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# Syllabic Complexity, Metalinguistic Deficits and Reading in Developmental Dyslexia

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## ABSTRACT

*A metalinguistic deficit in the awareness of phonological aspects of spoken language has long been assumed to be the single most important cause of reading failure among developmental dyslexics. Majority of this proposal's empirical support has come from examination of reading problems in irregular language like English and it's relation to the alphabetic principle of reading acquisition. Results discussed in this paper tests this hypothesis among a group of Oriya speaking developmental dyslexics on different metaphonological tasks and a set of reading tasks varying in syllabic complexity. Increase in the syllabic length of words also increases the phonological complexity of words thus eliciting a hierarchical of word reading in dyslexics. Compared to real words such deficits could be even more serious for reading of non-words in dyslexics. The results demonstrate how length of words could be a serious problem for developmental dyslexics for efficient decoding along with their metaphonological deficits. Results are interpreted towards a possible 'syllabic' awareness preexisting in Oriya speaking developmental dyslexics compared to 'phonemic' awareness within the general theoretical framework which considers 'syllables' as fundamental units of speech planning, production and reading.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Developmental dyslexia: Biological and linguistic deficits*

The study of developmental dyslexia is significant for its linguistic implications on the one hand and its relation to linguistic and cognitive constraints involved in the reading processes on the other. Dyslexia is