

Writing and spelling words: A cross-scriptal perspective

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With more and more research across scripts, we can begin to refine our understanding of the developmental process of learning to spell in different contexts. In this talk, I will present some basic models of spelling and then highlight research from our own and others' work on how children learn to write words. This research includes fine motor skills, "pure" copying (one aspect of visual-motor skill), and delayed copying, a construct that likely makes use of multiple skills, particularly orthographic memory. The cognitive-linguistic skill of phonological sensitivity is also important for spelling, as reflected in various studies of invented spelling. Finally, young children's early spelling depends upon scaffolding, or teaching. Studies of the maternal mediation of writing across cultures reveal that the focus of scaffolding in teaching young children to write varies by script demands. I will highlight studies of early spelling development in Chinese, English, Korean, Hebrew, Arabic, and Bemba, among others, in an effort to review what we already know about early spelling development, as well as directions for future research.