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THE NORTH SURREY DYSLEXIC SOCIETY

For the recognition of dyslexia and the advancement of literacy

REVIEW

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DYSLEXIA: SOME PRACTICAL NEEDS: by T.R. Miles

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By a 'dyslexic' child I mean one who has difficulty in a few special areas (including spelling in particular and usually reading as well) but who is usually quite able to cope with tasks involving abstract thought, comprehension, and immediate memory. Usually there is an accompanying difficulty over spatial relationships. Often this takes the form of confusion between b and d or p and q outside normal limits, i.e. beyond the age of 7 or 8, though it may take other forms, e.g. failure to put the knife and fork on the correct side of the table or failure to repeat the syllables of long words in their correct order. If ever you come across a child whose educational difficulties are specific to reading and spelling (but who is otherwise fairly bright) and who has difficulties both over direction and over recognising the 'look' of words, then you may be sure that this is a child whom many of us would wish to label as 'dyslexic'.

Some teachers and educational psychologists have disputed whether such a condition as dyslexia genuinely exists. I do not propose in this article to discuss the theoretical issues, since I have done this elsewhere (Miles, 1967). The main reason why I feel strongly on this matter is that, unless we use the label, we may very well make the wrong practical decision in respect of these children. The last thing I want to do is to pick quarrels with people over labels; but what is at stake is a decision as to how human beings should be treated.

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The main thing which I wish to plead for is a change of orientation. Our present policy in Great Britain towards backward children is permeated through and through with what may be called the 'child-guidance' attitude. I am not of course disputing the valuable work done at child guidance clinics with suitably selected cases, that is, with emotional disturbed and insecure children and their parents. What bothers me is the tendency, in the case of backward children, to attribute their difficulty - all too uncritically - to emotional disturbance. In medical terms one might speak of changing from a psychiatric

orientation to a neurological one*; in educational terms it is a change which involves willingness to take signs of backwardness at their face value instead of assuming that they are symptoms of underlying emotional disturbance.

I do not of course dispute the obvious fact that sympathetic parents can do a great deal to help dyslexic children; and I have certainly met dyslexic children (though in fact surprisingly few) who were difficult or emotionally disturbed. In most of these cases, however, it has seemed to me fairly clear that the emotional disturbance is the result of the dyslexia; parents or teachers have simply failed to understand the child's difficulties. To explain the backwardness in terms of emotional disturbance is often, in my opinion, to put the cart before the horse.

Let me now try to characterise the difficulties of dyslexic children as I see them. If one looks at their spelling one is likely to find some very strange mistakes. It is plain that somehow the 'look' of the written word does not register with them in the way in which it does with normal readers; hence, when they have written something, they have no visual means of 'monitoring' it, i.e. of telling whether what they have written is right. Another difficulty is that, if shown the correct spelling, they are likely to forget it a few moments later. Hence if a teacher scolds them they are doubly bewildered and mystified: not only may the scolding seem unfair since they may well have tried extra hard; in addition they have not the least idea as to what it is they have failed to do. Time and time again the children whom I have taught have written a word and tried to check it by one of the few devices open to them - my own facial expression! Sometimes they say the word very carefully to themselves, and indeed words that to us are completely bizarre in respect of their 'look' are often quite plausible phonetically, e.g. 'sopost' for 'supposed' or 'becend' for 'beckoned'. Often there is what may be called 'overlay' from acquired knowledge; thus the child may vaguely remember that, say, a g-h or a t-h ought to come somewhere in the word, or that some words have a final 'e', and on the basis of these vague memories he adds such letters in a haphazard way - e.g. 'wthe' for 'with'.

Here are some examples of particularly odd spelling. These will enable you to tell what happens in severe cases of dyslexia, though of course in many cases the disability is milder than this.

(1) One day feoul chilir went to rsg they Mother wech will we b going for rw holiday.

(2) Wen had a lant Roil lot yont it was a wit want.

(3) We pat a Negl in the water, fast we pat a pes of blating papa in the water, and pat the Negl on it and the papa sanc and the Negl acded on the Surface Tension.

These examples were copied from exercise books of the children concerned. All these children were above average I.Q. according to the traditional tests, the third having in fact a W.I.S.C. I.Q. of 128. The following is, as far as I know, what they were trying to say:

(1) One day five children went to ask their mother, Where shall we be going for our holiday?

(2) We had a land rover last year; it was a white one.

(3) We put a needle in the water. First we put a piece of blotting paper in the water and put the needle on it, and the paper sank and the needle acted on the surface tension. (The correct spelling of 'surface tension' is so surprising that one must assume it was written on the blackboard!)

What can be done on the practical side? In the long run I should like to see centres set up in various parts of the country, to which teachers could be seconded for suitable periods of training. These would be centres exclusively for the study of dyslexia and related disabilities. The present arrangements for training teachers and educational psychologists to understand the problems of dyslexia seem to me utterly inadequate. Indeed I would not mind people being obstinate and polemical over the actual label 'dyslexia' if only they would get down to working out properly and adequately what the needs of these children are. This they have conspicuously failed to do. Today a dyslexic child may well be in a class of children far duller than himself, in the hands of a remedial teacher who has read little about dyslexia, and who is visited, once a month at best, by an educational psychologist who

*Those wishing to extend their knowledge on the neurological side are referred in particular to M. Critchley, (1964).

'doesn't believe' in dyslexia and has never been grounded in the relevant parts of neurology. If such a child is eventually sent to a child guidance clinic, such is the present climate of opinion that he himself may be branded as emotionally disturbed and his parents may be led to infer that they are neurotic worriers. No one disputes that resources are limited, but at least let us channel existing resources in the right direction.

What can be done as a temporary palliative? The first thing is that all those concerned with remedial education should be on the look out for otherwise bright children whose weakness is specifically limited to reading and spelling. If in the case of these children they find rather strange spelling, some of it phonetic, and if they find that the child by looking at what he has written cannot see anything odd about it, it is a fair prediction that such a child will not grow out of his difficulties without careful individual attention. This prediction will be all the stronger if some of the subsidiary signs mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article are also present. In such cases there is no short cut. Very careful thought is needed in studying what exactly it is that the child cannot do; standards of whether the child has done 'well' or 'badly' need to be adjusted (often even the pathetic attempts at spelling cited above are the result of enormously hard work); extreme patience is needed when the same mistakes crop up again and again, and if the child's mistakes are simply corrected with no indications of how he went wrong the result is likely to be frustration for both teacher and child*. Above all the teacher should make clear that he understands - or at least is trying to understand - the child's difficulty. Indeed this is one of the central reasons why I feel one cannot manage without the label 'dyslexia' or some equivalent term. One needs to make explicit that the child is suffering from an identifiable condition for which he is not to be blamed; 'here is another weak speller' simply fails to bring this out. It may be objected that to say 'Your child is dyslexic' is simply 'telling parents what they want to hear'. My answer would be: of course the parents are relieved when their child is labelled in this way, since such labelling makes sense of what was otherwise quite baffling. Time and time again I have met parents who could see that their child was not simply dull but who were utterly bewildered by his performance at reading and spelling. Any label which gives honest information about such a condition is surely justified, even if the information is limited in scope and the predictions are probable rather than certain. It is a curious legacy of the 'child-guidance' mentality that 'reassurance' and 'telling parents what they want to hear' are viewed by some educational psychologists with considerable suspicion.

Finally here are three suggestions for immediate action:

(1) Press for more man-power. It seems clear from the existing evidence that only a large amount of coaching, individually or in very small groups, will help these children over their difficulties/; and it may well be that not all Directors of Education appreciate the magnitude of the need. (2) In the absence of special training courses evolve your own methods as best you can. (3) Pass on your experience to others, till concern for these children becomes nation-wide. I am sure there is no lack of good will, but informed opinion and careful planning are needed in addition.

References
CRITCHLEY, M. (1964) Development Dyslexia. Heinemann Medical Books Ltd.
MILES, T. R. (1967) 'In defence of the concept of dyslexia'. Published in The Second International Reading Symposium ed. John Downing and Amy L. Brown, 242-260. Cassell.

