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ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TECHNIQUES USED TO TEACH THE SKILL OF READING TO BOTH DYSLEXIC AND NON-DYSLEXIC ELEMENTARY LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

○ SKUTECZNOŚCI TECHNIK WYKORZYSTYWANYCH DO NAUCZANIA
UMIEJĘTNOŚCI CZYTANIA DLA UCZNIÓW W DYSLEKSYJNYCH
I NIEDYSLEKSYJNYCH

Abstract

The paper discusses the usability of certain language teaching/learning techniques as applied in mixed-ability classes containing dyslexic/non-dyslexic students when practicing the skill of reading. The authors of the research aimed to find out which of the popular reading techniques may be applied in the classes containing both dyslexic and non-dyslexic students as well as how many of the techniques discussed in the research can be recognized as more useful in teaching both groups of language learners.

Keywords: dyslexia; dyslexic/non-dyslexic learners; the skill of reading; FL lessons; teaching reading; practicing techniques;

Abstrakt

W pracy omówiono przydatność niektórych technik nauczania / uczenia się języków, stosowanych w klasach o zróżnicowanym poziomie umiejętności, zawierających uczniów z dysleksją / bez dysleksji podczas ćwiczenia umiejętności czytania. Autorzy badania chcieli dowiedzieć się, które z popularnych technik czytania można zastosować na zajęciach z udziałem zarówno uczniów z dysleksją, jak i bez dysleksji, oraz jak wiele z omawianych w badaniu technik można uznać za bardziej przydatne w nauczaniu obu grup językowych.

Słowa kluczowe: dysleksja; uczniowie z dysleksją / bez dysleksji; umiejętność czytania; lekcje języka obcego; nauka czytania; techniki ćwiczeniowe;

1. Introduction

There are numerous, more or less complete, definitions/descriptions of dyslexia. For example, Bogdanowicz [2006] notes that some specific difficulties in learning were described a hundred years ago for the first time. Interestingly enough, the case of a dyslexic person was not described by a psychologist or an educationalist but by an ophthalmologist, W.P. Morgan, to whom a teacher referred a 14-year-old student, since he suspected an eye defect as the student was not able to tell the given letters nor learn how to read. The ophthalmologist, after excluding eye defects, called the defect “word blindness”. The commonly used term “natural dyslexia” was introduced by J. Hinshelwood [in: Borkowska, 1996] in his publications in 1917. Nowadays, one term, i.e. developmental dyslexia, is used for the specific difficulties children experience while reading and writing. In 1968, during its conference held in Dallas, the World Federation of Neurologists accepted the stance that (...) *developmental dyslexia is the disorder manifested by difficulties in learning to read despite taking into consideration normal teaching methods and normal intelligence and hospitable social-cultural conditions; (it) is caused by the dysfunction of main cognitive functions; (it) is often constitutionally determined* [Nickolson and Fawcett, 1994, p. 115]. This definition has been accepted as the basis for the research we carried out and which is meant to be described in this paper. Although some specialists indicate the correctness of the use of more specific terms, i.e. dyslexia, dysorthographia and dysgraphia, the paper includes them into one large educational dysfunction.

2. Causes of dyslexia

Following Borkowska [1996], one may say that the most recent definition of dyslexia was published in 1994 in the USA. It was done by Orton Dyslexia Society (ODS):

Dyslexia is one of several distinct learning disabilities. It is a specific learning-based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single word decoding, usually reflecting insufficient phonological processing abilities. These difficulties in single word decoding are often unexpected in relation to age and other cognitive and academic abilities: they are not the result of generalized developmental ability or sensory impairment. Dyslexia is manifested by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems of reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling.

Following a suggestion offered by Bogdanowicz and Adryjanek (2004), the analysis of definition indicates that the specific difficulties in learning are the consequences of disorders of particular cognitive functions mostly attributed to child developmental disorders. The typical symptoms of these disorders are difficulties in differencing sounds that are similar in the articulatory-phonetic way (also called phoneme hearing disorder). Difficulties with the sound analysis of words cause frequent missing of either syllables of even whole words, reordering the order of letters during reading and

distorting the structure of written words, even writing senseless words. Difficulties in reading often appear at the earliest stage of reading processes, mostly with misidentifying letters and sounds represented by them. No wonder, then, that dyslexic children read slowly, with mistakes and without understanding. Poor concentration on hearing stimuli and poor auditory memory cause large difficulties with the understanding of the read text and skipping either words or word endings during dictation, (or listening comprehension) exercises.

Although the definition indicates that the direct causes of dyslexia are frequent developmental disorders of auditory-language functions, that does not mean that these are all possible causes. Specific difficulties in reading (and writing) may result from various forms of sight disorders (e.g. weak perception attention and visual memory), or different visual-spatial and/or kinesthetic disorders, also accompanied by the interference of the development of lateralization-connected activities (e.g. ambidexterity) and orientation in the body or space scheme.

