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# Whole-Brain-Based Oral Reading: A Study on Teaching English as a Second Language

**MIYAZAWA Masayuki Massey**

—Abstract

This paper is the accumulation of various researches and data stemmed from this researcher's English classrooms at his private English school as well as his university and college classes over two decades since 1991. The researches were made and the data was collected concerning reading activities in the classrooms.

In this paper, first, the importance of reading is discussed, and then various types of reading are introduced: they are right-brain reading, Whole-language reading, Whole-brain reading and Whole-brain-based oral reading. Whole-brain reading and Whole-brain-based oral reading are by-products of Whole-language reading. They were developed by this researcher during the courses of his teaching. In order to make Whole-brain-based oral reading successful, this researcher has introduced phonics programs, various fundamental training including eye-movement training and eye-voice-span practice, word-chunk training, and practice with rhythm and timed reading.

Then, the step-by-step oral reading programs for beginning readers and advanced readers are introduced. These programs were actually applied to the researcher's classrooms to make the reading successful. With these programs, it may be possible that any instructors can experience Whole-brain-based oral reading in their classrooms.

Oral reading activities are also helpful and effective for the students. Here, three types of oral reading activities are introduced; Perfect Reading Game, Text-independent Shadowing Practice and Filling-in-the-space Game.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **What is reading? – Value of reading**

There are four major skills in language learning; they are speaking, listening, reading and writing. People can live with the minimum of two skills: speaking and listening. Then, what do reading and writing mean to us? History shows us that in the early prehistoric days, our ancestors did not use reading and writing. Apparently, they depended on speaking and

listening for communication, and in the stone age, they started to draw some information on stones or walls. Later, they have invented writing, and therefore reading became necessary. Nowadays, valuable information is written in various forms, such as books and magazines, and has been passed from generation to generation. People read books in various ways with a variety of purposes, and in fact, these days we do not just read to get information.

In language learning, especially in second-language learning, book-reading is particularly important. As is mentioned above, reading is one element of the four major skills in language learning. Some people, however, might protest that they do not need to read books to master language; they might say, “If you live in an English-speaking country, you’ll soon be able to speak English through listening and speaking with people there.” To some extent, it may be true; you may be able to go shopping and eat out at a restaurant without any inconveniences, for example. If you would like to make more friends and have rich experiences in life, however, you need good reading and writing skills.

In the English-speaking countries, almost all people from government officials to the people in the street can speak English. Even their pets can understand English! Then, what is the difference? Is there any difference among the people who speak English? The major difference can be the content of their speech. If one is illiterate with a poor vocabulary and expressions and have only humble information, naturally their speech will become skin-deep. On the other hand, if one is literate with a large vocabulary and expressions and have rich information through reading and writing various materials, the content of the speech will also become rich.

There’s another way to look at the importance of reading and writing by classifying them in different ways. Instead of classifying the four skills into “speaking and listening” and “reading and writing”, let’s classify them to “speaking and writing” as one set, while “listening and reading” as another set. This classification is based on the input and output activities. Reading and listening are input activities while speaking and writing are output activities. Both in reading and writing, speed is adjusted, and oftentimes, both of these activities are slower than their counterparts. So, we can say that reading can be a slow version of listening and writing can be a slow version of speaking. If one cannot understand what is done in the slow activity, there’s very little hope for the person to understand what is done in the speedy activity. Language is sometimes spoken at a fairly fast speed for the beginners not be able to keep up with the speed. Also, if one is reading a story book in English and the person doesn’t understand a written sentence or a phrase, it is hopeless for such person to understand the same sentence or the phrase when it is spoken. From this view, we can assume that if one cannot understand what is read, one cannot understand what is heard. In the same way, if one cannot write well, one cannot make a good speech. Therefore, speaking and listening are somewhat related to reading and writing.

Reading is the very basis of listening, and the writing is the very basis of speaking. Assuming reading and writing as the foundation of language-learning, language-learning is just like building a house. Without a strong foundation, a solid house cannot be built, and such house can be weak and it may not last long.

According to various studies on brains<sup>(1)</sup>, people can retain memory for a long period of time when it is memorized using as many senses as possible. In reading and writing, peo-

ple use more senses than speaking and listening. So, the retention rate for the learners with the emphasis on reading and writing is high, while the retention rate is low for the learners with lack of reading and writing. For example, in case of young returnees from English-speaking countries, the retention rate of their English is usually very low <sup>(2)</sup> even if they are fluent in speaking English. When they return to Japan and go to an English language school once a week to retain their English level, for instance, the fluency may easily be lost after about six months or so. <sup>(3)</sup> In order to retain fluency in speaking, many returnees usually try to find native English instructors. No matter how good the instructors are, however, there's very little hope for them to retain fluency. There are two reasons and the first reason is as simple as mathematics; once-a-week one-hour-English-lesson is too short to retain fluency. It will be only 8.57 minutes per day. Another reason is they tend to disregard the power of reading and writing. Again, reading and writing are the strong foundation of language-learning.

## **2. New Types of Reading**

### **2.1 Right-brain Reading**

In this section, let's look at a new perspective in reading – reading through the right brain. What is the right-brain reading? Is there any benefit in reading through the right brain? How can the right-brain reading be done? Now, let's take a look at each of these questions.

#### **2.1.1 What are the functions of the right brain?**

According to a scientific research <sup>(4)</sup>, the right brain is generally used to process broad ideas, emotional expressions, instincts or the educated guess, and artistic data such as pictures, diagrams and music. The major advantage of the right brain is that it can process vast amounts of data at an amazingly rapid speed. If the learners use these two advantages – the processing speed and the volume – such learners will be able to achieve excellence. The study <sup>(5)</sup> says, however, that the average person uses only 3% of the capacity of the right brain during his/her life time, and the remaining 97% is unused. Why do we use only 3% of the right brain and waste the rest? The major reason lies on how we spend our daily life. Apparently, our ancestors in the prehistoric era used to depend on the right brain. They had to live on farming and hunting animals, so their lives were largely dependent on nature. As a result, they were largely using instinct and the educated guess as well as the artistic data of being surrounded by nature. These are the major functions of the right brain. Modern life, however, has changed not only or life styles but our brain usage. We do not have to go hunting any more. Our life has been surrounded by various electronic devices, and the farmers have also been using modern technologies to grow vegetables and feed animals, so they do not have to depend on their instinct. In modern life, we need rational and analytical abilities instead of instinct or the educated guess. So, in due course, we have ceased to use the right brain, and have switched to using the left brain to adjust ourselves to modern technologies.

The left brain can handle complicated data and is good at analyzing such data in a rational way. However, the processing speed is far slower than that of the right brain. The amount of data handled at a time is also much smaller. If we get help from the right brain,

our brain can handle a great amount of data at a fast speed.

Now, here is an important question; can the right brain handle language? Until very recently, it was believed that language is processed only through the left brain. However, some scientists and medical doctors have begun to suggest that the right brain has also some functions in language processing.<sup>(6)</sup> According to those specialists, the left brain handles the major part of language processing, while the right brain supports the left brain during language processing. So, when a person speaks, listens, reads and writes the language, both left and right brains cooperate with each other to make the best performance. That's the reason for the existence of the two brains.