*In my experience it is helpful to get the child to say the words very carefully and concentrate on the movements of his lips, tongue and throat as he does so. The children whom I have taught have all learned with no difficulty that certain movements correspond to certain letters; hence they learned to build up words by a rule instead of having to memorise each word by heart. The main limitation of this method is its failure to help the child over words which are irregular.

/I do not wish to be dogmatic as to who exactly should be included in such groups; but normally they would consist of reasonably bright children whose weakness at reading and spelling prevented them from keeping up with others of the same intellectual level. Such children are, of course, quite out of place in a class for 'dull' children, i.e. children whose intellectual level is weak all round.

SIR JAMES PITMAN K.B.E.

Sir James Pitman K.B.E. comments on the findings of Professor F.W. Warbuton and Mrs. Vera Southgate, published as "i.t.a.: an Independent Evaluation, the report of a study carried out for the Schools Council of England and Wales".

I greatly welcome the Schools Council Report, and am most grateful to Professor F. W. Warburton and to Mrs. Vera Southgate for the thoroughness and conscientiousness with which they have completed a truly momemental, and I believe historic, report.

Because of their report it is now likely that many millions of children throughout the English-speaking world will very much sooner benefit than they otherwise would in School and throughout the whole of their subsequent lives. If the general adoption of i.t.a. were thereby to be accelerated by only one year, six million more English-speaking children will have been saved from the delays, frustrations and failures which will continue to be their lot so long as an antiquated alphabet and irrational spellings are continued as their first learning medium. The early removal of that ancient millstone from around so many million little necks will owe much to the publication of this Report.

The conclusions (i.e. pp. 155-171, 275-279 and 282-284) contain most forthright endorsement of the benefits, but they include some caveats and indeed some reservations. Clearly I am expected to deal with these. This I have done, but first may I ask those interested to read two selected endorsements:-

(p. 156) (i)

"The verbal evidence offered on certain points by those with the greatest experience of either using i.t.a. with infants or observing its use is almost unanimous. The following are the main points of most importance to the questioning headteacher, as they led to the preceding general conclusion:

"1. Examples of every conceivable type of school are now using i.t.a. with infants and, with only rare exceptions, the teachers concerned have no desire to revert to the use of T.O.

"2. The majority of teachers who have used i.t.a., as well as knowledgeable visitors to schools, have concluded that, when i.t.a. is used with infants, better progress is made than when T.O. is used. The observed results include easier and earlier reading skill acquired without frustrations for the child; an increase in the time children choose to spend on reading, in the number of books they read and on their understanding of the contents of the books; an increase in the quantity and quality of children's free writing; and improvement in children's attitudes and behaviour; and beneficial effects on other school subjects and the general life of the school.

"3. The teachers who reached the foregoing conclusions were teachers with many years of experience of using T.O. They were comparing the results of using i.t.a. with their own previous experiences with T.O. when using different methods, every possible kind of material including all the well-known T.O. reading schemes and a variety of classroom procedures. Furthermore, many of these teachers were among those who had first begun to use i.t.a. in 1961 and 1962, and whom it is now generally accepted were exceptionally able teachers. Such a group of good teachers must necessarily have comprised the very ones who had previously obtained the optimum results with T.O. That the majority of such teachers find i.t.a. preferable to T.O. must be counted as strong evidence in favour of i.t.a. A similar argument applies to the views of H.M. Inspectors and local inspectors: their breadth of opportunities for closely observing the levels of work in all types of schools, using both T.O. and i.t.a., demands that their views should be taken very seriously."

(p. 277) (ii)

The experimental results so far obtained suggest very strongly that i.t.a. is, in fact, a more efficient medium for teaching reading to beginners than traditional orthography. The magnitude of the differences found in its favour in many different researches is unusually high."

The reservations and the caveats examined

There are six reservations and five caveats, which are set out below:-

Reservations:

1. Not all children benefit.

2. It is more effective for bright than for dull children.

3. There is a setback at the transition.

4. After the transition the advantage is lost.

5. The good results are the product of enthusiasm, not of the medium.

6. T.O. if properly taught would achieve as good or better results.

Caveats:

A. It is not a universal panacea.

B. It is not the final answer.

C. It needs improvement and there are alternative simplifications.

D. More research is needed.

E. Parents move home: moreover i.t.a. ought to be taught only if the Junior School is able to continue i.t.a. with those found to have been least ready for reading.

Reservations:

1. Not all children benefit (p. 276, 282)

No-one, least of all I, supposed that all children would benefit. There are necessarily some who for various reasons (see pp. 30 - 39 of my book Alphabets and Reading) will never succeed, whatever the medium, who-ever the teacher, and however favourable the home environment. These are anyhow a small percentage of all children. Seeing that they now fail when taught in T.O., they present no case for denying i.t.a. to the rest.

2. It is more effective for bright than for dull children (p. 283)

This reservation has been sufficiently answered in the Report itself under F. Slow Learning Children (pp. 165 - 168). The answer there given has since been made even stronger by the recent publication i.t.a. and Slow Learners: A Reappraisal (John Downing, Educational Research, Vol. 11, No. 3, June 1969) of which Warburton and Southgate could have had no knowledge. Similarly the Report on the Use of the Initial Teaching Alphabet in a Sample of London Schools, by A. H. Morgan, further supports the thesis that "the improvement appears at all reading levels, including that of the poorer readers".

On p. 283 Warburton and Southgate call attention to this difference in findings:-

"There was a certain divergence between the conclusions drawn from the verbal evidence and the research evidence concerning the relative performances of children of high, average and low intelligence. The verbal evidence suggested that i.t.a. had proved beneficial to children of all levels of intelligence. The research evidence suggested that i.t.a. was more effective for bright than for dull children."

It is thus satisfactory to find that research workers are now finding that the teachers were right after all.

Incidentally it would seem that the term "linguistic inadequacy" will in future be found to be more appropriate than "dullness", "slow learning" and "low I.Q." as the main factor in a disease of which slow learning is no more than a symptom: and in which it is also the main factor in a belated transition. As will be mentioned below under the Caveat D (Research), it is to be hoped that greater awareness of the part played by linguistic adequacy in learning to read will lead to quite fresh conclusions on this subject of the performances of the children who are here called "brighter" and "duller". For the moment this reservation affords no reason why the head teacher and the administrator should not feel obliged to employ i.t.a. for all classes of child.

3. There is a setback at the transition (p. 283)

It is interesting to note how widely the evidence from the Research differs from that obtained in the Interviews - interviews with a "Grand total in all categories" of 276 (p. 300). The point is well covered on p. 283.

The explanation of the divergences lies in the unsuitability of the tests employed by the research worker for measuring the achievements of the children at the transition. A research is as good as its measuring instruments. The following quotation from the Report (p. 166) is relevant:-

> "3. The reading tests currently used, even when they purport to measure the very earliest stages of reading, are extremely blunt instruments for the task."

and a passage on p. 168 supports the view that the research findings were not reliable in the terms of "functional reading" at the transition. So universally rejected by teachers has been this most properly made reservation that it may safely be regarded as having been negatived in the Report by the evidence from the Interviews and rejected by the authors in their consequent conclusion, under G. The Transition on pp. 168 - 169.

4. After the transition the advantage is lost (pp. 164, 275, 276, 282, 283)

It is to be noted that in all cases the authors write of the "advantage", not the "benefit". They themselves draw attention to the difference between these two concepts. The section E. The advantages of i.t.a. do not last is worth reading, particularly the last paragraph on p. 165, which is worth also quoting:-

> "It should also be emphasized that an acceptance of the view that the reading and writing of i.t.a. and T.O. children are approximately the same at the age of eight, does not discredit the use of i.t.a. for the initial stages of reading and writing. No claim was originally made to the effect that i.t.a. would produce better readers in the long run. The aim was to simplify the initial task of learning. Thus, even if i.t.a. children are only at the same level of attainment as T.O. children after three or four years, if learning to read has been easier and more pleasant for them, if fewer children have experienced frustrations and failures and if many have known the enjoyment and value of reading a year or so earlier than they would have done, it can fairly be claimed that its use has been justified".

Learning to bicycle might have been a similarly very slow and difficult process, with less than half the children - even after two and a third years - able to ride.

