

When and How to Teach Reading to Beginner Learners of English: A Comparison of Ten Ministry of Education Approved Introductory English Textbooks

塩原フランセス

神戸松蔭女子学院大学文学部

第2 外国語として英語を学び始めた学習者に、
いつからどのような方法で読み方を指導するか

SHIOBARA Frances

Faculty of Letters, Kobe Shoin Women's University

Abstract

英語の初級者にいつからどのように教科書を使用して読み方を教えるべきかについては、これまで様々な議論が繰り返されてきた。フォニックスが最適であると主張する研究者もいれば、ホールランゲージアプローチ (the Whole Language Approach: WLA) を推奨する学者もいる。フォニックスは、単語を発音するために文字をデコード (解読) するボトムアップ型のアプローチ、一方の WLA は、文脈から単語を推測するトップダウン型のアプローチである。英語を母語とする生徒に読み方を教える場合には、生徒が読み方を習う前から英語の語彙が豊富であるという下地があるため、双方のアプローチ共に一定の効果をあげている。しかし第二外国語として英語を教える場合には、大半の生徒が読み方の学習を始める時点で英語の語彙が豊富とは言えず、いずれのアプローチでも問題点を露呈している。本稿では、まず英語を母語とする生徒への読み方指導に関する理論を精査する。次に第二外国語としての英語の読み方を教える指導法に関する文献を精査し、これらの指導法の効果を示す経験的証拠も検証する。最後に、文部科学省検定済みの英語の教科書 10 冊を精査して、読み方学習の要素がどのように教科書に組み込まれているのかを分析し、そこから教科書を通じた読み方指導について考察していく。

There is a lot of controversy about when and how to teach beginner readers. Some researchers recommend phonics as the best approach for beginner readers, which is a bottom-up approach to decode the letters in order to read words. Whereas other researchers recommend the whole language

approach, which is a top-down approach based on inferring words from context. Both of these methods have had success with teaching reading in a first language where students have extensive vocabularies before learning to read. However, when teaching English as a second language most students do not have extensive vocabularies in English when they start learning to read, which makes both of these methods problematic. This article will firstly examine some of the theories about teaching reading in a first language, then examine literature on the methods of teaching reading in a second language with empirical evidence on the success of these methods. Finally, it will analyze how reading is introduced in ten English textbooks approved by MEXT to interpret what this might tell us about the reading pedagogy behind the textbooks.

キーワード：リーディング、小学校、中学校、フォニックス

Key Words: Elementary School, Junior High school, Reading, Phonics

Introduction

There is no doubt that students learning English as a second or foreign language need to learn to read and write, but there is a lot of debate as to how and when written text should be introduced to beginner learners of a second language. The argument of how soon reading should be introduced focuses on how much background knowledge of the language a student needs to have before encountering the written form. Some researchers say that the written form reinforces the learning of new vocabulary and grammar (Dlugosz, 2000), but other researchers emphasize hearing and saying a word before reading it (Linse, 2005).

In addition, the argument of how to teach reading has been raging for decades, mainly in teaching reading in a first language. On the one side is phonics and on the other side is the whole language approach. The whole language approach is a top down learning theory in which students learn to read through being introduced to various reading texts with lots of schema built-in in order for students to understand the text. Phonics is a bottom up approach to learning in which students learn the letter-sound combinations in English to build up the tools to be able to decode written words. These reading methods were developed for native speaking children, who typically have a vocabulary of over three thousand words by the time they start learning to read. Depending on when reading is introduced, second language learners often have a vocabulary of less than three hundred words when they start to read (Hoskins, 2018). This article will explain the main ways that reading is taught to beginners and examine the arguments for when to teach reading in a second language. In the final section, the way that reading is taught in Japanese public schools is examined. Four elementary school and six junior high school Ministry of Education recommended textbooks are compared to determine how reading is taught in Japan and whether it corresponds to the way that reading is taught to native English-speaking children. The textbooks are evaluated as well as a number of individual tasks to determine whether they are focusing on phonics, the whole language approach, or if another approach is being used.

How to teach reading in English to beginners?

