Oh the pain... pain...
PAIN?
I awake to pain,
The relief of pain
in a tooth undeniably my own!

Elaine H. Nelson

At the last session, Professor Khan read and commented upon their poems, showed them how to add, delete, and rearrange words and lines to give their expressions more force. We finished the last session by handing back their folders and pointing out some of the best pieces in each. The booklet, Pages for the Ages: Ashby Writing Workshop, 1978, contains 45 pieces arranged in three sections: The Early Years--Homestead and Town; The Middle Years--Boom and Bust; and The Later Years--Reflections and Dreams. If you read the book, you will see our students accomplished many things. For people who have not done much writing, they often choose the right word, deftly turn a phrase, and naturally develop strong vivid narratives.

All of us involved in this workshop found the teaching refreshing. We wonder what will happen fifty years from now if someone goes out and tries to get coherent written work from our present generation. Will they find as many literate people, eager to express their recollections and feelings? We hope so.

RECOGNIZING AND HELPING THE DYSLEXIC STUDENT

by Jo Crawford

Because educators have become more adept at early identification of developmental dyslexia, because language therapists have become more skilled in remedial training, and because parents and teachers have more enlightened attitudes about language disability, greater numbers of young adults with dyslexia are completing high school and entering college. There are several characteristics of the college dyslexic that are noteworthy. First of all, the student has learned to read, although he may

not read for sheer pleasure and finds it takes him longer to read than the non-dyslexic. Secondly, he has normal or above normal intelligence; indeed the higher the IQ the better he can master his disability. Third, there often exists a noticeable discrepancy between his ability to speak, make practical decisions, work with his hands or perform artistically, and his ability to express himself in writing. There is still another more intangible personal characteristic of the motivated college dyslexic known simply as the "grit" to pursue a difficult course until the goal is reached.

Despite all the problems she has surmounted, despite all the progress and achievements she has attained, and despite the fact that she feels she has "licked" her dyslexia, the student may well still have secret problems with writing. Telephone calls, personal interviews and dictating to secretaries may be the ultimate solution, but Freshman Composition, term papers, and essay examinations are the current nemesis.

Writing is the final link in the language hierarchy of listening, speaking and reading, and the most difficult skill for all students to acquire. How then does the English teacher know when a student is dyslexic? It is highly important to be able to recognize and identify this problem in order to deal with it. Although there is no perfected way of identifying dyslexia, there are certain problems and conspicuous patterns of error dyslexics share. Spelling, handwriting, and syntactical defects will endure long into adult life, even for the dyslexic who has become an avid reader. Examining spontaneous writing or having the student write to dictation are the best ways to diagnose dyslexia. Although the student may be able to copy accurately if he works slowly and painstakingly, unusual errors occur when writing spontaneously. These errors are remarkable because of their profusion, because they still exist at the college level, and because they are erratic.

As we look at the dyslexic symptoms displayed in spelling, handwriting, and general quality of written composition, it is important to keep in mind that although poor spelling is one

problem shared by all dyslexics, not all dyslexics will share all the deficits in other areas. Nor do all dyslexics share the same degree of difficulty within such specific areas as spelling or syntax. Indeed, one of the primary symptoms of dyslexia is the high degree of variability of writing performance from day to day.

Patterns of spelling errors most often seen in the writing of dyslexic students are:

- The rotation or transposition of letters, such as "fi" for "if" or "ton" for "not"
- Incorrect sequencing or serial confusion rather than simple reversal, such as "hagner" for "hanger" or "slomen" for "solemn"
- Repetition of letters like "corresspondent" for "correspondent"
- Omissions of letters such as "arument" for "argument" or "ciruler" for "circular"
- Insertion of letters such as "polictical" for "political" or "advoid" for "avoid"
- The telescoping effect of using too few letters (usually by omitting vowels) such as "mystrous" for "mysterious" or "gntlman" for "gentleman"
- Phonetic spelling such as "jelus" for "jealous" or "garenty" for "guarantee"
- Resorting to a homonym like "pare" for "pair" or "isle" for "aisle"
- Failure to detect differences in the auditory properties of words or letters (both vowels and consonants) resulting in such spellings as "cousent" for "cousin" or "wither" for "weather"

Secondary and post secondary dyslexic students are exhorted to use the dictionary and serious students do. However, most instructors would be appalled at the slow and laborious task this becomes for the student who does not have alphabetical serial order at her immediate recall. She must continually go back and repeat to herself at least sections of the alphabet

to determine whether L comes before or after K.

