

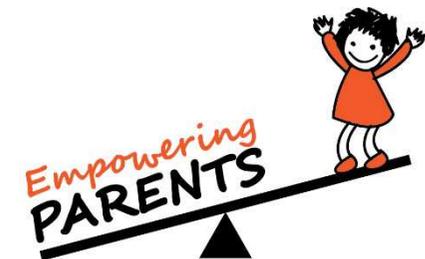
Dyslexia and Foreign Language Acquisition

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Hyposesis

There are (many) students with identified and unidentified dyslexia in schools and their dyslexia influences their ability to acquire their second (third, fourth) language but most of them do not receive informed educational and up-to-date ICT support and are helped in an ad hoc manner depending on each individual teacher's competence, empathy and resources.

Dyslexia and second language (SL) acquisition

- As dyslexia is a phonological weakness (difficulty to manipulate sounds of a language) it and other reading difficulties in native language affect SL acquisition negatively.
- Dyslexia manifests in
 - Reading;
 - Spelling;
 - Writing and
 - SL acquisition.

Dyslexia and second language (SL) acquisition

- Dyslexia manifests in
 - Reading;
 - Spelling;
 - Writing and
 - SL acquisition
- For some student dyslexia **may manifest only in SL acquisition** as their phonological and fluency deficits are well remediated in their native lge by good reading instruction.

Dyslexia and second language (SL) acquisition II

- Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (LCDH) (Sparks, Ganschow, 1991) – «poor readers have problems with phonological/orthographic (sound and sound/symbol) and syntactic (grammatical) but not the semantic (meaning) components of language.»

Dyslexia and SL Acquisition III

- Though – some students without these may have difficulty learning SL in a classroom setting (but – they learn a SL in real life situation!). **At-risk students.**

SL skills affected

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Various combinations of difficulties – various
lge aspects at work:
 - the first 2 can be weaker, the last 2 – stronger;
 - the reverse combination;
 - all the 4 skills are weak.

SL skills affected II

- Sometimes **only spelling is affected** with other lge skills appropriately strong –
- Confusion of letters
 - Y with J
- student in English keeps writing phonetically
 - I as ai;
 - And as end;
 - Would as wud

SL skills affected III

- Difficulties from moderate to severe degree.
- In different foreign lges difficulties can manifest with various severity:
 - Various alphabets – Latin and Kirilic;
 - Quality of lge instruction (C.H.Andersen);
 - **Deep (non-transparent) vs shallow** (transparent) orthographies (direct letter sound correspondence)
 - Finnish, Italian, Latvian as shallow orthographies vs English as deep orthography

English - modern *lingua franca*

- The first SL at schools in many EU countries.
- The «deepest» orthography of all EU lges.
- Deep orthography as opposed to shallow orthography of many lges in EU.
- Learning from environment and media is a benefit – many students have good listening and speaking skills (that come naturally from exposure to English via media).
- Also – good comprehension of English (literacy vs proficiency).

A Case Study I

literacy vs proficiency

- A secondary school student - a native level speaker of English with severe and 'classic' dyslexia (distinct phonological deficit):
 - very verbal, rich vocabulary in both lges;
 - rich background knowledge in many fields;
 - can write with pleasure if interested;
 - Spells phonetically – as he hears;
 - has difficulty spelling the simplest English words – e.g. go, new, about, hello.

A Case Study II

- A young woman with unidentified dyslexia working in a news agency and studying for 2 university degrees:
 - Has problems with spelling in Latvian and all foreign lges she knows;
 - Very good at learning foreign languages – «They just get written on my hard drive»;
 - Almost failed secondary school because of weak writing – made a deal with her teacher of Latvian;
 - Has anxiety about her spelling skills – would like to improve them but there is no offer to do that.

What to do? I

- Be informed about dyslexia.
- Teach and test thru the strongest skill (listening, speaking).
- Difficulties with linguistic terms – student knows the lge, but **does not know lingusitic terms** for them – learning can be more difficult than (just) knowing.
- Provide structured, direct, specific, cumulative assitance.

What to do? II

- Avoid linguistic terms, give example/model for the task to be done (Case 1).
- Teach phonic rules (80% of English is regular):
 - Use the textbooks that have these rules;
 - Integrate these rules in every lesson.
- Teach irregular words by heart:
 - Decrease the number of words a student should learn per class as compared to other students;

What to do? III

- Use ICT tools:
 - text-to-speech in English – free and high quality;
 - Spell checker for spelling;
 - Free on-line resources of audio recordings of literature (www.gutenberg.org)
- Teach explicitly – this helps to generalise:
 - Parts of words – prefixes, suffixes;
 - Origins of words – Latin, Greek roots;
 - Terms of different school subjects (sciences, literature, etc.)

What to do? III

- Use ICT and digital exercises and tests.
- Train awareness and metcognitive skills – what helps you to learn? What confuses you here?
- Overtrain, overlearn!
- Waving a SL as an academic requirement:
 - Done in some countries both on secondary and university level;
 - A sign lge as an option (SL in Norwegian secondary school).

Conclusions and suggestions

- Schools should sensitise their SL instructors about dyslexia and its effects on acquiring SL.
- Schools should develop their own systems of identifying and supporting students with dyslexia in SL learning.
- Parents should advocate for individualised approach at schools as schools often do not know anything about the issues.

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