

## **Learning to Speak does not Translate into Reading and Writing**

*Why are they at Opposite Ends of the Dyslexic's Learning Continuum?*

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Although through scientific research and advancement we're understanding more and more about the human mind, we still have so much more to learn -- and possibly unlearn -- about how our brain functions.

It seems every decade or so we revamp our thinking of how the human mind performs. Presently, scientists and educators concur that dyslexics learn best when using their senses. A growing belief among educators (which we do subscribe to) is that dyslexics think in a very high percentage of 3-dimensional (3-D) thought. In other words, dyslexics are "3-D learners" and the more senses that are in play, the easier it is for dyslexics to grasp a word or concept.

Research has proven that language, specifically spoken language, is hardwired and ready to go in a human being from birth onwards, however reading and writing are not and have to be learned. Simply put, speaking and hearing are easily and seemingly automatically developed, but reading and writing have to be actively learned.

### **Reading The Flat, Written Word Made of Abstract Letters**

A major obstacle to reading the written word is the requirement of the human mind to move beyond its early, natural, and well-developed 3-D sensory thinking to a different format that can work with abstract, 2-dimensional (2-D), written words and symbols.

The symbols learned in K-5 include upper and lower-case letters, numbers, and punctuation marks that are represented by flat, 2-D print. For the dyslexic 3-D learner (or anyone who possesses a predominantly sensory focused 3-D thinking mind) the introduction of flat, written abstract words and symbols is more than foreign because their mind has previously worked so well with naturally occurring speech and hearing. Young children have been good at thinking with their senses up until this stage in life. The required transition to finding meaning without available 3-D sensory input is confusing and disorienting. Perhaps, this required leap, or really fall, to the 2-D world explains why our educational system takes four years (grades K-3) for a student to learn to read.

## **Confusion and the Mind's Eye**

Moreover, understanding the 2-D world of print is further complicated by the dyslexic 3-D learner's use of their "Mind's Eye." The Mind's Eye operates below conscious awareness and develops an inner vision of what is seen, felt, heard, smelled, tasted, remembered, and imagined, both internally and out in the world. Up until learning to read and write, the Mind's Eye had worked well with respect to interpreting the dyslexic child's inner and outer worlds. Then the child enters the states of confusion that are induced when encountering 2-D symbols - how to make "sense" of flat symbols or marks on paper that cannot be experienced through sensory input like speech and hearing?

Confusion tends to trigger the Mind's Eye to rapidly review multiple viewpoints of a word, feeling, thing, or event that initially makes no sense upon first sight of it.

When the Mind's Eye is not consistently viewing a word from the point of perceptual focus that we call "The Spot" (generally recognized as a point above the center of the top of the head), the Mind's Eye can, almost instantly, register multiple viewpoints of the word. This generates confusing input when none of it is recognized as familiar and/or known by the viewer.

For example:

- The word "was" can be viewed right to left, and then it is seen as "saw."
- the letter "b" can be viewed from multiple positions and become seen as: "d," "p," or "q."

What one needs to know is that the dyslexic's Mind's Eye is constantly thinking in terms of 3-D meaning. However, unfortunately this does not work well for learning to read in grades K-5.

## **The Challenge of Sight Words**

Well over 50% of ANY text encountered in grades K-5 is made up of Sight Words (which are abstract words) and abstract symbols (punctuation, numbers), the rest are concrete words that can be associated with a physical experience, such as "dog" or "tree." Sight words and abstract symbols don't lend themselves to an automatic sensual 3-D interpretation or experience so they "make sense":

e.g., What does "be" look, taste, smell or feel like?

Basically, "be" is one of the "itty-bitty" words that dyslexics can easily learn to use in speech and have difficulty reading on a page.

Abstract word examples: "a," "be," "one," "is," "a period," "there," "most," "when," "why," "where," "how," etc.

Typically, dyslexics tend to have inconsistent problems recognizing and reading sight words when these words are encountered in written form. There are 300 of these commonly used abstract words and symbols in K-5 texts.

The bottom line is that sight words and abstract symbols can and must be *mastered* on a parallel track to any phonics or phonemic awareness program. This key track has to offer a way to master the three parts of every whole word by developing a sensory experience that gives each whole word meaning so that "it makes sense."

**To summarize what the dyslexic 3-D learner must master to successfully learn to read and write involves:**

1) **Adaptation to the flat, 2-D world of symbols in print.** It can easily be accomplished by using letter blocks or having your child make sculptured clay letters, that have height, width, and depth to them, and raised-textured letters to give the child a 3-D experience of them. Check out [Alphabet\(s\) Mastery Instructions for Clay](#) for more on clay letters.

2) For the dyslexic's Mind's Eye to learn to read fluidly, they must **stabilize their Mind's Eye on a point of perceptual focus, "Go to The Spot,"** that helps them consistently perceive words and symbols without distorting or changing them.

3) Then, the dyslexic's Mind's Eye must **master all three parts of any word** (What the word **Looks-like**, **Sounds-like**, and **Means**) through sensory experiences of each of these parts.

4) Most importantly, the dyslexic 3-D learner must **master what is interrupting his train of thought while reading. Abstract words and symbols most often cause the interruption of reading flow**, and therefore all 300 abstract words and symbols must be mastered for reading to become fluid and for comprehension to be maintained.

## Opposite Ends of the Spectrum - Speaking and Reading

We can see why learning to speak, and learning to read and write, really are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

On the one hand, **speaking comes naturally** as we make use of our senses to build a vocabulary for things, feelings, qualities, conditions around us, and to process through our experiences the meaning of all spoken words, even sight words. Spoken language is quite natural for anyone to learn. It's hardwired into the human brain and body and is ready to develop with stimulation of what is spoken around them. All the learner has to possess is the God-given human senses of sight and hearing.

On the other hand, **reading and writing are not wired into our brain as easily as speech -- they have to be learned.**

When it comes to seeing sight words in a book or having to write them down, that is where the thinking of dyslexic child's recognition and comprehension becomes confused. Their initiating thought process has always been in the 3-D mode of their senses, and they never really had to think in the now-required 2-dimensions used in writing text. By using the techniques I've described above, the child can visualize these abstract words within their well-developed comfort zone of the 3-dimensions of sensory input. This is the key to overcoming the 2-D dilemma and allowing the child to progress in both reading and writing skills.

*Learn to Read, so you can Read to Learn.™*