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ABSTRACT

In discussing instructional approaches to reading, this book offers several definitions of reading and discusses teaching techniques, including early methods, the basal approach, and recent trends, among them the phonics approach, the linguistics approach, the language experience approach, the initial teaching alphabet, individualized reading, concept development, and programmed and multi-media approaches. A section on reading research considers meaning-emphasis programs, code-emphasis programs, other instructional approaches, and the problem of definitive research. Implications for the classroom teacher are briefly outlined and selected references are included. (LL)

What Research Says to the Teacher

Reading: Instructional Approaches

by Sheralyn S. Goldbecker

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps because reading is such an indispensable tool with which to gain access to the knowledge that society possesses, it has been the most researched and analyzed—and as a result, often the most controversial—of our educational system's instructional areas. Even at a time when multi-media approaches to learning have been proposed as a means of assuring effective teaching and learning, reading remains a key factor in learning and communicating, in solving problems and forming new concepts, in gathering knowledge for future careers, in seeking recreational enjoyment. Parents—and society as a whole—are more concerned than ever before that all students can read adequately in order to fully participate in our complex and highly developed society. And they are looking to the classroom teacher to provide students with the skills necessary to achieve this goal.

WHAT IS READING?

In searching for a definition of reading and the skills that the reading process entails, the controversy between the advocates of different approaches to reading instruction becomes apparent. And this is only natural because the way in which one defines and interprets a goal—in this case, reading proficiency—determines the steps that one will follow to achieve this goal.

Generally, opinions on the nature of beginning reading can be divided into those that emphasize reading for meaning from the initial stages of instruction and those that emphasize "decoding"—teaching the student to decode the visual alphabetic symbols first, with meaning following naturally from this process at a later stage.

The following three viewpoints of the reading process exemplify the former approach.

The proponents of the basal reader type of instruction largely accept a definition of reading such as that proposed by William S. Gray who classified reading into four components: word perception or recognition, which would also include pronunciation and meaning; comprehension and interpretation of the concepts that are conveyed to the reader by the printed words; reaction on the part of the reader to the

concepts presented; and assimilation of these new concepts with the reader's previous knowledge. (44)* Using this type of definition, it is obvious that there is little difference between reading as practiced by beginners and reading as practiced by mature readers, except in the complexity and the purpose of the material read.

George H. Henry particularly emphasizes the importance of the theory of concept development in the reading process. He finds that reading occurs within a series of logical processes—rather than involving the learning of a number of discrete skills. Beginning reading in this type of framework differs from mature reading only in the refinement of the strategies that the reader employs during *analysis* and *synthesis*—the two basic modes of thinking involved in the reading process. (58)

Advocates of individualized reading instruction are concerned primarily with reading comprehension and skills as they relate to the needs and interests of the individual student. As Lyman C. Hunt, Jr., points out, a basal reading text controls vocabulary by selecting and presenting a limited number of words that the student at a particular reading level is presumed to be capable of comprehending. On the other hand, individualized reading is viewed as a process through which the reader is given freedom to explore through reading, to pursue individually selected concepts at her/his own pace. The student learns new words not because they are part of a vocabulary list; instead she/he learns them naturally as they are presented in the context of the self-selected readings in order to get meaning from the material. And reading instruction becomes the exploration of meaning and concepts rather than a structured and intensive process of learning certain requisite skills. (62)

Next are some of the opinions of those who view reading as primarily a decoding process.

As a proponent of the extensive use of phonics in teaching reading, Charles C. Walcutt presents a definition of reading as the decoding of the visual symbols or letters into spoken words in order to obtain both an understanding of language and an appreciation of the literature and the cultural heritage behind it, all as a result of the mastery of this code. He feels that while a reading program should be especially concerned with decoding and appreciation, understanding language is

*Numbers in parentheses appearing in the text refer to Selected References beginning on p. 26.

not really within the initial function of such a program. (108)

Linguistic scholar Leonard Bloomfield also proposes a somewhat limited definition of the concept of reading as decoding—learning the alphabetic symbols—rather than initially emphasizing the importance of meaning, as has been done in the basal programs. He believes that meaning comes as the reader gains proficiency in breaking the code, as she/he masters the letters through the initial study of regularly spelled words and then words as wholes. (8)

Charles C. Fries, also a linguist, sees reading as a three-stage process involving the transfer stage from "auditory signs for language symbols" to "new visual signs for the same signals"; the productive stage during which the student's responses to the visual patterns become unconscious, and finally the imaginative stage "when the reading process itself is so automatic that the reading is used equally with or even more than live language in the acquiring and developing of experience—when reading stimulates the vivid imaginative realization of vicarious experience." (30)

