

TBI Updates

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY MODEL SYSTEM
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION MEDICINE



Volume 6

Number 2

Language Learning: Part 2 by John Pavlish

In the previous newsletter John shared his experience of realizing that he could not communicate and the process of relearning to speak. In this newsletter he continues his story of how he regained the ability to communicate.

Reading challenged me the most. Unlike someone speaking to me, I could not imagine a voice to read for me. I originally used two strategies to relearn reading. One was phonics, which became my friend. The other one was my memory. Phonics helped me read easier books like Dr. Seuss' works. Alas, I soon felt mentally bored with children's stories because the last novel I read before my brain bleed was Catch-22. So anything trite would insult my broken brain.

One of the reasons that I could not read larger novels was an inability to see some words. The bleed in my occipital lobe prevented me from seeing anything in my right peripheral vision. During my reading, I accidentally jumped to the next line missing the words on the right side causing confusion of written concepts. My inability to read prompted me to learn other techniques like my memory. I actually was able to remember some words like an old friend.

Some words were ingrained in my mind like "Final Fantasy" or "time," and I recognized them immediately. However, simple three or four lettered words fled from me. Reading turned into a random roulette to comprehend words correctly, whether read out loud or not. It did not matter if I read Shakespeare or a friend's emails with poor grammar; the English language simply eluded me. Since I could not read the acronyms or sophisticated or misspelled words, I just pretended I understood what I read.

I found new tools on the internet and through therapy to aid my reading. Firefox, an internet browser, had built in spellchecking. It prevented me from misspelling words on internet web forms such as email clients, blogs, and forums. However, Firefox could not recognize all websites. There is an even more phenomenal tool. A search on Google would correct my mistakes and fix words by writing them in proper phrases. In addition to these tools, I also found that the Merriam-Webster dictionary online would allow me to search for words, their definitions, and pronounce the word aloud. Later on, I found that the software ReadPlease, available online for free, would

Continued on page 3

In This Issue

Language Learning	1, 3 & 4
TBI Education	2
Who's Who	2
What's Hot	3
Language Resources	2-3
TBI Forum	4

Who's Who



Julie Brunings

Julie Brunings, MS is a speech language pathologist at the University of Washington Medical Center. She has been part of the outpatient neurorehab team at UW for the past 10 years and appreciates the input each team member provides, which is necessary for the best patient outcomes. Prior to working at UW, she worked for a day treatment brain injury program in Long Beach, CA.

Julie specializes in cognitive retraining following brain injury. She enjoys working to develop specific strategies for each person to improve memory, attention and problem solving skills that may be changed after injury. She also co-leads the Cognitive Group at UWMC that is part of the neurorehab program.

UW Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems Website

Watch and download materials at: www.tbi.washington.edu.

TBI Documentary:
“Living With a Traumatic Brain Injury”

Soon, the TBI Documentary will also be available on BrainLine.org. “BrainLine is a national multimedia project offering information and resources about preventing, treating, and living with TBI.” This website is done under WETA, a non-profit TV station, and partially funded by the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center.

Language Resources

<http://www.openoffice.org/>

- **Open Office** is a free open source suite, for word processing, spreadsheets, presentation performer, a mathematical processor, and a drawing applet. It comes with a built in spell checking words

<http://www.readplease.com/>

-**ReadPlease** is for Windows, free and it reads text to you out loud that you throw into it

Mac Speech

-Within the System Preferences of OSX, Mac users can the Speech software, which can read highlighted text just like ReadPlease

<http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/>

-**Firefox** is a web browser that has a built in spell check. That makes it easy to email, or use any searching on the web.

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/>

-Here you can download plugins for Firefox, specifically **QT, Quick Translator**. QT allows you to get a quick definition of a highlighted word highlight and will read some words aloud.

-Another handy plugin, **gTranslate**, can translate just about any written language in the world.

Language Learning cntd.

read anything that was put into it. Kurzweil, another type of software that reads text aloud, takes this idea further. As a Hercules of software it can scan books or papers, and then reads them auditorily.

