استقصاء ادراك تدريسيّ الجامعة لعسر القراءة

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طرائق تدريس اللغة الانكليزية

جامعة بغداد- كلية التربية للبنات- قسم اللغة الانكليزية

المستخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استقصاء ادراك تدريسيّ الجامعة لعُسر القراءة. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف سيتم الإجابة عن السؤالين الآتيين: هل أساتذة الجامعات الذين يدرسون (اللغة الإنجليزية) لغة أجنبية على دراية بعُسر القراءة؟ وكيف يتعامل المعلمون مع التعليم والتعلم مع صعوبات القراءة الناجمة عن عُسر القراءة؟ وقد تم اعتماد استبانة مكجاتو وآخرين (٢٠٢٢) كأداة لجمع البيانات. وبعد تطبيق الأداة على عينة الدراسة (٥٠) تدريسيا للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة بغداد / كلية التربية للبنات، كلية التربية – ابن رشد – للعلوم الإنسانية، أظهرت النتائج أن تدريسي الجامعات لديهم فهم عام لعُسر القراءة، وأن استجاباتهم تكشف عن فهمهم لتعريف عُسر القراءة، وأسباب عُسر القراءة، وقدرتهم على تطبيق هذه الفهم عند التعامل مع الطلاب الذين لديهم عسر القراءة، والمعلومات الخاطئة التي يمتلكها التدريسيون عن عُسر القراءة. كما ان تعامل التدريسيين بشكل جيد مع تعليم وتعلم صعوبات القراءة الناجمة عن عُسر القراءة. وعليه سيتم عرض التوصيات والمقترحات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اضطراب عسر القراءة، عسر القراءة في التعليم، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية المصابين بعسر القراءة.

Investigating the University EFL Teachers' Awareness of Dyslexia

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Abstract:

This research aims to investigate university teachers' awareness of dyslexia. To achieve this aim, the following two questions will be answered: Are the EFL university teachers aware of dyslexia? How do teachers approach teaching and learning when dealing with reading difficulties caused by dyslexia? The Makgato et al. (2022) questionnaire has been adopted as a tool for gathering data. After administering the tool to the study sample (50 English language teachers at the University of Baghdad/ College of Education for Women, College of Education-Ibn Rushd-for Humanities), the results show that the university teachers have a general understanding of dyslexia, and their responses unfold their understanding of the definition of dyslexia, the causes behind dyslexia, their ability to apply such knowledge when dealing with dyslexic students, and the wrong information the teachers have about dyslexia. Furthermore, the teachers dealt highly with teaching and learning with reading difficulties brought about by dyslexia. Accordingly, recommendations and suggestions will be displayed.

Keywords: Dyslexia disorder, dyslexia in education, EFL dyslexic students

Introduction

Challenges with spelling and reading fluency identify dyslexia, a neurobiological disorder. It happens when there is a problem with the phonological parts of a language, even though the person is generally smart and has had enough help (Makgato et al., 2022). Many general and special education teachers lack sufficient preparation to instruct students with dyslexia effectively. Educators may be unaware of their negative biases, which can influence their teaching practices and attitudes toward dyslexic students. Therefore, to develop a professional program, it is essential to assess teachers' understanding of dyslexia and their views on students affected by this condition. Gaining insight into teachers' perceptions of dyslexia can assist researchers in formulating appropriate professional training and instructional strategies (Tosun et al., 2021). Zero and Pizorn

(2022) stated that foreign language teachers should be ready to integrate dyslexic students into mainstream classrooms successfully. They can do that by 1) their perceptions of their understanding of dyslexia and their self-efficacy regarding inclusive instruction-related classroom behavior toward dyslexic students (knowledge and skills) and 2) their perceptions of including dyslexic students in mainstream classrooms.

