

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

**FINAL REPORT ON THE OTLA PHASE 6 (ENGLISH) PROJECT -
COGNITIVE PROFILING FOR ENGLISH LITERACY LEARNING**

City Lit

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The programme was delivered by -



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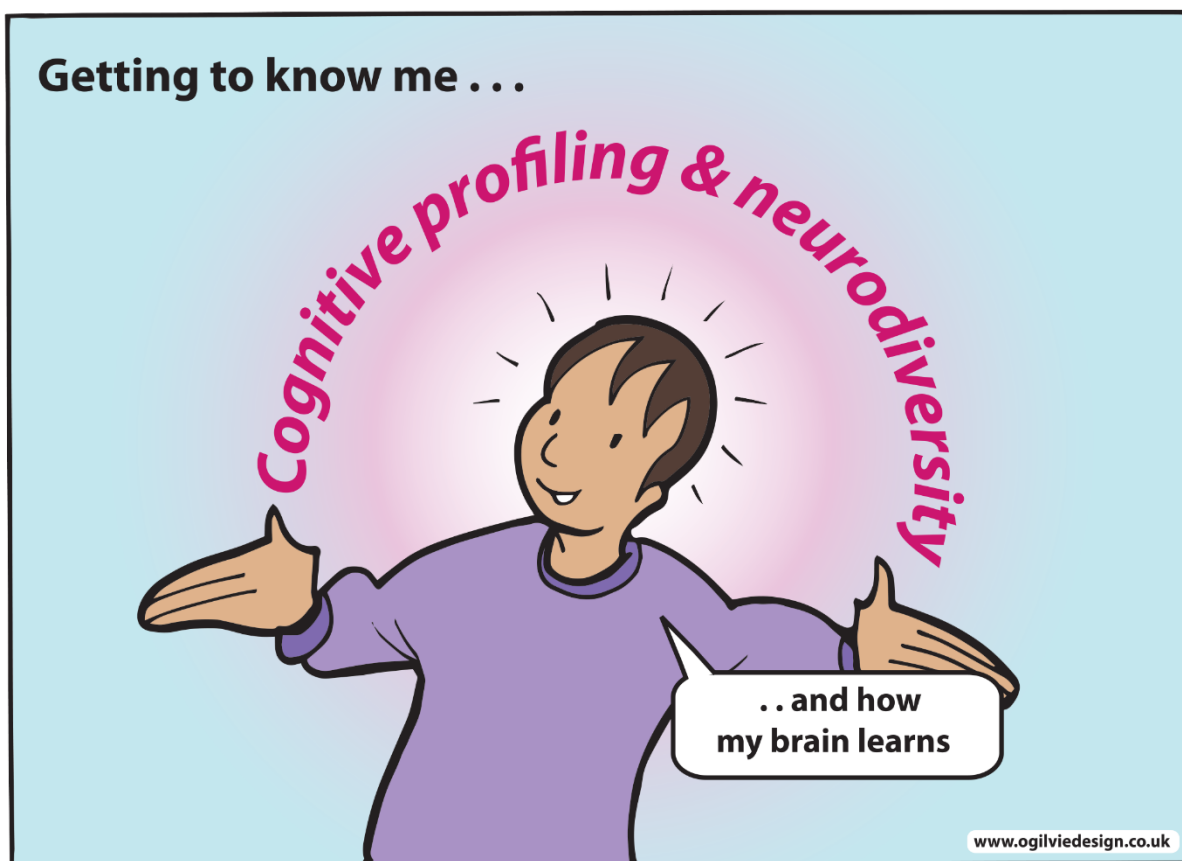


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Final report - Cognitive profiling for English literacy learning

City Lit



The aim of this project was to understand whether it was possible to use our knowledge of the cognitive profiles of English for Life learners to help us improve our teaching and learning strategies.

Summary

We wanted specifically to understand the neurodiversities of these English learners starting from pre-course assessment and continuing into classroom practice. We felt that, by designing an initial diagnostic assessment to reveal distinct neurodiversities as well as English levels, tutors could become more aware of the cognitive profile of learners from an early stage and develop appropriate learning practices to support better progress.

The project focused on learners in three non-accredited English classes within the Centre for Universal Skills at City Lit, an adult education college in Central London. These English for Life classes (Entry Level 1 – Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3 and Level 1) take a holistic approach to English literacy and communication development through a dedicated curriculum, distinct from Functional Skills.

The learner journeys of two adults from these courses (students AB, CD) were tracked. Four tutors were involved: two from the above courses (both experienced teachers of English literacy to adults); a Learning Support tutor, working one-to-one

with learners; and an educational neuroscientist with expertise in SpLD. Other participants included the English coordinator-assessor and the Head of Centre.

Rationale

The rationale, broadly stated, was the need to get to know our English students better.

In 2017-18, it was decided that the Functional Skills curriculum was not suited to all our adult learners, especially those with specific learning difficulties. Progress was often limited with frequent repetition of levels. Therefore, new non-accredited English classes were created to address the specific needs of these learners.

Also, initial research and screening by an educational neuroscientist intimated that some learning difficulties had been mis-identified as dyslexia, either by learners themselves or others: these difficulties could have stemmed from general learning difficulty or other related factors, including speech and language impairment, poor working memory, auditory processing difficulties, short and long-term memory deficits, comprehension difficulties, acute and generalised anxiety, or poor phonological awareness, whether developmental or acquired.

The OTLA project provided an opportunity to develop a curriculum better suited to the neurodiversity of these learners. Also, it was felt that a more specific pre-course assessment that incorporated a screening of the cognitive profiles of our English learners would give us more information about their neurodiversity. Combining these assessment findings with advice from a neuroscientist could inform tutors about what practices might work best for different learners.

We also wondered whether advice from a neuroscientist might help students in literacy classes become more aware of appropriate strategies and practices for improving literacy, providing a language and analytical framework to help learners, tutors, support workers and managers learn more effectively.

Approach

STEP 1 – Develop a screening tool and marking scheme from Entry Level 1 to Level 1 (Appendices 1, 2 and 3)

1. Create new assessment materials to provide initial information about a learner's English level and cognitive profile, including:
 - Whole word and phonological spelling/awareness differentiation in reading and writing
 - Word finding ability
 - Working memory
 - Specific language impairment (SLI)
 - Inhibitory control
 - Capacity to comprehend theory of mind
 - Error monitoring

2. Use an on-line marking scheme using colour-coding and comments to enable tutors not expert in screening for SpLD or understanding cognitive profiling to identify levels and learning difficulties.

STEP 2 – Assessment and screening of individual learners

Over 30 learners undertook initial assessment and screening: these and marking schemes were also shared with tutors via Google Docs. Seventeen learners diagnosed with specific difficulties in reading and/or writing were considered as project participants.

STEP 3 – Identifying specific case studies

Although we were interested in whole class profiling, we chose to focus on 3-4 students in each class, 2 as specific case studies.

STEP 4 – Consultation and training with tutors (Appendix 4 - information for tutors on neurodiversity)

Tutors and the neuroscientist discussed findings from the initial assessment and potential new approaches and strategies to address specific learner difficulties. Training in key aspects of neurodiversity and in recognising the implications of different learner responses to activities was offered, and tutors recorded and used findings to refine the learner profiles.

STEP 5 – Learners interviewed on film

Learners discussed their experiences of learning English on film: viewing the films helped us better understand why they were doing the course, what they found helpful or difficult and why.

STEP 6 – Gathering qualitative data through observation and participation with learners

Our neuroscientist visited classes over two months and recorded learner 'behaviour' with special reference to strategies matched to specific difficulties.

STEP 7 – Gathering qualitative data from tutors

This was collated and distilled into Learner Journey Case Studies

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

The most significant changes in practice related to information provided to teachers about learners' pre-course assessment and placement. A more precise identification of learners and their needs emerged, enabling a more accurate placement in the classes being studied and also other non-accredited courses. The marking scheme provided a framework and common language by which to discuss students' English and to differentiate aspects of their writing and reading. This proved particularly beneficial with learners whose level and competency initially seemed spikey and inconsistent. Prior to this project, the pre-course assessment had been limited

mainly to identifying different linguistic features such as punctuation difficulties. Now, we have developed a means of discussing why the learner might have been making these errors consistently despite having been 'taught' how to avoid them.

The early identification of neurodiversities and the chance to work with our neuroscientist did lead to some significant, albeit micro-changes in teaching and learning practices, with potential for further development. For example, one tutor more self-consciously differentiated her questioning strategies and sentence-writing exercises with a learner with Asperger's so that activities were less abstract, requiring direct, specific answers drawing on the learner's direct experience. Although she had done this before, she was now more confident using the strategy.

Another tutor learned why scaffolding writing exercises were not as effective with one learner as with others. He became aware of cognitive overload and, along with the learner's support tutor, recognised that giving the learner free time before writing to discuss the content and structure of a text can be more effective.