Just like brains, the human body has pairs of many things such as eyes, ears, arms and legs. Either one of each pair is playing the dominant role while the other of the pair is assisting its partner. In other words, almost all the time, each pair of organs cooperate with each other. Sometimes, it appears that one of the pairs is not assisting nor doing anything when the other is working. When a right-handed person throws a baseball, for instance, he uses his right hand and arm. In this case, it appears that his left hand and arm are not doing anything. On the contrary, they are helping to balance his body when he is throwing the ball with his right hand. So, both right and left hands/arms are cooperating with each other. The same thing can be said about other pairs of organs of the body.

In reading story books, the left brain plays the dominant role if the person is right-handed. This is the tricky part; the brains' controlling systems are crossed – the right brain controls the left half of the body while the left brain controls the right half of the body. When the left brain takes the helm in reading, the right brain assists the left brain by processing the general idea and the auxiliary data.

### **2.1.2 Right-brain-based Reading**

As is described in the previous section, the left brain is dominant in reading in case of the right-handed person. How to get the right brain to take the helm in reading is one of the major topics of this paper. The clue is the major characteristic of the right brain; the speedy and massive processing ability. As we have already explored in the section 2.1.1, the right has the power to process a huge amount of data at an incredibly rapid speed. So, in theory, the right brain can control one's reading if the person reads quickly and enjoy the whole story rather than focusing on the details. In other words, if the person puts him-/herself in the extensive and imaginative reading environment, his/her brain is set to the right brain mode. Then, what is the extensive and imaginative reading environment? The extensive reading environment means a person reads a large number of books at a rapid speed. The imaginative reading environment is that the person read books imaginatively with specific purposes or his/her own interests such as comparing the content with his/her own experiences or predicting the storyline, or exploring various factors and aids such as audio-visual aids.

How can we read quickly by not losing the track of the story line? Also, can we stay imaginative through rapid reading? If the reader is able to keep the following points in mind, the right-brain reading can be successful:

- (1) Get solid support from the left brain – The left brain's solid support is needed for readers to comprehend the stories making meanings mainly through the so-called

‘skill reading’. Such support includes various fundamentals and skills including phonics skills, vocabulary and grammatical understanding. With this support, the readers will be able to decode words and process information.

- (2) Pay attention to the whole – In order to maintain the fast reading speed and the interest in the storyline, the readers should, or should be guided to, pay more attention to the whole story instead of the details of the story. Moreover, paying attention to the whole means the readers should sometimes make references back and inferences concerning the materials that has not yet been read.
- (3) Enjoy the story – The reader should be able to enjoy the story instead of ‘suffering’ from studying fundamental skills such as the vocabulary, phrases and grammar. Getting the author’s message through the imaginative catch-ball with the author can be one of the joys for the readers.
- (4) Get knowledge support of social background – The readers should have knowledge about the various topics and events related to the books they read. In order for them to be knowledgeable, the readers should have a broad knowledge of social background through newspapers, magazines and TV/radio programs.
- (5) Get motivation and encouragement – The readers, especially young readers, should be motivated and encouraged to read. With motivation and encouragement, the readers may be more interested in reading. The motivation factors can be their family members, teachers or sometimes their friends.
- (6) Choose the right books – The readers should be able to choose the books which are appropriate to their English language level and their interest. The story’s length is also important, for instance, if a beginner reader chooses a long story, he/she might not be able to finish the story, and then he/she may lose the interest in reading. On the other hand, if they start with a short story, they may be able to finish the story easily, and they may be able to get the feeling of achievement so that they can eagerly go on to other books. (\*Reference is made to Chapter 4.1.1 for more details.)

## 2.2 Whole-language Reading

Whole-language approach, which is similar to the right-brain approach, places a priority on the “whole” and not the “part.” According to Kenneth Goodman<sup>(7)</sup>, whole language is an attempt to get back to basics of the real sense of that word. Literacy develops from whole to part, from vague to precise, from gross to fine, from highly concrete and contextualized to more abstract, from familiar contexts to unfamiliar. Goodman defines the principles of reading as follow<sup>(8)</sup>:

- (1) Readers construct meaning during reading. They use their prior learning and experience to make sense of the texts.
- (2) Readers predict, select, confirm, and self-correct as they seek to make what will occur in the text. Then, they monitor their own reading to see whether they guessed right or need to correct themselves to keep making sense.
- (3) Comprehension of meaning is always the goal of readers. The focus is on the meaning and not on language itself.

From the above point of view, Whole-language approach is apparently against the conventional intensive reading style which goes from part to whole. It is more like extensive reading where the readers guess the meaning of words from the context and place the goal of reading in the comprehension of stories. Also, in Whole-language approach, the readers are encouraged to read as many books as possible, and as a result, they are expected to level up their language skills. So, in a way, Whole-language approach is similar to that of the right-brain reading approach.

### 2.3 Whole-brain Reading

In the second-language learning situation, this researcher has experienced with his students that the combined approach of intensive and extensive reading can be one of the best ways for the students to acquire the target language “English” both efficiently and effectively. In this combined reading approach, three kinds of reading styles are applied, i.e., the left-brain/right-brain reading approaches and Whole-language reading approach. For the convenience, let’s call it “Whole-brain reading method.”

Whole-brain reading method has the major essence of right-brain reading approach so that the readers will be able to enjoy the content of the story rather than be tormented by grammatical details and so on. Also, the readers are encouraged to read a large number of books quickly, not losing the track of the storyline and remaining imaginative through rapid reading. From this perspective, the right-brain reading is close to extensive reading.

Another essence of the Whole-brain reading method is the Whole-language approach, in which the readers read stories to get the storylines from whole to part, or to focus initially on acquiring the rough idea of the stories. The readers are free to use imagination, predict storylines and self-correct the stories by making references back and inferences beyond the text.

In the Whole-brain reading method, the left brain is also playing an important role in supporting reading. In order to understand what is written in the story, the readers should have a fundamental amount of vocabulary and phrases, knowledge of phonics, and grammar including the sentence structures. Also, reading with comprehension exercises and drills help the readers to understand the stories. These are done through the left-brain-based reading, which is an analytical conventional reading with slow speed. From this perspective, the left-brain reading is close to the intensive reading.

The purpose of Whole-brain reading is to first develop skills for making meaning, and then to develop a positive attitude towards reading, and finally to make the readers more motivated and independent in reading.

## 3. Value of Oral Reading

By now, various reading methods and the importance of reading are demonstrated. Here comes a question: Which is more effective, silent reading or oral reading? In one way, it may depend on the students’ levels and the purpose of reading; if the instructor teaches intermediate or advanced-level students and/or wants to teach extensive reading by reading fast, skimming or scanning, silent reading can be much more practical. If the instructor

teaches beginners, however, oral reading can be more effective because the instructor can give them advice by checking their pronunciation, accent and intonation etc. Also, communicative and interactive oral activities can easily be incorporated into auxiliary comprehensive activities. Through these oral activities, the students can get more understanding of the story.

Let's look at silent/oral reading from the aspect of brain's input-output activities. Oral reading can be effective for all types of students. Silent reading is solely an input activity for getting information and digesting it within the inner-self, while oral reading involves both input and output activities. By reading aloud, the readers can usually hear their own reading voice, and they can become aware of phonemes and speech patterns such as pronunciation, accents and intonation. This means the readers can get chances to improve phonemes and speech patterns. So, naturally, they can improve listening skills at the same time (\*Chapter 4.1.3.3 for reference), and the oral reading can be the base of speaking practice.

