LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AUSTRALIA

2023 RTI Conference Handouts

Sunday 29th Oct

***Session 4* - Identifying Common Types of Reading Difficulties by Professor Emerita Louise Spear-Swerling**

Thanking all our Gold Sponsors…

Decodable Readers Australia

MultiLit

Training 24/7 online teacher training

PLD™

Learning Difficulties Australia

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research.

www.ldaustralia.org

enquiries@ldaustralia.org

@LearningDifficultiesAustralia

@LD_Australia

1

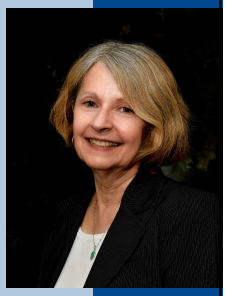
Louise Spear-Swerling

Bio:

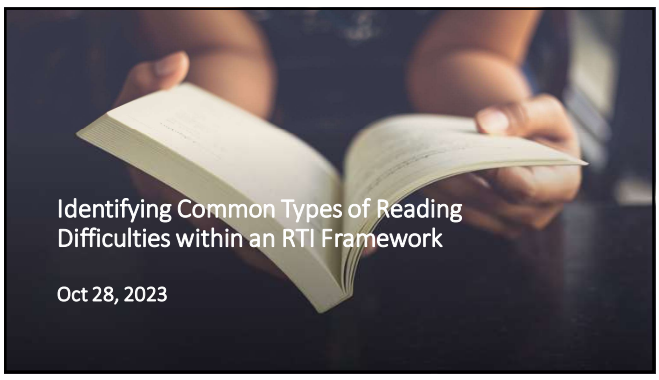
Ph.D., Cognitive Psychology
Ms., Special Education, Concentration in Learning Disabilities

Taught in public schools as a special educator; prepared both general and special educators to teach reading for nearly four decades; has published empirical studies of teacher knowledge in reading, as well as four books on RTI, different types of reading difficulties, and Structured Literacy approaches to reading intervention. Her latest book is *The Structured Literacy Planner: Designing Interventions for Common Reading Difficulties, Grades 1 – 9*, to be published by Guilford Press in spring 2024.

Currently she continues to consult widely for K-12 school districts, mostly on students with severe or persistent literacy difficulties and how to help them.



2



Identifying Common Types of Reading Difficulties within an RTI Framework

Oct 28, 2023

3

"RTI is great IN THEORY."

--Study participant responding to a question soliciting Connecticut teachers' opinions about RTI, circa 2012

4

Most teachers in the study:

- Had favorable views of RTI overall but noted many logistical challenges
- Lack of adequate support, instructional materials, time
- Most participants thought that RTI had clear benefits for the students

5

Goals of this presentation:

- Review the features and advantages of RTI (MTSS) models
- Discuss common poor reader profiles (types of reading difficulties) and their value
- Explain some ways that the profiles can be identified within an RTI framework
- Provide some specific case examples of students with different profiles and different intervention needs

6

Though often challenging for schools to implement well, RTI (MTSS) practices are currently the most promising way for schools to prevent or ameliorate reading difficulties.

(Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2019)

7

Some key features of RTI (MTSS) approaches:

- Universal screening and progress monitoring
- Provision of opportunities for intervention as part of the general education system
- Greater levels of intensity for greater levels of student need
- Data-based decision-making, both at the level of individual children and at a systemic level
- Strong attention to the quality of Tier I (core general education) instruction

8

Some reasons why RTI practices are important:

- Without attention to core instruction, the reading program may inadvertently manufacture reading problems in a subset of students
- Without universal screening, some students' problems will be overlooked until they are relatively severe and more difficult to address

9

Why RTI practices are important (continued):

- If special education is seen as the only avenue for intervention, some poor readers will be inappropriately identified with disabilities simply to obtain extra help
- This increases the strain on limited resources for students with disabilities

10

Reading problems are multifaceted, with 3 broad patterns of reading difficulties.

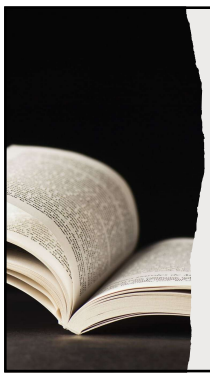
The 3 patterns can be understood in relation to the Simple View of Reading (SVR; Hoover & Gough, 1990).