Korendo [2009] observes that there are very many theories explaining the origin of dyslexia found in literature. Some of them remain the source of controversy and discussion, which proves the differences in authors' opinions. The most commonly mentioned ones refer to the genetic reasons, retarded maturity of the central nervous system (CNS), hormonal problems, or the result of micro-damages of the brain.

A. Beaton [2004] notes that the researcher who first took systematic studies over the influence of genetic heritage on the occurrence of specific difficulties in learning how to write and read was an English ophthalmologist named James Hinshelwood. As if following this research, C. Burt [1950], concluding in his own investigation, claims that one's inability to read, similarly to speech disorders, occurs more frequently in some families than in the others. Furthermore, C. Spring, C., and L. French [1990], also emphasize that children who prove reduced abilities to write and read can be genetically affected. A Czech scientist, Z. Matějček [1997] explains that many problems related to difficulties in reading and writing may be explained by genetic predispositions. His anamnestic research on grandparents, parents and siblings proved the existence of similar difficulties while acquiring spoken language and the formation of body part dominance, as well as the acquisition of manual skills. Similar observations were also reported by M. Annett [1996].

Another difficulty specified above, i.e. the concept of organic limitations finds the causes of dyslexia in the micro-damages of the brain structure, thus specifying the existence of special pathogenic factors of chemical, physical and/or biological nature that affect the CNS in the periparturient period. In their interestingly written book, Brejnak and Zablocki [1999] indicate that the forerunners of this cause of dyslexia were, among others, J. Stein & V. Walsh [1997], who paid attention to the significance of cortical damage. This view was later continued by M. Monroe [in: Korendo, 2009], whose research focused on the influence of micro-damages on the perception-related activity of various micro disorders, attention disorders and the correct dynamics of processes of psychical nature, that are needed in the process of learning how to read and write.

Recently, Matejček [1997] also remarked that different micro-damages of a child's brain in the periparturient period may result in an unfavorable impact on the psycho-motor development of children and, subsequently, on the processes of reading and writing. In the research he presented, it is stated that up to 50% of children with difficulties in reading and writing had some tiny brain tissue damage at their early developmental period. Quite similar observations can also be found in the work by T. West [1991].

One more interesting explanatory approach - apart from the concept of hormonal nature, which finds the cause of dyslexia in the underdevelopment of structure of specific surroundings of the cerebral cortex and, resulting from that, appearance of the overproduction of hormones - is the concept of psychodyslexia; the concept focuses upon various emotional causes (mostly, trauma and/or stress), finding their results in the appearance of functional disorders of the CNS. A number of researchers - the most prominent of them seems to be B. Hallgren [1950] - who see the causes of dyslexia in emotional disorders, claim that various problems with reading and writing may symbolize the requirements of the adult world in relation to children, who, in turn, due to the high level of their sensitiveness may, in some circumstances, reject the requirements laid upon them. Consequently, a situation like this may result in the appearance of a number of pathogenic factors, some of them being trauma and/or stress. W. Wall [in: Korendo, 2009] directly connects the difficulties of dyslexic character with different factors of emotional nature. In the researcher's opinion, such difficulties in reading and writing may even indicate child's social inadequacy. In his research he underlines the fact that many dyslexic children are proved to have revealed notable difficulties in getting required levels of attention and/or sudden, quite often difficult to explain, outbursts of anxiety (language anxiety included); sometimes, excessive stimulation (mainly hyperactivity) and negative emotional attitude can also be observed.

Although the existence of dyslexia remains an undisputed fact, Bogdanowicz [1994] rightly remarks that none of the concepts presented above have been definitely verified. Another researcher, H. Spionek, in her interesting topical report, sees the main cause of reading and writing difficulties in the disorder of rhythm and the pace of psychomotor development. In her work she proposes a list of the most commonly observed disorders, calling them forms of *fragmented deficiency during development* [Spionek, 1973, p. 29]. This list entails: /a/ the range of visual perception and visual synthesis/analysis; /b/ auditory perception and auditory synthesis/analysis; and /c/ problems connected with mobility and lateralization. Additionally, Bogdanowicz [1996] observes that professional help provided to children with specific difficulties in reading and writing, in most of the currently existing documents produced by the departments of education, focuses upon various forms of psycho-pedagogical therapy. The proposed forms of help are of correctional-compensational type, aiming at the correction and improvement of the distorted functions and provision of support of the properly-developing functions to the distorted ones (or replace them if necessary).

