

# CoP on Hebrew Literacy and Dyslexia

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# CoP on Hebrew Literacy and Dyslexia

In Jewish educational settings, teachers and administrators are often faced with children who seem to have more than typical difficulty learning to read Hebrew. This CoP will attempt to address some of the following questions:

- ✚ How does one deal with the issues of teaching Hebrew reading to students with language-based learning disabilities such as dyslexia?
- ✚ Is there some rule of thumb to decide whether problems an individual child is experiencing are due to a specific language disability as opposed to more typical difficulties associated with second language acquisition and an unfamiliar orthography?
- ✚ Are there circumstances under which a teacher or administrator should advise parents NOT to have their child learn Hebrew?
- ✚ Are there costs/benefits to first-language literacy of learning to read a second language?

Each of these questions of course has to be answered on the individual level. Specifically, in each case one needs to ask the following broad question:

- ✚ How does this child's specific learning style and/or possible cognitive impairments impact on his/her ability to acquire a second language, and a new orthographic system?



Consider the following case:

An English dominant child with a diagnosis of dyslexia is learning to speak and read Spanish in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Here's an example of two words she might have to read simultaneously:

Language	Orthography	Phonology
English	<u>vivacious</u>	/vai-ve-shIs/
Spanish	<u>vivacidad</u>	/bi-ba-si-ðað/

Now consider the same 7<sup>th</sup> grader, studying for her bat-mitzvah.

Language	Orthography	Phonology
English	<u>vivacious</u>	/vai-ve-shIs/
Hebrew	וְחַיִּי	/vI-ħa-ye/



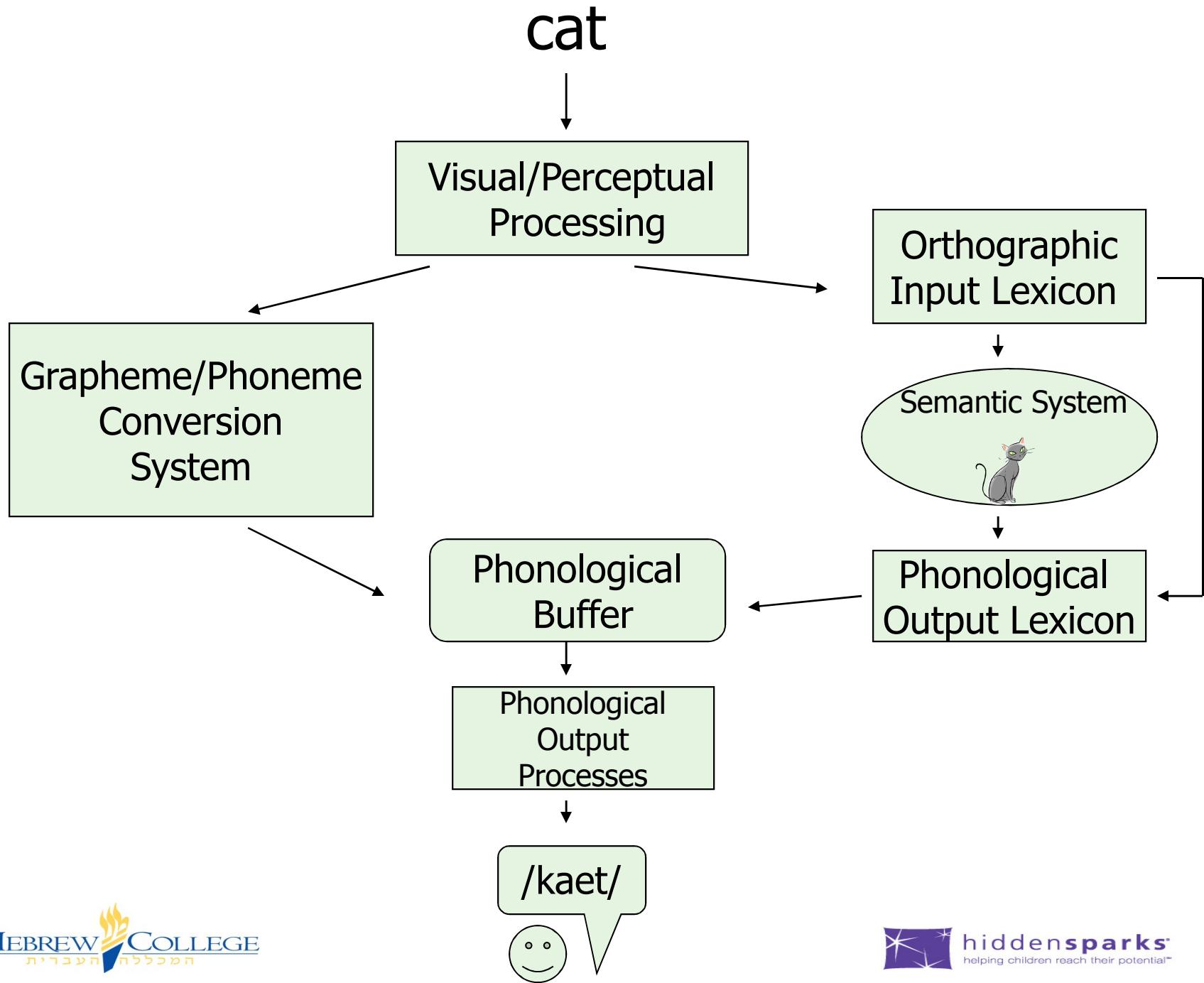
**What can we say about these two language learning scenarios?**

