

Dear NLPers: Would you like to help others improve poor literacy and numeracy and reduce Dyslexia?

By Olive Hickmott of Empowering Learning

There are millions of young people who are underachieving and who at the same time are exceptionally talented creative individuals.

Do you recognise this type of youngster?

Many youngsters today have very highly-developed visual skills, that may in some cases be far more developed than their parents' or teachers'. They have been brought up with fast moving colour TVs and computer games etc. They can easily recall pictures, movies and games in great detail. This skill used to be called 'a photographic memory' and many youngsters have developed the skill even further; allowing them to move videos around in their imagination at a rate of about 32 frames per second and maybe faster for those good at computer games. This is ideal for 3D activities such as jigsaw puzzles, Lego, shape sorters etc and for jobs such as carpentry, graphic design and architecture. The trouble is, this skill is completely inappropriate for words and numbers that are 2D, it is simply the wrong strategy!

The Challenge

Research shows that 10-15% of people in English speaking countries (and other non-phonetic languages) have Dyslexia and many more have poor literacy and numeracy, which are the No1 and No2 issues affecting employability of school and college leavers. There are millions of young people who are underachieving and who at the same time are exceptionally talented creative individuals.

By just reading this article and asking people about their experience, you can start to help adults and children alike, get unstuck from the unhelpful beliefs that:

- Dyslexia is genetic
- There is no cure
- People are lazy and stupid

To help your understanding try this little exercise: Can you spell and read well? If you can, can you 'see' words in your mind's eye? Try imagining the word 'giraffe'. If this is easy try the word 'conscientious' and try remembering your car number plate. If you are good at spelling and reading, this simple exercise will be easy and you will now be

aware that you do 'see' words in your mind's eye.

Just imagine, for a moment, spelling and reading without the skill to visualise words. This is what many youngsters are experiencing. If you are Dyslexic, the letters are probably running around having a party! The news I have for you is that of the 1000s I have taught, including teachers, only about 50% have developed this skill naturally, almost no-one was ever taught it and they can't imagine managing without it. The other 50% generally don't know what you are talking about and find literacy difficult.

NLP coaches are ideal for helping people understand how to find literacy and numeracy much easier. Seeing someone change in front of your eyes is one of the most rewarding jobs on the planet.

The world as seen by youngsters – told by these who struggle to spell and read

"Nobody told me that all good spellers and readers can 'see' words in their imagination (mind's eye). Maybe it is such a habit for them, they don't even think to tell us"

"When I was born, I lived in a world of 3D objects, where I was excellent at turning things around, like bricks and shapes, to make them fit and be successful. I built things all from my imagination, without having instructions. I was never told that letters, words and numbers are 2D and you simply get confused if you keep moving them. Even my toy bricks had letters and numbers on them, which just encouraged me to turn them around."

"I have exciting videos running in my brain all day, I don't seem to have any control over them, sometimes I have lots of screens with different channels, so I can be watching last night's TV, my mum telling my brothers off and my favourite film all at one time. I can't stop them or turn them off and sometimes they move so fast



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they are just a blur, like the TV when you first switch it on. They are often only a few inches from my face, which can be very distracting and it's too busy to pay attention to the Maths lesson. How does anyone focus when all this is happening?"

"Some words seem to be easier to remember, I think they are the ones with objects attached. So when I spell 'football' I think of the Arsenal Football sign, but silly little words like 'is', 'on', 'was' just don't mean anything to me. Do they mean anything to you when they aren't in a sentence?"

"I have been taught these phonics, but nobody asks me what I can hear. The way my Hindu teacher says them, isn't the same as my Irish mum or my English dad. And there are those words like 'to', 'too' and 'two' that sound just the same to me, but seem to have different meanings and are spelt differently.

This is so confusing."

"When the words start moving on the page, I start to feel dizzy and then feel like passing out. I have tried to put this out of my head, but every day when I come to school I hope that this will be the day that school starts to make sense. But I just get confused again and I am so tired when I get home, I feel frustrated, angry and sometimes can be really horrible to mum and dad. Nothing in school makes sense to me."

Does this sound like some of our youngsters or adults? Imagine what it would be like if more than 99% of the population could find literacy and numeracy easy. People are not held back by a lack of intelligence or laziness, it's a major confusion. And it's so easy to change when you know "how to."

