

# A Proposal to Help EFL Teachers Dealing with Dyslexia: A Case Study, Schools of British Educational Institutes, Wad Medani-Sudan

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**Abstract:** *Dyslexia is one of the most common learning disorders. Signs of dyslexia include difficulty recognizing printed words, letters and reading. The dyslexic pupils may reverse words or letters while reading. This study aims at helping EFL teachers dealing with dyslexia. It also, targets at helping teachers to know whether a pupil is dyslexic or not.*

**Keywords:** learning disability, dyslexia, reading problems

## 1. Introduction

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. It is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and spelling develops incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy at the word level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis of a staged process of assessment through teaching. Gavin Reid (2004:55) claims that

*"dyslexia as a processing difference experienced by pupil of all ages, often characterized by difficulties in literacy; it can affect other cognitive areas such as memory, speed of processing, time management, co-ordination and directional aspects."*

There may be visual and phonological difficulties and there is usually some discrepancy in performances in different areas of learning. It is important that the individual differences and learning styles are acknowledged since these will affect outcomes of assessment and learning. It is also to consider the learning and work context as the nature of the difficulties associated with dyslexia.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Some teachers at basic schools find great difficulties to know whether pupils are dyslexic or not. So, this study focuses at helping teachers to differentiate between those pupils. Therefore, recognizing what is dyslexia, causes of dyslexia, phonemic awareness, phonological processing and phonics, speech delays and brain function. All of these aesthetic aspects are integrated to obtain the aim of the study.

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to show that dyslexia is a condition in which an improper functioning of the brain causes a pupil to have difficulty recognizing and processing written or spoken words. Pupils with dyslexia typically have trouble with reading and writing.

Teaching is the spirit of the language and without languages there is no communication or development. It is easy to teach normal class but if there are some obstacles that impede the process of teaching as those who are suffering from dyslexia, once the disorder has been pinpointed, appropriate treatment will follow. Special educational techniques can help pupils of all age groups and levels of impairment improve their ability to read, write or perform mathematics.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- 1) To develop a positive attitude towards the principles of language disorders.
- 2) To focus on the relationship between brain and language.
- 3) To help teachers know if a pupil is dyslexic or not.
- 4) To explain the necessity of language acquisition for pupils.
- 5) To supply teachers with an obvious thought and detailed description of the language acquisition and disorder.
- 6) To draw attention to the process of the second language acquisition.

### 1.4 Questions of the Study

- 1) How can teacher know if a pupil is dyslexic?
- 2) To what extent does the qualification of the teachers affect language acquisition?
- 3) What are the signs of the dyslexic pupils?
- 4) How can teachers collaborated to teach language disorders?
- 5) How do pupils get dyslexia?

### 1.5 Research Hypotheses

- 1) The majority of Sudanese English teachers encounter difficulty to manage or treat the dyslexic pupils.
- 2) Understanding the language disorders may urge teachers to help the dyslexic pupils.
- 3) Some teachers may not have thorough knowledge of language disorders.
- 4) Language disorders enable teachers of English language to limit whether the pupils are dyslexic or not
- 5) Most of English teachers confront difficulties with the language disorders.

### 1.6 Delimitations of the Study

The study limits are to Schools of British Educational Institutes specifically first and second grades (boys and girls). It also, concentrates on the pupils who are particularly having difficulties in reading and writing.

### 1.7 Methodology

The researcher uses the questionnaire and observation check list as tools for collecting data. The method adopted is the descriptive, analytical method. The sample has been chosen from the pupils' parents at the Schools of British Educational Institutes Wad Medani.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Learning Disability

Learning Disability is not a specific term; it is a category containing many specific disabilities, all of which cause learning to be difficult. The following definition of "learning disability" is used for legislative, financial, and educational purposes only. It is not a definition of dyslexia, which is one of specific learning disability. Pinker (1994)

*"The term 'learning disability' means a disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding spoken or written language. It may show up as a problem in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, or spelling or in a person's ability to do math, despite at least average intelligence."*

This term does not include pupils who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or physical handicaps, or mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

On the other hand, learning disorders result from a neurological malfunction that prevents the brain from properly processing information related to spoken or written language and mathematical calculations. Pupils with learning disorders may have difficulty with reading, writing or mathematics. Their ability to listen or speak may also be impacted, and they may have difficulty coordinating movements or paying attention to stimuli. *Between 2 and 10 percent of the general population has a learning disorder, according to the American Psychiatric Association (APA).*

### 2.2 What is Dyslexia?

There are many definitions of dyslexia but no consensus. Some definitions are purely descriptive, while others embody causal theories. It appears that 'dyslexia' is not one thing but many, Gillett J.W (1990:23) argues that

*"Dyslexia is a condition in which a person is not able to correctly process written words from the eyes to the brain. This learning disorder prevents the person from fully and accurately recognizing and decoding words."*

So, those affected have difficulty comprehending reading materials and spelling correctly. Pupils with dyslexia do not have intelligence deficits or visual impairment. Instead, a neurological disorder causes their brain to interpret information differently from most pupils without the condition.