3. The research indications

While taking into account all the above observations and/or the described attempts to aid dyslexia in school learners, we wanted to find out the ways the selected techniques commonly applied to teach the skill of reading may work with the dyslexic and non-dyslexic foreign language (later FL) learners an average class usually consists. The lessons observed by us were the lessons of English and the techniques under research were: skimming/ scanning, extensive/intensive reading, reading aloud/ paired reading, phonic techniques. Apart from that, we took into account the effective aspects of mnemonic techniques while teaching/ learning the skill of reading, as well as the lessons based on scripted (i.e. course-book-based) approach when contrasted to the ones based upon creative activities of any kind offered by the language teachers. Basing upon 50 hours of observation carried out in each of the two schools placed in one of Polish large towns, we could conclude that all the techniques discussed in this paper were used in varying degrees. As mentioned above, as far as the skill of reading is concerned, our aim was also to check the level of effectiveness of the selected mnemonic techniques that seem to be helpful for such learners and therefore could serve as a model. Two types of lessons, i.e. a scripted lesson and a lesson based on teacher's creativity were taken under examination.

Additionally, while examining the behaviors applied by the teachers and what they exactly did, so as to meet the needs of young learners, we also discussed the teacher's role in particular techniques with the teachers delivering the lessons as well as with the learners taking part in them. The most commonly used form of assessment offered to the learners under our research was the Yes-No poll and the children were requested to place two colored stickers (yellow =YES and green = NO) to their grids. The whole discussion plan we had with the teachers was based on Harmer's [2003] indications. It was planned to point out possible advantages and disadvantages of such lessons in the subsequent paper (all the teachers were informed about our plans) and indicate these which were found to be most preferred by both dyslexic and non-dyslexic elementary learners of English. The results of the observations and the post-lesson inquiries were systematically introduced into a specially designed observation grid.

4. Characteristics of the learners

In order to describe the techniques used to teach both types of learners we visited two schools containing two 6th grade classes consisting of traditional (i.e. without dyslexic) and a mixed-education (i.e. with dyslexic students) groups of learners. In the first (traditional) school we met a group consisting of 25 students, whereas the second group (in the other school) consisted of 20 (both dyslexic and non-dyslexic) learners only. In both cases, the teachers used a course-book titled "Hot Spot 3. Student's book. While observing the teachers'/students' activities we also inquired the two groups under research to explain their steps.

The first group of students contained the students without medical opinion diagnosing the existence of specific learning difficulties (later SLD) of any kind. The lessons took place in the typical classroom environment, with one teacher in front of the class. In this class, there was a clear division between the students who were more linguistically advanced and those not so fluent in English. The oncoming research showed 36% of students recognized as weaker to be later juxtaposed with those more talented. The third group of students (28%) consisted of average (i.e. in-between) students who learnt together with them (their activities were monitored as well). The experiment-included techniques were planned to be used in order to give more fluent students an opportunity to prove themselves as well as help the weaker (but still non-dyslexic) students acquire the material during the lessons.

In the second school, we met a group of 20 students among whom there were 14 typical students and 6 SLD ones. Figure 1 presents the percentage of dyslexic students in comparison with those non-dyslexic ones we found in the second school.

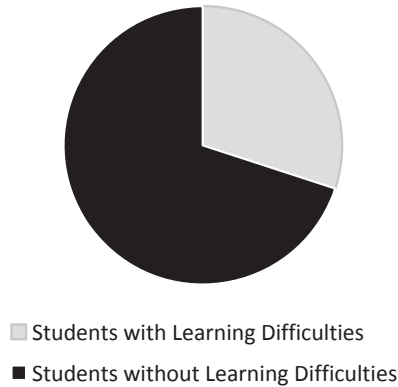


Figure 1: Dyslexic and non-dyslexic students in mixed-education group of students

In this mixed-education group, all dyslexic students had difficulties with the skills of reading and writing. These problems in education were a little bit diminished through the pedagogical therapy, but the pupils still had to overcome obstacles in these areas of FL learning. In 10% of the lessons, the pupils with dyslexia were found to be hyperactive, what resulted in disruptive classroom environment. That is why, as we could observe, the learners with dyslexia were clearly separated from the non-dyslexic ones (as they might disrupt their education). In this way the class was physically divided into two parts, i.e. on the left side, as well as in the middle row, there are “normal” students and on the right there were students with dyslexia.

Despite the fact that the disabled pupils may be less mature and demonstrate impulsive behaviour (and despite possessing a medical certificate to have been dyslexic), they were still mixed in one class with the non-disabled ones, being regraded to be able to learn in normal school environment. However, due to their diagnosed SLD, following

the recommendations found in the literature, the presence of the second teacher (teacher assistant) in the class was expected, so as to allow these students to achieve the level of proficiency appropriate for their age and possibilities. It is worth noticing that such a teacher assistant did not come up during the whole of our research, mostly due to fiscal reasons as we explained.

