RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

**TEACHING** STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

- **Identify their needs** as of the beginning of the year / term:

* On Day 1 announce to your class that students with specific learning differences can let you know either at the end of class or by e-mail
* Check any lists that your institution provides regarding this type of information
* Contact/reply to all concerned students and **ask them which types of accommodations** they’d like to get (see checklist)
* Avoid communicating their difference to the whole class; some students prefer to remain discreet on the topic. Ask them whether communication on accommodations may happen in class or not (see checklist)

- **Give them some individual support** every once in a while, if they wish (see checklist). Motivation is key, so a little goes a long way, for example 10 minutes after class or online.

- **Diversify your teaching methods** as much as possible, so as to involve multiple senses in the learning process and cater to all types of learners: visual, auditory, verbal, kinesthetic, logical, etc. Dyslexic learners need a lot of **repetition** to retain new skills or knowledge. Repeating through different types of learning activities avoids boredom and frustration and is very effective.

- **Course notes**:

* Clearly organized with a **table of contents** and page numbers
* Use **sans serif fonts**: Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, Courier (**minimum size 10/11**)
* Use at least **1.15 line spacing**
* Key words in **bold**
* No italics
* Text not justified
* **Airy layout**, with ample space for answers in exercises
* Include written **instructions for all exercises**; instructions should be short and clear
* All information necessary to complete an exercise should be on the same page, or on pages that can be read side by side (not on the front and back of a double-sided sheet)
* Include timelines / tables / mind maps / color codes to **make information visual**
* Include vocabulary lists
* Should be **available in electronic version** as from Day 1 of class

- **Exercises**:

* **Short** texts and videos (quality over quantity)
* **Regular practice**: short grammar and vocabulary exercises and tests throughout the course
* Provide **exercise keys** that students can use at their own pace
* Speaking exercises in pairs or groups before students have to speak in front of the class
* **Careful pairing** / grouping with partners they feel comfortable with, possibly regular partners
* Never make them read out loud in front of the class
* Write on the **blackboard** a much as possible: write clearly on a clean board
* Or project from a computer instead (make sure the contrast on the screen is sufficient)
* Give **instructions for exercises BEFORE** starting the exercise or distributing worksheets
* **Listening comprehension** practice:
* Wait until they have **finished reading** questions/gap text before playing the recording
* Possibly drop every 3rd question for them if their reading cannot keep up with the audio

**Watch out for undiagnosed dyslexics!**

Students can be dyslexic and never have been diagnosed. Symptoms to watch out for are:

* **Difficulties in writing**:
  + Poor spelling
  + Missing words
  + Poor text structure
  + Poor penmanship, erasures, untidy or crumpled pages
* **Difficulties in speaking**:
  + Difficulty using precise vocabulary
* **Difficulties in reading**:
  + Slow reader
  + Difficulty reading out loud (to be avoided)
* A surprisingly big **gap between written and spoken skills**, especially in students who seem invested in the course

If you suspect a student might be dyslexic, ask them if they have similar difficulties in their mother tongue. You could also ask them if they have relatives who are dyslexic, since dyslexia is hereditary.

If they believe they might be dyslexic, **encourage them to get tested**.

Ideally provide them with the contact information of a test center. Your institution’s inclusion coordinator might be able to provide that.