

FR2 Dyslexia Assessment in Multilingual Populations

Nandini Chatterjee Singh, Ph.D.

In a number of multilingual countries, children are provided literacy instruction in more than one language. In many of these countries, like those in southeastern Asia, languages belong to distinct writing systems. For instance, in India, many children learn to read in Hindi and English; however, Hindi is written in Devnagari, which belongs to the class of akshara writing systems, while English, which is written in the Roman alphabet, belongs to the alphabetic system. In such scenarios, it is crucial that children at risk for dyslexia be assessed in all the languages in which they are instructed. The symposium has three presentations, as described below.

The Development of DALI (Dyslexia Assessment for Languages of India)

Nandini Chatterjee Singh, Ph.D.

India is a multilingual country with 22 distinct languages and 10 distinct writing systems. The education scenario in India requires children to acquire literacy instruction in at least two languages and often in three. In particular, it is necessary that the child be assessed in his or her native language. In the absence of appropriate standardized screening and assessment tools in Indian languages, the diagnosis of dyslexia in India so far has been incomplete or even unavailable.

To address this lacuna, the Dyslexia Assessment for Languages of India (DALI) was developed. DALI contains screening tools for school teachers and assessment tools in Indian languages to identify dyslexia. DALI provides standardized, validated tests in three Indian languages (Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada) and English learned as a second language. It has been indigenously developed, standardized, and validated across a large population of 4,840 children. DALI contains a screening tool for school teachers and assessment tools for psychologists. This talk discusses the different tests available in DALI, its standardization, and its validation. The presenter also discusses reading patterns based on a reading study conducted using DALI and its implications for assessing dyslexia in biliterate populations.

Dyslexia Assessments in Chinese-English Learners

Cammie McBride, Ph.D.

In China, children routinely learn Chinese and English. Criteria for diagnosing dyslexia in Hong Kong Chinese children are well-established but complex. How these relate to English learning remains somewhat controversial. In Mainland China, the criteria for diagnosing dyslexia in Chinese are less clear,

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and difficulties in English are less well recognized. The presenter discusses four studies on Chinese-English learners in both Hong Kong and Beijing that demonstrated some uniqueness in reading difficulties in Chinese as compared to English and a fifth study examining poor reading comprehension in Chinese and in English. While there is some transfer of reading difficulties from the mother tongue and script to another one, there are also many differences. Such findings highlight the need for a quick and reliable task of English word reading for foreign language learners. Data on a newly developed word-reading task we have found useful in identifying those at-risk for reading English as a foreign language is also disclosed. Our goal is to use this measure for research and quick diagnostic purposes of poor reading in English around the world.

The presenter also highlights ideas from practitioners and those with dyslexia from around the world on the nature of dyslexia vis-à-vis foreign-language learning. While there are those (mostly American, since this is often optional in the U.S. but not in most other countries) who recommend that children and adolescents with dyslexia not be required to learn additional (foreign) languages, many view learning to read in a second language and/or script as important for children with dyslexia. They argue that reading in different languages and scripts exposes the person with dyslexia to multiple reading strategies, some of which may be relative strengths, rather than weaknesses, in such individuals. For example, a visual memorization strategy is likely to work better in Chinese than in English, but it can be applied in both. For example, individuals with dyslexia may make greater use of visual as compared to phonological processing strategies (or vice versa). These ideas come from both empirical research and from interviews conducted in the work on the presenter's book (forthcoming, Routledge, 2019) on dyslexia across cultures. In previous empirical studies and in the author's own interviews (consisting of 32 interviews with parents, teachers, pediatricians, those with dyslexia themselves, and clinical and educational psychologists across 20 countries), we find a minority of children who, relative to their peers, are dyslexic in their mother tongue but perform adequately in a foreign language (and sometimes script).

Spelling Performance may Depend on the Orthography

Malatesha Joshi, Ph.D.

While we have made much progress on reading development, similar progress has not been made on spelling development. While no strong connection has been associated with intelligence and spelling, good spelling is required for writing and is essential for reading as well. When students have to pause to spell correctly, they may produce ordinary words that may not convey the entire meaning (such as "good" in many cases) and also may have to use additional cognitive resources, which might impact flow of thoughts. Behavioral data suggests a strong relationship between reading and spelling, on the order of about 0.8 (Ehri, 1997).

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During this presentation, research into spelling and dictation tasks in various orthographies is presented and the educational implications of this research. For instance, it is generally agreed that English-speaking children make more errors on vowels than on consonants due to the fact that in English five vowel letters make about 18 sounds, so naturally much emphasis has to be placed on teaching vowel sounds in English. Interestingly, our studies into the transparent Spanish language have shown that Spanish-speaking children make more errors on consonants than on vowels; hence, more emphasis has to be placed on consonants while teaching spelling in Spanish. Similarly, we have conducted studies on Russian, where morphological and orthographic influences played a major role compared to spelling in English. Further, the presenter covers the spelling of English words by native speakers of Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Chinese, Kannada, and Telugu and shows the differences in their performance and their educational implications.

Track: Research

Level: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced

[International](#)

Clock Hours: 2.75

ASHA CEUs: 0.25

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