

 Research Article

Teaching English to Learners with Dyslexia: Challenges, Strategies and Implications

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Abstract

This paper explores the challenges and prospects of teaching English to learners with dyslexic brains, with particular attention to how dyslexia influences language acquisition and classroom performance. Dyslexia poses specific difficulties in reading, spelling, and phonological processing, which can hinder progress in English as a foreign language if not appropriately addressed. The study aims to inform teachers and educational practitioners about effective, inclusive teaching practices that can be tailored to the needs of dyslexic learners, and provide insights for textbook designers and curriculum developers to consider learning difficulties when designing English language materials. To achieve these objectives, the study adopts a quantitative research approach. A structured questionnaire was administered to English language teachers to investigate their experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices when teaching students with dyslexia. The findings reveal that multisensory instructional techniques, differentiated instruction, and individualized support strategies significantly enhance learner engagement and language outcomes. Additionally, results indicate that teachers' professional experience and prior training in learning difficulties strongly influence their confidence and perceived effectiveness when working with dyslexic students. Despite these positive practices, challenges persist, including large class sizes, limited resources, insufficient training opportunities, and the continued stigma surrounding learning difficulties. These obstacles often prevent teachers from fully meeting the individual needs of dyslexic learners. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of teacher training, inclusive classroom adaptations, and informed material design in supporting dyslexic students. The findings offer practical implications for educators, school administrators, and textbook designers, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to create more inclusive and accessible English language learning environments.

Keywords: Classroom Adaptations, Dyslexia, Phonological Processing, Multisensory Techniques, Teacher Training

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia is a neurobiological condition that commonly affects between 5% and 10% of students (Roitsch & Watson, 2019). Some individuals with dyslexia remain undiagnosed, which causes the condition to go unnoticed, unlike other disorders. In EFL classrooms, incorporating students with dyslexia has always been a challenge. Educators are not trained diagnosticians and cannot always detect dyslexia in their students (Snowling & Hulme, 2024). They often attribute a student's poor performance to laziness and carelessness. Similarly, some parents, due to illiteracy or lack of regular follow-up, fail to recognize their child's dyslexia, especially at an early age. This is particularly evident in the Moroccan context, where the illiteracy rate is 24.8% according to Moroccan World News, 2024. As a result, many children struggle with reading and writing tasks, leading to frustration and low self-esteem. Without proper intervention, these difficulties can persist into adulthood, affecting career opportunities and social interactions. Raising

awareness and implementing early screening programs can help ensure that students with dyslexia receive the support they need to succeed.

Previous research has rigorously attempted to understand dyslexia and provide recommendations for accommodating students with dyslexia in EFL classrooms (Roitsch & Watson, 2019; Siegel, 2006; Wagner, 1973). However, there is a significant gap in understanding how dyslexic students are supported in the Moroccan context. So far, very little research has been published on this topic, which remains insufficient to fully grasp the issue. By examining teachers' views and perspectives on teaching dyslexic students, as well as their readiness to incorporate dyslexic learners, this study aims to address the existing uncertainties and contribute to more effective strategies for accommodating students with dyslexia in Moroccan EFL classrooms. It also seeks to highlight the challenges that both educators and students face in adapting teaching methodologies to meet diverse learning needs. Additionally, the study explores potential training programs that could equip teachers with better tools for supporting dyslexic learners. Ultimately, the findings could serve as a foundation for policy recommendations aimed at improving inclusive education practices.

Understanding these difficulties will provide Moroccan EFL teachers with deeper insights into the severity of dyslexia and the challenges students face. This research serves as a crucial step in understanding how dyslexia affects language learning and how dyslexic students can be effectively supported in the classroom. The study aims to propose evidence-based teaching techniques and strategies that enhance inclusivity and cater to the needs of neurodiverse learners. By doing so, it seeks to bridge the gap in existing research and contribute to more effective classroom practices.

To achieve these objectives, the study will explore the following research questions:

1. What specific challenges do teachers encounter when instructing dyslexic students in EFL classrooms?
2. How do teachers' experience levels and training backgrounds influence their perceptions and approaches to teaching dyslexic students?
3. How can Moroccan EFL teachers effectively accommodate neurodiverse learners, particularly students with dyslexia?