As far as the researched students' preferred learning styles are concerned, these attending a typical class revealed audio-visual preferences mostly (80% of audial/visual learners and only 20% of kinaesthetic ones). A similar situation occurred in the mixed-education group of students; here we found 90% of audio-visual students and only 10% of kinaesthetic ones. Among these 90% of audial/visual learners, 33% were described as dyslexic children and 57 % as typical (i.e. non-dyslexic) ones.

The results found by us seem to contradict the fact that teachers mostly choose audial/visual techniques rather than those useful for kinaesthetic learners. At the beginning of language education, teachers do not usually have an occasion to know their pupils. That is why, it is useful for them to know that the probability of students who are audial/visual is higher than those who prefer to learn in a different way. Taking into account these two classes, audial/visual learners are more likely to appear in the classroom than those who learn with the help of movements, sounds or pictures. Taking these facts into account, the probability indicator of appearance of audial/visual learners in the researched class amounts to 0.84.

Based on this characteristic of students, we have pointed out an independent variable which in our research is the type of a student, i.e. a dyslexic or a non-dyslexic one. The dependent variable, on the other hand, becomes the language learning technique used to teach each of these types of learners. While juxtaposing the dependent variable and the independent one, we will be able to measure the effectiveness of techniques used to teach the skill of reading in the two researched classes.

5. Differences and similarities between the techniques used to teach the skill of reading to both types of students

We could clearly discover that in both cases, i.e. in a typical as well as in co-integrated learning group, there occurred most of the language learning techniques usually applied in respect of teaching non-dyslexic learners. However, we should look at them in a more critical way as we want to assess whether or not they become beneficial for our students. Figure 2 below presents occurrence of all such techniques during our observations ('non-dyslexic' refers to traditional school and 'dyslexic' to the second one). As seen in the diagram, the most frequent reading techniques clearly differ when taking into account the environment of their application.

In the 'non-dyslexic' group, intensive reading was the mode observed in 68% of the class while in the co-integrated learning group it reached only 40% of all the techniques used to teach the skill of reading. However, in the mixed dyslexic and non-dyslexic environment, the mode was the technique called reading aloud, used in 64% of lessons. What is more, we found out the techniques that occurred in mixed education

group of students only and which hardly occurred in a typical school, (i.e. ‘grouping words’ which occurred in 10% of lessons only).

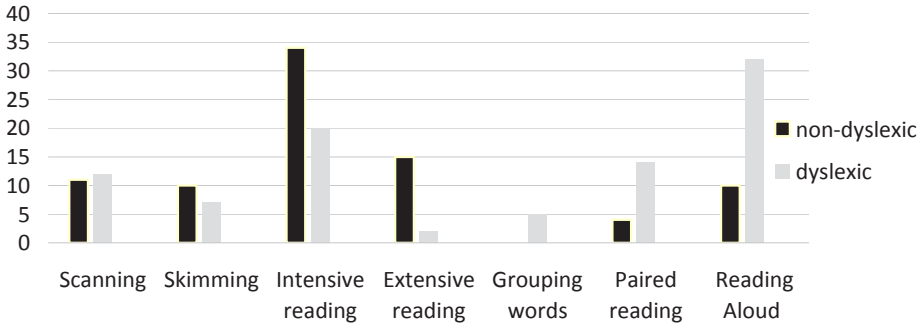


Figure 2: Comparison of occurrence of the techniques used to teach the skill of reading

In the next sub-chapter we will try to find an answer to our first sub-question, i.e. we will look for differences and similarities between the techniques used to teach the skill of reading applied to both dyslexic and non-dyslexic elementary learners of English. We will endeavor to find the techniques applied to both types of learners and the ones preferred to be delivered to only one type of students.

5.1. Skimming and scanning

These two techniques are reported to occur frequently in the classroom environment (Harmer, 2003). It was calculated in the research that when taking into account all 50 lessons, the probability of occurrence of one of the two techniques was 46% in a typical school and 34% in a class with dyslexic students. In a typical group of students, the two techniques were found to be used alternately; in comparison to this, in the co-operated teaching group they occurred together, i.e. both of them were presented during one activity.

In a typical class environment, the skimming technique was frequently used. The non-disabled students were obliged to read a particular text quickly and did some activities connected with the topic. The teacher introduced skimming in many situations; for example, following a course-book proposition, the students had to choose the most interesting story from those which appeared in the form of e-mails. In such case, the students were asked to read fast all the three e-mails and decide which of them was the most interesting for them.

One more useful exercise for practicing the skimming technique was creating and selecting a title. There were two examples of this particular activity; the students had to read a story titled *My hero* as well as the one titled “Me and my world”. It is worth mentioning here that *My hero* reading was 50% longer than *Me and my world* text. For non-dyslexic students it does not make a difference if the text is longer or not; however, for those with learning disabilities shorter texts are more likely to be read and

understood. Table 1 below presents the mistakes made by the two groups of learners when choosing a title for the text.

