
The Challenge of Identifying and Supporting English Learners with Dyslexia: What Can be Done?
 Dale W. Webster, Ph.D.
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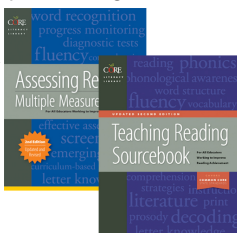
Agenda


- Reading Foundational skills
- What is dyslexia? What it's not.
- Phonemic proficiency
- What instruction should look like within an MTSS/RtI framework for culturally and linguistically diverse students
- A problem of practice: differentiating between language acquisition and dyslexia – important questions
- Assessments

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About CORE

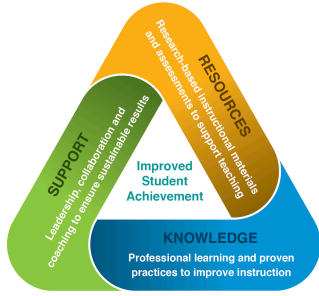
- CORE provides professional learning (face to face training, online training, and site implementation support) to improve literacy and math instruction, Pre-K-12.
- Founded by former CA State Supt, Bill Honig and Linda Diamond in 1995.
- Nationally recognized for the *Teaching Reading Sourcebook* *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures*.




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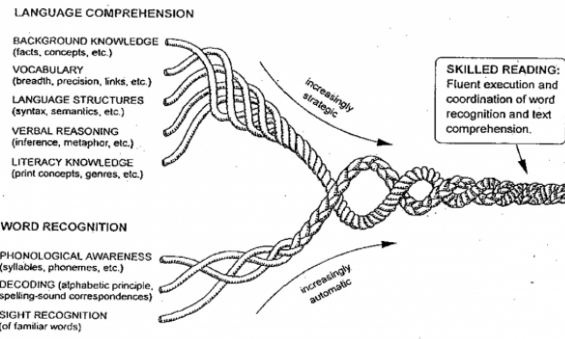
What We Believe



- Foundational knowledge (Reading/ Math Academies)
- Research based instructional tools: (curriculum & assessments)
- Job-embedded support

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The Many Strands that are Woven into Skilled Reading (Scarborough, 2001)



LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

- BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE (facts, concepts, etc.)
- VOCABULARY (breadth, precision, links, etc.)
- LANGUAGE STRUCTURES (syntax, semantics, etc.)
- VERBAL REASONING (inference, metaphor, etc.)
- LITERACY KNOWLEDGE (print concepts, genres, etc.)

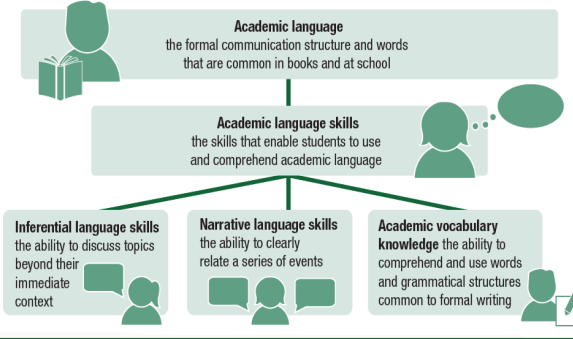
WORD RECOGNITION

- PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS (syllables, phonemes, etc.)
- DECODING (alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)
- SIGHT RECOGNITION (of familiar words)

SKILLED READING: Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

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Academic Language Skills (from Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade)

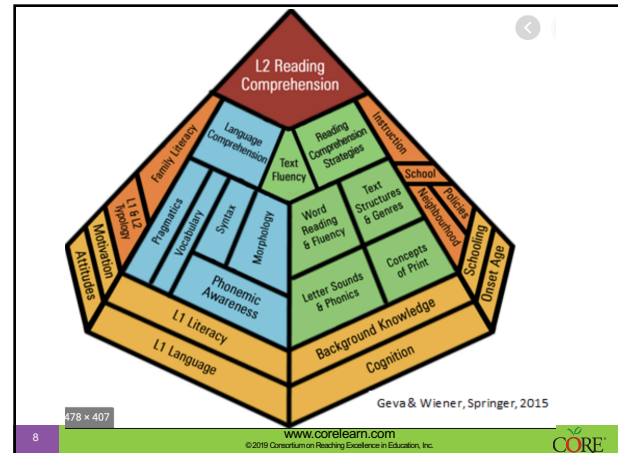


Academic language
the formal communication structure and words that are common in books and at school