In one class a new technique has been adopted successfully whereby learners read and stop whenever they lose the sense of the text in order for cognition to 'catch up'. Teachers have also experimented with students writing in flow and then making corrections as a strategy to encourage reluctant writers. The one-to-one tutor explained why the input about neurodiversities had helped her change her teaching practices (Appendix 5):

"It gave me a nudge into going back into thinking about using metacognition in the sessions and making small changes to make the learning really work for AB. Even when a task didn't quite work or make sense to AB we were able to talk about why this didn't work for him and how we could make it work."

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

The main organisational change arising from this project was to the pre-course assessment both in terms of its aim and content and also by conducting on-line marking schemes, thus enabling immediate sharing with tutors.

However, perhaps equally significant is the establishment of a shared discourse that has enabled more specific conversations and collaboration to take place between different parties. The assessor, class and support tutors and Head of Centre/curriculum manager now have a common language to frame their discussions and analyses of learners' learning, including disagreements. The effect has been to open up issues and raise questions which had previously struggled for a voice. For example, from collaborating with the neuroscientist and with information about the initial assessment, a learning support tutor said:

"It felt like it was breathing new air into the sessions. Her analogy about 'AB having to have his ducks lined up' stayed with me and helped me to really think about what was useful to him ... her input generally made the work with AB more purposeful."

This one-to-one tutor is now able to coordinate her work more effectively with the class tutor because of a shared framework. The two class tutors have also been able to collaborate more effectively about learners' progress between levels.

This shared discourse and the qualitative nature of the research has enabled findings to be shared with the Head of Centre and thereby feed into institutional curriculum development. The recording of students' experiences of learning with questions framed by cognitive profiling has enabled him to understand their needs and those of the tutors more effectively. Students have been able to articulate, for example, their anxieties when faced with a blank piece of paper or at job interviews.

The framework provided by this project has created a means to approach curriculum development and content as well as appreciate the type of space needed by these learners in order to succeed and feel at ease.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression

Retention within these classes remains good. The main strategy to show the effectiveness of the project was to focus on the quality of each student's learning and reading and writing output. There have been some notable successes following changes in practices including what a tutor described as a 'first' regarding a learner.

Learner AB (Appendix 6) had previously struggled with writing whole texts. He lacked confidence and seemed anxious about written tasks and expressing himself orally. He took longer than peers to start a written task so did not produce extended written pieces in a 'reasonable' length of time. Effective strategies were developed to give him time to discuss the content of his writing and structure, not overload his cognition via excessive scaffolding, and encourage more flow to his writing. His one-to-one tutor wrote after implementing some of these practices:

"I noticed a change in AB when I started implementing the feedback; he began smiling and also seemed to view the tasks as an adventure.

The real turning point came when he was able to write a complete letter in about 15 minutes. He was clearly pleased and was able to acknowledge that he had done well."

The neuroscientist also noted an increase in AB's confidence, with increased participation in in-class discussions and more activity in writing during class time. By midway through the term, AB no longer needed coaxing or visible 'scaffolding' to start and complete written tasks. Using the strategies suggested he was able start an extended writing task with less lead time and with confidence about what and how to write. A number of learners in the class reported that they found the stop and recap reading strategy helpful. One learner, AB, commented on the usefulness of stopping when the meaning of a word was difficult and changing the word to a phrase that explained it better.

The tutor reported:

“Reminding him to stop and recap what he was reading, in much shorter bursts was very successful. He read some quite ‘advanced’ texts with excellent comprehension and recall.”

Learner CD (Appendix 7) benefitted from writing from experience and being asked questions with specific answers. He showed he could achieve more than anticipated using these strategies and enjoyed them. His written responses showed that he was more capable of writing independently than previously thought and was also able to read with more understanding once questions were adjusted.

Learning from this project

We have learned the following:

1. Creating pre-course assessments to generate data about learners’ neurodiversity and cognitive profiling is possible and can support accurate placement.
2. This knowledge can be communicated to tutors and inform strategies and approaches.
3. These strategies, based on cognitive profiling, can be successful.

We have learnt that a more detailed understanding of and specific emphasis on neurodiversities can be a means of effecting progress in students’ literacy skills. There was certainly evidence that some strategies that took learners’ cognitive profiles into consideration benefitted their learning.

As our one-to-one tutor said:

“The project emphasised for me the importance of understanding exactly how someone learns so that as their tutor I can adapt tasks to their learning strengths and not their deficit.”

Our work with the neuroscientist has provided a different perspective on learning issues within our English classes and we have learned a new discourse which has opened up debates within our Centre.

However, we realise we are only at the very beginning of developing our knowledge and understanding of our learners. The small-scale nature of the project, the limited time for the development of strategies and the lack of quantitative data means any conclusions are tentative.

We made a lot of changes to our practices very quickly and our experience has shown we need to refine our initial assessments and process to help us become more efficient.

Our original project would have been better suited to a more longitudinal study. We did not anticipate the extent of ill-health and absence of teachers and students

during the project so were not able to observe as much experimentation and change as we would have liked. Nor were we able to observe as many learners as originally intended. Consequently, while we could document progress and confidently make some claims, this may have been because of having chosen the 'ideal' participants. We would also have liked to track our learner voice more thoroughly.

However, we hope to continue our investigations in the future, and extend the learning from this project into new practices to enhance the quality of teaching and learning for ourselves and our learners.

Appendix 1 - Entry 1 Initial assessment for reading and writing

OFFICE USE ONLY Recommended course:

Entry 1 Initial assessment for reading and writing

NAME:

1. Fill in the missing letters of the alphabet in lower and upper case.

A	B	C		E	F			I				M
	b		d						j	k		

	O							V	W		Y	
n			q	r			u					z

Food that is good for you

2. Match the word with the picture.

orange



banana



salad



tomato



water



Food that is bad for you

3. Write the name of the food under it.

crisps

sweets

pie

chips

cake

apple



Food groups

Fruit and vegetables



Protein



Carbs



Dairy



4. Which food group do these belong to?

FOOD	fruit and vegetables	protein	carbs	dairy
egg				
fish				
lemon	X			
ham				
rice				
bread				
milk				X
peas				
carrots				

Hey Sam,
Please come to a picnic.
Date: Sunday, 25th May
Time: 2pm
Place: Kings Park
RSVP: Send me a text (0764601203)
Please bring drinks.
Tim

5. a) Who is the text to?

5. b) What day is the party?

5. c) Tick the statement that is true.

- Tim hasn't got a mobile.
- The picnic is in a park.
- The picnic is at 1pm.
- Tim and Sam are not friends.

5. d) What is the name of the park?

5. e) Name two things Tim could take to the picnic.

1.
2.

5. f) You are Sam. Write Tim a text to reply.

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Writing task

Write about a meal you remember.

OR

Describe the picture. What can you see?

Do you like the picture or not? Why?



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I agree that this paper can be stored electronically for my City Lit teacher to access.

SIGNED: DATE:

E1 reading and writing mark scheme/screening













NAME:

* ⊗ no indicators/concerns about SpLD

⊗ possible concern about SpLD /not sure about what SpLD may be presenting (note what the indicators might be in comments column)

⊗ definite concern about SpLD (note what the indicators might be in comments column)

<i>Question</i>	<i>Aspect of literacy being assessed</i>	<i>Screening / indicative of possible SpLD</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. Fill in the missing letters of the alphabet in the correct order.	Knowledge of alphabet.	Check for formation of letters. Could indicate poor motor control/dyspraxia, dyslexia (possible when letters reversed). ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Comment on formation and knowledge.
2. Draw a line from a word to matching picture.	Understand explicit meaning of whole words/concrete nouns.	Level of reading comprehension of single words. SLI or poor comprehension possible with incorrect identification ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Comment on whole word recognition/ phonetic spelling
3. Write the name of the food, choosing from a selection of words.	Understand explicit meaning of single concrete nouns. Write using correct spelling.	Whole word versus phonological spelling differentiation (dyslexia); level of reading comp of single words (poor comprehension & SLI possible); transposing words incorrectly (dyslexia & SLI); observe handwriting and spelling development. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Comment on identification of single words and on spelling development.
4. Look at the pictures of food groups. Fill out the table.	Reading single concrete words and word finding.	Word finding, reading of whole words and difficulty understanding categorisation would indicate SLI; poor recognition of whole v phonetic spellings could indicate dyslexia. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Comment on correct identification of single words and on spelling errors.
5. a) Who is the text to?	Reading for information. Deduction. Understand letter conventions.	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low reading level. Not necessarily poor comprehension. But could indicate SLI /dyslexia. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	
5. b) What day is the party?	Some word finding and reading for understanding.	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low reading level. SLI /dyslexia. May indicate poor executive functioning. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	

<i>Question</i>	<i>Aspect of literacy being assessed</i>	<i>Screening / indicative of possible SpLD</i>	<i>Comment</i>
5. c) Tick the statement that is true.	Reading for and deducing meaning. Some word finding. Fairly complex logic.	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low reading level. Not necessarily poor comprehension. Possible SLI /dyslexia.   	
5. d) What is the name of the park?	Fairly tricky word finding and reading for understanding. Deduction.	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low reading level. Not necessarily poor comprehension. Possible SLI /dyslexia.   	
5. e) Name two things Tim could take to the picnic.		Spelling   	
5. f) You are Sam. Write Tim a text to reply.	Comprehending intent of writer & writing a response to show understanding. Differentiate students' written expression; accuracy of spelling, grammar & punctuation; breadth of vocabulary & sentence structure	Lack of response indicate lack of confidence/ability to write if previous responses show good comprehension. Accuracy of spelling; whole word and phonetic spelling differentiation could indicate dyslexia. Grammar and word choice (SLI) Speed of processing.   	
6. a) Describe the picture. OR Write about a meal you remember.		As above	

LEVEL	Pre-E	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2	Other	Comments
Reading								
Writing								

NAME OF ASSESSOR: **DATE:**

Appendix 2 - English for Life E2- E3 Initial Assessment

OFFICE USE ONLY Recommended course:

English for Life E2- E3 Initial Assessment NAME

1. List some foods you think are healthy.

.....
.....