The involvement of good listeners or an audience makes oral reading extra-beneficial for the readers. In oral reading, someone is usually listening, and if these listeners are positive and encouraging, the readers will be greatly aware of these listeners and they will try to read well. Provided that this process is repeated over and over, the readers may well realize that their reading gets better when they could "communicate" with the listeners by passing the text's content/information correctly. So, they try to read the text correctly being aware of the various important aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, accents, word chunks and emotions. As a result, the readers themselves can understand the texts correctly.

From the above view, ideal oral reading can be also called "word recognition in context." It refers to the ability to read the text's content aloud with accuracy, speed and appropriate phrasing.<sup>(9)</sup> As the readers' oral reading skill improves, so does their reading comprehension skill. One reason for this might be that when word recognition becomes automatic or their oral reading level goes up, the readers can dedicate more cognitive resources to understanding what they are reading.

There's another advantage in oral reading. Reading books aloud is a way to activate brains. It will strengthen the recognition-audio link of the both right and left brains. The Kawashima research<sup>(10)</sup> shows that all of the brain parts that are used for silent reading activated much more in the case of oral reading. Oral reading can also create mental pyrotechnics that grow synaptic connections.<sup>(11)</sup> This means what they have read aloud may be better imprinted in their memory. In fact, the students with oral activities have better retention of vocabulary and grammatical rules, which are sometimes complex ones.<sup>(12)</sup>

Oral reading can become more valuable when extra comprehension activities are added towards the end as the finishing touch. Such extra comprehension activities can be recitation, speech, drama, role-play or discussion. When these extra activities are introduced, the readers will not get bored by reading the same texts repeatedly because they can be given a specific purpose. However, it may be often the case that there is little time for the extra reading activities in the classroom. Even if the biggest activity or the event takes place only once a term or even once a year, it is worthwhile having such activities and events. The instructor should make a long-term program and clearly state this chance to the students. If there is a specific purpose, the students will be positively involved in oral reading and can become conscious about improving their oral reading.



## 4. Applying “Whole-brain” Reading Method for Oral Reading

### 4.1. Skill-building for Whole-brain-based Oral Reading

In the ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) situation, it is necessary for the readers to use supplemental materials to level up their English standard as well as to get ready for whole-brain reading. If their English level is low and lacking in reading skills, the readers’ major attention goes to analysis of the language itself such as vocabulary, grammar and phonological details rather than the story’s content. They get too busy phonetically “decoding” what is written. As a result, they cannot concentrate on meaningful reading, and they tend to lose fluency in reading.

In order to read fluently, the reader should concentrate on the story itself. It can only be possible when the reader has the appropriate English standard or skills to get the language analysis process automated. For that purpose, I believe some supplemental materials may include school textbooks, course books and various workbooks on phonics, vocabulary or comprehension. With the help of these supplemental materials, the readers should be able to acquire reading skills by leveling up their English standard, and to “decode” the language automatically.

As they become fluent in reading, they will no longer have to struggle with decoding words. Instead, they can concentrate on making meaning from the texts. That’s the start of whole-brain reading.

Finally, the goal of whole-brain reading is “reading-independence”, which means that the students will be able to read new texts independently by correctly making meaning by themselves. It is needless to say that they should know how to make skill-building, including vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. Also, they should read correctly, which means they should convey the meaning to the listeners. In order to do this, they need to grasp the word chunks by themselves. If they could do all of these, they should eventually be able to read aloud correctly almost any new texts by themselves. With the help of good oral reading programs involving solid skill-building preparations and extra comprehensive activities, the readers should be able to achieve this goal.

In the following section, some ideas for selecting books and supplemental materials are listed.

#### 4.1.1 How to Select Books

How to choose English books is an important issue for the ESL readers. In order for the students to be deeply involved in reading, the instructors may let their students choose the books they want to read by suggesting some titles. Or the instructors may actually bring in some books that their students would be interested in. However, don’t let the students go to a bookstore to choose the books unless their English level is good enough to do so, or they have interests in particular areas or books. The choices should be kept under the instructor’s control in general. Here is the list of the points to bear in mind when the instructors choose books for their students;

- (1) Choose books that are appropriate for oral reading – Most of the language textbooks

are full of oral reading resources such as stories, dialogues, poems and chants. Among them, the most appropriate materials for oral-reading practice can be stories and dialogues, with which the students will be able to learn to read aloud in a meaningful manner. To put it differently, the students will be able to study the word chunks and then to make it possible to convey the meaning to the listeners. Poems and chants are also good for the students to study emotional expressions. However, most of the poems and chants are not in complete sentence forms, so the instructors cannot totally depend on them. Rather, it is a good idea for the instructors to use them in combination with story or dialogue textbooks.

For further studies, news stories can be challenging and exciting experience for advanced students. What is more exiting for those students is to know about the model reader of news stories and copy them as they read aloud. Who is the model reader of news stories? That's a newscaster who is obviously the "master" of reading with the essence of entertainment. So, the instructors may arouse the students' interest with the words like this: "Let's read aloud just like a TV newscaster!"

- (2) Choose books that match readers' interests and lifestyles – The books should be related to the readers' interests and lifestyles, which mean there should be something in common with that they are doing or what they often see. For young readers, for example, books on animals, friends, amusement parks, cartoon characters may draw their attention, but books on politics, business and economic matters will not draw their attention. The same thing can be said about adolescent and adult readers.
- (3) Choose books that match readers' English level – In order for the readers to enjoy stories, the English level of the stories should match that of the readers'. Using graded readers can be a good idea, but the instructor should be careful about the content. Some graded readers are concerned 'only' with the English level, sacrificing fun, and as a result, the stories tend to be uninteresting.
- (4) Choose books that match readers' attention span – It is important for the instructors to consider the readers' attention span. Most of the time, it may be a good idea to start with short stories, and gradually go on to lengthy stories.
- (5) Choose books with audio reading – Reading stories needs consistent visual concentration. However, some people are kinesthetic and auditory-oriented, and they prefer getting information through listening rather than reading. For the readers who are kinesthetic or auditory-oriented, it can be a good idea to find books with the stories on CDs or downloadable audio. With the aid of audio materials, they will be able to soak themselves in reading, and later as they get used to reading, they might be able to read books without the help of audio materials.