These and many other definitions have been proposed for the reading process. However, whether one accepts reading as a process that should stress the importance of meaning and interpretation—that is, *mature reading*—from the very beginning or as a process that starts with the student learning to decode or master the visual symbols from which to reconstruct speech, with meaning and appreciation to come later, the ultimate goal for the reader is the same, understanding and appreciation of what is written so that these concepts can be incorporated into her/his existing knowledge.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Early Methods

Reading instruction, always a fundamental of the American education system, was exemplified during the colonial period, as well as the late 1700's and early 1800's, by the reading primers that taught students to read by memorizing individual letters, then combinations of letters, and finally complete words. This alphabet spelling method eventually gave way to the word method introduced by Horace Mann in 1840. Under this system, readers learned words by sight, and more emphasis was placed on the reader's comprehension.

Various other methods of reading instruction were employed during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Among those experiencing popularity at different times were such diametrically opposed methods as an artificial type of phonics that was used extensively for constant word analysis and the complete abandonment of word analysis in favor of having the reader learn whole words by sight through repetition.

The Basal Approach

From about 1930, the most common classroom method of reading instruction has made use of the basal reader. The basal reader approach stresses the achievement of meaningful reading from the beginning. High-frequency words are presented first with careful vocabulary control. Phonics and word analysis are applied later, and even then only to words that the reader already knows. Pictures in the text are considered to be more important clues to word recognition than phonic analysis. The sentences, stories, and poems of the basal reader are intended to be geared to the interests and experiences of the reader so that the content will become a motivational factor along with the desire to master the skill of reading. Vocabulary is controlled solely by the meaning-frequency principle rather than by any concern for phonic regularity. In essence, the only differences between the reading the student does in the basal text and that which she/he will do throughout her/his life lie in the purpose of the reading and its complexity.

Recent Trends

Around the mid-1950s dissatisfaction with the overall success of the basal method from many quarters of society led to development of and experimentation with various new techniques for reading instruction—many of which were based on the type of decoding defined by Bloomfield and others. The primary difference in the theories of these "decoders" lay in their assumption that beginning reading, learning to decode the visual symbols for the spoken language, was vastly different from mature reading, done for meaning and appreciation.

Phonics

The return of an emphasis on phonics—either as a component of the general reading program or as the basis for an entire program itself—established the extensive and early application of the science of speech sounds as a tool in learning how to read and spell. The concern is with the reader's ability to associate letters, letter groups, and syllables with the corresponding speech sounds. Although there is concern for reading content, word recognition is stressed first, with meaning following later. The study of phonics is intended to give the reader a faster start in word recognition so that reading content need not be so watered down, since many of the critics of the traditional basal readers have indicated that strict vocabulary control on the meaning-frequency principle has led to uninteresting content in these readers, particularly at the beginning level. While supporters of the phonics approach consider illustrations in the text still to be important to motivation, they should be treated so as not to draw the reader's attention from analysis of the words.

Linguistics Approach

Linguistics is the scientific study of the origin and structure of language. As applied to the teaching of reading by Bloomfield, Fries, Wardhaugh, and many others, it emphasizes the same type of decoding found in the phonics approach. The linguistic method attempts to build on the already advanced ability each student has in the spoken language when she/he begins to learn to read. Oral reading gains new importance with the desire to transfer knowledge of spoken words to their printed equivalents. Unlike the basal and phonics approaches, however, vocabulary is controlled largely on the basis of spelling regularity so individual sound/letter correspondences can be mastered one at a time, once this process is complete, irregularities of the language are dealt with. Primary emphasis is placed on the alphabetic code because the reader already has a fairly extensive audial and oral vocabulary, and thus content and illustrations no longer have first priority. Meaning and application are thought to develop naturally as the symbolic code is broken because the early words that are learned are already part of the reader's spoken vocabulary.

Linguistic Outgrowth

Because American schools are faced with the task of educating more and more students who are non-English-speaking, and because the traditional English oriented methods of instruction have been less than successful with many of these students, linguists have recently begun to investigate approaches to *bilingual reading instruction*. In addition to attempting to change traditional attitudes toward non-English-speaking students—that they are culturally deficient, that their native language and culture are somehow inferior, that they must learn the new standard language quickly before they have even had a chance to mature in their native language—all of which can have a devastating effect on the eventual success of these students in school, proponents of bilingual-bicultural education are establishing and evaluating programs designed to help students become literate in both their native language and English, utilizing reading materials designed to relate more closely to their cultural and language experiences.