The suggestion that the advantage of a new process of learning was lost three years after they had learned would be a fact to be reported, but not a reason for not adopting the new process. The benefit of "enjoyment and value of (bicycling) a year or so earlier" and of eliminating those "frustrations and failures" would still be great.

But there are, in the case of learning to read, other and even greater benefits to those who at present fail or only marginally succeed even after much more of those frustrations and failures. It can be only of that section of the infant population who learn to read, whatever the medium, of which it may be said "they catch up later". Those who fail in T.O. cannot be said to catch up later - unless a later attempt at remedial teaching is made using i.t.a.

5. The good results are the product of enthusiasm, not of the medium (p. 275)

Clearly enthusiasm and success are inter-related: it ought to be an open question in the short run to tell whether the reverse is not the truth - namely that enthusiasm has been the product of success. It is at least possible that this reservation will later be turned about and the claim made that i.t.a. not only is a better medium in itself, but the cause of more enthusiastic and better teaching.

Moreover the Report itself casts doubt on the validity of this reservation (p. 276), calling attention to the "figures in Oldham where the full school population has demonstrably used i.t.a. long enough for the effect of novelty to wear off, are still markedly in favour of i.t.a."

Finally there has been no evidence (and no research) to justify the assumption that little children (aged 5 to 6) behave in the same way as adults (from whose behaviour the present of a "Hawthorne effect" has been deduced).

6. T.O. if properly taught would achieve as good or better results (pp. 155, 170, 276, 283, 284)

This now very ancient "pie in the sky" has been the motivating idea behind all the earlier efforts to achieve greater success and less failure. The Torch Lighters by Mary Austin (Harvard University Press, 1961), for instance, assumed that the medium (T.O.) is sacrosanct, and that a choice of medium plays no part in the difficulties of the teaching of reading. Thus she blames Colleges of Education, the teachers, the children, the methods, the materials. Literally thousands of researches into hundreds of variables (every possible variable save only that of the medium!) have been carried out during the last half century alone, and all with no advance comparable in degree to that here reported by Warburton and Southgate.

It may well be - indeed it certainly is true - that the variables other than of medium can yield improvement, but that consideration affords no justification for gainsaying the desirability of changing to a medium in which it has been shown that those other variables will now more advantageously operate.

The very essence of the i.t.a. proposition and of the findings of the Report has been that "medium" is just non sui generis with "approaches, methods, procedures, materials, the teacher's competence and enthusiasm, the child's linguistic competence, etc., etc.," but is something quite separate by which all the others may become even more effective.

Caveats:

A. i.t.a. is not a universal panacea (p. 276)

No-one who has experienced i.t.a., least of all myself, has ever claimed that i.t.a. was a panacea, much less a universal panacea. It has been the opponents who have mis-supposed that the objective intended was that of a "cure-all" for every beginner and for every reading problem. It has been only from the lips and pens of opponents that the word has been used at all - as a dirty word to discredit the motives of others, a motive which has been just simply to raise the standards of achievements as high as possible in a situation in which, while the results of the past have been deplorable, there was no expectation that perfection would ever be attainable.

B. i.t.a. is not the final answer (pp. 169, 284)

As may be inferred from A. above, there never has been the suggestion that in 1969, 1979 or 2079 perfection will have been attained.

Thus if a caveat, this one leaves open all options for improvement while leaving the head teacher and administrator (who clearly can no longer justify retention of a seat on the fence) to go forward with hope, taking advantage of the high degree of improvement which i.t.a. offers, while awaiting the occurrence of a next "breakthrough" or of a gradual development in the more effective use of i.t.a. and above all, with a growing understanding of the principles which have underlain the improvement in the learning of reading which i.t.a. has brought about.

The fact that this particular breakthrough has taken some 500 years of efforts by scholars and educators in thus varying the medium during the learning process makes the hope of an immediate further breakthrough somewhat remote, and correspondingly makes it very desirable not to wait, but at the earliest practicable date to capitalize upon what has been clearly demonstrated.

C. i.t.a. needs improvement (pp. 278, 284) and there are alternative simplifications (pp. 155, 278, 284)

It is difficult for me to deal (with the desirable credibility) with the first of these, but after all I am a rare bird, possibly the only bird, with the background and knowledge to do so.

I have heard of only three persons who have made proposals, covering changes for no more than eleven out of the forty-four characters. Every single one of those proposals can be shown to fail on the criterion that in any alphabet, the factor of greatest importance to the learner is that each character shall differ significantly from every other of the characters. There are too many characters in T.O. lower case which already differ insufficiently (e.g. o c e; b d; p b; n h; v y; u n; etc.) for it to be other than unwise to make the i.t.a. "augmentations" more like the T.O. digraphs than they are already. Yet it has been in that (wrong) direction that all three well-wishers to i.t.a. have moved.

Essentially, the problem should not be presented as one between trying or not trying other simplifications, but rather as one between delaying or not delaying the implementation of what the Warburton/Southgate Report has established as so greatly benefitting the child. Exploration of alternatives (as of better characters for i.t.a. e.g. colour) should proceed pari passu with the adoption of i.t.a.

D. More Research is needed (p. 170)

This is not really a caveat - it is a wide (and very accurate) generalized truism.

It has been included largely because the references to research will probably be interpreted as a caveat, or even as a reservation, and because it is important to be clear that acceptance of this truism should not be allowed to delay implementing the findings of the Report.

Moreover by all means let research abound, but let there be discretion in priorities and judgment as to what is worth researching. There have been a number of researches conducted, and a great number proposed, which show that very lack of knowledge of how children learn to read and of how i.t.a. helps, the lack of which knowledge the two authors deplore when they call for an investigation into "how children learn to read". I suspect that the investigation they propose will be able to yield knowledge of the supreme importance in learning to read of an adequate language competence, and that in all future researches this variable between children will take priority over even the I.Q. and over the "socio-economic group" of the parent, and will come to be the chief variable needing to be matched whenever hereafter researches are planned. (See Elementary English: March 1969; p. 385).

E. Parents move home (161): moreover i.t.a. ought to be taught only if the Junior School is able to continue i.t.a. with those found to have been least ready for reading (158, 161).

The task of a child, only partly to be able to read in i.t.a. on prematurely leaving his Infant School, may be said to be less difficult on transferring from an i.t.a. Infant School to a T.O. Infant School than on transferring from a T.O. Infant class in one School to a T.O. Infant class in another School after the same length of time and with comparable other conditions. In so far as the i.t.a. child has made progress, it will be greater progress than he would have made in the far more difficult medium. He will be able to make a transition, one at that level which he has then reached. The less the time he has been able to spend in i.t.a. or the less the progress he has made in it, the less will be his ability to read at any rate some of the words he meets in T.O.

There seems to have been no attempt made to follow up children who have been faced with the necessity of making a premature transition from i.t.a. to T.O. because their parents have moved home. Thus we need for the present to base our conclusions on what evidence there may be.

In this respect the great Air Force Base at Dover, Delaware, U.S.A. and the Schools in Dover, are perhaps the outstanding sources for evidence. The Superintendent of Schools (Dr. Melville Warren) assured me that notwithstanding that the incidence of mobility between Schools was great, the problem was small, indeed not significant. Owing to the frequent postings of airmen (and thus of their families) there were both types of transfer: children partly taught in T.O. arrived in the Dover Schools (where only i.t.a. is taught) and children partly taught in i.t.a. left the Dover Schools for Schools elsewhere where only T.O. is taught. Those of the first class made strides of great progress when introduced to the very simple medium, and benefitted greatly from the change: those of the second were not specially prepared in Dover for such a (premature) transition: they left for the new School and very soon found their own appropriate (but necessarily lower) levels, when introduced to the much more difficult medium. They inevitably suffered a set-back (unless the new school were prepared to use i.t.a. intelligently for them), but the set-back was not serious or long. Their future progress would be slower, but in the final result, so he assured me, the child was more advanced, and because more successful sooner in T.O., by reason of the fact of the good start made in the simpler medium - one which after all bore a great resemblance to T.O.