Academic language skills
the skills that enable students to use and comprehend academic language

- Inferential language skills**
the ability to discuss topics beyond their immediate context
- Narrative language skills**
the ability to clearly relate a series of events
- Academic vocabulary knowledge**
the ability to comprehend and use words and grammatical structures common to formal writing

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In what ways do you see students struggle with decoding and encoding? (focus on behaviors)

How does this impact the students' ability to engage in reading text?

What do your schools currently do to address the needs of struggling readers?

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Dyslexia Defined

Dyslexia is a **specific learning disability** that is **neurobiological** in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent **word recognition** and by poor **spelling** and **decoding** abilities.

These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the **phonological** component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.

Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Lyon, G.R., Shaywitz, S. E., Shaywitz, B.A. (2003). A definition of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 53, 1-14.

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What Do We Know?

Dyslexia...

- is a **language-based** problem
- Is inherited (runs in families)
- exists across all levels of intelligence
- is not caused by a lack of motivation
- exists on a spectrum
- does not mean seeing things backwards or making reversals

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About Reversals

- Many people believe this is a defining feature of dyslexia
- Individuals with dyslexia do not make more reversal errors than do **reading-matched** younger readers.
 - A third grade student with dyslexia makes reversal errors because their phase of reading development is that of a Kindergartner or first grader.
- The student stands out because their **age-matched** peers make fewer or no reversal errors.

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What Else Do We Know?

- Occurs at all socioeconomic levels
- Occurs slightly more often in boys than girls
- Often occurs with other developmental problems (e.g., ADHD, executive function, written expression)
- We know about brain function
- Not the only type of reading disability (see next slide)
- May develop even with optimal classroom instruction
- Can be mitigated with high-quality instruction

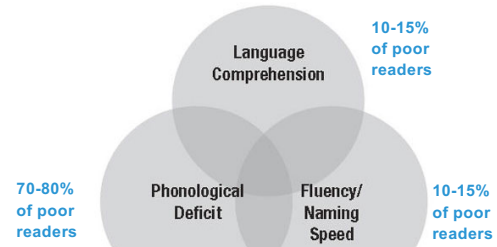


13

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Recognized Subtypes of Poor Readers (Fletcher et al. 2007; Aaron, Joshi et al., 2008)



Moats, L. & Tolman, C (2019). Excerpted from *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)*, 3rd Edition. Dallas: Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc.

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High quality instruction makes a difference

- Many children eventually identified with dyslexia can be taught to read with early identification and explicit, comprehensive reading/language arts instruction
- Remediation of dyslexia after Grade 2 requires high intensity and a comprehensive approach to reading instruction

15 hours vs 75 hours!

15

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Structured Literacy

- **Phonology** (study of sound structure of spoken words)
- **Sound-Symbol Association** (phonics, decoding instr.)
- **Syllable Instruction** (syllable types, division rules)
- **Morphology** (affixes, Greek and Latin roots)
- **Syntax** (grammar, sentence structure, mechanics)
- **Semantics** (comprehension, vocabulary, writing)

Explicit and Systematic!

16

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Take a minute to process

- Talk to your neighbor about what you have learned or what has been confirmed in your current schema of dyslexia.

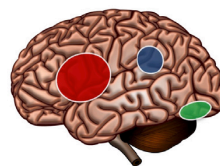
On to the brain...