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Understanding Dyslexia in ELT: Definitions and Key Insights

Dyslexia is a neurobiological, developmental, language-based learning disability that primarily affects an individual's ability to read, spell, and decode words. It is widely understood as stemming from phonological processing deficits, which hinder accurate and fluent word recognition, spelling, and decoding (Roitsch & Watson, 2019). This challenge is not linked to intelligence, vision issues, or lack of effort, but rather to neurological differences that impact language processing (Hudson, High, & Otaiba, 2007). Scholars like Snowling (2014) stress that dyslexia is not merely a reading issue, but a broader language learning difficulty, affecting areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and written expression. Siegel (2006) expands on this by emphasizing the genetic basis of dyslexia, noting that it is associated with structural and functional brain differences in areas responsible for language processing and phonological awareness. Dyslexia is recognized as a lifelong condition, though interventions such as structured, phonics-based teaching can significantly improve reading outcomes and support academic success.

The understanding of dyslexia has evolved over time, beginning with the historical work of Rudolf Berlin in 1887, who first coined the term and identified dyslexia as a neurological condition unrelated to intelligence or vision (Wagner, 1973). Berlin's groundbreaking work helped shift the perception of dyslexia from a sign of laziness or poor education to a legitimate, biologically based learning disorder. Today, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) provides a widely accepted definition of dyslexia, highlighting the challenges with word recognition, spelling, and decoding that arise from phonological processing deficits. These difficulties often lead to secondary issues such as reduced reading comprehension and limited vocabulary acquisition (IDA). Overall, research underscores the importance of early identification and

tailored interventions to support dyslexic learners, particularly in English, where the complexity of spelling and phonics compounds the challenges they face.

1.1.2. Challenges of Teaching English to Dyslexic Students

Dyslexic learners, both children and adults, face significant challenges in acquiring English language skills, particularly in areas such as reading, spelling, writing, and pronunciation. Scholars such as Lama (2019) and Vizhi & Rathnasabapathy (2023) highlight the difficulties dyslexic students experience with phonological processing, decoding, and orthographic knowledge, which impede their ability to match letters to sounds, spell words accurately, and process information efficiently. The complexity of English orthography, characterized by its inconsistent letter-sound correspondence, exacerbates these challenges, further complicating the language acquisition process for dyslexic learners. Additionally, the struggles with distinguishing sounds, associating letters, and recognizing words quickly lead to slower reading speeds and hinder overall comprehension (Jose, 2012; Vizhi & Rathnasabapathy, 2023).

However, despite these obstacles, research by Vimochana et al. (2023) suggests that with appropriate interventions, such as multisensory instruction and assistive technologies, dyslexic students can overcome many of these barriers and improve their English language proficiency. These strategies address specific learning needs, facilitating better phonological processing and decoding abilities. As highlighted by both Vimochana et al. (2023) and Lama (2019), while dyslexic learners may require more time and support to process and organize information, targeted teaching methods can help them build confidence and succeed academically, thereby mitigating the frustration and low self-esteem that often accompany language learning difficulties.

1.1.3. Teaching English to Dyslexic Learners in Morocco

Research on teaching English to students with dyslexia in Morocco is extremely limited. Most published studies on dyslexia in Morocco focus on Arabic learners rather than English, likely due to the status of English as a second foreign language in the country. Until 2023, Moroccan students in public schools did not formally study English until later stages of their education. The introduction of English earlier in the curriculum, starting in the 2023-2024 academic year, may encourage future research on teaching English to dyslexic students in Morocco.

Despite the scarcity of literature, some studies provide insights into dyslexia and language learning in Morocco. El Arbaoui (2023), in “Pedagogical Practices for Dyslexic Learners in Moroccan EFL Classrooms”, examined how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers address the challenges of dyslexic students in higher education. A questionnaire of 47 university teachers revealed that many educators regularly encounter dyslexic students, but lack formal training, which impedes accommodating them due to challenges such as limited knowledge, large class sizes, time constraints, and ineffective teaching strategies. However, the study found that multisensory approaches, assistive technology, and differentiated instruction positively impact dyslexic learners. The research underscores the need for specialized teacher training programs, policy support, and collaboration to create more inclusive EFL classrooms.

At a broader level, Abbou (2022) in “Dyslexia in the Classroom: From Psychological Assessment to Pedagogical Intervention”, explored dyslexia as a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting reading, writing, and academic performance. The study highlighted key biological and cognitive causes, including phonological processing deficits and cerebellar dysfunction. It emphasized the importance of early diagnosis through psychological and academic assessments and suggested intervention strategies such as phonological awareness training, multisensory teaching, and technological aids like audiobooks. The research advocates for inclusive education policies and personalized teaching approaches to help dyslexic students integrate effectively into the school system.