Furthermore, mainstream school teachers will encounter dyslexic students in their classrooms. The success of such pupils is dependent on high-quality, evidence-based, and informed instruction. Teachers' lack of awareness about dyslexia can contribute to inadequate teaching and, as a result, low academic achievement for children with the condition, despite the fact that 3–5% of the global school population suffers from dyslexia-related issues. Consequently, it is imperative that educators be cognisant of the nature of dyslexia and be aware of the most effective strategies for instructing students with dyslexia (Galimzhanova, 2021). Students with mild learning disabilities frequently go unnoticed and are integrated into mainstream schools. In these situations, teachers have a crucial responsibility in identifying students with dyslexia, as they are the first point of contact for students in the school and are ideally positioned to recognize learning difficulties. Therefore, educators need to possess a heightened awareness of dyslexia to facilitate a timely diagnosis of the condition. These students are neglected by teachers and parents as they attribute students' challenges to personality traits, perceiving them as laziness, attitude issues, or aggression. Consequently, these students do not acquire the necessary skills to cope with the demands of higher classes, which can result in behavior issues. However, only one-third of the educators had sufficient knowledge regarding dyslexia (Jaya Lakshmi, 2019). Teachers' beliefs and perceptions influence their classroom behavior and inform their teaching methodologies. Certain educators may refrain from openly articulating their views regarding students with dyslexia. Emotionally charged teachers may negatively affect their instructional practices and exhibit resistance to change. Educators must possess a favorable understanding and adequate knowledge of students with dyslexia (Tosun et al., 2021).

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Thus, it is essential that EFL Iraqi university teachers be aware of what dyslexia means and be able to deal with students with such disabilities in the classroom or instruct their students on how to deal with such students or learners that the university students may deal with in the future. The study aims to answer these questions:

1. Are the EFL University teachers aware of dyslexia?
2. How do teachers deal with teaching and learning with reading difficulties brought about by dyslexia?

Literature Review

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a learning disorder that affects 5-10% of the world's population, making the teacher's understanding of how dyslexia influences students highly important. Conversely, a teacher lacking this knowledge runs the danger of being useless and delivering harmful remarks with long-lasting negative consequences on dyslexia-affected students (Makgato et al., 2022). Affecting language-processing

abilities, dyslexia is a learning condition that starts in childhood and lasts through adolescence and adulthood. Most students classified as dyslexic have low spelling, reading, and writing ability. Despite traditional classroom experience, dyslexic adolescents with disabilities struggle to develop the language skills of reading, writing, and spelling necessary to approach their intellectual capacity. Stated differently, dyslexic students who try to read usually do so with difficulty and at a level below their chronological ages (Okechukwu, 2023).

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty in which learners have difficulty transforming a series of graphemes into phonemes and vice versa. Reading and writing are difficult undertakings for dyslexic learners. Dyslexia is genetic in nature; it is not a disease to have or not. Dyslexia is not to be set with accurate criteria that accordingly decide that this learner is dyslexic and the other is not since the degree of dyslexia is widely varied; it is hard to decide that two dyslexic learners have exactly the same level (Bragd, 2020). Three levels of description suggested by the paradigm of causal modeling seem appropriate for a better knowledge of dyslexia:

• Cognitive (information processing);

• Biological (genetics and neurology)

• Behavioral (main traits including reading and spelling) (Blunkett, 2000).

Dyslexia Characteristics

According to Ansari et al. (2019), dyslexic students struggle with deficient reading and written language. They might interpret some letters and words backward or in the other way. A hidden handicap without obvious symptoms or apparent indicators, dyslexia cannot be easily diagnosed. Though it is generally discovered in youth, it affects both children and adults. Deficit in the phonological component of language relates to cognitive capacities; poor spelling, word recognition, and comprehension skills in dyslexic pupils follow from these deficiencies (Ansari et al., 2019). Zero and Pizorn concluded that (2022) word recognition and decoding are the learning disabilities that lead to students' struggles in school. One in five students, irrespective of gender, has dyslexia, which impacts over half of students with learning disabilities.

Okechukwu (2023) clarifies that weak intelligence, a lack of enthusiasm, inadequate training, or problems related to poor hearing and eyesight have nothing to do with the difficulty in reading. Rather, dyslexia is typified by issues with inadequate phonological processing. Those with weak phonological awareness, according to phonological deficit theory, struggle with skills including syllable counting, memorizing sequences of sounds or letters, and lexical retrieval tasks. Responsible for the representation, storage, and retrieval of linguistic content are phonological awareness, verbal short-term memory, and lexical retrieval; failure in one or more of these skills may help to explain a range of behavioral dyslexia manifestations.