17

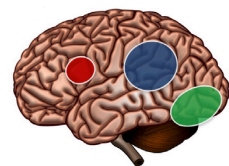
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BRAIN PATTERNS THAT DYSLIXIC STUDENTS MAY SHOW



BRAIN PATTERNS THAT NON-DYSLIXIC STUDENTS MAY SHOW



- **LEFT FRONTAL REGION:** Important for compensation
- **LEFT TEMPORO-PARIETAL REGION:** Important for phonological processing and grapheme-phoneme association
- **LEFT OCCIPITO-TEMPORAL REGION:** Important for orthographic processing

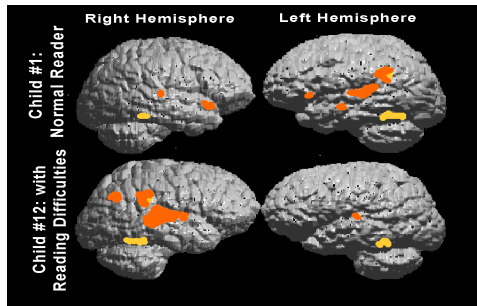
18

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Brain Function in Dyslexia

(Simos et al., 2001; Pseudowords)



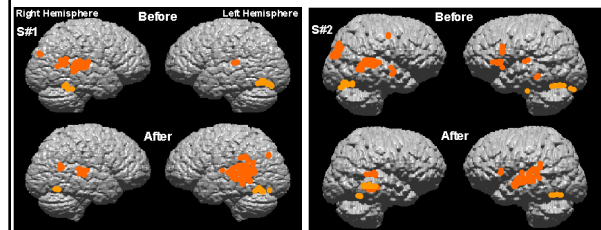
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Neural response to intervention;

(Pseudoword Task; Simos et al., 2002)



20

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Core Deficit is Phoneme Awareness

- The ability to separate mentally the speech sounds within spoken words and to manipulate individual phonemes in spoken words
 - Consciously separating phonemes is an unnatural, acquired skill for those who learn to read and write because words are undivided bursts of sound.
 - Awareness of the separate speech sounds enables children to make a mental map of the correspondences between the letters in the printed words and the sounds they represent.
- (Moats & Dakin, 2008)
- Pig Latin (**The cat ran across the room.**)
 - is advanced phonological skill; **phoneme proficiency**

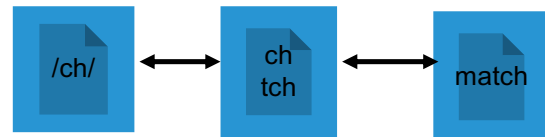
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The Heart of the Problem

Identifying speech sounds in words, learning all sound-symbol correspondences, and consolidating word memories.



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Phonological-core deficit

- Weakness in one or more of the following (typically more than one of these, sometimes all of them):
 - Phonemic awareness/analysis (segmenting, manipulation)
 - Phonemic blending/synthesis
 - Rapid automatized naming
 - Phonological working memory
 - Nonsense word reading, letter-sound knowledge acquisition
- Phoneme skills are needed for BOTH sounding out new words AND remembering the words we read

23

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Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Awareness

- Phonological awareness in Spanish or English predicts reading achievement.
- In fact, Spanish phonological awareness may be a better predictor of English word reading than English or Spanish oral proficiency (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993).
- A student can be given a phonological test in the home language by a speaker who is trained.

24

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Phoneme Awareness (basic)

NOTE: this would all be oral, not written words

Oral Blending: (hear sounds, then say word)

- /f/ /a/ /n/ ... "blend" ... fan
- /s/ /i/ /t/ ... "blend" ... sit

Segmentation: (hear & say word, then say sounds)

- "say sat" ... "sat" ... "sound sat" ... /s/ /a/ /t/
- "say tray" ... "tray" ... "sound tray" ... /t/ /r/ /ā/

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Phoneme Awareness (Advanced)

Manipulation*

NOTE: this would all be oral, not written words

(Deleting sounds)

- "say cram" ... "cram" ... "drop /k/, what's left?" ... "ram"
- "say truck" ... "truck" ... "drop /k/, what's left?" ... "tru"
- "say flare" ... "flare" ... "drop /l/, what's left?" ... "fair"

(Adding sounds)

- "say at" ... "at" ... "add /rrr/" ... "new word?" ... "rat"

(Substituting sounds)

- "say man" ... "change /mm/ to /ff/ ... "new word?" ... "fan"

*Key activity to promote orthographic mapping

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Phoneme Proficiency

- *Phonemic proficiency* is a term that refers to instant, effortless, and unconscious access to the individual phonemes within spoken words.
- Similar to letter-sound proficiency, i.e., automatic, unconscious access to letter-sounds (**sound-spellings**)
- To delete the /l/ in *slip* or change the /l/ in *fly* to /r/ to get *fry*
 - Segment the word
 - Isolate the target sound
 - Delete or substitute the sound
 - Blend the remaining sounds

