



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AMONG  
SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA: A  
COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON READING DIFFICULTIES,  
EFFECTS AND STRATEGIES**

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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**LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AMONG SECONDARY  
STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON READING  
DIFFICULTIES, EFFECTS AND STRATEGIES**

**DAVINA IVY LYN ANAK DAVID**

**This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor  
of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science)**

**Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development**

**UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK (2022)**

The project entitled 'Learning English as a Second Language among secondary students with Dyslexia : Comprehensive study on reading difficulties, effect and strategies' was prepared by Davina Ivy Lyn Anak David and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science).

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|-------------------|
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## **ABSTRACT**

Reading is extremely important in our educational, economic, and social lives. Reading ability is highly valued and essential for socioeconomic development. It is the most important classroom skill since it can help students enhance their overall language ability. However, this situation resulted in reading difficulties among adolescents with dyslexia, especially those in secondary school. It gets worse when reading is applied to a second language, as students might lag in several reading components. Several research types have been carried out to identify the difficulties faced by adolescents with dyslexia in reading foreign languages. Some of the research also involves parents' and teachers' role toward dyslexia adolescents to help them improve in reading a foreign language, especially in English as a second language. The researcher also developed various strategies to encourage students to ensure that the parents and teachers can communicate with them suitable to their needs in the classroom, at home and their progress. Parents' and teachers' involvement in the development of adolescents with dyslexia can help improve the adolescents' self-concept and self-esteem, aside from helping parents and teachers to be more aware and further understand the needs of their students. The following is a comprehensive review compiling over 40 articles from previous studies which have been carried out by several researchers providing outcomes showing the difficulties faced by secondary school students with dyslexia, the effects, and strategies to improve their reading skills in English.

*Keywords* : reading difficulties, adolescents with dyslexia, secondary school, foreign language, English, parents and teachers.

## ABSTRAK

Membaca amatlah penting dalam pendidikan, ekonomi, dan sosial kita. Kemahiran membaca sangat berharga dan penting untuk pembangunan sosioekonomi. Ia merupakan kemahiran dalam kelas yang paling penting kerana ia boleh membantu pelajar meningkatkan keupayaan keseluruhan bahasa mereka. Namun, keadaan ini mengakibatkan masalah membaca di kalangan remaja disleksia terutamanya di sekolah menengah. Ia menjadi lebih teruk apabila membaca digunakan pada bahasa kedua, kerana pelajar mungkin ketinggalan dalam beberapa komponen bacaan. Beberapa jenis kajian telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti kesukaran yang dihadapi oleh remaja disleksia dalam membaca bahasa asing. Beberapa kajian juga melibatkan peranan ibu bapa dan guru terhadap remaja disleksia untuk membantu mereka meningkatkan kemahiran membaca bahasa asing terutamanya dalam bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Pengkaji juga telah membangunkan pelbagai strategi untuk memasukkan galakan dalam kalangan pelajar bagi memastikan ibu bapa dan guru dapat berkomunikasi dengan mereka sesuai dengan keperluan mereka di dalam kelas, rumah dan kemajuan mereka. Penglibatan ibu bapa dan guru dalam pembangunan remaja disleksia dapat membantu meningkatkan konsep sendiri dan harga diri remaja, selain membantu ibu bapa dan guru untuk lebih sedar dan lebih memahami keperluan pelajar mereka. Berikut adalah ulasan komprehensif yang menyusun lebih 40 artikel daripada kajian lepas yang telah dijalankan oleh beberapa penyelidik dalam memberikan hasil yang menunjukkan kesukaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar sekolah menengah disleksia, kesan dan strategi untuk meningkatkan kemahiran membaca mereka dalam bahasa Inggeris.

