

## Module 2.3 Visual Memory Theory of Reading

- Four Definitions of “Sight-Word” in Education
  - Another name for the classic whole word reading approach
  - An early, high frequency word
    - Usually taught in kindergarten and first grade
    - Dolch-type words such as: and, of, is, what, has, her, one
  - Phonically irregular words
    - (e.g., said, have, put, wash, iron)
  - Any known or familiar, instantly recognizable word, regardless of whether it is phonically regular or irregular, or whether it is a common or an uncommon word
    - Sight word vocabulary
- Definition of “Sight-Word” by Researchers
  - A sight word is any written word that is well-established in memory and thus automatically recognizable
  - Doesn’t matter if a word is phonically or irregular, high frequency or low frequency, learned early or learned late
  - Sight vocabulary refers to a given person’s pool of known, familiar, and thus instantly recognizable words
    - This pool is called “orthographic lexicon”
- Visual Memory Theory of Word Recognition
  - Intuition suggests reading written words is like object naming
    - Both involve visual input and verbal output
  - Classic whole word method appears to be based on this assumption
    - Multiple repetitions to visually remember words
    - Very inefficient for weak readers
    - Word reading is not based upon visual memory
- Problems with Visual Memory Theory
  - Input and storage are not the same thing
    - Input is visual, storage is orthographic, phonological, and semantic
  - James Cattell (1886)
    - Reading words and naming objects have different reaction times
  - 1970’s
    - Students with reading disabilities usually had perfectly normal visual memory
  - Word reading correlates with phonological skills
  - Sometimes we have a “block” on names of people or things (visual memory), but never written words (orthographic memory)
  - Most students who are deaf struggle with word level reading, shouldn’t be a problem if word reading was based on visual memory
  - Different activation patterns in the brain
    - Phonic decoding
    - Instant word recognition

## Assessing, Preventing and Overcoming Reading Disabilities Course - Key Takeaways

- Memory for faces
  - Object naming
- Role of Visual Memory
  - Visual-oral paired associate learning in learning letters
  - Once letters are learned to automaticity, visual memory appears to play NO role in visual memory for words
  - Orthographic memory is for specific letter sequences