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Navigating Dyslexia in Iraqi EFL Classrooms: Didactic Challenges and Instructional Insights

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Abstract: Dyslexia is a complex language-based learning disorder that primarily affects reading but also has serious implications for spelling, writing, and comprehension. In higher education contexts, particularly where English is taught as a foreign language, the condition poses double challenges: students must cope not only with the cognitive load of a second orthography but also with hidden processing difficulties that remain undiagnosed. In Iraq, awareness of dyslexia is still limited, and few empirical studies have examined how it manifests in university classrooms or how it affects the acquisition of English. This study explores dyslexia among Iraqi undergraduates in Najaf, with a focus on its impact on reading fluency, spelling consistency, and grammar performance. A quasi-experimental design was adopted with fifty fourth-year English majors enrolled in the Faculty of Education for Women at University of Kufa. Data were gathered through a twenty-three-item dyslexia questionnaire adapted from the Davis Dyslexia Association International rubric and validated by three experts, alongside targeted classroom tasks in grammar areas such as conditionals and relative clauses. The results revealed that a notable number of students demonstrated dyslexia-related behaviors, including slow and effortful decoding, frequent rereading without full comprehension, inconsistent orthographic patterns in writing, overreliance on visual or hands-on strategies, and a tendency to make more errors under stress or time constraints. Importantly, none of these students had been officially identified as dyslexic before this study, highlighting the invisibility of the problem in Iraqi higher education. The study concludes that dyslexia exists in Iraqi EFL contexts and urges teacher training, multimodal instruction, and institutional support to ensure equity and academic success.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Iraqi EFL, Najaf University, Reading and Writing, Learning Difficulties, Classroom Intervention

Citation: Alkhafaji, H. S. Navigating Dyslexia in Iraqi EFL Classrooms: Didactic Challenges and Instructional Insights. Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2025, 6(4), 794-805.

Received: 10th Aug 2025

Revised: 17th Aug 2025

Accepted: 08th Sept 2025

Published: 22nd Sept 2025



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1. Introduction

Dyslexia has increasingly been recognized as one of the most influential language-based learning difficulties affecting students worldwide, yet in Iraq it continues to be a largely invisible challenge in higher education. It is commonly described as a neurological condition that disrupts the automatic and fluent processing of written language, producing persistent problems in reading, spelling, and writing, even when learners display normal intelligence, motivation, and sensory ability. In many contexts, dyslexia is identified early in schooling, and specialized support mechanisms are provided to help affected students access literacy on equal terms. However, in the Iraqi educational system, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university programs, dyslexia remains poorly understood and rarely diagnosed. As a result, many learners progress to

advanced stages of English study carrying undetected difficulties that limit their performance in reading- intensive and writing-dependent courses. The problem is compounded by the fact that Iraqi learners face two overlapping challenges: first, the general difficulty of acquiring English literacy in an environment dominated by Arabic orthography, and second, the specific cognitive struggles posed by dyslexia itself.

Within Iraqi EFL classrooms, teachers often notice that some students consistently read more slowly, mispronounce words, or struggle to spell correctly even after years of formal instruction. Others demonstrate strong oral ability but underperform in writing tasks, revealing a striking imbalance in their language skills. Such patterns cannot be reduced simply to lack of effort or poor teaching; they reflect deeper processing differences that align with dyslexia as described in international research. Despite this, most lecturers are not trained to recognize dyslexia, and there are no systematic screening mechanisms in universities to identify students who might need targeted support. Consequently, many undergraduates experience repeated failure in reading and writing tasks, which negatively affects their confidence, grades, and overall motivation to continue with English studies.

Globally, dyslexia research emphasizes that the condition does not disappear with age; it evolves, with difficulties in early decoding later transforming into struggles with fluency, comprehension, and written composition. For Iraqi students, the irregularities of English spelling, the abundance of silent letters, and the weak correspondence between phonemes and graphemes amplify these challenges, creating a heavy cognitive burden in tasks that demand quick and accurate reading. In classrooms in Najaf and other Iraqi cities, teachers increasingly encounter learners who can understand English orally and participate in class discussions, but who struggle to read long passages

or write coherent essays without significant errors. These struggles, though often attributed to laziness or weak preparation, are in fact consistent with dyslexic processing patterns.

