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# Responding to Reading Difficulties: An Exploration from Different Professional Perspectives

Unlu, Ezgi

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University of Plymouth

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH**

**Responding to Reading Difficulties: An Exploration from  
Different Professional Perspectives**

by

**Ezgi Unlu**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Society and Culture

**September 2023**

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## **Author's Declaration**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other university award without the prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

The work submitted for this research degree at Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment. This research was supported by a scholarship from the Republic of Turkiye's Ministry of National Education.

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A square box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be 'E. Unlu'.

Signed: Ezgi UNLU

Date: 18/09/2023

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Responding to Reading Difficulties: An Exploration from Different Professional Perspectives**

**Ezgi Unlu**

The study was designed to explore educators' perspectives on reading difficulties and their choice of teaching strategies for students with reading difficulties. The study aimed to understand how educators form their professional perspectives on reading difficulties, how this relates to their understanding of the concept of 'dyslexia' and how this informs their teaching methods. Furthermore, the study has explored the extent to which these chosen teaching strategies are inclusive and meet the needs of all students. A qualitative case study was used to generate data to address the research questions and achieve the aims of this study. Data were generated from semi-structured interviews with thirteen educators from different contexts and career stages, classroom observations in two primary schools in England, and a dyslexia training session online.

Thematic data analysis was used to interpret the data and identify themes related to the educators' understanding of the reading difficulty and pedagogy for students with reading difficulty (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke's six steps were followed for analysing the data. Furthermore, multi-layer analysis (Robbins, 2007) was used to incorporate findings from three aspects of my theoretical framework: Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis, Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom ethnography, and models of disability.

My study suggests that teachers' understanding of reading difficulties is influenced by different models of disability at different levels of their thinking, which then also influences their choice of teaching strategies to respond to reading difficulties. My study findings also suggest that students with reading difficulties are not given enough opportunities to voice their needs and feelings, and it is recommended that spaces be provided for individuals to reflect and for all stakeholders to talk and share their reflections. In addition, my study recommends that student teachers should be prepared for working with students who have reading difficulties in their future classrooms by developing an understanding and knowledge of inclusive pedagogy and how this relates to teaching children how to read. This can also be extended to teachers who are currently working in schools to develop a better understanding of how to support all children to learn to read.

## **Dedication**

To the souls of my family members and esteemed teachers Nejdet Aykan, Mustafa Yeşil, and Fazlı Doğan, who contributed to the education of countless pupils during their teaching careers.

To my family and dear friends who wished me good luck and who have been a source of motivation throughout this journey.



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## **List of abbreviations**

**GRC** = Guidance and Research Centre

**IPAA** = Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action

**NELI** = Nuffield Early Language Intervention

**PGCE** = Postgraduate Certificate in Education

**PiXL** = Partners in Excellence

**QTS** = Qualified Teacher Status

**SEN** = Special Educational Needs

**SENCO** = Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

**SENDCO** = Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator

**TA** = Teaching Assistant

**UDL** = Universal Design for Learning

**UNESCO** = The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation





## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Research background**

UNESCO has defined reading as ‘the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning that enables individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in the community and wider society’ (UNESCO, 2005, p.21).

According to the Department for Education (DfE), reading is a crucial component of schooling, and for students to succeed, reading and writing skills are essential (DfE, 2022). However, some children have difficulty learning to read, and a subset of these children are classified as students with dyslexia. The Rose Report (2009, p.9) defined dyslexia as ‘a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling’. Schools sometimes struggle to meet the needs of students with dyslexia; this can lead to students’ academic failure in school, and they can also develop social and emotional problems such as low self-esteem, frustration, and depression (Katz, 2001). The provisions of the Salamanca Agreement (1994) suggest that students with special educational needs (SEN) be included in general school education. The term ‘special educational needs’ as used in this framework encompasses all school-age children who have some form of impairment or learning difficulty, including children with dyslexia or poor reading. According to the Salamanca framework, ‘schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions’ (1994, p.4). Schools should therefore explore ways to educate all children, including those with significant difficulties and disabilities. This gives rise to the notion of inclusive education, which means that all children receive equal opportunities to learn and be educated in the same classroom as their peers (UNESCO, 2020).

Educators have an important role to play in the growth of inclusion. Teachers are responsible for adapting the curriculum and classroom learning environment to make students feel more included and have all their educational needs met in the classroom (Forlin, 2004). However, students who have special needs sometimes face exclusion, even though they are physically in the classroom; due to individualised and tailored educational programmes, they might not attend the same learning activities as the others (Hayes and Bulat, 2017). To address this problem, an inclusive pedagogical approach has been developed so that students who require additional support receive it without feeling different from their peers (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian, 2015).

## **1.2 Perspectives on reading difficulties**

Due to different perspectives on reading difficulties (Harmey, 2020), the relationship between dyslexia and poor reading is uncertain. Dyslexia can be defined as a specific learning difficulty that affects reading (Fawcett and Nicolson, 2017). In other words, dyslexia is characterised by problems in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and the velocity of verbal processing. It happens across a variety of intellectual abilities; while ‘co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration, and personal organisation, these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia’ (Rose, p.10). Each feature can also be observed in readers who are not labelled with dyslexia (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014). This includes being unable to read passages fluently, pronounce phrases correctly, and comprehend a text's context while reading (Hulme and Snowling, 2016). To address these problems, some researchers have recommended adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of all poor readers because it is well-known that many of the educational approaches recommended for dyslexia contribute to improvements in the reading of all readers (Elliot and Gibbs, 2020).

According to Elliott and Grigorenko (2014), scientific evidence to distinguish between a student with dyslexia and a poor reader without dyslexia is insufficient. They claim that the dyslexia label would only be used to identify some of the poor readers who do not seem to be making enough progress over time, despite receiving individualised, high-quality teaching in which different pedagogical approaches are used to engage, motivate, and challenge learners. However, only some of these poor readers receive extra support, while a great majority of others do not obtain the additional help they require. Elliot and Gibbs (2020) suggest that if schools were required to identify and assist all poor readers, and if teachers and future teachers received the necessary guidance and training, significant progress towards improving reading levels might be accomplished for all children.

In this research, I prefer using terms such as ‘students with dyslexia, reading difficulties, or poor reading’ as ‘people-first language’ is the most universally acceptable way to refer to people with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities also uses this form of language. This language puts ‘people’ before the ‘disability’ and places the focus on a person rather than the disability (United Nations, 2019). In addition, I use the term ‘reading difficulty’ to cover both dyslexia and poor reading, as it can refer to both.

### **1.3 Motivation**

This thesis is written from my position as a SEN teacher for almost ten years in public school settings in Turkiye. From my working experience, students with poor reading who were mostly considered dyslexic faced difficulties in having their educational needs met in mainstream schools. For example, when I was working at an SEN school, I had an 11-year-old pupil who had a learning difficulty, and he improved his reading, writing, and mathematics skills over time by receiving effective teaching methods and

being in a supportive environment. His family and educators decided to include him in a regular classroom at a mainstream school due to his progress. However, he returned to my class a year later because being included in a mainstream class did not work for him. Problems with the student's inclusion in the classroom included a lack of collaboration between the classroom teacher and other staff, providing an effective learning environment for him, and other students and their families not including him in social activities. Therefore, he felt unhappy and excluded because this environment did not allow him to be successful. This experience contributed to the gradual development of my understanding that students labelled with dyslexia and other students with reading and writing difficulties are not distinctly different because, regardless of their diagnoses or difficulties, if children do not get appropriate teaching, they will likely be unsuccessful in the classroom. Therefore, when I was offered a scholarship by the Turkish government to study abroad for a master's degree and a PhD on dyslexia, I decided to explore inclusive pedagogy for these students in primary schools in the UK context.

In my doctoral study, I aimed to explore British primary school teachers' perspectives on inclusive teaching strategies for dyslexia or poor reading. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions that began in March 2020 (I will go into further detail about this in Chapter 5), it became difficult to reach schools and teachers; hence, I searched for alternative ways of data collection, and this provided a diverse group of participants. This diverse group with different educational and cultural backgrounds provided multiple perspectives on poor reading. Although this was not my original intention, as a researcher who adopts a social constructionist perspective (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), I believe it is important to consider how individuals' perspectives on complex phenomena like learning to read are shaped by social context.

My study explores the perspectives of these different individuals' understanding of teaching strategies for children experiencing difficulties with reading and how the social context, interactions with other educators, their training and their experience with children shape their perspectives on teaching.

#### **1.4 Comparing classrooms**

Joseph Tobin is an anthropologist and educational researcher who does cross-cultural studies to understand how culture influences educational practice in schools. In his research, he examined preschool practices in three cultures: Japan, China, and the USA. He conducted interviews and collected observational data by using video. According to his study, teachers in three different cultures viewed and understood activities from their cultural perspectives. Sometimes they found the actions strange; however, when teachers were asked about the meaning or reasoning behind what was unusual to them behind the behaviour, they gained an understanding of different cultures' activities. Tobin described this as 'mak[ing] the strange familiar' (Tobin, 1999, p.124). On the other hand, looking at what happens differently in another culture can make what happens in their context seem strange, which Tobin describes as 'mak[ing] the familiar strange' (p.124). This can also lead teachers to question their accepted cultural beliefs and behaviours, which can also be described as questioning behaviours that are taken for granted.

As a Turkish researcher looking at practice in UK classrooms, I found myself adopting elements of Tobin's comparative classroom ethnography as a methodological framework for my study. Although my study does not directly compare UK and Turkish classrooms or educational activities, as a Turkish teacher and researcher conducting research in the UK education context, I brought an understanding of my own culture and fresh eyes to UK educational practices. I also included Turkish participants from

my cultural educational practice in my study. Therefore, as an outside researcher, interviewing and observing British educators in UK schools (an unfamiliar context) and learning about their educational practices helped me to ‘make the strange familiar’ (Tobin, 1999, p.124). On the other hand, hearing about teaching practices from Turkiye, my educational context, while studying practice in the UK made familiar practices seem strange.

### **1.5 Learning in sociocultural contexts**

According to Vygotsky (1978), who originated sociocultural theory, social interaction is critical in the development of learning. People learn by interacting socially and culturally with others in their social context. For example, Tobin (1999) explores how culture in different social contexts impacts responses to behaviour. Similarly, Barbara Rogoff has contributed ways to help understand how culture influences our thinking by focusing on how learning happens through interactions between the person and society. Rogoff *et al.* (2018) emphasise a wide sociocultural-historical practice approach that understands the foundation of children’s lived experiences and maintains that learning takes place as a result of children’s involvement in the actions and events of their cultural communities. This is important because, according to perspectives grounded in participation or social practice theory, cultural norms are the inherited practices, beliefs, and values of a group’s members across time (Rogoff, 2003).

Rogoff’s sociocultural theory considers children’s learning in ‘three planes of analysis, relating to community, interpersonal, and personal processes. It refers to three levels of analysis for learning processes: apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation’ (Rogoff, 1995, p.139). In my study, I have adopted a sociocultural approach that involves these three planes to explore educators’ understanding of teaching strategies for children with reading difficulties. Considering these three



processes of learning, i.e., community or institutional (apprenticeship), interpersonal (guided participation), and personal (participatory appropriation), has helped me to understand how educators in different social and cultural contexts learn to teach children with reading difficulties.

### **1.5.1 Apprenticeship**

Rogoff stated that ‘in apprenticeship, newcomers to a community of practice advance their skills and understanding through participation with others in culturally organised activities’ (1995, p.143). Thinking of learning as an apprenticeship ‘examines the institutional structures and cultural technologies of intellectual activity’ (Rogoff, 1995 p.143). Considering this institutional process of learning in the ‘culturally organised activities’ of primary schools, educators in my study participated in initial teacher training from educational institutions and then received in-service training from SENCOs or visiting experts. Initial teacher education students are newcomers to the field of education; they gain their primary knowledge and understanding of teaching through lectures in their courses. Similarly, new and experienced teachers in the schools build their knowledge of teaching through in-service training. These training experiences can influence their choice of teaching strategies for supporting students including students with dyslexia or poor reading.

My own experiences as a new student teacher were similar in that I learned about concepts of special education and how to teach students with SEN during my university course. My lessons included teaching maths, reading, and writing, and inclusive education. After graduation, I started my career as an SEN teacher in a special education school. I believe that meeting with experts and attending in-service training provided by the school also contributed to my knowledge of teaching.

### **1.5.2 Guided participation**

Guided participation ‘is the term that is applied to the interpersonal plane of sociocultural analysis. It stresses the mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and coordinating their involvement as they participate in sociocultural structured collective activity’ (Rogoff, 1995, p.146). An example of this interpersonal process of learning is when new teachers interact with and observe other teachers and staff; these interactions in practice can also contribute to their knowledge and help them develop their teaching skills. In my study, the educators in the school environment (cultural activity) were interacting with other educators and shaping their understanding of dyslexia or poor reading and how to adapt teaching for these students. Similarly, when I was working in special education schools, observing the school environment and engaging with other teachers and staff provided me with information about the school’s expectations about how to teach, including teaching children with SEN. In addition, placement opportunities for student teachers can be considered an example of guided participation. For example, in the final year of my university course, I had a teaching practice placement; I applied the teaching skills I learned from my course in the classroom while being observed by teachers and receiving their feedback and instructions.

Another example of guided participation was observing and interacting with teachers in the UK while conducting this research, which contributed to a better understanding of other perspectives on poor reading and teaching.

### **1.5.3 Participatory appropriation**

Rogoff uses the term ‘participatory appropriation’ to refer to ‘the process by which individuals transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation’. She explains further, ‘The basic idea of appropriation is that,

through participation, people change and, in the process, become prepared to engage in subsequent similar activities' (1995, p.150). This personal learning process is exemplified in my study, where educators were seen to shape their teaching knowledge from their experience working with children with dyslexia or poor reading, which in turn allowed them to develop their understanding of how to teach other children with reading difficulties. In the same way, my experience of working with students with SEN influenced my understanding of poor reading and helped me develop my teaching approach for these students.

Rogoff highlights the inseparability of these three stages of children's learning process. Similarly, my study sets no clear boundaries between stages of educators' learning to teach. Movement can happen across the stages because apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation can all be seen in each stage. Trainee teachers in their initial teaching training, early-career teachers, or experienced teachers can go through all these stages while participating in teaching activities in their social settings.

### **1.6 Developing inclusive education contexts**

As mentioned above, learning happens via social interactions with others in their social context (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1995), which can also apply to the way students learn from interacting with teachers in their classroom. Therefore, schools and teachers are important for children's learning. However, sometimes students need more help and support than their peers in the classroom due to their differences or disabilities.

Vygotsky (1993) identified disability as primary defects (physical or psychological differences in bodily function) and secondary defects (the effects of a mismatch between societal expectations and cultural developments and the functioning of

particular individuals) (Böttcher and Dammeyer, 2012). He recommends adaptations to pedagogy to address both primary (medical) and secondary (social) disabilities.

As mentioned in Section 1.1, according to UNESCO (2020), inclusive education means that all children receive an equal opportunity to learn and be educated in the same classroom as their peers. Ainscow (2005) suggests four steps to implement inclusive education, namely:

- ‘Inclusion is a process’ (p.9), which means inclusion must be viewed as an ongoing effort to develop better strategies for addressing diversity. It is about understanding how to deal with diversity and how to draw wisdom from it. In this approach, both children and adults start to view differences positively as learning inputs.
- ‘Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers’ (p.9). As a result, it requires gathering, combining, and analysing data from a wide range of sources to plan for policy and practice improvements. It is about leveraging many types of evidence to inspire creativity and problem-solving.
- ‘Inclusion is about the presence, participation, and achievement of all students’ (p.9). Here, ‘presence’ refers to where and how regularly children attend school; ‘participation’ refers to the quality of their experiences while they attend and thus must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and ‘achievement’ refers to the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not just test or examination results.
- ‘Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement’ (p.9). This implies a moral obligation to guarantee that groups statistically most at risk are closely watched and, where necessary, efforts are made to secure their presence, participation, and achievement in the educational system.

As stated above, Ainscow (2005) outlined what is required for effective inclusion. However, Allan (2007) emphasised the uncertainty around inclusion and the difficulties teachers encounter when attempting to adopt inclusive practices under current policy and legislative frameworks. Allan's study (2007) explored problems with implementing inclusion. For example, the medical approach to special education is characterised by a physical deficiency or impairment and continues to dominate legislation and, ultimately, classroom practices. Another issue was the lack of materials and resources available to teachers. On the other hand, Allan (2007) concluded that students do experience a sense of inclusion under particular conditions. Therefore, she suggests that it is critical that the voices of people who have had the most direct experience with inclusion be allowed to impact future policy and shape practice improvements.

The concept of inclusion does not place limitations on different kinds of alleged disabilities (Thomas and Loxley, 2007). Instead, it is about creating a framework in which all students, regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnicity, or cultural origin, can be recognised equally, treated with respect, and given actual opportunities at school. Furthermore, to create an inclusive society, it is important to recognise, respect, and listen to the opinions of those who have gone through special education.

As mentioned above, inclusion requires giving every child the same opportunity in the classroom. However, from a sociocultural point of view, inclusion might develop differently in different social contexts. Therefore, I adopted Ainscow's (2005) model of inclusion, shaped by Rogoff's approach to development as an underpinning theoretical framework for my study and explore whether teaching approaches for students with reading difficulties are inclusive for everyone.

## **1.7 Purpose of the study**

The study aims to understand how educators form their professional perspectives on reading difficulties and how this informs teaching methods. Furthermore, the study explores whether these teaching strategies are inclusive and how they meet the needs of all students. Finally, I seek to develop my understanding of reading difficulties and teaching approaches for poor readers.

This aim includes the following objectives:

to explore educators' perspectives on dyslexia or poor reading.

to learn more about the choice of teaching strategies and methods teachers adopt in the classroom for their students with dyslexia or poor reading.

to enquire how they achieved their teaching skills in this area.

to understand why they are using these methods and the significance of the sociocultural setting in the development of these strategies.

to reflect on my experience with poor reading and how I learned and developed teaching methods for these children.

## **1.8 Research questions**

These research aims and objectives led me to develop my research questions, which are, 'What are educators' perspectives on reading difficulty? How does their understanding affect their choice of strategies? Are these strategies inclusive?'

## **1.9 Overview**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. After this introduction, Chapter 2 focuses on the concept of dyslexia and poor reading and then expands to consider the effects of difficulties with reading. This chapter explains the term 'dyslexia' and how it is defined

in the existing literature; it gives information on the history and identified characteristics of dyslexia. This chapter also focuses on teachers' and parents' perspectives on reading difficulty, debates about teaching children to read, provision for learners with dyslexia or poor reading, teachers, and the role of teaching assistants (TAs) in supporting students with reading difficulty, the emotional effects of reading difficulty, and the voice of the learner with reading difficulty. This chapter also discusses reading difficulties in the later stages of education. Finally, this chapter also reflects my sociocultural background and offers insight into the Turkish context regarding dyslexia, including Turkish teachers' perspectives of dyslexia and challenges in Türkiye regarding teacher preparation for teaching students with dyslexia. Chapter 3 discusses social, medical, and interaction models of disability to explain different interpretations of reading difficulty; it also includes consideration of intersectionality and poor reading.

Chapter 4 focuses on inclusive pedagogy. This chapter includes teacher preparedness, inclusive teaching practices, challenges of inclusive pedagogy, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), student engagement, and the link between inclusive education and student engagement. This chapter is important for understanding the sociocultural context of inclusive teaching as it provides discussions of inclusive teaching practices.

Chapter 5 focuses on the methodology and research design; I introduce the ontological and epistemological standpoint of my research and then continue to outline the research design of my study, which includes qualitative methodology, case study, participants, and ethical considerations. I also include data collection methods, the data analysis process, and considerations of trustworthiness.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings from teachers' interviews, and observations. In Chapter 6, I shared important main themes I identified in the data, such as educational strategies for learners with dyslexia or poor reading, teacher preparedness, roles, and

relationships. Then in Chapter 7, the data are explored in more depth under three further themes: understanding of differences, an image of the learner with reading difficulties, and engaging the learner with reading difficulties. The final chapter provides a summary and discussion of the main findings, contributions of the study, implications and recommendations for training and practice, limitations of the study, and the conclusion.



## **CHAPTER 2: DYSLEXIA AND POOR READING**

## **2.1 Introduction**

In my thinking and teaching, I do not distinguish between poor readers and children with dyslexia; however, this chapter includes a review of the literature on dyslexia and how it is seen as distinct and different from poor reading. Therefore, this chapter will provide information on the history of dyslexia. It will then attempt to define the term ‘dyslexia’ and explain the characteristics of dyslexia. It will also discuss the tension between poor reading and dyslexia before continuing to explore the perspectives of teachers and parents on dyslexia and poor reading. This chapter will give information on debates about teaching children to read and provisions for learners with dyslexia or poor reading. It will review teachers’ roles in supporting dyslexia or poor reading and the roles of TAs in supporting children with reading difficulties, such as how they might help students with dyslexia and children with poor reading in or out of the classroom. This chapter also considers the emotional effects of dyslexia and the importance of listening to the voices of students labelled with dyslexia. It will mention reading difficulties in later stages of education. Finally, this chapter also presents the Turkish perspective of dyslexia as a reflection of my social-cultural background to indicate how dyslexia is viewed differently in Turkiye than in the UK context and what the challenges are in preparing teachers in Turkiye to work with children with reading difficulties.

## **2.2 History of dyslexia**

Reading difficulties known as dyslexia today were originally described as a separate condition in 1877 by Adolf Kussmaul, a German paediatrician; ‘word blindness’ was the phrase he used to refer to issues previously thought to be caused by an eye impairment (Kirby and Snowling, 2022). Rudolf Berlin, an ophthalmologist and researcher who was a contemporary of Kussmaul, coined the name ‘dyslexia’ alongside

the other common diagnostic names of the time: alexia and paralexia (Kirby, 2020).

These terms denoted disorders of the brain that affected the ability to read.

With the introduction of compulsory education in England with the Education Act of 1870, learning disabilities such as dyslexia became more widely recognised (Kirby, 2020). As a result of this recognition, various research bodies were established, and in 1904, the Royal Commission for the Care and Management of Vulnerable Pupils was set up. This was the first official government recognition that educationally ‘deficient pupils were a problem to be addressed’ (McDonagh, 2008, p.306, cited in Kirby, 2020). In the mid-twentieth century, American physician Samuel Torrey Orton (1937) identified several clinical features of dyslexia that researchers recognise today, 80 years later, including poor reading comprehension, spelling errors, and difficulties in learning foreign languages in adolescence (Kirby, 2020). Orton noted that their reading ability appeared to be age-appropriate but below the level predicted by their IQ, and the origins of dyslexia indicated an unexpected reading difficulty.

The British Dyslexia Association and the Dyslexia Academy have both worked to include dyslexia in UK law and provisions (Kirby, 2019). What Kirby calls ‘modern dyslexia’ was established as a learning difficulty that has an impact on fluent reading and spelling. However, although it has been implemented throughout society, current criticisms of dyslexia hinder the study of this new form (Kirby, 2019).

### **2.3 Definition of dyslexia**

The previous section discussed how the term ‘dyslexia’ developed historically in social and educational contexts. Therefore, it can be difficult to define and characterise dyslexia due to the different perspectives on it. Some researchers define dyslexia as a learning disability in reading, spelling, and writing. Reis *et al.* (2020) stated that individuals with dyslexia have trouble reading at a good pace, along with difficulties in

reading comprehension, writing, and spelling. However, the problems are not associated with intelligence (Wadlington and Wadlington, 2005). On the other hand, Gus and Samuelsson (1999) argued that ‘intelligence itself is a fuzzy concept’. Dyslexia or poor reading can be seen in children at all intelligence levels, including those who are below average. Snowling *et al.* (2020) mentioned that dyslexia is a condition that impacts people in various ways; therefore, symptoms differ from one individual to another. However, a key sign of dyslexia is having problems decoding words (Wadlington and Wadlington, 2005).

People with dyslexia are often assumed to have visual issues. On the other hand, some researchers believe children with dyslexia might struggle with phonological awareness, which is the ability to understand the sounds within words (Snowling *et al.*, 2020).

These issues can be seen in early childhood; however, sometimes dyslexia is not picked up until later, when the difficulty arises in solving complex matters and individuals cannot demonstrate complex skills (Wadlington and Wadlington, 2005). This can include comprehension, fluency in reading, grammar, in-depth writing, and the structure of sentences. Furthermore, some researchers believe dyslexia might negatively impact pupils’ behaviour and emotions in connection with their reading ability. Smyrnakis *et al.* (2021) highlighted that people with reading issues avoid reading aloud but also avoid reading to themselves.

Some researchers believe dyslexia not only affects the process of learning but also impacts daily activities and skills such as memory, social interaction, and dealing with regular stress and situations (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). Klonari and Passadelli (2019) mentioned that dyslexia leads to many children and students facing difficulty adapting to the typical school curriculum and engaging in activities with students without dyslexia. As a result, students with dyslexia feel anxiety and stress; they require support at school to meet their needs and prevent these negative emotions.

In this section, a range of definitions has been outlined, which might suggest some difficulty with dyslexia as a distinct ‘condition’.

#### **2.4 Dyslexia: How it is characterised and its impact on children’s experiences**

One of the things that classroom teachers need to prepare for in a diverse classroom and that practicing teachers need to consider is the variability in children’s ability to learn to read and write (Elliot, 2015). In many countries, this means addressing the concept of dyslexia and associated teaching and learning strategies. Approximately 20% of children in the world are labelled with dyslexia (International Dyslexia Association, 2016). In the UK, dyslexia is considered a disability and is one of the ‘protected characteristics’ legally protected in academic institutions and authorities under the Equality Act (2010). According to the Equality Act (2010), ‘mental impairment includes mental health conditions (such as bipolar disorder or depression), learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) and learning disabilities (such as autism and Down’s syndrome)’ (p.4). Teachers must therefore adapt their teaching approach to meet the educational needs of students with dyslexia (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015).

As mentioned in Section 1.1, dyslexia is considered a learning difficulty that primarily affects the ability to read and write words accurately and fluently (Rose, 2009). Poor reading has been reported to be the primary characteristic of students with dyslexia. Although reading difficulties may be viewed as being associated with more general cognitive features that underpin problems with reading in children, according to studies, social and cultural factors may also contribute to our understanding of reading difficulties (Harmey, 2020).

#### **2.5 Teachers’ perspectives on reading difficulty**

Despite the legal status of dyslexia as a disability in employment law (British Dyslexia Association, 2010), as stated in Section 1.2, according to Elliott and Grigorenko (2014),

scientific evidence is insufficient to distinguish between a student with dyslexia and a student with poor reading without a label of dyslexia. Therefore, Elliott and his colleagues offer an alternative perspective on dyslexia. According to Elliot and Grigorenko (2014), the term 'poor reading' should be used as a catch-all for a variety of difficulties, including less precise and fluent reading ability. The researchers propose adopting the word 'poor reading' to characterise decoding problems. Without making assertions about its causes, the word refers to an observable phenomenon (bad decoding). The researchers think that the most valid scientific tools and approaches (e.g., organised phonics programmes) should be employed to intervene in poor reading (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). However, in practice, teachers use a range of phrases to describe students who are thought to have a reading or writing issue (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). In practice, these labels frequently incorporate phrases like 'dyslexia' and 'reading disability'. The former is one of the 'conditions' included in the phrase 'specific learning disability' in legislation (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). The second phrase also has academic relevance, and is used to describe more widespread, non-specific, or generic issues. The phrases 'dyslexia' and 'reading problems' were used in this circumstance because both have significance for teachers.

Elliott and his colleagues emphasise that they do not suggest that people diagnosed with dyslexia are necessarily marginalised or excluded. The term 'dyslexia' may be helpful when accessing specialist services; however, an essentialist view of a particular group of children or the SEN category is likely to undermine teachers' willingness to participate fully in inclusive education through biased attitudes and assumptions (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). It may undermine teachers' belief that their knowledge of the essential qualities of a group of children can lead them to greater progress and success (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015).

In a study of primary school teachers' beliefs, the researchers found that the way children were categorised (e.g., dyslexia or dyscalculia) influenced teachers' feelings of efficacy when working with students with poor reading. The study looked at both theoretical and practical components, as well as teachers' essentialist beliefs about dyslexia, to examine the relationship between conceptual labels and practice beliefs (Gibbs and Elliott, 2015). The theoretical framework for this study was teachers' beliefs about the nature of literacy problems that were separate and at least partially socially constructed, and their beliefs about their ability to intervene effectively (Gibbs and Elliott, 2015). Teachers' judgements of the nature of children's difficulties may impact their feeling of professional obligation to a certain population of children (Gibbs and Elliott, 2015). Understanding the foundation and function of teachers' views about their effectiveness regarding children's reading is a vital concern for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of teaching (Gibbs and Elliott, 2015).

Essentialism is defined as the belief that '[p]eople act as if things ... have essences or underlying natures that make them the thing that they are' (Medin, 1989, p. 1476).

Essentialist beliefs involve an understanding that social categories (such as dyslexia) are distinctions of fundamentally (biologically) different groups of individuals. However, essentialist beliefs and social categories might cause prejudices or stereotyping of certain groups of people, such as students with dyslexia (Gibbs and Elliott, 2015).

According to Gibbs and Elliott (2015), it is important to examine teachers' essentialist beliefs about 'dyslexia' or 'reading difficulties' because the phenomenon of 'dyslexia' is considered the result of the interaction of biological (genetic) processes, psychosocial and cultural processes (such as oral language differences), and social and cultural responses to these problems. It is important to consider how teachers' essentialist beliefs are influenced by their own experiences with dyslexia. This can be providing an

example of Rogoff's (1995) personal level of learning as it provides learning through their participation in teaching activities.

Gibbs and Elliott's (2015) study highlighted that teachers' assessments of their efficacy were connected to their opinion that dyslexia was a persistent disorder that yielded viable conclusions, according to responses to the term 'dyslexia', although their evaluations of their efficacy were inconsistent with their experiences (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). The term 'poor reading', on the other hand, proved to be only weakly connected with essentialist attitudes about a reading problem, but all components of effectiveness beliefs regarding teaching were linked to higher levels of experience (Elliott and Grigorenko, 2014). Through component analysis, the links between effectiveness and group were identified: teachers felt that they would be more successful teaching students if they were classified as 'dyslexia' (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). A one-to-one comparison of essentialist ideas among teachers revealed that 'dyslexia' was judged to be substantially more consistent and widespread than a reading problem (Elliott and Grigorenko, 2014). In addition to the contributions of factual and other efficacy categories, only one essentialist belief component was shown to predict teachers' effectiveness views regarding 'reading problems' (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). To summarise, the findings suggest that teachers' beliefs about the underlying cause nature of reading issues connect with their efficacy beliefs about addressing the needs of children who may have difficulty with reading.

Elliot and Gibbs (2015) stated that their study shows that the term "dyslexia" is more likely to bring up essentialist beliefs than the term "reading difficulties." Essentialist views are more likely to make it seem like there are more differences between people who are "in" one particular group compared to the other "out" group and this could make it hard to know what the individual strengths and weaknesses of each group member are. Therefore, Elliot and Gibbs (2015) believe the label of dyslexia is not



helpful for teachers. Furthermore, according to Daniel (2023), the dyslexia label is also associated with some misconceptions about causes, screening, diagnosis, and intervention methods. For example, the label of dyslexia is often linked with the topics such as reversals letters, creativity, motor skills difficulties, or intervention methods like coloured overlays and specific dyslexia fonts; however, there is not enough evidence that dyslexia is connected with those concepts.

As a researcher who adopts sociocultural theory as a framework for my research, I believe teachers' perspectives on reading difficulty can be influenced by their social context because 'each person is a product of their own sociocultural environment and culture (race, religion, gender, family, and career)' (Markus and Herzog, 1995, p.39 cited in Dreier, 1999). Similarly, Holland and Lave (2019) emphasised that the sociocultural environment and culture have influenced how individuals shape their life experiences and develop their own personal histories. Holland and Lave (2001), used the term "history in person" to refer the continual transformation of both the individual and cultural resources that people use to create their own present narratives (Holland and Lave 2019). People bring their personal history into any aspect of social practice (Holland and Lave 2019). For example, educators bring their personal resources, such as their working experiences, life histories, knowledge acquired in university, previous employments, and their own experiences as students, to effectively use them within an educational context or in their classrooms. This also resonates with Rogoff's three planes of analysis, as Rogoff (1995) believes people learn through interaction within the community, interactions with others, and their own experiences in their social context. Similarly, Dreier (1999) emphasised that people's lives are shaped by participating in social practices and going through trajectories in and between different social contexts. In connection to these statements on individuals' learning, educators' perspectives on reading difficulty and their approaches to responding to reading difficulty can be linked

to their personal history, taking part in cultural activities, and social practice in diverse social contexts.

## **2.6 Debates about teaching children to read**

As reading is such a vital skill, one of the most essential purposes of early childhood and primary education globally is to teach children to read (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). Reading is important for students' cognitive development if they are to advance throughout their education; it also gives students access to nearly all subject areas as they progress from elementary school through secondary school and beyond (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022).

In England, teaching phonics is a widely used method for teaching students to read (Harmey, 2020). Synthetic phonics is a way to teach phonics that focuses first on educating students about phonemes and letters (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). The national curriculum in England requires maintained schools to teach reading using systematic synthetic phonics (DfE, 2022), which is underpinned by a particular set of assumptions about how children learn to read.

Successful word reading is based on the understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words (Harmey, 2020; Wyse and Bradbury, 2022).

Children's understanding of the English alphabetic code, or how letters or groupings of letters represent language sounds, aids in their reading and spelling (DfE, 2022).

According to Ofsted (2019), teachers should teach children to read by using synthetic phonics. However, some researchers have questioned if synthetic phonics is the best way to teach (Harmey, 2020; Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). According to Torgerson *et al.* (2019), even though phonics might be useful for teaching children to read, phonics has not been proven to be the only or best way to teach.

The primary goal of teaching reading is to develop reading comprehension, which is the ability to read the written word, analyse it, and understand its meaning (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). According to Gough and Tunmer (1986), reading comprehension is the result of two sets of skills: decoding and language comprehension, and it is important to focus on these areas to promote reading comprehension. On the other hand, the DfE promotes teaching fluency in schools to improve reading comprehension (Demie, 2013). According to Cotter (2012), fluency is an essential reading skill for the comprehension of the text. Children who are not fluent readers cannot create connections and completely understand the text. Reading fluency is a necessary ability to develop since it serves as a connection to reading comprehension. Implementing fluency strategies in a balanced literacy framework can help students enhance their overall reading comprehension (Demie, 2013). Furthermore, while studies have demonstrated that targeted teaching can improve the reading and comprehension abilities of poor readers, Harmeay argues that it is important to consider 'a range of different interacting factors—cognitive, social, and instructional' when deciding on possible ways to deal with reading difficulties (Harmeay, 2020, p. 56).

Many academics have pointed out that certain aspects of classroom instruction may be a contributor to children's reading difficulties (Scanlon et al., 2008; Vellutino, 2010). Scanlon et al. (2008) argue that if reading instruction had been more targeted and responsive to meet the needs of the students, the number of children currently labelled with learning disabilities would have decreased. Similarly, Vellutino's (2010) study suggested that early reading intervention can successfully prevent long-term difficulties with reading in children who would otherwise be classified as having reading difficulties.

Vellutino's (1996 and 2008) earlier studies were inspired by Marie Clay's Reading Recovery Programme (1987), which offers intensive, personalised, and thorough

instruction tailored to address the specific strengths and weaknesses of poor readers (Vellutino, 2010). Both studies on reading interventions suggested most struggling students related their reading difficulties to their personal and school experiences rather than to underlying cognitive impairments, which aligns with Marie Clay's (1987) perspective on 'learning to be disabled' (Vellutino, 2010). The results also support her argument that responses to intervention would be a better and more valid way to tell the difference between instructional and natural causes of reading problems than using IQ-achievement differences as the main criterion for psychometric or exclusionary approaches (Vellutino, 2010). Clay's (1987) argument on concepts Difficult-to-Remediate (DR) and Less-Difficult-to-Remediate (LDR) has parallels with Vygotsky's original conception of zone of proximal development (for further information, see Section 4.5) because some children with disabilities responded better to help within their zone of proximal development than others did.

In both studies, most of the students who were at risk of or had poor reading improved their reading levels after interventions; this meant that these children did not need to be labelled as having learning difficulty even though many of them would have met the standards for that label (Vellutino, 2010). In addition, Vellutino's findings support Marie Clay's contention that reading instruction must be carefully regulated, personally developed, and gradually provided in order to be suited to the specific needs of poor readers and to make the most of both their strengths and weaknesses (Vellutino, 2010). Furthermore, in both studies, children who received reading interventions performed better than children who received typical classroom instruction (Vellutino, 2010).

## **2.7 Provision for learners with dyslexia or poor reading**

Children in England spend approximately 13 years in compulsory education (DfE, 2018). Children as young as six years old are required to take national tests in spelling, reading, writing, mathematics, and science to determine whether they meet the expected academic standards (Jacobs *et al.*, 2020). This indicates that levels of literacy are an important measure of academic achievement in schools. The need for standardised academic testing puts additional pressure on students with dyslexia or poor reading. This is because the tests can present a barrier to the demonstration of academic achievement due to the slow word processing of students with dyslexia or poor reading (Jacobs *et al.*, 2020).

In terms of teaching strategies to support learners with dyslexia, highly structured phonics instruction and more specific intervention programmes are usually recommended; however, it can be argued that these are also appropriate for other poor readers (Gibbs and Elliot, 2008). While interventions are likely to have beneficial effects in most cases, this is not always the case, nor does it mean that the prognosis for those identified with dyslexia who have participated in reading intervention programmes is significantly different from that of other poor readers (Gibbs and Elliot, 2008). According to Gibbs and Elliot (2008), the Dyslexia Friendly Schools campaign of the British Dyslexia Association is a good example of the growth of specialist reading support in the UK. The introduction of specialist teaching methods (with an emphasis on a structured, multisensory approach), close collaboration with parents, the creation of an appropriate library of dyslexia-friendly materials, and the provision of support for students with dyslexia or poor reading throughout the school are all areas of focus for this initiative (Riddick, 2006). However, they criticised the term 'dyslexia friendly' as a misnomer because these schools are trying to provide more appropriate

educational opportunities for all children with reading difficulties, and it should not be limited to a subgroup of students with dyslexia (Gibbs and Elliot, 2008).

Dyslexia-friendly schools aim to help pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, meet their educational and emotional needs in the classroom (Mackay, 2004). According to the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), as with other key school policies, schools must demonstrate that they meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia. The BDA considers sufficient evidence to be the Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark. To obtain this mark, schools must demonstrate how dyslexia-friendly they are (Mackay, 2004). To demonstrate that a school is dyslexia-friendly, several key points must be met. This involves extensive consultation with a wide range of teachers, including parents and specialists (Mortimore and Dupree, 2008). In addition, programmes for the development of students with dyslexia must be enhanced. These plans must include clear goals for supporting students with dyslexia and ongoing review and evaluation of strategies to improve their management (Mortimore and Dupree, 2008). Parents and students should be informed about how appropriate the programme is. Schools also need to develop intervention programmes, including the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs); IEPs should ensure that all students with a specific learning disability (SPLD) are involved in individualised teaching and learning strategies (Mortimore and Dupree, 2008).

While all students benefit from a diverse and adaptable curriculum, some research suggests that small groups and individual instruction are most effective for children with dyslexia (O'Brien, 2019). Some children with dyslexia respond very slowly to teaching methods, no matter how successful they are (O'Brien, 2017), and these children will need skilled and intensive individual activities (Rose, 2009). Some children may benefit from specialist instruction; however, it is argued that responsibilities belong in the regular classroom and that in some situations, regular

teaching techniques need to be adapted (Davis and Florian, 2004). Inclusive education requires such a shift in strategy, which will be discussed further in the next chapter (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). It is important to consider all students when evaluating approaches to inclusive education. In other words, what is considered a good teaching method for children with dyslexia is often teaching that works for all children (Elliot and Gibbs, 2008).

## **2.8 Teachers' role in supporting dyslexia or poor reading**

The most prevalent sign of dyslexia or poor reading is the inability to recognise words correctly and/or fluently, and many experts believe this could be related to a lack of phonological awareness (Worthy *et al.*, 2016). This natural tendency interacts with the environment and teaching, both of which are involved in the development of reading skills (Harmey, 2020). When it comes to teaching, experts from different disciplines believe that no single approach to teaching reading to people with dyslexia or poor reading is best (Shaywitz *et al.*, 2008). For example, some official sources, such as the International Dyslexia Association (IDA, 2009), recommend a version of the Orton-Gillingham technique (Worthy *et al.*, 2016). Their approach is a systematic, sequential, multisensory, syntactic, and phonics-based approach to teaching students the basic concepts of reading, spelling, and writing (Hwee and Houghton, 2011). Basic skills are hierarchical, and the focus is on the automatic processing of these specific sub-skills based on a bottom-up approach (Hwee and Houghton, 2011). Phonics and phonological awareness, sound-symbol correspondence, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics are all explicitly taught (Torlakovic and Barnum, 2013). The multisensory nature of Orton-Gillingham reading instruction, including visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning, is an important feature (Hwee and Houghton, 2011).

Structured and multisensory programmes such as these are common in private learning centres and, more recently, in schools (Worthy *et al.*, 2016). However, despite their claim to be research-based, they are still not thoroughly researched, and only insufficient evidence suggests that they are useful in the short or long term (Ritchey and Goeke, 2006). The multisensory principle, which is highly valued by experienced clinicians, has not been found in systematic, comparative studies of reading instruction (Worthy *et al.*, 2016). The IDA (2009) acknowledges that it has long promoted the Orton-Gillingham technique and claims that it is effective.