Choosing books is one of the most important factors for introducing books, especially for young readers. With just a little glance at the book, they will get an impression of it that will linger until the end of the book-reading. Pictures of smiling children might catch the eye of young readers, but gloomy cover pictures might unconsciously scare readers away. The introduction is extremely important for young readers because they will keep their impression about books for the rest of their life. In Japan, there's a saying which goes, "A

3-year-old child's soul lasts for a life time.” So, the instructors must be very careful for choosing books for young readers. Here are additional points to consider when the instructors are choosing books for young readers;

- (1) Choose fun books with simple stories – The stories should be fun and interesting. Also, for young and introductory readers, the storylines should be simple and not complicated.
- (2) Choose predictable books – Reading books is exploring a new world, just like walking along the street in a new town. The readers walk along the street looking at the buildings, people and the changing scenery. They are wondering what they will see in the next street. If the readers do not know what's happening next, it can be sometimes thrilling and interesting. However, for young and introductory readers, it is like walking in the dark street if the story is not predictable at all. On the other hand, if the story is easily predictable, they might feel more comfortable, giving them the feeling that they are safe walking along streets with lights. The predictable books can be well-known novels, folklores or classic tales, or any books that use a set sequence or repetition techniques.
- (3) Choose folklore/classic tales, established literature – It is safe for young readers to choose something that is familiar to them. Folklores, classic tales or established literature can be good as an introduction to reading. They are predictable, and also the readers will be able to share the stories with people around them as well as the ones with different cultures. Moreover, these books will help to teach young readers morals.
- (4) Choose books with self-explanatory pictures – The pictures or illustrations included with the story are important elements of books for introductory and young readers. The pictures or illustrations can be clues or hints for the readers to understand the stories, and they will assist the readers when they encounter unknown vocabulary or expressions. Also, the pictures or illustrations will draw the readers' interest as well as stimulate the readers' imagination.
- (5) Choose books with good cover design – Book-cover designs are important to young readers, who do not have solid criteria for choosing books by the contents. They tend to choose them by the cover designs. So, the instructors or parents of young reads should keep in mind that the books should be appealing both in content and the design-wise. Some children are extra-sensitive to what they see, so the instructors or the parents should be careful when giving books to children.

#### **4.1.2 Increasing Vocabulary and Phrases**

It is a good idea for the instructors to use vocabulary textbooks to increase the students' vocabulary. Due to the limited length of the space, rest of this entire subsection is intentionally deleted. Detailed discussions on this issue are saved for future opportunities.

#### **4.1.3 Phonics Awareness**

##### **4.1.3.1 Basic Phonics Rules**

Studying phonics makes reading easier because it gives the students an idea on how to

pronounce unknown words. There are hundreds of phonics methods and some methods go into very great detail. However, phonics is not almighty and there are always exceptions in English words, which cannot be covered all by the phonics rules. So, learning phonics is a good thing, but it is not a good idea to go into deep in phonics. The best way to learn phonics can be to learn the basic rules in categories, and the students may forget about the tiny details unless the students want to become a scholar or a phonics worshipper! Here are basic phonics categories that the students might want to learn:

- (1) Category 1: The words that start with the same letters and sounds; bad-bag-bat, doe-dog-dot, him-his-hit...
- (2) Category 2: Rhyming words – The words that end with the same letters and sounds; bat-cat-fat, bed-Ted-wed, bid-did-kid, cot-dot-not, bud-dud-mud...
- (3) Category 3: Blends; br-cr-gr-pr, bl-cl-fl-gl-pl, sl-sk/sc-tw-tr-dr, sp-st-sw-sm-sn, spr-str-scr...
- (4) Category 4: Digraphs; sh-ch-th-wh-qu-gh-th...
- (5) Category 5: Vowel combinations; ea[i:], ee[i:], ey[i:], oe[ou], oa[ou], ie[ai], ui[u:], ue[u:]...
- (6) Category 6: Magic “e” words – In case of a word that ends with “e”, depending on the consonant-vowel combinations, the “e” will be silent and the preceding vowel will be pronounced the same as the alphabetical sound; at-ate, cap-cape, mat-mate, pet-Pete, bit-bite, kit-kite, not-note, hop-hope, cut-cute, cub-cube...
- (7) Category 7: Silent letters – Some letters have become silent; [k] know, knee, knew, knife [w] write, wrist, wrong [gh] sigh, high, weigh, fight [ugh] bought, caught [c] scene, scissors [b] comb, lamb, climb...

Phonics study is boring for young learners. It is mainly because the phonics study is done through the left brain, under which the students often repeat a stop-and-think process until they reach rational understanding. This process is extremely boring for young learners. In addition, due to lack of ability for analogy, it is difficult for young learners to actually apply the phonics rules to reading, and they fail to effectively use the rules that they have studied.

Young learners learn things effectively through the right brain, under which they get the information very quickly through their instincts. They do not have to repeat the stop-and-think process when they learn through the right brain. So, why not let them study phonics through the right brain? There is a problem, however; most of the phonics study is designed for the left brain. Is there any solution to this? Of course, there’s a way to learn phonics through the right brain. One of the hints is to teach the phonics instinctively. In order to do this, the instructor might use the techniques to have the students repeat the sounds or words with rhythm or music. For example, when the instructor teaches digraphs, let the students repeat the sounds and words like “ch-ch-chin”, “sh-sh-ship” by clapping the hands or with the help of a rhythm machine. Young learners love the rhythmical repetition, so if they repeat this procedure over and over with a good tempo, they will learn instinctively and the rules will be automatically put into their right brain. The instructor should remember, however, that the students should learn repeatedly in an enjoyable atmosphere. <sup>(13)</sup>

### 4.1.3.2 Phonics in Word Chunks

Another thing the students must be aware of is the pronunciation change in word chunks (\*Ref: 4.2.3 Word-chunk Training), word phrases or sentences. In order to pronounce words or phrases smoothly, native English speakers even drop some sounds. Here are some examples:<sup>(14)</sup>

- (1) If a word ends with a consonant, and is followed by a word that initiates with a vowel, the ending consonant and heading vowel will be joined:  
one\_another one\_of\_us eleven\_o'clock get\_up in\_an\_instant It's\_an\_apple.  
Take\_it\_easy. a lot\_of\_eggs out\_of\_the rock\_and\_roll fish\_and\_chips
- (2) If a word ends with /r/, and is followed by a word that initiates with a vowel, the /r/ sound and the vowel will be joined:  
for\_example for\_instance for\_a\_week far\_away here\_and\_there more\_and\_more after\_a\_while your\_eyes You're\_a\_student. There\_are some apples.
- (3) If a word ends with /t/ or /d/, and is followed by a word that initiates with an explosive sound [p,t,k,b,d,g], /t/ or /d/ of the first word will be dropped or assimilated with the explosive sounds of the following word:  
that\_pen that\_tent that\_king that\_bed that\_day that\_guy next\_day  
mashed\_potatoes difficult\_problems He\_taught\_Tom. Please\_hold\_it\_tight.  
We\_had\_got\_to\_the\_village\_at\_that\_time.
- (4) If a word ends with /t/ /d/ /n/, and is followed by a word that initiates with /th/ (both voiced and voiceless), /t/ /d/ /n/ will be pronounced at the /th/ position:  
that\_thing good\_thing on\_that\_table Look\_at\_that\_boy.  
There\_were\_ten\_thieves\_living\_in\_the\_cave. "Put\_it\_in\_the\_box,"\_said\_the\_mother.
- (5) If a word ends with a voiced fricative sound [/v/ /th/ /z/], and is followed by a word that initiates with a voiceless consonant, the voiced fricative sound will be pronounced as a voiceless sound:  
of\_course with\_thanks We've\_found\_it\_a\_last. I\_have\_to\_go\_now.  
He\_has\_to\_come\_back. She\_was\_shivering\_with\_cold. Let's\_choose\_six.
- (6) If a word ends with /t/ /d/ /s/ /z/, and is followed by a word that initiates with /u:/, the ending sound and /u:/ will be joined to produce /dz/ /s/ /z/ sounds:  
Won't\_you\_come\_with\_me?  
Would\_you\_mind\_opening\_the\_window?  
I\_miss\_you\_very\_much.  
Has\_your\_brother\_come\_back?