11

The SVR says that good reading comprehension depends on <u>both</u>:

- Good word recognition (including, e.g., phoneme awareness, letter-sound knowledge, phonological decoding skills, structural analysis, automatic word recognition)
- Good oral language comprehension (including, e.g., vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, syntactic competence)

12



Three profiles (patterns) of reading difficulties are common:

- **Specific word recognition difficulties (SWRD)** – reading problem is specific to word reading/decoding
- **Specific reading comprehension difficulties (SRCD)** – reading problem is specific to language comp/reading comprehension
- **Mixed reading difficulties (MRD)** – reading problem involves both word reading and language comprehension

13

PROFILE	Word Recognition/ Decoding	Vocabulary/Oral Language Comprehension
Specific Word Recognition Difficulties	Below average	Average or better
Specific Reading Comprehension Difficulties	Average or better	Below average
Mixed Reading Difficulties	Below average	Below average

14

The patterns differ in relation to:

- Screening
- Progress-monitoring
- Intervention
- Assistive technology

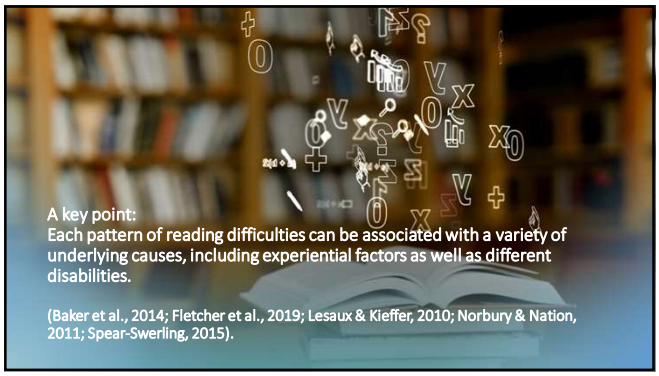
(Aaron et al., 2008; Capin et al., 2021; Cardenas-Hagan, 2020; Catts et al., 2012; Erickson, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2019; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010; Norbury & Nation, 2011; Spear-Swerling, 2015)

15

The patterns differ in relation to:

- Screening
- Progress-monitoring
- Intervention – identifying the pattern is a valuable starting point for planning interventions
- Assistive technology

16



17

Details about each pattern

18

Students with specific word recognition difficulties (SWRD) have:

- At least average listening comprehension and oral vocabulary knowledge
- Poor word reading that often involves poor phonological skills (e.g., poor phoneme awareness [PA])
- Fluency problems involving inaccurate or non-automatic word reading
- Reading difficulties that usually emerge early (i.e. K-4)
- Poor reading comprehension and poor reading fluency related entirely to problems in word reading

19

Students with SWRD benefit from:

- Highly systematic, explicit, synthetic-phonics interventions
- Intervention in phonemic awareness, if needed
- Applying their developing decoding skills in appropriate texts (decodables early on)
- Oral reading of text with a knowledgeable teacher who provides appropriate feedback
- Supplemental fluency intervention (if student reads slowly even at instructional level, eg., Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004)

20

Screening and progress-monitoring assessments useful for SWRD:

- Phonemic awareness measures
- Measures of grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) knowledge
- Curriculum-based measures (CBMs) for phonemic awareness, nonsense word reading, oral reading fluency (accuracy and rate)
- Spelling assessments with appropriate scoring (e.g., of error patterns)
- Criterion-referenced measures of decoding and spelling

21

Example: William (Fall of Grade 3)

- Experienced reading difficulties beginning in kindergarten and Grade 1
- Early difficulties centered on learning letter sounds, phoneme blending, and decoding
- Phoneme awareness skills have improved greatly with intervention
- In Grade 3 William still has serious reading difficulties involving labored, inaccurate decoding, poor fluency, and poor spelling

22

William: Grade 3 screening assessments

- DIBELS ORF, accuracy: below benchmark
- DIBELS ORF, rate: well below benchmark
- DIBELS Maze Reading Comprehension: well below benchmark
- **Remember** that Maze performance COULD be due to poor decoding/poor fluency and not poor language comprehension
- On a criterion-referenced decoding measure with different word categories, William mastered only closed (short vowel) and silent e categories
- Particular difficulty reading nonsense words

23

William: Grade 3 screening assessments

- DIBELS ORF, accuracy: below benchmark
- DIBELS ORF, rate: well below benchmark
- DIBELS Maze Reading Comprehension: well below benchmark
- **Remember** that Maze performance COULD be due to poor decoding/poor fluency and not poor language comprehension
- On a criterion-referenced decoding measure with different word categories, William mastered only closed (short vowel) and silent e categories (below grade expectations)
- Particular difficulty reading nonsense words

24

William (Grade 3, continued)

- Has always done very well in teacher read-alouds, class discussions
- Reading comprehension is good if he can decode the text well
- Math (both untimed calculation skills and problem-solving) is solidly grade-appropriate
- Has good ideas and vocabulary for writing, but poor spelling creates a drain on his motivation to write

