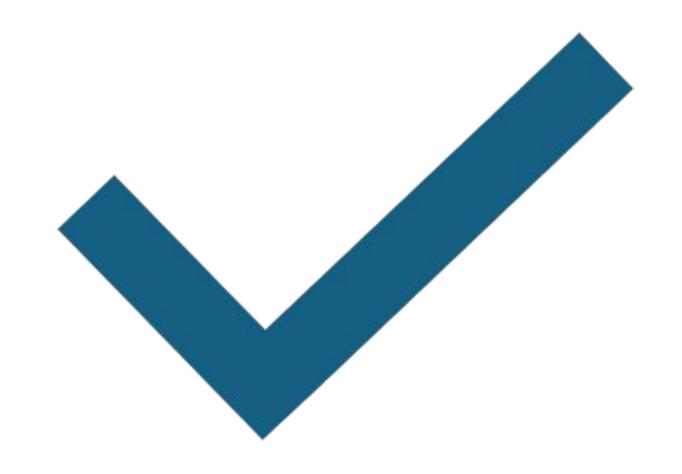# Adult learners with dyslexia and English as an additional language: assessing and teaching

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Presentation objectives

- To define the main characteristics of students who have EAL and dyslexia

- To Identify dyslexia in international students

- To highlight the main five sources of information used to identify dyslexia in students who have EAL

- To discuss the main challenges faced by students who have EAL and dyslexia

- To analyse some of the main impacts of dyslexia on language learning and studying

- To evaluate some of the main learning skills affected by dyslexia on students who have EAL

- To explore how we can assess students who have EAL for dyslexia and

- How we can support students who have EAL and dyslexia

The characteristics of the students

Who are the students ?

- The statistics from the Office for National Statistics states 20.6% of adults in the UK education system are known to speak English as an additional language(ONS, 2019).In addition, research suggests 1 in 10 people will be affected by dyslexia (Dyslexia Action, n.d.; BDA, n.d.).

- Considering this evidence, we can assume that a teacher is likely to be presented with an adult learning EAL with dyslexia at some point in their teaching career

Task

- In the chat space write down some of the main characteristics of students who have EAL and dyslexia

Characteristics of students who have EAL and dyslexia

- EAL students are not a homogenous group; they can include students who:

- -have spent most of their lives in England and had a long history of education using English as the language of instruction

- -have newly arrived in the country

- -have studied English as a foreign language for varying parts of their educational career,

- -have had no grounding in English at all.

- -enter the mainstream classroom with very limited English,

- -are fluent in English but speak one or more languages at home

- -are literate in their own language

- -have had extreme difficulty acquiring literacy skills, because of their Dyslexia or lack of educational opportunity.

- -may not realise that they have an underlying difficulty because their first language is highly transparent

- -speak English only outside the home. speak, hear, read, and access television and digital media only in their mother tongue. (Toohey, 2011).

Identifying dyslexia in international students

- There are various multi-dimensional issues associated with identifying Dyslexia in EAL students which include:

- -Understanding the cultural, and educational backgrounds of students

- It is important to access information about the educational, cultural and language background of the students and also how inclusive the previous learning environment was including teaching strategies and any disruptions in learning

- -Establishing some of the differences between 'expected and 'unexpected' EAL mistakes

- This can only be achieved by investigating some of the characteristics of the students' home languages, the level and extent of their L1 knowledge and learning and other factors such as whether multi languages are spoken

Identifying dyslexia in international students

- Often the writing issues associated with second language difficulties such as missing words, fragmented sentences, subject verb agreement resemble those found in the work of a student with Dyslexia (Tudhope 2014).

- It is then important to investigate whether the students' evidence other features associated with Dyslexia like organisation, time management, processing speeds and concentration.

- In addition, there may be inconsistencies between oral and written abilities.

Main five sources of information used to identify dyslexia in students who have EAL

- 1.**Cultural and religious background**

- For example: Family religion dietary requirements, festivals/customs observed cultural and religious factors affecting dress, social and cultural background,

- 2.**Family details and history**

- For example: details of family members, recent or past separations from family

- 3.**Language history, including current usage of L1 and L2**

- For example: Language(s) spoken at home, reading/writing skills in home language(s) Experience/competence in English, any other languages spoken with family/community, Extra English tuition, family history of specific learning difficulties;

Main five areas of information

- 4.**School and college history**, including past and current EAL and SEN support and attendance at community/religious classes

- For example: Previous schooling in the UK and abroad Community/religious school attendance, extended visits abroad, environment/opportunity to learn, familiarity with learning and teaching styles, Trauma ensuing from experiences of a new cultural/linguistic/educational Environment or the reason for the move to a new country

- 5.**Medical history**

- For example: Relevant/important medical information, physical development Emotionally stressful periods, social conditions, use of aids for learning, experience of speech difficulties; details of treatment receive, early speech development in mother tongue /delayed

What are the main challenges faced by students who have EAL and Dyslexia ?

