

## **FRIENDLY ENGLISH INSTRUCTION FOR DYSLEXIC LEARNERS**

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### **Abstract**

It is not really an easy work to get the general acceptance of dyslexia among the parents, teachers, society, government, and so on. However, in this era, we can see a number of countries actively fight for the dyslexics' rights in life, education, job, etc. In Indonesia, Indonesian Dyslexia Association has run several activities to support people with dyslexia. In short, Indonesian people start to realize the importance of having the right exposures on dyslexia and taking part to support the dyslexics. However, the partial understanding about dyslexia and the related things can cause the inappropriate and unfriendly actions to support them. Thus, in this article, the writer tries to discuss about the way how to create friendly English instruction for dyslexic learners which is based on the experts' suggestions. In accordance with the topic, this article covers the descriptive and critical review on dyslexic learners, English instruction for dyslexic learners, and friendly English instruction for dyslexic learners. Finally, this article is expected to give the brief information to both of the general readers and the professionals. In general, it is expected to be the guidance to solve the problems on dyslexia, especially related to the English instruction. Then, it is also expected to be used as one of the references to discuss and conduct the related topics and researches.

**Keywords:** dyslexia, English, friendly, instruction

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This article is the beginning step of my long journey on learning the relationship between the brain and language production. There are several interesting sub topics related to it. Among the other sub topics, language disorder becomes one of the attractive sub topics to discuss. However, it needs the real effort to 'peel' the surface and 'enjoy' the heart of the sub topic. Just like arranging a huge sophisticated puzzle, I try to put 'dyslexia' as the first chip for the puzzle.

Dyslexia isn't only about dyslexia itself, but also about the relationship between dyslexia and the other topic to discuss. It becomes a colloquial part which can be collaborated to the others in order to give wider and more comprehensive point of view in the discussion. In this case, education can be a unique partner.

In the education world, developing an excellent instructional system is really a challenging 'project'. It happens since the instructional system is consisted from several complex elements and influenced by various factors, both of the internal factors and external factors. Moreover, every learner, including a dyslexic learner has his/her own unique characteristics. It needs more efforts to facilitate all of the learners in a class with their own different characteristics. Thus, discussing it as a part of education world as well as a part of clinical linguistics domain will be very interesting.

### **2. DYSLEXIC LEARNERS**

Dyslexia has several descriptions and it can be seen from different points of view. One of the specific points of view is seeing dyslexia as a certain learning difficulty. Peer and Reid (2001: 1) say that dyslexia is best described as a

combination of abilities and difficulties which affect the learning process in one or more of reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy. The accompanying weaknesses may be identified in areas of speed of processing, short-term memory, sequencing, auditory and/or visual perception, spoken language and motor skills. However, some dyslexic learners have outstanding creative skills, yet others have no outstanding talents. It means all of them have strengths. Then, it occurs despite normal intellectual ability and conventional instructional system. In the other words, it is independent of socio-economic or language background. In the other word, actually, the dyslexic learners are just the same as the other learners, having their own unique characteristics as learners.

However, learners with dyslexia are among those who usually feel excluded from the instructional system, even from the society as a whole. It becomes a big problem which can cause systemic effects, especially for the learners. Thus, tackling the problem becomes a challenging opportunity, especially for the teachers who actually functions as the teacher, the curriculum developer, the curriculum implementer, the instructional facilitator, and the researcher. The most challenging thing is that they should ensure that the dyslexic learners have the equal opportunity as their friends.

Dyslexic learners have the unique relation to many life domains. One of the domains is the education. Thus, this article, specifically, discusses the relationship between the dyslexic learners and English Instruction. Related to previous statement, Reid and Fawcett (2004: 13) state that one of the areas that has gained significant momentum in recent years has been the acknowledgement of the need to promote appropriate and effective practices (for the dyslexic learners) both in assessment and in intervention for students who have to use different languages at home and school. English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesian curriculum. So far, there are, still, various problems faced by the 'mainstream' learners of English as a foreign language. It may be more complicated for the dyslexic learners since they acquire and learn the language in different ways from the others. The condition becomes more interesting to discuss since English, as a subject, has so many micro part to learn and master.

### **3. FRIENDLY ENGLISH INSTRUCTION FOR DYSLEXIC LEARNERS**

Experts have their own formulas on how to create a friendly English instruction for dyslexic learners. However, in this article, I try to find, compare, and reformulate them to be a new formula which is called as 3 Dyslexic-Friendly Formulas (3DF2). The description is as follow.

#### **a. Inclusion instruction**

Nowadays, people realize that the learners, including the English learners, have their own individual needs in learning. One 'size' doesn't fit all. That is why inclusion instruction is needed for every learner. However, people may have the inappropriate 'glasses' to see the word 'inclusion' itself. Related to the dyslexic learners, most of the people think that only specialist dyslexia teachers can teach dyslexic learners successfully trough the mainstream instructional system. It's a narrow point of view. In accordance with the statement, Turner and Pughe (2013:

1) propose that inclusion means being included, being part of and having access to. It means it is the way how the teachers find the unique of the dyslexic learners which should be the consideration, not who the teachers are. It means that everyone can be the teachers for the dyslexic learners as long as they can create dyslexia-friendly instruction. The main point here is how the teacher can facilitate the

dyslexic learner with the appropriate instructional system so that they can get the equal opportunity and access to learn just like the other learners. Thus, it doesn't need a 'special' teacher for the dyslexic learners.

b. Dyslexic-friendly teacher

In the instructional system, the teachers play the key role. They function as the curriculum developers, curriculum implementers, instructional facilitators, and the researchers. Although there are so many elements of the instructional system, still, the teacher is the most important part of it since he/she holds the responsibility to run the instructional process. McKay in Renandya (2012: 65) states that one of the key factors in the successful implementation of an English as an International (EIL) approach to teach English is the teacher. As mentioned earlier, whoever the English teacher, he/she should create the good atmosphere for the learners, including the dyslexic learners. Well, it's not just a piece of cake. However, it can be done well if the teacher can manage the instructional elements using the appropriate ways.

c. Support system for dyslexic learners

Dyslexic learners need support from their environment. It doesn't mean, of course, that they are weak. It happens since they are, just like the others, social creatures who need the others' support to survive in their life. Then, since they are unique, they also need special 'help' from their environments which are their parents, teachers, friends, neighbors, and so on.

Among the others, the parents play the first and important role as the part of the support system for the dyslexic learners. Silver (2001: 1) suggests that when research data are not available and the approach is based on an individual's belief and writings, information on such treatment approaches are usually found in a popular book, the newspapers, lay magazines, or in discussions in television shows, often parents hear of such approaches before professionals. It means, in this era, the parents have wide access to get the information about dyslexia and the treatment. Additionally, they can get the dyslexia-related exposures anywhere and anytime since they can just access them from their smartphones. They don't need to just wait the help from the experts and professionals on dyslexia. Moreover, good parents must be happy to do that 'sophisticated' things since their children's happiness should be their priority. Thus, the parents' support becomes the core part of the support system for the dyslexic learners.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To sum up, dyslexia is a complex thing since it is related to many things in our life. Then, dyslexia and language (especially English as a foreign language) learning becomes a perfect topic to discuss because of the unique and complexity. Moreover, the difference characters between the 'mainstream' learners and the dyslexic learners aren't the weakness of the dyslexic learners. That's the fact that the dyslexic learners are unique but every learners are also unique. Thus, it doesn't matter whether the learners are dyslexics or not, the teachers as the key of the instructional system should create friendly instructional atmosphere to all of the learners and it can be reached successfully by activating the appropriate and effective support system for the dyslexic learners.

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