

DysTEFL2: “DysTEFL2. Dyslexia and the teaching of English as a foreign language



Erasmus+

Marina Mattheoudakis

Thomai Alexiou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki,

Greece



Key About the project

Students with dyslexia experience difficulties in learning their first language skills but also while learning a foreign language. They do not usually receive any specialized help and tutoring in foreign language learning.

Lack of teacher support may result from the fact that language teachers may not be sufficiently aware of the nature of dyslexic problems and are not equipped with competences which will allow them to successfully teach foreign languages to these students.

Therefore there is a need to support EFL teachers and provide them with certified teacher development courses on how to cater for the needs of foreign language learners with dyslexia in EFL classrooms.

Key Target groups

Target groups for whom DysTEFL2 teacher development training events are offered:

pre- and in-service teachers of English as a foreign language,
teacher trainers,

training institutions for pre- and in-service teachers of English as a foreign language,

Key Project aims

The project aims to provide initial and continuous professional development training events for EFL teachers to help them gain necessary competences required to work with dyslexic foreign language learners.

Key Project outcomes include:

Needs Analysis – the study on the needs of EFL teachers and their preferences concerning teacher development training events

upgraded DysTEFL course materials supplemented with unit quizzes and a whole course test available in the distance learning (Moodle), face-to-face and online self-study modes

a 5 day validated teacher development course in Poland, Greece and Slovenia. The course available also in the distance learning (Moodle) and online self study modes

project website and e-learning platform

3 (one day long) Multiplier Events in Poland, Greece and Slovenia – DysTEFL2 workshops and seminars for EFL teachers and teacher trainers

DysTEFL2 Final Conference organized in 2016 in Łódź, Poland

DysTEFL2

- The DysTEFL2 project aims at popularizing the DysTEFL course.
- The course provides a solid theoretical foundation about the nature of dyslexia and practical suggestions for classroom teaching, task and curriculum design, and assessment.
- It focuses on learners with dyslexia in its approach to teacher training and in providing freely downloadable booklets and a complete set of self-study materials.

DysTEFL 2 focuses on developing a battery of quizzes, tests and exams , which constitutes an integral part of the procedures for confirming learning outcomes.

Project partners

- University of Łódź, Poland – project coordinator
- The Society for Alternative Education, Opole, Poland
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
- Ljubljana University, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Achievements

The excellence of DysTEFL's course has been confirmed by the British Council's ELTon award for "Excellence in Course Innovation". The ELTons are the only international awards that recognise and celebrate innovation in English language teaching (ELT).

Language Teaching material

- Language coursebooks are typically designed and written in order to address a generic audience
- Student populations, however, are highly diverse as they include students from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families and communities
- On top of those potential differences, learners exhibit a variety of learning styles and other individual differences, cognitive, linguistic and affective

Learners with special learning differences and materials

- Learners with SpLD, such as dyslexia, are a group of learners who may find language learning a challenging task.
- Unfortunately, most teaching materials do not cater for those learners and as a result, informed teachers are expected to be flexible and adapt their material in order to meet those learners' special needs.
- Inclusive approaches to education require teachers to make **appropriate accommodations** so as to enable those learners to progress without losing their motivation.

Characteristics of dyslexia

- Difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities.

Commonly found symptoms

- Slow reading
- Limited vocabulary
- Difficulties in syntax and morphology
- Difficulties in matching letter-sound
- Difficulties in arranging a story and ordering their ideas

A dyslexic child's account of trying to copy an assignment from the board

- ‘If she [the teacher] writes lots of things [on the board] I get all the things mixed up because I can only write one thing [word] down each time.... It’s hard to find where I was [on the board], so I just write down as much as I can, which means it’s all over the place and in the wrong order, and I miss bits out.’