An extract from p. 159 happens to be here appropriate:-

"The interviewer's conclusions on this agree with the common view that children are much more adaptable than adults usually suppose. The child starting school meets anomalies all the time. He often finds dual standards of behaviour or speech at home and at school: to these he generally adapts himself. Children who learn to read with T.O. demonstrate great adaptability, for example when they learn to accept that a letter represents one sound in one word and a different sound in another word. It could well be that it is simpler for many children to reconcile themselves, for a short period, to i.t.a. in school and T.O. outside school, than to adapt themselves in the initial stages to all the various rules governing the pronunciation and spelling of words in T.O."

The second part of this caveat (that i.t.a. should be denied to all children in an Infant School unless the Junior School is willing and able to continue the use of i.t.a. with those (few) children who have made insufficient progress in reading to have made the transition) is surely wrong. The figures in Attachment C indicate that some 78% of the i.t.a. children (as against incidentally only 38% of the T.O.-taught children) will be reading fluently in T.O. With proportions of this order it is clearly wrong for the Head of the Junior School to put back the millstone round the necks of the up-coming infants who have not yet learned to read even in i.t.a. (I suspect because of the hitherto unrecognized and hitherto untested inadequacy in the English language), and have not yet made the transition even after 2½rd years, but it is surely much worse of the Head of an Infant School to keep the millstone round the necks of all of the children when 85% have demonstrably done so much better by reason of its removal, and the remaining 15% are likely to have also done better, if not to the point of demonstrating their progress in a measurement which is yet acceptable to the Head of the Junior School.

There can surely be no gainsaying the proposition that if, as appears, i.t.a. benefits the 15% linguistically adequate, the policy of any Infant School Head must in conscience be one to help those most in need of help when in doing so he will be giving an admittedly great benefit to the more linguistic majority.

COMMUNICATION AND DYSLEXIA: by Patrick Meredith

Since the Epistemic Communication Research Unit came into existence fifteen years ago, supported by a D.S.I.R. research grant, within the framework of the Psychology Department of Leeds University, we have accumulated a very large mailing-list, both for this country and abroad. The sheer cost of sending out information has compelled us to examine not only this particular information-problem in quantitative and budgetary terms, but also many other information-problems, including those of learning to read and write, on which all documentary communication rests. Ideally I would like to be able personally to answer every individual letter received - for this is what Epistemics is about: it is the science of inter-personal documentary information. It is based on the proposition that the Industrial Revolution, which has de-personalized our collective relationships, started not with the steam-engine but with the earlier inventions viz. the clock and the printing press. We have to understand what both of these machines have done to us, to our children, to our civilization, if we are to overcome our present cultural sickness.

This note, which will go to everyone on our mailing-list, is intended first to assure all those who write to us that behind the mechanical duplicated document there is a small group of human beings trying to use slender resources to find scientific solutions for problems of communication which, in the last analysis are problems only because they affect individual human lives.

I want, therefore, to explain just what our present position is, so that those who would like to maintain a link with the E.C.R.U. may have a realistic idea as to the possibilities of fruitful contact.

For the past four years, thanks to a grant of £21,000 from the Department of Education and Science, we have concentrated on one specific educational problem viz. the treatment of Dyslexia. This problem is not insoluble but its solution depends on three conditions viz.

(1) a willingness to face quite new modes of thinking both about reading and about education,

(2) the recruitment and training of a professional task-force,

(3) a reliable source of funds to maintain, for several years, an organised training-project dedicated to the elimination of Dyslexia in particular and to a sustained remediation of illiteracy in general, including "innumeracy".

Now as a Research Unit we are in no position to undertake the second and third of these tasks. We have been analysing Dyslexia in a way never before attempted, and it is our present task to communicate our findings. They are novel and cut right across all existing views of the problem.

They cannot be fully presented in a single lecture or even a whole conference. And our greatest problem, in the academic year just starting, is to find the most effective way of transmitting them. Only when this is solved can be usefully indicate an approach to the problems of man-power and money. And time is running out. Our research grant expired this year.

Thanks to a local benefactor we have just enough to keep our Unit in existence (despite the fact that I myself officially retired at the end of last month). We are continuing to treat children and advise parents. But out main job is to communicate our findings, between now and next June.

One of the major obstacles to communication is the inertia of the publishing process. If we produce a book by next June we should be lucky if it appeared in print by June 1971. If, on the other hand, we spend a lot of time giving lectures and conferences so as to get ideas into circulation more quickly this would not only result in fragmentary and half-baked ideas but would seriously impede the writing process. I call it "writing" but because our research has concentrated on space-perception, much of our material requires diagrams and photographs. If our little team can concentrate on this one task we could produce about one chapter a month. And here I propose an innovation, to by-pass the usual publishing delay. We have printing facilities available in the University. Given a sufficient subscription-list we could issue our findings chapter by chapter, with the minimum of delay. This method might make the whole report cost somewhat more than it would by conventional publication but until we know how many subscribers we shall have the exact cost can only be guessed. But if subscribers are willing to commit themselves to the purchase of one moderately expensive book, to be received by instalments, we can work out a figure and start the operation.

Most work on Dyslexia has concentrated on verbal material, and the fact that numerical and geometrical material can also present serious difficulties has received insufficient attention. Our report will analyse the perception and interpretation of all types of symbolic material, the demands which these processes make on the growing nervous system, the quantitative problem arising from the sheer mass of material demanded by education, the extra burden imposed by any impairment of perceptual capacity, the importance of the time-factor in mastering the flightiness of attention (which is one of the commonest symptoms not only in Dyslexia but in any other educational handicaps), the need for new, simple, economically realistic materials and equipment, the elimination of false assumptions, prejudices and bad educational habits, the critique of propaganda for panaceas, and the handling of emotional problems arising from educational failure, both in children and in adults.

When the whole volume is complete we can hold a conference, some time in 1970 at which, unlike most conferences, a group of people all having read the same material can debate its merits and discuss its applications. But almost from the first chapter it will be possible for subscribers to start applying any of the methods presented. Thus the conference could base its discussions not merely on theoretical views but on a growing body of experience.

As soon as a sufficient subscription-list is reached we can estimate an economic figure for the cost and start printing. Initially we want to know what the likely demand is, without commitment. By sending us your name and address now, as definitely interested, you can help the project to get started. Payment can then be by instalment if desired.

Please write to

The Secretary,
Dyslexia Report,
E.C.R.U. Psychology Department,
The University,
Leeds LS2. 9 JT.

THREE STORIES

1. Extract from Eric Shipton's autobiography "That Untravelled World" published by Hodder & Stoughton, September 1969.

"Much as I hated corporal punishment, it was a small matter compared with the anguish caused by my inability to read aloud. This was probably the most inhibiting influence of my youth. I believe I must have suffered from a condition now known to child psychologists as dyslexia (word blindness), a visual defect which causes letters to appear transposed from their correct sequence. At any rate, I was quite exceptionally slow in learning to read, and even when I could do so myself, the words continued to get hopelessly tangled when I tried to read aloud. At first it did not matter much, but of course it became increasingly conspicuous as I grew older, and I was bitterly ashamed. The chief occasion for my humiliation was after morning prayers when, before the whole school, we had to stand up and read a passage from a scripture book. As time allowed for only half a dozen boys to perform in any one session, my turn came about once a fortnight. Then, my knees trembling, my stomach dissolving, I would rise to my feet and stammer, misread or remain quite silent, to the accompaniment of derisive applause, which was never checked and often encouraged by the master in charge. Sometimes I managed to evade my turn by absenting myself from prayers, which of course was suitably punished; sometimes I feigned illness, but generally without success. Eventually, however, I contrived a means of escape. A musical neighbour gave piano lessons to one or two of the boys; and when I discovered that the time allocated for them was during the period of morning prayers I persuaded my mother to allow me to take this 'extra'. So for my remaining years at the school I plodded happily through my five-finger exercises, and though I displayed not the slightest aptitude, the expense was, from my point of view, amply justified. Nevertheless, the fear of being made to read aloud continued to haunt me, particularly in the last few days of the holidays, when I was terrified that I might be trapped by some change of routine. Two notable effects of this experience, covering as it did so many of my formative years, were a totally irrational prejudice against the Church and a firm conviction that I was abnormally stupid. The latter in turn, no doubt, was a significant cause of my abysmal failure to learn my lessons."