(Kilpatrick, 2019, in press)

27

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Orthographic Mapping

Orthographic mapping explains how students turn unfamiliar words into instantly accessible sight words, with no sounding out or guessing. This is something that weak readers do very poorly, and as a result, they have limited sight vocabularies and limited reading fluency.

p. 18, Kilpatrick, 2015

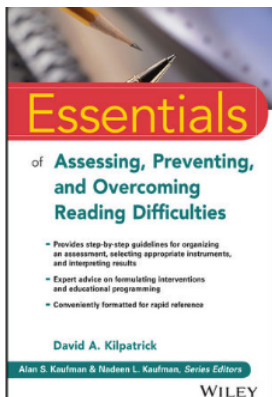
*Thus, orthographic mapping involves a connection-forming process in which **the oral phonemes in spoken words are "bonded"** (Ehri, 2005a) to the letters used to represent those phonemes. The phoneme sequence of the word that is already established in long-term memory acts as the anchor for the written sequence of letters used to represent that phoneme sequence.*

p. 122, Kilpatrick, 2015

Dixon, Stuart, & Masterson, 2002; Ehri & Saltmarsh, 1995; Rack, Hulme, Snowling, & Wightman, 1994; Roberts, 2003; Stuart, Masterson, & Dixon, 2000; Treiman, Sotak, & Bowman, 2001)

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Google
Kilpatrick reading

29

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Look at but don't read the following word...

Horseradish

- You can't help but read it, can you?
- This behavior is "pre-cognitive."

Try another word...

Dyslexia

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Name the COLOR of the squares as fast as you can...



Did you retrieve the colors as fast as you did the prior words?

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Name the COLOR of the WORDS as fast as you can...

Brown
Black
Blue
Green

32

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Look at but don't read the following word...

hovolupshim

- Wasn't quite the same, was it?
- What did you have to do?
- Did you recognize any chunk of it right away?

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Two Levels of Word-level Reading Skill Deficits

What distinguishes skilled word readers from poor word readers?

1. The ability to *identify* unfamiliar words by sounding them out (accuracy)
2. The ability to *remember* the words they read (automaticity)

(David Kilpatrick, Sept. 25, 2019)

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Phonic Decoding Skills Alone Cannot Explain Efficient Orthographic Learning

- Most of our intervention efforts focus on the first of the two levels of word reading – phonic decoding
- Many tutored dyslexics develop normal nonsense word reading but lag in word identification tests with real words and in fluency
- Dyslexics in consistent orthographies develop decoding skills but lack fluency

(David Kilpatrick, Sept. 25, 2019)

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Some Realities About How We Remember the Words We Read (Kilpatrick, Sept 25, 2019)


- Literate adults have between 30,000 to 70,000 words in their sight vocabulary/orthographic lexicon
 - These are familiar/known words that are instantly and effortlessly recognized on sight (thus *sight vocabulary*)
- Words in the orthographic lexicon require only 1/20th of a second exposure for reliable recognition
- Once words are learned, they are not forgotten
- Questions to consider. . .
 - How many of these 30-70K words that you know automatically were directly taught by a teacher or another adult?
 - What percentage of these words upon first exposure did you put conscious effort for remembering the next time?

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Orthographic Memory Is Letter Sequence Memory, Not Visual Word Form Memory

- Cattell's findings in 1886 – measured reaction time to 1 millisecond
 - DOG vs. 
 - Findings as early as the 1970s (e.g., Vellutino)
 - Dyslexics did not have deficient visual memories
- Reading correlates moderately to strongly with phonological skills but very weakly with visual memory
- Orthographic memory vs. visual memory
 - If a first grader learns "bear" he can instantly identify "BEAR"

bear, BEAR, **Bear**, bear, **bear**, **BEAR**, **bear**, bear, BEAR

(David Kilpatrick, Sept. 25, 2019)

