

### 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

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### 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)