Does font size affect children's memory and reading comprehension?

Vered Halamish

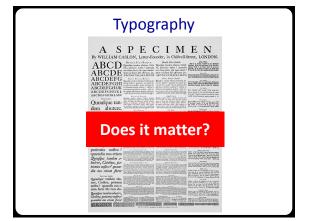
Institute of Information Processing and Decision Making, University of Haifa

Tami Katzir, Shirley Hershko, Hila Nachman

Edmond J. Safra Brain Research Center for the Study of Learning Disabilities

Department of Learning Disabilities

University of Haifa



Typography: Does it matter?

- Common view in education: reducing load is beneficial for learning (Sweller & Chandler, 1994)
- Indeed, more fluent typography (large font size) increases reading rate and accuracy among young children and dyslexic children
 - E.g., Hugh & Wilkins, 2000, 2002; O'Brien, Mansfield, & Legge, 2005; Zorzi et al., 2012
- More convenient typography improved adults reading comprehension
 - Lonsdale, Dyson & Reynolds, 2006

Typography: Does it matter?

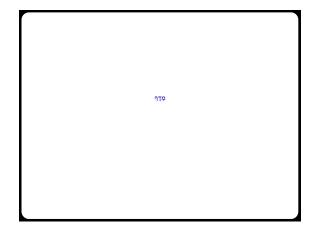
- However, research in cognitive psychology suggests that difficulties are desirable for learning (Bjork, 1994)
- Indeed, less fluent typography (difficult to read font, presenting words upside down) enhances memory and comprehension among high school students and adults
 - Diemand-Yauman, Oppenheimer, & Vaughan, 2011; French et al., in press; Sunghasettee, Friedman, & Castel, 2011
- · But, font size does not affect adults memory
 - Rhodes & Castel, 2008; Kornell, Castel, Rhodes, & Tauber, 2011

Current research

- Does typography (font size) affect memory and comprehension among children?
- Any developmental trends?
 - Young readers are glued to the print, older children focus on details and ideas (Chall, 1991).
- · What about metacognition?

Memory and Metamemory

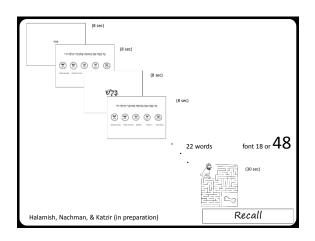
- Does font-size affect children's memory for the material?
- · Does it affect meta-memory?
- Any developmental trend?
- Subjects:
 - 50 1st graders (22 male, mean age: 6.9 years)
 - 44 5^{th} and 6^{th} graders (18 male, mean age: 11.1 years)

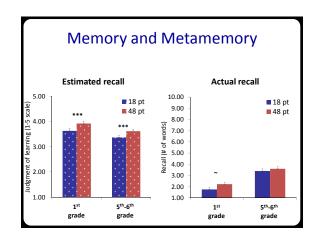












Reading comprehension

- Does font-size, line spacing and line length affect children's reading comprehension?
- Any developmental trend?
- Subjects:
 - 45 2nd graders (25 male, mean age: 7.5 years)
 - 45 5th graders (21 male, mean age: 10.5 years)

Reading comprehension

- 4 age-appropriate texts
 - 2nd grade: 44-47 words long
- 5th grade: 110-120 words long
- Text 1: standard
 - 2nd grade: 20 pt font size, 4.2 inch line length, double line spacing

צֶרִידְּ לַעֲשׂוֹת מַשְּׁהוּ

כֶלְבּ עָמֵד לְתְּסִוּף חֲתַלְתוּל. בַּקְרְבַת מְּקוּם עָמִדו שִנִּי יִלְדִים וְהַסְתָּכְלוּ בָּחָם. אִישָּׁה שַּחְסְתָּכְלָה מִהְחַלוֹן יָצְאָה בַּחַפְּזוֹן, גַּרְשָׁה אָת הַכַּלְב וְקָרְאָה אַל הַיָּלְדִים: אִינְכָּ מתְבָּיִשִּׁים:"" "וְכִי מָה יָש כְּאן לְהתְבָּישׁי לֹא עָשִׁינו שום דְבָרִו" אָמִרוֹ הַיִּלְדְים. "זְּהוֹ כֹל הָרִע, שָׁלֹא עֲשִׁיתָם שום דְבָרִו" השִׁיבָה הָאשָׁה בַּכִעִּים.

Standard 2nd grade

Reading comprehension

- 4 age-appropriate texts
 - 2nd grade: 44-47 words long
 - 5th grade: 110-120 words long
- Text 1: standard
 - 2nd grade: 20 pt font size, 4.2 inch line length, double line spacing
 - $-\,\,5^{th}$ grade: 13 pt font size, 4.6 inch ling length, 1.5 line spacing

צָרִידְּ לַעֲשׁוֹת מַשְּׁהוּ

Standard 2nd grade

כָּלָב עְּמִד לְתִּקּוֹף ְחַתַּלְתוֹל. בְּקְרְבַתְּמְקּוֹם עָמָדוֹ שְׁנִי יְלָדִים וְחְסָתְּכָלוֹ בָּחָם. אִישָּה שַהסתָבָלה מָהַחלון יָצְאָה בַּחְרָזוֹן, גַרְשָׁה אָת הַכָּלָב וְקַרְאָה אֵל הִיּלָדִים: אִינְכָּם

