



CONSTRUCTION OF LONGER WRITTEN STATEMENTS BY DYSLEXIC STUDENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF LINGUISTIC EDUCATION - ANALYSIS OF THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF THE DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Many researchers emphasize that the process of reading and writing is related to language proficiency and knowledge as well as other types of verbal communication (Maurer 2003, Krasowicz- Kupis 1999, 2004). It is therefore to be expected that there is a correlation between uninterrupted language proficiency and success in learning to read. Participants of the study: The study was participated in by 10 students (5 boys and 5 girls) at the age of 10, selected based on test results that indicated or confirmed developmental dyslexia. The study was carried out in a primary school in Kielce. Methods: The study presented in this article is based on the analysis of language material collected from students with developmental dyslexia. This article will present a part of the study concerning the analysis of the semantic structure in longer written statements of dyslectic students. The tool used in the study was a parallel language test, in which students with developmental dyslexia revealed their linguistic deficits. Conclusions: The results of the study indicate that in developmental dyslexia, the language learning mechanism is disturbed. The above statements allow the following conclusion to be drawn: dyslexic children encounter difficulties not only in the construction of a narrative text, but above all in its reception. This also makes it possible to redefine developmental dyslexia as a communication competence disorder.

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INTRODUCTION

The foundation of my exploratory research is the theory, explaining the essence of dyslexia based on a linguistic patomechanism¹. As confirmed by numerous studies, dyslexia is a language-based phenomenon. According to Vellutino (1979), people with dyslexia have great difficulties in visual-verbal learning. In the experimental studies, children were given verbal and nonverbal information, nonsensical syllables were combined with drawings or a strange sign resembling script (Krasowicz-Kupis 2008: 107). The dyslexics made mistakes based on verbal substitutes, they had a low level of vocabulary, they paid more attention to the context in which the word appeared. This type of deficit has its causes in visual and linguistic integration disorders. The linguistic background in dyslexia was already indicated in the Orton Dyslexia

Society definition from 1994, which characterizes dyslexia as a linguistic disorder. The breakthrough in such an understanding of dyslexia was made by the already mentioned Frank Vellutino (Krasowicz-Kupis 2006 and Snowling 2000, Hulme, Snowling 2016), who put forward the hypothesis of verbal deficit. Also in Snowling's (2000) studies, undiagnosed dyslexics showed delayed speech development from the very beginning. Snowling concluded that disorders of phonological processing occur in people with dyslexia. However, the question is whether the language systems (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic) remain relatively intact. The studies performed on Polish territory: Krasowicz-Kupis (2006), Osza (2006), Sazon-Brykajło (2007), Boksa(2004, 2011) only do not confirm the phonological aspect of dyslexia. The disorders demonstrated by dyslexic students are also visible in other language areas. The studies I have conducted on the linguistic background of dyslexia in children in latter classes of primary school (2000-2017) coincides with the observations of G. Krasowicz-Kupis (1999) and J. Sazon-Brykajło (2007). They concerned the teaching students to correctly edit and construct longer oral and written statements, as well as to develop operational and analytical-synthetic thinking within the word, sentence and text. They can be included in psycholinguistic and pragmalinguistic studies. In other words, when writing about dyslexia as a linguistic phenomenon, this ailment should also be considered in terms of communication.

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¹ Launched since 2000, which resulted in a PhD exam at the Faculty of Polish Studies of the University of Warsaw, passed in 2011, and participation in scientific and didactic projects as a substantive consultant and author of the method "Systemic language therapy for dyslectic students".

In other words, the teacher/therapist should encourage the dyslexic student to:

- create communications (as the sender of the statement)
- receive communications and assign meaning to them (as the receiver of the statement)
- know the basic language codes (use formal and informal language, depending on the specific social situation in which they find themselves)
- switch from one language code to another, drawing attention to the conditions under which the language act takes place.

These language skills are the basis of communication competence. For the purposes of this publication and in accordance with the assumptions of linguistic education, I accept the following definition of dyslexia:

Dyslexia is a disorder of language and communication competence manifested in an incompetent construction of discourse understood as a stream of spoken or written language behaviors.

Such a definition defines the field of diagnostic and therapeutic research in linguistic education, which consists of written or verbal messages written or articulated by students.

Own studies

The objective: the main objective of my work was to determine the level of communicative competence of primary school students with dyslexia. The basic question I was trying to answer was: Can a Polish language teacher recognize people with dyslexia using a parallel Polish philology test?

The participants in the study: The study was participated in by 10 students (5 boys and 5 girls) at the age of 10, selected based on test results that indicated or confirmed developmental dyslexia. The study was carried out in a primary school in Kielce.