In this activity, 100 % of dyslexic students (i.e. all of them) chose the wrong title while dealing with the reading titled *My hero*; at the same time, their work with the second, shorter reading resulted with only 33% of mistakes made by such students. When taking into account non-dyslexic students, 28 % of them make a mistake in first case and only 14 % in respect to the shorter text.

As far as disabled students are concerned, it was not an easy task for them to read the whole text and, what is more, at a rapid pace. That is why, when practicing the skimming technique, they should be given content words, so as to help them run through the whole texts without frustration.

Additionally, the teacher paid attention to the pictures, numbers and names which were very helpful for those students who were not able to cope with so many words. That is why, following the teacher's decision, they were requested to read only one (the first) passage of the longer text instead of three. When, subsequently, they were required to create the title for the text, they focused on one piece of the text only, offering their answers obviously different from those students who read the whole passage. However, despite everything they still practiced this skill of reading, being involved in this valuable activity.

Table 1: Choosing the title - mistakes made by learners

	<i>My hero</i>	<i>Me and my world</i>
Dyslexic students	6	2
Non-dyslexic students	2	1

Another thing is that not all the techniques applied by the teacher during the lessons could be of evident help for dyslexic learners. When practicing the skill of reading, it always occurs after the application of the skimming technique that the students get an outline of what the text is about. Such a situation was usually connected with both reading and having fun at the same time in the two classes we observed. In the mixed ability class, both the SLD students and the non-dyslexic ones were requested to choose only two sentences from the whole text. A similar activity was also applied in the traditional school. In both schools they worked in two groups deciding what to choose and what to eliminate. In both teams, the leaders were appointed out of the most fluent students in the class, which meant that (following the Yes – No grid) up to 66% of dyslexic students felt rejected, indicating that they did not fully understand the task.

Scanning is a technique that, in normal class environment, occurs alternately with the skimming one. This is due to the fact that children ought to be able to read fast, but also to select particular information from a text. Similarly to the skimming technique, the instructions of the teachers differed. In the lesson observed by us in the two schools the students were expected to read one of the two texts mentioned above within

3 minutes. Table 2 below presents the amount of information found by randomly-chosen non-dyslexic students in the text they worked with within 3 minutes.

Table 2: The number of information found when reading a text (selected students)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
4	5	4	3

The calculated mode was 4 which means that these students coped with their exercise well. However, looking into the learning conditions of the disabled students, it sounds logical they are not able to work that fast. Taking the above fact into account, they were offered 5 minutes instead of 3. However, also here most of the examined dyslexic students felt rather overwhelmed. While typical students found all information, dyslexic students made only 20% of the exercise. Figure 3 below presents the results of the task aimed to check whether or not, more time would be a useful factor for dyslexic students.

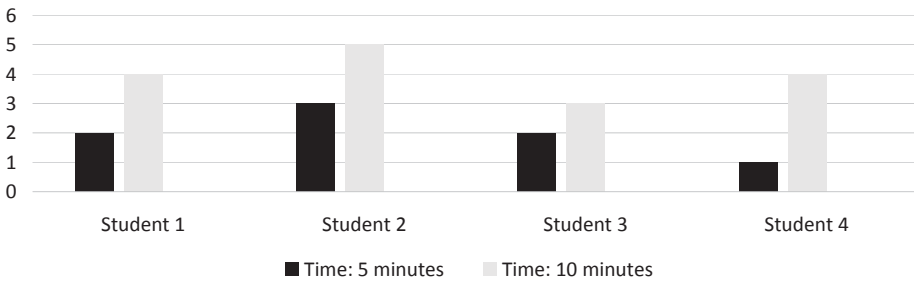


Figure 3: Effectiveness of intensive reading in dependence on time given to students

It comes out the results were quite promising when the teacher gave 10 minutes to dyslexic students and (in order to avoid disruption) non-dyslexic students were obliged to do another exercise connected with scanning. Based on the results presented above, we could clearly see that, with more time in hand, the dyslexic students were able to finish the exercise and found as many pieces of information as non-disabled ones within the periods of 5 (or 3) minutes. Despite everything, this exercise, though relatively time-consuming, brought a lot of satisfaction to dyslexic students; they could observe that they were also able to complete the task successfully.

5.1.1.1. Intensive vs. extensive reading

Following the results of the observation, the main difference between these two techniques (i.e. scanning-skimming related forms of intensive/extensive reading) appears to be placed in their occurrence in the classroom. The situation looks a little bit different, however, when the classical intensive vs. extensive reading conditions have

been formed. While in the regular school environment both techniques were frequently used, the classes containing dyslexic students had a rare opportunity to apply any of those strategies. Despite everything, it was found out that intensive reading activities were used (in 18 percentage points) more often than extensive reading ones.

