



I. Introduction

A typical classroom setting often has a clamorous atmosphere. Pupils and students with learning difficulties are pressured to keep up with the lessons while dealing with the background noise of their environment.

Learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and other developmental delays obstruct significant information to be processed (perceive, analyse, interpret) in the brain. Also, sensory inputs (what the senses acquire involuntarily) demand so much attention and disrupt their concentration primarily because they struggle to filter the significant messages from the unnecessary ones.

The vestibule, an organ located in the inner ear, plays an important role in the learning process like muscle movement and coordination (i.e. mouth and throat mechanisms) as well as body rhythm. Dr. Alfred Tomatis, a French ENT, established that by stimulating the ear, it can harmonise the functioning of each vestibule generating better control and coherence of one's perceptions.

II. Case presentation

Francis was the first baby for Helen and John after going on fertility drugs. After ten days past the due date, the mother was induced and went through a long labor.

In infancy, Francis did not latch onto the breast well and feeding was a struggle. For me, as a Tomatis® professional and psychologist, that was already a sign of immaturity of the vestibular system, which is part of the inner ear.

His milestones, however, were quite advanced. Even language came out quite quickly but the words were unclear. He used to jargon a lot and only his mother could understand him. At 7 in Grade 1, he did not have proper articulation and people could not understand him.

He started speech therapy at 2 ½ years old. Over the years, progress was minimal until fortunately, his parents found a speech therapist, who was able to understand Francis' difficulties.



Francis was generally a very serious boy and worried a lot. He tends to take things personally.

III. Management and Outcome

Francis was referred to the Australian Tomatis® Method by his speech therapist for speech difficulties. During the Tomatis® assessment, Francis was very quiet. He spoke with a very soft voice which was so quiet that you had to prick your ears to hear him. When asked to repeat what he had said, he would refuse and completely shut off.

His Tomatis® listening check during the first assessment showed imbalanced ears meaning that the two ears were not functioning together so the brain had difficulties in working properly. The test also showed some confusion and lack of clarity in his auditory processing compromising his speech.

The listening check was a graphic presentation of how his ears and brain had difficulties in recognising the sounds the right way; therefore, he could not enunciate the words properly. Being extremely self-conscious and lacking confidence, Francis knew that he could not express himself appropriately and thus, spoke very quietly hoping that his lack of clarity would go unnoticed, which of course was not the case.

We started the Tomatis® clinical program for ten (10) days two (2) hours a day. After one week, the mother reported that Francis was very happy. “He is skipping to the car after leaving the centre.” He is more relaxed.

He had a test at school during the week which usually worries him a lot, but at this time, he said to his Mum “I will do my best”, “I can do it”. His sentences are starting to get longer, he begins to explain stuff and labels everything compared to before when he only referred to all objects as “the thing”. He also starts to read on his own which is quite unusual for him and he is bonding better with his Dad.



Expressing Of Sound Mind Learning Difficulties and the Tomatis® Method: A Case Study

At the end of the first program, Francis talks more, speaks louder and is much more confident. He is able to make a presentation at school without stressing out about it and for the first time, he stands up for himself when teased by his brother.

With the second 10 days program, Francis continued to improve greatly. His grandmother is surprised by how clear Francis' speech has become and the change of his self-confidence. Francis told his mother one day in regards to the Tomatis® program, "this helps me to understand!"

His teacher also notices great changes in Francis' speech and behaviour at school. His vocabulary is increasing and is much more focused. He wants to read more and more. He even auto-corrects himself now with regard to some syntax errors.

That is the sign that the loop between the ear, the brain, and the mouth are working properly now. He is able to hear himself and corrects himself when what he says is incorrect. That is a great achievement and proof of the efficiency of the Tomatis® Method.

At the end of the third 10 days program, Helen is thrilled with the progress that her son has made in less than 4 months. At the last consultation, she said that everyone is commenting about the changes that Francis is showing in maturity, confidence, and level of happiness.

There is a big difference in his spelling and now he is even correcting his younger brother when he speaks incorrectly. That is a huge milestone in terms of the improvement and the maturity in the auditory circuits between the ear, the nervous system and the voice.

After 60 hours of Tomatis® Method ear retraining program, Francis' last listening check showed that the ears are quasi-balanced and that his speech and auditory processing are already working efficiently.



The Science Behind It!

The Tomatis® Method is an educational program utilising a neuro-sensory integration approach to learning difficulties. It makes use of advanced headphones specifically designed to transmit filtered music via air and bone conduction.

In air conduction, sound travels through the outer ear while in bone conduction, sound travels through the skull which is ten times faster. Then, using the TalksUp® device, its Gating® produces sound contrasts or 'filters' (high/low-frequency sounds) more at random.

The filters directly work on vital areas for learning such as the vestibular system, the inner part of the ear that is responsible for body movement and coordination, muscle tone, balance, and sensory processing. In fact, it is very complex and important as it is connected to several areas of the brain and body.

It was once difficult for Francis to express his ideas and emotions and relate to other people. But after doing the Tomatis® Program, Francis turned from being a silent, reserved child to a companionable, conversant son. He is one out of the 200,000 individuals per year who benefit from this restorative neurosensory stimulation program. For more information, visit www.tomatis.com.au!

Françoise Nicoloff is a registered psychologist and an International Tomatis® Consultant and Trainer. Françoise has worked for nearly four decades around the world with children and adults suffering from anxiety, depression, learning and communication difficulties. Françoise is often invited to speak at conferences. She is passionate about helping those people especially when their difficulties are linked to auditory processing which means that their brains do not hear what their ears are hearing. She has chosen to be based in Sydney and she travels within Australia and around the world. Recently, she has been asked to support families and professionals in China too. She can be contacted on 1800 677 010 or by email at info@tomatis.com.au.

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