The methods: The research presented in this article is based on the analysis of language material collected from students with developmental dyslexia.

This article will present a part of the study concerning the analysis of the semantic structure in longer written statements of dyslectic students.

The tools: the main methodological tool that can be considered both as a screening test and a monitoring of students' progress in the acquisition of communication competence and language proficiency in linguistic education is the parallel test (Boksa 2004). The method and criteria for this test have been taken from the methodology for diagnosing younger children, from pre-school education and integrated education/early primary education. (Krasowicz 1997. Bokus 1991), and then modified and adapted for the diagnosis of children in latter primary school classes. Based on the results of G. Krasowicz-Kupis's studies, I conducted my own observations and analyzed the narrative statements of students from 3rd grade of primary school with writing and reading difficulties. I asked my students to listen to the story I had read and then to present its content in writing. In my linguistic study, I changed the form of the semantic material from a picture story and short text read by the children on their own to a longer story (continuous text without illustrations) and the channel of information transfer - from visual to auditory. However, I kept the semantic and syntactic ² criteria for evaluating the narrative statement of the examined persons, including them in the parallel test (described below). Polish philology parallel tests are to be a helpful diagnostic tool for checking whether the student remembers, understands, selects and synthesizes the lectured content. By analyzing the results obtained by the student in these tests, the teacher can determine the level of language competence that is based on:

- understanding text assimilated by hearing
- interpreting the content of the text
- creating one's own text in accordance with the language norm

Carrying out such tests is an important factor in the study of the language skills of a dyslectic child, as noted in the publications of Grażyna Krasowicz (1997) and Barbara Bokus (1999), Borkowska (1991)

Tab 1 The criteria for the evaluation of the semantic structure in the statements made by dyslectic students
Analysis of the semantic structure (based on Krasowicz 1999:123)

Components of the story's superstructure	Description of the components of the superstructure of a story written by a student - (are they consistent with the teacher's story?) We write out quotations from the student's elaboration	Scoring If the superstructure components of a student's story coincide with those of the story's superstructure - the basis, we give the student one point for an accurate answer.
1. Identification of protagonists (presentation of characters)		0-1 pt
2. Placement in time - also included here are the delimiters of the beginning ("Long, long time ago...").		0-1 pt
3. Placement in space (setting)		0-1 pt
4. Separating the main plot, i.e. listing the events connected with the protagonist;		0-1 pt
5. Reproduction of basic information points - i.e. presentation of all the events that make up the plot of the story (plan of events) in sequence.		0-1 pt
6. Being able to identify the resolution of the action (finale)		0-1 pt
7. Taking into account subplots in the story		0-1 pt
8. Indication of episodes - events without impact on the course of action		0-1 pt
9. Evaluating - assessment of the behaviour of the characters, explaining the motives behind their behavior		0-1 pt
10. Introduction of additional descriptions (appearance of the characters, landscape, events)		0-1 Pts.

The command related to the student's commencement of the test is as follows: "I will now read you an interesting story titled: "Santa Claus Visited Us Too". The teacher reads the story carefully.

"And now - during this one lesson hour - you will present its contents in writing".

Criteria for the assessment of the students' written statements

The teacher analyses the stories written by the students from a semantic point of view using the following criteria (Table 1).

The student can receive from 0 to 10 points for the interpretation of the semantic part. Based on the analysis of the story written by a student, dyslexia can be suspected when the student receives around 4 or 5 out of 10 possible points and:

- deforms the content of the story (basic information points) - creates or adds completely new information compared to the one given by the teacher,
- omits important elements of the action,
- forgets about the resolution of the story,
- mixes up the order of the events (misplaces the basic information points),
- does not state the motivation behind the characters' actions, (does not make such attempts),
- focuses on the episodes, develops them (Bokus 1991)

Procedure

10 primary school students were subjected to parallel tests. The September test in the fourth grade was a diagnostic test - selecting children with dyslexia in a given classroom group. The analysis of empirical material was both qualitative and quantitative. It was related to the structure of the parallel test. It concerned the observation of the semantic side of student statements. It had an individual nature because it was based on the analysis of written statements of each individual student. The results were then synthetically elaborated in the form of tables and conclusions. The conclusions confirmed the hypothesis made at the beginning of the elaboration.

