University for Business and Technology in Kosovo

UBT Knowledge Center

UBT International Conference

2018 UBT International Conference

Oct 27th, 10:45 AM - 12:15 PM

Developing English writing skills for students with specific learning difficulties

Alma Lama

South East European University, al21449@seeu.edu.mk

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference>

Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lama, Alma, "Developing English writing skills for students with specific learning difficulties" (2018). *UBT International Conference*. 123.

<https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference/2018/all-events/123>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Publication and Journals at UBT Knowledge Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in UBT International Conference by an authorized administrator of UBT Knowledge Center. For more information, please contact knowledge.center@ubt-uni.net.

Developing English Writing Skills for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

Alma V.Lama

South East University, Tetovo, Macedonia

al21449@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract: In a context of learning, writing as a valuable tool, helps students think critically and demonstrate what they know but for students with specific learning difficulties, the writing process can bring different challenges as it can be much harder and slower. As a result, they may struggle academically by falling behind the school work. Moreover, they can get discouraged and avoid writing assignments. When it comes to developing English writing skills in students with specific learning difficulties, this can double the challenges and can lead our students to feeling frustrated about their academic achievements. This can also lower their self-esteem and the worst part is that teachers may criticize them for being lazy, which makes the situation even harder for them. This leads us first to identify the problem and learn how to cope with it! Moreover, this paper aims to provide an understanding of Dysgraphia as a specific learning difficulty which affects writing and in this case what methods and strategies we as teachers can use in an inclusive classroom, so our students can become more engaged with their writing and more proficient writers. Helping students with specific learning difficulties develop better writing skills, makes them become more successful and it serves them as a motivation to reach their life goals.

Key words: *English writing skills, students with specific learning difficulties, inclusive classroom*

1 Introduction

Dysgraphia as a learning impairment is considered to be under the umbrella of Specific Learning Difficulties That has to do with difficulties in written expressions. The term is understood as making Handwriting letters. Children with Dysgraphia can express themselves fluently while speaking but face several challenges when they need to follow or express their ideas in writing. For students who face these difficulties, takes more time for them to develop the writing skills, the process is harder and slower and without help and practice, these students may experience hard time in school therefore we need to develop and work on different strategies to improve writing skills.

Dysgraphia is a learning difficulty that indicates the correct writing skills regardless of ability to read. People with Dysgraphia can write, and have a higher than average IQ, but lack co-ordination and organizing thoughts in parallel with others.. They can also find it hard on basic spelling skills sometimes mixing letter p with q or b with d and often will occur that they write the wrong word when trying to put their ideas on the paper. (Brainhe.com, 2006). On the elementary school the difficulty emerges when they are first introduced to writing, they make large size letters and outside of the notebook margins. Students whose first language is transparent misspell words as in their first language they don't have a decoding system because their first language is transparent which means that is written as it is spelled.

2 Identification of Dysgraphia

Identifying students who have Dysgraphia is quite challenging because their writing difficulty might be a result of other type of learning problem. (Cavey 1987) However, some of the signs and symptoms that appear are seeing student who stays behind his/her classmates, if he/she does not notice a certain letter spacing, finds it hard to organize words on the page from left to right, writes letters that go on one direction above or below the notebook margins or finds it hard to write inside the notebook margins, copies text slowly and stops writing while others continue. All of these are related to category one of Dysgraphia which is called Visual- Spatial Difficulty. A child may show that have Dysgraphia if he or she has fine motor difficulties which is the second category and this is manifested with holding a pencil incorrectly, holding a puzzle piece incorrectly while doing puzzles, holding shoelaces while tying his or her shoes even while eating, for example, holding a knife while cutting food or fork while picking up the food. A child with Dysgraphia will find it hard to use scissors well or to color inside the lines. Students with Dysgraphia as said above find it hard to put their ideas down on paper quickly, find it hard to follow directions, lose their concentration easy and this is due to Dysgraphia third category so-called Language Processing Issues. Other symptoms that you may see in students who suffer from Dysgraphia are spelling issues which affect the handwriting. In this category students with Dysgraphia experience difficulties to understand spelling rules or saying if a word is misspelled. In this content, they make errors in writing, miss upper and lowercase letters, have trouble reading their own writing, erase a lot, avoid writing and complain as they have their hand cramped etc.

When it comes to grammar use, students with Dysgraphia don't know when to use a punctuation mark, they overuse commas and mix verb tenses, and don't start the sentence with a capital letter. As for the organization, if you ask them to tell the second part of the lesson they find it hard to organize themselves, they forget about important facts and details, they assume that others know what they are talking about but actually they never get to the point but they are better at bringing ideas while speaking. These symptoms always depend on students level of education but most of them you see when they start school and it can be manifested with a lack of

development in academic writing skills, basic skills and social skills therefore, we need to bring different methods and strategies that help these students succeed in a required tasks inside and outside the class.

