

Dyslexia in the Adult Years



David McLoughlin

University of Buckingham

&

Independent Dyslexia

Consultants

1-7 Woburn Walk

London. UK. WC1H 0JJ

david@dyslexia-idc.org

0044 207 383 3724



www.dyslexia-idc.org

Transition stress points for adults



- School to Work
- Work Back to Training/Education
- Job Redefinition
- Change of personnel
- Promotion
- Change of Job
- Employment to Unemployment
- Retirement

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

- ‘THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION IN SAYING THAT A PERSON IS DYSLEXIC WHILST NEVERTHELESS BEING A COMPETENT READER.’
- DYSLEXIA IS A SYNDROME - ‘A FAMILY OF LIFELONG MANIFESTATIONS THAT SHOW THEMSELVES IN MANY OTHER WAYS THAN POOR READING.’

(Tim Miles, 1990, 1998)

Dyslexia defined

- ‘ Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and/or writing, such difficulties being unexplained in relation to an individual’s other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically characterised by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present.’

Dyslexia Association of Ireland Website

Understanding Dyslexia- 3 Levels (Frith 1999)



- Behavioural
- Biological
- Cognitive

Primary characteristics



Those that derive directly from the cognitive difference:

- Reading
- Spelling
- Writing
- Proofreading
- Numeracy
- Organisation
- Social communication



Secondary characteristics

- Lack of confidence
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Stress

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Sometimes not being able to forget is more of a problem for dyslexic people than not being able to remember

Positive characteristics

Cognitive

- Good powers of visualisation
- Artistic talents, particularly where good visuospatial skills are required
- Good practical and problem solving skills
- A 'big picture' approach to problem solving

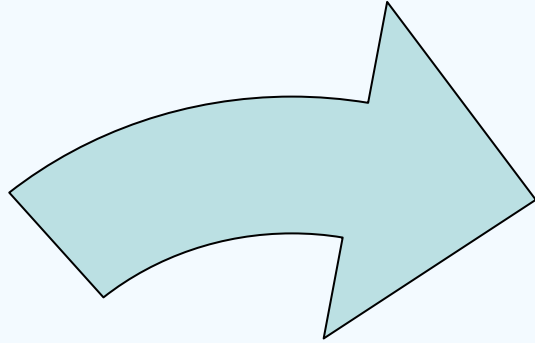
Positive characteristics



Affective

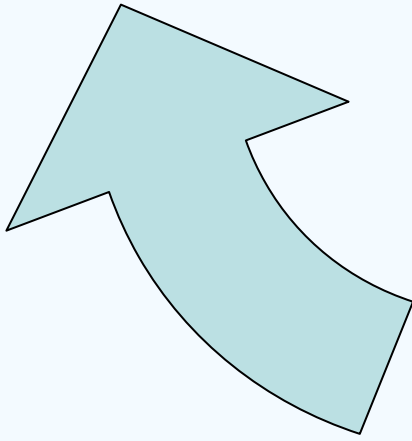
- persistent
- determined
- hard working
- resilient

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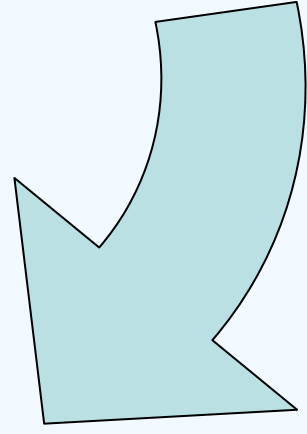


PRIMARY
DIFFICULTIES

EDUCATIONAL AND
SOCIAL
EXPERIENCES



SECONDARY
DIFFICULTIES



NEUROLOGICAL EVIDENCE



- Neuro-anatomic studies
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Neuro-psychological Testing

MODELS OF DYSLEXIA



- Explain primary difficulties
- Predict what might be difficult in the future
- Provide a rationale for strategy development

Working Memory



- The memory system fundamental to effective performance in learning and work settings
- Working memory and general intelligence are not identical but are highly related (Conway et.al. 2003)