According to Worthy *et al.* (2016), teachers have a strong influence on dyslexia-related decisions, practices, and interactions, and the teachers are ultimately responsible for the teaching of all students. He and his colleagues conducted a research study with teachers in Texas schools to understand their perceptions, understandings, and experiences of dyslexia, or poor reading. According to the findings of this research, two important factors appeared. Firstly, teachers felt an obligation to meet the needs of all students, including those with dyslexia or poor reading (O'Brien, 2017). Secondly, participants identified several challenges in supporting students, including a lack of knowledge and unclear policies and procedures. According to the interviews, teachers want to know more about their students and do more to help them (Worthy *et al.*, 2016). However, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their schools and districts because they lack knowledge and clarity about dyslexia identification and intervention policies and procedures. However, although participants were confident in their ability to provide effective reading instruction to students with other reading problems, they were unsure of their ability to work with students with dyslexia (Worthy *et al.*, 2016). This finding was also related to Elliot and Gibb's (2015) study in terms of how the label of dyslexia affects teachers' readiness for working with these students negatively. Many teacher educators and researchers prefer to characterise individual students as having reading



difficulties rather than use the term 'dyslexia', which is deficit-oriented (Paseka and Schwab, 2020).

## **2.9 The role of TAs in supporting students with reading difficulties**

The role of TAs was expanded in the early 1990s, before which it had been largely confined to 'supporting' teachers (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). This has changed over time, partly as a result of the UK government's workforce restructuring programme, which has led to a significant increase in TAs' responsibilities (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018).

In UK schools, many TAs' main role is to support students in lessons in regular classes, but many others are tasked with providing structured support programmes, particularly in maths and reading (Houssart and Croucher, 2013). As the TA role grows, TAs usually support students who need extra support or who are behind their peers academically. In some cases, these students have poor reading or have been recognised as having dyslexia. To support these children, schools often provide TAs with training to learn how to work with them. TA training has elements of Rogoff's (1995) institutional and community levels of learning as TAs practice and improve their teaching skills through participation with others in teaching activities.

Bell (2013) explored the effectiveness of dyslexia-friendly practice training to support students with dyslexia or poor reading. The researcher interviewed TAs and support staff who were undergoing professional training to support students with dyslexia, highlighting their desire to learn more about dyslexia and how to identify it. This study suggested that dyslexia-specific training increased assistants' awareness, skills, and understanding of dyslexia, and improved their ability to carry out teaching tasks (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). Farrell *et al.* (2010), on the other hand, conducted a study to understand the impact of TAs on children's academic improvement in general.

According to the findings, adequate training and ongoing supervision can increase the implementation of research-based reading interventions. As Rogoff (1995) emphasises, learning can occur through interaction with the larger community and others; this community-level engagement connects TAs with knowledge beyond the school and helps them learn how to implement reading interventions effectively. This connection with knowledge about reading interventions helps not only students with dyslexia but also children experiencing difficulties in early literacy and language skills; this study showed these pupils make more progress than similar pupils who did not receive reading interventions (Farrell *et al.*, 2010).

TAs' taking time out of the regular classroom for such training sessions creates a more collaborative learning environment, ensures that lessons are delivered as planned, and demonstrates that assistants can be effective if they have the necessary training to teach (Brown and Devecchi, 2013). Schools can maximise TA effectiveness by supporting training and expanding the role of TAs in schools (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). However, access to training and support for TAs varied across programmes (Houssart and Croucher, 2013). In addition, TAs often reported failing to find opportunities to pass on information about pupils' progress to teachers, and teachers had little knowledge of the education programme (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). This may be because, as mentioned above, individual specialised teaching usually takes place outside the general classroom, in learning support units, or in small, self-contained rooms in the school (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). As previously stated, to minimise this problem, educators should collaborate to meet the needs of students with dyslexia or poor reading in the classroom (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015).

## 2.10 Parents' perspectives on reading difficulty

Dyslexia, or poor reading is a problem not only for students but also for their parents (Earey, 2013). Learning to read is an important skill that can lead to success in education, employment, and adult well-being (Earey, 2013). Parents of students labelled with dyslexia showed higher levels of stress than parents of students without a dyslexia label (Snowling and Melby-Lervåg, 2016). This can relate to their child's low academic scores, especially if they do not understand how to support their children (Earey, 2013).

It has previously been criticised that most studies on dyslexia have involved middle-class households (Riddick, 2012) because dyslexia is usually reported when parents can pay for assessment and extra educational provision. Research on dyslexia often raises the issue of labelling (Wadlington and Wadlington, 2005). One of the most important aspects is whether parents consider labels good or bad. However, deciding whether it is constructive or destructive is not as easy as deciding whether it is good or bad in individual cases. Earey (2013) notes that labelling can make parents more aware of dyslexia or poor reading and the support their child needs. On the other hand, the label of dyslexia can cause negative attitudes among teachers and others (Yildiz *et al.*, 2012). Despite different perspectives on labelling, parents primarily voiced their apprehension regarding the inadequate level of assistance provided by schools (Rose, 2009). This leads parents to be concerned about their children's future and increases their anxiety levels; to minimise these concerns, schools might consider including the parents in discussions about children's learning (Yildiz *et al.*, 2012).

Parental involvement and support for children's learning have become increasingly common. In terms of a child's education, parents are crucial and may influence success or failure (Rose, 2009). Research has shown that teachers believe that the role of parents at home is an integral part of a child's reading process (Paseka and Schwab, 2020).

Moreau (2014) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of the role of parents in encouraging children's reading at home. Moreau (2014) pointed to a lack of appropriate educational provision in schools, parents' lack of interest in reading and writing, and parents' difficulties with literacy as reasons for students' difficulties in reading and writing. In this study, the teachers interviewed highlighted the importance of parents' influence on their children's love of reading. However, according to Earey (2013), parents usually face difficulty in understanding how to help their children, and their needs are frequently ignored. In connection with solving this problem, Elliot and Gibbs (2008) suggested that parents should be informed about the teaching and provided with consultation with educators.

Home learning environments are vital for shaping and developing children's language and educational development; activities such as having conversations, storytelling, and doing reading activities together can have an impact on children's reading abilities and school success (Skwarchuk et al., 2022). Three important aspects of the home learning environment that promote children's educational development are the availability of learning resources, the quality of parent-child relationships, and the involvement of children in learning activities (Lehrl, Evangelou, and Sammons, 2020). However, studies have shown that when children from less advantaged backgrounds first begin reception (enter the school), their language abilities are frequently below age-appropriate standards, which puts them at a disadvantage in their schooling (Ferguson, Bovaird, and Mueller, 2007). According to research, positive relationships and collaboration between families and schools can increase the effectiveness of home learning environments; however, there is not sufficient research on how to better support students who come from less privileged home learning environments across different ages (Lehrl, Evangelou, and Sammons, 2020).

## **2.11 Emotional effects of difficulties with reading**

Students with dyslexia or poor reading may experience emotional problems as ‘secondary disabilities’ as academic failure negatively affects their self-esteem and self-confidence of students (Böttcher and Dammeyer, 2012; Wilmot *et al.*, 2022). Evidence is lacking that dyslexia biologically causes emotional problems; however, most students with dyslexia or poor reading experience emotional problems related to their reading and writing abilities (Livingston, Siegel, and Ribary, 2018). These students may experience anxiety and frustration due to difficulties meeting school and family expectations. Lithari (2019) suggested that anxiety in students with dyslexia or poor reading is the most common mental health problem because of their fear of failure. Teachers and parents need to support and encourage children with dyslexia or poor reading; school attitudes have a significant impact on these students and their self-esteem (Wilmot *et al.*, 2022). This reinforces the view that the focus should be on changing teachers’ determinist beliefs about dyslexia so that teachers can work more effectively to help children with reading difficulties (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015).

## **2.12 Voice of learners with reading difficulties**

A qualitative study was conducted in Ireland on the perspectives of children with dyslexia. The study aimed to improve the learning experiences of children with dyslexia in mainstream and special schools by sharing the views of children with educators (O’Brien, 2019). The study was carried out in a ‘reading school’, where pupils were encouraged to talk openly and honestly about issues that were important to them (O’Brien, 2019). Focus group interviews were used to collect data, and in-depth research showed that participants were quite satisfied with the teaching methods used in the school, particularly by educators. Although they may not be dyslexia-specific strategies, young people found them beneficial. A case can therefore be made for

incorporating the experiences of these ‘insiders’ into the development of inclusive pedagogy to support children with dyslexia or poor reading (and other learning disabilities), both in special and mainstream schools (O’Brien, 2019).

Due to the research, the value of giving children a platform to express their views through their voices was discussed. However, giving them a platform to voice their opinions is insufficient if they are not heard and ultimately taken on board (O’Brien, 2017). To overcome barriers to participation and increase literacy rates, it is essential to recognise students’ right to express their ideas, while the overuse of the term ‘children’s voices’ should be discouraged, and the claim made that ‘children’s participation in decision-making is a permanent and non-negotiable right’ (Lundy, 2007, p.940, cited in O’Brien, 2017). While this study offers ideas for consideration, a focus on educator-generated pedagogical tools may not be enough. We need to recognise that children can make important contributions and help shape best practices.

### **2.13 Reading difficulties in the later stages of education**

It has been identified that sources of essential and valuable information regarding effective policies in education and interventions that learners require, namely the learners’ voices themselves, have been neglected (Gibson and Kendall, 2010). Although significant research has been conducted on learners with dyslexia, the literature on learners’ voices and their individual experiences within schools or educational institutions is limited. According to Lithari (2019), studies suggest that students with dyslexia or poor reading can be distressed as they struggle with reading and writing, and they may also experience bullying and social isolation.

Another study conducted by Akyol *et al.* (2021) in Türkiye indicated that many students with dyslexia experienced negative attitudes towards them from their teachers or professionals. They expressed that teachers were not patient with them and made

negative comments, which made them demotivated. As highlighted in Akyol *et al.*'s (2021) research, a student who had been labelled with dyslexia mentioned that the teacher in school was upset with him and sometimes punished him because the student could not read and write correctly and failed several times. However, Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2020) suggested teachers should provide extra support in achieving success rather than judge students based on their academic performance. Some students with dyslexia or poor reading have quite positive results in their academic and personal lives when they feel included, and they believe the diverse school environment allows them to prosper in their academic achievements, whereas within the limited learning environment, they tend to feel they are not included (Yildiz *et al.*, 2012).

The transition from primary to secondary school can be a challenge for students academically, and the increased workload can lead to academic stress for students who may be concerned that their work is not meeting standards (Lithari, 2019). Pupils with dyslexia or poor reading may feel low self-esteem due to academic difficulties at school and a lack of support from teachers (Yildiz *et al.*, 2012). Negative experiences at school can affect a child's motivation to continue with their education (Madriaga, 2007).

Students with dyslexia or poor reading who progressed from school to further education (16+ years of education before entering higher education) reported that parents, tutors, and career advisors discouraged them from applying to university because they believed completing university would be difficult for these students (Jacobs *et al.*, 2020).

However, if students with dyslexia or poor reading get adequate support in primary and secondary school, it might be easier for them to transition to university.

In recent years, the number of students in higher education diagnosed with dyslexia has increased (Snowling *et al.*, 2020). Students need to have a diagnosis, as it helps them apply for the funding called the Disabled Students' Allowance. This funding allows students to access study assistants, or support assistants, and other services in their

university courses (Gov.uk, 2021). This support might increase students' academic achievements and decrease drop-out rates. According to Chua (2020), students in higher education with dyslexia or poor reading who do not receive support are more likely to withdraw from their studies in their first years than students without dyslexia or poor reading. However, many students reported that they do not disclose their abilities on the application forms of colleges and universities to avoid facing discrimination and not being offered a place in the institution (Office for Students, 2019).

Students with dyslexia or poor reading have an increased risk of becoming a subgroup with low degrees due to not having the appropriate required education and relying on the funding system, which helps to support or provide help (Chua, 2020). Hebert *et al.* (2018) mentioned that dyslexia, or poor reading, includes reading, writing, and comprehension difficulties. These issues can increase students' levels of embarrassment, frustration, and anxiety (Gibson and Kendall, 2010). Some of these students' experience anxiety and fear of not being successful in their university courses. These students must be welcomed, given the tools they need to learn, and encouraged to engage in deep learning. According to Rodriguez-Goncalves *et al.* (2021), children with dyslexia or poor reading should be provided with extra time in examinations to reduce their anxiety and stress during the exams so that their knowledge is tested. Examination questions tend to be more inclusive and hence should be short answers for children with dyslexia, or poor reading, as they have problems in communication, grammar, reading, and writing. However, the Office for Students (2019) highlighted that promoting inclusive practice in a higher education context would mean modifying a service or practice to ensure that all students are given an equal opportunity to succeed. In terms of housing and educational services, for example, this may include examining the accessibility of facilities, equipment, and learning resources and taking action to address any identified problems (Office for Students, 2019). In terms of assessment, it might



include examining the tools used throughout an institution to ensure they are appropriate for students experiencing various difficulties (Office for Students, 2019). This more adaptable method may also benefit students who are not disabled and choose not to declare a disability (Madriaga *et al.*, 2010).

## **2.14 Turkish perspectives on dyslexia**

Provision for dyslexia may differ in the British and Turkish contexts for a variety of reasons; for example, in the UK, dyslexia might be seen as a learning difference or difficulty, but in Turkiye, it may be viewed as a learning disorder. This might be due to cultural differences because individuals can develop their understanding as a result of interaction with their cultural communities (Rogoff, 2021). Cultural and societal variables can therefore influence how dyslexia is seen, understood, supported, tolerated, or ignored in these two countries.

As a Turkish teacher and researcher, I have included the Turkish perspective on dyslexia or poor reading here to help readers gain an understanding of how my experience of dyslexia in Turkiye might have shaped my thinking. This section discusses how the medical model influences Turkish teachers' understanding of dyslexia and their teaching methods; the medical model will be discussed further in Section 3.2. Furthermore, this section will compare the UK and Turkish contexts regarding provisions for dyslexia and poor readers.

### **2.14.1 Provision for dyslexia in Turkiye**

Dyslexia is reported as one of the most common types of learning difficulties in Turkiye. According to the Turkish Dyslexia Association (2017), dyslexia causes problems in reading, spelling, writing, and other academic and social skills and affects 10% of the Turkish population. Similarly, the BDA (2022) stated that 10% of the UK's population, over six million people, have dyslexia.

According to 573 special education laws, the Turkish National Ministry of Education suggests that students with dyslexia should be educated in mainstream education schools with their peers in the same classroom (Melekoglu, 2014). The British education system also supports and includes children with dyslexia in regular classrooms. For this purpose, both English and Turkish mainstream education schools should provide sufficient educational support in the classroom for these students. Therefore, teachers play an important role in supporting students with dyslexia or poor reading in the classroom. Teachers should be aware of the needs of the students and include students' educational and individual needs in planning and organising the classroom (Balci, 2019). However, to receive adequate support from teachers, students in Turkiye must be diagnosed with dyslexia.

#### **2.14.2 Diagnosing process**

Turkiye has a different diagnosis process than the UK. In the UK, if children are not making progress with their studies, the teacher can with parental agreement, request an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment with the Local Authority. The request must be supported with reports from the child's school, nursery, or childminder, doctors' assessments of the child, and a letter from the parent about the child's needs (DfE, 2012). In some cases, to receive their diagnosis, students in the UK go to private assessment centres (Riddick, 2012). In addition, schools conduct assessments of children's needs themselves. In Turkiye, however, schools refer children for assessment, and the government provides free assessments at GRC. In the UK, students with dyslexia may receive additional support in the classroom or reading interventions elsewhere during lesson time. Turkish students who are diagnosed with dyslexia are more likely to receive an IEP, and teachers should follow this education plan while providing support in the classroom. These students receive additional support outside

school from a dyslexia specialist or SEN teacher in government-funded private education centres (Melekoglu, 2014).

In Türkiye, if classroom teachers and education counsellors believe that a student requires educational assessment, they contact the Ministry of Education's Guidance and Research Centre (GRC); the GRC conducts observations and tests that measure students' verbal and performance abilities. In some cases, the student is also referred to the neurology and psychiatry departments of public hospitals for diagnosis (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). In these departments, a child psychiatrist makes a final medical diagnosis. After receiving the diagnosis, the child returns to the GRC, where an individual educational plan is developed based on the diagnosis. For school-age children, two types of reports are drawn up: the first is a report on personal support in an educational context. With this report, anyone can go to a private 'rehabilitation centre' (private learning centres for children with SEN) that provides special education services after school hours and attend educational courses designated by the GRC. For these courses, the government provides funding to the education provider. Students return to the GRC after one year to evaluate the education programme and update the personal support report if necessary. The second report focuses on the incorporation of teaching offered by the student's school. This report is used to develop an integrated curriculum for the student, create an individual education plan, and guarantee that the child receives appropriate support in line with the plan (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020).

In Türkiye, dyslexia is seen as a language-based reading disorder with long-term impacts (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). However, according to Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2020), in Türkiye, pupils are often misdiagnosed, alienated from their peers, teachers, and communities, and marginalised by society and schools because the concept of dyslexia is misleading in Türkiye. Unless a student has been

diagnosed with dyslexia, he or she does not receive adequate assistance from professionals or teachers to address his or her difficulties with reading (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). Another issue is that teachers do not receive appropriate training about dyslexia or poor reading to meet the diverse needs of their students during their initial teaching training and in-service training.

### **2.14.3 Turkish teachers' understanding of dyslexia**

According to Turkish education experts, teachers' awareness of reading difficulties is important because teachers' knowledge and experience are related to their students' reading success (Mesmer and Kambach, 2022). However, Turkish teachers have been often criticised for not having enough knowledge of dyslexia or poor reading and not being ready to work with these children. Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2020) conducted a study to explore Turkish classroom teachers' understanding, beliefs, and perceptions of dyslexia; 260 primary teachers took part in this study, which found that teachers' knowledge of dyslexia is inadequate.

According to Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2020), in Türkiye, the initial teacher training programme does not include dyslexia or poor reading courses for student teachers. As a result, teachers who are not familiar with dyslexia or poor reading may feel inadequate and uncertain about their competence in the classroom (Seçkin-Yılmaz and Erim, 2019). Teachers' pedagogical understanding of reading difficulty is critical to developing students' reading skills and success. Teachers who are unfamiliar with dyslexia or poor reading are less likely to use evidence-based approaches, which may negatively impact school performance and student attendance (Egloff *et al.*, 2019). This study also found that almost half of the teachers defined dyslexia as a reading and writing problem that was not related to intelligence (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). Some of these teachers claimed they learned the term 'dyslexia' through books,

the internet, and television or radio stations. Another finding showed that new teachers believe that using coloured reading pens helps children with reading difficulties. This finding can relate to dyslexia being perceived as a visual problem, or that the use of coloured reading markers is an effective intervention for dyslexia (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). Some teachers believe students with dyslexia or poor reading often have behavioural problems. Many teachers indicated that they are not prepared to work with students with dyslexia (Balci, 2019). This study claimed teachers' lack of awareness of dyslexia is related to the fact that they did not participate in dyslexia modules during their undergraduate education. Therefore, this study recommended that classroom teachers complete a course on learning disabilities as part of their undergraduate training to meet the educational needs of pupils (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). The study pointed out that teachers need to understand all elements of dyslexia and have access to evidence-based methods before starting a teaching career. However, while Turkish researchers focus on training teachers specifically on dyslexia, Forlin (2010) suggested that initial teacher training programmes should encourage student teachers to use inclusive pedagogy in their future classrooms, which may benefit all children with different needs.

Children with special needs and those identified with dyslexia do not receive the same opportunities as other children in Türkiye (Yazicioglu, 2020). According to Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2020), the provision of educational support through support rooms (a term that refers to places where Turkish students receive extra support outside the classroom in the school) is important for children with learning difficulties. However, problems such as inadequate physical conditions in educational support rooms and a lack of resources and teaching materials have been reported in Türkiye (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). These problems suggest that children who still receive inclusive education cannot exercise their right to education (Melekoglu,

2014). In addition, classroom teachers' lack of awareness of meeting children's diverse needs and not responding to students' needs properly might affect students' motivation to learn negatively (Seçkin-Yılmaz and Erim, 2019). Therefore, Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş (2020) suggested that teachers' professional development courses should focus on improving teachers' awareness of meeting the needs of students with dyslexia through in-service training courses, workshops, and seminars led by professional teams. Rogoff (1995) highlighted the importance of interactions with larger societies in cultural learning activities. Similarly, professional development courses for teachers are essential for learning to teach because they allow teachers to improve their teaching skills through interacting with knowledge developed in social practices outside the school. In Türkiye, teacher training programmes are also considered vital to creating pedagogical content for students with learning difficulties. Therefore, according to Seçkin-Yılmaz and Erim (2019), educational institutions and academics in Türkiye should consider focusing on educating student teachers on various pedagogical approaches in initial teacher training courses.

As previously stated, in Türkiye, dyslexia is viewed as a brain-related problem that is more complex and complicated than poor reading (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). Students with dyslexia are seen as different from other students with reading problems, and they require individualised education plans. Therefore, Turkish teachers are hesitant to work with these children because they do not know how to implement the IEP prepared by GRC or how to support students in the classroom in general (Balci, 2019). In the UK, teachers tend to see dyslexia as a reading difficulty that is not primarily associated with a neurological problem. As Elliot (2015) discussed, essentialist beliefs about dyslexia can affect teacher readiness; therefore, some teachers, like Turkish teachers, do not feel prepared to support these children in the classroom. In Türkiye, some students with dyslexia receive extra help in educational support rooms

from SEN teachers or specialists. On the other hand, British students who have dyslexia or reading problems receive extra help outside of the classroom from TAs. This can relate to how children with dyslexia are viewed in the two different cultures as a result of their interaction with the cultural community (Rogoff, 2021). However, teachers in both British and Turkish contexts believe structured research-based teaching techniques are effective for children with dyslexia, and teachers should learn about these structured research-based teaching techniques in their initial teacher training or in-service training and then implement these strategies in their classrooms.

#### **2.14.4 Challenges in Turkiye regarding teacher preparation for students with dyslexia**

In Turkiye, a study explored the perspective of dyslexia among student teachers. The study was conducted at the Faculty of Education, Pamukkale University, with 226 student teachers participating in the study (Yurdakal and Kirmizi, 2015). According to the findings, the primary teacher candidates lacked knowledge of dyslexia. Moreover, the study results suggest that trainee teachers did not know how to help students with dyslexia and that they did not know how to arrange classroom environments for these students, even though they have positive attitudes towards working students labelled with dyslexia (Yurdakal and Kirmizi, 2015). As mentioned in Section 2.4, studies with British student teachers also indicated they do not feel confident in their teaching knowledge when working with these children (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015).

Another study, which aimed to take a holistic view of the problems related to dyslexia, found that primary school teachers in Ankara, Turkiye, lack the skills to help children with dyslexia and that policy changes are needed as teachers and schools face problems in teaching and supporting pupils with dyslexia (Balci, 2019). In this study, teachers claimed that they have very little knowledge of dyslexia, stated that dyslexia causes

difficulties in reading, spelling, and writing, and believed that students with dyslexia should be supported in an educational support room via individualised education plans by specialists. However, according to teachers, Turkish primary schools have no dyslexia specialists, and they believe this limitation creates difficulties in meeting the children's needs. Moreover, Turkish teachers find it difficult to adopt appropriate teaching methods and skills in classrooms for students with dyslexia (Balci, 2019). Teachers and school management also find it difficult to cooperate with the families of these students (Akyol *et al.*, 2021). Finally, this study concluded that Turkish teachers do not feel that they have enough training to meet the needs of students with dyslexia. This section mentioned that Turkish student teachers and teachers lack the knowledge and confidence to support students with dyslexia (Yurdakal and Kirmizi, 2015; Balci, 2019) to address this problem, and teachers should gain knowledge and understanding of the impact of dyslexia, learn specific teaching strategies, or provide resources to accommodate children's needs with dyslexia (see previous section). However, according to Gibbs and Elliot (2015), classrooms should be designed to accommodate all learners' needs, including poor readers, and they stated that categorising children with dyslexia as different from other students with poor reading may affect teachers' willingness and efficacy in working with these children. Similarly, to Turkish teachers, British trainee teachers also feel less confident working with students with dyslexia. Both countries mentioned that initial teaching training courses should prepare future teachers to accommodate the different needs of their future students. In Türkiye, researchers believe trainee teachers and in-service teachers need to receive specific training about dyslexia via initial teacher training and professional development courses (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020). On the other hand, British researchers suggest teacher training programmes need to consider promoting inclusive teaching (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). According to Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), if



teachers are encouraged to use inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms for all students, it can assist children who require more help, are different, or are classified as having dyslexia. These teaching approaches will be explained further in the next chapter.

### **2.15 My reflection on dyslexia**

This chapter has explained the term ‘dyslexia’ and its possible impact on people’s ability to read, write, and comprehend. However, Elliot and Gibbs (2015) stated that these problems can also be seen in other students with poor reading. Like Elliot, I believe that no qualitative difference exists between dyslexia and other kinds of problems with reading. Therefore, this chapter also discussed whether it should be defined as poor reading or dyslexia. The term ‘dyslexia’ might help access special services (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). However, some teachers who work with children with dyslexia might have negative attitudes and assumptions about their abilities because the label of dyslexia can negatively affect teachers’ willingness and effectiveness to work with these children (Gibbs and Elliot, 2015). Therefore, many researchers prefer using poor reading or reading problems rather than the term ‘dyslexia’ because it is deficit-oriented (Paseka and Schwab, 2020). This chapter also included teachers’ perspectives on dyslexia. Teachers often want to help children with dyslexia; however, they believe they need to gain more knowledge on dyslexia and learn specific teaching strategies to help children with dyslexia in the classroom. For this reason, they do not feel ready to teach children with dyslexia. On the other hand, teachers are more confident in working with students with other reading problems (Elliot, 2015).

This chapter also considered the role of TAs in supporting students with dyslexia. As TA roles have increased over the years (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018), some of them deliver teaching sessions outside the classroom to children with dyslexia or poor reading. TAs who received training about dyslexia believe they improved their

awareness of dyslexia and their teaching skills (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). However, according to Farrell *et al.* (2010), implementing these specific teaching strategies can also help other children with poor reading and language skills. This chapter also presented the parents' perspective on dyslexia; it highlighted that parents of children with dyslexia or poor reading are more likely to face stress and anxiety because of their children's academic failure and lack of support from the school (Earey, 2013).

Therefore, schools need to include parents in the learning process to increase children's success and reduce the concerns of the family (Yildiz *et al.*, 2012). In addition, this chapter included the voices of students with dyslexia; these students often express their anxiety, stress, and fear of not being successful in school due to a lack of support, especially in higher education or university courses (Chua, 2020). This chapter also explained provisions for learners with dyslexia or poor reading. This section mentioned the dyslexia-friendly school approach, which provides structured reading interventions, multisensory teaching, collaboration with parents, and dyslexia-friendly learning resources for students with dyslexia. However, Eliot and Gibbs (2009) stated that all these approaches are beneficial for all learners with poor reading and should not be limited to students with dyslexia.

Finally, this chapter presented the Turkish perspective on dyslexia. As mentioned above, Türkiye adopted a medical model to explain dyslexia. It is seen as a neurological problem that is more than poor reading, and students need to receive a diagnosis to receive an appropriate education plan (Sümer Dodur and Altındağ Kumaş, 2020).

Furthermore, receiving a diagnosis of dyslexia makes it easier for students to access resources and services. On the other hand, Turkish teachers feel confused by the term 'dyslexia'; they believe they do not know how to help these students because they feel they need to provide different or specific teaching strategies for them, and they express that they did not receive enough training in their initial teaching training on dyslexia

(Balci, 2019). This section also compared the British and Turkish concepts of dyslexia. Dyslexia is viewed differently in these countries due to language and culture, and they follow different ways of identifying and addressing these students' needs. However, in terms of teacher preparedness, both Turkish and British student teachers feel they do not receive adequate initial teacher training to support students with dyslexia. As a result of how dyslexia is understood in these two cultures, Turkish researchers recommend specific dyslexia training, whereas British researchers recommend adopting inclusive pedagogy to support students with dyslexia or poor reading.

**CHAPTER 3: DISABILITY MODELS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Disability studies explore social, political, cultural, and economic factors that define disability. Researchers, professionals, and activists have developed arguments around the different models of understanding disability. These models can help explain individuals' perspectives on disability. In this chapter, I will explore medical, social, and interaction models of disability to help understand different perspectives on poor reading or dyslexia and inclusive pedagogy.

### **3.2 Medical model**

The medical model of disability indicates that people are disabled due to their physical impairments or differences. According to Goering (2015), the medical model looks at what is 'lacking' in the body of the person. Therefore, the medical model uses resources that have been developed for providing the necessary aid to the people, but it can lead to lower expectations, which has a direct influence on the people losing their independence, choice, and control of their own lives (Bunbury, 2019).

According to Toro, Kiverstein, and Rietveld (2020), medical models are based on the view that problems in learning are the results of some organic diseases or disorders and developmental delays. It assumes that organic dysfunction is essentially significant among the causes of learning problems. The disability conditions might be caused by genetic factors, biological problems, or neurological dysfunctions (Toro, Kiverstein, and Rietveld, 2020). For this reason, the medical model of disability focuses on the child's disability and sees the problem within the child, trying to find ways to help the child so that they can better fit within their environment (Massoumeh and Leila, 2012).

Therefore, before making any decisions regarding the educational programmes for students with disabilities, according to the medical model, neurological assessment and medical diagnosis play an essential role (Massoumeh and Leila, 2012). However, much

criticism is associated with the medical model by researchers and disability activists. Therefore, its applicability should be carefully considered.

### **3.3 Social model of disability**

According to Nisker (2019), the social model of disability theorises impairment and disability as different interrelated ideas. The social model is considered relevant to terms such as ‘Universal Design for Learning’, ‘social inclusion’, and ‘inclusive practices’ (Riddle, 2020). The social model argues that a person’s disability has been caused by the way society has been organised without considering how people might be bodily impaired or different (Petasis, 2019). It looks at ways of eliminating the barriers that have been restricting the life choices of people who have disabilities or different needs (Bunbury, 2019). The removal of barriers to facilitate inclusion is a common theme because disability is viewed in the social model as socially constructed (Disability Rights UK, 2012). For example, injuries such as spinal injuries can create mobility impairments, but stairs are considered a physical barrier for people with disabilities (Petasis, 2019).

The limitations are not just limited to physical barriers; societal behaviour towards the individual with a disability can be based on prejudice or stereotypes that hamper the potential growth of that individual (Goering, 2015). Oliver suggests another view (2004): that people with disabilities are socially oppressed, and therefore, to improve people's lives, social barriers to people with disabilities need to be removed and social policies and practices that promote social inclusion and citizenship need to be developed. Despite different opinions about the social model, it continues to receive support from disability rights activists and has helped people with disabilities become more independent (Goering, 2015). According to Alexander-Passe (2018), persons who adopt a social model perspective may hold the view that the reason people with

disabilities face discrimination is because of societal perceptions and attitudes rather than inherent characteristics of disability.

### **3.4 Interactional model of disability**

Comparing the models above, a medical model might have a significant influence on understanding the diagnosis of a child with reading difficulties, which could help to identify the associated disability and might reveal some underlying physical difficulty that can be corrected, for example, eye-tracking problems or auditory discrimination difficulties. On the other hand, environmental factors can influence learning and disability, such as social environment, poverty, or social exclusion. Therefore, a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of disability may be achieved using the interaction model approach, which combines elements from the social and medical models (Shakespeare *et al.*, 2016). According to this theory, people with impairments have underlying medical conditions that doctors might be able to alleviate. In addition, society must discover methods for assisting and empowering persons with disabilities so that they can participate fully in all aspects of social, economic, and political life (Petasis, 2019). According to Petasis (2019), the interaction model has a considerable effect on various methods used in special education. Moreover, the interaction model has many advantages over the other models in considering special education, specifically in responding to differences, implementing intervention, meeting all the needs of an individual, and removing social barriers because it does not concentrate only on the physical impairment or the social environment. According to Massoumeh and Leila (2012), in the medical model, learning disorders are caused by biological factors. In contrast, other research evidence suggests that learning difficulties might be caused by a variety of factors (Catts, 2021). Furthermore, some impairments might be influenced by a combination of biological and environmental factors. Therefore, adopting the interaction model might be useful because it combines both factors.

Educators can provide interventions or extra support in the classroom to compensate for a disadvantaged or inappropriate environment and physical differences.

### **3.4.1 Intersectionality and disability**

According to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), people occupy distinct and particular social positions that are based on a variety of concurrent and multiple identities, including race, sexual orientation, nation, class, ability, and gender. Crenshaw (1989) used the term ‘intersectionality’ to express these complex identities in contrast to categorical generalisations. Intersectionality assumes that people have numerous identities as members of different groups, which results in distinct and complicated experiences of oppression and privilege (Case, 2016).

Having a dyslexia diagnosis has often been associated with children from a middle-class background because these families can afford private assessments (Riddick, 2012). On the other hand, poor reading and poor speech-language skills are often considered more related to a poor social environment. For example, some educators might believe children from low-income households tend to face reading and academic failure because they might have much poorer pre-academic skills, have had little engagement with learning resources, and might have less parental involvement and fewer reading role models (Ferguson, Bovaird, and Mueller, 2007). Similarly, some children who come from ethnic minority families might also be associated with having poor academic skills as a result of being stereotyped. In these cases, student class, race, ethnicity, and physical abilities may all play a role in students' experiences of discrimination.

Intersectional pedagogy explores students' experiences as a synthesis of their colour, ethnicity, class, ability, gender, and life experiences, rather than as a single dimension. It encourages teachers to consider students' overlapping identities and life experiences when designing lessons and implementing pedagogical strategies (Case, 2016).



Similarly, people who adopt an interactional model of disability also suggest considering students' differences, impairments, and the way society is organised makes it difficult for them as individuals with an impairment while planning teaching strategies. Both approaches recognise individuals' differences biologically and socially.

### **3.5 Integrating disability into the theoretical framework**

My research study adopts the interaction model of disability as a part of its theoretical framework to explore educators' perspectives on dyslexia and poor reading because of my experience of both individual differences or impairment and the impact of the social context on learning. Furthermore, intersectionality will help with the analysis of some of my findings, looking at how disability co-occurs with various other kinds of disadvantage.

The different perspectives on disability outlined above (social, medical, and interactional) may be influenced by society and culture. As a result, as previously mentioned, I also intend to use Rogoff's three planes (apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation; see Section 1.5) as a theoretical framework, because teachers' responses to poor reading may be culturally shaped. According to Rogoff (2003), human development 'is a process of people's changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities' (p. 52). Rogoff believes that participation in cultural communities leads to the development of cultural norms, which are the inherited practices, beliefs, and values of a group's members throughout time. As Rogoff (1995) highlighted, people can develop different perspectives by participating in cultural events. In connection with this, people can develop different understandings of disabilities. As mentioned above, I adopted an interactional model of disability as one of the frameworks to explain educators' perspectives on reading difficulty because sometimes individuals can relate poor

reading to environmental factors and problems within children. This model of disability combines medical model and social model; while the medical model focuses on people's bodily impairment, and the social model of disability focuses on removing barriers in the environment, interactional model of disability aligns with Vygotsky's disability theory (1993), as mentioned in Section 1.6. it combines primary disability (physical or psychological differences in bodily function and secondary disability (the effects of a mismatch between societal expectations and cultural developments and the functioning of particular individuals) (Böttcher and Dammeyer, 2012). On the other hand, as mentioned in Section 3.3, the social model of disability argues that the environment and the attitudes of society towards a disability create barriers to education rather than the disability itself (Goering, 2015). In connection with social model disability, Rogoff's (1995) theory on human development emphasised the importance of the relationship between environment and learning. For example, people can develop prejudgements, negative attitudes, and assumptions via interactions with each other in their social contexts, as she mentioned that people inherit customs created by others while also participating in the processes involved in sociocultural activities (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, considering Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis, society can focus on replacing these beliefs and behaviours with positive attitudes like acknowledgement, understanding, acceptance, and respect. From her perspective, people develop through their participation in and contributions to cultural activities that themselves develop through the involvement of people in succeeding generations, rather than culture influencing individual development (Rogoff, 2003).

Individuals may develop teaching strategies through to social participation of in teaching activity activities and interaction with their social community. For example, teachers in different schools might have different approaches to supporting students with poor reading. As explained in Section 1.5, teachers enter as new members of a

school, after which interaction with other teachers and children and school expectations might influence their choice of teaching strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading.

### **3.6 Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed three models of disability, including medical, social, and interactional, how these different models explain disabilities, and how they have contributed to providing the required support to individuals with a disability. This chapter also considered the link between intersectionality and poor reading. Finally, it integrated models of disability into the theoretical framework of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4: INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature on inclusive pedagogy to gain an understanding of inclusive teaching practices for students who need extra or different support, such as students with dyslexia or poor reading. Firstly, this chapter considers how inclusive education is understood as a concept and then interpreted in practice. Secondly, it defines the term ‘inclusive pedagogy’ by explaining inclusive practice for students who need extra or different support, and it presents relevant research on inclusive practice. Later, it discusses the importance of teacher preparedness for promoting inclusive education. This chapter also discusses the challenges of inclusive pedagogy and key points for overcoming these challenges. Finally, it considers some examples of strategies to promote inclusive practice, such as the Index for Inclusion and the UDL, and the importance of student engagement.

## **4.2 Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education has become a global aim for educational institutions (Ainscow, 2005) and is linked to the social model of disability as it focuses on removing barriers rather than on individual bodily impairments or differences. However, whether both medical and social models should be considered while promoting inclusion is also debated (Shakespeare *et al.*, 2016). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the interactional model of disability combines these two disability models, which are also widely used in the education field for responding to differences (Petasis, 2019). Therefore, I adopted the interactional model of disability and intersectionality to understand the implications for educational provision for learners with disabilities in general and reading difficulties in particular.

‘Inclusive education’ is a broad term that includes topics such as pedagogy, attitudes, and curriculum (Qu, 2020). It can also be connected with Rogoff’s (1995) three lenses as it involves personal, interpersonal, and community levels of learning. At the personal

level, Nasri *et al.* (2021) claim that inclusion is about students who can be accommodated in mainstream schools without having to go through any major changes to their education. However, Frumos (2020) opposes the idea that all students with special education needs can be adequately supported in mainstream schools because it can be difficult to meet the requirements of every student in the classroom; a one-size-fits-all strategy will not result in the desired academic success for every child. As a result, some researchers suggested that rather than radical changes in schools, the focus should be on the individual child who needs support (Garcia-Campos *et al.*, 2020). However, this idea raises concerns about social justice for disability (Riddle, 2020). According to McKenna *et al.* (2022), attempting to implement a social justice commitment requires deciding whether to take a 'transformative' or an 'affirmative' approach. Affirmative approaches are primarily concerned with the process of compensating without affecting the principles of sociological systems, whereas transformative methods are concerned with changes in the basics of social structures (McKenna *et al.*, 2022). According to Elias and Mansouri (2023), transformative approaches can create more inclusive pedagogic practices in the school, as this focuses on questioning all assumptions behind the problem's conceptualisation, rather than merely seeking answers to the problem as it now exists (McKenna *et al.*, 2022).

Inclusion education is often linked with social justice; however, the practice of inclusive provisions involves challenges like offering IEPs to children with SEN without their being seen as discriminated against and marginalised (Qu, 2020). Similarly, Griful-Freixenet (2021) stated that the existing scenario is paradoxical for children who must be diagnosed or at the very least labelled as different to obtain the necessary support. On the other hand, according to some disability theorists, to increase inclusion, people should see disability as a type of societal oppression rather than a personal problem (Riddle, 2020). This is often the case with reading difficulties since some schools

struggle to meet the diversity of student needs. As mentioned in Chapter 2, children with dyslexia or poor reading may struggle to receive adequate support in school since the term ‘dyslexia’ identifies a problem in the child, which results in a belief that these students require additional or different support. However, some researchers argue that schools must accommodate all children's needs, regardless of their abilities, including those requiring extra or different support, which has contributed to developing the inclusive pedagogy concept (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

### **4.3 Definition of inclusive pedagogy**

Inclusive pedagogy is an aspect of inclusive education that refers to educational strategies in the educational context, which can also be linked with Rogoff's (1995) personal level of learning as it focuses on individuals' understanding of how to modify teaching for particular learners. For example, some educators believe that individualisation is required for effective teaching (Florian and Beaton, 2018).

Individualisation, also known as differentiated instruction, is a common educational strategy that discovers techniques for educating individual pupils by adjusting teaching based on their requirements (Kaye and Aserlind, 1979; Loreman, 2017). At its most extreme, this viewpoint can mean learners with learning difficulties require one-on-one instruction. When teachers must be focused and make improvements for a wide variety of students, this can be a difficult undertaking (Aleada Lee-Tarver, 2006).

According to Florian and Beaton (2018), inclusive pedagogy, also known as an inclusive educational strategy, is a pedagogical response to individual student characteristics that avoids the occurrence of marginalisation because of differentiation policies designed exclusively to suit individual needs. Teachers are accountable for adjusting the curriculum and learning environment in the classroom to make students more included, since after the Salamanca Agreement, it was widely agreed that teachers

should meet students' educational requirements in the classroom (Forlin, 2004). While many beneficial inclusion methods have been noted, numerous issues have arisen. Many reasons contribute to these issues, including competitive strategies, a lack of funding and resources, and ineffective teaching techniques (Florian and Rouse, 2009). The next sections will explain further details about these issues.

