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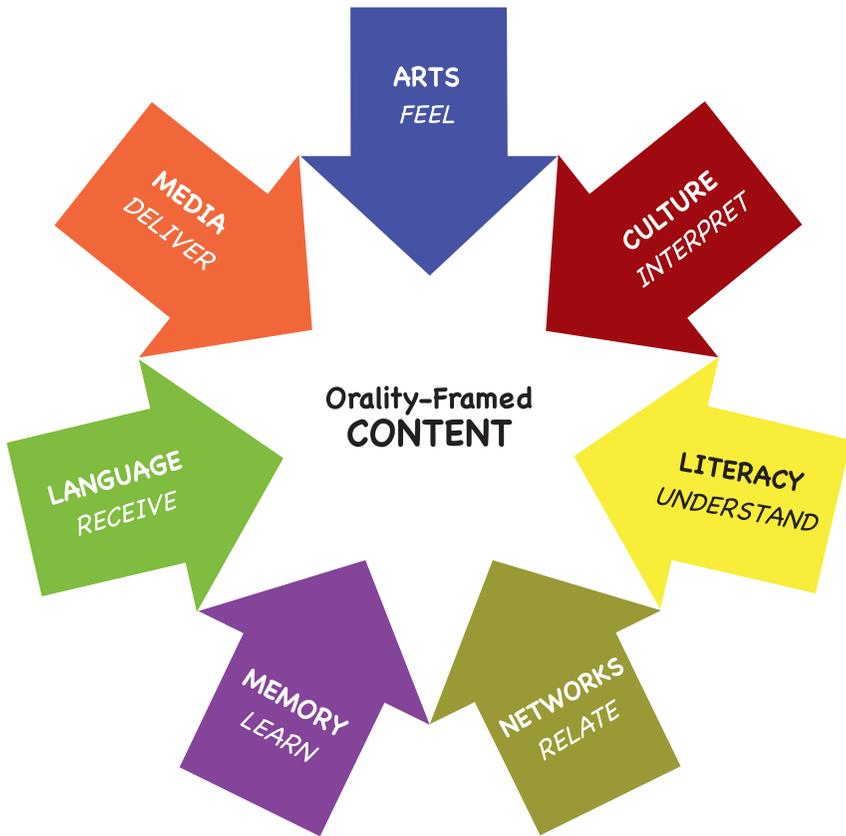
The Word Became Fresh



The Seven Disciplines of Orality

Madinger • Snead • Gravelle • Moon • Getz
Handley • Logan • Swarr • Koch • Williams • Rye

SEVEN DISCIPLINES OF ORALITY: A Holistic Model



Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.

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Cover Photo

Uniskript can be traced back to 1446 when King Sejong launched the Korean alphabet which triggered a literacy revolution in Korea. In 2002 Korean linguist Dr. Kim Cho shared her doctorate discoveries on the ancient alphabet at the University of the Nations. The basic idea was then further developed by a team of innovators from the University of the Nations. As a result, the letters were redefined and a technique created to generate new alphabets that are both attractive and relevant.

The art—visual and font creation—is all derived from within the culture, thus providing greater opportunities for natural embracement than an alphabet that might be imported from outside of one's culture.

As we watch the development of Uniskript, which had its roots in a phonic system from the mid-1400s, we are reminded just how much the digital era is mimicking and borrowing from the pre-Gutenberg era.

Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;
no deeds can compare with yours.
All the nations you have made
will come and worship before you, Lord;
they will bring glory to your name.
For you are great and do marvelous deeds;
you alone are God.

Psalm 86:8—10 (NIV)

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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Editor's Note

Samuel E. Chiang

More Textual / Digital Possibilities Please

When my family moved to Canada as immigrants, I was in my early teens and I knew only the Roman alphabet and seven English phrases that my grandfather had taught me. On the UNESCO “illiteracy to literacy” continuum, I fitted nicely into the illiterate category as a young immigrant in Canada. On the orality continuum (see Lovejoy 2012), which includes learners from those who are exclusively oral to highly textual/digital, and who by necessity or by choice prefer to learn in an oral manner, I was and still am an oral preference learner.

