

EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

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Dyslexia among students has been a problem for a long time. This process started when the disorder was distinguished from the basic illiteracy. Although long time has passed after that moment, the scientific community hasn't yet created enough opportunities for the students having dyslexia to study foreign languages. It is believed that students with dyslexia are not able to produce written speech while learning some different languages because it is hard for them to acquire even the knowledge of their own language. But what has been proven is that these students are totally healthy and the only problem is their lack of reading or writing ability [1, p.14].

The educational community in Kazakhstan hasn't paid much attention to the students with learning disorders such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dysgraphia. This factor has caused many problems to these students trying to study in the state schools together with people without any disorders. The cause of the issue is that people with dyslexia require some special attention while learning to read in their mother language. Accordingly, learning a foreign language can cause even more problems. So, it is usually accepted that people with learning problems should not even try to train themselves in studying. But what is known for sure is that people with dyslexia are usually talented in other spheres, such as music, physics, computer science and other various fields [2, p. 35]. They also have an amazing memory that allows them to remember the facts and the phrases word for word.

Dyslexia is described as the process, in which the mental function that causes the disorder is a gift in the truest sense of the word: a natural ability, a talent. It is something special that enhances the individual. Dyslexics don't all develop the same gifts, but they do have certain mental functions in common. Here are the basic abilities all dyslexics share:

1. They can utilize the brain's ability to alter and create perceptions (the primary ability).
2. They are highly aware of the environment.
3. They are more curious than average.
4. They think mainly in pictures instead of words.
5. They are highly intuitive and insightful.
6. They think and perceive multi-dimensionally (using all the senses).

7. They can experience thought as reality.
8. They have vivid imaginations [2, p.36].

In order to write this article, two interviews were taken from two people of different age having the disorder called dyslexia. The first interview was taken from a 23 year old American woman Heather D., who studied in a state school together with children without disorders. According to her information, she experienced such kind of relationship with her classmates that could be described as bullying at school. The cause was that she was accounted as an illiterate person. As soon as the parents and teachers discovered the disorder, they decided to let her study in her own pace with a special tutor who helped her learn the words and letters. This process was not arranged according to the alphabet, but using associations, pictures, colors, and other materials such as constructing letters from beans or writing them on sand. Heather responded that it is easier for her to read a text if it is on green or yellow background, but it is hard to read when it is on white or red background. Some special thin films can be used while reading books as a mean of helping people with dyslexia. She confirmed having the ability of playing musical instruments and claimed to be talented: not understanding the music notes she has been able to play the piano since she was six. The music, including Mozart, can be played just after hearing it without any preparation.

The second interview was taken from a young girl from Kazakhstan. She is 8 years old and studies in a Physical-Mathematical School. She claims to have good results in mathematics. The problem is that the language tests, especially quizzes are usually graded by two points out of five. Aigerim's mother says that the problem happens in English and other languages only. Her handwriting style looks not very clear, as well as the writing speed is low as she writes 8 words in 20 minutes. But what is amazing is that she is able to remember long texts, no matter in English, Russian, or Kazakh. Moreover, she can reproduce everything that the teacher has told her during the lesson. Thus, she never needs to read the text at home. This is considered a basic symptom of dyslexia: having low ability to write or to read while having good memory or mathematical and musical talent. The list of symptoms among adults and teenagers, provided by the UK National Health Service are as follows:

- poorly organised written work that lacks expression (for example, even though they may be very knowledgeable about a certain subject, they may have problems expressing that knowledge in writing)
- difficulty planning and writing essays, letters or reports
- difficulties revising for examinations
- trying to avoid reading and writing whenever possible
- difficulty taking notes or copying
- poor spelling
- struggling to remember things such as a PIN or telephone number
- struggling to meet deadlines [3].

The problem in studying foreign language is that students with this disorder need to read a new alphabet, which appears to be a real problem if the teacher is not able to teach special things. The examples of exercises can be quite difficult for the foreign language acquisition as the teacher can be not ready to provide them for the class and for the special student. So, it is crucial for the student to have somebody who can help them and who can lead them while reading. Learning new letters in English can be a bit overwhelming for a student, and if it is a young person, learning can be

done through the materials and various things. The fact is that the adult dyslexic students are also studying to read using the same techniques: they're trying to remember new letters using pictures, drawing them on sand and salt, etc. Although it is a hard process, people still can try to learn a new language, and to succeed in that they need to spend much time. If language is more important than the ability to write or to read, students can be allowed to speak and listen only: discuss some pictures, find some special algorithms. All these processes can be done without using words as written. But if reading is required for the future occupation, it is needed to use different platforms while studying.