#### **4.4 Inclusive pedagogy in practice**

As stated above, inclusive education requires responding to children's differences in the classroom (Ainscow, 2005), which can be accomplished through pedagogical responses; pedagogy is concerned with how teachers teach and how students learn, and it is an essential component of any effective inclusive approach (Loreman, 2017). Researchers believe that the difficulty for educators attempting to be more inclusive in their classes is determining how to observe and deal with human heterogeneity in ways that include rather than exclude students from what is usually given in the classroom (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Meeting this challenge, however, increases the standard for inclusive practice since expanding what is usually available to all pupils is a difficult educational task. It requires a shift in learning and teaching from one that works for most learners even while offering something 'extra' or 'distinct' for those who struggle to one that includes the creation of a rich learning society marked by learning experiences that are adequately made available for everyone (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) conducted a study in two Scottish primary schools to explore educators' knowledge about 'inclusion' practice in terms of understanding teaching choices. The research highlighted how children with exceptional educational needs are more likely to face exclusion from the regular classroom environment, curricula, and society because of the 'determinist assumptions' that influence them



(Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Misconceptions regarding inclusive education and practice have resulted from a lack of clarity about the term 'inclusion' and debates on whether inclusion is an effective educational practice for students with special or extra educational needs (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) used the phrase 'inclusive pedagogy' to express the multifaceted problems of providing an effective 'education for everyone' in their study. The purpose of inclusive pedagogy is to broaden what is commonly available in the classroom to reduce the need to label some students as different (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). As mentioned in Section 4.3, this is supported by an alteration in pedagogical reasoning from ensuring that all students have equal access to high-quality teaching to ensuring that all students have equal access to high-quality learning opportunities that allow them to actively participate in classroom practices (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) suggest that this perspective on individual diversity varies from prior conceptions about inclusive education and inclusive practice, which are based on the idea of providing for all while excluding some. The inclusive pedagogical method seeks to remove the challenges and stigma attached to labelling some learners as different by concentrating on the learning culture in a classroom. The researchers' goal was to illustrate this complicated system in operation (Amor *et al.*, 2019). The results lead to the conclusion that how educators tackle the topic of inclusion in their everyday practice impacts their inclusive teaching approaches, as indicated by their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about student learning; and their actions and reactions (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

The findings are especially important for teachers who are committed to inclusionary principles but work in educational institutions dominated by policy and practice that use bell-curve thinking, such as developmental norms, to assess learning and categorise learners by ability level (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). The bell-curve model of

distribution states that most events occur around a median point, whereas a few occur at either high or low extreme ends, which underpins many educational practices and organisational ideas (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Sorting students by ability is one example of how this paradigm operates, as is the use of norm-referenced assessments (Florian, 2015). Approaches are used to assess a student's learning ability and determine whether they are qualified for extra assistance. Individual children's educational requirements are commonly classified as 'extra' or 'special' using these sorting processes, which are a structural feature of the school system. As a result, it is anticipated that certain students will require something 'different from' or 'in addition to' what is typically provided to other students their age (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). This can also relate to providing education strategies for students with poor reading; as mentioned in Chapter 2, students with dyslexia or poor reading also have different educational needs than others.

While common, this method tends to limit rather than increase many children's learning and achievement potential in school. An inclusive educational strategy, based on everyone's beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes, creates a slight but significant change in how teachers respond to individual differences in a way that avoids stigmatising some students as less capable (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). All these factors of 'beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes' could be the result of teachers' participation in social activity and interaction with their social community (Rogoff, 2003). Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) findings have far-reaching consequences for teacher education and preparation. First, they provide suggestions for what teachers can do and how they can accomplish it. Second, they shed light on why such behaviours are difficult to develop and sustain. Finally, the findings of a teacher's craft knowledge study might be used to consider what teachers need to know and how they can be taught and supported to work in inclusive classrooms (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

In a study focused on primary school teachers, educators were helped to build inclusive pedagogy to address the requirements of students with SEN (Brennan, King, and Travers, 2019). This is supported by Florian's (2015) conceptual framework, which integrates an inclusive pedagogical approach (IPAA) with essential standards for successful professional development (PD). IPAA can be related to Rogoff's (1995) personal level of learning because it focuses on how teachers build their knowledge of teaching through their participation in training activities. On the other hand, Ainscow's (2005) inclusive education model focuses on the community, interpersonal, and personal levels of learning because it is a broader term that aims to implement inclusion through teacher interactions in the school. According to Brennan, King, and Travers (2019), IPAA aids educators in designing solutions with individual variations that do not exclude any child. It is recommended as a tool for inclusive education researchers, and for application in teacher education and PD settings to assist students and teachers in analysing their inclusive pedagogy. In Brennan *et al.*'s (2019) study, IPAA was introduced to teachers as part of PD courses, and teachers implemented this inclusive teaching approach in their classrooms. Introducing this teaching approach to teachers as part of a PD course can be seen as having elements of Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning as it aims to teach teachers how to imply inclusive teaching approaches in their classroom via interaction with a wider community.

Brennan, King, and Travers' (2019) study investigated how a PD course, supported by the IPAA, can assist teachers in a primary school in the Republic of Ireland in meeting the requirements of students with SEN. The study's findings suggest that IPAA helped teachers move away from deterministic thinking about students' abilities, a shift prompted by successful outcomes for students. Teachers noted that when students were given a choice, they were more driven and engaged in their studies, and they generated higher-quality work. This study also reported that teachers demonstrated greater

efficiency for inclusive practice as a result of positive results in their courses, which aided in the long-term viability of new practices. Finally, this study mentioned that teachers worked successfully with others to increase inclusive practice. The teachers took part in a variety of collaborative tasks, such as teamwork in solving problems, making lesson plans with other educators, observing the other educators, and co-teaching to promote inclusive practices (Brennan, 2017).

#### **4.5 Teacher preparedness**

As discussed above, teachers' preparedness is an important aspect of implementing inclusive pedagogy in the classroom to promote inclusion. Agreement is universal that excellent teaching is the key to better student learning (Timperley and Parr, 2008). Evidence-based and well-articulated educational approaches should underpin good teaching (Coldwell and Simkins, 2011). Knowledgeable, engaged educators who adjust and modify their techniques to their learners' ongoing needs to achieve high-level results across varied student institutions make good practice possible (Timperley and Parr, 2008). Improving the experience for all student teachers in these institutions entails identifying patterns of strengths and weaknesses, reflecting on what has worked in the past, and planning; good practice is now frequently described in more technical terms that measure teaching performance (Coldwell and Simkins, 2011). These are all aspects of courses that help student teachers prepare for their future professions as teachers.

Inclusion in the classroom can also be promoted through university courses for student teachers (Forlin and Sin, 2017). As a result, it has been argued that universities should alter their initial teacher education programmes to foster inclusiveness (Forlin, 2010). Many institutions, however, may find it difficult to adjust their courses because they are governed by legislative standards or have a curriculum that is governed by

governmental or professional authorities (Timperley and Parr, 2008). Furthermore, because training programmes are already overcrowded, it is probable that to adapt the education programme to incorporate inclusive education, other classes that are regarded as vital for original training would have to be eliminated (Timperley and Parr, 2008).

Education faculties can, however, focus more on inclusive education and consider how to provide essential teaching strategies for it; even if it is not mandatory, institutions can create their training system and define their goals in preparation of educators for inclusion to support their teachers for future classroom diversity (Florian and Rouse, 2009). Teachers must gain both academic and practical knowledge to be equipped for inclusion. Educators are unlikely to fully participate in the establishment of inclusive classroom groups unless they have a solid and useful knowledge base (Forlin, 2010).

Furthermore, not only does information play a role in encouraging inclusion in the classroom, but educators' values and attitudes play a role as well (Ferguson *et al.*, 2019). Unlike many other topics covered in initial teacher education, learning about inclusion requires students to challenge their innermost ideas about what belief is correct and fair and consider moral principles and powerful ethical understanding to accept accountability for the schooling of all children, regardless of the diversity of their needs (Forlin, 2010). As a result, preservice teachers should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes and understanding about how to accommodate the diverse needs of children in the classroom. To ensure that teachers are better able to promote inclusive practice, change is needed and potentially an entirely new way of thinking about both original and subsequent professional learning (Forlin, 2010).

As mentioned in Section 1.5, I adopted Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis to understand educators' professional development in their socio-cultural context, which includes teacher preparedness. However, there are other social-cultural theorists who

focus on human development. For example, Vygotsky (1978) is the best-known sociocultural theorist who emphasised that learning happens via interaction with others in their social context, and his learning and development theory influenced other theorists such as Barbara Rogoff (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). Other sociocultural theorists also focus on the relationship between the environment and human development. For example, Bronfenbrenner's (1997) ecological systems theory suggests that a person's development is influenced by a variety of interconnected environmental systems, ranging from personal surroundings such as family to larger social structures like culture. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem all reflect various degrees of environmental impacts on an individual's development and behaviour. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the microsystem has the most influence in these systems. This is the child's closest environment, which includes their family and school. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory places the macrosystem as the final layer of learning systems. It focuses on how cultural components impact a child's development, which consists of the cultural beliefs, attitudes, and social environments that children are exposed to. However, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development does not distinguish between micro- and macro-systems because culture is observable in people's daily activities (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017). According to Vygotsky (1978), in the zone of proximal development, children interact with more experienced partners to acquire the abilities required for applying the thinking tools provided by culture. As they participate in group complex thinking utilising cultural tools of thought, children develop the necessary skills to think independently, adapting these tools for their own needs (Vygotsky, 1978). When children participate in activities within their zone of proximal development, under the guidance and collaboration of experienced individuals, they are able to accomplish tasks that might otherwise be challenging (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, children can tie

their shoes more easily with the assistance and instruction of their parents or older siblings.

As mentioned above, Barbara Rogoff (1995) is influenced by Vygotsky's social-cultural theory and focuses on cultural processes in human development. According to Rogoff (2003), human development 'is a process of people's changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities' (p. 52). Individuals inherit customs created by others while also participating in the processes involved in changing sociocultural activities (Rogoff, 1995). As mentioned in Section 3.5, from Rogoff's perspective, people develop through their participation in and contributions to cultural activities that themselves develop through the involvement of people in succeeding generations, rather than culture influencing individual development (Rogoff, 2003). Every generation uses and expands upon the cultural practices and instruments passed down from earlier generations when participating in sociocultural activities with others. People change cultural practices and institutions at the same time that they evolve through the shared use of cultural practices and tools (Rogoff, 2003). As mentioned in Section 1.3, conducting research during lockdown provided me with the opportunity to include participants with different educational, cultural, and professional backgrounds in my study. In this research Rogoff's three planes of analysis provides a framework for understanding how educators from different cultural and educational backgrounds developed their teaching practices through different kinds of participation in teaching activities in their schools and local communities. For example, school placements can be considered an example of Rogoff's learning theory, and it has an important role for teacher preparedness as it allows student teachers to interact with experienced teachers and children in the placement school; through these interactions, student teachers can learn how to teach children in their future classroom.

Rogoff (1995) primarily focused on how humans, particularly children, learn through interactions with others in daily activities; however, this foregrounding of informal learning might seem to ignore the contribution of academic learning, but Rogoff's contrast is between the solitary learner and learning in a community. This can include learning from academic sources, but as part of a class, and recognising the importance of relationships with other students and the tutor (interpersonal), but also with the community.

#### **4.6 Overcoming challenges to inclusive pedagogy**

As mentioned in Section 4.4, Brennan, King, and Travers (2019) explored the effectiveness of including an inclusive pedagogy approach as part of PD courses for teachers to guide them in meeting the requirements of children with special needs. According to their findings, the inclusive pedagogy approach helped teachers create a learning environment that supports all students without labelling any student as different most of the time. However, implementing inclusive teaching can be difficult, as some teachers believe that differentiation by choice does not work for all students (Brennan, King, and Travers, 2019). Despite actively participating in debate and the exchange of teaching methods, teachers had challenges in certain instances when attempting to refrain from employing methodologies that stigmatised learners with SEN by categorising them as different. In addition, Brennan, King, and Travers' (2019) study suggests that some teachers see the problem in a child due to the child's learning difficulties diagnosis. However, in implementing inclusive pedagogy, educators must shift from viewing SEN labels as learner deficits to viewing learning difficulties as teaching problems to be overcome (Florian, 2015). According to students in Brennan, King, and Travers' research (2019), a continuous PD course is required to shift this viewpoint. Furthermore, it emphasises the significance of collaborating with others in



meeting individual learning goals, which may have influenced the learner's choice in this case.

Brennan, King, and Travers (2019) suggested that some students in their study required extra or different support, such as pre-learning lessons, before they were expected to participate in choices, such as students with dyslexia or poor reading. Teachers in these instances, were required to alter their teaching methods to address the requirements of students who had difficulties making choices, displaying the concept of a continuum of teaching methods that may be shifted to various levels of intensity based on student needs. However, the research findings may claim that the inclusive pedagogy approach did not help teachers to include some students with SEN without labelling them as different (Brennan, King, and Travers, 2019). As a result, any changes to the IPAA must not be interpreted as a licence for teachers to use exclusive teaching methods in providing the requirements of students with SEN (Brennan, King, and Travers, 2019), for example, identifying at the start of the class that a student with SEN will require additional support to participate in a learning activity or depending on explicit differences such as different educational goals for students. This highlights the significance of teachers creating a variety of pedagogies from which to choose to address different learning requirements, rather than a single set of teaching methods for all students (Brennan, King, and Travers, 2019). In addition, collaboration between the class teacher and the SEN teacher can help students achieve their goals in a whole-class context.

Teachers enter the policy arena by considering the implications of inclusion when problems of power and equity come up, and this may include integrating the views of children and parents (O'Brien, 2017). Teachers first need to build inclusive pedagogy by understanding pupils' diverse needs and accepting that they must identify and meet these different needs (O'Brien, 2017). Schools must also address stereotypes about

socioeconomic status, differences in colour and gender, special needs, and issues of intersectionality of complex identities in contrast to categorical generalisations (see Section 3.4). Schools that understand and implement inclusive policies, recognise differences, and craft effective pedagogies are also more likely to raise standards for all students (O'Brien, 2019). Schools can benefit from adopting a 'connected pedagogy' in which students can make connections between their experiences inside and outside the classroom (Smith and Barr, 2008). These connections make it easier for all students to understand the purpose behind the tasks that have been given (O'Brien, 2019). For this reason, it is worth emphasising that good schools value relationships. The concept of teacher collaboration is also worth considering (Smith and Barr, 2008). Evidence suggests that students are more likely to be engaged when teachers take a holistic approach and teach collaboratively in schools (O'Brien, 2019). Furthermore, research shows that progress cannot be made without addressing differentiated, quality teaching and learning (Ainscow and Miles, 2008). Creating shared spaces where teachers can reflect on and evaluate their work will ultimately benefit all students (Smith and Barr, 2008).

The Index for Inclusion was introduced by Booth and Ainscow (2002) to support inclusive development in schools in the UK. The index aims to improve schools' inclusive values by building collaborative relationships with teachers and improving the teaching and learning environment. It focuses on three key areas: creating an inclusive culture, producing inclusive policies, and evolving inclusive practices (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Introducing the index in schools can be considered an example of Rogoff's (1995) interpersonal level of learning because teachers can develop these approaches through interactions with each other. Similar to the Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002), another well-known American-origin approach that considers the diversity of students and supports inclusive education is the Universal

Design for Learning (UDL), which combines different materials and techniques according to student learning preferences (Griful-Freixenet *et al.*, 2020). UDL can also be linked to Rogoff's (1995) interpersonal level of learning because it considers increasing the inclusion of students in the school via interactions between educators. UDL aims to engage all children in learning tasks while maintaining high standards. Engaging in activities in different ways, understanding how pupils demonstrate their learning, and measuring learning in different ways should be part of a different approach to teaching and learning (O'Brien, 2019).

#### **4.7 Universal Design for Learning**

In the context of inclusive education, UDL is the concept of designing all elements of a learning environment based on the broad needs of students (Dalton, McKenzie, and Kahonde, 2012). UDL is an educational approach that builds on current neuroscience research and universal design principles to promote access, participation, and development for all learners in the common curriculum (Griful-Freixenet *et al.*, 2020). UDL recognises the need to create content and learning experiences that allow for different forms of expression, interpretation, and participation to ensure the engagement of diverse learners. Similarly, inclusive pedagogy aims to allow all students to participate in the social and intellectual life of the classroom to promote inclusive education. However, UDL and inclusive pedagogy are slightly different. While inclusive pedagogy suggests a shift in teaching to accommodate all learners including the student who needs extra and different (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011), UDL is a widely inclusive concept without focusing on who needs extra or different (Sanger, 2020). In addition, inclusive pedagogy might be considered a social model of disability because it focuses on removing barriers in the environment for children who need extra support, while UDL is more likely to have elements of a medical approach because it adopts brain-based learning. However, applying UDL principles in the classroom might

also increase the chance of fostering inclusive pedagogy as part of inclusive education. So, UDL can be considered an alternative way to promote inclusive education (Fornauf and Erickson, 2020).

In the early days of UDL, the focus was on the use of technology to enhance accessibility (Katz, 2013). Recent breakthroughs in the principles and application of UDL have led to the recognition of additional educational approaches that can improve accessibility for diverse learners. UDL has proven to help learners in terms of accessibility, engagement, and progression (Rogers-Shaw *et al.*, 2018). However, few approaches provide a comprehensive framework that combines these components based on primary education research.

#### **4.8 Student engagement**

Student engagement is an important part of inclusive pedagogy to promote inclusive education (Sanger, 2020). Students who are actively involved in school learn more, obtain better marks, and are more likely to seek further education. However, as students go through the educational system, their levels of involvement tend to decline. Thus, educational pedagogies that support students' social and intellectual participation in diverse-teaching methods are critical (Katz, 2013).

##### **4.8.1 Inclusive education and student engagement**

According to Rangvid (2018), student engagement in learning is critical for academic progress since children who are engaged and connected to their schools have higher academic success, higher attendance rates, lower drop-out rates, and fewer behavioural problems. Teachers' attitudes, the school atmosphere, and the attitudes of parents and classmates may all impact a student's level of participation (Katz, 2013). School engagement is important to student success and includes social (emotional) and academic (behavioural) engagement (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004).

To be emotionally involved, a child must have a sense of belonging, interact with peers, and participate in social activities at school (Van Mieghem *et al.*, 2020). This is similar to the concept of social inclusivity, in which all students have a feeling of identity and belonging and are involved in the social life of their school and classroom (Katz, 2013). On the other hand, academic engagement (behavioural engagement) refers to students' active participation in their studies (Rangvid, 2018). When students exhibit engaged behaviour, such as on-task activity, and display an interest in their studying, they are academically engaged (Skinner *et al.*, 2008). Academically included students participate in the normal classroom's learning activities; however, a student might be academically engaged but not academically involved. Academic inclusion principles, on the other hand, would assume academic engagement since a student must be engaged to participate actively in classroom learning (Vallee, 2017). Student participation might have been used as a measurement of social and academic inclusivity and could potentially predict accomplishment if examined in the setting of a typical classroom with all students working on the same activities (Katz, 2013).

Although student involvement is variously defined, most studies agree that a socially engaged child interacts favourably with classmates and instructors, has a sense of belongingness, and has a good social self-concept (Katz, 2013). These measurements, on the other hand, are significantly different. Although social interactions may be observed, belonging and self-concept need self-reporting, which can be accomplished through an interview or a survey. Both involvement in academic tasks and intellectual involvement in those tasks are now widely used to describe academic engagement. According to Messiou (2019), on-task behaviour is visible in evaluating academic engagement, but the satisfaction of studying, academic self-efficacy, and views about learning need self-report, much like measuring social engagement (Katz, 2013).

## **4.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced inclusive pedagogy as effective teaching for all learners, including those who need something extra or different. This chapter addressed issues related to teachers preparing themselves to accommodate all students' needs in the classroom. It also explained how teachers can adapt teaching strategies related to the inclusive pedagogy approach for learners and how these approaches are beneficial to children's learning, well-being, and social lives. This chapter also introduced programmes as an alternative way to support inclusive education, such as IPAA, the Index for Inclusion, and UDL. Furthermore, it highlighted how effective teaching and meeting students' needs in the classroom contribute positively to students' future adult life. Being included and receiving appropriate support from teachers can improve students' self-esteem, confidence, and motivation, which makes these students less likely to drop out of school. Finally, it emphasised the importance of student engagement, including both academic and social engagement, in promoting inclusion.

## **CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY**

## **5.1 My journey towards a PhD**

Before moving on to methodology, I will briefly share my journey towards a PhD to help readers understand how my study methodology and design were formed.

After completing a master's degree in special education needs in the United Kingdom in 2017, I decided to pursue a PhD in education. On October 1, 2018, I began my PhD programme. I passed RDC.1 (project approval) and RDC.2 (confirmation of route form) and received approval from the Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1) to begin data gathering for my study, all on schedule. I aimed to explore future teachers' and primary teachers' perspectives on inclusive pedagogy for students with poor reading. My study's data collection methods included classroom observations and interviews. The plan was to interview student teachers and follow them into their placement school, then observe classroom teachers on separate occasions teaching different subjects, followed by a one-hour interview after each observation. In February 2020, I started seeking participants and presented my research to potential participants. However, due to COVID-19, England went into lockdown for eight weeks in March 2020, and primary schools stopped face-to-face teaching. At this point, I was forced to rethink my plans for data collection and, subsequently, the design and direction of my study.

I held a Zoom conference with two primary school teachers from different schools in July 2020. They agreed to participate in my study and allow me to carry out observations in their classrooms in the following school year. However, when the next academic year began, one of the teachers stated that they were concerned and overworked due to COVID-19 and that their school would not permit visitors. Therefore, the teacher resigned from the study.

On September 4, 2020, I interviewed the other teacher in the school and photographed the classroom resources. The teacher informed me that I would be allowed to do



observations before Christmas. However, due to an increase in COVID-19 cases, the entire country was placed under lockdown again in November 2020. Then the lockdown was lifted in December. I started taking Swivl training (a robotic device that tracks an educator wearing a marker as they walk around the classroom) to use for my observation in the new year, but another lockdown began on January 5, 2021. Following discussions with my supervisor, I changed my method of data collection because we did not know when the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown would be lifted. I found new participants for my study and used Zoom to conduct 30-minute interviews on supporting children with dyslexia or poor reading with five teachers from different schools and educational backgrounds. Then I invited my Turkish colleagues to participate in my research and conducted interviews with them. In addition, during the lockdown, I attended online workshops led by a dyslexia specialist on multisensory teaching to support students with dyslexia. Although interviews provided information on teaching strategies, my supervisor and I agreed that, for more information and richer data, I should conduct classroom observations, so we waited for the schools to reopen. On March 8, 2021, schools restarted face-to-face teaching. In March, I emailed the school and the teacher I had previously interviewed, who had agreed to observation. They stated they could not accept visitors until May because of the schools recently having reopened, the intensity of the work to resettle the children, and the three-week Easter holiday. I waited until May, then contacted the teacher and headteacher, and scheduled the observation date for June 9, 2021. After receiving the required permissions from the school headteacher and parents, and due to receive my first COVID-19 vaccination, I was accepted as a visitor to the school on June 9, 2021. I observed the class for three hours using Swivl. During the summer, I searched for new schools to collect data. In July, I contacted the second school, where the headteacher

was interested in participating in my research for the coming academic year. I visited this school and conducted interviews and observations on October 22, 2021.

Conducting a research study is a journey that includes real-life experiences and can be affected by the circumstances around us. As mentioned above, the methodology and design of my research were heavily influenced by COVID-19 restrictions. Furthermore, being a student funded by the Turkish government and having a deadline for completing a PhD in four years put more pressure on me. All these factors led me to follow a different path from the one I had planned for the data collection. However, as mentioned in Section 1.3, following different paths of data collection became a strength of my research as it provided a diverse group of participants with different educational and cultural backgrounds and multiple perspectives on poor reading, which is also consistent with my positionality as a researcher.

## **5.2 Positionality**

Ontology concerns reality and the nature of existence (Crotty, 1998). Ontology can be thought of as having two main approaches: realism and relativism. Realists believe only one reality exists; on the other hand, relativists believe that multiple realities exist that are interpreted by individuals. My study perspective is relativist, as I believe individuals might have different perspectives and understandings, specifically about dyslexia or poor reading. Furthermore, these different perspectives might be informed by their social and cultural experiences. Therefore, this study adopts Rogoff's sociocultural framework (1995) as a theoretical framework to follow the relativist perspective in understanding how educators view reading difficulties and develop their teaching strategies for students with reading difficulties.

According to Crotty (1998), epistemology is a way to see and understand the world. Regarding epistemology, I follow an interpretivist approach as a researcher because I

want to explore educators' perspectives, understandings, and experiences with poor reading and their choice of teaching strategies in their classroom settings while also reflecting on my understanding of dyslexia or poor reading.

Interpretivism aims to understand deeply human actions in a particular context (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, Hammersley (2013) suggested that:

*Interpretivists argued that in studying the social world, it is essential to draw upon our human capacity to understand fellow human beings 'from the inside' – through empathy, shared experience, and culture, etc – rather than solely from the outside in the way that we are forced to try to explain the behaviour of physical objects (p.26).*

Therefore, the advantage of this approach is that interpretivist researchers can look at different ways people behave or events in their social context. In addition, it can provide researchers with valuable data to examine people's feelings, perspectives, emotions, and expectations in natural settings (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). As an interpretivist researcher, adopting Rogoff's (1995) three planes to observe development has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers' perspectives of reading difficulty and their responses are shaped by their local context. Despite the advantages of this approach, one of the limitations of interpretivism is that findings cannot easily be generalised to other people and other contexts (Cohen, 2002). According to certain epistemological positions, this can lead to reductions in the validity and usefulness of research results, according to procedures used in the natural sciences. However, within the epistemological position that I adopted, it is more appropriate to consider whether my research is trustworthy. I aimed to achieve this by carefully checking that I genuinely captured educators' perspectives of teaching strategies in their particular social context.

Another limitation levied against interpretivism is that it tends to be subjective rather than objective in its ontological view (Mack, 2010). Research results are inevitably

influenced by the researcher's own perception, his or her own belief system, ways of thinking, or cultural preference, which can reveal many biases. This is, however, consistent with my relativist ontological stance; I believe it is important to collect multiple views on pieces of social reality, such as dyslexia or poor reading, to better understand its complexity.

A paradigm can be characterised as 'a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research' (Bogdan and Biklen, cited in Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006, p.2). The social constructionist's paradigm believes people construct knowledge via social interaction with others in their social context (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). According to Burr (2015), language is very important to social constructionists, as interactions between people in their daily lives are viewed as the practices through which our shared forms of knowledge are constructed. As a result, what we consider to be reality, which varies historically and between cultures, might be regarded as our current accepted means of viewing the world. For example, educators might exchange their understanding and knowledge of dyslexia or poor reading in their school settings; however, these shared understandings and knowledge can be different in different sociocultural contexts.

The objective of research using this paradigm is to understand as much as possible participants' perspectives on the circumstances being examined (Creswell, 2016). In my research, the social constructionist paradigm will help me to understand how educators constructed their knowledge of reading difficulty in their social context and how this affected their choice of teaching students with reading difficulty.

### **5.3 Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore teachers' teaching strategies for students with poor reading in mainstream schools. A qualitative research approach

provides data about attitudes, emotions, observations, thoughts, decisions, and expectations from groups or individuals relevant to the specific research problem (Parker and O'Reilly, 2013). Mitchell (1983) describes qualitative research design as the 'detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) that the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibits) the operation of certain generally identified theoretical principles' (p.192). The theoretical principles shaping my research are Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis and Ainscow's (2005) inclusive education model.

A case study approach to research was adopted as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident' (Yin, 2014, p.16). According to Gomm (2000), a case study is working on and exploring something, perhaps 'a person, community, or phenomenon' (Sturman, 1997, p.61) in great depth. Through the use of a case study methodology, I aimed to explore educators' opinions related to teaching strategies to support students with reading difficulties. The benefit of a case study, according to Wellington (2015), is that it is illustrative and illuminating, accessible, and easily disseminated, keeping the reader's attention.

This study used a multiple-case study design to explore three cases related to the teaching context. The boundaries of the case studies in my project are:

- Case One, practice: classroom teachers and a TA in two mainstream schools in South West England.
- Case Two, preparation: teachers who completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Education course.
- Case Three, Turkish practice: Turkish teachers who are doing PhDs in education.

### 5.3.1 Participants

The participants in this research study are three primary education teachers, one special education teacher, one teaching assistant, one master's student, one secondary school teacher, five Turkish teachers who are doing PhD in the education field at Plymouth University, and myself, a special needs teacher from Turkiye also studying for a PhD at Plymouth.

In the original research design, I intended to use purposeful sampling to explore teaching strategies; this method is commonly used in qualitative research to define and select cases that are rich in data for the most efficient use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, I resorted to convenience sampling, and so my study included the participants with whom I was able to make contact during lockdown. This approach allowed me to include different socio-cultural and educational perspectives on poor reading, which enhanced the originality and breadth of my research.

*Table 1: Demographics of participants*

<b>Participant pseudonyms</b>	<b>Settings</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Working experience</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
Lily	Primary school (South School)	Year 6 teacher	30 years	QTS Primary Education
Cecilia	Primary school (North School)	Deputy headteacher	13 years	QTS Primary Education
Hallie	Primary school (North School)	TA	11 years	TA course
Ethan	School for children with autism spectrum conditions	SEN teacher	3 years	Master's in SEN
Ellie	Primary school	Year 2 teacher	2 years	PGCE
Ashley	Secondary school	Biology teacher	6 months	PGCE
Clara	Education Department	Master's student	Placement year	PGCE
Semiha	Education Department	PhD student	Placement year	Special Education Needs

Kenan	Education Department	PhD student	5 years	Special Education Needs
Aleyna	Education Department	PhD student	3 years	Special Education Needs
Yakup	Education Department	PhD student	5 years	Primary Education
Remzi	Education Department	PhD student	Placement year	Early Childhood Education

Thirteen participants were included in this study. Participants were divided into three groups: primary educators in South West England, newly qualified teachers who had completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course, and Turkish PhD (special education) students. These participants shared their knowledge and perspectives on teaching strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading.

### **5.3.1.1 School descriptions**

As previously stated, the data were mainly collected from two primary schools, which are identified as North School and South School. North School was in a rural area, and according to the educators, the students in this school come from less advantaged homes, and the school provides reading interventions to compensate for the children's less advantaged environment. South School, on the other hand, is located in a middle-class town, and the teacher focuses on preparing students for a successful transition to secondary school. Until recently, South School had an autism unit; therefore, the school previously offered specialised provisions for children with communication difficulties, particularly those with autism spectrum conditions. In connection with previous specialised provisions, South School has Nursery Plus, a separate unit that provides extra support to children who are behind their peers academically.

## **5.4 Ethical considerations**

The participants were chosen from primary school teachers, teachers who completed the PGCE course recently, and Turkish teachers. Participants were given information sheets (see Appendix 2) to read and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) if they were willing to take part. Also included in this form was the information that participants could withdraw up to two weeks after interviews without giving any reasons (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault, 2015). This was reinforced throughout the data collection period by the researcher. The information sheet included the following: an outline of the procedure, reasons for the research, a request for permission to participate, a request for permission to record interviews, the right to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity of data, the secure storage of data, the opportunity to validate data, and adherence to the BERA (2018) ethical guidelines throughout the research process. Furthermore, the headteacher letter, classroom observation consent form, and parent letter (see Appendices 4,5,6) were provided by the researcher to inform parents that no photographs or recordings were taken of the children.

## **5.5 Confidentiality**

All collected data has been made anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. Participants' responses were anonymised; the names of participants were not included at any point.

The information given by participants has been kept securely according to the rules of the Data Protection Act of 1998. In the interview transcripts, I removed all names of individuals and locations from the interview and assigned different name identifiers. The information provided by participants was not passed to anyone outside the research team.



## **5.6 Data collection methods**

In this research study, a mixed-method data collection approach was used, which expanded the options for a rich dataset by utilising different approaches (Creswell, 2007). Observations and semi-structured interviews were used to obtain rich details of data and to explore teaching strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading in mainstream schools. Using these methods allowed me to access participants' perspectives about teaching to students with reading difficulty.

As earlier mentioned, the data collection of this research was heavily affected and delayed by COVID-19 restrictions. During the lockdown, data were collected first from teachers who had recently completed the PGCE course and then data were collected from Turkish PhD students via Zoom interviews. Then the second set of interviews was conducted with primary teachers by using a voice recorder. After the first set of interviews, I had to wait 15 months to collect observational data for the research because COVID-19 restrictions prevented me from obtaining access to classrooms.

### **5.6.1 Observation**

Observation is 'the systematic description of events, behaviours, and objects in the study-selected social setting' (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p.76 cited in Kawulich, 2012). Observations are useful research tools that provide an investigator with the opportunity to gather first-hand live data by using the five senses in social situations or activities (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017). In this study, I used observation to provide information on teachers' behaviours in natural settings related to teaching strategies (see Appendix 7). Before observations for ethical considerations, I provided information sheets, a letter for the head teacher, a letter for parents, and a classroom observation consent form to schools.

Two primary schools in South West England were included in the observations.

Observations were conducted both inside and outside the main classroom. I observed a whole-classroom teaching session for two hours and a group teaching session for 30 minutes at the first school. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I interviewed the classroom teacher a year before conducting observations. At the second school, I observed a reading intervention for 30 minutes before doing educators interviews. Videos were recorded by a device called Swivl, during both observations. The Swivl is a device designed to hold an iPad, camera, or smartphone securely. It has a remote-controlled marker that allows users to control the device from a distance. This device aims to monitor and record video footage of a person in motion (Swivl, 2023). I did not participate in the events; instead, I carefully watched them (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017).

The observations provided me with important data related to teaching practices in primary schools. However, the observation method of data collection also has potential weaknesses; notably, cultural differences can influence the interpretation of the data. In a study by Kawulich (2005), she noted that the observer's position within a particular culture played a role in data collection, which can have its limitations. However, I do not believe that in my research this was a limitation; instead, because my understanding of the topic has been formed within my own culture, I was able to bring fresh eyes to the culture of the group I observed. As mentioned earlier (see Section 1.4) Tobin describes cross-cultural observations as 'making the familiar strange and the strange familiar' (Tobin, 1999, p.124). During the observations, I asked the teachers about events that were new to me, but which might have seemed commonplace to them. With their explanations, the strange became familiar to me, and sometimes the familiar became strange to them.

### **5.6.2 Interviews**

Interviews have long been used in research as a way of obtaining detailed information about the topic or subject. Interviews ‘involve a set of assumptions and understandings about the situation which are not normally associated with a casual conversation’ (Denscombe, 1998, p.172). In this study, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 8) were used for data collection. In semi-structured interviews, questions are flexible and open-ended, and the interviewer has control over the questions (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017). Interviews were conducted in two stages to enable participants to discuss freely, and then a follow-up email was used to clarify points and ask further questions. This maximised the likelihood of success of the interview (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017). The use of interviews allowed participants to openly express their experiences and viewpoints on dyslexia and poor reading and share their opinions on teaching strategies.

### **5.6.3 Focus group**

One of the data collection methods in qualitative research is using a focus group, which involves interviewing a small group of people with similar backgrounds or interests to discuss one topic to gain a better understanding of the topic (Mack, 2010). In this study focus group interviews were used to gather information on dyslexia or poor reading and teaching strategies from Turkish participants who are studying PhD in the field of education.

### **5.7 Data analysis**

To analyse a case study, ‘it must be described within an empirical context or topic in the study's structure’ (Thomas, 2011, p.512), or as George and Bennett put it (2005, p.69), ‘the research area should be clearly identified by the investigator; that is, the ‘class’ or ‘subclass’ of incidents in which one case or several cases are instances to be analysed’.

Therefore, the topic of the analysis is an instance of some phenomenon, and the phenomenon involves the theoretical framework. Therefore, the object is an analytical context in which the case (subject) is understood and illustrated. Nevertheless, 'it is not necessary at the start of the analysis to identify the object; this often happens later in the process of exploration' (Thomas, 2011, p.515). Concerning this, my research focuses on educators' responses to reading difficulties, and using Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analyses will help me to explain how they developed their responses to reading difficulty.

### **5.7.1 Reflexive thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is widely used for 'identifying analysing, and reporting patterns' (themes) within qualitative data, organising and describing the data set 'in (rich) detail' (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p.78). The different types of thematic analysis include reflexive thematic analysis, which is one of several varieties of thematic analysis defined as 'a theoretically flexible method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset' (Braun and Clarke, 2012 p.4). Reflexive thematic analysis emphasises the researcher's active participation in knowledge development (Byrne, 2021); the codes reflect the researcher's interpretations of the meaning patterns found in the dataset.

In my study, reflexive thematic data analysis was used to interpret to data and identify themes related to the educators' understanding of dyslexia and the choice of pedagogy for students with dyslexia or poor reading, from the viewpoints of educators and teachers, based on data from interviews and classroom observations. Approaches to thematic analysis are also numerous. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a six-step procedure for reflexive thematic analysis. These steps include familiarisation, coding, producing themes, revising the themes, describing, and identifying themes then finally

writing up (Braun *et al.*, 2016). In my study, I followed the six steps discussed below. Codes were generated both deductively and inductively. Additionally, multi-layer analysis (Robbins, 2007) was used to analyse the findings incorporating different levels of analysis: Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis, Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom ethnography, and models of disability, which will be discussed further in the Section 5.7.6.

### **5.7.2 Pre-analysis transcribed audio recording and familiarisation**

In my study, all the data were recorded, transcribed, and encrypted before being analysed. I used a voice recorder and Zoom recordings for interviews. For classroom observations, I used Swivl to record the teaching session. Before that, I received multiple training sessions on Swivl from the University IT staff.

All participants' interactions provided audio and video files in MP4 format, which I then saved as password-protected documents on One Drive under the Data Protection Act 2018. A secure online transcription service, Happy Scribe, was used to transcribe the data. I just kept the audio file on Happy Scribe for the duration of the transcribing process and then deleted it from the site permanently to protect the confidentiality of the data. The plain text (.txt) format of the fully transcribed and anonymised data was selected because it is an appropriate form that removes all information that could lead to the identification of individuals.

Happy Scribe provides only 70% accurate transcriptions. I manually reviewed the recordings and transcriptions for several hours to ensure that the information presented was correct when compared to the source. However, this was insufficient to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, so I checked transcriptions with a native English speaker to help me confirm that the audio had been accurately transcribed, which was needed for starting the data analysis process.

### **5.7.3 Initial coding**

Coding refers to the process of giving codes, names, or labels to data (Punch, 2005).

The two ways of coding are deductive and inductive. Deductive coding aims to generate codes following a predetermined code. On the other hand, inductive way coding may create codes that are entirely reflective of the data's content and unbound by any predetermined codes. In this instance, data are 'open-coded' rather than coded to match a pre-existing coding frame to best convey meaning as stated by the participants (Byrne, 2021). I used both deductive and inductive ways to code and organise my data in Microsoft Word (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The transcriptions from UK educators and Turkish colleagues were manually highlighted and coded using the 'comments' feature in Microsoft Word. I began by highlighting important sentences and phrases by using the deductive approach to search for answers to specific research questions, and I gave them codes describing their content. To generate the first codes, I carefully highlighted important data in the transcriptions. The data were analysed immediately at the end of each session and several times throughout the analysis. Then, when I started analysing data a second time, I noticed using deductive coding was not adequate; I was missing data that I found important, such as the word 'struggling'. Therefore, my data analysis also included inductive coding, so I started using codes for important and interesting data in the transcripts less directly relevant to research questions after finishing the first coding for educators' interviews in Microsoft Word (see Appendix 9).

### **5.7.4 Generating and revising the themes**

At the end of the coding process for educators' perspectives on pedagogy and understanding of dyslexia or poor reading (see Section 5.7.3), the coded data was reviewed and analysed, and similar codes were combined. As a result of this process, I

began to develop main themes and sub-themes (see Appendix 10) that were meaningful in the dataset to help answer the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2013).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme is a pattern of data responses related to the study question; nevertheless, no definition is universally accepted (Braun and Clarke, 2016). Themes were generated from my interpretation of data and connections that I chose throughout data analysis, which was accomplished through the coding process. My research shows these themes by answering the research questions and also by sporting other entering features of the data from an individual perspective and experience with students with dyslexia or poor reading.

### **5.7.5 Identifying themes**

The process of identifying themes is referred to as defining the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.92). At this stage, I defined and named important themes concerning both the dataset and the research questions. In my study, I used both semantic and latent themes to identify themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent (cited in Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Semantic themes lie ‘...within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written.’ (p.84). In contrast, the latent level looks beyond what has been said and ‘...starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies - that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data’ (p.84).

In my study, themes were identified in two phases: firstly, I identified semantic themes, which were answering research questions such as support for learners, teacher preparedness, and roles and relationships, and these were developed mainly by using deductive codes (see Section 5.7.3). Then, as I was looking for more depth in the data

via using more inductive coding, it led me to identify latent themes such as understanding differences, the image of the learner with reading difficulty, and engaging students with reading difficulty.

### **5.7.6 Reporting**

While reporting the analysis of the data, as a researcher and an SEN teacher, I also reflected on my perspective on the findings. My understanding of dyslexia and pedagogy was also shaped by my own experience with students with poor reading, which can be related to Rogoff's (1995) personal level of learning as people learn through their participation in an activity. For example, I have discovered that my perspective on dyslexia differs from that of my Turkish colleagues, regardless of the fact that we have similar cultural and educational backgrounds. As a result, I decided to include my viewpoint on reading difficulties in this research findings.