My mother, was very perplexed by my inability to read; she felt that she was somehow to blame and it caused her deep distress. It also had a powerful effect on my later development: long after I was grown up I continued to regard myself as intellectually sub-normal and this was mainly responsible for my crushing sense of inadequacy. Luckily for me I achieved some success as a mountaineer which probably gave me a measure of self-confidence and led me into a field of activity which, though eccentric, offered unexpected scope and proved very rewarding. But for this fortunate circumstance I believe that I would have had a pretty unhappy and futile life.

I am delighted to learn of the progress that has been made in the understanding and treatment of dyslexia, and that many children will thus be spared the misery and stunting development that can result from it.

2. Christopher Magarshack. Interviewed by V.W. Fisher.

'To whom it may concern. Christopher Magarshack has been unable to read all his life by reason of a physical disability'. This certificate, signed by a neurologist from the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, is carried everywhere by Christopher Magarshack 'In case' he says vaguely 'of trouble ..... ' Life is very difficult for the totally illiterate.

Christopher Magarshack was born in 1934. School for him was to start in September 1939 in all the confusion of war. The chaos of his first four years spent variously at Glastonbury, St. Albans, Hampstead, and Farnham, and his early separation from his mother and family all contributed to turn him into a very disturbed child. By the time he was six it was already being suggested that he should be sent to an ESN school. His mother, who has never thought that his difficulties were insurmountable because of lack of intelligence, kept him from the ESN school and arranged for him to go to a Roman Catholic boarding school for physically handicapped boys. This was evidently not a success since Christopher was soon moved back to the ESN school, which had been evacuated to Farnham. He remembers the lessons there, staring at marks on the blackboard, and all the time not knowing what the symbols meant.

At last the war ended and the family were re-united. Christopher is the youngest of four children. The other three had all been evacuated to different schools but had suffered no ill effects and were reading and writing normally.

The ESN school moved back to London. The staff changed but things did not improve. Christopher remembers that from this time even the attempt to work from the blackboard was dropped. He was 'the boy who can't read' and all effort to teach him anything at all stopped. He was never given a picture book, let alone a reading book, but was told to sit on the floor with a box of dominoes for amusement. At this time his mother saw the educational psychologist, (she was by now practised in these interviews) this one told her that Christopher was very disturbed and should not be pressed. Christopher and his mother both think that it was this judgement, passed on to the school, which led them to drop all pretence of teaching him. His mind was given no stimulus at all; his confidence in himself and in his ability was totally destroyed. He speaks very bitterly now of his disastrous and wretched school days. He feels that had a diagnosis of his difficulties been made an effort might have been made to teach him to read. As it was 'they thought my brain wasn't capable of anything. If you have the best computor in the world and feed nothing in you get nothing out'. Now he knows he has a block. 'My mind runs away from written words. I have to force myself to stay with them'.

The family were fortunate enough to meet an enlightened educational psychologist who started to give Christopher private lessons. She was beginning to make progress with him when she had to stop because she was pregnant. She sent Christopher to the Tavistock Clinic who advised that he should leave school and attend a day hospital for occupational therapy. This was the beginning of an art training because he was set to make puppets and toys. While he was attending the day hospital he was being seen from time to time by another educational psychologist. Not for the first time his mother spoke of dyslexia. She remembers his comment 'There ain't no such animal'.

At 17 the question of a career became rather pressing. His mother wrote to Rural Industries Bureau. Pottery was mentioned and seemed to be a good solution. Christopher went to the Woolwich School of Art, travelling by bus to avoid having to read the names of stations. In 1957, with the help of his parents he started his own pottery. Today he has a successful shop and takes in pupils and apprentices. The business side of it has to be looked after by his mother as he can't write cheques or letters, though he can telephone orders.

In 1962, when his personal problems were causing him to be deeply depressed, his mother encouraged him to enter hospital for exhaustive tests to get to the bottom of his reading failure. At last it was shown definitely that his inability to read was caused by neurological defect. For Christopher the diagnosis was perhaps too late.

All his life he has been trying to learn to read and he has grasped every chance that has been offered. The Cambridge House Literacy Scheme has provided devoted tutors with whom he has struggled. An advertisement in the 'Times' Personal Column asking for adult illiterates was answered by his mother. He was not apparently a suitable subject for the experiment which used the talking typewriter. He found it interesting but, after only two or three sessions, unhelpful. He has recently got in touch with the British Council for Rehabilitation of the Disabled and has another opportunity to make an all out effort to learn to read. Now, at 34, he is hesitating; understandably he is shy of putting more effort into failure and disappointment.

Of the restrictions imposed on him by his illiteracy he speaks bitterly - not only of the obvious limitations in the choice of career but also of the social disadvantages. He finds it difficult to make close friends; he dreads the moment when he must confess to a new acquaintance, or have discovered by a stranger, his strange incomprehensible deficiency.

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3. Tom May B.Sc.(Soc.) Dictated to his wife.

I suffer from dyslexia. I am 28 years old, married and expecting our first baby in November. I have a Sociology Honours Degree and a Teacher's Certificate.

Naturally I take a professional interest in dyslexia both from a sociological and educational view, though it was only in my early twenties that any diagnosis of my problem was made - when I had already embarked on my degree course and was receiving help as an 'adult illiterate'!

I was born in late 1940. My parents lived in London; my father, in strict fairy tale tradition, was a shoe maker and I was the second of his four children. The youngest child also suffers to a minor degree with reading and writing problems but has achieved higher education and is at present reading for a degree. As far as I know there is no other history of dyslexia in the family.

When I was three I went to a nursery school because both my parents were engaged on war work, then to a London County Council Primary school in a working class district. At about six I spent some time in hospital with diptheria. While in isolation hospital I was with another patient - a maths teacher - who taught me arithmetic for which I seemed to have some aptitude. When I returned to school reading difficulties became obvious, and difficulties in telling right from left, which I still suffer from, aggravated the situation. This frustration caused me to become quite a disturbed child and I developed a bad stutter. By the time I was eight the school thought I might be mentally deficient, but after giving me a series of tests decided to recommend me for an ESN school. My parents refused to send me to the ESN School, not on the basis of any advanced educational theory, but because they didn't want me to be sent away. They felt I was slow witted but did not want to admit to themselves, or the neighbours, that anything was seriously wrong. So I remained in the C stream of the primary school - quite seriously disturbed but receiving no treatment.

The opinion that I was slow-witted was shared by the community around me; a fact I was not unaware of. During the period from eight to eleven I developed the ability to memorise virtually everything I was told and lost the ability to visualise images - a condition shared by about 10% of the population. By eleven I still did not know the alphabet and those letters I could write were upside down or back to front. However, I could solve practically all arithmetic problems and do some geometry. I could read some words on the basis of their shape. Just after my eleventh birthday I started to teach myself to read from a comic. I asked my mother each word until I had memorised each one as a whole. I still find it difficult to explain the exact process by which I read.

When I took the 11 plus I got a central place and went to a comprehensive school. I had been rejected by several others, Grammar/Technical or Technical/Modern, because I could not read and write properly. About this time, realising that people thought me stupid, I had a burning desire to prove myself to be as clever as anyone else.

During secondary school I developed a considerable interest in science and liked geography and history. I absolutely hated writing. I noticed my spelling difficulties extended to French and German, neither of which I can write now, but I can stutter away in German.

At sixteen I passed three O levels in Maths, Chemistry with Physics, and Geography. My father, though surprised by this success, considered education to be a waste of time and refused to continue to support me at school unless I agreed to pay him £2 a week for my keep. This money I earned by paper rounds in the morning and evening, an evening delivery job, and working in the school holidays. This did not do my education or my temper much good and I was eventually causing so much trouble at school that I was asked to leave, but was allowed to return to take A level Chemistry, and O level history. English Language, English Literature, French and German were abandoned as a dead loss.

So, at eighteen, I had four O levels and one A level. I started work as a laboratory technician in the metallurgy industry. Because of my inability to do any clerical work or to write reports I found this job impossible and became in turn a milkman, an electrician's mate, and a factory hand; becoming in my last job a charge hand.

About the age of eighteen I began to be interested in Trade Union affairs and militant left wing politics. This necessitated public speaking and developing ideas for which reading was necessary. I was on the National Executive of the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which brought me into contact with middle and upper class young people whom I could see were no brighter than me yet were going to University. During this period of being involved with politics the problem of not being able to write properly was a severe handicap, but I was able to dictate letters.

