

A Survey of the Effective Classroom Strategies for Teaching Children with Dyslexia

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Abstract

In this paper we aim at discussing various strategies adopted by teachers in order to help a child with dyslexia cope with challenges in the class. The time spent in attaining education plays a significant part in a child's development. For a teacher, aiding a dyslexic child is a wonderful as well as challenging task. Dyslexic learners have learning differences due to which they cannot hold information for long and may not be able to grasp the information at all. It is important to understand that a dyslexic learner neither lacks intelligence nor willfulness, only constant support provided by mentors can help them learn and achieve. This paper is aimed at reviewing a wide range of strategies that could act as guidelines for tutors and equip them with necessary skills to help the learners with dyslexia in different age groups learn and achieve.

Keywords: Reading Disorder, Students with Dyslexia, Dyslexia Teaching Strategies, Dyslexia Teaching Methodologies, Dyslexic Students

1. Introduction

The educational landscape is home to a diverse range of learners, each with their unique strengths and challenges. Among these individuals are those who possess exceptional uniqueness, that affects their readiness and suitability to the conventional educational practices. Such uniqueness often encompasses a complex interplay of learning and psychosocial aspects, posing distinct instructional challenges. One particular group facing these challenges are individuals with developmental differences, where the lack of outwardly apparent symptoms adds to the complexity of understanding their needs.

One such condition that highlights this educational complexity is dyslexia. Dyslexia, characterized by unexpected difficulties in reading despite otherwise intact cognitive abilities, presents multifaceted challenges that extend beyond conventional learning difficulties. This condition, impacting literacy skills encompassing reading, writing, spelling, and comprehension, can have profound effects on an individual's self-esteem and overall educational experience. Understanding dyslexia within the classroom context requires not only recognizing its wide-ranging symptoms but also implementing strategies tailored to accommodate its diverse manifestations.

This paper aims to investigate the intricacies of teaching individuals with dyslexia in a classroom setting. By exploring the minor-details associated with dyslexia at different developmental stages and explaining the challenges faced by educators, this paper will offer an array of strategies that can be employed to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. The understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching students with dyslexia underlines the significance of teacher adaptability and informed strategies.

As we navigate the landscape of education, it is imperative to recognize that an effective education system must cater to the needs of every learner, including those with developmental differences like dyslexia. By equipping educators with comprehensive insights into the challenges faced by individuals with dyslexia and offering a toolbox of pedagogical strategies, this paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue on inclusive education and the imperative role teachers play in shaping the educational journey of all students.

2. Discussion

Every individual is different but some of them are so unique that they cannot fit in easily. Differences associated with it are related to learning and psychosocial aspects. As there are no visible symptoms, it is very complex to understand the condition. It is a life-long developmental process which affects child's ability to learn. Learning difficulties are of two type "general learning difficulties" and "specific learning difficulties". "General learning difficulties" causes poor performance of learner in all subjects. On the other hand, specific learning difficulties affect the ability to learn a specific subject such as literacy and numeracy skills. Dyslexia is characterized as unexpected difficulty in reading who otherwise possess intelligence, motivation, and creativity (Chandra, 2014).

Proficient reading is very essential for learning any subject taught in class. With an increase in emphasis on education, more and more people are required to express themselves on paper. They may have trouble in reading accurately and fluently. They also encounter difficulty in reading comprehension, spellings, writing and mathematics.

Signs of dyslexia look different in each age group which need to be perceived by the teacher.

- **Preschool:** A common sign through which a teacher can recognize children with dyslexia is that they have trouble recognizing rhyming words. A dyslexic kid of this age group struggles in taking away the beginning sound from a word. They face difficulty in learning new words. They also struggle in matching letter with their sounds.
- **Middle School:** Students suffering from dyslexia in middle school make spelling errors. They have to frequently read a passage multiple times in order to understand it fully.