As an eager immigrant, I sought to learn English with gusto. But the Roman alphabet for the English language seemed arbitrary to me, and spelling of words did not always make logical sense. It was bad enough that I could not exercise intuition in the language acquisition effort, but I was lost because logic could not be readily applied to make words and sentences. I wished there was some way in which I could see the link between sound, symbols, and the writing system, so that I could progress along the UNESCO literacy continuum a little quicker.

Decades later, I believe there is now an in-between system which will move people more quickly into textual and language acquisition. The developers of this innovative system call this Uniskript[®].¹

While working on her doctoral studies in linguistics, Ms. Sek Yen Kim-Cho discovered the applicability of the Korean *Hangeul* alphabet system (see <http://sejong-nurigle.com/>). This system was developed by King Sejong (1397-1450), and put into place in 1446 for the Korean people (see page 3 of http://sejong-nurigle.com/uploads/14_Nurigle_Project_Proposal.pdf). Innovators used the principles of the *Hangeul* system and developed Uniskript.

Uniskript is developed from a set of proto-symbols: a rectangle representing the lips; a triangle representing the tip of the tongue; one to three lines representing how wide the mouth opens for the generation of vowel sounds, and so on. Whereas the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA,

<http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/>) covers all phones (the sounds possible within human language), Uniskript² is fitted to each language as it is developed, only covering the relevant phonemes (sounds possible within a *specific* language).

The difference between the Roman alphabet and Uniskript may be comparable to that of varying symbols used on public restrooms. Consider two washroom doors, the symbol ♂ on one and ♀ on the other. Most people will consider it common knowledge that the first symbol signals male gender and the second signals female gender, but these signs are completely arbitrary and perhaps difficult to remember. In fact, these symbols are created based on a high acquisition of literacy skills. On the other hand, one door with the icon of a man and another door with the icon of a woman in a skirt would be more intuitive (across *most* cultures), because the symbol corresponds directly to what it represents.

Uniskript is not meant to replace any already-existing alphabet; it is simply meant to introduce literacy in a variety of settings.

What Are the Applications of Uniskript, and Where Is It Going?

The innovators are already launching test trials, academic experiments, and scalable study groups to implement Uniskript into different domains. Consider the following.

Reading. Uniskript can be used as an introduction to reading, because it helps people see the correlation between symbol and sound. Uniskript teaches symbols (icons) that correspond to symbols (phones) in a way that makes sense. This process is called *iconophonological* or *icono-feratural*. Uniskript is unique in that a visual translates directly to sound. Furthermore, the art—visual and font creation—is all derived from within the culture, thus providing greater opportunities for natural embracement than an alphabet that might be imported from outside of one’s culture. The implications for oral preference learners are huge, including those who are highly textual/digital.

Children. Children sometimes have difficulty learning to read because the Roman alphabet is arbitrary, providing no intuitive connection between sound and symbol. Uniskript can accelerate the reading process by making

a clear visual representation of how and where sounds are made. Children then understand how an alphabet represents sounds. Can we dream of what might be possible with biblical literacy?

Dyslexia. Current focus group studies and trials in the English language, it is already demonstrating that the deployment of Uniskript as a tool to introduce the concept of an alphabet to a child produces different outcomes. The alphabet avoids any mirror images that might create confusion as to what sound is meant to be produced. More scalable studies are now underway to see how individuals with dyslexia will function better with Uniskript.

Apraxia. Speech therapists handling cases of children apraxia (difficulties in handling motor movements involving facial muscles) and adult apraxia due to trauma are teaching patients how to speak through Uniskript.

Deafness. The advancement of technology is so great that hearing devices implemented into the ears can now help people who are born deaf to “hear”—but how do they pronounce words after years of inactivity in the muscle formation of sounds and words? Uniskript is deployed to help formerly deaf people to recognize facial muscle formation and how sounds can be made and words can form.

Lack of space precludes me from discussing the Uniskript digital input system, and ultimately, the Uniskript contribution to shell books (www.shellbooks.org) through crowd-sourcing.

This fledging system will need to be reviewed by many others (an intensive process which has already begun), and if proven fruitful, will take time to gain acceptance. If this happens, it may present a fresh hope for the 1.6 billion adults who are excluded from the opportunity of reading scripture for themselves.

As I watch the development of Uniskript, which had its roots in a phonic system from the mid-1400s, I am reminded just how much the digital era is mimicking and borrowing from the pre-Gutenberg era.