Presentation of study results - quantitative analysis

Date of examination: September 2015

Material: Małgorzata Musierowicz's text titled "Santa Claus Visited Us Too" ("U nasteżbył Mikołaj")

For the semantic part, the student could receive a maximum of 10 points (see tool description)

The pluses indicate that the superstructure elements listed in the table 2 are included

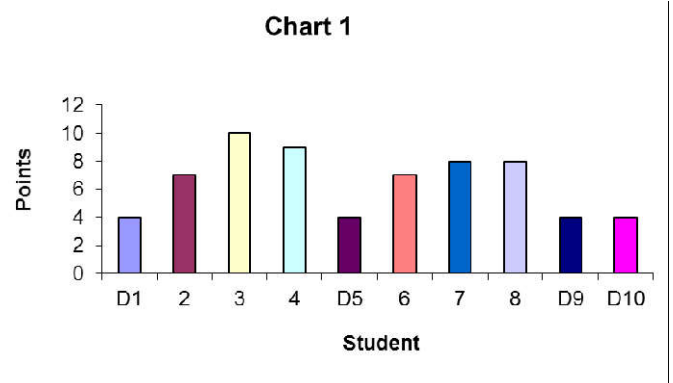
Letter D – denotes a dyslexic student (Tab. 2)

For the semantic part, the student could receive a maximum of 10 points (see tool description)

The pluses indicate that the superstructure elements listed in the table 2 are included

Letter D – denotes a dyslexic student

Conclusion 1: On the basis of the scores, students who obtained the lowest score from the semantic part, i. e. 4 points out of 10 possible, understood the content of the story presented by the teacher in 40 percent. This is shown in the chart 1 below (chart 1)



Therefore, students with no. 1, no. 5, no. 9 and 10 may have difficulty reading and listening with understanding. In the fourth grade, out of 10 persons, there are 4 dyslectic persons (two persons have a decision from a psychological and pedagogical counseling center and have a confirmed diagnosis, two others - from the dyslexia risk group - are still under observation).

According to the theory of G. Krasowicz-Kupis, the students (no. 1, 5, 9, 10) significantly distorted the content of the information provided by the teacher. These distortions pertained to:

In person 1's composition

- character names were distorted
- the setting of the events were determined ambiguously. Defining space was not a delimiter of the beginning of the story
- during the action, the events were signaled, but not all of them were comprehensively described to the end, although they were listed in chronological order. No finale of the events was marked. The story was not finished.
- no motivation behind the characters' actions was exposed

Tab 2 Results obtained in the study group - semantic analysis

Student	Identification of protagonists	Time	Space	Main plot	Action plan	Resolution of action	Subplots	Valuation	Additional descriptions	Episodes	Points
D1	+	+	+	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
2	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	7
3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
4	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	9
D5	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	4
6	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	7
7	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	8
8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	8
D9	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	4
D10	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	4

In person no. 5

- the place of the events was concretized, but it was intertwined in the course of events
- the story began in the midst of action
- the events were not organized chronologically
- the action had no finale
- the motivation for the characters' actions was omitted

In person no. 9

- There was no specification of time. This is an important piece of information, as the events are taking place on St. Nicholas Day.
- the finale of the story was distorted, the child added additional elements to the plot

In person no. 10

- There were no action building elements and elements complementary to the interpretations of the protagonists' actions, motives behind their behaviour were not taken into account, the course of events was distorted.

All the students mentioned on the basis of teacher interviews have learning difficulties. Their problems result from the inability to listen with understanding, distraction during classes, and hence problems with memorization while listening to the presented text. The failure to understand the content, or the semantic medium of elaboration, also translates into elements of communication building. Therefore, the statements of students from both groups have been characterized in parallel tests also in terms of the syntactic structure of the message³.

Presentation of study results - qualitative analysis of the superstructure of the texts created by dyslexic children

I have conducted the quality analysis between written expressions of dyslexic children and those without dyslexia based on the short story by Małgorzata Musierowicz entitled "U nasteżbyłMikołaj".

The diagram of the basic superstructure elements indicated by selected students without dyslexia is as follows (table 3)

For comparison, this is the diagram of superstructure elements distinguished by dyslexic children (table 4):

Tab 3 Elements of superstructure of the text "U nasteżbyłMikołaj" distinguished by students without dyslexia - examples