משפעת
בחריף הדבה אמשים חולים בשפעד. המחלה נגרמת על ידי נגיפים
בחריף הדבה אמשים חולים בשפעד. המחלה נגרמת על ידי נגיפים
ויוריסיים. היסימנים למחלה דומים לטיסינים של המטנות נונילת, שייעל,
באב גירו, חים, כאבי ראש, עיימות, חוליםה האבר גב. המחלה ממשכת
דרבי ארבינה עד שכנה ייסים, ניתו להדרבק בה על ידי מעבר של הנונים

Standard 5th grade

Reading comprehension

- 4 age-appropriate texts
- 2nd grade: 44-47 words long
- 5th grade: 110-120 words long
- Text 1: standard
 - -2^{nd} grade: 20 pt font size, 4.2 inch line length, double line spacing
 - $-\,\,5^{th}$ grade: 13 pt font size, 4.6 inch ling length, 1.5 line spacing
- Text 2: decreasing font size by 20%



Reading comprehension

- 4 age-appropriate texts
 - 2nd grade: 44-47 words long
 - 5th grade: 110-120 words long
- Text 1: standard
 - 2nd grade: 20 pt font size, 4.2 inch line length, double line spacing
- 5th grade: 13 pt font size, 4.6 inch ling length, 1.5 line spacing
- Text 2: decreasing font size by 20%
- Text 3: decreasing line spacing by 20%



Reading comprehension

- 4 age-appropriate texts
 - 2nd grade: 44-47 words long, with diacritical marks
 - 5th grade: 110-120 words long, without diacritical marks
- Text 1: standard
 - 2nd grade: 20 pt font size, 4.2 inch line length, double line spacing
 - 5th grade: 13 pt font size, 4.6 inch ling length, 1.5 line spacing
- Text 2: decreasing font size by 20%
- Text 3: decreasing line spacing by 20%
- Text 4: increasing line length by 20%

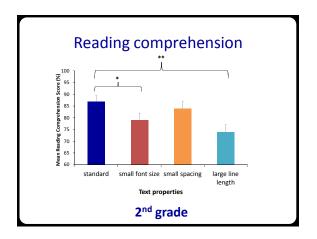
Standard 2nd grade כֶּלֶב עָמֵד לִתְקוֹף חֲתַלְתוּל. בְּקִרְבַת מֶקוֹם עַמָדוּ שְנֵי יְלָדִים וְהַסְתֶּכְלוּ בָּהֶם. אִישָׁה שָהַסְתָּכָּלַה מְהַחֵלוֹן יָצְאָה בְּחִפָּזוֹן, גַּרְשָׁה אָת הַכֶּלֶב וְקָרְאָה אֶל הַוְלָדִים: אֵינְכֶם בָּנֵשׁי לא: Large line length 'הו כל אִפָּא יָצְאָה לָעֲבוֹדָה וְשִירַה נִשְׁאֵרָה לְבַד בַּבַּיִת. הִיא בָה חָשְׁבָה לְעַצְמָהּ לְהָכִין הַפָּתָּעָה לְאִפָּא. שִירַה קָמָה, סדָרָה אַת מִיטָתָהּ וְנַעַרָה אַת הַמַּפָּה. אַחַר כָּדְ שַׁטְפָּה אָלוֹשׁ צַלֶּחוֹת וְגִיהַצָּה שִׁמְלָה שָׁל אָמֶא. כַּאֲשֶׁר אַמָּא מזרה הביתה היא תבקה את שירה ואמרה: יַהַהַפָּתָּעָה נֶהֶדֶרָת וְאַתִּ יַלְדָּה נִפְּלָאָהיי.

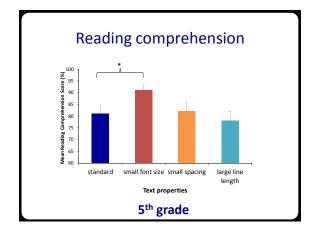
צריד לעשות משהו

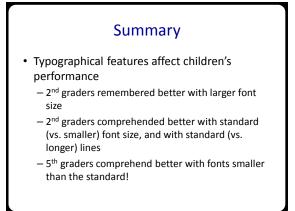
Reading comprehension

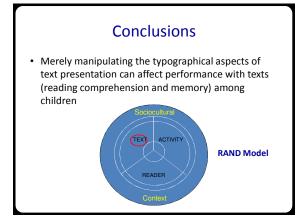
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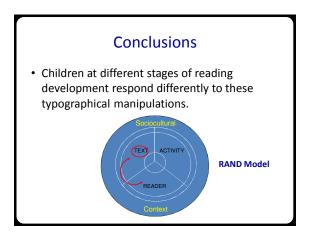
Reading comprehension • 4 multiple-choice reading comprehension questions for each text: | באר שרואים לעלקה מסשרה שליסי ושארה בא, מסטלה נפשף היא עסטר (באיני יידינה עדינה עידינה עדינה ועדינה שארה בא, מסטלה נפשף היא עסטר (באיני יידינה עדינה עדינה עדינה עדינה ועדינה שארה בא, מסטלה נפשף היא עסטר (באיני יידינה עדינה עד











Conclusions

- Subjective feelings do not always capture the effect of typographical features on performance
 - Children feel that large font size is easier to remember
 - For 5th graders, this is an illusion!
- Encountering difficulties when reading can be desirable! (Bjork, 1994)
- The optimal level of difficulty changes with development.

Future directions

- Is the effect of font size and line length on children's comprehension mediated by reading time?
- How does font size affect adult's comprehension?
- How does font size affect metacomprehension?

Implications

- In the modern area of on-screen reading, typography (e.g. font size) can be easily manipulated by the readers
- It is therefore important to understand:
 - How typography influences performance with texts
 - Whether readers accurately grasp this influence and can effectively regulate on-screen reading.





Thank you!