I re-examined the data and analysis for several months to ensure that the themes were related logically and meaningfully to produce a compelling story from the data and that themes were expanded on when appropriate while also maintaining internal consistency and being able to convey their unique narratives when separated from other themes (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Reflexive TA enabled me to use the research data to address the research questions, and I was able to write up and present my findings in the thesis' findings section (Charmaz, 2006). I combined findings from the recent literature with selections of my data to support my results.

As mentioned above, I also used multi-layered data analysis to present my findings and discussion. The first layer was Rogoff's sociocultural theory under three planes of analysis, which helped me to explain how educators learn and develop their teaching strategies. The second layer was elements of Tobin's comparative classroom ethnography method, which was used for understanding and noticing differences in



educational in different school cultures. In addition, I adopted an interactional model of disability as the part of a theoretical framework to understand educators' understanding of reading difficulties.

## **5.8 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness implies that researchers can convince themselves and others that their research findings are important (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) expanded the idea of trustworthiness by including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria to complement the traditional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. These trustworthiness criteria will be described, along with an explanation of my efforts to meet these criteria.

### **5.8.1 Credibility**

The 'fit' between participants' perspectives and the researcher's representation of them is referred to as credibility (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Using multiple sources of information and employing various data collection methods is one suggested approach to achieving credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

To ensure credibility, I used various data collection methods, such as classroom observations and interviews. This allowed me to engage with participants in their settings by using multiple data tools to obtain multiple realities and explore phenomena. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggested peer reviews as an external check on the research process, which may improve credibility, therefore I shared interview transcripts with some of my participants and my supervisors to check preliminary findings and interpretations based on raw data.

### **5.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the generalisability of research. This means that findings found in one particular context can be applied to other contexts or settings as well (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Qualitative research is difficult to generalise; however, the researcher is responsible for providing detailed descriptions so that individuals attempting to apply the findings in their context can assess transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In my study, I attempted to provide detailed descriptions of educators' perspectives on teaching strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading. These descriptions included in-depth explanations of the participants' experiences, viewpoints, educational backgrounds, and social context. For example, I described two primary school locations (see Section 5.3.3); North School was in a rural area, and according to teachers, their students had poor language and speech skills due to their less advantaged backgrounds; the school provided reading interventions for these students. As a researcher, I provided sufficient details for readers with a similar context to this school to assess whether study results will transfer to their contexts.

### **5.8.3 Dependability**

To attain dependability, researchers can guarantee that the study process is rational, traceable, and well-documented (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). When readers can study the research method, they are better able to judge the research's dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Auditing a research study's procedure is one way for it to demonstrate dependability. A researcher develops an audit trail by keeping track of all research choices and actions throughout the study (Carcary, 2009). An audit trail gives readers proof of the choices and decisions the researcher took on theoretical and methodological issues throughout the study (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). According to Sandelowski (1986 cited in Carcary, 2009, p.15), a study's findings are:

*Auditable when another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by the investigator in the study. In addition, another researcher could arrive at the same or comparable but not contradictory conclusions given the researcher's data, perspective, and situation.*

To ensure dependability, in my study, I maintained raw data, video and audio recordings, field notes, interview observation transcripts, and a reflective diary to assist me in organising, relating, and cross-referencing data and making the study process's reporting easier. All these methods provide a clear audit trail for my research study.

#### **5.8.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is associated with showing how the researcher's interpretations and findings are drawn from the data, which necessitates the researcher demonstrating how conclusions and interpretations were reached (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (1989) defined confirmability as the achievement of credibility, transferability, and dependability. For people to comprehend how and why decisions were made, Koch (1994) advised researchers to incorporate markers like the justifications for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study (cited in Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

To achieve confirmability in my study I used multiple data collection methods such as classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews to explore educators' perspectives of teaching for students with poor reading. These various data collection methods could complement or compete with one another. For instance, in my research, data from classroom observations and interview responses occasionally corroborate one another.

Additionally, data collection from a diverse group of educators such as primary school teachers, a TA, a special education teacher, teachers who completed the PGCE course,

and Turkish teachers enriched my data. These various data collection methods and diverse group participants increased the confirmability of my research.

## **CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS**

## **6.1 Introduction**

The study findings have been analysed through Rogoff's sociocultural activity theory (1995) under the three planes of analysis, Joseph Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom method, and the interactional model of disability (see Sections 1.4, 1.5, and 3.3). In this chapter, I will mainly explore what kind of teaching strategies educators use to support students with poor reading and how they learn these strategies, which will be explained by using Rogoff's three planes of analysis. In the next chapter, I will explore how teachers' understanding of dyslexia or poor reading influences the development of these teaching strategies for students with poor reading. Together these two chapters of findings will offer a framework for how individuals shape their understanding and provide teaching for students with poor reading in their social settings. The extent to which these teaching strategies are inclusive will be explored in the final chapter.

This chapter focuses on three key themes: educational strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading, teacher preparedness, and the roles of TA and parents. These themes were generated from repeated readings of interviews and a focus group, and classroom observations. The data were drawn from three separate cases; participants were teachers from two primary schools, teachers who had recently completed their initial teacher training, and Turkish teachers who are studying for a PhD in Special Education. Participants were given information sheets to read, and informed consent was gained. In the interview transcripts, I removed all names of individuals and locations from the interview and assigned different name identifiers (see Table 1). The quotes were taken directly from the transcripts, and all repetitions, hesitations, or fillers have been removed.

## **6.2 Educational strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading**

This theme was developed based on educators' responses to questions about the teaching strategies that they are using for students with dyslexia or poor reading and classroom observations. Education strategies can include methods and techniques that a teacher uses to support their students through the learning process. As mentioned earlier in Section 1.5, teachers develop these strategies over time with their participation in teaching activities on community, interactional, and personal levels (Rogoff, 1995). For example, teachers can develop and shape their teaching methods during initial teaching training, which might be considered a community-apprenticeship level of learning where they connect with the 'institutional structures and cultural technologies' (Rogoff, 1995, p.143). These include the national curriculum, code of practice, and local guidance on SEN provision, interactions with other teachers in their first years of teaching, including placement experience (interpersonal level: guided participation), and finally, their experience with students both with and without reading difficulties (personal level: participatory appropriation). Learning at all three of these levels can also happen in each career stage; for more details, see Section 1.5.

Rogoff's three planes of analysis (community, interpersonal, and personal) have therefore been used as a theoretical frame to analyse the development of teaching strategies. However, learning in these three planes might play out differently in different schools or contexts. Therefore, in this section, I will use Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis to help me explore and explain how schools in general and teachers, in particular, develop teaching methods to accommodate all students, including those who have poor reading or have been categorised as having dyslexia, and the way schools organise the school environment for supporting students with dyslexia or poor reading.

### **6.2.1 Support for learning**

This sub-theme focuses on how educators and schools support learning for students with dyslexia or poor reading in the classroom and how they learn to provide support for these learners seen through the lenses of Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis.

In this analysis, educators learn to support students with poor reading or dyslexia via training, interaction with others, and their experience with students; however, these stages influenced teachers' choice of teaching strategies differently in different schools.

For example, in terms of supporting learning, North School implements many reading interventions for students with poor reading to improve their reading. A reading intervention is a programme that includes intensive or focused reading instruction to help people who are reading below grade level to catch up (Vellutino and Scanlon, 2002). These interventions have been mainly selected and developed by the headteacher and deputy teacher based on their working experience with children and interactions with each other and the wider community. TAs deliver these reading interventions in the classroom or other familiar spaces within the school, which might provide students with a sense of belonging to the same learning environment. To select who should take part in the reading interventions, North School first screens all students using the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) screening programme (Snowling *et al.*, 2021), which assesses the children's early language skills and detects problem areas. This is followed by the NELI intervention programme which is a 20-week programme for children with poor oral language skills. The programme consists of small-group and one-on-one sessions aimed at enhancing children's vocabulary, growing their ability for storytelling, promoting active listening, and fostering independence in speaking (Snowling *et al.*, 2021).



North School uses NELI screening because teachers have concerns about students' poor language when they join the school, which they believe is caused by aspects of children's home environment (this will be discussed further in Chapter 7). A teacher stated:

*Well, all our intervention is linked to poor reading. Because they come to our school with poor speech and language, currently, we use a screening called NELI. About 50% of our nursery intake, we have concerns, and NELI (screening) flags some areas.* Cecilia: North School teacher

These screenings continue throughout all age groups to detect students' specific needs.

The teacher added:

*So, at the minute with a speech-language thing, we have screened all the nursery. Then we screen reception. We screened in Year 1. We screened in Year 2. And I think we have still got some in Year 3 being screened. Currently, these are children who are poor readers. We want to pinpoint why, and we need to then support.* Cecilia: North School teacher

NELI screening allows teachers to assess expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, receptive vocabulary, and sentence repetition. Then it provides a daily, 30-minute reading programme. Cecilia commented:

*We do screening in the nursery, like now after a couple of weeks, and then we screen. So, it assesses expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, receptive vocabulary, and sentence repetition. And it gives you, basically works out based on their age, kind of concerns, and then from this screening, it provides a programme to follow. Very in-depth, isn't it?* Cecilia: North School teacher

*Half an hour a day.* Hallie: North School TA

Teachers noticed that some students could not repeat a sentence, which is an important ability for assessing children's language skills. As a result, the school decided to provide an intervention for these students in the afternoons. The same teacher explained:

*However, in terms of sentence repetition, which is something we saw very much highlighted last year, that is what they could not do. They could not repeat a sentence. And so, they are going to have intervention only in the afternoons,*

*purely to look at that strand. They do not need the other bits [of the NELI intervention], but it is just that sense of repetition. So, NELI, and then in reception, Year 1, some have had last year, we've always had interventions.*  
Cecilia: North School teacher

Sentence repetition can be one of the indicators of children's language abilities and also links with working memory capacity, which is defined as the 'cognitive ability of an individual to store and process information over limited periods of time' (Dogan, 2012, p.49). According to Dogan (2012), working memory is considered to be an effective predictor of basic academic abilities such as language, reading and writing skills, and mathematics, as well as learning problems such as speech-language disorder and difficulties in reading, writing, and math. Furthermore, working memory training programmes have been suggested as beneficial in helping problems with language and improving children's language comprehension abilities (Klem *et al.*, 2014).

In addition to children's sentence repetition problems, a few years ago, the compulsory national testing SATs (Standard Assessment Tests) results in North School suggested that students needed additional help in terms of speed and fluency. The interplay between teachers' experience, interaction with each other, and community-level knowledge accessed through aids such as NELI and SAT made teachers notice that these students need more interventions. Therefore, teachers encouraged students to read faster to gain fluency. The teacher stated:

*We assess the reading rate for children because, basically, a few years ago, what we realised - I was at the SAT test, myself and the headteacher were, and we had children in there who could answer every question, but they could not answer in an hour. And we are like, absolutely gutted. We could not give them all {extra time}. They did not need anything extra. And so, this has taken a few years. This is where it comes from - the fact that we need to speed them up. We just need them to read, read, and read and read. And to get that fluency. And the speed is key.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Children not managing to answer questions in an hour led North School to question the interventions that they had tried for students with poor reading over the years. Having noticed that the amount of actual reading was lacking, they realised that they had been putting too much into a half-hour intervention programme:

*We tried many types of interventions over the years. But we realised last year we needed a quantity of reading. That was it. So, we found with the intervention, we were trying to put in too much. We were trying to do a bit of spelling, a bit of everything. It was too much.* Cecilia: North School teacher

North School staff observed that children were only reading for a small amount of time during the intervention:

*And we were like, right when we watched it. Oh, my God. They are only reading for, like, five minutes because they are waiting to take turns and things like that. And we thought, Well, it is a half-hour intervention. And we were like, we came out, we were like, oh, no, we are like, scrap that.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Then, as a result of interactions with each other, teachers produced a new intervention idea that will help students' reading:

*And then, we together, we kind of put into, like, an idea, did not we? And then you [speaking to the TA] have refined it from there.* Cecilia: North School teacher

The TA added (referring to the morning session that I observed):

*You saw the kind of reading fluency intervention that we have created. And the children that you saw this morning have just completed the NELI intervention programme. So, they have done the full 20-week programme.* Halie: TA North School.

However, convincing other teachers to take part in a new intervention in the morning was difficult because they were already running other afternoon interventions;

*So, what you saw this morning is kind of like we took a leap basically took a while to convince teachers. because we had the afternoon invention. So that was running. And they were reading for half an hour.* Cecilia: North School teacher

With this new intervention, they expanded the NELI intervention programme with other activities like a memory game and echo reading, which is a rereading strategy designed

to help students develop expressive, fluent reading (Varga *et al.*, 1999). The teacher added:

*But then we wanted to take them out literally. We wanted to put stuff like memory gain, echo reading, and more phonics. Colour semantics is another part of that. NELI is also another part of depending on which programme they run. They tailored it to the group of children that they are aiming it for and which age they are at.* Cecilia: North School teacher

This provides six weeks of a morning fluency programme so that students can then use these skills in the classroom.

*Now. They come out for six weeks. Instead of doing literacy, they come out and do the fluency programme in the morning. Then, after six weeks, they can go back into a class and then start to apply those skills.* Cecilia: North School teacher

As mentioned above, interventions in North School are developed by the headteacher and deputy teacher on behalf of the teachers; teachers and TAs learn these interventions by interacting with the headteacher and deputy. According to North School's deputy head, even the idea of delivering a fluency programme was a surprise to teachers because they were worried that children were only reading and not writing; therefore, Cecilia explained to the teachers why students needed this intervention.

*It was a bit of a shock for teachers because teachers were like, they are not writing. And we are like, well, if they cannot read, they have not got the ideas; they cannot write. They are not ready for that.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Cecilia noticed that this fluency intervention provided students with lots of the reading practice that they needed:

*So, we managed to convince teachers that it was okay that they were not doing any writing, and they were purely reading for an hour in the morning. And they are doing another half-hour, at least, in the afternoon. It was only when we got that quantity that it made a difference. The afternoon interventions were not enough, definitely.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Furthermore, another reason for developing this fluency programme was noticing that older children who had had interventions for years still needed more practice in reading.

Finding this six-week morning fluency programme was both helpful for the students and a positive experience for the TAs because it made students read faster:

*And we had the same children having interventions in Year 6 were having it from reception. And we are like, that does not work. It needs to be a bigger quantity. So, we need to put in, we found, like, six-week blocks as a pure saturation. And the idea was the children and the TAs both responded so positively to it because it made it so much faster-paced* Cecilia: North School teacher

These interventions focus on reading quickly and fluently to help students to improve their comprehension, through *rereading and rereading an accessible familiar text*.

Cecilia from North School. She explained further:

*They are not being taught at that moment. It's purely looking at pace, really reading quickly and fluently, because what you had tended to get was children who just sounded out every single word painfully. And that was their only strategy, wasn't it? They were not reading. They could 'read', but they could not comprehend anything. Our aim is to get everyone to up 90 words per minute, and that's when we teach the comprehension.* Cecilia: North School teacher

North School developed fluency interventions because they believe that reading slowly does not enable comprehension as much as reading fluently; this belief is a result of interaction with the wider community, such as the DfE, as they promote teaching for fluency (Harmey, 2020). Fluency is an important reading skill that is essential for the comprehension of the text (Cotter, 2012). Children who are not fluent readers are unable to create connections and completely understand the text. Reading fluency is a necessary ability to develop since it serves as a connection to reading comprehension. Implementing fluency strategies in a balanced literacy framework can help students enhance their overall reading comprehension (Demie, 2013). Additionally, evidence suggests that targeted teaching can enhance the comprehension abilities of struggling readers (Harmey, 2020).

North School not only aims to offer interventions for students with poor reading but also to assess learning and provide feedback when additional teaching is required. The

school believes that all these assessments provide a better understanding of the needs of the students. For this reason, North School also does assessments regularly to check their book band level (every book band has its own colour, and each colour represents book levels that go from easy to difficult):

*We have the teachers do lots of the assessments. They have things like benchmark books, so they will be checking weekly or biweekly. What book band they should be on?* Cecilia: North School teacher

In addition, North School does other assessments; this teacher added:

*We do tests, more formal tests, and quizzes with the children.* Cecilia: North School teacher

This focus on testing, screening, and assessing to identify children's 'levels' has extended to working with an external organisation with expertise in assessment in areas of deprivation. North School mentioned Partners in Excellence (PiXL), a not-for-profit professional organisation that advises and supports school leaders on school improvement (The PiXL Club, 2019). The core subjects (English, reading, writing, grammar, and mathematics) are formally assessed in each year group at the end of each term (half termly in Year 6) to track pupils' application of the whole curriculum under test conditions using previous Standards and Testing Agency and PiXL assessments. PiXL uploads test data spreadsheets and prepares analysis documents to aid core topic teaching after exams. Teachers give pupils a PiXL grade based on their percentage of marks to predict their end-of-year reading and math performance and identify learning needs. PiXL appears to be an example of Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning because this organisation creates community support for schools. According to the teacher, PiXL is a group of schools that have fewer advantages:

*We call PiXL test. So, PiXL is a group of schools. They are a large group of schools, about 400 to 550 schools, a huge amount of them are in London. They are across the country, and they are deprived schools. And they create these*

*tests. They are very linked, very much in line with SAT tests.* Cecilia: North School teacher

In addition, PiXL provides elements of the interpersonal level of learning between schools by allowing schools to compare their school with other deprived (less advantaged backgrounds) schools. The teacher continued:

*And so, what you do is you then sit the test, and they create an analysis so you can compare yourself to all the other deprived schools. If you are not comparing yourself to upper-class or middle-class schools, you are a very able cohort. You are comparing yourself to schools that are the same as your cohort, which is helpful.* Cecilia: North School teacher

The interplay between interactions with a comparable community and other teachers in similar circumstances, together with the school staff's experience with students, contributed to North School creating their analysis, Qlas (question level analysis), which lets them look at every question and detect the problem areas, then decide what kind of intervention needs students.

*And then we have this very in-depth, what we call Qlas question level analysis. And that allows us to look at every single question. And then we can see, really pinpoint like which kind of questions can children answer and which cannot they, so is it retrieval? Is it some type of comprehension, is it word meaning? And that then informs our intervention.* Cecilia: North School teacher

With the Qlas analysis, North School can target students with poor reading. Teachers mentioned they need to focus on students who 'should be on track'. These are students that require more reading help but do not all have 'super special needs':

*And that then informs our intervention or in-our whole-class teaching. So now, for example, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, just do the test. They have done a test, the weight PiXL. They kind of analyse it for you. You have these big grids you fill in and that you can see clearly where it will target your poor readers, what skills? And they can give targeted intervention-focused teaching to those group, that group, particularly, we focus on the 60th to 85th percentile of children. So those ones - we are not talking about our super special needs, we are looking at those children who should be on track.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Cecilia's comments above make it clear that North School has high expectations for itself and its students; they aim to support all students to be good readers. Therefore, they provide a range of ways to find out about all students' needs. Inclusive assessment is defined as 'the development and implementation of equal and effective assessment techniques and procedures that allow all students to display their full potential in terms of what they know, understand, and can perform' (Hockings, 2010, p.2). However, although North School's battery of assessments and screenings covers all children, they are very much deficit-based, looking to find out which children are not reaching a particular level and to diagnose the problem. These assessments then allow educators to choose teaching strategies and plan how to deliver these strategies to students with poor reading. North School's approach to planning reading interventions can be explained by considering the interplay between Rogoff's (1995) community, personal, and interpersonal levels of learning to teach in the context of an assessment/target-driven educational culture (Snowling *et al.*, 2021); school leaders' very personal experience with children and the national assessment tasks led them to decide to find out what was wrong and, using community tools like NELI screening, what teaching area could be improved (e.g., through miscue analysis). They then introduced these interventions to teachers and TAs through school-based training and peer observation.

In summary, North School's educators learn how to support students with dyslexia or poor reading via training, interactions with others both within and beyond the school, and their experience with these students. Similarly, other teachers in my research learned to support students via training, interactions, and experiences. However, in terms of adopting strategies for students with poor reading, they follow different approaches. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, through adopting Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom ethnography method, as an outside to the UK primary schools, I noticed these differences in schools and classrooms.



South School also responds to the need to provide early support for children who are not progressing, but this happens differently:

*Very early on, if something is picked up in terms of a child is not progressing as they should, then we put a lot of support in as early as possible because it is those building blocks that are so, so important.* Lily: South School teacher

In South School, teachers are encouraged to use revisiting and reinforcement techniques for students with poor reading. The teacher explained:

*As a school, anyway, we believe in revisiting learning, layering it, and making sure that we go back over knowledge. But I think for these children who have trouble with reading, it is so important that you are doing that. Revisit, reinforce. We learn and we overlearn things, trying to get different ways to catch it, to make it stick. So, we talk to our children about learning being sticky or knowledge being sticky.* Lily: South School teacher

Lily's use of the terms 'layering' and 'sticky teaching' is likely to be connected to PD courses that she has attended as a teacher. According to Davies (2021) 'making learning stick' is seen as an effective way to teach students because it promotes children's independence and success. These ideas also underpin the UDL, which is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that enables all students to achieve (see Section 2.7). This strategy allows students to access, interact with, and demonstrate their knowledge in many ways.

Another recently qualified teacher believed that using visual materials is useful for students with poor reading. The teacher stated:

*My main responsibility is to provide a visual structure to lessons. The main strategy is using pictures or symbols.* Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK

Furthermore, Ethan believes teachers can motivate students' engagement by adapting learning in creative and fun ways:

*I like to think everyone has his own special skills, but it is important if we can motivate the kids so they can engage in the learning in a more creative and fun way. Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK*

Some participants believe students with dyslexia or poor reading require something different or additional; they have identified them as having ‘difficulty’ as a result of their own experience with students with dyslexia or poor reading, and interaction with other teachers and the wider educational community. Therefore, some teachers choose materials and activities that can be modified, such as avoiding long reading texts or the use of black pens on white backgrounds. For example, while North School offers intensive reading interventions to students with poor reading, the South School teacher believes they should make certain adaptations for students with poor reading to meet the learning goals:

*We always make sure we adapt our materials that we are using. I was talking about stripping back, you know, taking activities back so that they are simplified, so not giving children who struggle with reading great big chunks of text, you just do not do it. You give them the same text, but I might have stripped it up. So, read this bit, then read this bit rather than read a whole A4 sheet. Quite simple. I know. I try and avoid using black pens on white backgrounds, and we try and avoid that in our photocopying as well. Lily: South School teacher*

Furthermore, in South School, students who need extra help receive pre-learning sessions from TAs outside of the classroom before the main lesson. The teacher explained:

*So, we would do that with all the children, but with those children who need that little bit of extra help, they may have a pre-learning session with the TA. So, if we are covering something that I think that I know is going to be a little bit tricky for them, they will have a little mini-lesson outside of the classroom before the main lesson. Lily: South School teacher*

Similar to South School, a Turkish teacher remembered altering learning materials for a student with dyslexia:

*I had one dyslexic student, and I gave him shorter reading texts, using bigger letters and colourful letters. Yakup: Turkish PhD student*

Yakup's comment about altering the learning materials can be related to Türkiye's approach to supporting children with reading difficulty; in Türkiye, children with poor academic skills or poor reading are identified centrally through the GRC by using a dyslexia assessment form that assesses reading and writing skills. These assessments allow GRC educators to diagnose specific children who are struggling in school. A Turkish teacher stated:

*I used to work in GRC; we used a dyslexia identification form to identify students. If students have a higher IQ than 70 and still have bad academic performance, educators in GRC use the dyslexia assessment form for these students to decide if they are dyslexic or not. Aleyna: Turkish PhD student*

In GRC educators only meet with the children to assess their skills. Using standard assessments and tests to assess a child's abilities in an unfamiliar context by a total stranger might be insufficient in some cases because educators engage these children for a limited amount of time. For example, I had a student who was diagnosed with a severe learning difficulty in GRC. However, he was not 'severe'; he was a very articulate, talkative, and funny boy with visual impairments; he was in fact partially blind, and he required surgery, but the doctor had advised his parents to wait until he turned 18 before doing the operation. In his previous school, he did not fit in in a typical classroom, and the primary school educators referred him to GRC for assessment. They used the standard assessment form, which included presenting cards, asking questions about them, and requesting hand-eye coordination tasks that mainly assess cognitive learning, and he performed poorly in these tasks. My experiences with the student led me to conclude that his poor vision prevented him from completing these tasks successfully.

Following the diagnosis of a child as an SEN student, GRC educators provide IEPs for these children, and then classroom teachers are expected to implement this plan in their lessons. These IEPs usually include modified teaching, such as giving students reduced reading texts or writing materials and setting up different learning goals from other students.

On the other hand, although North School assesses children with specific screening and then intervenes with a specific programme, they also provide some resources to be used by all but which have particular benefits for students with poor reading. For example, North School also provides dyslexia-friendly books and publications that are accessible to everyone. When teachers were asked what kind of resources they used for students with dyslexia or poor reading, the teacher answered:

*Guess it is a book, is it? Yeah, I mean, a lot of them are dyslexia- friendly.*  
Cecilia: North School teacher

North School claimed that they had invested a lot of money and time to offer books for students with poor reading, and phonics games.

*So, we spent a lot of time looking at different publishers, looking at different reading schemes, buying in a lot, spent thousands, thousands, and thousands. We do use something like phonics games and things, but it is not a specific intervention.* Cecilia: North School teacher

During the visit, the educators showed me colourful, six-page books. Even though these books are specifically designed by the publisher for students with dyslexia, they are available to all readers. These resources give the student the chance to read a whole book, even if they have limitations on their reading ability. The teacher stated:

*And even higher up the school, we will buy things like books by publishers like Barrington Stoke. So, they are dyslexic-friendly publishers. So, their books are specially targeted at dyslexic children. It is great because you can get any novel, but they condense it in a way. And the font they use, and the colour pages, make it accessible to dyslexic readers. Really ...But the children love it, especially when they are starting to read because there are only six pages. And when they*

*first, when we first started the programme, the children are like, I can read a book. I can read a whole book because they just finished a book and it is like, and I can read it again.* Cecilia: North School teacher

While North School offers specific interventions to students with poor reading, in terms of resources they provide accessible reading materials to everyone. On the other hand, South School uses technology to support students with poor reading. For example, teachers use voice-activated software to help with writing. The teacher explained:

*We have voice-activated software, which is brilliant when it works. So, they speak into it, and then the written translation comes up, and then they can use that to support their writing. More successful have been the reader pens, you run the pen across, and the text is read aloud. We obviously have a coloured overlay. We use dyslexic-friendly fonts for their work.* Lily: South School teacher

These comments suggest that teachers have different approaches to supporting students with poor reading in the classroom. Some teachers believe students with dyslexia or poor reading need something extra or special, so they need to adapt their teaching for them, such as reducing reading text and modifying materials. On the other hand, other teachers offer a ‘wide range of’ learning opportunities for everyone, including students with poor reading, such as dyslexia-friendly books and reading interventions, which are intensive or focused reading instruction to help readers who are below grade level to catch up (Vellutino and Scanlon, 2002). Learning in the three planes of development appears here: All the strategies were developed through teachers interacting within the school with other teachers, particularly the SENCO, using resources informed by knowledge from the wider community and their personal experiences with students.

### **6.2.2 Organisation**

This sub-theme presents how schools adjust their environment to support students with poor reading or dyslexia.

In my study, I saw that schools follow elements of a UDL approach to create the environment as a result of training, interaction with other teachers, and their own working experience. However, schools have different approaches to adapting school environments for learners. For example, during my visit to South School, I visited and photographed the classrooms. All classroom display boards have the same background colour, and all borders are the same colours related to the board's topic. Every classroom appeared similar. The teacher who works at this school remarked:

*The biggest change we have made to the environment has been the shift in the board backing – all uniform colour and a pale blue, all borders are pastel colours and linked to the topic of the board (only three colours in total).* Lily: South School teacher

However, these similarities in the classroom had made the teacher a little concerned. She stated:

*You feel like you are going to lose your individuality. [when the idea was introduced] It is going to lose the feeling of being in my classroom. But then you can still feel it. Every classroom was different, even though there were strong similarities there. Still, the teacher's personality comes through. And that is important.* Lily: South School teacher

The school experienced some changes in the learning environment while it hosted a special unit for children with autism and communications conditions (which will be discussed further in Section 7.2) and all teachers were expected to follow processes to adapt the classroom environment. According to Lily, one of the important changes was calming the environment:

*I think that in terms of that uniformity and trying to calm the environment is such an important thing. We are not supposed to have big hanging displays or things that crowd the environment. So that I think helps. [...] That's all the things that we would do in terms of each subject and area, the area of the curriculum.* Lily: South School teacher

However, not all adaptations for the learning environment have been implemented yet, because Lily believes adopting these changes needs time. She commented:

*Not everything is tied down yet, because it takes a while to change people's practices. And we need to observe classrooms and see teachers teach and have*

*that as part of what is in our heads as senior leaders, that we are looking for that inclusion and making things right.* Lily: South School teacher

These adaptations appeared to have been aimed at creating an autism-friendly environment, but to create a dyslexia-friendly classroom, the teacher received different training. Related to dyslexia-friendly training, the teacher shared a document on general strategies for supporting children with dyslexia in KS1 and KS2, which was the Local Authority's response to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support. This document provided information on how to plan an environment for students with poor reading.

*But also, this one here was our training on creating a dyslexia-friendly classroom. So that is interesting. You need to pick through to find the bits that talk about how to improve. It starts from Part 2 [ the teacher refers to the section on planning].* Lily: South School teacher

Despite the calming environment policy, during the classroom observation, I noticed that the classroom had displays (see Appendix 11), which can be related to Lily's training in dyslexia-friendly environments as it suggests that displays are helpful for a student with dyslexia or poor reading.

Lily's comments suggest to me that she tries to adapt to the classroom environment based on interaction with other teachers (specifically the SENCO) and the wider community during local authority training and as a result of her practice. Similarly, North School is trying to create an environment based on UDL principles as a result of their own experience working with children, and interaction with other teachers in the school, and the wider community, especially via PiXL. However, these can play out differently in North School in terms of organising the environment for learners.

For example, the North School provides many varied displays to help students learn; during my visit to the North School, I noticed ‘working walls’ with writing, math, and vocabulary displays in each classroom.

*School environment, we have things like working walls that are not specific, and targeted at reading, writing, and maths. But it supports reading-because our working walls support the children during the process, the sequence. So, there will be things they can refer to.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Cecilia believes that providing vocabulary displays helps students in writing lessons at North School who need particular support with language development. She explained:

*We have vocabulary displays you can see in most classrooms. So we have, like, for example, in our writing lessons, we have a big vocabulary warm-up. We have a vocabulary in everything. So, you have a word like, ‘happy’. But around it would be all synonyms. There can be words linked to happy words and phrases. And children actively refer to them all the time in their learning. You just see they do it. They look around the classroom.* Cecilia: North School teacher

However, the TA mentioned that children developed new vocabulary that they do not use in their classrooms; during a 30-minute morning reading session with the TA that I observed, she showed students cards with who, what, and where questions to encourage them to talk. For example, one card pictured a teddy bear eating ice cream on a bench in the park. In the interview, the TA mentioned this example. She commented:

*You saw that as well, because then children were talking about the ice cream. It was not just a vanilla ice cream. It is scrumptious ice cream. It is a taste of it. So, they were coming out with all the vocabulary they do not see used within their classroom.* Hallie: North School TA

In addition, I went to different classrooms and took photographs of the walls and whiteboards (see Appendix 12). The teacher goes into more detail on how these walls support reading:

*I think what you will see in the walls supports them; we have things like supporting the reading. So, we use stem sentences a lot on our slides, on our*



*whiteboards. So, when we are asking a question, there will be a stem sentence to scaffold the child's response. And they are well trained.* Cecilia: North School teacher

North School uses the budget to adapt the school environment to support students including, students with poor reading. According to North School, it is important to provide high-quality resources for students. She stated:

*And then we also, I guess, in the school environment, should make sure everything we have has high-quality, nice things. So, we spend a lot of money. We spend a lot of money on resources, I think, more than most schools. But we want you to look at things, particularly books, and go, oh, it is a nice new book. Brilliant. I will take it. I will take good care of it.* Cecilia: North School teacher

North School's approach to spending lots of money to provide high-quality 'nice' books can be related to promoting children's love for reading or reading for pleasure, which is important both for educational and personal development (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). It could also be related to the assumption that children do not have high-quality books at home, which connects with North School's considerations of the effects of children's less-advantaged home environment (this will be discussed further in Chapter 7). As mentioned in Section 2.10, home learning environments are vital for shaping and developing children's language and educational development; activities such as having conversations, storytelling, and doing reading activities together, can have an impact on children's reading abilities and school success (Skwarchuk et al., 2022). However, studies have shown that when children from less advantaged home environments first begin in Reception class (starting statutory schooling), their language abilities are frequently below age-appropriate standards, which puts them at a disadvantage in their schooling (Ferguson, Bovaird, and Mueller, 2007). North School recognises this problem, and they are trying to overcome it by offering children books and reading interventions.

To adapt to the school environment for students with poor reading, another primary teacher I interviewed stated that the school where she works believes multisensory teaching is beneficial for students with poor reading; teachers are expected to engage in multisensory activities with students in the classroom, and the school focused on organising their environment to support multisensory learning. The teacher explained:

*They have done a focus on multisensory activities. So, it is more like physical activities where they can, like, engage with like that kinaesthetic learning, not just sit down and read and write like get more involved with, like, physical learning and like spelling. So, they have encouraged us to use more like games. So, when we must do spellings, like go into the hall, and then they can like throw the ball around, and then they like spell words and get them to be more physical.*  
Ellie: PGCE student

Related to Ellie's statement on multisensory teaching for students with dyslexia or poor reading, I attended online workshops run by a dyslexia specialist during the lockdown. These workshops were designed to teach parents how to support their children with dyslexia at home. In these workshops, the dyslexia specialist explained multisensory teaching and gave examples of learning activities (building words and sentences with kits, matching visuals or sounds with words, creating letters with playdough) that parents can do at home with their children, recommending that parents to visit some of the websites that focus on multisensory activities. Although some educators or schools promote the idea that multisensory learning is the best way to help students with dyslexia or poor reading, however, as previously argued in Chapter 2, these teaching styles can be helpful to all children, not only those with poor reading.

In the context of my study, therefore, although each school employs a different approach to creating a learning environment for students, schools design their environments around principles found in various support programmes as a result of personal experience with children, and interactions with other teachers, and the training they received. For example, Ellie used a multisensory approach to create a classroom

environment for students with poor reading, while Lily created a calming visual environment for learners, whereas North School used the content of many ‘working wall’ displays to support learning.

### **6.2.3 Summary**

Analysis of the theme of educational strategies suggests that teachers in schools that prioritise communication support have developed different teaching approaches and different approaches to providing learning environments that accommodate students with dyslexia or poor reading. For example, North School provides reading interventions, while South School adapts classroom activities to suit the needs of students with dyslexia or poor reading. As mentioned above, these differences might be influenced by teachers' initial and continuing training, their interaction with the wider educational community, and their own experiences with students. These differences will be explored and discussed further in Section 7.2.

## **6.3 Teacher preparedness**

### **6.3.1 Introduction**

Teacher training has an important role in shaping how teachers devise and implement educational strategies for learners because teacher training prepares teachers with theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching (Orchard and Winch, 2015). Teacher training can happen via initial teaching education and PD courses. As previously stated in Section 1.5, teachers' PD can be explained by using Rogoff's institutional level of learning because entrants to the profession build their first knowledge by participating in teaching activities designed to share knowledge built up within the educational community. This section presents participants' comments on the role of teacher training to improve their knowledge of dyslexia or poor reading and meet the needs of students

identified with dyslexia in the classroom. Sub-themes in this section include preservice teacher training and in-service teacher training.

### **6.3.2 Initial teacher training**

As previously stated in Chapter 4, according to Forlin (2010), university courses for preservice teachers can play a significant role in promoting inclusion in classrooms, and he believes initial teacher education programmes in universities should adapt their teacher programmes to promote inclusion. For teachers to be prepared for inclusion, educators need to acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge:

*‘Without a sound and meaningful knowledge base, educators are unlikely to fully participate in the growth of inclusive classroom groups’* (Forlin, 2010, p.649).

This sub-theme presents preservice teachers’ perspectives on dyslexia or poor reading and their understanding of meeting the needs of these students in the classroom as a result of their initial teaching training.

In the UK, different routes to becoming a teacher are available, including studying for a Bachelor of Education (BEd) in a specific field, completing a PGCE course, or choosing another path to qualified teacher status (QTS) while also working in a school. These programmes all offer initial teaching training. In my study, some of the teachers had recently completed the PGCE course after their bachelor’s degrees. For example:

*I have a PGCE in secondary biology and psychology* Ashley: PGCE student

*I have just done my teacher training, which was a one-year course.* Clara: PGCE (master’s) student

Another teacher who works as a primary teacher for 2 years. She stated:

*This is my second year, and I did my PGCE, and then last year and this year, so yes, two years. And then obviously, I had placements when I was in my teacher training.* Ellie: PGCE student

Before the interviews, when these new teachers were invited to participate in my research, they expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities to answer questions about supporting students who identified as having dyslexia because they are not dyslexia specialists and they only received a little dyslexia training in their course. For example, one teacher commented on the training:

*Not specialist training. I did train like-on my course, like we did a little bit about dyslexia, like how to teach dyslexic students what strategies to use. But I have not got any specialist training. Ellie: PGCE student*

Similarly, another teacher mentioned she did not receive any specialist training beyond receiving a Makaton course, which is a language programme that uses symbols and signs to help people communicate and was developed to help students with speech and language problems (Grove and Walker, 1990). She commented:

*There were optional elements of our teacher training to do things like Makaton, Introduction to Makaton Course, which I think would be helpful for children with dyslexia. But I would not say there is a specialist in the schools I have worked in for dyslexic students or part of the training. Clara: PGCE (master's) student*

According to these two teachers, there is no one with specialist knowledge of dyslexia and no dyslexia specialist who works with the students with dyslexia work at their school. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Rose (2009) stated that dyslexia specialists might play a significant role in supporting students identified with dyslexia, supporting classroom teachers and TAs, and raising dyslexia awareness. They may offer a variety of teaching methods to assist students classified as having dyslexia. However, some experts argue that these methods are not significantly different from what is high-quality classroom teaching for all learners (Davis and Florian, 2004).

Like the British preservice teachers in my study, the Turkish PhD students who had completed their Bachelor's in Special Education Needs, Primary Education, and Early

Childhood Education in Turkiye stated that they did not take any training to support children with dyslexia in the classroom in their university course.

Analysis of the current sub-theme suggests that preservice teachers believe they did not get enough training in their course to be prepared to address the needs of students regardless of their differences in the future classroom. This can be a problem in promoting inclusive education. As previously mentioned in Section 4.5, the lack of preparedness to educate students with special education needs may make promoting inclusive education challenging (Rouse, 2008). On the other hand, experienced teachers in my study received various kinds of in-service training to support students with dyslexia or poor reading.

### **6.3.3 In-service training**

As previously mentioned in Section 4.5, teachers with adequate and appropriate training can help implement inclusive education in terms of teaching and understanding individual differences among pupils (Forlin and Sin, 2017). In-service training offers teachers the opportunity to improve their professional knowledge and teaching skills. Serving teachers can be prepared for an inclusive setting through training programmes (UNESCO, 2020). This sub-theme presents in-service teachers' training related to supporting students with dyslexia or poor reading.

In my study, North School educators received dyslexia training mainly through staff meetings at school to support reading, but they also received some external training outside of school to support reading. For example, the teacher stated:

*So, as a staff, we do receive dyslexia training. But it is done through staff meetings and things run by SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). I personally, over the years, might have attended a course supporting reading.*  
Cecilia: North School teacher

The TA added:

*I had dyslexia training recently, which was online, as we could not attend (because of COVID-19 restrictions). I have also been to a course with the SENCO specifically for low-level readers. That was interesting. But most of again, the training I have had comes from the school, through staff meetings.*  
Hallie: North School TA

Similarly, in South School, the teacher received training from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-Ordinator (SENDCO) in her school to support students with special needs. This teacher received training via PD meetings:

*Not a [dyslexia] specialist, but we had a very, very qualified, and experienced SENDCO, who provided us with professional development meetings on all areas of special educational needs. And she was particularly an autism specialist. We had lots of training on that. But she also provided us with many professional development meetings. So we had one that was because the whole our whole philosophy on things like dyslexia and other areas of special education need is that we need to be really clear about what that actually means.* Lily: South School teacher

One of these trainings focused on a document (the teacher brought this document to the interview) produced by the Local Authority:

*We had training on this document (Local Authority's Response to SEND Support: KS2: The Pupil Profile).* Lily: South School teacher

As a result of the training Lily used visual aids to facilitate learning for all students:

*So, you know, I have to use those visuals, those things to support what they are doing and also to try to give them some way of experiencing the learning.* Lily: South School teacher

Analysis of this sub-theme suggests that North School educators receive dyslexia or low-level reader training primarily through staff meetings led by the SENCO, but they also attended some courses outside of school to support the teaching of reading, while South School teachers received training on special education needs by the SENDCO/autism specialist in school. These slightly different training experiences

shaped their understanding of dyslexia or poor reading and helped them develop teaching strategies for these students by interacting with wider community knowledge and other educators in the school.

#### **6.3.4 Summary**

In dealing with the theme of teacher preparedness, I focused on preservice and in-service teachers' preparedness to support students with dyslexia or poor reading in the classroom. In my study, preservice teachers believed they did not receive enough teacher training to support students with dyslexia or poor reading in the classroom.

Although they believe that some teaching strategies that they had learned in this training may be beneficial to students identified as having dyslexia, they were still reluctant to work with students with poor reading skills. On the other hand, experienced teachers who had in-service training were more confident working with students with reading difficulties.