25

Typical example of William's reading comprehension problems on an oral reading inventory:

- Grade 2 passage: Labored reading, many decoding errors (below instructional level)
- He misread the word *maple* in the sentence, *Jack found leaves from some maple trees during his walk.*
- When asked the question, "What kind of leaves did Jack find?" William could not answer
- When the passage was read aloud to him, William answered 100% of comprehension questions correctly

26

William's standardized test scores (Grade 3):

(WIAT-III average range = 85 to 115)

- **WIAT Word Reading = 83**
- **WIAT Pseudoword Decoding = 78**
- **WIAT ORF (accuracy) = 75**
- **WIAT ORF (rate) = 70**
- **WIAT Spelling = 80**
- **WIAT Reading Comprehension = 89**
- **WIAT Receptive Vocabulary = 106**
- **WIAT Oral Discourse Comp = 101**
- **IRI Listening Comp = Grade 3**
- **IRI Reading Comp (ins level) = Grade 1**

27

William's reading problem involves SWRD because:

- He has below-average word reading coupled with solidly average oral vocabulary and language comprehension
- His problems in reading comprehension and reading fluency are clearly associated with word reading and NOT with language comprehension

28

William's main intervention needs:

- Highly explicit, systematic synthetic phonics intervention, including spelling intervention
- Application of decoding skills in reading instructional-level, decodable text
- Oral text reading with a knowledgeable teacher who provides appropriate scaffolding (to ensure accuracy and build fluency)
- Additional fluency-building activities such as repeated readings of text
- Vocabulary and comprehension development can occur mostly in Tier 1 (general education), with accommodations as needed

29

Students with specific reading comprehension difficulties (SRCD):

- Have at least average word recognition and phonological skills
- Have reading comprehension problems that frequently involve listening comprehension and/or oral vocabulary knowledge
- Language often not low enough for eligibility for speech/language services
- Other factors besides language (e.g., attention, executive function [EF]) may also influence comprehension

30

Students with specific reading comprehension difficulties (SRCD) (continued):

- Have no history of early PA or decoding problems
- Any fluency problems are based in language (or attention/EF), not single word reading
- Reading comprehension difficulties often, though not always, emerge later in schooling (around Grade 4 and up)

31

Students with SRCD benefit from:

- Explicit intervention in the area(s) of comprehension in which they are weak (e.g., vocabulary, background knowledge, inferencing, perspective-taking)
- Integration of oral language interventions with reading comprehension interventions (e.g., Clarke et al., 2010)
- Texts appropriate to their language comprehension levels (esp. if far behind)
- If needed, explicit teaching of EF strategies in the context of reading and writing (e.g., explicit teaching about text structure, organizational strategies for writing; Cartwright, 2015)

32

Screening and progress-monitoring assessments useful for SRCD

- Oral language measures (e.g., oral vocabulary, listening comprehension)
- Reading comprehension CBMs (usually maze format)
- Tier 1 reading comprehension assessments
- Embedded comprehension checks (on curriculum tasks)

33

Example: Marcus (End of Grade 5)

- Marcus consistently met benchmark for PA screening assessments in Grades K – 1
- Consistently met ORF benchmarks in Grades 1 – 4, for both accuracy and rate
- Language comprehension and reading comprehension are weaknesses
- Similar difficulties in both listening and reading
- Difficulties most often involve vocabulary and background knowledge
- More reading comprehension difficulties as grade expectations increase

34

Marcus: Grade 5 screening assessments

- DIBELS ORF, accuracy: met benchmark
- DIBELS ORF, rate: met benchmark
- DIBELS Maze Reading Comprehension: well below benchmark
- On Maze, Marcus completed many items but made many errors
- Informal spelling screening: met benchmark
- Consistently represented sounds in words, in the correct sequence
- Spelling errors typically involved spelling generalizations (e.g., begining for beginning) or morphology (e.g., colinist for colonist) and were grade-appropriate
- Informal listening comprehension assessment: below grade expectations

35

Marcus: Grade 5 screening assessments

- DIBELS ORF, accuracy: met benchmark
- DIBELS ORF, rate: met benchmark
- DIBELS Maze Reading Comprehension: well below benchmark
- On Maze, Marcus completed many items but made a lot of errors
- Informal spelling screening: met benchmark
- Consistently represented sounds in words, in the correct sequence
- Spelling errors typically involved spelling generalizations (e.g., begining for beginning) or morphology (e.g., colanist for colonist) and were generally grade-appropriate
- Informal listening comprehension assessment: below grade expectations

