

TASK 4.2 + 4.3 INTERVIEW WITH A DYSLEXIC LEARNER

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The interview I had with a dyslexic student of mine was quite an experience for me and came to confirm in reality all the material I went through during this DYSTEFL course.

The interview took place in my school after I got written consent by the Sts' mother, who is also dyslexic. This girl goes to 3rd grade of senior high school, she's getting ready for university entrance exams (with the special accommodations for dyslexic candidates) and she has been taught separately by specially trained instructors, with 2-3 other Sts, in 3-4 basic subjects, for 1-2 years in Dimotiko, 1-2 years in Gymnasio and luckily, throughout Lykeio. Of course this does not happen with the majority of the subjects including English.

I can report that she faces many serious and mild difficulties in both developing her mother tongue and learning the foreign language and these difficulties **resemble in many ways**. With English it's even more difficult because they don't speak it at home, in everyday life. The biggest problem for her is losing her concentration very easily. She tries to focus on the previous sentence and so she misses what follows. She cannot stay concentrated even if she finds teaching/activities interesting or even if she likes the subject taught.

All 4 skills and all aspects of learning English are relatively difficult for her. She said she understands oral instructions in English but when it comes to listening tasks, the audiotape has to be very very clear and slow in order to be understood and she prefers to have it written as well. She can handle reading and comprehending smaller chunks of passages/paragraphs but not a whole text. She needs to limit information intake and to have **more time** to go back to the special point of the text for further analysis. **She feels very intimidated** when it comes to reading aloud or speaking up in class. She deliberately avoids raising her hand to give an answer even if she knows it (I personally noticed that). She cannot remember how a word is pronounced (although she recognizes its form + meaning). It's very demanding for her to remember many new words and not even revision helps her.

She faces great difficulty with orientation, finding herself around a city/place, giving directions to someone/tourists even when she knows the place well, even in her mother tongue. She has developed special mnemonic techniques to remember North-South, East-West and left-right (eg she only remembers "right" with the hand she uses to do the "cross sign" in her prayers) . Before she uses the "right" notion she has to resort to **her personal mnemonic device**, otherwise she makes a mistake! It is very difficult to remember the alphabet , put words in alphabetical order , look up names in telephone directories, sequence the months of the year (afterMarch.....she confuses the order of the months!)

She can never keep concentrated for a long time , not in the classroom, not at home, not at the cinema (it's impossible for her to watch a movie, she constantly asks: *What is going to happen next? How are these people related? Etc* , which is disturbing for her friends.

She believes she can understand fairly well grammatical rules (I go, you go, he goes...) and syntax of an English sentence. She thinks that she understands / learns better **experientially (βιωματικά, που σίγουρα δεν θα ξεχάσει)** and visually. Diagrams/tables/mind maps help her organize her thoughts/ideas. She learns if **teachers present things in parallel with real life and in connection with everyday situations** (eg in Chemistry she learned and realized the chemical substances contained in the board marker they used on the board!)

It was really **shocking** when she admitted that she faces negative comments aiming at hurting her, criticism and discrimination by her classmates (even they are in Lykeio and know about her situation) eg "We can't wait for you to answer" , "Will it take all day?" , "This is funny reading" etc and **this breaks her heart** quite often. But also some teachers of hers have shown indifference, total ignorance and they insist on her doing exactly the same things/activities as all Sts , not caring about her difficulties and her special rights.

She definitely finds extra time in a task necessary , helpful and stress-relieving for her. It is **very rewarding** and **motivating** for her to participate, be "involved" and feel "accepted" in a pleasant procedure like learning a foreign language. **She finds teaching with special accommodations essential for her school life!**

I would like to **thank** this girl for **opening her heart to me** and for offering me **an illuminating experience!!!**