

STUDY – PRISON C
TRANSCRIPT OF IN-MATE INTERVIEWS –
USE OF THE READERPEN
AT PRE-FUNCTIONAL LEVEL - ENGLISH

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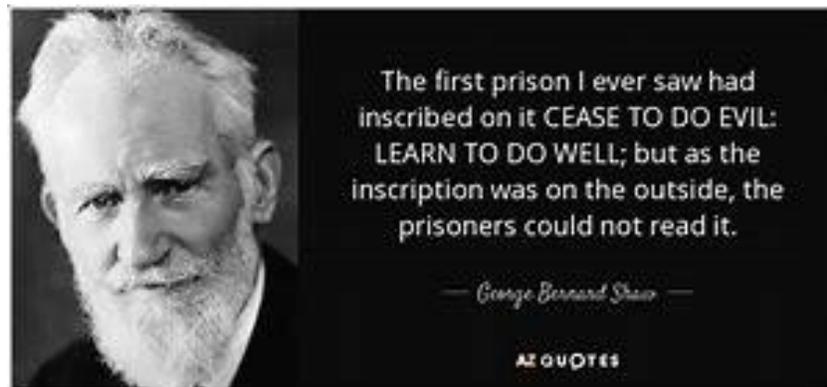
The following transcripts were gathered in line with a long-term study undertaken at HMP Prison C in the East of England, with inmates who have little or no reading skills. The study has been commissioned by Scanning Pens Ltd.

HMPPS/MoJ National Research Committee (NRC) has granted retrospective approval of this study.

All pictures used are ‘stock’ photographs of Prisons throughout the UK.

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Abstract

Hearing the voices of inmates with little or no reading ability, was an important aspect of the long-term study currently being undertaken within prisons in the East of England. The following enables greater insight as to what is important to the prisoner, who is undertaking their first tentative steps in learning to read. I questioned why reading is important to them and the potential for this skill to open different doors for them, currently 60% of prisoners leave prison with no transferable skills (Coates, 2016) to use in the communities they move into.

My hope is that prisoner voices will be heard, by asking questions such as how can education provide a difference to their lives? What obstacles prevent their regular attendance at education sessions? What resources/strategies could help with their education? What education means to these men, in daily life, wishing to seek and create long-term goals and enhance their life outside prison? The answers to these enquiries’ emphasises the importance of the work that prison educators undertake, with consideration as to the tools they have available to them to support this journey and the potential contrast to the required prison regulations which may interrupt these learning pathways.

Introduction

This study focused on prisoners who may have no recognizable ‘skills’ and the hindrance this creates when unable to read. All the participants in this study had two things in common; they had committed a crime and they are unable to read. Their inability to read may be due to several factors such as dyslexia, environment; home and community; culture and/or language barriers. One may consider a causal link between environment, abilities, experiences and illiteracy impacting on limitation of choice and criminal behaviour (Clark and Dugdale, 2008). I was interested in gaining insight as to whether opportunities to learn to read, would offer better outcomes in the future; currently 60% of prisoners leave prison having gained no work skills and/or no educational and training qualifications (Coates, 2016). Having the chance to make a choice, and change, may not only improve rehabilitation outcomes and job opportunities and increase positive results for educators, but just as importantly, may improve the prisoner’s emotional experiences due to accessing the written word.

Method

Finding prisons who would literally open the door to accepting a study team into this difficult environment was the first hurdle (Brosens et al., 2014). However, notwithstanding, the team were fortunate to have been invited into a prison in the West of England, Prison A (HMP Channings Wood) where a pilot study was undertaken in 2017, (Franklin 2018).

Attending an Exam Officer Conference in London, the study team were pleasantly surprised to find an Exam Officer who worked within a prison in the East of England. After approximately 9 months of talking and negotiation an agreement was reached to enable the study team to send ReaderPens and ExamReader pens into the prison where this Exam Officer worked (Prison B). The Exam Officer subsequently arranged a meeting inviting support staff from other local prisons, and we were fortunate to meet SE representing Prison C. Prison C is the focus of this study. Prison C has received an Ofsted rating of Good, for their achievements, quality of learning, personal development and leadership skills (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018).

SE identified suitable participants for the study based upon the criterion of little or no reading ability. One had a dyslexia diagnosis, others had no diagnosis of dyslexia or learning difficulties but had left school with little or no formal qualifications, another participant used English as a second language; known as ESOL learners in the prison system: he possessed some good English communication skills but poor English reading and writing skills.

Potential participants were approached and those who showed an interest or who had been identified as benefiting from the opportunity to learn to read were engaged. Some were initially reluctant when starting the process, however, emphasising how their individual learning needs would take center stage, SE persuaded them that the ReaderPen could enhance their learning experiences.

SE was shown how to operate the ReaderPen and ExamReader Pen. Both pens highlight a word or line of text and read this out loud, or via headphones, to the user. The ReaderPen has other functions including a dictionary, an audio recorder, a ‘text to file’ capacity and the ability to capture text directly onto a computer document. Due to the needs of the participants, it was felt the reading aspect and dictionary facility of the ReaderPen would be the only focus of this study. Once SE felt confident with the use of the pen, she introduced the pen and functions to the participants.

The first participant group consisted of five men, four had no childhood diagnosis of learning difficulties, whereas the fifth man had been identified with a learning difficulty but was unsure what this had been. One participant had left school at 10 years of age, unable to read or write

and one had attended higher education college and gained a City and Guilds qualification but was later diagnosed as dyslexic in his 30s. One participant is an ESOL learner (English as a second language), another had completed school and had excelled in sport with little or no focus on his learning, potentially due to hearing and speech difficulties. The final participant was a young man who was unable to read or write apparently due to a fragmented education characterised by frequent school moves.

All participants attended pre-functional skill sessions with our teacher, SE. On showing the prisoners how to use the ReaderPen she worked through each individual’s learning needs to assess how they would benefit most from the use of the pen, such as validation, sounding out or pronunciation support. The participants were then offered the use of the ReaderPen during their 1:1 session, and additionally offered an opportunity to ‘volunteer’ to attend self-support sessions, where they could sit and read independently, observing the teacher with another student and were requested not to interrupt the other learner’s session. These self-support sessions became exceedingly popular.

1. Table of Participant Prison Learners at Prison C.

ID CODE	AGE	EDUCATION	SEN STATUS
M1	54	Completed Secondary Modern No qualifications	Self-Identified on initial assessment. Pre-Functional Level
M2	59	Left school at 10. Unable to read or write	Self-Identified on initial assessment. Suffered brain trauma in adulthood. Pre-Functional Level
M3	45	Completed education. No qualifications	Self-identified at pre- assessment with childhood speech, language and hearing difficulties. Pre-Functional Level
M4	29	PRU and multiple educational settings No qualifications	Undertook courses via Job Centre/Employment support. Pre-Functional Level
M5	48	Completed to further education level City & Guilds	ESOL Diagnosed dyslexic during further education course Entry Level

Results

The initial results were positive: all participants felt they were gaining from having the ReaderPen available, to help them support their emerging reading skills. The ReaderPen helped the students to gain validation and confirmation for themselves, as opposed seeking the time and attention of their teacher.

“This has changed my world”.

Each participant had a specific learning need upon which the tutor was able to focus the functions and strategies of the ReaderPen. For example, the ESOL participant wished to work on pronunciation since, in his language several English vowel sounds do not exist. The ReaderPen was particularly effective for this participant, who was able to use it to focus on the sounding and listening of words. He is now attending the next level of lessons due to achieving a Level 2 in English and Maths, however, he has been invited to return to the volunteer sessions to make use of the ReaderPen to support his future educational goals.

Validation of words and sentences was of import to several participants, and the frustration of not having the ReaderPen available to them in their cells, in between education sessions, was frequently identified as disappointing. 60% of the participants wished to have access to the ReaderPen outside the educational block and they put forward ideas as to how this might be achieved.

The ReaderPen enabled one participant to state:

“I’ve a new lease of life”.

A further participant stated:

**“When I am on my own I feel Jesus, I’ve done this!
It’s a great help to a person like me:
it feels as though you’re deeper in the book”.**

The excitement and interest the ReaderPen created for some of these learners was tangible, and it was obvious to understand why they wished to continue with their new-found skill outside the classroom environment. However, the difficulties this could create for prisons remain and therefore careful strategies need to be considered, depending on the format and category of prison; one size does not fit all!

Of note is the participant who wrote his first letter after nine years in prison. He had previously asked other people to write for him, but with his new-found confidence he decided to tackle the task independently. It took him several days, however, his immense pride in reaching this achievement was justified.

Several of the participants indicated their intention of using the ReaderPen after release:

**“I think I will be using the pen after my release because
I do a lot of reading”**

These sentiments have been associated with promises made to family members, and for one participant to his employer who assured the prisoner their continued support by offering to purchase a ReaderPen for the employee on return to work.

