



## MULTISENSORY TEACHING TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING READING FOR EFL STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA: TEACHER'S PERCEPTION

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### Abstract

Dyslexia or “word blindness” is a developmental reading disorder which is a result from the inability to process graphic symbols. This research aims to know teacher’s perceptions on using multisensory teaching technique for teaching reading to students with dyslexia. This is an interview study in which collecting data is conducted through semi-structured interview in order to discover more in-depth information about multisensory teaching technique in teaching reading for dyslexic students. The participant of this research is an orthopedagogic teacher who works in an inclusive school. Based on the research results, the teacher perceives that teacher’s creativity and appropriate supporting media are necessary in implementing multisensory approach. The teacher also perceives that this approach has some advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include achieving the learning objectives, centered on children, friendly to children, motivating children in learning, making the students be more confident, and optimizing children’s development. The disadvantages are expensive cost in providing supporting media and limited time allocation in implementation. In implementing a multisensory approach in teaching reading to dyslexic students, the teacher does the following strategies: learning adjustments, using code-switching, using concrete-semi concrete-abstract concepts, learning agreement, students’ reward, and the teacher and parent’s communications.

*Keyword:* dyslexia, multisensory, reading, teaching technique.

## INTRODUCTION

The most common case of learning difficulties in research is dyslexia (Wenar and Kerig, 2006). Children with this disorder may have normal IQ, and other abilities are also good but in terms of reading will have difficulty (Prasetya, 2017). Children with dyslexia become a phenomenon that has not been detected too much by society in general

because of its specific characteristics. According to Dewi (in Zunus, 2017) in Indonesia, until now, it still uses public view to assess children who have difficulty reading. According to him, there are still many of them who do not understand. Lack of understanding of dyslexia is considered to make many teachers in schools unprepared.

Moreover, they also have never received special training on dyslexia. Enough knowledge for parents and teachers to understand the characteristics of children with dyslexia is needed so that children get appropriate interventions and can actualize themselves. The existence of an inclusive elementary school program is indeed quite helpful if a child with dyslexia get good treatment from a teacher and shadow teacher who treats more intensively. Teaching reading is a complex phenomenon for teachers who teach normal students. Furthermore, teaching reading skills to students with reading disabilities (dyslexia) is a far more complicated task for English teachers. However, students with reading disabilities can also be taught to read effectively by adopting a multisensory teaching approach. Goswami (2015) and Roulstone et al. (2012) have revealed that for student with difficulties in learning to read, a multisensory pedagogic is typically the foremost effective method. Diani (2009) reported there was an effect of multisensory teaching method on the students' reading achievement. Another study is reported by Kamala (2014) that teaching through multisensory approach makes the dyslexic students learn these skills in an easy way. For instance, dyslexics often confuses with the similar looking letters (b and d), this confusion can be easily solved by making the students to use all their learning modalities (VAKT). This research is motivated by the problems that arise in the school environment, especially in the teaching learning process at school that is the lack of the teacher's understanding in teaching reading dyslexic students. The research question can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the teacher's perceptions in multisensory teaching technique in teaching reading to student with dyslexia?

2. How does the teacher implement multisensory teaching in teaching reading to students with dyslexia?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Teaching Reading**

According to Brown (2007), Teaching is a guide and a learning facility that enables learners to learn, and sets the conditions for learning. It means that teaching reading helps students to read English fluently in their classroom. Teaching cannot be separated from learning because teaching is a guiding principle and facilitating learning, enabling learners to learn, managing the learning conditions. Teachers ' understanding of learning will determine their philosophy of education, teaching style, approach, methods and classroom techniques (Brown, 2007). Fahimsyah (2008) said the main task of teaching reading is to teach understanding. To assess the problem of what to teach when teaching understanding, we must try to determine what is likely to prevent a child from understanding the text.

### **2. EFL students' with Dyslexia**

The word dyslexia are defined as a general term for disorder that involve difficulty in learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols, but that do not affect general intelligence in Rismanti (2017). The description of specific difficulties dyslexic students may have with reading. Letters with similar shapes such as 'u' and 'n' may be confusing, along with similar looking words such as 'saw' and 'was' (Farrell, 2006). Words that have the same initial and final letter can also be confusing for dyslexics. Furthermore, words like wood and word are easily mistaken for each other (Allen, 2010). According to Kamala (2014) the signs of dyslexia differ from individuals to individuals but the most common symptoms of dyslexia are: (a) Has difficulty in reading

to read. (b) Confused with similar looking letters (b as d, m as w). (c). Confuses similar looking words (bread/beard). (d). Lacks consistency in reading words. (e). Has problems in associating letter with sounds. Some difficulties that occur of students with dyslexia are reading, spelling and writing. Those activities usually used left hemisphere skills which is the left hemisphere of the brain is usually used to sort, remember and involve phonics and accuracy, therefore dyslexic children are less able to do it perfectly. That's why dyslexic children often feel tired when studying or doing their assignments (Rismanti, 2017).