Although these studies focus on English and dyslexia, digital tools have also been explored as an intervention for dyslexic learners. The study “AraRead: A Mobile Application for Enhancing Arabic Reading Skills in Moroccan Children with Dyslexia” examined the effectiveness of the AraRead app in improving Arabic reading skills among dyslexic primary school students. Conducted over seven weeks with

36 participants, Bouda et al. (2024) point out that gamification and interactive exercises significantly improved reading fluency, phonological awareness, and motivation. The findings highlight the potential of mobile applications in supporting dyslexic learners, suggesting that educational technology could be extended to English language learning as well.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section of this paper outlines the research approach, data collection methods, and analysis techniques used in the study. The purpose of this section is to explain how the research was conducted.

2.1. Research Design

This study follows a quantitative research design to explore teachers' perceptions of dyslexia in Moroccan EFL classrooms. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, beliefs, and teaching strategies.

2.2. Participants & Sampling

This study employed a random sampling method, selecting 100 English teachers from various schools across Morocco. Random sampling was used to ensure that all English teachers had an equal chance of participation, making the findings more representative and generalizable. The sample included teachers from both public and private schools, ensuring a wide range of perspectives on the challenges and strategies used to support dyslexic learners in Moroccan EFL classrooms.

The study involved teachers from diverse backgrounds and varying levels of teaching experience. Participants had teaching experience ranging from 0 to 10+ years, as shown in the table below. The goal was to determine whether seniority and experience influence how teachers accommodate neurodiverse students. This was done by comparing teachers' experiences with dyslexic learners, particularly in identifying and supporting them.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants by Teaching Experience

Experience Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-1 years	31	31.0%	31.0%	31.0%
1-5 years	11	11.0%	11.0%	42.0%
5-10 years	19	19.0%	19.0%	61.0%
10+ years	39	39.0%	39.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table illustrates the distribution of participants by teaching experience, with 39% having over 10 years of experience, while 31% are relatively new to the profession with 0-1 years of experience.”

2.3. Research Instruments

Data for this study were collected using a primary source, which is a questionnaire designed by the author to gather insights from English language teachers. The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions, allowing for quantitative data collection. It focused on topics such as teachers' experiences with dyslexic students, the challenges they face, and the strategies they implement in the classroom. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to ensure accessibility and ease of participation. Participants were selected randomly to minimize bias and ensure a diverse range of responses.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 16 items distributed across four sections. Most items were closed-ended and measured using Likert scales, primarily 5-point scales, allowing respondents to indicate the degree or frequency of their experiences and perceptions. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Section 1 focuses on demographic information, including teachers' experience and the age range

of dyslexic students they teach. Section 2 assesses teachers' readiness to accommodate dyslexic students, including training and support. Section 3 explores the challenges teachers face, such as identifying dyslexic students and adapting teaching materials. Section 4 examines the teaching methods used, including multisensory approaches and strategies for managing the emotional and motivational needs of dyslexic students.

2.4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS to ensure a clear and systematic interpretation of the results. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize teachers' responses regarding the challenges they face, their preparedness, and the strategies they use to support dyslexic students.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

3.1. Teaching Experience and Training

The findings indicate that a substantial proportion of surveyed teachers (43%) have more than 10 years of experience teaching English. This demonstrates a strong professional background, suggesting that many educators have developed extensive pedagogical skills and classroom management strategies over time.

