ExWyZee Remedial Reading

THE READ-THE-WORD COMPULSION   **4-8-15** revision
Reading a word can interfere with reading the word.

Yes, sounds like gibberish, but read on.

The first draft of this monograph was a section of ExWyZee SepCom Monograph Separation of Words on the Computer. But it's given a monograph title of its own because the Reading The Word Compulsion is one of the most pervasive, debilitating, and difficult-to-remedy deficits in the dyslexic's deficit baggage.

For the fluent reader, Mississippi, elephant, and McDonalds are sight words – recognized on sight. In reading a word that is *not* recognized as a sight word the brain is engaged in two tasks. The first task is to decode the word, and to say, or to think, the sounds the letters represent. The second task is to bring the meaning of the word out of the brain's vocabulary bank – if it's in that reader's vocabulary.

Anyone who has tutored reading-impaired kids knows what I mean by the Right End Mutter. The student correctly reads some part of the left end of a word, maybe the first syllable or two, and then mutters something incomprehensible for the rest of the word.

In reading the probably-unfamiliar word *pertinent* he might correctly read the left end (per or pert or pertin) and then mutter tent, tenant, or nenent for the rest of the word.

There are at least two levels of severity of this problem. In less-severe cases, the student has the ability to read the right-end parts of a word when they are presented in isolation. That is, he has no difficulty reading right-end parts for the word pertinent (tinent or inent or nent), when they are presented out of context in a list of letter-blends to read.

But he commits the Right End Mutter as a way to get through reading an unfamiliar word with the least exertion. It might be called the habitual lazy-brain problem, sort of a why-bother response. He might not do the mutter when reading the familiar word *continent*, a word with the same right-end structure as pertinent, but will do the right end mutter when reading incontinent.

As a student progresses from reading on mommy's lap, through the early primary grades, the brain of the fluent reader becomes wired to do exactly what we want it to do – to glance at a word for a few milliseconds and recognize it either by a familiar pattern in its appearance (Mississippi,

alphabet), or to see it in parts (in-hospit-able, in-hos-pit-able, inhos-pit-able, in-hos-pitable), and blend those parts to recognize the word.

We see a breakdown in the decoding process in a student who correctly sight-reads Arizona on Monday, but can't read the un-capitalized arizona on Tuesday. The pattern of the distinctive capitalized version is wired into the brain's word vault. The un-capitalized version is not.

Now, here's where the gibberish-like title of this monograph comes in. He wants instantly to read the word – for two reasons: (1) That's what he's supposed to do, it's what his brain has become trained to do. (2) Not to read it instantly, but to break it into readable parts, and blend the parts, is difficult for him.

There are at least two reasons for that to be difficult: (1) *It just is*. Dyslexia? Maybe. (2) Or, he has not had the vigorous decoding-by-parts drills that he should have had before he got to the point in school where he's asked to read *inhospitable*. It's likely that, for the seriously reading-impaired student, both of those reasons apply.

So, he takes the path of least-resistance, the path of least-discomfort, and simply handles the word by reading the first part, inhos, and muttering something for the rest of it, so it might come out *inhospital* or *inhospitbull*.

If the right end of that word had been presented out of context, *pitable*, he might have read it by parts, pit-able. But when it was part of a word that might not be in his vocabulary, the read-the-word-compulsion kicked in, with no attempt to decode the whole thing by parts.

Can a dyslexic student's brain be re-wired to *cure* the Right End Mutter? Maybe not. Can it be rewired to *reduce* the right-end-mutter compulsion? Yes, I've seen it in students given intensive drills in separating and decoding words on the computer in the ExWyZee Remedial Reading Program.

It might sound strange to a passerby in the hallway when we say to a student, "Do not read the word." We hope the passerby pauses to hear us as we then direct the student to read the parts of the word separately, and, finally, to "put them together."

An example:
For the word colorado the student arrives at the separation *col-ora-do*. When directed to say the first part he correctly responds with *col*. But then when told to say the second part, he begins the response by again saying col, then trying to blend it with *ora*. The Read The Word Compulsion is activated, which interferes with concentrating on, and decoding by, the word's parts.

So, again, we have to say, "Do not read the word, read only the first part."
And, Do not read the word, read only the second part." That routine has to be
followed until the student becomes comfortable with reading each of the
parts in his separation one at a time, and then to read them in sequence. In
many cases you'll find that, to get a student to overcome the RTW
Compulsion, and read a certain part, you must cover the preceding parts with
a piece of paper or with your hand.

Now, consider the difficulty you face as a dyslexic's reading coach. For a
severely reading impaired student, especially one who is along in grade three
or higher, it's not just that you have to teach a skill. You have to train the
student's brain to overcome a neurological *compulsion*!

The SepCom feature of the ExWyZee program is designed to do that. But
keep it in mind that a few kitchen-table sessions will not accomplish that.
Think in terms of months, five days a week.

Filename: Read the word compulsion