ESOL students; known as foreign nationals in the prison system; make up 11% of the prison population (Sturge, 2018); approximately 9,310 prisoners in March 2018. They come from 162 different countries, with Polish and Romanian prisoners forming the largest group (1,500) of foreign nationals. SE explained the difficulties of teaching foreign nationals due to complexities of vowel sounds and letters within each language. Therefore, learning the correct English pronunciation and ‘hearing’ produced a higher success rate for these learners. Our ESOL participant stated:

**“The pen has made me more aware of when I am
mis-reading or mis-pronouncing”.**

The importance of understanding legal documentation and the impact of being unable to read and/or relying on other people for information was of paramount importance to several of the participants. All participants understood the issue of trust when relying on other readers and this led to a mixture of emotions. The youngest participant relied on his partner to read things to him, but he did not display the same levels of embarrassment which the older participants described in the same situation.

In contrast, when speaking with SE, the older participants were not afraid to share their difficulties or feel they had to provide her with the answers which they felt she wanted. In contrast the youngest participant was less enthusiastic or truthful when questioned about his reading and he struggled to answer questions on a book he had taken from the library.

Often, prisoners retain memories and anxieties of their educational experiences and had not been given the opportunity to experience self-led learning based on their self-discipline. Building trust by helping younger prisoners to understand that the prison teacher would not react like their childhood school teachers and that the prisoner would not ‘get into trouble’ if they chose not to engage and to refuse to learn, could remove barriers to learning for these prisoners.

As an initial response to the first element of our long-term study I felt a great deal of confidence in the results and impact, making the ReaderPens acceptable tools within prison. I witnessed a sense of achievement and hope for these prisoners. Future studies will aim to follow these men through their educational journeys both within prison and subsequently outside.

Furthermore, evidence of growth in ability and confidence was seen with one participant achieving Level 2 English and Maths and is now undertaking further lessons to aim for Level 3 and beyond. Therefore, in our follow up studies in Prison C, we hope to provide statistical data pertaining to the qualifications the other four, and future participants, achieve.

To put this into perspective Coates (2016) informs us of ‘Key Facts’ in her ‘Unlocking Potential’ report that **60% of prisoners “leave prison without an identified employment or education or training outcome”**. Our participants are still within prison and to date we have had a 20% success rate in passing Entry Level 1 & 2 in English and Maths for an ESOL student with dyslexia. We are confident a further 60% have the determination and confidence to achieve Entry Level 1 in English and Maths leading to the achievement of a qualification for our participant group to 80%, double the national average.

Discussion

Patience and a slow approach gave the biggest insights when attempting to amass tangible data during the study. A requirement to gain trust, to understand the confines of prison life and to construct agreeable steps was, at times, frustrating and difficult. However, as one who had never encountered the complexities of prison reform and education I was grateful for the support of all staff at Prison B and C, and my previous research at HMP Channings Wood (Prison A).

Day to day changes can have an immense impact on the men, leading to inconsistency within their classrooms. There are many difficulties which can occur at a moment’s notice to prevent all movement of prisoners, for example difficulties in accessing the education block for days or weeks. This is immensely frustrating for the learners, but also for the prison staff and teachers. Coates (2016) made the following observation:

“If you remove the barriers and enable prisoners to learn on their own wings, or in their cells, they are much more likely to get involved in education”.

So, the logistics of the prisoners having access to a ReaderPen within their cells is an area of interest for those involved in the study, but this could not be a blanket approach due to operational reasons. Instead we are discussing this concept with prisons who allow prisoners to access ‘hobby boxes’ in their cells overnight and the strict criteria of how these prisoners access this facility is worth exploring further.

The prison environment is a difficult place in which to work and live. Public opinion can be swift and blunt when faced with shocking headlines. Recently such a headline came from the prison minister, Rory Stewart who gave himself one year to reduce drugs and violence within prisons (BBC News, 2018). The government have pledged £10million to improve security and conditions in jails. However, it appears this is a chicken and egg scenario. Prisoners will cite ‘boredom’, which was identified by Scott (2018) who was told, by prisoners, that time feels suspended, and that life becomes ‘empty’. One would therefore conclude that offering education or work is one answer to alleviating boredom and lack of motivation? However, as I have experienced during my study, the lack of prison staff to enable movement from one part of the prison to another can prevent routine access to education, and unlike mainstream schools there is no Educational Welfare Officer to challenge attendance rates! The time offered within the education department amounts to approximately five hours a day. There is some support from Peer Mentors (Shannon Trust, 2018) for learners to continue their studies outside the educational

environment. Online training and learning via a TV channel is available, but for some learners this style of learning, without 1:1 trusted support, is impractical.

The participants of Prison C recognised they are enthusiastic learners, but this was curtailed by not having access to the ReaderPen in their cells. These men were predominately older, and perhaps having had the time to reflect and understand the impact their illiteracy had on their decision making. They appeared finely attuned to their difficulties in comparison with the younger participants I encountered in Prison B, whose willingness to learn was still quite artificial. The youngest participant in Prison C also displayed elements of not being completely truthful about his reading ability; he was enthusiastic about the ReaderPen but his belief in his reading abilities were greater than his actual skills. However, the emotional impact of being able to read to his son via the Storybook Dad programme (Storybook Dads, 2018) enabled him to understand the power of the written word. I would like to further study the use of the ReaderPen being offered to those wishing to undertake this programme, providing opportunity to fathers who are unable to read and who may be reluctant to try because of their lack of skills.

Future studies will attempt to follow our first five participants, to see if they achieve qualifications, and for one who has successfully completed Levels 1 and 2 Maths and English further courses; and to hear of their lives outside prison. Results would be shared with the varying differing types of prisons, to discuss the opportunities which were offered to the inmates, with consideration for their age and cultural influences. Furthermore, attention should be given to exploiting the insights of the older generation, regarding the importance of education and how this could be modelled. Over the last 11 years there has been a steady increase of prisoners in the over 50 brackets (Allen and Watson, 2017).

Currently prisoners are given the opportunity to work with peer mentors who are trained to support non-readers and writers; the Shannon Trust Mentor Programme (Shannon Trust, 2018). However, the peer mentors have skills gained perhaps from childhood education as opposed to learning to read within prison themselves. A powerful concept of mentors who have gone through learning in prison may create the formation of peers who have common ground. For example, older generational non-readers who then learn to read will be on hand to discuss the emotive and independence they have achieved alongside peer mentors who have qualifications and the skills to help with the reading and writing aspect.

The ideas and concepts put forward here are not to create difficulties or criticize the incredible work carried out within prisons at this time; however, it is apparent from an outsider’s viewpoint that the two parties; the prison environment and the educational environment; do not always work in harmony together due to the challenges daily life can throw up at a moment’s notice. We would like to propose a suggestion which could create positive educational outcomes for all,

namely: review the concept of learning on the wings and in the cells, supported by peers, which in turn may lead to the promotion of independent learning, increased confidence and self-esteem.

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STUDY – PRISON C
TRANSCRIPT OF IN-MATE INTERVIEWS –
USE OF THE READERPEN
AT PRE-FUNCTIONAL LEVEL - ENGLISH

Prisoner 1

KEY: M1: Participant; CF: ReaderPen Researcher; SE: prison teacher; JC: ReaderPen CEO

M1: If it weren't for SE, I've come along amazing since she showed me the pen. Aah that's amazing that pen I tell you, I hate reading, I really do...

CF: So that's what you thought about reading, you just didn't want to...

M1: Oh I hate reading, SE will tell you, she said “I'll get you reading”, I said “you won't”....

(laughter)... She has, it's lovely..brilliant, absolutely brilliant. That (pointing at pen) has given me me another lease of, I don't know what you call it, life, sort of interest, you na...?

CF: And your reading, what kind of things are you reading?

M1: Oh god, I come down and I've got a big dog book on all breeds, and it's lovely (laughter)

CF: Fantastic

M1: ... and it's got a dictionary on it as well, I ain't used that but that would be very good as well... 1

SE: You like your dictionary, don't you?

M1: Ahh I'd love it, I love me dictionary

CF: Oh so that's something that could be useful for you

M1: Oh yeah, it would be a hell of a use, yeah, like I said I used the pen the other week, you know I done something, and when I read it a bit further I gathered that weren't right so I went back and used the pen and that wasn't what I thought it was, so that's even better, that's brilliant (points to pen)

CF: So that's actually prompting you to realise you've made a mistake to go back?

M1: AHH when I was reading it, 'cause I know what I'm doing, that's just didn't added up to, you know? And I went back and thought that it wasn't what I thought it was, yeah the pen is brilliant, yeah.

(Voices speaking over each other; asking about his reading)

M1: Yeah, I thought it was something else, and you know that's brilliant, absolutely brilliant... thanks to SE

CF: So, is there anything you've found difficult about the pen?

M1: No, it's easy to use.

CF: Good, good, so you found it very easy to use?

M1: Yeah, yeah. very good, yeah

JC: So, do you use it for just one word or several words

M1: I, I use it for quite a few, you know?

SE: Do you scan one word at a time or do you go for the whole sentence?

M1: No, no, no, if I see a whole sentence, no but if I see a word and there is two together and I think I don't really know what that word is I will scan them both and then I get, then I know exactly what it is, yeah it's very good, yeah its brilliant

CF: So, it's kind of confirming what you think you've read?

M1: I couldn't read it but when I hear what it is I know what it is, you know? 9/10, but sometimes I do and that could be handy with the dictionary couldn't it, yeah, it's brilliant.

CF: So, is your reading coming along as well?

M1: Oh, it's come along in the last few months, SE will tell you, it's come along brilliant, my spelling (raises voice in pride)

SE: Yep

CF: Your spelling too?