NHS rules for healthy eating

1. Eat more carbs than other food groups. Make sure you include healthy carbs such as wholemeal or grain bread, potatoes and brown rice.
2. Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.
3. Eat more fish such as salmon which is an oily fish.
4. Eat less fat. Include healthier fats found in olive oil, fish and nuts.
5. Cut down on sugar that is in food and that you add.
6. Eat less salt.
7. Drink lots of water. However, six glasses daily is a minimum to stay healthy.
8. Do not skip breakfast.

2. What food group should you eat more of than any other?

.....

3. Name two things you should eat less of.

.....

4. Name two carbs.

5. Write the sentence 'Do not skip breakfast' in your own words.

.....

6. Tick the statement that is true.

- It is okay to skip breakfast.
- Some fats are better for you than others.
- To be healthy, eat one kind of fruit every day.
- Eat more sugar.

Read 'It's not easy being healthy' before you answer questions 7 to 10.

7. Why did the writer have to cut down on fat in her diet?

.....

8. In your own words, rewrite the sentence 'The first thing to go was sausages'.

.....

9. What did the writer find easy to do?

.....

10. Which of the following statements is true?

The writer ate sausages occasionally for breakfast.

Having a diet high in fat is unhealthy.

The writer was healthy before reducing fatty food.

The writer thought at first it would be hard to cut out fat.

Read 'Cooking show judge wants to ban packed lunches' before you answer questions 11 to 17.

11. Tick the statement that is true.

Prue Leith is worried about children using their mobile phones.

She thinks that children should learn about healthy food at home.

Children and adults should eat the same thing for lunch.

Prue is happy with what children eat at school.

12. List two things that Ms Leith wants banned in schools.

.....

.....

13. What two reasons does Prue Leith give for children being unhealthy and overweight?

.....

.....

14. What reason does Prue Leith give for no choice at lunchtime?

.....
.....

15. The word *ban* is used a number of times. What does this mean?

.....

16. The article starts with the question: 'Can you say goodbye to chocolate bars, bags of crisps or fizzy drinks?' Rewrite this question in your own words.

.....

17. The article starts with the question: 'Can you say goodbye to chocolate bars, bags of crisps or fizzy drinks?' How would you reply to this question?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Choose ONE of the writing tasks.

- a. What do you think about Prue Leith's ideas on banning food? Should we ban any foods? Should we tell others how to eat?

OR

- b. Describe the picture. What can you see? How do you feel about the picture? How are the people the same or different from you?



It's not easy being healthy!



My GP told me that I had to eat less fat because I was at risk of heart disease.

Easy, I thought. Cutting out fat can't be that hard. I was wrong. It was hard. Fat is everywhere, I found out. Many of the foods I love to eat have unhealthy fats in them. What I didn't know was just how much! So, of course pizza and chips have bad fats but so does red meat.

It was easy enough to say 'No!' to pizza and chips but it wasn't so easy to give up red meat. Also, sausages had to go. No more sausages for breakfast. No more sausages for dinner. No red meat for any meal.

I miss red meat and I miss eating pastries and butter, but when you have no choice in the matter, you find other things.

Cooking show judge wants to ban packed lunches



29 March 2019

Can you say goodbye to chocolate bars, bags of crisps or fizzy drinks? That's what Prue Leith wants all children in the UK to do. She wants to ban school packed lunches.

Why? She is worried about the obesity* crisis. She is concerned that children are becoming more unhealthy and overweight because they eat unhealthy foods and they are not being taught about healthy foods.

At a food event in Scotland, Ms Leith said that packed lunches brought from home should be banned, 'immediately'. She also wants unhealthy snacks to be banned in all schools. Ms Leith believes that if children learn what to eat at school they may be able to make healthy choices for the rest of their lives.

Ms Leith thinks that there should be no choice for students and teachers at lunchtime. All children and adult should eat the same thing, unless they have special dietary requirements. She believes that this will make sure they have an appetite at lunchtime for healthy food.

*obesity = being very overweight

English for Life Entry 2-3 reading and writing initial assessment and screening

NAME

* ⊗ no indicators/concerns about SpLD

⊗ possible concern about SpLD /not sure about what SpLD may be presenting (note what the indicators might be in comments column)

⊗ definite concern about SpLD (note what the indicators might be in comments column)

<i>Question</i>	<i>Aspect of literacy being assessed</i>	<i>Screening/indicative of possible SpLD</i>	<i>Possible responses</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Write a list of healthy foods.	Whole and phonetic spelling. Vocab breadth.	Whole word & phonological spelling differentiation. Dyslexia. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		List any spelling mistakes
2. What food group should you eat more of?	Reading comprehension of simple. Explicit meaning	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low ability level. Not necessarily poor comprehension. The sentence may be tricky for reader with SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Carbs	
3. Name two things you should less of.	Reading comprehension of simple and compound sentences. Explicit meaning and word finding, scanning text.	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low ability level. Not necessarily poor comprehension. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Two of the following: fat, sugar, salt	
4. Name two carbs.	Reading comprehension of complex sentences, scanning.	Reading complex sentences for specific information may be trickier for reader with SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Two of the following: wholemeal or grain bread, potatoes, brown rice.	
5. Rewrite the sentence, 'Do not skip breakfast' in your own words.	Understanding idioms /metaphor. Expressing meaning in writing.	Lack of understanding or ability to express in own words may indicate SLI. Look at spelling for dyslexia. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
6. Tick the statement that is true.	Reading to deduce and for implicit and explicit information.	Reading to deduce may be difficult for readers with SLI and poor working memory. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Some fats are better for you than others.	
7. Why did the writer have to cut down on fat?	Reading for explicit information. Word finding.	Reading complex sentences for specific information may be trickier for reader with SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	To avoid getting heart disease	

<i>Question</i>	<i>Aspect of literacy being assessed</i>	<i>Screening/indicative of possible SpLD</i>	<i>Possible responses</i>	<i>Comments</i>
8. In your own words rewrite the sentence, 'The first thing to go was sausages.'	Understanding idioms /metaphor. Expressing meaning in writing.	Lack of understanding or ability to express in own words may indicate SLI. Look at spelling for dyslexia. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
9. What did the writer find easy to do?	Reading for explicit information/deduction. Word finding.	Inhibiting some information. Poor comprehension/executive functioning. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Give up red meat.	
10. Which of the following statements is true?	Reading to deduce and for implicit and explicit information. Comprehending some trickier vocab in the question.	Reading to deduce may be difficult for readers with SLI and poor working memory. The sentences in the questions have more challenging grammar and may challenge readers with SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Having a diet high in fat is unhealthy	
11. Tick the statement that is true.	Reading to deduce and for implicit and explicit information.	Reading to deduce may be difficult for readers with SLI and poor working memory. The sentences in the questions have more challenging grammar and may challenge readers with SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Children and adults should eat the same thing for lunch.	
12. List two things that Ms Leith wants banned in schools.	Reading for information.	Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low reading level. Passive construction may be tricky for readers with SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	<i>Packed lunches and unhealthy snacks</i>	
13. What two reasons does Prue Leith give for children being unhealthy and overweight?	As above.	Word finding. Poor comprehension may be due to poor decoding or low reading level. Not necessarily poor comprehension. But could indicate SLI /dyslexia. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	They eat unhealthy foods and they are not taught about healthy foods	
14. What reason does Prue Leith give for no choice at lunchtime?	Word finding and comprehension of meaning. A slightly trickier question to comprehend.	As above. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Children will have an appetite.	

<i>Question</i>	<i>Aspect of literacy being assessed</i>	<i>Screening/indicative of possible SpLD</i>	<i>Possible responses</i>	<i>Comments</i>
15. The word 'ban' is used a number of times. What does it mean?	Understanding of single word meaning. Use context if required	Being able to explain meaning. Indication of SLI if this is challenging. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
16. The article starts with the question... Rewrite in own words.	Understanding metaphor and rhetorical devices.	Understanding metaphor and explaining. May be an indication of SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		
17. The article starts with the question... How would you reply to this question?	Understanding metaphor and rhetorical devices. Written responses that shows understanding and ability to write clearly and accurately.	Write clearly with clarity of thought.	Must show an understanding of the original rhetorical device and of the article as a whole.	
WRITING TASK Describe the picture OR 6. b) What do you think about the ideas of banning foods?	Written expression; accuracy of spelling, grammar and punctuation; breadth of vocabulary and sentence structure; ability to express creativity and imagination...	Ability to express ideas grammatically; vocab breadth an accuracy of use; accuracy of spelling. Organisation of ideas. Whole word and phonetic spelling differentiation. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		

To be completed by the assessor. The learner has been assessed and is now working towards the levels indicated. S/he has been assessed as having achieved the level below.