Phonics

There are two main forms of phonics; synthetic phonics and analytic phonics. Analytic phonics is when readers identify a common phoneme in a set of words. For example, students will identify the /p/ sound in *pet*, *park* and *pen*. Synthetic phonics is when the students are taught phonemes explicitly building up phonics knowledge from the smallest unit. As synthetic phonics, is recommended by most literacy specialists this paper will focus on this. Synthetic phonics is a way in which the smallest units of sound (phonemes) are taught as individual sounds with their grapheme or letter representation. These sounds and letters are then blended together to form words. Synthetic phonics also teaches children how to hear all the phonemes in a word and match them to a letter in order to help them to spell correctly. Phonics gives students the tools to read for themselves. It can empower students and can turn reading into a puzzle, which can be incredibly motivating for students. Unfortunately, only approximately 50% of words in the English language can be decoded using phonics (Reyhner, 2018). In this way phonics can also be incredibly frustrating, which is why a top-down approach is also necessary.

Whole Language Approach

The whole language approach to teaching reading was developed by Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman in the 1970s (Katanoda & Wada, 2003). It is considered a top-down approach where the reader constructs meaning from text based on prior knowledge of the language. Whole language instruction often involves; reading stories, games, matching pictures and words, as well as songs and chants. Goodman (1967) believed that beginning readers need little instruction to decode letters and that by reading meaningful texts and making inferences students will naturally acquire the ability to read in English. The whole language approach involves being able to read words that have been shown before, as well as having sufficient background knowledge of English to guess the meanings of new words from context. In this way the whole language approach can be very effective in learning to read English in a first language, where children as young as four or five years old often have an extensive knowledge of vocabulary. However, when teaching English as a second language students often do not have an extensive vocabulary, so cannot guess the words from context, and cannot infer the meanings of words.

Sight Words

Frequent words are often taught as sight words. This is a way in which students learn to read individual words isolated from context as a whole word from flashcards. It is a method that is very effective if used for a limited number of words, but it can be challenging for students to learn a large number of words in this way. Hinzman and Reed (2018) list two reasons for teaching sightwords. The first is with words that could be decoded with phonics, but appear so frequently that learning to read them without decoding speeds up the reading time. These are words such as *and* or *get*. The second

reason to use sight words is with words that cannot be decoded because they do not follow the typical letter-sound correspondences, so cannot be decoded. These are words such as *there* and *have*. Hinzman and Reed (2018) warn against allowing students to become reliant on sightwords at the expense of deduction and decoding of words as they will always be reliant on what they have already learned, they cannot become independent readers. In addition, without any context students may not understand the meaning of the sight words they are reading.

Yakudoku (translational reading)

Most of the research into teaching beginners to read has been done with regard to first language learners. In a second language in many countries, and Japan in particular, translation has often been used in lieu of top down or bottom up approaches to reading. In Japan this is called *yakudoku*. *Yakudoku*, literally means translational reading. Saito (2012) states that *Yakudoku* is used as a tool to aid comprehension and utilise the first language to help with comprehension. Saito (2012) points out that many Japanese learners of English have become very proficient at English through the *Yakudoku* method. He does not claim that all language learning should be done through translational methods and acknowledges that communicative language learning techniques are important in encouraging output forms of the language, especially speaking. However, as far as reading comprehension is concerned he states that translation can aid comprehension.

Studies in Reading Comprehension in English as a Second Language

Although phonics has been shown to be a powerful teaching method for teaching reading to young learners as a first language, there are mixed findings when studying older students and students studying English as a foreign language. In various studies of L1 English learners Shu-Mei Chwo (2009) reported that although incorporating phonics teaching methodology is initially time consuming, after one year it increases the reading speed and comprehension of learners compared to those who have learnt with the whole language approach. In a meta-analysis of systematic phonics instruction, it was found that phonics helped students with decoding, comprehension and spelling. Phonics instruction was more powerful than any other type of reading instruction, in addition, the effects persisted even after instruction had ended (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001). However, although phonics instruction was a benefit to the majority of students it did not appear to be of benefit to low achieving students and those with cognitive limitations. Second language learners cannot be defined as students, who have cognitive limitations, but they do have far lower knowledge of vocabulary and syntax than L1 learners. In addition, as the Chinese logographic system used in Japan and China are in marked contrast to the Roman alphabet used in most European languages the way of teaching reading is necessarily different. The challenge for teachers of Chinese and Japanese speakers according to Shu-Mei Chwo (2009) is that students need to be taught the correct pronunciation before they can be introduced to phonics. In primary schools in Hong Kong English reading instruction is generally taught through rote

memorization of the word shape and pronunciation without any reference to phonics and breaking down the word in segments of sounds. This is very similar to the way that Chinese is taught in schools. On the other hand, Taiwanese schools tend to incorporate phonics in their English reading programs. A comparison of the two methods of teaching reading found that rather than sight words and phonics being in conflict they are complementary. The different reading methods were suitable for students at different developmental stages. A natural conclusion is that both methods are advantageous for teaching reading to learners with very different writing systems (Shu-Mei Chwo, 2009).

