



# Literacy difficulties and dyslexia

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## Session overview

- Overview of key elements in the development of literacy skills
- Definitions of dyslexia
- An overview about the research related to literacy difficulties
- Information about the type of support schools put in place
- Strategies which can be used at home

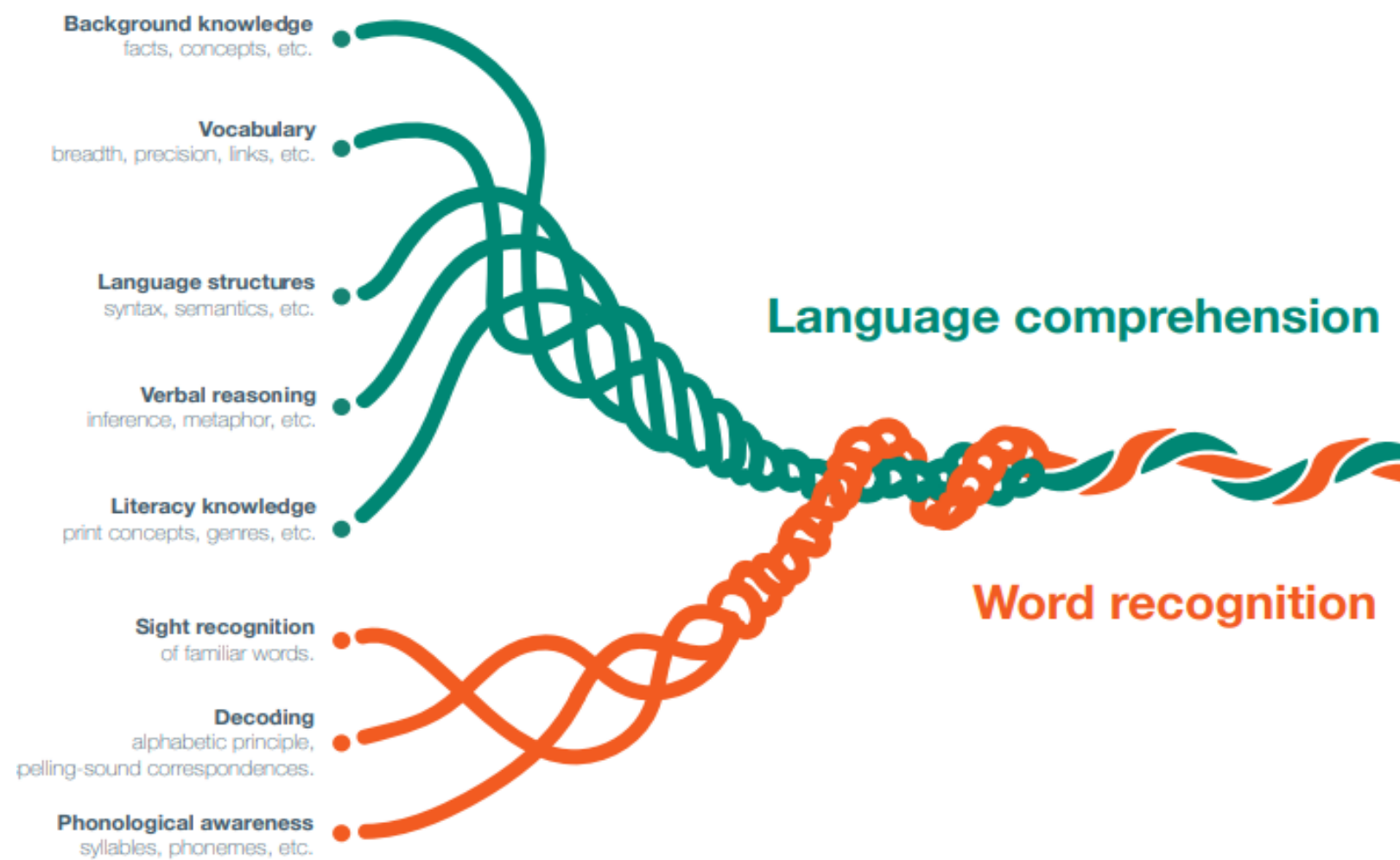
# Early literacy skills

- Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world
- First interactions with language and text provide the basis for literacy skill development
- Early literacy skills/pre-requisite skills are in development when children begin school
  - An interest in books and a motivation to read
  - A wide vocabulary (knowledge of words and their meaning)
  - Awareness of print (knowing that print conveys meaning and that in English words are written and read from left to right)
  - Phonological awareness (ability to hear individual sounds and put them together to make words, and hear a word and split it into individual sounds)

## Development of literacy skills

1. Whole word awareness of familiar words
  2. Vocabulary development in speech
  3. Song and rhyme
  4. Phonological awareness
  5. Decoding
  6. Increased sight word recognition
  7. Reading with fluency
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# Scarborough reading rope



# Literacy difficulties

- Difficulties will occur at varying points of development
- May be co-occurring with another area of need
- May be literacy specific
- Difficulties may be underpinned by some, or all of the following:
  - Phonological skills (phonemic awareness and phonic skill): the ability to hear sounds and put them together
  - Verbal memory: the ability to store, process and manipulate verbal information
  - Verbal processing speed: the ability to retrieve familiar words quickly and accurately
  - Visual processing speed: the ability to visually recognise familiar words, symbols or patterns quickly and accurately

# Phonics

- Synthetic phonics – sounds learned in isolation and blended
  - /c/a/t/
  - Part-to-whole approach
  - Letter by letter phonological decoding
  - Child learns to sound and blend sequential letter sounds
- Analytic phonics – sounds are not learned in isolation, but a phonic element is identified
  - How are these words alike? (*pat, park, push, pen*)
  - Whole-to-part approach
- Which pupils may benefit from analytic approaches over synthetic?