SE: Yep

M1: That's absolutely...

SE: In the past you weren't up for really writing a letter or...

M1: Nooooo, yeah, I... write a letter...

CF: Oh fantastic you wrote your first letter?

M1: it took me a while, nine years of being in prison... yeah

CF: Oh my gosh.

M1: it's true, it's thanks to SE, SE's way of teaching is brilliant. As I said when I was at the last prison I did education

CF: Yeah?

M1: ... for quite a while and I got to a stage I wasn't going to get any more. Then I come here I thought "I'm never gonna get any further", but since I've known SE, honestly, I've come along brilliantly.

SE: Brilliantly, you did it! (laughter)

M1: No, your techniques are good, she's very good.

CF: Good.

M1: That's not just me that says it, everybody... you know?

CF: And how was your letter received, the person you sent the letter to... what did they think?

M1: Well...yeah brilliant, well they wouldn't know I wrid it but yeah, I did write...

SE: You didn't actually let them know that you had written the letter yourself.

M1: Yeah.

SE: ... Because in the past if you have needed to do a letter you've asked someone...

M1:... I'm good at writing letter...I'm very knowledgeable at doing a letter..

CF: Yes?

M1:... just not on paper.. but now.

CF: So you got someone else to write your letter?

M1:... spellings, well I. But my spellings have come along but since doing this 1:1.

SE: Your spelling is much better than you still believe it is.

M1: Yeah, cause a...

SE: ... a lot of the time I tell you to go ahead and write it

M1: yeah (laughs).

SE: And then.

M1: I'm not so far out, am I?

SE: No, you're not. And I make him go for it.

M1: 54 years of being alive and I've never been able to spell, but just recently cause, I don't know. I'm getting very good.

CF: You've probably opened your brain up.

M1: Well this pen, this pen is definitely... I can't tell you, I'm telling everyone about it...

SE: They (pointing at study staff) like your advertising, they really do (laughter).

M1: Yeah, it's brilliant, yeah.

CF: So, has this made you think differently about education in prisons?

M1: well yeah, it's given me, I can't tell you, I got that glow back in me body, wanting to learn.

It's all good.. yeah.

CF: And why do you think they really promote education in prison? Why do you think they push this?

M1: Well, you need an education, don't you? There's always going to be a need to write a letter and forms and that.

CF: To understand what you're reading?

M1: Yeah exactly.

CF: Excellent. So, do you think having the pen could have given you a different education when you were younger? So, if this had been introduced to you as a child do you think things would have been different for you?

M1: Yeah, I do, it they had teached me like SE done, to begin with, laying out the thing...sounds.

SE: Sounds? So, working with the phonics?

M1: Soon as I done that then this pen would have been absolutely, yeah. I reckon I would have been a different education then I am now, you know? Definitely.

CF: Fabulous, and so what age do you think the pen being introduced to you would have given you better choices, what age do you think you recognise that you were struggling?

M1: Well not too early... I was struggling all the while really, but I don't know... 7.... 8....

probably, I reckon I would've been nowhere near what I am now. Do you know what I mean?

CF: Yeah.

M1: It (sic ReaderPen) would have helped me tremendous, it really would have.

CF: So, education is really important?

M1: Well it is to me, yeah, you know? It’s nice to write a letter, I felt good that I did, that I could do it. And I had to go through the dictionary for words, and it was a lot of struggle. It took me two days to do it, but I got there. And I never thought I'd ever do a letter when I first come here, nine years, but yeah.

CF: And that's the first of many hopefully!

M1: Yeah and reading, I loat...hate reading, but now I love reading.. with this pen yeah (joy and laughter heard in voice).

SE: I love the fact that (laughing) you still say you hate reading (much laughter from all).

M1: Well I do hate reading...

SE: You sit there (pointing to table and chair)...

M1: ..you have to do a lot of reading. I've got a parole coming up and I've got a dossier to read through, and I can't understand half the word. They use these big words, and with a dictionary I'm more, and this has got one on it as well (holding up pen).

CF: So, if you've got all that paperwork and you've got access to the pen...

M1:... oh yeah that would be a hell of a help, yeah.

SE: Why don't you bring your paperwork here? If you had access to the pen somewhere within the prison would that be...

M1: ... yeah of course it would, it's a struggle, you know what I mean? It's a struggle....It's a lot of paperwork, I'm talking the paper is like this, (raises hands to show large amount of paperwork) and it's full.

SE: You don't have a lack of understanding of the words, once you have read the words you know what it all means.

M1: Oh yeah and the dossier, my dossier for instance is full of errors, and if I didn't read it. Oh yeah, big errors and if I hadn't read it. I have to read it really closely...

CF: ... and do you sign that as well when you've read it? You sign to say you've read that?

M1: I don't sign for it, no, but I've been in touch with probation, my solicitor and told them. And they all know these things are wrong. They are big things that are wrong but before I never really use to go through the dossier to tell you the truth. Now I go through it with a fine comb and I read everything.

SE: Excellent.

M1: This pen would have come in really handy, I'm telling you.

CF: Yeah..of course, of course.

SE: You would have known exactly what it was....

M1:... oh I know what it is...

SE: I know that you do, now, 'cause you worked through it...

M1: ... yeah but before I didn't, I use to. Last prison they use to say just sign here, but I said I ain't read it, but I never use to read as much.

CF: 'Cause you didn't like it!

M1: No... that's a struggle, that tires me out very quick. SE'll say I do a lot of exercise 'cause I use to be 22 stone. But I lost about 11 stone in... yeah, I use to be quite big and yeah, I was a 63 chest at one time.

CF: Oh my gosh.

M1: Yeah, and I was diabetic.

CF: Yes?

M1: Asthmatic. Yeah, I've got rid of all of that, by losing weight and health. That's what I'm saying, I do all this exercise and that don't wear me out as much as what this learning does!

CF: Yes, yes.

SE: You sit there during a session, won't you? And after half an hour session you say...

M1: "I'm worn out" (much laughter).

SE: And I say... "we're just going to do a bit more".

M1: But this pen, honestly, I can't tell you. When I get out I am going to get one, I don't know when I'm going to get out, but when I do I am going to get one!

CF: SE will provide you with some information about where you can contact us as 'cause obviously we would like to offer a discount to you for being part of the study.

M1: Yeah? That's alright, like I said I don't know when I'm getting out that's the trouble.

CF: Well hopefully we will hear from you in the future?

M1: Absolutely, well I'm definitely gonna do it. Well as I said if had had this a few years back whatever that would have been great help, a great help, the last, well 4 paroles and 2 there was lots of stuff in the dossier I didn't even know was wrong till the solicitor pulled me up on that. I should have known that, but I didn't like reading, so I didn't bother that much but now this last dossier. I am telling you I went through that letter by letter (laughs) and I found it all myself, so this pen. Like if I had that, I can't tell you, it doesn't tire me out so much.

CF: It is exhausting...

M1: ... it is exhausting, that's what I said. Physical is nowhere near as bad as this stuff (laughter)

Prisoner 2

Key: M2-Participant; CF: ReaderPen Researcher; SE: prison teacher; JC: ReaderPen CEO

CF: What do you think about the pen?

M2: It's a good thing, I'm not fluid, natural, dyslexic would you say? I don't know.

CF: Yeah.

M2: But for me it's... to read... I can read the whole book without the teacher being there but before I couldn't. I find it really... I'd break it up, the words? Like, say 'management', I would find that difficult. So, I broke it up, first: man, then the second: and I just kept getting better and better with it. So, I find it great, but ya would only get it when you come here.

CF: Yes?

M2: You need it with ya all the time. To really improve ya reading.

CF: Uhum.

M2: You need it all the time like... when yu reading or out to work with ya. So yeah, it's definitely a big, big help. To people who is in mine situation.

CF: Yes?

M2: Yes, its absolutely... well, you can read a whole book... so to me.

SE: M2 chooses his books from the library. Don't you? You can be reading...

M2: Yeah!

SE: And...

M2: I... I took Richard Branson's, as a starter, 'cause he was dyslexic...

CF: He is.

JC: Yes.

M2: So, I got that one, ‘cause it’s an easy read, I think they call it. I've read all that with the pen and you know it’s so helpful. It's brilliant. Brilliant.

CF: So why is reading important to you?

M2: To me? Well, I had a little bit of school so everything I've ever done is always been by my learning, by watching people. And outside I work for the film industry?

CF: Yes?

M2: So, I've been on sets and stuff like that. Now with technology, everything is computers, so everything is sent to off to the showrooms by computers. So, I have to learn to read, to do the job that I want to, to carry on when I get back out.

CF: Yes, of course.

M2: So, when this was introduced to me, I tell you. I wasn't too sure about it...

CF: Okay?

M2: But then when I started to do it, I was Jesus, its... ‘cause I don't have to involve the teacher?

CF: Yes

M2: I can carry on, on me own...

CF: So that's you being independent?

M2: Yeah very..It's like a great invention. Was it you that invented it?

CF: No... No JC is CEO of the company and he has worked with the chap who designed it.

JC: Yeah, they've always done pens that have done translations and stuff and we really pushed them to make a reading pen, as they didn't have one. To promote independent reading.