In a study of Japanese learners, Kambara (2012) proposes that teaching phonics explicitly will also improve Japanese students' English pronunciation. Although the idea of whether phonics instruction improves pronunciation is not usually promoted as an advantage of phonics instruction, encouraging students to focus on the sounds in words will probably encourage noticing the difference between commonly confused sounds such as /l/ and /r/. Results of a number of studies into the effectiveness of phonics instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL) programs shows that it does seem to have a positive effect on phonological decoding and phonological awareness, which appeared to help in improving word pronunciation (Huo & Wang, 2017). Despite some benefits of phonics instruction, the irregular nature of the English sound system makes English very difficult to teach purely through phonics (Baker, 2008). In addition, systematic phonics instruction can only be effective if students' oral proficiency is sufficient to decode words when reading the graphemes. If students do not know the meaning of a word having decoded it, they will not have the skills to comprehend text (Irujo, n.d.). Irujo (n.d.) goes on to state that students cannot read fluently before they can speak fluently. Repeated readings of texts will not aid fluency if the vocabulary and sentence structures are unfamiliar to students.

In a study by Stuart (1999), in the UK with kindergarten students studying English as a second language, phonics instruction was found to be effective to improve reading skills in the short and long term. In a comparison of second language students receiving phonics instruction or whole language instruction, students who receive phonics instruction were significantly ahead of the other group after a twelve-week program and were still ahead a year later. The study was carried out with 96 kindergarten students learning English as a second language, who had a more limited vocabulary than L1 students. It should be noted that as this study was carried out in the UK the students were surrounded by English in their daily life and consequently acquiring far more English language input than English language learners in Japan.

These studies all indicate the effectiveness of phonics instruction especially with very young children, however one study conducted in Japan had a slightly different result. In a study by Katanoda and Wada (2003) of teenagers in Japan who had studied with the whole language approach and phonics approach, whilst in elementary school, the students felt that they understood more and enjoyed classes taught through the whole language approach. The problem seemed to be that many students' knowledge of English before starting the reading program was too limited to appreciate and understand the phonics

program. On the other hand, the way that English reading without phonics was taught utilized games and matching words with pictures. The whole language approach could be enjoyed by students with no prior knowledge as well as those with extensive prior knowledge. Given this negative result of teaching phonics Katanoda and Wada (2003) concluded that there needs to be a certain amount of English input before phonics is introduced. A major difference of this study is that it is assessing students' attitudes to the reading programs rather than testing their achievement. If the students, who learned reading with phonics had discovered significant gains in their English reading, they may have been more positive about the phonics program.

Both the Japanese and Chinese researchers conclude that a combination of sight words, whole language and phonics instruction is the best method to teach reading (Katanoda & Wada, 2003; Shu-Mei Chwo, 2009). It seems that phonics can be an effective method to teach second language learners to read, but students need a certain level of vocabulary before beginning a phonics program.

When to teach reading to beginner students learning the language?

As learners of a first language usually have an extensive knowledge of vocabulary and grammar before being taught to read, reading needs to be introduced differently in a second language. Some researchers and teachers believe that it is better to focus on speaking and listening before teaching reading. Linse stated that the basic rules are; "Hear a word before you can say it, say a word before you can read it, read a word before you can write it." (2005). This is the emphasis of many EFL textbooks for young children allowing them to have a solid knowledge of the meaning and sound of a word before they encounter the written form. This does not seem to be supported by the work of Dlugosz (2000) who found that by presenting the children with a word or phrase in both phonic and graphic forms, two channels of perception are accessed, speeding up learning and improving short-term memory, but the majority of studies recommend students hearing words before reading them.

Most of the studies carried out with L1 learners of English were carried out with children first entering school around age five or six, in contrast the studies of second language learners were generally older. This could account for the negative attitudes to phonics expressed by students in Katanoda and Wada's (2003) study, as they were teenagers. There is a lot of debate as to when it is best to learn a second language, which is beyond the scope of this article, but inevitably any reading or phonics program in a second language will take place at an older age than L1 learners. This does not need to be a negative thing as there may be a positive washback effect from the L1 reading experience, which enhances comprehension in the L2.

