Abstract

Learning to read and write depends on abilities that are language related but that go beyond the ordinary abilities required for speaking and listening. Research has shown that the success of learners, whether they are children or adults, is related to the degree to which they are aware of the underlying phonological structure of words. Poor readers are often unable to segment words into their phonological constituents and may have other phonological deficiencies as well. Dyslexia is defined as an unexpected difficulty in learning to read. Students with dyslexia are impacted by a gap between their intellectual level and their reading level. The condition also effects other school-related skills. Consequently, dyslexics struggle copying with many of the activities that make up a school day (spelling, writing, and reading). Tragically, those daily academic struggles can inform some bleak and discouraging internal conversations. Dyslexics look around the room and see that certain basic skills come more easily to their peers and they commonly make the unsurprising, yet erroneous, determination that school is not for them. To reinforce this cycle further, their humiliating struggles can lead to an all-out retreat from class participation and assignments, furthering the idea that they have low capacity for achievement. Therefore it is absolutely essential that teachers need to be provided with orientation about the Dyslexia disorder so that they can understand and help students with dyslexia, and also spread the knowledge to others on the matter for further support.

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing are among the central skills that people need in order to fully participate in the society and be a part of its culture. They accompany our life from the very early years through bedtime stories read by our parents, then becoming one of the critical predictors of school success, and finally being among the central skills used in most of the professions we choose. Therefore, the undeniable importance of developing reading and writing competence from the very beginning of one’s education has been on the spotlight of the educational systems around the world and formulated in educational laws.
However, not every child finds it equally easy to learn the first letters and become successful at developing literacy skills. Children with specific learning difficulties, like dyslexia, may struggle considerably to perform a reading or spelling activity which for others would seem easy and obvious (Nijakowska, 2010). Dyslexia is often referred to as a hidden disability because it does not have outwardly visible signs that easily indicate to others that there is an issue, which has contributed to the problem of confusion and misperceptions (Shaywitz, 2003). In many cases dyslexia is still referred to as a defect and has a stigma that belittles a person’s sense of ability and worth.

1.1 Meaning

“Dyslexia” is a compound noun, deriving from the Greek prefix “dys”, which means difficult, painful or abnormal and the word “lexis”, which means the words of language. So, dyslexia means having difficulty with words or language. Since it is a difficulty with language skills, it results in problems with reading, writing, spelling, talking (and using numbers). This implies that people with dyslexia have more difficulty accessing written information and, as side effect, this impedes the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. Moreover, there are brain structure, brain function, and genetics studies confirming the biological foundations of dyslexia. Not only this, the most frequent way to detect a child with dyslexia is by low-performance at school.

1.2 Definitions of Dyslexia

World Federation of Neurology (1968): They defined dyslexia as, “a disorder in children who, despite conventional classroom experience, fail to attain the language skills of reading, writing and spelling commensurate with their intellectual ability”

The Research Group on Developmental Dyslexia of the World Federation of Neurology (1996): Dyslexia is, “a disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and sociocultural opportunity. It depends on fundamental cognitive disabilities, which are frequently constitutional in origin”

British Dyslexia Association (1996): A complex neurological condition which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect many areas of learning and function, and may be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. One or more of these areas may be affected. Numeracy, notational skills, motor function and organizational skills may also be involved. However, it is particularly related to mastering written language, although oral language may be affected to some degree.

II. TYPES OF DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is more frequently developmental. However, acquired dyslexia also exists when specific disorders of reading or writing occur after a brain injury. Dyslexia occurs along a continuum and varies in severity, being a persistent and chronic condition.

Researchers broadly agree on three different kinds of dyslexia: phonological, surface and deep dyslexia. However, the delimitation of these three types is not clear and symptoms of different types of dyslexia overlap.
Phonological dyslexia: Phonological dyslexia is a reading disorder characterized by impairment in non-word reading ability. Phonological dyslexics use a visual reading route (read words at once). Phonological dyslexics remember an orthographic and phonological vocabulary.

Surface dyslexia: Surface dyslexia is characterized by poor reading of low frequency irregular words, coupled with accurate reading of non-words. Errors made in reading irregular words tend to be regularizations. Surface dyslexics use a phonological reading route (grapheme-to-phoneme conversion rules). Surface dyslexics encounter problems when using the grapheme to phoneme conversion rules.

Deep dyslexia: People with deep dyslexia present semantic errors related to a lack of semantic representation retrieval, such as substitutions of entire words among others.