### **6.4 Roles and relationships**

#### **6.4.1 Introduction**

As earlier stated in Chapter 2, parental involvement and support for children's learning are becoming increasingly common. Parents play an important role in their child's education and can influence children's success (Rose, 2009). Research has shown that teachers believe that the role of parents at home is an integral part of a child's reading process (Paseka and Schwab, 2020). Similarly, the role of TAs in supporting students with dyslexia or poor reading is growing. According to Farrell *et al.* (2010), TAs have an impact on children's academic improvement, and adequate training and ongoing supervision can increase the implementation of research-based reading interventions. These reading interventions help students with children experiencing difficulties in



early literacy and language skills; according to findings, pupils make more progress than similar pupils who did not receive the interventions (Farrell *et al.*, 2010).

In my study, a common belief among educators was that TAs and parents play important roles in children's education; therefore, schools should provide support to TAs and parents to be part of children's learning. However, their role in supporting students with poor reading was different in the different settings as a result of the combined effects of their training, interaction with others, and their own experience. This theme explores TAs' and parents' roles in supporting students with poor reading.

#### **6.4.2 TAs' role in supporting children with poor reading**

This sub-theme has been generated from my comments on interview transcripts and classroom observations. This sub-theme presents aspects of the role of TAs in supporting students with poor reading in school, and it focuses on how TAs learned to support these students viewed through Rogoff's (1995) three planes of development.

As previously stated in Section 2.8, TAs' roles and responsibilities are growing to support students' learning (Griffiths and Kelly, 2018). As the TA role grows, TAs are more frequently found supporting students who need extra support with behaviour or who are behind their peers academically. Different roles and ways to support learning in schools have been identified, such as whole-class support, targeted in-class learning support, and targeted intervention delivery (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). Similarly, in my study, the TA role includes working with students with dyslexia or poor reading one-to-one, and supporting teachers in the classroom, and delivering reading interventions, often outside the classroom. However, these roles differ in each school, mainly as a result of interactions with the teachers and in-house training.

For example, one recently qualified teacher stated that TAs work with students with dyslexia one-to-one outside the classroom, but she might work with them in the classroom:

*I do not work directly with dyslexia students because they have TA, but I do work with them in the classroom. Ashley: PGCE student*

Ashley believes it is difficult for her to give that one-to-one attention, especially when the school is understaffed:

*Coming from a teacher's standpoint, there simply is not enough time in your lessons, especially if you are understaffed. You do not always have a TA with you. Ashley: PGCE student*

Likewise, in Ellie's school, TAs support older students who are diagnosed with dyslexia outside the classroom. She commented:

*The older children are diagnosed with dyslexia, so they go out outside the classroom and practice like reading books and practicing phonics and like decoding. And they do spellings in small-group sessions. Ellie: PGCE student*

Similarly, in South School, TAs are responsible for delivering sessions outside the classroom for students who need extra help. For example, the teacher believes that English language learning patterns are important; therefore, she focuses on morphology and how words come together in her lessons. She explained:

*I think with English, it is important to draw attention to patterns and to exploit those patterns. You know, if you know that, then you know this. If you know how to spell that word, then you know how to spell this word. We focus a lot on morphology and how words come together. So, you know, see two chunks because this comes from one place, and this comes from another. Lily: South School teacher*

However, Lily believes learning morphology is more difficult for certain students than for others. Therefore, for students known to be struggling with reading in general, the teacher wants them to get extra help from the TA before the main lesson because she

believes it would be difficult for them to learn along with the rest of the class, so with pre-learning sessions, students can be ready for the main lesson. The teacher explained:

*So, we would do that with all the children, but with those children who need that little bit of extra help, they may have a pre-learning session with the TA. So, if we are covering something that I think that I know is going to be a little bit tricky for them, they will have a little mini-lesson outside of the classroom before the main lesson. Lily: South School teacher*

Here the teacher stated that the TA is responsible for delivering sessions outside the classroom; however, during my observation, I noticed that the teacher took an active role in supporting students with poor reading both during the whole-class lesson and later in a targeted teaching session. For example, she chose students whom she considered required additional help with writing for small-group teaching. During this mini-session, the teacher helped them with writing sentences based on the story they had read earlier in the main classroom. While the TA was assisting other pupils with a task set by the teacher in the main classroom, the classroom teacher delivered a learning session with a small group outside the main classroom area (but still in the same large room). Her delivery of the session could be related to modelling for the TA on how to support students with poor reading; this suggests that in this classroom, the TA learned how to support students through observation of the classroom teacher.

In addition, in South School, another aspect of the TA role is supporting the teacher in the classroom while the teacher leads the class. For instance, during whole-classroom observation, I saw the TA help students with general content and behaviour in the classroom.

TA roles were, however, different in the different schools. For example, at North School, during my observation, the TA delivered reading interventions to students with poor reading. This school trains the TAs to deliver the interventions. One of the TAs

monitors this training and manages the organisation and storage of intervention

materials. The teacher explained:

*So, we put a lot of TA training, and Hallie monitors that amazingly. So, we train the TAs. They deliver the sessions.* Cecilia: North School teacher

As previously discussed, North School has developed many interventions over the years for students with poor reading (see Section 6.2). One of these reading interventions involves moving children through the book levels; TAs therefore need to be aware of how children should be moved through book bands:

*And then Hallie monitors it very carefully to see two children because every time you do a group, it's like, oh, which children? That child needs to move to book level. Let's move them up because we want to get momentum, and you should be moving through the book bands because we found that children were just stuck, were not they?* Cecilia: North School teacher

TA added:

*Yeah. There is a child that is demoralised when they just go through the same books each time and not feeling that progression.* Hallie: North School TA

Furthermore, moving through book bands worked for TAs and students because TAs found the previous structure a bit stressful because they were doing more talking than the children. The teacher remarked:

*That's worked really well for the children. They really have responded well. But also, the TAs. I think the TAs were they just found the previous kind of structure a bit stressful. They thought it was not very pleasant. They just did not enjoy it. And they were doing more reading than children. That seemed to shame, because the children, the ones who needed to be reading, TAs had the found out there, the ones who were just talking at the children all the time.* Cecilia: North School teacher

This comment suggests that North School not only trains TAs to deliver the sessions but also considers their well-being while delivering the sessions.

Another method of TAs' training and parental support involves having them observe the teachers while teaching guided reading sessions with the group of students, which is an

instructional practice or approach where teachers support a small group of students to read a text independently (Ford and Opitz, 2008).

*So basically, we have small groups of six children, so the teacher will be teaching six children like modelling, basically showing a guided reading session or whatever reading, especially when the parents are watching.* Cecilia: North School teacher

The teachers' description of this method led me to understand that North School TAs learn to teach by interacting with wider community knowledge because their training includes observing teachers, thereby indirectly accessing the wider knowledge base.

Analysing this sub-theme suggests that TAs are mainly responsible for delivering sessions outside of the classroom and offering guidance and encouragement to maintain focus for individual children in the classroom. For example, in North School, the TA was delivering the session based on reading interventions that the school had provided her with training on to offer support for students with poor reading. This suggests that TAs are considered educators in North School, and their role is clear for students with poor reading. On the other hand, in the South School, I observed that the classroom teacher had an active role in teaching in the classroom, and the TA's role was more supportive, helping students who needed extra support based on teacher instructions. Therefore, this suggests that in my study, TAs had different roles and responsibilities in each school, and these roles were influenced by school culture (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019). As mentioned above, TAs learn these roles through observations of and interactions with teachers and the training that they receive in their schools. For example, North School trains TAs to carry out interventions, which suggests TAs learn to teach on the community and interpersonal level because the training that they receive also involves accessing community-level knowledge already refined by teachers for their particular context, while South School TAs learn to teach mainly on elements of interpersonal level because in this school TAs learn through interactions with the

classroom teachers, for example, about how to pre-teach children who might struggle in the whole-class environment.

### **6.4.3 Roles of parents**

This sub-theme was developed by teachers' responses to questions about how they support the parents of students with dyslexia or poor reading. This sub-theme focuses on how schools, or more specifically, teachers support parents of students with dyslexia or poor reading; and their role in guiding parents' involvement in the student's learning process.

As previously stated in Section 2.10, being labelled with dyslexia or being a poor reader affects not only pupils but also their parents (Earey, 2013). Parents have a critical role in a child's education, and they can contribute to a child's success. Although involvement and support from parents for their children with learning difficulties are becoming increasingly common, according to the Rose Report (2009), the most common concern expressed by parents was the school's lack of support. The report therefore suggested that schools should organise meetings to involve parents in students' learning processes (Rose, 2009). Similarly, in my study, teachers remarked that schools are organising meetings and workshops with parents to include parents in students' learning processes, and parents learn how to support their children via interaction with educators; however, in terms of supporting parents, schools have different approaches that are shaped by their perceptions of these parents.

For example, according to one teacher, because each child is unique, they have different needs and require different meetings, so each parent was provided with meetings with the SENCO. In addition, parents at her school attend meetings with the classroom teacher to help their children's learning at home. The teacher explained:

*So, parents meet with the SENCO. So, each child is different with dyslexia, so they do have different meetings, depending on how frequent or how when they need to meet, so they have meetings with the SENCO to discuss progress. And if there is any help that the parents can have from the school at home, and they also meet with the class teachers every so often just to, like, go through if there is anything they need. So, if they are struggling with the homework, like any strategies that we can help the parents with to help with their reading or writing at home? Ellie: PGCE Student*

This suggests that in Ellie's school, parents are involved in learning processes via interactions with SENCO and teachers. In contrast to Ellie's comments, while I was working in Turkiye as a special education teacher, the school that I worked at did not involve parents in child learning or did not organise meetings too often because the staff believed that parents would not attend or be interested in children's learning process due to their lower expectations for their children. This can be related to Turkish parents' understanding of disability, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

North School, on the other hand, organises reading workshops for parents to get involved in their children's learning process, offering an opportunity for an interpersonal level of learning. However, they have found that parental engagement was a challenge due to parents' negative school experiences in the past:

*So, we have been running a lot of parent workshops currently. So, this has all been reading focus. What we have done is, over the years, we have done different parent workshops, and our parental engagement is a very big problem for us. We have a lot of parents who do not want to engage because they did not have a great time in school. They did not have a very good positive experience, and their parents did not read to them anything, or support them with homework and things, so they do not even think to do it for their children. Cecilia: North School teacher*

North School realised that parents do not like working with their children because they feel they will be judged. Therefore, this school provided reading interventions with students that parents could watch and learn from. The teacher added:

*So, to get that it was always a big drive for us, so the parent workshops for the reading. So, parents over here we realise do not like working with their children because they feel like being judged. So, they like to watch their children. They want to see their children being taught. So basically, we have small groups of six children, so the teacher will be teaching six children like modelling, basically showing a guided reading session or whatever reading, especially the parents are watching. And then we have a little chat with the parents afterwards about what they saw and what kind of approaches. It was well attended to this year. Cecilia: North School teacher*

In addition, North School aims to encourage parents to read to their children at home; therefore, they send newsletters or information sheets to explain their expectations from parents. The teacher stated:

*But it is always some parents that are hard to reach. We send home newsletters, and we do parent emails about reading, information sheets, and explaining expectations for reading homework. We do expect them to be reading every day. Particularly lower down school. Cecilia: North School teacher*

However, not all parents are interested in reading with their children at home because they think their children are tired after school. For this reason, North School produced the idea of sending a book for pleasure that parents can read and share with their children:

*Something we've been doing this year, which we're spending a lot of money on, I think parents find it a little bit stressful trying to do a reading book with their child, isn't it? Because they're like, come on, it's after school, parents are harassed. Children are tired, and they're like, come on, read this book. Your teacher said you must read this book. So, we basically send home two books now, one which is the targeted reading level. The other one is just for pleasure. So, the book for pleasure won't be their reading level. It will be a book for their parents to read to them, to share with them. Cecilia: North School teacher*

Cecilia believes sending books home for pleasure was received positively by both parents and children, but it is still too early to decide if it has worked or not. The teacher remarked:

*And that has been positively received. They really like to read with their parents. That have been really. Positive. And that kind of goes to our whole development*



*of level reading. But this is kind of like, still kind of the early phases of this to see what will work and what will not work. Cecilia: North School teacher*

North School staff are therefore using the understanding of the parents in their community, built up in the school over the years, to refine their practice concerning reading at home. The teacher noted that the school allocates parents to workshops and delivers workshops to them during the day. However, some parents still do not engage:

*There's definitely more to explore. So, we allocate them during the school day. And then we do say, 'no'. If you cannot make those ones, we will try and do another one. It depends. Sometimes you get cohorts [in which] the parents are really engaged, and other cohorts are not, so [the teachers] are very disappointed by the turnout. Cecilia: North School teacher*

Parents did not enjoy attending the reading workshops because they involved too much terminology that they could not understand:

*But I think it blows their mind when they come to the parent workshop. How much is involved in reading? Because the terminology and everything is quite off-putting. It is not a normal language. I know even my friends, friends who have children and they are very educated. They are like, what is blending? And I was like, oh, it is just this put people off schools. We have our own language and parents just think, no, I do not want anything to do with that. Cecilia: North School teacher*

For this reason, North School produced new ideas to encourage parents to engage in their children's learning; for example, one of the ideas was to bring parents to school for non-educational reasons and then introduce them to workshops for support reading.

Teacher explained:

*What they thought they might do like, this is like a picnic or something where parents coming to school for no educational reason, just for pleasure, to see if we can get them in the door. Once we get them in the door, hopefully, then we can get them on board for other things, like reading and supporting reading. Cecilia: North School teacher*

Due to parents' hesitation to read books with their children, the North School constructs knowledge with parents about sharing a book with their children because they believe

the developing love for reading will have a big positive impact on their lives despite their economic and social background. Cecilia commented:

*But just sharing a book with a child, we want to see that is what you should be doing normally, and hopefully, they will see it's a positive experience because I think if children learn to read for pleasure, it has a bigger impact on their lives than their social and economic situation.* Cecilia: North School teacher

South School, on the other hand, takes a different approach to including parents in their children's learning. For example, in this school, as a result of the training they received (see Section 6.3.3), teachers are expected to talk with SENDCO if they are worried about a child, then teachers will have a meeting with senior leaders, and if all educators in this meeting agree that the child's problem is severe and persistent, finally teachers will talk with the parents about these problems. Lily explained:

*So that is the training that we have had. And the expectation is very much that we would talk about any children that we have these worries about with SENDCO. We are never in isolation. It would be something that would be flagged up. I do not know if you heard me say about the meetings with the senior leaders. So, everybody must agree that it is severe and persistent. And then that is when we would start to talk to parents on a different level.* Lily: South School teacher

Teachers at South School talk with parents about their concerns during the parents' evening, and they explain how parents can support their children at home:

*To begin with, you might have a parents' evening. Where are you talking to the parent and saying that you have concerns? You know, little 'Such and such'. is not meeting this. He is not able to do this. This is what I am doing about it. This is what you can do at home to support that.* Lily: South School teacher

However, if the problems continue with the child, teachers will make an educational plan and then explain to parents what their child needs to achieve. The teacher commented:

*But if it goes up that level, then we start looking at actual educational plans and having parents in for longer to really talk through the things that their children need to be able to achieve.* Lily: South School teacher

Lily's comments suggest that in South School, parents are expected to engage and work with their children at home, which may be related to the school's history as a communication support base (which will be discussed further in Section 7.3.2).

Another perspective on supporting parents came from Turkish educators; two Turkish teachers believed that they should inform parents about dyslexia. One of these teachers remarked:

*I would explain to a parent what dyslexia is, and then I would tell them how important it is to support these children emotionally and to engage in social activities together.* Yakup: Turkish PhD student

However, one Turkish teacher believes explaining the term 'dyslexia' is difficult:

*Parents are confused about dyslexia. I try to explain to them because it is not easy to understand for them; even for educators, it is difficult to understand.* Kenan: Turkish PhD student

Yakup and Kenan's comments regarding the necessity of informing and explaining the term 'dyslexia' to parents might be related to how dyslexia is perceived in Türkiye, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Analysis of this sub-theme suggests that schools provide meetings for parents to be involved in children's learning, and parents learn how to support their children via interactions with educators. However, schools have different approaches to supporting parents. Ellie's School, for example, organises SENCO meetings for the parents of students with dyslexia to inform them about the learning process. Similarly, South School meets with parents whose children have severe and persistent reading problems, and teachers explain to these parents how they might help their children. On the other

hand, North School provides meetings and workshops to parents of children with poor reading because they believe students are coming from homes where parents are less educated and are not good at reading themselves. Therefore, the school aims to support parents in developing a love of reading for their children because collaboration between schools and families is important for student success (Paccaud *et al.*, 2021).

#### **6.4.4 Summary**

Analysis of this theme suggests both parents and TAs have an important role in supporting children with poor reading. However, in terms of supporting students, these roles are viewed differently in different school settings. For example, North School trains TAs to deliver reading interventions for all students and organises reading workshops for all parents to teach how to support children's reading. On the other hand, in South School, children who are particularly known to have difficulty with reading were getting support from the teacher also informs these children's parents about how they can support them at home. As previously stated, TAs at North School learn how to support students through training and interactions with teachers, whereas TAs at South School learn how to support children mainly through interactions with the classroom teacher. Parents in both schools, on the other hand, learn how to help their children at home through interactions with educators, but the expectations about parents' involvement differed between schools because of different cultural and historical understandings.

#### **6.5 Chapter summary**

Analysis of the findings suggests that teachers have different teaching approaches and different approaches to providing learning environments that accommodate students with dyslexia or poor reading. Looking at Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis, this is related to their training, interaction with others, and their experience with children.

Analysis of the findings also suggests experienced teachers feel more ready to work with students with dyslexia or poor reading, while preservice teachers do not feel ready to work with these students due to their lack of training on dyslexia or poor reading. The findings also explored the TAs' and parents' roles in supporting children with poor reading, which are different in different school settings as a result of their access to training and opportunities for interactions with teachers (see above). Furthermore, all these different approaches can be related to teachers' understanding of dyslexia or poor reading, which will be explored further in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS**

## **7.1 Introduction**

The exploration of themes related to strategies, roles, and organisation in the previous chapter suggests the need for increasing the depth of the analysis and exploration of participants' perspectives on teaching strategies for students with poor reading. As mentioned earlier (see Section 5.4), the participants in my study are recently qualified teachers in the UK, Turkish PhD students, and staff at two primary schools. They have different educational and cultural backgrounds; therefore, this chapter explores the perspectives of these educators on teaching strategies based on their socially acquired knowledge of dyslexia and/or poor reading. Looking at practice from a different cultural standpoint can help reveal what is taken for granted (Tobin, 1999); I will therefore include my perspective on teaching strategies for students with poor reading as a special education teacher from Turkiye.

As explained in Section 5.6, I have sought to identify both semantic and latent themes in my study; in Chapter 6, I reported on semantic themes, where I identified what participants said about the teaching strategies used for students with dyslexia or poor reading and considered how they learn these teaching strategies by using Rogoff's three planes of development. However, further analysis prompted me to search for deeper meaning in their teaching choices; therefore, I looked for latent themes in this chapter (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The introduction to the previous chapter provided the details of the initial data analysis (Section 5.7). Findings from the second phase of qualitative data analyses are presented in this chapter under three latent themes: understanding of differences, the image of the poor reader, and engaging students 'with dyslexia or poor reading'.

## 7.2 Understanding reading differences

This theme was mainly developed by analysing educators' responses to the question, 'What do you understand by the term "dyslexia"?' Their definitions of dyslexia prompted me to develop this theme because it became clear that individuals had different understandings of dyslexia and that this might be related to their training and experience of dyslexia or poor reading, as outlined in Section 6.3.

My analysis of participants' comments suggests that educators' understanding of disability in general and poor reading in particular can be explained by both medical and social models. As discussed in Section 3.2, the medical model of disability assumes that people are disabled due to their physical impairments or differences, which implies that this model views the problem as being within the person. In contrast, the social model argues that the disabilities people experience have been caused by the way society has been organised without regard for people's impairments or differences from each other (Petasis, 2019). Staff at North School (located in a rural area classified as disadvantaged) appear to adopt elements of both social and medical models of disability and elements of intersectionality, which shapes the way they understand poor reading. North School staff believe that many students have poor language skills due to their family backgrounds. According to teachers, most students do not have a physical impairment; however, they have a disadvantage due to their early experience of suboptimal learning environments. Cecelia from North School explained:

*We do have some parents who are illiterate and cannot read, which is tricky to manage. And we tend to know those parents, but we just need to provide as much help in school as possible because we know it will just not happen outside school.* Cecelia: North School teacher

She added:

*We have done different parent workshops and our parental engagement is a very big problem for us. We have a lot of parents who do not want to engage because they did not have a great time in school. They did not have a very good positive*



*experience and their parents did not read to them anything, or support them with homework and things, so they do not even think to do it for their children.*  
Cecilia: North School teacher

This school appears to adopt the interactional model of disability because they believe that their students come from less advantaged backgrounds. This has put up barriers to their students' learning, and they are trying to remove these barriers in their environment by offering high-quality books and sending books home (see Section 6.2), which echoes the social model of disability. As mentioned in Section 3.4.1, individuals have multiple identities (such as race, gender, class, and disability), and sometimes these identities can intersect with each other to shape their experiences and bring advantages or disadvantages to their lives (Case, 2016). In this case, North School staff recognise that children's background and their reading abilities are interconnected, and they believe that this influences children's learning experiences negatively through a reduction in opportunities in their home learning environment which shows consideration of intersectionality. Therefore, educators aim to respond to the needs of these students in the school via reading interventions. However, elements of the medical model are still evident in their thinking because they see the problem as located in the child, and they offer interventions to change the child's poor speech, language, and reading. While the social model of disability focuses on changing the environment, North School instead focuses on improving basic aspects of children's language ability, which may reflect their belief that poor reading is caused by poor language skills, which can be compensated for by school-based intervention activities. Therefore, I suggest they adopt an interactional model of disability (Shakespeare *et al.*, 2016) because they consider that both environmental and within-child elements affect learning (see Section 3.3). Although staff at North School do not describe children as biologically deficient, they choose to use diagnostic tools to determine poor reading and try to overcome environmental factors (poor family background) via diagnostic approaches such as

reading interventions. This led me to consider that North School views reading problems as ‘within’ children (but because of mainly socioeconomic factors) and believes that these children require help to change or be changed. Furthermore, the use of assessment tools such as NELI might be related to the fact that it is generally accepted that language and speech are important for children’s learning, and many schools are encouraged to use NELI to improve children’s language skills due to the positive outcomes of the programme (EFF, 2020). NELI screening and intervention programmes are published by academics with a long history of working in the less advantaged areas who are also responding to the call to ‘close the gap’ in performance after COVID-19 (OxEd, 2023). The use of NELI to help to close the gap aligns with North School’s aim of overcoming barriers to language development in students’ home environments (see the interview quotation from the North School teacher on the next page). Considering Rogoff’s (1995) three levels of learning, North School’s use of NELI is an example of a community level learning that neatly fits in with interpersonal and personal learning about the needs of children in the school.

Educators’ different educational and cultural backgrounds provided me with various perspectives on teaching practices. I use Tobin’s method of comparative classroom ethnography to understand and notice different practices in different school contexts as an outside researcher (Tobin, 1999). For this reason, trying to interpret North School’s approach to poor reading prompted me to reflect on my understanding of poor reading. My experience as a special needs teacher has led me to believe that no distinct difference exists between dyslexia and poor reading because children in my class who were not labelled as dyslexic showed similar problems with reading, such as difficulties in word decoding, fluency, and comprehension. These students, however, usually came from working-class or low-income families or ethnic minority families. From my working experience, I believe they are more likely to face difficulties in school because

poor reading may be linked with a less advantaged environment, just as how the social environment is constructed may contribute to children's poor performance; similarly, to North School, I noticed that my own perspectives on poor reading also have elements of social model of disability and show consideration of intersectionality. Poor school performance that might be caused by a lack of opportunity can also negatively impact these children's future lives, as research has shown that people with dyslexia or poor reading are more likely to experience future difficulties such as homelessness, poverty, and social exclusion (Macdonald, 2010).

North School is concerned about students' poor language skills (as shown in the quotation below); they believe that language skills are an essential foundation for building literacy, and because of this, they offer many interventions for students to support them with learning to read and to make up for their less optimal home experience, as they believe their students' reading abilities and family backgrounds are interconnected and they cause children to be less advantaged. The use of assessment tools such as NELI and PiXL shows how they use their interactions with the wider community to inform their understanding of and response to poor reading. The school aims to provide children with as wide a range of learning opportunities as those enjoyed by others who do not come from less advantaged backgrounds. The teacher explained:

*Well, all our intervention is linked to poor reading because they come to our school with poor speech and language. Currently, we use a screening called NELI. For about 50% of our nursery intake, we have concerns, and NELI flags some areas.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Staff at North School assesses all students' speech and language skills in the nursery to determine those who require interventions to help them learn to read. On the other hand, South School assesses the speech and language of young children who are considerably lagging behind their peers to identify which of these students might need to transfer to a

different classroom known as Nursery Plus (see Section 5.3.1.1.) This provides intensive support to students who are lacking in their speaking and listening skills. This underlying different model of reading difficulty might come from historically having an autism unit located within the South School and receiving training from an autism expert (see Section 6.3.2). Children needed an identification to receive education in that unit, and the school's ethos might be influenced by this approach, such as making school a pleasant place for children with communication issues (e.g., displays, spare quiet spaces) (see Section 6.2.2). The unit has now closed, but many aspects of the ethos have remained. In this connection, this school believes that poor reading is related to children's learning difficulties, which suggests elements of a medical model of disability. The South School teacher, who has received training in dyslexia, defined dyslexia as 'persistent and complex' (also as defined in the Code of Practice, DfE, 2015) and 'more than just finding reading a little bit challenging':

*So, our training went back to 'What is dyslexia?' You know, we explored the definitions out there and agreed on things like, yes, you can say they have difficulty reading, or writing, or spelling, but these difficulties are persistent and complex. It is more than just finding reading a little bit challenging. [...] they have problems at the word level that are severe and persistent.* Lily: South School teacher

As a result of her training, Lily is adapting teaching strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading to accommodate their reading difficulties:

*So, it is always bringing it back to that visual, because I think sometimes the children who are still struggling with reading and writing in Year 6 [10 and 11 years old] still find it impossible or difficult to do.* Lily: South School teacher

Furthermore, Lily aims to plan simplified learning activities for students with dyslexia or poor reading. For example, she 'strips the text' to avoid giving big reading texts to these students. She stated:

*We always make sure we adapt the materials that we are using. I was talking about stripping back, you know, taking activities back so that they are simplified. So, not giving children who struggle with reading great big chunks of text, you just do not do it. You give them the same text, but I might have stripped it up. So, read this bit, then read this bit rather than read a whole A4 sheet.* Lily: South School teacher

The stripping text strategy might be useful for students with dyslexia or poor reading because it allows them to access a text that is being read by the rest of the class.

However, reading a reduced text may not provide the same reading experience as others. Her comment suggests to me that the interactional model of disability influences Lily's teaching strategies because she believes these children need different teaching strategies than children without dyslexia. Although she tries to provide this modified teaching strategy to students while they are in the classrooms with their peers, this might not promote inclusion because the reduced text is not available to all students, and reading different texts than other classmates may cause children to feel excluded.

Lily's comments above suggest that her understanding of dyslexia or poor reading was shaped by the training she received from SENCO experts, which can be an example of Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning as her understanding of reading difficulties is influenced by interacting with the wider community.

Most teachers in my study defined dyslexia as a learning difficulty with specific characteristics; they believe dyslexia is more than just being a poor reader. For example:

*So, it is a learning difficulty, which means they find it difficult to read and write jumbled words on the page.* Ashley: PGCE student

*It is a learning difficulty that can cause problems in reading, writing, and spelling. The main difficulty many dyslexic people face is processing and remembering.* Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK

On the other hand, my study involves different social and cultural perspectives on reading difficulty. For example, Turkish teachers suggest that these go beyond reading and writing; a Turkish teacher described different features of dyslexia. He stated:

*They do not have a low IQ, they have a problem with reading, they have a problem managing their time, and they are slow learners. They have their own time for learning.* Yakup: Turkish PhD student

According to another Turkish teacher, another view of students with dyslexia is that they have behavioural problems:

*They also have behaviour problems; they are angry and hit each other.* Aleyna: Turkish PhD student

However, Aleyna believes not all children with poor reading have dyslexia:

*Dyslexic students do not have low IQ, dyslexia has different types, such as dyscalculia and dyspraxia, and I cannot say all students with poor reading have dyslexia.* Aleyna: Turkish PhD student

Similar to Aleyna's comment, I also believe that not all children with poor reading have dyslexia. On the other hand, in contrast with Aleyna's assumptions about a learner with dyslexia or poor reading being angry or having behavioural problems, as a Turkish teacher myself, I believe students' behavioural problems might be a result of frustration in their school life rather than a direct consequence of having dyslexia. For example, frustration with not being able to read and write may lead to children being aggressive towards their peers at school. As discussed in Section 2.8, that dyslexia itself causes serious emotional or behavioural problems has not been proven; however, previous research has shown children with dyslexia can develop anxiety and frustration, having to cope with the difficulty of meeting their school's and families' expectations (Livingston, Siegel, and Ribary, 2018). Due to these emotional problems that students are facing, in my research, some teachers feel responsible for reducing these problems

with different or extra teaching strategies and finding ways to involve parents in students' learning (see Section 6.4.3).

The comments above suggest that most British teachers in my study consider dyslexia a learning difficulty. On the other hand, Turkish teachers defined dyslexia as a learning disorder, and they tended to refer to brain-related problems. For example, one Turkish teacher believes '*they have different brain processes than others*' (Semiha: Turkish PhD student). Another Turkish teacher defined dyslexia as a neurological problem: '*Dyslexia is a problem of biological and physiological origin. It is a neurologic problem*' (Kenan: Turkish PhD student).

Another Turkish teacher's definition of dyslexia suggests a medical problem with long-term consequences, although an early diagnosis can help minimise these consequences.

He stated:

*They have problems with reading comprehension, and there is no treatment for dyslexia, but early identification (diagnosis) is important.* Remzi: Turkish PhD student

Although most Turkish educators in my study believe dyslexia is a brain-related problem, one teacher nonetheless portrayed having dyslexia as an advantage because this difference has positive impacts:

*They have a normal or high IQ. Having dyslexia is a blessing and has many advantages because they are good at art. They have different brain processes than others, which makes them successful in life.* Semiha: Turkish PhD student

This view was not shared and was indeed explicitly countered by another Turkish teacher, who believes dyslexia has negative impacts. His comments went beyond a reference to a brain-based difference to suggest observable physical differences:

*Dyslexia is a problem of biological and physiological origin. It is a neurologic problem; dyslexic students look different than others, and they have a noticeable problem with their posture. They are clumsy. This illness makes their life hell.*

*Dyslexia is a Greek origin name that means word blindness, so I disagree with Semiha that having dyslexia is not an advantage; it is a disadvantage in social life.* Kenan: Turkish PhD student

Kenan's comment suggests that he considers dyslexia a medical condition that affects a person's social life negatively. Similar to Kenan's comments, people labelled as dyslexic are more likely to experience social isolation and poverty (Macdonald, 2010). However, this might be linked to people's attitudes rather than dyslexia or poor reading because students who are labelled as dyslexic express that they face negative attitudes and assumptions from teachers and others about their abilities (Balci, 2019). This can cause children to drop out of school or not pursue higher education, which might lead them to face poverty in their adult lives.

The responses above suggest that the understanding of dyslexia among Turkish teachers in my study is more strongly shaped by the medical model of disability, which primarily affects reading, implying that their understanding of dyslexia is influenced by their social and educational context, where this view is commonplace (Yazicioglu, 2020).

This can be related to Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning as Turkish teachers shaped their understanding of dyslexia via interaction with the larger community.

However, in contrast to these findings from Turkish teachers, although I am a Turkish teacher myself, I do not see dyslexia or poor reading as a brain-related medical condition. I believe dyslexia does not differ from poor reading. I have found support for my point of view in the research literature, which concludes that no significant difference exists between poor reading and dyslexia (Elliot and Grigorenko, 2014).

Even though I share the same sociocultural and educational background as these teachers, I have a different perspective, which could be explained by my own experience of working directly with children with poor reading. This can be considered an example of Rogoff's (1995) personal level of learning, as I shifted my understanding of dyslexia through my participation in teaching activities. For example, I worked with



children who had both learning disabilities and difficulty in reading. Despite having a learning disability diagnosis, each child learned to read in a unique way and at their own pace. As a result, I tailored the teaching for each of them to support their reading.

### **7.2.1 Summary**

The interpretations of teachers' responses to the definition of dyslexia made me aware that individuals have different understandings of reading differences and that these differences could relate to differences in their social context, such as the schools where they work and their teacher training. These differences prompted me to develop this latent theme, 'understanding of reading differences'. All teachers in this study noticed differences in children's ability to learn to read, but they had different perspectives on the causes of those differences. However, in response to these differences, all teachers modified their teaching strategies to support children.

Analysis of this theme suggests that teachers' understanding of reading differences is mainly influenced by the interactional model of disability, which combines social and medical models of disability. For example, North School believes students' poor reading is connected to their less advantaged social environment, which could suggest the influence of the social model of disability and shows consideration of intersectionality. However, their approach to overcoming this environment has an element of a medical model approach because they put huge effort into screening and selecting interventions for children without making a distinction in their approach, which would single out children with dyslexia. South School, on the other hand, assesses the speech and language of students to find those who are significantly behind their peers and determine which of these students should transition to a separate unit (a specially designed environment). This implies that these schools approached poor language and speech differently, with the North School assessing students for providing support in discrete sessions outside the classroom while they remain in the same

classroom with their peers for the rest of the time, and the South School assessing pupils for identification and deciding whether they should remain in their classroom. However, in terms of teaching strategies, South School Teacher Lily adopts a learning environment for students with reading difficulties. These different views of dyslexia are influenced by teacher training in their school. As mentioned in Section 6.3.2, while North School teachers receive school-based training on poor reading through staff meetings, South School teachers receive training about special education needs from SENCO experts. This different training also formed their understanding of reading difficulties, which was explained by using Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning. Despite differences in how students are assessed and supported, both schools adopt the interactional model of disability to respond to poor reading or dyslexia.

Similarly, other UK teachers' understanding of reading differences showed a strong influence of interactional models of disability, and these teachers tended to believe that dyslexia is more than just having poor reading. On the other hand, Turkish teachers believed that dyslexia is a brain-related problem that can best be explained by the medical model of disability. As mentioned above, teachers' different understandings of reading differences are shaped by social and educational contexts. In addition, all these different understandings of reading difficulties shaped their perspective of students with poor reading, which will be explored in the next section.

### **7.3 Image of the learner with dyslexia or poor reading**

While reviewing the transcripts as part of the process of thematic analysis, I highlighted specific words teachers frequently used in describing students with dyslexia or poor reading. These words prompted me to comment on transcripts as part of the coding and analysis process and to develop the 'image of a learner with dyslexia or poor reading' theme. The teachers' perspectives of learners with dyslexia or poor reading are

presented in this theme, and how their own and others' experiences shaped their socially developed knowledge of dyslexia.

This theme includes sub-themes relating to 'responsibilisation', 'talented', 'struggling', and 'negative assumptions'.

### **7.3.1 Responsibilisation**

This sub-theme was developed by considering individuals' perspectives on responsibility for the learning of students with poor reading. In my study, some teachers place considerable responsibility on parents and students for students' learning, while other teachers do not put responsibility on children and parents for their learning. These differences were shaped by their understanding of disability in their local context and their interactions with others (Rogoff, 1995).

Teachers' perspectives on responsibility can be linked to school atmosphere and interactions with others, an example of Rogoff's (1995) interpersonal level of learning. For example, according to my findings, North School educators believe it is important to support students with dyslexia or poor reading by providing interventions for them (see Section 6.2.1). These teachers also see themselves as accountable for their students' success by removing possible barriers to learning, whereas children were not seen as responsible for their learning. For example, a North School teacher stated that students '*are well trained*'. On the other hand, in South School, students are encouraged to develop responsibility for their learning. The teachers, for example, Lily, the teacher who defined dyslexia as a persistent and complex difficulty (see Section 7.2), believe that students must work harder so that they can meet class expectation. In the quotation below, Lily describes the school strategy for questioning children in whole-class teaching sessions in more detail. The intention behind this strategy is for the teacher to spot the weaknesses in children's responses and identify the areas for development.

However, it appears to be used differently when teaching students who might ‘struggle’ (see Section 7.3.2). The teacher instructs students to practice before being asked for a class response so they can give the right answer. They are therefore encouraged to work extra hard, so they are prepared to be asked questions, which is a teaching strategy that is likely to feature in whole-class teaching in secondary school:

*We have a hands-down strategy. If we ask a question, I will nominate the person I want to answer it. I will use that to help me to spot where the weaknesses are, and where the areas for development are. But also, if I have a child who is particularly struggling, I will make sure I give them a bit of a warning. So, I would say to them, I am going to come to you next. So, make sure you get your answer ready; what answer is going to be? - and then they will give you the answer quietly and I will say practice, practice, and then go back to the front of the class [and say] ‘Right, over to so-and-so’, then they can say the answer because they have prepped it and they have practiced. Lily: South School teacher*

During the classroom observation, I noticed students in her classroom had to meet certain expectations for learning behaviours. For example, when the teacher selected a student to answer a question, the teacher waited for a considerable amount of time for the student to respond. This indicated that in her classroom, she expects each student to be aware that they need to be ready to answer a question. This can be seen throughout Lily’s strategies as a Year 6 teacher because she wants to help students attain certain learning behaviours to carry forward to secondary school. She might hold a vision of secondary school practice in which students do not receive the same support as in primary school. Lily stated that ‘*As a Year 6 teacher I want children to be ready for secondary school*’.

As mentioned in Section 2.11, the transition from primary to secondary school can be a challenge for students academically; the increased workload can lead to academic stress for students who may be concerned that their work is not meeting standards (Lithari, 2019). Classes are arranged differently, and pupils are expected to adjust to having

many different teachers instead of one main class teacher (DfE, 2022). Lily wants all pupils to make a successful transition to secondary school. She aims to teach students how to work extra hard to meet classroom expectations and use these strategies in the future, so they will not have difficulty in secondary school.

In addition, in Lily's school, teachers are encouraged to teach revisit and reinforcement techniques to all students that make learning 'sticky'. The teacher explained that this is particularly important for students with poor reading:

*As a school, anyway, we believe in revisiting learning, layering it, and making sure that we go back over knowledge. But I think for these children who have trouble with reading, it is so important that you are doing that. Revisit, reinforce. We learn and we overlearn things, trying to get different ways to catch it, to make it stick. So, we talk to our children about learning being sticky or knowledge being sticky. Lily: South School teacher*

As mentioned in Section 6.2.1, Lily's approach to making learning 'sticky' might be influenced by PD courses. Ofsted (2019) defined learning as 'an alteration in long-term memory' (p.44) and used the term 'sticky knowledge' to describe permanent learning (Harford, 2018). According to Ofsted (2019), teachers should be encouraged to use sticky learning as an effective teaching method. Therefore, Lily's approach is an example of Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning, as she developed sticky learning methods via interaction with the wider education community.

In Lily's classroom, students who 'have difficulties' are expected to meet classroom expectations, which include achieving the same learning goals. For this reason, Lily sets small steps towards these goals for these students in her lessons and motivates the students to keep working towards the set goals:

*For children who struggle particularly with English lessons, it is important to say to them that by the end of this session, they will, and they can do this by the end of the session. For those children who struggle with writing, it is about keeping those steps incredibly small, making sure they know they can achieve it and when they achieve it. Lily: South School teacher*

The teacher showed me a piece of writing written by a boy with dyslexia. In the writing session, he is expected to write and read it back to the teacher. She explained further:

*He went from having to have, you know, his, it had to be mediated totally to this idea of chunking the story down. In each session, he knew he only had to write about that one picture. He knows 'I can do that. I can achieve I can make that happen'. And he is focused even more on just a sentence, just one sentence.* Lily: South School teacher

She added:

*I am not asking for much, but I am saying to him, 'The bottom line was you need to read it back to me'.* Lily: South School teacher

Lily adopts this strategy because she believes these students have difficulty with English and writing and might not be able to reach the same learning goals as others. As a result, providing these students with predetermined and structured small steps for the lesson (Spear-Swerling, 2019) will enable them to overcome their struggles with writing. However, Tondeur (2015) rejects the idea that dyslexia is a problem, that the student with dyslexia requires help, and that learning how to think, read, and write clearly is necessary for success because this may limit their creativity in writing. Louise Tondeur, who identifies herself as a 'dyslexic writer', shares her experience that it was hard for her to write her thoughts. Therefore, she developed some strategies herself to help her creativity in writing, such as writing in a spontaneous style and not worrying about making sense in the first draft, playing with non-sequential forms, making links that do not make sense, writing about a topic until you understand it, and putting faith in the process of rewriting (Tondeur, 2015). According to her, all these strategies help her practice creativity in her writing. However, these strategies appear to be in contrast with Lily's and Cecilia's approaches to writing.

Lily also believes that for students to meet expectations, their parents should also take some responsibility for their children's progress by helping with their reading. Her ideas

about the role that parents of children experiencing reading difficulties should take are influenced by an image of these parents as eager to respond to teachers' suggestions.

The teacher stated:

*Particularly with the reading, the parental support that starts early is so important. The conversations teachers have [with parents], they are about what sort of reading should they be doing with their children. How can you encourage them to read? – all those sorts of things.* Lily: South School teacher

Furthermore, some students might be required to do extra reading outside the classroom to keep up with class expectations because they are having difficulties during lessons.