This issue of the Orality Journal is a special one; not only do we celebrate our one-year anniversary, but also the articles are keyed off from the anchor

piece by Chuck Madinger. He provides both scale and scope of coverage in “A Literate’s Guide to the Oral Galaxy.” Then, we include an aspect of each of the disciplines of orality—culture (Snead), language (Gravelle), literacy (Moon), memory (Getz), networks (Handley), arts (Logan), and media (Swarr, Koch, and the ION Audio Scripture Engagement team). Keith Williams was gracious to provide digital and mobile interests and implications for oral-preference learners. Tara Rye provided reviews on two excellent books that are now being translated into multiple languages.

As promised in the last issue, the labs on adaptive changes are here—in print, it is covered by Joe Handley (covering network and participatory learning in leaders development), and online, the blog (www.oralicity.net/blog) by Jennifer Giezendanner (describing the acceptance process of Bible storying in a cross-cultural organizational environment).

Finally, we are in for a special treat, as each of the writers of the “Seven Disciplines of Orality” are also the presenters at this year’s ION conference. What they have written is also mediated audibly into what they shall say and what we shall hear.

On the Journey Together,

Samuel E. Chiang
From Johannesburg, South Africa

- ¹ The developers of this system have filed patents globally.
- ² A simplified description of the process for developing Uniskript for a language involves a few steps: 1.) First, the phonemes of a language must be determined; if certain phonemes do not exist within a language, there is no need to develop extra symbols for it. 2.) A team is sent to collaborate with indigenous speakers of the language in order to determine how the proto-symbols may be adapted in a way that is relevant to their culture and art—sometimes images and shapes that are significant within a culture may be incorporated into the Uniskript alphabet. This creates a connection between the people and this new alphabet as well as the shape of the symbol and the mouth. 3.) Once symbols are decided on, an artist finalizes them, ensuring their aesthetics. 4.) A font is developed.

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I Love to Learn but I Don't Like to Read: *The Rise of Secondary Oral Learning*¹

W. Jay Moon

W. Jay Moon is Associate Professor of Church Planting and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary. From 1992-2001, he was an SIM missionary among the primarily oral Builsa people in Ghana, West Africa, and focused on church planting and water development. His two upcoming books discuss oral discipleship.

The wrinkled brow and heavy sighs informed me that this seminary student was frustrated and discouraged. He plopped down in the chair, slumped down with his head resting on the seat back, and started talking. A slow trickle of emotion at first grew into a rushing river.

"I love to learn, but I don't like to read!" he started. "All of the reading assignments are weighing me down. I start a lot of interesting books, but I usually end up not finishing them. For my class assignments, it's even worse—it takes me an hour to write down on paper what would take me ten minutes to say out loud," he continued. This river was now overflowing the banks, gathering increased force by the minute.

His next words burst forth like a call for help from a drowning victim, "Why are all of the assignments based on my ability to write down my thoughts anyway? It would

be much more efficient to speak to the professors and dialogue with students in class instead of writing it out. Furthermore, once I finish seminary, I will likely be evaluated by others based on how I communicate orally instead of in print." Hopelessly, he sighed, "I feel like quitting school all together!"

Unfortunately, this student is not alone. The above fictional story is based on many conversations with seminary students who are oral learners. In a study over a 9-year period, 53.5 % of seminary students preferred oral learning compared to print learning. These are bright and dedicated students called by God for ministry, yet they prefer to learn and be transformed by oral means compared to print means.

Walter Ong (1982) used the term "secondary oral" learners to describe these students. In the 1980s, Ong observed that a new learning preference called "secondary orality" was occurring

due to recent technological advances such as television, radio, movies, etc. Secondary oral learners are those who have the ability to read and write, but they prefer to learn or process information by oral, rather than written, means, aided by electronic audio and visual communications (Lovejoy and Claydon 2005, 63–64). Rick Brown (2004) describes this historic shift as follows:

A general trend in history has been the progress from primary orality to some literacy with residual orality, and from then in some cases [e.g., U.S. academia] to a print-oriented culture. The modern trend is to move on to secondary orality, to a post-literate or multi-media culture...