This research is examining the way that reading is introduced in introductory English language textbooks in Japan. A comparison of the six mainstream textbooks for first year Junior High School as well as four textbooks for Elementary school students.

Reading Activities in Japanese Public School Textbooks

The majority of published materials for teaching English as a second language to young learners introduce words very gradually and many textbooks incorporate phonics as well as whole language approaches to teaching reading, but a comparison of the government approved beginner textbooks in Japan shows that very little phonics is included and words are introduced very early and very quickly. The textbooks compared were ten government approved English textbooks intended for initial English study. Six of them were for first year junior high school and four were elementary school textbooks. The junior high school textbooks were developed at a time when English reading and writing was not taught at elementary school and it was assumed that students would enter junior high school with little or no knowledge of English.

Alphabet

In every textbook *a* corresponds to apple. Although this is a simple way to introduce the sounds, introducing all the letters of the alphabet at one time is too daunting for beginner students, in addition, there are many important phonemes such as *ai*, which are not listed as separate sounds in the alphabet. This seems to demonstrate that most of the textbooks introduce the alphabet as a way to introduce phonics, but all the letters are introduced on one day. Students are not given the chance to gradually acquire the phoneme and grapheme connection. *Jolly phonics* (Wernham & Lloyd, 2010) is a highly popular phonics program for native speaker children. In this program it is recommended that each new phoneme is introduced on a different day. They also identify the most important phonemes as being not just the letters of the alphabet, but also vowel sounds such as *ai* in train. The phonemes are also introduced in a very specific order in the *Jolly Phonics* program, not following alphabetic order, but following the order that will be most effective to read as many words as possible quickly, so that students can get a sense of satisfaction to be able to read (Wernham & Lloyd, 2010).

Dialogues

Most of the introductory textbooks are based around simple dialogues. These could be introduced in a whole language approach and there is no evidence that teachers are not allowing students to hear the words before saying them and saying them before reading them as recommended by Arnold and Malcolm (2016). If dialogues were to be used for the whole language approach the teacher would model the dialogue either using a team teacher or playing a recording. Students need to understand the meaning of the dialogue before trying to reproduce it themselves and finally reading the text. Although there is no evidence that this is not the way it is taught it is unlikely that students do not see the text before trying to speak. In addition, trying to memorize every word in even a short dialogue is a challenging task, especially if students have no background knowledge of the vocabulary being introduced.

Phonics

Very few of the textbooks incorporate any systematic phonics teaching, although some of them incorporate a few phonics activities. *Total English 1* (Gakko Tosho, 2015) was the only textbook to introduce any type of blending, even if this was very limited. The teaching of phonics is recommended by the American National Reading Panel as part of a balanced approach to teaching reading strategies (Katanoda & Wada, 2003). The advantage of phonics is that it empowers students and can enable them to decipher unfamiliar words as their English ability improves. It is a strategy used by native English speakers of English even at very high levels of proficiency when encountering new words.

Stories

Many of the textbooks incorporate short stories. Some of these are based around English translations of Japanese folktales. In this way the students have the schema, which will help them to understand the story in English and even infer meaning. In this way these stories could be said to be introducing reading through a whole language approach.

Elementary School Textbooks

English was only introduced in Japanese public elementary schools as an optional subject in 2002 and in 2011 it was made into a foreign language activity class (Aoki, 2016). In 2012 a textbook *Hi, Friends! 1 & 2* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012) was published for these foreign language lessons, and in 2018 a new textbook *We Can!* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012) was published to replace *Hi, Friends!* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012). These textbooks will be analysed to see how they approach the teaching of reading English.

In the *Hi Friends!* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012) textbooks, which were first developed for Japanese elementary school students there is a lot of vocabulary building and listening with some simple speaking activities. Any writing seems to involve writing in Japanese or checking boxes. Although the *We Can!* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2018) textbooks were designed to replace the *Hi Friends!* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012) textbooks, the teaching philosophy seems to be quite different. These textbooks start with a large amount of written material. One of the first activities involves reading the months of the year, which are multi-syllable, phonically irregular words.