Facing a similar problem are those students such as urban Blacks who come to school speaking a non-standard dialect of English and who must learn to read from traditional texts. In attempting to help this type of student learn to read more easily, linguists have begun research in the areas of *psycholinguistics* and *sociolinguistics*, to evaluate the effects of various psychological and sociological factors, respectively, on the ability of these students to learn to read (86) Such studies have led to the development of new instructional materials that are written in non-standard dialect and that have content more relevant to the everyday experiences of these students. Thus, these students would be able to learn to read in their non-standard dialect—and experience success in a learning situation—and then this knowledge would be transferred through instruction in standard English, much in the same manner as in many bilingual experimental programs.

Language Experience Approach

Another technique stressing early mastery of the alphabetic code is the language experience method (106) Here the close relationships among reading, spelling, and writing are stressed. Reading materials are developed individually for each student based on her/his oral expressions that are written down by the teacher in the beginning

stages, then, as the student gains proficiency, she/he writes her/his own materials. Thus, there is individualization of instruction as well as flexibility of learning activities. Word recognition and vocabulary development begin early, as does phonics instruction. Overall communication skills are stressed as each student writes and reads independently, thus gaining knowledge of a basic vocabulary. Each student's unique interests and needs are a primary concern of this self-pacing type of reading instruction.

Initial Teaching Alphabet

While advocates of the linguistic method begin instruction with regularly spelled words and then gradually progress to the irregularities, Sir James Pitman and other alphabet reformers have sought to revise the alphabet itself to correspond more closely to the actual sound of the English language. Each of the 44 characters of the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i/t/a) devised by Pitman represents a single sound. After the reader uses materials written in the i/t/a for a year or so - long enough to feel confident about reading this type of material - the transfer is made to reading materials using the traditional alphabet.

Not all of the new instructional techniques proposed are based on decoding as opposed to meaningful reading from the start of instruction.

Individualized Reading

The individualized reading approach, while stressing meaningful reading before word analysis, is aimed at replacing what practitioners feel to be the generally uninteresting content of the basal reader with a variety of reading materials selected by the individual student. As with the language experience approach, however, each student progresses at her his own pace, and there is considerable flexibility of learning experiences. (88)

Concept Development

While basal readers often present short stories or poems that the student looks at one at a time, those concerned with early concept

development feel students should be more concerned with relating the various materials read to one another than with reading "skills." By fragmenting reading into groups of discrete skills, the reader can lose sight of the meaning necessary to analyze what is read, to relate this to materials read previously, and to synthesize this with the knowledge she/he already has. Reading, as taught using the concept development approach, must go beyond mere comprehension and thus bring about creative response from the reader.

Programmed and Multi-Media Approaches

Programmed instruction has provided reading materials in a different format whereby reading tasks are presented in small units. In theory, meaning, phonics, and linguistics approaches can be treated in this manner, organizing reading fundamentals into a logical progression of skills. However, the decoding approaches seem to have made more frequent use of this technique. One advantage to this method, which utilizes texts, workbooks, teaching machines, etc., to drill students in repetitious activities involving memorization, is that the teacher is freed to provide more creative instruction. And as in other methods discussed, the reader is self-motivated, moving largely at her/his own pace.

The use of various communication media has increased in recent years as teachers incorporate reading materials other than standard texts, field trips, motion pictures, filmstrips, still pictures, tape recorders, record players, and the like into the daily instruction to increase each student's background of experience. Generally the thrust of this approach has been more toward increasing comprehension and thus gaining meaning from reading, based on the principle that a student will not understand the printed word if she/he cannot associate it with real objects or their visual representations, even though the skills involved in decoding have shown her/him how to pronounce it correctly.

READING RESEARCH

With these and other new techniques competing with the once firmly entrenched basal approach to become "the way" to teach students to read better, or earlier, or whatever the objective, how is the

classroom teacher to evaluate which techniques will be the most effective in her/his particular situation? As stated earlier, there has been extensive research on reading instruction carried out during the last several decades. A look at some of the more recent studies may provide some interesting insights—perhaps because differing conclusions regarding many of these techniques make it difficult to categorize any approach as entirely successful or unsuccessful.

Meaning-Emphasis Programs

The major issue debated by proponents of meaning emphasis and those of code emphasis is the point at which meaning becomes important in the reading process. While code emphasizers feel that meaning follows once the code is broken, Yetta M. Goodman has found otherwise in her analysis of students' reading miscues (errors). Using miscue analysis to diagnose reading problems and to achieve insight into the complexity of the reading process, she concludes that words should not be introduced outside the context of language and that students should have access to all language cues—meaning, sound, and the relationship between letters and sounds—when learning to read. In discussing one student who had difficulty in comprehending the word *globe*, even though he could pronounce it correctly, she writes:

> It is more important for this child to learn the scientific concept of the word globe than to teach him the sound-symbol correspondence, its graphic identity as a word or its dictionary meaning out of the context of the written language in which is was presented. (41)

Basal Approach

Basal textbooks have been criticized by advocates of both major types of reading instruction for a number of shortcomings—for example, vocabulary controlled strictly on the basis of meaning frequency has led to uninteresting or watered-down content, and the stories are based largely on the experiences of white, middle-class, suburban students, stories that ethnic and socioeconomic minorities cannot relate to and thus be motivated to read. However, there is evidence that publishers of basal readers are attempting to alleviate this problem while maintaining the emphasis on meaningful reading.

