

**BDA Conference March 2004: The Dividends from Research to Policy and Practice  
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**Poster Session**

Margaret Crombie  
Moirra Thomson  
Hilary McColl

**Subject: Modern foreign language learning**

This group of researchers from Scotland is engaged in experimental work to investigate how certain multisensory materials commonly used in mainstream foreign language courses might be used more effectively to support dyslexic learners.

The materials consist of sets of cards, dice and other visual/tactile stimuli which can be used to consolidate vocabulary learning and which can be physically manipulated to reflect grammatical structures. Used in conjunction with other support mechanisms familiar to those working in the field, these materials can be used in game-like activities which have the potential to provide both support and motivation for learners who find foreign language learning challenging.

An important feature of this programme is its attempt to show how materials originally devised for mainstream classes can, if used in certain ways, benefit dyslexic learners as well as improving learning for other members of the class. As well as a detailed description of the programme we hope to be able to provide examples of the materials used along with photographs and video clips of the learners in action.

**Conference themes**

The programme touches on a number of Conference themes; in particular, International perspectives; Multilingual aspects and Intervention.

# MULTISENSORY APPROACHES TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Examining how the use of certain mainstream resources might be used to assist and create additional learning opportunities for all language learners, including those who are dyslexic.

Resources: Miniflashcard Language Games: picture/text vocabulary cards; photocopiable versions of the cards; language dice.

Electrical equipment: Audio cassette recorder, PALE, Drake Language Master

ICT: Computer and appropriate talking software, Clicker 4; Website: [www.linguascope.com](http://www.linguascope.com)

Challenges facing all foreign language learners	Additional challenges facing dyslexic learners	Multisensory strategies that can help all learners	Additional learning opportunities for dyslexic learners
<p><b>VOCABULARY ACQUISITION</b></p> <p>Need to acquire large quantities of new language items in a relatively short time, to remember them for long periods of time, and to be able to recall them as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term and working memory difficulties</li> <li>• Auditory-verbal processing difficulties</li> <li>• Slow naming speed</li> <li>• Overload on working memory</li> <li>• Tendency to miss or reverse syllables</li> <li>• Word finding difficulty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of vocabulary cards embodying text and pictures. These can be used selectively and repeatedly in game-like activities to support acquisition, to consolidate learning and to prompt recall.</li> <li>• Class encouraged to compile a picture dictionary in book or poster form, using the photocopiable visuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photocopies of the cards can be retained for additional practice and future revision.</li> <li>• Similar vocabulary items can be incorporated into Clicker Grids and used to enhance Language Master cards.</li> <li>• Frequent use of games like Snap and Matching Pairs to reinforce new vocabulary</li> </ul>
<p><b>SPEECH</b></p> <p>Need to learn how to pronounce and read aloud words which follow a different phonetic code.</p> <p>Need to learn how to say the words, to recognise them when they are spoken or read and to be able to write them reasonably accurately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological awareness deficit/confusion</li> <li>• Effects of stress on accuracy of pronunciation and fluency</li> <li>• Difficulties re letter/sound relationships</li> <li>• Poor auditory discrimination</li> <li>• Links between reading and phonics weak or not understood</li> <li>• Visuo-perceptual difficulties</li> <li>• Orthographic difficulties</li> <li>• Mismatch between teaching &amp; learning styles</li> <li>• Speed at which "natural language" is spoken - mismatch with speed of processing information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cards can be selected to illustrate and practice selected sound/text explanations,</li> <li>• OHP versions of the visuals can be used to support introduction of textual forms of the word</li> <li>• Vocabulary cards incorporate text, so that written and oral forms of the word can reinforce each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drake Language Master cards can incorporate the same pictures, plus sound, and opportunities to compare own pronunciation with that of the teacher.</li> <li>• Photocopiable worksheets incorporating the same pictures can be used to set up writing activities.</li> <li>• Use of Clicker to reinforce reading.</li> <li>• Use of Language Master to reinforce speaking and listening.</li> </ul>