### 4.1.3.3 Correcting Phonetic Habits

Some students "cannot" hear their own voice correctly, which means they cannot perceive their own speeches correctly. Many of those who cannot hear insist they are listening<sup>(15, 16)</sup>, but somehow there is a gap between what they hear and what is actually spoken. As a result, they are not listening to their own speeches correctly. Unless they perceive their own oral reading correctly, they cannot get rid of their wrong phonetic habits no matter how many times they listen to the model reading, and therefore they cannot pronounce words correctly.

Why does this happen? Most of these cases, it would be due to the psychological prob-

lem derived from two kinds of personalities; one is too much pride and the other is stubbornness. In case of the students with too much pride in their pronunciation, they tend to strongly believe that their pronunciation is excellent and no change is necessary. Their brain system is automatically and unconsciously blocking their ear to catch what they actually hear. The same thing can be said about those who are stubborn; they tend to believe that they are doing all right and they think no change is necessary. Again, their brain system is automatically and unconsciously blocking their ears to accept what is actually heard. During the echoing session, these students are copying just the “words” but not the pronunciation. Yet, they think they are correctly imitating the pronunciation.

Unless the students realize this psychological ear-blocking, there is no hope that their pronunciation will improve. It is needless to say that the solution is to “open up” their ears! But how can we “open up” their ears which are being blocked psychologically? The best remedy is to get the help of a voice recorder; with a voice recorder, the instructor can let them hear their own oral reading. After recording the student’s oral reading, the instructor plays the model reading audio, and let them compare if they are really the same. Here, the major point is to have the students realize that there is a difference between their oral reading and the model reading. If this is successful, the instructor can go into the detail having the students compare the pronunciation word by word or sentence by sentence.

“Katakana English”, which are Japanese words borrowed from English, can be also the villain. Subconsciously, the students are pronouncing these Katakana words in Japanese way. So, when the instructor corrects the students’ English, the instructor should put extra attention to Katakana English by asking the students if they are not pronouncing Katakana words in Japanese way.

Once these subconscious elements are removed from the students’ brain, they may rapidly acquire correct pronunciation. All they have to do is to listen to the model reading as many times as possible, and do the oral reading.

## **4.2 Whole-brain-based Oral Reading — Getting used to fast reading**

### **4.2.1 Eye-movement Training**

Getting used to fast reading is one of the most important factors for the whole-brain reading in both silent reading and oral reading. If a student can read faster, the student can get more information and learn more. In order to get used to fast reading, the students need to train their brain in combination with their eye-movement.<sup>(17)</sup>

First, let’s take a look at the ways to improve eye-movement. In English, words are written from left to right, so the beginning readers should practice reading left to right. If they cannot move their eyes steadily from left to right, they will lose the track of the writing, and therefore they will not be able to read smoothly from the first line to the second line and so on. Some young readers or beginning readers are not used to moving their eyes from left to right. Their eyes might jump from one point to another, and some of them might start looking at the middle of the line, or in an extreme case, from right to left. In order for the beginning readers to get the habit of reading from left to right, they should start by reading slowly, and then when they get used to it, they can gradually increase their reading speed.

One method for steady and correct eye-movement practice is to read aloud. Reading

aloud is a slow activity that will enable the reader to be more aware of setting their eyes in right positions word by word. By reading aloud, readers can grasp each word steadily and move from one word to another, and also from one row to the following row.

In case of young readers, their eye movements are not yet well-set for reading. They tend to look at the whole text just like they are looking at a picture. They might move their eyes from right to left instead of from left to right, and from bottom to top instead of from top to bottom. For such young readers, the instructor needs to use some eye-charts to practice their eye movements so that they move their eyes from left to right, and from top to bottom. It is also a good idea to use computer programs designed to improve the eye movement. In this practice with eye-charts, the parents or the instructors need to guide the young readers with their index fingers to trace the texts or numbers from left to right, top to bottom, and to make sure the young readers following with their eyes. When they are used to this movement, let them do the same by themselves – point and trace by themselves using their own index fingers. In this activity, the parent or the instructor should make sure that their fingers are flowing smoothly at a fast speed. After about a month or so, they will be able to establish smooth eye movement which goes from left to right, top to bottom.

The eye movement involves a movement of the eye-muscles and is related to the sports' eye vision. It is needless to say that people who are good at sports, especially ball-using sports, have good sports' eye vision. They can follow the fast moving balls, which means they can move their eyes at a fast speed. According to the research<sup>(18)</sup> done by this writer, the people who are good at ball-using sports are relatively good readers. 32 students out of 65 students, who had shown a better achievement in reading, have been playing ball-using sports. Those 32 students required less time to read the same passage, and also they were able to read aloud smoothly and quickly. They have also achieved better comprehension of what they have read.

There are two kinds of eye movement; one is the ability to look at the horizontal movement which is called the Dynamic Visual Acuity (DVA), and the other is the vertical movement and is called the Kinetic Visual Acuity (KVA). In reading English texts, the DVA is more important than the KVA because quick movement is required horizontally. Meanwhile, fast KVA may not be required for the beginning readers, rather what is required is to go steadily line by line from top to bottom without skipping any lines.

#### **4.2.2 Eye-Voice-Span Practice**

While reading through the text, the readers should be able to grasp the meaning of what they have read in a timely manner. In order to grasp the meaning of what is written, the readers should be able to store the text in their short-term memory and process it quickly. Beginning readers or young readers tend to just read in a superficial way. – i.e. as they read along, they are trying so hard simply to read quickly that they cannot grasp the meaning of the text. What's happening in their brain is a series of read-forget, read-forget processes. In order to grasp the meaning, this process should be changed to a read-retain-analyze, read-retain-analyze processes. There is a way to practice retaining the text in the readers' brain each time. One way is to apply the Eye-Voice-Span practice. This method was pioneered by J.F. Quantz in the 19th century.<sup>(19)</sup> His method was to suddenly cover the page that a reader was reading

aloud and ask the reader to continue to say the words for as long as possible. This is a sort of reproduction test, so the reader should read the same text repeatedly and become familiar with the content before the instructor uses this method.

There are other versions of Eye-Voice-Span practice. (1) In this practice, the instructor will tell the students to look up from the text as soon as they read a first couple of words in a sentence, then the students should have to say the rest of the sentence aloud without looking at the text. The students should do the same sentence by sentence. (2) For advanced students, the instructor may ask them to look up after reading the first sentence, and continue reciting the story for as long as they can remember. (3) If the instructor wants to concentrate on checking the text comprehension, the instructor may read the story paragraph by paragraph and towards the end of the paragraph, the instructor stops and asks the students to finish the sentence. If this activity is successful, the instructor may ask the students to play the instructor's role in a group or pair.

### 4.2.3 Word-chunk Training

Once readers get used to the eye movement, they can go on to a second stage which is to practice reading in "word chunks." A word chunk is the group of words or sometimes a single word that can be read as one with a single breath. It can be a word, a phrase, a clause and a sentence, and also it can be a group of meaningful words or a group of phonetically cozy words. The number of the words can vary; it can be one word, two words, three words or more.

