

Foreign language learning and dyslexia: Inclusion in education and assessment

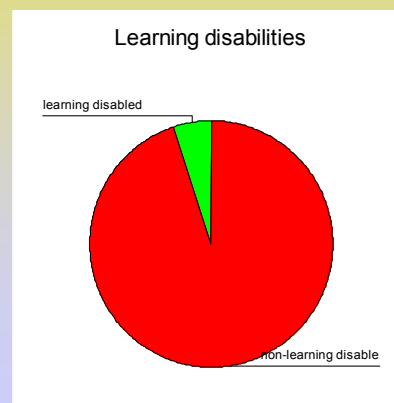
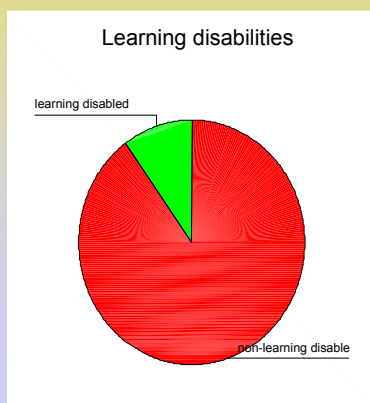
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Project home-page: <http://esely.elte.hu>



Which chart represents the proportion of students with learning disabilities in a typical foreign language classroom?



	Percentage of pupils with SEN
Austria	3.2%
Belgium (F)	4.0%
Belgium (NL)	5.0%
Denmark	11.9%
Finland	17.8%
France	3.1%
Germany	5.3%
Greece	0.9%
Iceland	15.0%
Ireland	4.2%
Italy	1.5%
Luxembourg	≈ 2.6%
Netherlands ^d	2.1%
Norway	5.6%
Portugal	7.0%
Spain	3.7%
Sweden	2.0%
Switzerland ^e	6.0%
UK	3.2%

Source:
Special Education across Europe in 2003
Trends in provision in 18 European countries

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

<http://www.european-agency.org/site/info/publications/agency/ereports/06.html>

What is dyslexia?

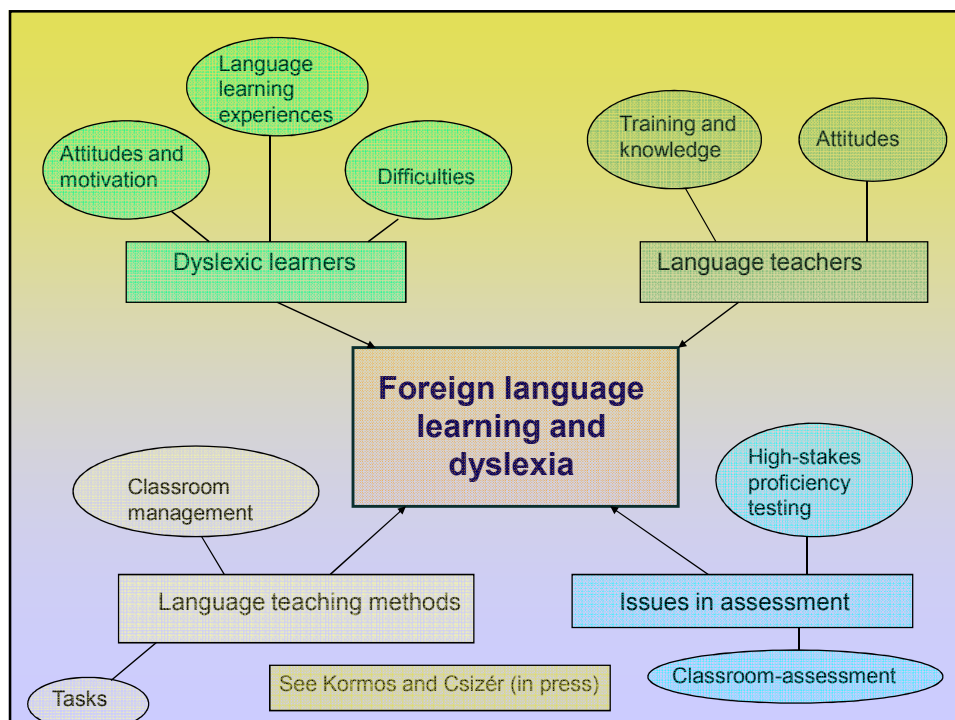
- Neurobiological in origin
 - Deficit in the phonological component of language
 - Difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition
 - Poor spelling
 - Comprehension problems
 - Unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities
 - Occurs despite effective classroom instruction.
- (based on Lyon, Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003).