M2: Yeah, it’s such a great help, to like, young kids that have the same, maybe not as bad as me, but starting off as good as you can.

CF: Is that why you left school early?

M2: Well, where I was, it was a big family and they put me out on the farm, with me brother.

And we had two other brothers, so it wasn't that we bothered until I came to England when I was 15?

CF: Yep.

M2: And then I was in and yu had to fill in this (mime filling in forms) and I was sod it... I realised, and I said to me sister. She said “you've to go to night” (sic school)... but I never did, and when I got married, me wife, I had to tell her.

CF: Yes?

M2: And then that become, so embarrassed telling her, and she put me onto evening class... which I did... I can read a little.

CF: Yes?

M2: But with this.. its like, my god yu can do the whole thing on your own!

CF: You can do it on your own, yeah.

M2: Yeah, it's a great idea. To put into like schools and to colleges. And I believe, 'cause I was talking to my boss; he came to see me, and I was telling him about the pen and he said "actually there's one of the directors, that's dyslexic", I'm telling you, "and he's got" either, it's this one or “something similar...”.

CF: Yeah?

M2: That he's using and he's gonna get them for people that is dyslexic...

CF: So he understands more than anybody else.?

M2: Yeah.

CF:... What it's like?

M2: He's the headman, it's his company.

CF: Absolutely.

M2: He was telling me, stick with what you're doing, with teacher (indicating SE).

CF: Yes?

M2: And we'll see, when yu finish yu sentence, and go from there. And to get one for yu.

CF: Well, SE's got some information about how you can contact the company, 'cause we will offer a discount for you being part of the study.

M2: Oh brilliant, yeah?

CF: So, if it is something you'd like to look at?

M2: Yeah certainly. I'd love one as soon as I'm out... I've got 12 months left so...

CF: Fantastic... (laughter from group)

CF: Now...I believe you are left handed so you were using the...

M2: I am.

CF: ...in a bit of an odd way to start with?

M2: I was

CF: you were?

M2: But with practice.

CF: Yeah?

M2: I was kind of flexible to use either.

CF: Ambidextrous?

M2: But because I was just beginning.

CF: Yes?

M2: But now I can just do it left or right.

SE: We sorted it out, didn't we? So that we could convert it to left.

CF: Yes?

SE: But in actual fact, I've now discovered, that you now...

VOICES TALKING EXCITEDLY

SE: That you can use it right handed. That you don't bother...

M2: Cause I hold the book, like that, (demonstrates how he holds a book) or the page that ...

CF: Yes?

M2: And I go down and some more, and then I just do that...its... its both ways for me.

CF: So, you are doing it to suit your needs... excellent.

M2: So, I'm ambidextrous?

CF: Ambidextrous! Yes!

M2: I'm getting educated (much laughter).

JC: Are you using the dictionary?

M2: I am yeah. Yeah. It's like, em, it's taken time to get use to it, yu know? So...

JC: It's a complicated dictionary. We are working on having a, urm, an easier dictionary to understand as there are lots of acronyms...order...explanations...

M2: Yeah? It's a great way... I just want to ask a question because I work with people that does technology we had to first screen, like before I come here, it's like for buying clothes, instead of putting clothes on, you just type in, it's like a big telly?

JC: Yes.

M2: And it's similar to this, but the programme on it was really small, so you just stand in front of this and it's like erm, and it reads/scans ya. And if yu put your finger there and it knows what clothes, it dresses ya.

CF: Oh wow...

M2: Its similar to this...

JC: Yeah?

M2: It suits the clothes for yu age, whatever...

SE: Yes?

M2: I was just how, is this done by chips... how do ya store all the information, on this?

JC: It's got a 4GB memory on it, so it's got Collins English Dictionary on it.

M2: Oh, I see.

JC: To store the words on it... but it's a camera and then it does OCR, optical character recognition, and then text to speech.

M2: Its brilliant how it goes, ya know, when you go to the word and it's so. How you use the headphones, and it is so clear and the word...

CF: And prompt.

M2: It's just great... yeah.

CF: Yeah.

M2: Yeah, I'm chuffed with it, so I hope you're recording all of this... boost ya sales (laughter).

CF: Thank you (laughing).

JC: We're keen just to see how it's gone in the prisons, and maybe see if we can get more inmates using the pen...

M2: So, are yu getting good sales and is there a lot of people like?

JC: Well they're being used a lot in exams, GCSEs and A levels.

M2: Oh, okay.

JC: But we haven't really done much for prisons. This is really one of the first prisons in the UK that have trialled this new technology...

CF: And rather than selling the pen, and just leaving people like your teacher to just get on with it, we thought it was really important to find out how you learn, how prisoners learn. And how we can implement the pen in a better way, so that you get the most from it! So, it doesn't end up in a cupboard, never used.

M2: Yeah, no that's a, that's the thing, I do have, have... a thing, when we come like for our lessons, our session?

CF: Yeah?

M2: But really you need it more?

CF: Yes.

M2: To, to, improve your reading.

CF: Yes, of course.

M2: If you had it like normal... on the outside, like through your working day, say

CF: You can access it?

M2: Yes.

CF: Absolutely.

M2: You're doing forms, like you know. You see, you get through to fill in your own time, in your own way. Yeah, so to me it's like...

CF: So, what's really important for you is, being in prison, it would be great if you had access to it?

M2: Yeah... If you had time like as I call it in your flat (sic. cell).

CF: In your flat? Yeah....

SE: You do a lot of self-study don't you?

CF: Overnight?

M2: Yeah, it's my goals, to do this, I promised me daughter, that I'd do.

CF: More?

M2: I'd I've been kind of hiding it, cause bearing in mind I'm fifty.... I'm over 50 years of age, and it's embarrassing when ya work in the studios. Where I work, I've met Sir Bruce Forsyth... and he said "Have you got this book?" and he showed me the name of the book he wanted and I couldn't read it, but I had three (books) and the luck of the Irish I picked the right one.... (much laughter)... I picked the right one! Yes, I did!

CF: And it is difficult, isn't it, you assume that, I mean, once upon a time maybe like when you were on the farm you could get away with not needing to read?

M2: Yes.. you could unless you went to market...

CF: Yeah, so different environments? Yeah....

M2: Yeah... but then like yu went to the doctors or anything and yu see the paperwork coming... it's like... it's like someone tying a knot in yu stomach. It's getting so embarrassed.

JC: Urm (agreement).

M2: It's just like to... it's like... it's not like for yourself, well, it is like for yourself, but you're like "this person thinks I'm stupid", it's not that you're stupid.

CF: No.

M2: It's just there for ya, and for a child, you know, it takes a child six years to be fluent, but as you're older, it's very hard like, as you know, it's very hard. Certain words, and how, I'm terrible at...

SE: ... You are not terrible at all, but you find, you don't give the phonic sounds?

M2: No.

SE: So, we've moved away from the phonics side of it and doing more recognition of...

CF: Sight recognition?

SE: Yes, the pen has made a vast difference...

M2: Yeah, yeah...

SE: To your spelling...

M2: Yeah, I've picked up, I'm picking up other words.

SE: Yeah.

M2: In me brain, I lodge them in me brain instead of forgetting them.

SE: As ...

M2: Using them, yu go over them, sorry, as many times as yu want.

CF: Yes. Pick that up (indicating pen)... definitely. And have you found, therefore, that your vocabulary and use of words, is that getting bigger? Your using more words....

M2: Yeah, definitely! Yeah, big words that I wouldn't even dream about, yeah, I'm trying to get there, like “management”... and

SE: It's the segmenting of words that you do a lot of though, as well with the pen. The other guys I don't think do (this skill) but...

JC: Like syllables?

SE: Yeah... And then you build up the word, so you are almost self-teaching. You, you get the word...

M2: Yeah

SE: ... And you think, “I don't know what it is”, then you break it down.

M2: Yeah...

SE:... and then you look at it and then you put it with the whole sentence...

M2: Yeah, and then it shows the precision for me...

CF: And then I guess what the pen does it validates, confirms, what you thought you read? The sentence is actually what you are reading?

M2: Yeah, it is, it's just great, that you can read a book, the enjoyment is hard to explain, I haven't won the lottery, but I am sure it'll be something similar, to me, like that.

JC: Do you bring your books in here that you've been trying to read?

M2: Yeah.

JC: Do you flag the bit/pages you would like to....

M2: Yeah, well I am reading a book and it's about, erm, it's called when, it's about the time when the country had fallen, when the mines was going, and the Irish come here and they're working in the mines, all that kind of stuff, so I'm interested in that. So, I think that's about 150 pages and I'm thinking I'm about 71 with the pen, so that's really good. And now I'm only an hour here with the pen, so to me that is really good...

JC: And do you think... do you only read it when you are in here?

M2: If I'm.... If I'm doing my desk work and I've finished and it's the weekend and I am bored and its nice and sunny I'll take it (book) out with me and just try, and have a go at it. Yeah, just to improve, the more I do, the better ya get.

CF: Yes, yes, of course.

M2: I'm really happy to have, since I've started with SE, I've moved quicker. I'm happy with meself, so.. its a goal to me...so...

CF: So what kind of strategies are you going to take with you when you leave? When you go outside?

M2: Well hopefully I'll be able to read perfectly, in the 12 months, that is my goal.

CF: Your goal?