*Kata kunci* : masalah membaca, remaja disleksia, sekolah menengah, bahasa asing, bahasa Inggeris, ibu bapa dan guru.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reading is a mandatory skill to function in today's society, and it is an activity that students and teachers must do all the time in school. In any topic at school, students can read a variety of texts for varied purposes. As a result, it is the activities that people engage in regularly in various ways, such as reading written articles on their smartphones, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers. English has become essential for pupils to improve their English proficiency in today's schooling. Reading a text in a foreign language such as English is not the same as reading in one's native tongue. English second language readers may have had a lot of reading experience in their native tongue. It is critical to comprehend the material by stating that reading entails comprehension (Stauffer, 1969). One of the most significant factors for English second language learners is the ability to comprehend difficulties.

On the other hand, reading the English language could be problematic for those with reading disabilities such as dyslexia. Dyslexia is a developmental and learning disorder that impairs an individual's ability to read and write. They have learned to read correctly but have lost this skill due to brain injury. According to the widely accepted explanation of dyslexia, the main reasons for reading difficulties are problems with phonological coding and the persistence of poor phonological abilities. Connecting spoken and written words are challenging due to phonological decoding issues. Therefore, other phonological problems appear to constitute the core dyslexia impairment (Elbro 2004; Goswami 2002; Samuelsson, Herkner and Lundberg 2003; Vellutino et al. 2004).

In Miller et al. (2006), they used adults to investigate the double-deficit hypothesis of dyslexia. According to theory, adults with both rapid naming and

phonological awareness problems have more severe dyslexia than individuals with only one of these significant disabilities. Higher reading achievement was connected to better phonological awareness and rapid fluent naming; these abilities are good predictors of adult reading fluency. Miller et al. (2006) claim that adults have learned to compensate. They emphasize the importance of assessing adults' reading fluency since it exposes long-term deficiencies. Miller et al. (2006) discovered that in a reading comprehension study, listening comprehension, working memory, IQ, vocabulary, and general knowledge were more important. Dyslexia, on the other hand, according to Lehto (2006), is not the same as reading comprehension, even though the two are often confused.

Developmental dyslexia refers to the problems associated with learning to read. Adolescents with dyslexia may struggle with literacy skills, particularly when reading English as a second language. They may fall behind in several reading skills, including accuracy, comprehension, and speed. Lagging is a cognitive difficulty associated with the process of reading in a foreign language (Alsamadani, 2008). They can also experience much pain and stress as if their peers mentally abuse them at school because they have a learning disability.

According to Smith et al. (2004), reading and writing problems affect learning and career development when they are encountered daily. As a result, intelligent individuals with dyslexia may be unable to study at the level they are capable of or desire or their studies may fall short of the standards for participation in the knowledge society, compromising their possibilities for lifelong learning. According to sociocultural theory, what is valued in a person's society and culture shapes their sense of self (Kozulin, 2003). People with dyslexia have a problem because literacy skills are highly prized in today's culture and are crucial to one's self-esteem.

Compared to their typically succeeding counterparts, people with dyslexia appear to have a weaker academic self-concept than their overall self-concept (Zelege, 2004). Students with reading and writing difficulties are more prone to develop social and emotional problems, including mental concerns, due to dyslexia's impact on self-esteem. Adult students having difficulty learning may have low self-esteem and anxiety (Price and Gale 2006). As a result, individuals may have social and emotional problems and academic challenges (Reis, 2005).

Nevertheless, today's students are attempting to solve their reading challenges. According to Davoudi and Yousefi (2015), reading difficulties and problems that occur in EFL learners are classified as a problem in grammatical knowledge and poor reading methods, which are necessary to help students lessen the difficulties, as well as problems in vocabulary knowledge and background information (Samad, Jannah & Fitriani, 2017). As a result, parents and teachers should work together to develop solutions to assist people with dyslexia in overcoming their difficulties in learning English. According to Hung and Ngan (2015), reading is an essential skill for improving vocabulary, writing, fluency, and speaking. It would assist students in mastering their target language, such as English, which is vital in secondary school.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This study examines the reading difficulties in English as a second language faced by adolescents with dyslexia. Specifically, this study addresses the following objectives :