Hi, Friends! 1

Hi, Friends! 1 (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012) textbook is a vocabulary building textbook. There is very little English text and instructions are written in Japanese. Each lesson has a very simple chant or song for students to learn. This is written in English, but is short enough that students could memorize the song without reading the words. In this way it could be categorized as a whole language approach to reading. Students can use the contextual clues from pictures to understand the meaning, looking at the written text later. There are a lot of colorful pictures with a variety of matching and listening activities. The layout is bright and attractive for children. Capital letters are introduced in Lesson 6. These are not

connected to phonics and students search for the same letter within a picture. This activity seems to be aimed at familiarizing students with the shapes of letters, but no one could expect students to learn all 26 letters in one lesson. At the back of the textbook there are flashcards for students to cut out. One set is capital letters. The textbook is very short containing only nine lessons. Each lesson is six pages long. If each class used two pages the textbook may cover 27 weeks of classes, but it would require supplementary materials to cover a 45-minute lesson.

Hi, Friends! 2

Hi, Friends! 2 (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012) textbook is very similar to *Hi, Friends! 1* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012). It builds on the vocabulary and speaking activities introduced in *Hi, Friends! 1* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012), some vocabulary is introduced through a story using very simple English. The story is a Japanese fairytale, so students are familiar with the schema aiding comprehension and inferencing words. Months of the year are also introduced although they are next to the Japanese translation. Small letters of the alphabet are given as flashcards, but are not introduced in the textbook. The teachers book gives advice on how to introduce the small letters of the alphabet.

We Can! 1

We Can! 1 (Tokyo Shoseki, 2018) textbook was written to replace the *Hi, Friends!* textbooks for 5th and 6th grade elementary school students, but has considerably more content. It is still very much communication focused, but the amount of written text has increased. There are 96 pages compared to 40 pages in *Hi, Friends! 1* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012). Instructions are generally written in Japanese. The approach to reading is mainly written words with visual clues. In general, the schema is introduced through Japanese and pictures in a type of whole language approach. Short dialogs are easy to understand and memorize, so that students can learn to read through these dialogs. Sounds and letters are introduced at the bottom of each page with a letter and two words beginning with that letter.

We Can! 2

We Can! 2 (Tokyo Shoseki, 2018) textbook is a continuation from *We Can! 1* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2018), but it also has a lot of review. Most of the phonic first letter sounds are reviewed, and four new diagraphs, *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *wh* are introduced. On the whole both *We Can! 1* and *2* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2018) both introduce phonics, but contain no systematic phonics teaching to help students decipher words. The majority of reading is taught through the whole language approach and memorization of sight words. There are colorful flashcards and vocabulary pages at the back of the textbook to aid memorization.

Junior High School Textbooks

English has been taught to junior high school students since the American occupation after the

second world war. Until recently, although many students attended private language schools in elementary school, it was assumed that students would start studying English from junior high school. Although many students would have very little prior knowledge of English, when the textbooks for Junior High School students were examined it was found that these are very text-dense from the beginning.

New Horizon English Course 1

New Horizon 1 (Tokyo Shoseki, 2011) textbook introduces phonics near the beginning of the textbook. All the letters of the alphabet are introduced on the same page. This may be used as a reference page. There is no systematic teaching of phonics to help students to decipher new words. More than one sound for letters are introduced at the same time. For example, *g* introduces the voiced velar plosive consonant as in *girl* and the affricate consonant as in *giant*. At the back of the textbook the phonetic alphabet is introduced with the phonetic sounds of various words. All sentences and dialogs are introduced with colorful visuals to enable whole language reading skills to be used. The end of the textbook contains a few short stories for extensive reading. These contain Japanese translations to help students to understand the story, although it removes the necessity for students to read the English.

New Crown English Series 1

New Crown 1 (Sanseido, 2011) textbook introduces phonics near the beginning of the textbook with one word for each letter of the alphabet. There is no systematic teaching of phonics and the emphasis is on providing Japanese translation to aid understanding. There is a strong focus on grammar through dialogs. The dialogs are short and easily memorized with visual clues possibly aiding whole language approach to reading. The back of the book contains a few short stories with clear picture visuals to enable reading through the whole language approach.

Columbus 21 English Course 1

Columbus 21 English Course 1 (Mitsumura Tosho, 2012) textbook is based around simple dialogues and vocabulary taught through pictures. The textbook gradually introduces more language through a variety of common situations, with which the students would have a clear schema, for example at school and at a summer firework festival. In this way the students can utilize top down skills to decode the reading. Each letter of the alphabet is introduced near the beginning of the textbook with a picture associated to each letter. There is one page of phonics introduced on page 49 of the textbook, but there is no systematic phonics instruction. The textbook seems to be very clear and easy to understand. At the end of the book three very simple short stories and two songs are introduced for more extensive reading and listening.