(Adapted from: <http://www.dyslexia-parent.com>)

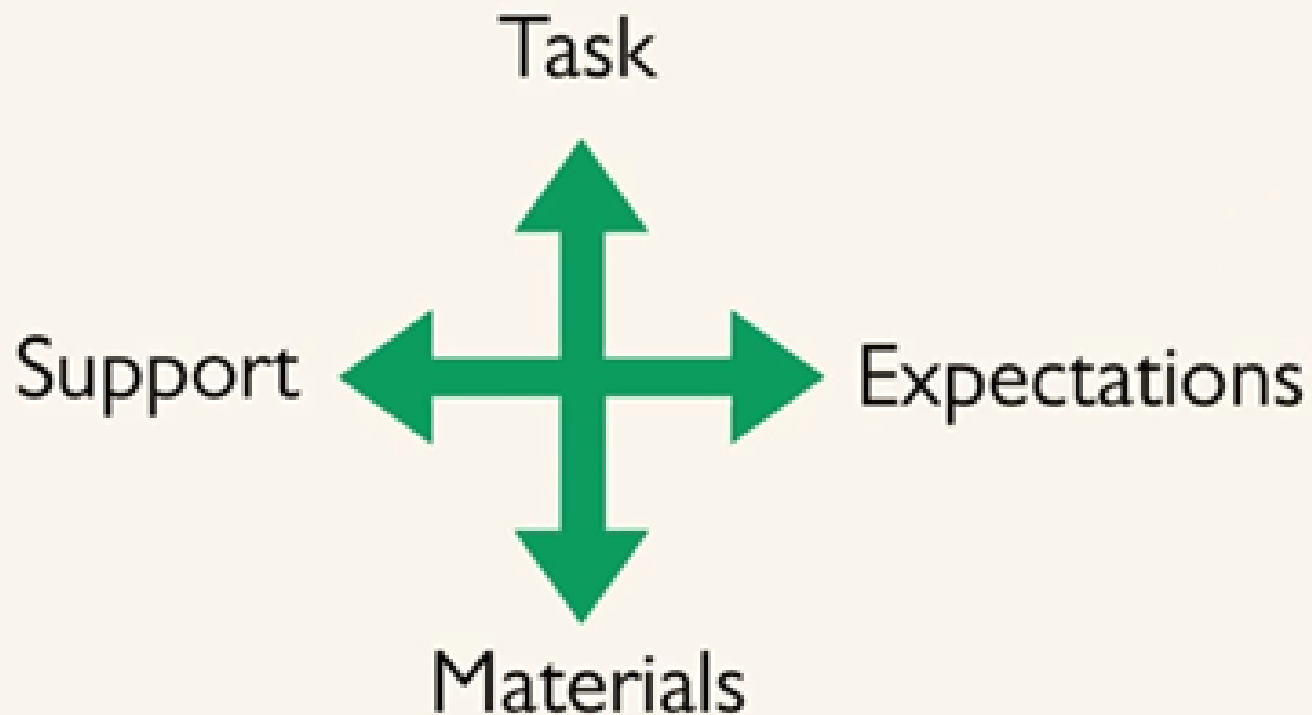


Course content and materials

Many teachers may not be able to determine the content of what they have to teach, but they can still have a large say in how the material is presented.

Differentiate!

Differentiation



Ways to deal with learners with SpLDs

- Breaking large projects into smaller, more manageable chunks
- Allow time and vary the pace .
- Revising is important.
- **Differentiation is vital.**

Differentiation by materials

- Do we give everybody the same task? Or different bits of a larger task?
- Set a task with a core component that everybody must tackle, and some additional work for the quick finishers
- Everybody does the same task, but with **different materials**

Differentiation

By support

- Learners with SpLD will probably need more support than their peers as in order to sustain motivation
 - They experience greater difficulties
 - They may easily become demotivated

By expectation

- We should not have lower expectations of our learners with dyslexia but we should be realistic .
- We need to know how far we can push each learner, and when to accept that they have done the best they could.

Appropriate teaching methods

- Use 'Top/down' approaches in teaching as students with dyslexia think in wholes
 - They need to see the 'Big Picture' first and 'the forest before the trees'.
- Read loudly
- Avoid open ended questions involving abstract or incomplete instructions.
- Ensure that instructions of tasks and activities are simple, clear and do not require multiple tasks.