Equal opportunities for students with dyslexia

- Many school-children exhibit symptoms of learning disabilities (LD).
- Serious language learning problems for learners with LD.

SHOULD STUDENTS WITH LD LEARN ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

- ✓ Speaking foreign languages is highly important in many countries of the world.
- ✓ Lack of foreign language competence is a serious disadvantage.



L2 reading problems

- cannot find the sounds corresponding to letters
- mix up letters while reading in L2.
- are not able to read aloud and pay attention to what they are reading simultaneously.
- difficulties reading longer texts.
- comprehension problems

(based on Kormos and Kontra, 2008; Kormos and Mikó, in press)

L2 writing problems

- cannot copy words from the blackboard
- leave out and mix up the order of letters
- use capital letters incorrectly
- sometimes mix L1 and L2 spelling
- write down the words as they would pronounce them in their L1

(based on Kormos and Kontra, 2008; Kormos and Mikó, in press)

Problems in learning foreign language vocabulary

- mix up similarly sounding words
- find it difficult to memorize abstract words
- find it easier to learn nouns than verbs and adjectives

(based on Kormos and Kontra, 2008; Kormos and Mikó, in press)

Problems with the pace of learning and memory

- Slow pace of learning in the language classroom
- Need more time
- Phonological memory problems make constant revision necessary



PROBLEMS FOR INTEGRATING DYSLEXIC STUDENTS
IN THE MAINSTREAM FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

(based on Kormos and Kontra, 2008)

Consequences of the learning problems of dyslexic students

- ✘ Students' motivation deteriorates.
- ✘ Low self-esteem
- ✘ Invest insufficient energy in language learning
- ✘ Negative language learning experiences

(based on Kormos, Csizér & Sarkadi, 2009; Kormos & Csizér, in press).

Issues for assessment

Proficiency tests measure skills such as reading and spelling that are particularly difficult for dyslexic learners.

Dyslexia is a reading DISABILITY, therefore candidates' disability should be considered in the assessment of proficiency.

How can the balance between accommodations/fairness and the validity of the test be found?

**Results of a survey of accommodations provided in Hungarian high-stakes language proficiency exams
(Kormos, Sarkadi & Kálmos, in press)**

	BGF	BME	CAMBRIDGE ESOL	ECL	Euro	Goethe Institut	LCCI vizsgaközpont	Lexinfo	Osztirak Intézet	SZIE Zöld utak	Társalkodó	Telc	Trinity	Origo, Pannon, ZMNE Oeconom, PROFEX
Separate written and oral certificate	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Extra time in written exams	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N.D.
Disregarding spelling errors	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	N.D.
Use of computers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	N.D.
Use of spell-checker	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	N.D.
Extra time in oral exams	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	N.D.
Extra time in listening comprehension	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	N.D.

Implications

- There is a great variation in the accommodations provided.
- Most frequent accommodation is giving extra time for solving the task.
- Computers and spell-checkers are not frequently allowed.
- No accommodations in formatting the test-papers.

What are the accommodations that do not threaten the validity of language proficiency exams?

- ✓ Formatting
- ✓ Extra time for solving tasks that do not require on-line performance
- ✓ Extra time for processing instructions
- ✓ In tasks where the measured construct does not include orthographic skills disregarding spelling errors or allowing the use of spell-checkers
- ✓ Providing laptops for students with dysgraphia
- ✓ Electronic dictionaries

Policy decisions needed in terms of assessment

- Standardized procedures for providing accommodations should be set up in the case of high-stakes language tests including exams provided by commercial enterprises and school-based exams.
- A system of accommodations in classroom-based assessment should also be set-up at a national level.

Problem for language teaching

Most language teachers are not in the position to cope with the special needs of students (Smith, 2008)

- Little knowledge about the nature of students' special educational needs.
- No awareness of affective and cognitive strategies disadvantaged students use.
- Not equipped with the appropriate language teaching tools.



Policy level decisions needed

- Including mandatory and optional courses on learning disabilities in pre-service and in-service teacher training.
- Co-operation between special education teachers and language teachers at school level.
- Considering the level of assistance provided for learners with dyslexia: pull-out classes, remedial classes, special language learning groups for dyslexic students, teaching assistants

Policy issues related to the curriculum

- ❖ Starting age for foreign language learning for dyslexics
- ❖ Choice of foreign language
- ❖ Modified learning goals: e.g. focus on oral communication skills
- ❖ Exemptions

Thank you for your attention



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