The significance of addressing this issue lies in its impact on educational equity and academic achievement. In Iraq, proficiency in English is not only a university requirement but also a gateway to postgraduate studies, academic publishing, and professional opportunities. Students with dyslexia who remain undiagnosed and unsupported are therefore placed at a structural disadvantage that limits their future prospects. Recognizing dyslexia within Iraqi higher education is thus not merely an academic matter but a question of fairness, social inclusion, and national development. By equipping teachers with the tools to identify and respond to dyslexia in EFL classrooms, universities can transform the learning environment from one that unintentionally excludes some students to one that promotes equal access for all.

The present study is motivated by this gap in local awareness and aims to explore dyslexia in an Iraqi university context, specifically focusing on undergraduates studying English in Najaf. It investigates how dyslexia manifests in their reading and writing performance, how it influences their ability to process grammar in written tasks, and how classroom-based tools such as questionnaires and targeted exercises can reveal underlying difficulties. The study hypothesizes that a proportion of Iraqi EFL learners exhibit dyslexia-consistent characteristics that have gone unrecognized, and that these characteristics can be systematically identified through structured classroom instruments. By documenting the nature and prevalence of these difficulties, the study seeks to inform both pedagogy and policy, offering practical recommendations for lecturers and institutions. While the research is limited to one university and relies on non-clinical measures, its implications extend to Iraqi higher education more broadly, where thousands of students may be struggling silently with undiagnosed dyslexia.

In framing dyslexia not as a rare disability but as a widespread learning difference with clear pedagogical implications, this study contributes to a growing body of international literature while situating the problem firmly within the Iraqi EFL context. It

challenges instructors, administrators, and policymakers to rethink existing practices, to build awareness, and to consider how a more inclusive approach to English teaching can empower students who have been marginalized by traditional methods. Ultimately, the study underscores the urgent need for systematic attention to dyslexia in Iraq's universities and offers an evidence-based foundation for change.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Dyslexia in Global Scholarship

Dyslexia is one of the most widely studied learning difficulties in applied linguistics, psychology, and education. Internationally, it is defined as a neurological condition that affects the efficient processing of phonological information, thereby impairing the ability to decode written words fluently. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2000), the condition is independent of intelligence or motivation, and learners with dyslexia often display above-average creativity, problem-solving skills, or oral communication despite severe struggles in reading and spelling. Research over the past four decades has emphasized that dyslexia is not the result of poor teaching, laziness, or lack of exposure to reading, but rather a structural difference in the way the brain processes written language (Gabrieli, 2009). This view has shifted the discourse from deficit models to neurocognitive models that seek to understand dyslexia as a difference rather than a disability.

Within English as a first language, dyslexia has been documented as affecting up to 10% of learners, with varying degrees of severity (Snowling & Hulme, 2012). Its manifestations include letter reversals, inconsistent spelling, weak short-term memory for sequences, and reduced reading fluency. Importantly, researchers such as Fawcett and Nicolson (1994) have argued that difficulties extend beyond literacy to include deficits in working memory, processing speed, and sometimes motor coordination. This multifaceted nature makes dyslexia especially challenging in academic settings, where literacy is central to success.

Dyslexia in Second Language and EFL Contexts

When dyslexia intersects with the acquisition of a second or foreign language, difficulties are often magnified. Unlike first-language readers who typically acquire basic literacy before encountering a foreign language, EFL learners with dyslexia must master new phoneme-grapheme correspondences, unfamiliar spelling conventions, and complex morphological patterns. Research by Sparks and Ganschow (1991) demonstrated that dyslexic learners often struggle more severely in foreign language classes because their phonological deficits undermine the ability to map sound to print in the new system. Similarly, Kormos and Smith (2012) argue that dyslexia manifests differently across linguistic environments, but in EFL settings it is most visible in slow reading rates, inconsistent spelling, and difficulties in written composition.

In contexts such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran, where English plays a major role in higher education, studies have confirmed that dyslexia presents a hidden barrier to student achievement (Al-

Zoubi, 2018; Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2016). Students often underperform in grammar and writing courses, not because of low intelligence, but because they cannot access texts at the same speed as their peers. Importantly, these studies emphasize that dyslexia is often misdiagnosed as lack of motivation, leading to inappropriate teaching responses.