The basic length can be short, but as the reader's English standard gets higher, some word chunks may be joined and become longer. While the reader's level is limited, the word chunk may be split into two or three word chunks. One example of basic word chunk will be something like this;

Sample Text:

---

For hundreds of years, the people of a Scottish town believed that a dinosaur-like monster lived in a nearby lake called Loch Ness. Many said they saw the creature, but no one could prove it was real. In 1934, a London doctor, Robert Kenneth Wilson, gave a newspaper a photo of the monster. He took the picture, he said, when he suddenly saw the animal in the lake one morning. The news traveled around the world.

*(Excerpts from "Active Skills for Reading: Book 1" by Neil J. Anderson, Thomson Learning Co., 2003 Boston)*

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Text in word chunk (for beginning students):

---

For-hundreds-of-years the-people-of-a-Scottish-town believed-that  
a-dinosaur-like-monster lived-in-a-nearby-lake called-Loch-Ness.  
Many-said they-saw-the-creature but no-one-could-prove it-was-real.  
In-1934 a-London-doctor Robert-Kenneth-Wilson gave-a-newspaper  
a-photo-of-the-monster. He-took-the-picture he-said



when-he-suddenly-saw-the-animal in-the-lake one-morning.  
The-news-traveled around-the-world.

---

Text in word chunk (for advanced students):

---

For-hundreds-of-years the-people-of-a-Scottish-town-believed-that  
a-dinosaur-like-monster-lived in-a-nearby-lake-called-Loch-Ness.  
Many-said-they-saw-the-creature but no-one-could-prove-it-was-real.  
In-1934 a-London-doctor-Robert-Kenneth-Wilson gave-a-newspaper-  
a-photo-of-the-monster. He-took-the-picture he-said  
when-he-suddenly-saw-the-animal in-the-lake-one-morning.  
The-news-traveled-around-the-world.

---

In order for the readers to grasp the word chunk, the instructor should read it aloud first, and then have the readers repeat it. Or the instructor gives the readers the story recording so that they can practice at home. By reading aloud, the readers will be able to grasp the word chunks correctly. If the readers have difficulty in reading in word chunks, the instructor should use a pencil to mark up the word chunks in the readers' text. The readers should then be asked to increase the oral reading speed. If the readers have a problem in speeding up, the instructor should use the OHP (over-heard projector) to trace the text as they read along. And later, let the readers trace their text by themselves. At the end of this stage, the readers should be able to read aloud at a fairly fast speed without using their fingers. By the time they get used to reading aloud fast enough without tracing their text with their fingers, the readers should be used to tracing the text with their eyes from left to right, from top to bottom, and line by line.

#### 4.2.4 Practice with Rhythm

Some students have problems in reading texts in word chunks even if they can recognize the word chunks. Japanese students tend to pronounce each word with equal stress just like reading Japanese texts. Their English reading often sound like a flat and emotionless reading. This is mainly due to the language difference between Japanese and English. Let's compare the following two sentences in both languages to know the difference. The stress is shown in the upper-case letter "V" and the weak sound is shown in the lower-case letter "v".

(Eng) Earthquake prediction is an important issue. [Vv vVv v v vVvv Vvv]

(Jap) Jishinn yochi wa jyuuyouna mondaida. [VV VV v VVv VVv]

As is shown above, the spoken English sentence has a distinct intonation with lots of ups and downs while the Japanese sentence is almost flat and has very few ups and downs. For those who have problems in acquiring the intonation in English, this researcher has found out that it is effective to introduce music or rhythm with the help of a metronome or hand-clapping. This practice can be recommended to start with a slow speed, and then gradually

increase the speed.

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Example text with word chunk and clapping marks:

*(excerpts from "NHK Tossa-no hitokoto", domestic version, by Ichiro Tatsumi, Tokyo, 2000)*

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v v-v v v v---v v

A: Excuse me. Do you have the time?  
(Excuse me. Do-you have-the-time?)

v v v—v--v

B: Yes, it's almost noon.  
(Yes-it's almost noon.)

v v-v v v-v v v v - v-- v

A: No wonder I'm hungry. Do you have time for lunch?  
(No-wonder I'm-hungry. Do-you-have time-for-lunch?)

v v v-v v

B: Sorry, I'm busy now.  
(Sorry I'm busy now.)

---

#### 4.2.5 Timed Reading

Let's look at two kinds of timed reading, a silent timed-reading and the oral timed-reading. It can be interesting for the students to keep a record of these two kinds of timed reading in charts and graphs, where the data are easily visible. In this researcher's class, the average oral-reading speed was 140 ~ 180 words per minute (wpm) at first, and later it went up to 180 ~ 230 wpm range. It is needless to say that the silent reading is faster than the oral reading. Due to physical restrictions by the articulate organs, oral-reading speed usually stabilizes when it reaches its maximum speed. On the other hand, silent-reading speed may get faster and faster, and therefore, the gap between these two readings will become wide from a certain point. With these predictions in mind, the timed reading chart will help the students see their achievement from time to time, and encourage them to work towards the goal.

In timed reading, the instructor can either limit the reading time or time the whole story. If the instructor want the students to time the whole story, the instructor may make the students in pairs, for example, and give a stopwatch to each pair. One of the pair will time the partner's oral reading. The timing partner should also be responsible for correcting the partner's mistakes. Whenever he/she makes a mistake in reading, the partner should point it out immediately. Then the reader should stop and correct his/her mistake. In a large classroom situation, this may not be possible unless the instructor has a large stock of stopwatches and ideally a teaching assistant. So, it may rather easier for the instructor to limit the time and later have the students count the number of the words they have read.

#### 4.3 Step-by-Step Oral Reading Programs

Here are some step-by-step methods for the students to become fluent in oral reading based on a Whole-brain reading approach.

In each program, the initial goal is to gain fluency in speedy mass input, which is oral repetition, just by copying or echoing the model reading. The students should be able to gain a good “speech habit” by repeating or echoing it, and if they could demonstrate their oral reading in synchronization with the model reading, it means they have reached the threshold to fluency. This process is just like a baby acquiring their native language. Babies first listen and repeat what they hear. They repeat this process hundreds of times, and eventually they get the phoneme patterns in their brain and they start to speak fluently. The same thing can be said about oral reading: The students should first “copy” what they hear, and they should repeat this process hundreds of times.

Due to the limited time in the classroom for the speedy mass input, homework may be necessary for the students. It is strongly recommended that the instructor prepares a model reading audio/CD for each student for their study at home.

#### **4.3.1 7-Step Oral Reading Practice (for beginners)**

- Step 1: Text Introduction – The instructor will briefly introduce the story by checking the vocabulary. The students should check the vocabulary and study the text to understand the content beforehand. The pronunciation check is voluntary, but the instructor should encourage the students to check the pronunciation of major vocabulary before the class.
- Step 2: Model Reading – The students will listen to the model reading of the instructor or the audio recording.
- Step 3: Silent Reading – The students will read the text silently. After reading, the instructor will ask questions to make sure they are reading the texts for the meaning. In order to get most out of silent reading, the instructor may tell the students that the instructor will ask some questions about the story after reading. This remark will remind the students to read carefully and to understand the story.
- Step 4: Questions & Answers Session – The instructor will ask some questions to make sure the students understand the text. Also, the instructor accepts questions from the students. The questions can be “True or False” questions, yes/no questions or simple “WH” questions. On this stage, the instructor should avoid questions that require reasoning such as “why” questions unless the students have deep understanding of the story or a high-level English standard.
- Step 5: Echoing (repeating after the audio recording or the instructor) – The students should repeat after the model reading phrase-by-phrase or sentence-by-sentence. Their reading should reflect the understanding of word chunks and phonemic patterns, and in order to achieve this level with fluency, the students should repeat it many times.
- Step 6: Synchronized Reading (reading aloud in time with the audio recording or the instructor) – At the stage, the students are required to read aloud at a native English speaker’s natural speed. During the practice, they should try to dub the model reading. In other words, they should be able to read in time with the voice of the model reading, and their oral reading should be synchronized with the model

reading. They should learn to read the text at the same speed as the model reading, not too slow or not too fast, by reflecting the appropriate word chunks, emotions, and correct pronunciation and intonation, etc. The instructor should tell the students that they should “copy” the model reading exactly as it is.