Dyslexic students rarely had an opportunity to read for pleasure. They were mostly asked to search for the pieces of information rather than simply read for fun. During our 50 hours of observation we could notice only two situations when dyslexic learners may have done this. The teacher brought a selection of short poems and the students were encouraged to choose one of them, while basing on the titles as well as their interests. As we later found out, the titles encouraged 70% of the students to read through the poems; at the same time 85% of both dyslexic and non-dyslexic children found literary language too difficult to be comprehended. The design of this lesson was befitting, however, as it seems the teacher's choice of books was not appropriate to both types of learners.

In the second case, i.e. in the traditional class, the extensive reading strategy occurred more frequently, i.e. in 30% of the lessons. We could observe that in the class there was a specific "reading corner", from which the students could 'borrow' a book they wanted to read at home. They had a week to read it through and then they were asked to say whether they liked it or not in front of the class, offering a short book summary as well (it might go in Polish). We could, however, observe situations where only up to 40% of the students exchanged the books and the opinions, whereas the rest did not care about this activity at all.

One of the issues observed here were the learners' evident problems with the vocabulary. Despite the fact that some of them seemed to be quite good at English, they still used dictionaries as often as those who were not that fluent. Such a situation was clearly observed during one of the activities aimed at practicing extensive reading. Although, as we pointed out above, non-dyslexic students were given 10 minutes to go on with their extensive reading activity, they still tended to make use of the dictionary, regardless of their current level of reading fluency. Table 3 presents the frequency of making use of dictionaries made by the selected learners in a traditional class (i.e. without dyslexic learners) within the indicated period of 10 minutes.

Table 3: Frequency of using dictionary during extensive reading (selected students)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5
10 times	8 times	12 times	6 times	7 times

While analyzing the results of the research, we can conclude that the average result of the dictionary use was 9. That means that an average non-disabled student that took part in our research while reading for pleasure had to use dictionary 9 times during a mandatory 10-minute long reading period and it took him/her a lot of time to find the meanings of particular words.

While extensive reading is based on reading for pleasure, intensive reading always has a particular aim. However, the percentage of students involved in it differs as well. When taking intensive reading into account, 80% of the students recognize it as a duty to be done during the lesson and that is why they usually make an endeavor to do such an exercise correctly. However, when assessing extensive reading in their Yes-No grids, we recorded a surprising number of 85% of both non-dyslexic and dyslexic pupils who did not want to spend their free time at home on practicing the skill of reading (thus, going through some books that they did not feel to be interested in). While the result may sound less surprising in respect of dyslexic learners, the same answer found among non-dyslexic learners (the so-called ‘fast readers’ included) may look annoying.

5.2. Grouping words – Phonics

This a technique is mostly intended for dyslexic students; it mostly appeared in a mixed-ability school (in approximately 10 %). In the traditional school environment, during 50 hours of observations, this strategy did not appear at all.

For dyslexic students it seemed to be a great opportunity to get to know the written forms of words. The teacher also found it useful for those children (non-dyslexic students included) who preferred to learn in both audial and visual way. They had an opportunity not only to see the words on the blackboard, but also to hear the peers’ and the teacher’s pronunciation.

Table 4: Mistakes when pronouncing the words (selected students)

Attempts (3 words) \ Type of students	Dyslexic Students	Non-dyslexic Students
1 st lesson	3	2
2 nd lesson	3	1
3 rd lesson	2	0
4 th lesson	1	0

In an exercise observed by us, the teacher introduced irregular verbs. During a consecutive number of lessons, there was positioned a table (named ‘-ought reading’ by the teacher) on the blackboard. The teacher gave examples of the past forms of verbs and then asked the students to pronounce them correctly.

Below we prepared a table (Table 4) which takes into account mistakes made by the students during their attempts to read these words correctly. As we can observe, dyslexic students had problems at the beginning, but soon their scores improved.

At the beginning, the dyslexic group of students made mistakes in 100% of all the examples. They were to pronounce words *bought*, *taught*, *thought*, *brought* and *sought*.

At the same time, the students without dyslexia mostly made mistakes with the second and third word, whereas the remaining ones were pronounced correctly. This situation clearly changed later on, mostly in respect to non-dyslexic learners; whereas the children with dyslexia still made mistakes in 100% of the presented words, the non-disabled students pronounced only 33% of the words incorrectly. During the two subsequent lessons, the teacher took a bag and played a game with the children; they were still practicing the reading of the words presented some lessons earlier. We could observe that the students with dyslexia still had some problems with reading such words, although they made a lot of effort to pronounce them correctly. In the next lessons when the teacher asked them to read sentences with the words they had kept practicing earlier on, we found out that the average level of correctness of dyslexic students, mostly due to their earlier efforts, rose to 66 % whereas the one presented by non-disabled students reached 100%. However, that strategy proved to be highly useful as the two groups of students in the subsequent lessons mostly applied correct pronunciation and did not make too many mistakes while reading these words. Whether the irregular verbs had been finally mastered by the dyslexic students was to appear later on, when some other FL reading practicing techniques were to be applied.