In speech therapy, I relearned basic school reading techniques and learned some for the first time. Context reading was my trump card for reading without my computer. I could understand a word by reading the paragraph or passages around it. However, this would cause a large “mental

Continued fon next page.

Language Resources

<http://www.pidgin.im/>

<http://www.adiumx.com/>

-**Pidgen** is a Windows-Linux based IM (Instint Messaging) client that has spell checking built into it. **Adium** is its Mac cousin.

<http://www.webster.com/>

-The Merriam-Webster online dictionary is free and reads the word properly. This is nice because ReadPlease cannot read some words (like read and read).

<http://dictionary.reference.com/>

-This is also a great online dictionary that can read words out loud as well

<http://www.youtube.com>

-While there are random videos on youTube, it is possible to search for specific videos about mathmatices, science or English lessons.

<http://www.google.com/>

-And finally, **Google**. I found that if you type a word that you think is wrong, you can put it in Google, and it will correct you, much faster than any spell checker that I mentioned to you, including Microsoft’s spell check in Word as well.

What’s Hot

Caregiver Study

A traumatic brain injury affects not only the person with the injury, but also the family members and friends who help during the recovery process. Most caregivers of people with TBI agree that more information and resources would help them provide better care and reduce the stress of everyone involved. However, it can be difficult to get enough information before discharge from rehabilitation and, often, even more difficult to get what’s needed in the community after discharge.

We have recently started a new research study to see if we can use regular telephone calls to reduce stress and anxiety for caregivers. We will provide educational information and teach caregivers problem-solving strategies they can use to address everyday concerns that come up once the brain injury survivor is back home.

Over the next 4 years, 180 caregivers will participate in the study—half of those will be randomly assigned to the group that receives the phone calls and the other half will receive the typical services that are provided after discharge.

At the end of the study, we will compare how well the group who received the phone calls did compared to those who didn’t receive the calls, to see if this approach is effective. If so, we hope that it will be adopted by others as a way to improve the quality of life for caregivers as well as the TBI survivors.

Continued from page 3

jujitsu” sometimes making tiredness or memory loss afterwards. Another powerful technique I learned was through understanding words in constructions. Deconstructing words made me really feel like Hercules defeating the Hydra. Without these techniques and tools, I would not have been able to write this article.

I still have two goals to achieve through language. The most important goal is relearning language, so I will be able to complete my MIT education. I only have two classes to finish my degree. One is a thesis, while the other is a restricted elective in my major. I will need to be able to write a thesis, in addition to presenting it to a group of professors.

Another necessary caveat of reading consists of tackling textbooks, research, and my own writing. Finally, I have something close to my heart. I would love to read books for pleasure, without deciphering words or becoming fatigued and frustrated. For “easier” novels to finish, I would love to finish *A Wrinkle in Time* and *Harry Potter, Deathly Hallows*. However for fun, I also want to be able to read classics like *Brothers of Karamazov*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Flowers for Algernon*. (Please see pages 2-3 for Language Resources provided by John Pavlish)

TBI Forum Series

The UW Traumatic Brain Injury Model System invites you to join its quarterly information and discussion group on topics relating to life with a brain injury.

At the most recent forum, “Assistive Technology: From Duct Tape to Computers,” Curt Johnson (right), shared solutions to everyday problems faced by TBI survivors. He points out that you may already have a lot of assistive technology at your fingertips. Most computers come with built in features. He also shared a number of solutions that are inexpensive alternatives to costly products and easily implemented.

For more information about Curt Johnson and assistive technology please see the article *Preserving Dreams* at <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/news/johnson.aspx>



The next TBI Forum:

“Pediatric TBI: School and Community”

Will be **Wednesday, October 22nd, 2008, 7:00 pm** at **UW South Campus Center**. Please join us.

For more information, including driving and parking directions, call Aaron Scrol 206-616-0334 (ascrol@u.washington.edu) or visit our website at www.tbi.washington.edu.

If you would like to receive this newsletter by email contact us at:

uwtbi@u.washington.edu

Or visit our website at:

www.depts.washington.edu/rehab/tbi/