M2: And then the world is me oyster, hopefully I'll go back to the filum thing, but I'll be able to put me hands up with no worrying about people...

JC: The 'filum' thing...

CF: Stop it! (Laughter). You, (to M2) know exactly what I'm talking about you?

M2: (Laughing), I do, I do.

CF: (towards JC) SEE....

M2: A lot of people laugh at certain words...

CF: I know....

M2: we say treeee years....

SE: Well, we had that sometimes when we are doing the phonics?

M2: yea... treeee (three).

SE: It's...

M2: ... Certain words, the Irish 'ting' ... like 'ting' ... Yeah (more laughter).

SE: So, your spelling, all goes slightly awry...

M2: It does, yeah that's the kind of ...remember, it's not that way, it's the way you say it

(nodding to teacher) to get.

CF: It's your accent, your culture?

SE: Yeah.

M2: Yeah.

CF: You know, cause if we did try and spell 'filum' the way we say it (indicating self and M2; one from the north east and the other from Ireland; laughter from both) it would be a bit bizarre! Wouldn't it?

M2: (laughing) yeah, it would.. Yeah.... (laughing).

CF: So is there anything else you would like to add about how you....

M2: No, I'm just think it's the most important ting, it's a brilliant pen, but yu have to spend the time with the pen, more to get fluent reading. Yu got to have more, an hours great, which I am thinking of, but if you had it, if you were allowed it out, but I can't see it, yu know?

CF: But it's worth us sharing that information and your thoughts with others, because obviously one of the biggest policies is about how to increase education in prisons.

M2: Yeah...

CF: And they really, sort of push how important it is...

M2: To have something...

CF: In prisons, to be educated.

M2: To me that is like, today if you are going to talk to them, I would say to them: "for them (establishment) to improve people (prisoners) who have bad records, who can't read or write, it's a great help for them to be educated for them to be able to see the other side of life"...

CF: Yes.

M2: Show what these pens do, also to sort out, signing for us to be responsible for it, and have to take it back, and if not to be charged for it...

CF: Yes, to put in place some strategies to keep everybody safe and make sure that the pen...

M2: Yeah.

CF: Goes where it should. And also, how powerful it would be for those guys who can't read who need to sign paperwork, to agree to adhere to rules...

M2: And there is such a great feel to be able to do that...

CF: Yes.

M2: To be able to pick up like even the canteen, ways of doing stuff, and to read all that, without anybody helping yu, it's just a great thing. And they could provide all of that just by using the pen... So, it's great that, it's a great help, that's all. So, I hope that the prison does take it into consideration.

CF: Thank you.

Prisoner 3

Key: M3-Participant; CF: ReaderPen Researcher; SE: prison teacher; JC: ReaderPen CEO

M3: Hello.

JC: I’m JC from Scanning Pens.

M3: Nice to meet you.

CF: Hello, I’m CF.

M3: Nice to meet you.

(Invited to sit and settle down)

CF: What did you think of the ReaderPen?

M3: I found it a great help, in a sense where I’ve obviously started to have my lessons in here as well. Where we go through the basics, with the beginning books, the starter books. I’ve found by having this you’ll push yourself a bit further to read, something a bit more challenging? Cause you know you’ve got that there to fall back on. So, where before, if you took a book that was more challenging, you know, after you’ve got the first three words say wrong? You start to lose a little bit of interest, don’t ya?

CF: Yes.

M3: Cause, it breaks up the sentence doesn’t it?

CF: Yes.

M3: Well where you’ve got the pen, that’ll come in there, and you can use that, and it keeps you then interested in reading through the rest of the book then. I find it a great help.

CF: And then, what did you think of the pen in comparison to maybe doing those things on your own?

M3: I don't think... I think you would get there without the aid, but I think it would be a lot arder and I don't think the 'enthusiasticness' (sic) would be there. I find that gives you, as I say, the confidence, and the ability to excel further, then you would have done, without it.

CF: And are you trying more complex books?

M3: Yeah, definitely. Obviously as I say, you are going to challenge yourself more because you've got that there, so you can, so I find it a great help, yeah?

CF: So, what's your background? Did you finish school early?

M3: I had the typical where the erm people didn't understand yu? So, at an early age, I had one instant I had one teacher, speak to me, this was in the primary school, if you couldn't read she use to hit ya. So, the more you got the words wrong, the more..., so you got to the stage where you didn't want to read. You know you go home and tell your parents. Parents do the best they can... they go up there "whoohoo, this is wrong and that!"... I was never smacked by my parents in my life and all of a sudden there's a stranger smacking a child. Erm, but yeah, I found as I got older there was a lack of caring. I was very good at sports, so they'd pull me out of classroom to go play football or rugby or cricket but when it came to like thinking on leaving school, and I'm gonna be out in the big world. And I've got to get a job and that, and it was sort of....

CF: Shoved that to one side?

M3: And, of course, you come out and it's really hard, it's really difficult. And, but I mean I don't know if its God looking down on me, but I've always had good common sense. I've had me own business, and I've had successful job. Not in the business that I had, I no longer have that business. I worked with cranes, I was the signaler? You know the guy that puts all the loads

on? Tells the crane driver where to go, dealing with 30-40 tonnes, I’ve worked on the, you know the Shard in London?

CF: Yeah.

M3: The “Walkie talkie”, the “Gherkin”, so I’ve worked on all the high risers and that. Which still goes against the grain, cause obviously I still had to get me NVQs but they cheat a little bit. They go “you’ve got it up there, you’ve passed, because it’s there”. But if it was down to that, I’d have to write it down there, I’d never pass. Even though I was up there (pointing to head) and I could do my job very good. Without being arrogant... but

CF: Putting that on paper?

M3: If I’d have to put that down on paper, no.

CF: And reading anything as well?

M3: Well reading was difficult.

CF: So, you had to retain all of that information to know what you were doing. You had to somehow learn that in your head?

M3: You learn your own code. I had to learn certificates, obviously, and a lot of the lifting equipment we use is tested every six months to keep it in service. Lifting is pretty much, straps, slings, shackles, so you’ve got to look at certs. So, what I do is instead of reading the different names, I look at the sizes of them, oh yeah that one’s up to date, that’s ok. And obviously you look at the physical date of them, you find ways round it, to be able to function and cope.

CF: This sounds like dyslexia, is that what you’ve been recognised as, a dyslexic?

M3: Well no, because I’m finding without any clarity. What a lovely lady (pointing to teacher) and I mean that sincerely. I mean no, you find a lot of people, if its gonna take more work, it’s very easy to “I’ve got a problem, I can’t deal with that”. It takes a lot more courage, doesn’t it?

To say, “well actually I can see that this guy here, he’s functioning and intelligent, but there is something not quite, something missing”, yeah? So, it takes that person “‘I’m gonna persevere with this’” when so many people go

CF: Yeah.

M3: Yeah, I’m finding the stuff that I am learning its staying...Ummm. The biggest problem I have, I can read, great, I can read but I can’t put it down on paper... Now I know that sounds... its quite a hard one to explain isn’t it?

CF: No, no.

M3: You can read something, but can’t write it down. How can you read the words if you can’t write it down, I’ve had that all my life. Some people are very ‘yeah, you know....’. But you look for answers, for help, aren’t you?

CF: Is that moving forward for you (pointing to pen).

M3: This has helped me so much. I’m 58 now, and I am learning stuff now I never knew. I’m getting English in the mornings, and in me own time tuition as well, which is great. I work in the kitchens, but there is a bit of a conflict there because they don’t like me doing the English and that, ‘cause they love me in the kitchens, because I graft. ‘Cause I’ve always grafted me whole life. They would rather have that, and I’m like “‘no’”, “‘no, education is so much more important’”. ‘Cause without getting into things I wouldn’t have signed things, legally, if I had known what I was signing and shoved under me nose, do you see what I mean?

CF: Yes.

M3: There’s that balance. Yeah, I got away with functioning very well. I had a very good paid job. But when it come down to things to ‘better’ myself, I couldn’t. I couldn’t, you know? It’s like being a slinger, but you’re up and down, the build, you’re going up and down and I am 58 its

hands-on, all day. I’d like to be an “AP”, an appointed person. That’s the guy who works out where the mobile cranes are going to be to take down the tower crane. You’ve got to know all that literature, you’ve got to learn where the services are, where the subway runs, everything. Ya know?. I’d like to move into that, but because of my reading ability, and my writing is terrible, which is non-existence, that puts some people off. But I’m finding this is brilliant, getting back to this I find really good.

CF: Well your long-term aim is to read fluently when you leave?

M3: I’d love to read fluently.

CF: So, if you are not able to, are there tools like this that could help you outside?

MF: Without a doubt, I think, I think so many things, it’s like disabilities. People are not aware of disabilities ‘cause they don’t want to know there are people with disabilities, which I think is terrible. There are so many disabilities out there, but how often do you actually see signs that say “oh this shop here sells if you need these aids?”. Or things like that, but were “oh there’s no disabilities, there’s no disabilities?”. I think that’s what we do, we shun away from it, where I think we need to advertise more. Because if a few people knew these were out there, and they go for it, people talk obviously. “This is brilliant, this is helping my reading, this is helping me to get a job”. Now if this helps you to get a job you are going to become a tax payer: if you become tax payer you conbuting to the nation, aren’t you? You see it’s a knock-on effect isn’t it?

