

Module Two: Part 3

c) Phonetics and phonics – and changing the perception of ‘phonics’

To understand the distinction between phonetics and phonics

To raise awareness of the need for a fundamental change in perception of the teaching of phonics and the role of phonics for adult literacy

Module Two: Part 3 continued

c) Phonetics and phonics – and changing the perception of ‘phonics’

To consider whether the entire teaching profession in English-speaking or English-teaching contexts should be knowledgeable about reading and spelling instruction based on the English alphabetic code and phonics skills (and not just *infant* teachers)

Module Two: Part 3 continued

d) The realities of 'silent reading'

To understand the hidden dangers of routine *word-skipping* taking into consideration the various types of word-skipping and their possible causes

**Clarifying the difference between
phonetics and phonics
and
working towards a global
change in perception of 'phonics'**

Terminology

- **Phonetics:** The science concerned with the study of speech processes including the production, perception and analysis of speech sounds
- **Phonics:** The association of letters and letter groups with their phonetic values

Terminology

Phonics: ... and a method for teaching reading and spelling new and challenging words

FOR LONG-TERM LITERACY

A change in perception

Many people, however, including teachers, pupils and their parents think of phonics only as a teaching method for infants.

This perception needs to CHANGE

Spell this word ...

What did you **do** to
spell the word ?



Proficient adult spelling

- What is the **main spelling skill** and requisite **code knowledge** for spelling new, longer or more challenging words when we write or type?
- What function is served by **saying the letter names LETTER-BY-LETTER** in the order they occur in the word?

Proficient adult spelling

- Most adults chunk words into 'syllables' and think in 'units of sound' = form of **phonics**
- Many **adults** 'think' in **sounds** when they write or type new, longer or more challenging words.
- **Saying the letter names** 'in order' **ONLY** serves the purpose of **relaying the spelling accurately** letter-by-letter **to another person**. This is not the actual **spelling process** or 'skill'.

Reflecting on **spelling**

A diet of '*look, cover, write, check*' without orally segmenting the spoken word and **without thinking of the sounds** whilst writing the word, can lead to muddling the order of the letters:



The teaching profession

Do you think that **all** teachers, **across the sectors**, make it **explicit** to pupils that ***proficient adult*** spellers use **phonics knowledge and skills** routinely?

Do you think that **all** junior and secondary ***pupils*** apply **phonics knowledge and skills** ***routinely*** to spell?

The teaching profession

Do all teachers tell pupils that
phonics is an adult skill?

Do all pupils know that **phonics is**
an adult skill for spelling?

Read this word aloud ...

synchrocyclotron

**What did you do to
read the word ?**

Proficient adult reading

- Did you translate the letter/s from left to right **into sounds** leading to a pronunciation?
- Is it **made explicit** to all pupils that **proficient adult readers apply phonics knowledge and skills** to **read** new words?

A change in perception

- It is highly *unlikely* that **all** teachers tell their pupils **explicitly** that literate adults **routinely** apply their alphabetic code knowledge and phonics skills for reading and for **spelling / writing / typing**.
- It is highly *unlikely* that the world's pupils think that phonics is 'adult stuff' rather than 'baby stuff'. **How can we change this?**

Ah but ...

Private silent reading

What do you 'do' when you read **privately** to yourself and encounter a new word or an unusual, longer and more challenging word?

**Do you skip new
or
longer words?**

The teacher discovers that she has never 'pronounced' dinosaur names even though she has read (silently) about them.

Oh gosh!
I've never
properly decoded
these dinosaur
names !



The boys in particular delight in helping her out!

The realities of silent reading?

Literature is full of
new vocabulary

– far richer than, and beyond,
daily **spoken** language

The realities of silent reading ?

So what do you think happens when **children read silently** to themselves ...

... **particularly** if they are **lacking** alphabetic code knowledge and the blending skill or have an impoverished level of **spoken** language?

The realities of silent reading?

Do you think that teachers are fully aware of how many learners may skip words when reading privately - and how frequently they skip words?

How many learners 'get by' through routinely guessing their way through reading material by default habit or in preference to accurate decoding

- or with no option but to guess or skip?

The 'skipping words' issue

It should be **well-known** across the teaching profession that it is very common to **default** to 'skipping words'

... but it is not well known that this is an **important issue for learners** or that this is **not** a desirable habit.

Consider common teacher-training

Years of emphasis on:

1. Reading **'with fluency and expression'**
2. **'Reading on'** to guess what unknown words might be
3. **'Skim-reading'** to get the gist of a text ...
4. Common notion that children **go beyond** the need for 'phonics' when reading

All lead to a worrying habit of **'skipping words'**
- whether by **default** or **necessity** !

The 'skipping words' issue

How can we address this
in our practice ?

Discuss or reflect

Suggestions:

- 1) Provide plenty of opportunities for 'reading aloud' to slow down reading, to encourage accurate reading and to monitor reading habits and ability
- 2) Engage with pupils and their parents/carers about the importance of:
 - reading aloud and appropriately for an audience
 - accurate reading, *not* guessing or skipping
 - being curious about the meaning of each word (use context to support comprehension)

Personal word book:

- **Provide each learner with a book with lines** to note when reading which words are challenging to decode and which words are 'unknown' (meaning)
- **Allow time to look at these words** – support with **correct decoding** as necessary and **clarify meaning** (tell the learner or, if mature enough, look up the words in a dictionary)

Secondary sector

Many secondary teachers report that large numbers of their pupils cannot access well enough (**read**) the required literature.

How many of our junior and secondary colleagues are **FULLY TRAINED** in teaching alphabetic code knowledge **and** blending **and** segmenting to support, **or to teach as needed**, the weaker readers and spellers?

Phonics “a b c baby stuff”

Do older pupils requiring **learning support** think that they are getting ...

phonics “adult stuff”

phonics “baby stuff”?

What do you think **they** think?

How can we change these **perceptions**?

How can **all** teachers support older pupils?

Phonics expertise

Should **all** teaching professionals
be **experts** at teaching and
supporting pupils in **phonics**?

How would an **Alphabetic Code Chart**
in **every** classroom be helpful?

(More about this later)