### **3. Multisensory Teaching Technique**

Multisensory approach was proposed collectively by learning difficulty specialist, teachers, and researchers in the late 1920s and was significantly developed in the 1970 by Gillingham and Stillman (Saputra & Nugroho, 2015). Basically, the approach consists of a string of multisensory learning strategies including linking eyes, ears, voice, and hand movements as dyslexic children have extra creativity and stronger sensory receptors. Kamala (2014) also conveys that multisensory approach utilizes more than one sense in the teaching process to enhance the learning process of the students. When learning takes place through more than one sense the students' learning capacities and the retention of the learnt materials have been improved. Multisensory approach is otherwise known as VAKT (visual, audio, kinesthetic, tactile) method. As such, multisensory learning is very much dependent upon all the senses being utilized as a key method of retaining information, in contrast to the most common reliable method of sight and hearing (Kelly and Philips, 2016).

### **4. Teacher's Perceptions**

Perception is the process of human thinking about a particular phenomenon Aprianto (2017). Perception is initiated from organ understanding. This process is linked to human brain accepting message or information. In this phase a person uses five senses to communicate with his / her environments. These are sight, sound, taste, smell, touch. People interact with the environment using these senses, and then the brain will register the stimuli and send them to the nervous system. According to Slamento (2010) there are two factors that influence someone's perceptions, those are internal and external factor. The internal factor is a factor that comes from inside the person. It depends on psychological factors such as thinking, feeling, willingness, need, sex, attention, and motivation. The external factor is a factor that comes from outside the person. External stimuli also influence the perception of others, and feedback is an internal factor in the monitoring process

## **METHODOLOGY**

The interviewer pursues in-depth information around the topic that is teaching and learning activities, especially for students' with dyslexia. It is used in order to know the teacher's perception after using multisensory teaching technique for students' with dyslexia. The research is conducted in an elementary school in Bandung. This school is one of school which held inclusive education in around Bandung area. The participant in this research is an orthopedagogic teacher (special teacher for students diagnosed with special needs). She has taught students with dyslexia for 2 years. Although this study involved only one participant, this choice is methodologically justified within a qualitative interview-based research design. The focus of this study is not generalization but an in-depth exploration of the teacher's perceptions and instructional practices.

Concentrating on a single experienced orthopedagogic teacher allowed the researcher to obtain rich, detailed, and contextualized data regarding the implementation of multisensory teaching for students with dyslexia.

Data collection in this study is an online interview. The direct interview was canceled because of a pandemic at this year namely covid 19. The online interview was carried out through a chat on *whatsapp* by asking questions to the participant. The researcher chooses Semi-Structure Interview as an instrument to get the data. Semi-Structure Interview is used to get some information through conversation between the researcher and participants. A semi-structured interview has been referred to as a 'conversation with a purpose'. In-depth interviews are utilized extensively as interviewing format possibly with an individual or sometimes even with a group (Corbin, 2008).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Teacher's perceptions on multisensory approach in teaching reading to the dyslexic students.**

#### **1.1.Teacher's teaching creativity is necessary**

Creativity is necessary in teaching learning activity. It should be integrated into not only lesson planning but also instruction. The teacher argues that multisensory approach can help the students with dyslexia in reading English, but she also said that the multisensory approach is not always appropriate for use in every learning process for the students with dyslexia. The teacher also said that in teaching learning activities the teacher must still pay attention to the other things,

at least, the things that need to be considered by teacher include: understanding the condition of each student (obstacles, abilities and student's needs), subjects to be learned, learning materials, and learning objectives. the teacher explains that not all the dyslexic students can be continuously taught using the same (monotone) method, because each dyslexic student has different characteristics, to eliminate or reduce the boredom of these dyslexic students, the teachers must be creative in teaching learning activities, so the dyslexic students are not easily bored or can be referred to as active learning. To build creativity in the learning process and reduce student boredom, the teacher uses several media available in conveying material, such as English songs (motion-rhythm), flash cards, storytelling (by using media images as puppets), guessing words, etc., the teacher conveys that the dyslexic students who were taught by the teacher already have sufficient English language skills, from mastery a lot of vocabulary to its pronunciation. The teacher often finds out that the dyslexic students find difficulty in writing English words from how it is pronounced into word.

#### **1.2.Supporting Media**

The teacher said that everything can be used as learning media if it is in accordance with its learning objectives. when the teacher teaches at school, the teacher is facilitated by having such varied supporting media such as meronce tool made of wood and plastic materials and from

large size to small beads, legos, small balls, puzzles, Montessori media, etc. The teacher also said that so far Lego, puzzles and meronce tools are media that can increase the dyslexic student's mood in learning to read. The teacher

works around by putting a text of story that must be read by students under some supporting media, the teacher asks students to choose what media he will play, for example when students choose to play puzzles and then students must read the text well while playing.

### **1.3. Advantages and Disadvantages**

The advantages include achieving the learning objectives, centered on children, friendly to children, motivating children in learning, making the students be more confident, and optimizing children's development. The disadvantages are expensive cost in providing supporting media and limited time allocation in implementation.

