

Picture stories for tiny talkers

Picture stories for tiny talkers by Gert de la Forest. (Available from the author, 14 Pleasantview Bay, Regina, Saskatchewan; \$3.75, or \$3.50 each for ten or more copies.)

REVIEWED BY ELIZABETH SMALL

Picture stories for tiny talkers is a delightfully illustrated 98-page workbook for stabilizing the sounds *f*, *l*, *sh*, and *th* into general conversation.

Gert de la Forest appears to have a real understanding of the interests of young children, and no doubt her experience as both speech pathologist and classroom teacher has provided her with many ideas. Although her drawings of isolated objects are at times so out of proportion that they are not instantly recognizable, she compensates for her lack of draftsmanship by humour and animation displayed in the sketches of children and animals.

The exploits, presented in cartoon style, of the Fat Funny Man, Linda and Lonny and their recalcitrant pet, Little Lamb, Shelly and her Shy Sheep, or Little Tom Thumb (who fixed his Dad's toothache) are fascinating stories for any young child.

The book also introduces a number of ideas for word games based on the adventures of the cartoon characters.

As a speech exercise book, it offers a varied program of reading and activities, but from a speech clinician's standpoint, the order of difficulty could have been re-arranged to better advantage. The author adheres rather too rigidly to the initial, medial, and final approach, introducing difficult syllable combinations like *elephant* (for medial *f*) earlier in the book than words like *knife* and

laugh (for final *f*).

Attractive diagrams give the tongue and lip positions for all four speech sounds before the exercises are commenced, and give the same instructions for the final dark *l* as for the clear *l*, in terms of tongue placement.

A parent or teacher not previously instructed might also be confused by the lack of consonant assimilation, which is a necessary part of all running speech. The underlining to emphasize the pronunciation of every *l* (as in "big whale liked"), or the instruction of standard tongue placement for the sound, regardless of its position in the word (as in "little"), could cause very laboured production on the child's part if he worked under an inexperienced clinician.

A parent working under the guidance of an experienced therapist could, however, find this book an excellent stimulus for a child's home practice.

As a general speech clinic work program, the exercises are not numerous enough to be of benefit to a large number of children, but to an individual child having difficulty with more than one of the four listed sounds they would provide several hours of profitable therapy.

From an economical point of view, however, the workbook could well have been divided into four parts, giving the parent the option of purchasing any part separately. For a child having difficulty with only one of the four sounds, the workbook does not provide enough material.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that it has limited use as an articulation manual, and despite minor technical flaws, its freshness and originality would not fail to appeal to the majority of our most stubborn young clients.

The Fonator

Acoustic-vibratory communication aid: the Fonator. (Siemens Corporation, Electromedical Division, Erlangen, West Germany).

REVIEWED BY PAUL KUTTNER

Now that the controversy between "manualists" and "oralists" has been joined by those extolling "total communication," it seems appropriate to explore this latter concept to its fullest extent: utilization of all sensory input modalities in the communication process.

The Fonator offers a truly multi-sensory approach to therapy. Seated opposite the hard-of-hearing client or clients, the clinician can provide visual cues while at the same time the Fonator delivers an amplified auditory signal and a simultaneous vibro-tactile sensation. Sound is delivered through lightweight adjustable earphones, and vibration by means of a watch-sized electromagnetic piston which can be strapped to a part of the body (such as the wrist) or to the chair or table if the client is seated. The amplifier and all associated accessories are portable and can be operated from 110 or 220 volt household current.

Two excellent volumes of research trace the development and use of the Fonator. It was conceived in the mid sixties in an attempt to improve "conventional" methods of teaching speech to the severely hearing impaired and the deaf-blind. Its main purpose is to supplement and to offer an improved method of vocal feedback. It was felt that the efficiency of vision as an input channel is limited due to similar facial configurations for different speech sounds. Thus a considerable amount of

vocal information is lost.

The number of speech units which can be discriminated visually, and the phonemes contained in any one unit vary from language to language. The same remark applies also to the tactile units ... For the German language, experiments have been carried out to investigate the question how visual and tactile units can be combined to form a phonetic system. Thus, the phonemes p, b, and m belong to the same visual category, but if we now add the tactile channel, these three phonemes become distinguishable since they have differing vibratory characteristics.... It can be assumed for the tactile aspect, that the phonemes of any one language can be classified in accordance with the following vibratory characteristics:

- a) duration (long and short speech sounds),
- b) vocalization (voiced and unvoiced speech sounds),
- c) pitch (low and high speech sounds),
- d) intensity (strong and weak speech sounds), and
- e) the characteristic intermission, as for example we can regard the phoneme "r". (Ding, 1972).

A number of years of experimentation in Germany shows that infantile vocalizations can be increased and that speech development follows a more "normal" sequence when using the Fonator. The reported experience demonstrates that pupils who have learned to speak with the aid of vibratory stimulation can speak more precisely than a control group of children who were taught by "conventional" methods.

My experience with the Fonator has been in a clinical diagnostic setting. I

have found it to be an aid in initial parent guidance and demonstration teaching. Initial sound presentations to the severely hard of hearing child often do not produce the immediate results parents hope for. Hearing may be a strange experience for the child, but he is much more familiar with vibration as produced by common familiar activities. By using the Fonator we were able to allow him to explore these and other vibrations more fully, and to add the sensation of vocal vibration to his experiences. Many children have eagerly imitated vocalizations after only a short therapy period. Since they receive simultaneous sound stimulation, the opportunity exists to fade the vibratory stimulus gradually and transfer training to the auditory mode as might be used during home therapy with hearing aid(s) or auditory trainer.

The Fonator was introduced into Canada about three years ago, and would, in my opinion, offer an interesting opportunity for experimentation in a clinical or educational setting. Normative data for English phonetic vibratory characteristics have to my knowledge not yet been established, but would seem to be the basic prerequisite to more sophisticated research and general acceptance of this mode of teaching speech (and language).

REFERENCES

- Ding, Herbert. 1972. *Der Fonator im artikulationsunterricht hoergeschae-digter*. Karlsruhe, West Germany: Verlag G. Schindele.
- Schulte, Klaus, Roesler, Heinrich, and Ding, Herbert. 1969. *Akusto-Vibratorische kommunikation-shilfe*. Kettwig/Ruhr, West Germany: Erlag Hoergeschae-digte Kinder.