



Development of a Test for Early Detection of English Learning Difficulties

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Symposium format:

- **Multimodal symposium**

Symposium mode:

- **Hybrid**

Sub-themes:

- **LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS:** autonomy, strategies, young, old, non-instructed, individual factors or differences, emotion

Abstract:

When teaching/learning English, it is important to analyze why learners have difficulties in reading and writing in ESL/EFL from a cognitive and linguistic perspective. Early identification of learners' problems in the early stages is necessary to achieve instruction responsive to learner diversity.

More than 10% of the population is said to have dyslexia, and acquisition of the early literacy skills is the most challenging in ESL/EFL circumstances. In Japan, the number of people with reading and writing difficulties is very small (2-3%) in their native language. However, in English learning, many Japanese learners fail in the word reading and writing stages. It has become clear that the Japanese phonological system significantly impacts English learning. We would like to discuss and share the methodology and findings in this symposium. We look forward to presentations on learners' literacy development during the alphabet learning and English vocabulary reading and writing stages and the influence of the native language.

Argument:

Dyslexia is a serious problem not only for native English speakers but also for learners of English, and Sparks (1993), in his Linguistic Coding differences hypothesis, points out that L2 learning problems are based on difficulties with the native language and conducts research on dyslexia. Dyslexia, especially in English, is known to cause reading and writing difficulties in the early stages of reading and writing. Wydell and Butterworth's (1999) granularity and transparency hypothesis describe a case of a bilingual boy who had no dyslexia in Japanese but had difficulty reading and writing only in English. In EFL and ESL, if the influence of the learner's native language is not taken into account, instructional strategies that work for native speakers of one language may be inappropriate for nonnative speakers of another language. In this symposium, we would like to discuss early detection of stumbling in the literacy acquisition stage, how to deal with students with English learning difficulties, and specific teaching methods for non-native speakers of English.



The current situation and background of learning difficulties in English and attempts to develop tests for early detection of English dyslexia in Japan will be discussed first. Murata developed a test (URAWSS-English) to determine whether words that fail to read are due to unlearning or cognitive characteristics. The URAWSS-English test features a phonetic representation of the word in katakana for students who cannot spell the correct English spelling. Since katakana is a syllabic character, it cannot correctly represent the alphabetic words, but it is possible to guess whether the misspelling is due to a lack of knowledge or phonemic weaknesses. Murata's study found that 11 of 154 eligible junior high school students may have learning disabilities (Murata, 2016). In 2020, Sakai and Tsuchiya organized "learning stumbles" and "likely associated factors" and developed a test to identify children with learning disabilities who have difficulty hearing English. The test was administered to 957 children. The test was administered to 957 children and found particular words that might identify children with auditory problems. Based on these studies, Murakami et al. attempt to develop an English Learning Difficulty Check Test for Japanese elementary school students beginning in 2019 to predict issues in the early stages of reading comprehension in Japanese elementary schools. Test content includes vocabulary, phonological awareness, and alphabet writing. Analysis of the test is ongoing but has shown that vocabulary challenges are mostly related to phonemic decomposition and lowercase letter dictation. Interviews with teachers are also underway to determine the extent to which the test results accurately represent the reality of the students.

English dyslexia is not just an English problem, but learners' native language influence should be more accounted for. We welcome researchers who wish to present on the early identification of learner language difficulties related to dyslexia or test developments.

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