

TOOL KIT FOR TEACHERS



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CRIA

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METHODS FOR LEARNING
DISORDERS IN YOUTH

Table of Contents

READING ACTIVITIES	3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	3
ORGANISATION (FOR ALL TASKS)*	4
MATERIALS NEEDED, TASK 1	4
TASK PROCEDURE, TASK 1 – “HONEY THE BEAR”	4
MATERIALS NEEDED, TASK 2	5
TASK PROCEDURE, TASK 2 – “THE TRAIN”	5
MATERIALS NEEDED, TASK 3	6
TASK PROCEDURE, TASK 3 – “THE TRAIN OF SYLLABLES”	6
MATERIALS NEEDED, TASK 4	7
TASK PROCEDURE, TASK 4 – “JAM JARS”	7
MATERIALS NEEDED, TASK 5	8
TASK PROCEDURE, TASK 5 – “GET ON THE BUS”	8

Reading activities

DEVELOPING PHONOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

LEARNING GOALS

The main goal of these activities is to help students – with language difficulties or possible diagnosis compatible with dyslexia - develop their phonological and semantic consciousness to improve their linguistic competence.

Key concepts: Language difficulties, phonological consciousness, semantic consciousness.

Theoretical framework

Dyslexia is a learning disorder that affects reading comprehension, reading fluency, spelling, writing and can affect mathematics as well. It is the most frequent learning disorder among schoolchildren. It is estimated that between 5 and 17% of the students may have dyslexia. The problems associated with this disorder can greatly hinder learning as within our educational system most learning is done through written code, although we must recognize that more and more teachers are aware of the need of providing access to information through different ways (visual, auditory, manipulative, literature...). So, it is frequent that students with a good cognitive capacity and this diagnosis may also fail in other areas.

A dyslexic student has to put so much effort in the task of reading and writing that he or she tends to be easily tired, which makes him/her distracted and rejectfull of these tasks. The difficulties of this pupil tend to go beyond the difficulties in reading and writing and in some cases present difficulties in laterality, short-term memory, problems of comprehension, difficulties in space-time notions... This means that they end up having low self-esteem and associated emotional problems.

In the sessions, we will explain we will focus on working primarily on the written aspect of language. The reduced groups in special education classrooms allow working, through different participatory, manipulative and playful activities, phonological and semantic consciousness in order to eliminate the omissions, inversions and word substitutions in writing and to achieve the concept of separating words in the sentence and endowing the writing of coherence and structure.

Organisation (for all tasks)*

- *Group of 4 students with diagnosis of dyslexia or difficulties compatible with this diagnosis.*
- *A special education teacher*
- *Activities to work in sessions of 60 Minutes twice a week (varied activities to work on phonological and semantic consciousness)*

*This organization of the tasks is the one used by the school that developed these methods. Each teacher can adapt this organization to his/her own context and resources and the activities can fit perfectly in a bigger group class, organized in smaller student groups so that all students can work on their phonological and semantic awareness, in an inclusive school context.

Materials needed, task 1

- *A picture of "Honey the bear"*
- *Cards with slogans*
- *Images of different food items*
- *Board*
- *Board marker*
- *Pencil and paper*

Task procedure, task 1 – "Honey the bear"

In order to motivate students that can often feel unmotivated it is proposed to use a kid-friendly figure: Honey the bear. Honey has some "cards" with different slogans of what it wants to breakfast: *"things that have two syllables, things that have the letter A, things that have the long name, things that have 4 letters"* And a lot of images of different kinds of food (cherries, cake, chocolate, soup, cereals.....) A card is picked up and then everyone takes turns choosing food items that fulfill the orders.

The items are fed – one by one - to Honey, and then the name of each food item is written on the blackboard by the student who has chosen it.

Tips to work on phonological awareness

At this stage of the exercise some tips are given in order that the teacher/trainer can provide further support to students so that they can develop their phonological awareness – the ability to recognize the different sounds that conform a written word -.

- If the word is very long the syllables are “clapped out”.
- A circle is drawn for each syllable and within each circle (Syllable) a stripe is written make for each letter that needs to be written in the syllable.
- Once the word is already written in syllables, it is finally written together on the board to gain awareness of the semantic unity.

The separation of words into syllables helps to be aware of all the phonemes of the word, not to leave out letters and to write the word much more easily.

EXAMPLE 1:



Fig 1: Example of the activity on the board.

Then the board is erased and an individual worksheet is proposed to the students. They should write one of the words that we have previously been written on the board, all of which are no longer written. When they have advanced greatly in word writing, propose building short sentences with these words.

Materials needed, task 2

- Drawings of a train and its wagons (Fig. 2)
- Drawings of different items

Task procedure, task 2 – “The Train”

For this activity a train is build using wagons (with free space inside). Each wagon gets assigned a letter. Students should select the items represented in the drawings and then, classify them into the wagons.

The classification should be made according to the first letter of each word, so all the items that start with “T” are classified in the same wagon.

Once all the items are classified, the words classified into each wagon are written in the board following the tips described in the previous task.

EXAMPLE 2:



Fig 2: Example of the train and the items to classify.

Materials needed, task 3

- Drawings of a train and its wagons (Fig. 2)
- Drawings of different items
- Papers with written syllables that correspond to the names of the items

Task procedure, task 3 – “The Train of Syllables”

For this activity, the teachers can reuse the materials from the previous activity. It should be also included a third material, as stated in the materials relation above.

In this case, the activity consists of constructing words from syllables. In the table there are some of the images of the items used in previous activities, students pick one and identify the name corresponding to the image.

Afterwards the name of the word, is decomposed into syllables and the students look for the syllables that compose the word, that are written in papers and spread in the table.

Once the syllables are identified the students put them in order, one in each wagon, hence building the word and setting it next to the corresponding item. Finally, the decomposed words are written altogether.

EXAMPLE 3:



Fig 3: Example of the development of the activity. Source: Pinterest.

Materials needed, task 4

- 5 drawings of jam jars, with different numbers.
- Drawings of different items

Task procedure, task 4 – “Jam jars”

The main goal of this activity is that students can identify the number of syllables that conform each word. In order to achieve this goal, 5 "Jars", each corresponding to a number of syllables, are used.

Using the set of different images (that can be reused from previous activities), students take them by turns and classifies them in the jam jar corresponding to the number of syllables that the word has, and all the group – including the teacher- checks whether this classification is right or wrong.

Afterwards, all the words classified into the jars are written down, by each student, in his/her worksheet. If there's still time to, the whole class can look for words (that are not in the drawings) and that could fit into the different jars.

EXAMPLE 4:



Fig 4: Example of the activity materials.

Materials needed, task 5

- 4 drawings of buses, with different numbers.
- Drawings of characters with different items

Task procedure, task 5 – “Get on the bus”

4 coaches. Many characters. We have to guess which bus each character should go in. The hint is in the word the character is thinking. If we correctly clap the syllables of the word in the drawing, we will know which bus the character belongs in. As always, we will end up writing down the words.

EXAMPLE 5:



Fig 5: Example of the activity materials.