Working memory

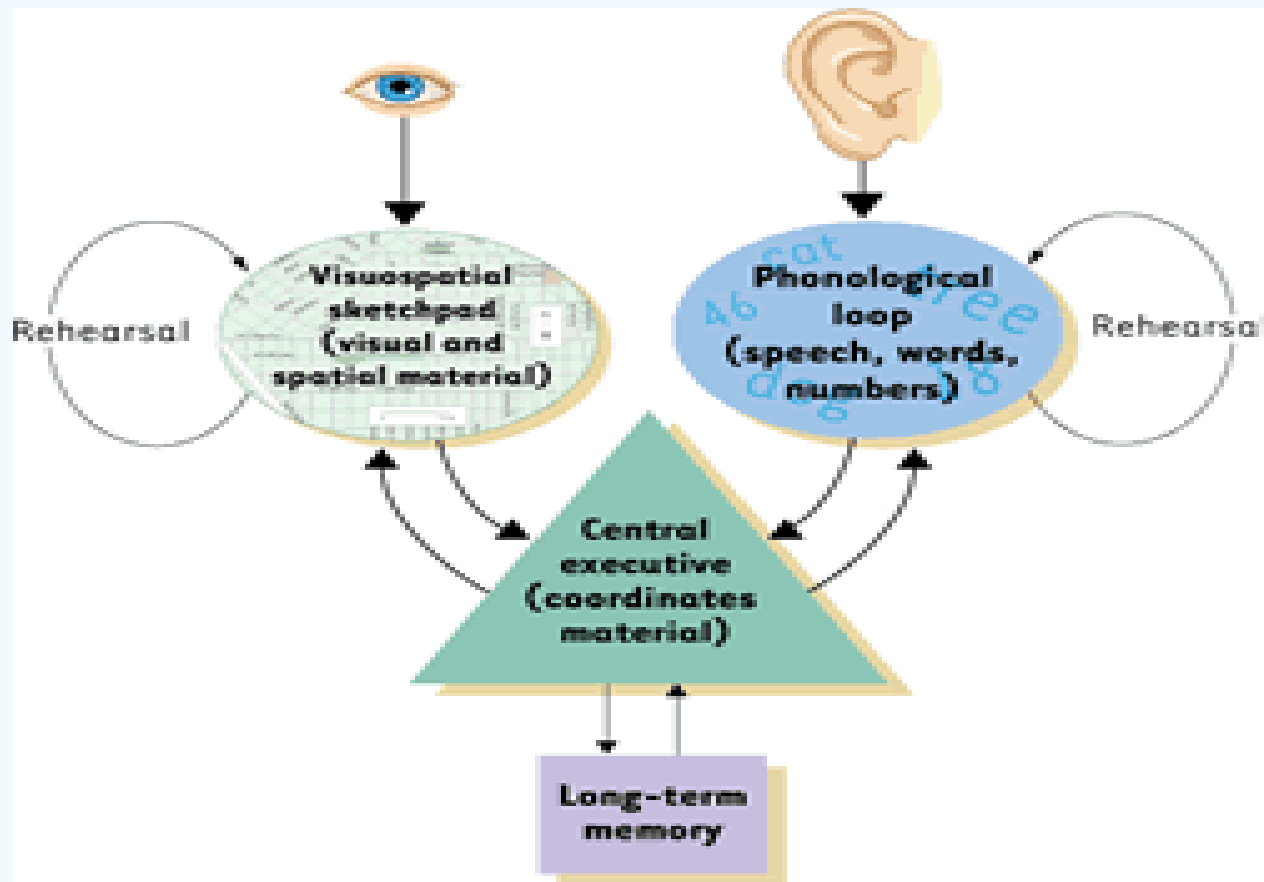
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1. Holding on to information in the very short –term
2. Storing information in long-term memory
3. Retrieving information from long-term memory
4. Doing all of the above at the same time



Working memory

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- Dyslexia
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Phonological Loop

Two components

- Phonological store – speech perception
- Articulatory loop – speech production

- It preserves the order in which words are presented
- Limited capacity

Visuo-spatial Sketchpad

- Storage and manipulation of spatial and visual information
- Limited capacity
- Logie (1995) suggested:
Visual cache – stores form and colour information
Inner scribe – spatial and movement information