- i. The reading difficulties faced by secondary students with dyslexia in learning English as a second language.
- ii. The effect of reading difficulties in English on secondary students with dyslexia.
- iii. The strategies to help students with dyslexia in learning English.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research question involved in this study are :

- i. What are the difficulties that secondary students with dyslexia face in learning English as a second language?
- ii. What is the effect of reading difficulties in English on secondary students with dyslexia?
- iii. What are the strategies to help students to improve their reading difficulties in learning English?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **METHOD**

The article materials included in this research are found using the most popular search engine, which is Google Scholar, PubMed, ERIC, SagePub, Springer and ScienceDirect. Many articles are related appeared by using the keyword 'students with dyslexia', 'secondary student', 'English as a second language', 'learning English', 'second language', 'effect on dyslexia,' reading difficulties', 'developmental dyslexia', 'reading skill development', 'strategies for dyslexia', 'parents and teachers role', 'emotional impact', 'psychosocial', 'self-esteem' and 'social problem'. Findings from these articles are published between 2000 and 2022. The information from the selected articles will be used to identify additional studies, and the research related to the topic will be chosen as material.

**Table 1: Literature search for reading difficulties faced by secondary students with dyslexia in learning English as a second language.**

| <b>Difficulties</b>     | <b>Article</b>           | <b>Methodology</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Age</b>                | <b>Findings</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phonological processing | Łockiewicz et al. (2016) | Experimental       | 98       | 17                        | Students with dyslexia made more phonological and orthographic errors than controls in a single second language word spelling test.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                         | Łockiewicz et al. (2019) | Experimental       | 141      | Secondary school students | The native language in phonological processing skills predicted that participants with dyslexia had less developed English Foreign Language (EFL) reading skills than their peers without dyslexia.                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                         | Navas et al. (2014)      | Systematic review  |          | All                       | Across a wide range of spoken languages and writing systems, phonological processing validly explains dyslexia symptoms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                         | Palladino et al. (2016)  | Exploratory        | 23       | 13                        | This study adds to the expanding body of evidence that orthography influences the link between phonological skill and reading.<br>Error type analysis revealed that children with dyslexia create mainly phonological-type errors, which certainly greater than other groups. Students with dyslexia performed differently when phonological signals and syllable position |



|                           |                   |     |                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           |                   |     |                                         | were present.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Snowling (2001)           | Literature Review | All |                                         | The student with dyslexia phonological impairments is a manifestation of a language disability. The findings of this study support the phonological deficit theory and confirm that children who come to reading with poorly specified phonological representations experience reading difficulties. Although adolescents with dyslexia have a smaller reading deficit in ESL, they frequently have severe reading and spelling deficits in L2. |
| Van et al. (2017)         | Causal Study      | 81  | 14                                      | Students scored badly in tests that required retrieval of the lexical orthographic form and the link between the lexical form and its semantic correspondence, for which responses could be delivered without phonological mediation.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Commissaire et al. (2022) | Experimental      | 50  | 11-15                                   | In English orthography, vowels are part of the alphabet and appear as letters; however, in Persian orthography, short vowelization is not part of the alphabet. This could be the source of the difficulty Persian dyslexics have spelling English words.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Ghazaleh (2011)           | Experimental      |     | 11-14                                   | Poor readers outperformed their controls in orthographic knowledge and semantic fluency. Less transparent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Morfidi et al. (2007)     | Comparative       | 52  | 8 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup> grade |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Orthography

orthography, such as English, puts a high demand on learning mechanisms, which are likewise required to acquire more transparent orthography.

The list of English words provided just a few occurrences of irregular words that would show the specificity of English orthography. These words appeared to cause significant difficulty for all children, particularly the dyslexia group.

Orthographic pattern recognition accuracy was lower in those with dyslexia compared to those without dyslexia.

In terms of total accuracy, English and German dyslexics differed. Failure to detect students with dyslexia using reading level controls, on the other hand, could be attributable to the fact that English orthography allows for more reading errors than German orthography.