The world as seen by teachers

A very common thread for these youngsters, when in primary school is to turn letters and words around. 'Was' becomes 'saw', 'b' becomes 'd', 'no' becomes 'on' and numbers are written the wrong way around – this will resonate with many teachers. This is a classic sign of a very well-developed imagination or mind's eye that can easily turn around objects. By the time pupils get to senior school, whole sentences can start to move off the page, turn around or simply shake so youngsters just don't want to even look at the



written page. All of this is going on in their subconscious, out of conscious awareness, so they don't realise what is happening. Pupils may be getting very frustrated as poor literacy makes them feel stupid and often very sick – this frustration can generate bad behaviour.

The Solution

The National Curriculum, in the UK, calls for multi-sensory teaching and learning. But teachers have had little or no education in how children learn visually. There is a great difference between showing a child what one particular dragon looks like and reading a story about dragons where the child can make up their own pictures. Youngsters naturally visualise pictures and can just as easily learn to visualise words and keep the letters still. Every primary school teacher can learn how to teach the whole class in minutes, and it is invaluable Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for every subject in school. Our aim is to reach as many teachers and pupils as possible and share with them the "how to's" that make teaching and learning to spell easy.

We have a simple protocol, using

visualisation, based on the NLP spelling strategy, extended for Dyslexia and Dyscalculia. Our process includes whole family learning and is structured in a way that is easily reproducible, with simple steps to teach at any age and in any language. The methodology is tried and tested and works in both school and home settings. We also help parents of the under 7s stop their children ever getting confused by words and numbers and developing Dyslexia. This confusion can so quickly develop into a strong identity through labelling and the low self-esteem.

If you recognise pupils from this article and want to use your NLP and coaching skills to make a real difference please take a look at www.dyslexiainschools.co.uk where you will find a free audio introduction and a note to headteachers about making spelling and reading easy. Youngsters can learn to see words in less than an hour – the younger they get the habit, the more successful they are.

With all the benefits of an excellent visual memory, youngsters have a really great opportunity of success, once taught how to control their visual pictures, making the best use of their untapped gifts. ■

Replicable research

Having successfully used the methodology over several years with individuals, schools, families and in business, we have started projects to replicate this work for formal research worldwide.

The objective is to measure the success of the approach in both the short and long term, using the standard measures available in school and adult education.

The project will ensure that the skills can be taught to staff who will be carrying out independent research in their own particular community.

This will also be replicated in adult education and separate work carried out to measure the success of our preventative strategies amongst the under 7s.

If teaching visualisation has a positive and lasting impact, the objective is to move from intervention to normal practice in classrooms worldwide, teaching the skills during teacher, support staff and specialist staff training.

If you are interested in contributing to this work please get in touch with olive@tiahl.org.

My credentials

When I first found out about visual spelling I would have been classified as dyslexic myself, my mind's eye moved very fast and although I could visualise numbers, I had never considered the concept of visualising words, until a few years ago. Since then I have learnt much about my own internal experience that has enabled me to dramatically improve my spelling and reading. With curiosity I have helped 100s of people to understand their own experience and with simple tools achieve their goals. I have trained over 1000 people

in UK, Europe, Singapore and the USA to be able to pass literacy on, through visualisation. Together we have reached 10,000s of people who struggle with spelling, reading, maths, dyslexia and dyscalculia.

Empowering Learning, has extended and simplified my work published in Seeing Spells Achieving and a CD, entitled Pass Literacy On, is now available. It is a behaviour that you can simply learn. As founder of www.empoweringlearning.co.uk I have a passion for helping

people who are struggling with any learning difficulties. I am a health, wellness and energy coach, qualified as a Master Practitioner in NLP, Energetic NLP, Thought Pattern Management and Professional Coaching.

The web-site has many stories of individuals who have successfully overcome learning difficulties, inspiring others to repeat their successes. We have developed other simple techniques to help those with ADD/ADHD, Dyspraxia and other learning difficulties. I am a

founder member of the International Association for Health and Learning (www.tiahl.org) and the Institute for the advanced studies in health (www.nlpiash.org).

I run professional training for coaches, teachers, trainers and breakthrough workshops with youngsters and their families. "In just 90 minutes everyone can change their experience with words."

Do help me to "Pass Literacy On" to every children and adult, giving them choice over their own experience.