	story 1	story 2	story 3	story 4	story 5
element of the superstructure	<i>Santa Claus!</i>	<i>Stories about St. Nicholas Day</i>	<i>Małgorzata Musierowicz's stories</i>	<i>Story: "U nas też był Mikołaj!" ("Santa Claus Visited Us Too")</i>	<i>St. Nicholas Day</i>
Identification of protagonists	<i>Siblings, mom, dad</i>	<i>Sister and brother, parents</i>	<i>Romcia Tomcio, mom, dad</i>	<i>Mom, dad, Romcia, Tomcio, aunt</i>	<i>Parents, mom, dad, sister, brother</i>
placement in time	<i>"St. Nick's been here, get up ..."</i>	<i>"When the night passed..."</i>	<i>"The morning came..."</i>	<i>"On a winter day..."</i>	<i>"When the darkness fell..."</i>
placement in space	<i>"Behind the bookcase, the parents awoke..."</i>	<i>"In a small, cramped apartment..."</i>	<i>"In a high-rise block"</i>	<i>"Romcia was running around the apartment..."</i>	<i>"Mamerciątkas were looking around the room..."</i>
primary action	<i>"The brother and sister rubbed their eyes. They saw presents and sweets all around them. Santa Claus had been here - Romcia shouted to her brother. I wonder if he brought something for the parents? - the siblings thought. If not, we'll give them the money aunt Lilka keeps in the closet - said mom and dad that night". Tomcio. The parents moved nervously in the bed...</i>	<i>"When the night passed, Tomcio and Romcia woke up with smiles on their faces. They knew that Santa Claus had visited them and money aunt Lilka keeps in the closet - said mom and dad that night".</i>	<i>"Tomcio and Romcia woke up happy one morning. They knew that Santa Claus had visited them. They saw the presents and loads of candy. They had to check what their parents wanted their parents to be as happy as them..."</i>	<i>"On December 6, the girl named Romcia and her brother Tomcio were happy with their presents, which they had gotten from Santa Claus. They wanted their parents to be as happy as them..."</i>	<i>"Finally, Santa Claus came. Mamerciątkas were looking around the room. They saw the presents ... They were curious about what Santa Claus had brought their mom and dad..."</i>
Resolution	<i>"Everybody was hugging each other and rolling around the bed."</i>	<i>"Mom and dad hugged their beloved children."</i>	<i>"On such a day, everybody should be happy."</i>	<i>Mom and dad kissed their children warmly.</i>	<i>"Even mom and dad behaved like Romcio and Tomcia..."</i>
complex action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children playing with their new presents - Checking if the parents also received gifts from St. Nicholas - Giving the money kept in their piggybanks to the parents - The idea to borrow money from aunt Lilka - Sudden awakening of the parents - Kissing the children good morning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children playing with their new presents - Checking if the parents received gifts from St. Nicholas - Giving their savings to the parents on St. Nicholas Day - happiness of the parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children playing with their new presents - Checking if the parents received gifts from St. Nicholas - Giving their savings to the parents - Taking aunt Lilka's money - Sudden awakening of the parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children playing with their new presents - Checking if the parents received gifts from St. Nicholas - Giving their savings to the parents - Wanting to borrow money from aunt Lilka - Sudden awakening of the parents - Hugging the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children playing with their new presents. - Checking if the parents also received gifts from St. Nicholas - Giving their savings to the parents - Borrowing money from aunt Lilka - happiness of the parents
Episodes	<i>- The story about how Santa Claus finds his way into the room</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>The story about how Santa Claus finds his way into the room</i>	<i>None</i>
Valuation	<i>"The children loved their parents very much..."</i>	<i>"Romcio and Tomcia didn't want their parents to be poor.. They were sad that dad and mom hadn't gotten anything from Santa Claus"</i>	<i>"The children were sorry that the parents hadn't gotten any presents."</i>	<i>"The Mamerts felt the warmth of their children's looks"</i>	<i>"They all loved each other very much and cared for each other. In such a family no one is sad"</i>
Descriptions	<i>- description of Santa Claus</i>	<i>- description of the December morning</i> <i>- description of Santa Claus</i>	<i>- description of the childrens' feelings when they realized that the parents hadn't gotten any presents</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>- description of the situation - Romcia and Tomcio check out their presents</i>

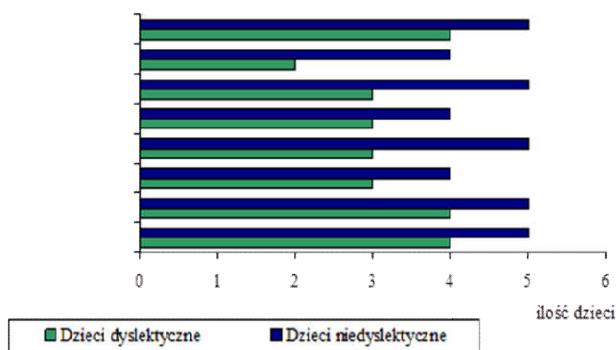
³ The size of this text does not allow this part of the study to be published.