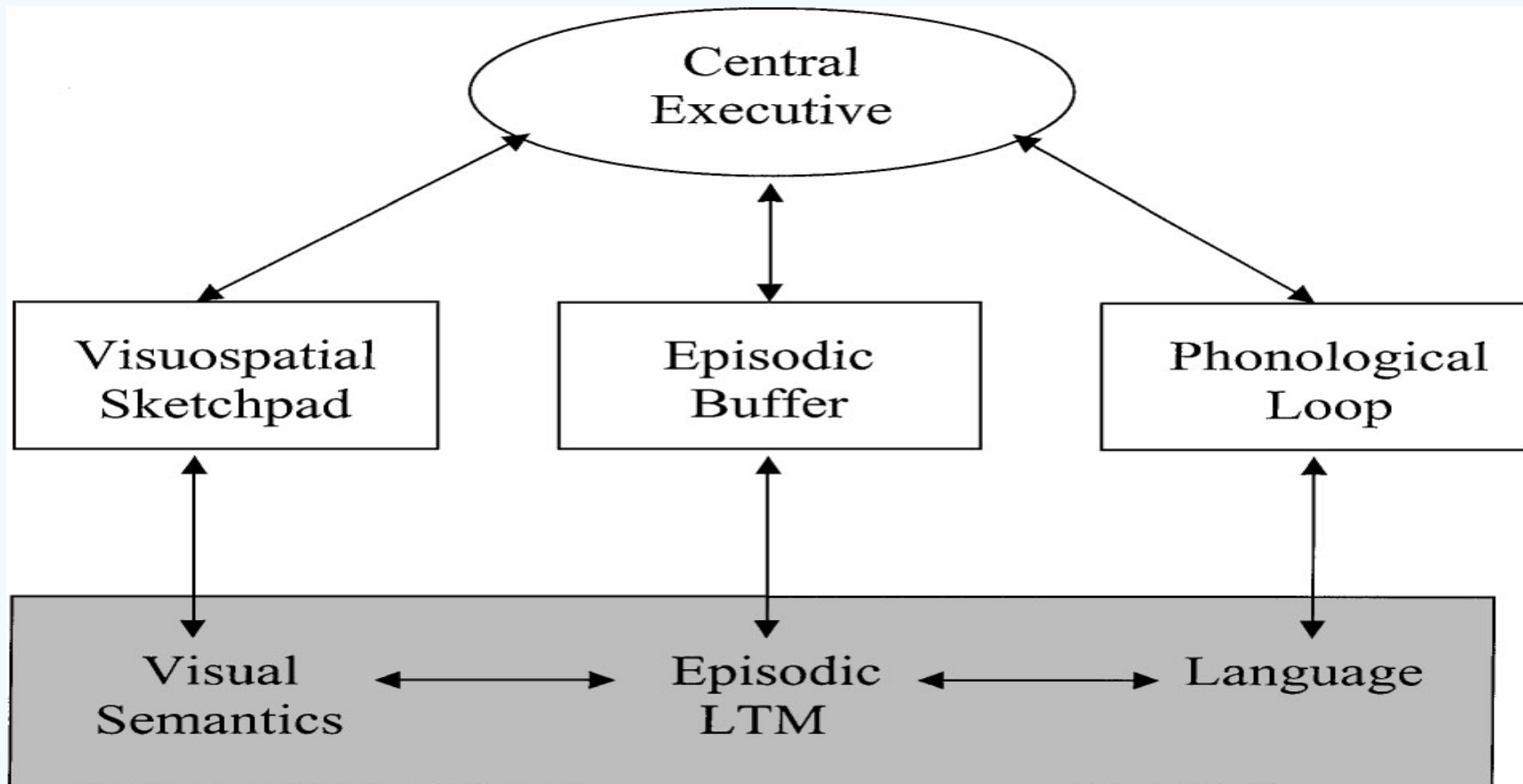
Central Executive



- planning
- sequencing
- the ability to sustain attention
- resistance to interference (inhibition)
- utilisation of feedback
- the ability to change set
- the ability to deal with novelty

Components of Working Memory (Baddeley 2000)

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Episodic Buffer

- Limited capacity
- Integrates/binds information from a range of sources into a single structure or 'episode'
- Acts as an intermediary between the CE, PL and VSS
- Conscious awareness is the principal mode of retrieval from the buffer

When storage demands exceed storage capacity in one of the specific store systems, some central executive capacity must be devoted to storage with the result that fewer resources are available for alternative activities. (Swanson, 1998)

Increasingly taxing working memory resources results in increased difficulty in controlling inhibition. (Pennington, 1996)



Improving performance

Development and elaboration of Executive Functions are critically dependent on memory and attention and, when built upon that foundation, can provide a basis for continuing adaptation, adjustment and achievement throughout the life-span (Eslinger, 1996)



Diagnostic assessment

- Diagnostic assessment is differential
- It is a process of explanation
- It should lead to better self-understanding
- The content should be appropriate for an adult
- Reports should not include IQ scores and reading/spelling ages
- Workplace/needs assessments should focus on solutions

Dyslexia and success in employment



Skill Development

- Goal setting - steps to mastering job
- Re-framing - developing self-understanding
- Developing skills and strategies-reading comprehension, memory techniques, spelling

Skill development



- Dealing with dyslexia can and should be a creative experience in that it is about finding solutions.
- So many adults have achieved success in their personal and working lives that it must now be accepted that dyslexia is not an insurmountable barrier.#

(McLoughlin et al 1994)

Dyslexia and success in employment



Compensation

- Finding alternative ways of dealing with tasks – mnemonics for spelling and procedures, use of imagery
- Using technology - portable spell-checker, planning software, text to speech software

Dyslexia and success in employment



Adjustment

- Adjusting training - presentation/duration
- Adjusting the job – performance targets
- Adjusting appraisal - extra time for tests
- Fostering self-advocacy through self-understanding
- Advocacy

Summary



- Dyslexia is an information processing difficulty/difference
- It affects much more than reading/spelling
- Dyslexic people can be successful in all occupations and at all levels
- Supporting dyslexic people involves recognising, acknowledging and valuing their difference

- Independent
- Dyslexia
- Consultants

Further Reading

McLoughlin, D,
Leather, C. &
Stringer, P (2002)

**The Adult Dyslexic:
Interventions and
Outcomes.**

London, Whurr

