



ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA IN THE MAINSTREAM ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

There is a lot of discrepancy between the student's ability and his/her performance level. That discrepancy or inconsistency is confirmation of the learning disability. Deficits in any area of information processing are noticeable in a range of specific learning disabilities. Dyslexia is one such specific learning disability. This study aims to explore the ways in which the dyslexic children can be accommodated effectively to learn English in a mainstream English language classroom in order to prevent their academic failure.

Keywords: *Dyslexia, English language classroom, accommodation.*

INTRODUCTION

A learning disability (LD) is a condition that interferes with a student's ability to receive, store, process, retrieve or use information. A learning disability, or learning disorder, is not a problem with intelligence. The child who has an LD often performs inconsistently. One day the child may be able to do something, and the next day the child may not be able to perform the same task. It is a hidden problem. We cannot tell that the child has an LD simply by looking at the child. LD manifests itself in many ways. The child may have a learning disability in one or two academic areas and excel in others. So it may appear the child is not trying to learn in the areas in which the child is having difficulty. LD affects the child's life in more areas than just learning. There can be difficulties in reading, spelling, writing, or in comprehension. Dyslexic children exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved in the understanding or in the use of spoken or written language. They can be helped by the right way of accommodation in the classroom to learn the language effectively. This study presents all possible ways of accommodation that can be provided in the mainstream English language classroom.

ACCOMMODATING A DYSLEXIC STUDENT

Teaching dyslexic students in a mainstream classroom is challenging, but we cannot say that it is impossible. Both the mainstream education and special education teachers need accommodations to promote the learning in and management of a class of mixed kind of learners. After identifying the strengths and difficulties of the children, it is most important to identify the right accommodation for each child to achieve goals. The given accommodations appear effective for helping a dyslexic student with learning problems to achieve in general education. Accommodation of a dyslexic student in the mainstream classroom can be done in the following three ways:

1. Accommodating dyslexic student by materials.
2. Accommodation involving interactive instruction.
3. Accommodation involving student performance.

ACCOMMODATING DYSLEXIC STUDENTS BY MATERIALS

This type of accommodation uses materials to enhance the learning of diverse students. And some of the material accommodations for dyslexic students are given below:

1. Use a tape recorder.

Dyslexia is related to reading disabilities. The tape recorder often is an excellent aid to overcome this difficulty. Directions, stories and some specific lessons can be recorded on tape, so that the student can play it again to clarify and understand the directions or concepts. To improve the reading skills, the student can also be asked to read the printed words silently as they are presented on the tape recorder at the same time.

2. Clarify or simplify written directions.

If the directions are written in paragraph form and many units of directions are given, the teacher could help the child by underlining or highlighting the important parts of the directions. But rewriting the directions in simple steps is often helpful.

For example,

Original directions: This exercise will show how well you can locate articles. Read each sentence. Look for the articles. When you locate an article, find it in the list of articles under each sentence. Then circle the number of your answer in the answer column.

Directions rewritten and simplified: Read each sentence and circle all the articles.

3. Present a small amount of work.

The teacher can tear pages from workbooks or copy the specific exercise to present small assignments to the dyslexic students who are concerned about the amount of work to be done. This technique prevents students from examining the entire workbook and becoming disheartened by the quantity of work to do. Also, the teacher can trim down the amount of work when it is superfluous to the dyslexic child.

For example, the teacher can request the student to complete only even-numbered or alternate exercises with stars by them. Or, the teacher can divide a worksheet into parts and ask the student to do a specific part and the parts can be given names according to

the child's areas of interest. A worksheet can be divided easily by drawing different-coloured lines across it and writing 'start' and 'stop' within each part.

4. Block out unrelated stimuli.

If a student is diverted by visual stimuli on a full worksheet or page, a blank sheet of paper can be used to cover the pictures on the sections of the page not being worked on at the time.

5. Highlight the necessary information.

If the child can read a text but has difficulty finding the necessary information, the teacher can mark this information with a highlighter to help the child to remember the essential information in the text.

6. Provide additional practical activities.

Most of the exercises and lessons do not provide enough practical activities for students with learning problems to attain mastery on selected skills. Teachers then must provide some extra material with practical activities. Recommended practical activities include instructional games, self-correcting materials, peer-teaching activities, and additional worksheets.

7. Provide students with a graphic diary.

An outline, chart, or blank web can be given to the child to fill in during the exercise. In a progressive chart, the child can mark his or her own progress and get enthused to do the next work. In the information chart, the child can relate information and this helps students to look for key information and see the relationships among concepts and information.

ACCOMMODATION INVOLVING INTERACTIVE INSTRUCTION

The task of gaining dyslexic children's attention and engaging them in a class for a period of time demands many teaching and managing skills. Teaching should offer successful learning experiences to a dyslexic child also, as the other normal children are experiencing. Some effective accommodations to develop successful interactive instructional activities in the classroom are given below:

1. Use plain teaching procedures.

Many teaching materials are not suitable for simple teaching procedures; in that case, the teacher has to design a material to include these procedures. Teachers can use the following simplified teaching steps within their worksheet, exercises and lessons.

