

# **Dyslexia in the Aspect of Malay Language Spelling**

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### **Abstract**

This study was focusing on dyslexics who have problems with spellings from the aspects of learning bahasa Melayu. The purpose of the study was to see the errors made by the dyslexics according to the Levinson Theory 1994 especially from the angle of spelling errors. The study was conducted at Taman Maluri Secondary School, Cheras Kuala Lumpur. Interview and reading and spelling test were used in the study. The reading and spelling test was done by using the dyslexia exercise books and short stories as the instruments. This was done to determine the

spelling errors listed by Levinson in his theory. The findings of the study said that dyslexics have difficulties in identifying phonemes. The exchanging of letters occurs very often during the spelling process. Among the letters that are often mixed-up by the students are 'b-d', 'u-n', 'm-w', 'g-q', 'p-q', and 'b-p'. Dyslexics are gifted with many huge talents. Therefore, parents, teachers and society should give their best support to convince the dyslexics to continue striving for excellence in their life and study. Among the prominent dyslexics are Orlando Bloom, Jacky Chan, the Mc Dreamy, Patrick Dempsey, Whoopy Golberg, Albert Einstein, and Tom Cruise. For this study the researcher aims to see the correct techniques and process of the teaching and learning for these dyslexics.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Dyslexic, Spelling aspect, Malay Language

## **Introduction**

Dyslexia is not a disease but it is just a barrier in learning that attacks children. The word dyslexia was introduced by Prof. Rudolf Berlin (specialist and ophthalmologist) in 1887 (Hammond and Hughes 1993:3). Dyslexia came from a Greek word which "dys" means difficulties and "lexia" means word. This gives dyslexia a definition of 'difficulties in using lexicon or word' (Newton & Thoman 1947:6). He also has expanded the definition of dyslexia as the complication in language among children who are in the process of learning and fail to acquire the ability of reading, writing or spelling in parallel with their other intellectual abilities (Newton & Thoman 1947:3). Dyslexia is also a specific inability in reading. The inability is atrocious until they cannot differentiate letters b-d', 'u-n', 'm-w', 'g-q', 'p-q', and 'b-p'. Children with this symptom are said as having dyslexia. Some of them even have difficulties in concentrating, giving perceptions, memorising, speaking, thinking, abstracting, eyes-hand coordination, socialising (low self-esteem) and obtaining low grade with poor performance. Therefore, they find difficulties in adapting themselves with the learning system that we have.

## **Literature Review**

There was a research done by Mohd Anuar Abdullah (2001) to look at the knowledge of the teachers from the Special Education Rehabilitation. This research was done at the area of Hilir Perak. It was found out that majority of the teachers there claimed their students have problems with regards to reading and repeating sentences and even words. Moreover, according to other teachers the students also have problems in getting to know words visually and auditory. This makes them have difficulties in pronouncing certain words that they see and hear.

According to Rosana (1998), dyslexics can be identified through 8 main characteristics (i) instabilities of writing and speaking vocabularies, (ii) late in oral action, (iii) weak in arranging the content, (iv) short-term memory, (v) unable to spell properly, (vi) limitation of understanding; only remember things in the class but will be forgotten during test, (vii) inaccurate in reading and (viii) not well-planned. If any child possesses the above mentioned characteristics the child is said to have dyslexia.

Miles (1998) did a survey on a comparison of effectiveness of two basic learning-to-read steps among students who are under the rehabilitation in Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan. The findings showed that from the 132 chosen students who are under the rehabilitation, only 40 of them are identified as possessing the characteristics of dyslexia in their learning. He had tested the sample by using the writing diagnostic method. Samples were given a few sentences to copy and results showed that subjects copied all spellings. Later he read the same sentences to the students and subjects were asked to write it again. Results obtained very little differences. Samples were seen as inserting and deleting some words into the spelling.