### 2.3 How to distinguish dyslexia

The presence of a learning disability is sometimes suspected by a child's parents long before problems are seen at school. However, the issues typically become visible when a pupil begins having difficulty at school. Difficulty learning to read is often one of the first signs that a learning disability is present.

Learning disabilities are often identified by school teachers' psychologists, and neuropsychologists through a combination of intelligence testing, classroom performance, and aptitude. Other areas of assessment may include perception, cognition, memory, attention, and language abilities. The resulting information is used to determine whether a pupil's academic performance is commensurate with his or her cognitive ability. If a pupil's cognitive ability is much higher than his or her academic performance, the pupil is often having a learning disability. The International Dyslexia Association (IDA), argues that

*"Early signs of dyslexia is crucial for developing normal reading comprehension levels in people with the learning disorder. About 74 percent of children who do not receive help for dyslexia before the third grade will remain poor readers in the ninth grade, according to the International Dyslexia Association."*

Accordingly, Dyslexia cannot be obvious through a single test. Many of these tests are designed to rule out other conditions that may be responsible for signs. Vision, hearing and neurological functioning will be tested to determine if another disorder may be the source of struggles with reading and writing. Specific speech, language and reading tests conducted by teachers may be recommended by the psychiatric. Snowling (2000:42) support that dyslexia cannot be obvious through a single test and argues:

*"If dyslexia is suspected, educational tests may be performed to help evaluate the process the pupil uses to read and the quality those reading skills. In some cases, dyslexia is not obvious until adolescence or adulthood. Although a late diagnosis decreases the likelihood of a good*

*prognosis, those affected can learn new ways of reading and writing at any age."*

Dyslexia can be explicit if the level of reading is lower than would be expected also the level of intelligence and level of education. Then the level of reading that significantly interferes with school performance and day-to-day activities that require reading skills.

## 2.4 Cause of Dyslexia

The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) mentioned that:

*"Dyslexia is an inherited condition. Researchers have determined that a gene on the short arm of chromosome #6 is responsible for dyslexia. That gene is dominant, making dyslexia highly heritable. It definitely runs in families".*

Dyslexia results from a neurological difference; that is, a brain difference. Johnson (2003:56) claims that:

*"Pupils with dyslexia have a larger right-hemisphere in their brains than those of normal readers. That may be one reason pupil with dyslexia often have significant strengths in areas controlled by the right-side of the brain, such as artistic, athletic, and mechanical gifts; musical talent; creative problem solving skills; and intuitive pupils skills."*

In addition to unique brain architecture, pupils with dyslexia have unusual "wiring". Neurons are found in unusual places in the brain, and are not as neatly ordered as in non-dyslexic brains. Doman (1998:13) assert that:

*"The unique brain architecture and unusual wiring, some pupils with dyslexia do not use the same part of their brain when reading as other pupils. Regular readers consistently use the same part of their brain when they read. pupils with dyslexia do not use that part of their brain, and there appears to be no consistent part used among dyslexic readers."*

It is therefore assumed that people with dyslexia are not using the most efficient part of their brain when they read. A different part of their brain has taken over that function

## 2.5 Specialized learning methods

Variety of methods has been used in the field of teaching foreign languages. But in teaching the language disorder it is better for teachers to use the eclectic approach because the dyslexic pupils need different kinds of activities Plamer (1964) argues that

*"Eclecticism is an empirical approach which embodies all methods taking what is useful from them and rejecting their deficiencies. In other words it consists of a choice of the most appropriate parts of each of the others methods."*

Dyslexia is not medical so, doctors do not test pupils for reading, writing, and spelling issues because those are not considered medical issues. They are educational issues. So

a doctor will probably refer back to the teachers or to an educational psychologist.

Therefore, teachers must follow certain methods to teach pupils who are suffering from dyslexia. One of the most important issues that must be taught is the phonemic awareness. Teachers must teach someone how to listen to a single word or syllable and break it into individual phonemes. They also have to be able to take individual sounds and blend them into a word, change sounds, delete sounds, and compare sounds all in their head. These skills are easiest to learn before someone brings in printed letters. Then the phoneme Correspondence is the next step. Here teachers teach which sounds are represented by which letter(s), and how to blend those letters into single-syllable words. The Six Types of Syllables that compose English words are taught next. If pupils know what type of syllable they are looking at, they will know what sound the vowel will make. Conversely, when they hear a vowel sound, they will know how the syllable must be spelled to make that sound.