Dyslexia readers were consistently slower than non-dyslexia readers. The continuous RAN lists discriminate between reading groups because it benefit non-dyslexia readers while considerably impairing dyslexia readers.

Longer response times in English-speaking children due to less reading experience results in less exposure to various

Palladino et al. (2013) 46 12 - 13 Descriptive

Tong & McBride (2017) 25 9-13 Qualitative

Ziegler et al. (2003) 49 9-13 Comparative

Rapid automatized naming (RAN) 42 Adolescents Experimental

Katzir et al. (2004) 60 School student Cross-linguistic

written word forms for English children who struggle with decoding. Naming speed was an essential indicator for those in the early stages of word recognition.

The reading-disabled adolescents in RAN performed much worse than the normal readers. As a result, RAN is a more significant predictor of reading progress than in inconsistent orthographies.

Verbal working memory tasks involve some aspect of phonological processing, an area of weakness. Dyslexia individuals struggle with maintaining and manipulating information as that problem is heightened when the stimuli involve phonological processing.

Verbal working memory was a major predictor of connected-text oral reading fluency in this sample of dyslexic adolescents. It provided unique explanatory power beyond word reading and verbal language skills.

Layes et al. (2017) Fundamental 40 7<sup>th</sup> grade

Verbal working memory Alloway et al. (2014) Feasibility 40 17–26

Rose & Rouhani (2012) Applied 77 13–17

**Table 2: Literature search for the effect of reading difficulties in English on secondary students with dyslexia.**

| <b>Article</b>        | <b>Methodology</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Findings</b>                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boyes et al. (2020)   | Exploratory        | 6-17       | Self-esteem, bullying victimisation, emotion control, social skills, and peer problems are significant correlations between externalising and internalising problems.                                  |
| De Lima et al. (2020) | Comparative        | 7-14       | The dyslexia group had higher averages for anxiety, depression, withdrawal, rule-breaking behaviours, aggressiveness, problems interacting with peers at school, and attentional and thought issues.   |
| Crombie (2000)        | Descriptive        | 12 - 16    | Students with dyslexia experienced significant failure throughout their studies, resulting in a loss of motivation and decreased in self-esteem.                                                       |
| Eissa (2010)          | Qualitative        | 12 - 18    | Dyslexia has negatively influenced adolescents' self-esteem and caused them to feel different from others. As a result, those with low reading skills had higher rates of depression and anxiety.      |
| Garcia (2009)         | Explanatory        | 13 and 16  | Students with poor self-esteem are typically unable to articulate or convey their actual feelings regarding tough situations. They frequently cope by constantly attempting to hide their impairments. |
| Glazzard (2010)       | Exploratory Study  | 14 - 15    | Some students make specific comparisons, such as reading aloud in class, spelling, and writing, while others make broad comparisons and find their                                                     |

|                           |                   |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ingesson (2007)           | Causal study      | 7 - 19  | work more complex than their peers. These comparisons led to emotions of stupidity, disappointment, and isolation. It appears to be the worst for children with dyslexia in terms of well-being and self-esteem. They avoid academic subjects and prefer activities that do not require them to deal with reading and writing. |
| Humphrey (2002)           | Empirical         | 8 - 15  | The difficulties children with dyslexia encounter negatively affect their self-development, including their self-concept and self-esteem.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Leitão et al. (2017)      | Qualitative       | 10 – 17 | Participants believed they were unintelligent and were bullied. As a result, it impacts their mental health, causing unhappiness, frustration, disappointment, annoyance, and stress. They also had negative experiences with teachers due to a lack of understanding.                                                         |
| Livingston et al. (2018)  | Literature Review | All     | Individuals with dyslexia have feelings of failure, leads to a slew of negative effects such as problems with self-esteem, social interactions, behaviour, motivation, and emotional well-being.                                                                                                                               |
| Rapus-Pavel et al. (2018) | Qualitative       | 4       | Adolescents' homework stress was usually triggered by their moms' high expectations, which the adolescents did not want to disappoint by receiving a poor grade.                                                                                                                                                               |
| Rimkute et al. (2014)     | Longitudinal      | 13 - 16 | Parents of dyslexia students had lower expectations for their children's future schooling, which predicted their children's educational expectations. The students believe they have been characterized as lazy and unintelligent.                                                                                             |