Mr Sandiyao Sebastian (1993), a lecturer from the Pedagogy and Psychology Education Department, University Malaya has estimated that 3%-5% from the children who went to school can be categorised as children who have dyslexia and these children possess normal intelligence. According to him, dyslexics have problems with either reading, writing or learning other languages, calculating or remembering certain things. Dyslexics also sometimes fail to read properly where they skip sentences or even mispronounced certain letters that look different to them.

A more details research on dyslexia which was conducted either in a normal condition or clinically was done by J.P Gupta (1993). In his research paper, he explained levels of dyslexia that occur in the Malaysia Science University Hospital, Kelantan. He has brought forward the role of the education system and suggested a few concrete steps to be taken in controlling dyslexia. In Malaysia, there are around 2 million cases of dyslexia and this number is worrying. The findings of the research showed that although the performance reaches 70% in the automatic skills, the auditory skills, and graphical skills, they will show poor performance in graph-phonemic for both reading and writing skills. The main problem of dyslexia in Malaysia is the failure of the children in combining 'grapheme' and 'phoneme'.

## **Methodology**

This study was conducted in Taman Maluri Secondary School, Cheras Kuala Lumpur. It involved Year 2 and 3 students who are in their Dyslexia Special Programme. The focus of this study was on the language learning and the analysis of spelling errors which the concern was on visual and auditory dyslexics. To the visual dyslexics the language learning in the aspect of reading was focusing on problems in getting to know letters and reading letters in a wrong direction. Whereas, to the auditory dyslexics the problem was focusing on spelling-it-right which the students fail to perform well and they committed to exchanging from one letter to another letters. This research was conducted through the initial observation.

The Levinson Syndrome Theory 1994 was used in the study. Referring to Levinson, dyslexics can be divided into three; dyslexia in reading, writing and arithmetic. But this study was only focusing on dyslexia in reading. In this syndrome, dyslexics are said failed to balance their memory to memorise letters with sentences regardless visual or auditory. Thus, dyslexics tried

their best to memorise the shape of the letters, its sounds and the combination of repeating words because they easily forget. According to Levinson again, there are seven mechanisms of dyslexic errors in reading; (i) Transferring (ii) Inserting (iii) Exchanging (iv) Deleting (v) Evaporating (vi) Reflecting (vii) Predicting

### **Findings of the Study**

*Objective: To analyse errors in spelling through Bahasa Melayu Diagnostic Test based on the Levinson Theory 1994*

The diagnostic test was used to fulfil the objective. The test had been administered on 4 subjects who have problems in capturing visuals towards the symbols of letters, weak in words pronunciation, have problems in capturing sounds (auditory) where they couldn't repeat what they heard accurately.

#### **Sample 1: Jayden Theng (Year 3)**

In the aspect of reading, he could read but he needed special observation. He just couldn't concentrate when reading. Hence, his fluency in reading only happened to the two-syllable word. For example [sa+ya] was read accurately but not [su+ka+re+la]. Looking at the two-syllable word, he couldn't differentiate the two pronunciations of the different phonemes. For example the word [beca] was read as [baca]. This happened because he was not familiar with the phoneme /e/ and the sound was mistakenly replaced with /a/. This situation will invite to a huge change of meaning. He has committed to the errors of deleting, exchanging and predicting/for fun. From the pronunciation of double-words he will drop the first syllable word, such as 'kura-kura' becomes 'kura', 'rama-rama' becomes 'rama' and 'gula-gula' becomes 'gula'. While the test was tested on him, the researcher found out that he couldn't even read all double-words properly. He was also confused in differentiating 2 different letters like l (i-small letter) with l (L-capital letter). He spelled 'lebih' with 'iebih'. He has committed to the exchanging of letters while spelling it. Among other errors are 'lemas' - '/i/emas'; 'lebah' - '/i/ebas'; 'lelaki' - '/i/elaki; 'letak' - '/i/etak; and 'lemah' - '/i/emah. There were also words that he read and spelled based on his own prediction and he did it on purpose, such as 'lampu' was read as 'lembu', 'merdeka' was spelled as 'mereka', 'gelanggang' - 'gelang', 'pandai' as 'panda', 'perbarisan' as 'pambaris'. All in all, he could read although he was not as fluent as the normal children.

