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- 1 Over the last few years, much attention has been dedicated to exploring the neural and cognitive underpinnings of learning disabilities in reading. Such an interest is partly due to the major socio-economic impact of these disabilities, which are estimated to affect 3-9% of school-age children and adults. The growing body of research in that domain also allows us to improve our understanding of the mechanisms involved in the acquisition of reading in normal children.
- 2 A conference on this topic, held in Aix-en-Provence in November 2002, attracted more than 200 attendees from France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada. The conference aimed to get researchers from different fields discussing their views on current issues in language disorders and reading acquisition. The participants had a large variety of backgrounds which included neurology, neuropsychology, neuroimaging, cognitive neurosciences, cognitive and developmental psychology, psycholinguistics, linguistics and phonetics. One of the main axes of the conference was the integration of basic science and applied research based on rigorous experimental methods.
- 3 This special issue of *Current Psychology Letters: Behavior, Brain & Cognition*, contains 11 papers selected among those presented at the meeting, and including reviews and experimental studies. A central question in this volume is to better understand why some individuals come to experience difficulties in the acquisition of reading. This question is addressed from many different perspectives, which include the role of syntax and morphology, the development of phonology, and the effects of attentional processes. The definition of subcategories in developmental dyslexia and the implications of current research for remediation are also discussed. In addition, a large place is devoted to the current debate focussing on whether developmental dyslexia is caused by language-specific factors (more specifically, a phonological deficit) as opposed to general auditory and/or visual deficits.

- 4 We are most grateful to Jacques Vauclair and Jean-Paul Caverni, Chief Editors of Current Psychology Letters: Behavior, Brain & Cognition, for their support and guidance, as well as to all the contributors in this volume, which we believe should prove a valuable tool for all the researchers and professionals working in the field of learning disabilities in the years to come.
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