CF: Ummm.

M3: We seem to shun away don’t we?

CF: I mean obviously we’ve introduced these into schools because we are hoping the earlier we introduce them the more it becomes a habitual thing, like having your glasses and your phone etc.

M3: Exactly.

CF: So, if you had this opportunity for something like this rather than your teacher hitting you?

M3: (laughing) I mean, it’s a terrible thing (laughing) it’s human nature to laugh... It’s a brilliant thing, it would give you that confidence wouldn’t it? Could you imagine? I don’t know how they’d feel about exams, cause I still think...

CF: Oh, we have an orange one which is allowed in exams. JC is the CEO of the company and has worked with examination boards.

M3: Are you the company director?

JC: Yes.

M3: OK.

JC: So, there is an orange one which only reads and doesn’t have a dictionary on it...

M3: And when you brought that up was that a struggle for you?

JC: Yea, when I went to the exam boards eight years ago and they told me to go away....

M3: See, this is it...

JC: But I came back four years later, and they said “this is what we need” because, if the children in the school always have humans to read to them, they are not going to manage in the real world.

M3: That’s right.

JC: So, we need to get them prepared to manage on their own.

M3: Do you realise the potential? People could have this in their pocket in everyday life.

CF: Absolutely.

M3: You know when I had my own business and I’d have to go, went into the bank to write a cheque, I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t physically write a cheque.

CF: And some of the other people have described how they feel, sick and knots in their stomachs you know?

M3: When I was a child, you start to believe, when people call you stupid, they call you long enough you start to believe it. You do. Well, you know. As I say, I had lovely parents. God rest them, I had really beautiful parents, they had me quite late. They gave me such a balance, to be able to deal with me own inadequates, me reading, me writing. Maybe they could have helped me more with it but they got there. They brought out what was in me, to be able to get around that. So, you can be successful in life even though you got a lot of prejudices and there is still prejudices now.

CF: Oh yes.

M3: I told my boss, I was on the job right and this is the gospel truth, I had just finished working on the Gherkin, the one that looks like a rugby ball?

CF: Yes.

M3: I was just stood on the top of that, yeah. I was just walking across the RSJ to the crane driver, looking around and my boss came up and I was like “‘yeah the weather conditions let us...” Cause obviously when you are working at high level you lose a lot of time through wind. Cause you just can’t lift.

CF: Yeah, of course.

M3: You’ve got winds, you know, loads are getting out of control. Erm, and I was saying to him, “Well, you’ve given me loads of paperwork and you are gonna have to give me some time for this”. It was like the certs to order a new sling, and everything like that, and he was asking me if we would have to renew anymore before the end of job. I said, “we might need to get 6 tonne

straps, but you can do it”, and he said “no, you do it”. And I said, “no my reading”. And he looked at me like that, and I’m going... like all of a sudden... and I’m like woooo, yeah?

CF: Like you have leprosy?

M3: Exactly, yeah...He couldn’t grasp that I’ve done my job like for the last, oh, amount of years, but my reading is not... very...

CF: Yeah.. He made an assumption?

M3: Good at all, but my spellings is probably none existent. “You charlatan! How have you done your job?” (laughter)... “with what’s up there!” (pointing to head). And that’s that..

JC: Doubly impressive.

M3: That’s, that’s stereotype. They demonise you. It’s the old pigeon hole scenario.

CF: With the writing with SE, how has that improved?

M3: The writing has improved because, obviously, I have a very strong accent, as you can hear, so I don’t mouth my words properly.

CF: Neither do I, I’m from Durham...

M3: You don’t hear properly...I’ve worked up your way! (Laughter). So, you don’t pronounce yer words properly so obviously when your trying to pronounce the word your trying to read, your not, cause your earing it completely different, aren’t yu? To how it should be but like you’ve learnt me how to (directing to SE).

SE: We’re also waiting for a hearing test.

M3: An ear test...Yeah... I’ve worked on construction nearly all me life so my ears are bad...

CF: Yeah?

M3: And because being a slinger signaler, people go to you , “well why aren’t you wearing ear protection”. So, I am going to talk to the crane driver, now that they are coming back to me...

CF: Yes, cause you are going up and down?

M3: How am I going to talk to the crane driver if I’ve got ear protection. You’ve got the background noises all the times... so ... yeah.

CF: So that could impact on how you pronounce things and how you spell things as well.

M3: Later in life yeah, but at the beginning of the life obviously there was something wrong. I also had, I think I was telling you I had speech therapy when I was a child.

CF: Did you have grommits? Or anything put in your ears...to help?

M3: Urrmmm... no.... nothing at all. I use to... I use to not pronounce ma words properly. I still don’t now.

CF: Yeah, yeah.

M3: Ummmm, but obviously with learning the words and that, and I’m learning to pronounce them which is so much important...

CF: So, does that help (pointing to pen) you with that?

M3: That helps. Yes, that helps.

CF: So, you could scan over a word and hear how it’s meant to be said?

M3: Yeah. I mean what’s brilliant with this as well you can cheat, if you are getting frustrated.

That you reading from a book, you can take your time with it, this is where it is really clever. If you want a bit of a breather for your brain, you can go over the line, or the full sentence, which I think is brilliant cause that brings you back into, you know, being excited by what you’re reading. Once you’ve got through that, you are ready then to start again, aren’t ya? It’s very clever.

JC: And you know you can actually read a whole paragraph. You can scroll back up

M3: Yes?

JC: You can press the OK button and it will read it all back to you.

M3: This one okay, I found the orange one a bit difficult, it was playing about a bit when I was trying it.

CF: Being a bit naughty?

M3: It was being a bit naughty, yeah... but this, this is brilliant (ReaderPen).

CF: Excellent.

M3: It really is, for someone, with my abilities and that, to be blunt. And I can't see why every child shouldn't have one, if they've got a problem... I'm not saying every child, if children with learning difficulties. An aid isn't a treat, an aid, it's self-explanatory isn't it? It's an aid to get the end result, which then gets you into work, to pay your tax....

JC: Spectacles. We wear glasses? Is that cheating? No.

M3: Exactly....I started wearing glasses...

SE: It's one of the things...

M3: When I was 50. I mean I really take my hat off (begins to applaud) I don't want to put you on the spot.... No, I know what it's like to have that frustration. You've got a brilliant idea and you want to get it out there. And instead of people sort of saying “do you know what, he's got something” they want to ‘poo poo’ you all the time. Because they haven't either come up with it or they don't like idea of the change; no one likes change....

CF: It is difficult to make that....

M3: Do you know, I've had someone... I've had this in the construction. You find this, you've had one guy in his late 40s, early 50s. and he's done this one job, all these years. And someone comes along and says “if you try it like that”...they can't stand the idea of change. But change, if it saves time, it's benefiting you to? Ya na?

CF: Thank you so much for talking to us.

M3: Well thank you, it’s nice to have a sensible, logical conversation (much laughter)...

SE: You don’t get that with me (laughing).

M3: You don’t get that no...

Prisoner 4

CF: Hi, I’m going to record you, is that fine?

M4: Yeah, fine.

CF: Excellent, So SE has been working with you and the ReaderPen, we’ve come along today to hear how you are finding it...

M4: Yeah.

CF: And If you can give us some comments about what you’ve found, what’s good about it, or not so good and whether you would think about using it in the future..... So, how were you introduced to the pen?

M4: Basically, she introduced it to basically help me read and write. When I started using it meself, I found it good.

CF: Good?

M4: It’s helped me a hell of a lot...

CF: So how difficult do you find reading? Can you describe what you can and can’t do?

M4: It’s not as difficult now, since I’ve been using that (points to pen).

CF: Huhum.

M4: And doing all the reading and writing classes has helped, so everything is getting better now.

CF: So, are you feeling more confident about books and things?

M4: Yep, yep.

CF: SE has kindly shared with us that you are going to be looking at doing the Storybook Dad?

M4: Yeah. At the moment, I’m doing that, at the moment...

CF: Is that something you thought of before?

M4: Yep, I was working on getting me reading and writing up to, where I needed to get it first, and then I was gonna do the father book, and that’s it.

CF: It’s quite an exciting project? Is your son’s name X? (points to participant’s arm tattoo of a name).

M4: Yeah.

CF: So, will that be the first time you’ve ever read a book to him?

M4: Yeah, it is.

CF: Wow...

M4: That’s why I’m doing it now to get him to hear my voice every day...soo...

CF: Good... So the pens...

M4: Is helping me, a hell of a lot.

CF: What kind of things are you reading, what kind of things do you use the pen to read?

M4: Some of the books I get out of the library I can’t be bothered to walk to get out of the library...

SE: You’ve also used it for the reading books here, which you read with me, but you then take sometimes to...

M4: Yeah, I sit out here for half an hour to read the pen myself...

CF: Is that something you would have done in the past? Sit down and read.

M4: Na, na, this is a first time, whatever... but...

CF: Is that going to help you when you leave?

M4: Yeah, yeah its gonna help me a hell of a lot.

CF: ‘Cause it’s not just books it could help with but a whole ream of things; like paperwork you are going to sign? When you leave you may have to agree to things?

M4: Yep.