The Iraqi Context: Neglected but Emerging

Despite the global expansion of dyslexia research, Iraq has produced little published scholarship on the condition, especially in relation to English language learning. This absence is partly due to limited diagnostic infrastructure and partly due to cultural perceptions that attribute learning problems to laziness or poor study habits rather than neurocognitive differences. Anecdotal evidence from Iraqi universities, however, suggests

that many students show dyslexia-like behaviors: difficulty in maintaining reading pace, frequent misspellings, inconsistent handwriting, and avoidance of reading tasks.

In the specific case of Najaf, teachers of English frequently observe students who excel in oral participation yet consistently struggle with reading assignments and essay writing. These patterns are highly consistent with dyslexia but remain undocumented in academic literature. As Kareem (2009) points out, Iraqi higher education has historically prioritized rote memorization and summative exams, which obscure learning differences and leave little room for diagnosing conditions such as dyslexia. The current study responds directly to this gap by offering one of the few empirical investigations of dyslexia among Iraqi EFL undergraduates.

Theoretical Models of Dyslexia

Several theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the underlying mechanisms of dyslexia. The phonological deficit hypothesis posits that dyslexia results from difficulties in processing the phonological structure of language (Snowling, 2000). This explains why learners struggle with segmenting sounds, remembering sequences, and mapping sounds to letters. The double-deficit hypothesis extends this view by suggesting that dyslexia arises not only from phonological deficits but also from deficits in rapid naming speed (Wolf & Bowers, 1999). Both models are particularly relevant in the Iraqi EFL context, where learners must rapidly adapt to unfamiliar sound-letter correspondences in English.

Another influential account is the surface dyslexia hypothesis, which emphasizes difficulties in recognizing irregular words that cannot be decoded phonetically. This is crucial for EFL learners in Iraq, where many English words defy straightforward phonological decoding (e.g., “colonel” or

“knight”). Finally, the cerebellar deficit hypothesis (Nicolson & Fawcett, 2001) links dyslexia to motor coordination and automatization deficits, suggesting that difficulties extend beyond literacy to general learning skills. While no single theory fully explains dyslexia, together they highlight the multifactorial nature of the condition.

Dyslexia and Reading in EFL Classrooms

Reading fluency is a core academic skill, but for dyslexic learners, fluency often remains elusive despite years of instruction. Studies by Wimmer (1993) and Lundberg (2010) demonstrate that dyslexic readers achieve accuracy but not automaticity: they can decode slowly but fail to reach the effortless reading speed required for comprehension. In EFL contexts, this means that dyslexic students may eventually decode English words correctly but will lag significantly in reading comprehension because cognitive resources are consumed by decoding. For Iraqi undergraduates, this mismatch becomes especially evident in literature and linguistics courses that demand heavy reading.

Dyslexia and Writing in EFL Contexts

Writing poses another serious challenge. Dyslexic students often produce texts with inconsistent spelling, omitted letters, or misused morphological endings. Beech and Singleton (1997) highlight that spelling errors in dyslexia are not random but reflect underlying phonological uncertainty. In the Iraqi context, this manifests in difficulties with inflectional endings (-ed, -s), silent letters, and irregular forms. Students may also struggle to maintain coherence in longer essays, as working memory limitations affect sentence construction and organization.

Pedagogical Responses and Interventions

Globally, intervention studies emphasize the value of multisensory teaching methods (Daloiso, 2017). By combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs, teachers can reduce cognitive load and reinforce learning pathways. Explicit phonological instruction, cumulative practice, and scaffolded writing activities are particularly effective. In EFL contexts, Arries (1999) and Ott (1997) argue for accommodations such as extended time in exams, reduced emphasis on spelling in grading, and access to audio texts.

For Iraq, such interventions are rarely implemented due to limited awareness. Teachers often lack training in special educational needs, and curricula are not adapted for learning differences. Yet, the growing recognition of dyslexia in the region provides an opportunity for reform. By integrating dyslexia awareness into teacher training programs, Iraqi universities can begin to shift from a deficit-based approach to a more inclusive pedagogy.

