

## Assisting Language Learners of Dysgraphia: A Handbook for Teacher Candidates

Nurullah Darici<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq

Correspondence: Nurullah Darici, Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq

Email: nurullah.darici@tiu.edu.iq

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**Abstract:** When training both native speakers and non-native speakers of the target language, language instructors face the challenges of motivating pupils who struggle with writing and enhancing their writing abilities. In fact, almost every educator in the globe has encountered a pupil with dysgraphia while teaching a language. During this qualitative research study, ten language teachers at a private institution were asked to respond to an open-ended question, "What remedies are available for students with dysgraphia?" In this qualitative study, instructor responses to what can be done for students who struggle with writing are transcribed to assist teacher candidates in beginning their careers.

**Keywords:** Dysgraphia, Teaching Languages, Students with Writing Difficulties

### 1. Introduction

Foreign language instruction, a necessity since the beginning of international relations, is today more crucial than ever. Given the benefits a foreign language can offer a person, it is suggested that this trait and acquisition will allow the individual to comprehend the world better (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). In addition, teaching and learning are time-consuming educational processes and interactions between teachers and students. The objective of the educational interaction relates to three dimensions which are known cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. To achieve these goals, a teacher must exert maximum effort in transmitting content, skills and methods, classroom management, and other areas (Yildiz, 2015). Teachers experience a variety of personalities and difficulties in their working environment. Most difficulties are directly or indirectly tied to the psychology of the students, while some include genetic code. School-aged students need assistance most because they lack significant expertise in resolving their challenges. These students need special care, treatment, and guidance (Bilgin et al., 2022a). Guidance is assisting a person in improving or discovering a solution to a problem on a topic they do not fully understand. In the modern world, people's problem-solving methods and problem overcoming are extremely diverse (Bilgin et al., 2022b).

Fluency and accuracy are crucial in language learning. Foreign language literacy affects personal and professional progress (Mustafaeva, 2021). Nowadays, student admission criteria to study in undergraduate

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programs are usually based on reading and listening skills rather than writing and speaking skills, often known as productive skills (Yildiz, 2020a) because evaluating the examinee is simple. After admission, when you observe the students in university language courses, however, as long as most language learners have strong receptive skills, few students experience significant writing difficulties. Writing is a vital scholastic skill that helps students acquire confidence and protect their self-esteem (Yucedal & Shareef, 2022; Kara & Abdulrahman, 2022). Most writing assistance solutions do not teach writing in exciting ways (Mart, 2013; Khan et al., 2017). At this time, the interaction between students and teachers is crucial in language acquisition (Yildiz, 2020b). Many extracurricular or in-class activities can be used to help the students learn the language well (Yildiz, 2017). Hence, educators are interested in using games in writing or vocabulary exercises because of their positive impact on student motivation (Celik et al., 2022).

## **2. Dysgraphia Child**

Originating in Greek, the term "dysgraphia" describes a writing disability. The root word, graph, comes from the physical act of making letters by hand. Students with average or above-average intelligence may fail school, which needs written work to pass topic subjects, not be promoted to the next grade, not graduate from high school, and not pass state high-stakes assessments. Students who can't write may drop out of school (Brown, 2019). Children with dysgraphia often endure emotional tension and worry due to their inability to write. Students with dysgraphia cannot employ the same writing skills as their peers. Students with writing difficulties tend to focus on the form rather than the content, spend less time planning, and make fewer corrections. In contrast, students with stronger writing skills spend more time organizing their ideas, evaluating, reviewing, and organizing their writing before beginning to write (Buğday & Sarı, 2022). Parents and teachers expect kids to write at the same level as they speak if they have high verbal abilities; if they do not, they may be misunderstood as unmotivated or irresponsible. Developmental dysgraphia causes writing/spelling difficulties despite proper schooling, vision, and IQ (Döhla, et al., 2018). Many professionals consider writing difficulties (dysgraphia) as difficulties with a set of skills known as transcribing. Handwriting, typing, and spelling are the talents that allow humans to produce writing. Dysgraphia refers to writing difficulties. Patients with dysgraphia have no physical or motor impairments that prohibit them from writing. The writing of dysgraphia patients is difficult to read or completely unintelligible.

