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RACIAL AFFECT IN READING COMPREHENSION.
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THREE FIFTH-GRADE CLASSES OF ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED NEGRO CHILDREN, EQUATED ON INTELLIGENCE AND READING ACHIEVEMENT, PARTICIPATED IN A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF VARYING AMOUNTS AND TYPES OF RACIAL CUEING ON AFFECTIVE SETS TOWARD THE PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST IN A CLOZE TYPE READING SELECTION. ALL THREE CLASSES READ THE SELECTION, BUT CLASS A WAS PRESENTED PICTURES OF THE INTERACTION OF THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERS WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH PEERS. CLASS B HAD SINGLE PICTURES OF THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERS ONLY WHO WERE IDENTIFIED AS A NEGRO PROTAGONIST AND A WHITE ANTAGONIST, AND CLASS C DID NOT RECEIVE ANY RACIAL CUEING. EACH CHILD RATED THE PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST ON A SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE ADAPTED FROM OSGOOD'S SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL. IT WAS FOUND THAT THE CLEAR IDENTIFICATION OF THE RACIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST AND THE USE OF SINGLE PICTURE CUES RESULTED IN A POSITIVE RATING OF THE PROTAGONIST AND A NEGATIVE RATING OF THE ANTAGONIST. CLASS B ALSO USED MORE EXACT LANGUAGE TO ACHIEVE CLOSURE. THE USE OF PICTURE CUES ONLY AND THE LACK OF RACIAL CUEING, WHETHER PICTORIAL OR TEXTUAL, RESULTED IN PERCEPTION OF THE ANTAGONIST AS AN IDEAL TYPE HAVING POSITIVE EVALUATION AND STRENGTH AND OF THE PROTAGONIST AS HAVING POSITIVE AND STRONG TYPE CHARACTER. CLASSES A AND C USED LANGUAGE LIMITED TO SYNONYMS AND THE GROUPS' OWN LANGUAGE TO OBTAIN CLOSURE. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE (CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 6-10, 1968). (NS)

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RACIAL AFFECT IN READING COMPREHENSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if three groups of Negro fifth grade children, given varying amounts of picture cueing, would have differential affective sets toward the protagonist and antagonist in a cloze type reading selection.

A secondary purpose was to ascertain if the racial orientation of the pictures served to aid the comprehension process of the reader, as reflected in the cloze score.

Three fifth grade, all Negro classes, a total of 96 children from a population classed as economically deprived, comprised the sample. The classes were equated on intelligence and reading achievement score.

The three classes were presented a story in which the Negro protagonist was the dominant, positive figure and the white antagonist was unfriendly and ineffectual in his relationships with his peers. Neither figure was identified by race in the story text.

Class A received five pictures of game-like interaction of the two main characters with each other and with their peers, but were not told anything about the pictures.

Class B received pictures of the main characters only. The Negro character was clearly identified as the protagonist. The white character was clearly identified as the antagonist. No interaction between the characters was indicated.

Class C read the written selection but did not receive any racial cues, either in the form of pictures or in the story text. All three classes read the story from which sixty adjectives, verbs, and nouns, in equal ratio, had been deleted. On completing the story each subject rated the protagonist and antagonist on a seven point, 12 semantic differential scale using adjective pairs from Osgood's Semantic Differential.

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It was hypothesized that the group having the picture cueing would achieve the highest mean cloze score. The expectation was that this group, upon seeing the protagonist in the story was a male of their same ethnic group and chronological age range, would relate to the principal story character. In turn, the rating given the protagonist on the 12 Semantic Differential scales was expected to be lower since it was postulated that the lack of picture cueing would handicap the class' affective dimension behavior. It followed that the lower motivation was expected to produce a lower cloze score and, possibly, a less well-defined rating for the protagonist on the Semantic Differential scale.

White, Kingston, and Weaver, in three studies, used 12 specific bipolar adjectives of Osgood's Semantic Differential to define the relationships of judgments of self-concept and concept of a story protagonist. The reader's concept of self proved to be reliable in predicting affective measures of the protagonist in the selected reading passages.

Responses of the children rating each of the person concepts of the protagonist and antagonist were factor analyzed by the principal components solution. Factors with latent roots greater than one were preserved for rotation. The emerging factors were rotated to the varimax criterion, and factor scores were determined for all subjects from the rotated factor structures representing the protagonist and antagonist.

Three general semantic factors emerged, which have been cited by Osgood, and many others, as Evaluation, Potency, and Activity.

However, these semantic factors were much less clearly defined than was true of studies by Kingston, White, and Weaver (1967-1968) in which undergraduate students comprised the sample. It appears that fifth grade Negro students may lack the power to clearly define the twelve adjective pairs, resulting in more diffuse

behavior while rating the person concept by the Semantic Differential. It is significant that in Class B, those presented the single picture of the protagonist and antagonist, perceived the protagonist as fast, happy, sharp, and moving person concept, as inferred from the "activity" factor. The antagonist, on the other hand, was perceived as having negative evaluation with inferences of small, thick, bad, and unfair behavior. They did perceive the antagonist as having some dynamic qualities.

In contrast, Classes A and C perceived the antagonist as a more ideal type boy, having very positive evaluation and strength. The protagonist was rated as having a positive and strong type character.

A canonical correlation analysis was performed between cloze test scores and Semantic Differential factor scores. The results suggest a correspondence between the affective dimensions of the semantic ratings and variations in the students' abilities to cloze using exact meaning, synonyms, or other acceptable phrasing that would indicate the student understood the passage.

From the general canonical correlation analysis, one of the striking inferences was that Class B, that rated the protagonist in a more positive manner, used a significantly larger amount of exact words in achieving cloze. Classes A and C depended primarily on synonyms and their own group's language in order to successfully cloze on the criterion passage. It is hypothesized that the additional help given Class B in identification of the story principals by race and name resulted in more exact language usage.

However, it is unsure why presenting the full range of pictures to Class A did not cue off sufficient identification on the part of the reader to produce higher exact cloze scores for this group.

The results suggest a correspondence between the affective dimensions of the semantic ratings and cognitive components expressed in the cloze procedure. The canonical analysis appears to support the idea that cloze scores and Semantic Differential ratings belong in the same system of relationships.

Finally, one thesis emerging from this study is that Negro intermediate grade students apparently need books in which the principal protagonist is described as being a Negro and is also identifiable in the story as having the positive qualities our society cherishes. There seems the need for more direct use of the terms Negro and white in the story content.

Based on this idea a study is in process investigating the affective meaning children obtain from reading stories in which the protagonist and antagonist are racially identified in the printed text.

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