About this time I began to sort out my emotional problems largely because I ceased to have money worries and had a regular girl-friend. I continued my studies at night school in science subjects and my writing gradually improved to about the level of an average ten year old.

I then met my future wife who was studying sociology. Not wishing to be married to a manual worker all her life she encouraged me to go to evening classes and try again for O level English Literature and English Language. I finally obtained English Literature but persistently failed English Language, usually with a Grade 9. However I now had the minimum qualifications for a London University B.Sc. Sociology degree, which I decided to take with the intention of becoming a teacher at the end of it. A place was offered to me because, although I only had minimum qualifications, I had had industrial and Trade Union experience.

In the first term at the Polytechnic I had problems with the vast amount of reading required and the essays. I sought help from the head of the department who put me onto the English Department where a lecturer advised me to read Sir Ernest Gowers' 'Plain Words'! This was, of course, useless. My department eventually recommended me to see someone, they couldn't say who or where, about adult illiterates.

My wife one day saw an advertisement in the Times Personal Column (regular reading for the illiterate!) for adult illiterates to contact a research worker at Birkbeck College. Although I did not really fit in with his project he agreed to include me and I was introduced to the 'talking typewriter'. The walking typewriter helped me and I learnt that I could type better than I could write.

At College I avoided essays as much as possible by always volunteering to give seminars which could be entirely spoken. Previous experience of public speaking, and a very well trained memory, enabled me to get by till the exams. London University is said to have a special translating department to assist examiners; this must have been used as I passed both parts 1 and 2 of my degree.

I obtained only a third class degree. I think this was at least in part due to my difficulty in writing which takes a lot of effort. I tend to write unclear sentences and transpose word. Also I make mistakes like writing 'be' instead of 'by' or 'than' instead of 'this'. I have tried dictating essays into a tape recorder and then trying to type it from tape, but I never found this to be satisfactory because of the time involved. It is much easier to dictate to my wife - which is how you are receiving this!

Colleges of Education demand English Language O level as an entry qualification but, having once obtained my degree, I was accepted by Garnett College of Education (Technical) to do a one year technical Teachers Certificate course. This course was more interesting than the degree course because the tutor insisted on essays. I warned her that I could not write but she would not believe me so I wrote her one and her first comment was 'My God! You're illiterate!'. After this our relationship worsened so I was given another tutor who had had teaching experience with students with English difficulties.

On the general lessons of my experience I would say that a severely handicapped dyslexic can only learn to read if he has extremely strong motivation. A working class background, where reading may be positively discouraged as a waste of time, is in itself a severe handicap. There is also the danger that having learnt to read you will forget how to unless you have consistent reason to read. Incidentally, the first book I ever read was 'Capital' by Karl Marx.

I think a dyslexic will never learn to write as well as someone else, possibly never getting beyond the standard of a thirteen or fourteen year old. Encouragement from friends and the need to read and write are vital. To reach any reasonable standard very high intelligence is necessary. In non-verbal I.Q. tests I normally get over 150. The embarrassment in not being able to read or write properly is somewhat lessened when you can put B.Sc. after your name. Then you can afford to laugh it off even if that is not how you feel about it. For me, as with others, dyslexia is linked with spatial problems such as confusing right and left, even when doing simple tasks like unscrewing something. This might limit the fields of skilled manual work open to a dyslexic.

The ability to speak and to have a general ability to deal with ideas certainly enables you to dodge problems, but without luck, help from friends, or specialist help, a dyslexic will not overcome dyslexia. Being dyslexic, unless it is diagnosed very early is likely to lead to emotional problems, particularly in a middle class culture, but the emotional problems are eased by knowing that one suffers from a definite defect.

A dyslexic must face the fact that a professional career can be blocked because of the English exam which may be a necessary entrance requirement. If dictation could be a recognised form of taking exams for dyslexics then life would be easier for us. Certainly my experience shows that I got better results dictating to my wife than when writing essays myself - even when these have been re-written with corrected spelling. One of the ironies I have noticed is that the higher the level of exams or work I have been required to do, the less the difficulties arising out of dyslexia.

There is a danger that a dyslexic will become exceedingly bitter about the problems he is confronted with, especially if allied with other disadvantages - though in my case it has added to my determination.

In a short account like this it is impossible to get over the subtleties and complexities of being a dyslexic. Certainly not the feel of the problem. One thing is certain. Our society is not tolerant to dyslexics. Tax returns and writing cheques are only some of the problems we face - it is so easy to put money into the Post Office Book and so difficult to get it out!

Mr. May has sent us this sample of his work on the talking typewriter. His present spelling of the words will interest readers and his comment 'This seems to be a bad day today yesterday I did somewhat better'.

LANGUAGE DIAGUGNOSIS DIAUGNOSIS DIAGNOSIS COMPULTION
compulsion prejudges prejugd prejudes prejudice
aquire accaur acquire acquire carick caricturistic
charactistic characturastic charactaristic characteristic
comprehention comprehenson comprehension disatation
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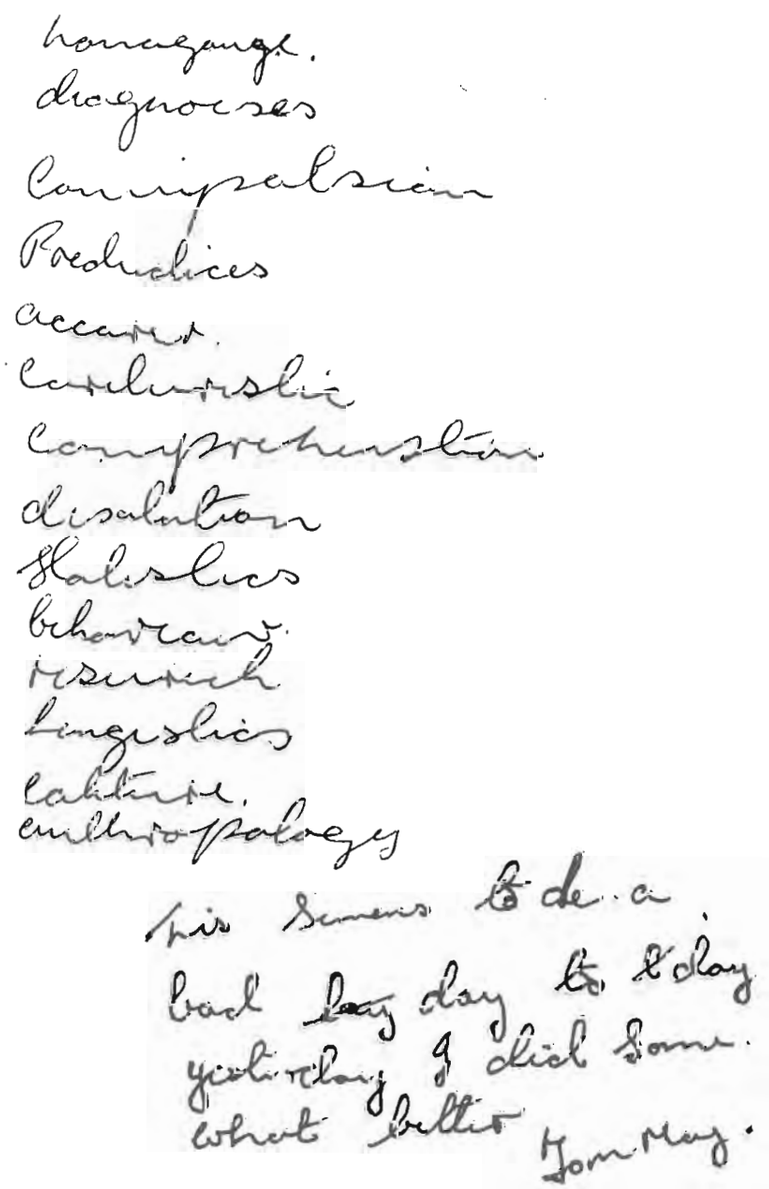

READING AND THE DYSLEXIC CHILD

by R.M.N. Crosby M.D. with Robert A. Liston — Souvenir Press 30/-

Dyslexia and its related disorders affect the ability to learn to read in at least 10% of children starting school each year. Many of these continue to leave school as backward or even non-readers. The years at school have been wasted and even worse these children have suffered intellectually, socially, and sometimes physically as well. They are disabled children and yet in this so-called enlightened age they and their parents have been made to feel that it is somehow their fault.

