Dyslexia REVIEW

The Journal of The Dyslexia Guild

The Dyslexia Guild
LITERACY SPECIALISTS · TEACHERS · ASSESSORS

www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/dyslexia-guild

Volume 28, Number 2
Summer 2018

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The Dyslexia Guild

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Contact us:
Editors: Kathryn Benzine, Head of Education and Training
Janice Beechey, Guild Administrator and Librarian

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Dyslexia Guild Membership and Subscriptions
Email: guild@dyslexiaaction.org.uk
Tel: 01784 222342
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Editorial

Welcome to the Summer Edition of Dyslexia Review. On the eve of our annual conference we have an exciting line up of speakers to hear in Birmingham as well as contributors to this edition of the journal. Gill Cochrane from our postgraduate department introduces Professor Jeff Bowers from Bristol University whose recent research questions the phonics-based approaches that have been adopted in schools. Supported by a case study from Dr Peter Bowers this article is a feast of research revelations.

Dyslexia Review is delighted to welcome two international contributions to this issue of the journal. Maja Kelić, a Croatian speech and language therapist and Michela Bettinelli, an Italian specialist teacher and adviser present their own research into aspects of English language learning for second language learners in their respective countries. This is an insightful article that not only explains similar and different difficulties encountered by their learners but also explains much about methods of language teaching and learning in Italy and Croatia and how these impact on the learner.

From Denmark we welcome Sigrid Klerke and Janus Askø Madsen from the Eyejustread (EJR) project. Using cutting edge eye tracking technology EJR have tracked the eye movements of learners with literacy difficulties and enabled specialist teachers to use this as part of a remedial and recovery programme for reading. This project is making great headway in Denmark and we anticipate that it will soon be available to the UK market as an additional tool for our specialists to use.

Still on a European theme and keeping the home flag flying, Helen Trory and Sheena Bell from the University of Northampton present the conclusion of the European Commission supported project into disability and employment transition. A best practice project with useful publications which can be accessed through the supporting website. Our Units of Sound specialists will be pleased to hear from Margaret Rooms and the team at UoS who provide a feature on working with ESOL students and a special offer to Guild members.

From the team at Dyslexia Action we bring you an article on Credit and Level designed to demystify the qualification arena and to help you brush up your continuing professional development ideas going forward. Jan Beechey also provides a round-up of the latest books on academic writing and a summary on GDPR legislation just in case anyone has missed this detail in their email of late! We hope to see you at conference and wish you all an enjoyable summer of reading wherever you are.

Kathryn Benzine
Editor

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Beyond Phonics

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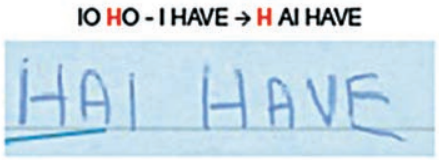
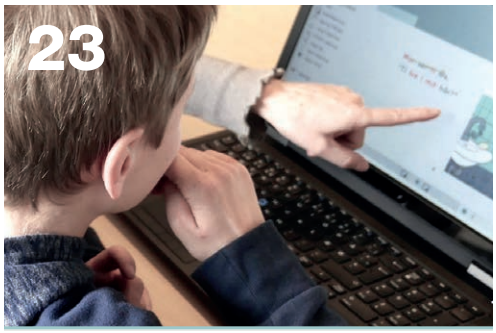


The dynamics of English as a foreign language



Seeing reading through students' eyes

SENEL Special Educational Needs Employment Links

Membership News

Jan Beechey summarises recent GDPR information for Guild members

Where can I find further information on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into effect on 25 May 2018?

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website is the place to start and there is much useful information that is regularly updated including a Data Protection Self-Assessment Toolkit for small businesses. The Frequently Asked Questions for the Education Sector offers the following clear explanation:

- The GDPR applies to 'personal data', which means any information relating to an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified in particular by reference to an identifier. You can find more detail in the key definitions section of our Guide to the GDPR.
- The GDPR sets out the information you should supply and when individuals should be informed. The information you supply about the processing of personal data must be:
  - concise, transparent, intelligible and easily accessible;
  - written in clear and plain language, particularly if addressed to a child; and
  - free of charge.

See: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/education/education-gdpr-faqs/

Preparing for the GDPR 12 steps to take now puts the new legislation into context and sets out the 12 key premises to be mindful of:

1. Awareness
2. Information you hold
3. Communicating privacy information
4. Individual's rights
5. Subject access requests
6. Lawful basis for processing personal data
7. Consent
8. Children
9. Data breaches
10. Data protection by Design and Data Protection Impact Assessments
11. Data Protection Officers
12. International

See: https://ico.org.uk/media/1624219/preparing-for-the-gdpr-12-steps.pdf

Key points relating to Children
You should start thinking now about whether you need to put systems in place to verify individuals' ages and to obtain parental or guardian consent for any data processing activity.

If your organisation offers online services ('information society services') to children and relies on consent to collect information about them, then you may need a parent or guardian's consent in order to process their personal data lawfully.

The GDPR sets the age when a child can give their own consent to this processing at 16 (although this may be lowered to a minimum of 13 in the UK). If a child is younger then you will need to get consent from a person holding 'parental responsibility'. This could have significant implications if your organisation offers online services to children and collects their personal data. Remember that consent has to be verifiable and that when collecting children's data your privacy notice must be written in language that children will understand.

Advice service for small businesses
This dedicated advice line from the ISO offers help to small organisations preparing for the new data protection law, including the General Data Protection Regulation.

The phone service is aimed at people running small businesses or charities. To access the new service, dial the ICO helpline on 0303 123 1113 and select option 4 to be directed to staff who can offer support.

As well as advice on preparing for the General Data Protection Regulation, callers can also ask questions about current data protection rules and other legislation regulated by the ICO including electronic marketing and Freedom of Information.

The Dyslexia Guild

LITERACY SPECIALISTS • TEACHERS • ASSESSORS

Annual Summer Conference

Thursday 28 June 2018

Aston University, Aston Street, Birmingham B4 7ET

For all those with a professional interest in dyslexia and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs)

- Hear expert speakers talk about research and current topics
- Network with others from around the world of SpLD
- See the most up-to-date resources from our Dyslexia Action Shop
- Attend seminar sessions and learn about specific topics
- Take home an attendance certificate for your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) 5 hours

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Conference Programme

Wednesday 27 June

3.00pm-9.00pm Guest Speaker, pre-dinner drinks, conference dinner.

Thursday 28 June

Morning Agenda

9.00am-10.00am Registration –exhibitions and tea/coffee.

10.30.am-11.30am **Keynote Speaker: Professor Judit Kormos PhD, SFHEA**
National Teaching Fellow Professor of Second Language Acquisition and Director of Research, Lancaster University.
The multilingual aspects of dyslexia and the learning of additional languages in classroom contexts.

11.30am-12.00pm Exhibitions and tea/coffee.

12.00pm-1.00pm **Keynote Speaker: Professor Clare Wood**
Researcher in developmental and educational psychology, Nottingham Trent University.

The immediate and longer-term effectiveness of a speech-rhythm-based reading intervention for beginning readers.

1.00pm-2.00pm Exhibitions, Lunch.

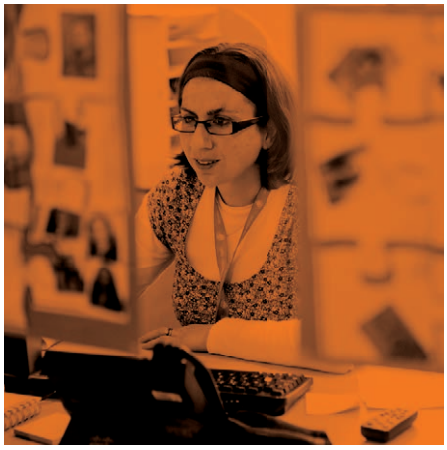
Afternoon Agenda

2.00pm-3.00pm **Speaker: Dr Adrian Wallbank**
Rethinking academic writing for learners with dyslexia.

3.00pm-3.20pm Exhibitions and tea/coffee.

3.20pm-4.20pm **Speakers: Dr Karisa Krcmar and Mrs Tina Horsman**
Mindfulness for study: from procrastination to action.

4.20pm Conference close.



Conference Fees

Wednesday and Thursday
(includes conference dinner and accommodation Wednesday, and conference, lunch and refreshments Thursday)
£247.00 inclusive of VAT

Thursday 10am-4.20pm
(includes conference, lunch and refreshments)

Thursday only **(members)**
£125 inc of VAT

Thursday only **(non member)**
£150 inc of VAT

Beyond Phonics: In conversation with Professor Jeff Bowers


Jeff Bowers


Gill Cochrane

In this article Gill Cochrane, Programme Manager for the postgraduate Professional Programme talks to Professor Jeff Bowers of Bristol University and considers the subject matter of his recent research paper.

In this article we consider the subject matter of the research paper *Beyond Phonics: The Case for Teaching Children the Logic of the English Spelling System* (Bowers & Bowers, 2017) in an interview with its lead author, Professor Jeffery Bowers of Bristol University. The topics arising include what sort of system is the English language, what sorts of educational interventions and approaches promote and enrich children's literacy knowledge-base and the quality of evidence used to bolster educational policy.

Few topics in psychology have generated so much heat as the recognition of words. Reading, whether of books or of briefly exposed words with emotional connotations, has been a source of continuous controversy since the nineteenth century. Yet despite its liveliness, an author who approaches this subject has some reason to fear that his readers may find it tiresome or even painful (Neisser, 1967. p. 105).

Neisser's words in his seminal work *Cognitive Psychology* ring as true today, more than 50 years after their publication, as the 'reading wars' (Pearson, 2004) concerning the best way to develop early reading and literacy skills continue. Pearson was writing about the continuing skirmishes between the 'whole-word' approach and the 'phonics-based' approach to reading. His paper sought to recommend a more balanced and considered stance on reading instruction policy. This balance was and continues to be difficult to achieve because in this age of sound-bytes and hash-tags we face the '… persistent problem of interpretation that tends toward oversimplification' (Pearson, 2004, p. 238) rather than attempting to process and report nuance in research findings. Pearson goes on to state: 'Research is often used in a selective, uneven, and opportunistic manner by policy makers', but problems with bias and not processing the nuance of research findings can have other consequences as well. This sort of 'confirmation bias' (unwittingly only accepting new information when it confirms what we already believe), is something we must all guard against – even if we are cognitive psychologists or teachers. People who display confirmation bias tend to purposefully seek out evidence that bolsters their current belief set and tend to purposefully reject any evidence that contradicts it. To link this back to reading research and educational policy, it matters how we conceptualise literacy-related difficulties and indeed the very nature of the English language. It matters because our assumptions predispose us to think of strategies to support learners in particular ways. Our assumptions bias our attention and screen out research evidence concerning the efficacy or theoretical significance of certain methods that we might otherwise carefully consider.

