

Reading difficulties

In every classroom in every country we can recognize children who struggle to master the reading skill. Some of these children gradually overcome their initial difficulty and by practicing acquire functional literacy. But many of these children continue to encounter reading difficulties throughout their childhood and some of them struggle with reading still in adulthood.

The general term “reading difficulty” is often employed where reference is made to broad group of different types of reading problem – [Read more](#). Children who have severe problems in single-word reading (decoding) and/or reading fluency of text are most often diagnosed to have “dyslexia” or “reading disability”.

Why children struggle in reading in different countries? The reasons could be very different in different orthographies and in developing and developed countries, because of the developmental level of the educational system and teacher training.

The orthographic structure of each language is important in learning to read. In transparent orthographies like in Bantu-languages there is a regular connection between letters and sounds. Children in transparent orthographies usually learn to decode accurately and the reading difficulty tends to focus on reading fluency in sense that the skill does not automatize or stays slow. In contrast highly complex orthographies like in English there is complexities of letter-sound connections – [Read more](#). Therefore in these languages children have problems also already in reading accuracy because of the complexity of letter-sound connections.

Why some children learn to read quite easily and some struggle with learning to read? Research done in different countries has identified many environmental and individual factors that may affect learning to read.

Environmental factors can be e.g.:

- parental literacy – [Read more](#)
- Availability of books and reading materials at home – [Read more](#)
- inadequate schooling – [Read more](#)
- level of teacher training – [Read more](#)
- quality of teacher practices (*linkki M-K*)
- reading instruction used in the classroom ~~Read more (7)~~ (*tähän linkki M-K:n teksteihin*)

Individual child related factors could be e.g.:

- genetic factors
- brain-based factors
- cognitive factors
- motivational factors (*linkki xx*)

We know that genetic factors affect to brain development during the pregnancy and how neural networks that are involved in reading and learning to read are developing in the brain – [Read more](#)

The most important cognitive functions are:

- phonological processing – [Read more](#)
- rapid automatized naming (rapid and automatic retrieval of verbal material from the long-term memory RAN) – [Read more](#)
- short-term and working memory – [Read more](#)

Identification of reading difficulties (Read more) (*link assessment, letter knowledge etc.*)

If we compare developed countries (with developed educational

system, high quality of teacher training, plenty of reading material at home etc.) and developing countries (problems in educational system, low quality of teacher training, no reading materials at home etc.) we can find differences concerning the reasons behind reading difficulties. For example if we select the poorest readers from the classrooms, the reasons behind reading difficulties can be very different in these countries – [Read more](#).

Key literature

[Aro, T. & Ahonen, T \(eds.\) \(2011\) Assessment of Learning disabilities: Cooperation between Teachers, Psychologists and parents. African edition.](#) University of Turku and Niilo Mäki Institute, Jyväskylä, Finland.

Elliot, J.G. & Grigorenko, E.L. (2014). The Dyslexia Debate. Cambridge University press.