Dyslexia, which includes difficulties in precise or fluent word recognition, inadequate decoding skills, and challenges in spelling, is a specific developmental disorder that impacts the ability to learn reading and does not stem from intelligence deficits, major neurological issues, unaddressed visual or auditory processing problems, emotional disturbances, or insufficient educational experiences. Dyslexia is the most common learning

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disability, affecting approximately 80% of individuals identified as learning disabled. According to sex, dyslexia is more prevalent in boys than in girls (Jaya Lakshmi, 2019). The neurobiological and genetically based cause of dyslexia is unknown. It is not an illness; rather, it is the special brain functions that cause difficulties when learning language skills, including reading, spelling, and writing. Brain injury or poor instruction has nothing to do with this. Moreover, dyslexia is a lifetime phenomenon. These language skills become even more permanent and can result in obstacles for dyslexic learners who endeavor to acquire English as a foreign language.

Moreover, those with dyslexia often have poor working memory, which makes it challenging for them to keep and recall material they have just been taught. They might thus be unable to remember the visual cues regarding some words or the bodily motions required to speak them. Besides, dyslexic individuals have trouble with auditory processing and could find it difficult to link letters and sounds. For this reason, individuals may find it difficult to grasp spoken English since they are slower in recognizing the sounds inside a syllable and the differences between syllables.

Furthermore, highlighted is the fact that dyslexia sufferers also have problems with processing speed; hence, they find it difficult to make some skills automatic. They might thus be slower in finishing jobs involving more than one ability at once and may take some time to react to activities requiring quick responses. Sharing comparable traits like processing speed, working memory, and phonological process. People with dyslexia—more especially, teenagers with dyslexia—have difficulties reading, but this does not mean they have a low intelligence level. Learning their native tongue and English as a foreign language provide the same difficulties for dyslexic students. With age and practice, dyslexic students' reading skills might improve, and their past difficulties with reading may fade. While phonological awareness and reading decrease with age, phonological processing still influences dyslexic students as they become older (Madden, 2021).

Dyslexia assessment encompasses evaluations of intellectual and academic performance alongside analyzing key linguistic skills. These skills

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include receptive (listening) and expressive language abilities, phonological processing (e.g., phonemic awareness), and the capacity for rapid naming of letters and words. Additionally, the assessment should evaluate a student's ability to read both isolated words and words within context. If the results reveal a profile indicative of dyslexia, a tailored intervention plan should be designed, incorporating suitable accommodations such as extended time (International Dyslexia Association, 2017). Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that predominantly impacts the ability to read words accurately and fluently and to spell. Its characteristics include phonological awareness, verbal recall, and verbal processing speed—all of which pose challenges. With no clear cutoff for its classification, dyslexia is better viewed as a continuum rather than a discrete condition and can be found over the whole spectrum of intellectual ability. The main ideas here are:

1. Dyslexia causes trouble decoding or encoding print.2. It connects with issues with phonology.

3.It might happen at several ability levels.

4. Dyslexia is a dimensional condition whereby our identification cut-off is somewhat arbitrary (Snowling & Hulme, 2024).

Students with dyslexia find the same challenges with reading and writing a foreign language as they do in their mother tongue. Still, some college courses include a second or foreign language component. Here are some pointers on how to help the dyslexic learner pick up a foreign tongue.

1. Instructions and symbols need to be used consistently.

2. Provide an introduction and overview of the course, as well as introductions to chapters and units.

3. Write a chapter/unit summary

4. Include a glossary.

5. Close correlation between audiocassettes and books.

6. Avoid using irrelevant vocabulary and information.

7. Prepare students for listening tasks by setting the scene.

8. Explain the phoneme-grapheme system.

9. Provide examples of word segmentation.

10. Systematic vocabulary expansion.

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11. Avoid assuming the understanding of grammatical words.

12. Use examples to demonstrate grammar points.

13. Use cultural information to increase motivation.

14. Most dyslexic learners prefer an oral/aural focus

The most effective strategy to assist dyslexic students is to provide a highly structured learning environment that uses a range of techniques to convey information. In summary, students with dyslexia learn best when the teaching is;

1. Multi-sensory, which means employing all possible pathways in the brain, including visual and auditory.

2. Systematic/sequential - To structure learning so that students can gain skills gradually and logically.

3.Cumulative: The teaching helps the students connect to what they already know.

