

## Can some reading programs have negative effects on pupils ?

Writing for *TES Scotland*, journalist Emma Seith reported on the views of Yong Zhao, a professor of education at the University of Kansas in the US.

Emma writes that Professor Yong Zhao argues teachers should be told that some interventions that improve results can also 'hurt' pupils.

Education researchers should be compelled, like medical researchers, to be explicit about the negative "side effects" of the interventions they advocate.

In China, there was a saying that "all medicine is poison at the same time", Professor Zhao said. "Some times a teaching method might improve test scores but reduce pupil creativity.

"Educational research seems to be exclusively interested in what works, but ignores the possibility that what works may hurt at the same time," he told TES.

"When you buy a medical product, you are given information about both its effects and side effects. But such practice does not exist in education."

**Schools and teachers were never told that while a reading programme might teach pupils to quickly sound out words it might also make them "hate reading forever"**

### **A Very Common condition...**

Almost all the students who come to *Dyslexia WA* have distressful stories of school experiences where the traditional rote and repetitive learning methods have caused significant angst throughout their education, often resulting in hating reading; adults go through decades never opening the pages of a book for any reading for pleasure.

But... the turnaround which takes place in a very short time once students receive instructions and use strategies which fit with their clever and impressive thinking styles is something special to behold. A bit like using correct medicine for a particular condition.



Emma Seith's article can be seen at [https://www.tes.com/news/call-researchers-highlight-negative-side-effects-methods-phonics?fbclid=IwAR3CmFgadCSNVH2VOi6x\\_csYClq1MLj8eaKoJMrgdtNt41BJ5iInf-4gQc](https://www.tes.com/news/call-researchers-highlight-negative-side-effects-methods-phonics?fbclid=IwAR3CmFgadCSNVH2VOi6x_csYClq1MLj8eaKoJMrgdtNt41BJ5iInf-4gQc)



### **Princess Beatrice and dyslexia**

Beatrice, daughter of Sarah Ferguson, tells of feeling, when at school, she was 'not good enough'. Her school day experiences were marked by struggles and self esteem issues as her classmates were on reading levels which she could not reach.

"I was very lucky, I got to go to a school that was very nurturing and supporting [but] I would describe the actual day-to-day learning side of things — very challenging," the 31-year-old said in an interview.

"I think if I were to say to my younger self, do not be defined by those moments that happened to you in that exam or that classroom because they are lifelong learnings," she said. "They are the lessons that you carry with you and they build you up to be who you are."

Beatrice works in a technology company which succeeds through thinking differently.

"... I think that's one of the strengths we have as dyslexics is to look at things differently, be a problem solver, find new ways to do things, be experimental, entrepreneurial."

Beatrice ended her interview by reassuring individuals with dyslexia that, despite misconceptions surrounding this topic, dyslexia is a strength. "It is not something that is wrong with you. It is a great part of how your brain works and everybody's brain works incredibly differently," she stated. "There is nothing wrong, there is just everything that is so right."



**Dyslexia: not a disability, but a visual-spatial thinking style which succeeds with a visual-spatial teaching style.**

## A Butterfly is...

From Brenda Baird, Brisbane, Queensland

**I imagine a butterfly as an insect with colourful wings floating effortlessly in the air.**

The wings have the most brilliant shades of blue. My picture is very clear.

Others might describe a butterfly as:

An insect of the order of Lepidoptera; it comprises of the Papilionoidea, Hesperioidea and the Hedyloidea families. Most species are diurnal.



Do the scientific and Latin terms confuse you or enlighten you?

Which direction would you prefer to follow, the visual imagery that delights the eye...

or would you rather the forensic, wordy examination of the insect's anatomy and its intersection with other animals and their evolutionary development?

Perhaps I could even make some other terms up if that would help.

A similar comparison can be made to the way dyslexia is considered.

To me, dyslexia is a creative way of thinking, a learning difference.

Dyslexics think predominantly in pictures, not the sounds of words.

Dyslexics are often called visual-spatial learners or picture thinkers.

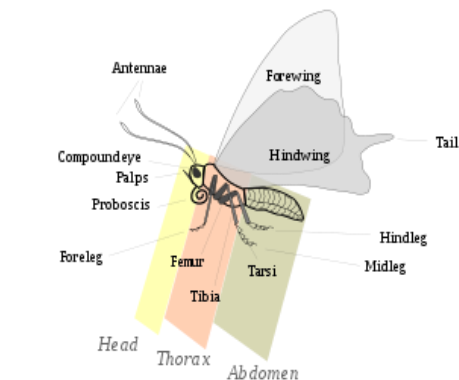
Often dyslexics receive a 'scientific' diagnosis. Academics create terms and phrases to describe a condition... there are dozens of them out there: Auditory Discrimination Problem; Auditory Processing Disorder; Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD); Orthographic Deficit; Phonemic Awareness Deficit; Specific Language Disability (SLD); Visual-Motor Integration Disorder; Visual Convergence Problem. These are but a few.

Sometimes these terms confuse rather than enlighten. Even more significantly do they help the dyslexic understand dyslexia?

A butterfly is a butterfly: an insect with colourful wings floating effortlessly in the air.

A dyslexic is a dyslexic: a visual spatial thinker capable of innovative thought and perception.

*Brenda is herself dyslexic and author of her book, **Dyslexia: Lost for Words**. Brenda teaches successful learning strategies for other dyslexics.*



## The Gift which dyslexia bestows

From an article by **Ripu Bhatia** from [stuff.co.nz/environment](http://stuff.co.nz/environment)

**Examples of those special skills and abilities which dyslexics display are everywhere.**

Take teenager Jake Ockleston of Auckland, NZ, yet another talented young man.

A high school student with dyslexia, Jake has built an electric motorbike to reduce his carbon footprint.

Jake was inspired to construct his zero carbon vehicle after attending the School Strike for Climate earlier last year.

"It's been quite a mission, sometimes you take one step forward and about five steps backwards," the Titirangi teen said.

"But I have a decent knowledge of motor-bikes, I mean I got my first bike at 9 and I've been riding them ever since."

Ockleston purchased a secondhand dirt bike frame from Trade Me and spent two-and-a-half years on the project.

The completed bike can travel 80km before needing to be recharged and hit top speeds of 150kmh.

The project involved complex electrical wiring and programming to ensure the engine, battery and controller functioned together to power the zero carbon vehicle.



Jake started with a simple dirt bike frame he purchased. The project required complex electrical wiring and programming.

Jake said because of his dyslexia he had always thought "slightly differently to people".

"I was very interested in electronics and mechanical stuff as a kid. I'd have all these toys and they wouldn't last more than a week, I'd take them apart to see how they work," he said.



"I see the world in a mechanical sort of picture, visual way."

Jake's dyslexia means he has always enjoyed building things. Other projects include a soldering machine and a sand blaster.

Although not all dyslexics show the same creative skills which Jake displays.

All dyslexics do exhibit creative abilities; they are symptoms of their shared underlying condition.

The symptoms are many, from mechanical talents, to dance, art, music, sport, entrepreneurial skills, strong empathy... the list goes on.

Thank your favourite spiritual being for dyslexics!!

