**Understanding Literacy Acquisition: Foundations, Barriers, and Implications**

Hello and welcome to this short video which aims to introduce the topic of literacy difficulties.

This video will last approximately 8 minutes.

Further information about literacy difficulties and how to support such needs can be found on the links at the end of this webinar.

Literacy is made of 3 core components- reading, writing and spelling.

In this video we will go through each of these components in more detail, thinking about how they develop and where children and young people may experience challenges.

There are 2 strands needed for reading development: one around language development and the other is around word recognition

This diagram helps when thinking about interventions for children, as it is helpful to think about what level they are at in these different areas so that the interventions will be appropriate.

Even in early reading development in early years there is language development and word recognition going on

We talk about the importance of having a rich language environment, for example the importance of song, rhyme, exposure to rhythm and this is before children even look at lots of text- so exposed to literacy through language

The more formal teaching around literacy is word recognition. So, in early development children get an understanding that prints or symbols represent something meaningful and then associate these prints with language.

Then we go into understanding that letters represent sounds, and then that they represent words and we experience language in our environment.

On this simple view of reading, we can see that children with good language comprehension and word recognition are secure readers, but we might have students who have good word recognition but poorer language comprehension so in this instance you would focus on their language comprehension rather than developing phonics skills for word recognition. Sometimes students with neurodiversities fall into this area, or children with speech and language difficulties.

Need to bear these two factors in mind in any assessment of literacy difficulties- How is the child’s language comprehension? How is their word recognition?

Learning to spell requires a range of skills related to linguistic knowledge. This includes phonology, semantics, morphology and orthography.

First of all, spelling requires being able to match units of sounds to corresponding letters, by a so-called phonological procedures. This procedure is of use when children spell regular words, such as words whose letters and sounds match perfectly, for example, kit.

Secondly, young spellers might have to use their orthographic knowledge; what letters represent what sounds. Sometimes, there is more than one way to spell a sound. Orthographic rules and regularities can help a child choose between possible alternative spellings. For example, rules such as ‘i before e, except after c’ and regularities of frequent clusters of letters. When regularities and rules cannot account for the word’s spelling, memorization of the orthographic representation might be needed. For example, for exception words, such as weird.

Thirdly, knowledge of derivational and inflectional morphology plays a role when spelling a word that has a derived or inflected forms. Derivational morphology is involved in the formation of new words from existing ones. For example, the stem heal and suffix -th generate the noun health. By contrast, inflectional morphology is involved in grammatical transformation of words. For example, the suffix -ed changes the tense of words.

Finally, semantic knowledge; what words mean, might be required to disambiguate homophones and words that sound the same such as allowed and aloud.

To help understand the development of writing we can consider it using this developmental framework.

It is illustrated as a triangle where transcription and executive functions are represented by the angles at the base and text generation is positioned at the vertex of the triangle. Working memory is considered to affect the whole writing process and this is shown inside the triangle.

This model states that in the early stages of writing development, the transcription processes are fundamental and foundational and both handwriting and spelling are the basis from which the writer can translate their ideas into written text.

The executive functions are regulated by assistance from teachers, parents and peers in these beginning phases of learning how to compose. However, as the writer matures, he or she will be able to better regulate these executive functioning skills, and these will transition into playing a more significant role in the writing process as transcription becomes more automatic.

The Dyslexia Debate examines how we use the term "dyslexia" and questions its efficacy as a diagnosis. We probably all have our own beliefs about this. However, it is important to acknowledge the boarder difficulties at play rather than leaping to the accessible phrase of "Oh well, he or she is dyslexic"

Reading is multifaceted, it is not a single mental process. If a child is having difficulties in learning any of the skills, we mentioned earlier their literacy skills will not proceed in line with their peers. Therefore, children's reading difficulties will come in various forms depending on the sub-skills of challenge.

There is not one specific profile of cognitive strengths or difficulties that need to be identified in order to classify a child as having dyslexia. Each individual is likely to be different, and the support required will therefore also be different. Not all pupils who have literacy difficulties will be identified as being dyslexic.

Although the local authority recognizes the definition of dyslexia, they do not feel that children’s literacy difficulties should be limited to this, and it is important that all children and young people experiencing literacy difficulties should be identified as early as possible and receive scientifically validated intervention.

Oxfordshire use the Plan, Do, Review Cycle of assessment over time, where the child/young person’s initial difficulties are identified, and their subsequent response to intervention is monitored.

As you can imagine there are a range of factors which influence literacy development. These are just some of the areas, for example EAL, exposure to books, working memory, parental confidence, self-concept. This is not an exhaustive list.

To conclude, considering the psychology of literacy development, the following key elements need to be addressed in literacy teaching. These include:

* Decoding
* Phonics
* Fluency
* Vocabulary
* Comprehension
* Motivation and enjoyment

These elements of literacy should be focused upon in whole class teaching as well as interventions for literacy. When a child experiences literacy difficulties each of these components needs to be assessed individually to inform effective interventions which target the child’s specific challenges.

If you would like any further information regarding literacy difficulties, please ask your school's link Educational Psychologist if you have one. The SEND School Framework or intranet also have advice and guidance around literacy.

Alternatively, The Oxfordshire School Inclusion Team otherwise known as OXSIT, also offer a variety of trainings around literacy needs.

Finally, the education endowment fund offers a range of free resources which can be used to support children and young people across the age ranges who experience challenges in literacy.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to this webinar.