

Investigation into the language based disability (dyslexia) and what problems may arise in written discourse due to the condition

Introduction:

Since an early age, I have always had a keen interest in dyslexia. My brother was diagnosed with having this condition when I was very young; therefore, I have always been aware of the problems that can exist with this condition. Due to my brother's struggle I have been supportive, thus developed a very personal interest in dyslexia. Therefore, when given an open titled research project in English language I chose to pursue my interest into this specific area, looking at the problems that a dyslexic child has with written work.

As the title states my main aim in this investigation is to primarily concentrate on the difficulties and problems that may develop in a child's written language due to this condition.

"A language-based disability in which a person has trouble understanding words, sentences or paragraphs; both oral language and written language are affected"

<http://www.interdys.org/abcsofdyslexia/page5.asp>

As you can see from the quote, a main part of the definition of dyslexia relates to problems associated with written English language. I hope to discover that the child's work that I investigate will provide significant data to show such problems exist; letter reversal, word reversal, confusion of words, spelling errors, inversions and emissions. These are only some of the problems that I am aware that a child or adult suffering from dyslexia can have in their work. However, I would like to also apply my own linguistic frameworks, which I hope to develop from my research. Maybe looking at syntax, Lexis and phonology.

I am going to base my data and investigation on a case study of two candidates; one a sufferer of dyslexia the other a non-sufferer. I feel this would be an appropriate way of investigating the written language of dyslexia in this project. My reasons for constructing my investigation as a case study are due to ethics and the time given for the study. As if more time was available than I would like to pursue a more in depth study on dyslexia. I understand that the data I am going to be analysing is not going to be representative for all dyslexic sufferers. Another problem that is going to arise is obtaining the text to represent dyslexic writing, due to dyslexia being a taboo area for many sufferers. Nevertheless, I am still going to carry out this project, as it will provide the data I need for a case study and I feel it is a challenge. Therefore having a keen interest into the area, it will be an enjoyable challenge and very interesting. 450

Aim:

My aim is to study the written language of two children's work at different ages; one child has been diagnosed with dyslexia and the other a non-dyslexic sufferer. My aim is to investigate the differences between the candidates written language development and to see if any rate of development is apparent due to dyslexia. 56

Hypothesis:

Due to the investigation I have gained a large quantity of research into how dyslexia can effect an individuals development of there written language, therefore I am able to hypothesize that in my results there will be substantial findings that repres ent supportive evidence to show that dyslexia can reduce the development of written linguistic abilities.

When I decided to carry out a language based research project on dyslexia, I realised that a lot of extra time and effort was going to have to be applied to my project to develop more of an understanding of what linguistic frameworks I was going to apply when analysing the texts. Having done a lot of research on the Internet I found many useful websites that provided me with the relevant data to unders tand and develop my own framework to analyse the written dyslexic language I am hoping to obtain.

Definition

First, we have to be sure what we mean when we use the term dyslexia. Dyslexia is a difficulty with language. It is not that a sufferer is any less intelligent than a non-sufferer it is more associated with language. There are many problems that a child who is dyslexic may experience these include difficulty with reading, writing, understanding the language they hear and spelling.

Cause

There is no simple cause for this learning difficulty; however, it is thought that the cause due to the brain cells of a dyslexic child being arranged differently to child not suffering of dyslexia. In simpler terms, it is thought that it is due to an inefficient connection between the left and right halves of the brain. Some studies provide data to show that dyslexia is inherited and others provide evidence to show it is due to a lack of schooling or poor schooling but there is no clear explanation for the cause o f dyslexia.

Language problems

Here are some of the problems that I can a look for in the dyslexic work and which will hopefully help me to develop my own framework.

- Letter reversals b for d as in bog for dog
- Word reversals gof for fog
- Inversions m and w, u and n 340

Framework

Now I have developed my knowledge into the area of dyslexia I am now prepared to concentrate and develop my framework for analysing my data. I have been extremely influenced by “The ABCs on dyslexia” and have now developed mine. I have decided to look at many different features, which I have found occurring dyslexic written language but I am also willing to explore the development of language acquisition as I feel it will be relevant. However, below show the main features I wish to analyse in each text:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| • Letter reversal | • emissions |
| • Word reversal | • Syntax |
| • Inversions | • Lexis |
| • Transpositions | • Phonology |
| • Substitutions | |

Methodology

Once I had decided on what and how I was going to investigate dyslexia in my language project, now I had to try to obtain the data. As I had chosen to convert the investigation into a case study I decided that to obtain the data may create some problems; due to the sensitivity that is associated with dyslexia. I therefore contacted a local dyslexia centre (Clifton dyslexia centre) and was given two brothers work to look at. One who had been diagnosed with having dyslexia and another who did not suffer from the language disability. To make my study fair I have obtained their work from them both at the same stages in their life's; early age, primary school, secondary school, after school and their present situations; both in their occupations. I was very honest with both the candidates for my study and they both seemed very enthusiastic and helpful. I have realised that many things could have effected research especially home life or school life so I have focusing my study on two brothers who have taken the same direction in their occupations and grown up in the same circumstances made my project more fair. It was not just obtaining the actual evidence I needed for such an investigation I needed to do quite a lot of research so therefore spent a lot of time talking to specialists in dyslexia and scanning the internet for relevant findings. Initially when preparing my investigation I wanted to develop a more in-depth