III. DYSLEXIA SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Dyslexia comes in many forms and presents itself differently in different people. But there are still some telltale signs that teachers can look out for in the classroom:

1. Reading at a level well below the expected level for the age of the child.
2. Problems in processing and understanding what he or she hears.
3. Difficulty in comprehending rapid instructions.
4. Difficulty in copying notes from the board while a teacher is lecturing as it requires students to read, listen and write at the same time.
5. Trouble following more than one command at a time.
6. Problems in perceiving something in sequence and also in remembering the sequence (putting letters and words in wrong order while reading and writing like felt as left, act as cat etc. and omission of letters i.e. ncat for cart, wet for went etc.).
7. Inversion of letters-numbers (3 for ε).
8. Changing, missing or adding letters in the same word.
9. Inability to sound out the pronunciation of an unfamiliar word.
10. Inability to distinguish between the sounds of vowels and difficulty in rhyming.

IV. TEACHER MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DYSLEXIA

There are a number of misconceptions around discussions of dyslexia. Misconceptions that teachers have about dyslexia can have profound implications for their students (Colson M Jeanne, “Teacher Training on Teaching Students with Dyslexia”, 2013.pp.16-17)

1. Dyslexia is a visual defect: It was believed for many years that altering print including the use of color overlays would assist students with dyslexia. However, over the years these theories and techniques have demonstrated little effect for assisting students with dyslexia.
2. Dyslexia is a verbal defect: While dyslexia is a language-based problem the issue is not with verbalization, it is with processing.
3. Word reversal is the dominant indicator of dyslexia: While some individuals with dyslexia may occasionally reverse letters, it cannot be used as a diagnostic tool, and it is not universal.
4. All students with dyslexia have similar characteristics but to different degrees: Dyslexia comes in many shapes and forms and what is true for one student may not be for another.

5. If individuals with dyslexia can read a passage, then they will also be able to comprehend what they have read: Reading comprehension can be extremely difficult for individuals with dyslexia because they are focusing on reading the words and not understanding the text.

6. Dyslexia is not hereditary: Most students with dyslexia have at least one parent who also has dyslexia.

V. ISSUES FACED BY A DYSLEXIC

**Loss of confidence:** A child’s early years are spent developing their self-image. If these years are full of frustrations from school, they will lead to feelings of inferiority. If not helped quickly this can lead to feeling powerless and incompetent. Research also suggests that these feelings of inferiority develop by the age of ten. After this age, it becomes extremely difficult to help children develop a positive self-image.

1) **Anxiety:** Anxiety is the most frequent emotional symptom reported by dyslexic adults. Dyslexics become fearful because of their constant frustration and confusion in school. These feelings are aggravated by the inconsistencies of dyslexia. Because they may anticipate failure, entering new situations can become extremely anxiety provoking. Anxiety causes human beings to avoid whatever frightens them. The dyslexic is no exception. However, many teachers and parents misinterpret this avoidance behavior as laziness. In fact, the dyslexic’s hesitancy to participate in school activities such as homework is related more to anxiety and confusion than to apathy.

2) **Depression:** This same series of frustrations can lead certain children to depression. Signs of depression in children are:
   - Child has negative thoughts about themselves
   - Child tends to view the world negatively
   - Child lacks hope or an ability to imagine positive things in the future

3) **Anger:** Many of the emotional problems caused by dyslexia occur out of frustration with school or social situations. Social scientists have frequently observed that frustration produces anger. This can be clearly seen in many dyslexics. The obvious target of the dyslexic’s anger would be schools and teachers. However, it is also common for the dyslexic to vent his anger on his parents. Mothers are particularly likely to feel the dyslexic’s wrath. Often, the child sits on his anger during school to the point of being extremely passive. However, once he is in the safe environment of home, these very powerful feelings erupt and are often directed toward the mother. Ironically, it is the child’s trust of the mother that allows him to vent his anger. However, this becomes very frustrating and confusing to the parent who is desperately trying to help their child.

**Loss of interest or zeal for learning:** If a child is consistently performing below expectations and no matter how hard he tries, he is still falling short, it is easy to understand that he may lose interest in learning.
Low tolerance or patience with difficulty: Without regular success, kids with dyslexia can develop a low tolerance to difficulty, causing them to give up quickly when a project is perceived as being too hard.

Family Problems: Interestingly, sibling rivalry is common in homes where one or more children are dyslexic. The kids without dyslexia can feel jealous of all of the attention, time and money being spent on the dyslexic child. This kind of negative attention, of course, is unwanted by the child with dyslexia and can cause more stress.