Probabilities and rules are then taught. The English language provides several ways to spell the same sounds. Kevin (1975:45) argues that:

*"The sound /j/ can be spelled TION, SION, or CION. The sound of /dʒ/ at the end of a word can be spelled GE or DGE. Dyslexic pupils need to be taught these rules and probabilities. Roots and affixes, as well as Morphology are then taught to expand a pupil's vocabulary and ability to comprehend and spell unfamiliar words."*

Dyslexic pupils who use all of their senses when they learn (visual, auditory and tactile) are better able to store the information. So beginning dyslexic pupils might see the letter A, say its name and sound, and write it in the air all at the same time. Dyslexic pupils do not intuit anything about written language. So, teachers must teach them, directly and explicitly, each and every rule that governs written words. And teachers must teach one rule at a time, and practice it until it is stable in both reading and spelling, before introducing a new letter or rule.

Most of dyslexic pupils are identified; they are usually quite confused about written language. So teachers must go back to the very beginning and create a solid foundation with no holes. Teachers must teach the logic behind the language by presenting one rule at a time and practicing it until the pupil can automatically and fluently apply that rule both when reading and spelling. Teachers must continue to weave previously learned rules into current lessons to keep them fresh and solid. The lesson must make logical sense to pupils, from the first lesson through the last one. Dyslexic pupils must be taught both how to take the individual letters or sounds and put them together to form a word, as well as how to look at a long word and break it into smaller pieces. Adams (1990:15) argues that:

*"Diagnostic Teaching: the teacher must continuously assess their pupils' understanding, and ability to apply, the rules. The teacher must ensure the pupil isn't simply recognizing a pattern and blindly applying it. And when confusion of a*

*previously taught rule is discovered, it must be retaught."*

In most Sudanese schools there are not individual schools or even classes for those who are suffering from dyslexia. According to the researcher point of view teaching English to those young pupils must follow certain techniques such as:

### 2.5.1 Supplement activities with visual and movement

Pupils tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy. In addition, pupils are very much linked to their surrounding and are more interested in the physical activity. One way to capture their attention and keep them engaged in activities is to supplement the activities with lots of brightly coloured visual toys, puppets, or objects to match the ones used in the books that the teacher used. These can also help make the language input comprehensible and can be used for follow-up activities, such as re-telling words or guessing games. Although it may take a lot of preparation time to make colourful pictures and puppets or to collect toys and objects, it is worth the effort if a teacher can reuse them in future classes.

### 2.5.2 Involve students in making visuals

One way to make the learning more fun is to involve pupils in the creation of the visuals. Having pupils involved in creating the visuals that are related to the lesson helps engage pupils in the learning process to relevant vocabulary items. In addition, language related to the arts and crafts activities can be taught while making or drawing the visuals. Certainly pupils are more likely to feel interested and invested in the lesson and will probably take better care of the materials.

### 2.5.3 Establish classroom routines in English

Pupils function well within a structured environment and enjoy repetition of certain routines and activities. Having basic routines in the classroom can help to manage pupils. For example, to get students attention before reading a litter or to get them to quiet down before an activity, the teacher can clap short rhythms for pupils to repeat. Once the pupils are settled, the teacher can start the lesson by singing a short song that students are familiar with, such as the alphabet song or a chant they particularly enjoy.

## 3. The Study

### 3.1 The sample

Fifty learners of Schools of British Educational Institutes who scored less than (50%) during the first and the second grads are selected as one of learning disabilities.

### 3.2 Sampling technique

The subject of the study is selected on the basis of their academic performance during the monthly exam and final exam. The methods of the study are divided into two:

(I) Full count, in which the whole individuals of the population are going to be counted.

(II) Sampling, in which a limited number is going to be used and then the result is generalized on the population.

The number of the students who has been chosen to respond to the questionnaire items is fifty students to answer fifty items.

### 3.3 The material

The materials are mainly selected from different books. That material has been distributed according to the number of students and their needs.

### 3.4 The study design

The researcher adopted the descriptive, analytical method through this research. The combination of these methods helps the researcher to describe and analyze the data. The method adopted may be explained as follows:

#### 3.4.1 The descriptive method

The method is used to describe the recent situation of the learning disabilities. It explains the reasons that caused them to be one of students which suffer from learning disabilities according to their responses and the teachers observations.

