

Dislexya and the English Language: Contributions to the Education in Regular Schools

Silvia Maria do Nascimento, SESI / SP, Brazil

The European Conference on Education 2021
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

People with dyslexia need their teachers to have enough knowledge about the subject in order their learning can be effective. The “spelling, writing and reading area learning disorder”, as defines the Dyslexia Brazilian Association (DBA), does not impede learning, as it is not an impairment; but the teachers should take some differentiated attitudes. This paper aims to contribute with the teachers with some suggestions for activities and adaptations for the tests. English classes and activities, besides the manner as the teacher used to deal with a 9th-grade dyslexic student, were analysed. We have also observed whether the Pedagogical Coordinator has provided some direction to the educator to develop his work along with the pupil. Through reflexive conversations with many teachers of this particular school, these professionals got the conclusion that is not possible just to wait that all guidance and upgrading comes from the Pedagogical Coordination; it is very much important that each one can be the responsible for their continuous updating so that their pedagogical practice be more efficient. It is also desirable to confirm, with the results of this paper, whether the teaching-learning activities results reflect better the subject learning when the educator is not worried about the questions related to spelling, that are the biggest problem of dyslexic students.

Keywords: Dyslexia, English Language, Teaching and Learning

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

1. Introduction

The classroom of an elementary school has an average of 30 students, and this number can be much higher. Each of these students is a different person. With different problems, afflictions, anxieties, desires, facilities and difficulties to a greater or lesser degree. It is part of the teachers' job to realise and understand these particularities so that they can guide and assist the students in their learning in the best way possible.

In recent years, the subject of "dyslexia" has been much discussed. Most of the time, however, it is related to the Portuguese language. However, even with regard to this language, we have noticed doubts among some teachers about how to deal with dyslexic students, how to work on their contents, how to evaluate them properly, without facilitating or simplifying their tests.

When we think of a dyslexic student, who wants or needs to learn a foreign language, the problem seems to be even greater because of the much smaller amount of sources and resources for teachers to seek.

We can then ask a few questions: how is this teacher trained and oriented to work, in English language classes, with students who present dyslexia? Does he need to take any specific courses? And the students, how should these students act?

Before answering these questions, however, we need to make some clarifications: What is dyslexia? Is it an illness, abnormality, disorder or dysfunction? What are its characteristics? Are students, children or teenagers able to learn the English language at the same pace as "normal" students? What would be an appropriate teaching sequence for such students?

With the intention of helping to clarify these questions we will do our research by observing some English Language classes and activities, in an elementary private school in Santo André, São Paulo. We will analyse the classes, reflect, point out some situations and propose suggestions to solve problems, if any. We will also make suggestions for didactic sequences and answer these questions based on renowned authors that we will use as bibliographic reference.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Information

In this article we will investigate some ways of working with dyslexic students in English language classes, as some difficulty is noticed on the part of the teachers in conducting these classes and also on the part of the students in accompanying the English classes because of (but not only) phonetic and orthographic issues. It is then discussed what would be the real reasons for the difficulties of these teachers and pupils.

It is then hoped to find out:

- ✓ Is the teacher informed before receiving the student?;
- ✓ How should he start work?;
- ✓ What is a child with special educational needs?
- ✓ Is dyslexia a special educational need?
- ✓ Will the didactic sequence be the same for all students in the class?;

- ✓ Is there a need to make any kind of change?;
- ✓ How does the evaluation take place?

We do not intend to judge this teacher's classes, but to take an objective look at them and help this professional to perceive situations that he/she may not be aware of because of his/her involvement in the teaching and learning process.

We will reflect critically, investigate and point out solutions to the difficulties raised by both the teacher and the students.

2.2 Dyslexia?

Dyslexia means difficulty (dys) with words (lexia). It is a disorder that affects the skills of reading, writing and spelling. It is the alteration of a neurological process that leads the child to have difficulty reading and understanding what he or she reads despite his or her intelligence being normal.

According to teacher Me. Marcia Regina Zemella Lucas, (2014) a dyslexic person "possesses adequate intelligence and cognition to develop learning and has no intellectual deficit. She is not 'disabled', she only learns in a different way".