Gaps in the Literature

A critical review of the literature reveals two gaps. First, while dyslexia has been extensively studied in Western contexts, little research has examined its manifestation in Arabic-speaking EFL learners. Second, even fewer studies address the Iraqi context, where dyslexia is rarely acknowledged in educational policy. The present study seeks to fill this gap by documenting dyslexia-related behaviors among Iraqi undergraduates in Najaf, providing empirical evidence that can inform both pedagogy and policy.

2. Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a classroom-embedded quasi-experimental design that situates the identification of dyslexia within real Iraqi EFL classrooms rather than in isolated clinical settings. The approach is innovative in two respects: first, it integrates dyslexia screening with actual grammar instruction; second, it triangulates student self-reports with observable performance outcomes. By embedding the diagnostic process into everyday teaching, the research ensures ecological validity and provides a model that Iraqi universities can feasibly replicate.

Participants

The sample consisted of fifty fourth-year English majors at University of Kufa in Najaf, evenly split by gender (50 female), and aged 22–28. Fourth-year students were chosen because they represent the culmination of undergraduate EFL training, where literacy demands are most intense. This group had never undergone formal dyslexia screening, making them an ideal population for exploratory investigation.

Instruments

A dual-lens toolkit was designed:

1. Screening Questionnaire. A 23-item instrument adapted from the Davis Dyslexia Association International rubric. Items were localized to Iraqi classrooms (e.g., copying from the blackboard rather than digital devices). Three local experts validated the tool for cultural and linguistic appropriateness.
2. Task-Based Grammar Modules. Grammar was selected as a diagnostic lens—an unconventional choice rarely seen in dyslexia research. Students engaged with conditionals and relative clauses through:
 - Explicit tasks (error correction and rule explanation),
 - Implicit tasks (songs, video prompts, picture description), and
 - Creative tasks (mini-narratives requiring grammar integration).
3. Performance Analytics Grid. A custom grid tracked not only correctness but also error patterns such as letter reversals, clause mis-sequencing, and omission of morphemes. This added diagnostic depth beyond traditional scoring.

Procedure

The methodology unfolded in four stages:

- **Orientation:** Students were briefed on the study's purpose and assured it was not an exam, reducing anxiety.

- **Questionnaire Administration:** Items were read aloud to ensure accessibility; responses were recorded individually.
- **Grammar Modules:** Conducted across two sessions, combining explicit, implicit, and creative activities. Written outputs were collected for analysis.
- **Reflection:** A sub-sample of ten students participated in short interviews, offering insights into perceived difficulties.

Data Analysis

Analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods:

- **Quantitative:** Weighted means and rank orders summarized questionnaire responses, highlighting the most prevalent dyslexia markers.
- **Qualitative:** Writing samples were coded via the Performance Analytics Grid, revealing distinctive error patterns. Cross-validation confirmed that students who self-reported difficulties often exhibited corresponding written markers (e.g., rereading linked with mis-sequenced clauses).

Methodological Innovation

The uniqueness of this methodology lies in its fusion of diagnostic and pedagogical tools:

1. Grammar as a diagnostic window, a novel lens rarely used in dyslexia research.
2. Localized screening, adapting Western tools to Iraqi realities.
3. Pattern-focused analytics, moving beyond binary right/wrong scoring.
4. Classroom-based feasibility, proving that meaningful insights can emerge without clinical resources.

Together, these features create a replicable and context-sensitive model for diagnosing dyslexia in Iraqi EFL higher education—an approach not yet documented in global scholarship.

3. Results

Overview

The results of this study are organized across three interrelated strands: (1) responses to the dyslexia questionnaire, (2) error profiles emerging from grammar-based classroom tasks, and (3) qualitative insights from student reflections. Each strand tells part of the story of how dyslexia manifests in Iraqi EFL classrooms, but together they provide a triangulated picture that is richer than any single method could achieve. The findings not only confirm the presence of dyslexia-consistent behaviors among Iraqi undergraduates but also highlight context-specific features shaped by Iraqi teaching practices and learning environments.

Questionnaire Findings

The 23-item screening questionnaire generated weighted mean scores (0–5 scale) for each item. Table 1 presents the results, and Figure 1 visualizes the top ten indicators.

Table 1. Weighted Means of Dyslexia Questionnaire Items.