I opened the interview by asking Professor Bowers about the rationale for the paper which explains that the predominance of phonics-based approaches in schools was based on a mistaken premise:

> *"The main logic of my paper is people have a misunderstanding of the writing system… they think English is an alphabetic system that is shoddy and needs to be reformed. They say: 'if only we had Spanish…'"*

We discussed the fact that every language has its particular challenges, if not for all its speakers, then for some who may have particular cognitive profiles/information processing difficulties. These sorts of difficulties may not be helped by rote-learning of grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme links. We touched upon the orthographic transparency of Spanish, but noted how the commonplace phenomenon of elision (missing out segments of words in speech) can make it a challenging language to learn beyond an elementary stage for non-native speakers. This shows us that languages are complex, dynamic phenomena that change over time. These factors need to be taken into account when we try to quantify a language's ease of adoption or 'teachability' (Cahill & Karan, 2008, p.3) this takes us 'beyond phonics' as so many other factors associated with spoken language and its written form need to be taken into account. As Frith puts it:

> *"When alphabets have been in use for a particular language for centuries, then there are likely to be many changes to the spoken language and even in the meaning of words. Writing systems, like ships at sea, tend to take on extra cargo and end up encrusted in barnacles. This changes their efficiency but also gives them their character and history. English orthography is one of the 'ships' that exemplifies a writing system that has grown to be particularly complex and historically rich" (Frith, 2010, Foreword).*

Bowers returned to the mis-characterisation of English as a purely alphabetic language, he contests that English has a reduced 'efficiency'. He argues that English is a morpho-phonemic language system that has developed to represent the intersection of morphological, etymological and phonological elements. A quote from Venetsky (1999) used within the Bowers and Bowers paper, sums up this more positive view of the orthography of English: 'English orthography is not a failed transcription system invented out of madness or perversity. Instead, it is a more complex

system that preserves bits of history (i.e. etymology), facilitates understanding, and also translates sound' (p.4). I asked how difficult it had been to get across the importance of morphology (and etymology) as elements of a balanced literacy 'diet' and for the need to reappraise the level and purpose of phonics-based input in the school curriculum:

> *"People don't hear what we say. They think that we are anti- the idea that letters have something to do with sounds: we're not saying that. We're saying that we have to understand how grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences work but within the context of morphology. To ignore the role of morphology is the mistake. It's not that we claim there is no phonology relevant to reading… There is a lot of consistent structure to English organised largely by morphology, so why would you not teach all regularities? Why are people so fixated on only one sub-set of regularities (grapheme-to-phoneme mappings)?"*

A key message of the paper is that the role of morphology and etymology in literacy learning have been underestimated and that the use of morphological and etymological approaches are not as widely used as they should be. The role that morphological awareness, that is explicit knowledge about the morphemic structure of words, which enables the manipulation of and reflection upon those structures (Carlisle, 2003; Tong, Deacon, Kirby, Cain & Parrila, 2011; Gombert, 2003), plays in literacy development is still relatively under-emphasised. There is a good range of evidence that substantiates the positive influence morphological awareness has in the following areas:

- Typical comprehension skills (Tong et al., 2011; Berninger, Nielsen, Abbott, Wijsman & Raskind, 2008) including reading comprehension (Kirby & Deacon, 2004; Reid, 2009; Kirby, Deacon, Bowers, Izenberg, Wade-Woolley & Parrila, 2012).
- To inform speech (Berko, 1958).
- Several aspects of reading including word reading (Devonshire, Morris & Fluck, 2013; Roman, Kirby, Parrila, Wade-Woolley & Deacon, 2009; Burani, Marcolini, De Luca & Zoccolotti, 2008; Pollatsek, Hyönä & Bertram, 2000; Elbro & Arnbak, 1996), and reading fluency/speed (Burani et al., 2008; Pollatsek, et al., 2000; Elbro & Arnbak, 1996; Kirby et al., 2012; Nagy, Berninger & Abbot, 2006).
- Vocabulary acquisition (Anglin, 1993; Bertram, Laine, & Virkkala, 2000).
- Spelling (Devonshire & Fluck, 2010; Devonshire et al., 2013; Trieman & Cassar, 1996; Wolter, Wood & Dzatko, 2009).
- Development of writing skills (Berninger, et al., 2008; Green, McCutchen, Schwiebert, Quinlan, Eva-Wood & Juelis, 2003).

In spite of a wide evidence base for the importance of morphological input in literacy instruction, the emphasis still rests heavily upon phonics input: it is overwhelmingly seen as the sole kick-start mechanism for literacy development by many if not most practitioners. This can leave some learners in a phonological corral: repeatedly going over the same small numbers of grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme links and consonant blends, as it is assumed if these cannot be grasped that work on other aspects of literacy (syntax, punctuation, suffixing etc.) will be futile. Bowers notes:

> *"Most kids will learn to read (in spite of the method) but some are struggling and it's got to be so disheartening to repeatedly fail at a task that is intrinsically meaningless (converting letters to sounds). If you can get kids succeeding on other word-related tasks – it boosts their confidence and they are succeeding. My co-author and brother, Peter, has this great anecdote about a conversation he had with a teacher: [see box at end]. It sums up the sort of enthusiasm that the Structured Word Inquiry (SWI) approach can stir up in a child who's been struggling to read."*

This links to an interesting point raised in the paper: a discussion of whether the strategic support given to learners should be intent upon compensating for the weaknesses/difficulties of the struggling reader, or to be focusing on restoring or improving particular skills that the struggling reader might be lacking (that is compensatory versus ameliorative instruction). Phonics-based instruction is clearly an ameliorative strategy (i.e. that seeks to remediate deficiencies), but can we assume that all children will be helped by it? Anecdotally, there is evidence that not all children thrive on a synthetic phonics diet. Yet standard synthetic phonics programmes do not have an alternative to suggest in such cases (except 'more phonics'). An example of this from a question asked during a teacher training session for a popular phonics-based intervention programme:

> ***Specialist Teacher***: What would you suggest I do if the child I was working with, perhaps a child with a poor working memory, couldn't grasp the link between the phoneme and the grapheme using the drill outlined by you?
>
> ***Synthetic Phonics Trainer***: We recommend going over things again and again until the link is secured.

Another example, of the 'more phonics' response, comes from a research paper. In 2014 Snowling and Hulme pondered over the unexpectedly disappointing set of results of a series of phonology-based intervention studies:

> *Current causal models of reading development arguably have focused almost exclusively on the cognitive processes underlying reading development and how best to remediate deficiencies in such processes. Such models are typically silent on broader influences (motivational, attentional, and socio-cultural) on learning, however. It is concluded that future theories will need to be broadened in order to develop more effective interventions for children with a variety of reading and language learning difficulties (p. 300).*

But the role of morphological awareness and the enriching types of word-study found when work on etymology is carried out with learners was not even mentioned as a potential way to 'broaden' future theories. Instead the authors consider that the disappointing results could arise from the fact that 'the intensity of interventions may simply

be insufficient' (p. 303) or that the interventions in the studies did not last long enough. Similarly, back in 2006, a randomised controlled trial for beginning readers with literacy delay (Hatcher, Hulme, Miles, Carroll, Hatcher, Gibbs et al., 2006) found that around a quarter of the children 'resisted' treatment (failed to respond/improve). Furthermore, '… the children with severe reading problems at the beginning of the study (indexed by low scores on word recognition, letter knowledge and phoneme manipulation) and children in receipt of free school meals tended to respond less strongly to the programme' (Hatcher et al., 2006, p. 825). In other words, those who needed strategic support the most were not helped by the type of input given. Compton, Miller, Ellemann & Steacey (2014) also suggest the limited success of approaches (like phonics-based approaches) in remedial instruction is they are not rich enough to engage the cognitive processes necessary to facilitate a breakthrough in reading skills in such children:

'… [we question] the effectiveness of the prevailing interventions intended to improve word-reading and reading comprehension skills in children with reading disability (RD). Our hypothesis is that we as a field may have inadvertently diluted reading theory in ways that compromise the power of intervention programs. For both word reading and reading comprehension we argue that current intervention programs target instruction at a knowledge level below that which is necessary to foster reading skill development that is "generative" in children with RD. (p. 55)

However, other researchers, echoing Bowers & Bowers (2017) position, have noted the need for enrichment tasks to ensure that children fulfil their 'language potential'. For example, Roy and Chiat (2013) examined the impact of low socio-economic status on language development in the UK. They argue that: *"… a proportion of children from low SES backgrounds who perform poorly on standard measures of language have intact language potential. Hypothetically, if they had grown up in a more advantaged environment, they would perform in the normal range. For these children enhanced input is needed to realise their language potential. If home and community environments remain unchanged, they will continue to lag behind peers" (p.21, 2013).* Again the type of 'enhanced input' needed is not going to be provided by a phonics-based approach alone. Bowers advocates the use of compensatory strategies:

"I think it's a false theoretical claim that if a learner has phonological deficits, that therefore we need to target phonology, logically the answer could equally be because learners like this have a phonological deficit let's try to teach them in a different way…"

The approach advocated by Bowers and Bowers (2017) is Structured Word Inquiry (SWI, Bowers, P.N. & Kirby, 2010). Interestingly, SWI provides both compensatory forms of instruction (a focus on morphemes within words and word roots), as well as ameliorative forms of instruction (looking at how phonemes are represented within the context of morphology). It is a predominantly explorative mode of learning, that encourages relational understanding (Skemp, 1989) – the appreciation of patterns in bodies in knowledge, and the drive to find out the connections between things rather than a surface understanding of rules or rote learning of facts. As Bowers puts it:

"If you understand that spellings are in a fundamental way organised around meaning as well as phonology there's a whole range of new methods of instruction. One thing we know from psychology is that the best way to learn is to attach meaning and organise things. That is a fundamental, uncontroversial, transparent truth… so if you can attach meaning to something, you should."

I asked him about the 'structure and meaning test' (part of the process of SWI) that is mentioned in his paper. He gave me an example:

"If you have two words, for example, 'corner' must be somehow related to 'corn'… if they are morphologically related they have to share the same structure, so 'corner' passes that test : it's 'corn' + <er>. But is 'corner' in anyway related to the meaning of 'corn'? That's the meaning test. Kids in First Grade are using this amazing resource, The Online Etymology Dictionary (https://www.etymonline.com/) to check if words like this are related… Structured word inquiry is not the end goal. The goal isn't to have someone name accurately a bunch of words that are connected …. It's the importance of the act of organising things and relating things- that involves a lot of meta-skills."

An excellent illustration of the use of the Online Etymology Dictionary with younger learners is given in a YouTube clip: https://youtu.be/53iJ4AnMRLU. The quality of the discussion between the children and the amount they draw from the activity demonstrates the potential of this approach to engage and empower young learners and to develop them metacognitively. Matrices (as in Figure 2) are used both to capture 'morphological families': words that share a common root. They act as very succinct records and reference cards that can be used for a wide variety of word-building and word-exploration activities.

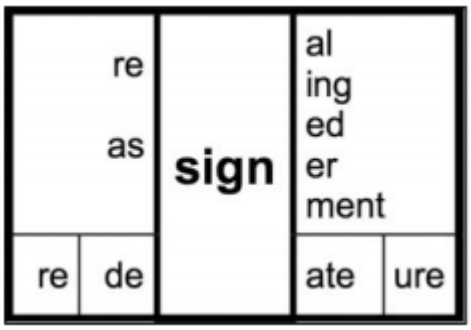


Figure 2

Finally, we returned to the issue of 'confirmation bias' in the field of reading research and how this might be reducing the potential for researchers to conduct intervention studies that featured morphological/etymological approaches to language learning and language enrichment. Bowers is about to publish a paper that systematically reviews the evidence-base for phonics-based interventions, he states:

"People accept such lame evidence as supporting the efficacy of phonics, but the actual evidence for phonics is so weak … it doesn't justify the absolute commitment to this approach. People need to understand that there is not very good evidence; this might make them more open to understanding other methods that support reading development … Currently it is hard to conduct research in alternative intervention approaches to phonics… hardly anyone is talking about the work done by Devonshire and colleagues in this field."

To give just one example of the weakness of the actual evidence in support of systematic phonics, we discussed the National Reading Panel Report 2000. This report is one of the most quoted pieces of evidence in defence of the predominant use of synthetic phonics to exclusion of other methods. Yet even around the time of its publication there was unrest, and in 2003 Camilli and Vargas, published a re-examination of the evidence. They '… arrived at substantially different interpretations of the same evidence' and noted that 'If the NRP results are taken to mean that effective instruction in reading should focus on phonics to the exclusion of other curricular activities, instructional policies are likely to be misdirected' (pp. 36-37).