Appropriate teaching techniques

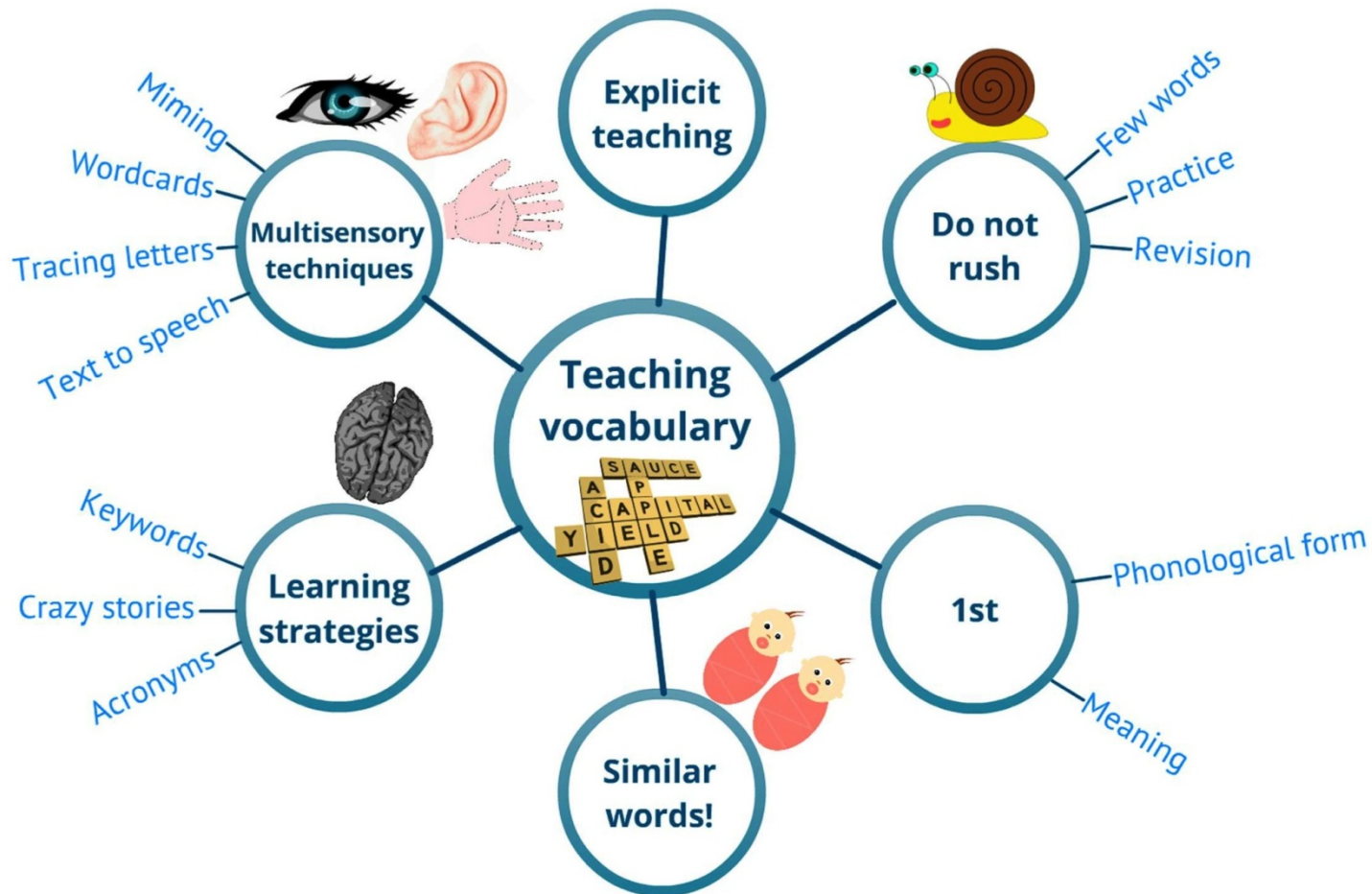
- Mindmaps
- Digital voice recorder
- Speech to text software (a user-friendly, free service called Robobrace, available at www.robobrace.org)
- Wordcards in a digital format. You may prepare word/flashcards using quizlet: <http://www.quizlet.com>
- Songs
- Mnemonic devices
- Crazy stories (Schneider and Crombie, 2003)
- Memory game with word cards



Vocabulary teaching

- Limit the number of words you teach in one lesson (no more than 10)
- Use multi coloured flashcards(preferably 3 x 5).
- Focus on pronunciation and meaning
- Present new words in familiar contexts
- Avoid instructing similar words in the same lesson (e.g.Who, how, why, etc)
- Play language games!
 - Bingo
 - Taboo
 - Pictionary
 - Sudoku
 - Magnetic letters