LEVEL	Pre-E	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2	Other	Comments
Reading								
Writing								

NAME OF ASSESSOR: **DATE:**

Appendix 3 - English for Life Level 1

OFFICE USE ONLY Recommended course:

English for Life Level 1 NAME

Part A Reading

Read 'How taking up boxing helped me beat anxiety – and regain control of my life'.

1) What does the writer usually write about?

.....

2) How old was the writer when she became mentally unwell?

.....

3) The writer has written this article to (tick the correct answer):

Describe what it's like to be a boxer.

Explain how boxing helped her feel better mentally.

Tell readers they should get a personal trainer.

Explain to readers how to lose weight.

4) In the first paragraph the writer says she has 'two left feet'. Explain in your own words what you think this means.

.....

5) In addition to weekly exercises, list two things the writer did to get better.

1.

2.

6) Did the writer have enough money to pay for a personal trainer? Provide evidence for your answer.

.....

.....

7) Did the writer choose to take up boxing? Provide evidence for your answer.

.....

.....

8) 'My fist made an increasingly loud and satisfying thunk against the pads'. What do you think the word 'thunk' refers to?

.....

9) Find two sentences in the final paragraph that show the benefits the writer gets out of boxing.

1.
2.

10) Find a word in the first paragraph that is similar in meaning to each of the following verbs:

- duck
- hit

1. Fill in the table.

Write as many words as you can that are similar in meaning to	Write as many words as you can that are opposite in meaning
big	big
happy	happy
fight	
	healthy
thrive	thrive
fall back on	

How taking up boxing helped me beat anxiety - and regain control of my life

(Article from The Guardian newspaper)

Monday 27 May 2019



A couple of years ago, the idea of putting on a pair of boxing gloves and trying to bob and hook would have had me laugh. I was always the girl with two left feet; I was more likely to accidentally smack myself in the face than punch a boxing pad.

But in late 2017, at the age of 35, I felt like I had lost my mind. Thanks to a mixture of stresses and overwork, I was no longer the confident and happy person I had been. My thoughts took themselves down a path of worry and panic. I couldn't find pleasure in the

things I loved. I was unwell and needed to find a way to get better.

As someone who writes about women's health, I knew what to do. So I added weekly exercise to my schedule, along with therapy, mindfulness, more time outdoors and reducing my workload. I didn't expect to enjoy it, and knew that I would need one-to-one help to motivate myself to exercise regularly.

With some financial support from my parents, I enlisted a personal trainer. We worked to improve my balance, flexibility and strength, which showed me that I could do much more than I thought. My trainer, Jo, presented exercise in a way I had never seen before. One day, out came a pair of boxing gloves. I put them on and aimed at the pads in front of me. I had never thrown a punch before and expected to feel ridiculous. Instead, it felt good. I quickly learned how to rotate my fist and then swiftly pull it back to guard my face; how to soften my knees, and use the power in my legs and my stomach muscles until each jab, each cross and upper cut felt powerful. My fist made an increasingly loud and satisfying thunk against the pads.

I doubt I would win a fight with anyone. I would take my bad week out on the pads and leave sweaty and red-faced but feeling both clearer and lighter.

Challenging myself physically while feeling low has not been easy, but the boxing gloves have wrapped a protective layer over more than my knuckles. My body has stepped up. Now, when I find myself wondering who I am and what I'm worth, I look down at my arms. Thanks to the boxing circuit, my newly defined muscle remind me of what I'm made of: the determination to thrive as well as survive.

English For Life L1 Reading and writing mark scheme

NAME

* ⊗ no indicators/concerns about SpLD

⊗ possible concern about SpLD /not sure about what SpLD may be presenting (note what the indicators might be in comments column)

⊗ definite concern about SpLD (note what the indicators might be in comments column)

Question	Aspect of literacy assessed	Screening /indicative of SpLD	Possible responses	Comment
1. What does the writer usually write about?	Explicit understanding.		Women's health	
2. How old was the writer when she became mentally unwell?	Explicit understanding.			
3. The writer has written the article to:	Understand the intention /key ideas of the writer. Comprehend explicitly and implicitly.	Reading comprehension. Implied and explicit understanding. Possible SLI, dyslexia ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Explain how boxing helped her feel better mentally.	
4. In the first paragraph, the writer says she has 'two left feet'. Explain what this means.	Understand idiom. Explain understanding in own words.	Understanding of idiom. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Any response similar to: Awkward. To move awkwardly especially when dancing or moving.	
5. In addition to weekly exercises, list three things the writer does to get better.	Explicit understanding. Word Finding.	Word finding and explicit understanding. Possible SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Any of the following three: therapy, mindfulness, more time outdoors, reducing my workload.	
6. Did the writer have enough money to pay a personal trainer? Provide evidence for your answer.	Deduction	Breadth of vocabulary and deduction. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	She didn't have enough money for a personal trainer. Evidence: 'With some financial support from my parents' or in own words.	
7. Did the writer choose to take up boxing? Provide evidence for your answer.	Deduction	Breadth of vocabulary; and deduction. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	She didn't choose to take up boxing. Evidence: 'One day, out came a pair of boxing gloves.' or in own words.	
8. What do you think the word 'thunk' refers to?	Deduction	Deduction.	The sound made when the writer hits the pads. Or something similar.	
9. Find two sentences in the final paragraph that show the benefits the writer gets out of boxing.	Word finding, deduction and breadth of vocabulary.	Word finding, deduction and breadth of vocabulary. Possible SLI /dyslexia ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Any two of the following sentences: 'the boxing gloves have wrapped a protective layer over more than my knuckles'; 'My body has stepped up.'; 'Thanks to the boxing circuit, my newly defined muscle remind me of what I'm made of: the determination to thrive as well as survive.'	

<i>Question</i>	<i>Aspect of literacy assessed</i>	<i>Screening /indicative of SpLD</i>	<i>Possible responses</i>	<i>Comment</i>
10. Find a word in the first paragraph that is similar in meaning to:	Understanding meaning; breadth of vocab	Word finding and reading whole words for meaning. Possible SLI. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Duck = bob Hit = smack	
11. See table below	Breadth of vocabulary	Indicate possibly SLI ⊗ ⊗ ⊗	Accept inaccurate spellings; Award ½ mark for each accurate response, up to 5 marks in total	
WRITING TASK How do you try to stay healthy? Describe in detail what you do to try to stay healthy. OR People pay too much attention to their health. It's better just to enjoy life. Discuss.	Written expression; accuracy of spelling, grammar and punctuation; breadth of vocabulary and sentence structure; ability to express creativity and imagination...	Looking specifically at ability to express ideas grammatically; word power; accuracy of spelling. Organisation of ideas. ⊗ ⊗ ⊗		

Possible responses	Possible responses
Large, huge, enormous, massive, great, immense	Small, little, tiny, puny, slight
Contented, joyful, jolly, jovial,	Sad, unhappy, down, gloomy, glum, blue, melancholy, woeful
Brawl, box, battle, contend, spar, argue, scrap	
	Ill, unhealthy, sick, poorly, ailing, unwell
Flourish, well, growing, blossom, bloom, succeed, prosper	Unhealthy, dying, fail, wither, decline, wane,
Employ, use, reply on, depend on, resort to	

To be completed by the assessor. The learner has been assessed and is now working towards the levels indicated. S/he has been assessed as having achieved the level below.

LEVEL	Pre-E	E1	E2	E3	L1	L2	Other	comments
Reading								
Writing								

NAME OF ASSESSOR: **DATE:**

Appendix 4 - Information for tutors on neurodiversity

Learning is not simple. The way we each experience learning is not only complex, it is unique. While it is simple and tidy to label our learning and our learners, it is not at all realistic nor is it helpful to do so.

It is much more effective for the learner to understand their specific challenges than to give these a label. A label will often mask their real difficulties rather than highlight them so that we might find the best possible strategies. It is our role to provide person-centred, individualised learning in a neurodiverse population, wherever possible.

Many students have a number of challenges while not always provided with a label or diagnosis. Therefore, it is important to observe behaviours rather than ask for a label. This is, in any case, good teaching practice. If we stick to a label, we may miss understanding how to address a learner's particular needs.

Many difficulties we find in one learning difficulty are found in others. There is a great deal of overlapping. In addition, it is very common to find that learners with difficulties in any area of their learning/cognition experience anxiety, low self-confidence and other challenges to their mental wellbeing.

Categories of observable challenges/difficulties for learners and associated strategies for the classroom.