<p><b>GRAMMAR</b></p> <p><b>Need to understand patterns of language, how words influence each other, how sentences are constructed, and how to construct sentences accurately.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sequencing difficulties</li> <li>• Difficulties with prediction in first language</li> <li>• Mismatch between learning and teaching styles</li> <li>• Failure to achieve automaticity and fluency affects language perception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By adding language dice to the sets of cards, grammatical associations can be explained visually, sentences can be manipulated, paradigms of possibilities set up.</li> <li>• Games and activities provide practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples generated with cards and dice can be recorded in prepared grids and further examples found for homework etc.</li> <li>• Use of website to extend experience of target language and reinforce vocabulary use</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONSOLIDATION AND PERFORMANCE</b></p> <p><b>Need for realistic settings with appropriate everyday useful language, e.g:</b>  Phone conversations.  Reading and listening practice  Use of target language in other subject, e.g. Art, using French names of colours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retention - the dyslexic learner needs more repetition and reteaching in order to transfer data to long term memory</li> <li>• Slow rate of language processing</li> <li>• Difficulties transferring learned skills</li> <li>• Coping with language at natural speed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overlearning through seeing, saying, hearing, writing and physical movement.</li> <li>• Role play - acting out situations</li> <li>• Digital Language instruction - slow down speed of presentation initially</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of photocopiable resources to produce games to reinforce common language -e.g. Pelmanism - foods, clothes, prepositions etc</li> <li>• Video with subtitles in language being learned.</li> <li>• Video, without subtitles, of familiar programmes in target language, e.g. Asterix cartoons</li> <li>• Computer &amp; CD-ROM-based activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>CREATIVITY</b></p> <p><b>Need to generate language in new combinations; often 'personal language'. but learners can not always think of things to say.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects of fatigue and low self esteem and the need to concentrate on practical difficulties may inhibit creative use of language</li> <li>• Problems with organisation and sequencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picture cards can be selected to act as 'prompts' to help learners to generate personal language.</li> <li>• Give clear structure to learning - build in small steps on previous knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner can compile own set of 'picture prompts', use them to practise at home and support presentation in class.</li> <li>• Use of Clicker grids and website to reinforce vocabulary use</li> </ul>

SUGGESTED PLANNING GRID FOR USE IN SCHOOLS

**CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR DYSLEXIC LEARNERS  
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES**

<b>Effect of dyslexia on ML learning</b> Our dyslexic learners may have difficulties with the following	<b>Possible solutions</b> Strategies which might help to ease the difficulties	<b>Resources</b> How MLG-type resources might be employed to support these strategies

Adapted from Crombie, M. & MColl, H. (2001). 'Dyslexia and the Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages', Peer, L. & Reid, G. (Eds.) *Dyslexia: Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

## MINIFLASHCARD LANGUAGE GAMES (MLG Publishing)

These resources have been marketed to mainstream schools since the early '90s as a serious-but-fun addition to more conventional textbook learning. Some teachers still see games and game-like activities as 'rewards' for good work, but more are now seeing them as useful ways of practising language items - and so consolidating learning - without losing the learners' attention. They also have the advantage of being 'multisensory' and therefore capable of supporting language acquisition for a wide range of learners. And they can be used in different ways with learners at any stage of learning. The range of subject matter published by MLG is wide but, essentially, all the resources consist of the following elements:

### **Miniflash cards**

These are similar in size and feel to packs of playing cards. On one side of each card is a coloured cartoon-like illustration of a language item or concept; on the other, the textual form of the item with, in the case of nouns, information about gender. The packs are marketed in English, French, German and Spanish, but, with the addition of a checklist they can be used to support other languages since each picture is numbered. Each pack comes with suggestions for a large number of language games for groups of learners, but they can also be used by individual learners to help with vocabulary acquisition.

### **Photocopiable picture books**

Some of these contain black line versions of the illustrations on the cards, others contain more pictures, usually in sets of 12. While not as bright or substantial as the coloured cards these have a number of advantages.

- sets of pictures can be copied in the numbers as required at minimal extra expense;
- they can be copied on to acetate and used on overhead projectors to introduce new language;
- sets of pictures can be copied for use as worksheets or game-boards;
- sets can be copied and cut up and used as extra cards, or as illustrations for textual work;
- illustrations can be copied and used to enhance your own worksheets;
- they can be coloured in and personalised by learners for whom that sort of work is motivating;
- they can be used as triggers for all sorts of creative language work.

In other words, the same set of visuals has potential for use at all the different stages of the language learning cycle.

### **Dice**

These can be used on their own or in combination with the cards or pictures. Some of them (numbers, colours, moods, tenses) can be used to extend and randomise items in any language; others are language specific (subject pronouns, question words, auxiliary verbs) and can be used to explain and practise items of grammar - such as, for example, how verb endings must change when each new pronoun is thrown up on the dice. A suitable set of cards, a pronoun dice and a tenses dice all used together can create examples of language constructions which can challenge advanced learners, especially if part of the task is to write them down as well.

While originally intended for mainstream schools and colleges, these materials have, by their very nature, considerable potential for assisting disadvantaged learners.