CF: So, you may have to sign paperwork. (Turns to teacher) Are they allowed to read paperwork, for things they are expected to sign, when they come here?

SE: That hasn't come up yet, has it?

M4: No.

SE: It's something that I think that would be useful, for you, to be able to... if they say "right this is what you have to agree to", it can look quite daunting, can't it?

M4: Yeah.

SE: If you have a whole sheet there...but to be able to just scan each line and think "no, I actually don't agree".

M4: Yeah.

SE: You'd be quite verbal about saying you didn't like it, but you've got to know...

M4: Yeah, what it says on the paper before I sign it...

CF: Absolutely, cause otherwise you could be agreeing to signing anything...

M4: Yeah.

SE: Something else you said, when you are at home, how do you deal with the mobile?

M4: Oh yeah, my missus needs to read all the texts for me...

JC: All the text messages?

M4: Yeah. She needs to help me with all the time.

SE: But hopefully...

M4: I have to ask her...

CF: ‘Cause that could put a strain on a relationship, couldn’t it? Especially if she is dealing with the little one?

M4: Yeah.

CF: She’s busy or whatever, doing her own stuff?

M4: Yeah.

CF: And you have to say, “stop I need you to read this, it’s really important I know what this is”?

Especially if from a doctor or bank stuff?

JC: Actually, on your phone nowadays you can link it, so it can read to you?

M4: Yeah, yeah.

CF: So, it could isolate you not being able to read these things?

M4: Yeah.

CF: What kind of work did you do, before?

M4: Metal polisher.

CF: So quite hands on?

M4: Yeah.

CF: So, you didn’t need to read a great deal? But I guess you need to know health and safety and stuff?

M4: Yeah, I did have to read a little. Sheets they gave you to see what’s come in and everything, and what deliveries are. Got all the paperwork all the time. I’m the person who does the deliveries, so I have to look at the paperwork and get them to sign the paperwork as well.

CF: And what was that like?

M4: Yeah it was alright, ‘cause half the time I was in the office and the women who was in there would write it all down, so I’d get it all done, and get them to sign it.

CF: So, it was okay?

M4: Yeah

CF: You didn’t get into trouble for not reading something properly?

M4: No, (laugh) I had to sort it all out first before they take it.

CF: So why do you think education is important in prison? Why do they push people to learn in prison?

M4: To make them a better person for when they get out.

CF: And do you think that’ll help you?

M4: Yeah it is, I’ve changed a hell of a lot since I’ve come in, I’m a totally different person.

CF: And do you think you would look at education when you go out? Or would something like the pen being available, if you had that in your pocket...

M4: Yeah, yeah, I’d carry that around all day long. If I needed it, I’d know it’s there, sitting there, helping.

CF: What age did you finish school, when did you finish school?

M4: 16, I was in and out of schools, ‘cause I was quite naughty...

CF: Prus?

M4: Yeah.

CF: Yeah. And I guess prus are more about keeping bums on seats rather than educating?

M4: Yeah.

CF: And did anyone assess you to say “‘look your showing signs of reading difficulties’”?

M4: Yeah, I’ve done so many different courses, I’ve signed on at the Job Centre, I’ve done ‘Five Reader’... Yeah... I’ve done three levels of reading and writing and passed every single one.

So...

CF: We just need to get you engaged to keep you going?

M4: Yeah.

CF: So, I think the ‘Storybook Dad’ is quite powerful because you are reading to your son, and you are also showing to him how important reading is?

M4: Yeah.

JC: What kind of books do you like to read yourself? Just for fun rather than learning.

M4: I just got out the other day, ahh what do you call it?... Ah it’s like a doctor film...?

SE: One’s on films and things?

M4: Yeah.

SE: ‘Cause they have quite a few magazines as well, don’t they?

CF: Is it a story or factual information?

M4: No, it’s loads of different stories and things.

CF: So quite interesting?

M4: Yeah, at the moment it is.

JC: Do you bring them in here sometimes and use the pen?

M4: Yeah, yeah, sometimes I come over here, but I forget.

SE: And then you don’t show up...

CF: So, you get told off? (laughter). So, what about if you want to read in your cell? How do you find it if you want to do that?

M4: Yeah, I just sit there and try and get it myself.

CF: And I guess you could come here and use the pen to confirm what you think you have read?

M4: Yeah, yeah.

CF: What about spellings?

M4: Yeah, spellings are alright.

SE: Your spellings really have come on, hasn't it?

M4: Yeah, yeah.

SE: You do a lot of phonics spelling. And you have ended up - you have a phenomenal memory, so once we have covered it, third time, it's there.

M4: Yeah, yeah...

CF: So, do you do a lot of sight things? So, if you see quite a complicated word, I see the word "motivated" up there, (points to display). If you have learnt that, by either looking or sounding that out, you then keep hold of that? It would stick in your brain?

M4: Yeah, yeah.

CF: So, is there anything else you would like to add about the pen?

M4: No, no.

CF: So, don't you want to say how fantastic it is?

MUCH LAUGHTER

M4: It is (laughing). It's a great pen, it's helping a lot of people and it teaches us a lot, it teaches us how to do it. The teachers don't have to do as much when sitting next to us, it helps.

SE: Giving you the opportunity to do it for yourself?

M4: Yeah.

CF: Promoting being independent. Very best luck for the future. I've asked SE to tell us how your Storybook Dad went. How the recording went if that's okay?

M4: Yeah, of course. Yeah, I'm fine about that at the moment.

Prisoner 5

CF: How did SE introduced the pen to you?

M5: First she spoke about the pen and she tried to explain to me but at the beginning I did not really know or really understand the concept of the pen ‘cause it was new to me. But then when the pen came along, ‘cause of my pronunciation um I found it very difficult to really open up to reading. But she explained to me that really the pen can me... listen what I am reading now.

CF: Yes?

M5: And ah and it helps me as well to understand. ‘Cause I have a few issues like ‘duchess’ and ‘duke’ and although they both start ‘du’?

CF: Yes?

M5: Ah without the pen I could not differentiate which one I should produce ‘ua’ or ‘au’ sounds.

CF: Yes, absolutely.

M5: And the pen helped me to differentiate when so, and the special as well and if I found the sound difficult words I cannot pronounce, I just write them down, check in the dictionary and just scan the pen I can hear properly and understand as well, the word I am reading.

CF: Cool. Have you tried the dictionary feature?

M5: Yeah, I tried but I’ve not used that much. But I use before. What I find interesting with the dictionary, it not just tell you, it read for you, it give extra...

JC: Examples?

M5: Examples of...

JC: Phrases?

M5: Phrase as well.

JC: The word...

M5: The words and I found that interesting. Especial with my difficulty in reading, the pen helped quite a lot as well...

CF: Yes?

M5: No problem. Just the only issue I find which I had was probably a bit of function I did not... I had a problem... If I scan more than three different sentences, urm I have to listen to the first sentence so fast, the first line, and then go back again and the second one doesn't fill...

SE: Didn't you say there was an ability to scan (hands are miming a whole piece of text)?

CF: Yes, there is.

JC: You can go into the menu, (showing participant the menu in the pen).

M5: Yeah.

JC: And you can select in the reading settings whether to 'append' or 'replace' and depending on what the last person was doing. So, replace is really good at picking out words?

M5: Yes, yes.

JC: And it keeps clearing the screen. Whereas append is always adding on.

M5: Yep, yep.

JC: Another word onto the end, so you can add many lines or sentences, then you can scroll up and read them back to you...

M5: Ohhh.

CF: So, you would use the little cursors to go back to the beginning.

M5: Yep, yep, yep.

CF: Then you would hit the square button and you would hear the whole thing together.

SE: So, you could do like a paragraph...

M5: Yeah, yeah a paragraph.

SE: Which I think you would...

M5: That would be helpful. Yes. ‘Cause I tried before, just like I said, but since that...

CF: Yes?

M5: ... couldn’t...

JC: Yes, just go into ‘settings’, ‘reading settings’, and select ‘append’ and then it will keep adding on the line.

M5: This is interesting.

JC: And then you can have a whole paragraph, and you can scroll up to the whole paragraph, and you can listen as many times as you like...

M5: Just listen? This is good, good... I found it really really interesting, even the guys in my class as well. There’s about nine of them probably need to use that, (pointing to pen). But I found the concept very interesting,

CF: Uh huh?

M5: They found the concept very interesting. Especially the dictionary zone there (pointing to pen). Just like you have a book in front of you and explains to you, you need that.. amazing...

JC: Amazing?

M5: Yeah really amazing that.

JC: The dictionary is quite advanced, do you find it a bit complicated?

M5: No, not really.

JC: You like the dictionary?

M5: Yeah, yeah, I really like it. ‘Cause especial it give you different meanings of the words, not just a single meaning...

CF: And you may know...

M5: ... yeah...

CF: One of those other words, might you?

M5: Yeah.

CF: So, you can go, “oh yes I understand what that actually means”.

M5: Yeah, yeah. The meaning, its original as well, and I understand and find quite interesting.

JC: Are you scanning individual words or you tending to want to scan....

M5: Usually it is the individual words, ‘cause I can read, but if I have to read for myself. But some of the words I cannot pronounce properly and those when I have difficulty. I just stand there. Just to be able to pronounce. Although a few words have a similar meaning and I just check, and they give the meaning as well.