They might also need a different way of approaching homework. Because of her image of the parents as keen to get involved, Lily expects that they will work with her to provide 'tailored' support for their children with their homework. Lily explained:

*That must be in consultation with parents because we will give children who are struggling with reading a whole different way of approaching homework, a whole different set of expectations because homework can often cause a huge amount of stress in the home, even when the child can do it. When they are struggling to do it, then there is a sort of knock-on effect, and then the negative attitude that the children feel towards the work just increases. So, there is just no point. You know, it is not helping anybody by forcing them to sit there to try and do something they cannot do. So, we would work very closely with parents, and we would expect those parents to support them and make use of a tailored program, something that they are interested in, something that they want to write about.* Lily: South School teacher

This teacher's view of parents of students with poor reading goes as far as 'pushing' parents to read to their children at home. Lily added:

*Just the other thing is that with poor reading, we would be looking at interventions about reading to the children—as well as just getting them to do the decoding. So, we would be pushing the parents at home to read to their children more. You know that is such an important thing. The hearing of reading, the sharing of reading, it being an experience that is pleasant. So even though these children are big, we would still be saying read, read to them.* Lily: South School teacher

In contrast to this approach, in North School, parents are not seen as needing to take responsibility for their children's learning and are certainly not pushed into anything.

This image includes not having had positive school experiences or support at home in the past and not wanting to engage with reading now. Cecilia, a teacher at North School, stated:

*We have a lot of parents who do not want to engage because they did not have a great time in school. They did not have a good positive experience, and their parents did not read anything, or support them with homework and things, so they do not even think to do it for their children.* Cecilia: North School teacher

Cecilia's statement implies to me that she has an image of parents that does not include putting responsibility for their children's learning on them. According to Cecilia, they come from a poor social background. She believes these parents struggled with schoolwork and homework in the past due to a lack of support from their parents. As a result, many parents continue to struggle with reading themselves. The school had sought to involve parents in children's learning through reading 'workshops'. However, the school formed the view that parents dislike working with their children in workshops in school because they are afraid of 'being judged'. Instead, the workshops seem to be more like demonstrations, where parents can learn from watching the teachers teach their children:

*So, to get that it was always a big drive for us, so the parent workshops for the reading. So, parents over here we realise do not like working with their children because they feel like being judged. So, they like to watch their children. They want to see their children being taught.* Cecilia: North School teacher

North School provides the interventions and workshops during the day because they do not want to put too much pressure on children's families by expecting them to help their children with their homework at home.

Although the image of students and parents does not include being responsible for learning in the North School, students are seen as responsible for their learning in the South School, and they are expected to learn how to 'deliver great work'. Children are



also expected to play an active role in marking. The teacher from South School stated she uses 'marking alongside', which means the teacher and student do assessments together. In this classroom, assessing children's learning requires identifying and discussing errors with them. This discussion involves the teacher reinforcing students to do acceptable work:

*I was thinking about assessing writing, and with those sorts of children, most of my marking, most of my assessment, would be done alongside. We would go back through it together and that would where I be would say now, not accepting that. What were you trying to write? Say it. Look at it. What have you done wrong?* Lily: South School teacher

This strategy suggests that in this classroom, students need to be aware of the teacher's expectations and they should be able to identify their mistakes and work to correct them; students are held accountable for their mistakes. On the other hand, North School's approach, with its many assessments

*We do tests, more formal tests, and quizzes with the children.* Cecilia: North School teacher

suggests that in North School, children are not seen as responsible for assessing their learning, while in South School, teacher and student do assessments together. Reflecting on these findings, I was following a different approach than Lily. For example, I used assessment and marking in my classroom to identify areas where students needed to improve, allowing me to create a teaching plan for delivering the sessions that focused on these areas because, as a teacher, I want to shape students' learning by providing the support they require to achieve learning goals. In my approach, similar to North School, children were not included in the assessment process. Now that I think about it, the reason behind this might be related to my image of the SEN students as not responsible for their learning.

The summary of this sub-theme suggests that teachers in my study have different perspectives on children's responsibility for their learning. For example, North School does not see children or parents as responsible for learning because they believe many of their students have a less advantaged social environment, and the school aims to overcome this by providing interventions for children and workshops for parents, while South School teachers place responsibility on children and their parents, and children are encouraged to work hard to meet external expectations so that they will have a successful transfer to secondary school. These two different school approaches are likely to have been developed through Rogoff's interpersonal level of learning because attitudes towards parents are generally shaped via interaction with other teachers in their schools. Ainscow and colleagues also point out the importance of wider structural support for inclusive cultures (Ainscow *et al.*, 2004).

### **7.3.2 Talented**

As previously discussed, most teachers' definitions of dyslexia in my study suggest that they believe children with dyslexia are different from children without dyslexia or poor reading, and that these differences place them at a disadvantage (7.2). However, some of these teachers also believe these differences enable them to be talented, for example:

*I know that children with dyslexia may struggle to read and write. It is associated with increased creativity or a more picture-oriented mind.* Clara: PGCE (master's) student

*It is important to discover their talents and strengths because most of them are talented in some areas, like drawing.* Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK

*They have normal or high IQs; dyslexia is a blessing and has many advantages because they are good at art.* Semiha: Turkish PhD student

In the extracts above, teachers described children with dyslexia as talented or being more inclined towards visual modalities. This might be related to their personal experience with these children, such as Ethan's comments about his twin sister having

dyslexia and being good at drawing, or it might be linked to a widely held belief that people with dyslexia are creative. Researchers have investigated the link between some aspects of creativity and dyslexia; their findings indicate that people with dyslexia use creative thinking, particularly when establishing linkages between distinct or opposing parts and creating alternate solutions (Cancer, Manzoli, and Antonietti, 2016). This view of dyslexia has led to a critique of teaching approaches that limit creativity and impose a particular way of thinking, as learners with dyslexia are seen as having thinking skills that are unique and creative (Tondeur, 2015). For example, the Dyslexia Association introduced 'Structured Literacy Instruction', a literacy method that teaches systematic word recognition and decoding strategies that it claims are beneficial to the majority of pupils, including those with dyslexia (Spear-Swerling, 2019). This teaching encourages teachers to teach strategies or content in small steps. A further criticism of this learning is that it does not provide fluency and prosody, which are essential for reading comprehension and can affect creativity. If students cannot read and understand the text they cannot think differently.

In connection with teachers' comments about children with dyslexia being talented, based on my personal experience with students, I believe that every child, regardless of differences or disabilities, has unique skills, talents, and abilities. For example, while I was working with children with learning difficulties, I realised that each of my students had individual abilities and strengths in areas such as music, art, and sports. This experience led me to believe that every child is unique, and that their talents are often unrelated to their disabilities. For example, one of my 11-year-old students enjoyed playing table tennis and participated in table tennis tournaments several times. For this reason, all children should be encouraged to discover their talents and be allowed to engage in activities that show these talents. This is important for the development of self-esteem (Katz, 2013).

Some teachers described students with dyslexia as talented in particular areas like drawing, art, and creativity and different from students without dyslexia (see above). As a result, some teachers believe they should use these talents and strengths to help students overcome reading difficulties. For this reason, one teacher provides different writing activities. She stated:

*So, like getting them to write in, like different ways with glitter, or glue or Legos. So that is different. Yes, a different way. So, to help them with different activities focused on writing, not just focusing on the reading, they are doing it like that, doing kinaesthetic learning as well.* Ellie: PGCE student

Comments that led to the identification of this sub-theme suggest that some teachers who perceive learners with dyslexia or poor reading as different have an image of children with dyslexia as talented; this view might link with their personal experiences with children, or with the generally held belief that dyslexics are more ‘creative’ (Cancer, Manzoli, and Antonietti, 2016). Therefore, they believe they need to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents and skills.

### **7.3.3 Struggling**

‘Struggle’ was one of the most frequently used words by the teachers when they discussed learners with dyslexia or poor reading based on their experience with these children. Examples of this include:

*Yeah, I think if a child was struggling to write words in order or letter order, then I would think they could have dyslexia.* Clara: PGCE (master’s) student

*I know that children with dyslexia may struggle to read and write.* Ashley: PGCE student

The word ‘struggle’ indicates experiencing difficulty and putting significant effort into doing something, with the suggestion that the task might be performed to a lesser standard. The South School teacher believes that children who are struggling should be encouraged to work hard towards achievable goals (see Section 7.3.2). Lily commented:

*For children who struggle particularly with English lessons, it is important to say to them that by the end of this session, they will, and they can do this, by the end of the session. For those children who struggle with writing, it is about keeping those steps incredibly small, making sure they know they can achieve it and when they achieve it. Lily: South School teacher*

However, teacher Ethan, who has a twin sister labelled with dyslexia, remarked that despite his sister's hard work, it still 'felt like a marathon' to her:

*Regardless, she is an amazing person who works extremely hard every day, and I admire her for it. Still, it felt like a marathon to my sister: Ethan a Greek teacher working in the UK*

According to the findings (see Section 6.2), North School creates an attractive learning environment for all students, including students with poor reading, to compensate for their low national test performance. On the other hand, South School has designed a work environment that suits children with communication difficulties, particularly autism spectrum conditions, with the teacher suggesting additional strategies or pre-teaching sessions for students with poor reading so that they might keep up with class expectations (see Section 6.2.1). This could be interpreted as being encouraged to work harder, similar to Ethan's comment that his sister, who has dyslexia, has to work hard to meet expectations. Teachers in my study consider students with dyslexia or poor reading 'struggling' and therefore put in place extra activities and/or strategies. However, if students are not motivated to work on extra tasks on top of those carried out with their classmates, this can lead to misconceptions about these students, such as being lazy, not working hard enough, or even being incompetent. These negative connotations accrue around the word 'struggle'. Therefore, using the term 'struggle' can have a negative impact that causes people to doubt someone's abilities to do or learn.

### 7.3.4 Negative assumptions

Although dyslexia is commonly known as a reading problem by teachers (Elliot and Gibbs, 2020), prejudiced attitudes or assumptions associated with a label of dyslexia may limit teachers' ability to fully engage in inclusive education (Elliot and Grinko, 2014). Similarly, Ellie and Ethan in my study emphasised that based on their personal experience, the label dyslexia can cause others to make negative assumptions about children with dyslexia, such as their being 'stupid' and 'lazy' due to the way they have difficulty with classroom tasks (see quotations below). According to one teacher, not only are children with dyslexia seen as stupid and lazy by others, but this can also become part of the way they think of themselves. She mentioned this in the context of helping to develop their confidence:

*So, they feel they are improving, and they are not just like stupid, and they do not understand anything. So just to make them have more confidence in their writing.* Ellie: PGCE student

Comments about students with dyslexia involve multiple voices; even though the teacher has a positive image of the learner with dyslexia, she is aware of other people's perceptions of the student. Some of these perceptions can create a negative impact on students' self-esteem. Ethan shared his twin sister's school experience as a student with dyslexia:

*The label of dyslexia is a negative term, and there are many misconceptions about dyslexic students, such as they are lazy and do not try hard enough. Unfortunately, my sister experienced similar negative attitudes from teachers throughout her school journey.* Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK (Ethan's second language is English; therefore, I made some changes to his statements to make them clear.)

This teacher added that children with dyslexia may also face negative attitudes about 'laziness' or being blamed by their parents. He added:

*So, my focus is on convincing parents that these students are not lazy, they may face some difficulties. Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK*

According to teachers' comments based on their personal experience, the dyslexia label might have a negative influence on people's perspective of students with dyslexia or poor reading as just being lazy or not trying hard; therefore, as these teachers' comments suggest, it is important to support these students' confidence and self-esteem in the classroom while changing parents' attitudes towards to their children is important for students' well-being.

### **7.3.5 Summary**

The summary of this theme suggests that based on teachers' understanding of reading differences (see Section 7.2), some teachers believe students and parents should also be responsible for learning as well as teachers. Other teachers believe students or parents are not responsible for children's learning. Teachers' different perspectives on responsibility are likely to be shaped by interactions with others in their schools (Rogoff, 1995; Ainscow, 2004). Analysis of this theme also suggests that teachers' socially derived knowledge of differences and their personal experience with students with dyslexia and poor reading shape their image of students with reading difficulties.

Some teachers (see Section 7.3) perceive students with dyslexia as struggling or requiring different strategies, while other teachers view children with dyslexia as talented. In addition, analysis of this theme suggests students with dyslexia and poor reading can face negative attitudes and assumptions because of their differences. These hidden assumptions and negative attitudes can not only affect the readiness of some teachers to work with these children, but they can also affect children's self-esteem negatively. On the other hand, teachers perceived these students as requiring additional or different teaching approaches than other students because of their difficulties.

#### **7.4 Engaging students with dyslexia or poor reading**

According to Rangvid (2018), student engagement in learning is critical for academic progress; children who are engaged and connected to their schools have higher academic success, higher attendance rates, lower drop-out rates, and fewer behavioural problems. School engagement is important to student success and includes social-emotional and academic (behavioural) engagement (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004). To be emotionally involved, a child must have a sense of belonging, interact with peers, and participate in social activities at school (Van Mieghem *et al.*, 2020). This is similar to the concept of social inclusivity, in which all students have a feeling of identity and belonging and are involved in the social life of their school and classroom (Katz, 2013). On the other hand, academic engagement (behavioural engagement) refers to students' active participation in their studies (Rangvid, 2018). When students exhibit engaged behaviour, such as on-task activity, and display an interest in their studying, they are academically engaged (Skinner *et al.*, 2008). Academically included students participate in the normal classroom's learning activities. However, a student might be academically engaged but not academically involved. On the other hand, academic inclusion principles would assume academic engagement since a student must be engaged to participate actively in classroom learning (Vallee, 2017). Student engagement might have been used as a measurement of social and academically inclusiveness and could potentially predict accomplishment if examined in the setting of a typical classroom with all students working on the same activities (Katz, 2013). As student engagement can form part of inclusion, teachers should consider supporting academic and social engagement in their classrooms to promote inclusion. Therefore, this theme focuses on how teachers support student engagement. In my study, I did not invite students' perspectives on their learning because I was not able to engage with students due to



COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, I conducted interviews with educators on student engagement.

This theme developed from the teachers' responses concerning how they facilitate the voices of students with dyslexia or poor reading, which is important for promoting children's engagement both socially and academically as part of inclusion (Ainscow, 2005). The teachers' responses suggest that the schools in my study follow different approaches to engaging with students with dyslexia or poor reading based on their different understandings of reading differences and their image of the poor reader, such as considering students to be 'struggling' and seeing them as being responsible for their learning (see the quotations below). Looking at this using Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis, these different approaches also might be shaped by interacting with the wider community and other teachers, or personal experience with students.

For example, Ashley, who views students with dyslexia or poor reading as having a 'learning difficulty', believes it is important to speak to her students outside the classroom to learn their feelings about lessons. The teacher commented:

*I always try my hardest with disadvantaged people. If I know they are disadvantaged or have a learning difficulty, I will take my time out of my lessons, out of my break, time to speak to them, and make sure they are OK and getting on well with the lessons. Ashley: PGCE student*

However, this teacher believes not all teachers find time to listen to these students:

*I know that not all teachers have the time to do so. I try, and I try to facilitate the best I can for the students. But obviously, it is not always the case in school settings. Ashley: PGCE student*

The comment above suggests Ashley's personal experience with students led her to learn that it is important to listen to them outside the classroom because, according to Ashley, in her school, not all teachers use their free time to talk to their students.

Ashley's finding time to facilitate children's voices in their learning implies that she

aims to support students' engagement. Allowing students to express themselves freely to the teacher about their learning needs may help to shape teachers' choices of strategies that can increase students' active participation in the lesson, which can increase their academic success. Furthermore, listening to students' voices about their learning is beneficial not only for developing teaching strategies but also for improving students' well-being and sense of belonging (Katz, 2013), which is also important for successful social inclusion (Ainscow, 2005).

In my study, teachers have different ways of promoting student engagement to increase their participation in lessons and promote a sense of belonging. For example, Ethan (a SEN teacher) saw himself as responsible for supporting students' engagement in the classroom; therefore, he created a classroom environment in which students could express their feelings freely. He stated:

*Creating an environment in which children can express their needs and feelings without feeling pressured or stressed. It is normal or important to express negative emotions. My calm attitude and giving them this chance will help, or at least I will try. Ethan: Greek teacher working in the UK*

Ethan's approach to establishing an environment for children to share their needs or negative feelings might be motivated by his experience working with autistic children, who can experience difficulty in making people understand them or understanding others, which can cause frustration (Ho, Stephenson, and Carter, 2012). Ethan's encouragement of children to express themselves and their emotions is vital for children to feel heard, understood, and valued, which can boost academic and social engagement. According to Katz (2013), emotional and social well-being is linked to resilience, citizenship, and mental health, and social inclusion is critical to student development. Therefore, listening to students' feelings without judging and trying to understand them can build these students' sense of belonging to the classroom and influence their

participation in both academic and social activities positively, which also supports inclusive education (Ainscow, 2005).

While Ethan creates a classroom environment to support student engagement, Ellie's school has a different approach to supporting student engagement. According to Ellie, teachers encourage students to express their needs to governors or other teachers in school council meetings:

*So, we have like school council meetings, so we try to encourage the children with dyslexia to attend them, so they can voice their opinions to like the governors and other teachers to express, like how they find themselves getting on and if there is anything like we can do to help them. So, yes, they can go to the meetings and discuss that. Ellie: PGCE student*

However, for younger students with dyslexia or poor reading, the schools maintain good communication with parents because they believe it is difficult for younger students to understand:

*And then for the younger children, it is harder, because they do not always understand what is happening and what dyslexia is. So, we just try to, like, be positive and always keep good communication with Mum and Dad. Ellie: PGCE student*

As mentioned previously, Ellie sees students with dyslexia or poor reading as different and having different needs (see Section 6.3); therefore, her comments above suggest that she believes in allowing these students to express themselves and that having good communication with parents is important for student engagement. This approach can relate to the in-service training that Ellie received in her schools, offering her the opportunity to become acquainted with the community level of learning.

On the other hand, South School views students with dyslexia or poor reading as having complex needs (see Section 7.2); therefore, they try to support student engagement via

attachment-based mentoring. In this school, mentors facilitate the voice of these students outside the classroom by game playing and talking:

*We were talking about Thrive and attachment-based mentoring. A lot of the children who have got those more complex needs will have time with a mentor, as we call them. And so that gives them a one-to-one relationship which is out of the classroom, out of the teacher-child relationship, which can help, to be able to go and sit with somebody, play a game of Lego, and have a chat facilitates talk more than in the classroom. Lily: South School*

This teacher believes one-to-one relationships allow children to express their opinions and needs about learning:

*To have that one-to-one attention is so important. And what they will talk about will be anything and everything. But what the mentor is trying to get out of them is what they need. You know, what will help? What can you do? How do you feel about how things are going? What do you think you need to do next? How do you think you need to develop? And the information we get back from that time when they have that time is vital as teachers because that is their voice and their chance to express how they are feeling about their learning now and what they need. Lily: South School*

As earlier discussed in Section 7.3.1, in South School, students are encouraged to develop responsibility for their learning. Therefore, this school supports students' engagement by providing mentor attachment for students to express their opinions, assess their learning, and make educational decisions. This strategy can be linked with the Code of Practice (DfE, DoH, 2015): Schools should also take steps to ensure that young people and parents are actively supported in contributing to needs assessments and developing and reviewing EHC plans. This can enable students to enhance their self-advocacy skills, which is 'a concept and skill associated with self-determination' (Test *et al.*, 2005, p.43). Lily's comment about Thrive and attachment-based mentoring suggests that South School's approach might be influenced by interacting with a wider community via the school's SENCO, which can be related to Rogoff's (1995) community level of learning.

In contrast to these findings, North School teachers stated, '*We do not engage in conversations with students, especially with the younger ones, because they would not be able to tell you*'.

North School not engaging in conversations with students, especially younger children, fits with their general approach of assuming responsibility for their learning (see Section 7.3.1).

On the other hand, Turkish participants had difficulty answering the question about facilitating students' voices. For example, one Turkish teacher, Kenan, commented, '*I did not understand the question*'. Similarly, from my experience, I recalled that I did not ask for students' perspectives on their learning. This suggests that in Türkiye, students' voices are not being heard as much as they should be by teachers. The lack of effective communication skills to engage students in their learning process and understand their perspectives can make it difficult to implement inclusive education. Teachers not facilitating students' voices might affect academic and social engagement negatively, as children are not encouraged to express themselves. Furthermore, not being included in the learning process can result in academic failure, which can also lead to emotional problems such as depression and anxiety (Katz, 2001). All these elements can decrease children's sense of belonging and participation in social or learning activities and more likely increase drop-outs, which can also affect inclusion negatively.

My analysis of this theme highlights how schools and teachers facilitate children's voices to improve students' engagement both academically and socially in different ways that are shaped by their understanding of poor reading, or dyslexia and interaction with the school, and the ideas from the wider educational community, and their personal experience with children. For example, Ashley views students with dyslexia or poor reading as having learning difficulties. Therefore, based on her personal experience with

these children, she believes it is important to devote her time outside of the classroom to support their engagement. On the other hand, Ellie's school provides school council meetings for students, including children with dyslexia or poor reading, where they can express their needs and opinions with educators. Teachers in this school also maintain good communication with parents of younger children who cannot express themselves to the support engagement of younger students. As mentioned above, Ellie's approach to encouraging children to express themselves in these meetings and keeping good communication with parents might be linked to teacher training that she received in her school. In contrast, due to interaction with ideas from the wider community via the Thrive programme, South School provides attachment-based mentoring whereby children can talk with a mentor outside of the classroom, play games together, and build one-to-one relationships. This approach can be related to students developing responsibility for their learning. On the other hand, Ethan aims to support students' engagement in the classroom. Therefore, he creates an environment where children feel able to express their feelings based on his experience working with autistic children. Nonetheless, these different ways of approaching the issue of seeking students' views are aimed at different outcomes, shaped by different priorities but all with children's present and future needs in mind.

## **7.5 Chapter summary**

The previous theme of understanding difference suggests that the British teachers in my study (Lily, Ellie, Clara, Ashley, and Ethan; see Section 7.2) view dyslexia as a learning difficulty, while the Turkish teachers (Kenan, Aleyna, Semiha, Remzi, and Yakup) view dyslexia as a brain-related problem. The difference between these British and Turkish teachers could be explained by the impact of their individual life experiences, educational backgrounds (Rogoff, 1995), or social environments on their understanding

of reading differences. These different understandings of dyslexia, or poor reading, and interactions with others in their social context (Rogoff, 1995) also influenced their perspective of individuals' roles in success. For example, while Turkish teachers believe it is a life-long condition that affects an individual's academic abilities, British teachers such as Lily believe that if students work harder or receive extra support, they may meet the same expectations as others. Furthermore, this different understanding of differences and teachers' personal experience with children shaped their image of the poor reader, which also led educators to facilitate students' voices in various ways to support student engagement and promote inclusion. These different approaches were influenced by their training in school and their personal experience with children.

## **Chapter 8: Inclusive pedagogy for reading difficulties**



## **8.1 Introduction**

The previous two chapters have explored the perspectives of experienced, early-career and academic professionals from different cultural backgrounds and their choice of teaching strategies for students with reading difficulties. This final chapter will be divided into five main sections: a brief summary of the study; reflection on the extent to which the findings address the research questions, including the promotion of inclusive pedagogy for students with reading difficulties; the contribution of the study; implications and recommendations for training and practice; limitations of the study, and concluding remarks.

## **8.2 Summary of the aims and implementation of the study**

As mentioned in Chapter one (Section 1.1), inclusive education is a process concerned with identifying and removing barriers to the presence, participation, and accomplishment of all students (Ainscow, 2020). The term includes topics such as pedagogy, attitudes, and curriculum (Qu, 2020), and it can also relate to Rogoff's (1995) three lenses of development as it involves personal, interpersonal, and community level learning. Inclusive pedagogy is one aspect of inclusive education, which implies offering similar learning opportunities in the classroom for all students, including those who require additional or alternative support, such as students with reading difficulties. This can be linked with Rogoff's (1995) personal level of learning as it focuses on individuals' personal understanding of how to modify teaching for particular learners. Teachers have an important role to provide effective teaching for all learners; however, sometimes children with reading difficulties (whether labelled 'dyslexia' or 'poor reading') struggle to have their needs met in the classroom, which can lead them more likely to face social and emotional problems such as low self-esteem, frustration, and depression (Katz, 2001).

Therefore, this study set out to explore different perspectives on teaching strategies for students with dyslexia or poor reading. It used a multiple case study design of three groups of educators with different relationships to the context of teaching learners with reading difficulties: experienced practice: classroom teachers in two mainstream schools in SW England; preparation: teachers who have completed the UK Postgraduate Certificate in Education course, and finally, Turkish practice: Turkish teachers who are studying for a Ph.D. in special education. These participants shared their knowledge of and perspectives on teaching strategies for students with poor reading (Section 5.3.3) through semi-structured interviews, two classroom observations in primary schools (Sections 5.6.1; 5.6.2). The particular diversity of this group originated through the limitations on contact during COVID-19 restrictions. Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis were then used as a theoretical framework to develop a deeper understanding of how teachers learn to teach and to gain insight into educators' perspectives on reading difficulties in the UK and Turkiye.

The usefulness of Rogoff's contribution lies in her understanding of development – in this case, professional development: how teachers learn to teach, how they develop teaching strategies, and their perspectives on reading difficulty. As an outsider researcher, I also adopted Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom ethnography method, acknowledging the usefulness of a 'fresh pair of eyes' on educational practices in what was for me an unfamiliar culture. While the main aim of the study was to understand how educators form their professional perspectives on reading difficulties, and how this then informs their teaching methods, I was also keen to explore whether these chosen teaching strategies are inclusive and how they meet the needs of all students. Finally, I should acknowledge a more fundamental aim to develop my own understanding of reading difficulty and teaching approaches for students with poor reading.

The research questions of this study were: what are educators' perspectives on reading difficulty? And then the second question: how does their understanding of reading difficulty affect their choice of strategies, and finally: are these strategies inclusive? A qualitative case study was used to generate data to address the research questions and achieve the aims of this study. A flexible version of Braun and Clarke's thematic data analysis was used to interpret the data and identify themes related to the educators' understanding of the reading difficulty and pedagogy for students with poor reading (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, multi-layer analysis (Robbins, 2007) was used to incorporate three levels of analysis: Rogoff's (1995) three planes to observe development, Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom ethnography, and models of disability. In the following sections I will reflect on the extent to which the findings using this frame of analysis help me to address the research questions.

### **8.2.1 What are educators' perspectives on reading difficulty?**

One of the research questions of this study is what educators' perspectives on reading difficulty are. To respond to this, my study suggests that it is important to consider educators' different experiences of teaching students with reading difficulties as well as differences in their opportunities training and for reflection on their teaching experiences; educators also work in different educational and cultural contexts, as well as coming from different backgrounds. These factors all contribute to the development of their perspectives on reading difficulty.

A crucial component of teachers' perspectives of reading differences, developed through the factors above, is related to how they understand the origins of dyslexia or reading difficulties; do they think the problems with reading are caused by genetic difference, or by experiences beyond the school gate, or by the way they are taught? These understandings can be related to different models of disability; the genetic origins

of dyslexia might invoke a medical model as it places the difficulty profoundly within the child, whereas the social model would be invoked by consideration of external factors such as the environment, teaching, or aspects of home life. Educators in the UK context of my study could be considered to be mainly influenced by the interactional model of disability, which combines social and medical models of disability. For example, North School staff believed students' poor reading is connected to their less advantaged home environment, suggesting that the school's understanding of poor reading is influenced by both intersectionality (the identification of multiple overlapping factors of advantage and disadvantage) and a social model of disability; however, the school also has an element of a medical model approach to overcoming students' environment as they put huge effort into screening and selecting specific interventions for children to address within-child deficits in test performance. South School Teacher Lily, on the other hand, defined dyslexia as a 'persistent and complex' condition and 'more than just finding reading a little bit challenging'; Lily's understanding of reading difficulty therefore has elements of medical model of disability which could be connected to her interactions with the autism community, as the school had an autism unit in the past where students needed diagnoses to receive support; however, even though Lily seems to see dyslexia as a within-child problem, her approach to adapting the learning environment for the student with reading difficulty has more elements of the social model of disability. Similarly, the understanding of dyslexia of other teachers working in the UK showed a strong influence of the interactional model of disability; these teachers tended to believe that dyslexia is more than just being a poor reader, that is, a particular condition, but one with a complex aetiology requiring both individual and classroom-level responses. On the other hand, the Turkish teachers (though not including me) believed dyslexia is a brain-based

problem that can be explained by a medical model of disability that requires separate provision largely through after school support.

All these different understandings of reading difficulties can be seen to be traceable to knowledge acquired on their teacher training courses and other interactions with knowledge from the wider community. For example, North School is located in a rural area that is considered less advantaged and geographically remote and therefore perhaps needs to put more effort in to be part of a wider educational community. The school therefore uses PIXL to give them the opportunity to interact with schools with similar cohorts of children and NELI screening and intervention programmes to link them to knowledge generated by academics with a long history of working in the area, and who are also responding to the call to 'close the gap' in performance after COVID-19 (OxEd, 2023).

Teachers in my study therefore tended to perceive students with dyslexia or poor reading as different 'in essence' Gibbs and Elliott (2015) and, because of this difference, requiring additional or different teaching approaches compared with other students. Essentialist beliefs imply that 'social categories are discriminants of fundamentally (biologically) distinct groups of people' (Gibbs and Elliott, 2015: 324). In my study, these beliefs were shaped by teachers' interactions within school and with the wider community about the nature of dyslexia, and influenced by their personal experiences with the students they teach. These findings resonate somewhat with Elliot's comments on how teachers' beliefs about dyslexia affect their teaching choices (see Section 2.5; Gibbs and Elliott, 2015); it is therefore important to bring to the surface teachers' essentialist beliefs about 'dyslexia' or 'reading difficulties'. Although no one in my study declared themselves to have dyslexia, teachers' essentialist beliefs about dyslexia might also be influenced by their own personal experiences of having dyslexia.

The phenomenon of 'dyslexia' can also be considered the result of the interaction between biological (genetic) variation, psychosocial and cultural processes (such as oral language differences), and social and cultural responses to these problems (which can also be linked with interactional model of disability), so it is important to consider how individual teachers might include all these different aspects of causation in their understanding of reading difficulties. In my study, while teachers generally believe dyslexia is a condition (following a medical model through their contact with knowledge within society in general and educational procedures in particular), their responses to dyslexia or poor reading appear however to be mainly shaped by a social model of disability. Using Rogoff's three planes of development helped me to understand how educators' different views on dyslexia from a community, interpersonal, and personal level of development combine in the moment. These different levels of knowledge might be described by the different models of disability. For example, we might argue that the community level of development mainly views dyslexia as a condition that is separate from reading difficulty. Similarly, on the interpersonal level of development, processes and interactions in school might incline teachers to see children as different from others in ways that are connected to the school's sociocultural and historical background (consider South School's autism unit and North School parents' backgrounds); on the other hand, through finding ways to teach individual children, teachers work with a more social model of disability, as they try to change the environment and remove barriers for them. Therefore, I can understand that models change as attention shifts between different levels of development.

**Figure 1. Looking through the lenses of Rogoff’s three planes of development, focusing on different processes in supporting a child with reading difficulties**



Here I am teaching a child with reading difficulties (Figure 1); after carrying out my study, how do I now understand how my teaching strategies have been shaped across the different planes of development?

On a personal level, I understand that I adopt a non-essentialist understanding of dyslexia. For me, the pattern of strengths and weaknesses associated with dyslexia is just one pattern among many possible patterns that can lead to difficulty with reading and writing. I therefore find out as much as I can about the individual’s strengths and weaknesses and then select teaching strategies to allow children to use their strengths and change the environment to make sure their weaknesses don’t get in the way of their participation. I have come to this position through my personal experience of teaching children like the child in the photograph.

On an interpersonal level, through talking to other educators, I understand that they have different ideas about what it means to have a reading difficulty and what strategies to select to teach children with reading difficulties. I realise that this understanding will have been shaped by conversations, routines, and resources that have taken place in their places of work. When I spoke to practitioners, their view of dyslexia did not always match mine, but I found that I could usually learn something from their strategies to help all children to participate in classroom activities.

At a community level, I found I did not share the views of my colleagues from Turkiye. They adopted a mainly medical model of dyslexia as a within-child problem to be solved by individual remedial teaching separate from the class. There were also aspects of the teaching strategies of the English teachers that did not fit with my own preferred strategy; there were resources, interventions, and routines that I didn't understand, and often this was related to the culture of 'closing the gap' so all children could reach targets in national testing. Even still, as educators, we shared the same goal of helping all children to succeed.

My study also highlighted how teachers' understanding of the reading difficulty and their personal experience with students with poor reading shaped their image of these students. The educators had different images of the child with reading difficulties. These differences were related to their ideas about the origins of the difficulty, as discussed above, but also lead to assumptions about personal characteristics and expectations of how they might behave in the classroom. While some teachers described these children as 'creative' and they should be given the opportunity to improve their talents, children with reading difficulties were more often described as 'struggling', strongly suggesting that they are working within a system that is not meeting their needs and that they needed to be better equipped to cope within this system. There was a big contrast in responses to help children cope with reading difficulties between Turkiye and the UK,



with the externalising of assessment and support in Türkiye taking responsibility away from both student and teacher, but there were also subtle differences in the images of the child within the UK classrooms. For example, it was possible to identify a contrast between an image of the child needing to take responsibility for their reading difficulty, versus a more passive image; in South School, teachers placed responsibility on children regarding their learning as Lily believed if students worked harder outside of lessons, they could meet the expectations and work alongside the rest of the class; on the other hand, in North School, students had a more passive role in their learning as they required support and needed to be ‘well trained’ by teachers through many interventions. However, educators such as Ethan, Ashley, and Semiha believe that children with dyslexia or poor reading are ‘talented and creative’, and that these students can come up with their own strategies to overcome reading difficulties. These differences can be explained by looking across Rogoff’s (1995) three planes of analysis: teachers shaped their understanding of reading difficulty and the image of the children in their local context via interactions with each other and the students. In my study, both schools have made wide efforts towards inclusion (Ainscow, 2005); however, to achieve this goal, they followed different approaches, and using Tobin’s (1999) comparative classroom method helped me to see differences in their practices. Looking through Rogoff’s interpersonal level of learning, I noticed that interactions between the head teacher and other educators inspired teachers to make school-based efforts towards the inclusion of students with reading difficulties (such as choices of display and provision of reading books), but their interactions with wider considerations such as national testing and the culture of secondary schools did not always support their efforts towards inclusion as students needed help to perform well in the test or succeed in the secondary school without support. How this help was managed will be discussed in the next section.

### **8.2.2 How does educators' understanding of reading difficulty affect their choice of strategies?**

As mentioned above, educators' understanding of reading difficulty appeared to be mainly influenced overall by an interactional model of disability, which also affected their choice of teaching methods as educators believed these students have different needs than others. In this section, I will further discuss how educators managed the balance between universal and targeted (these terms will be explained below) approaches in response to the needs of students with reading difficulty.

The SEND code of practice (DfE, 2015) suggests teachers should adopt a universal approach to support all students in the classroom, including those who need additional or different support. However, if, after adopting this approach, students are still significantly behind their peers, then educators should consider using a targeted approach. This approach involves more individualised teaching strategies that focus on a specific child. In connection to this, in my study, when teachers were asked what kind of teaching strategies they used to meet the needs of students with dyslexia or poor reading, teachers' responses suggested that they use some strategies that were accessible to all students but were particularly chosen to support students with poor reading (a universal approach), for example, the use of classroom displays visible to all learners. In addition to this, the educators also adopted specific teaching strategies, directly targeting children with reading difficulties; using these strategies, such as pre-teaching, or providing interventions, are examples of such targeted provision. Decisions about the balance between targeted and universal strategies, however, appear to be made at the school level, through interaction with the SENCo and school leaders.

One example of a universal approach within my data is that North School screens all their students to identify learners' needs, assessing their language skills early at the

beginning of formal education (Snowling *et al.*, 2021). As previously mentioned in Section 7.2, because North School teachers believe that many of their students are coming from inadequate social environments, the school aims to overcome that deficit environment by ensuring that all students have the opportunity to access universal teaching strategies and to be identified for targeted interventions that meet their particular needs. This universal screening led the school to provide strategies and interventions targeted at small groups of children with similar needs. The NELI screening programme is an example of this and is used to address the school's concerns about widespread deficits in language development. North School employs this universal screening strategy before focusing on select groups of pupils that require targeted interventions. Since this school is so concerned that their students are falling behind due to their poor social environment, they have designed their practice to help students catch up or close the gap with peers from other schools. Underpinning this need to close the gap is a concern that has been developed within the community level, because the school's results from national testing will be compared with results from other schools.

As North School believes that many of their pupils come from an inadequate social environment, the school aims to overcome that deficit environment by offering the opportunity for personalised interventions for all students. Therefore, it could be argued that North School follows a universal approach to the identification of students' needs by screening all children, then offering a personalised intervention programme (NELI) for poor language skills. In addition to the NELI intervention, North School has developed its own intervention to improve reading fluency, which is delivered to small groups of children by TAs to overcome a lack of opportunities to practise reading. Again, the integration of professional learning across different planes can be seen; as mentioned in Section 6.2, North School develops these interventions as a result of in-

house and external training, interaction with others in the school, and their personal experience with children (such as the upsetting experience of watching them fail in national testing), as well as their understanding of reading difficulty developed through knowledge acquired during initial teacher education.

North School aims to help students to overcome the difficulties of their environment by identifying gaps in children's language skills and providing interventions (see Section 7.2). This school believes it is important to compare itself to other schools that have pupils from similar less-advantaged backgrounds as their students because it will allow them to assess their students' learning needs (see Section 6.2.1). Therefore, North School adopted another universal approach to assessment through the use of QLAs (question-level analysis). While NELI screening looks for individual gaps, using QLAs provides ideas for interventions based on experience with test performance from all students. This can be explained by using Rogoff's (1995) community and personal of learning because North School interactions with wider community (SAT) and their personal experiences with students led the school using this Qlas to develop further interventions.

The volume of different interventions in North School was noteworthy and clearly reflected a concerted approach to improving reading over time. However, as an outsider researcher, interpreting and understanding the teacher's statements was difficult for me because I needed prior knowledge and more detail on the topic to make the strange familiar to me (Tobin, 1999). This school appeared to use a restricted code of language that is more understandable in their social group; as an outsider, I needed more details about the school's history, educational practice, and school approach to understand their educational practice better (Bernstein, 1971). For example, teachers mentioned terms like 'six-week blocks' as well as 'SATs' with which I was not familiar. This led me to

contemplate what it would be like as a new teacher starting at this school. I would first need to work out and understand the overall approach to reading (screen, select/design interventions, evaluate, and decide on the next steps), but I would need more time to learn about the specific interventions. All these interventions and teaching approaches could be learned by a new teacher through in-house and carefully selected external training and interaction with other teachers over time, and using Rogoff's (1995) community and interpersonal level of learning would help a new teacher to understand how teachers would learn how to teach in their new school context. As mentioned in 6.3, educators learn how to teach in North School via staff meetings and interactions with the headteacher and deputy teacher. Teachers at North School learn reading interventions through peer observations throughout their teaching careers in the school; this learning also supports the interplay between personal, interpersonal, and community levels, which can be linked to the school's location in a rural area, where they feel compelled to find ways to reflect personally, interpersonally, and with the larger community.

In relation to differences in the image of the child with reading difficulties, while North School provides equal assessment and screening opportunities for all students, teachers detect what areas they need to support and use children's deficit scoring or mistakes to guide their interventions (e.g., through miscue analysis). On the other hand, South School provides early support for children who are not progressing through the 'marking alongside' in the class, but then South School students are made aware of their mistakes and helped to work with the teacher to correct them. This implies that here, students are held accountable for their mistakes. As mentioned above, this approach is connected with South School's image of the learner as having active responsibility in

their learning, while North school students were given more a passive role as they needed help from the teacher to respond to mistakes.

While North School assesses by screening students' language skills themselves to find out how to meet their needs, in Turkiye, students with poor reading must have an external diagnosis (in the Guidance and Research Centre - GRC) to receive support as SEN students. This is consistent with a medical model approach to dyslexia or poor reading mentioned in Section 7.2. On the other hand, some local authorities in the Southwest no longer recognise dyslexia as a diagnosable condition; therefore, it puts the responsibility firmly on to schools identify possible problems, which might also explain North School's screening approach.

In contrast to North School and South School in Southwest England, in Turkiye, it is the role of the GRC staff to screen or assess children's learning based on the dyslexia assessment form results. As mentioned in Section 6.2, one of my students with visual problems was diagnosed with severe learning difficulty due to his low performances in these assessments. My personal experience working with the student made me believe that he was unable to perform these tasks due to his poor vision. This experience with the student's diagnosis process led me to believe that, rather than using only standard assessment forms, interactions with teachers and the teacher's personal experience with the student should be incorporated into the assessment process to acquire a better picture of a child's ability. Furthermore, reflecting on this experience with my student in a Turkish educational context made me think about different scenarios in different school cultures (Tobin, 1999). For example, if this student was in South School, he would be identified as visually impaired and then receive support in a separate unit until he met educational expectations or received additional help, such as a pre-learning session. However, if he was in North School, he would be assessed by using NELI screening and then provided interventions to close the gap between him and his peers.

