

**Coping with dyslexia:  
A transactional perspective**

Submitted by Theodosia Thoma, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of  
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# ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the phenomenon of coping with dyslexia based on the perspectives of six Greek dyslexic adults, as expressed by themselves. The research is concerned with exploration of the phenomenon by standing out from linear *reductionist approaches* - whether pathologising person-focused or exclusively environment-focused - as well as *interactionist approaches* that are simplistically additive. Instead, the study explores the phenomenon of coping with dyslexia from a *transactional perspective* which assumes that the factors of coping are strongly interrelated, mutually affected and altered by the transaction, suggesting a more complex and holistic understanding of the phenomenon. More specifically, the study considers the adequacy of Schlossberg's transitional 4 S System in explaining the experiences of individuals who cope with dyslexia.

To pursue the purposes of the study, a multiple case studies design was employed and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Findings suggest that for the participants, coping with dyslexia is not restricted simply to dealing with a set of difficulties, because the dyslexia 'situation' is a complex entity with a variety of aspects which relate directly or indirectly to literacy efficiency. Participants reported employing a complex and constantly evolving (across contexts and over time) system of different coping strategies. In fact, findings suggest that coping with dyslexia is not a stable entity but a transactional process which is characterised by fluidity, non-linear evolution and involvement of multiple factors. The 4 S System managed as an analytic tool to adequately identify and explain the complex transactionist relationships between the involved factors and the system of coping as a whole. Finally, in terms of effectiveness, findings suggested that there are no magic recipes. The usefulness of a coping or support activity seems to be an individualistic issue determined by contemporariness and so, a flexible approach towards coping with dyslexia is suggested.

*To my supervisors, Phil, Ruth and Hannah,  
to my parents, Konstantinos and Evaggelia,  
to my brother, Yannis  
and to Giorgos  
without whose endless support this thesis would not have been possible.*

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