**Table 3: Literature search for strategies to help students with dyslexia in learning English.**

| <b>Article</b>                   | <b>Methodology</b> | <b>Focus Group</b> | <b>Findings</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Crombie (2000)                   | Descriptive        | Teachers           | Modern language teachers must engage with special needs staff to develop the most effective solutions.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Erkan et al. (2012)              | Case study         | Teacher            | More focus is needed on effective teaching methods and techniques for dealing with students with dyslexia.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Garcia (2009)                    | Explanatory        | Teachers           | Intervention programmes that address self-esteem and encourage treating the student holistically, rather than just a reading and spelling deficit, have a unique opportunity to demonstrate to students with dyslexia that they each have something to excel at.                                              |
| Hosain (2018)                    | Mixed method       | Teachers           | The syllabus and curriculum should be well-modified to improve the effectiveness of English teaching. Extra time should be set aside for reading, writing, and speaking, and additional classes should be offered at school to help children improve their fundamental understanding of the English language. |
| Kormos, Csizer, & Sarkadi (2009) | Descriptive        | Teachers           | Adapting assessment processes to the nature of the learner's disability is significant in students' perspectives because it can help students reach their full potential, which decreases anxiety and improves attitudes toward                                                                               |

|                           |                   |                     |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           |                   |                     |  | language learning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Livingston et al. (2018)  | Literature Review | General             |  | More support systems from teachers and interventions for dyslexia and their families are required to address and lessen the emotional effects on dyslexia.                                                                                                                                                   |
| Lyngnes et al. (2022)     | Exploratory       | Teacher             |  | Teachers must understand the students' learning difficulties, provide alternative tasks, and know how to use digital teaching aids to assist students with dyslexia.                                                                                                                                         |
| Rapus-Pavel et al. (2018) | Qualitative       | Parents<br>Teachers |  | Teachers should take a more active role in lowering teenage stress, and parents, especially mothers, should provide additional support to help adolescents with dyslexia manage homework.                                                                                                                    |
| Rontou (2012)             | Causal            | Teacher             |  | Teachers could give students extra time in class. This finding suggests that foreign language teachers should consider providing students with dyslexia more time to answer questions and complete exercises.                                                                                                |
| Singer (2008)             | Qualitative       | Teacher<br>Parent   |  | Teachers' words and thoughts can help pupils develop their adaptive self-talk to help them persevere in the face of failure. Teachers should cooperate with parents since parents are the primary source of academic assistance and emotional support for students who experience repeated academic failure. |

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Overview**

In any education setting, many intelligent and capable children face specific learning difficulties in the presence of other symptoms such as incoordination, left-right confusion, or poor sequencing (Esra et al., 2012). In reality, children have dyslexia, which is the most common learning disability and lasts throughout life. In today's globalized and more unified world, English language learning has become an increasingly important aspect of education in every country. For most students, learning English is an enjoyable and satisfying experience. However, for students with learning problems, such as dyslexia, it can be an extremely unpleasant and humiliating experience, which is the polar opposite of what is intended because they may struggle to read English (Ghazaleh, E. B, 2011). The difficulties are typically caused by a phonological component of language loss, frequently unexpected in connection to other cognitive skills and the provision of adequate classroom education (Lyon et al., 2003).

Furthermore, developmental dyslexia may have a significant impact on the individual. Anger, stress, discomfort, guilt, loneliness, insecurity, anxiety, and emotional and social issues are also possible (Lockiewicz, Bogdanowicz, & Bogdanowicz, 2014). Therefore, parents and teachers play an important role in assisting adolescents in improving their learning process. The literature provides some insight into the reading difficulties that secondary students face in learning English as a second language among adolescents with dyslexia.