**Spontech phleebees dwing tweedily.**

Grumping est freeping pequeen verable  
fronchets sey wisf est feetle awar bree  
queets. Krepet creeteen avum crestent.





## Literacy difficulties and dyslexia

- The subject and labelling of dyslexia can be a contentious issue
- Different understandings, changes to definitions over time
- More important the focus is on assessment for intervention and being responsive to need

**It is important to note that regardless of whether or not a child or young person has been identified as having dyslexia, if literacy difficulties are present, they should have access to the appropriate support.**

## Rose report (2009)

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in **accurate and fluent word reading and spelling**.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the **range of intellectual abilities**. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are **no clear cut-off points**.
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexia difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to **well-founded intervention**.
- Studies report that many parents of children identified with dyslexia also have reading difficulties.

## BPS definition (1999)

“Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the “word” level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis of a staged process of assessment through teaching”



## Dyslexia and delayed development in reading

- Research would suggest that there isn't a difference in the profile of those who are labelled as dyslexic and those who aren't
- Learners will make the same mistakes when tested, and make progress across the same developmental trajectory.
- No difference in intervention; what works for one group, works for the other.
- Discrepancy model i.e. use of dyslexia for those with a high IQ has also been debunked.

## Assessment of dyslexia

- Dyslexia is identifiable as a developmental difficulty of language learning and cognition
- Close observation, assessment or pre and early reading activities is preferable, and more successful than universal screeners
- Dyslexia occurs across the **range of intellectual abilities**. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are **no clear cut-off points**”
- “It is now recognised that there is no sharp dividing line between having a learning difficulty such as dyslexia and not having it”
- Response to intervention is the key component to identification

## Does having a label of dyslexia help?

- “If you struggle to learn to read, it’s a massive threat to your identity”
- The label itself doesn’t impact on provision of intervention or additional resources in school.
- The dyslexia label serves a powerful psychological function.
- Can be detrimental in causing a ‘fixed’ view of literacy ability.



# How schools respond to literacy difficulties

## Universal support

- **Inclusive high quality teaching, differentiated for** individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEN.
- High quality systematic phonic work as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

## SEN Support

- **Small group evidence-based** intervention to reduce the gap and increase attainment to age expectations

## Targeted/specialist Support

- Time limited support tailored to an **individual pupil**.
- **Focused teaching activities** which tackle fundamental errors, misconceptions and gaps in knowledge or understanding that are preventing progress

# Quality first teaching

- Inclusive teaching techniques e.g., talking partners, peer support
- Effective differentiation of work - by task/by outcome/by material
- Limited copying off the board
- Various methods of recording encouraged e.g., mind mapping, ICT, drama, pictures, flowchart, oral presentations
- Chunking instructions and tasks into small parts
- Teaching memory strategies e.g., mnemonics, visualisation
- Providing brain breaks
- Multi-sensory teaching strategies
- Pre-teaching vocabulary
- Teach and support meta-cognitive strategies e.g., planning, review
- Scaffold writing through pre-writing activities, summarising, sharing, sentence starters



## Interventions

- 2018 EEF Project report looked at 38 literacy projects - 42% found no effect, or negative effects
- The most effective approach is differentiated learning in class + targeted early intervention
- Progress depends on the nature of the literacy difficulty.
- Huge evidence base now about 'what works'.
- Some people will have enduring literacy difficulties and learn coping strategies that suit them.

# ROSE REVIEW (2009) effective intervention for 'dyslexia'

- Personalised
- Highly structured
- Little and often
- Cumulative
- Frequent consolidation
- Encourage generalisation
- Phonics
  - Grapheme-phoneme correspondences & larger orthographic units (syllables, rimes)
- Phonological awareness
- Morphological awareness
- Encouraging reading for pleasure
- Support emotional well-being – resilience, motivation and perseverance

## Support at home – developing language

- A focus on developing oral language skills is especially important for the development of a range of reading and writing skills in this age group.
- Read books aloud and have conversations about them
- Read TO your child until you can read WITH them
- Explore and learn new words (develop expressive and receptive language skills)
- Develop reading comprehension skills - Speak about books and stories by asking questions to prompt your child to predict, summarise or make inference about what has/will happen. Ask them to make links between what they are reading and other things they know or have seen. See the [TRUST framework from the EEF](#)

## Support at home – reading

- Model fluency in reading through reading something first, and then having your child read it
- Encourage re-reading of their favourite books if this motivates them and increases their confidence
- Practice recognition of sight words (the words that occur most often)
- Practice blending – remind your child of the skills they learnt in KS1
- For longer words try syllable segmentation

## Support at home – spelling

- Practice oral segmentation
- Try to find ways that help them remember words they get stuck on e.g. making a mnemonic, highlighting the part of the word they find tricky, creating a picture or agreeing an action that reminds them of the word
- Create a list of words they forget and encourage them to refer to this when they get stuck
- Look at the start and end of words to identify common 'chunks'
- Go over the rules of spelling together, e.g. a 'q' is always followed by a 'u'. Ask your child's teacher for the rules they teach in class

Questions?