1. Spelling and reading challenges
2. Attention challenges and ADHD
3. Coordination challenges
4. 'Working memory' challenges
5. Slow cognitive processing
6. Speech communication challenges
7. Auditory processing challenges
8. Stammering and stroke, head injuries
9. ASD (Autism spectrum disorder)
10. Mental health concerns

Spelling and reading challenges

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

- Can comprehend what they read but struggle when 'decoding' some words. These words will be different for every person who is 'dyslexic'.
- Has poor or inconsistent phonetic decoding. (Poor phonological awareness)
- May struggle to read some words and not be able to read/sound out the end of the word or the beginning.
- May be reluctant to read aloud.
- Comprehend when text is read to them but struggle with some lexically similar words.
- Cannot learn phonetics easily.
- May have not learnt to read at school.

- Slow at reading.
- Makes spelling errors for common words
- Sometimes misses out small words (not necessarily a sign of dyslexia on its own.)

Strategies:

- Provide glossaries for each topic.
- Encourage students who have poor phonology to learn whole words.
- Be aware of how they best learn.
- Break down reading and writing tasks to step by step process so that the student can concentrate on the more difficult task of reading without other distractions.
- Assistive technology for reading and writing wherever possible/necessary.
- Give students any reading material in advance (for some students this is essential)
If possible, allow students to record your class and/or provide them with clearly written hand-outs from the class. Use images where you can.
- Write key terminology on the board and recommend a personal vocabulary book for new specialist terminology.
- Introduce tasks in relation to their purpose – so that tasks are meaningful.
- Make sure students know how words are pronounced as well as written.
- Improving phonological awareness outside class would be recommended for adults with dyslexia who are required to read text.
- Chunk reading. The size of the chunk will depend on the student's difficulties.
- Turn passive sentences into active ones.
- Rephrase. Have students reword and rephrase.
- Students identify difficult words prior to reading whole texts.
- Developing reading strategies outside class would be recommended for adults with poor comprehension or SLI.

Attention challenges and ADHD

Attention is a spectrum of capacity. Everyone's experience of attention is different depending on their interests, motivation, levels of anxiety and other mental health, and their genetic capacity.

ADHD is not on the spectrum of attention but is a 'psychiatrically' diagnosed condition. Those with ADHD/ADD are under-stimulated and seek additional stimulation unconsciously. It therefore will be 'treated' differently from those who have poor attention. Those with ADHD will though be affected by their environment in similar ways to those without ADHD.

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

Impulsivity:

- Interrupting others and finding it difficult to wait for their turn
- Acting without thinking
- Can appear frustrated by their own impulsivity

- Hyperactivity: (not so obvious in adulthood)
- Difficulty staying in one position, particularly sitting
- Restless and fidgety, can tap feet and fiddle
- Difficulty in waiting, so can appear impatient

Inattention:

- Easily distracted by movement and noise
- Start tasks and skips parts of it
- Not always following the instructions
- Doesn't finish a task, losing interest if it is quite a repetitive task
- Can find organisation of belongings and self tricky.

Anxiety:

- Anxiety often accompanies ADHD (is understood to be comorbid)

Strategies:

- Provide additional tasks to undertake while the main task is being undertaken.
- Doodling can help a student stay on task.
- Take mini breaks more often (at least every 15-20 minutes). Brains become distracted because they need breaks. The breaks help to refocus.
- Observe fidgeting. Allow physical activity if possible.
- Provide checklists to tick off for longer more repetitive tasks. Or have a learner create their own for the task.
- Break large tasks down into its parts
- Set timer for the task or parts of it to keep a learner on task and on track.
- Observe for increasing or decreasing anxiety and talk.

Coordination Challenges

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

- Slow at learning a new skill requiring co-ordination when more than one is to be performed at the same time.
- Difficulty writing at speed.
- May have dodgy balance.
- Often, but not always, may not be good at organisational and planning tasks.
- (Difficulties very much depend on the tasks required.) Anxiety often accompanies ADHD

Strategies:

- More practice and trying out will be required when there is a physical coordination component.
- Encourage a learner to practice outside of class hours.
- Must not avoid physical tasks that are challenging, but develop resilience to learn them and persevere.

- May benefit from learning touch typing.
- May need support in getting organised. Encourage use of alarms and diaries; list making possibly.
- Provide specific models for planning tasks. These are best if step by step and can be repeated.

'Working memory' challenges

Working memory gets poor press and therefore needs some explanation. The impact on the learner may well be more prevalent than any other learning difficulty. It is understood that learning for at least 10% of the population is negatively impacted by a poor working memory.

A learner with a poor working memory does not have a poor memory. They do though find it challenging to keep information in their head while working on this information. An example of this might be a simple task such as writing down a phone number. Information held in the working memory can be lost through cognitive overload (too much going on for that learner) and through distraction. There is a huge variation across the population in working memory capacity. This variation may depend on a number of factors but these do not fluctuate from day to day (and does not tend to change across a lifetime).

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

- Can't always follow more than one or two instructions at a time. Struggle to recall all of the instruction.
- May become frustrated or agitated when on a task that has complexity.
- Learners can lose their place in a written or reading task.
- Makes errors or skips part of a task.
- Loses concentration or appears to have a short attention span but has good attention when tested.
- Doesn't always understand the requirements of a task.
- Make slow progress in English and maths. Will struggle with maths problems, typically.
- Can be reserved in group activities. But has good social relationships.
- Problems learning when both storage and processing is required at the same time.
- Work appears sloppy or unfinished.
- Exhibit high levels of anxiety.

Strategies:

- Learners develop own strategies for place-keeping and staying on task.
- Use memory aids.
- Use repetition to create automaticity of simple parts of a task such as, for example, times tables so that the cognitive load is reduced.
- Do not multi task in learning. Learn or store first and then undertake higher level thinking or processing separately.

- Ensure the task is meaningful.
- Break down tasks into its parts.
- Encourage and model written planning. Create routines for learning. Find a pattern that works and stick with it.
- Internalize routines by adding verbal and visual backups.

PLEASE NOTE: Some tasks may look simple but may require a lot of working memory. With people trying to tackle too much at once it often translates to sloppy – or unfinished – work and creates anxiety.

For example, if students write essays they using working memory to recall important information, generate and organise ideas, use correct spelling and grammar, and even make sure writing is legible or that they are operating the laptop. Trying to think through everything at once can clutter up the mental scratchpad. Instead encourage one task at a time. When you have a task automated, it no longer requires working memory freeing it up for higher level or more difficult tasks. Recalling what to do next also requires cognitive workspace.

Note on 'perfectionism'. Perfectionists often appear to be slower at processing or more to the point, those who are slower at processing often appear to perfectionists. This may be a coping mechanism or strategy that masks their real challenges.

Slow cognitive processing

Slow speed of processing impedes ability to generate ideas quickly. It impacts reading and listening comprehension. It also impacts the take up of new ideas and interfere with logic but can lead to greater creativity. There is great variety of speed of processing amongst students.

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

- Have difficulty finishing tasks in the allotted or expected time
- Find it difficult to listen and take notes at the same time and are much slower at producing the notes
- May have difficulty keeping up with conversations
- Become overwhelmed by too much information at once
- Needs more time to make decisions or give answers
- Needs to read information more than once for comprehension
- Has trouble executing instructions if told to do more than one thing at once

Strategies:

- Provide extra time
- Prepare tasks well before starting
- Create scaffolding
- Reduce distractions and the opportunity for procrastination
- Encourage students to develop an awareness of how they best learn and think
- Understand that there is a high level of neurodiversity in speed of processing and in the type of information/stimulus that is being processed

Speech communication challenges (SLI and speech communication difficulties – stroke and head injuries)

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

- May have difficulties remembering instructions in sequence
- May find the written word especially at speed
- May not get other people's jokes or be able to keep up with a conversation when it's at speed.
- Probably will be reluctant to ask for something to be explained especially at speed.
- May become frustrated, angry or agitated when they don't understand what is being asked of them.
- Lack confidence when speaking in a group when they're not able to plan their response.
- Struggle with the passive tense.
- May have poor grammar: misuse prepositions, have inaccurate verb tense.
- Poor reading comprehension especially when language is complex.

Strategies:

- Provide instructions more slowly and chunk up into steps wherever possible.
- Allow additional time to consider/processing before responding.
- Avoid jargon where possible (if not necessary) and explain what the jargon means if it is necessary to use.
- Be specific rather than use approximations. Avoid 'You could', or 'possibly in about...' for example.
- Avoid the passive tense. Turn the sentence around to the active tense if possible.
- Ask students to repeat/Check for understanding. The explain differently if they have not understood.

Auditory processing challenges

Often occurs in conjunction with ADHD and poor attention and communication difficulties.

Behaviours and typical traits to look for:

- Find it hard to follow multi-step or complex directions.
- Difficulty with multi-tasking in auditory situations such as listening and taking notes.
- Difficulty keeping up with rapid or accented speech.
- May feel frustrated or not engage with long or fast-moving conversations, or teacher talk.
- Difficulty learning a foreign language or technical information where language is novel or unfamiliar.
- Social issues and difficulty "reading" people at times.

