

A KEY VOICE TECHNIQUE: Reading for Meaning AND ITS BACKGROUND

By Esther de Burgh-Thomas

NB Relevant illustration is below Professor Snowling's email which is below.

The reason I wrote to Professor Snowling (see her answer to my email below) was to check with her what I had come to believe from the Paulesu 1995 PET scans (a research document entitled, *Is dyslexia a disconnection syndrome?*) as featured in her book, *Dyslexia*. Snowling's reply, below, confirmed that I was on the right track and why using the dyslexic's own voice is crucial. There is a very simple basic difference between the dyslexic and non-dyslexic brain. One brain processes sound and meaning together and one does not. If the sound of the word and its meaning are processed separately, as is the case with dyslexia (listening and writing but not speaking), it means that at any one moment, only either the sound of a word OR its meaning are being processed by the dyslexic brain. So, whereas the non-dyslexic hears and understands everything in a word at the same time, the dyslexic first hears a sound but not the meaning because they can ONLY process the sound. What then happens is an automatic change-over such that the dyslexic is processing ONLY the meaning but not the sound. Again, this causes listening and reading comprehension problems. AND YET whatever the dyslexic processes through their natural voice is processed as well as if they were not dyslexic. For example, here is a simple technique for overcoming reading comprehension difficulties:

READING FOR MEANING (NB This is only for tricky paragraphs the dyslexic needs to understand. Many dyslexics are happy with the extent to which already comprehend text.)

- A) First store the sounds of the words in the paragraph by reading aloud;
- B) Now read silently to store the meanings of the same words;
- C) Now imagine a younger, less cognitively able person needs you to read the paragraph aloud to them and that the words of the text will make it too difficult for them to follow. Instead of reading it, take each sentence and put it into your own words: words your listener will, you know, understand.

Tip; you can add in extra words to the text or you leave the words as they are but extract the occasional connector word – whatever would make it easier for a younger listener to follow if you were helping them with the paragraph.

Because you have just read the paragraph aloud and silently your brain has all the information at the ready for it. It won't feel like that to you to begin with so you have to have faith that the information will come as soon as you begin speaking it. The important thing is you are not simply decoding (which means only using Broca's area), you have *putting it into your own words*. You were combining sound production with meaning (meaning means you had to combine semantic processing from Wernicke's area with sound processing from Broca's area). This is called using the *natural* voice.

I have seen law students who were about to give up because reading a law page nine times was not working experience a moment when, for the first time, they knew they had it in them to get a law degree. This skill is equally important for dyslexic children of all ages.

One of my dyslexic, students, an engineer from Imperial College had been helping his friends by reading through texts with them and suddenly realised, when I went through this technique with him, that this was his super-power. He went from failing his exams miserably to getting a first and a top job in the engineering world.

Every time the dyslexic uses their natural voice their brain does something entirely different from usual IT PROCESS WORD SOUNDS AND MEANINGS AT THE SAME TIME. This simple fact is at the heart of what has removed the dyslexic's power in literacy and academic work.

IMPORTANT. The order of reading above was aloud first, silently second. There are two kinds of dyslexic. If you are a phonological dyslexic then you read aloud first. If you are a surface dyslexic you read silently first. Every dyslexic has a strength, either reading aloud or silently but this can be misleading. I have worked with dyslexics whose natural aptitude was for reading aloud but who had been conditioned by schools and parents to read silently. Sadly, then, you can't always tell which one you are although if you try the above technique both ways you should be able to work it out.

Conclusion Try the above method both ways and monitor yourself extremely carefully or ask me for a screening.

The email below is from Professor Snowling and covers the above phenomenon (the dyslexic brain not processing sound at the same time as meaning).

-----Original Message-----

From: Maggie Snowling [mailto:m.snowling@psych.york.ac.uk]

Sent: 07 November 2010 16:18

To: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Subject: RE: A hypothesis at the heart of dyslexia

Dear Esther

It was nice to hear your thoughts. I do think dyslexia is associated with problems of activation around Broca's area, particularly retrieval of phonological information, and certainly this would affect the circuit to Wernicke area. I'm not sure that this helps us much though with the issue of intervention and examination arrangements. I'm keen on the use of speech-text recognition rather than a scribe, as more independent

Best wishes

Maggie

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Developmental Disorders of Language, Learning & Cognition by Hulme & Snowling
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