Some of the Main challenges faced by learners

- 1. Phonological Processing Difficulties: Dyslexia is often characterised by difficulties in phonological processing, which is the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. This can pose a challenge when learning the sound-letter correspondences and pronunciation rules of a new language.

- 2. Working Memory Limitations: Dyslexic learners may have working memory limitations, which can hinder their ability to hold and manipulate new language information, such as vocabulary, grammar rules, and sentence structures. This can make it more difficult for them to comprehend and produce language in a second language context.

More main challenges

- 3. Orthographic Differences: Dyslexic learners may struggle with the orthographic differences between their native language and the second language. Each language has its own set of spelling patterns, rules, and irregularities, which can present additional obstacles for learners with dyslexia who already have difficulties with decoding and word recognition.

- 4. Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension: Dyslexic learners may have challenges in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension in both their first and second languages. Difficulties with decoding, word recognition, and fluency can impact their ability to understand and interpret written texts, particularly in a more complex second language context.

- 5. Limited Instructional Support: Learners with dyslexia may face limited instructional support or appropriate interventions specifically tailored to their needs in a second language context. Teachers and educators may not be aware of the specific challenges that dyslexic learners face, resulting in less targeted interventions and support.

Some of the main impacts of dyslexia on language learning and studying

Task

- In the chat space note down some of the main impacts that dyslexia can have on language learning and studying

Some of the main impacts on learning

- **Processing ability**
- Students with dyslexia tend to take time to read, respond to questions and to process information which can impact on their ability to decode text and the processing of new vocabulary, spelling, recalling, and organising information
- **Metacognition**
- When students with dyslexia struggle with metacognition this can create problems for the development of independent learning and autonomous learning skills. By developing metacognition, they will be able to master the most effective ways of learning and be able to tailor them to meet their individual needs

Some of the main impacts on learning

- **Concentration span**

- Students with Dyslexia tend to have a shorter concentration span and hence it is more difficult for them to focus for long periods. In particular, visual attention issues can impact on single word identification, and complex reading comprehension(Chen et al, 2016)

- -**Long term memory (LTM)**

- Students with Dyslexia tend to have difficulties with LTM. This can result in problems with representing, storing. processing and retrieving sounds and with visual word processing. This can affect spelling and reading

- -**Working memory (WM)**

- Students with Dyslexia tend to have weak working memories which affects their ability to manipulate and retain information over short periods. This can have an impact on their complex reasoning, multi -tasking, organisation, recall, concentration, and general phonological learning

Some of the impacts

- **Self-organisation**
- When students with Dyslexia display this difficulty it can affect their verbal fluency, their letter recall and their ability to generate and execute problem solving strategies even when given goal directed tasks (Levin, 1990)
- **Self confidence**
- A number of studies suggest that students with Dyslexia often struggle with a lack of self-concept and self-esteem which is the result of their previous educational experiences which impact on their motivation and their ability to achieve (O' Byrne et al, 2019)

Task

- What kind of learning skills would be affected by dyslexia for a student with EAL ?

- Why would this be the case ?

- Note down some answers in the side bar, please.

Some of the main learning skills affected

- Reading
- Writing
- Oral skills
- Academic skills

Reading

Difficulties because of dyslexia issue

The decoding and reading of individual words

Slow speed of cognitive processing

Ineffective visual processing

Problems with working memory

Difficulties because of second language barriers

Unfamiliar vocabulary in texts

Unfamiliar phonics

Lack of knowledge of language structure

Lack of familiarity with generic conventions of the text

Writing

Difficulties because of dyslexia

Processing speech sounds

Phonics

Speed of processing

Problems with motor skills and penmanship

Difficulties with organisation and time management

Difficulties because of second language

Unfamiliar vocabulary

Lack of understanding of selling conventions

Issues with syntax and word order

Lack of knowledge over grammatical conventions

Difficulties with generic textual conventions

Oral skills

Difficulties because of dyslexia

Speed of processing and retrieval of phonological information

Inability to concentrate for long periods

Lapses in auditory working memory which can mean that students with dyslexia struggle to learn new skills implicitly