- Have difficulty with pragmatic communication issues.
- Zone out. Often appear to lose concentration/attention.
- Become easily frustrated when wanting to find out information.
- Appears to understand but then will have misunderstood.
- Fills in 'blanks' in conversations incorrectly

Strategies:

- Step by step instructions, not delivered all at once.
- Provide written or visual cues and information wherever possible to support oral information delivery.
- Simplify rather than reword unless specifically asked to reword.
- Ask student to repeat what they have heard in their own words to check for understanding.
- Encourage student to identify when they stop comprehending, lose track or when they have forgotten and get them to seek the information in the way they best comprehend it.
- Note taking and listening at the same time is not effective.
- Chunk all oral information.
- Provide extra time for absorbing any oral information.

Stammer and stroke, head injuries

Are likely to be easily identified and identifiable

Strategies:

- Give the person time to speak.
- Keep natural eye contact.
- Try to avoid finishing off words and sentences.
- Avoid giving simplistic advice such as "take your time", "take a deep breath", "don't worry about it".
- Hearing and understanding of a person who stammers is necessarily impaired, so you do not need to change the way in which you are speaking.

Students with communication difficulties following stroke or head injury

Strategies:

- Try to reduce background noise and distractions.
- Make sure you have the student's attention before speaking to them.
- Avoid sudden topic change.
- Allow the student time to talk.
- Try to avoid using long or complex sentences; it may be helpful to break things up into shorter, more manageable phrases.
- Pick up on student's use of non-verbal communication. It sometimes helps to use natural gesture when you speak.

- It may be helpful to offer a pen and paper so the student can write or draw to assist communication.
- It does not usually help to raise your voice but slowing down a bit may help.
- Remember that the person may lack confidence in their ability to communicate and is likely to experience more difficulty if anxious.

ASD and Asperger's Syndrome

According to the National Autistic Society, 'Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them'. ASD and Asperger Syndrome are diagnosed by a consultant psychiatric specialist. People with this diagnosis have long term **difficulties with social interaction**, often with **restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour, activities or interests** that impact their lives. No two people with ASD or Asperger are alike. Their capacity to communicate ranges from little or no verbal communication those with 'high functioning Asperger Syndrome' who may have high intelligence but experience barriers to learning. It is common for people with ASD or Asperger Syndrome to experience anxiety.

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

- Finds unfamiliarity challenging
- Poor social communication
- Poor 'Theory of Mind' (ToM)
- Difficulty with abstract or symbolic language
- Difficulty recognising false belief
- Sensory over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity
- Highly focused interests
- Repetitive behaviour
- Disruptive behaviour
- Find unfamiliarity challenging - they may not be able to picture a new situation or to anticipate based on prior experience. This can lead to anxiety

Strategies:

People with ASC or Asperger Syndrome benefit from knowing what to expect.

- Preliminary visit designed to learn layout, point of contact, timings etc.
- Outline things such as lesson structure, shape of course, breaks.
- Having a standard class structure/routine can allay anxiety. Where possible, stick with the expected format – explain differences. Of course, this is not possible and may be impossible in some courses.
- Give advance warning of exams, trips etc.
- Clarify expectations /boundaries at the start of the course and whenever misunderstandings arise.
- In group work, define tasks /roles. A student with ASC may not volunteer to take on a role or be able to find their own group to join; extra guidance and classroom management may help.

- Many students find it beneficial to receive handouts in advance of the class. These materials can also act as reinforcement.
- Depending on the environment and organisation of the class, providing a buddy or peer initially may be helpful in talking through expectations

Poor social communication

- Limited or no eye contact.
- Limited verbal communication.
- High levels of understanding and clear coherent speech, but difficulties reading social signals.
- Not able to consistently read non-verbal or body language
- Confused, agitated or upset if the tone of what is being said is different from the content as is the case with irony, sarcasm and some humour.
- Developing friendships and getting to know their peers can be difficult. This can also impact the way a student participates in class, as social conventions or non-spoken rules of turn-taking, for example, may not be understood.
- Discrepancy in succeeding in different modes of communication. For example, face-to-face communication is considerably more difficult than written or communication with 'technology'.

Strategies:

- Address learners by name.
- Check for understanding. In doing so, try to use open-ended questions.
- Avoid multi-layered questions.
- Avoid jargon. If jargon is used, ensure learners are clear about meaning.
- Decision-making can be challenging when there are not clear parameters or when there is too much choice. Offer clear choices. Limit choices.
- Visual aids are helpful when clarifying meaning. This can be something as simple as clip art, stick-figure diagrams or a photographic example.
- It is best to be clear and direct about class structure and expectations. It may also be good practice to agree a class contract.
- Autism can lead people to behave in a way that is unusual and on occasion considered inappropriate in the context. The learner probably is not aware of this and should be spoken to discretely as soon as possible.
- Eye contact may be very difficult for some learners. No eye contact is not an indication that that person is not listening. Check with the learner about what kind of eye contact is comfortable.
- Deliver information in a variety of forms including electronic, written and so on.

Poor Theory of Mind

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

- Limited or an apparent lack of 'Theory of Mind'(ToM), that is being able to infer the full range of mental states (beliefs, desires, intentions, imagination, emotions)

that cause action. Theory of Mind enables someone to reflect on the contents of one's own and other's minds. This is not a lack of empathy.

Strategies:

- Visual aids are helpful when clarifying meaning. This can be something as simple as clip art, stick-figure diagrams or a photographic example.
- It is best to be clear and direct about class structure and expectations. It may also be good practice to agree a class contract.
- Autism can lead people to behave in a way that is unusual and on occasion considered inappropriate in the context. The learner probably is not aware of this and should be spoken to discretely as soon as possible

Difficulties with abstract language

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

- Understanding what is said literally rather than metaphorically. Phrases such as *"the cat being let out of the bag"* may not be understood.
- May not find all jokes funny.

Strategies:

- Whenever appropriate, take time to explain the connection between the metaphor and its interpretation.
- Ask students, with or without this difficulty, to explain/interpret jokes or metaphors. It may not be limited to the students with ASD and, in fact, those with ASD may understand the abstract language better as they have previously learnt/memorised it.
- Some courses will be theory heavy. It is worth considering when this can be clarified or reiterated in concrete terms.
- Check for understanding if abstract language is used.

Sensory over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity

Many with ASD can experience some kind of over or under sensitivity such as smell, colour, light, sound, touch and so on. It is important not to underestimate the impact of sensory overload or under-load and some learners may shut down when they can no longer cope.

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

Notice unusual responses to:

- Banging doors, loud sudden noises, humming, music and machinery noises such as hand dryers
- Being held or touched or people being too close
- Smells such as perfumes and food or cooking
- Lighting especially fluorescent or bright coloured lights
- colours

Strategies:

- It might be appropriate for a student to wear headphones or listen to their own calming music during some practical activities when there are sounds that cause distress.
- Some students benefit from agreeing that they will take 'time out' and make their apologies and leave the room if they feel over anxious or are experiencing sensory overload.

Highly focused interests and repetitive behaviours

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

- Intense and highly focused interests
- May find it hard to follow a whole process through, getting stuck and then fail to keep up

Strategies:

- Autistic people often report that the pursuit of such interests is fundamental to their wellbeing and happiness, and many channel their interest into studying, paid work, volunteering, or other meaningful occupation. The interest can provide structure, order and predictability and help people cope with the uncertainties of daily life.
- Explain to learners the next step if they are stuck
- Create a step-by-step plan that can be ticked off as the learner proceeds.
- Build in 'negotiated' rewards for all students once a step is completed.

Disruptive behaviour

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

- Disruptive talking and repetitive behaviours. (These can be a sign of anxiety as well as lack of focus or not following what is happening in class. It may indicate a lack of understanding of what to do)
- Always be clear about the behaviour that is problematic in the class, perhaps refer back to the class contract, describe the behaviour that you need in class – seek agreement that the student will – wait for their turn, share leaflets, talk about other interest etc. at break or after class.

Strategies:

- Check that the learner knows what to do.
- Check if they have any concerns.
- Be direct about expectations for the whole group and of individuals where necessary.
- Formalise the turn-taking (through game-playing, for example)
- Agree an individualised plan for behaviour directly with the student.

Mental health challenges

Typical traits and identifiable behaviours:

- An individual on a mental health spectrum may have particular issues with trusting others, for example – and may be especially concerned with confidentiality.
- They may also have poor concentration or memory impairment, or they may seem lethargic, or have difficulty keeping appointments.

Strategies:

- Establish ground rules. This goes for all students but spell out the rules more clearly than usual.
- Communicate clearly and directly.
- Provide a safe environment for the individual to talk without being interrupted.
- Allow plenty of time for the individual to make decisions.
- Let the person set and modify their own goals as much as possible.
- Be clear about your own boundaries. This includes the time you have available to talk, and the limits to the support you personally are able to provide.
- If personal issues come up in conversation with a student, listen sympathetically without probing or trying to find a resolution. A helpful phrase to show empathy but without becoming overly involved is: “That sounds difficult for you.”
- If you are concerned about a student and feel they need support, discuss this with them and suggest referral to the Access and Inclusion team

Appendix 5 - Tutor reflections on how the project impacted their practice

Please note AB is the learner; JC is the in-house neuroscientist.