Students with dysgraphia, or trouble with written expression, struggle to keep up with their classmates. Most of these pupils' usual educators could not help them succeed academically (Kurniawan & Sihwi, 2017).

Dysgraphia is a condition that makes it difficult for a person to use letters, numbers, and/or symbols when writing. Modern society places a high premium on written communication, making dysgraphia a significant issue. Furthermore, dysgraphia in the classroom might impact a child's typical growth, self-esteem, and academic accomplishments (Drotár & Dobeš, 2020). Children with writing issues have a normal IQ but cannot learn to write in the traditional educational system. Consequently, they are labelled as a failed student (Azimi & Mousavipour, 2014). Children who struggle to comprehend what they hear also struggle to write. Some of these children can copy by looking at the word, and they may even know how to spell the letters, but they cannot write what they hear (Berninger & Wolf, 2016). Children who cannot read are also incapable of writing. They can replicate words without understanding them but cannot

use them as idioms meaningfully. Children with writing difficulties cannot make the movements required to write the letters and numbers they perceive. They cannot copy or write the displayed text. In arithmetic class, for instance, they have trouble writing numbers and arranging them correctly on paper (Indira & Vijayan, 2015). However, when they hear operations such as addition and subtraction, they can generate the answers in their heads. In addition, these children cannot tie their shoes, open the lids of bottles, cartons, etc., succeed in sports, and have difficulty copying writing (Mayes et al., 2018).

### **3. Methods**

In this qualitative study, a single, open-ended question was posed to ten lecturers from a private university. Their responses were transcribed and recorded.

#### **3.1. Research Sample and Participants**

A semi-structured interview with one open-ended question was chosen to get the insightful opinions of language teachers. The key interview question is presented below:

- What interventions are available for students with dysgraphia?

#### **3.2. Participants**

The researcher for this study successfully convinced ten language teachers from three different nations (Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan) who had worked there in the past and are now working as instructors at the Tishk International University to take part in this study. Since the researcher had been affiliated with the university for a considerable time, he persuaded the participants to thoughts in an encouraging setting voluntarily.

#### **3.3. Data Collection Procedure**

Because the researcher was a part of the same group as the participants, he could plan the study with extreme precision. The interview with ten teachers lasted from five to ten minutes, depending on how much time was spent discussing each instructor's ideas. The findings section includes a detailed analysis of the collected data under "Teachers' Opinions."

### **4. Findings**

#### **4.1. Teachers' Opinions**

**Teacher A:** To illustrate my argument, I would like to tell you about a circumstance with one of my primary school kids. My first year at that institution was memorable. When we first met Ahmad, he was 10 years old and in the fourth grade of elementary school. Always happy, always energetic, and always social, he was a child. He was exceptionally skilled in mathematics if he could perform the calculations in his head. However, he was infamous for making mistakes in written exams. He was recording the wrong versions of the responses in his head. For example, if the result were 45, the value displayed would be 54. When Ahmad began school, he was still writing words in order, and when he was learning the alphabet, he wrote them all backward. After speaking with Ahmad's prior class instructor and his father, I was

presented with this information. The transition from typing to handwriting was difficult for him. Ahmad was unable to distinguish between b and d. Since he wrote "teche" instead of "teacher" in the second grade, correcting the student's mistakes was hard. He was incapable of distinguishing between vowels and consonants. It was a nightmare for me to choose how to address the problem, and I recommended that Ahmad's parents send their son to a psychiatrist.

After a while, Ahmad participated in the counseling sessions. At the start of each session, he was administered the Wisc-r intelligence test. The results suggested that Ahmad possessed a normal IQ, but there was a large disparity between his verbal and performance test scores. The test results indicated that the student had some learning difficulties. In subsequent sessions, Ahmad was encouraged to focus on approaches to literacy, strengthen his focus, and eradicate any deficiencies in the visual field. The reading and writing skills of the learner began to improve as a direct result of these classes.

In conclusion, everything was OK in elementary school, but I am powerless now in college. It is not easy to convince adults to alter their learned behavior.

In conclusion, everything was OK in elementary school, but I am helpless in a university situation. It is difficult to change the learned behavior of grownups.