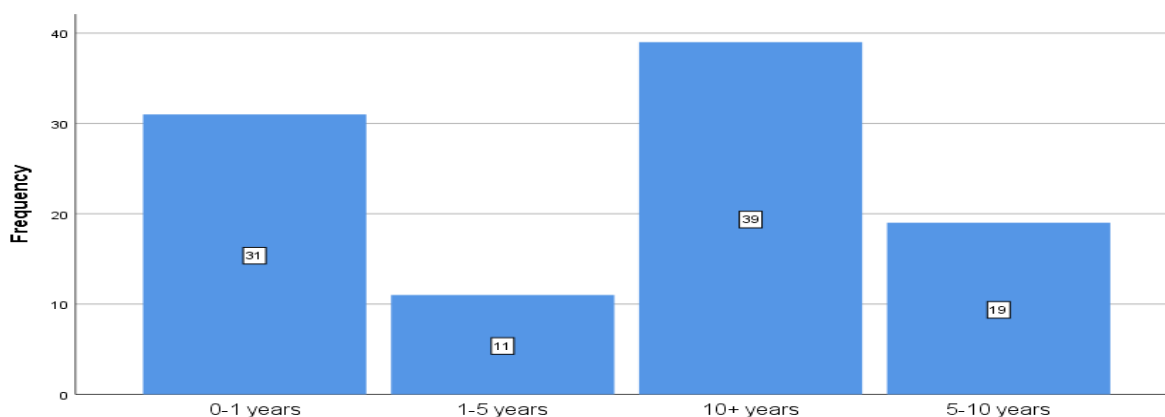


Figure 1. Distribution of Teaching Experience Among Surveyed Teachers

However, despite their considerable experience, a significant majority (79%) reported not having received formal training specifically focused on teaching students with dyslexia. This gap highlights a crucial area for professional development, as specialized training is essential for equipping teachers with effective strategies to support students with dyslexia, ensuring inclusive and accessible learning environments.

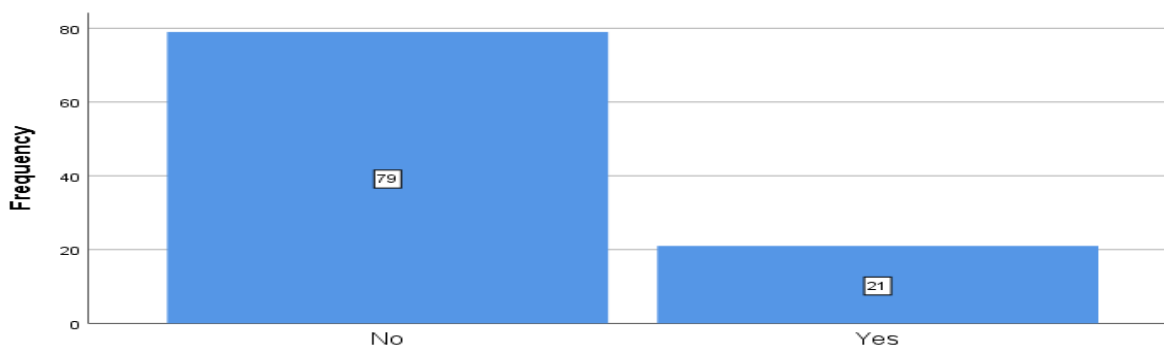


Figure 2. Teachers' Formal Training in Teaching Students with Dyslexia

This significant gap in teacher preparedness suggests that experience alone is insufficient in addressing the specialized needs of dyslexic learners. Without proper training, teachers may rely on traditional teaching methods that do not cater to the unique challenges faced by these students, potentially hindering their academic progress. The lack of targeted professional development in this area calls for urgent intervention through structured training programs.

From the perspective of Information Processing Theory, effective learning depends on how information is encoded, processed, stored, and retrieved. Dyslexic learners often experience deficits in phonological processing and attention, which can overload working memory during language tasks. Without specialized training, experienced teachers may rely on traditional, text-heavy, or lecture-based instruction, which places high cognitive demands on dyslexic learners and limits effective encoding of language input.

This finding supports the view that pedagogical expertise must be complemented by an understanding of learners’ cognitive processing constraints. Structured professional development can help teachers adopt instructional approaches such as multisensory techniques that reduce cognitive load and enhance information processing for dyslexic students.

3.2. Institutional Support and Teacher Preparedness

A large proportion of teachers (80%) feel either minimally supported or not supported at all by their institutions in addressing the needs of dyslexic students. This lack of institutional backing limits teachers’ access to essential resources such as specialized teaching materials, professional development opportunities, and assistive technologies.

