The Psychology of Dyslexia: a handbook for teachers with case studies (second edition)
Michael Thomson (2009)
Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 236pp
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This book is a second edition which has been updated and expanded to include a CD-Rom of case studies of children with dyslexia. It is aimed at teachers undertaking postgraduate qualifications in specific learning difficulties/dyslexia, hence the subtitle A handbook for teachers. The contents are fairly typical of the genre, comprehensively covering the nature and definition of dyslexia, testing and assessment, neuropsychology and neurophysiology, difficulties with reading and spelling, and phonological and memory deficits. This makes interesting reading and may be valuable as background reading for some specialist teachers such as those mentioned above. Unfortunately, most teachers, particularly those who lack a scientific background, will probably find it hard going, and the information contained therein is largely irrelevant to the day-to-day management of children with reading difficulties such as dyslexia in mainstream education. The final chapter on the social psychology of dyslexia seems misplaced and provides an unsatisfactory conclusion.

It is the title of the book that is more problematic. While the first part of the title is indubitably true, for it is a book about the psychology of dyslexia, it is certainly not a handbook for teachers. While psychology is an academic discipline involving the systematic, often scientific, study of human functions and behaviour, teaching is the imparting of knowledge to others, which often involves a complexity of skills and attributes that cannot all be scientifically measured or tested. There are a growing number of respected educators who are now questioning the dominance of a positivist epistemology and the privileging of scientific knowledge as the only way of knowing. Teaching children with literacy difficulties requires much more than testing, psychometric assessment, and an understanding of the latest theories of neuropsychology which constitute the prime content of this book. Some teachers question whether any of it is necessary at all. A ‘handbook’ for teachers should be less about syndromes and symptoms, and more solution-focused, with different suggestions for supporting children with reading difficulties, irrespective of the underlying causes, and with full consideration of the social, pedagogical and institutional barriers to learning. This book, and the associated case studies, concentrates on a within-child, deficit model, which may be appropriate for psychologists, but is not particularly helpful to teachers.

Other concerns include the author’s definition of dyslexia, which is unclear and confusing. He favours the discrepancy model and the over-reliance on IQ testing and scores to prove his point are disquieting, giving the impression that only a small group of children (intelligent, from well-supported home backgrounds and not experiencing emotional problems) are entitled to the label of dyslexia. This seems to be recidivism, returning us to the days when only middle-class children were identified as dyslexic.

As a former SENCo (or its equivalent in Scotland) who now teaches on the postgraduate courses aforementioned, the model of dyslexia advocated seems outdated, and, furthermore, from a social justice perspective, discriminatory. I prefer to examine the whole concept of literacy with teachers, and to suggest that the labelling of increasing numbers of children as defective can lead to low expectations and complacency within our profession, and impact negatively on society.

In order to really improve the lot of children with literacy difficulties, we, as teachers, need to look critically at our pedagogy and our attitudes to difference. While testing, assessment, neuroscience and psychology may have a part to play in our understanding of all learning difficulties, effective teaching and supportive teachers provide the best chance of helping such children. Therefore, while acknowledging the contribution of this book to educational psychology, and, with reservations, its merit as a textbook for postgraduate courses, I remain unconvinced of its contribution to the majority of teachers and the teaching profession.

Jane Mott
There is currently much research into developing children’s reading skills; for many years, literacy teaching and literacy research have been dominated by a host of resources of teaching reading and, as pointed out in the Foreword, the contribution of spelling and writing have to a large extent been ignored. This book highlights the need for a better balance between reading and writing in literacy teaching, with an emphasis on the valuable contribution that spelling and handwriting can make to literacy development in primary and secondary schools, with a particular focus on overcoming barriers to learning such as those experienced by students with dyslexia.

The book is organised into two distinct parts. Part I forms a comprehensive introduction to the second part and contains three chapters which explore spelling, handwriting and dyslexia. Within the chapters, the author explores and discusses the association between each of these and presents an analysis of the importance of understanding how each links to the other and their relationship to becoming literate. A key theme which links them is how an understanding of each of them can help us design and develop effective interventions that provide support to overcome barriers to learning for children and to reinforce and consolidate literacy development. Each chapter includes background research and information that is easily accessible as a reference to be dipped into; for example, reference is made to both the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy and, within chapter 3, ‘Dyslexia and Dyspraxia’, there is a section that addresses the educational difficulties of children with dyslexia and a range of other disabilities such as dysorthographia (specific verbal difficulty), dyscalculia (number difficulties), dysgraphia (handwriting co-ordination difficulties), DCD (developmental co-ordination disorder/ dyspraxia) and specific language difficulties. Practical advice is provided through reference to problem-based learning which is underpinned by case studies and examples taken directly from classrooms.

Part II, ‘Assessment and Identification Instruments’, is introduced by an informative section on the assessment of literacy difficulties and discusses issues such as early identification, early screening and individual diagnosis. The author then presents a useful review of current dyslexia assessment tests, including the Aston Index, the Bangor Dyslexic Test, Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB), Cognitive Profiling System (CoPS) and the Dyslexia Early Screening Test (DEST). This is a comprehensive section on intervention and the chapters in this section address intervention approaches exploring dyslexic remedial programmes, multisensory phonics and phonological training and strategic cognitive and linguistic approaches, with details of how each programme can be structured to meet the specific needs of individual children. Within each chapter, the author helpfully identifies a number of specific approaches and schemes, evaluating each and, in some cases, adding details of research studies that have been carried out using specific programmes or schemes. There is also an evaluation of existing handwriting schemes, considering the strengths and weaknesses of each. All of this adds weight to the book as a useful, accessible reference source.