Description Of data:

The types of data that I wish to analyse are going to be photocopied pieces of written discourse from a child who is suffering from the condition and a non-dyslexic sufferer. I am hoping to also compare the dyslexic Child's work with the non-dyslexic Child's work. I hope that there will be distinct differences that I will become aware of when analysing the work and show how linguistic development may be effected due to dyslexia. I am going to take some ethical problems into consideration within my study, as I don't wish to intrude on people's privacy, the research will all been freely given, consent of those being studied and my candidates will not have their physical, social and psychological well being adversely affected by my research. This is important I feel when doing a study such as this as from past experience I am aware many individuals become very embarrassed and offensive when researching such a taboo area. Therefore, all names and personal information will be erased from the pieces of evidence I am going to use in my investigation.

Data used within the investigation

Child with dyslexia

- Piece of written discourse from the age of 5, , 1985
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 7, 1987
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 10, 1990
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 13, 1993
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 15, 1995
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 19, 1999
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 21, 2001

Child without dyslexia

- Piece of written discourse from the age of 5, 1984
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 7, 1986
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 10, 1989
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 13, 1992
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 15, 1994
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 19, 1998
- Piece of written discourse from the age of 21, 2000

Analysis of data

AGE FIVE

First, when we look at the texts 1.1 dyslexic child I noticed that it had obviously been a writing exercise, even though it had been a hand and eye exercise not about the lexis or vocabulary the child had developed. It was apparent that just in a simple copying exercise that the child had shown signs of dyslexia within his work such as instead of using the correct word sequence; lots of love the child had written the 3 single words as one word with a word reversal on the word *of* the dyslexic evidence was *LotsfoEove* so this shows that there is also a spelling error in the word love a vowel has been used in place of a consonant. However when analysing a child of the same age text 1.2, which can be seen in the appendix this shows that the child has done a similar writing exercise and has made no spelling errors and no signs of word or letter reversals. Even though text 1.1 shows signs of dyslexia it is however hard to actually specify whether this child has dyslexia or not as it is only a small mistake however if it was alongside other problems then it may well indicate the child is suffering from dyslexia. 212

AGE SEVEN

At the age of seven, we are looking at many more features, which may well suggest that the child is dyslexic, as you can see by looking at text 2.1. It is apparent that when comparing the Child's written work to a non-dyslexic sufferer we can see that the child with the condition is not developing language acquisition as fast. The child with dyslexia's work is very hard to read, there are many vowels not used mainly consonants have been used. maybe consonants were easier for the child to learn, or it may be to do with phonology that the way the child hears the lexical items. it can be seen that there are such features of inversions and letter reversals. Words such as dut and tike are obvious throughout this piece. From looking carefully at the text I can see that the Child's vocabulary has developed and the use of complex sentences has started to develop in both children's work and the dyslexic child is trying to emphasize exactly what he wants "electric trumpet" it seems he has developed his word order but shows no sign of any punctuation it seems that what the child is trying to get across is correct however it is just getting it down on paper. The other Child's work 2.2 shows that by the age of seven, this child has developed the correct word order, using complex sentence structure, correct use of personal pronouns, expresses opinions, use of prepositions; it is fluent and has the correct use of tense. Again as with the other child, there is no punctuation and some spelling errors but it is apparent that the child without the condition is developing the rules of written language much faster than the child with dyslexia.

AGE ELEVEN

By this stage it can be seen that when comparing the two children the dyslexia sufferer really is not progressing and it would be more appropriate to compare this child text 3.1 with the non-dyslexic sufferer 2.2 as when comparing the two children's work at the age of eleven it shows dramatic differences. The dyslexic child has missed off bound morphemes being that the tense is incorrect. Again it may be to do with the way that the child is hearing words, however the child has progressed by starting to use punctuation but is using apostrophies in the incorrect place and capital letters on the wrong words. It still shows four years later the child is still using consonants more than vowels, the child is writing in note form showing ellipsis and emissions, however it does show development as there is no apparent word reversals or letter reversals at this age but simplification of lexis is quite apparent. The sentences again are complex the same as in 3.1 and his word order is correct, however comparing the two texts shows me that the child without dyslexia uses joined up writing, the use of technical and specialist language, it is very fluent and coherent, there is correct use of punctuation apart from there is still a problem with capital letters at this age.

AGE THIRTEEN

The first thing I was aware of when first glancing at text 4.1 was the handwriting it was suddenly very controlled, it seemed that the candidate had become a lot more confident in expressing what he personally thought. However it seemed that the punctuation and word order is correct but there is a lot of letter reversals, 2chole, hvae, hte, qart and dest also there is ellipsis, substitutions such as missing off important letters like H in having this again can be linked to phonology and the way that the teenager may hear the lexical items. Also simplification of words maybe picking out the main phonemes the child hears so writing it as it sounds like arptree should be harptree wek should be week. However in text 4.2 the teenager's work is very advanced in the skills of written language, there are no spelling errors, it's fluent, coherent and has correct punctuation.

AGE FIFTEEN

AGE NINETEEN

AGE TWENTYONE

OVERALL ANALYSIS

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- <http://www.interdys.org/abcsofdyslexia/page5.asp>
- <http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/d02adult/a01what.htm>
- <http://www.readingassist.org/dyslexia.html>