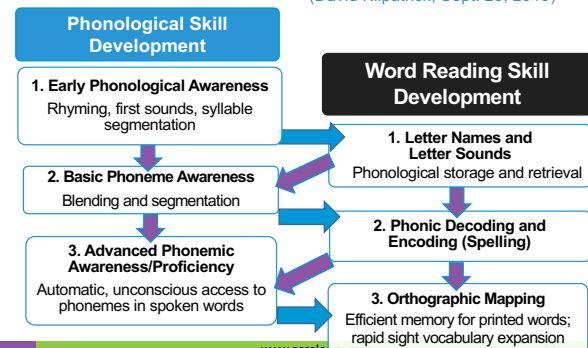
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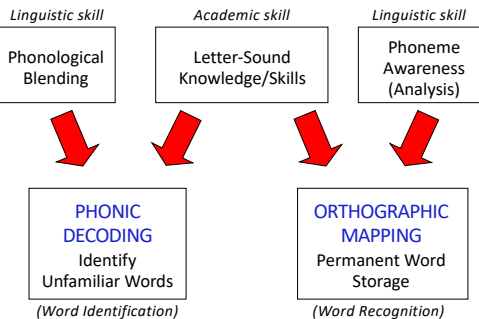
The Developmental Relationship Between Phonological Skills and Word-Level Reading

(David Kilpatrick, Sept. 25, 2019)



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Strong Intervention Programs...

For Word Reading Difficulties

- Intensive and purposeful phonemic awareness development to the advanced level (manipulation)
- Intensive phonic decoding instruction
- Extensive opportunities to read connected text*.
 - Decodable text at first
 - Then, chapter books, high interest leveled text

*Multiple related sentences

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Take a minute to process

- Talk to your neighbor about what you have learned or what has been confirmed in your current schema of dyslexia.

On to English learners...

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What Should be Considered to Distinguish Between Language and Reading Disability?

- Compared to English, for how long has the student been speaking and exposed to the home language?
- Are the difficulties present in home language and English?
- Have appropriately explicit instruction and intervention been provided?
- Has this instruction produced improvement?
- Assessment data of cognitive functions (RAN, phonological memory, basic phonological awareness, and phonemic proficiency (advanced))

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Transparent vs Opaque Orthographies

Transparent

- Spanish, Italian, Finnish
- Consistent rules
- Usually one-to-one correspondence
- Decoding skills developed faster
- Students with dyslexia struggle more with **fluency** than accuracy (accuracy still poor compared to typical peers).

Opaque

- English, French
- More complex spelling patterns
- Context-dependent rules
 - Read – red
- Much less one-to-one correspondence
- Decoding problems (accuracy) are more evident. Fluency also a challenge.

Adapted from Enciso, 2017

43

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Opaque vs Transparent Orthographies

Deficits in decoding and phonology are more common in opaque orthographies (Wimmer, 1993; Wimmer & Mayringer, 2001), while deficits in reading rate and processing speed are more common in transparent orthographies in which most letters have only one sound each associated with them (Holopainen, Ahonen, & Lyytinen, 2001; Jiménez, 2012; Tressoldi, Stella, & Faggella, 2001)

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Opaque vs Transparent Orthographies

Accumulating evidence with bilingual learners of two **alphabetic** languages suggests that **learning in a phonologically transparent orthography (e.g., Spanish) might improve children's phonological reading skills** and increase the strength of left superior temporal activation in their phonologically-opaque language (e.g., English).

Bilingual children with dyslexia who are learning to read in a phonologically transparent orthography (Italian) have also been found to **have better phonological literacy skills in their phonologically-opaque language (English)** than their monolingual English peers with dyslexia

(Kovelman, Bisconti, & Hoeft, 2016)

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Questions to discuss

- What do you think is the most challenging aspect of distinguishing between language acquisition and learning disability?
- How do your English learners do in comparison to other students?

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Understanding L2 Acquisition: 3 theories of cross-language transfer interact with each other

1. Typological perspective (Lado, 1957)
2. Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1981)
3. Cognitive underlying processes framework (Geva & Ryan, 1993)

Genesee (2006) suggests that the typological perspective assists transfer of spelling, vocabulary, & word recognition while Cummins' theory assists transfer of higher order literacy skills.

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Typological perspective (Lado, 1957)

- Transfer is easiest with phonologically similar languages (Spanish-English vs Chinese-English)
 - Positive vs negative transfer
 - Phoneme similarity/dissimilarity
 - /s/ and /th/
 - Cognates: organización and organization
 - Compound words occur in Chinese and not in Spanish
 - Orthographic depth can make it easier or harder to learn to decode.