This book sets out to emphasise that a greater priority must be given to the early stages of spelling and handwriting teaching, and that more consideration needs to be given in teaching and intervention strategies if pupils are to make quick, effective progress. Throughout each of the chapters, the author effectively shows the links between spelling, handwriting and dyslexia and gives examples of case studies to illustrate the multi-sensory connections between sounds, symbols, articulation awareness and motor skills components. Added to this are the very useful evaluations of current assessment tests for dyslexia and evaluations of current schemes and programmes for teaching handwriting and spelling.

*Spelling, Handwriting and Dyslexia* is an excellent reference that provides theoretical and practical information and advice on overcoming barriers to learning for children. It is ably supported by the numerous figures, tables and examples of research studies in the text. It will appeal to a wide audience – class teachers, trainee teachers, SENCos and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) at both primary and secondary level – and will help to support inclusive practice in the classroom.

Mary E. Chambers

**Dyslexia in the Primary Classroom**
Wendy Hall (2009)
Exeter: Learning Matters, 124pp
Paperback £15.00
ISBN 978 1844451890

The book is aimed at newly qualified teachers (NQT) working in primary classrooms and makes the necessary links with the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS). When reading any newly published book in this area, there is the anticipation that the author will bring something new and illuminating to support the teaching of children with dyslexia. Works by Reid (2003), Reid and Wearmouth (2002) and Ott (1997) have already covered the area comprehensively and made links between the theory (and associated research) and practical aspects of teaching.

It is recognised within the book that children with dyslexia are individually different in terms of their learning profile and the importance of assessment in planning support. The identification of children with dyslexia is handled in some
depth and there is a useful list of signs in chapter 2. Dyslexia as a syndrome is covered, together with reference to the importance of developmental factors for identifying the condition. Definitions of dyslexia are explored early on in the text and this material is helpful in exploring the ways in which dyslexia is regarded and whether we can have a shared understanding. As the author states, dyslexia is ‘highly prevalent in classes’ and the newly qualified teacher will encounter children with dyslexia throughout his or her career.

Multiple interventions have been suggested in the literature, and here the focus is on using games to address some of the difficulties in literacy and mathematics. The author has made a case for the value and use of such games and a clear rationale is contained in the concluding chapter. The author has succeeded in describing a wide range of game-like activities that could be developed for classroom use and delivered by either the teacher or the teaching assistant. This is a readable text with a good overview of how to work with teaching assistants and a small number of case studies based on the author’s personal teaching experience with individual children.

The author often refers the reader to other texts and seems aware of the limitations of trying to cover such a wide area. This is an acknowledgement that the book cannot provide the solutions to all the issues that may arise for those entering the teaching profession. My main criticism of the book would be the lack of reference to whole-school approaches in meeting the needs of children with dyslexia and the ongoing agenda to provide dyslexia-friendly classrooms. There is the occasional reference to the SENCos within the text, though no acknowledgement of school or local authority policy that relates to this area. NQTs are required to work as part of a teaching team and need to have cognisance of what is seen as good and effective practice for their teaching context. There are no references to the mapping of provision for schools or effective interventions for literacy, such as the excellent publication from the DCSF, What Works for Pupils with Literacy Difficulties? (Brooks, 2007). Unlike the similar book in this series, Dyslexia-Friendly Practice in the Secondary School (Mortimore & Dupree, 2008), there are few reassuring comments for the NQT in terms of support they could access, and how they might ‘tap into levels of expertise’. Many schools and local authorities have documentation to support teachers and to exemplify what is seen as good practice. This missing contextual material unintentionally leaves the book with a limited focus and a rather dated feel. This is also compounded by the limited nature of the materials in the chapter on ICT and the questionable suggestion of using the Bangor or Aston screening kit (Aston Index) to support the screening process.

Additionally, there is a reference to Letters and Sounds (Primary National Strategy, 2007) that suggests the author is critical of the approach that differentiates the teaching of phonics in the early years. Many early years practitioners have welcomed this as a means of providing a more appropriate literacy curriculum to meet the needs of their children rather than ‘creating ability groups’.

The text does not claim to be comprehensive and those teachers seeking to enhance their knowledge base should consider reading this text in conjunction with Reid (2003). As part of their induction programme, NQTs will become aware of the wider implications of teaching primary-aged children with differences in learning. Additionally the NQT needs to appreciate this text within the context of the dyslexia-friendly agenda and how a whole-school approach can help these children achieve. In conclusion, though this book provides some interesting material, it is questionable how useful the NQT will find the text.

Glynnis Smith

References
A 225 code is sent in response to the ABOR command when the data connection is still open but there is no file transfer in progress to abort. Example response: 225 Data connection open; no transfer in progress. Possible command: ABOR.

This is the response given by the server to the PASV command. It indicates that the server is ready for the client to connect to it for the purpose of establishing a data connection. The 227 series, branded Red Wing, is a Japanese suburban electric multiple unit. Built since 2014 for JR West, the 227 series is used on various local services on various lines around the Hiroshima region of Japan. The 227 series was designed to be a suburban train meant to be operated in the Hiroshima region, in addition to replacing older trains like the 115 series sets used on services in that area. The first set entered service on 14 March 2015.

91.225 - Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS–B) Out equipment and use. Sec. 91.225 — Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS–B) Out equipment and use. Link to an amendment published at 75 FR 37712, June 30, 2010. (2) Meets the requirements of §91.227. (c) Operators with equipment installed with an approved deviation under §21.609 of this chapter also are in compliance with this section. (d) After January 1, 2020, and unless otherwise authorized by ATC, no person may operate an aircraft in the following airspace unless the aircraft has equipment installed that meets the requirements in paragraph (b) of this section.