The National Association of Dyslexia, in its question-and-answer section informs us of the following about the regular school and the bilingual school:

“The dyslexic child must attend regular school. It is important that school staff know the characteristic aspects of dyslexia, the reader function of the dyslexic and are ready and available to meet these special needs. A bilingual school is not suitable for a child with language difficulties as he or she will have to deal with several languages simultaneously, with different phonetic and grammatical structures, which will make learning the written language more complex”.

Some difficulties, however, are related to understanding (listening) and writing, presented by dyslexic people are the exchange or non-identification of letters. For example, the brain can understand XENTE or CHENTE instead of GENTE, GADO instead of GATO; the letter W can be confused with the letter M; the letters D - B, B - P can be seen with the same format or heard with the same sound and the same can occur with the letters S, SS, C, Ç, X and Z.

These (and other) obstacles that already occur in the mother tongue of the learner, will certainly occur in English language classes, because it will be necessary for him/her to read, listen, pronounce, remember, sequence and write in English.

This is when the teacher's role becomes very important. Depending on how these barriers are worked out in the family and school partnership, the development of this young person will take place progressively without having emotional distresses, because another issue faced by dyslexic students is low self-esteem due to circumstances in which humiliations happen, even in unintentional ways.

2.3 Special Educational Needs?

According to LDB n° 9394/96 in its Chapter V, article 58:

Special education refers to the type of school education "offered preferably in the regular education network for students with special needs" (Ministry of Education).

And Resolution No. 95, of November 21, 2000, based on the provisions of the Federal and State Constitutions, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, the Statute of the Child and Adolescent and Indication No. 12/1999 and Resolution No. 5/2000 of the State Council of Education, considers in its Article 1st that:

"Students with special educational needs are those who present significant physical, sensory or intellectual differences resulting from innate or acquired factors, of a permanent or temporary nature, which result in difficulties or impediments in the development of their teaching-learning process". (Mario Covas Reference Center)

In this way, we can confirm that dyslexic students do not need to be considered as having special educational needs, but they should have special attention during classes so that their disorder does not impede their intellectual evolution.

2.4 Specific Reading Disorder

The definition of reading difficulty according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is the following:

"The main feature is a specific and significant impairment in the development of reading skills that is not solely accounted for by mental age, visual acuity problems, or inadequate schooling. Reading comprehension skill, reading word recognition, oral reading skill, and performance of tasks requiring reading may all be affected. Spelling difficulties are frequently associated with specific reading disorder and often remain into adolescence even after some progress in reading has been made. Specific developmental disorders of reading are commonly preceded by a history of disorders in speech or language development. Associated emotional and behavioural disturbances are common during the school age period." (WHO, 2010).

2.5 The Teacher

It is more common these days for undergraduate courses to comment on, or actually study, class situations with dyslexic students experienced in regular schools by undergraduate students.

There are many more teachers who are interested and concerned about the subject and how they can improve their practices so that these students are not left on the sidelines; to this end, they seek out and carry out on-site and distance learning courses, exchanging experience with professionals, often from different states and even countries.

Nevertheless, the universe of teachers who are unaware of dyslexia or who prefer to remain out of date on the subject is enormous. There are several reasons, but they are not our goal in this article.

All students need the full attention of the teacher. Those who have some special need, even more. In the case of dyslexia, but for any disturbance or disorder, it is the teacher who is close to the student, analysing and evaluating their progress and difficulties.

It is not for the teacher to diagnose, he/she is not a health professional. But according to the Brazilian Association of Dyslexia (2019, page 01)

“It is at school that dyslexia, in fact, appears. There are dyslexics who reveal their difficulties in other environments and situations, but none of them compare to the school, a place where reading and writing are permanently used and, above all, valued”.

And it is in daily work with his students that the teacher's gaze is always attentive to the behaviour, advances and difficulties of the students that distrust may appear and then ask the family for a referral to a specialist to determine whether the child or young person really has dyslexia.

In class, it is up to the teacher to look for ways to vary his classes to include this student with others in the class, not to separate him, as Vygotsky mentions (1991, pp. 86/87) "Many educators, recognising that the speed of learning can vary from child to child, isolate the 'slow learners' from their teachers and companions through the use of programmed and often mechanised instruction".