Poor handwriting is a common problem for most dyslexics. Some students do perfect letter formation and their spelling errors stand out clear and bold; however, a general untidiness of penmanship is more usual. Sometimes letters are so badly malformed and misaligned that they are scarcely recognizable. This is not a deliberate maneuver to conceal spelling but a general deterioration that occurs most often under time pressure when taking notes, writing essay exams, or when writing for long periods of time.

It is not uncommon to see the insertion of a capital letter into a word like "suBtract". The student may have an unusual manner of joining letters, or strokes may intersect. Writing "m" with four humps or with two, resulting in letter "n", is common. There may be fragments of mirror writing. It is not unusual to find that the student resorts to half printing and half cursive writing. The general impression is most often of very immature handwriting.

The dyslexic student does not present only spelling and handwriting disorders. Because he suffers from a language disability, his general ability to express himself in written language is depressed.

Compositions will be noticeably brief. The dyslexic student will write far fewer words in a measured amount of time than the non-dyslexic student and there will be a paucity in the number of different words used. The words she does use will rarely have more than three syllables and there may be a noticeable lack of adjectives and adverbs due to the absence of abstract ideas in the narrative. The dyslexic student, not always but typically, writes in concrete terms related to personal experiences. She often uses a preponderance of first person pronouns whereas the more normal narrative would be more generalized to abstract concepts.

Sentence structure is likely to be monotonous, with little variation in length, producing a hard-to-read style. When the student ventures beyond simple or compound sentences there are

apt to be glaring errors in syntactical structure.

The student's choice of vocabulary words may be so general or imprecision that the result is a rather bleak composition without much description or detail. Seldom are foreign terms used, nor are there the expressions usually found in literature and popular reading material one would expect the student to be reading.

There are likely to be technical problems with the use of prefixes and suffixes, noun-verb agreement, and the articles a or an. Punctuation is used very sparingly and may be limited to periods.

Finally, there is a general lack of cohesiveness in the written text due not only to poorly sequenced ideas but to the lack of proper words and expressions that tie sentence parts or sentences together.

How can the English teacher help these reluctant writers for whom the task looms large and long, and success seems dim? Three ways of helping suggest themselves: 1) being aware of the symptoms and referring the student for special education remedial services, 2) using the special education or support services personnel as resources for information on specific techniques useful in teaching these students, and, 3) making reasonable modifications in the course requirements. For example, the dyslexic student needs twice as long to proof-read, edit, and re-copy his written work, and anything written spontaneously in class will need to be accepted as it is. Oral examinations may be necessary to validly test the student's knowledge.

Most important of all, we cannot judge these students poor risks for college or professional training on the basis of language disability alone. Although any degree of language disability will have some effect across disciplines, the determined, motivated, and intellectually capable student can succeed in a chosen field. We must regard the student in terms of his strengths, capabilities, and general potential, but not overlook his need to learn to write. This special student with the

"grit" to acquire a post-secondary education deserves not just the sympathy of the English instructor but an equal amount of that teacher's "grit" to clarify the learning task and help him or her to express ideas and thoughts in writing.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Committee on Classroom Practices in Teaching English of the National Council of Teachers of English invites educators at all levels--elementary, secondary, and college--to submit manuscripts for the 1981 Classroom Practices publication, which will focus on the theme, "Structuring for Success in the English Classroom." Articles should describe in detail a specific single method or strategy for successful classroom management of an English language arts class. Examples of such methods might be: effective long-range planning which includes all areas of the language arts (vocabulary, reading, literature, writing, oral language, etc.); reporting on reading, procedures for sharing writing; planning for individual differences; organizing for instruction; varying individual, small-group and whole-class instruction and "quiet" and "noisy" activities; maintaining a learning environment. Manuscripts can range in length from two to ten double-spaced pages. Two copies should be submitted, with the author's name and address appearing only on a title page attached to the front of each copy. Manuscripts should be mailed before April 15, 1981, to the committee chair, Candy Carter, P.O. Box 2466, Truckee, CA 95734.