As Professor Bowers suggests, his current work in this area should not be taken collectively as an argument in support of 'whole language' and related methods of instruction as opposed to synthetic phonics, but rather, as a sincere and thorough initiative that seeks to highlight the need for alternative approaches to reading instruction and to champion learner-centred and metacognitively-oriented approaches to study in our classrooms.

The Bowers and Bowers (2017) research paper discussed in this article can be downloaded from Professor Bowers blog site: https://jeffbowers.blogs.ilrt.org/ - it is found under the PUBLICATIONS tab.

Anecdote from Dr Peter Bowers:

This quote came from a conversation I had with a friend and colleague of mine called Gail. Gail had worked as an Orton-Gillingham tutor for 30 years and had thus taught through a phonologically-focused method for all that time before encountering the Structured Word Inquiry system (SWI)[1].

This was about a year or two into her work with SWI. She was excitedly telling me about the fact that a struggling child who could not read had started to come to their sessions with a little notebook in which he wrote words he noticed during the week between their sessions that he wanted to investigate with her. His notebook would be full of misspellings, but the point was that their work together had obviously provoked this non-reader to notice and think about interesting words and their spellings outside of their sessions.

My friend was rightfully very excited. Not only could she now just start lessons on a word that her student was inherently interested in — and had been wondering about — but that interest in and of itself was clear evidence of this student's learning. This was a child who would throw levelled books and phonics activities across the room in frustration in traditional remediation programs.

When Gail told me about this student bringing his notebook of noticed words to her sessions, the contrast regarding motivation struck me immediately, so I asked her that question. "In your 30 years of tutoring kids before SWI, did you ever once have a learner come to your session and ask, "Can we work on /f/ today?"

Of course, my question answers itself. The point being that phonemes and graphemes are definitionally abstract things — and things we *must* help children understand if we want them to learn to read and write. What this little story illustrates is something that should be obvious anyway. We don't help learners gain an understanding of abstract concepts by removing them from their meaningful context, practising them, and then later bringing those abstract content to its meaningful context.

Any instruction that practices grapheme-phoneme correspondences outside of the context of a word is doing just that. Of course, my friend taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the context of words all the time as well. However, not in the context of a *word family.*

What makes a grapheme-phoneme convention particularly interesting to a learner is when surprising correspondences are explained in a meaningful way — by how they link meaningfully related words.

In the link below[1] you can see a story that is actually about this exact learneer with another SWI tutor who also worked with him. It's worth a read. The relevant example in here is how Beckett got excited about encountering the word <magician> and noticing that the <c> was writing different "sounds" (phonemes) in its relative <magic>. The interest in learning about this grapheme-phoneme correspondence of the <c> — that it can write both /s/ and /ʃ/ (of course it can write /k/ too) is provoked by seeing how that feature of the phonology of <c> is *serving a useful, meaningful function* - to link the obviously related words <magic> and <magician>.

This aspect of the phonology of <c> is often not taught explicitly in phonics programs. But even when it is, the comparison of teaching these possibilities with example words — but not showing how this feature functions to link related words is clearly sub-optimal pedagogy as it removes the meaningful context… Instead the SWI approach suggests ensuring that orthographic phonology is taught in the contexts of *morphological and etymological* families. In this way, key concepts of orthographic phonology will surface in a meaningful context. The key is that the teacher has the orthographic knowledge to be able to leverage those learning opportunities.

[1] https://tinyurl.com/learningSWI

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Would you credit it!

Kathryn Benzine, Head of Education and Training at Dyslexia Action provides a summary guide to current qualifications considering how credit and level can define and clarify the qualifications marketplace.

In the Training department we are often asked about the 'value' of current qualifications as well as 'legacy' qualifications (i.e. those no longer offered). In this short article I will explain some important concepts that may help when considering if the much-loved and well-used qualifications you hold are still as valid today in the field of specialist teaching and assessment as they were when you first qualified.

Continuing Professional Development

Firstly and importantly, qualifications do not date, IF you keep up the specialist knowledge first gained through them with recent and relevant continuing professional development (CPD). Furthermore the skills acquired through qualifications, particularly those in higher education, transcend content knowledge in terms of the transferable skills that are applied to the workplace; these are not only retained through life but are usually built upon and further developed. Transferable skills at degree level include cognitive and intellectual skills (critical thinking, data analysis and synthesis, advanced literacy and numeracy); practical and professional skills, (researching and analysing, problem solving and decision making, planning and organising); interpersonal skills (communication, teamwork, leadership); and self-management skills (learning, improving and achieving, resilience, adaptability and drive, digital skills). These skills will be further enhanced at postgraduate level and may include others such as constructive self and peer evaluation, project management and report writing, presentation, academic writing, strategic and quality management, autonomy and initiative.

So will a one-day or short course further enhance these skills? Undoubtedly, critical self-awareness and an ability to analyse and question (the status quo and self), professional updating in terminology and content and re-evaluation of current and best practice

can all be achieved through exposure to ideas circulated in a peer network. This may mostly be through good CPD for those whose qualifications are complete. The annual Dyslexia Guild Conference is an example of just such an opportunity where ideas abound and discussion enables all participants to reflect and improve their professional awareness. Dyslexia Action is also a leading provider of specialist teaching and assessment CPD courses at levels 4, 5 and 7 and Guild members are able to update their professional practice and obtain discounts on some of these specialist courses. Fellows are able to take advantage of a free course each year. The Guild requires its members to undertake a minimum of 30 hours of CPD a year and this is checked on a sampling basis.

Defining Qualifications

So on to defining qualifications. We are often asked to describe how specialist teaching and assessment qualifications differ. It is not surprising that many people are confused, as there are many examples of awards available in the specialist teaching and assessment arena where a clear determination of credit and level is not provided. In addition, if nationally defined course descriptors are not adhered to there may be added concern about the validity of such awards. There are three important criteria that facilitate this understanding, level and level descriptors, and credit, all of which underpin our nationally recognised qualification frameworks.

Understanding level

Level is determined by providing reference points that enable those who undertake qualifications to understand where their programme sits in relation to other awards. QAA notes that Level Descriptors are used 'to determine the relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and learner autonomy associated with a particular level of learning and achievement'. (QAA 2008 p7)

Compare the two descriptors on the following page from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA 2014) and from Qualification and Component Levels (Ofqual 2015b).

Descriptor for a qualification at level 7 (QAA). The holder will have demonstrated:	**Descriptor for a qualification at level 7 (Ofqual).** The holder:

• a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
• a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
• originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
• conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  • to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  • to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
	• reformulates and uses practical, conceptual or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors.
	• critically analyses, interprets and evaluates complex information, concepts and theories to produce modified conceptions.
	• understands the wider contexts in which the area of study or work is located. Understands current developments in the area of study or work.
	• understands different theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the area of study or work.

Descriptor for a qualification at level 5 (QAA). The holder will have demonstrated:	**Descriptor for a qualification at level 5 (Ofqual).** The holder:
• knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed • ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context • knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study • an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.	• has practical, theoretical or technological knowledge and understanding of a subject or field of work to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts. • can analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information, concepts and ideas. • is aware of the nature and scope of the area of study or work. • understands different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.

The complexity and depth of a level 7 qualification should enable the individual to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information and ideas, reformulate, modify and produce change in areas of strategic activity. Level 7 or Master's level study is characterised by sustained and intensive work. It is intellectually demanding and requires critical and deeply-applied thinking skills. It does not necessarily provide answers but enables you to arrive at solutions through intellectual challenge and application.

A level 5 qualification will develop cognitive and performance skills, based on practical, theoretical, technological and applied knowledge and facilitate progression to higher level awards. Level 5 study enables the individual to formulate responses to well-defined problems and to exercise judgement and accept responsibility for personal and group outcomes. (SEEC 2016).

Inevitably it is not that simple, however level descriptors do provide a clear benchmark for course providers, learners and employers.

Qualification Frameworks

Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are mapped against the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This is maintained by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) which is the body that monitors and advises on quality and standards across UK Higher Education. This framework provides the qualification descriptors for higher education qualifications at levels, 4,5,6,7 and 8. Qualification descriptors describe the outcomes (which are assessed by the course provider) and the attributes of learning (the capabilities of the holder of the qualification) at higher education level. At most levels there will be more than one type of qualification that can be achieved but the outcomes and attributes will not be the same. So for example the first year of a master's degree course (level 7) will usually achieve a Postgraduate Certificate of Higher Education (60 credits) and the second year a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (90 - 120 credits) but a Master's degree (180 credits) will only be awarded when the learner achieves all the outcomes and attributes associated with a qualification at that level.

National Vocational qualifications are those that sit on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications and map against the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in the UK (Ofqual 2015). The RQF has replaced earlier frameworks the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The RQF recognises qualifications **by level** (8 levels supported by 3 entry levels) and **by size** expressed as Total Qualification Time which is the amount of time that it will typically take a learner to complete the qualification. This is different from Guided Learning Hours which is the time typically spent being taught or supervised in study. Total Qualification Time is expressed in credit as described in the next section.

These frameworks are not exhaustive, there are other frameworks including those in Scotland, Wales and, yes, Europe! To find out more about these, see Qualifications can Cross Boundaries (QAA 2017).

Understanding Credit

The establishment of credit as a means of measuring the volume of qualifications and for recognising the equivalence of learning is a relatively recent thing. SEEC (a consortium of UK universities and HE providers) was established in 1985 and published the first **Credit and level descriptors** for higher education in 1996 and more recently in 2016. The latest QAA credit guidance was published in 2014 and that of Ofqual for vocational qualifications in 2015.

What is credit?

Providing a credit rating to a qualification is a way of describing and quantifying learning that has taken place. It is also a way of providing a value to a qualification based on the level at which study has taken place. **One credit is allocated to 10 notional hours of learning** or, as described by Ofqual (2015a) as Total Qualification Time (TQT). The notional learning hours or TQT are the typical amount of time it will take to achieve a qualification. So a 10 credit course will have taken around 100 hours to achieve or about 4 full time days of learning whereas a 60 credit course will take about 600 hours or 25 days of full time learning. This learning will of course be spread out over a few hours a week for those undertaking it on a part-time or work-based basis and in practice may take longer depending on the individual's personal time/study allowance. The following table describes some typical credit and level ratings for UK qualifications.

Type of qualification	Framework Mapping	Level	Credits	Notes
Award	RQF	Entry to level 7	1 -12	All levels Minimum of 37
Certificate			13 - 36	All levels
Diploma			37+	All levels
Foundation Degree	HEQF	5	240	A minimum of 90 credits must be at level 5
Bachelor's Degree		6	360 Minimum	A minimum of 90 credits must be at Level 6
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE teaching)		6	120	20 or less credits at level 7
Postgraduate/ Professional Certificate		7	60	First 60 credits of a Master's qualification
Postgraduate/ Professional Diploma		7	90 - 120	Second 60 credits of a Master's qualification
Master's Degree		7	180	Final 60 credits of a Master's (usually a dissertation)
Doctorate		8	n/a	Doctoral degrees are not usually credit rated because of their basis in original research

Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes (CATS)

In theory credit can be gained across different qualifications and accumulated towards a specific goal. So for example 60 HE credits may be taken forward to a Master's degree **where the university recognises and allows such credit to be brought forward**. In practice this is easier in some areas of academic study where subject knowledge is similar or contributes towards a specific pathway. It is more difficult in subject areas where specific competencies are being examined at the same time such as in specialist teaching and specialist assessment.

A specialist teaching Diploma at Level 7, may however, be recognised by a university as contributing to a more generic award in Education Studies in Special Needs. However cross-disciplinary CATS is rarely possible. For example 60 HE credits in Specialist Teaching at Level 7 cannot be put together with 60 HE credits in French Literature to make a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching of French Literature! Separately though these qualifications will contribute to a professional portfolio, for example as part of a profile for a Study Skills Support Tutor.