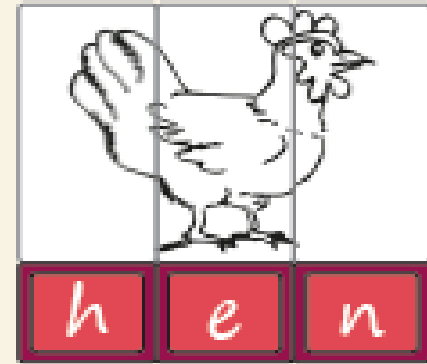
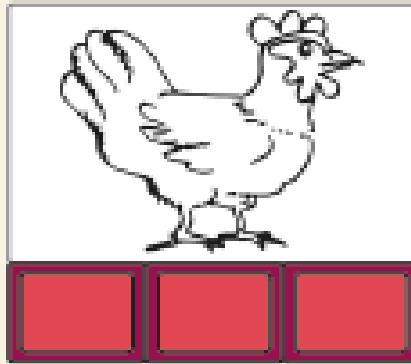
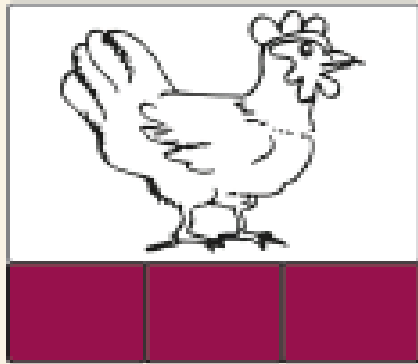
Sample of cognitive map for vocabulary



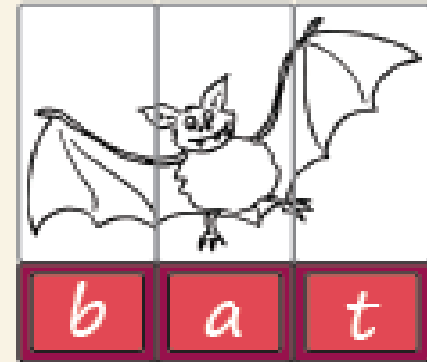
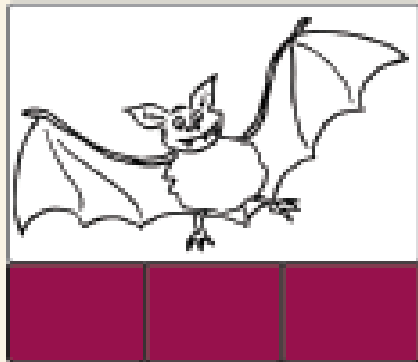
Grammar teaching

- The teaching of grammar should be based on already known structures
 - Colouring and grammar coding facilitate memory storage and recall
 - Emphasise rules and exceptions: explicit teaching may help learners with dyslexia
- 2. Word order questions
 - You **are** **wearing** blue jeans.
 - **Are** you **wearing** blue jeans?
 - **They** **study** Italian?
 - **Do** they **study** Italian?

Sounds and spelling: divide words into sounds



....



Orthographic awareness:

Dividing words into onsets and rimes




	b	bat	
	c	at	cat
	r	rat	

Diagram illustrating the division of words into onsets and rimes for the word 'dog'. The onset 'd' is shown in a separate box, and the rime 'og' is shown in a box with 'o' and 'g'.

jog
log
fog
dog

Diagram illustrating the division of words into onsets and rimes for the word 'can'. The onset 'c' is shown in a separate box, and the rime 'an' is shown in a box with 'a' and 'n'.

can
pan
van
fan

Diagram illustrating the division of words into onsets and rimes for the word 'tin'. The onset 't' is shown in a separate box, and the rime 'in' is shown in a box with 'i' and 'n'.

tin
fin
bin
pin

Diagram illustrating the division of words into onsets and rimes for the word 'top'. The onset 't' is shown in a separate box, and the rime 'op' is shown in a box with 'o' and 'p'.

