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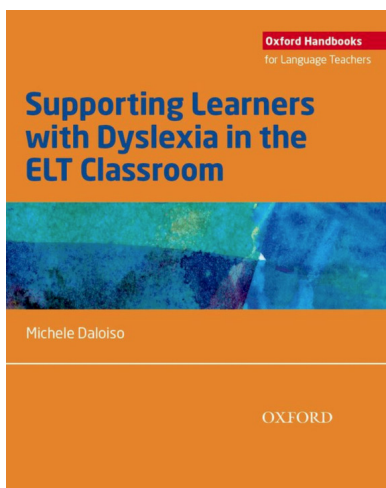
Michele Daloiso, *Supporting Learners with Dyslexia in the ELT Classroom*, Oxford University Press, 2017; 213 pp.: ISBN 978-0194403320

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With estimated prevalence rates ranging from as low as 4–8% to as high as 17–21% (Elliott, 2020), dyslexia has become an indispensable aspect to consider in developing inclusive education policies and practices, encompassing all subject areas and in particular English language teaching (ELT). Lack of support for learners with dyslexia may result in reduced self-confidence, lower academic achievement, and a higher risk of unemployment (APA, 2013), which makes the book *Supporting Learners with Dyslexia in the ELT Classroom* by Michele Daloiso both timely and necessary. The book is intended for all ELT contexts, but the author uses the EFL classroom as an example, as will we. The book is divided into six chapters. The first three chapters outline theoretical perspectives and methodological guidelines, while the last three look at the practical implications, with selected activities for the teacher. As the author embraces the neurodiversity paradigm, it eventually guides the methodological rationale for the discussed suggestions and strategies in the book, helping teachers shift their attention from learner difficulties to learning barriers in the EFL classroom.

Furthermore, the author contextualises each chapter through the story of Marcos, a Spanish-speaking EFL learner with dyslexia, whose life we follow from birth to high school. His experiences are presented in episodes that serve as introductions to the contents of the chapters. The reader is thus invited to critically reflect on learning and teaching implications even before reading the chapter in question.

Further information on this book can be found at <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780194403320/000000001>



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Chapter 1, titled *Literacy and dyslexia: an overview*, underscores essential concepts and paradigms in understanding the nature, features and causes of dyslexia, including its impact on the EFL learning process. The author starts by challenging the reader's beliefs about dyslexia through a short survey, emphasising that recent and uneven acknowledgement and identification of dyslexia across countries gave rise to numerous persisting misconceptions and common stereotypes. Instead of providing a variety of definitions of dyslexia, the author focuses on personal stories and definitions provided by learners themselves, following a more natural writing approach with a language that is more understandable to the reader. In addressing the causes of dyslexia, Daloiso relies on the so-called 'causal modelling framework' (Frith, 1995; Morton & Frith, 1995) (p. 31) with three underlying levels: biological, cognitive, and behavioural. However, the reader is encouraged to reflect on the contextual aspects at each of the three levels as the environment (considered from society, school, and classroom perspectives) is perceived as crucial in influencing learners with dyslexia. This view aligns with the social and interactionist models in understanding dyslexia and the human rights-based approach to inclusive education (see Nijakowska, 2020; UNICEF, 2012).

Furthermore, the reader is introduced to the relevance of Brunswick's (2010) cross-linguistic research in exploring the varied incidence of dyslexia across countries. Namely, 'orthographic depth' (or the degree to which a written language deviates from one-to-one sound-letter correspondence) plays a significant role in the estimated prevalence of dyslexia in learners; in fact, English has the deepest orthography and the highest number of people with dyslexia compared to orthographically 'shallower' languages. This section corroborates the claim that the linguistic aspect of dyslexia becomes much more evident when learners engage in learning English as a foreign language.

In Chapter 2, *Dyslexia and English as a foreign language*, the reader is introduced to emotional, cognitive, and linguistic factors that impact the learning process of an EFL learner with dyslexia. We would like to highlight a few useful choices that the author makes in explaining the topic of this chapter. First, the focus on motivation from the stimulus appraisal theory perspective and not simply as 'rational willingness', offers a much more in-depth introduction to the emotional factors that are pivotal for EFL learners at the beginning level. Second, in discussing 'cognitive load', the author draws our attention to the ever-present tension between the top-down and bottom-up approaches to teaching receptive skills in the EFL classroom. 'Learners with dyslexia can experience difficulties with bottom-up processes [leading to cognitive overload] that, in turn, can eventually affect access to top-down processes if no support is

provided' (p. 51). Third, the foreign language curriculum should no longer overlook the significance of metacognitive skills that EFL learners with dyslexia can use to compensate for their linguistic difficulties. In addition, the author contextualises the chapter by providing extracts of interviews with learners with dyslexia about the difficulties they experience at the emotional, cognitive, and linguistic levels. However, it is much appreciated that Daloiso also focuses on the EFL teacher and how the teacher's methodological choices may cause more barriers for learners with dyslexia, even when well-meant. It is an important issue in foreign language education to be addressed more frequently and in greater detail. In addition, observation is highlighted as key in providing appropriate accommodation to learners with dyslexia, which is why the chapter offers several observation tools for teachers.