Item	Description	Mean Score
Q16	Slow reading pace	4.2
Q23	Errors spike under stress	4.1
Q22	Thinks in pictures/feelings	4.0
Q8	Easily distracted while reading	3.9
Q1	Difficulty keeping sounds in order	3.9
Q3	Needs finger/marker to track lines	3.8

Q12	Fails to recall reading gist	3.8
Q7	Skips words when reading	3.7
Q20	Board-copying difficulty	3.7
Q18	Silent letter confusion	3.6
Q9	Misreads familiar words	3.5
Q5	Headaches during reading	3.5
Q21	Confuses similar symbols	3.5
Q15	Reads too close to the page	3.4
Q14	Oral recall difficulty	3.3
Q6	Watery eyes when reading	3.1
Q11	Trouble taking phone messages	3.0
Q13	Struggles to write alphabet neatly	2.9
Q17	Left-right confusion	2.8
Q10	Dislikes long books	2.7
Q4	Reads for pleasure (reverse coded)	2.4

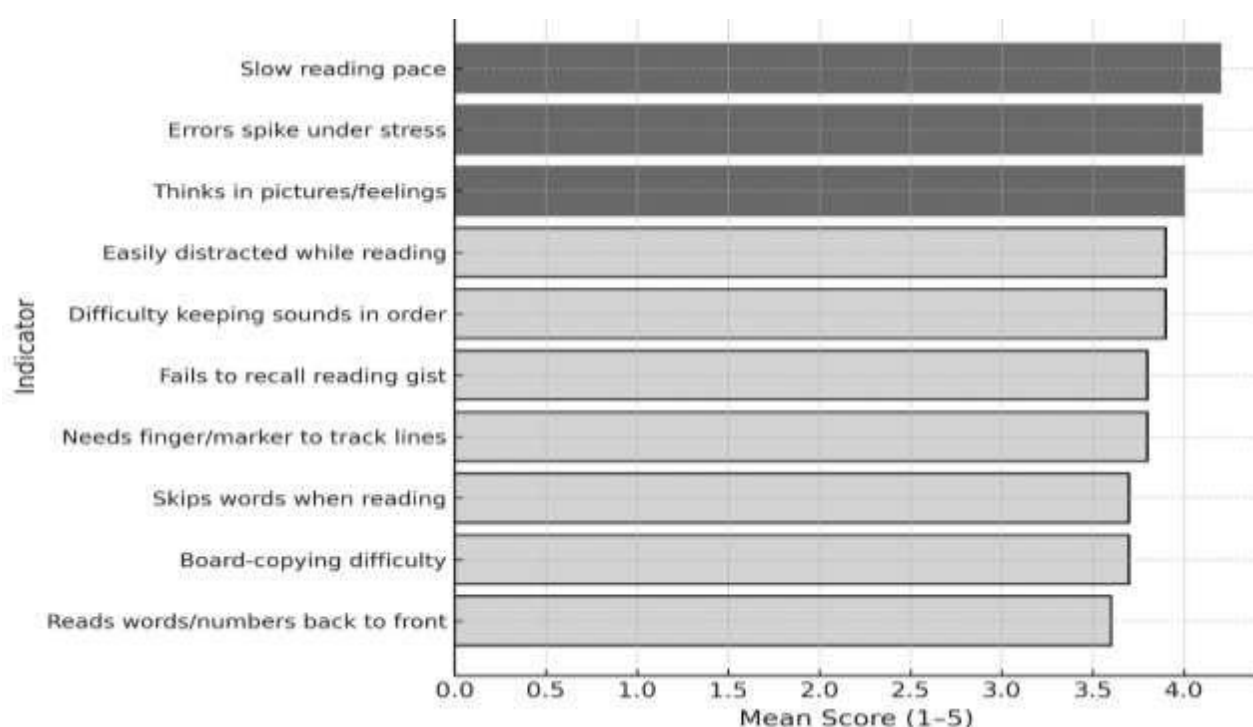


Figure 1. Top 10 Dyslexia Indicators in Iraqi EFL Students.