- High School: The student suffering from dyslexia in high school often skips small word while reading. They would prefer multiple choice questions over question answers as they find difficulty in retaining the information. Also, they may not be in the same class as their age fellows would be (Understood, n.d.).
- Grade school: Grade school kids have trouble taking mid sounds away from a word and in blending sounds together. They often don't recognize common sight words. They find it difficult to remember words for longer period, and face difficulty in solving words problem.

A dyslexic child finds the acquisition of literacy skills difficult and suffers from deep trauma when abused by peers due to the disability. A lot needs to be done in order to help children with dyslexia feel comfortable with the class environment. Class teachers are often confused about children who are bad in studies as they find carelessness and lack of interest as the obvious reason behind the bad grade. Class teacher needs to be aware of all the problems a dyslexic child may be facing.

With the keen understanding of child's behavior, a great deal of misunderstanding can be prevented. In a positive and encouraging environment, a dyslexic child feels success and self-value. Students with dyslexia face issues related to Poor auditory and short-term memory. Examples of poor auditory short-term memory are related to difficulty in remembering correct sound of words. Children with poor auditory and short-term memory may not be able to memorize even a short list of words.

The studies suggest that a vast majority of teachers face challenges with respect to academic performance and behavioral issues within the children with dyslexia. Many research findings indicate that children with dyslexia may encounter range of relative quantifiable symptoms. The problem that makes a dyslexic child unrecognized is that not every symptom of dysfunction is present with in all the children having dyslexia similarly they don't face single pattern of difficulty. Children with dyslexia show frequent variety of characteristics such as reading difficulty, spellings, verbal symptoms and non-linguistic. Also, these symptoms maybe more prominent in one individual as compared to another. It is found that teachers have only a limited awareness about dyslexia and strategies that need to be adopted in order to minimize the symptoms (Chandra, 2014).

3. Strategies for Effective Instruction

In this section, we will discuss a wide range of effective classroom strategies for teaching children with dyslexia.

3.1. Multisensory Activities

Multisensory activities help dyslexic children absorb and process information in a manner they could retain for a longer period and involve using senses like touch, movement, sign and hearing. These activities are not only beneficial for dyslexic children but also for rest of the class. Engaging in something different excites the kids and helps them in memorizing things in a better way. Examples of multisensory activities for classroom include writing words with tactile materials, example glitter, pasta or beads. Teacher should plan spelling practicing activities example hopscotch- in which children spell words with each square. Scavenger hunts for letters also helps the children to learn and perceive quickly. Teacher may try making teams in class and give them a word. Next, write letters and hide them in different places within classroom. The team finds letter and construct the word back and then glue them.

A teacher may recommend pocket spell check to children with dyslexia. The dyslexic learner type's word in a way they think it is spelled, and spell checker returns a correctly spelled match. This helps them build confidence in both writing and spellings and memorizing the correct spellings. A particular useful skill for dyslexic student is to master touch-typing. While few students struggle with handwriting, touch typing can help them as it flows through finger without any conscious thoughts. The students using touch-typing can have additional benefit of automatic spell check which can help them in writing words.

A line reader magnifies the portion of text which helps dyslexic readers move through book or worksheet easily. Colored keyboards help dyslexic child a lot. Keyboards with colored layouts and large alphabets

make typing more accessible. Some come with multimedia hotkeys which allow user to play, pause, rewind and stop, which is helpful for dyslexic students to perceive and learn also the use of text to speech software are very helpful for them. A teacher must be aware of the fact that other children should not feel envious, and the technology purchased for dyslexic may be used by other students as this will reduce the sense of isolation within them.

Copying from the board can be a challenge for the students with dyslexia as they struggle when reading printed text, another challenge may be in deciphering someone's handwriting. Additionally, they may face issues related to physical process of writing-the problem seen in students with both dyspraxia and dyslexia. After decoding the word, a dyslexic student consciously concentrates on the shape of individual letter, taking the attention away from the lecture being taught in class. Teacher must do helpful arrangements for gifted children in class. She may provide dyslexic student with notes or lesson plans in advance. The student will then take notes like other students without thinking about copying everything before it's swiped off from the board. This increases their focus and commits key information to their memory.