Since typically developing L2 students are able to learn and distinguish phonemes with quality instruction, if they show persistent difficulty doing this then it may be a sign of other non-language related problems.

48

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Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1981)

- Academic language proficiency transfers across languages when students have developed literacy in L1
 - monitoring comprehension, inferencing,
 - accessing and using prior knowledge,
 - using knowledge of text genre conventions, and
 - noticing the author's point of view

Task demands, language proficiency, nature of the task can inhibit this transfer

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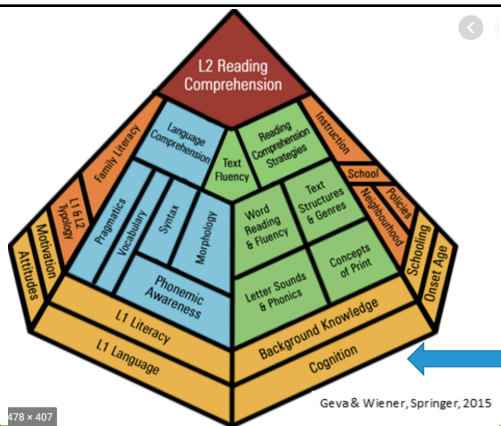


Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth

Genesee (2006) suggests that the **typological perspective** assists transfer of spelling, vocabulary, & word recognition while Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis assists transfer of higher order literacy skills.

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Understand L2 Acquisition: 3 theories of cross-language transfer interact with each other

- Cognitive underlying processes framework (Geva & Ryan, 1993)
 - Individual differences in working memory, RAN, PA, and phonological memory explain L1-L2 correlations and **predict** word reading, spelling, and fluency in both L1 & L2.
 - Performance on these cognitive processes does not require high levels of oral language proficiency (OLP)
 - Many educators tend to attribute low OLP as the cause for poor decoding skills thus under identifying ELs as LD who have **persistent** word recognition difficulties.
 - OLP does not drive the development of word reading skills in L2 in the primary grades.

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A Civil Rights Issue

The Exclusionary Clause of IDEA 2004

"A child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is (A) lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction...; (B) lack of instruction in math; or (C) limited English proficiency" (IDEA 2004, Section 614.b.5)

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Opportunity to Learn

Opportunity to learn must be established.

Some ELLs are identified as having LD not because they have disabilities, but rather because they have not received an adequate opportunity to learn.

Some ELLs are taught in "disabling contexts," with too few opportunities to develop their language/literacy skills.

Janette Klingner and Amy M. Eppolito, *English Language Learners: Differentiating Between Language Acquisition and Learning Disabilities*

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What IS Opportunity to Learn?

- Has tier 1 been high quality? Is the school implementing a strong curriculum?
- Are tiered interventions of increasing intensity afforded to English learners? Are there ways to assess intervention response?
- Is literacy instruction culturally and linguistically responsive?
- Is language and literacy developed across the curriculum? Are lessons meaningful?
- Are teachers including opportunities for structured academic talk in their instruction?

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Oral language proficiency is not a prerequisite for word reading skills

- Phonological processing skills such as phonological awareness (PA) and rapid automatized naming (RAN) are not strongly associated with language proficiency
- Both PA and RAN can be reliably assessed in the L2
- Both can be used to predict word reading skills to help understand the source of difficulties in learning to develop word level reading and spelling skills in the L2

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Oral language proficiency is not a prerequisite for word reading skills

Research has demonstrated that L2 learners perform equally and sometimes better than L1 learners on rapid automatized naming tasks in the early stages of reading acquisition even though their skills in language and reading comprehension are weaker (Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Chiappe, Siegel, & Gottardo, 2002; Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003).

...along with phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming was a significant predictor of basic English word decoding (e.g., word reading and pseudoword decoding).

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Strong Intervention Programs...