Step 7: Presentation (extracted activities) – At this stage, the students are supposed to express themselves in front of the class through extended activities such as the role-playing (copying the voices with emotion), recitation, story-telling/narration and discussion. In the story-telling, for example, the students can draw some pictures out of the text in chronological order and tell or narrate the story by pointing at each picture. They can just write down some key words on a large piece of paper and tell the story by pointing at each word. Ideally, they should be able to recite the story. They do not have to say the sentences exactly as they are written in the textbook, but they can change the words or sentences. Through these activities, the students can understand the story better. Naturally, better understanding means better reading.

#### **4.3.2 4-Step Oral Reading Practice (for the advanced)**

The primary aim of this practice is to be fluent in oral reading without failing to make meaning. In order to save time for each step, short story books are recommended in this practice. Preparatory reading including vocabulary check and silent reading should be given to the students before starting the following steps. The questions and answers session can also be given before the Step 1.

- Step 1: (     ) Echoing
- Step 2: (     ) Synchronized Reading
- Step 3: (     ) Double-speed Reading
- Step 4: (     ) Recitation

Before handing out books to the students, the instructor needs to prepare the above step-label and glue it on the back cover of each book. The students will start from Step 1 and go on to Step 4. As they achieve the requirements of each level, the instructor will put a check in each parenthesis. The instructor should explain to the students how it works as well as the purpose and the eventual goal of this reading steps.

In the first step of the 4-step reading, the instructor should have the students repeat after the instructor or the audio recording until they get smooth enough. They should be aware of the phonemic elements and word chunks, etc. In the second step, the instructor should have his/her students read the text in synchronization with him/her or the audio recording. The instructor should tell the students to copy his/her voice or the audio recording exactly as it is. They should read the text at the same speed, possibly at a native English speaker’s natural speed, not too slow or not too fast. The instructor emphasizes the word-chunk practice if the students have difficulty in reading at natural speed. On the third step, the instructor may ask the students to read aloud the story at least twice as fast as the natural speed. In this practice, it is important for the instructor to remind the students that, no matter how fast they read,

they should be able to convey the storyline to the listeners by following correct word chunks as well as phonemic aspects and emotion. The fourth step is memorization of the storyline to recite the story. This is especially effective for the students who are reading short-story books. <sup>(20)</sup> This will add the finishing touch to reading. It is not necessary for the students to memorize and recite the book precisely. They are allowed to narrate the story in their own words as long as they can follow the storyline. If the students could recite the storyline in word chunk with a proper intonation, emotion etc., the instructor might be able to say that they have achieved the goal in the book, and are ready to go on to a new book.

#### **4.3.3 6-Step Oral Reading Practice (for the advanced/ 50-minute class)**

This practice is designed to be carried out in the classroom straightforward without any preparation such as homework assignments or preparatory reading before the class.

**Step 1: Silent Reading (Free Reading)**

The main purpose here is to get the text comprehension.

**Step 2: Model Reading**

The main purpose is to get the general idea of the pronunciation, accent and the intonation. Q&A session can be an option here.

**Step 3: Word Chunk Quest**

The students will be asked to find their own word chunks.

**Step 4: Oral Reading (Free Reading)**

The instructor will rotate the class to give some advice.

**Step 5: Presentation & Critique Session**

The students will read aloud in front of the class. The instructor and the class will evaluate each student's reading including the word chunks. Depending on the time and the English level of the students, the instructor may skip Step 5.

**Step 6: Discussion**

For an extended activity as well as for fun, the students may need some time to talk freely about the story topic. Actually, this is a sort of a reward for the students after going through a series of tough reading sessions. Also, since this is not a prepared discussion, their talking can be more casual and relaxed. So, it is recommended to place the object in enjoy talking – for instance, if they have read a story about sports, they can talk about their favorite sports to play or watch. They may talk about the reasons they like a particular sport, and their experience in playing or watching sports etc.

### **4.4 Oral Reading Activities**

#### **4.4.1 Perfect Reading Game**

In this game, the students will take turns reading the text aloud. If he/she made a mistake, including any small mistakes, he/she should stop reading. Then the next student will continue reading until he/she makes a mistake. The student who has read the most words, sentences or lines, will be the winner. It may be easier and faster for the students to just count the number of the lines in the text they have read without any mistakes, and then the instructor should write down the student's name and the number on the board to keep track

of the record.

In order to create an enjoyable atmosphere, the instructor should tell the students something like this; “Let’s play the Perfect-Reading Game”, and proceed the game in a lively atmosphere. Also, in order to make the students more attentive and concentrate on their classmates’ reading, the instructor should not decide the order of reading. Instead, the instructor should nominate the next reader at random. In the small class with the students of 15 or less, the instructor may ask the students to stand up in a circle. The instructor will stand up in the middle of the circle and point out the next reader each time.

This game may be fun but there are some drawbacks that the instructor should keep in mind. The major problem can be that the students tend to concentrate only on phonemic aspects and tend to forget about the storyline or making meaning. In order to avoid this and remind the students to read with storylines in mind, the instructor points out the apparently wrong word-chunks as mistakes. Another problem can be that the students may become “picky” on mistakes. The object of this game is to make the students aware of the listeners in oral reading, and it is not to be picky on others. So, the instructor should be extra-careful not to pick the same student repeatedly. Maybe this activity should be used only once in a while for a change.

#### **4.4.2 Text-independent Shadowing Practice (in group/ pair)**

In this practice, one student will act as the model reader, while the rest of the students will be the listening-cum-repeater. The procedure is; (i) The instructor will nominate one student to be the model reader. (ii) The class will close the textbooks. Only the model reader is allowed to look at the text. (iii) The model reader will read the text aloud sentence by sentence. (iv) The whole class will repeat each sentence in chorus. If the class could not repeat the sentence correctly, the instructor will ask the model reader to read aloud the same sentence repeatedly until the class could echo his/her reading correctly. In the case of pair practice, the partner will request the model reader using such expressions as “Pardon?”, “Once more, please.”, “Please speak more slowly.” and “Please speak louder.”

The purpose of this practice is to make the students aware of the audience or the listener as well as to reduce the text-dependent attitude. For example, the model reader may notice that he/she should read aloud in the most audible manner. As a result, the model reader will learn to read clearly in correct phonemes and word chunks in a meaningful manner. Meanwhile, the class will be very attentive in listening, and they may realize that they may be able to echo by thinking about the storyline.