Whereas previous generations in U.S. seminaries assumed that print-based means of teaching and assessing were effective to produce student learning and transformation, many contemporary students prefer to learn through oral means. Jonah

Sachs observed that contemporary learners are now accessing information through digital means, and they are exhibiting the characteristics of oral learners. As a result, he described these secondary oral learners using the term “digit-oral” as follows:

The oral tradition that dominated human experience for all but the last few hundred years is returning with a vengeance. It’s a monumental, epoch-making, totally unforeseen turn of events . . . our new digital culture of information sharing has so rejected the broadcast style and embraced key elements of oral traditions, that we might meaningfully call whatever’s coming next the digital era. (2012, 20)

While some have called this learning preference the “21st Century Literacy” (NMC 2005), the roots of this learning preference stretch far back into oral cultures. At one end of the continuum, primary oral learners cannot

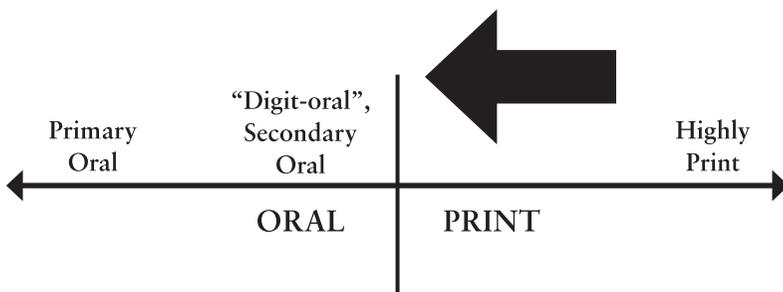


Figure 1. Shift in learning preference from print to oral.

read or write. At the other end of the continuum, there are highly print learners. In between, there is a range of learning preferences. The secondary oral learners fall near the middle, as they shift from a print to an oral learning preference as shown in Figure 1.

In this article, I will do two things: (1) describe the design of a 9-year research project among seminary students to quantify their preference for oral vs. print methods of learning and assessment and (2) summarize the data that demonstrates an increasing preference for oral learning of seminary students compared to the print learning preference of seminary faculty.

Background of Seminary Students Assessed

Over a period of nine years, 281 seminary students were assessed and observed in the classroom. The students came from various cultural backgrounds, as shown in Table 1:

Cultural Background	% of Students
African	4.6
Asian	6.8
Native American	1.8
North American	86.1
South/Central American	0.7

Table 1. Student Cultural Backgrounds.

The students were enrolled in the following degree programs:

Degree Program	% of Students
DMin	3.2
DMiss	0.7
MA/MDiv	87.5
North American	8.5

Table 2. Student Degree Programs

All of the students were enrolled in classes taught at Sioux Falls Seminary or Asbury Theological Seminary.² As evidenced above, the students were from diverse cultural backgrounds, and they were in various programs of study. The most common demographic or “typical student” studied, however, was a Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Divinity (MDiv) student from North America.³

Keep in mind that all of these students have completed an undergraduate degree (or the equivalent); therefore, they *can* read and write since they have completed the rigorous admissions standards for both seminaries (as required by accreditation standards). The question is not one of intelligence; rather, the questions are, “How do students prefer to learn and have their lives transformed? How can professors accurately teach and assess the students’

learning? Is this through oral or print methods and assessment instruments?” By answering these questions, students can move from frustration to learning.

Assessment Instrument

In order to assess a person’s learning preference, an “Orality Assessment Tool” was developed by Lynn L. Abney (based on Ong’s work) for use in primary oral cultures.⁴ To test the learning preferences

of secondary oral learners in a seminary, the students were asked to complete the “Learning Preference Assessment” (LPA) as a class assignment. The students were not informed that this assignment was to assess the preference of oral vs. print learning; rather, they were told that it simply assessed their learning preference without any correlation to intelligence or IQ. Table 3 highlights a few of the differences that were assessed.

Category	Oral Learners’ Preference	Print Learners’ Preference
Dialogue	Learn mostly in dialogue with others, often communicate in groups	Learn mostly alone, often communicate one-on-one
Oral Art	Appreciate clarity/style of speech through oral art forms (e.g., stories, proverbs, songs, drama)	Appreciate clarity/validity of reasoning through interesting literature
Experience	Learn best when teaching is connected to real events, people, and struggles of life	Learn by examining, analyzing, comparing, and classifying principles that are removed from actual people and struggles (events are examples)
Holism	View matters in the totality of their context, including everyone involved (holistically)	View matters abstractly and analytically (compartmentally)
Mnemonics	Mnemonic devices like stories, symbols, songs, rituals, repetition serve as valuable memory aids	Written words can be recalled later; therefore, value brevity and being concise. Stories merely help illustrate points
Participation	Respond to a speaker and participate in a storytelling event	Read alone and listen quietly

Table 3. Summary of Differences Measured in LPA.

