Dyslexia and Learning English: *Teaching Grammar*
Jon Hird   Italy TESOL, November 2017

OXFORD TEACHERS' ACADEMY | **Teaching Learners with Dyslexia**
Online professional development

Selecting appropriate grammar activities

Read about these grammar activities and the challenges they present to students with dyslexia.

1 Match the questions to the answers.

As a matching exercise this is accessible. However, the layout and the length of the exercise should be looked at carefully, as some matching exercises are challenging for students who have difficulty with spatial orientation.

2 Rewrite the sentences as negative statements.

Exercises that involve writing full sentences are generally challenging for learners with dyslexia, particularly at the early stage of controlled practice.

3 Complete the sentences/text with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

Writing a single word or short phrase is not too challenging, particularly when the prompt is close to the gap to be filled.

4 Write questions for these answers.

Asking students to write full questions can be difficult for learners with dyslexia, particularly at the early stage of controlled practice.

5 Match the beginnings and endings of the sentences.

While a matching exercise shouldn't in principle present difficulties to students with dyslexia, you should check the layout and the length of the exercise because some students may have difficulty with spatial orientation.

6 Which sentences describe the present and which the future? Write 'P' (Present) or 'F' (Future).

This exercise is accessible as it is asking students to reflect on meaning, with minimal writing involved.

7 Put the words in the right order to make sentences.

This can be challenging, particularly for students with spatial orientation difficulties. You could make it more accessible by using coloured cards.

8 Answer the questions using the right verb tense.

As an activity that involves free writing, this is challenging for students with dyslexia.

9 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box.

Gapfilling exercises are usually accessible. However, if learners have to select words from a box, this can present issues with spatial orientation.

10 Rewrite the second sentence so that it means the same as the first.

As an activity that involves free writing, this is challenging for students with dyslexia, particularly at the early stage of controlled practice.

Picasso sentences
Skills needed
For the drawing student: reading quickly to understand the target sentence; ability to link the words to images and then to produce those images.
For the guessing students: the ability to interpret images and link them to words.
Accessibility
For some students the picture aspect of the task will be very accessible, if they are able to think in images.
Challenges
Some students (e.g. with dyspraxic tendencies) may find the drawing challenging if they have difficulties with motor skills. Even if the student is very good at drawing, the images that they select to represent the

ideas may not be as obviously representative to the other members of the team, as s/he may be making different connections between them.

Adaptations

You would need to make sure that the drawing student has enough time to read the sentence carefully, and that s/he has understood all the words, as well as the whole idea.

Dictogloss

Skills needed

Students need to be able to listen to an oral text, process the information, and remember it after a short pause, in order to write it down.

Accessibility

The group nature of the activity means that the dyslexic students are supported by their peers (but it would be quite easy for a student to opt out of this activity and let others produce the sentence, so you would need to be alert to this possibility and make sure everyone contributes).

Challenges

This activity is likely to be very challenging for learners whose dyslexia affects their auditory processing (speed of processing and/or accuracy of processing) and their memory.

Adaptations

This could be used as part of a memory strategies programme, such that some techniques for memorizing language are taught first, before this is used as a practice activity. The ideal partner for a dyslexic learner would be a student with a good memory, but who is willing to listen to the other student.

It should be made clear that it's acceptable for students to say whatever they remember, whether it is accurate or not (and this might prompt another student to remember more) and that spelling is not important at first. This is also a good opportunity to model how texts emerge gradually, and not always accurately, demonstrating the importance of proofreading.

Adapting exercises:

4 **Riferisci quanto è stato detto usando i verbi del riquadro.**

apologize   invite   refuse   offer   promise
deny   suggest

0   'I won't tell anyone. I promise.'
   He _____promised not to tell anyone_____ .
1   'Shall we go for a pizza?'
   Jane _____ .
2   'I'm sorry for being late.'
   Martin _____ .
3   'Do you want to come to my party?'
   Sara _____ .
4   'I'll help you if you like.'
   She _____ .
5   'I'm not going to tell you.'
   My brother _____ .
6   'I didn't break the window.'
   Sam _____ .

4 Riferisci quanto è stato detto.

▶   'I won't tell anyone. I promise.'
   He **promised not to tell anyone**.

1   'Shall we go for a pizza?'
   Jane **suggested** _____.
2   'I'm sorry for being late.'
   Martin **apologized** _____.
3   'Do you want to come to my party?'
   Sara **invited** _____.
4   'I'll help you if you like.'
   She **offered** _____.
5   'I'm not going to tell you.'
   My brother **refused** _____.