Accreditation or Recognition of Prior Learning

There is however renewed enthusiasm in the possibilities for greater flexibility in where and what people study; the provision of transferring credit having recently been reviewed as a part of the government reforms for Higher Education in the shape of the Higher

Education and Research Act (2017). Most training providers and membership bodies will consider prior learning experience, known variously as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Accreditation of Prior **Experience** and Learning (APEL) recognising that the diversity of qualifications and experience brings further knowledge and professional development. If it isn't offered, the advice is to ask but be prepared to provide a transcript of what you have studied and some detail on the content such as a course syllabus or brochure which the Awarding Organisation may still retain.

Accreditation

So how does the accreditation of qualifications and awards fit into the picture? Accrediting Bodies should concern themselves with standards and provide acceptable benchmarks against which providers of professional qualifications can measure their quality of provision. Accrediting bodies include generic ones and specialist ones.

Generic bodies include the British Accreditation Council and the CPD Standards Office and are concerned with, amongst other things, standards of teaching and learning; course management and administration; learner support and advice; assessment of performance and progress; material content and delivery; technological support and accessibility.

Specialist teaching and assessment accreditation bodies include the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) and the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC); each of which have formulated a set of criteria to guide course providers. It is assumed that the criteria will ensure that accredited courses will therefore be fit for purpose and thereby ensure standards are met in terms of the practitioner's professional competence and practice. They should however also refer to the relevant national qualification frameworks, accepted level and credit rating criteria in providing these competency standards. For most professional bodies there will be benchmark criteria that sit around undergraduate or postgraduate levels of education.

Specialist Teaching Qualifications and Awards

How does this all impact upon the plethora of qualifications that sit around specialist teaching and qualifications you may ask? A knotty and not easily answered question when it comes to some of the awards and qualifications available in the UK today. A careful review of the **Level and Credit Rating** of a course will answer some of these questions. You can be assured that Dyslexia Action qualifications are all carefully credit-rated and levelled against the relevant descriptors as follows.

Mapped against	Qualification Title	Guild Member Grade	Level	Credits	Notes
RQF	Dyslexia Action Units: (e.g. DACPD51 Dyslexia and Co-occurring Difficulties)	Pathway to Membership	4/5	3	A unit is 30 hours of Total Qualification Time (about 6 weeks of part-time learning. Some units are at level 4 and some at level 5
	Dyslexia Action Awards: (e.g. DAAWD51 Perspectives on Dyslexia)		4/5	9	Each Award is made up of 3 units about 18 weeks of part- time learning. Some awards are at level 4 and some at level 5.
	Certificate in Supporting Literacy in Learners with Dyslexia		4	18	Comprises 2 Awards (About 36 weeks of part-time learning.)
	Certificate in Supporting Adults with Dyslexia and Co-occurring Difficulties	ADG FE/HE	5	18	Comprises 2 Awards
	Diploma in Strategic Teaching Support for Dyslexia and Literacy	ADG	5	37	Comprises 3 units (Two theory and one practical). About 10 months of part-time learning.
HEQF	Professional Certificate in Structured Teaching Intervention	ADG	7	60	Comprises Modules A, B and C
	Professional Certificate in Assessment Practice for Dyslexia and Literacy	MDG	7	60	Comprises Modules B, D and E
	Professional Diploma in Dyslexia and Literacy	MDG FDG	7	120	Comprises Modules A, B, C, D, E and F. Each module is 20 HE credits. Progression available to Master's award.

Legacy Qualifications

In the Training Department we receive many calls from individuals who have undertaken qualifications before credit and level rating of qualifications was available. This does not invalidate these awards; it means we have to be cautious about how we describe them in terms of current programmes. Qualifications such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Studies in Education (Kingston University), the Hornsby Diploma in the teaching of students with SpLD/Dyslexia (Qualified Teachers) as well as some early Dyslexia Institute (Dyslexia Action) qualifications fall within this category and we can recognise them as broadly level 7 equivalent today at either Certificate or Diploma level depending on course content.

So how do I know if my qualifications are still valid? At this point you make like to read again the opening paragraph on

Continuing Professional Development. For those working in Specialist Teaching and Assessment or Student Support you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I been working continuously in my specialist field since graduating from my professional training course (excluding any career break periods)?
- Have I regularly undertaken at least 30 hours of CPD a year and is this evidenced?
- How has professional specialist teaching and assessment practice changed since I qualified and have I updated my knowledge?
- What work-based training and development have I undertaken that contributes to the updating of my professional practice?
- Am I familiar with the latest specialist teaching programmes and resources?
- Have I undertaken at least one relevant level 7 CPD course within the last five years?
- Am I qualified to use appropriate and recognised tests for the assessment of dyslexia/SpLD?
- Have I obtained the latest information from the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC)?
- Have I updated my Guild CPD Log (available on the Guild Member's website) to show this continuation and progression?

If the answer to all of these questions is yes then you are indeed meeting the requirements for Guild membership in full. If there are some grey areas you can update at any time by visiting our CPD course section for qualified professionals at: www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/courses-qualified-spld-professionals

Professional Body Membership

Membership of a professional body should also act as a reference point for qualifications but is also based on combination of qualifications and experience. Dyslexia Action Membership Grades are as follows:

Affiliate Grade does not confer post nominals but is a grade suitable for student and aspirant members as well as other professionals with an interest in dyslexia/SpLD.

ADG FE/HE Study Skills Support Tutors (normally hold Master's level qualifications and specialist study skills support qualifications at level 5 or higher)

ADG Specialist Teachers (normally hold Level 5 or Level 7 Specialist teaching qualifications)

MDG Specialist Teacher Assessors (normally hold a level 5 or level 7 specialist teaching qualification and level 7 Specialist assessment qualifications (minimum of 60 credits)

FDG Fellows of the Dyslexia Guild (are normally fully qualified specialist teacher assessors with extensive professional experience in the field of dyslexia/SpLD).

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SpLD Assessment Standards Committee: www.sasc.org.uk

The dynamics of English as a foreign language for Italian and Croatian learners with dyslexia

Maja Kelić a Croatian speech and language therapist and **Michela Bettinelli,** an Italian specialist teacher and adviser present their research into the characteristics of their respective language orthographies and the impact this has for second language learners of English with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

The aim of the action-research project

In this project we wanted to explore how the Home Language (referred to as L1) shapes the way learners master writing in English as a foreign language as taught in school. Both the Italian and the Croatian languages differ phonologically from English, but even more importantly they significantly differ from English in the way language sounds are captured in the written form. These differences affect the way Croatian and Italian learners cope with the complex English writing system. The children that took part in the study had a diagnosis of dyslexia (according to ICD-10[1] it is F81.0 specific reading disorder,) or language impairment (F80.1 or F80.2) in comorbidity with reading impairment. Children from the Croatian sample are all included in speech and language therapy in clinical settings.

Description of the tasks

Three tasks were used. All the target words used were taken from text books used by the learners in both countries and are common and frequently used by the children who participated in the tasks.

Task One:
Target words were presented by picture within a sentence. This was done so that the contextual information within the sentence could facilitate lexical retrieval. See Figure 1 for an example sentence designed to trigger the target word 'ice-cream'.

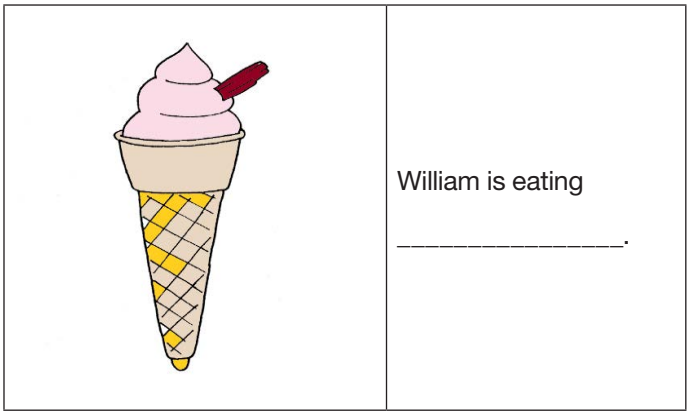

Figure 1

If the learner did not remember the target word, or did not know the word, the examiner would dictate the word to the student and check the learner's knowledge of it. Responses were classified as follows:

1. Learner wrote the word independently
2. Learner could not remember the word, but knows the word (lexical retrieval problem)
3. Learner does not know the word - the word is completely new to the learner

Task Two:
Images representing the target subject area were presented to the learner, and the learner had to describe the pictures using a sentence. If the student did not know what to write, the examiner would describe the picture in the mother tongue to give the context.

Task Three:
This was a free writing task where learners were asked to describe their family. If the learner did not know what to write, the examiner provided some ideas in the mother tongue to elicit a written response from the learner. If the learner was not able to write a sentence, they were encouraged to write at least a couple of isolated words connected to the topic.

Current teaching methods of teaching English as a second language in Italy and Croatia

In Italy as Costenaro, Daloiso & Favaro, (2014) put it: "… *it is common practice for some primary teachers to have students copy long lists of words in order to enhance the memorization of word spelling, which is a very painful and ineffective task for pupils with dyslexia"* (p. 209). Most children, when they are learning how to write, will pronounce an English word as if it is an Italian word: for example, if they have to write *'beautiful'* they will say bay/a/oo/tifol. This way of writing, although methodologically wrong for all students, is even more confusing for learners with dyslexia as it does not give any direct, explicit systematic route for converting English speech sounds to graphemes.

[1]International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en

In Croatian schools, during the first two years of learning English, oral communication is highlighted and students are only rewriting a selection of the words they are introduced to orally. Dictation is introduced in the fourth grade, while recognising and reading of phonetic symbols is introduced in the fifth grade. Thus, during the fifth or sixth year of studying English the transcription of the language is introduced, but still there is no systematic teaching of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and the writing system is acquired mainly at the global level, remembering the orthographical representations of the frequent words. Similar to the way Italian learners learn English, Croatian students also try to remember the way English words are written by pronouncing them in a Croatian way, adding new burdens to an already overwhelmed working memory. This of course, is especially taxing for learners with dyslexia.

The Italian and Croatian Orthographies

In Italian although the mapping from phonology to orthography is considered to be transparent, it is not totally regular, as there are some phonemes that have word-specific realisations. Of the twenty-one letters that make up the Italian alphabet:

<a>, <b>, <c>, <d>, <f>, <l>, <m>, <n>, <p>, <q>, <r>, <t>, <v>, have one-to-one grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences.

<h> is either silent or used as a diacritical grapheme[2] (for example, <g> is sounded as /ʤ/ in 'il getto' meaning 'a jet' versus /g/ in 'il ghetto' meaning 'ghetto').

<c>, <g>, <i>, <u>, <s> have different sounds depending upon context-sensitive rules

<e> <o> <z> have two possible pronunciations depending upon the words they appear in (lexical knowledge is required to pronounce them correctly) (Job, Peressotti, & Mulatti, 2016).

The letters <j>, <k>, <w> <x> and <y> are only used in 'loan words' from other languages or, very occasionally, in proper nouns, so are not strictly considered to be part of the Italian alphabet[3]. The seven vowel sounds in Italian, are generally represented by single-letter graphemes and there is not the range of possible spelling choices for complex vowel sounds that is found in English.

The Croatian language has thirty phonemes (Volenec, 2013) which are all represented by individual graphemes, thus Croatian orthography is very transparent. There are twenty-five consonants in the Croatian phonemic inventory, but it lacks complex vowel sounds. It has five simple vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/. None of these maps directly onto English vowel sounds. Two vowel sequences are not found in the Croatian primary phonological system, although contacts of vowels can be found in foreign words (e.g. 'kakao', 'aorta') or at the borders of morphemes (Maksimović, 2011). Whilst English shows great diversity of complex vowel sounds and the way they are orthographically represented, Croatian arguably has one or no diphthongs.