Table 4 Elements of superstructure of the text "U nasteżbył Mikołaj" distinguished by children with dyslexia - examples

	story 1	story 2	story 3	story 4	story 5
element of the superstructure	"U nas też był Mikołaj!" ("Santa Claus Visited Us Too")	About St. Claus	Something unusual	Children get presents	"St. Nicholas Day presents
Identification of protagonists	Children. Parents	Girl, colleague	Romcia and Tomcio, mom and dad	Santa Claus, mom, dad, sister, brother	Children, mom, dad, aunt
placement in time	"Once the children woke up	"It was in winter	"Once upon a time there were Romcia, Tomcia, mom and dad	"Romcia got up, but the sun didn't"	"One day..."
placement in space	"In the room..."	"In the city"	"none"	Romcia was sitting on the bed	"at home"
primary action	"The kids saw that the parents are poor and wanted to give them money" [grammatical and spelling mistakes in Polish - translator's note]	"The girl and the boy stole from their aunt Lilka - for mom and dad"	"Romcia and Tomcia gave mom and dad the money from santa"	"Romcia got up, but the sun didn't." Tomcio also got up... they saw the presents from Santa Claus. Santa Claus gave money to the parents.	"On St. Nicholas Day, aunt gave money to the twins' mom and dad"
Resolution	"Everybody was happy about the money"	The kids were mean spirited [grammatical mistakes in Polish - translator's note]	no resolution	"The parents were so happy that they rolled around the bed"	"The aunt was nice because she helped."
complex action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The children awake - The children talk, the parents are poor - Children's help - Aunt's help - Happiness of the parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The children awake - The parents are sad that they can't afford presents for their children -Stealing aunt's money 	No full resolution of the action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The children awake - Tomcio and Romcia are happy about the St. Nicholas Day presents - Money - the gift to the parents from St. Nicholas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The children awake - The children are happy about the St. Nicholas Day presents - The gift from the aunt to the parents on St. Nicholas Day None
Episodes	None	None	None	None	None
Valuation	- explanation of why the children were sad and why did they help their parents	- negative valuation of the children - acknowledgement of the parent's sadness	None	Happiness of the parents	- explanation of the aunt's behavior
Descriptions	None	none	None	None	None

The differences in the identification of basic elements of the superstructure of the texts written by children with and without dyslexia have been illustrated on the chart 2:

Identification of protagonists
placement in time
placement in space
primary action
resolution
complex action
episodes
valuation



number of children
Non/dyslexic child
average WPS for dyslexia = 0.6
average WPS for non-dyslexia = 0.9

As can be seen from the above tables and charts, dyslexic children misconstrued the basic elements of the superstructure of the text, interpreted Małgorzata Musierowicz's story in a completely different way, did not pay attention to the atmosphere of St. Nicholas Day, wrongly accused the main characters of stealing money for their parents. Actually, there is other action in the stories of children with dyslexia and so is the subject of the work: compositional narrative dominant is constituted by the reputed grief of the family caused by poverty. Students with dyslexia did not notice humor or comic situations in the main characters' creations. Students with dyslexia who correctly indicated the basic elements of the superstructure such as: character identification, basic action, valence, presented the content of the the foregoing story too literally. Written expressions of dyslexic children looked more like a summary, formed on the basis of the memory reproduction of the course of events. Although in both groups: the dyslectic and non-electronic one - the students easily identified the protagonists, not all the children with dyslexia were able to explain the motives of character's actions. Both groups of children had difficulties in determining the time and place of the analyzed story. These two components of the structure were definitely better defined by students with no reading and writing difficulties.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the superstructure of narrative texts built by children with dyslexia shows that students struggling with dyslexia:

- have problems with identifying the basic elements of the superstructure in the narrative text,
- are not always able to distinguish the main plotline of the story,
- rarely include in their written statements additional elements of superstructure: complex action, valuation,
- change the content of the text to a greater extent than children without dyslexia, providing distorted information,
- mistakingly interpret the characters' actions, some events, the ending of the story.

The above statements allow the following conclusion to be drawn: dyslexic children encounter difficulties not only in the construction of a narrative text, but above all in its reception. This is often caused by the inability to focus attention on the text listened to.

Recapitulation

According to the sociolinguistic concept, language formation should be as natural as possible. Mastering rules, paradigms and the ability of grammatical analysis is not the basic goal of language learning that constitutes art for art's sake. Language education programmes and therapeutic programmes should be developed with a view to developing the communication skills and language proficiency of a child. Looking at dyslexia from a sociolinguistic point of view opens up yet another research area to researchers, connected with the theory of language acquisition through socialization (LASS - language acquisition socialization system) (Bruner 1980, Gleason, Ratner 2005). According to this approach, language acquisition takes place through other people. Interaction, not only contact with language is necessary (Panasiuk 2013).

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