


Completely illiterate adults can learn to decode in 3 months

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Abstract The purpose of this case series was to explore whether adults who did not have the opportunity to acquire reading skills during childhood are able to do so rapidly if trained with an adequate literacy program. After 14 weeks of training with a new, optimized, literacy course based on cognitive research, six out of eight participants became able to read words they had never encountered, hence demonstrating that they were definitely engaged in decoding processes that allow autonomous reading. Moreover, they showed enhanced phonemic sensitivity and phonological memory. The latter finding implies that functional changes can take place rapidly outside the reading domain even when reading is acquired in adulthood. Thus, there is no major plasticity impediment preventing rapid eradication of illiteracy in adults.

Keywords Adult illiteracy · Adult literacy · Decoding · Reading instruction · Phonics

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