Not to feel sorry, but to be open to dealing with differences, keeping in mind that students with some special need may have slower learning. In addition, their attitudes should be positive and constructive, as well as a valid appreciation of the strengths of the dyslexic learner - since the feeling of inferiority can always be present, because they have more difficulty than their peers.

2.6 Tips for the English Language Teacher

The following suggestions could benefit all students in the class, not just dyslexics. It is not necessary to do everything together. We are presenting some possibilities which the teacher will use as he/she sees fit. All age groups are covered.

- ✓ use of flash cards – help in memorizing the spelling of the new vocabulary;
- ✓ activities that activate memory and reasoning;
- ✓ activities on coloured and/or printed sheets – draw attention, highlight certain points;
- ✓ diverse and fast activities – prevents the student from being embarrassed by being further behind than the other students;
- ✓ activities where movement is necessary – helps with content retention;
- ✓ oral repetitions – orality involves the student during learning;
- ✓ music;
- ✓ use of simple fonts in sentences or texts – makes it easier to attach;
- ✓ sitting at the front;
- ✓ sitting away from doors and windows;
- ✓ short and simple instructions – so that the student doesn't get lost in the instructions and keep doing the activities;;
- ✓ clear and achievable objectives;
- ✓ encouragement – to develop self-confidence, since it is possible that they have low self-esteem;
- ✓ adaptation of activities: - more time, or
 - fewer alternatives, or
 - fewer questions, or
 - assistance in reading statements.

- ✓ treat them naturally;
- ✓ in oral reading, that it is only the teacher and the student, so that there is no embarrassment – or indication in the previous class of which stretch the student will read, or even a smaller excerpt.

Activities involving interaction between colleagues, in which one helps or explains the subject to the other, are also very beneficial.

3. Methodology

An action-research will be done in a class of an Elementary Private School in the city of Santo André, São Paulo. I will follow this class, with the authorization of the direction and the teacher responsible for the English language classes. The use of the school's didactic material and the didactic sequence will be observed, as well as the instructions received by the teacher from the Pedagogical Coordinator.

4. Observation and Analysis of Some Lessons

With the permission of the School Director, the Pedagogical Coordinator and the English Language Teacher, some classes were attended during one semester. For the students it was said that the teacher's classes would be analysed and that, for this, I would need to check some notebooks at certain times. There was no problem at all.

The teacher would come in and greet the 9th grade students, make the call and put the class schedule, all in English. She was in the habit of explaining what would be done so that the students would know "how the class would go"; however, in some classes she reversed the events to surprise the students so that "they wouldn't always expect the same" - she explained.

During the explanations she looked at all the students to see if they were following her reasoning, she questioned them and when necessary she returned to the subject. In a few moments she spoke in English - a few moments - most were actually only spoken in Portuguese.

At no time did the dyslexic student ask questions, it was always the teacher who reached her. Sometimes repeating what she had just said, other times mimicking in her direction, or writing on the blackboard and looking to see if she was following the explanation.

The following detailed activities are not sequential and not all are evaluative, but each one was done at the end of a set of at least three classes, with the exception of the first activity, which was an initial diagnostic activity.

In figure 1 we have an individual interpretative diagnostic activity that the teacher brought along on the second day of class. The intention of the teacher was to confirm or not her forecasts for the initial subjects of that class.

It was not recorded in the evaluation, but the students could use the physical dictionary and the student did so. It was not necessary for the teacher to guide her to take it as it was necessary with other non-dyslexic students.

I have noticed that in questions 3, 4 and 5 the teacher highlights the points to be answered in different ways, although she did not capitalise on what was desired in question 4. These

highlights help the dyslexic student, even though it may sometimes be that the student needs the help of a reader, depending on the degree of his/her dyslexia. There was no need for a reader for the observed student. She never asked and when asked about the need she refused, saying it was not necessary.

It is highlighted in the evaluation criteria that this evaluation is adapted with fewer questions; even so, the teacher, when verifying that the student made a mistake in question 5, registers that the same rephrases the question on the back of the exam (figure 2), which the student does; however, the subject (the difference between the verb tenses) has not yet been dominated by the student.