The assessment consists of 40 questions with opposing pairs. The score for each question ranges between 0 and 4 for a total combined score on the assessment from 0 – 160. A score of 80 or below indicates that the student has a preference for oral learning, while a score of 81 or above indicates a print learning preference. Along the continuum of oral vs. print learning preferences, the combined scores fall into the following categories:

0-25: Primary oral. Someone who cannot read and write. Alternatively, the person has great difficulty or strongly dislikes reading. Thinking is shaped in oral patterns.

26-50: Highly oral. Highly values oral learning approaches due to personality, cultural background, and life experiences.

51-80: Oral tendency. Tendency toward oral thinking and learning. Secondary oral (digit-oral) learners often fit in here, as they transition between oral and print preferences.

81-120: Print tendency. Tendency toward print thinking and learning. Person has been schooled, but does not fully interiorize print learning as the highly print learners.

121-160: Highly print. A heavy emphasis on print has shaped the person's thinking/learning in print patterns. Shaped by extensive schooling.

Assessment Results

The test results of the 281 students indicate that the largest category of students falls in the oral tendency (47.5%). Combining this group with the primary oral and highly oral students, the total number of students with an oral learning preference (LPA score \leq 80) is 53.5%.⁵ The scores are shown below in Table 4.

Learning Preference	Primary Oral	Highly Oral	Oral Tendency	Print Tendency	Highly Print
(LPA Score Range)	(0-25)	(26-50)	(51-80)	(81-120)	(121-160)
% of students	0.5	5.5	47.5	42.5	4

Table 4. Learning Preferences of Seminary Students.

To compare the learning preferences of seminary students to that of seminary faculty, faculty from the following seminaries were asked to take the LPA as part of their faculty training:⁶ Sioux Falls Seminary in South Dakota, Baptist Theological Seminary of Richmond in Virginia, and William Carey International University in California. The test results of 23 faculty showed that the largest category of faculty falls in the print tendency (69.5%). There are no faculty members with a primary oral or highly oral preference, and only 21.5% of the faculty had an oral learning preference (LPA score ≤ 80). The results of the faculty assessments are in Table 5.

Learning Preference	<i>Primary Oral</i>	<i>Highly Oral</i>	<i>Oral Tendency</i>	<i>Print Tendency</i>	<i>Highly Print</i>
(LPA Score Range)	(0-25)	(26-50)	(51-80)	(81-120)	(121-160)
% of students	0	0	21.5	69.5	9

Table 5. Learning Preferences of Seminary Faculty.

Finally, I made a visit to LeTourneau University in 2013 to meet with 32 undergraduate students who were majoring in religious studies. Since this represents the likely rising seminary freshmen class, it would be instructive to see a snapshot of the learning preference for these future seminary students. The largest category of students falls in the oral tendency (65.5%). When combined with the primary oral and highly oral students, the Letourneau students with an oral learning preference (LPA ≤ 80) is a whopping 78%. Table 6 summarizes these results.

Learning Preference	<i>Primary Oral</i>	<i>Highly Oral</i>	<i>Oral Tendency</i>	<i>Print Tendency</i>	<i>Highly Print</i>
(LPA Score Range)	(0-25)	(26-50)	(51-80)	(81-120)	(121-160)
% of students	0	12.5	65.5	22	0

Table 6. Learning Preferences of LeTourneau University Religious Studies Students.

Comparison of LPA Results

Table 7 compares the above data in one table. Notice that the oral learning preference increases from the faculty to the seminary students to the LeTourneau students. The oral learning preference in the faculty is 21.5%, while this jumps to 53.5% for the seminary students. This huge gap indicates a likely source of misunderstanding in learning assessment and methods. An even more dramatic difference is observed in the LeTourneau University students who showed a whopping 78% oral learning preference compared to only 21.5 % for the seminary faculty. Clearly, the gap between the learning preferences of faculty vs. students is widening.