- Present an advanced diary,
- Display the needed skill,
- Provide guided practice,
- Propose remedial feedback,
- Monitor practice, and

- Give review.
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2. Repeat the directions.

If the students have difficulty in understanding and following the given directions, they can be helped by being asked to repeat the directions in their own words. The following suggestions can help students understand directions:

- (a) If the direction contains several steps, break down the direction into parts.
- (b) Simplify the direction by presenting only one part at a time and by writing each part on the chalkboard as well as by stating it orally.
- (c) While using written directions, be sure that the students are able to read and understand the words as well as figure out the meaning of sentences.

3. Maintain daily routines.

Many students with learning difficulties require the structure of daily routines to do what is expected.

4. Simultaneously combine verbal and visual information.

Verbal information can be given along with visual displays

5. Write key points or words on the chalkboard.

Before starting a new lesson or exercise, the teacher can write new vocabulary and key points on the chalkboard.

6. Use balanced presentations and activities.

The teacher should maintain a balance between oral presentations and visual information and participatory activities. Also, there should be a balance between group activities and individual activities.

7. Use mnemonic instruction.

Mnemonic devices can be used or designed by the teacher to help students remember key information or steps in a learning strategy.

For example, when the teacher teaches the order of colours in a rainbow, this mnemonic word, VIBGYAR, can be used. In VIBGYOR, V Stands for Violet, I – Indigo, B –Blue, G –Green, Y – Yellow, O – Orange, and R – Red.

8. Daily Review.

Daily review of previous lessons or exercises can help students connect new Information with prior knowledge.

ACCOMMODATIONS INVOLVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Students differ considerably in their ability to respond to different modes of class room activities.

For example, students differ in their ability to give oral answers; present their views in discussions; writing letters and numbers; drawing pictures; spelling; work in noisy or messy class room environment; and read, write, or speak at a fast pace. And dyslexic students vary in their ability to process information presented in auditory or visual formats. The given accommodations involving modes of response and expression can be used to improve students' performance:

1. Change response mode.

For students who have trouble with fine motor responses like handwriting and drawing, the response mode can be changed by the teacher to underlining, choosing from multiple choices, or marking with a highlighter. Students with fine motor difficulties can be given extra space and time for writing answers on worksheets or can be asked to respond on individual chalkboards.

2. Encourage use of graphic organizers.

A graphic organizer puts organizing material into a visual format. To develop a graphic organizer, the student can use the following steps:

- (1) Write the topic on the first line,
- (2) Divide and order the information into major headings,
- (3) List all information explaining the major headings on index cards,
- (4) Place the information under major areas,
- (5) Organise the collected information under appropriate subheadings, and
- (6) Arrange the available information in the organizer format.

3. Place students close to the teacher.

Most of the dyslexic students have attention problems, and the students with attention problems and hyperactive difficulties can be seated near to the teacher, chalkboard, or work area and away from distracting sounds, materials in the classroom.

4. Encourage use of calendars.

Students can be encouraged to use calendars to record assignment due dates, note down school-related activities and test dates, and schedule timelines for exam and for homework.

5. Reduce copying work by giving handouts or worksheets.
6. Use cues to stress important items.

Asterisks or bullets can be used to mark the activities that count a lot in evaluation. This helps students to spend time according to the importance of the task.

7. Using hierarchical worksheets.

The teacher can design worksheets with activities arranged from the easiest to the hardest. Enjoying the first success helps students to begin the next work.

8. Using the instructional aides.

Students can be provided with letter and number strips to help them to write correctly and fast.

9. Giving work samples.

Samples of completed tasks can be displayed to help students to know the expectations and plan accordingly.

10. Use peer-mediated learning.

The teacher can join together peers of different ability levels to correct their notes, read aloud to each other, and write stories.

11. Encourage note sharing.

The normal student can ask to use carbon paper to take notes and then share them with absentees and students with learning problems. This helps students with writing difficulty to concentrate on the classroom work.

12. Flexible time frames.

Student who works slowly can be provided with additional time to complete the written work.

13. Provide additional practice.

Students with learning problems require different levels and quantity of practice to learn skills or content.

14. Use exam substitutions or adjustments.

Students can be allowed to give oral examinations instead of written reports. Also, the class tests can be given in the oral format. For example, if a student has a writing difficulty, the teacher can ask her or him to give an oral presentation instead of writing examination.

CONCLUSION

At the board examination level, most of the Indian educational boards have recognized specific learning disability or dyslexia as a learning problem and have allowed some examination provisions on a case-to-case basis.

- Extra time in order to complete the examination
- Marking for content and overlooking spelling and grammatical errors
- Use of a calculator for mathematics
- Dropping of a second language
- Use of a scribe for writing the examination

Each of the boards has some or all of these provisions. The ICSC, CBSC, and the Tamil

Nadu State Board and Matriculation boards of ASLC and ESLC examinations, all have these concessions. If the dyslexic child is helped in the classroom with the right accommodation and teaching strategy, the child can successfully face his board examination with or without the accommodations given by the government. It prevents the academic failure of the dyslexic student and ensures his bright higher education also. It is the noble duty of every language teacher to know about dyslexia as a language-learning difficulty and help the dyslexic children to learn language for their academic success.

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