I basically found it really useful and I felt like it was “breathing new air” into the sessions. I have only been working with AB since September as he had been working with a colleague last year. I felt like we were doing the same things over and over and it wasn’t moving AB on because I hadn’t taken into account how he was actually processing information. The input from our neuroscientist (JC) about his strengths and weaknesses was really useful. I approached both reading and writing differently. The writing was particularly useful because it meant that I moved away from what I thought was helpful for someone with a short-term memory deficit to something that was actually really helpful to someone who was organised but processes very slowly. JC used an analogy about “AB having to have his ducks lined up” and this stayed with me and helped me to really think about what was useful to him when I was working with AB. I feel the input from JC generally made the work with AB more purposeful.

JC’s input somehow helped me to see the sessions as an adventure with AB and that we were exploring how he learns rather than just going through the motions. It changed my teaching because it gave me a nudge into going back into thinking about using metacognition in the sessions and making small changes to make the learning really work for AB. Even when a task didn’t quite work or make sense to AB we were able to talk about why this didn’t work for him and how we could make it work. Although, the project has stopped, I am still holding onto the feedback and trying to keep exploring what is the best way of working with AB with the new insights I have into him.

The effects it had on AB

I have always experienced AB as very willing to try new tasks and enjoying a challenge but getting overwhelmed quickly and lacking in confidence. He is very humble and plays down his many talents and skills. I noticed a change in AB when I started implementing the feedback from JC; he began smiling and also seemed to view the tasks as an adventure. The real turning point came when he was able to write a complete letter in about 15 minutes. He was clearly pleased and was able to acknowledge that he had done well. He then asked me to dictate challenging words like ‘judiciary’, which he spelled successfully using the computer. I feel that by having the experience of doing something well, it began to change the old story in his head that he isn’t good at writing. I feel that his confidence is beginning to increase and he seems more relaxed.

Final thoughts

The project emphasised for me the importance of understanding exactly how someone learns so that as their tutor I can adapt tasks to their learning strengths and not their deficit, in order for them to not only change the old stories in their heads about not being successful, but also by actually producing work that they recognise is successful and are proud of. Through the traditional education system, they are so used to focussing on what they feel they need to improve and do better on, that I am now aware that I have to ensure that I am not reinforcing this mind-set by giving them tasks that they are going to struggle with.

It was really useful to be able to run ideas past JC and have that support.

I feel that the ETF OTLA neurodiversity project is something that would be really useful to be pursuing and maybe get more support tutors involved to really help the students to move on and learn as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Appendix 6 - AB learner case study

English is AB's first language. His English for Life (L1) class at City Lit is not his first course at this level. He sees himself as street wise but not academic and he feels that he "slipped through the net" because he did not get help when he was younger. He said that if he was intelligent in an academic way he would not need to be in college.

Overview of neurodiversity / challenges to learning from initial cognitive profile screening

- Slow speed of cognitive processing –AB took a long time to start and then wrote very little by hand, which had a lot of crossing out. Not all of the tasks were completed.
- AB may have either a good working memory or a poor working memory with well-developed and effective strategies to deal with memory difficulties. His well-organised ideas and well-structured written work indicate a good working memory. However, his punctuation difficulties such as making extensive use of comma splices despite knowing about his errors when asked to correct them suggest a potential difficulty with poor working memory. Slow speed of cognitive processing combined with poor working memory suggest the learner would lose track of what he is reading, but his reading comprehension does not seem to be obviously impacted.
- Connected with the above is the likelihood of limited cognitive load evidenced by lack of punctuation and paragraphing. ('Cognitive load' assumes that the brain has a limited capacity at any one time. This capacity is impacted by the number of tasks being done and the amount of information being processed consciously and unconsciously at any one time. This capacity is affected by the type of task and information and varies greatly from person to person. If for instance a person is already able to spell, paragraph and punctuate automatically using already learned information and motor-skills, then this will take up almost none of the working load capacity. If, however, the person has to 'think' about how to do any of these tasks then it takes up space in the cognitive load. When this happens, it is very difficult for learners to then employ higher level thinking at the same time to be creative or to answer questions as the load for higher level thinking has been used up. If the learner is then anxious about the task on top of this, the cognitive load is even further compromised.)
- Extensive vocabulary with accurate comprehension of meaning. Reads slowly but accurately.
- Accurate spelling and grammar, suggesting AB does not have dyslexia or Specific Language Impairment.

Description of learner in class from early sessions by tutor

- Reported that he had been told he had dyslexia at school.
- Lacks confidence and seems anxious about written tasks and expressing himself orally, at times. His sentences are on the whole simple and lack complexity.
- Takes longer than all of his peers to start a written task and so does not produce extended written pieces in 'reasonable' length of time
- Appears to understand instructions in class, though is a quiet learner in the class

Suggested activities/strategies that would best address the learner's challenges from neuroscientist

- Additional time for all tasks, especially for written tasks requiring processing of multi-faceted components such as a purposeful original letter-writing task which requires consideration of specific format, register/formality, original content, paragraphing, punctuation
- Time for structured thinking before commencing the task so as to reduce the cognitive load.
- AB should write a draft in a 'flow' not worrying about punctuation or paragraphing. I would not recommend scaffolding necessarily for this learner as it may be one more 'higher level thinking' task too many that would impede processing.
- Once flow of writing has finished, go back and put in punctuation, paragraphing. For paragraphing, consider/discuss where each idea begins and ends—this will eventually become automatic for AB and then will not require additional cognitive load much further down the track.
- Before starting any 'extended' writing task, AB should talk about content and how he will write. This will help him free up cognitive load when he does the actual writing. Scaffolding is not recommended as this may require even more processing for AB than he is able to do.
- In reading, AB is slow and this may be due to him losing track of meaning as his processing of input does not allow him to keep up with his reading pace. AB should stop when he loses the sense of what he is reading in order for his cognition to 'catch up'.
- By implementing these strategies, AB's reading and writing will become more automatic and so his proficiency and speed will increase over time as a result. Processing, working memory and inhibiting (unconsciously) will then be 'focused' on those processes in the brain that are not automatic and taking place as higher level executive functioning in the prefrontal cortex. (See notes above about 'cognitive load'.)

Activities experimented with (in class and one-to-one) based on suggestions

- In reading, the whole class struggle at times with comprehending. So part of a number of lessons was dedicated to students learning the technique of stopping when they lose the sense of what they are reading in order for cognition to 'catch up'. We used samples of challenging printed material such as newspapers and online non-fiction for this purpose. A number of learners in the class reported that they found this strategy helpful. One learner said that it was also helpful to stop when the meaning of a word was difficult and change the word to a phrase that explained it better. Then continue reading having made sure he had recapped before.
- With writing, the tutor continued with scaffolded learning because it was a strategy that had been successful in the past - including AB's building up his writing step by step with short sentences with one subject, one verb and one object
- In his one-to-one sessions, AB chose a topic to write about from 3 suggestions and prior to writing talked about the content and how he would structure it. He wrote an enter letter by hand, using quite simple sentences in about ten-fifteen minutes.
- AB in a follow up session, typed up the letter, making changes to the wording and the punctuation
- Tutor also practised a jigsaw approach to reading, and identifying how a newspaper article can flow by asking AB to reconstitute a cut up newspaper article

Observed outcomes/results (in class and one-to-one)

- As with the whole class, reminding AB to stop and recap what he was reading, in much shorter bursts, was very successful. AB read some quite 'advanced' texts with excellent comprehension and recall that he previously had not done.
- Scaffolding writing tasks was only somewhat helpful. AB still required a long lead time to get his ideas together. (NOTE: is this then a helpful strategy for AB?)
- AB responded well to activities which were amended in line with suggestions to allow him additional time for cognitive processing
- His confidence both in- class and one-to-one seems to have markedly increased.
- Giving AB time to talk about and even plan his writing ahead of starting the writing was very successful. Writing a well-structured complete letter by hand in a short time period was a first for AB.

Student's reflections on methods and progress

- AB reported that he found it particularly helpful to talk to himself silently about what he was going to write. He reported that he didn't find a written plan or a structure i.e. model to follow helpful: he was able to picture in his head the

beginning, middle and end. He said he found knowing who he was writing to and that he was writing about something real very useful. He found it helpful to set himself the task of writing 3-4 sentences per paragraph.

- AB found the activity of putting the article back together confusing and said that he didn't enjoy it. He questioned why the tutor had chosen to do it this way. He said that it felt like doing a jigsaw puzzle and that reading wasn't like doing a puzzle. He also said he felt it broke up the flow of the text and made it harder for him to take in.