Teacher must give extra time to gifted child to complete their work. If a child takes day to complete the work, distribute it on weekends so that they may have full week to complete the work. Teacher could also let their parents know the task in advance which may help them in completing homework in time. Teacher should assign marks based on effort. Dyslexic learner may not be as good as their class fellows in spelling and grammar. However, if their creativity shines above the errors then a teacher must praise them and award marks as per the effort put by the learner. Highlight any major spelling mistakes using green pen and help the learner to remember correct spellings.

3.2. Educational Games

Educational games are very helpful for them. The great thing about games designed for dyslexic student is that everyone in class can benefit from it, so these games can be easily incorporated in the lesson plans. Nothing excites a student more than a game. There are hundreds of educational application and exciting games available online. High speed training and Dyslexic.com have variety of applications. Nessy.com offers a range of PC games which help learner perceive sounds that make up words. It covers an area where dyslexic child is particularly weak at. They use colorful, cartoonish styles which keep the kid engaged. Dyslexicgames.com is web link where there are a lot of puzzles, 3D drawings, reading activities which help dyslexic learner in strengthening up: visual thinking. A teacher may use an iPad and use Simplex spelling series which is an excellent choice as they help students understand phonics and words easily and quickly.

Teacher must work together with parents. Arrange regular meetings with parents of dyslexic students to discuss the progress of their child on daily basis. The child's parents may also suggest better strategies which worked well at home and what didn't. Working in alliance with parents is necessary in order to help child in better way. This is very important as no two dyslexic children are same and there is no "one size fits all" approach. By sharing knowledge and progress of dyslexic child both parent and teacher can devise a plan which can be used to make the child learn effectively and efficiently (Berninger, 2009).

The student with short term memory issues deals with only a fraction of a phrase at a time, and they find it difficult to process information quickly. During writing from board, student suffers as when they look back again after writing a portion of sentence the board is raised already. Student comes up with incomplete work when they are asked to revise or to prepare a test. These students often find it difficult to read their own handwriting. In order to minimize the issue teacher needs to be vigilant and plan according to the student's need. Binding him/her with a cooperative class-fellow that can help in writing as well as in providing notes when needed may be an effective strategy. Teachers may provide written notes for each student so that they can copy easily. Also, they should prefer bullet points instead of blocks or text. Dyslexic students also face challenges in reading printed black on white paper so it's better to use pastel shades for hand-outs. Choice of clear fonts makes reading easier for dyslexic children, such as Ariel with font size 12. Teachers should also provide vocabulary list of words that will facilitate reading.

While presenting information to students, teacher must give an overview first and then present

information. Going towards end of the topic, provide 1 minute summary so that students may recall what they studied in the lecture. This strategy is very helpful for dyslexic and non-dyslexic students in class. Teacher must help in creating mind maps and spider diagrams as it helps them in memorizing. Encourage students to highlight text for key concepts; also, use of ruler under a sentence can be very helpful for those students who see words moving around on printed paper (TTRS, n.d.).

3.3. Mnemonics

Mnemonics are very helpful to memorize words as the learner always struggles with difficult words. Learning sight-words also help in spellings writing and reading. Some children with dyslexia may benefit from holding fatter pen or pencil. It is becoming more common to allow students use laptops in class. A disorganized dyslexic child would not lose any notes if he/she uses laptop instead of to making paper notes.

Adequate assessment of language is important for students as dyslexia is a disorder of language processing within brain. It is important for teachers to recognize the type of weakness present within the child as only she can give an effective plan to overcome the problem being faced by them. Motivation plays an important role as dyslexic children may be trying hard but still not successful. These children have differences with peers, and they want to be taught in more intense fashion. Without intense intervention, these students would try to avoid any difficult and painful task (Chandra, 2014).