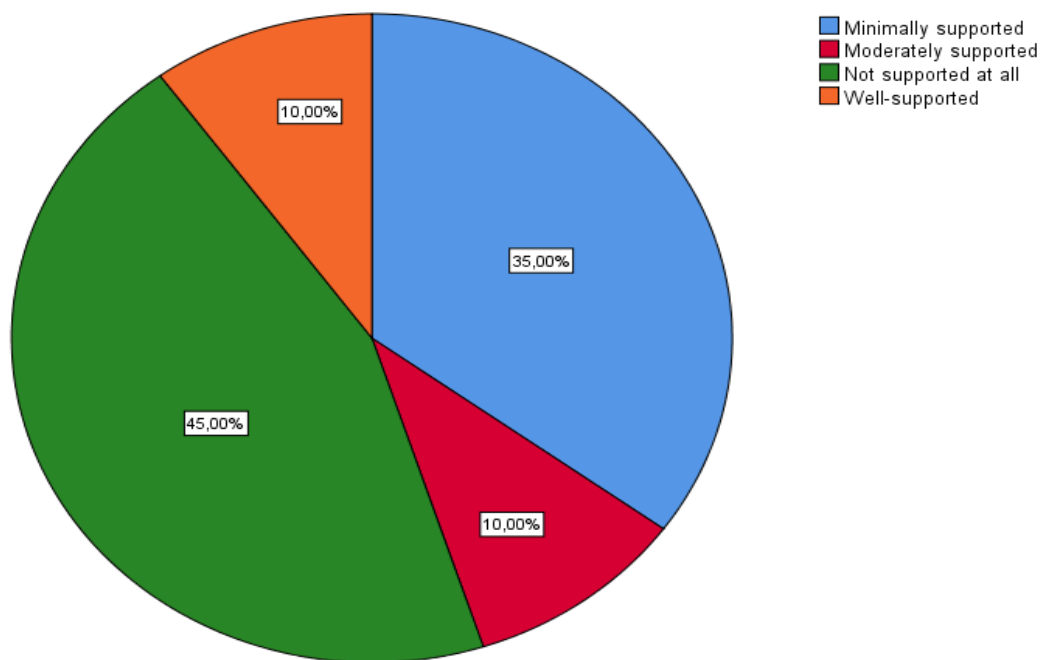


Figure 3. Institutional Support and Teacher Preparedness

Consequently, only a small number of respondents (17%) feel very or extremely prepared to support dyslexic students effectively. The findings indicate that without proper institutional support, even well-intentioned educators struggle to implement inclusive practices. Strengthening institutional commitment through funding, resource allocation, and administrative support is crucial in fostering an inclusive learning environment.

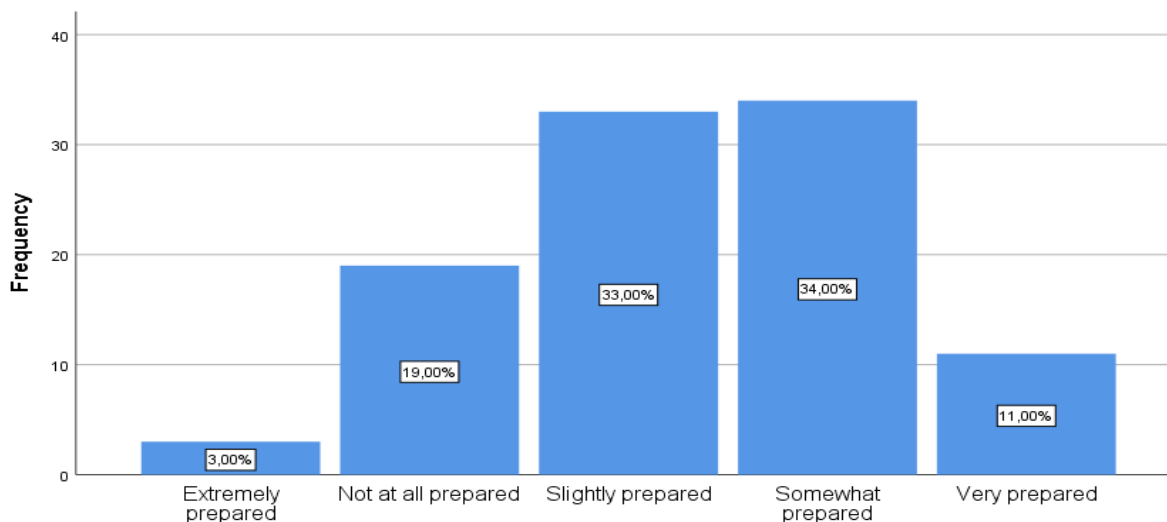


Figure 4. Teachers’ Readiness to Accommodate Dyslexic Students in Their Classes

Moreover, the findings reveal interesting trends in how teaching experience influences perceived preparedness to support dyslexic students. As indicated in the table below, the data suggest that neither experience nor inexperience alone guarantees strong preparedness.