CF: So, it’s just opened up avenues for you...

M5: Yes yes.

CF: For you to completely understand...

M5: Yes, yes 100% yes. And it is helping with my spellings as well.

CF: Okay?

M5: Yeah, helping with my spelling. By listen I be able to write by ear, I’m listening, does that makes sense?

CF: Yeah, yeah?

M5: Helping with my spelling.

CF: So why do you think education is seen to be so important in prisons?

M5: Well, just what we spoken, not long ago. Just by using the pen in my education is helping me to improve my reading and writing. When I came over, I have entry level in Maths and English and now I finish Level 2 in English and I finished Level 1 and Level 2 in Maths.

CF: Excellent.

M5: And this has given me more option when I get released, you know?

CF: Huh hum.

M5: I can do more, I have more opportunity for different jobs and so. And especially I am thinking of going to higher education.

CF: Fabulous.

M5: And I, that help it, and on top of that, just recent, I was speaking to my son as well. He asked me what I’m doing. For the last three month. And I spoke to him of the courses I am doing, and stuff like that. And he said “Dad, I am very proud of you, even though you are there, by trying to better yourself”. Make a big diff... impact. Not just me, for my older daughter as well. Although she was studying, then she gave up. But now she apply again to go back to finish her study.

CF: Excellent.

M5: Cause I’m doing something that not just encourage them, but what can I say... ‘model’ for them to do.

CF: Yes, you’re modelling positivity for education.

M5: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah....

CF: Fantastic...

M5: And the education here, not just helping me but helping them as well. And I found that really important, I found that really important.

CF: And would something like this tool help you to continue with your education?

M5: Yeah, 100%. 100%. Actually, I’m thinking about when I get released, ‘cause I get released next year, trying to get a pen. Is something to continue doing, ‘cause I think I’m gonna need, I’m gonna need. Definitely, the pen is very helpful.

JC: Actually, CF can, we’ve got something where....

CF: Well we are working with SE with the pen. I’ve offered to give SE a letter to give to all people who have participated, including yourself, so when you leave you can get in touch and I can offer a discount for the pen.

M5: Yes, that should be fine, that should be fine.

CF: When you do leave you will have lots of paperwork. So, we hope to be working with probation to help you with the leaving paperwork.

M5: That would be an aim. It has been very helpful, very helpful. And if you listen, if you listen to, after (pointing to recording of interview device), it help me keep the words on my mind,

CF: Yeah.

M5: And if I keep listen, keep listen, and the pen is helping me even when I read on my own, reading loud.

CF: Alright, yeah, yeah.

M5: Reading loud, and I can hear. And sometime, I compare with the pen, what I hear from the pen and what I hear from myself reading loud as well. Just, the downside, I just use the pen three times a week in a class. I’m all right with that, you know, but... at least it can help me alone as well in class as well.

CF: So, you would like to use it outside the class environment?

M5: Yeah, yeah, if I could use more often.

CF: Yes, of course.

M5: If I could use more often.

SE: One thing, just while I’ve got you here, to interject. Some of the other guys are coming in, they come and just bring whatever it is they want to read and sit in here. If you want to do that at any time, you can do that. Just come and give me a shout.

M5: Okay.

SE: If you want to do that at a regular time we’ll sort you out a slot on the board...

CF: Fantastic....

SE: Yeah, if you’ve got things you want to read, and in that way it doesn’t need to be in your English lesson. And it doesn’t need to be about education. It can be anything you want to read, something you’ve got from the library or a magazine...

M5: Okay.

SE: You are welcome to come and sit here and read.

M5: Oh thank’s Miss. That would be good.

CF: So, it would be nice to have access to the pen at other times...

M5: Yes.

CF: ‘Cause as you say you’ve now got this taste to learn...

M5: Oooohhhh.

CF: You’re kind of passionate about it, and your setting such a fabulous example to your children.

M5: Yeah, yeah, yeah,

CF: To be able to do it more, is really important to you. I can hear that.

M5: It will... it will.

CF: That is fantastic.

M5: Well thanks.

CF: Well, thank you so much for coming to see us today. We appreciate that you don't see SE so much now as you have moved on. Now you are so high on your levels (laughter). It was really great for you to come back and see us...

M5: Oh thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

CF: Thanks.

M5: My, my, being with SE open's my eyes, as well.

CF: Good.

M5: She supported me a lot and especial with the sounds of the letters. At the time I didn't understand even though I know the alphabet. I wasn't able to say from beginning to the end, but by the time I left here I was able to memorise from the beginning to the end, the end to the beginning...

JC: What? Backwards?

M5: (laughing) Yeah all the times.

(Much laughter from all).

CF: Genius.

JC: I can't do that.

SE: Well, the thing we both found out was I was unaware in (language X – the ESOL participant) you don't learn phonics, do you?

M5: No, no.

SE: You don't.. the letters all have set sounds...

CF: And obviously when we are putting certain letters together in English they create different sounds...

SE: Yeah...

CF: Don't they? So, in (language X) they sound as they look?

M5: Yeah, yeah...

CF: That makes sense, yeah?

M5: That was a challenge, yeah.

SE: And Y is our ESOL teacher, she is (same nationality as participant), isn't she?

M5: Yeah.

SE: And there have been occasions of there being particular letters 'u' was one of them, wasn't it? That we were ...

M5: Yes ...

SE: (laughing) and the sound of the letter being a 'Uhh', and I went to her to ask "I need a (language X) word that has got this sound in it."

CF: Yes, and there isn't one?

SE: There isn't one!

CF: No.

SE: And I came back and apologised, "this is why you are having so much difficulty"...

CF: It doesn't exist....

(Laughter).

M5: It was alright. I use to read some strange stuff and she would just go "okay, help you next week and come back again". And I would come back again with some kind of challenge.

SE: Yeah, he was forever...

(Laughter)

CF: Well, it's good to question isn't it?

M5: Yeah, yeah

CF: But it also shows a barrier that language can create when you are learning or having to do lessons in English.

M5: It’s true, it’s true.

CF: You’re not only having to overcome having to read in a different language but if there is difficulty there, such as pronunciation...

M5: Yeah

CF: That’s adding to that difficulty.

SE: You also have quite severe dyslexia, don’t you?

M5: Yeah, yeah

CF: You were diagnosed nine years ago?

M5: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

CF: And how did you realise that you had dyslexia?

M5: I just... how I realised that... ‘cause when I was younger I was able to help my younger brothers but as I grow up things become more difficult, I couldn’t understand. I remember my kids as well, when they were small, I was able to help them up. But then they show me they were the ones helping me, and I just couldn’t understand. It doesn’t make sense, I’m not... how can I say... I’m not. I’m academic and how come I don’t understand pure simple stuff? And sometimes what made me realise, if I have to think and write at the same time I’m really really hard. But if someone is saying it and I am writing it down I found it more ease. And those small issues, at the time I did not realise I was dyslexic, so it was just something in my head, or whatever? ‘Cause I never had that much issue for Maths as well?

CF: Yeah.

M5: But then, I went to a course; High National Diploma for Photography. When I done the assessment and the teacher realised cause before I could start a write a sentence different, a capital letter and immediately I would put a big letter across the capital then small letters and then change again just keep changing all around...

CF: Right

M5: All around.

CF: Yeah, yeah, yeah

M5: And she realised then I have dyslexia. “Dyslexia? How come?”. Then she did another assessment and she realised , yes, I was severely dyslexic.

CF: How did that make you feel, being told there was something going on?

M5: In a way it made me feel relief. Cause I understand somethings there that I’s not capable to do that. ‘Cause I remember when I was at school, I just get frustrated ‘cause I can’t explain whats going on. And I felt like something’s wrong, but I could not understand. By being told this was dyslexic and theres ways about, especial when they teach me a few techniques and err they show me a lot of people who done well, in life, as severe dyslexics as well...

SE: Yeah, yeah.

M5: That encouraged me for once in my life. “I’m not dumb” just something doesn’t connecting in there, and capable of doing as long as I use all those different.

JC: I’m dyslexic as well.

M5: Yeah, yeah.

JC: I understand.

M5: But it did help me and boost my confidence a little as well.

CF: And that is why something like the pen feels really important. Not just for dyslexics but for reading difficulties...

M5: Yeah, yeah ...

CF: But to encourage, and to give you confidence, and to make you feel independent when you're reading.

M5: Yeah sure, sure

CF: And it sounds like you have accessed all of those potentials.

M5: Yeah yeah I am. It still a process, you know?

CF: Yeah...

M5: But compared where I was, you know, five years ago or two years ago before I came to jail. I feel like I have made a lot of progress with it, and enjoying more reading as well. And writing not taking as long as before and even before even the smell of the ink!

SE: I remember you saying...

M5: Use to give me headache...

JC: On a book

M5: On a book? No. When I'm writing...

CF: When you were writing?

M5: Yeah.

CF: Maybe the tension, the stress of it?

M5: Could be, I use to sweat at lot, but now SE has shown me a technique where I plan a letter before writing.

CF: Yes.

M5: Although I am not 100% there, but am better than before.

CF: Good.

M5: Yeah, yeah, my writing is not all over the place, you know? But I still feel stuff that I need to work at.

SE: Still got questions?

M5: Yes.