Meet the Team

I'm Maja Kelić a speech and language pathologist, working mainly with children with dyslexia and language disorders, undertaking assessment and delivering therapy. I have a PhD in language and cognitive neuroscience and my area of research is reading development and reading disorders. I'm one of the official lecturers of the Croatian Dyslexia Association and the author of the book "Reading Development", a book for Croatian practitioners and teachers describing the influence of language in reading development.

I'm Michela Bettinelli, a special needs teacher trainer and parents' counsellor. I have the European Competence Certificate, (European Qualification Framework 22.1) and I'm a licensed lecturer for The Italian Dyslexia Association. My role includes organising teacher training workshops and specific laboratories for children and parents, preparing individualised materials and providing mediation between the family and the school. I mainly work with children and young people affected by learning disabilities and associated disorders (language difficulties, behavioral difficulties and ADHD). I'm also a licensed ICT Tools Trainer for Special Education (Children, Parents and Teachers).

The length of vowels is not described at the segmental (phonemic) level: no short and long vowels are considered separate phonemes. However, distinctions are made at the suprasegmental level (in descriptions of prosody, intonation etc.) because length is a feature of the Croatian prosodic system. For example, the Croatian phoneme sequence /pas/ with short stress means 'dog', whereas with a longer duration the meaning changes: /pa:s/ means 'waist'). So, you can see that the length of the vowel unlike in English, is not represented in the Croatian orthography.

Additionally, the Croatian phonological system lacks some consonants present in English: the dentals /θ/ as in ***th***in, /ð/ as in ***th***is and the labiovelar /w/ as in **w**ait. These consonants are often, especially in beginner and intermediate level learners, substituted with /t/, /d/ and /v/,

[2]i.e. used to change the sound associated with the grapheme to which it is added.
[3]For further information see, for example, http://aboutworldlanguages.com/italian
[4]Further details about the Croatian orthography can be found at http://aboutworldlanguages.com/croatian

respectively, those being their closest Croatian correlates. Another, possible area of confusion lies in the grapheme <h> which has a different phoneme link in Croatian i.e. /x/ (as in the Scots word 'loch'), whereas in English the associated phoneme is /h/ (Smojver, 2010). However, in comparison to English the full range of consonant phonemes are mapped onto unique graphemes in Croatian – so spelling choices are far clearer than in English. One final point to note is that when learning to read and learning the alphabet, Croatian children do not learn letter names since transparent orthography implies that every letter has only one possible sound, i.e. grapheme-phoneme correspondences are very consistent. Accordingly, the Croatian alphabet[4] is the same as the Croatian phoneme inventory, thus children name the letters pronouncing the corresponding phoneme.

In both Croatian and Italian schools, because there is no structured, cumulative teaching of phoneme-to-grapheme correspondences the formation of letters that do not occur in the learner's L1 are not explicitly taught. This places a further burden on learners as they may be struggling to decide how to join letters whilst trying to keep the phoneme-to-grapheme links (or the memory of the visual representation of the word) in mind.

Analysis of the Learners' Spelling Representations

We will now give some examples of the ways the children in our research sample represented English words. Some of the points link more to one orthography than the other, but some patterns occurred in both the Croatian and the Italian learners' writing.

Order of the graphemes

There were several examples that showed that the learners knew all/most of the letters within the word but had problems with sequencing the letters:

'fruits' was written <fru**ist**>

<juc**ie**> for 'juice'.

There were also examples where you can see that the learner knows there is a double letter string somewhere but is not sure of its location. So, for example, 'door' is written as <do**rr**>. Since our pilot research included children with dyslexia or dyslexia and language impairment, it would be interesting to see if this a specific feature appearing in the clinical group or if it could be considered a developmental stage in learning to write in English. We know that dyslexia is often connected to difficulties in sequencing and remembering order particularly when there is a heavy burden on memory (e.g. Friedmann & Gvion, 2010; Kohnen, Nickels, Castles, Friedmann, & McArthur, 2012).

Representing Vowels

The lack of overlap of any vowel sounds between Croatian and English led to some interesting representations. For example, 'bus' was spelt <bas> in three cases – but this is not surprising as there is no similar vowel sound to /ʌ/ in Croatian - /æ/ is the closest vowel sound to it. Far from showing poor discrimination, this actually shows good phoneme discrimination and an evolving representational skill set. In 'shoes' the vowel sound was often represented by the Croatian learners as <u>. Again, this is not surprising if we consider that this is the English phoneme that equates most closely with the <u> /uː/ grapheme-phoneme pair in Croatian.

Both sets of learners had problems with diphthongs – such a variety of spellings is possible in English. The /aɪ/ (vowel sound in 'bike') can be spelt in a wide variety of ways in English. It is a diphthongal vowel glide (complex vowel sound), if said slowly we can feel the movement made when saying /j/ (as in the first phoneme in 'yob'). Perhaps this is why it was often interpreted as containing the <j> grapheme (<bajk>) by the Croatian learners and as containing the <y> grapheme (<bayk>) by the Italian learners. 'Eyes' was also written as <ais> in the Italian sample. The word 'ice-cream' – showed incredible variation – with more than 18 different representations. This is not surprising when you consider the representation of /s/ by <c> (followed by <e>) as well as the two long vowel sounds.

Double letters or not?

There may be further reasons why Italian learners make mistakes with double letters, because of features of their native language and their learnt perceptions of teachers' pronunciations. It is common practice for teachers in Italy to emphasise the presence of double consonants in the middle of some words (like 'paLLa'; 'maMMa', 'coLLa'). So, for example, teachers may also subconsciously emphasize certain sounds within English words to help learners hear the sounds, but this may mislead the learner into thinking that they need to use a double letter string. So, when there is an English word with an unexpected phoneme-grapheme pairing (like <ow> to represent the phoneme /əʊ/) the teacher may be pronouncing the word with undue emphasis to try to make the presence of two letters clear… but the child mixes the hint with the Italian strategy, so he thinks there is a double letter somewhere. It is likely that this is why you can find 'window' written <windool>. This shows how complex L1 issues can combine to lead the learner to use the wrong strategy in spelling in English. It also shows that spelling that looks bizarre can actually have a complex, but understandable rationale when analysed fully.

Sometimes spellings that look bizarre have a commendable rationale

Some of the representations in our sample showed us that we need to consider what is success in language acquisition and what skills contribute to gaining mastery of a language (written and spoken). Sometimes the rationale of learners was commendable, but it was difficult to spot. The case of 'window' being spelt <windool> already mentioned above falls into this category. Another spelling of the first syllable of 'window' shows an interesting rationale based on the orthography of the learner's L1 (Italian). The learner spells 'window' as <uindool>. The phoneme /w/ in Italian is relatively rare. When it occurs, it is usually written using <u> paired with <o> as in 'uovo' ('egg') and 'fuoco' ('fire') - so what looks like a bizarre spelling is actually a close approximation to the target string of phonemes (in the first syllable) using <u>, which is found in some Italian words to represent /w/.

IO HO - I HAVE → H AI HAVE

Figure 2

Another example, is the misplacement of <h> by Italian learners in certain situations. For example, when children are writing <hai have> for 'I have'. See Figure 2. It appears to be a generalisation from the Italian auxiliary verb 'to have': the regular 1st person present tense of the verb in Italian is 'io ho' (but the <h> is not sounded). So, when the learners need to write the phrase 'I have' in English, it seems that they may not appreciate that 'I' is the subject of the verb. They have this knowledge of syntax/word class in Italian, but it appears that they have a problem with multi-tasking. As it is generally difficult for Italian learners with dyslexia to remember to put the <h> in when writing 'io ho' in Italian, this habit of mind transfers to situations when they are writing in English: they are incorrectly generalising and becoming confused. They know they should keep in mind the <h> grapheme because of its silent presence in Italian, but since the verb 'to have' already has 'h' inside it, learners tend be put the <h> where there is a place. Therefore, the misrepresentation of <ai> for 'I' becomes <hai>.

The use of <c> in spelling representations of <shoes> at first seems bizarre. But there are two things to consider from learners' L1. Firstly, the Italian word for 'shoes' is 'scarpe' (so the letter string <sc> is clearly present in the word in F1); secondly, if you consider that in Italian the letter strings <sci> and <sce> both generally contain the phoneme /ʃ/, then the choice seems much more understandable. Here is a selection of the spellings with an analysis of the rationale/ comments about the spelling choices the learner makes:

SUUOS → missing the <sci> sequence that would create a soft sound (in Italian).

SCUSE → missing the <i> from Italian orthography

SCOSE → missing <sci> sequence that would create a soft sound (in Italian).

SCYUS → the use of <y> to represent /j/

SHOOS → partial visual representation; also <oo> is a possible representation for /u:/

SCIUSE → almost correct in Italian phonology

SHUS → partial visual representation

The word 'shoes' was spelt with great variety within the Croatian sample, however there was less variation than with the Italian learners' representations. Croatian learners were more prone in general to use phonetic spelling, thus the majority of children used phonetic spelling including Croatian letter Š to represent <sh> /ʃ/ and <u> to represent /u:/. We can observe the progress in learning the visual representation of the word: <Š> is replaced with <sh>, <z> at the end of the word with <s>. See Figure 3.

ŠUS
ŠUZ
SUZ
SHUZ
SHUES

Figure 3

The biggest problem for Croatian speakers is the vowel because the vowel string <oe> is not only not present and contra-intuitive in Croatian, but also not so frequent and consistent in English, compared to some other combinations as, for example <oo>.

Readiness to Write in English

Interestingly, using the native language orthography when writing English words, or in the case of Croatian, basically phonetic spelling, allowed Croatian learners to express themselves better and be more successful in the free writing task than the Italian learners. Half of the Croatian children were able to write a short text about their family. See Figure 4 for two examples. These are quite easy for an English reader to make sense of.

Maj dad olvejs go tu farm večetobols. Maj mom vorks a lot and rid. Maj sister stadis ol najt.

Maj najm is Mark ij liv vid maj granji grandad and maj dad is a diliveri gaj and maj mom is a bajker.

Figure 4

The Italian learners were generally far less ready to write independently.

CONCLUSIONS

We drew some preliminary conclusions from our action-research project:

When the Italian children did not know the target word they tended to switch from English to Italian orthography and they wrote the sounds within the word with Italian phoneme representations in mind. (For example, 'window' written as <uindol>, <vidor>). But generally, the spelling representations of the Italian children (in spite of having a relatively transparent orthography) are guided by predominantly visual strategies and not by phonology – this may well be because copying is the main teaching strategy in Italian schools.

The higher success rate in single word spelling in the Italian sample looks like greater mastery of spelling, but it is more likely to be indicative of the rote learning methods used and the range of words chosen for the project. It should not therefore be assumed that this accuracy would transfer beyond known words. It should be noted however, that there were examples of whole word strategies in both sets of learners (Italian and Croatian).

When learning to read and to write in the native language the child is mastering the alphabetic principle and adding to the mental lexicon new representations of words – the orthographical representation. However, when learning to write in the second language, the learner is using already learned mechanisms, rules and principles, these are leading to specific and understandable errors. Mastering orthographical representations can be seen as a continuum, from writing the words using native language orthography, even using the graphemes that are not present in English alphabet, for example, writing 'shoes' as <šuz> or 'television' as <televižin>, to the correct orthographical representations for the familiar and frequent words.