## **2. The implementation of multisensory teaching in teaching reading to students' with dyslexia**

### **2.1.Learning adjustments**

Before the teacher starts the teaching learning process, the teacher makes sure the students' condition and adjusted with the learning material so the students can follow the learning process clearly. In teaching the dyslexic students, before the teacher gave the subject materials,

the teacher has to know their condition. If the dyslexic students are in good condition, the teacher can go through the materials. In the other hands if the students are in bad condition, the teacher will reduce the learning objectives.

### **2.2.Using code-switching**

Use code-switching during teaching learning activities to the students with dyslexia. The teacher said through using code-switching the learning materials conveyed can be more comprehensible for the students.

### **2.3.Using concrete, semi-concrete, abstract media**

The teacher used concrete, semi-concrete, abstract media to support multisensory approach in teaching reading English for the dyslexic students. She believes that it can stimulate the student's senses (visual, audio, kinesthetic). The media can also be replaced with a flashcard.

### **2.4. Learning Agreement**

The students with dyslexia have a 'tantrum' or mood swing which occurs unexpectedly, because many of the dyslexic students cannot express their feeling directly. Dealing with this condition, the teacher makes an agreement with the students at the beginning of learning and the teacher should be consistent.

### **2.5. Reward**

The dyslexic students have a "tantrum" that is why the teacher often gives a simple reward such as saying "you're cool!", high five, and give a star sticker, etc. to increase

the student's motivation and to create a good circumstance.

## **2.6. The teachers and parent's communication**

After the lesson finished, the orthopedic the teacher usually takes some notes in student's journal. The journal brings the teachers class, orthopedic teachers and parents into the student's progress of learning process or the success of each student in each meeting. Then, the teacher also always prays best for the students with dyslexia.

In implementing the multisensory approach, the teacher used concrete, semi concrete, abstract media to stimulate the student's senses. At that point, the teacher mentions some objects, it aims to develop students' understanding about the kind of objects that are around them by using English language. With this activity, the teacher hopes students can memorize the vocabulary that has been learned for learning on the next day. It is line with Praveen (2020) that the teacher uses student's senses to understand the information and connects to ideas they have already known, tap into nonverbal reasoning skills, understand relationships between concepts, store information and store it for later recall. The teacher is also encouraged to create a pleasant learning atmosphere during the learning process. To realize that situation, the teacher's creativity is needed in using various teaching methods, but still adjusting to the needs and conditions of the students. Various media are also used to support the process of learning to read the dyslexic students. Sudek, et al (2019) convey a classroom that is dyslexic friendly should have a great variety of authentic listening and reading material that can motivate and provide purposeful communicative activities in combination with the best elements of simultaneous methods in the benefit of all the

students but bear in mind a specific intention of helping learners with this condition. To get further, support from the closest people of the dyslexic students is also very influential on the way of learning the dyslexic students in school.

To facilitate the students' comprehension and the students' listening and speaking skill in English, the teacher uses code switching during the teaching learning process for the dyslexic students. The reason why the teacher used codeswitching is that it could facilitate the students to learn English effectively and efficiently (Fathimah, 2016; Puspawati, 2018). The use of instructional media is also expected to improve the students' understanding of learning to read, the learning media is able to increase the students' interest in reading that will be conveyed by the teacher. Learning media is also considered to be able to reduce the students' boredom and more concentrate. Suharsih & Hamidiyah (2012) said that the use of media may provide many advantages for the teacher and the students. It can make the classroom situation more interesting and also persuade the students to learn English without forcing them. The teacher suggests to given present to the students. The teacher asked the students to "copy, spell, read and writing" in teaching reading while using multisensory approach for the students with dyslexia. In the other study Holešinská (2006) also used this type multisensory approach in her study by exploring several activities to help dyslexics with their spelling. One of those activities called "Trace, Copy and Recall" uses a chart with few spelling words. By giving reward, the students will be focused in learning process (Irawati & Syafei, (2016). The way the teacher uses multisensory approach is almost similar with Praptiningrum and Purwandi (2009). When using multisensory approach the teacher requires a lot of time and requires to see the condition of the students. Praptiningrum and

Purwandi (2009) also said that multisensory approach can help students to be active and interactive if accompanied by motivation and encouragement from the teacher.

## **CONCLUSION**

Multisensory approach can help students with dyslexia in reading English, but it is not always appropriate for use in every learning process for students with dyslexia. Students with dyslexia have mood swing or “tantrum” that is why teaching learning activity must be supported by creative and variation methods and adjusted to the subject, objectives, material, and condition of each student. Appropriate supporting media are also necessary in implementing multisensory approach. The teacher also perceives that this approach has some advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include achieving the learning objectives, centered on children, friendly to children, motivating children in learning, making the students be more confident, and optimizing children's development. The disadvantages are expensive cost in providing supporting media and limited time allocation in implementation. In order to implement the multisensory teaching technique in teaching reading EFL student dyslexia, teacher prefers to use code switching and use various media to deliver the material. Teacher starts with concrete semi concrete-abstract media. Students learn to copy, spell, read and writing words by dictation from teacher. To prevent boredom the unexpected student's temper tantrum, teacher make an agreement with students. Teacher often gives a reward as positive reinforcement if students can pass the learning process or showing good attitude. Teacher also takes a note to following up the student learning success.

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