This book about dyslexia was written in non-technical language to inform and help both parents and teachers and to stimulate interest and discussion on this as yet untackled problem in our educational system.

Dr. Crosby uses the term dyslexia to include all organic neurological reading disabilities. He defines dyslexia as a symptom resulting from one or more of various neurological impairments. Dr. Crosby stresses that dyslexia is neither a disease of nor injury to the brain; he says that it most often appears when a person has an impairment of visual of auditory perception. Dyslexic children are no different from other children. They are not mentally retarded or stupid in any way. They are intelligent often extremely intelligent. Their disabilities are minor and of no consequence until as school children they are required to learn the extremely fine tasks of reading and writing. Their impairment is often genetic in origin, and may improve with time as maturation proceeds.

Many parents of these children may feel that the most important contribution of this book is Dr. Crosby's appeal for acceptance. Before educators will accept the existence of dyslexia as a cause of reading disorders they must have information. Dr. Crosby sets out to provide this information by presenting numerous cases to illustrate the multitude of neurological impairments that can impede reading instruction.

There is no easy answer to solving the reading problem of dyslexic individuals - no simple cure of a few simple exercises in which we can have confidence. An early diagnosis and planning of the whole educational programme for these children is his long-term answer. Remedial teaching though essential does not cope with all the problems raised and if the school is failing to understand the problem the child will still suffer at school and some of the remedial help will be wasted.

He suggests with-holding formal conventional types of instruction until these children have caught up on their maturational lag even if, as sometimes happens, this does not occur until the age of twelve. He suggests that in the meantime oral methods and all the other modern educational aids could be used to provide these children with information until they are ready to tackle the to them difficult tasks of learning to read and write.

He is constantly reiterating that teachers can help these children and suggests that they devise programmes of remedial help and ways of avoiding a sense of failure. Any programme of remedial help should be based on detailed diagnostic testing to show areas of strength and weakness. The remedial teacher can then use the areas of strength to initiate progress and keep up a steady rate of improvement while attempting whenever possible to remedy the areas of weakness.

Teachers must be informed on the subject so that they realise that it is a credit to them to recognize the early signs of neurological disabilities and refer them for diagnosis. They must stop regarding such children either as their own education failure or as morons. Once they have accepted that impairment exists and that it is quite minor, the main problem is then how to surmount the educational difficulties. Throughout the book there is constant reference to the fact that these children can be helped and advice is given on how to begin to help the individual cases quoted. This information in itself will prove invaluable to any teacher interested in the problems of these backward readers.

The first and most important initial problem for the parents is to obtain recognition of their child's neurological learning problems and to find the real cause of his disability by diagnosis, which should be done as early as possible. The first sign is when a teacher or parent suspects that a child reads at a level below that indicated by his intelligence.

Dr. Crosby states that "The most common cause of neurological reading disability is impaired visual perception. The child has a brain dysfunction which inhibits his ability visually to appreciate and discriminate a shape and/or pattern". This difficulty is sometimes isolated and sometimes occurs in conjunction with other impairments which affect the child's writing, arithmetic, speech, motor performance co-ordination sense of direction auditory perception or tactile perception. The various disorders may each range from minimal to severe and milder cases may not be recognised until later. This is because the milder cases will learn to read but they will be slow to learn and will continue to read slowly. Some milder cases may be more easily spotted by their bizarre spelling.

Sometimes these children are misunderstood both by their teachers and sometimes their parents as well. They feel rejected and therefore show signs of emotional maladjustment. This is often their greatest handicap and can be overcome when the child's disabilities are explained to the parents and teachers. Problems of rejection and misunderstanding must be dealt with alongside the remedial help if the child is to benefit fully from the teaching.

Sometimes a child is described as "not working up to his capacity", but when his capacities are ascertained by diagnostic tests it is found that his teachers are not making use of what capacities he has. He is being required to do tasks which are very difficult or even impossible for him because of his particular disabilities and is then being admonished as if the mistake were his fault. The fault in these cases may lie in the method used by the teachers and their lack of understanding of the child's disabilities.

Sometimes a child's disabilities cause him to work so slowly that he cannot keep up with the requirements of the class. He then needs to be given more time and a lessening of the load. If either the writing or spelling or both are affected it is grossly unfair to test these children by written examinations. They are speaking the truth when they tell you that they know the answer but cannot write it down. Many of them could be productive if given the necessary help. They need a great deal of individual help, but with the numbers involved Dr. Crosby stresses the immensity of the problems involved.

If the contents of this book - well illustrated by documented case histories - were generally known to teachers and educational psychologists their increased awareness of the problem could not fail to benefit these disadvantaged children.

Anna Evillen.

A USEFUL READING SCHEME: by Carol Coates

It is always a great problem to find the right scheme for the teaching of reading. One which accomplishes reading, writing and spelling all at once should be of interest to every remedial teacher who is faced with this familiar task, not only for one age group but for one ranging from six to thirteen.

I first used the Sullivan Associates Programmed Reading Series when teaching the dyslexic children in classes for the maladjusted, but it has proved useful in general classes of non-readers which include immigrant children and those with specific language disability. Its main virtues are:

1. To start Book One, not even the whole alphabet needs to be known - only the sounds of m, n, t, p, f, th, and the short sounds of i and a and these are taught in a Pre-reading Book. By the end of Book One, eight more sounds have been added. This means that sounds are introduced gradually, in many different contexts. No words are used which cannot be "unlocked" by the sounds the child knows. This gives him confidence and discourages guessing - one of the worst features of "look-say".

2. In the early books, every frame on a page requires (a) comprehension and (b) a response in writing. There are, of course, times when writing can be waived, but on the whole, just one word or a phrase is no great chore, and the practice involved can be an important factor in the child's acquisition of a neat, legible script.

3. Each child goes at his own pace. Those who are not dyslexic but just behind for some reason or other, can get through the beginning books as rapidly as he has time to read - always being checked by the tests which occur every fifty frames. To these there are no supplied answers (as there are with the other frames) and it is soon quite evident if there has been any cheating.

4. Psychologically, the books are very sound. They are large, and just the turning over of the big pages gives the child a sense of progression and importance. There is plenty of colour, and above all, humour, both in the drawings and the sentences. The print is bold and easy to read, well-spaced, and gradually decreases in size as skills increase.

5. Once accustomed to the procedures required, the child can work for considerable stretches entirely on his own. Also he is not competing against anyone, just himself - his own previous record. Although in the first two books the subject matter is not exactly thrilling, it is challenging enough to give a feeling of mastery and progression, which, for the time being, must take the place of more interesting material. Beside the picture of an enormously fat man may be the caption, "Am I a fish?" Being able to share a joke can raise morale no end. The eagerness with which the children come to the class (and beg to come oftener - even twice a day) testifies to the soundness of this slow but sure approach for these particular children.

7. Other excellent aids for the teaching of sounds can be dove-tailed into this scheme very easily. I myself use the Pictograms* of Mrs. Lyn Wendon, introducing each new sound as it occurs in the text with an accompanying drawing made from the letter or sound itself. Since the workbooks are scientifically designed by linguistic and educational experts who know all about word counts and unequivocal sounds, the introduction of each phonogram is in an orderly sequence and used as many times in a story as is feasible. After having drawn the pictogram, the child writes each new word which incorporates it underneath the drawing. In this way, by the time he has finished the workbooks, he has a complete dictionary of sounds, alphabetically arranged, for reference, at the back of his loose-leaf notebook. Mr. Moseley's Colour Code magnetic perspex tiles* are useful, too, and can be used to spell out a family of words to show similarity of structure and in many other ways.

8. Because of the division of each workbook into frames, and the controlled introduction of new words, the making of games to accompany each stage of learning is made very easy. I myself have made over fifty on the lines of Old Maid, Happy Families, Snap and Speed. Every lesson ends with some kind of word game, thanks to these blank playing cards which look professional and slip easily in the hand. Those in the class who may not be quite ready for a particular game, not yet having reached the sound, join in, and if helped, do not get discouraged but rather feel important to be doing something advanced, and are in some measure then prepared unconsciously for the sound when they encounter it later.