Learning Preference	Oral Learners	Print Learners
(LPA Score Range)	(≤ 80)	(> 80)
% of 23 Faculty	21.5	78.5
% of 281 Seminary Students	54	46
% of 32 LeTourneau Students	78	22

Table 7. Comparing LPA scores of Faculty, Seminary, and LeTourneau Students.

To track the increase in oral learning preference over time, the LPA scores for the seminary students were recorded for each year of testing. Table 8 shows the number of seminary students and percentage of those with an oral learning preference over the 9-year period.

Test Year	# Students Tested	# Students with LPA ≤ 80	% Oral Learners
2005	55	23	42
2006	24	13	54
2007	25	14	56
2008	68	37	54
2009	39	20	51
2010	15	10	67
2011	0	#####	#####
2012	0	#####	#####
2013	55	34	62

Table 8. Seminary Students' LPA Results over Time.

The last column in Table 8 demonstrates the increase in oral learning preference over a 9-year period from 42% to 62%. Plotting the percentage of oral learners over time portrays this upward trend.⁷ A linear regression of the data demonstrates a general increase in the percentage of oral learners over the 9-year research period. See Chart 1 below.

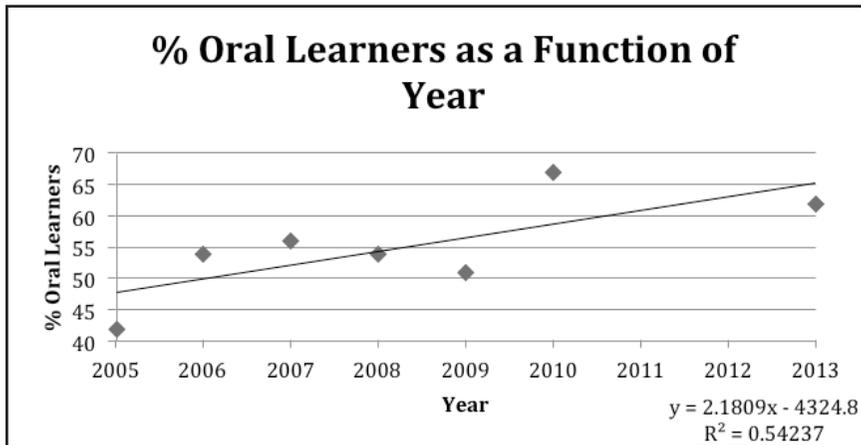


Chart 1. Seminary Students: % Oral Learners over Time.

This data suggests that there is a learning preference shift occurring in the seminary students that needs to be understood and addressed further. If faculty do not address this shift, seminary students who are gifted and called will continue to come to faculty offices with frustration.

Conclusion

The wrinkled brow and heavy sighs of frustration by the students described in the introduction are etched in my memory. These students were often defeated, questioned their own intelligence, and some even questioned their own call to ministry. I can only imagine the number of seminary students who never came to my office—they simply quit their seminary studies all together. The LPA gives an objective measure of

their preference for oral vs. print learning, which helps me to teach and assess their learning more effectively, as described by the following seminary student's email.

*Hello Dr. Moon,
 I just wanted to say thank you for the class this semester, but I also wanted to point out one element in particular that has really helped me professionally. The oral vs. literacy assessment*

has helped me understand my own learning preferences but it has also helped me understand my students. Since taking that assessment and learning what it means, I have shifted my thinking in teaching to recognize how this might affect my students of diverse backgrounds. We push the literacy model of teaching and testing and I have found that some students are having a hard time adjusting. I started to implement more story telling and oral based formative assessments to more accurately pinpoint if my students are actually learning. Paper and pencil tests do not portray the learning gains that oral students might show if they were given alternative options that fit their styles. As a result, I have seen students express what they know in new ways because of the adjustments I am making. There are many other elements

of the class that have helped me, but this one has made the most immediate impact in my teaching. My point is...Thank You. I am a better teacher because of this simple assessment.

Sincerely, Blair

Blair is recognizing the secondary oral learning preference shift that Ong first observed in the 1980s. Ong, however, had no idea that the explosion of digital media was just around the corner. The small flame of secondary oral learning has blazed into a brush fire of digit-oral learning. This has led to a significant increase in those who learn best and are most likely transformed when learning comes through oral means. Recognizing and adjusting to this oral learning preference can help move oral students from frustration to understanding.