4.Enables consolidation and repetition to compensate for poor short-term memory and promote automaticity.

5. The teaching is cognitive, encouraging students to think about the content and use their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

6. Relevant: Using specific examples that are directly related to the material under study (Loftus, 2009).

The Cognitive Characteristics of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a heterogeneous condition, and individuals with dyslexia may exhibit varying profiles of difficulties and traits. However, certain characteristics are commonly associated with dyslexia and have been consistently observed in related research and practice.

1. Dyslexia is commonly associated with insufficient phonological processing skills, which impair the ability to decode unfamiliar words and potentially hinder comprehension. Research shows that these difficulties are prevalent not only among children but also in many adults with dyslexia.

2. Dyslexia often involves significant inefficiencies in working or short-term memory, affecting various aspects of speaking, reading, and writing. These challenges may include difficulties in retaining letter-sound associations, leading to delays in acquiring phonics, as well as errors or delays in

accessing the mental lexicon, which can slow reading and writing or cause incorrect word usage. Memory issues can also hinder text comprehension, especially during rapid reading, disrupt the organization of learned material during exams, and result in disjointed or incomplete written work due to losing track of intended expressions.

3. Dyslexia is often associated with challenges in automating skills, requiring individuals to expend significant mental effort on tasks that others find relatively effortless. This difficulty is particularly evident in complex tasks involving multiple subskills, such as reading, writing, or driving. In educational settings, this may prevent a dyslexic student from simultaneously focusing on the mechanics (e.g., spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and the content of written work. Similarly, they may struggle to listen and comprehend while taking notes effectively.

4. Dyslexia-related visual processing issues can impact reading, particularly when dealing with extensive text. These problems may include binocular instability and sensitivity to visual discomfort, characterized by hypersensitivity to strong contrasts or flickering. Symptoms such as headaches and eyestrain often limit reading to short intervals, potentially disrupting comprehension. However, not all individuals with dyslexia experience visual discomfort using colored overlays.

(Ebere, 2016)

Previous studies

Many studies conducted over a long period and in different regions of the world have dealt with this topic. The following are some of them compared with the present one.

Study	Aim	Sample	Instrument	Results
Dalaf and Talib (2021)	**Attempts to explore the background knowledge of Iraqi EFL college instructors of "alexia" and**	**twenty instructors**	**Two methods have been employed: the first is a questionnaire, and the second consists of**	**The outcomes of this investigation revealed that the teachers who participated have inconsistent previous knowledge**

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	"agraphia" and to assist teachers in teaching students who have such learning challenges.		several interviews with a group of instructors.	regarding such topic.
Makgato (2022)	The purpose of this study is to assess dyslexia awareness and knowledge among government primary school instructors.	The sample consisted of 30 purposefully selected elementary school teachers.	Data is gathered using a questionnaire that includes true-false questions, closed-ended questions, and open-ended questions.	The findings revealed that elementary school instructors have a basic awareness and understanding of dyslexia. Many of them were discovered to be employing restricted tactics to instruct students with dyslexia in their classes.
Okechukwu et al. (2023)	The first purpose was to create and validate the Teachers Awareness Questionnaire (TAQ), and the second is to utilize the validated TAQ to evaluate primary school teachers' awareness of dyslexia.	The TAQ was filled by primary school teachers from Nsukka and surrounding rural villages.	The level of understanding and belief about developmental dyslexia. Data were collected utilizing a cross-sectional design for the measuring method.	The study's findings reveal that elementary school instructors in Nigeria lack the necessary information concerning dyslexia.
Černickaja & Sokolová (2024)	The purpose is to investigate the empirical	12 studies about dyslexia	Thematic analysis of the studies	The findings indicate that university

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|	knowledge of dyslexic university students from the perspective of their teachers.			instructors are sufficiently knowledgeable of dyslexia and have generally positive attitudes toward dyslexic pupils.

