

ExWyZee Remedial Reading

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Monograph No. 1

THE P = PA PHONEME FAULT

The phonics fault addressed here could just as well go by several names: D=Duh, B=Ba, G=Ga, J=Ja, K=Ka, V=Va, or Z=Za. But P=Pa will do. I give the P=pa fault its own monograph status because it is so common for plosive letters (b, c, d, g, k, p, t) in reading-impaired children.

For some letters, as soon as we tell a child the sounds for them, we create a potential reading problem. When we introduce the beginner to the b-sound, when we say the b-sound (outside the context of some word), he doesn't hear the plosive b-as-in-bubble. What he hears is ba or buh. And when we say the d-sound, he doesn't hear the diddle-d. He hears da or duh.

We can say the sound (phoneme) for the letter-s by hissing. We can hum for the letter-m. And we can say at least one sound for each of the letters a, c, e, i, o, u, x, z, simply by saying those letters' names. Most students readily learn the p-puff, the bubble-b, and the diddle-d sounds when they are coached in the first and second grades as they read aloud. If a child pronounces map as mapa, he is coached in making the p-puff instead of the pa-sound.

But some do not get their brains properly wired for plosive letters, and we find some of them in mid-elementary-and-up reading:

land as landa
apricot as aparicot
submarine as subamarine.

And if we drill them with nonsense words we find them reading:

sop as sopa
fazro as fazaro
odrop as odaropa.

We see two levels of severity of this phonics problem. At its worst we see students who, when drilled on reading two, three, and four-letter combinations, will read:

od as oda
bro as baro
slup as slupa

And we see students who might not make those phonics errors on such drills, but when attempting to decode unfamiliar words, will read:

adverb as adaverba

simplex as simpalex
Aztec as Azatec

For the most severe cases students need extensive oral drills where they hear a reading coach say the sounds correctly and incorrectly, are directed to repeat what the coach says, and are directed to say which pronunciation is correct. The P=Pa fault is not a speech problem, but it often requires the sort of tutor-intensive therapy that speech impediments require. Teacher-led chalkboard lessons won't do it for the even-mildly-dyslexic student.

To treat a student's P=Pa phoneme deficit the ExWyZee program doesn't rely on P=Pa incidents to come up in round-robin reading sessions (Incidental Instruction). When the deficit is detected in a grade-three-and up student, Direct Instruction* is provided. The student is given lists of words to read in tutorial sessions. Each list is a mixture of words that invite the error (apricot, submarine) and words that do not (sassafras, minister).

While such drills can start with lists of words, all of which are error-inviting, in order to concentrate the student's mind on the error, after fair improvement is seen, the list should be mixed to move away from the inclination to make the error when the guard is down. Examples of error-inviting words:

Low level: mop, dip, prom, lord, Ford, slid, drum, drop, sad, lamp.

Mid level: print, plant, broom, sled, bored, sadly, madly, gladly.

Upper level: adverb, pretend, apricot, lobster, Labrador, apprehend, mobster, sadistic, ledger, amplitude, amplify, sombrero, abscess.

Drills with nonsense words can help. A student might read Upjohn correctly, since it is made of two simple words up and John. But that student might, in the next breath, make the P=Pa error with the nonsense word apjofa, pronouncing it apajofa. Apjofa is more inviting of the error than Upjohn.

A case from an ExWyZee log: One especially difficult case was that of Student-AM, a girl retained in grade-three. She'd had enough unhappy experiences with learning to read, that she was sometimes belligerent. Early on in treating her P=Pa errors (mostly with the letters p, b, and d) she would often deny making the errors. When I would mispronounce a word just as *she* had just mispronounced it, she would sometimes respond angrily "I didn't say that." It took audio-taping to make her aware of making the phonics error.

In severe cases of the P=pa fault the treatment must be as intense and focused as in speech therapy. I will direct a student to repeatedly read

a word, alternately saying it with and without making the error. For example, when the error is made on these words, I will have the student recite them:

apricot - aparicot - apricot - aparicot - apricot - aparicot

oblong - obalong - oblong - obalong - oblong - obalong

cradle - caradle - cradle - caradle - cradle - caradle

bedlam - bedalam - bedlam - bedalam - bedlam - bedalam

frog - froga - frog - froga - frog - froga - frog - froga

N-Insertion Fault

This is an example of an unusual fault. It's not a phoneme fault. That is, it's not a case of mis-sounding of a letter. I include it here to make the point that we sometimes see quirky pronunciation faults that must be treated as the P=pa fault is treated, with exercises designed to sharply focus the student's attention on it. The N-insertion fault was observed in Student-AM's pronunciation of Canada as Ca-nan-ada, Catatonic as cat-an-tonic, Banana as ba-nan-ada. The same sort of treatment described above for P=pa (including audio taping) was effective in eliminating this fault in student AM.

*Don't assume that a reading program that is publicized as *Direct Instruction* meets the test of what that term should mean. If Direct Instruction means anything for the severely reading-impaired student, it means, forceful, targeted, and frequent, instruction on reading skills deficits -- provided to the individual.