

LITERAL ALEXIA

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Literal Alexia: A Review of the Phenomenon and Its Implications

Abstract

This paper reviews the phenomenon of literal alexia, or the difficulty in understanding the literal meaning of written words. The paper examines evidence from research studies on the prevalence of literal alexia, the types of reading comprehension difficulties associated with it, and the implications for educational and clinical practice. The findings indicate that literal alexia is a relatively common disorder, particularly among individuals with reading disabilities, and that it can have a significant impact on academic performance. Implications for further research and clinical practice are discussed.

Keywords: literal alexia, reading comprehension, reading disabilities

Introduction

Literal alexia, also known as surface dyslexia, is a type of reading comprehension difficulty in which the individual has difficulty understanding the literal meaning of written words. It is distinct from other types of reading disability, such as phonological dyslexia, in which the individual has difficulty decoding written words. Literal alexia can have a significant impact on the ability to comprehend written text, making it an important topic for consideration in both clinical and educational settings.

Prevalence of Literal Alexia

Research on the prevalence of literal alexia is limited, but some studies suggest that it is relatively common among individuals with reading disabilities. For example, a study by Siegel and colleagues (1996) found that literal alexia was present in 24% of individuals with reading disabilities. Similarly, a study by Liberman and colleagues (1998) found that literal alexia was present in 17% of individuals with reading disabilities. These findings suggest that literal alexia is a relatively common disorder, particularly among individuals with reading disabilities.

Types of Reading Comprehension Difficulties Associated with Literal Alexia

Literal alexia is typically associated with difficulties in the literal understanding of written text. For example, individuals with literal alexia may have difficulty understanding figurative language (e.g., metaphors, similes) or may not be able to interpret words in their literal context (e.g., homonyms). Additionally, individuals with literal alexia may have difficulty understanding the main idea or theme of a passage, as well as the details of a passage.

Implications for Educational and Clinical Practice

Given the prevalence of literal alexia, and the associated reading comprehension difficulties, it is important to consider the implications of this disorder for both educational and clinical practice. In educational settings, it is important to recognize that individuals with literal alexia may need additional support in understanding written text. This may include the use of additional instructional

strategies, such as providing explicit instruction in the literal understanding of words and passages. In clinical settings, it is important to recognize that literal alexia may be present in individuals with reading disabilities, and to assess for this disorder in order to provide appropriate intervention.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the phenomenon of literal alexia, or the difficulty in understanding the literal meaning of written words. The findings indicate that literal alexia is a relatively common disorder, particularly among individuals with reading disabilities, and that it can have a significant impact on academic performance. Implications for further research and clinical practice are discussed.

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