Table 2. Relationship Between Teaching Experience and Preparedness to Support Dyslexic Students

		Teacher’s Preparedness to Support Dyslexic Students					
		Extremely prepared	Not at all prepared	Slightly prepared	Somewhat prepared	Very prepared	Total
Teaching Experience	0-1 years	3	2	9	11	6	31
	1-5 years	0	0	9	2	0	11
	10+ years	0	14	10	15	0	39
	5-10 years	0	3	5	6	5	19
Total		3	19	33	34	11	100

Surprisingly, newer teachers (0-1 years) display a more varied sense of preparedness, with some feeling “Extremely prepared” (3) while others feel “Not at all prepared” (2). However, the majority fall somewhere in between, particularly in the “Somewhat prepared” (11) and “Slightly prepared” (9) categories. Teachers with 1-5 years of experience show a narrower pattern, with most feeling only “Slightly prepared” (9) and none reporting high levels of confidence. Interestingly, those with 10+ years of experience are the least likely to feel well-prepared—14 of them feel “Not at all prepared,” and none feel “Extremely” or “Very prepared.” This suggests that while experience brings general teaching expertise, it may not necessarily translate into confidence in supporting dyslexic students, possibly due to a lack of specialized training. In contrast, teachers with 5-10 years of experience have a more balanced distribution, with at least some reporting confidence in their ability.

3.3. Challenges in Teaching Dyslexic Students & Teaching Strategies

The data highlights the main challenges teachers face when teaching English to students with dyslexia. As explained in Table 3, teachers go through a lot of challenges while teaching dyslexic students.

The most significant issue is the lack of adequate training or professional development (20.61%), suggesting that many educators do not receive the necessary instruction on how to effectively support dyslexic learners. Time constraints (19.85%) and limited access to specialized resources (19.08%) further complicate efforts to provide individualized instruction, making it difficult to implement effective strategies. Additionally, a lack of support from school administration (18.32%) means teachers may struggle to get the necessary accommodations or materials for dyslexic students. Difficulty in individualizing instruction (16.03%) reflects the challenge of addressing diverse learning needs in a standard classroom setting. Lastly,

resistance from students or parents (6.11%) is the least significant issue, though it still indicates that some families may be hesitant to acknowledge or address dyslexia. These challenges highlight the need for better training, resources, and institutional support to improve English instruction for dyslexic learners.

Table 3. Challenges in Teaching English to Students with Dyslexia

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of adequate training or professional development	20.61 %
Limited access to resources (e.g., specialized materials)	19.08 %
Difficulty with individualizing instruction	16.03 %
Time constraints (e.g., large class sizes)	19.85 %
Lack of support from the school administration	18.32 %
Resistance from students or parents	6.11%
Total	100 %

The major challenges identified lack of training, limited resources, time constraints, and difficulty in individualizing instruction, which directly relate to cognitive demands placed on dyslexic learners. From an Information Processing and Working Memory perspective, these constraints prevent teachers from implementing strategies that reduce processing overload, such as paced instruction, repetition, scaffolding, and multisensory input. As a result, dyslexic learners may experience reduced engagement and slower language development.

The finding discussed above aligns with much previous research on the issue. According to Folia and Malisiova (2025), while many EFL teachers are aware of dyslexia and are willing to support affected learners, their understanding of the condition is often limited. Most teachers have received little or no formal training in dyslexia, which reduces their confidence and can lead to misconceptions, lower expectations, and inadequate support in the classroom. Despite these challenges, teachers show a strong interest in learning effective strategies for teaching dyslexic students, but they lack access to targeted professional development. Overall, there is a clear gap in both research and practice regarding practical, classroom-based methods for supporting dyslexic learners in EFL contexts.

Similarly, a study conducted by Černickaja and Sokolová (2024) shows that teachers often perceive dyslexia as a poorly defined and confusing condition, which makes it difficult to address in practice. Despite this uncertainty, most university educators hold positive attitudes toward students with dyslexia and are motivated to support them. However, they report feeling insufficiently prepared due to limited practical training and a lack of institutional support. Overall, the findings highlight a strong need for targeted professional development and better resources to help teachers implement effective and inclusive practices for dyslexic learners.