Tutor's reflections (in class and one-to-one)

- Scaffolding worked less well than other strategies. This is probably because he has too many things to control or to plan for and think about at one time. He resisted being given plans and scaffolding that he has not had a hand in.
- A number of learners in the class reported that they found this strategy of stopping and reviewing their reading helpful. One learner said that it was also helpful to stop when the meaning of a word was difficult and change the word to a phrase that explained it better. Then continue reading having made sure he had recapped before.
- AB had some 'moments' when key points regarding sentence structure and punctuation seemed to click: "I found it was best to limit teacher talking time to making a few key points and then to ask AB to put into practice what was covered in class. More teacher talk would seem to compromise AB's cognitive load and slow up his processing speed."
- "I think AB's progress will benefit from introducing the neurodiversity suggestions made by JC more slowly and over a longer period of time as he needs to be on board with them to be convinced of these changes to his normal way of working, as he may feel that if we do too many things differently from what he is used to that the activities are not very beneficial, even though they may actually be of more use to him." (class tutor)
- "I feel that the strategy for the writing task worked well.' Not having a 'plan' but talking about the writing made it become clearer to AB about 'who he was writing to and what he wanted to tell him... and gave him a clear format to put his ideas in." (one-to-one tutor)

Neuroscientist's reflections

- Marked increase in AB's confidence from the beginning of the term maintained into the rest of the course. This was evidenced in his increased participation in in-class discussions, increased activity in writing during class time. Anxiety about writing tasks seemed to be reduced. In the early part of the course, AB produced very limited written work during class. He was initially reluctant to start and then took a long time to produce little - while the rest of the class were well under way. By midway through the term, AB no longer needed coaxing or visible 'scaffolding' to start and complete written tasks. AB showed marked progress in his writing. He was able to start an extended writing task

with less lead time, but more importantly with confidence about what and how to write, using the strategies suggested.

- The feedback from both teachers suggests that having a knowledge of what strategies to try out to address his slow speed of processing and compromised cognitive load as well as an understanding of how this impact learning and tasks provides a greater chance of engaging AB in his learning.

There seem to be inroads too into AB using strategies for his reading of challenging texts that lead to improved comprehension.

Appendix 7 - CD learner case study

CD was a new learner to the college and was placed in our English for Life class (E1-E2). He disclosed as ASD (Asperger's syndrome) on his enrolment form.

Overview of neurodiversity / challenges to learning from cognitive profile screening at pre-course assessment

- CD answered very few reading comprehension questions so it was difficult to know whether or not he was able to comprehend the questions or the text he was required to read, or if there was another reason for his lack of responses.
- He did though respond to the writing task which illuminated a large discrepancy between the receptive and productive macro skills in this assessment.
- The writing showed a good grasp of vocabulary but his responses indicated possible ASD. Two of his written responses indicated an inability to grasp 'theory of mind', that is to understand the intention/what is in the mind of another person from what is implied as opposed to what is directly stated. He also appeared to have taken literally an idiom that an adult which a person with English as his first language might be expected to understand. This may be the reason why this student had previously not progressed—his English may have been hampered by an apparent lack of capacity to answer comprehension questions but may not have been indicative of his actual comprehension.
- Probably not dyslexic as there were no indicators in his writing of phonological difficulties.
- Possible SLI as there were some inaccuracies in grammar including verb tenses. Odd use of personal pronouns. He wrote, for example, 'her' not 'she' and vice versa.

Description of learner in class from early sessions

- CD identified as a first language English speaker but some of his written language was similar to that of a second language English speaker.
- Needed a great deal of support in class
- Did not appear to be comprehending or listening effectively to oral instructions in class
- Did not respond to reading comprehension questions without support
- Would regularly leave the room to go to the toilet.

Observations by neuro-scientist prior to suggesting activities/strategies

- In his written work, CD found many questions perplexing and so would not respond. If one was simply to observe, it appeared as if he did not understand the requirements of the question. A question such as, 'How many times a day do you say hello to people?' has no precise answer but learners without ASD tendencies would probably understand what the question was asking. When

CD did not know what the requirement of the question was, he would respond, commonly, orally, 'I can't tell.' (An honest response rather than a rude or general one.) He left this question blank in writing. When, though, the question was recast so that CD could answer definitively, 'How many times did you say hello today?' He had a confident response: 'Twice.' A follow up was then: 'Who did you say hello to?' He was able to answer this definitively in writing.

- CD left the room when he felt overloaded and anxious. This seemed to be a good strategy as he came back when he was able to process what was happening in the classroom.
- CD had excellent reading skills and read reasonably fluently when he was asked questions that were concrete and literal. This was in apparent contrast to what he showed in most of his initial assessment. His comprehension was good when the questions were literal. He did show this same understanding with non-literal or idiomatic questions.
- CD displayed some errors when reading words aloud that caused him to make predictions and to guess. Making predictions was possibly a strategy he had learnt. When asked to sound out the word or to uncover parts of the word bit by bit, he could usually read it correctly.
- When given tasks that required copying, CD had no difficulty but when required to fill in gaps in cloze activities he usually did this incorrectly. When he was asked to write 'from scratch' about a topic of interest, he was fluent in his writing. This was confirmed in his screening assessment *but was not previously shown in this course/class*.

Suggested activities/strategies that would best address the learner's challenges

- Unlearn guessing or predicting unfamiliar words when reading that had become automatic. When CD comes across an unfamiliar word, he should cover up parts of it to make him read the parts and not predict the whole. This will require classroom TA to assist until this becomes a habit. When reading, the brain tends to operate with confirmation bias and so it is reasonable that CD would read inaccurately if what the word he was expecting was not the word but still went ahead and read it anyway. This might appear to be poor reading or dyslexic. However, this can be unlearned as the brain also 'enjoys' increased activation with novelty. So exposing CD to being able to read new words or words he didn't expect to see will lead to effective learning if he perseveres with this technique.
- Read a text and make up his own comprehension questions which he would also answer. This would show his teacher what he understood and did not understand (which may be one of the most important points about comprehension questions) and lead to increased enjoyment and reading confidence. Neuroscience studies confirm that questions and uncertainty are activated in the brain much more so than answering correctly and certainty, and lead to more effective learning.

- When others in the class are writing cloze sentences (filling in the blanks), CD should be given the opportunity to 'free' write (with clear parameters) about a topic of interest. CD is struggling with gap-filling because he cannot predict what it is that the teacher or the task is wanting. He has poor theory of mind so will not be able to know what is expected of him or when something sounds 'right' as he does not know what 'right' entails. For example: *What connecting word do you use between these two (simple) sentences to make a longer new (compound) sentence to make sense, so that it sounds right? I ran for the bus. The bus didn't stop.*

Activities experimented with (in class) based on suggestions

- With a support assistant in the classroom, when reading new/unfamiliar words, CD was encouraged to use a card or ruler to cover parts of the word. Whenever possible, when he made a prediction/guess, he was asked to try again. (Asking, 'Did that sound right?' was not a good strategy as CD would answer. 'I can't tell.' This is a reasonable answer as there is no way of him knowing what 'right' meant in this context.)
- Read a text and made up his own comprehension question which he also answered. While other learners in the class used the comprehension questions provided, CD was happy to make up 2 or 3 questions and then to answer these. The questions were all, predictably, 'concrete' or explicit and so there are limitations when wanting to ascertain CD's understanding of implicit meaning in a text, or when asking him to make predictions. CD is not able to necessarily understand how to answer certain questions or to comprehend the meaning of idioms and metaphors that have not previously been explained to him. CD also has difficulty understanding some forms of sentences such as the passive form and so requires support in recasting this kind of sentence. This may be SLI or it may be ASD.
- The whole class of learners used connectives/conjunctions to make simple sentences into compound sentences. They did this by being given simple sentences and then experimented with which conjunction to use to make the compound sentence make sense and to 'sound right'. CD was supported to write these from scratch rather than to use the sentences that he felt had no interest in and could not see the point, unless he was copying them directly. He was not able to tell if the sentences that were provided sounded 'right' but was able to write compound and complex sentences that made sense about his favourite football team. He did this by coming up with the start of the sentence together with the TA and then he finished it off: 'Man U played well against Liverpool but... still lost 2 nil.' for example.

Observed outcomes/results (in class)

- CD achieved more or was much more able than anticipated with most of these strategies.
- He did not resist any of them, which may have been expected. In fact, he seemed to enjoy them.
- With only a few sessions it is difficult to know if he will continue to make good progress in his writing, particularly.

Teacher's thoughts and comments (in class)

- The tutor found the insight into the types of questions to ask in class – both orally and for written task – involving rephrasing them into a more specific concrete form particularly insightful and helpful. This style of questioning revealed that CD understood far more in his reading and in class interactions than immediately apparent since it could be the original question which confounded him not the text or the activity.

Neuroscientist's reflections

- The feedback from the teacher and the support assistant suggests that having a knowledge of CD's difficulties in comprehending what is being asked of him and the challenges that ASD poses in this type of learning setting, and an understanding of how these impact learning and how he undertakes tasks, provides a greater chance of engaging CD in his learning. It did lead to progress in writing. He wrote meaningful short passages that were mostly accurate. He had better reading responses and marked lower levels of anxiety, at least in the short term. On the first occasion observing CD he left the classroom three times during the lesson because he felt overloaded. On subsequent occasions, he left once only during the lessons. While he did not articulate that he was feeling overloaded/anxious I have made this assumption. We know that people who have ASD are likely to have anxiety. However, we also know from a large number of studies that a poorer working memory and high anxiety levels are like to co-occur. Because CD has fewer social filters than many adults he is possibly more aware that he/his brain has 'had enough', is overloaded, and so the most sensible thing to do would be to take a break. (In addition to this clever strategy, during the break when the brain is not focused on the task at hand, it then is able to often solve the problem that it could not solve when highly focused.)