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Seeing reading through students' eyes

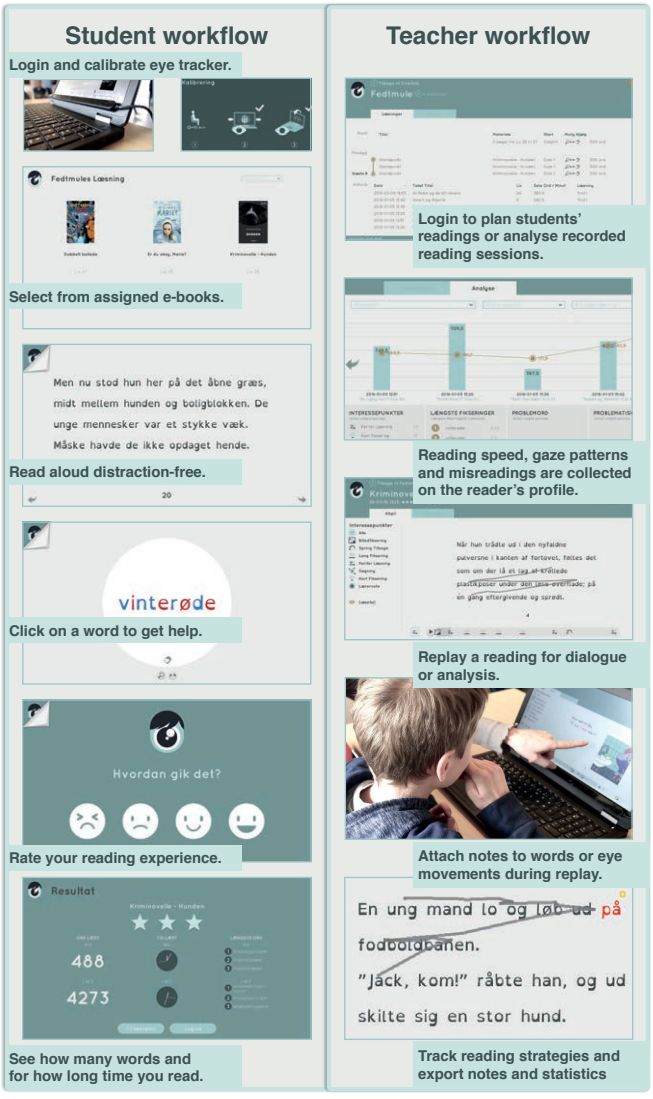
Sigrid Klerke

Janus Askø Madsen

Sigrid Klerke and Janus Askø Madsen from Eyejustread in Denmark describe how their project is helping to identify and support students with literacy difficulties at an early stage.

Summary

EyeJustRead (EJR) uses eye tracking technology to empower specialist reading teachers, beginning with a focus on Danish schools. This means bringing a technology that used to be reserved for research laboratories into the school environment. The benefit to teachers is ultimately the time saved on manual tasks can be better spent evaluating and acting on the needs of each reader. In this article, we present the case for using eye movements in specialist reading teaching and share some strategies that specialist reading teachers have started to develop in their work using EJR. The illustration below shows the typical workflows of students and teachers when using the tool.



Visible reading behaviour

Our eyes are the only parts of our body that need to move to read a text. Simply looking at the eyes of someone reading fluently reveals the signature unconscious staccato dance of the pupil from side to side. However, moving the eyes along lines of text is not in itself considered reading – much more must happen inside the reader. When working with beginner and struggling readers, assessment of students' progress is therefore based on other types of evidence, in particular reading aloud and various schemes designed to probe comprehension.

Leaving the psycholinguistic lab

Despite there being a long tradition of using eye tracking in reading research (see e.g. Rayner (1998)), measurements of eye movements are entirely absent from practical reading teaching. There are at least two reasons for this; firstly, although eye movements are directly observable, they are too fast and too small for humans to track and evaluate in any meaningful detail while viewing readers live. Secondly, the technology of recording eye movements reliably was, until very recently, only found in research laboratories because of the high price and necessary technical skill set.

Eye-mind hypothesis

The eye-mind hypothesis states that what a viewer looks at corresponds to what the viewer is mentally paying attention to. Daydreaming is one of several examples where the hypothesis does not hold, but in reading, it has been shown to be a reasonable assumption. Only the very central 1–2 degrees of humans' field of view is rendered in sufficiently sharp detail to distinguish letters clearly. In order to perceive visual input, the eyes stand almost still for a brief time before skipping in rapid motion and stabilising to start perceiving the next bit of visual input. The planning and execution of these jumps, and the resulting coherent mental imprint of the visual scene, happens involuntarily. The rapid movements are called 'saccades' and the short, stable gazes are called 'fixations'. To perceive a linear text, readers must therefore fixate anything that cannot be guessed easily and keep all that information ordered while it is being processed. This is why an eye movement pattern of steady forward-directed saccades is a reasonable strategy. If something becomes too unclear, the reader must interrupt the forward strategy and may produce backwards saccades to revisit text that was already read or search for clues in an illustration. The automation of this ongoing eye movement programming is a necessary part of skilled reading and the eye movement trace records this development precisely.

The most important work

The ultimate goal of EyeJustRead's users, who are providing specialist reading teaching, is to deliver effective intervention. Evaluating whether this goal is met requires assessment, record keeping and time spent analysing these assessments and records. It is this work that forms the backbone of key decisions regarding potential diagnosis, choice of teaching methodology and assistive tools. The quality of the intervention therefore hinges on the quality and availability of the notes and observations made while a student is reading and being assessed. The same is true for the quality of the coaching of students; a teacher can only highlight and nurture the progress that gets noticed.

Trading time

The new possibilities which arise from being able to keep detailed recordings of live readings,and to analyse and re-analyse readings at any time after they are performed, have proven to be a valued feature with the Danish teachers who use EyeJustRead. They emphasise, for instance, how they are able to go back and point out progress from early recordings to later ones and use this to motivate or illustrate something to students or their parents when the need arises. Similarly, when an intervention takes a new direction, it becomes possible to revisit a student's reading history with colleagues, for instance if the intervention fails to produce the expected outcomes or a teacher needs to hand over a student. For students and teachers alike, the increased flexibility can also help relieve some of the pressure that comes with live reading observation and assessment, resulting in a more valid assessment of the student's functional reading level.

Any method, one tool

Reading specialist teachers employ a wide range of teaching methods. The choice of one over the other is based on the experience, habits, tradition and background knowledge of the expert as well as on concrete observations of a given student. EyeJustRead is a simple, method-agnostic tool which depends on the expertise that the reading teachers bring to the table, just as much as on the hard work that the students put into practising reading.

Supporting evidence-driven experts

The one lesson that can be drawn from every research paper is that more research is always needed. There is always uncertainty in how well a treatment outcome will generalise and even the most elegant experiments have known biases and limitations. Eye-tracking research in reading is mostly concerned with variations that can be observed in a fully controlled research environment. This allows the researchers to attribute any observed variation e.g. in fixation duration to the independent variable being researched. Because EyeJustRead does not enforce a standardised protocol to assimilate a research lab environment, we focus initially on providing low-level metrics and feedback such as time read, words read, reading speed, reading replay and annotation of simple scanning patterns such as long fixations, re-fixations and image viewing. This approach relies on teachers' expertise to assign value to the raw evidence based on their situated knowledge, and recognises their need to make hard practical decisions also in cases where more research is still needed. The intention at EyeJustRead is not to stop at providing low-level metrics, however.

The foundation is data

As EyeJustRead collects and keeps records of reading data to support the reading teachers, we also use anonymised data (where consent has been obtained) to help us study how eye movements reflect specific reading behaviour. In collaboration with researchers at three Danish universities, we actively seek answers to the open questions which could help us to help reading teachers save more time. An example of such a question is whether students' misreadings can be detected automatically as Bingel et al., (*2018*) have attempted. The goal of this research is to use machine learning technology to distinguish patterns in eye movements that accompany successful and failed reading strategies and thereby help teachers' identify the data that is most informative to them. Other possibilities include mapping individual readers' progress to samples of previously recorded comparable readings and developing better informed student feedback systems.

Communicating data

We have found that by enabling the reading specialist to work with this data, a range of new dialogues based on this data are opened up (Klerke et al., 2018). For example, the intuitive use of replay for retrospective think aloud can become an integrated part of collaborating with a student. One reading specialist explains her approach in this way: "When the replay is used in a conversation with the student, the student becomes aware of which strategies they employ, but can actually also often provide valuable observations and information about what they do or think when they read. […] When there is a reading that you analysed yourself, and talked through with the student, it is possible to determine much more precisely what should be the focus of the teaching."

Learning from the best

EyeJustRead also aims to open up this new window into the reading profiles of struggling readers outside of the Danish context. Successfully doing this, however, requires continuing to learn from specialist teachers and researchers who know what struggling to read looks like.

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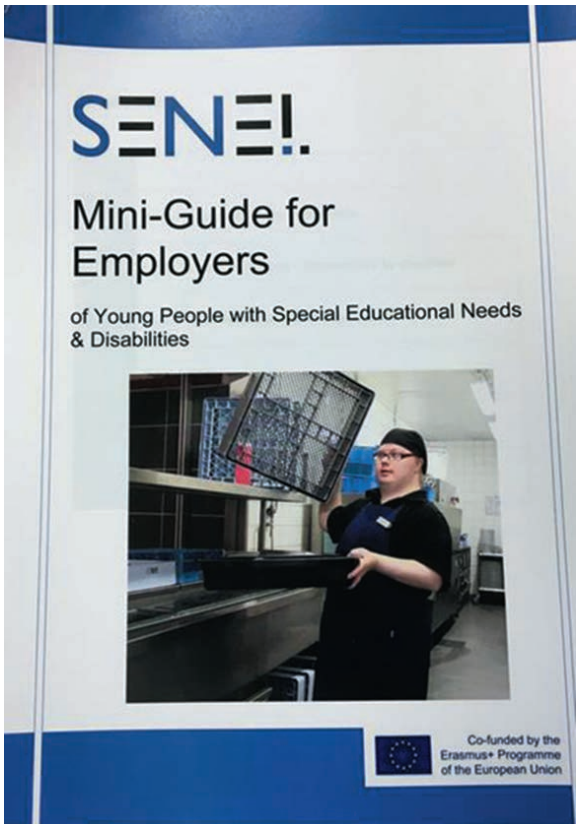
SENEL Special Educational Needs Employment Links: encouraging employers to value diversity

Helen Trory and Sheena Bell, Senior Lecturers SEN and Inclusion, at the University of Northampton, share the project's story.

One of the most challenging parts of any young person's life is the transition from education into the workplace. We live in an era of rapid change, where employers need a diverse and creative workforce and people with dyslexia are needed to share their talents and strengths. Despite improved employment figures, across the European Union there is an employment gap. The employment rate of people with disabilities remains low and is far lower than that of people with no disabilities. As many disabilities remain undisclosed and unidentified in adults, current figures are likely to be conservative.

In this challenging employment context, the SENEL (Special Educational Needs Employment Links) project ran for two years, was co-funded by the EU and ended summer 2017. SENEL united organisations from across Europe to focus on supporting transitions into the workplace from vocational education and training (VET), which is often delivered in Further Education settings in the UK. The team created a set of materials to support transition into the labour market for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Led by the University of Northampton, professionals from England, Finland, Germany and the Czech Republic produced free materials in all four partner languages, and these are still freely available on the SENEL website. (https://www.jamk.fi/en/Research-and-Development/RDI-Projects/senel/home/)

The first project product is a Portable Exhibition of documentary photographs and videos showing best practices in each partner country, available with accompanying text in four languages. The materials portray the stories of young people with additional needs, including dyslexia, who have made the successful transition into the workplace. They are downloadable and can be adapted.



The project then produced a "A Mini-Guide for Employers of Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities". This was developed, piloted and evaluated by the SENEL team in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including young people with SEND and employers. Its format is a booklet in very simple visual form which can be printed and used directly with employers. This emphasises the strengths young people with SEND may have and how only small adjustments may be needed in an employment context.

