

Strategies to Overcome Learning Disabilities among Dyslexia Students

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Abstract

This paper deals with the sources of the learning disabilities and advancements in the evaluation of children's specific learning styles and problems. The learners with learning disorders can find difficulty in learning as quick as other children who are not affected by problem. Learning disabilities are mainly of two types: processing input, storage and output, by function impaired as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. The study focuses on the various theories on the cognitive development of the child and the factors affecting the quotient domain of the child. Based on the problems faced by the children, this paper gives a brief note on evaluating the child with learning disabilities. This article makes an attempt to show the various strategies that are to be followed by teachers and parents too.

Key words: learning disabilities, evaluation, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia

INTRODUCTION

Nature is very dissimilar in all ways. Due to the different genetic composition it is noticed that a lot of differences amongst human beings. Here the differences mean to the physical construction and intellectual abilities. Students are categorized as 'exceptional' in the educational system, where they need additional help and support towards academic achievements. Amongst all the learning difficulties, most common is dyslexia, which is known as a specific learning disability, it also includes dysgraphia and dyscalculia. The difficulty that student challenges is with the process, receive, store, decode and to reproduce the given information which is termed as the neurological state of the child.

Dyslexic students mostly face problems in reading and phonological structures of

words. The negative consequences of a child with dyslexia are brought down as the outcome of primary education where it focuses on only learning to read. When we consider the trouble of a child with reading it is must to note on two differentiated terms as decoding and comprehension. Decoding is the fluency of reading a text aloud and comprehension is the actual understanding of a given text for a child. Developmental dyslexia is when a child has trouble in learning to decode, comprehension impairment is when the child has trouble with comprehending the text, which are usually noticed through the development of oral language. **Multiple factors of Dyslexia**

The established difficulties with reading and associated skills run through families and are extremely heritable. The literary problems of a child are associated with the speech and language difficulties which are actually at menace. Though students

develop learning skills and abilities as a wholesome process in their entire education conditions, but they continue to be stable in how they approach the environment of the language, process the given information, to revise and to use the processed knowledge. With including linguistics, learning process affects the learning styles of varied students. It is also to understand that student's learning disabilities are due to a particular learning disability. For reading problems of the pupils dyslexia is the misunderstood term most commonly. Dyslexia is not only associated with reading skills, instead it is means striving with words of any language. According to neurobiological studies, the difficulties are to be found physically in brain. Which cannot be treated, but there can be changes in the cognitive domain and learning abilities of the child when it starts to grow as an adult.

The three major theories of developmental dyslexia that were emerged as a study of multiple cases were:

1. The phonological theory
2. The cerebellar theory
3. The magnocellular theory (auditory and visual)

The phonological theory hypothesizes that dyslexics have a specific deficiency in the demonstration, storage and recovery of speech sounds. This theory explains that to read an alphabetic system it requires to the fact of learning phonic and grapheme correspondence. That is the communication between the letters and sounds. The first step to be learnt is the representation of sounds that lies as a foundation for reading alphabets in a systematic way. This theory also explains

the behavioural and cognitive discrepancy. The dysfunction of the left-hemisphere of the brain is what causes this disorder as the brain areas underlie connections with phonological and the orthographic demonstrations. This theory had been critiqued strongly that this disrespects the discoveries about non-linguistic shortfalls in dyslexics.

The cerebellar theory emphasizes that the main cause for dyslexia is because of the abnormalities in the cerebellum. This theory states that there is a dysfunction and a number of cognitive difficulties which arise from the dysfunction. The cerebellum is much engaged in processing and interpreting the events of 'behind the scenes', of our conscious mind it is forever multitasking. It is responsible for the production and understanding of language which is both written and verbal. This plays an important role in the reading and writing skills particularly even if it plays the role of overall function of the brain. The additional and balanced difficulties that a dyslexic individual faces are the critical processing of information, natural plasticity of brain. On the other hand, few have suggested that the primary cause for dyslexia may not be the reason of dysfunction of cerebellum.

The magnocellular theory postulates that, as the cerebellum accepts huge input from different magnocellular systems of the brain which is generalized to be both audio and visual as well. The auditory processing theory postulates that the problem lies in the varying rapid sounds of the language. The fast transactions and the short sounds would be the reason for additional difficulties in general when the events such as the signs to phonetic differences, such as in /ba /versus /da/ and /pa/ versus /fa/.

This stands as the evidence that dyslexic individuals have weak perceptions over the categorical dissimilarities. The visual theory put emphasis on only reading problems in dyslexic individuals. The different roles and pathways are two various partitions of visual system. The studies of psychology show the decreased sensitivity in monocellular range and brain imaging studies. This includes the irregularities as the geniculate nucleus of dyslexic individual's brain. The audio and visual theories comprises between phonological, cerebellar, and also magnocellular theories.

Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory of Cognitive Development:

Vygotsky is well known for his idea of 'Zone of Proximal Development', where he says that the children who are in this zone can perform task independently. Instructions are the huge importance towards the cognitive development of child with the pertaining social influences. He says that the learning of a child is affected with the socio-cultural constructs at the backdrop. He also gives the idea of scaffolding which is significantly related to the proximal development, he refers scaffolding to the support given to a child by the others who has more knowledge. According to him, socio-economic factors help the child in growth towards cognitive and psychological domains. When applied to the children with learning disabilities this theory goes well, as research says that the children may not be brought up in a well instructed society and which lags in the cultural context. So there is an adverse effect on the instructions towards a particular task that are being passed in socio-economic subways.

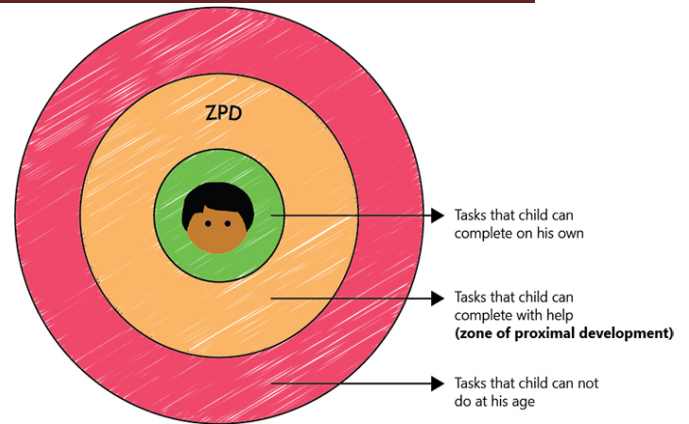


Figure 1.0 Vygotsky's Theory of Proximal Development.

Literature Review

Frances Hannon, senior Researcher National Disability Authority, in his study aimed to improve attitudes to people with disabilities as key for priority of NDA. The authority committed to regular surveying to benchmark attitudes. The acceptance of people with disabilities is implausible, as long as the negative attitude of the society persists (Nowicki, p.21). They had found that positive attitudes can support the disabled people to grow and expand in every area of life.

The literature of Specific Learning Disabilities is the technical appropriateness of the IQ- achievements inconsistency and personal strengths and weakness methods. The researcher Joseph M. Cottrell in 2004, had given that the number of disabled persons had increased over the past 39 years. He found that the school psychologists had helped in finding out children with disabilities. The outcome of the research was that it provides future research regarding specific learning disabilities.

Malgorzata Kowalik- Olubinska described the various discourses on learning disabilities, specifically the medical and

socio-cultural one. The classroom failure of a disabled child is because of lack of developmental support of children, which can be investigated through education with respect to socio-cultural perspective. Bodrova and Leong had strongly said that, for a successful learning process of a child there needs the involvement of teachers, where they are expected to frame a set of developmental tools of the mind for the children.

Lynn Dare and Elizabeth Agnes Nowicki from Western University of London had made an attempt on the check on parent's standpoints on their kids with various learning disabilities. The research had found that the children with differed strengths and weaknesses, felt as an exercise of frustration about schooling. In their concluding thoughts they said that students with twice-exceptionality often remain as unrecognized ones until their higher grades. As they grow into adulthood, children would achieve positive outcomes.

Brett Miller, Sharon Vaughn and Lisa Freund had made an attempt on understanding the continuum of learner responses to interference demands an additional focus on underlying causes and postulated mechanism leading to adequate or negligible responses. The article by them reflects, the promise in the enduring efforts of a large underlying mechanism of learning differences, but findings the pathways to more modified and actual instructions for the children stressed with learning disabilities.

Problems faced by the learning disabled students:

The sample of five learners was taken for the investigation of the problems that are

being faced by the learners. The learners were between the age of 4-10, wherein every individual learner showed varied learning disabilities mostly dyslexia and also with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. These learning disabilities are called as chronic, which means that the treatment can help but the condition of the pupil cannot be cured totally. To pay attention and control unwary behaviours is the main difficulty faced by these learners. The child may look restless but in fact the child is almost dynamic. The environmental factors can adversely affect the child mental state of a child according to the researchers of National Institute of Mental Health.

The first child among the taken sample is of the age five years. Wherein, in the first look, he conveyed a message that he is pale and inactive, after observing for many days It was found that he was very intelligent, where he had all the knowledge that he should be possessing for this age. It could be traced that he had more rhymes and poems in his mind more than that of his classmates. Though he had a slight confusion between the alphabets, he could frame them into words easily later. First observation was as such he was lazy. Thereafter it has been noted that he lags behind attention. And he needs a special care to learn the things. He use to attach to a person with whom he feels secured and he listens to that only one person's instructions. The instructions which are given by his teachers will not be reached to him as he assumes to be insecure and not even look at the instructor. The cause for this disability is that 'low birth weight', which is usually said to be the factors that affect the child and leads the child towards

some impulsive behaviours. There is also an anxiety issue with him where, if the instructor repeats the instruction or if he/she forces him to do something, the child shows the anger on his surrounded things. Anxiety towards learning is also being noticed while learning the second language, he refuses to speak and write when he does not like to do it.

