

# **Researching Dyslexia in Multilingual Settings**

## COMMUNICATION DISORDERS ACROSS LANGUAGES

**Series Editors:** Dr Nicole Müller and Dr Martin Ball, *University of Louisiana at Lafayette, USA*

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# **Researching Dyslexia in Multilingual Settings**

Diverse Perspectives

Edited by

**Deirdre Martin**

**MULTILINGUAL MATTERS**

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## *To Leo and Olivia with love*

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# Introduction

Deirdre Martin

## Introduction

When planning this volume, I considered whether the notion ‘dyslexia in multilingual settings’ formed a field of study. I mean by a ‘field of study’ a body of knowledge that is constituted by sets of nested and symbiotic relationships across concepts, theories and analytical frameworks. The relationship between higher-order conceptualisations of knowledge and the practices of enquiry that create the knowledge constitutes the ‘DNA’ of the discipline. My question is: what do the various disciplines involved in studying dyslexia share with regard to conceptualisations of dyslexia phenomena? Do they share analytical frameworks for the interpretation of data, and if so how? Strong contenders as field-of-study candidates would be the disciplines of educational linguistics, cognitive and neurological psychology, as well as sociolinguistics and anthropology. Yet they each have distinct, and arguably incommensurable, ways of generating and interpreting evidence. Positivist approaches engage technical skills in their methods of data collection and analysis, while ethnographers have practices of enquiry that are interpretative and dialogic in nature.

Analyses of the nature of literacy studies through a model of overlapping disciplines (e.g. Rassool, 2002) often omit references to literacy difficulties/dyslexia and multilingualism. The few existing studies of dyslexia in multilingual contexts illustrate a ‘bounded’ approach to this area, where discipline structures and analytical frameworks make it difficult for theoreticians to engage with each other (for discussion see Martin, 2009). This chapter discusses an agenda for further research with a view to moving towards more inclusive interdisciplinary study. Bearing in mind that there is an epistemological purpose to educational research, namely to contribute to our knowledge of teaching and learning in practice (Hymes, 1981/1968, in Van der Aa & Blommaert, 2011: 5), the chapters in this volume reflect