**Teacher B:** As someone who has taught English for 24 years, I cannot avoid encountering students with reading and writing issues. Sentences in which words jump rope, sentences in which uppercase and lowercase letters are intermingled, words written without regard for grammar, and the expectation that pupils would write essays on top of that. I have no idea what to say. I accept them as such because these students are currently enrolled in college. These issues are not currently being resolved. It should have been resolved during elementary school. Typically, I provide these students with sample texts and instruct them to write accordingly. I want them to copy the keywords 20 times exactly as they appear. I instruct them to write on the lined paper I provide them and not cross the lines. Later, Ahmad participated in the counseling sessions. He was given the Wisc-r intelligence test, and according to the results, he had normal intelligence, but there was a significant disparity between his verbal and performance section scores. This result demonstrated the student's learning problem. In subsequent sessions, Ahmad was required to concentrate on literacy techniques, increase his focus, and eliminate his visual field deficits. The student's reading and writing began to improve due to these courses.

In conclusion, everything was OK in elementary school, but I am helpless in a university situation. It is difficult to change the learned behavior of grownups.

**Teacher C:** From what I have seen, students with dysgraphia cannot apply spaces properly when writing, they cannot size letters properly, and they make spelling mistakes quite often. Words are like climbing stairs. I have had these types of students, and usually, these students would complain about doing homework and writing. It is not easy to teach someone of college age to write. This problem is not only in a foreign language learning stage but also in their native language. I do not do much, and I accept them as they are. When I do not understand their writing, I call and ask them what they mean. Already such students do not exceed three or five in the class.

**Teacher D:** As I understand it, there must be a distortion in the visual perception of students with dysgraphia. For this reason, the students I ask to write anything have a hard time writing left-footed, and as they go to the bottom line, they have difficulty keeping up with the starting line of the article. I had such a student in my class last year, and when he was writing, he was writing the lines after the first line from the far right, so he had dysgraphia. I also came across many subsequent sentences that were mistakenly written like a sentence. He did not use punctuation and continued the next sentence by starting with a lowercase letter. It was not something I could solve. That student has moved on to the second grade and is a sophomore. Usually, I show my learners what kind of homework they would bring in their writing assignments, but nothing much has changed for that student.

**Teacher E:** It is quite difficult to influence this kind of student. According to a Turkish proverb, a tree bends while it is young. It is challenging to resolve the writing issues of a college-aged student. Two pupils in my class were affected by these issues. They used to leave spaces between letters and words when writing paragraphs, writing words consecutively or leaving spaces where there should not be any. What I focused on was whether or not students used the proper words and whether or not their sentences had a unified sense regardless of punctuation. Such students are, in my opinion, too difficult to correct. Regardless, their writing styles will never alter.

**Teacher F:** I have seen this type of student in my classes, but honestly, I have not done much about it. My schedule does not permit me to work with such students. Why is it even feasible, especially in the academic world? Students majoring in dysgraphia find it extremely difficult to find work. Students with dysgraphia have a hard time with letter sizing. The pupils in question all utilized letters of wildly varying widths within the same phrase. Students with dysgraphia can benefit from stop-and-go worksheets for writing assignments because they provide explicit guidance on letter size, orientation, and spacing. The management of the school must obtain such records in this situation.

**Teacher G:** All too late. I figured out what was going on and how to fix it. My son displayed identical signs, and I failed to recognize their significance in time. At first, I thought nothing was wrong. Unfortunately, I was not made aware of this by their educators. To my knowledge, genetic coding is at the root of this issue. Anyway. I treat my students the same way I would treat my child. Having worked with me, they now have more assurance in themselves. Whenever they fail, I never put them down in front of others. The only other option is to work with these students individually, giving each the impression that they are important and have many responsibilities. Such students, sadly, often face social isolation and ridicule from their peers. We cannot stand for it when we are in charge of a classroom to have this happen.

**Teacher H:** Such a person was enrolled in my class. He seemed to be reacting to something, but it was unclear what. I had to repeat myself several times because they could not figure out how to accomplish anything independently. Although it seemed he grasped my explanations, he consistently failed to apply them in actual situations. When I approached the youngster for his thoughts on a topic, I was met with little success; instead, he has shuffled around from topic to topic. Irrelevant topics were all he could talk about. However, what can you do? These youngsters are currently first-year college students. To me, the question of how they will graduate remains open.

