

SHORTHAND: A REAL WORK OUT FOR THE BRAIN

By: Waldir Cury

The act of writing in shorthand is a unique exercise for the brain!

As well said by the authors of "Theory and Didactics of Stenography", Pedro da Silva Luz and Wanda Canes Avalli: "the study of shorthand is a true school of intellectual discipline, concentration, attention, coordination as well as graphic, glossal and logic memory, mental agility and vivacity of understanding. "

To learn shorthand means a new literacy in a writing system much more complex than the conventional writing system, which uses the alphabetic code.

It is known that swimming is a perfect sport for the body. It is a stretching exercise, good for the respiratory system, excellent for the cardiovascular system, stimulates overall blood circulation, strengthens the peripheral circulatory system and strengthens the muscle tone. Even the contact with the water has benefits: if cold, improves organic resistance; if warm, it is highly relaxing, reducing stress.

Other sports are also beneficial for the body. It would be impossible to list all of them but they go from soccer, skiing, running, extreme sports, cycling to a simple stroll around the block. Everything is healthy!

And what about the brain! With its huge control system and integrated processing of information and billions of neurons? How to exercise it? What would be the exercise for the brain if compared to what swimming represents for the body?

In an interview, Ivan Izquierdo, a neuroscientist, one of the most important brain experts, answered the following question: "What are the best exercises for the memory?"

- *"The best practice is reading. By reading only the first letter of a sentence, in milliseconds the brain processes countless words related to that letter. This causes the brain to activate the memory. It is a great exercise."*

Now, if reading, which uses a simple writing system, formed by letters of the alphabet, is considered to be the best there is to exercise the memory then, what can be said about shorthand? A super-compact and complex system of phonetic writing (graphophonics) that requires so much thought and concentration to write and so much

interpretation to read? A system in which, sometimes, the absence of a graphic sign has the meaning of a sound - that has to be interpreted ... What can be said of an orthography system, in which the stenographer writes, in a fraction of a second, shorthand signs with different sizes, different positions, different placements of dots, dashes, suppressions and abbreviations? What can be said about a writing system in which the stenographer has to manage the exactness to perfection of the signs, aiming futurely on its translation, while writing in shorthand?

In summary: the stenographer writes managing the transformation of sounds into signs, simultaneously checking the size of each symbol and the position of each sign. A perfect motor coordination is required for such multi-task!

Horizontal, vertical, oblique dashes and signs, circles, half circles, dots, long lines, shorter lines, signs going up, signs coming down, everything must be drawn in its proper place and proportion, in order not to hinder future reading - and all done at great speed.

In this case, wouldn't shorthand represent the most complete work out for the brain?