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Mapping Visual Symbols onto Spoken Language Forms

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Learning to read is arguably the most important challenge for the child starting school. Mapping new visual symbols onto existing spoken and conceptual forms also presents an interesting challenge for the brain. In this talk, I discuss some of the work that my laboratory has been conducting using artificial language learning approaches to understand how the brain solves this challenge. This work has allowed us to discover how the brain captures different forms of systematicity within the writing system, how the nature of the writing system impacts on emerging representations, and how the acquisition of literacy impacts on spoken language representations. I conclude by relating this work back to discoveries using more naturalistic methods, and argue that these two forms of evidence can be highly complementary in the study of reading acquisition.

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