The second pupil in the research sample was of six years old. The major issue that had been noticed is that he lags behind attention. But if he pays the attention towards learning, he is the most active and fast learner. For example if given the activity of word building of second language he will be the one who gains all the words to put them first in the crowd of different aged pupils. He is noticed as mischievous, calm in nature and sometimes stubborn. He distracts within a minute and if he gains back the attention he will perform the assigned task within seconds. It is also noticed that he is being punished the faster he goes out of the learning box. When he is pampered with both negative and positive reinforcement there is much growth in the learning and behaviour of the student.

The third pupil is about the age of six years. Her main difficulty is with the alphabets/words. She is a typical dyslexic child, where she writes down all the words in a reverse order. And it is noticed that she is being very calm and sensitive. While the instructions are being passed on to the classroom of students, this very child is observed to be not followed and she looks on to the people and things as the scary ones. She is not approachable even when someone harms her, instead she sits in the corner of the class and cries lonely. These actions of the child convey that she is not

strong mentally. During the research, it is found that there are various social-environmental toxics that had a tremendous impact on the child. She is frightened of the teachers, wherein she feels that someone is going to harm her. The confused state of mind of the child displays that she carries a fidgeting thought while seated in the class which usually means 'leave alone'.

The fourth student is about the age of twelve years old, he is noticed to be very impulsive in nature. When the students are asked to be seated in the class, he gets up and moves around in all the situations. He is noticed with the attitude of 'on the go', by acting as a proper motor. Interfering in the conversations of others and finishing the sentences of others, or waiting to turn a conversation. These are the signs of hyperactivity disorder, where he is seen always being interrupting in the activities, games and conversations. Anxiety of the student has also been seen as the major aspect of learning disability. To focus on his works is the most difficult task for him, where he gets confused with the instructions that are being passed. He also faces the difficulty to see and read the certain words.

The fifth child is of the age nine years. He shows all the qualities of a matured child. He has the disability in learning a second language. He is noticed that he never wrote any exams but when asked questions orally he always stands up in giving excellent answers. He is called as the most disciplined student, for example if a student throws a piece of paper in the school ground, this child picks it up and throws it in a dustbin. He always seems to be happy, he is never surrounded by any friends rather he enjoys his own thoughts.

When a particular textbook is given to the child, when he is not in the disposition to learn, he shows the nature of anxiety. He cries for the pain of others, when it comes to him he never utters a word about his physical pain. When he realises that he had answered in a wrong way, he tries to blame himself and corrects it. There is the difficulty in reading the words but can grasp anything in a short period of time. He lags attention and never likes to communicate with anyone which shows his insecurity towards other beings.

Tasks that may help to look at a dyslexic evaluation – an inside mechanism

The questions that are framed should be to find out the various strengths and weaknesses of a child.

Breaking Down The Tests

- Oral language skills:
 1. Blending and Removing Sounds
 2. Repeating “Nonsense words”
 3. Rhyming
 4. Identifying the First and Last Sounds in WordsRapid naming
- Reading:
 1. Common words
 2. ‘Nonsense Words’
 3. Fluency and Comprehension
- Spelling:
 1. Dictation
 2. Asking the child to write a sentence by giving a word
 - Writing:
 1. combining two sentences
 2. Reproduce sentences
 - Background Knowledge:
 1. To ask the child to listen few questions
 2. Basic sense of information

Completing the Evaluation

First step is to look back at all the gathered information. Include the things in evaluation such as, social history of family, measure reduction functioning, academic skills and progress, emotional intelligence/functioning. Goal should be to provide some information to the family about the qualities by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the child which will be important for directing a road map of how to be successful. Every child needs an intensive approach towards learning despite of the disabilities. We should acknowledge that students are not disabled rather they have different ways of thinking as a natural fact.

Conclusion

Life is all about learning how to learn. Teaching the students how to learn is teaching them to develop various programs of learning tasks. With sensitivity and understanding the individuals should be treated, it's very important to evaluate them and to encourage as a slow process. The use of effective strategies should be taught to eliminate stress and to enable coping. Learning difficulties cannot be treated rather can be managed as it is the life-long process. Parents need to be aware of their child's mental state and should help them by counselling and supporting merely. Every child is gifted with varied talents, help them to discover their talents, give them the motivational strategies to grow and shine out of stress and it is important to preserve their uniqueness in the process. These children are overactive and intelligent or more impulsive than normal children.

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