Parents themselves may misunderstand dyslexia and insist that the child just work harder, which doesn’t work.

VI. ROLE OF TEACHERS

- Teachers need to offer consistent, ongoing encouragement and support. Teacher should always be open to listen to children's feelings.
- Teachers must reward effort, not just "the product". For the dyslexic, grades should be less important than progress.
- While denying unacceptable behavior, teachers must not inadvertently discourage the dyslexic child. Words such as "lazy" or "incorrigible" can seriously damage the child's self–image.
- Teacher should help students to set realistic goals for themselves. Most dyslexic students set perfectionistic and unattainable goals. By helping the child set an attainable goal, teachers can change the cycle of failure.
- Teacher should make the child to recognize his or her successes. To do so, the child needs to achieve success in some area of life. Teachers need to find out their interests and ways to relate the child's interests to the demands of real life.
- Many opportunities exist in our schools for dyslexics to help others. One important area is peer tutoring. If any dyslexic student does well in mathematics or science, teacher can ask him to tutor other classmate who is struggling. Perhaps that student can reciprocate as a reader for the dyslexic student. Tutoring younger children, especially other dyslexics, can be a positive experience for everyone involved.
- And finally, teacher must understand the cognitive and affective problems caused by dyslexia. Then they must design strategies that will help the dyslexic, like every other child, to find joy and success in academics and personal relationships.

VII. STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING DYSLEXIA PROBLEMS

A teacher should learn everything he/she can about dyslexia. There are many strategies that teachers can adopt to help dyslexics. Dyslexics learn better by doing than by reading.

- Share everything you know about dyslexia with parents of dyslexic kids
- Find materials with a large font (and write in large font on the board)
- Use a structured approach and find materials with familiar structure throughout
- Encourage the student with praise and understanding
• Do not expect the student to read aloud in front of the class
• Find out the particular weaknesses that a student has, and help the student in recognizing these
• Teach spelling, but don’t mark the student on spelling alone
• Find ways to increase the self-confidence of the student
• Seat the student close to the board
• Provide audio lessons
• Provide multisensory lessons (teaching that engages more than one sense like sight, hearing, movement and touch at the same time.
• Take test verbally
• Introduce memory training techniques
• Integrate technology and audiovisual resources
• Identify learning styles that work well for your learner (pairs, groups, tutors, etc.)
• Work with a specialist to develop an IEP (Individualized Education Program)
• Help other students in understanding dyslexia to prevent bullying.
• Provide a calm and quiet environment with extra time for tests (or a private room)
• Provide instructions for assignments and tasks in small steps
• Invite people with dyslexia into the classroom (or discuss the success of some famous dyslexics)
• Grade student based on schoolwork rather than just tests
• Review regularly

VIII. CONCLUSION

Robert Buck once said, “If children can’t learn the way we teach, then we have to teach the way they learn”. Worldwide, 10% of the population has dyslexia, a cognitive disability that reduces readability and comprehension of written information. Dyslexia is an elusive disability that beckons for clarity and awareness. Even if dyslexia is popularly identified with brilliant famous people, such as Steve Jobs or Steven Spielberg, dyslexia is an extremely serious problem affecting school performance of a great amount of children, among other problems. Dyslexia is not easy to detect, it is a hidden disability. Dyslexia most commonly affects phonological awareness but there is also evidence which shows that it also has an impact on coordination and balance. It is believed that students with dyslexia have difficulty automatically learning new skills or putting new skills into long-term memory. Without this level of automaticity, learning new skills can be very difficult. There is a big need of knowing the fact that dyslexia is not an inability to learn but dyslexic brain simply learns in a different manner.

The consequences of dyslexia in our present society may not be as dramatic or life-threatening as I imagined. They are socially important, since they involve learning problems at an early age that can affect the cognitive and emotional development of a child. Therefore it is important to recognize that behavioural difficulties in school, may be a sign of dyslexia. Any sign of problems in learning to read, even very early in a child’s school career, should
be taken seriously and investigated. The common assumption that the child will grow out of the problem is not a valid one in most cases. We know that early identification and early intervention can prevent most serious reading difficulties, or at least reduce the severity of them. Any school difficulties or behavioural problems should be investigated immediately. School phobia or somatic complaints that appear on school days are a sign of a possible learning disability. There is evidence that significant numbers of dyslexics are represented in populations of runaway homeless street youths, adolescent suicide victims and juvenile offenders. It is important that we recognize these difficulties early and make an attempt to eliminate them or reduce their severity.

IX. REFERENCES


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