**In which case will learning to read be more difficult?**

**I would argue that even this last seemingly straightforward question can't be answered without at least two more pieces of the puzzle.**

- 1) We need a model of reading.**
- 2) We need a functional (cognitive) diagnosis of reading difficulties.**

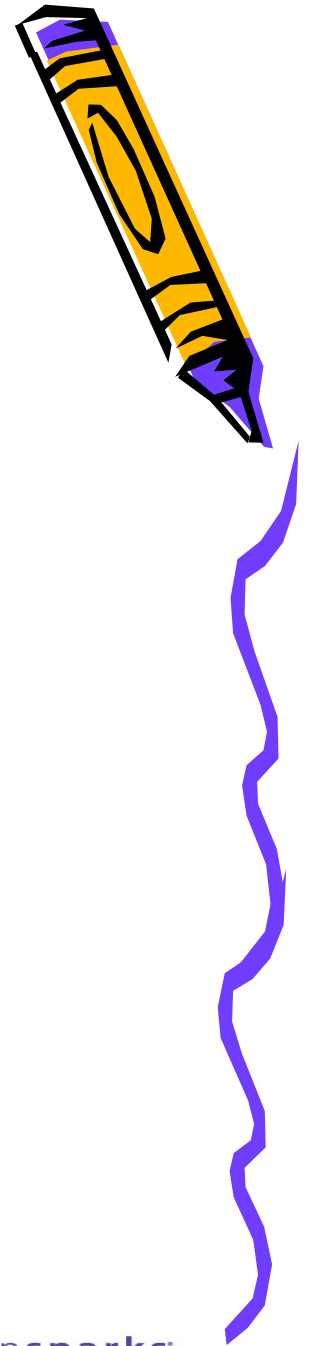




# Three types of words

- Regular – words whose pronunciation can be figured out by sounding out such as CAT
- Irregular – words whose pronunciation must be “known” such as YACHT
- Nonwords – pseudowords that you need to sound out such as BOKE