top
pop
hop
mop

Material for orthographic awareness



Spelling choices for individual sounds

bea ch

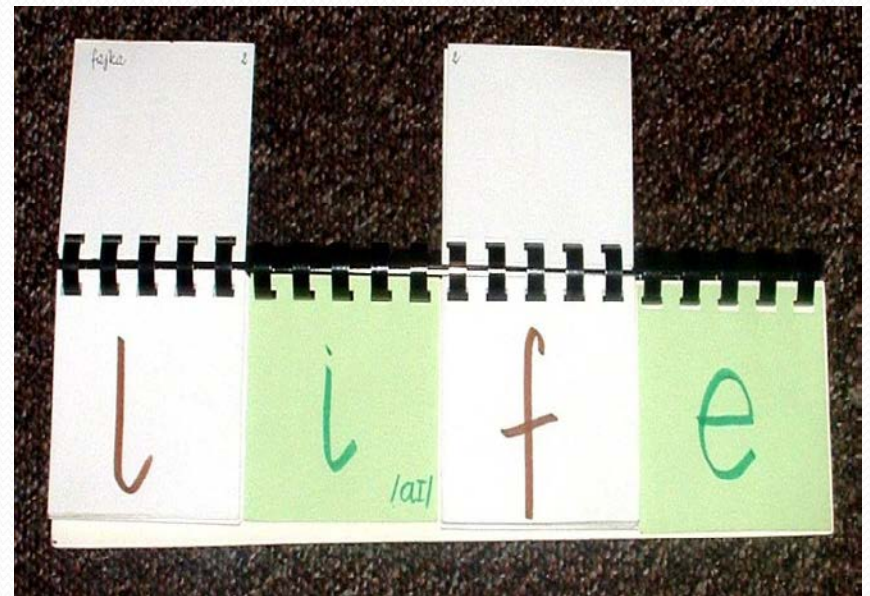
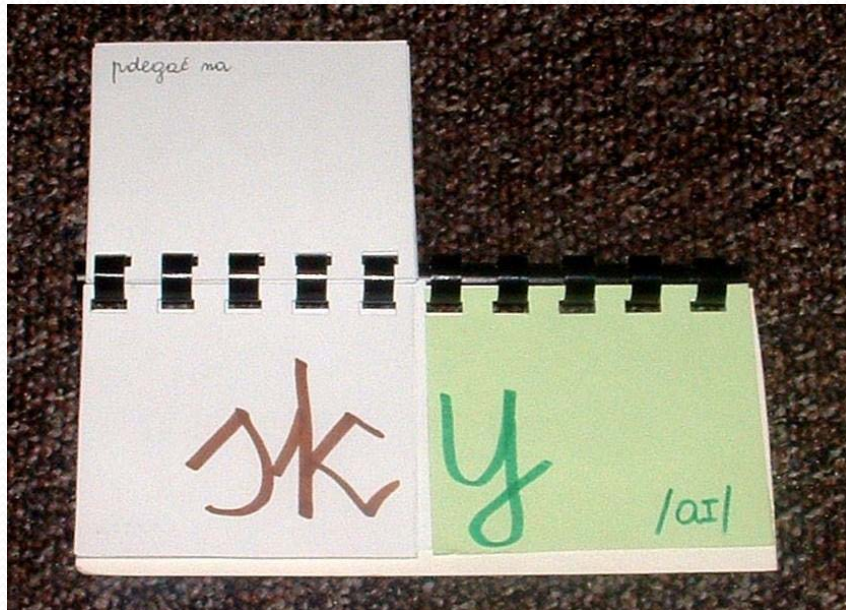
sti tch

op ch

BINGO			
cat <u>ch</u>	tea <u>ch</u>	<u>ch</u> ea <u>p</u>	<u>ch</u> est
bea <u>ch</u>	ma <u>tch</u>	<u>ch</u> op	pun <u>ch</u>
fe <u>tch</u>	<u>ch</u> ild	lun <u>ch</u>	<u>ch</u> arm
ske <u>tch</u>	<u>ch</u> eck	rea <u>ch</u>	sti <u>tch</u>

church	bench	bench	sketch	sketch	chain	chain	peach
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Material for spelling choices



Phonic trees: Spelling choices



For reading, use appropriate texts

- Text should be organised into short paragraphs
- Text should be accompanied with illustrative pictures or visual images
- Ensure that you spread out the text so that it is less dense on the page.
- Shorten all sentences in texts and turn passive verbs into active verbs (Reid 2013, p.61).
- Write heading and subheadings; the organizational structure can make it much easier for student with dyslexia to read and understand
- The font and size of the letters should be appropriate, e.g., Century Gothic (see <http://opendyslexic.org/>)
- Use cream filter or pastel transparencies for reading.

Material for developing speaking skills: Task 1

The following activity is a speaking activity from Think Teen, an EFL coursebook for A2 learners of English at high school

(Karagianni, Kouli, and Nikolaki, 2008, pp. 149 and 152).