Educational platforms can allow these students read not only the text but create it in a special way changing the background, adjusting the script, choosing the size of the letters, reading not the text but words. This use of the platforms can help to acquire knowledge in an individual way, as each person with dyslexia is different. For somebody it is easier to read bigger letters, for another person it is considered easier to read red letters, other people cannot read as Times New Roman, so they need to have something easier and clearer to see the difference between letters. So, any platform that has various scripts in it, can provide this adjustment inside. The platform Google Classroom can be used in order to download the PDF files specially designed for students.

Nowadays, most of the study books provide the dyslexic-friendly texts of their exercises. These texts are designed in the way that the distance between the lines is bigger, the picture is not together with the text but it is just in the corner, the letters are large, and italic script is not used. Letters must be clear, but in classical way they are usually black on the white screen. Just in order to change that the students can use a different platform or an application. They can use the Photoshop or Paint 3D in order to use some filters. These filters make the background different color and create the possibility for students to read and to understand the text clearly. As for writing, several ways can be used. If the student already knows how to draw letters it doesn't mean they will not forget about that. As they have a diagnosis of dyslexia, they are never believed to be able to write without mistakes at all. Some students train themselves to write clearly, but it requires much time. So these students should not be asked or yelled at just because of their mistakes. They must be encouraged to write, no matter in what way. Because this problem can lead to various psychological consequences which will be harder to correct [4, p.108]. As for students, it is important to have some inner motivation in learning writing. The writing systems, such as Google Documents, allow the teacher to change the background color as well as the script. So, while the students are studying online, they can use this system of documents creation, and the teacher will see their progress on the way. It is needed to control the progress and create the friendly atmosphere, that's why this platform should not look like a grading system. Usually, the writing and reading material for dyslexics looks colorful and funny, and this personalization is easier to be done in different platforms including the Google Documents. As the students begin to read and write in a foreign language, it is crucial to show them that writing and reading are not the most important thing in studying. So this two activities should not take all the time of the lesson on training. The students with dyslexia are usually able to remember the facts, remember the words: how they sound, and they can reproduce them without seeing them. They can have better results than other students in different tests and other competitions, which are done in the oral way. So writing exercises, especially personalized ones, should be done implicitly. Students with dyslexia are better trained by themselves, not more than other students. And if the student needs to learn to write, they should better find a special person who will train them in a better way. The teacher's job is more to encourage and show the way how any student can learn a language, and also,

showing that language is not reading and writing only. Language is a mean of communication and communication can be done through speaking as well as through listening to a person.

Educational platforms allow to *manage daily classroom routines* – this provides help to the dyslexic students to know and do needed from them during an instructed time. The students with dyslexia should not concentrate on their problems in the communicative approach: speech and listening should not base on any written information or tables, schemes. The platforms also provide the possibility to *give more time* for completing tasks and assignments. It is important to *signal* when the teacher would like students to respond orally, allocate enough time for preparation, provide questions and issues you want to discuss in a lesson in advance, which is more practical than calling on students for fast, random responses on the way. It is quite necessary to provide regular *consultation* with students and an extended feedback. *Comparing what students have learned* is also crucial when the comparing point is the students' previous achievements, and not the success stories of their classmates. It is possible through the "grading system", which allows to build the graph of all the results the student has got. Much effort can be praised often, when the computer system sees that there is a progress. If the teacher needs to nominate a student to read the material aloud during tests and group work, and/or a scribe, the writing part can be already done for dyslexic learners, so they won't need to spend time or feel overwhelmed for stopping their classmates. One of the most important positive side effects of the platforms usage is that it is possible to vary the test conditions – provide a separate, distraction-free room, give more time to complete the test, use alternative test modes and task types. So the students can feel that not only they are under special attention, but the test system varies for everybody.

Platforms in education can solve a lot of psychological, physical, medical, educational and management problems among students with dyslexia as well as among their classmates. The classes provided with the use of platforms let the teacher vary the exercise types and provide special class organization for those with disabilities. Although the problem of studying English by people with dyslexia has been studied much all over the world, it is still not under the required attention of the university teachers, especially teachers of languages, literature, history and other subjects. Knowing the fact that the students can learn and it is not illiteracy can turn the life into the better site and this is one of the sides of a teacher's job.

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