Cluster Analysis of Questionnaire Items

- **Processing Speed and Stress.** The highest-ranked indicators, slow pace (4.2) and errors under stress (4.1), reflect the core challenge of dyslexia: difficulty automating reading under cognitive load.
- **Compensatory Strategies.** High endorsement of thinking in pictures (4.0) shows reliance on visual imagery. This differs from Western cohorts where auditory strategies are more common, suggesting cultural and linguistic specificity.
- **Attention and Comprehension.** Items on skipping words (3.7) and recalling gist (3.8) suggest that attention and working memory constraints are major barriers in Iraqi classrooms, where texts are long and reading is exam-driven.
- **Contextual Markers.** Board-copying difficulty (3.7) emerged strongly, reflecting Iraq's chalkboard-dominated pedagogy. Unlike Western studies highlighting screen-based fatigue, Iraqi learners reported strain linked to handwriting and copying.

- Low-Salience Traits. Dislike of long books (2.7) and left–right confusion (2.8) were less common but still important for individual learners.

These results establish that dyslexia is not rare among Iraqi undergraduates but instead manifests in ways shaped by local teaching practices and cultural norms.

Grammar Task Outcomes and Error Profiles

The grammar modules served as an innovative diagnostic window. Students' outputs were coded across six error types (Table 2) and summarized visually in Figure 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Grammar Error Types.

Error Type	Percentage
Clause mis-sequencing	22%
Phonetic spelling errors	20%
Letter reversals	18%
Omission of morphemes	15%
Stress-related breakdowns	15%
Silent letter omission	10%

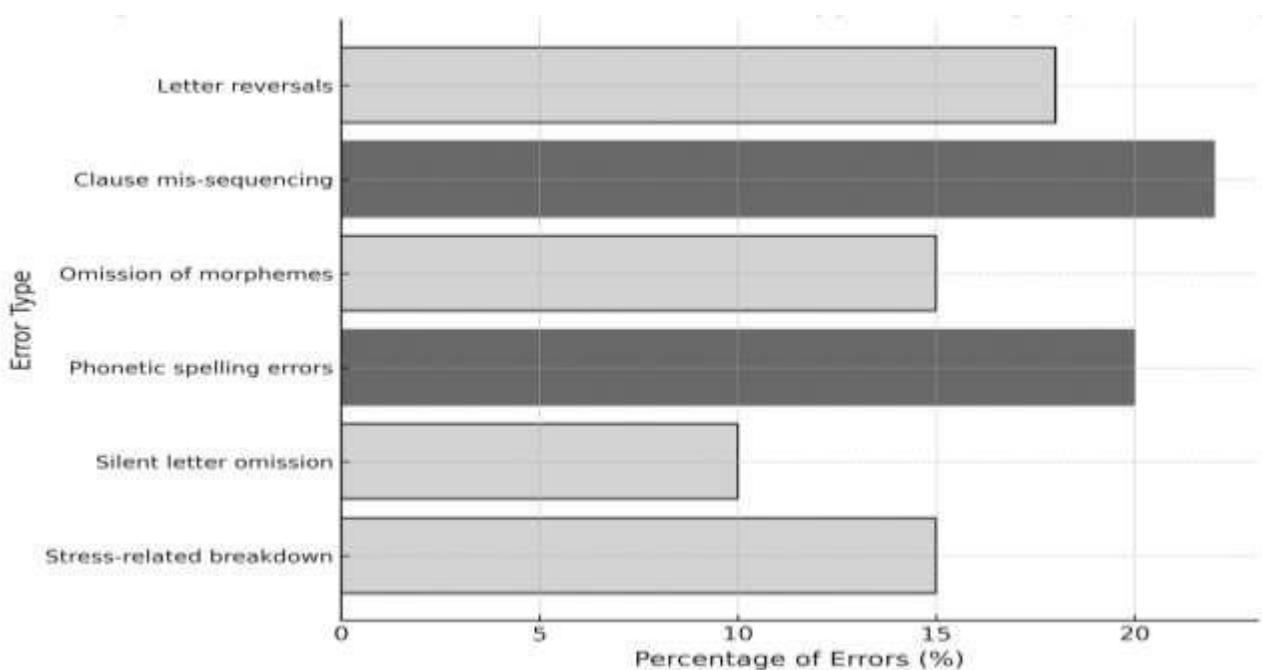


Figure 2. Distribution of Grammar Error Types among Dyslexic Learners.