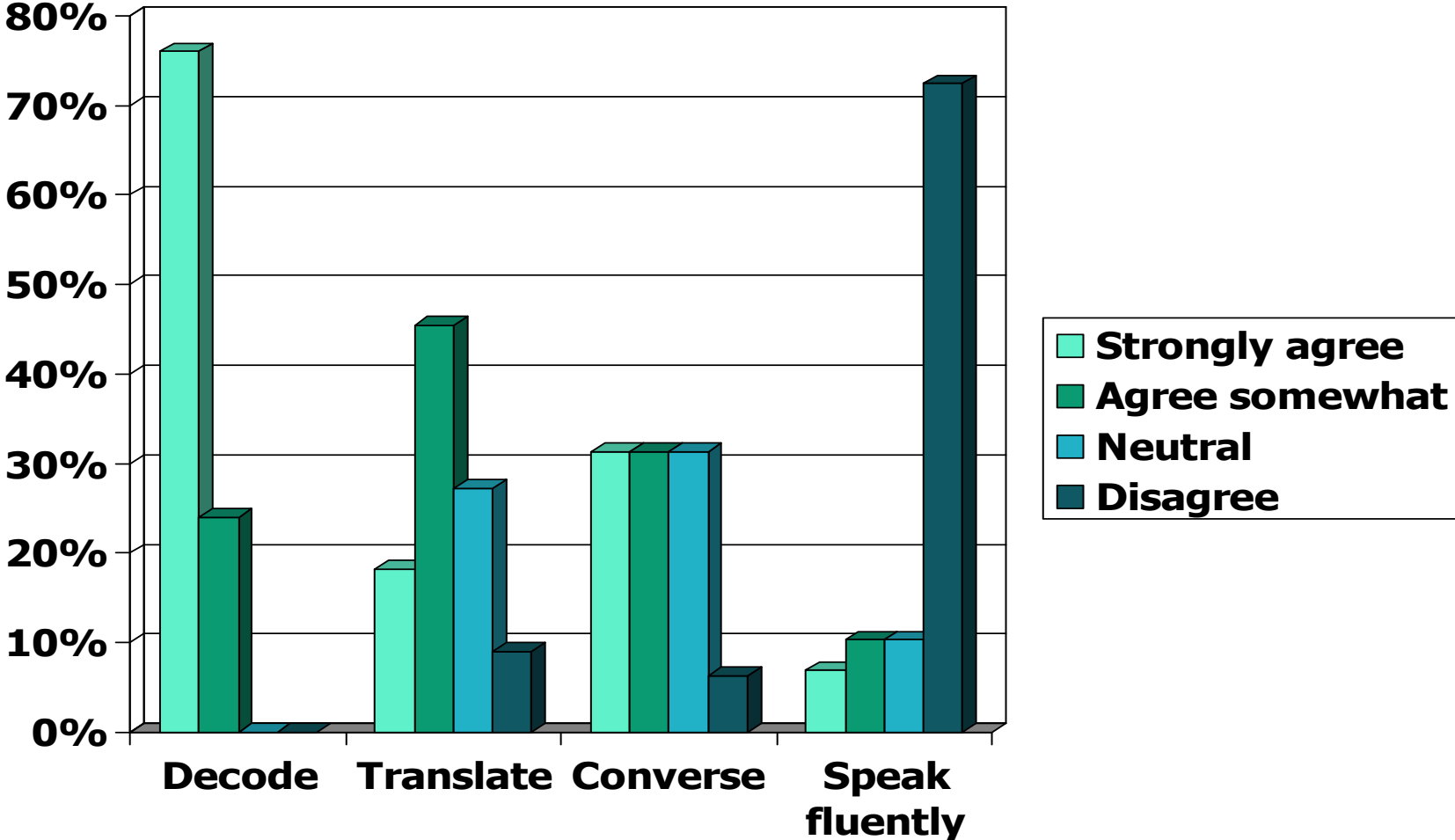
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# Questions about goals

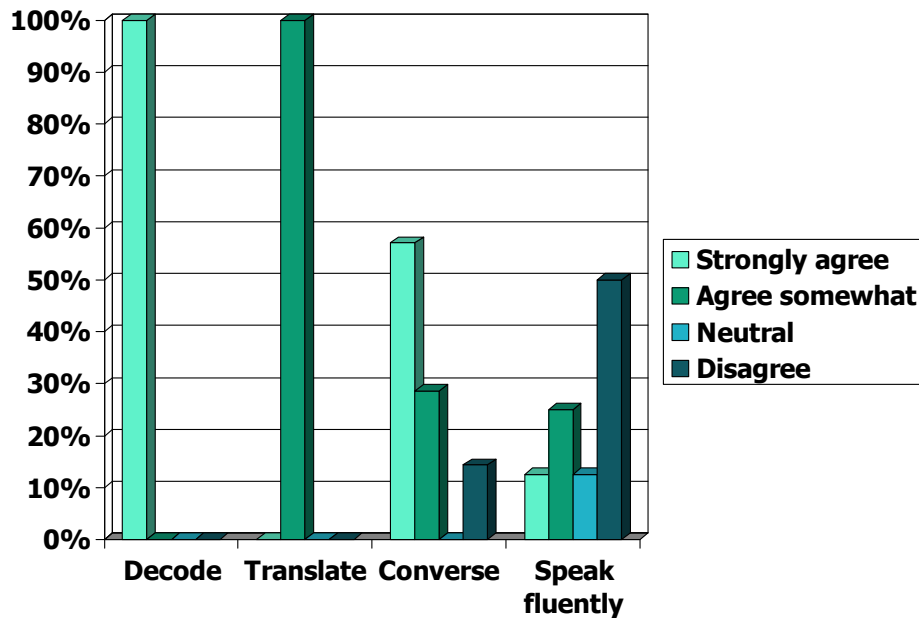
- 1) Students should be able to decode Hebrew fluently (**Decode**)
- 2) Students should be able to translate biblical or siddur texts with a dictionary (**Translate**)
- 3) Students should be able to carry on simple conversations in Modern Hebrew (**Converse**)
- 4) Students should be fluent speakers of Modern Hebrew (**Speak fluently**)