The Magic Squares of Mr. and Mrs. Childs can also be chosen to coincide with the general level of attainment of the class and the specific sounds needing drill at a particular moment. The accompanying manual is useful here. One can also use the excellent, not too hard, crosswords in Fun with Words.

9. The team of compilers fortunately, in addition to being language experts, have both wit and imagination and many of the stories are charming, especially in the later books where there is not so much limitation of vocabulary. For each programmed reading workbook, there is an accompanying storybook, using only the words that the child has learned up to that point, or ones with similar blends and sounds. These hard-cover books are of normal size and have some very good stories in them. Many is the time I've heard a child say, as he handed one of them back to me, "That's a good book, Miss".

10. There are three series of workbooks (with one for the Pre-reading stage) number 1 - 7; 8 - 14; 15 - 20 and each book is divided into units for easy reference for the teacher. The reading age goes from 5 to 12.4 years. The cumulative total of actual words introduced up to the end of Book 14 is 1377 but of course the skills to unlock many more should have been acquired. The total at the end of Book 20 is about 2900. I have used only Books 1 - 15. For each series there is a separate Teacher's Handbook full of suggestions and useful word lists (one for each section). It also contains supplementary material if a child has not managed to grasp the main intent of a workbook. I cannot think of a more useful aid for anyone just starting remedial work than these manuals which are absolutely specific as to how to proceed. The workbooks can be used over and over again, for answers are written in loose-leaf note-books. These are more flexible than bound ones, allowing for the insertion at will of drawings or any extra work.

11. There is a test in each workbook after every fifty frames, based on the new words introduced. Also there are three special books of tests, one for each series, incorporating all the new words in each book. Therefore in the Test Book for Workbooks 1 - 7 there are seven separate tests, each several pages long, with pictures in colour, usually including a story on which there are comprehension questions to be answered in a word or a phrase. In addition to all these, there is a Placement Test for newcomers whose reading level may be unknown. The number of the test in which he fails is the number of the workbook he should start on.

There is, of course, no scheme without its drawbacks, but I feel there are fewer in this than in any other I have yet investigated or used. The books are American and words such as "colour" or "favour" must be changed before the children see them. Also, naturally, there are references to a few objects and situations non-existent in England. But these are surprisingly few (money, for instance) and are accepted as quite natural.

The many drawings - actually one accompanies every piece of reading - are not exactly the kind I would choose, for they are somewhat crude, both in form and colour. On the other hand, they are lively and often amusing, and the children seem to enjoy them.

Because the progression through the various sounds is relatively slow, children often cannot, for some time, read ordinary easy books from the library. Of course this is a source of frustration to both the children and the teacher, but one just has to accept the fact that if, after two years, perhaps, or many more, in an ordinary class, these children have learned nothing, their state of ignorance would just continue without this drastic treatment of starting from the very beginning and building slowly. Eventually, of course, they can whisk through recognized reading scheme books, having tackled all the difficulties one by one before.

But the main difficulty encountered, is a surprising one - the actual acquiring of the books. Having proved so popular, they are constantly going out of print, and the interim periods seem to get longer and longer. At the moment, all those between 15 and 20 are not available, and the 8 - 14 are now in the process of being re-printed, but, I am told, should be ready by the end of November. Direct orders seem to be more successful than through requisitioning. Even then, delivery can be painfully slow. I sometimes feel I would like to take a trunk to the McGraw-Hill establishment in Maidenhead, ask to see their storerooms and help myself.

References

Programmed Reading Series Cynthia D. Buchanan, M.A. and Associates
McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited
Shoppenhangers Road, Maidenhead, Berks
There is a free "Flow Chart" which one can write for which sets out the entire scheme in detail, with all the words and sounds listed for each book. Miss Buchanan of Radcliffe-Harvard is one of the leading "programmers" in the United States.
Each workbook and storybook costs about 17/6 (according to the rate of exchange).

Pictograms with accompanying Manual (very useful)
Mrs. Lyn Wendon
39 New Road, Barton, Cambridge.

D. V. Moseley, M.A. magnetic perspex sound tiles
Centre for Learning Disabilities
86 Newman Street, London, W.1.
The first sets made were experimental. New ones are likely to be available by the end of the year.

Blank playing cards 35/- per thousand plus carriage
The Amalgamated Playing Card Company Limited
Sales Manager Mr. J. F. Bell
Eastgate House, 10 Eastgate, Leeds 2.

Magic Squares by Sally and Ralph Childs
(A book with accompanying manual which shows what sounds predominate in each "square")
Educators Publishing Service,
75 Moulton Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139. U.S.A.

Fun with Words Books 1 - 5 about 1/6 each
Wheaton, Exeter.

The best markers to use on the rather shiny-surfaced playing cards have been found by experiment to be the newest ones available at Smith's called Platignum Rapid Markers

Carol Coates has no financial interest in any of the above items (Ed.)

The Review is, of course, sent to all members; members who are parents of dyslexic children may also ask for copies to be sent to schools, persons, or authorities whose interest they may wish to engage. Our membership is not confined to Surrey but we hope that new local or County Societies will be formed. We shall be only too glad to give newly formed groups any information or help in our power; we look forward to the day when co-operation between us may lead to a National Society for the protection and promotion of the interests of the unfortunate dyslexic child.

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Our next issue in April 1970 will include an article by Miss D. Pammenter, Deputy Secretary General of the British Council for Rehabilitation of the Disabled, on the work being done to help the adult dyslexic; W.K. Gardner writing on "Training Teachers to Teach Reading"; and "Some types of Reading Backwardness" the paper read by Professor M.D. Vernon to the Society last September in Chertsey.

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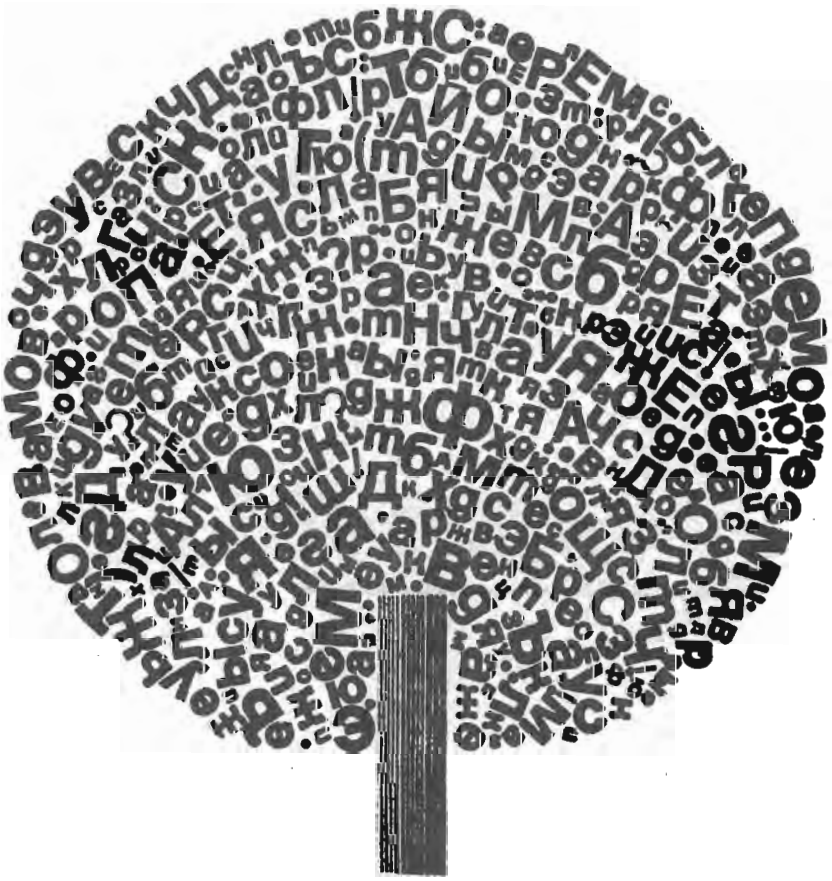

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