Teacher should repeat directions twice at least. Students having issue in understanding directions are asked to repeat direction in their own words. The student can repeat directions with a peer when teacher is not available. The following instructions may be useful to understand the directions: if directions contain several steps, breakdown them down into further sets. Simplify the directions by writing only one direction at a time on board and repeat it orally. When written directions are used, be sure that students are able to understand it and comprehend the meaning from it.

Students are significantly different in their ability to perceive and respond in different modes. For-example, students vary in their abilities like one may speak well while other maybe good in writing paragraphs or drawing objects. Moreover, students vary in abilities to process information presented to them in visual or auditory form. Teacher must plan balanced oral presentations along with visual information and active student's involvement. Also, a balance between large, small and individual activities should be maintained.

Change in response mode: For students who have difficulty with motor response such as writing things, the teacher should adopt methods like multiple choice questions, sorting and marking techniques. Students with fine motor problem may be provided with additional space for writing answers. Provide an outline of the lecture to the students which will enable students to follow the lesson successfully and make notes. Moreover, an outline helps student to organize the material and ask questions during lecture (WETA, 2006).

Teach must guide students to organize their work graphically. A graphic organizer involves visual formats. To develop graphic organizer, students may apply following strategies: Write the topic on top, divide the information as per headings, and write down related information on index cards, organize information as per major areas and place information in appropriate subheadings (WETA, 2006).

Teaching students with dyslexia across settings can be very challenging, as it becomes relatively tough to teach students belonging to heterogeneous groups. Students spend a significant part of their day interacting with tactile things. Most instructional materials given by teachers are provided to class of students who learn at different pace and different ways. Providing with accommodations can enhance learning of students. Paraprofessionals, volunteers, and students can help them develop and implement accommodations. Material accommodations including tape recorder can be very helpful in providing aid to those who are unable to read from paper properly. Directions, stories and specific lessons can be recorded and provided to students. The students can rewind the tape and clarify the directions and concepts. Also, a student may repeat words with the tape and understand them fully. Some of the information is provided in the form of paragraphs and contains a lot of useful material. In order to help

child with dyslexia, teacher may highlight some part or underline it in order to emphasis on the specific portion and help them memorize it for long. Rewriting the directions is also very helpful as this exercise helps in understanding easily.

3.4. Reading Guide

Reading guide help students in understanding and perceiving information quickly as they help to focus on relevant content. It helps the student understand ideas clearly with numerous details of main idea. A reading guide may be developed Para by Para or section by section. Teacher should help students as per the problem a dyslexic child maybe facing. For example, if students have writing issue, teacher may be allowed to give oral presentation instead of written assignment, opposite maybe done for those having speech issues. A person with dyslexia needs to be given boost and self-confidence in order to re-establish them and overcome challenges. They have already experienced failure throughout their life so they don't believe that they can achieve anything or even learn (WETA, 2006).

People with dyslexia often face depression. Depression in adults shows relatively different symptoms as compared to children. The depressed child would misbehave or be overactive to hide the painful feeling. Teacher must be very observing in class in order to help student fight with depression in dyslexia. It is necessary to aware the peers and educate them effectively about dyslexia. If a student with dyslexia is surrounded by positive and welcoming people, there are more chances of their recovery. While being in non-supportive environment, where the student is often teased and mocked, may lead to deep depression and anxiety which can harm them throughout their life, and they may not recover or cope with the societal challenges at all. Educating peers is very essential in order to help the child with dyslexia in class. With the support they may be able to live a normal life (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).

4. Conclusion

In this paper we focused on children with dyslexia and type of issues they commonly face in each age group. The paper also discusses about effective strategies which have helped and can help students with dyslexia in class. A major issue faced by teachers is that no two children with dyslexia show similar symptoms also same strategies may not work for all. A teacher has to plan by keenly understanding the child's behavior and later adopting strategies as per the issues faced by the child in different class activities.

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