On the other hand, Ethan, a teacher with experience in both the Greek and UK contexts, followed a universal approach that promotes a creative and fun learning environment for students with reading difficulties as he believed these students are talented and creative. Ethan's approach to including students with reading difficulties in the classroom via enjoyable ways of learning (instead of the extra hard work required in South School and the participation in interventions in North School) may be influenced by his experience as a special education teacher and his belief that each child has a unique talent and skill that they should be encouraged to improve and explore (which was also my experience when working with students with SEN). Similar to Ethan's universal approach, North School provides enjoyable dyslexia specialist resources that are available for all students. These resources give the student the chance to read a whole book like the rest of the class, even if they have limitations on their reading ability. In addition, by providing these attractive and appealing books, North School aims to reduce barriers to reading in students' home environments since they are coming from less advantaged homes and their parents might not engage with them in reading because they are not confident readers themselves.

On the other hand, South School uses a mixture of universal and targeted provisions for children with poor reading, which can be linked with their understanding of reading difficulties with elements of both medical and social model of disability. As an example of a universal approach (targeted originated), this school adapts the school environment by using the same colours in displays across all the classrooms in the school. This was introduced originally to help students with ASC feel comfortable in different spaces outside their home classroom as these students were seen as 'different and needing extra help'; with this targeted approach, the school aimed to make it easier for them to be included in some mainstream classroom activities, and this approach then remained in the school to serve all children. On the other hand, a targeted approach is used to

facilitate the voices of the students who have more complex needs (such as dyslexia) via attachment-based mentoring. This approach again was influenced by an understanding of disability, which sees students with dyslexia or poor reading as ‘different’ therefore South School believes this mentoring provides teachers with information and an understanding of children's different requirements, allowing them to decide how to address the needs of children who have more complex needs. South School also provides pre-learning sessions for students who require additional support, which are delivered outside of the classroom by TAs prior to the main lesson to meet classroom expectations as these students are struggling and learning can be tricky for them, and they need to catch up with their peers in the classroom. All of these targeted approaches are connected to South School's understanding of reading difficulties, which is seen as a problem in the child, but then attempting to adapt the environment by offering them something different and extra from other students to meet classroom expectations. These approaches are also linked to the past presence of students with autism in the school, as these students sometimes required additional teaching methods and support outside of the classroom.

As well as these targeted approaches, South School aims to create a calm environment for students by making the classroom atmosphere communication and language-friendly. As explained in Chapter 7, this approach originated from a targeted approach designed for students with autism when the school had these students and they required support for communication skills; however, due to positive outcomes for children with autism, the approach remained, and it now serves all students (in other words, a targeted approach a became universal approach). These adaptations to the school environment were designed in accordance with the training they received to create communication and language-friendly classrooms during the time when there was a communication resource base on site. Therefore, teachers were calming the environment by avoiding



big fussy displays. As students with autism were transitioning to other classrooms, some of these approaches dyslexia-friendly environment, which suggested that informative displays are helpful for a student with dyslexia or poor reading. Consequently, despite the calming environment policy, during the classroom observation, I noticed that her classroom had many displays. This can be considered the limitation of a universal approach, because what might be good for one group (needing limited displays) might not work for another group (needing lots of displays). On the other hand, North School provides a diverse learning environment for all students, including those with poor reading. As North School believes students have language and speaking problems due to their less advantaged home environment, they aim to help all children learn through learning walls for different disciplines.

North and South schools use a combination of targeted and universal provisions to assist students with dyslexia or poor reading as a result of their understanding of reading difficulty (see Section 8.2.2). However, their choice of teaching methods was influenced by their teacher training, interaction with others in the school (e.g, SENCo, school leaders), and their personal experience with students in their school. All of these teaching strategies are aimed mainly to at addressing children's reading difficulties. However, there could be some uncertainty about the inclusiveness of these methods, which will be discussed further in the next section using Ainscow's (2005) inclusion model.

### **8.2.3 Are these strategies inclusive?**

In the above sections, I shared a summary of my key findings on educators' understanding of reading difficulty and their responses to reading difficulty; in this section, I will discuss the implications of these findings for inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011) and inclusive education (Ainscow, 2005).

As mentioned in Section 4.2, inclusive pedagogy can be considered as a pedagogical response to inclusive education, and it means a shift in learning and teaching from one that works for most learners even while offering something ‘extra’ or ‘distinct’ for those who struggle to one that includes the creation of a rich learning society marked by learning experiences that are adequately made available for everyone (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). In connection to Florian’s statement about students who need extra or different support, in my study, there was a common belief among educators that students with dyslexia or poor reading do need extra or different support and that teachers should adopt a combination of targeted and universal teaching approaches to support students with poor reading. As mentioned above, these strategies are developed over time as a result of teachers’ interaction with SENCo and other SEN experts, school leaders, students, and in-house training. Using Rogoff’s (1995) three planes of analysis helped me understand the interactivity between these stages. Even though these balanced approaches are intended to help children with reading, it is debatable whether these ‘targeted + universal’ teaching approaches are promoting inclusion. Adopting Ainscow’s inclusion model (2005) as part of my theoretical framework has helped me to address this question. For example, North School uses a universal approach screen for all their students to identify their needs, and this can be considered an inclusive strategy because these assessments are available for all learners; GRC (Turkiye) and EHCP (UK) assessments, in contrast, are available only for pupils with possible special educational needs. Furthermore, with these assessments, North School is able to identify individual needs and put in place supportive strategies. Indeed, Ainscow’s (2005) second principle of inclusion includes identifying and removing barriers to learning.

On the other hand, North School offers the NELI personalised intervention programme for children with poor language skills. Providing reading intervention for students with poor reading can be beneficial for children who are behind their peers in terms of

reading and language abilities. Receiving reading interventions from the teaching assistant in small groups with their classmates may still make children feel included. In addition, some activities that are used in these reading interventions, such as guided reading, echo reading, and memory games can be beneficial for all learners; therefore, these targeted interventions can also be consistent with inclusive pedagogy.

Furthermore, providing extra or different support to children who are behind their peers can also promote inclusion, as Ainscow (2005) stated that inclusion is about the attendance, involvement, and success of all learners. Through targeted reading interventions, North School aims to close the educational gap between students from less advantaged backgrounds and those from not less advantaged backgrounds. They also wanted to increase students' future success on national examinations in the next phase of education. Furthermore, they hope to develop a love of reading, which will have a significant positive impact on students' lives, whatever their economic or social background. Similarly, Lily at South School uses a targeted approach in the context of the universal 'hands-down' strategy to prepare students who are struggling with English to ensure they are ready to answer questions. This strategy allowed children to practise the answers, which can help increase students' academic engagement and sense of belonging in the classroom. Lily's goal in using these strategies is to encourage children to develop habits of learning that they may take with them into secondary school and beyond. As she understands secondary school practice, students do not receive the same level of help as they do in primary school. Lily wants all children, particularly those who struggle with reading, to successfully move to secondary school. Therefore, she hopes to teach these students how to work extra hard in order to achieve classroom expectations and to employ these strategies in the future so they can succeed in secondary school. Lily also adopts teaching particular strategies for students with reading difficulties such as providing predetermined and structured small steps for the

lesson that help them achieve classroom goals. However, in contrast to Ethan's creative way of teaching, Lily's structured approach might not support students' creativity as they are limited in their opportunities to think about how they might address their differences. The differences between Lily's and Ethan's approaches could be explained by their image of the learner with reading difficulty; while Lily's defined these students as 'struggling' and needing 'different' support, Ethan believed these students are 'talented' and 'good at art'. These different images of students may also be related to their working experiences with these students and their expectations from students. Lily is a primary school teacher who works in a middle-class town as a Year 6 teacher with the goal of preparing all students for the next phase of education; however, some students needed more support to be prepared, and, in the UK's target-driven education system aimed at reaching certain grades at GCSE (including in English), this can dominate teachers' thinking, and she therefore might not place a high priority on aiming to support the creativity of students. On the other hand, Ethan is a SEN teacher who works in a school for children with autistic spectrum conditions, and he aims to increase all children's excitement and enjoyment of learning by creating a rich learning environment (using visual materials) and giving them the opportunity to express their feelings and needs freely in the classroom. Ethan's efforts towards inclusion for students with reading difficulties might also be linked to his twin sister's negative school experience as a student who was labelled with dyslexia and whom he described as 'creative, intelligent, and hardworking'; still, his sister did not receive support from teachers due to their negative assumptions about her abilities and who did not have the chance to voice her feelings and needs. Looking through Rogoff's three planes to observe development, it can be considered that Ethan's teaching approaches were mainly shaped by his personal experience with students, while Lily's are more shaped

by interpersonal experience working in a school environment where concerns about progress towards national testing are more pressing.

As mentioned above, North School follows an inclusive approach to organising the school environment, such as by providing dyslexia-friendly resources and using displays that are available for all students, including students with dyslexia or poor reading to improve children's speaking and reading abilities since the school believes students might not have access to these materials at home. This follows recommendations by Elliot (2008), who suggests that dyslexia-friendly resources or specific teaching methods should be available for all students with poor reading because it is beneficial to all learners. Furthermore, these resources can also promote inclusive education as they serve all children, including those learning English as an additional language. Although South School also uses a universal approach (see previous section) to create a calm environment for students by making the classroom atmosphere communication and language friendly, this school also uses displays to make the environment dyslexia-friendly. As mentioned on above, South School's 'calming environment' approach did not promote inclusion as it did not serve children who needed more displays in the environment. Some of these universal approaches can be linked to inclusive pedagogy as they are useful for all students and can also be beneficial for implementing successful inclusion as they focus on involvement and success for all learners (Ainscow, 2005). On the other hand, South School's targeted approach to offering one-to-one support from a mentor outside the classroom might not promote inclusion because this mentoring is not available for everyone; therefore, students who received this support might feel marginalised (Ainscow, 2005).

In terms of student engagement and facilitating students' voices, some educators had difficulty answering this question. For example, North School stated they 'do not engage in conversations with students because they would not be able to tell you'. North

School's answer can be connected to their image of the learner, namely that students have a more passive role in their learning and lack oral language skills. On the other hand, Turkish educators did not answer the question at all, as they stated that they 'did not understand the question'. Turkish educators' responses can be linked to their understanding of reading difficulties, which is affected by the medical model of disability, as this model sees children with reading difficulties as in deficit; teachers might believe these students may not be aware of their needs. However, not giving students the opportunity to voice their feelings and needs about their learning can make it difficult to implement inclusive education, as students' engagement and understanding of their perspectives are important to inform strategies for successful inclusion.

Due to the influence of the medical model of disability in Turkiye, students with reading difficulty often receive individual education plans provided by GRC educators to meet their educational needs in the regular classroom; students in the UK might receive EHC plans, although the process to achieve this is more complicated. According to some researchers, however, implementing IEPs in the classroom might not promote inclusion. Hayes and Bulat (2017) found that students who have special needs sometimes feel not included even though they are physically in the classroom; due to individualised and tailored educational programmes, they do not attend the same learning activities as the others. Furthermore, classroom teachers may find it difficult to apply individual education plans in the classroom while offering whole-class teaching, and so some teachers can be reluctant to work with students who are labelled as 'SEN student'. Therefore, in terms of inclusion, students and teachers might not have positive experiences with SEN labels and IEPs to address the educational needs of students. On the other hand, GRC diagnoses can provide support for students outside of school from private learning centres, while students in the UK receive support primarily in school.

Receiving one-to-one support outside of school hours can be beneficial for students since it allows them to have a normal school day with their classmates during school hours.

As discussed above, educators and schools use a combination of universal and targeted provision to meet students' needs with reading difficulty; some universal approaches (using displays, providing visual materials, and attractive books) make learning accessible to all, which promotes inclusion, as children's sense of belonging and well-being is enhanced by participating in the same activities as their peers. On the other hand, targeted approaches such as reading interventions and pre-teaching were designed to help children with reading difficulties to achieve educational goals, close gaps with peers, and prepare them for future phases of education and life in general. If these targeted approaches increase students' engagement and school success, some of them can be considered to promote inclusion (Ainscow, 2005). In addition, these targeted teaching approaches can also support inclusive pedagogy because teachers may modify their teaching for students who need extra or different support (Ainscow, 2005), and all these strategies are also useful for other learners.

### **8.3 Contribution of the Study**

My original contribution to knowledge is showing the usefulness of Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis. These were originally developed to look at how children learn, but I have used them to explore educators' perspectives on teaching strategies for students with reading difficulties and explain how they develop these strategies. The findings of the study demonstrate the importance of considering the educators' whole context, including their social, cultural, and educational background, and how this shapes their understanding of reading difficulty and their response to dyslexia or poor reading. This finding can contribute to our understanding of the importance of building

social knowledge of dyslexia or poor reading and how teachers use this to shape their teaching strategies for these students via formal training and interaction with other educators supported by reflection on their own experience of working with students. As a Turkish teacher and researcher who has conducted research in the UK educational context, using Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis helped me gain an understanding of the context of UK education and how this shapes educators' choice of teaching strategies to respond to reading difficulty. Using Tobin's (1999) comparative classroom method allows me to notice subtle differences in these strategies in the different school cultures while adopting Ainscow's (2005) inclusion model to understand if these teaching strategies are supporting inclusion.

#### **8.4 Recommendations for Training and Practice and Future Research**

This section suggests how the study's findings can benefit primary schools and institutions offering professional development. It draws attention to several considerations for students' education with poor reading that are relevant to educational authorities and initial teaching training courses. The following section makes key recommendations based on the summary and reflection on the main findings of this research (Section 8.2).

##### **8.4.1 Teaching training programmes**

The findings from this study highlight how teachers consider that they did not receive enough training to support students with poor reading. Participants did not feel ready to work with these children, partly because they believe these students require extra and different teaching methods than those they were familiar with. The use of Rogoff's three planes of analysis has provided lenses through which a better understanding of the relationship between knowledge acquired during initial teacher education in the community plane of development and individual teachers' personal readiness for



working students with poor reading can be reached. Findings highlight how initial training institutions should consider further embedding inclusive pedagogy in their education programme plans for pre-service teachers by bringing Rogoff's three levels of learning together (community, interpersonal, and personal); this could better prepare trainee teachers to work with students who require extra support (including those with reading difficulties), in their future classrooms and give them spaces to share, reflect, and adjust their teaching knowledge. For example, in terms of apprenticeship (community level of learning) when student teachers start their initial teaching training as newcomers to 'culturally organised activities' (Rogoff, 1995), they generally build their first knowledge and understanding of teaching via lectures in their courses. In these courses, if students are introduced to the thinking behind inclusive pedagogy approaches and their current understanding of the process of learning to read, they will gain primary knowledge and understanding about these topics, which can be the first step to prepare the student teachers to meet students' diverse needs in the classroom including students with reading difficulty.

The guided participation (interpersonal level of learning), which emphasises how individuals and their social partners should cooperate and communicate with one another while they engage in socioculturally structured collective activity (Rogoff, 1995). The placement year can be an example of guided participation, where student teachers can learn from observing and interacting with experienced educators; they can gain knowledge and understanding of teaching from these exchanges. To encourage student teachers to use inclusive pedagogy and effective reading methods in their future classroom experiences, teachers can guide them on how to implement these strategies, which can be done by demonstrating lessons and then discussing them with student teachers.

Regarding participatory appropriation (personal level of learning) which means that through their own engagement, individuals modify their knowledge of and responsibility for events. As an example of participatory appropriation, student teachers can also develop teaching methods through own experiences with working students in the classroom. In this level of learning, student teachers can provide their own inclusive teaching methods that work-for all children, including who need extra or different support, as well as useful teaching methods for reading to students with reading difficulties.

As discussed above, all these three levels of learning can contribute to student teachers' understanding and implementation of inclusive pedagogy for students who need extra or different support and the use of effective methods in teaching reading for all students, including students with reading difficulties. Therefore, it is important that initial teaching education should bring all three levels of learning together to prepare student teachers for their teaching careers. Bringing these three levels of learning together will allow student teachers to develop their initial knowledge of teaching and provide spaces for them to reflect and adjust this knowledge through interaction with each other. It will also give them the opportunity to share their personal experiences.

#### **8.4.2 Inclusive teaching practice**

Findings from the current study showed that educators generally believed students with dyslexia or poor reading were 'different' and needed extra or different support. As mentioned in 7.2, although educators' understanding of strategies for reading difficulty was mainly influenced by an interactional model of disability (social and medical model) as a result of teachers' interactions with others in their social context, their understanding of dyslexia was something essentially different, which can be explained by using Rogoff's community level-apprenticeship. Therefore, considering how to

incorporate these three levels of learning in shaping teachers' understanding of reading difficulty is important as it will also affect their choice of teaching strategies for these students. For example, regarding the apprenticeship-community level of learning, initial teaching education programmes and professional development courses should embed a more social model of disability which focuses on removing barriers that are constructed by society rather than focusing on individuals' deficits or biologically based impairments. As Elliot (2015) highlighted, seeing the problem in the child given a dyslexia label can affect teachers' readiness to work with these students due to negative assumptions and prejudices; similarly, some of my participants' comments show that the label dyslexia can cause others to make negative assumptions about children with dyslexia, such as their being 'stupid' and 'lazy' due to the way they have difficulty with classroom tasks. Moreover, teachers claimed that sometimes these negative assumptions can also become part of the way children think of themselves. Therefore, children should also be encouraged to consider using the terms reading difficulty rather than dyslexia, which is a deficit originated. This language also should be supported through interactions with others such as classroom teachers, peers, parents, SENCo and other experts, school leaders, and other educators (interpersonal level - guided participation) and their personal experiences with other students with reading difficulty (personal level - participatory appropriation). Incorporating all these levels of learning together will contribute to developing children's understanding of reading differences and a positive image of themselves.

In connection to educators' understanding of reading difficulty, in my study, educators' use a combination of universal and targeted approaches to support students with poor reading. As discussed above, using universal approaches such as NELI screening, classroom displays, and 'dyslexia-friendly' resources made learning available for all students. On the other hand, using some of the targeted approaches, such as modified

learning activities, reading interventions, and pre-teaching sessions, also promoted inclusion as it gives students the opportunity to catch up with others without reading difficulty. However, sometimes schools might struggle to find the right balance between universal and targeted to meet the needs of the particular children in their school. For example, in terms of supporting student engagement as a part of inclusion, South School follows a targeted approach (attachment-based mentoring) that might not promote inclusion as students might feel marginalised. On the other hand, some educators implied that they did not facilitate students' voices. To summarise, while educators and schools try to provide teaching approaches that promote inclusion of students with reading difficulties in whole-class activities, however, in terms of student engagement and giving students a place to express their feelings about these targeted and universal approaches, this is not always the case.

This problem can be connected with understanding inclusion as a process, and it can and still will be a struggle for educators (Allan, 2007). Therefore, my study recommends that student engagement and creating a supportive environment for students with reading difficulties to share their feelings with their peers and educators can be promoted again by using Rogoff's three planes of analysis. For example, professional development courses can introduce inclusive teaching methods, emphasising the importance of student engagement and ways of involving children in their learning (apprenticeship); interactions with experienced teachers or mentors can influence new teachers to implement these methods in the classroom (guided participation). In the first year of my teaching career, I had a mentor (an experienced SEN teacher) who helped me with the teaching practices in the school. In Türkiye, inexperienced teachers are supported by mentors (who have at least 10 years of working experience) throughout their first year of teaching. Additionally, they attend training, seminars, and formal assessments that are provided by the Turkish Ministry of

Education with the Candidate Teacher Education Programme (Turkish Ministry of Education, 2022). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, early-career teachers are introduced to an extended framework that includes a two-year induction period. This induction period involves support from mentors, induction activities, training, and mentor sessions, as well as regular progress reviews with two formal assessments against the teachers' standards (Department of Education, 2023). In addition, the experience working with students can also lead teachers to develop inclusive teaching and student engagement methods (participatory appropriation). Bringing all these three levels of learning together is critical for implementing inclusive education and student engagement.

Because my study was unable to involve the students who experience dyslexia or poor reading due to difficulty accessing them as an outsider researcher and COVID-19 restrictions (see next section), as a result this crucial aspect of inclusion 'children's voices', was missed out. Therefore, this study recommends that future researchers consider incorporating the perspectives of children or individuals with reading difficulties, as well as their parents, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of inclusion, targeted and universal provision, and the factors that contribute to students feeling included and supported.

### **8.5 Limitations**

This research has limitations in terms of methodology, data collection tools, timing, and participants; a number of factors that created limitations in this research are highlighted below.

Due to restrictions introduced to limit the spread of COVID-19, I had many delays and difficulties with collecting data. During the lockdown, primary schools stopped face-to-face education and it was hard to find participants and, even when I found willing

participants, it was not also possible to enter schools. Therefore, I had to change the study design and data collection methods to fit what I could do, rather than what I might have wanted to do to pursue my original design.

A further limitation on access was that, as an outsider researcher, it was difficult for me to work directly with primary-age children and their parents; therefore, I was unable to involve them in my research.

Another limitation was that as an outside researcher, I was not familiar with UK education systems such as educational policies, national curriculum, school environment, and educational practices. Despite researching these topics beforehand, during interviews there were many unfamiliar phrases. While I could ask some questions at the time, asking too many would interrupt the interviewees' train of thought, and I had to research them afterwards. This meant that opportunities for following particular lines of argument might have been missed.

## **8.5 Concluding remarks**

This study provides important insights into educators' perspectives on teaching strategies for students with reading difficulties in mainstream schools. Through the use of Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis, I have developed an understanding of the influences on teachers' knowledge of reading differences and their practice. The role of the social context, the wider macro environment in terms of national and local processes, and the influence of initial teacher education on notions of inclusive education have been explored and have shaped my own understanding of reading difficulties within the UK, making the strange gradually more familiar (Tobin, 1999).

My study highlighted that the students with reading difficulties were not given enough opportunities to voice their needs, and it recommended that these students find spaces for all stakeholders to talk, and for individuals to reflect and share their reflections. In

addition, my study recommended that student teachers be prepared for working with students who have reading difficulties in their future classrooms by having an understanding and deep knowledge of inclusive pedagogy and its relationship with teaching children how to read. This can also be extended to teachers who are currently working in schools to have a better understanding of how all children learn to read, rather than following prescriptive programmes that might not suit individuals and their particular patterns of strengths and weaknesses in reading subskills. As mentioned above, promoting inclusion can be a struggle as some of the universal approaches will not serve all children; however, introducing and implementing inclusive pedagogy by combining Rogoff's three planes of development can help teachers meet the diverse needs of their students.

Finally, as my study was missing the voices of students with dyslexia or poor reading, my study also recommended that future studies include students, and parents, as well as teachers who describe themselves as having dyslexia for a better understanding of their personal experiences in school.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Approval of Application for Ethical Approval



### CONFIDENTIAL

Ezgi Unlu  
Plymouth Institute of Education  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
University of Plymouth  
Dear Ezgi

### Application for Approval by Education Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-committee

*Reference Number: 18/19-260*

*Application Title:*

I am pleased to inform you that the Education Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-committee has granted approval to you to conduct this research.

Please note that this approval is for three years, after which you will be required to seek extension of existing approval.

Please note that should any MAJOR changes to your research design occur which effect the ethics of procedures involved you must inform the Committee. Please contact Claire Butcher on (01752) 585337 or by email [claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely

### Professor Jocey Quinn

Chair, Education Research Ethics Sub-committee -  
Plymouth Institute of Education  
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Professor

Chair,

and Integrity

Plymouth Institute

## Appendix 2: Information sheet for teachers



Information sheet for teachers

**Project:** *An exploration of teachers' and future teachers' perceptions and experience of inclusive teaching strategies for students with dyslexia in mainstream primary schools in SW England.*

### **Project contact details:**

*Name of researcher/student: Ezgi Unlu Email address; ezgi.unlu@plymouth.ac.uk*

*Name of Supervisor: Jan Georgeson Email address janet.georgeson@plymouth.ac.uk*

### **What is this project about?**

This research aims to explore to teachers' and future teachers' attitudes towards inclusive teaching strategies for students with dyslexia in mainstream primary schools in SW England. **I am inviting you to participate in interviews on Zoom and, if possible, observations of different teaching sessions in the classroom. These could take place via video recording.**

### **Benefits of taking part?**

Participating in this study may not help you directly, but the information I get from the study will help to increase the understanding of practice in primary schools in England.

### **Informed consent**

Your participation is voluntary, and it is up to you whether you wish to participate. You have been invited to participate in this study because you can share experiences about teaching strategies for dyslexia as an educational practitioner.

### **Right to withdraw**

If you decide that you do not want to continue to take part in the study, you are free to ask to withdraw your data any time up to two weeks after data collection has finished.

### **Debriefing**

I will write a feedback report for teachers on my findings.

### **Confidentiality**

All collected data will be kept anonymous and only used for the purposes identified above.

Your responses will be anonymised; no names of participants will be included at any point.

The information that you give will be kept securely according to the rules of the Data Protection Act 1998. The interview transcript will be anonymised, that is, I will assign a numerical identifier to the interview and remove all names of people and places.

The information you provide will be used for the research purpose only and will not be passed to anyone outside the research team.

### **Planned Outputs**

I will aim learn about to teaching strategies for students with dyslexia and explore inclusive teaching strategies for students with dyslexia in the primary schools in England. This will help me for understand more about educational and individual supports for children with dyslexia. I believe that this research study will be improve my knowledge about inclusive pedagogy and teaching training system in England. I also believe that the findings of this research study will be helpful for future research related

to inclusive education for students with dyslexia. Furthermore, this research finding will provide a good example to support for effective implementing by teachers for dyslexia in Turkiye.

Thank you for your interest in this research!

### Appendix 3: Consent Form



**Project:** *An exploration of teachers' and future teachers' perceptions and experience of inclusive teaching strategies for students with dyslexia in mainstream primary schools in SW England.*

I confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.
- I understand **I can ask to withdraw my data up to 2 weeks after the interview** without giving reasons nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn. This will in no way affect my relationship with Plymouth Institute of Education
- The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me.
- Procedures for audio, video or other forms of recording data collection have been explained and provided to me, and I consent to audio  and video  recording.
- The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me and I consent to the use of my data from the research project in this way.

I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.

#### Participant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Researcher:

Ezgi UNLU

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix 4: Head Teacher Letter



### Head Teacher Letter

Date:

Dear,

I am a PhD student from Turkiye currently doing my PhD in education at the University of Plymouth. I have eight years teaching experience in Turkiye and have worked with students who have learning difficulties in a public school.

In my research, I would like to explore teachers' and future teachers' perceptions and experiences of inclusive teaching strategies for students with dyslexia in mainstream primary schools in SW England.

**I would like to do zoom interviews with teachers and observe them via video recordings of different teaching sessions in their classroom.**

The aims of my research study are to learn more about what kind of teaching strategies and methods teachers use in the classroom for their students with dyslexia, to investigate how they achieved their teaching skills and to explore why they are using these methods. All collected data will be kept anonymous and only used for the purposes of this research. Also, video-based observation data and zoom interview responses will remain confidential and kept securely according to the rules of the Data Protection Act 1998. **Transcripts of the interviews will be anonymised, that is, I will assign a numerical identifier to the interview and remove all names of people and places. The video observation will not include students in the classroom; they will not be included in the video.** Information sheets and consent forms will be given in advance to teachers, and I will be available to answer any questions they may have about their participation.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. I would be very happy to send you any further details should you require more information.

Yours sincerely, Ezgi Unlu, PhD. student,

[ezgi.unlu@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:ezgi.unlu@plymouth.ac.uk)



## Appendix 5: Classroom observation consent form



Project: Exploring inclusive teaching strategies for students with dyslexia in primary schools in England

Classroom observation consent form

I understand that by signing this form, I agree that Ezgi can observe our lesson.

I understand that my name will not be used in anything that Ezgi writes about the lesson.

I have been informed that photographs will not be taken during the observation.

Name	Signature

**Appendix 6: Parent letter**



Date:

Project: Exploring inclusive teaching strategies for dyslexic students in primary schools in England

Dear parent,

I am a student from Turkiye currently doing my PhD in education at Plymouth University. I have eight years teaching experience in Turkiye working in state schools with students who have learning difficulties. I am exploring teachers' and future teachers' inclusive teaching strategies for dyslexic students in mainstream primary schools in England. **I would like to observe three teaching sessions in your child's classroom.**

The aims of my research study are to learn more about what kind of teaching strategies and methods teachers in UK use in the classroom to support children with dyslexia, to find out how they learnt about these strategies and explore why they are using these methods. All data will be anonymous and only used for the purposes of this research; teachers, children and the name of the school itself will be not identified and I won't take any photographs during the lesson. Children will be also being asked if they are happy with me observing their lessons.

If you do **not** agree that your child can be observed during lesson, please contact with classroom teacher using the form below.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Ezgi Unlu, PhD. student,  
ezgi.unlu@plymouth.ac.uk

.....  
.....

**Project: Exploring inclusive teaching strategies for dyslexic students in primary schools in England**

I do not wish my child to be observed during classroom observation of teaching strategies.

Signed ..... date  
.....

Name of child .....

## Appendix 7: Observation schedule

### Observation Schedule

I will observe:

classroom environment			
How does the teacher start the lesson?			
What kind of teaching approaches does teacher use?			
Does the teacher use any tools?			
How does teacher respond to questions and how does teacher ask questions			

## Appendix 8: Interview questions

- 1) How many years have you been working in education?
- 2) Do you have any specialist training in supporting dyslexia?
- 3) Do you provide any specific intervention for students with dyslexia or poor reading in your setting? Which teaching strategies do you use to support these students?
- 4) What strategies do you use for assessment of assignments to support students who are struggling with reading?
- 5) What strategies do you use for homework to support students who are struggling with reading?

- 6) Do you use any specific resources in your setting to support students who are struggling with reading such as a computer/laptop/iPad?
- 7) What strategies are you using for supporting parents of students have communication problems including poor reading?
- 8) Has school made any modification to school environment or school processes for supporting students with poor reading or communication difficulties?
- 9) In what way/s are you/setting able to facilitate that the 'voice' of the student with dyslexia and ensure it is heard?

Any other comments?

**Appendix 9: Sample of interview transcript, analysing, and coding the emerged themes from the original interviews, semi-structured interview schedule with educators and classroom observations notes.**

Colour codes

Purple =Training, Light blue= Image of the child, Dark green= Roles and relationships

Yellow= Educational strategies, light green= emotional wellbeing.

**Appendix 9.1: South School teacher interview**

**Ezgi:** Thank you for taking your time.

**Lily:** No problem. That's OK.

**Ezgi:** **my first question will be how many years have you been working and in education?**

**Lily:** 30 years. I mean, I had a short career break, but I have been in education for 30 years. Can you believe that it's a really long time?

**Ezgi:** Do you have any specialist training in supporting dyslexia?

**Lily:** Not a specialist, but we did have a very, very qualified, and experienced SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-Ordinator), who provided us with professional development meetings on all areas of special educational needs. And she was particularly an autism specialist. We had lots of training on that. But she also provided us with a lot of professional development meetings. We had one that was designed to alter our whole philosophy on things like dyslexia and other areas of special education needs. We need to be really clear about what that actually means. It's not something that we just say, oh, yes, but he's a little bit dyslexic or he's on the autistic spectrum. We are expected, here in (city name) to really know the subject and

know what that looks like. So, our training went right back to, 'What is dyslexia?' 'You know, we explored what are the definitions that are out there and agreed things like, yes, you can say they have difficulty with reading or writing or spelling, but these difficulties are persistent and very complex.

It's more than just finding reading a little bit challenging. Yeah. So the training that we had took us all the way back to that sort of thing. It's making sure that we say they've got problems at word level that are severe and persistent. But then we also learned how to clarify what word level actually meant. What does that look like in practice? So we were asked to go away and look at children and really study them and then to come back and talk about their word level work.

And then what does severe look like? So that you're not just saying this is a severe problem or it's severe. You're saying it's a severe problem because they can't do this, this, this and this and this. We had training on this document, which is the Local graduated response. Can you see that for every area of learning, you've got things that you need to make sure you've checked, so it eliminates so if you've done all of that and there's still a problem and you haven't identified any other problem, then you go up a level, then you go up to the next one.

So then you'd go up to the next plan and the next plan. And it really makes you as a teacher, stop and think when you are talking about this child with this specific problem. Exactly what's the definition of that problem? Is it severe and persistent? Do I really understand what the problem is.? You're welcome to take that. I did you a copy of it.

There is a key stage 1 one, but I've only got the Key Stage 2 because obviously I am in stage two at the moment.

So that's the training that we've had. And the expectation is very much that we would talk about any children that we have these worries about with SENDCO. We are never in isolation. It would be something that would be flagged up. I don't know if you heard

me say about the meetings with the senior leaders. So, everybody has to be in agreement that it is severe and persistent. And then that's when we would start to talk to parents on a different level.

To begin with, you might have a parents evening. Where you talking to the parent and saying that you have concerns? You know, little such as such is not meeting this. He's not able to do this. This is what I'm doing about it. This is what you can do at home to support that. But if it goes up that level, then we start looking at actual educational plans and having parents in for longer to really talk through the things that their children need to be able to achieve.

This is this is quite a heavy document. But when once you get used to it, it really does help you to look at what what's missing, what have they got, what is missing? What can I do about it?

**Ezgi: When did you have that training?**

**Lily:** A year ago. I don't know. I've got this, this is the training that we had so that this is the PowerPoint that was that we go this one day. Oh no. That's today's date. That's not helpful. I think Mrs S. probably keeps a list of our training, but it would have been a couple of years ago because I would say two or three years ago maybe. Yeah. So, a little while I suppose. Isn't that? Welcome to take those to have a little look through, because that this is all that I was talking to you about, looking for those indicators and, can you just see what was I saying, and this is this is exactly I was just talking about in terms of looking for the indicators and really knowing what they mean, say you're welcome to take those to have a look through this that shows you the sort of training that we've had recently.

**Ezgi: Do you provide any specific interventions for students with dyslexia or poor reading in your setting which teaching strategies to use to support the students?**



## Lily

We as a school, we believe in revisiting learning, sort of layering it, making sure that we go back over knowledge. But I think for these children who have **trouble** with reading, then it's so important that you're doing that. Revisit, reinforce. We learn and we over learn things, trying to **get different** ways to catch it, to make it **stick**. So, we talk to our children about learning being **sticky** or knowledge being **sticky**. So, find something to **stick** it to, to make it happen.

We try to make learning about experiences rather very much than just that didactic teacher at the front talking all at the time, which of course, children with poor language/literacy skills often **struggle** with anyway, because especially as I talk quite quickly. So, you know, I have to use those visuals, those things to support what they're doing and also trying to give them some way of experiencing the learning as well. We focus very strongly on assessment for learning in our classrooms.

We have hands down strategy. If we ask a question, I will nominate the person I want to answer it. I will use that to help me to spot where the **weaknesses are**, where the areas for **development are**. But also, if I've got a child who is **particularly struggling**, I'll make sure I give them a **bit of a warning**. So I would say to them, I'm going to come to you next. So make sure you get your answer ready what answer is going to be and then they'll give you the answer quietly and I'll **say practice, practice practice** and then go back to the front of the class 'Right, over to so-and-so', then they can say the answer because **they've prepped it and they've practiced** it in that time so that they're not left that awful moment where they're left hanging in the class, not able to think of the answer or they haven't thought of the answer yet or whatever. So that's something that I use an awful lot of. We always make sure we adapt our materials that we're using. I was talking about **stripping back**, you know, taking activities back so that they are

simplified, so not giving children who struggle with reading great big chunks of text, you just don't do it.

You give them the same text but I might have stripped it up. So, read this bit, then read this bit rather than read a whole A4 sheet. Very simple. I try and avoid using black pens on white backgrounds and we try and avoid that in our photocopying as well. But it is very tricky and expensive, so it's a little bit harder to do that for them. In terms of the photocopying resources with spelling, with writing and with reading.

I think with English it's really important to draw attention to pattern and to exploit those patterns. You know, if you know that, then you know this. If you know how to spell that word, then you know how to spell this word. We focus a lot on morphology and how words come together. So, you know, see two chunks because actually this comes from one place and this comes from another. So, we would do that with all of the children, but with those children who need that little bit of extra help, they may have a pre learning session with the T.A teaching assistant

So if we're covering something that I think that I know is going to be a little bit tricky for them, they'll have a little mini lesson outside of the classroom before the main lesson so that their brain is already struggling. Yes, as you know, learning can be a struggle, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. I don't think so. They're already struggling with it. They're already tussling with it, but they've heard it once before. So you're getting that over layering again, revisiting so, so important with the used of things like key outcomes and learning intentions and things like that.

We've moved away from that slightly. In terms of generally, but for children who struggle particularly with English, I think it's really important to say to them by the end of this session, you are going to, and you can do this by the end of the session. You need to write me two sentences because... and then go back into teaching, you know, the bit that they're going to write sentences about, because I think sometimes these children

can be sat there **thinking, where's this going? Where's this heading?** You know. 'What is she **going to ask me to do?** And I'm **not going to be able** to do it'. And they're thinking the **wrong things**, whereas. Yeah, whereas if they know all they've got to do is write two sentences. OK, I'll listen. I'll take in what I've got to write my two sentences about. And I think that kind of it's **a top down** so tell them where the top of the lesson is and then work with them up to it rather than starting at the bottom.

I've got no idea whether or not I am explaining it very well. **Can you see what I mean?** And that's something I found **so successful**. That and the chunking things up. **This is the little boy I was talking to you about who's very severely dyslexic. So, he was severe.** He went from having to have his writing mediated totally to this idea of chunking the story down. We look his writing. Each session he **knew** he only had to write about that one that one picture. He **knows** 'I **can** do that. I **can** achieve I **can** make that happen'. And he's focused even more on just a sentence, just one sentence. I'm **not asking for much**, but I'm saying to him. 'The **bottom line** was you need to be able to read it back to me.' I **can't do** that.'

'Yes, you can'. It's one sentence were **expectation as high**. And then likewise, where he was making spelling mistakes with words that he should know how to spell, I **wouldn't let it** go. So if he spelt physical wrong fine. But if he spelt 'the' or 'do' wrong. **No**. So there's that kind of **high expectations** but only within what you know they know. I would like to say to him '**Take it away!**'. And then, you know, he goes from writing one sentence to the point where he could read most of that back. And then his last little bit of work that you did before they disappeared off. He wrote this.

And if you look at the spelling, lost the plot bit here, but you've got four or five lines. Where every word that you should know is **spelled correctly**, but everywhere that it's a **little bit more challenging** is phonetically plausible. So, it's I think with those children who **struggle with writing** it's about keeping those steps incredibly small, making sure

they know that they can achieve it and when they achieve it, recognizing it, but not letting it slip. So once you see if he'd still been with me then I would have next session where I would expect four lines where everything's spelled correctly or everything's done correctly. And in terms, I think you ask about resources a bit later. So I won't say anything about those now.

**Ezgi:**

**What strategy are you using for assessment of assignments to support students who are struggling with the reading.**

**Lily**

Okay. So, with our reading, the reading curriculum is quite different to our writing one in an awful lot of ways, even though they do link across. If I was thinking about assessing writing then with those sorts of children, most of my Marking, most of my assessment would be done alongside. We would go back through it together and that would be where I would say now, not accepting that. What were you trying to write? Say it. Look at it. What have you done wrong? So it's always bringing it back to that visual, because I think sometimes the children who are still struggling with reading and writing in year six, (10 and 11 years old) and still finding it impossible or difficult to do, the phonetic strategy needs to be broadened and we need to go to whole word, whole word recognition and that ability to see where they've gone wrong, to accept that they are going to make mistakes because they have a need that makes them make mistakes with words and to do something about it. With our reading curriculum is very much that the children are read to and we discuss, we do go into note taking and things with it. But it's a lot of talk. We use the whole class reading strategy so all the children in the class will have the same text, we use rulers on. We will read down through it together and discuss it. So with this young lad here, I would have had him next to me while he

was doing that and I might have had three or four words on a whiteboard for him to find as he was going down through.

I'm trying to **train** him into **Skim and scan**, to look for words that he recognises and then he'd have a go at writing them. In terms of our assessment, we assessed against our own points in terms of our reading curriculum, which I can send you as well. I haven't got a copy of it here. Each year group will have end points of things they are able to do. So that's what we would use for assessment of reading.

**Ezgi: what strategies do you use for homework to support students who are struggling with reading?**

That has to be in consultation with parents because we will give children who are really **struggling with reading** a whole **different way of approaching homework**, a whole **different set of expectations**, because homework can often cause a huge amount of stress in the home, even when the child is capable of doing it. **When they're struggling to do it, then there is a sort of knock-on effect and then the negative attitude that the children feel towards the work just increases.**

So there's just no point. You know, it's not helping anybody by forcing them to sit there to try and do something they can't do. So, we would work very closely with parents and we would expect **those parents to support** them and make use of a tailored program, something that **they're interested in**, something that they **want to write** about, something that they **want to read** about and make it very much about them. **And it's all about that success, giving them success in some way so that we can build on it.**

**Ezgi**

**Do you use any specific resources in your setting to support students who are struggling with reading, such as computer, laptop, iPad?**

**Lily**

Yes, we do. We have voice activated software, which is brilliant when it works. But when you have a child perhaps with an accent or they have a mild speech impairment or something like that, it can be really quite funny what comes out. I have had a couple of incidents in the classroom, and I'd also say sometimes it doesn't hear you. So it's only saying, pardon, pardon? The poor child is left shouting at the computer!

I think there are times when it works. When it works well, it's brilliant. So, they speak into it and then the written translation comes up and then they can use that to support their writing. More successful have been the reader pens, you run the pen across, and the text is read aloud. We obviously have a coloured overlay. We have we use dyslexic friendly fonts for their work. So the book has a certain type of font, I don't think you had any in there but I could probably find some examples of that. The only time I would say we expect them just to write on a laptop would be if there is a physical issue. I think the physical act of writing is so important in terms of muscle memory, in terms of developing their spelling, in terms of developing their confidence in their ability to do that very fundamental task, isn't it? I mean, unfortunately, it's still something that they need to be able to do.