(<http://ebooks.edu.gr/new/books-pdf.php?course=DSGYM-A114>)

- Let us evaluate together the level of difficulty of the speaking activity taking into consideration the difficulties learners with dyslexia may have in speaking



Speaking

Find the differences

- 1 *You and your partner have got a copy of two students' diaries. Some of the things in them are not the same. Take it in turns to ask and answer questions to find out 3 similarities and 3 differences. You have five minutes.*

Student A: Look at the diaries on page 149.

Student B: Look at the diaries on page 152.

- 2 *What differences have you found? Check with the rest of the class.*

Tip!

- You don't want to miss the fun, so...
- Don't show your diary to your partner.
- Answer only your partner's questions.
- Don't give him/her any extra information.



Speaking

Student A



Emma's diary

16 Monday Dance lesson - 6.30	20 Friday Take the dog to the vet - 6.15
17 Tuesday Go to the dentist - 3.30	21 Saturday Meet Carol outside school - 8.00
18 Wednesday Study for the Maths test	22 Sunday Visit Museum of Modern Art with mum and dad
19 Thursday Tidy my room	Have lunch at the park.

Paul's diary

16 Monday Play basketball - 5.15	20 Friday Wash dad's car
17 Tuesday Revise Biology	21 Saturday Meet Jane outside school - 8.00
18 Wednesday Buy present for dad (after 3.00)	22 Sunday Visit grandma - morning Go to the cinema with Tom - 7.30
19 Thursday Watch football match - 8.00	




Language Bank

- Paul is playing basketball on Monday.
- What is Paul doing next Sunday?
- Is Emma studying for a Maths test on Wednesday 18th?
Yes, she is / No, she isn't
- When / What time is Emma?
- According to my diary, Paul isn't

Sample answer

- The speaking activity has some positive elements. It is interesting and fun, provides opportunities for interaction and gives learners a language bank which enables them to produce appropriate language.
- However, it is cognitively challenging, if not difficult, as learners are required to exchange information and move from one text to another.
- As there is no access to both diaries at the same time, since this is an information gap activity, it is very difficult to locate the differences especially because they are very subtle.

- 
- What is more, some of those differences concern timetables and, therefore, numbers, and these pose difficulties to learners with dyslexia.
 - Apart from the cognitive challenges, the activity is also linguistically challenging because it requires extensive and multiple questions and answers.

Material for teaching speaking skills to young learners: Task 2

The following activity is a speaking activity from Magic Book 1, (Alexiou & Mattheoudakis, 2013, p. 53), a Greek EFL coursebook targeting 9-year-old learners of English

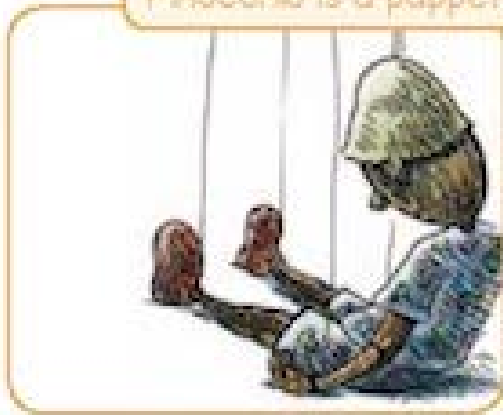
- Evaluate the level of difficulty of the speaking activity taking into consideration the difficulties learners with dyslexia may have in speaking

Speaking activity for younger learners

3. Tell the story.



Pinocchio is a puppet



Sample answer

- This is a task that is cognitively appropriate, fun and playful. The basic character is Pinocchio who is a well-known character to children of this age.
- However, although the activity may look quite easy, it is obvious that it requires learners to perform a double task, i.e., they are expected to understand the plot of the story, find the appropriate language to narrate it as well as express verbally the sequence of the events of the story.

Activities

- One idea to reduce the level of difficulty would be to provide learners with dyslexia with captions and just ask them to match them with the corresponding picture.
- Possible activities for the development of speaking skills might include miming, games like taboo, and tongue twisters (e.g. “Tonight the night is light and bright”).

Final tips 😊

- All students with special learning difficulties are different – find which strategies work for them
- Teaching dyslexic learners may be very frustrating as their development is quite slow.
- Allow plenty of time for development and be very patient!

THANK YOU!

The DysTEFL2 material can
be found on

dystefl.eu



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