Methodology

The research is a descriptive quantitative study. The sample is (50) English Language teachers at the University of Baghdad/College of Education for Women, College of Education- Ibn Rushd- for Humanities. To collect data, a questionnaire was adopted from a study by Makgato et al. (2022). It included twelve open-ended questions, eight closed-ended questions, and twenty true-or-false statements. Considering the study is purely quantitative, the twelve open-ended questions were omitted. The instrument's face validity was ascertained by submitting it to several experts from the EFL specification. Since the questionnaire has already been adopted, no item analyses or construct validity are required. The Alpha Cronbach coefficient was 0.76, indicating an acceptable level of instrument reliability. Respondents' reliability has been ascertained by test-retest, and the questionnaire was resubmitted for 20 participants a week after the first submission. The test-retest reliability value was 0.79, indicating a good level of reliability.

Data Analyses

To answer the first question, are the EFL University teachers aware of dyslexia? Every correct answer takes a (1) value, and every incorrect answer takes a (0) value. By using Excel, the results show that (801) correct answers of (1000) as a total of all answers rate 80% as correct answers.

University Teachers' Awareness of Dyslexia
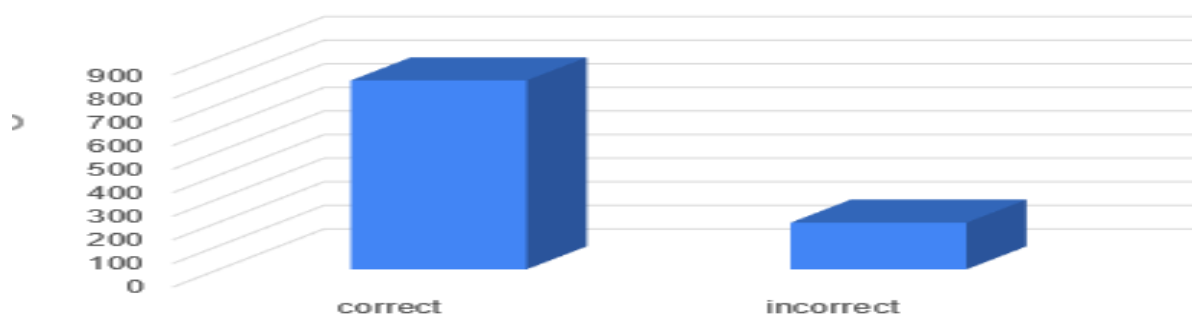
Furthermore, the percentage of each item is displayed to show the level of teachers' knowledge of dyslexia regarding each item (see Table 1).

Table (1)

Teachers' Knowledge of the Concept of Dyslexia.

	Item N.	Items	Correct	incorrect	% Correct
1.	17	"Dyslexia affects the learners' performance in reading."	50	0	100
2.	18	"Every struggling reader is dyslexic."	50	0	100
3.	20	"Physicians can prescribe medication to help dyslexic students."	50	0	100
4.	19	"Learners with dyslexia have a below average intelligence."	49	1	98
5.	2	"Dyslexic readers demonstrate weak phonological processing skills."	47	3	94
6.	11	"Learners with dyslexia do not read at the expected level."	47	3	94
7.	13	"Multisensory instruction can be useful for learners with dyslexia."	46	4	92
8.	5	"A person with dyslexia will never learn to read."	45	5	90
9.	3	"Dyslexia is limited to the English-speaking population."	44	6	88
10.	9	"Learners with dyslexia have trouble recognizing letters and matching letters to sounds."	42	8	84
11.	14	"Learners with dyslexia struggle with learning new words."	42	8	84
12.	16	"Learners with dyslexia have trouble recognizing whether two words rhyme."	42	8	84
13.	8	"In some learners, dyslexia can affect writing."	41	9	82
14.	1	"Dyslexia is a neurological disorder."	40	10	80
15.	7	"Learners with dyslexia experience repeated erratic spelling errors."	40	10	80
16.	4	"If you just give learners enough time, they will outgrow dyslexia."	32	18	64
17.	6	"Learners with dyslexia have problems learning the letters of the alphabet."	31	9	62
18.	15	"Dyslexia is a lifelong condition that makes it difficult for people to read."	27	23	54
19.	12	"Dyslexia is hereditary."	25	25	50
20.	10	"Learners with dyslexia avoid reading, both aloud and to themselves."	10	40	20

The second question, "How do teachers deal with teaching and learning with reading difficulties brought about by dyslexia?" was answered by statistical treatment of the eight questions gathered data. The questions were answered by selecting agree, neutral, or disagree, ranging as, 3,2.1, respectively. The weight of each alternative is as follows: 0-1 weak, 1.1-2 moderate, 2.1-3 high. Accordingly, all the items are dealt with highly except 4, and 8 are dealt with moderately; see Table (2).