At this moment I notice that the teacher does not make any mark regarding the student's spelling mistakes, as she did in exercise 3. She only corrects the contents. As we have seen before, it is not interesting to mark the spelling mistakes of these students, because we know that it is not due to lack of study or intelligence that these mistakes happen, but due to the recognition that the brain does not do or does it in a wrong way.

In this activity the student achieves the established interpretative objective, despite having made a mistake in one of the questions. The other incorrect question was about the difference between the verb tenses that were used in the text. At the same time, in question 3 she is able to recognise the verb tenses used in the text.

By making these adaptations, the teacher allows the student to demonstrate whether she really understood the content without any vexing and discriminatory situations. Lina Knudsen, in her Master's Dissertation, page. 19/20 deepens the above written:

“They may need, for example, to be given more explicit instructions especially when it is given to them in written form, be it in their native language or the FL. Longer assignments may need to be divided up into smaller steps in order to help the student organize his/her time as well as to plan efficiently. Reading assignments should be given a day before the other students so that the dyslexic student will have adequate time to read and comprehend the text.”

Figure 3 shows an evaluation exercise on Present Perfect tense, in which the physical dictionary and a list of irregular verbs could be consulted. The teacher's aim was to check whether the students had understood that they should look up the verbs in the Past participle. There were no other adaptations apart from the consultations.

The student had no difficulties in dealing with the dictionary and verb list sequences. She ended up missing two exercises, but did the activity on her own and was successful.

With activities 4 and 5 we can clearly observe what was described above in item 3 (Dyslexia?). The activity was to create sentences with the expressions used to, be used to and got used to from explanations and examples of exercises already done in class. The student did the activity, but it is noticeable that she forgets previously written words and makes spelling mistakes typical of her dyslexic situation. In this scenario, it is possible to notice that despite the spelling mistakes and forgetfulness of words, the student was able to understand the content taught.

Critérios de avaliação: Compreensão geral (inferir ou submeter) ou leitura; Entender ou discernir o tipo de tempo verbal; Presente Simples e Presente Contínuo. Nestum tipo de consulta será permitido utilizar o dicionário ou o Google Tradutor. Observar as informações contidas no e-mail para responder às questões.

Meet and Greet with Shane and Justin in Seattle

Dear,

Are you attending the 2017 TESOL Convention in Seattle, Washington? If you are, join Steve and I (I'm for a Meet and Greet at the Top House Cafe (1005 6th Ave., Seattle, WA 98101) on March 2nd from 7:30-9:00 pm.

Hope to see you there or at a future event!

Cheers,

The Teach English Now! team

Join us on Facebook!

See = assistir
WA = Washington
sham = shampoos
join = juntar ou unir-se

- Do que trata este e-mail? (2,0)
 - a) De um convite a uma recepção.
 - b) De um convite a uma convenção.
 - c) De um convite a um seminário.
 - d) De um convite a um congresso.
- Quem está convidando Silvia? (2,0)
 - a) Facebook.
 - b) The Teach English Now! team.
 - c) Tap House Grill.
 - d) Shane and Justin.
- Qual tempo verbal nós temos na pergunta e seguir: "Are you attending the 2017 TESOL convention in Seattle, Washington?" (2,0)

presenting continue = present
- Escolha a alternativa em que a frase a seguir esteja escrita corretamente: "Ela se encontra com Justin e Shane na convenção". (2,0)
 - a) She meets herself with Justin and Shane at the convention.
 - b) She meet herself with Justin and Shane at the convention.
 - c) She is meeting herself with Justin and Shane at the convention.
 - d) She meeting herself with Justin and Shane at the convention.
- Qual a diferença de uso entre os tempos verbais PRESENTE SIMPLES e PRESENTE CONTÍNUO? Responda em português. (2,0)

Presente é o que está sendo feito agora, o futuro - presente contínuo é o que está sendo feito agora.

5-0 presento contínuo é o que está sendo feito agora

Figure 1

Figure 2

Exercício avaliativo (10,0), objetivando a melhoria na compreensão da escolha verbal na construção de sentenças afirmativas, ao utilizar o Presente Perfeito. O dicionário e a lista de verbos podem ser consultados. Usar caneta azul ou preta.