5.3. Paired reading - reading aloud

Similarly to the grouping words technique, this one occurred more frequently in the class with the disabled children. However, it could also be observed (in approx. 8%) in non-dyslexic classes.

When working with non-dyslexic students, this technique was mostly practiced in respect to dialogues; here, after the role performers had been decided, the students were expected to read them alternately. While actively performing this technique we observed up to 8% of the students who were truly interested in such conduct of the lesson, with most of the observed learners (i.e. approximately 92%), being quite bored and disruptive. As it seems, such lessons ought to be elaborated on in a more detailed way (e.g. teachers might engage all the class by asking the learners who currently do not take part in reading out the roles to note down particular information they could hear).

A similar activity was carried out in a classroom with dyslexic/non-dyslexic children. The teacher was certain that all the students traced the text they listened to because when they heard (or read) irregular verbs that appeared in it, they were required to stand up (or clap their hands) when they had noticed irregular verbs. Such verbs occurred 20 times in the text and in 90% the students made action so as to point out the occurrence of an irregular verb.

The example presented above illustrates an opportunity for all the students (i.e. both dyslexic and non-dyslexic) to engage in tracing a text passage and at the same time listen to the students who kept reading correctly. It is also worth noticing that, as we could observe, when non-dyslexic students were able to recognize the irregulars correctly in up to 80 %, the dyslexic ones, despite their hard work, could do that in only up to 45 %. Additionally, this exercise shows that the activities the teacher had offered to

them to let them recognize the irregular verbs we described above did not prove to be effective enough and many of the dyslexic learners still had problems with the discovery of the verbs they seemed to have been able to discover only a few days before..

Finally, it should also be noted that this technique still has some opposition in the literature [e.g. Stein and Walsh, 1977]; it is claimed such actions as standing and clapping in hands, when performed by some learners, may clearly disengage these students who are expected to be focused on reading a passage.

6. Mnemonic techniques used in classroom environment - the skill of reading

As far as mnemonic techniques are concerned, there were not many opportunities to observe them during lessons. Following subsequent calculations, the mnemonic techniques connected with the skill of reading appeared in 20% in the mixed-learners school only; in the traditional school we did not have any opportunity to observe them.

When discussing the skill of reading, we have to admit that the most popular mnemonic technique was the flashcard technique. The teacher had prepared special flashcards informing the learners how to pronounce certain words, e.g. “read CZ instead of CH” and “read SZ instead of SH”. These flashcards were practically glued to the blackboard and when the students were to read some texts, the teacher usually approached these flashcards so as to ask indicate the correct pronunciation. After five lessons, the flashcards were removed and the students were to say what the flashcards presented on the blackboard had informed them about. It turned out, it was only up to 20% of the students who knew the correct answers. Mostly as a result of the short period of time these flashcards had been positioned, as well as the fact that the learners had not expected they would be asked a HOTS question, the teacher decided to attach these flashcards again. After the next five lessons, when the same question had been repeated, the amount of students who knew the correct answer reached almost 60%. However, the teacher decided to continue this exercise until 100% of the learners knew the correct rule.

7. Student’s book based lessons vs. teacher’s creative design-based lessons

The final issue we were interested in were possible differences in the students’ approach to the lessons based upon the course-books and the ones where teacher’s creative approach clearly prevailed. Generally, a belief that the student’s book is to be recognized as only a tool when introducing a new topic, or practicing particular topic-connected exercises is quite popular [Harmer, 2003]. In such situations it is expected the teacher’s creative design ought to offer some additional flavor to such a lesson and thus make the students more motivated to follow it. However, as Harmer [2003] observes, in too many cases a lesson is mostly based on the book only. Many teachers seem to be

either poorly creative or simply not willing to prepare something on their own, what, in turn, largely affects the general process of learning.

The course-book based (i.e. scripted) lessons were observed in 90% in the traditional school and in 85% in mixed education groups. Figure 3 presents the level of emotional discouragement of the students, compared with the frequency of using course-books during one lesson in respect to dyslexic/non-dyslexic students. The results of the research were received with the help of the Yes – No grid filled up by the students.

