

Symposium Title

Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions of Dyslexia Across Orthographic Contexts:
Preliminary Findings from an International Research Network

Research Overview

This symposium presents preliminary findings from an ongoing cross-national study of primary school teachers' knowledge and perceptions of dyslexia in Israel, South Korea, the United States, and South Africa. The study builds on a long-standing WERA International Research Network examining teachers' communicative and instructional work with linguistically diverse learners and extends that comparative platform by adding a literacy-focused dimension. Specifically, it considers how teachers understand dyslexia across educational settings shaped by different linguistic and orthographic contexts.

Purpose of Study

The symposium brings together papers from an ongoing cross-national study examining elementary school teachers' knowledge and perceptions of dyslexia across countries that differ in language, writing systems, and educational contexts. Building on prior IRN work on teachers' communicative and instructional practices with linguistically diverse learners, the study extends this line of inquiry by focusing on teachers' literacy-related knowledge and perceptions.

The symposium has three aims: to present the shared conceptual and methodological framework guiding the study; to report preliminary findings from participating countries; and to consider how linguistic and orthographic diversity may be related to teachers' understandings of dyslexia, reading difficulties, and instructional support.

The study is grounded in the view that teachers' understandings of dyslexia matter for early recognition and educational support, and that these understandings may vary across linguistic and educational contexts. A comparative international perspective is therefore needed, particularly when reading development and reading difficulty may be understood through different orthographic and instructional conditions

Research Methods

The study uses a cross-sectional survey design involving elementary school teachers across the participating countries. The survey framework is based on an existing instrument previously used in the United States to examine teachers' knowledge of dyslexia, common misconceptions, and perceptions of instructional needs (Author, 2021; Author, & Brown, 2019). For the current study, the instrument was collaboratively adapted

by the international research team for cross-national use. Local-language versions were prepared by the country teams and checked through back-translation procedures.

In addition to dyslexia-related knowledge and perception items, the survey includes demographic and professional background information relevant to teacher knowledge, including teaching experience and training. Surveys were administered online by the local research teams.

At the time of submission, preliminary data had been collected in Israel, South Korea, and the United States, and data collection in South Africa was expected to be completed in time for presentation. The study was expected to include approximately 150–200 teachers from each participating country. Because data collection and initial analyses were still in progress, the symposium emphasizes methodological coordination, country-level preliminary findings, and the emerging basis for later cross-national comparison.

Results and Discussion

Because data collection and initial analyses are still in progress, the symposium is organized around an opening presentation and four country-based papers. The opening presentation situates the study within the broader trajectory of the WERA International Research Network and briefly outlines the shared comparative design, the common survey framework, and the rationale for examining teachers' knowledge and perceptions of dyslexia across linguistically and orthographically different contexts. Rather than presenting final cross-national conclusions, the symposium is designed to share early country-level findings and to identify emerging themes for subsequent comparative analysis.

Introduction: The opening presentation explains how the current study grew out of the IRN's earlier cross-national work on teachers' communicative and instructional practices with linguistically diverse learners. It then introduces the literacy-focused extension represented in the present study and describes the comparative framework used to examine teachers' dyslexia-related knowledge and perceptions across the four participating countries.

Paper 1: Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions of Dyslexia among Primary School Teachers in Israel

The first paper reports preliminary findings from Israel. Focusing on elementary school teachers working in a Hebrew-language educational context, it examines teachers' dyslexia-related knowledge, areas of uncertainty, and perceptions of reading difficulties in relation to the linguistic and instructional conditions of Hebrew reading. In doing so, it adds evidence from a context that has received relatively limited attention in research on teachers' dyslexia-related knowledge.

Paper 2: Title: Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions of Dyslexia among Primary School Teachers in South Korea

The second paper reports preliminary findings from South Korea. It considers how elementary school teachers conceptualize dyslexia and reading difficulties within a distinct linguistic and writing-system context, and how these emerging patterns contribute to the developing comparative picture across countries.

Paper 3: Title: Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions of Dyslexia among Primary School Teachers in the United States

The third paper reports preliminary findings from the United States, where dyslexia has relatively strong visibility in educational discourse and teacher preparation, although misconceptions remain evident in practice. It focuses on teachers' knowledge of dyslexia, common misunderstandings, and perceptions of instructional support, and considers how these patterns contribute to the broader cross-national analysis.

Paper 4: Title: Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions of Dyslexia among Primary School Teachers in South Africa

The fourth paper reports preliminary findings from South Africa, adding evidence from a multilingual educational context in which language of instruction and linguistic diversity may influence how reading difficulties are recognized and interpreted. This paper extends the comparative scope of the symposium and contributes to the emerging international understanding of teachers' dyslexia-related knowledge and perceptions.

The symposium concludes with a cross-national discussion that brings together the main themes emerging across the country papers. This discussion considers points of convergence and divergence across linguistic, orthographic, and educational contexts, and identifies directions for the next stage of comparative analysis, collaborative interpretation, and future dissemination within the IRN.

References

- Author. (2021). Dyslexia knowledge, perceived preparedness, and professional development needs of in-service educators. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 71(3), 547–567.
- Author., & Brown, T. B. H. (2019). Early childhood educators' perceptions of dyslexia and ability to identify students at-risk. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 8(3), 228–235.