Total English 1

Total English 1 (Gakko Tosho, 2015) textbook is the only textbook to introduce any specific teaching of phonics and blending sounds to produce words. This is only introduced on one page and is not reviewed or supported by more examples. The language is introduced through various dialogues and vocabulary through colorful illustrations. The dialogs are all simple with visual stimuli and situations enabling students to understand the meaning through schema and repetition.

One World English Course 1

One World English Course 1 (Kyoiku Shuppan, 2011) textbook introduces language through very simple dialogues. The dialogues are much shorter than in most of the other textbooks. All the dialogs and vocabulary are introduced with visuals to aid understanding. There are explanations in Japanese for all the activities and many of the sentences are translated into Japanese. Although the visuals mean that the method of reading could be whole language, the extensive translations mean that *yakudoku* is probably the most common method of teaching reading.

Sunshine English Course 1

Sunshine English Course 1 (Kairyudo, 2011) textbook starts out very simply with very simple conversations and common house and classroom vocabulary. There is a lot of visual support for all the written text. The alphabet is introduced on pages 16 to 17 with a picture and words beginning with the letter. Some of the alternative phonic sounds of letters are also introduced, for example letter *c* has the words cat and city. There is also an introduction to dictionary use on page 23. There is one short extensive reading book at the end of the textbook. There is no explicit explanation of phonics or introduction of common sight words.

Table 1: Summary of activities in MEXT approved English textbooks

	<i>New Horizon English course 1</i> (Tokyo Shoseki, 2011)	<i>New Crown English Series 1</i> (Sanseido, 2011)	<i>Columbus 21 English Course 1</i> (Mitsumura Toshio, 2012)	<i>Total English 1</i> (Gakko Toshio, 2015)	<i>One World English course 1</i> (Kyoiku Shuppan, 2011)	<i>Sunshine English Course 1</i> (Kairyudo, 2011)	<i>Hi, Friends! 1&2</i> (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012)	<i>We Can! 1 & 2</i> (Tokyo Shoseki, 2018)
Alphabet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Phonics in text	O			O	O	O		O
Phonics in appendix						O		
Dialogues	O	O	O		O		O	O
Phonetic glossary	O		O					
Short Stories	O	O	O		O	O		
Phonics blending				O				

In summary, the textbooks all contain dialogues and at least one page of the 26 letters of the alphabet. Some of them contain brief references to phonics and most of them incorporate stories. It is difficult to determine what method of reading instruction is being practiced. In general, it would have to be said that understanding in the junior high school textbooks is mainly provided through *Yakudoku* or translation into Japanese. All the textbooks incorporate colorful visuals, which aid comprehension and provide some sort of schema. Based on this comparison it can be said that neither phonics nor whole language approaches to teaching reading are being used systematically. The main method of instruction is still Japanese style translation (*Yakudoku*), although the textbooks contain a variety of communicative speaking activities. There are short stories in most of the textbooks encouraging extensive reading, but generally at the end of the books as a follow up, or culmination of the textbook rather than an integral way of teaching reading.

Discussion and Recommendations

Teaching reading to beginner learners needs a strong bottom-up (phonics) element and a strong top-down (whole language) element (Anderson, 2008). Without the skills to decipher new words students will forever be dependent on their teachers. A study of the textbooks used in Japanese public elementary and junior high schools show bright colorful images with a strong emphasis on familiar schema. The element of reading that is missing is the bottom-up phonics instruction. A systematic introduction of phonics in the early stages with a variety of long and short vowel sounds as well as diagraphs would aid students in deciphering words they have never encountered before, but there is still

some question as to whether students would understand the words due to their limited vocabulary.

Although the whole language approach has also been criticized for second language learners due to their limited vocabulary, in these textbooks it appears that the aim is to teach reading and vocabulary at the same time. All of the textbooks introduce short dialogues based on schema with which the students would be very familiar. This aids comprehension of the text considerably along with the visuals accompanying the dialogues. It may be concluded that in these textbooks the main form of instruction is *Yakudoku* (translation to Japanese by the teacher). Although translation has been criticized over the last few decades, it is clear that it is effective for many students, evidenced by the number of Japanese students who can read in English at a high level (Saito, 2012).