36

Marcus's test scores (End Grade 5):
(WJ-IV average range = 90 to 110)

- WJ Word Identification = 95
- WJ Word Attack = 108
- WJ Spelling = 105
- WJ Sentence Reading Fluency = 94
- WJ Passage Comprehension = 80
- WJ Picture Vocabulary = 74
- WJ Oral Comprehension = 84
- IRI Listening Comp = Grade 3
- IRI Reading Comp (ins level) = Grade 3

37

Marcus's reading problem involves SRCD because:

- He has grade-appropriate word-reading skills combined with weaknesses in broad oral language/reading comprehension
- Within the area of language comprehension, vocabulary and background knowledge appear to be core weaknesses
- Reading comprehension difficulties are associated entirely with language comprehension, not inaccurate or nonautomatic word reading

38

Marcus's main intervention needs:

- Explicitly teach vocabulary and background knowledge needed for academic texts
- Indirect approaches to vocabulary instruction (i.e., use of context cues to determine meanings of words) also useful
- Use student-friendly definitions
- Use examples and non-examples of new vocabulary words
- Teach morphology to improve vocabulary knowledge, which will also benefit his word reading and spelling

39

Students with mixed reading difficulties (MRD)

- Have problems in both areas of the SVR, word recognition/decoding and oral language comprehension
- Language comprehension not necessarily low enough for S/L services
- As in SRCD, other variables such as attention and EF can also influence comprehension performance

40

Students with mixed reading difficulties (MRD, continued):

- Have poor reading comprehension that is only partly accounted for by poor decoding (e.g., poor comprehension may occur even in text the child decodes well)
- Fluency frequently is poor due to problems in both word reading and language comprehension
- Difficulties tend to emerge early in schooling (K-4) due to problems with decoding, but may persist even after remediation of decoding skills

41

Students with MRD benefit from:

- A combination of systematic phonics intervention and intervention involving the specific areas of comprehension in which they are weak
- Opportunities to apply their developing decoding skills in appropriate texts and with appropriate teacher feedback (like students with SWRD)
- Integration of oral language interventions with reading comprehension interventions (like students with SRCD)
- Instructional strategies for attention and EF, if these areas are relevant

42

On screening and progress-monitoring assessments, students with MRD will often show a combination of weaknesses in both phonological/word reading skills, and language comprehension.

43

Example: Sofia (End of Grade 4)

- Native Spanish speaker, immigrated to U.S. in Grade 1
- Conversational English is very good
- No history of language delay in Spanish
- Information about schooling prior to immigration is limited but there does not appear to be a history of literacy difficulties in Spanish
- Has received ESL services (not bilingual education); ESL now discontinued

44

Sofia (Grade 4, contd)

- Ability to read common words is good
- Sometimes has difficulty decoding long, complex words
- Vocabulary weaknesses in English impact her comprehension in classroom discussions as well as during reading
- Syntax errors in her writing are consistent with Spanish syntax (e.g., use of double negatives, flexible word order)
- Some language-related (e.g., vocabulary) difficulties in math problem solving

45

Sofia: Grade 4 screening assessments

- DIBELS ORF, accuracy: below benchmark
- DIBELS ORF, rate: below benchmark
- DIBELS Maze: well below benchmark
- Spelling screening assessment: below benchmark
- Made a variety of spelling errors, including phonological errors, primarily in long words
- Informal listening comprehension assessment: below grade expectations

46

Sofia: Grade 4 screening assessments

- DIBELS ORF, accuracy: below benchmark
- DIBELS ORF, rate: below benchmark
- DIBELS Maze: well below benchmark
- Spelling screening assessment: below benchmark
- Made a variety of spelling errors, including phonological errors, primarily in long words
- Informal listening comprehension assessment: below grade expectations

47

Sofia's test scores (End Grade 4):
(WIAT-III average range = 85 to 115)

- **WIAT Word Reading = 83**
- **WIAT Pseudoword Decoding = 90**
- **WIAT Spelling = 84**
- **WIAT Oral Reading Fluency = 82**
- **WIAT Reading Comprehension = 76**
- **WIAT Receptive Vocabulary = 79**
- **WIAT Oral Discourse Comp = 84**
- **IRI Listening Comp = Grade 3**
- **IRI Reading Comp (ins level) = Grade 2**

48

Sofia has mixed reading difficulties (MRD) because:

- She has difficulties in both word reading and oral vocabulary/oral language comprehension
- Good conversational English does not mean a student has the academic English needed to be successful in school
- Problems with English academic language and vocabulary are common in ELs
- Criterion-referenced testing supports teacher observations that her decoding problems mainly involve multisyllabic words
- Sofia is also responding well to intervention and does not appear to have a disability

49

What are Sofia's intervention needs in reading?