So we don't use just laptops. You know, you can you can write that on the laptop, but it doesn't replace writing by hand. It's used as a support to it.

**Ezgi**

**what strategies are you using for supporting parents of students who have communication problems, including poor reading,**

**Lily**

Particularly with the reading, the parental support that starts **early is so important**, you know, we went down to the nursery building, so where Selina was. The conversations that teachers have, they're very much about what sort of reading should you be doing **with your child**? How can you **encourage them** to read, all those sorts of things? Very early on, if something is **picked up in terms of a child's not progressing** as they should, then we put a lot of **support in as early as possible** because it's those building blocks that are so, so important

**Ezgi: Do you have parents who speak English as a second language?**

We have some you know, our demographic is that we have less than some schools that I've worked in previously. And that can be very tricky. But, **you know, we have our E.A.L (English as an Additional Language) support and the parents also have that support, particularly if they have little or no English. So, we have extra support that we can call on to help us with that. And we do have teachers in the school that are quite fluent in different languages, which definitely does help.**

Just the other thing that with the **poor reading**, we would be looking at interventions being about reading to the children as well as just getting them to actually do the **decoding**. So, we would be **pushing the parents at home to read** to their children more. You know, that is such an **important thing**. The hearing of reading, the sharing of reading, it being an **experience that's pleasant**. So even though these children are big, we would still be saying read, **read to them**.

**Ezgi**

**Has school made, any modification to school environment or school process for supporting students with poor reading or communication difficulties?**

**Lily**

You've seen having been for a nice walk around, so **when the changes came** it was **quite interesting because** everybody had to have the same boards and that we weren't allowed to use black pen and all of these sorts of things, you are kind of feel a bit like you're going to **lose individuality**. It's going to **lose the feeling of being** my classroom. But then you can still feel it. Every classroom was **different**, even though there were strong similarities there.

Still the **teacher's personality comes** through. And I think that's important. So I think in terms of that uniformity and also trying to calm the environment is **such an important thing**. We are not supposed to have big hanging displays or things that crowd the environment. So **that I think really helps**. And I think this when I send this one to you (training documents), I know that you can take this one because that's got all of our all of the things that we would **do in terms of each subject and each area, the area of the curriculum**, but it's also this one here was our training on creating dyslexia friendly classroom. So that is **really interesting**. You need to pick through to find the bits that actually talk about the how to actually improve. It starts really from part 2.

So, all of that is being implemented?

Maybe **not everything's tied down** yet because it does take a while to change people's practices. And we **need to observe classrooms and see teachers teach** and have that as part of what's in our heads as senior leaders, that we're looking for that **inclusion and making things right**. The biggest change we've made to the environment has been that the shift in the board backing – all uniform colour and a pale blue, all borders are pastel colours and linked to the topic of the board (only three colours in total).

**Ezgi: The last question is, in what ways are you or your setting able to facilitate voice of the student with dyslexia and ensure its heard?**



Lily

We were talking about thrive and attachment based mentoring. A lot of the children who have got those **more complex needs** will have time with a mentor as we call them. And so that gives them a kind of **one-to-one relationship** which is out of the classroom, out of the teacher child relationship, which can help, to be able to go and sit with somebody and maybe play **a game of Lego and have a chat facilitates talk more** than in the classroom. To have that **one-to-one attention is so important.** And what they will talk about will be anything and everything. But what the mentor is trying to **get out from them is what they need.** You know, **what will help? What can you do? How do you feel about how things are going? What do you think you need to do next? How do you think you need to develop?** And the information we get back from that time, when they have that time, is really **vital as teachers,** because that is absolutely their voice and their chance to express how they're feeling about their learning at the moment and what they **need.**

Ezgi: any other comments?

Lily No, I haven't got any other comments.

### **Deductive framework**

SENDCO, professional development meetings, training on SEN, what is dyslexia, difficulty with reading and writing or spelling, autism specialist, training on document Devon graduated response.

Revisit learning, revisit, reinforce, much learning about experiences, using visuals, focus very strongly on assessment, hands down strategy, adapt our materials that we're using, simplified activities, stripped reading texts.

Marking, use rulers on. We will read down through it together and discuss it, own points in terms of our reading curriculum.

consultation with parents, work very closely with parents, use of a tailored program

Voice activated software, reader pens, coloured overlay, book, dyslexic friendly fonts for their work, computer, laptop.

## Appendix 9.2: North School interview

**Researcher:** how many years have you been working in education or in the school?

**Cecilia:** For, like, 13 years in education? **TA:** Eleven. Here.

**Researcher:** Do you have any specialist training in supporting children who are struggling with reading or especially with Dyslexia?

**Cecilia:** So as a staff, we do receive dyslexia training. It's done through staff meetings and things run by SENCO. I personally, probably over the years, I might have attended a course supporting reading, but we tend to everything we've done is based on evidence, everything is seen in school and then any research and things that we've done acted on

**TA:** I had to Dyslexia the training recently that was online, and I've also been to a course with the SENCO specifically for low level readers.

That's quite interesting. But most of again, the training that I've had come from the school.

**Researcher:** Do you provide any specific intervention for students with poor reading in your school, and if so what teaching strategies do you use support students that makes sure children have opportunities to take part in different interventions?

**Cecilia:** Basically, all of our intervention is based on poor reading. Everything, basically all of it. So, it starts in nursery because in our school, our students come to school with very poor speech and language. I think currently we use a screening called NELI. it screens for receptive vocabulary.

And it's interesting. Basically, about 50% of our nursery intake is currently got concerns. We've got concerns and NELI flags basically some areas, what areas? sets vocabulary sets to repetition.

**Researcher:** When do you do it?

**Cecilia:** We do screening in the nursery, like now after a couple of weeks, and then we screen. So, it assesses expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, receptive vocabulary, and sentence repetition. And it gives you, basically works out based on their age, kind of concerns and then from this screening, it provides a programme to follow. Very in-depth, is not it?

**TA:** half an hour a day

Children that you observed also have poor reading. (TA talking with me)

You didn't see NELI this morning. You saw kind of reading fluency intervention that we've created. But the NELI programme is kind of first step in that, really, because if they're not speaking and listening, they're not then ready to go on to the reading, to be able to go to the decoding aspect of it.

**TA:** And the children that you saw this morning have just completed the NELI programme. So, they've done the full 20-week programme. We're just waiting for their results to come back to where they passed.

So, at the minute with a speech language thing, we are screened all the nursery. Then we screen reception. We screened in year one. We screened in year two. And I think we've still got some in year three that being screened. Currently, these are children who are poor readers. We want to really pinpoint why, and we need to then support. There might be so near one. For example, after half term, you've got children. You did come up as age related on the nearly screening. However, in terms of sentence repetition, which is something we saw very highlighted last year.

Cecilia: That's what they couldn't do. They couldn't repeat a sentence. And so, they're going to have intervention only in the afternoons, purely to look at that strand. They do not need the other bits [of the NELI intervention], but it is just that sense of repetition. So, NELI, and then in reception, year one, some have had last year, we've always had interventions. We tried many different types of intervention over the years. But we realised last year is we needed a quantity of reading. That was it. So, we found with the intervention, we're trying to put in too much.

We were trying to do a bit of spelling, bit of everything. It was too much. And we were like, right when we watched it. Oh, my God. They are only reading for, like, five minutes because they are waiting to take turns and things like that. And we thought, Well, it is a half-hour intervention. And we were like, we came out, we were like, oh, no, we are like, scrap. And then we together, we kind of put into, like, an idea, did not we? And then you [speaking to Teaching Assistant] have refined it from there.

So, what you saw this morning is kind of like we took a leap, basically took a while to convince teachers, because we had the afternoon invention. So that was running.

But then we wanted to take them out literally. We wanted to put stuff like memory gain, Echo reading, and more phonics. Colour semantics is another part of that. NELI is also another part of depending on which programme they run.. They tailored it to the group of children that they are aiming it for and which age they are at

Now. They come out for six weeks. Instead of doing literacy, they come out and do the fluency programme in the morning. Then after six weeks, they can go back into a class and then start to apply those skills.

So, we managed to convince teachers that it was okay that they were not doing any writing, and they were purely reading for an hour in the morning. And they are doing another half hour, at least in the afternoon. It was only when we got that quantity that it made a difference. The afternoon interventions were not enough, definitely.

And we had the same children having interventions in year six were having it from reception. And we are like, that does not work. It needs to be a bigger quantity. So, we need to put in, we found, like, six-week blocks as a pure saturation. And the idea was the children and the TAs both responded so positively to it because it made it so much faster-paced. And the children rereading and rereading an accessible familiar text.

They are not being taught at that moment. It's purely looking at pace, really reading quickly and fluently, because what you had tended to get was children who just sounded out every single word painfully. And that was their only strategy, wasn't it? They were not reading. They could 'read', but they could not comprehend anything. Our aim is to get everyone to up 90 words per minute, and that's when we teach the comprehension.

. But it takes the hours. So, we put a lot of TA training and Hallie (TA) monitors that amazingly. So, we train the TAs. They deliver the sessions. And then Hallie monitors it very carefully to see two children because every time you do a group, it's like, oh, which children? That child needs to move to book level. Let's move them up because we want to get momentum and you should be moving through the book bands because we found that children were just stuck, were not they?

**TA:** Yeah. There is a child that is demoralized when they just go through the same books each time and not feeling that progression.

**Cecilia:** That's worked really well for the children. They really have responded well. But also, the TAs. I think the TAs were they just found the previous kind of structure a bit stressful. They thought it was not very pleasant. They just did not enjoy it. And they were doing more reading than children. That seemed to shame, because the children, the ones who needed to be reading, TAs had the found out there, the ones who were just talking at the children all the time.

**Cecilia:** A lot of effort, hasn't it? But it's well worth it. And hopefully we'll see data.

**TA:** even phonics We've **changed instead** of recovering one diagram, then we have pack so volume of everything. I think the key thing first is the volume.

**Researcher:** what strategies do you use for assessment of work of students who are struggling with reading, like Miscue analyses?

**Cecilia:**

We have the teachers do the lots of the assessment. Basically, they have things like benchmark books, so they'll be **checking weekly** or biweekly. What book band they should be on? Are they ready to move on? And that's really based on their kind of teacher expertise? We assess the reading rate for children because basically a few years ago, what we realised - I was at the SAT test, myself and the headteacher were, and we had children in there who **could answer** every question, but they **could not answer** in an hour. And we are like, absolutely gutted. We could not give them all {extra time}. They did not need anything extra. And so, this has taken a few years. This is where it comes from - the fact that we need to speed them up. We just need them to read, read, and read and read. And to get that fluency. And the **speed is key**. We do tests, more formal tests, quizzes with the children. We call PIXL test. So, PIXL is a group of schools. They are a large group of schools, about 400 to 550 schools, a huge amount of them are in London. They are across the country, and they are **deprived** schools. And they create these tests. They are very linked, very much in line with SAT tests. And so, what you do is you then sit the test, and they create an analysis so you can compare yourself to all the other **deprived** schools. If you are not comparing yourself to upper-class or middle-class schools, you are a very able cohort. You are comparing yourself to schools that are the same as your cohort, which is helpful. And then we have this very in-depth, what we call Qlas question level analysis. And that allows us to look at every single question. And then we can see, really pinpoint like which kind of questions can children answer

and which cannot they, so is it retrieval? Is it some type of comprehension, is it word meaning? And that then informs our intervention.

And that then informs our intervention or in our whole class teaching So now, for example, year three, year four and five, just do the test. They have done a test, the weight Pixl. They kind of analyse it for you. You have these big grids you fill in and that you can see clearly where it will target your poor readers, what skills? And they can give targeted intervention focused teaching to those group, that group, particularly, we focus on the 60th to 85th percentile of children. So those ones - we are not talking about our super special needs, we are looking at those children who should be on track.

Why aren't they on **track**? What can we do to put them on **track**? It's forensic. It takes a lot of time, but it's worth it very carefully done.

**Researcher: Do you use any specific resources in your setting to support students who are struggling with reading, such as computer, laptop, iPad?**

**Cecilia:**

Guess it is a book, is it? Yeah, I mean a lot of them are dyslexia friendly.

So, we spent a lot of time looking at different publishers, looking at different reading schemes, buying in a lot, **spent thousands, thousands, and thousands**. We do use something like phonics games and things, but it is not a specific intervention.

Our **i**nterventions are fluency based on there. That's it. They're within the teaching.

For example, in year one, when they're doing **guided reading**, they can't do guided reading with all the children. It might be that some of the groups already out every day with a TA. The teacher in the class might be doing a group, the other group who's working independently. They might be doing **a phonic game on an iPad or a Chromebook** or something, but that's why every day is kind of used at each discretion. I don't even use anything else.



**TA:** We support the same children anyways; the classrooms are designed around.

**Cecilia:** And even higher up the school, we will buy things like books by publishers like **Barrington Stoke. So, they are Dyslexic friendly publishers.** So, their books are specially **targeted at Dyslexic children.** It is great because you can get any novel, but they condense it in a way. And the font they use, and the colour pages, make it accessible to Dyslexic readers. Really ... But the children love it, especially when they are starting to read because there are only six pages. And when they first, when we first started the programme, the children are like, I can read a book. I can read a whole book because they just finished a book and it is like, and I can read it again.

But they don't look different. It's very nice. Basically, initially, when we set up the intervention programme, Hallie very kindly allowed herself **to be filmed.** And then we got all tiers to watch Hallie do the **filming.** And in the video, I think some of the children like, 'I've read it literally'. We were like, five minutes of just reading that book and they just read it **again and again** and again to gain that pace and expression.

they just felt **like they were a reader.** That's our big push at the minute is **develop a love of reading.** That is the central role, because what we found we had **a lot of disenfranchised readers.** They literally say, '**we do read**'. And you think, Right, how can we stop this? And this is why the intervention that we've developed so much better because children are like 'yes, I love it'.

And at the end of the session, they just read this lovely story. because we know that the **parents don't read them at home,** and it is kind of like wanting to give it anything we could, but it's simple and **fast paced and just that quantity of reading.**

**Researcher:** I have to ask if you're concentrating on pace, how does that support comprehension well within the **pace?**

**Cecilia:** In order to read, you need to be reading with **expression** and prosody.

So, within the structure you might have seen this today when they read a couple of pages and what they'll do is they'll read it back with the TA. The TA will be driving the **pace** and they'll also be using the prosody and then that provides it because they're then reading to pace, reading with this idea of this **prosody**, then they are gaining comprehension. So, if you don't read fast, you cannot comprehend. But it obviously takes years and years, but that **constant modelling and doing it together** makes them realise that's how you're reading it stops them as well.

**Researcher: What strategies are you using for supporting parents of students have communication problems, including poor readings?**

So, we have been running a lot of parent workshops, currently. So, this has all been reading focus. What we have done is, over the years, we have done different parent workshops and our parental engagement is a **very big problem for** us. We have a lot of parents who do not want to engage because they did not have a great time in school.

They **did not have a very good positive experience** and their parents did not read to them anything, or support them with homework and things, so they do not even think to do it for their children.

So, to get that it was always a big drive for us, so the parent workshops for the reading.

So, parents over here we realise **do not like working with** their children because they feel **like being judged**. So, they like to watch their children. They want to see their children being taught. So basically, we have small groups of six children, so the teacher will be teaching six children like modelling, basically showing a guided reading session or whatever reading, especially the parents are watching. And then we have a little chat with the parents afterwards about what they saw and what kind of approaches? It was well attended to this year.

But it is always some **parents that are hard to reach**. We send home newsletters, and we do parent emails about reading, information sheets, and explaining **expectations** for reading homework. We do expect them to be reading every day. Particularly lower down school but you can always get into parents **who are not** interested. And we do have some parents who are **illiterate** who cannot read, which is very tricky to manage. And we tend to know those parents, but we just need to provide as much help in school as possible because we know it will just **not happen outside school**.

Something we've been doing this year, which we're **spending a lot of money** on, I think parents find it a little **bit stressful trying to do, a reading book, with their child isn't it? Because they're like, come on, it's after** school, parents are harassed. Children are tired and they're like, come on, read this book. Your teacher said you must read this book. So, we basically send home two books now, one which is the targeted reading level. The other one is just for pleasure. So, the book for pleasure won't be their reading level. It will be a book for their parents to read to them, to share with them.

And that's **been positively received**. They really like their parents because obviously we're kind of like a library. We've **spent thousands of thousands** of pounds, and they can then access all these beautiful, **wonderful books**. And, earlier to say how well taken care of they are, the books have been so far, so they've **been well and highly valued**.

That's been really **positive**. And that kind of goes to our whole development of level reading. But this is kind of like, still kind of the **early phases of this** to see what will work and what won't work. There's definitely more to explore. So, we allocate them during the school day. And then we do say, no. If you can not make those ones, we will try and do another one. It depends. Sometimes you get cohorts [in which] the parents are really engaged, and other cohorts are not, so [the teachers] are very disappointed by the turnout.

What they thought they might do like, this is like a picnic or something where parents coming to school for no educational reason, just for pleasure, to see if we can get them in the door. Once we get them in the door, hopefully, then we can get them on board for other things, like reading, and supporting reading. But I think it blows their mind when they come to the parent workshop. How much is involved in reading? Because the terminology and everything is **quite off-putting**. It is not a normal language. I know even my friends, friends who have children and they are very educated. They are like, what is blending? And I was like, oh, it is just this put people off schools. We have our **own language and** parents just think, no, I do not want anything to do with that. But just sharing a book with a child, we want to see that is what you should be doing normally, and hopefully, they will see it's a **positive experience** because I think if children learn to read for pleasure, it has a **bigger impact on their lives than their social and economic situation**. It's as simple as that. So, for us, if we can even get to one extra child, we thought that's in the right direction.

**Researcher: Has the school made any modification to school environment or school process for supporting students with poor reading?**

**Cecilia:** School environment, we have things like working walls that are not specific, and targeted at reading, writing, and maths. But it supports reading, because our working walls support the children during the process, the sequence. So, there will be things they can refer to. We have vocabulary displays you can see in most classrooms. So, we have, like, for example, in our writing lessons, we have a big vocabulary warm-up. We have a vocabulary in everything. So, you have a word like, 'happy'. But around it would be all synonyms. There can be words linked to happy words and phrases. And children actively refer to them all the time in their learning. You just see they do it. They look around the classroom.

**TA:** You saw that as well because then children were talking about the ice cream. It was not just a vanilla ice cream. It is scrumptious ice cream. It is a taste of it. So, they were coming out with all the vocabulary they do not see used within their classroom.

**Cecilia:** I think what you will see in the walls supports them; we have things like supporting the reading. So, we use stem sentences a lot on our slides, on our whiteboards. So, when we are asking a question, there will be a stem sentence to scaffold the child's response. And they are well-trained.

**TA:** And again, it might be just like below and reminding of their full sentence might have to model the first bit. But **even within a guided group** are well aware that they **need to support that** as well. They're using those skills.

**Cecilia:** And then we also, I guess in the school environment, should make sure everything we have has high quality, nice things. So, we spend a lot of money. We spend a lot of money on resources, I think, more than most schools. But we want you to look at things, particularly books, and go, oh, it is a nice new book. Brilliant. I will take it. I will take good care of it. And it's something special. And they don't want tatty horrible old things that's not inviting to a child. So, we take care to update.

**Researcher:** **In what ways are you able to facilitate that voice of the child with reading problems and ensure it is heard? And how do you find out from children what they think will help their learning?**

**Cecilia:** We don't **engage in a conversation**. Especially with the **younger ones**, because they **wouldn't be able to tell you**. We're mindful. We're always giving them a way into the learning. So there's always a way **they can access us**.

**we discuss with the child if there's** a word they're **struggling** with, we'll kind of **scaffold their** learning to get it, but we don't ever ask them or what do you find reading tricky

because the problem with a poor reader is they normally poor a rater as well as they struggle with participating because they don't have a vocabulary. They were being safe if they had special needs, and they might have been out of targets and they are discussed with the children. But that's only for those specific children.

**Researcher: Do they choose the books? Do they have opportunities for choosing, because that can be a way in which you can express your preferences?**

**Cecilia:** We don't really have exploratory talk about why they have choices,

**TA:** Some groups on that are reluctant readers who are struggling with reading, but again, couldn't tell us why.

**Cecilia:** Then it would be which book was a choice of books because otherwise the TA is always giving the book to them to read.

but found some children, especially, like last year, that they just needed that choice to be able to take ownership of reading. I'm choosing this, but I want to read, which is a really good way to do it. But again, it's very tricky. If they haven't got that vocabulary to tell you exactly what they're struggling with, they just turn off and they're like, 'no, I don't want to read,' but yes, choice is one of the things that we've had come across. Not very often.

We tend to find that because we change fluency so that it's so much fun and accessible anyway, and we target it for that specific group of children. So, it's not just one structure that we use for all the children. We tailor that per group to what that child needs. Then we find that there's just a way in for them to access that reading anyway. But yeah, choice is something that we've done before.

Any other comments?

**Cecilia:** No, I think we're very into reading, really. I mean, I think we'd buy any book we possibly could if we are allowed, but now I feel like we're moving above positive direction. What we want to aim to do is see it in data, which I'll see hopefully this year because we have such a couple of disruptive years. We just want to because we feel like we have an outstanding practice, but we only get judge on our data. So that's kind of what it boils down to.

We feel that we are not engaging with the children much more engaged content, or the adults are much more engaged. I think everybody's really on board with it. We just hope that that really kind of gets conveyed, and if it doesn't work something else, basically.

### **Deductive analysis framework for interviews**

- their role in the settings
- specific training
- understanding of dyslexia (image of child)
- teaching strategies, intervention

Organization.

Teaching methods

Classroom management

ethos

- resources
- supporting parents
- school environment
- dyslexic student's voice

### **Codes**

TA 11 years, primary teacher 13 years.

. Dyslexia training, SENCO, staff meeting, course supporting reading.  
Online dyslexia training, course with SENCO

intervention, poor reading, screening for receptive vocabulary Nellie, Nursery, assess expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sentence repetition, a programme half an hour in a day, 20 weeks NELI programme, Echo reading, phonics, colour semantics, fluency programme, 90 words per minute when teaching comprehension, TA training,

. Benchmark books, checking book bands, reading rates every half term, SAS tests, quizzes, formal tests, pixel tests,

Decodable books, phonics games, iPad, Chromebook, dyslexia-friendly publishers' book, Barrington Stoke

Parent workshop, reading focus, showing guided reading session, home newsletters, email, information sheets for homework.

Working walls, vocabulary displays.



### Appendix 9.3: North School reading intervention observations notes

Ta holds the cards and

(ar) what is it?

Well-done let's start with (student name) are you ready? Bar, dar, smart, harm spark, bark, what is it? far she shows cards each student answers the card.

well-done, let's do all together are you ready when I click my fingers (she clicks her finger) start  
very good

Next one. cart, park (children reads) very good.

showing EA card children eaa

Let's start with (freak, deal, neat, speak, yeast boy student ta yes let's read sounds look what diagram we do ea (boy reads) well done seal (girl reads) wrong ta shows again on card seal, another student read wrong ta shows again by touching letters on card student beat well-done

shows nouns starts with WH.

well, the last one student talk hold on shows card with WH what is this she asks the boy student

whist, whisk,

Very good. Right. All together as a group. Are you ready? When I click my fingers? wham, whim I can't hear (students can't read) let's start together no she is spelling w-h-i-m whim very good, last one click her finger whiz

she uses chronometer for speed the next inaudible she took 2 books are we sat up are u ready? like the story she gives story books to each child. Are we ready?

. Let's start with story ready potato finger. let's make sure we say clearly One (boy student potato he repeats well-done) potato, two potatoes, three potatoes, four.

student says I likes potato TA: I like to remember tracking finger she puts her finger on the book .my turn one potato two potato, three, four potato

your turn boys read one potato, two,3, 4 TA: oh this say 4 potato

Let's do that. One again. Together. One potato, two potatoes, three potatoes, four. my turn ta reads.

Nice and cosy underground. (Students repeat) they don't know. Inaudible students repeat. suddenly a firmest fog comes down to dig them up.

They roll around upon the ground what can this be about then one by one they're tossed inside a bucket made of ... inaudible

student repeats with same expression Very good.

Clatter clang, bump, and bang. We hear Them going in Ta your turn (boy reads same sentence)

The bucket swings into the air and takes them for a ride. they end up in the kitchen (students repeats after her)

where it's nice and warm inside. let's read again they turned the page one student need a tissue ta brought and sit back.

Splash. There's water in their eyes.

Eyes. They Windsor every squirt a giant brush is scrubbing them to get off all the dirt.

Lovely. Finished there that was excellent. (TA removes Books from desk) I put them there

Right. Let's play a quick memory game before we go any further, shall we? Yeah. let's play I went to zoo. I should start and then you got u remember what I said then I am going to go around (she explains the game) (she sets chronometer again) Let's start we had play haven't we? TA: I went to zoo I seen an elephant, Ta point the student she wants her to repeat her sentence and add more

student start I went to zoo ta wants her slow down TA repeats quietly and the student repeats the sentence.

I went to zoo I saw an elephant TA asks and? Giraffe, tiger

Lovely. Right, (calls boy went name)? I Zoo I saw elephant, giraffe and tiger.

Lovely, lovely. other student repeats I went zoo elephant giraffe, tiger and cheeky monkey. TA repeats the whole sentences again adds an animal name she wants other student to repeat it helps her for remember with imitating the animal student add I see a pig ta mm a cow ta do we see in zoo? or in farm. A Go to zoo what u see? students answer tiger, we seen a tiger what about lion maybe? she points the students for remember the other students answer. other students repeated, a student struggle TA what about she uses her arms imitating snake.

Well, fabulous. That was excellent using memories to remember all these animals. She stopped the chronometer. let's do she took cards and put on the table. She shows cards who, what doing, what where,

**Conjunctions and adjectives.** Okay, have a look at my picture. who (student answer) a dog

what dog does student cuddling is he cuddling or holding he says holding it where other student in the garden, so we need make sentence together then (making sentence) the dog is holding a ball in the garden. Lovely sentence Lets all together the dog holding a ball in the garden excellent work. let's look have picture here (ask the boy)? Who is in my picture he answers a fluffy bear I like that u added the adjective?

What are they doing to the fluffy bear? So, we got the subject, which we know who what fluffy teddy bear is doing eating ice cream student answers where he eats ice-cream ta asks the students he sitting on bench licking vanilla ice-cream ta I really liked. Could be vanilla ta says delicious ice-cream can be scrumptious? Ice cream. could be cold ice cream. let's have a look the fluffy bear eating a vanilla ice cream in the park. all together are u ready they repeat the sentence.

the last one she shows a picture the boy what is the boy doing (called student) name? washing his hand. Where he is washing his hand called student name for the answer)

she answers in the bathroom. okay (student name) he repeats the boy was his dirty hands in the bathroom. Ta very good you added an adjective smart boy I really liked.

That fabulous work. (Other student) The boy was his hand with the soap the could be she (knocks her head) in the bathroom. another student repeats the sentence says washing in the toilet. the toilet in the bathroom is what you probably call your bathroom, isn't it? (She explains toilet is the bathroom) she turns the board let's move on reading. inaudible in our **book today we come across some these diagraphs are u ready?** so diagraphs are showing the UR students read turnip.

she shows AR students reads farm, or. Corn  
, aw down,  
igh ...High,  
oo ...Took soon,

(So, let's now. reading the board like name said (students reads) TA took books out from an envelope.

shall we do **together they read** book title the **foolish fox** .do you know what foolish means? it means unwise, silly who makes unwise decisions let's look **who makes unwise** decisions, stop you are going to pages 2,3,4 and 5 we read all together are u ready

they are **reading book loudly**. TA watches them she **helps their reading correcting them**.

Okay. lovely back to page 2, remember we are **reading with lots of expression** are u ready? TA starts reading Fox ... Inaudible.

Fox had a farm, but he did not like firmly so

He said to some sheep for me. And you can keep, some of the fruit. The sheep said we can keep the top part the fruit or the bottom part. the top part said fox. a girl student counts the sheep Ta asks her how many sheep? is that 4? where is the setting of the story. The setting of story is a farm. (She helps students for the sentence) page 6,7,8,9.

boy reading inaudible **sit up ta says** Ta **track with her finger**. students are reading loudly Ta watch their reading by one by. Lovely well-done.

she helps with student FF fruit then we added s fruits. **read that sentence** again. (Student reads again). lovely TA helps another student with reading she reads the sentence boy follows **her and reread** the sentence. Lovely

TA everybody page 6 ready? **let's read together**. (Ta is reading)

so, the sheep corn sits in the soil when the corn high when the sheep cut it down then they took the corn inaudible. To fox This is not food said fox. fox was crust it had been a trick. **Wait read again what punctuation** it is? do it **again change the voice ready?** they **read sentence again with expression** on you have 10,11,12, 13.

the girl student starts to read TA looking her book listening her reading. that **was perfect**. She listens other students reading. TA helping **with their reading correcting the words**. **read it again** ta says.

lovely let's go back to page ten

Okay, now, **remember, Fox is speaking**. Okay, we **change our voice**.

Fox said next year you must the keep bottom part of fruit, so the sheep put turnip seed in the soil. when the turnip ... the sheep ...they took the turnip tops to fox. (**They read with expression**)

Ta hang on a minute. (Inaudible) **change your voice**. Can you read page is 14,15? oh last 2 pages?

students start to read; she is showing **the board for give hint to student** (ow) ta says **sit up to** boy student. Ta helps another student

(Ta and **the girl read sentence together**) read again.

lovely. right let's **read all together**.

So, hang on a minute. Is **Fox, please?** At this point?

So, we **need our cross voice**. Are you ready, this is not fruit said fox was crust it a have been a trick, so now fox farm is land himself? **lovely?**

you got 2-minute right you will go back to beginning of story and read all it again. All the way through is u ready for your challenge.

students start to read loudly the whole book. I know I know you are very tired let's do it together Ta says to girl student they read again. TA follows another student reading. Hang on read it again, what was that one does you remember?

student reads inaudible... Good read it again. Ta shows the board for help children reading. Ta helps the girl student repeat sentence with her one more minute (TA listen other students) TA: you have 30 second go back to beginning, they read it again. Ta helps with a student who has problem reading (ta talking inaudible) very good clever girl who have been fabulous reader.

And now I went to ... this morning and I found the most fabulous story book. Would you like to share a story? (She removes the previous reading books)

student yeah. TA: you like this book. student yeah, the scary one. let's read ooo Ta hold the book have u ever heard this story? you had? don't tell anybody else.

right shall we read? TA read with expression low voice students listens.

And due to the mud, the swap really stank (she use her body) the darkly lived quietly all on his own and dreamed of transforming his muddy swap home. This is home.

What do you know about his home? we know smells quiet badly. stink

He had a neat garden which had a neat wall. And each year he grew Orchids some large, some small. (Use her body gesture)

Some flowers were spotted, and some flowers were plain. He cherished them all just the same one day as he tended to his tiny new bird. inaudible. oh, look Ta shows pictures.

This here's where I'll build my new mountain park. I'll concrete it all because it's stinky and dark. Look over there at that strange one. He is saying, yes, you stinky creature out down to your King, TA who is talking student answer you. Ta who is talking in the story? who is that the King.

The King and his minions all started to laugh. Oh, call for my father to give it a bath. a student shows something on the page

No, cried McCarthy. The orchids will die. He runs over his hands, and he stammered a cry. If you could just look at their beauty, their Grace, your see. The swamp is a magical place. a student talks about story ask question **inaudible she points the dress**. TA it looks strange isn't it?

Shall we have a look? The Princess goes forward. Incredible, kids. You say they come with my .... Do show me the way the darkness has.

Sadly, they've not flowered yet in a couple of weeks. **(Student is laughing)**

Oh, Daddy, I have to insist we return. Just Nick and the marvellous things I could learn all right, Crista K. We'll return in ten days. He scoured up darkly. Now back up your way.

The whole of this swamp best be bursting with Grace. Or soon I'll be skating all over this place. Give me a scurry. You show me a scurry face that's straight on for me.

The next day was up for door. He rubbed up his eyes and his eye were. He gathered up the class and shores he would need. His swap was at Faith, so he had to succeed. He shovelled them up till his shoulders were sore and shovelled and plotted and shovelled some more.

The sunset. He kept going. He's couldn't stop him.

He worked without seating entirely so fast, but quickly he found that ten days had passed. But as he was singing his flowery song, he spotted a sub thing that didn't belong right there on the leaf of a small Pickle shirt. **Student shows pic makes noise eww**

But darkly was panicked. What could he do? He thought for a moment, and then he said, Shoo, but just as he lifted it off with his paw, he looked all around, (a **student is excited she try to hold the book** TA hang on no) maybe a bit of both Channing. He felt rather sick. He had to do something and do something quick. **TA asking, you** think he is going to see butterflies next? **she is asking what** you think he is going the **see let's have a look**, turns the page oo not butterflies.

He tried to remove them as fast as he could, but there were so many. **Ta ask what he is doing** at the moment the student eating? eating what liana? make a sentence student makes it inaudible.

His sword will be lost. And he tried not to cry. He knew he had failed. And he how dark. He said nothing.

What could he say? Just as the King is wolfing and glean, the Princess explained, oh, my goodness, gracious me. Why look at the beauty? Look at the Grace. This really is the most magical place. ... **TA reading with expression** in audible

This poor ruin Orchestra. Be hundreds of butterflies. student I told u butterflies.

The Princess excitedly made a decree. This place from now on is protected by me. The swamp is the first of my nature reserve. But darkly will run it. It darkly silences inside his heart sword.

And he knew he is rescued. Students point **pictures says look and talking about the page. TA engage with her.**

From then on, the pair of them would often meet. She found in some more kids the grubs would not eat. The plan that they made was suspended in grand. The Princess decided he needed a hand and hand out. The King had some Butlers to spare.

In fact, before long she had him working there. **TA and students talk about pictures students laughing!**

There's was still dark but no longer so dark and it never became the King's role of state park. But darkly have proven that beauty is sometimes. TA closed the book.

Lovely thank you so much coming and doing jobs with me today, TA wants students leave quietly.

## **Deductive frameworks**

Teaching methods, resources

Teaching session on fluency

**First activity** -reading phonic cards, diagraphs 3 minute.

She uses **chronometer**.

She shows cards to student to **wait for** her answer (each student different card)

She **clicks her finger** for the answer she wants read them **altogether**,



they read individual and together.

For **incorrect** answers she **waits** more sometimes says mm and children read again

Or she **reminds the diagraph** (what diagraph we were using) make children read again.

She **shows letter** by her finger on the card, or **she moves her lips** for the letter. Then the student read it again

She helps student with their **reading by hints**.

She uses well done, good job positive reinforcement.

**Second activity** -reading a **story book** 5 minute.

TA wants student **set up**, are you ready?

She sets **chronometer**.

**Tracking finger**, she is reading first (**modelling**) then students read the same sentence.

She read with expression,

she listens students reading helping them by tracking fingers and asking let's read it again.

She stops the **chronometer**.

**Third activity** **memory game** 5 minute

She starts **the chronometer**.

**Explains** the game she starts first (I went too zoo I have seen an elephants)

She **repeats the sentence** with students using her fingers.

She uses **hints for students** remember each other answers (she points the person or **imitating the animal**).

One student says I went to zoo I have seen a pig ta mm stop wat for another answer student a cow,

TA: Do we see in a zoo or in a farm? What about a lion? (she helps student with answer)

Ta also **imitating** a snake using her arms for help another student.

## **Appendix 9.4: South School observation notes**

### **Mini teaching session with student with reading difficulty**

Teacher -Wild, yeah, so can we put those two together? Cheering wildly

That be a good way to start a sentence? OK, so we've got cheering wildly. Who are we talking about? We might need to explain to me who was cheering wildly (student answer) the crowd. So let's stick with that one minute. So cheering wildly the crowd.

Shouted, come on and do it. Blimey, you're on it this morning. OK, so we've got we I'm going to change it slightly.

I'm going to say shouted to encourage and then we'll get onto because I don't want any speech in there at the moment. I think that's too much to cope with. OK, so let's go back to what we had. First of all, do we do we think we need to chunk this up? The sentence, is it going to be too long? Otherwise, should we try? OK, so. Cheering wildly the crowd shouted to encourage encouraging Tommie Smith or and John, because we want to include the other man, don't we?

Oh, gosh. I say let's try it. So see if I can remember it. Cheering wildly The crowd shouted, encouraging Tommie and John. How many words is that? Nine. I said eight, I can't even. Okay, but that's. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Four minutes later, I've got you. OK, let's concentrate because it's nine words. Yeah, I'm not doing it. Come on, Cheering Hang on, keep pace. (teacher count words with student to help them to write)

### **Hand down strategy from whole classroom teaching**

Remember, it's going to be hands down questions so I can ask anybody. So make sure you're talking about the thing that you're you should be talking about and that you're ready to answer. What helped you to add detail so it could be something that your

partner did that helped you or it could be something that your brain did to help you?

OK, so talk to each other, have an answer. Ready, Hand down question.

They listen to. I think you could tell me what was he doing? Not just my brain. You talk to me when you get to this point.

All right, back together, then.

Let's bring in Lila (girl name). Tell me something that helped you to add more detail.

Are you trying to think of a sentence that I think you need to put the thing first and then add so whatever it was, and then helped me to add more detail at the end? What helped you? Can you remember a detail that you added? And remember how you answered one of the questions?

We'll help you to answer this question. What was your event, what were you talking about? (teacher waits to student answer like around 3 minutes)

Can you speak up a deaf old lady? What about your event? What did you talk about?

About bowling, OK? What was the question you asked? Tell me more question that you asked me. OK, so think about what did you have to do then to be able to answer that question, to add more detail? What happened **inside your head, what did you say**? What was the reason why you went, what was the answer? OK, so when you think about that moment, close your eyes, what do you say?

Did you magically get to the bowling alley? if you drive it, that's not legal. You're not allowed to do that. OK, so you went in the car. Who else was in the car with you? OK, so that's the picture that you see what was happening in Lila 's brain then throughout all of that. What was going on is a horrible feeling, isn't it, Carson, the little man doing that running round thing?

Although with Lila, I sometimes feel you are worried about getting the answer right.

Like, you can answer the question, but you don't want to say out loud in case it's wrong.

And what do we what do we say about wrong answers? What do I always say about wrong answers. absolutely. And also it gets us started just now, this idea of a half-baked idea, like I'm not really sure. And lots of you started to say that to me.

Teacher pause was interesting to me. It felt students need to answer questions or teacher pushes students to be more confident and not be shy to give wrong answers.

## Appendix 10: Themes and Codes

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Educational strategies	Support for learners	Interventions/activities/resources Support
	Organisations	School Ethos and Culture Walls / Displays

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Teacher preparedness	Pre-service teacher training	PCGE Dyslexia training Initial teacher training
	In-service teacher training	SENCO Professional development courses

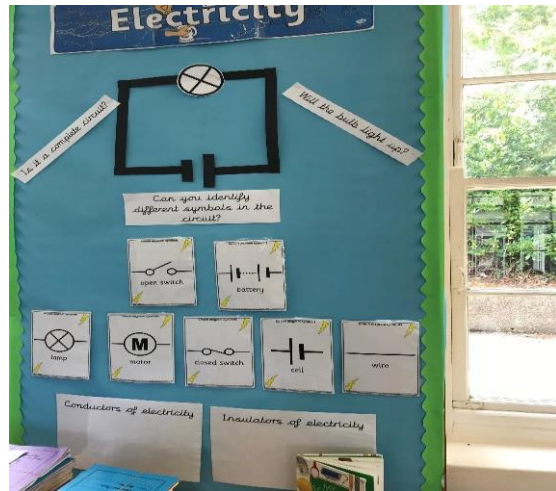
Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Roles and relationships	Role of TAs	Delivering mini sessions Relationships with teacher
	Roles of Parents/family	Workshops Parents evenings Meeting with SENCO

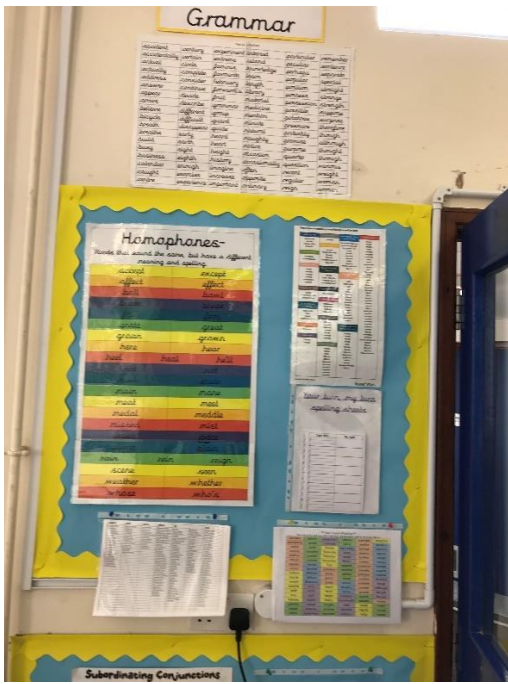
Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Understanding differences		Testing /Diagnosis/screening Medical model Social model Interactional model

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Image of learners with reading difficulty	Responsibilisation	Responsibilities of teachers, parents, students
	Talented	Picture-oriented mind, creativity, good at art, support
	Struggling	Struggling with reading, writing English, support
	Negative assumptions	Lazy, stupid, support

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Engaging learners with reading difficulty	Mentor, Senco meetings with students creating classroom environment

## Appendix 11: Sample of South School pictures









**Appendix 12: Sample of North School pictures**