Name: _____ nº 7 grade 9^oA

Choose and circle the right option.

1. I have _____ a game of cricket in Calcutta. *X*
a) watched b) game c) been

2. I have _____ the Taj Mahal in India. ✓
a) visited b) want c) were

3. He has _____ the Sahara desert on a camel. *X*
a) cross b) crossed c) crossed

4. We have _____ the Pyramids of Egypt. ✓
a) see b) seen c) saw

5. He has _____ next to the dolphins. ✓
a) swim b) swam c) swam

6. A lady has _____ up to the crown of the Statue of Liberty. ✓
a) went b) gone c) go

7. I have never _____ in public with Lady Gaga. ✓
a) sing b) sung c) sang

8. Billy has _____ paragliding in the Alps. ✓
a) tried b) tried c) trying

9. Phil and Mark have _____ sushi in Tokyo. ✓
a) eat b) ate c) eaten

10. I've _____ photos of whales in Canada. ✓
a) taken b) took c) take

11. We have _____ tea with the Queen Elizabeth. ✓
a) drunk b) drunk c) drink

12. Jane has never _____ in the film studios of Hollywood. ✓
a) was b) were c) been

10/12

Congratulations 8.5

Figure 3

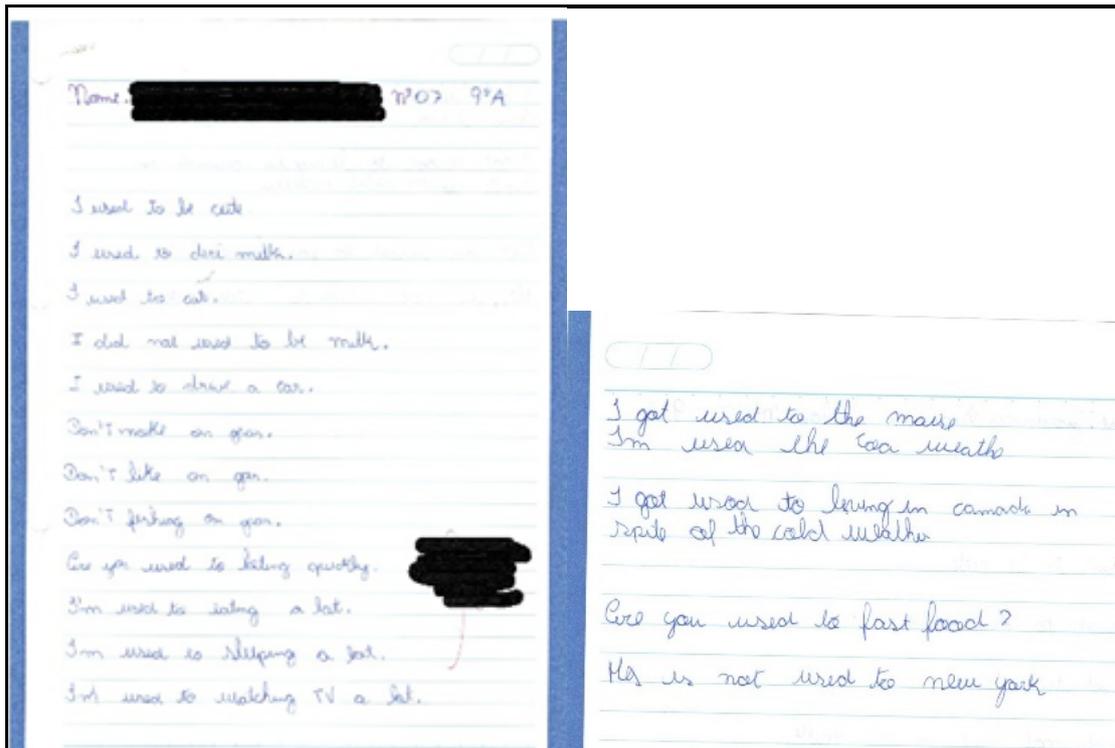


Figure 4

Figure 5

5. Conclusions

Some English language classes were observed at a private school in the municipality of Santo André, São Paulo, in order to check how the English language teacher is trained, how she is guided by the school coordinator and how this teacher works with students with dyslexia.