For Word Reading Difficulties

- Intensive and purposeful phonemic awareness development to the advanced level (manipulation)
- Intensive phonic decoding instruction
- Extensive opportunities to read connected text*.
 - Decodable text at first
 - Then, chapter books, high interest leveled text

*Multiple related sentences

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Explicit Phonics Lesson Sequence

CORE Teaching Reading Sourcebook p. 175
(Handout)

1. Develop phoneme awareness
 - Include addition, substitution, and deletion activities
2. Introduce sound/spelling
3. Blend words
4. Build automatic word recognition
5. Apply to decodable text
6. Word Work for decoding and encoding

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Phonological Skills

Typically Developing ELLs	Indicators of possible learning difficulty
Perform similarly to native speakers	On-going weaknesses in phonological awareness (e.g., inability to match sounds to letters, hear rhymes, to replace one sound with another, break a word into sounds, blend sounds together)
Possibly will have some difficulty if native language is phonologically very different from English	
Apply phonological skills to both languages	

Can be assessed using: DIBELS; Roswell-Chall Auditory Blending Test; Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation; Test of Auditory Analysis Skills; informal phonological segmentation, matching and blending tasks; identifying rhymes in songs; using "Pig Latin"

*Phonological awareness is considered a key predictor of difficulties with word level reading and spelling. It can be reliably tested in English with ELLs.

(From Geva, E., & Wiener, J., 2014)

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Word Reading Skills: sight vocabulary and decoding skills

Typically Developing ELLs	Indicators of possible learning difficulty
Make steady progress	Word reading difficulties in both languages*
Word-level reading at par with monolingual peers (after a few years of schooling in English)	Difficulty remembering or naming letters, sounds, and sight words
Read words* with reasonable fluency even if other skills are not native-like (oral language, grammar, vocabulary)	Not progressing despite targeted instruction in word reading

*Can be assessed with Dolch word lists, CORE Phonics Survey, reading decodable words out of context with accuracy, sounding out unfamiliar words, or pseudowords.

(From Geva, E., & Wiener, J., 2014)

61

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Spelling: sound, pattern, and morpheme levels

Typically Developing ELLs	Indicators of possible learning difficulty
Make steady progress	Persistent spelling errors
Learn from instruction	Difficulty with phonological awareness
Apply rules and patterns to new words	Spelling errors which are not attributed to influence of the first language
Apply rules and patterns to new words	Difficulty remembering how common words are spelled
May have errors that originate from influence of first language	
Spell as well as native speakers with sufficient classroom instruction	

(Adapted from Adelson, Geva, Fraser, 2014)

62

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Fluency and English learners

- Fluency at the **word level** reflects decoding skills and phoneme proficiency
- Fluency at the **text level** reflects both decoding ability and oral language proficiency (Crosson & Lesaux, 2009)
- ELs in Grade 2 were able to read single words as fluently as their monolingual English speaking peers (EL1); however, EL1 peers had better text-reading fluency because of their more developed oral language proficiency and ability to access meaning more easily (Geva & Yaghouh-Zadeh, 2006)
- Assessing fluency at the **word level** may be appropriate to distinguish those ELs with word level difficulties and/or dyslexia

63

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Something to consider...

...possible to reliably measure underlying cognitive processing skills in the L2 or L1 and that individual differences in skills such as phonological awareness and RAN measured in the L1 or L2 can predict accurate word recognition and pseudoword decoding, cross linguistically

(Geva & Wiener, 2014)

64

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Two important types of assessment to administer

1. Phonological/phonemic awareness (in L1 and/or L2)
2. Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) (in L1 and/or L2)
 - letters and digits more closely related to reading than objects/colors

Compare to typically developing L2 students!

But also...

- Home background (languages spoken); history of reading difficulties
- Developmental history (language milestones in L1 & L2)
- Educational history (prior schooling + literacy instruction history)
- English language proficiency (4 domains)

65

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Conclusion

With appropriate instruction L2 learners who are exposed to the L2 in the primary grades can develop accurate word-level skills in the L2 and that accurate word-level reading skills are not heavily dependent on OLP.

Persistent difficulties in developing decoding skills of students who begin studying in their L2 in the primary grades cannot be attributed simply to poor OLP in the target language. Performance should be compared to that of children from similar backgrounds and should be used to identify and provide appropriate interventions to L2 learners, who experience **persistent** difficulties in acquiring word-level reading skills.

(Geva & Wiener, 2014)

66

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67

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