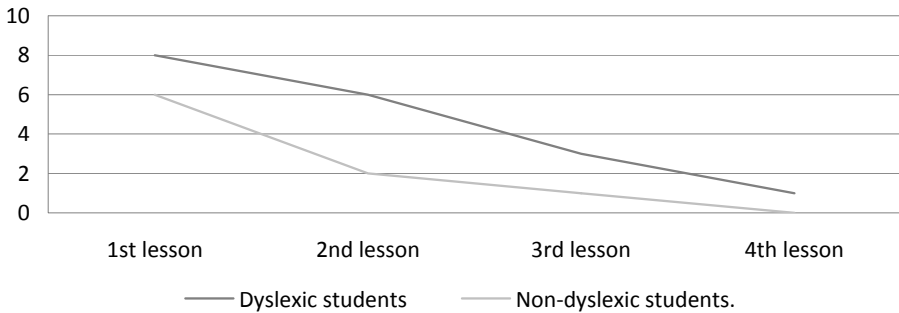


Figure 4: Level of positive/negative attitudes of students towards frequency of using students' book (the first four lessons)

Based on this figure we can conclude that the less frequent the usage of book is, the more satisfied and willing to learn the learners (both dyslexic and non-dyslexic) are. During the (scarce) lessons which were not focused on the course-book, the students keenly took part in the exercises and benefited from them more than when just sitting in their desks and going through the exercises found in their workbooks.

In one exemplary activity, the students had to find a person matching the sentence found on the flashcard; they also had to decide how to read a particular word together with their findings. When they were ready, they had to come to the teacher and read the sentence aloud in front of the class. This particular activity not only helped weaker students to work with more advanced pupils, but also let them be more motivated to practice the skill of reading. At the same time, it is worth noticing that almost 84% of the students did this activity properly, with almost 63% of dyslexic students included.

8. The influence of the techniques on the students' motivation

Taking into account all the techniques presented earlier we could clearly observe those which affect dyslexic/non-dyslexic students' motivation at the highest and lowest level.

In 89% of the cases, intensive reading was a technique that motivated both types of students to practice their reading skills. They evidently felt that the more involved they were, the higher improvement they made. Apart from that the students (both non-dyslexic and dyslexic) provided considerable evidence that they managed to do the activities connected with text skimming, being not only able to read but also to

comprehend the texts. The results calculated in this instance were as follows: 89% of the observed learners, with 33% of dyslexic students, performed this activity correctly.

These two techniques influenced 68% of all the students; one could also observe that during lessons they liked doing such exercises. Unfortunately, apart from skimming, the activity aimed at intensive reading was rarely used what - as it seems - clearly influenced the average level of their motivation.

9. Conclusions

The paper has been planned to illustrate the level of our initial assumption that some reading practicing techniques are more advisable for the lessons with dyslexic/non-dyslexic learners, while some others mostly bring poor positive results. The results of the research indicate that – among the reading techniques - the strategy most motivationally effective was intensive reading for non-dyslexic students and reading aloud for dyslexic students. At the same time, the most common technique, as well as the one averagely liked by both groups of learners, appears to be the skimming technique.

As far as the form of the lesson is concerned, we found out that in most cases the teachers preferred using a course-book as a source of linguistic knowledge, thus recognizing it as the basic lesson instrument¹. It might be inferred some more linguistically advanced students felt rather frustrated after they had seen their teachers opening the book. When taking into account the forms of exercises offered to both the traditional and the mixed education group of students, we may assume that they preferred to learn with the help of more bodily and/or conceptually involving forms of education (which mostly included plays or games).

When discussing mnemonic techniques used to teach the skill of reading we were able to mention only two of them, mostly because of the fact that they were rarely present during the fifty lessons we observed. It is worth noticing, however, that the two exceptions we discussed earlier appeared to be successful and useful for the learners (both dyslexic and non-dyslexic ones). Noticing this fact, it seems teachers should become less apprehensive in the application of various mnemonic techniques, especially when teaching vocabulary. We are also willing to accept a stance that having applied such an approach requires a teacher to change their general educational stance into a far more creative one².

The final point we focused upon was the influence of the observed reading practicing techniques on the students' motivation. It ought to be admitted the two techniques specified by us in this paper as positively motivating for the learners were scarcely applied by the teachers during the whole research. A more general remark that can be

¹ The ways the teacher's decisions shape the general outline of knowledge deliverance in a language classroom were discussed in detail by quite a large a number of researchers [e.g. Gaarder, 1977; Stern, 1983; Cook, 1991; Richards and Rodgers, 2001 and many others]. Baker [199]), while forming the ten commandments of good language teaching, stresses the fact that frontal forms of teaching usually result in unplanned growth of learners' passivity and their goal loss.

² Recent research on the ways creativity can change both the teacher's and the students' approach to language lessons can be found in a very interesting paper by Coffey & Leung [2015].

placed here concerns the nature of motivation as observed by both the learners and the teachers. While observing the teachers' work we had a vague feeling not all the teachers clearly understood that any whatsoever form of work, when done properly, requires earlier motivation and that this remark is equally important not only in respect of students, but of teachers as well.

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