#### **4.4.3 “Filling-in-the-Space” Game**

This is the oral version of filling-in-the blank text activity. In this game, the students are required to orally fill in the missing word or a phrase in a spoken sentence. For example, the instructor will read the part of the story as follows:

[Example 1]

The instructor: “Jimmy said, ‘What is your umm....?’”

(The students should guess what the “umm....” is.)

One student: “plan”  
(or “What is your plan?”)

The instructor: “That’s right. The answer is ‘plan’.”

[Example 2]

The instructor: “Tom Sawyer was always mischievous. One day, he broke his neighbor’s fence.”

“Now, everybody, let’s say the sentence in chorus!”

The class: “Tom Sawyer was always mischievous. One day, he broke his neighbor’s fence.”

[Example 3]

If the instructor is teaching an advanced class, the instructor might ask the students to guess the whole sentence following the instructor’s sentence with a little prompt or the hint words:

---

“Half an hour later, the ferry stops at the island. You get in your car and drive off the ferry. You drive the car down a small road. In front of you, there are some trees next to the road. One of the trees begin to move. You stop your car quickly. The tree falls in front of your car. You get out of your car.”

*Sample text: [“The White Stones” ©2000 Oxford University Press]*

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The instructor: “Half an hour later, the ferry stops at the island. You.....”

Student 1: “You get in your car and drive off the ferry.”

The instructor: “That’s right. ‘You get in your car and drive off the ferry. You drive the car.....’”

Student 2: “You drive the car down a small road.”

The instructor: “Right. ‘You drive the car down a small road.’”

“Now, let me go back to the top of today’s story. ‘Half an hour later, the ferry stops at the island. You get in your car and drive off the ferry. You drive the car down a small road. In front of you.....’”

The class: “.....”

The instructor: “In front of you, there are.....”

The student 3: “In front of you, there are some trees next to the road.”

The instructor: “Great! ‘In front of you, there are some trees next to the road.’”

[Notice] The instructor should repeat the prompting-sentence a couple of times until the students could answer smoothly. It is a good practice for the students to answer in a whole sentence. Also, it’s a good practice if the class repeats the whole sentence after getting the answer. As the ball starts rolling, the instructor may recruit a volunteer-student to act as the instructor. It will encourage the students to be positively involved in this activity.

## Conclusion

Based on the theory that “reading is one of the vital foundations of language study,” we have explored various types of reading: they are right-brain reading, Whole-language reading, Whole-brain reading and Whole-brain-based oral reading.

Among them, Whole-brain-based oral reading has great values and is applicable to almost any English teaching environment. In order to get used to Whole-brain-based oral reading, we have first looked at the importance of phonic awareness, and then we looked at various fundamental training including eye-movement training, eye-voice-span practice, word-chunk training, and practice with rhythm and timed reading.

With the introduction of step-by-step oral reading programs, the students can be motivated to study and also to level up their oral reading as well as their over-all English standard.

Oral reading activities are also helpful and effective for the students to supplement and enhance their reading. In this paper, three types of oral reading activities are introduced; Perfect Reading Game, Text-independent Shadowing Practice and Filling-in-the-space Game.

With the above information and techniques in mind, the instructors should study carefully about their students’ English level, and what kind of oral reading programs and activities to be applied in the classrooms or English course. Provided that the programs and the activities match the students’ level, the students may surely improve their reading and then their English standard. Besides these programs and activities, it is needless to say that the instructor’s capacity and the skills are equally important for the success of oral reading in the classroom. Let’s get well-prepared and hope for the success!

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Marha, J.C. et al. *Nippon-no Bilingualism*. Tokyo: Kenshusha Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991, pp.71-77
- (3) Yamamoto, Masayo. *Bilingual*. Tokyo: Taishukan Shoten Co., Ltd., 1991, p.127  
Marha, J.C. et al. *Nippon-no Bilingualism*. Tokyo: Kenshusha Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991, p.71
- (4) Hatta, Takeshi. *Nobiru Sodatsu Kodomo-no Nou*. Tokyo: Roudou-keizaisha Co., Ltd., 1986, pp.19-29
- (5) It was referred to by Dr. Constantin von Economo (1876-1931), a physiologist in Austria.
- (6) Abe, Mitsunobu. *Story of Right-Left Brain*. Tokyo: Tosho Co., Ltd., 1984, p.129 based on the regional document written by Celgef, Bolice Phedrovich in Leningrad in 1984
- (7) Goodman, Kenneth. *What’s Whole in Whole Language?* Canada: Heinemann Inc., 1986 p.38
- (8) Goodman, Kenneth. *What’s Whole in Whole Language?* Canada: Heinemann Inc., 1986 pp.38-40
- (9) The research-based assessment practices for the adult education classroom, by the National Institute for Literacy. 2001-2012  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/national-institute-for-literacy/>
- (10) Kawashima, Ryuta. *Ondoku Drill*. Tokyo: Kumon Shuppan Co., Ltd., 2014
- (11) <http://readaloudwestvirginia.org/>
- (12) <http://readaloudwestvirginia.org/>



- (13) For more information on young learners' right-brain phonics program, "Phonics Adventure" is effective. *Phonics Adventure* is written by Massey Miyazawa, Bilingual Kids English School, Sagamihara, Kanagawa, Japan.  
<http://homepage3.nifty.com/bilingual/sub1.htm>
- (14) Tsuchiya, Sumio. *Eigo Communication-no kiso wo tsukuru Ondoku Shidou*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha Co., Ltd., 2004, pp.34-35
- (15) Massey Miyazawa's research in his classrooms both at Wako University and Bilingual Kids English School in 1992-2011.
- (16) Training listening is also important for fast reading. The reason is that reading is associated with silent resonance, in which people read information and their brain turns the information into phonetic codes which resonate in their ears. This is also called the intermodal transfer. (\*Mattingly, I.G., 1972:133) Antony Boys also added it in his project (\*Boys, Antony, *A Junior College Reading Course*. Ibaraki Christian Junior College Bulletin, Mar 1987, p.11) that "Reading skill is based on primarily linguistic skill, especially that of listening." Naturally, if a person is hearing-impaired, he/she may have difficulty learning to read properly. In this researcher's classrooms, this researcher has actually witnessed two young learners who had difficulty reading only to find out later that they had a hearing problem.
- (17) (18) This research and the related research were done by Masayuki Massey Miyazawa in 1999 through 2006. In order to test the sport-eye vision, this researcher has used the flash cards and have taken a questionnaire. 32 students out of 65 students shown a better achievement in reading had been playing ball-using sports. Interestingly, 6 out of 7 students who are extremely slow readers have not experienced any ball-using sports and poor flash-cards recognition, which means they have an inferior sport-eye vision.
- (19) J.F. Quantz's Problems in the psychology of reading (1897) which developed the techniques necessary for studying the eye-voice span that occurs when people read aloud and that appears to reflect a short-term memory or buffer-storage in mental processes (Blumenthal, 1970)
- (20) In order for the students to level up to this stage of memorization, the instructor might choose some books with lots of repetition such as the Three Little Pigs and the Farmer and the Beet by Pearson-Longman Co., Ltd. Short story books are also recommended: Bookworm starters (Oxford), Active Skill for Reading (Thomson), True Stories series (Pearson), L.A. Hill's *Stories for Reproduction Series* (Oxford)

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