# Aggregate Responses across all Settings

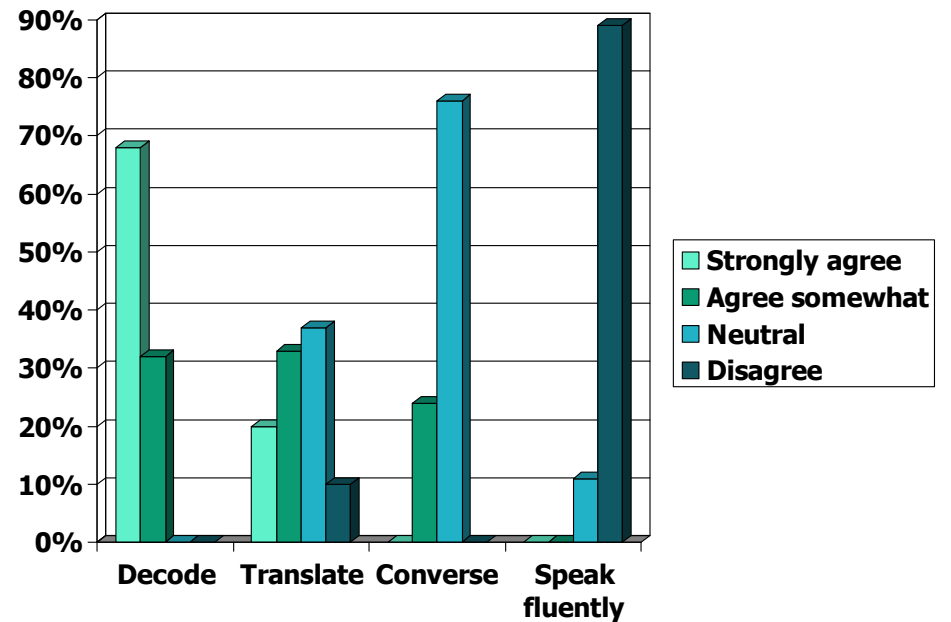


# Comparison of Day and Supplementary Schools

## Day Schools



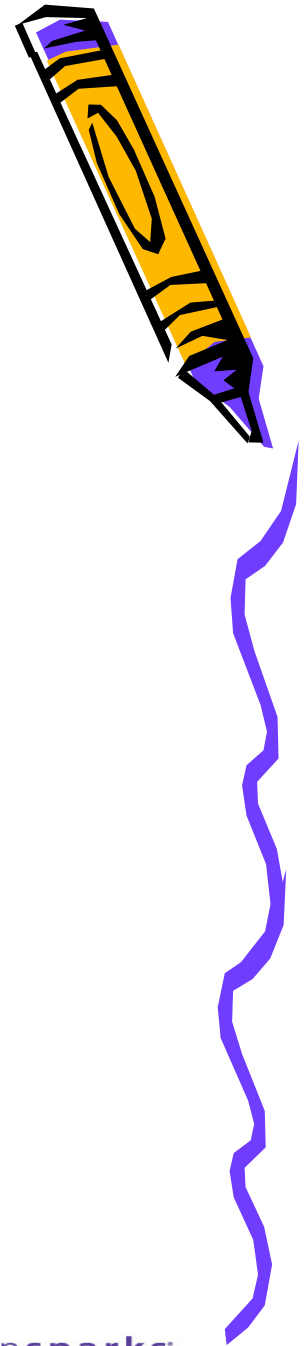
## Supplementary Schools



# Specific skills asked about

Rate the importance of the following to your Hebrew program.

- 1) Ability to read/decode vocalized Hebrew.
- 2) Ability to read unvocalized Hebrew.
- 3) Ability to write Hebrew in block letters.
- 4) Ability to write Hebrew in script letters.
- 5) Ability to comprehend Modern Hebrew.
- 6) Ability to speak Modern Hebrew.



## CoPs Virtual Sessions

Monday 4-5 PM (ET)

Jan. 11, 2010

Feb. 8, 2010

March 15, 2010