Table (2)

Mean and Value of Each Item of Teachers' Approaches to Teaching and Learning with Dyslexia-Induced Reading Difficulties

	Items	Mean	Value
1.	I have dyslexic learners	2.40	high
2.	I am aware of symptoms of dyslexia	2.44	high
3.	I am able to manage dyslexic learners	2.10	high
4.	I received training on dyslexia	1.42	moderate
5.	I understand teaching strategies for learners with dyslexia	2.00	high
6.	Teachers in the university are supportive	2.40	high
7.	I consult resources on dyslexic learners	2.04	high
8.	I know whom to consult for questions about dyslexia	1.86	moderate

Results Discussion

The results in the diagram (1) show that the university teachers have a general understanding of dyslexia, and their responses unfold their understanding of the definition of dyslexia, the causes behind dyslexia, their ability to apply such knowledge when dealing with dyslexic students, and the wrong information the teachers have about dyslexia. Furthermore, Table (1) gives a detailed description of the teachers' understanding of dyslexia in that the percentage of correct answers ranges from 80-100%. This result comes with the overall range that appears in diagram (1): participants answered correctly at a rate of ٨٠%. However, the participants gave incorrect answers with the rates (64%, 62%, 54%, 50%, 20%) for five items. This

information is crucial to the participants because it may promote collaboration between the school and the learner's home to collectively develop a strategy to aid dyslexic students. This awareness was vital so that participants did not lose faith in dyslexic students who did not master reading as well as other students. This was also likely to help participants avoid setting unobtainable goals for themselves. Participants' comprehension of how dyslexia influences teaching and learning. In summary, the data revealed that the majority of participants were aware of the reading challenges that dyslexic students faced when learning languages. The second question in the survey focused on the participants' comprehension of dyslexia-related limits in teaching and learning, as well as potential remedies. Table 2 reveals that the majority of participants displayed a grasp of strategies for supporting dyslexic students in the classroom.

Furthermore, the participants' comments demonstrated their comprehension of the reading difficulties that dyslexic students faced, as well as their own limited teaching skills. This, in turn, demonstrated how the participants were able or unable to cope with educating students with such reading issues, as well as the remedies accessible. Furthermore, replies to this question demonstrate teachers' comprehension of how difficult or easy it is to remedy dyslexic-related reading issues. Furthermore, by comparing the results of this study with the results of previous studies, it is found that the results of this study come near to the results of Dalaf and Talib (2021) concerning the dyslexia term and Iraqi college instructors, but they differ in that this study aims to investigate the instructor's awareness of dyslexia and the Dalaf and Talib (2021) deals with their knowledge about dyslexia and how they cope with dyslexic students' difficulties. Makgato's (2022) study showed the same result as the current one, but the difference is in the sample type. The sample of Makgato's (2022) study is primary school students. Finally, Černickaja & Sokolová (2024) proved that university instructors are aware of dyslexia.

Conclusion

The study questions are answered by analyzing the yes\ no questionnaire of 20 items and the closed-ended questionnaire of 8 items. The results of

both questionnaires show that the university teachers have a good understanding of dyslexia. Thus, they can select suitable strategies to overcome the challenges that face their dyslexic students.

Recommendations and Suggestions

According to the results, it is recommended to develop diagnostic tests to diagnose dyslexic university students, enroll the university teachers in training courses about how to deal with dyslexic foreign language learners, and hold conferences and symposiums to handle the dyslexic foreign language learners' challenges. For future studies, studying dyslexia as an obstacle to learning specific areas in language learning and suggesting suitable treatment for them.

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