Poor self-confidence in speaking in public

Difficulties because of second language

Lack of understanding of language structure

Lack of subject specialist vocabulary

Lack of self confidence in speaking in L2

Academic skills

Difficulties because of dyslexia

Speed of processing information that can impact on note taking for instance

Difficulties of retrieving subject specialist vocabulary from long term memory which can affect comprehension
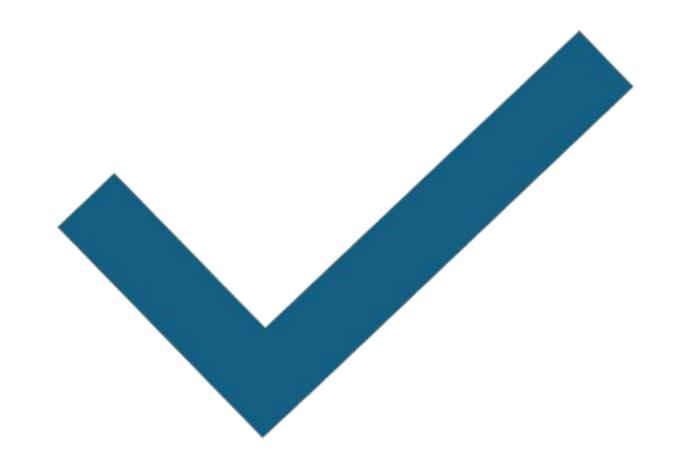
Inability to concentrate for long periods

Problems with multi taking which can affect assignment completion

Difficulties because of second language

Adjusting to differing academic expectations such as teaching methods, level of student independence (Tudhope, 2014)

Difficulties in comprehending longer texts can result from either word-level reading problems or from a global language comprehension deficit

How can we assess students for dyslexia who have EAL ?

Assessment

- Researchers have found that non-native speakers with dyslexia are sometimes less likely to be identified, while at other times, they are over-identified.

- Schools and colleges may fail to identify dyslexia by attributing any English reading and writing difficulties to their status as English learners, even if those students also exhibit characteristics of dyslexia.

- On the other hand, a student with limited opportunities for developing English oral language proficiency and English literacy might be increasingly likely to be misidentified with dyslexia as they progress in school, when the issue might be limited skills due to lack of exposure to English.

Task

- Using the chat facility suggest some of the main barriers to the effective assessment of dyslexia in students who have EAL

Barriers to effective assessment

- 1. Language interference: Multi-lingual children may experience interference between their languages, making it difficult to separate dyslexic symptoms from typical language transfer or development errors.

- 2. Language proficiency: Multi-lingual children often have varying levels of proficiency in each language, and dyslexic symptoms may manifest differently in each language. This variation can make it challenging to determine whether the difficulties stem from dyslexia or simply from language proficiency issues.

- 3. Cultural and educational factors: Cultural and educational differences can impact the assessment process. Dyslexia may be perceived and diagnosed differently in different cultures, leading to potential under- or over-identification of dyslexia in multi-lingual children.

Barriers to effective assessment

- 4. Assessment tools and measures: Many traditional dyslexia assessment tools and measures are designed for monolingual populations, and their validity and reliability for multi-lingual children may be limited. There is a need for culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools that can accurately identify dyslexic symptoms in multi-lingual children.

- 5. Dynamic nature of language acquisition: Language acquisition is a dynamic process, especially for multi-lingual children. Dyslexic symptoms may change or even disappear as language skills develop. This fluidity makes it important to consider the child's language development trajectory when assessing dyslexia in multi-lingual populations.

Some assessment approaches

- Ask the student about educational background re: first language teaching in reading and writing, as well as teaching in English language and literacy.

- Ask about the student's ability to read and write in the native language. If a student has difficulty in their native language, that might point toward dyslexia.

- Assess spoken English as this will affect the ability to learn to read and write English.

- Ask about family history for Dyslexia or other related conditions which should then be should be documented

assessment approaches

- Focus assessment on reading fluency and spelling skills rather than writing and decoding if learners have 'transparent' first languages include:-

- Word reading skills, including reading of real words and pseudo-words

- Word reading fluency, including accuracy and rate

- Sentence and paragraph reading fluency, including accuracy, prosody, and rate

- Reading comprehension at the sentence and paragraph level.