Chapter 3, titled *Methodological guidelines for accessible language teaching*, slightly departs from the previous two chapters by exploring more practical concepts, in particular, the Language Teaching Accessibility Theory (LTAT), a framework of reference for language teachers that informs the design of accessible learning environments. Addressing Michael Moore's (1989) research, the author evokes Vygotsky's constructivist approach to explain the role of the EFL teacher as a mediator facilitating the interaction between the student and the target language, where certain difficulties may arise for learners with dyslexia. A member of the DEAL research group (University of Venice, Italy) that developed the LTAT, the author takes us through the 'macro-level' of methodological choices and teaching approach in a language course and the 'micro-level' of specific interventions in single units of the language course—all with the purpose to make the EFL classroom more accessible. A highly useful section of this chapter relates to general principles for accessible teaching practice, reminding the reader of the importance of structured EFL lessons, adjustment to suit learner needs, efficient differentiation, and multimodality in terms of multisensory and multimedia instruction. Teachers are also invited to reflect on their personal experiences as learners and on their former teachers' choices in ELT, with the aim to challenge potentially unexplored beliefs about language learning that may set barriers for EFL learners with dyslexia. With numerous ELT methodologies, Daloiso investigates the strengths and weaknesses of three common approaches (structural, communicative, and formative-communicative) that, according to the author, influence the market of today's EFL textbooks. To illustrate, although the opportunity to process grammar explicitly is a particular advantage of the structural approach in teaching EFL learners with dyslexia, other neo-behaviourist connotations can be frustrating such as the presentation of language in a mono-sensory way, the underestimated

importance of phonological and orthographic awareness, and the over-emphasis on grammatical correctness. The last part of the chapter discusses the impact of the classroom climate on accessible environments and suggests practical ideas to promote awareness of learning diversity in the EFL classroom.

Chapters 4–6, titled *Working on sounds and letters*, *Developing communicative skills*, and *Accessible language testing and assessment*, respectively, move from theory to practical suggestions and activities in supporting learners with dyslexia in the EFL classroom. In Chapter 4, the author focuses on phonology and orthography. The reader is introduced to implicit and explicit phonological awakening and the importance of an integrated approach when working with EFL learners at a very young age. Some takeaways are a section dedicated to storytelling from the interactionist perspective, a view most often neglected in ELT and yet most useful not only to children with dyslexia but all learners, and the ‘sounds syllabus’, a unique strategy that supports the development of phonemic awareness in learners but also compensates for the lack of time and space to design a comprehensive phonological program in the ELT classroom. Chapter 5, in contrast, integrates receptive and productive skills and discusses practical ideas to support learners with dyslexia in communication-oriented work. Daloiso provides suggestions for developing technical and strategic learner skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking, a usual component in teacher education programs that often raises several conflicting questions among EFL teachers. However, both inexperienced pre-service teachers and experienced practising teachers are given the opportunity to make specific connections and reflect on viable choices throughout the chapter. Finally, a most critical area in ELT seems to be assessment, which is also the focus of the final chapter in this book. The author draws attention to the interrelatedness of assessment procedures and policy/school regulations, which sometimes limit the teaching and set barriers to the learning process. Common ELT methodologies are evoked to explain different types of accommodations and modifications in classroom-based assessment and official examinations, which could be a slight limitation to understanding the changing roles of assessment in schools. However, we believe that the shift to formative strategies in this section, such as self-evaluation, exemplifies inclusive practices in the form of personalised EFL teaching that allows the development of self-regulated, confident learners.

In the end, we would like to commend the author who, with academic yet readable language, neatly explains the book’s topic in a structured and relatable way. The summary maps placed at the end of each chapter are a terrific visual tool in guiding the reader through the chapter, thus providing an actual practical example to be used with trainees with dyslexia in initial and

continuing teacher education. The experiential model used throughout the book in engaging the reader to analyse the topic is both convenient and valuable as it humanises concepts that sometimes seem to be covered much too distantly, almost in isolation, from the real-life context. We are invited to think about the concept of diversity itself since the author emphasises EFL areas of difficulty for both learners with and without dyslexia. The only suggestion we would have for future editions would be for the author to add personal narratives from a researcher's point of view, considering that Michele Daloiso is a member of a renowned research group that explores language teaching and learning methodologies with extensive experience that could further challenge the reader. However, an exhaustive academic endeavour, the book is certainly a most useful resource to all engaged in the topic but especially to foreign language teacher educators as it provides a methodological framework of reference that can be used in both initial training and continuing professional development programs across contexts.

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