#### **Sample 2: Maisara Fateha Izwan (Year 3)**

She has a problem of not being able to remember letters in words in both visual and phonetics. She was trying her best to memorise the shape of the letters, sounds and the words combination many times because she easily forgets. These are the examples of words that she couldn't see its visuals and phonetics clearly a/ and /u/, /m/ and /n/, as well as /h/ and /l/. This

situation creates problems to these words 'majlis'-'mujulis'; 'awam'-'awan'; and 'hari'-'lari'. The insertion of letter also happened to the word 'padang' when it becomes 'pandang'. During the reading process, she couldn't recall letters, words and even different sentences. Due to her eyes couldn't capture the reading materials, she read by skipping lines. For example 'Undangan ke Majlis Hari Lahir' was read as 'Undangan ke Mujulis Lahir'. There were also other spelling errors made by her like 'comel'-'come'; 'putih hitam'-'puteh-itam'; 'bermain'-'berma'; 'sofa'-'sopha'; 'dan'-'ban'; dan 'pusing-pusing'-'puseng-puseng'. There were 6 errors in predicting, 4 in deletion and 5 in insertion.

### **Sample 3: Azhad (Year 3)**

Based on the diagnostic test conducted, the problems identified are errors in spelling. He failed to cover the pronunciation of /e/ and /æ/ accurately. The example of words are geng'-'gěng' and 'sedang'-'sědang'. Meanwhile, during the reading test he often delayed in uttering the suffix -lah. Like in these words 'lihatlah'-'lihat...lah'; 'terpaksalah'-'terpaksa...lah'; 'ialah'-'ia...lah'; and 'ingatlah'-'ingat...lah'. The reading errors that he committed also are among the errors listed in the Levinson due to the difficulties in stemming the word. There were also words that he read in a wrong direction. They are b-'d'; and 'u'-'o'. Basically he made errors in these words 'menabung'-'menadong'; 'tujuh'-'tujoh'; 'sepuluh'-'sepuloh'; and 'wang'-'yang'; 'ikan goreng'-'ikan goring'; and 'nasi goreng'-'nasi goring'.

### **Sample 4: Fang Yee (Year 3)**

Among the spellings she was confused in her reading were la'-'la'; 'tiap-tiap'-'tiba-tiba'; 'rakannya'-'rakan-rakannya'; 'taman'-'tamam'; 'bank'-'beng', 'bukan'-'bukam'; 'makan'-'makam'; 'april'-'apirl'; 'julai'-'jully'; 'mei'-'may'. She also shared the same characteristics with the sample 1 where she cut the double-words down; 'gula-gula' becomes 'gula' and 'kura-kura' becomes 'kura'. Overall, she has all the characteristics of a dyslexic mentioned by Levinson in the aspect of reading. She often committed to exchanging, reflecting, deleting, inserting and predicting. Other than that she was also suffering from not being able to focus. Last but not least, her bahasa Melayu was influenced by her knowledge in English language.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the reading and spelling diagnostic test, it was found that all the samples have these dyslexia criteria. They did many errors based on what discussed by Levinson. The error of letter replacement was made by all samples. Based on the data gathered, among the words the letter was replaced were 'beca' was replaced by 'baca'; word 'hari' with 'lari'; and word 'awamu' with 'awan', whereas the error in guessing and reversing were made by only 3 samples. Among the errors of guessing made by the samples were 'lampu' was read and became 'lembu'; and word 'merdeka' was spelled as 'mereka' and errors in dropping letters were done by 2 samples in the words 'comel' was replaced with 'come' and 'hitam' with 'itam'. Nevertheless, as dyslexics who showed signs of just recovering from the problems of reading, speaking and reading intonation,

they were not just as they were expected. To enhance the process of dyslexic learning, the Special Education System should be able to teach these children by focusing on their other skills so that these dyslexic children can continue doing their activities like other normal children.

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