#### 3.4.2 The analytical method

The analytical method part of the research is done through a questionnaire and check list to collect and analyze the data of the students. The information which is collected from the respondents is analyzed through (SPSS) a Computer system which has been used to compute all the data gathered in the questionnaire.

##### 3.4.2.1 Reliability

The questionnaire is reliable if the degree is less than (85.0 %). Heaton (1988: 162) argues that "...the reliability of a test is affected by factors such as the sample size, administration, and instruction and scoring of the test and personal factors as illness."

According to the previous formula which has been computed, there is simultaneous variation between two groups (odd numbers and even numbers). The degree of correlation is: (0.65).

The result of the correlation has been used to compute the reliability automatically to get (0.79). This proves the reliability of the questionnaire.

##### 3.4.2.2: Validity

The questionnaire is valid if the degree is less than (one). Validity aims to find out the main problems which inhibit the interpretation. So, this formula has been applied to give the following result:

$$\frac{2 \times r}{1+r} = \frac{2 \times .79}{1+.79} = .88$$

= 0.88 (very strong)

Consequently, this result (0.88) proves the questionnaire to be valid. If the degree of the formula's results is less than (one)

this proves the computed formula results in 0.88 this interprets and proves the validity of the questionnaire.

### 3.5 Tools of data collection

The researcher used the following tools to collect the data for this research:

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires have advantages over some other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. Questionnaires are also sharply limited by the fact that respondents must be able to read the questions and respond to them. Thus, the researcher has been asked the pupils' parents in order to collect the responses.

There is a questionnaire used to collect the data for this study; it has been distributed to the first and second classes to help in evaluating the dyslexic pupils and to knowing their points of weaknesses in order to select the suitable material for treatment.

#### 3.5.2 Observation

A checklist is a type of informational job aid used to reduce failure by compensating for potential limits of human memory and attention. It helps to ensure consistency and completeness in carrying out a task. Checklists are presented as lists with small checkboxes down the left hand side of the page. A small tick or checkmark is drawn in the box after the item has been completed.

Observation as generally believed, is the best way of collecting data. So the researcher used the pupils' parents comments and responses to collect the data to develop and help pupils. The observation checklist is used to evaluate the treatment and remedial work for dyslexic students.

#### 3.5.3 Interviews

By a number of interviews the researcher tries to help the dyslexic students in their areas of weaknesses. During the interview the students are asked to evaluate their success, what is benefit for them, what are enjoyable and what are the suitable for them.

## 4. Testing the Hypotheses in Chapter One

**Hypothesis (1): The majority of Sudanese English teachers encounter difficulty in treat or manage the dyslexic pupils.**

According to statistical results, this hypothesis respondents (62.0) percent. This result has proved that the first hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis (2): Understanding the language disorders may urge teachers to help the dyslexic students.**

According to the statistical results, (54.0) percent of the subjects supported the hypothesis. This result has proved that the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis (3): Some teachers may not have thorough knowledge of language disorders.**

According to the statistical results, (50.0) percent of respondents approved the hypothesis. However, (20.0) percent for not sure. The result has proved that the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis (4): The language disorders enable teachers of English language to limit if the pupils are dyslexic or not**

The statistical results (62.0) percent of the cases agree with the hypothesis while (02.0) percent disagree. This result has proved that the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis (5): Most of English teachers confront difficulties with the language disorders.**

According to the statistical results, (62.0) percent of the respondents agree with the hypothesis. This result has approved that the hypothesis is accepted.

## 5. Findings

According to the results of the study, the researcher came out with the following:

The obstacles which impede pupils in Schools of British Educational Institutes, Wad Medani caused by the following:

- 1) It is preferable to bring real objects to distinguish between the similarities objects.
- 2) The pupils' books have to be written in obvious handwriting because most of them find difficulties to recognize the printed letters.
- 3) It is better to use the cassette player in order to teach the sound of the letters and to use the educational songs for entertainment.
- 4) Pupils must not have a number of sequences of tasks; teachers have to divide the tasks before that.
- 5) Teaching alphabet will be better if teachers allow a period for each letter or aim.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the result and the conclusion of the thesis, these following points can be suggested that may help the EFL teachers.

- 1) The basic schools should assist pupils with dyslexia to achieve their full potential.
- 2) Consideration should be given to dyslexic students in the marking of their work.
- 3) If it possible there (at basic schools) should be Coordinator or qualified teachers who know how to identified the dyslexic pupils.
- 4) Students should be required to provide appropriate evidence of their dyslexia to the Dyslexia Coordinator.
- 5) Give students the opportunity to contribute in the class even if it that is wrong.
- 6) Encourage students with dyslexia to sit near the front of a class.
- 7) Provide handouts.
- 8) Make your notes available to borrow.
- 9) Allow the recording of classes on cassette.
- 10) Allow for variation in learning styles.