It is important that professionals in vocational training, both in colleges or workplaces, are supported to prepare their students for transition. Employers are not just looking for exam results: they are looking for commitment and adaptability. At the same time, young people need to recognise their own potential to have the confidence to sell their skills to prospective employers. With this in mind, the

SENEL team produced a tool for young people with SEND entitled “The Passport to Employment for Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities”. This provides both guidance and a self-advocacy tool for VET/FE students with SEN, as they make their transition from VET/FE to work. It is available for download from the website along with a CV template. This can be used by individuals or in training groups, or used as an interactive online document which can facilitate training and development, and can be shared directly with employers. Multiple formats are available including PDF files, an adaptable Word version, an Easy Reading version and the interactive online tool. This is the first time such a product has been offered in these formats, focusing on disadvantaged groups to support their access to long term, satisfying employment and promoting the inclusivity of continuing VET.

SENEL engaged a wide range of participants: key stakeholders were employers, young people with SEND and vocational trainers. The development of the products and dissemination activities involved a wide range of additional relevant stakeholders as participants spanning charitable organisations, counsellors and careers advisors, government institutions, vocational trainers/teachers, disability and adult learner associations, university staff and students, politicians and the public.

The SENEL project has been widely presented in partner countries and by invitation in international contexts,

including a conference in Bangkok, Thailand, where the project materials were shared with professionals from 15 countries across South East Asia. Despite the project ending, SENEL’s impact ranges from a direct and ongoing significant influence on the training and development of young people with SEND to a continuing voice in national organisations and funding bodies. A renewed partnership of organisations has just submitted a proposal for another European project to continue working on employer links.

Do have a look at the website and follow us on Twitter! @SENEL_Europe

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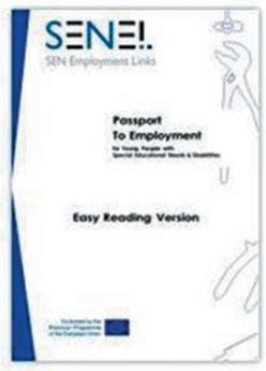


Easy Reading Version

Units of Sound – working with ESOL students

UNITS OF SOUND
Literacy for life.

We know that Units of Sound is being used increasingly with students whose first language is not English (English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL). For the past five years the Units of Sound team has taken part in an interesting teaching activity in Hastings on the south coast of England with the language school STS – now known as ILS.

The course lasts for three weeks and teaching is every morning with Units of Sound lasting between 60-90 minutes. The group size is 10-12 and the students are dyslexic Swedish teenagers aged 13-18 years. You can see already that the parameters are challenging – length and frequency of the lessons, size of teaching groups and of course English is not their first language.

We place all the students on the programme on the first day and get a piece of writing from them. On the second day we introduce the activities fairly rapidly using the whiteboard to demonstrate activities and good practice. We found is useful to start with spelling rather than the more usual reading as the students get working with spelling exercises more quickly and that then leads immediately into memory and dictation for the more able. The result is that by the middle of the second lesson all the students are working independently. We then introduce reading on the third day by which time some students will be working on the full programme.

From then on the students are set targets for the number of pages to cover and teachers (two to begin with, dropping down to one once we can see the groups are largely independent) work with individuals as needed. A whiteboard session at the beginning is a good way of reminding students of good practice. Students use the screen tutors individually to learn about new features as they meet them.

In the second week we are starting to understand who has more specific needs and introduce the vowel activities and word endings from the Active Literacy Kit for some students. At the higher end of the scale we introduce the writing exercises to stretch the more able. We have also used the verb exercise worksheets from Developing Literacy for Study and work (Bramley – no longer in print so hang on to your copies!).

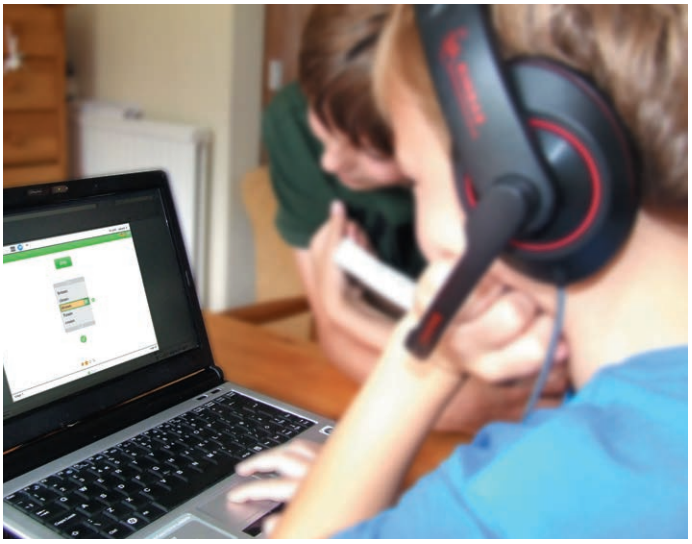
The pattern of skills that the students come with has not varied over the years and consists of:

- Excellent oral English skills
- Pretty good reading skills
- Poor spelling skills
- Extremely poor writing skills.

You could say that you would expect the same from a group of English teenagers, but with the Swedish students the gaps between the skills are larger.

Almost everyone, apart from the two or three more able students needed work on:

- Short vowel sounds
- v-e patterns – this is just not recognised as a pattern at all.



Units of Sound was not originally intended for ESOL work and so it is interesting to see how the activities benefit the students in slightly different ways.

Structure
The repetition of the structure makes Units of Sound a very thorough practice ground in all the skills areas.

Reading
The recording feature not only assists decoding but is invaluable here for pronunciation. If you can decode a word, but can't say it accurately then this feature breaks everything down to small steps.

The sentences and passages support fluency by having model reading to listen to at an appropriate decoding level.

Vocabulary. The teacher needs to be prepared to spend more time on vocabulary in the Reading Check exercise. Students were, of course, adept at using smartphones to translate unknown words into Swedish.

Spelling
The sheer number of words with the same spelling patterns makes this a very useful exercise.

At first we wondered if the Check Spelling exercise would be too demanding with its requirement of an 8/10 score to move on. However, this had the added value of making students pay more attention to the sound.

Memory
This is the short phrase interim step towards writing and students tended to be successful with it.

Dictation
Again we wondered if this would be too demanding, but then realised that they needed this if they were going to improve their writing. The practice was similar to working with English students in that it takes them a while to adjust to the level of concentration and attention to detail that is needed.

The number of pages that most students covered in the three weeks was astonishing and a real testament to their desire to improve their English.

In conclusion

Units of Sound can most definitely be a useful component in teaching English to ESOL students. A short, intensive course may be enough for students who just need to address some of the basics but do not need to work systematically through the whole programme. For others, the structure is what enables the skills to be assimilated systematically, without complex analysis. We would be interested in hearing from any Dyslexia Guild teachers' experiences in working with similar students.

There is one absolute skill required before you consider Units of Sound however, and that is that the student must have some oral English skills to begin with.

Units of Sound Update

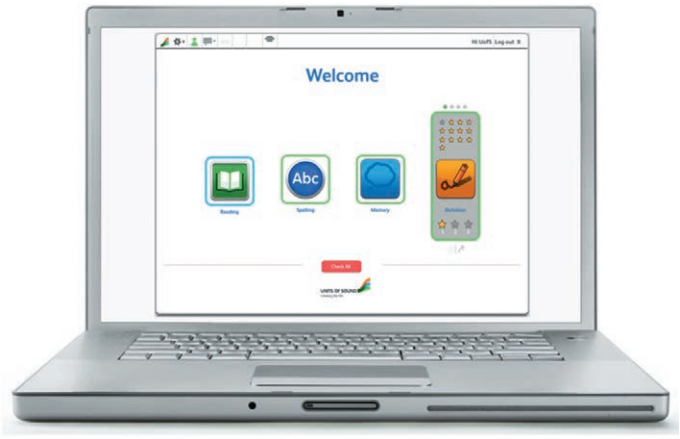
For anyone new to Units of Sound – it's an online literacy intervention programme created by Walter Bramley and further developed by Dyslexia Action. It is specialist material that anyone can use with a wide application in age and ability. See www.unitsofsound.com for more information or to request an online demonstration.

Units of Sound – Literacy that fits

This is the home version of the programme i.e. for parents or helpers who are supporting the student rather than a teacher. The student lessons are exactly the same but we have changed the welcome screen interface and access to records, as there is only one student.

Another development here has been to integrate the Reading Check exercise into the programme rather than using pdf reading documents. This has made it easier to access and use, and perhaps more importantly, means the exercise is always carried out and not skipped.

Literacy that fits is essentially a slightly blunter instrument than the professional programme to reflect the nature of the helper.



Future Plans

We have continued to make minor changes through the year such as adding more options for accessing and printing records and more detailed checks for microphone access.

The summer months are usually our busiest period for development so that new features are ready for the start of the academic year in September. This year, the plan is to add an integrated Reading Check into the professional programme. This will not be a replica of the Literacy that Fits feature as teachers need to have more analysis of the exercise.

Last year we asked our Units of Sound teachers to take part in a Reading Check survey so that we had good information to base this work on. We found quite a split between teachers who always carried out the exercise, those who did it sometimes and those who couldn't find the time.

Integration does cut down on the time involved as you don't have to go off and find the pdf with the correct set number, but you do still need to find 5-10 minutes to hear the student read to you. For those of you who like the paper exercise, don't worry, you will still have that option.

Dyslexia Guild Member Offer

As a member of Dyslexia Guild we want you to have the opportunity to try Units of Sound for yourself. We can let you have a three-month trial licence for five students, which includes a place on the Practitioners' course. To take advantage of this offer, contact the Units of Sound team using the contact feature from the website www.unitsofsound.com giving your Dyslexia Guild number.

Licences

All information on the different licences can be found on the website. We have introduced a licence for private tutors, for five or ten students, which runs for just one year at a time.

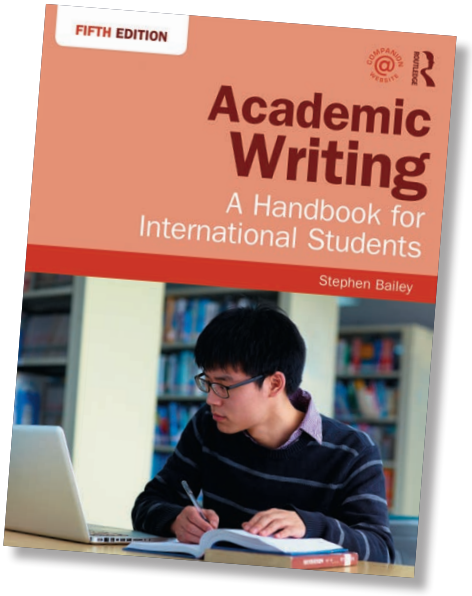
We aim to make Units of Sound affordable for all groups who need it.

The Units of Sound Team

Units of Sound now operates independently as Units of Sound Ltd. If you knew the old team though, you will know the new one! Margaret Rooms, Operations Manager; Hannah MacLellan, Training and Education Manager; Karl Vickers, Technical Support; Scott Matheson, CEO

Book Reviews

The latest books on academic writing reviewed by Jan Beechey, Dyslexia Guild Librarian



Stephen Bailey (2018) Academic Writing: A handbook for international students, Abingdon: Routledge

This is the fifth edition of this book which has been written to help students who are not native speakers of English with their academic work. Aimed at both postgraduate and undergraduate students who are either studying full time or part time or on multidisciplinary courses, this book can either be used by a tutor to help support students or as a self-help book by students themselves. There is a short guide to British and American variations in vocabulary, spelling, academic language and punctuation that need to be understood within written academic work.