¹Portions of this article were first printed in another article by the author. See Moon 2013.

²From 2005-2013, I taught Intercultural Studies classes at both seminaries. Dr. Terence Mournet taught New Testament classes at Sioux Falls Seminary for part of this time and conducted the same research. While I have an oral-learning preference, Mournet has a print-learning preference. Our hope is that both perspectives will inform and balance each other in the research.

³While we tried to gather as diverse a group as possible, we were limited by the students that were in the classes. I am proposing to do further studies to determine the effect of cultural background on oral vs. print-learning preference.

⁴This assessment tool was based on Ong's work "Orality and Literacy." See <http://orality.net/media/420>. The assessment was adapted by removing the category titles "Oral Communicators" and "Print Communicators." The research was then applied to seminary students instead of a primary oral audience; therefore, the learning style categories and descriptions were also adapted.

⁵This is the average of all of the scores over the 9-year test period. All of the percentages in the following data are rounded to the nearest 0.5%.

⁶For a further description of a faculty consultation by the author, see Moon 2013.

⁷The dips and spikes in the graph show that the data is not entirely consistent, but the linear regression indicates an overall upward trend. Further research should be conducted with larger sample sizes.

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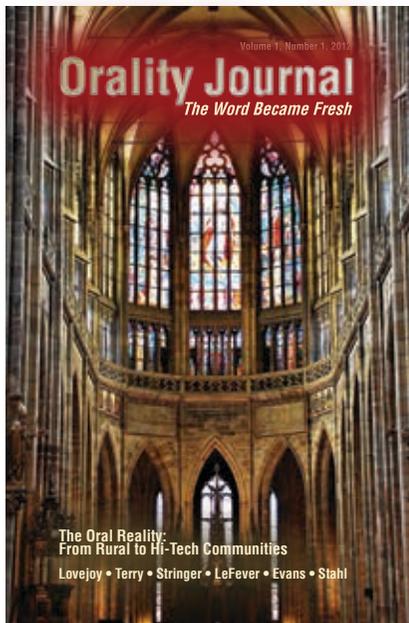
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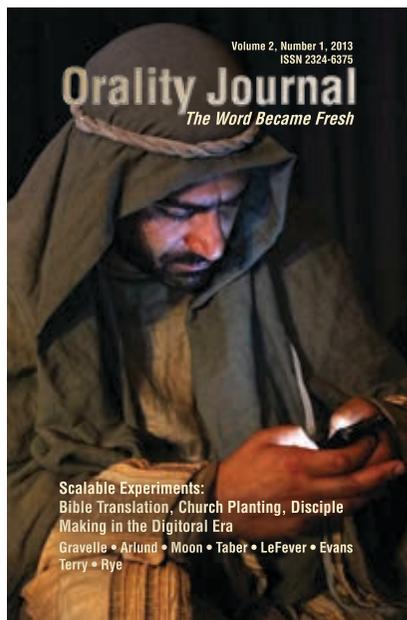
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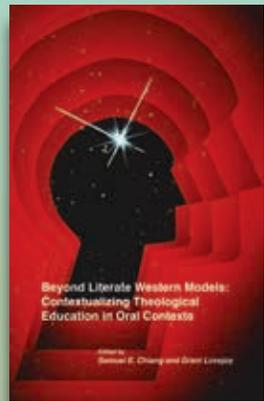
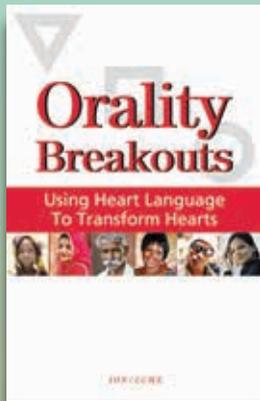
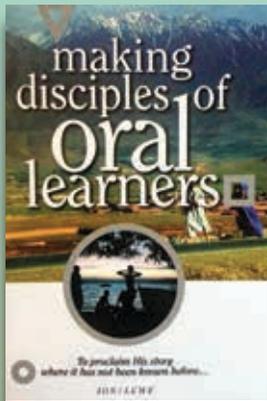


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