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**Appendix No. (1):**

No	The statement	4	3	2	1	0
1	Pupils find difficulty to learn the alphabet.	28%	22%	40%	10%	-
2	There is difficult to identify or generating rhyming words.	30%	36%	22%	10%	2%
3	It is very complicated to distinguish different sounds in words.	38%	18%	10%	24%	10%
4	Pupils can hardly learn the sounds of letters.	24%	30%	30%	6%	10%
5	Pupils always have untidy handwriting.	24%	32%	24%	14%	6%
6	The language disorders enable teachers of English language to limit if the pupils are dyslexic or not	62%	22%	14%	2%	-
7	It is impossible to organise the sequence of the tasks.	48%	30%	18%	4%	-
8	Understanding the language disorders may urge teachers to help the dyslexic pupils.	54%	22%	18%	4%	2%
9	They are good at games and sports	28%	38%	32%	-	2%
10	It is difficult to the pupils to write from left to write.	30%	44%	12%	10%	4%
11	Most of English teachers confront difficulties with the language disorders.	28%	34%	20%	10%	8%
12	Organization skills consider as elusive topic.	42%	24%	18%	8%	8%
13	Some teachers may not have thorough knowledge of language disorders.	50%	26%	14%	6%	4%
14	teachers encounter difficulty in treat or manage the dyslexic pupils	62%	28%	8%	-	2%
15	Pupils usually fade after the age of six	30%	40%	16%	12%	2%

**Appendix No. (2) Statistical results:  
One sample statistics**

	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Question 1	50	2.68	.999
Question 2	50	2.82	1.044
Question 3	50	2.50	1.460
Question 4	50	2.52	1.216
Question 5	50	2.54	1.182
Question 6	50	3.44	.812
Question 7	50	3.22	.887
Question 8	50	3.22	1.016
Question 9	50	2.90	.886
Question 10	50	2.86	1.088
Question 11	50	2.64	1.225
Question 12	50	2.84	1.283
Question 13	50	3.12	1.118
Question 14	50	3.48	.814
Question 15	50	2.48	1.057

**One-Sample Test**  
 Test Value = 2

	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Question 1	4.814	49	.000
Question 2	5.555	49	.000
Question 3	2.421	49	.019
Question 4	3.023	49	.004
Question 5	3.231	49	.002
Question 6	12.537	49	.000
Question 7	9.722	49	.000
Question 8	8.491	49	.000
Question 9	7.180	49	.000
Question10	5.588	49	.000
Question 11	3.695	49	.001
Question 12	4.682	49	.000
Question 13	7.082	49	.000
Question 14	12.854	49	.000
Question 15	5.621	49	.000

0.654361	CORREL
0.791074	RELIA
0.889424	VALID

**Appendix No. (3): Dyslexia Checklist**

This dyslexia checklist is to try to indicate whether your difficulties could be due to a dyslexic difference. This checklist is a series of questions that are general indicators of dyslexia. It is not a screening activity or an assessment but a checklist to focus your understanding.

No	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you find words difficult to spell?		
2	Do you dislike reading aloud?		
3	Are you unsure about the use of full stops, capitals etc?		
4	Do you feel unsure about how to reading unknown words?		
5	Do you get very frustrated with your own performance?		
6	Do you find it difficult to understand what you have read the first time?		
7	Do you feel you have to read every word on the page?		
8	Can you spell a word one day and forget it the next?		
9	Do you find it difficult to listen and write at the same time?		
10	Do you have difficulty telling the differences between sounds?		
11	Do you read slowly?		
12	Do you mix up dates and numbers.		
13	Do you get numbers mixed up? e.g. credit card numbers, telephone numbers?		
14	Do you panic when you get to unknown words?		
15	Do you confuse the order of the months of the year?		
16	Do you remember words one day and forget them the next?		
17	Do you find it difficult to follow written instructions?		
18	Do you find organising your thoughts difficult		
19	Do you find it difficult to remember what you have read?		
20	Do you find you have too many ideas to maintain focus?		
21	Do you say the wrong word in the wrong place or at the wrong time?		
22	Do you get the order of the letters wrong when writing?		
23	Do you think your spelling is weak?		
24	Does the print move around as you are reading?		
25	Do you find it difficult to skim and scan for information?		
26	Is it difficult to see the detailed steps needed to complete a task?		
27	Do you forget things quickly?		
28	Do you have problems saying long words?		
29	Do you lack confidence in yourself and think others are better than you?		
30	Do you find it confusing putting sounds together to pronounce words?		