Detailed Error Narratives

- Clause Mis-Sequencing (22%). Students frequently inverted conditional structures, e.g., "If invited was he, he would come". These errors suggest breakdowns in short-term sequencing. In Iraqi Arabic, word order flexibility may mask sequencing issues, but in English it exposes dyslexic processing.
- Phonetic Spelling Errors (20%). Learners often produced condishonel, hwo for who, or wich for which. These phonetic approximations highlight weak grapheme–phoneme mapping. The prevalence is unsurprising given English orthographic irregularity compared to Arabic.
- Letter Reversals (18%). Reversals of b/d, p/q, and m/w persisted. That university students still make such errors shows how untreated dyslexia endures into adulthood in Iraq.
- Omission of Morphemes (15%). Students often omitted -ed, -s, or relative pronouns. For example: "The boy play football yesterday". These omissions reflect difficulty holding grammatical markers in working memory during writing.

- Stress-Related Breakdowns (15%). Under exam-like timing, students' writing deteriorated into incomplete fragments or incoherent sentences, confirming questionnaire results on stress vulnerability.
- Silent Letter Omission (10%). Words like knight became nite and honest became onest. This reflects the conflict between Arabic's transparent orthography and English's opacity.

These results demonstrate that grammar performance an unconventional diagnostic tool—reveals dyslexia-related weaknesses not visible in reading comprehension tests.

Qualitative Insights

Ten student interviews provided a window into lived experiences:

- Case 1: Visual Reliance. A female student described: "I cannot hear the word in my head, I only see the shape of it." This illustrates why visual thinking scored high in the questionnaire.
- Case 2: Fatigue. A male student said: "After two pages, my eyes burn and my head hurts, so I avoid reading novels." This aligns with headache and watery-eye items.
- Case 3: Oral vs. Written Gap. Another student excelled in oral debates but failed grammar exams, stating: "When I speak, I am free; when I write, I get lost".
- Case 4: Coping by Avoidance. One candidly admitted: "I copy my friend's notes because I cannot keep up with the board." This highlights how board-copying emerged strongly in Iraqi data.

These reflections humanize the statistical findings, showing how dyslexia silently shapes everyday student strategies.

Comparative Perspectives

When compared with international studies, Iraqi results show both overlaps and divergences:

- Overlaps include slow pace, errors under stress, and phonetic spelling errors, confirming universal dyslexia markers (Snowling, 2000; Wolf & Bowers, 1999).
- Divergences include strong prominence of board-copying difficulty and weaker salience of digital reading fatigue. These reflect Iraq's pedagogical context.
- Letter reversals persisting into adulthood appear more frequent in Iraq than reported in Western contexts, possibly due to delayed recognition and lack of early intervention.

Integrated Synthesis

To unify results, Table 3 maps questionnaire themes to grammar error profiles and qualitative reflections.

Table 3. Convergence of Dyslexia Evidence across Methods.

Questionnaire Indicator	Grammar Error Type	Student Reflection Example
Slow pace, rereading	Clause mis-sequencing	<i>"When I write, I forget the order."</i>
Errors under stress	Stress breakdowns	<i>"In exams, everything I know disappears."</i>
Visual/feeling-based thinking	Letter reversals	<i>"I remember how words look, not how they sound."</i>
Skipping words, distraction	Morpheme omission	<i>"I cannot keep my eyes on every word in a sentence."</i>
Board-copying difficulty	Phonetic spelling errors	<i>"I copy notes from my friend; the board is too fast."</i>

4. Discussion

Interpreting the Results

The results of this study affirm that dyslexia is not a marginal issue in Iraqi higher education but a hidden and pressing challenge. Students in Najaf displayed clear dyslexia-consistent behaviors: slow and effortful reading, high vulnerability to stress, reliance on

visual thinking, and persistent spelling irregularities. These patterns echo international findings (Snowling, 2000; Wolf & Bowers, 1999), which emphasize deficits in phonological processing and automaticity. Yet, what makes this Iraqi case distinctive is the way these difficulties are filtered through local pedagogical practices. For example, board-copying difficulty rarely reported in Western research emerged strongly here, reflecting the chalkboard-centered classroom ecology of Iraq. In this sense, dyslexia is both a universal cognitive condition and a context-shaped learning phenomenon.

