

## Visual Learning Approach to treat Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

The term 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) is a term that refers to a difference or difficulty with particular aspects of learning that affect the understanding of a text (e.g. text overlapping; handwriting difficulties; spelling mistakes; needing to re-read; memory difficulties; difficulty in getting the ideas on paper..).

The most common SpLDs are dyslexia (on which we'll focus in the article), dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

It's important to underline that SpLDs are independent of intellectual ability, socio-economic or language background. As stated in the quote here below, having a SpLD does not predict academic potential:

*Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that affects auditory memory and processing speed which impacts on literacy development, mathematics, memory, organisation and sequencing skills to varying degrees. Dyslexia can occur at any level of intellectual development. It is neurological in origin and is seen to run in families. It affects up to 10% of the UK population at some level and can affect anyone of any age and background. (Dyslexia SpLD-Trust March 2015)*

However, the path to achieve may be harder and may require far greater effort and a distinct set of skills.

The challenge and opportunity in an educational context – for teachers and students- is to be aware of the specific effects of these differences and to explore a variety of methods and techniques to facilitate optimal learning.

Thanks to the Visual Learning Approach adopted by ABA English, a dyslexic people can try his hand at studying English by taking advantage of the benefits of our Academy.

We will indicate here below the reasons why dyslexics' students do need an efficient study method and the benefits our course could bring to them.

### Why does a student with SpLD need an efficient study method?

- Because, compared to his normolothric peers, he cannot afford the canonical method of study that consists of reading the material several times. Every time a dyslexic student reads is like if he sees letters, syllables, words for the first time because the automatism that allows people to recognize letters and syllables does not work properly in his mind.
- Because he has bad management and perception of time ( $s=d/t$ ). As the reading *speed* is inversely proportional to the time needed to read the text, the perception of this one is affected. In order to face that, dyslexic people adopt speed-increasing mechanisms to reduce the time needed to read. This behaviour obviously causes syllabic distortions at a graphic and phonemic level like the change of phonologically similar words (*will: well, god: good; from: for*)
- Because he finds difficulty in retrieving information. Since his reading is not fluid, the effort to perform it is increased and the understanding of the information is then affected.

It is therefore useful to adopt certain methodological paradigms like compensatory measures; multimedia tools and a systematic method of study, if we aim to teach a foreign language.

## **ABA English course and benefits that our method can bring to dyslexics' people**

The method that characterizes our Academy is known as 'natural method': we believe in learning a new language as a child would do, just figuring out to face some real-life scenarios.

Thanks to the multisensory approach we adopt, we can stimulate at the same time the visual and the auditory channels and we are then able to increase the input dyslexics' students receive.

- The learning process of ABA English course starts with the **ABA Films** that show what real life is like in Britain and the US.

These short films, produced exclusively by the American and British Academy, represent a quick and fun way to start learning English. The ABA Film is the starting point of every unit and contains the communicative functions and the grammatical structures that will be considered and analysed in other sections.

*Benefit: watching films in the original language makes it possible to associate an image with the sound in real time, while reading the written version of the scenario*

- Afterwards, we encounter the **Speak** Section where student will record and study all the sentences of the previous dialogue using our Listen-Record-Compare technology (LRC) and interact by interpreting the roles of the native actors who appear in the short films. The LRC system is important as it allows to listen, understand and practise the grammatical structures introduced by the initial film.

*Benefit: Listening to a mother tongue teacher reading an English text, repeating what you have listened to, Comparing the pronunciations allows the auditory memorization that goes hand in hand with the reading of the text.*

- Without any doubt, the vocabulary is essential for gaining wider knowledge of a language and there's nothing better than learning new words while having fun. This is the reason why our **#ABAmoments** were launched.

Among the huge variety of themes available, we can select the topic we wish to study and go through the section. Once in, we will be asked to associate a specific word with the corresponding image. We do believe that the visual channel (Visual Learning Experience) is preferential as the images help to remember.

*Benefit: the section stimulates the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels at the same time. It is combination of colour coding and sensorial support.*

- **Personal Teacher:** for any linguistic doubt you may have you are always entitled to drop a message to your teacher whom will be more than glad to take care of you. Affective teacher always means effective learning.
- **Learn Talk:** you will schedule a chat with your personal teacher that, according to your needs and considering your progress, will prepare a class for you. If there's a topic or area you want to deepen, you will always be allowed to let your teacher knows your preferences.

*Benefits: The affection, understanding and appreciation of the teacher produce enthusiasm, trust, facilitation. The metacognitive teaching together with a systematic method develops the awareness of what we are doing; why we are doing that; when we need to do so and under which conditions.*

The goal of ABA English is to produce and maintain a high level of motivation and perseverance to allow the student to increase their motivation and to achieve great goals.