The book is divided into five parts: The Writing Process, Elements of Writing, Language Issues, Vocabulary for Writing, and Writing Models. The first three units in Part 1: The Writing Process are designed as a basic introduction to the subject and assume a fairly low level of writing ability, and can be taught by tutors as a series of lessons with feedback from the practice exercises. They would be very useful to undergraduate students who may not have come across the various types of academic writing such as short or long essays, projects, papers, dissertations/ theses or the format of journal articles. Effective reading and finding suitable sources, using reading lists, library catalogues and websites is covered as well as developing critical approaches to sources. There is good advice on note taking, summarising and paraphrasing, references and citations and even proofreading.

Part 2 teaches related writing skills and covers some more of the less tangible elements of study skills such as argument and discussion, cause and effect, making a comparison and supporting work with visual information such as charts, diagrams and tables.

Language issues that international students may find most challenging when writing in English are highlighted in Part 3. For example, proper use of articles, correct use of punctuation and effective use of an academic style. This section also contains information on the language of numbers and writing accurately about statistical data. The units in Part 4, Vocabulary for Writing, provide a variety of approaches to improving student understanding, from abbreviations to recognising synonyms. Writing Models is the last part and focuses on the types of writing that students need to produce from case studies and literature reviews, reports and even letters and emails. There are examples of these formats and an introduction to the practice of writing in a group.

I liked the layout of the chapters which were divided into small sections which made it easier to read rather than having to read long paragraphs. Each chapter starts with a box describing what the chapter is about and sections are interspersed with short exercises. Each part ended with a progress check which could be used by tutors and students alike to check understanding with answers appearing at the back of the book and a useful glossary of words that might not be familiar such as flowchart or peer review.

An excellent book that, although aimed at international students, would also benefit UK students who come from a more practise-focused background. Study skills tutors can use it to strengthen particular issues or areas of study that students might be struggling with.

Phillip C. Shon (2018). ***The Quick Fix Guide to Academic Writing: How to avoid big mistakes and small errors.*** Thousand Oaks: Sage

Written by a Professor with fifteen years of university teaching experience, the author has set out the big and small mistakes in a grid-based system which presents a quick guide of writing rules to follow. This grading code sheet sets out the cardinal sins of most social science papers. For example, he uses “BHP” which stands for “Beating Horse Problem” or in the UK we might say “Flogging a horse to death”, another is “LLP - Laundry List problem” which means rather than synthesising the literature thematically, the student has just stated the literature author by author.

In the small errors list, Schon uses “ELAB” for “point needs expansion and elaboration” but also lists a lot of grammatical, referencing or typical typing mistakes. Although I found the lists quite informative, some of the abbreviations might need further explanation and expansion to students.

A key theme in this book is that teaching students how to write academically is intricately connected to the act of critical reading. Schon refers back to his previous publication, How to read journal articles in the Social Sciences (2015), to advocate using his reading codes system to help students organise their notes. He says this will help students identify the difference between good and bad texts, and so become a better writer due to that newly acquired knowledge.

Chapter 2 looks at how to formulate a research question and again this chapter is a look at what not to do before starting to write your own papers. It provides a tentative estimate of the amount of reading that you must complete before you can ask a meaningful research question. Chapter 3 continues by offering some good advice about reading around a subject using a Reading Code Organisation Sheet (RCOS). The actual mechanics of carrying out a literature search have not been addressed, but anyone within a FE or HE institution should contact their librarian who can help with choosing the correct databases, abstracting and indexing sources to find relevant results.

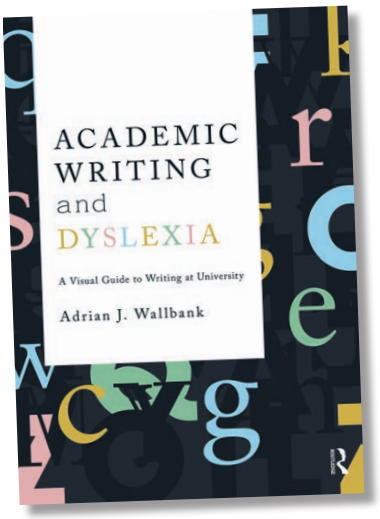
The following chapters cover developing a critique of previous literature, how to produce a finding and a claim, writing an abstract, introduction, discussion and conclusion. The book is very much aimed at students in the social sciences but there are many common-sense ideas here. The author very much likes his own acronyms and you may have to adapt these to make reading codes of your own or even symbols, as he suggests using his method to organise your work.

I feel this book would benefit study skills support staff and tutors in understanding the common writing errors, rather than a self-help guide for students. The book would be useful to draw upon to expand your knowledge and understanding of the issues. I would suggest you start with Chapter 7 the conclusion, first, to get a good idea of his rationale. Most students have been taught to write to a pre-set question but not taught why they are developing a certain type of argument in the first place,and they have not written a complex and extensively long paper before. All this can be daunting for undergraduate students but for those who have specific learning difficulties it can generate a great deal more fear and anxiety. This book has not been written specifically for students with SpLd, and is certainly not a quick fix, but will be invaluable in understanding common misconceptions in many areas of academic study and enabling students to better organise their critical reading and writing.

Adrian J. Wallbank (2018). ***Academic Writing and Dyslexia: A Visual Guide to Writing at University,*** Abingdon: Routledge

After reviewing several titles on academic writing, this book was my favourite. Adrian covers all the worthy topics that the other two books did but in a much more reader-friendly way. This was helped by the examples, text boxes, templates, icons and different coloured texts in all the chapters that helped to break up the reading into smaller chunks. Summaries of each chapter were also broken down into bullet points.

Chapter one is called 'Stepping up' from school/college to university, and explains the differences from taught, coached and mentored learning to the emphasis on independent learning. The coping strategies in the book help to harness and tap into visual and multi-dimensional thinking styles that can be adopted to help students cope at university. There is also advice on making the transition from school/ college in writing and engaging in much more critical thinking. The book presents a 'process-orientated' step-by-step approach to academic writing and composition. This is a visual system which aims to bridge the gap between the existing coping strategies of the learner and the demands of academic writing whilst also enabling the student to write independently.



Reading to Write is the topic of chapter 2 and there is some interesting information about the dyslexic experience of academic reading, eye tracking, vision and how by enforcing certain strategies study skills specialists can make the problem worse. Adrian goes on to examine skimming and scanning as reading techniques. There is also advice on maintaining focus and concentration and how that might be used to a student's advantage. He draws on the work of Eide and Eide (2011) regarding "multi-framework advantages" and also "pre-equipping" to help students get an overview of a subject.

Subsequent chapters cover critical reading for critical writing, essay genres and structures. Then, in chapter 5, Visualising effective paragraphs is explored. This helps students understand how and why paragraphs need to be linked and also how they can integrate their evidence to prove their argument. There is plenty of good advice on writing and structuring clear and effective sentences. The last chapter covers proofreading and editing, looking at strategies and checklists. I particularly liked the Quick Reference Guide at the back which acted as a visual subject index to the book itself.

Both students and those who work within study skills support, would gain a great deal from this book. A copy is available to borrow in the Dyslexia Guild library, as is Eide, Brock L. and Eide, Fernette, F. (2011). The dyslexic advantage: unlocking the hidden potential of the dyslexic brain. London: Hay House.

Adrian Wallbank is speaking at the Dyslexia Guild conference at Aston University, Birmingham on Thursday 28 June 2018. See our conference advert in this issue for further details.

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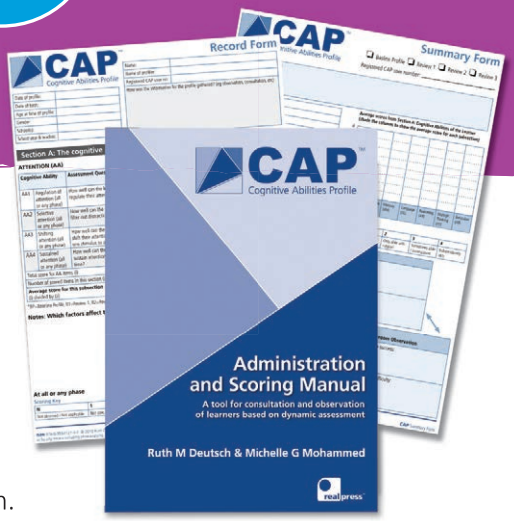

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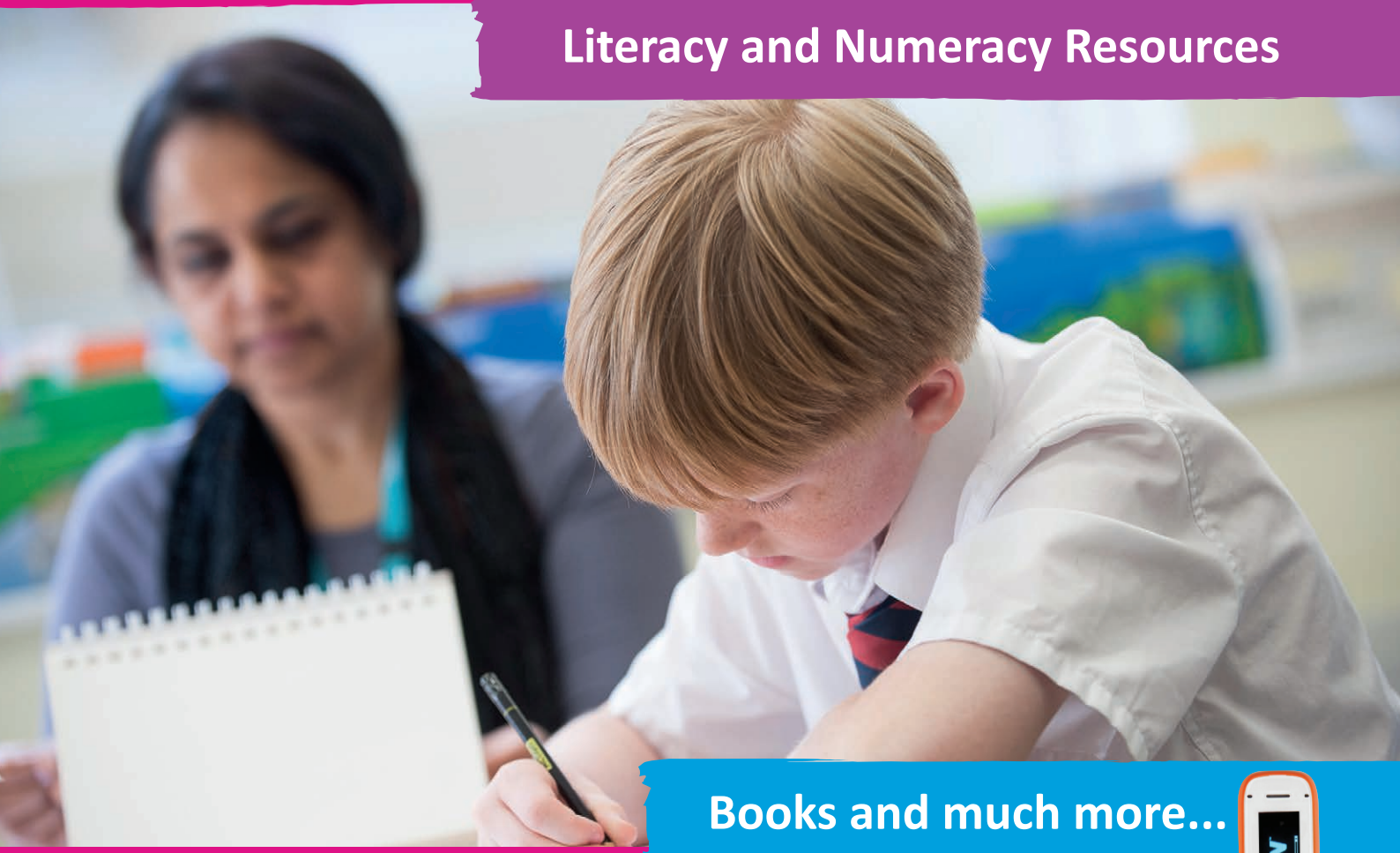

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