This research indicates that at present phonics is not taught systematically in Japanese public schools. The first two years of elementary school English education focus on vocabulary building and oral input. This is a very effective basis for introducing reading at a later stage. Deferring reading instruction is essential as students cannot decode words that they have not yet acquired. With the introduction of English in elementary school it would be hoped that students could build a large vocabulary before they need to start reading, but when they do start reading at the early stages, systematic and gradual introduction of the most common 42 phonic sounds would be the most effective way for students to gain the ability to decode and understand text independently of the teacher. A comprehensive introduction of phonics would probably be beneficial to help students deciphering new words as their vocabulary grows. Any phonics program would need to be adapted to second language learners focusing on vocabulary already introduced.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP16K45678

References

- Anderson, N. J. (2008). *Practical English Language Teaching: Reading*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Aoki, M. (2016, September 15). *English heads for elementary school in 2020, but hurdles abound*. Retrieved from The Japan times: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp>
- Arnold, W., & Malcolm, F. (2016). *Reading and Young Learners*. Retrieved from British Council Teaching English: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/reading-young-learners>
- Baker, T. (2008). Applying Reading Research to the Development of an Integrated Lesson Plan. *English Teaching Forum*, 1, 22-29.
- Dlugosz, D. W. (2000). Rethinking the role of teaching a foreign language to young learners. *ELT Journal Volume*, 54(3), 284-290.

- Ehri, L., Nunes, S., Stahl, S., & Willows, D. (2001). Systematic Phonics Instruction Helps Students Learn to Read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's Meta-Analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 71*(3), 393-447.
- Gakko Tosho. (2015). *Total English*. Tokyo, Japan: Gakko Tosho.
- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist, 6*(4), 126-135.
- Hinzman, M., & Reed, D. K. (2018, June 12). *Teaching sight Words as a Part of Comprehensive Reading instruction*. Retrieved from Iowa Reading Research Center: <https://iowareadingresearch.org/blog/teaching-sight-words>
- Hoskins, B. (2018, September/October). TLT Interviews, The Language Teacher. 21-23. (M. Hara, Interviewer)
- Huo, S., & Wang, S. (2017, May 17). *The Effectiveness of Phonological-Based Instruction in English As a Foreign Language Students at Primary School Level: A Research Synthesis*. Retrieved September 21, 2018, from Frontiers in Education: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2017.00015/full>
- Irujo, S. (n.d.). *What Does Research Tell Us About Teaching Reading to English Language Learners*. Retrieved September 2018, from Reading Rockets: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/what-does-research-tell-us-about-teaching-reading-english-language-learners>
- Kairyudo. (2011). *Sunshine I*. Tokyo, Japan: Kairyudo.
- Kambara, H. (2012, November 19). The needs of early English phonetic instruction in Japan. *Japan Today*.
- Katanoda, H., & Wada, T. (2003, 12). *A Study of Phonics Teaching in the Case of Japan's Elementary School*. Retrieved from <https://meisandai.repo.nii.ac.jp>
- Kyoiku Shuppan. (2011). *One World English course*. Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan.
- Linse, C. (2005). *Young Learners*. USA: McGraw Hill.
- Mitsumura Tosho. (2012). *Columbus 21 English Course I*. Tokyo, Japan: Mitsumura Tosho.
- Reyhner, J. (2018, August 8). *The Reading Wars*. Retrieved from https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/jar/Reading_Wars.html
- Saito, Y. (2012). Translation in English Language Teaching in Japan. *Komba Journal of English Education, 3*.
- Sanseido. (2011). *New Crown I*. Tokyo: Sanseido.

Shu-Mei Chwo, G. (2009). Review Studies on L1 and L2 Phonic versus Whole Word Teaching Methodology from English as L1 to English as L2. *Hung Kuang Humanities and Social Sciences Journal*, 8, 69-100.

Stuart, M. (1999). Getting ready for reading: Early phoneme awareness and phonics teaching improves reading and spelling in inner-city second language learners. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69, 587-605.

Tokyo Shoseki. (2011). *New Horizon English Course 1*. Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki.

Tokyo Shoseki. (2012). *Hi Friends!* Tokyo, Japan: Tokyo Shoseki.

Tokyo Shoseki. (2018). *We Can!* Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki.

Wernham, S., & Lloyd, S. (2010). *Phonics Teacher's Book*. Chigwell, Essex, UK: Jolly Learning Ltd.

(受付日 : 2018. 12. 10)