- Instruction in structural and morphemic analysis of multisyllabic words
- Teach her how to recognize common roots, prefixes, suffixes, and to apply this knowledge in reading words
- Integrate spelling and vocabulary instruction with word reading(e.g., *geo* = earth, *astro* = star)
- This can benefit her decoding as well as her spelling and vocabulary knowledge
- Try to exploit cognate knowledge in instruction (e.g., *delicioso*/delicious)

50

Sofia's intervention needs (continued)

- Directly teach other vocabulary words and academic language central to understanding texts used at her level
- Address confusions with English syntax and grammar in writing
- Anticipate and address possible problems with English syntax and grammar in reading (e.g., use of *–ing* form as a subject as in *Smoking is bad for you* vs. *To smoke is bad for you;* omissions of *that* as a relative pronoun as in *The book he read was excellent*); see Swan & Smith, 2001

51

In screening and progress monitoring, also consider whether a student has indicators of risk such as:

- A family history of language/learning disabilities or ADHD
- A developmental history of language delay
- A lengthy history of prior intervention (e.g., a student who repeatedly appears to have caught up to peers, only to fall behind again later)

(Zipoli & Merritt, 2017)

52

Summing up

- RTI (MTSS) practices are a promising way to prevent or ameliorate reading problems
- Key RTI practices include universal screening, early identification, provision of intervention as part of the general education system, and use of data to improve core instruction as well as individual student interventions
- Common types (profiles) of reading difficulties involve specific word recognition difficulties (SWRD), specific reading comprehension difficulties (SRCD), and mixed reading difficulties (MRD)
- Identification of these common profiles provides a valuable starting point for planning reading interventions in the context of RTI practices

53

Thank you!

SPEARSWERLL1@southernct.edu

54

References

Aaron, P. G., Joshi, M., Gooden, R., & Bentum, K. (2008). Diagnosis and treatment of reading disabilities based on the component model of reading: An alternative to the discrepancy model of LD. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 41, 67-84.

Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., Gersten, R., Haymond, K., Kieffer, M. J., Linan-Thompson, S., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school (NCEE 2014-4012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from the NCEE website: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications_reviews.aspx.

Brown-Chidsey, R., & Steege, M. (2005). Response to intervention: Principles and strategies for effective practice. New York: Guilford.

Capin, P., Cho, E., Miciak, J., Roberts, G., & Vaughn, S. (2021). Examining the reading and cognitive profiles of students with significant reading comprehension difficulties. Learning Disabilities Quarterly, 44, 183 – 196.

Cardenas-Hagan, E. (2020). Teaching literacy skills to English learners. In E. Cardenas-Hagan, (editor). Literacy foundations for English learners: A comprehensive guide to evidence-based instruction (pp. 3-30). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Carnine, D. W., Silbert, J., Kame'enui, E. J., & Tarver, S. G. (2009). Direct instruction reading, 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Cartwright, K. B. (2015). Executive skills and reading comprehension: A guide for educators. New York: Guilford Press.

Catts, H.W., Compton, D.L., Tomblin, J.B., & Bridges, M.S. (2012). Prevalence and nature of late-emerging poor readers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 104, 166-181.

Clarke, P. J., Truelove, E., Hulme, C., & Snowling, M. J. (2014). Developing reading comprehension. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Erickson, K. (2013). Reading and assistive technology: Why the reader's profile matters. Perspectives on Language and Literacy, 39, 11-14.

Fletcher, J. M., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. A. (2019). Learning disabilities: From identification to intervention, 2nd edition. New York: Guilford Press.

Hoover, W. A., & Gough, P. B. (1990). The simple view of reading. Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 2,127-160.

Lesaux, N. K., & Kieffer, M. J. (2010). Exploring sources of reading comprehension difficulties among language minority learners and their classmates in early adolescence. American Educational Research Journal, 47, 596-632.

Norbury, C., & Nation, K. (2011). Understanding variability in reading comprehension in adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: Interactions with language status and decoding skill. Scientific Studies of Reading, 15, 191-210.

Spear-Swerling, L. (2015). The power of RTI and reading profiles: A blueprint for solving reading problems. Baltimore, MD: Brooks Publishing.

Swan, M., & Smith, B., Eds. (2001). Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems, 2nd edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zipoli, R. P., & Merritt, D. D. (2017). Risk of reading difficulty among students with a history of speech or language impairment: Implications for Student Support Teams. Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 61, 95-103.

55