- If possible, compare performance with similar learners with similar native languages and background experiences

Supporting students

Three sets of general principles

- NALDIC core principles of support (1998)
- Universal Design for Learning (2014)
- Multi-Contextual vocabulary approach for young adult learners (Hutchings and Mortimer, 2016)

Core principles of support (NALDIC, 1999)

- Using UDL as the basis for planning
- Activating prior knowledge in the student
- The provision of a rich contextual background to make the input comprehensible
- Actively encouraging comprehensible output
- Making key grammatical elements explicit
- Developing learner independence

Using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL)(Meyer et. al. 2014)

- Multiple means of representation
- Multiple means of action and expression
- Multiple means of engagement

Multiple means of representation

- Use different ways to prompt learner comprehension including background knowledge, critical features, guiding the processing of information and visualisation

- Provide options for language, Mathematical expressions and symbols through the classifying of language, syntax and structure, the decoding of text and mathematical symbols, and developing understanding across languages using multiple media

- Provide options for perception including customising informational displays and visual and auditory alternatives

- E.g. using different forms of audio-visual media

Multiple means of action and expression

- Provide options for the development of executive functions including individual goal setting, supporting the planning of self-development and self-monitoring of progress
- Provide options or expression and communication including multiple design media and communication to support practice and performance
- Provide options for physical action include varying methods for response and navigation, tools and assistive technologies
- E.g. using a range of different scaffolding techniques both offline and online

Multiple means of engagement

- Provide options for self -regulation including promoting motivational expectations, facilitating coping skills and developing and supporting self - assessment and reflection

- Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence including the understanding of goals, varying challenges and demands, promoting collaboration and increasing mastery orientated feedback

- Provide options for promoting different levels of interest including optimising autonomy, learning relevance and value

- E.g. develop opportunities for peer and self assessment

Task

- Using the chat provide three examples for each category of support and explain why they have been successful for you.

Some UDL examples

- **Multiple means of representation:**
- Provide Games, Puzzles, word searches
- Realia- 'real world into the class'
- Use graphic organisers
- **Multiple means of action and expression:**
- Self- questioning and thinking aloud
- Design tasks using social media like Tik Tok or Pinterest
- **Multiple means of engagement:**
- Pair reading
- Varying modes of feedback, online,. Audio, video , podcasts

The multi contextual approach(2014)

- The multi-contextual method of vocabulary instruction is a teaching approach that focuses on providing learners with multiple opportunities to encounter and engage with new vocabulary words in various meaningful contexts.

- It recognises that vocabulary acquisition is not a one-size-fits-all process and that learners benefit from exposure to words in different situations, texts, and contexts. This method aims to develop a deep and interconnected understanding of vocabulary by emphasising the importance of using words in authentic and relevant ways.

Characteristics of the multi contextual approach

- One characteristic of the multi-contextual method is the use of authentic materials. Instead of relying solely on isolated vocabulary lists or decontextualised exercises, this approach incorporates real-world materials such as articles, videos, books, and conversations. By exposing learners to vocabulary words in authentic contexts, they can grasp the meaning, usage, and nuances of words more effectively.

- Another key characteristic is the integration of vocabulary across different subject areas. Instead of limiting vocabulary instruction to language learning lessons, the multi-contextual method encourages teachers to incorporate vocabulary development across various content areas. This approach recognises that vocabulary is not isolated to language alone but is deeply embedded in other disciplines.

Characteristics of the multi contextual approach

- The multi-contextual method also emphasises interactive and collaborative learning experiences. Learners are encouraged to engage in discussions, debates, presentations, and projects that require the use of new vocabulary words. This active participation and interaction help solidify understanding and promote higher-order thinking skills.

- Additionally, collaborative activities provide opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, clarify vocabulary usage, and hear different perspectives on word meanings and applications.

- Furthermore, this approach recognises the importance of repetition and reinforcement. Learners encounter vocabulary words in multiple contexts, reinforcing their understanding and retention. Rather than relying on rote memorisation, this method encourages learners to encounter words repeatedly over time, allowing for more connections to be made and a deeper understanding to develop

Task

- Using the chat provide some examples of how you might develop vocabulary using a multi contextual approach

Some ideas

- Using board games like Balderdash, Taboo, Just a Minute
- Promoting word banking amongst students
- Using Dictogloss as a teaching strategy

- Any questions?

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