Techniques facilitating vocabulary acquisition for dyslexic students

Sarkadi Ágnes
The focus of this presentation

- Vocabulary learning difficulties observed during teaching English to dyslexic teenagers and adults learners in a one-to-one setting.
- Techniques facilitating vocabulary acquisition for these dyslexic language learners
What is dyslexia?

- difficulty in the acquisition of literacy skills which is not due to mental disability or inadequate instruction (Bryant and Bradley, 1985)
- neurological in origin
- a learning difference, combination of abilities and difficulties
- dyslexic strengths - advanced visual/spatial skills, creativity, efficient problem solving skills and the use of a holistic cognitive learning style (Ranaldi, 2003)
Vocabulary learning and dyslexia

- Dyslexic language learners not only have problems in reading and writing, but in:
  - auditory processing
  - visual processing,
  - short term memory
  - storage and retrieval in the lexicon
  - Sequencing
    (Smythe, 2004)
- These difficulties make vocabulary learning challenging for dyslexic learners
Problems with spelling

- Deep orthography- they misspell words, they have problems with pronouncing words
  - salary-salary, study-study, Since-since, courage-cleaned

- Reverse the order of letters
  - their-thier, Dutch-Ducth

- Insertion and omission of certain letters:
  - slowly-slowely, pavement, foot-footh, taught-thought, Aus(r)ia
Other problems with studying words

- Confusion of similar words
  - Homogenous Inhibition-Ranschburg (1939), Meixner (1993)- similar elements interfere with each other in the learning process and inhibit learning
  - Visual similarity: waist-wrist, water- waiter-weather, quit- quiet-quite
  - Semantic similarity: shoe-socks, antonyms- earn-spend, cheap-expensive
  - Things which are similar for a dyslexic may not be similar for a non dyslexic: “Practice the environment”!, temperature-adventure

- The memorization of misread words, electricat - electrician, prepoarti – prepare
Techniques helping to overcome problems with spelling

- The use of capital letters in the vocabulary notebook
- **COLOURCodings** of vowels & consonants (Hodge, 1998)
- Syllabification -**IM-PROVE, AD-VAN-TAGE**
- Explicit teaching of grapheme and phoneme correspondences (Nijakowska, 2001)
  - rain, complain, main, gain, day, way, may
- Tracing letters in the air -**MESSAGE** (Nijakowska, 2001)
- Training the student to rely on pronunciation to avoid certain mistakes - *Ducht- Dutch, impoving*
- Decision about the importance of spelling
Techniques helping memorization of words

- Multisensory techniques
  - Learning style - take advantage of their stronger learning channels, and also develops their weaker modalities
  - The use of a tape recorder - auditive learning style
  - Memory games - kinesthetic, visual, auditive
  - The preparation of drawings next to words (Robinson-Tait, 2003)

- Mindmaps - visual, holistic (Gyarmathy, 2001)
**FAMILY**

**MARRIAGE**
- Wedding
- Bride
- Groom
- Bride
- Honeymoon
- To marry sb.
- To get married
- Fiance
- Fiancée
- Husband
- Wife
- Spouse
- Ex/future husband
- To divorce sb.
- To get divorced
- To separate from sb.
- A broken home/marriage
- One/single-parent family

**NAME**
- Nick name
- Maiden name
- Full name
  - First
  - Surname

**RELATIVES**
- Parents
  - Natural
  - Foster mother
- Siblings
  - Uncle
  - Nephew
  - Aunt
  - Niece
  - Twin sister
  - Cousin
- In-laws
  - Bachelor
  - To split up
  - To live with sb.
  - To go out with sb.
  - Co-habitation
  - Married to sb.
  - Unmarried
  - Separated
  - Divorced

**KIDS**
- To be childless
- Pregnancy
- To be pregnant
- To be maternity leave

**AGE**
- Child
- Baby
- Toddler
- Kid
- Teenager/adolescent
- Adult/grown up
- Middle-aged/elderly person
- Pensioner
- In your early twenties/thirties
- In your mid/later teens
- In your early twenties/thirties

**MARITAL STATUS**
- To get divorced
Mnemonic devices (Schneider & Crombie, 2003)

- Keywords: RAIN-COMPLAIN- He complained about the rain.
- Stories/dialogues incorporating problematic vocabulary

The little pink hedgehog
One day the weather was bad and the little pink hedgehog felt cold and it was thirsty. It met the waiter. He brought him a glass of water. The waiter let the little pink hedgehog to stay with him.
Techniques for avoiding the confusion of similar words

- relatively long intervals between similar words
- Extensive practice of similar words - auditory, visual, kinesthetic
- e.g.: Identify the word you hear - in isolation, in a sentence, in Hungarian
Techniques to avoid the memorization of misread word forms

- Pre-teaching of new vocabulary
- Pre-selection and discussion of difficult words
Conclusion

- Main problems:
  - Deep orthography
  - Confusion of similar words
  - Memorization of misread word forms

- Special techniques:
  - enhanced efficiency, a more enjoyable and less frustrating learning process
  - Multisensory techniques (learning style!)
  - Mnemonic devices
  - Special attention to similar words
References