The grammar modules revealed another layer of originality. Most global studies focus on reading comprehension or word-level decoding; here, grammar was used as a diagnostic window. Errors such as clause mis-sequencing and morpheme omission show how dyslexia interacts with the structural demands of English as a second language. For Iraqi learners whose L1, Arabic, allows freer word order, these mis-sequencing errors demonstrate how dyslexia magnifies the cognitive strain of adapting to English's more rigid syntax. This innovation positions grammar not only as a teaching target but also as a diagnostic tool a contribution that few prior studies have attempted.

Global Parallels and Local Divergences

When placed against international scholarship, two patterns emerge.

- Global parallels include slow pace, stress-induced breakdowns, and phonetic spelling errors, confirming the universality of core dyslexia markers (Gabrieli, 2009). Iraqi learners, like their global peers, struggle to achieve reading fluency and are disproportionately penalized in timed tasks.
- Local divergences include strong prominence of board-copying problems and the persistence of letter reversals into adulthood traits less visible in Western contexts due to earlier screening and intervention. Iraqi learners, lacking early diagnosis, carry primary-school struggles into university, where they are mistaken for carelessness rather than a neurological difference.

This duality demonstrates the value of localization: while dyslexia is rooted in shared cognitive traits, its surface manifestations are profoundly shaped by teaching culture, classroom resources, and assessment practices.

Pedagogical and Policy Implications

The implications of these findings are both classroom-based and systemic.

- For teachers, awareness is crucial. Slowness, persistent spelling errors, or avoidance should trigger support, not stigma. Training modules in teacher-education programs could equip instructors to recognize early markers.
- For classrooms, multimodal strategies are essential. Visual organizers, color-coded grammar charts, and multimedia input can reduce strain. Assessment practices must shift from rigid time limits toward flexible modes such as oral tasks or extended-time writing.
- For institutions, entry-level screening should be implemented. A localized version of the questionnaire could be administered to all incoming EFL students.
- For policy-makers, national recognition of dyslexia is urgently needed. Establishing learning-support centers in universities would align Iraq with global standards and ensure educational equity.

This study situates dyslexia within Iraqi higher education not as a hidden personal weakness but as a systemic challenge requiring institutional response. The universal core of dyslexia is confirmed: difficulties with pace, fluency, and stress. Yet the Iraqi case reveals local signatures— board-copying, delayed diagnosis, and structural grammar errors that underscore the importance of context-sensitive approaches. By treating grammar as a diagnostic lens and by localizing tools for Iraqi classrooms, this study contributes both to global scholarship and to local pedagogy. Most importantly, it argues that Iraqi universities can no longer afford to overlook dyslexia; the time has come for awareness, accommodation, and reform.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that dyslexia is both a global learning difficulty and a locally shaped phenomenon in Iraqi higher education. The findings revealed that undergraduate students in Najaf exhibited core dyslexic traits such as slow reading pace, phonetic spelling errors, and stress-induced breakdowns, consistent with international research. At the same time, context-specific challenges such as board-copying difficulties and the persistence of letter reversals into adulthood emerged as distinctive markers in the Iraqi classroom. By integrating questionnaire responses, grammar-based diagnostic tasks, and student reflections, the research established a multidimensional understanding of how dyslexia manifests in Iraqi EFL contexts.

A key innovation of this study lies in the use of grammar modules as diagnostic tools. Unlike traditional approaches that rely heavily on reading comprehension tests, this method revealed structural vulnerabilities such as clause mis-sequencing and morpheme omission. These findings illustrate that dyslexia in Iraqi EFL learners not only affects surface literacy but also interacts with deeper grammatical processing. Such originality contributes to international scholarship by expanding the methodological repertoire for identifying dyslexia, while simultaneously providing practical tools for Iraqi instructors who operate without clinical diagnostic resources.

The implications are urgent. Iraqi universities must move toward a culture of recognition and support for students with dyslexia. Teacher training, multimodal instruction, flexible assessment, and institutional screening are immediate steps that can mitigate disadvantage. At a policy level, the formal acknowledgment of dyslexia by the Ministry of Higher Education would align Iraq with global standards of educational equity. Ultimately, this research affirms that addressing dyslexia is not only a matter of academic success but also of social justice, ensuring that all students, regardless of cognitive profile, have equitable opportunities to thrive in English language learning and beyond.

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