3 Dysgraphia Treatment

Accommodation of students with Dysgraphia plays an important role! The earlier a training starts, the faster they overcome challenges which are related to writing. As English teachers we have to be careful when presenting letters right in the beginning as kinesthetic memory is powerful and students learn what they see, read and hear and if we present them in a wrong way, they develop the habit which is very difficult to correct. We have to bear in mind that work needs always to begin with letter formation when we teach the alphabet and the sounds of each consonant and vowel and at the same time to practice it daily and repeat over the weeks and check with it often for months. Another method, when you teach word order is to present words in small pieces of letter and ask students to put them together in a sentence, encourage them to do this at home as an assignment with handwriting and bring it to class for others to complete the sentence. This will encourage them to write better as others will read their work and they don't like to feel embarrassed by the fact that somebody will not understand what they have written. Encourage students to experiment with different writing tools for example computer. Providing a text with spaces for students to fill in with the information can be encouraging for students with Dysgraphia as they don't need to worry about writing the whole text.

4 Strategies of Coping with Dysgraphia

As teachers, we know that writing is a great tool to learn but if we have students who encounter difficulties in writing, we have to come up with different strategies. If we teach vocabulary, ask students to practice the writing of the new words for example write each new word five times and practice spelling. Older students can use this strategy to form five different sentences for each new word that they learn, motivate them and praise those who really try and reinforce the positive aspects of student's effort and encourage them to be patient with themselves. The use of multisensory techniques provide visual, auditory, kinesthetically and tactile support that can be used to help also students with Dysgraphia as it encourages them to verbalize the motor sequence of the form of the letters for example letter b is a big stick down with a big stomach away from its body on the right side where letter d is the same but its stomach in on the left. Allow students to use technology to help them write correctly on the notebook.

- Give hand-outs in advance and encourage pre-writing. Maybe ask them to write the first word of every sentence and capitalize the first letter.
- Give them more time to process what they comprehend in order to organize and find the right way to write the word and be patient as students with Dysgraphia are very emotional and get easy frustrated.
- Help them through dictation by giving them more time to write the word down.
- Present writing material in small chunks so they can write it all. Ask student to present their work while writing down their ideas and how they will elaborate each part.
- Organize the ideas that they want to express, for example plan your paper, organize your thoughts and ideas, write your draft, edit your work, revise your work and bring the final draft at the class. For every written work students with dyspraxia need to work ahead at home.

As teachers, we have to copy on the board what you are asking them to complete or print it for them and it will be a great idea if you can give them a sample form so they can be successful on their work.

5 Instructional Activities that Improve the Handwriting Activities of Students with Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia affects the hands muscles and it is very important to start working on this part as early as possible for example activities such as playing with clay to strengthen hand muscles can help, teaching from kindergarten how to keep lines within margins to develop motor control, activities such as connecting dots to create a letter form or an image and tracing letters from samples. All of these will help student also hold the pencil grip or crayon or color pencil.

6 Conclusion

As English Language teachers, the overall goal is to help the students perform accurately and faster. At the same time participate together with their peers in a writing task. We have to consider making changes on the volume of the written work, complexity, tools that will help students to use so they can advance in their writing skills because when they receive the appropriate time and help, they can succeed in their class and home assignments.

In conclusion Dysgraphia as a specific learning difficulty can be noticed at the very young age and can be treated so every student can succeed and reach its

potential in writing better. As early as we are able to identify, it gives us a chance to help them with different strategies to improve their skills and provide the right accommodations.

With this in mind, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should consider to test every student right after the first year of preschool so as they enter the elementary or primary school, teachers are aware if they have students with Dysgraphia and start working on the teaching strategies.

References:

1. Cavey, D. W. (1997). Dysgraphia: Why Johnny Can't Write: A Handbook for Teachers and Parents,ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 286 339, 1997.
2. "Dysgraphia Info." Brainhe.com. BRAIN.HE. Retrieved from: <http://www.brainhe.com/staff/types/dysgraphiastaff.html>
3. International Dyslexia Association. "Understanding Dysgraphia." Wrightslaw.com. Retrieved from: <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/read.dysgraphia.facts.htm>
4. Jones, S. (1998). "Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Handwriting Problems and/or Dysgraphia". Retrieved from www.idonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/dysgraphia.html
5. Richards, R. G. "Strategies for Dealing with Dysgraphia, 1999b." Retrieved 29 August 2018 from www.idonline.org/article/5890/