The answers we obtained to these questions, after conversations with teachers from Elementary I, II and High School, and in particular with the English Language Teacher from Elementary II and High School, were that teachers should seek for themselves the knowledge about dyslexia, although they can count on the Pedagogical Coordinator of this school unit. They should read articles, take courses and exchange experiences with other teachers and, as our suggestion, with health specialists as well.

It is possible to see clearly that from these studies, and the expansion of knowledge, the repertoire of diversified activities to be worked with dyslexic students will increase. In this way, the possibility that the teacher will be able to help this student towards his or her learning will be much greater.

The student, whether a child, adolescent or adult, who has dyslexia, will face several barriers in his or her life. It is necessary to avoid that their life is full of failures for the reason of not being able to read or write properly, because depending on the type and level of these barriers will be greater or lesser. When studying English as a foreign language this student will try to overcome an even greater barrier. On your own it is possible, but quite difficult.

In these situations it is common that moments of shame, humiliation and bullying happen. There are cases where the student no longer wishes to go to school. It is not possible not to think about the emotional aspect of students, who are evolving human beings and will need to

read at all times in their social or professional life. Poorly conducted classes can traumatise for the rest of their lives and prevent learning from taking place.

We reiterate, however, that the teacher should not diagnose, but always be attentive and when knowing or perceiving something in his students should inform the coordination and the family so that the appropriate arrangements with health professionals are made.

From these perspectives, we consider that the class teacher knew how to work with the dyslexic student, because she treated her naturally, not exposing her at any time, while taking care that she did not get lost or lag behind her other classmates. In fact, she was never treated in an inferior way, her classmates and the school never bullied with her; the teacher was always attentive to the needs of the student and in evaluations she used resources so that the student had full conditions of achievement, because she knew that the young girl did not have any disabilities, just a way of learning different from other students.

References

- ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE DISLEXIA (ABD) <http://www.dislexia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Como-interagir-com-o-disléxico-em-sala-de-aula-Leis.pdf>, acesso em 29.jan.2020.
- ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE DISLEXIA (AND). <http://andislexia.org.br/>, acesso em 29.jan.2020.
- BRITISH DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION (BDA). Teaching for Neurodiversity. <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/educators/teaching-for-neurodiversity/webinar-training-teaching-for-neurodiversity>, acesso em 01.fev.2020.
- BARREIRA, M.; CABRAL, F.A.; FERNANDES, A.M. Entender para incluir. Guia CNA para o trabalho com alunos com necessidades educacionais especiais. Editora CNA, São Paulo, 2019.
- CENTRO DE REFERÊNCIA MARIO COVAS. Acesso em 17 novembro de 2020, http://www.crmariocovas.sp.gov.br/pdf/diretrizes_p1130-1133_c.pdf.
- DYSLEXIA INTERNATIONAL. <https://dyslexia-international.org/cbd-for-dyslexia/>, acesso em 20nov.2020.
- KNUDSEN, LINA. Dyslexia and Foreign Language Learning. Dissertação de Mestrado. 2012
- LUCCAS, Marcia Regina Zemella. Educação Inclusiva de Portadores de Transtornos/Distúrbios Neuropsicológicos. Apostila, Curso de Pós-Graduação à Distância em Neuroeducação. Universidade Estácio de Sá. 2014.
- MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO (MEC). Acesso em 17 de novembro de 2020, http://portal.mec.gov.br/seesp/arquivos/pdf/lei9394_ldbn1.pdf.
- ORGANIZAÇÃO MUNDIAL DA SAÚDE (OMS). *International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems: ICD-10*. Version: 2010. Disponível em: <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2010/en#/F81.0>, acesso em 20nov. 2020.
- TONELLI, J. R. A. A “Dislexia” e o Ensino-Aprendizagem da Língua Inglesa. Tese de Doutorado. Londrina. 2012.
- VYGOTSKY, L. S. A formação Social da Mente. Martins Fontes. São Paulo. 1991.

Contact email: silvinhamarianascimento@gmail.com