**Teacher I:** Although I have never encountered students who fit this description, I have heard it is a genetic illness. Therefore, there is not a lot to do. Because I knew that these people who had just made it to college had feelings, I made it a point to assign them the kind of assignments they could complete without it being a source of emotional distress, and I did my best to keep their spirits up.

**Teacher J:** One of these students was mine. He was completely incapable of using correct grammar in any context. He struggled with even the most basic norms of sentence construction, such as punctuation, comma, and full-stop usage. He frequently wrote lengthy phrases without punctuation marks and included irrelevant commas in the spaces between words in his writing. As if the sentences were written lists instead of sentences, the sentences did not resemble sentences. After completing each writing task, I would invite the student into my room for a one-on-one session in which I would point out his errors. I would instruct him on the proper way to write. After ten efforts at various writing jobs, I noticed some improvements, albeit very tiny ones, but these changes were not the amount I had hoped for him to be. I think it is up to us to welcome such students into the classroom in such a manner.

#### **4.2. Advice to Teacher Candidates Who Will Face Students with Writing Difficulties**

1- One of the most crucial steps is to inspire or persuade the student that he will undoubtedly succeed someday. These students should not be considered unintelligent, thoughtless, contemplative, or lazy in the classroom. If a student with writing difficulties writes with his left hand, he should not be forced to write with his right.

2- Use lined paper until the student's handwriting is elegant and fluid. Ask your student to recite something they know by heart in class.

3- Do not hand him a book and request that he read it in class. Print similar letters on the attractive writing pad using different colored pencils, such as (b) green and (d) yellow. Underline the letters b in green and d in yellow in the text he reads. Apply this technique to additional letters that he or she struggles to recognize.

4- Every day, have your student memorize a sentence and write it from memory. Practice until the s/he has mastered the material, then print it out. Let her/him self-identify her/his flaws with a green pencil and no eraser.

5- Ensure you and the student with a learning handicap have a productive discussion. Ask the student's family for assistance in identifying their ability areas. Identify the area where your student is deficient (language, movement, social behavior, fine motor) and learn the exercises that will improve that area from the psychologist treating the child. Ensure that these activities are implemented at home and in school.

6- Students with learning difficulties require additional stimulation. For this reason, you should provide your students with sufficient explanations while instructing the course. It would be best if you urged your student to talk so that you can hear what he has to say.

7- Even if a student's work is incorrect, he should be commended for his effort.

8- Whenever a student learns a new term, make it simple for him to employ it in a sentence. Never permit insults such as foolish, thoughtful, or sluggish to be used in the school where your student is enrolled.

9-Avoid punishment and rebuke. The area in which these students excel should be revealed in the classroom, and it should be assured that they excel in this area.

10- Students that struggle with writing should be instilled with courage and self-assurance, and no pressure should be imposed.

## 5. Conclusion

Dysgraphia patients who have not been treated for a long time hardly hold on to life. Society does not understand such patients and may distance themselves from such natures. Our love and support as educators or parents are very important here. If symptoms are mild in patients with writing difficulties, they can continue their education in regular schools. In severe cases, backward children should receive education in private schools. As these children age, progress is made, for example, after the fourth grade. Therefore, it is inconvenient to make such children repeat classes. Because their intelligence is of normal value, these patients succeed with the special help of the psychologist and the special effort and attention of the class teacher.

Considering developments in science and technology, we can treat patients with new tools and equipment. We must remember that this is a medical condition, and such patients might face academic, social and basic life skills difficulties. The diagnosis of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) can be made in the light of information obtained from different sources. The problems related to the patient's reading, writing and arithmetic skills are addressed, and it is determined when these begin. Information about the patient should be obtained from both the psychologist and the parents. During the diagnosis, the "Learning disability screening list", Wisc-r intelligence test and neuropsychological tests are used. This ailment can be cured, but it cannot be completely cured. Parents or teachers should help such patients develop a sense of self-confidence although such individuals have difficulty in making friends, writing, reading, playing, speaking, buttoning, holding a pen, grasping something with their hands, etc.

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