In the same way, El Arbaoui (2023) posits that in Moroccan EFL classrooms, teachers often have a limited understanding of dyslexia and its specific impact on learning a foreign language. They are generally unfamiliar with teaching strategies designed for dyslexic learners. Nevertheless, teachers show a strong interest in professional development to gain the skills and knowledge needed to support these students more effectively and inclusively.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS & LIMITATIONS

When teaching English to students with dyslexia, it is essential to adopt multisensory learning techniques to enhance comprehension and retention. Dyslexic students often struggle with processing written text, so engaging multiple senses, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile, can make learning more effective. For example, teachers can encourage students to trace letters in sand while simultaneously saying the sounds out loud, reinforcing the connection between phonetics and writing. Using colored overlays on text, incorporating movement into learning activities, and integrating interactive tools like flashcards with pictures and sounds can also be highly beneficial.

Assistive technology plays a crucial role in supporting dyslexic students. Digital tools such as text-to-speech software, audiobooks, and speech-to-text applications help students access content without being hindered by reading difficulties. Programs that allow students to listen to books while following along with

the text can improve both comprehension and fluency. Additionally, using fonts designed for dyslexic readers, such as Dyslexie or Open Dyslexic, can make reading less overwhelming. By integrating these tools into classroom instruction, teachers can help students overcome learning barriers and build confidence in their abilities.

Providing appropriate accommodations is another key factor in ensuring dyslexic students succeed in learning English. Extended time on tests and assignments, oral assessments instead of written ones, and breaking down tasks into smaller, manageable parts can significantly reduce stress and frustration. Additionally, using structured and predictable lesson plans with clear instructions allows students to feel more comfortable and prepared. Teachers should also offer alternative ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge, such as through presentations, projects, or verbal responses, rather than relying solely on traditional written assessments.

Creating an inclusive classroom environment is essential for fostering a supportive learning atmosphere. Teachers should ensure that their instructions are clear and concise, using visual aids whenever possible. Providing a variety of learning materials such as videos, infographics, and hands-on activities ensures that students with different learning preferences can engage effectively. Encouraging peer support through study buddies or group projects helps students build social connections while reinforcing learning. Furthermore, fostering a positive attitude towards dyslexia by emphasizing strengths rather than weaknesses can help students develop a growth mindset and build self-esteem.

Finally, maintaining open communication with parents, specialists, and students themselves is crucial in addressing the individual needs of dyslexic learners. Regular check-ins with students can help identify which strategies are working and which need adjustment. Collaboration with speech therapists, special education teachers, and psychologists ensures that students receive the necessary interventions and tailored instruction. Parents should also be actively involved in their child's learning process, receiving guidance on how to support literacy development at home. By fostering a team-based approach, teachers can create a more effective and nurturing learning experience for students with dyslexia.

Future research should address these limitations by employing mixed-methods designs, combining quantitative surveys with classroom observations, interviews, and case studies. Such approaches would provide a more nuanced understanding of teaching practices, student engagement, and the actual effectiveness of multisensory strategies. Expanding the sample to include teachers from diverse geographic, institutional, and socio-economic backgrounds would enhance the representativeness of the findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could investigate how teacher training, institutional support, and inclusive instructional strategies impact dyslexic learners' English proficiency over time.

While this study provides valuable insights into teaching English to dyslexic learners in Morocco, some constraints should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 100 teachers is not sufficient for quantitative analysis and may not fully capture the diversity of teaching experiences across Morocco, particularly in rural versus urban areas or between public and private institutions. Second, the study's contextual scope is limited to Moroccan EFL classrooms, which may restrict the generalizability of results to other educational systems or linguistic environments.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals significant challenges faced by Moroccan EFL teachers in supporting dyslexic students, primarily due to a lack of specialized training and institutional support. The data underscores the urgent need for targeted professional development, resource allocation, and inclusive policies. Adopting multisensory techniques and assistive technologies, alongside fostering open communication, are crucial for creating effective learning environments. Implementing early screening programs and raising awareness among parents are vital steps to ensure timely intervention. Furthermore, future research should explore digital tools and tailored interventions suitable for the Moroccan context. Ultimately, collaborative efforts are essential to bridge the gap between research and practice, empowering dyslexic learners to succeed.

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Research Ethics. The author confirms that all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the terms of their participation.

Data Availability Statement. Insert the relevant data availability statement here. All manuscripts must contain a clear statement regarding the availability of data and materials used in the study.

Conflicts of Interest. The author declares that the data used in this research are available upon request.

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