Albert J. Harris and Milton D. Jacobson, compilers of new listings of general and technical reading vocabularies based on currently popular elementary-level textbooks, have found.

> A much less stringent control over vocabulary than formerly is characteristic of some of the new basal reading programs. . . . Thus it may be anticipated that a word list based on readers popular in 1970 may reflect this trend toward less exacting control over basal reader vocabularies. (50)

And hopefully this loosening of vocabulary control would aid in the development of more interesting and varied reading materials.

In an attempt to relate to students of all social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, publishers have also begun providing basal materials that present characters and situations more familiar to these minority groups. For example, S. Alan Cohen notes:

> Most teachers and curriculum supervisors assume that commercially published basal "sight" reader programs adequately cover the scope and sequence of skills needed to produce good readers. . . . We found that some skills are taught in the wrong sequence. . . . Some skills, such as analyzing roots and affixes, are overtaught because they lend themselves to workbook exercises better than other skills. Some are undertaught, and still others are not taught at all. [A] study, completed recently at the Yeshiva University Reading Clinic, involved a detailed behavioral analysis of the teacher manuals of three representative basal reading systems currently in wide use. Over 66 percent of the skills taught were unrelated to reading [viewed as decoding.]

However, Cohen found such basal series as the *Chandler Language Experience Readers* by Carillo et al and *The Bank Street Readers* by Black to be both popular and successful when used with urban populations. Both these series deal with the multi-ethnic urban environment and include many illustrations to motivate the reader. But despite the fact that this type of content may be more relevant for some readers, Cohen still feels that such basal programs need to be supplemented by programs to develop phonic and word attack skills. (17)

Herbert Kohl has been successful in motivating disadvantaged readers by using a wide variety of reading materials such as "how to"

manuals, bus schedules, and menus:

> The ability to master these materials increases the reader's power over his or her life and, therefore, are highly interesting to beginning readers.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Of course it is foolish to stick to one stereotyped image of the learners' culture. Though most of the materials selected may relate to the learners' perceived interests there is no harm in throwing in materials that might expose them to unfamiliar situations. (69)

L. Jean York and Dorothy Ebert, on the other hand, find it:

> . rather imprudent to discard a sequential reading program that is successful because five children cannot relate to the story. . . . other materials and methods might be selected for the five children who are not succeeding. (114)

Not totally willing to accept the theory that disadvantaged students cannot learn to read stories that they cannot relate to, York and Ebert conclude that "the problem may well be the children's paucity of verbal skills rather than the content of the reading book." (114)

Individualized Reading

While it is difficult to quarrel with the philosophy behind individualized reading, there appear to be certain drawbacks to this approach. Miles A. Tinker and Constance M. McCullough indicate that experiments with this method have produced favorable results. (105) However, though Edward R. Sipay sees certain advantages to this method, he feels that there is still need for further research to see just how effectively reading skills are being developed by this type of program. (88) Harry W. Sartain, after studying 10 classes of second-graders involved in an individualized reading program, concludes that this approach does not appear to produce better achievement than does a good basal program. (83) He also sees inefficiency as a weakness, since teachers must become involved in preparing and presenting numerous individual reading lessons each day. (82) One solution proposed by both Sartain and Nila Banton Smith (92) is the use of this individualized approach as a supplement to a basic reading program, particularly in the upper elementary levels, thus, students benefit from

the individualization of instruction, and the teacher can more effectively and efficiently provide group instruction in those skills that lend themselves to that approach

Concept Development

John H. Langer cites studies such as those by David H. Russell that have shown a close correlation between concept development in reading and vocabulary growth. Although it is difficult to find reliable methods to evaluate the type of affective thinking represented by concept development, Langer sees it to be an essential process in reading instruction: "The word-in-itself is devoid of meaning if the user has no concept for it." (73)

Henry also presents examples of how even first-graders can be successfully instructed by the use of the "spiral curriculum" that enables the reader to synthesize concepts of ever-increasing number and complexity. But he, too, sees the area of concept development as needing further investigation to develop ways of both fostering and measuring the process as an integral part of reading. (58)

Code-Emphasis Programs

There are a number of writers—Jeanne S Chall (14), Kohl (69), and Tinker and McCullough (105), among them—who emphasize the importance of phonics instruction during beginning reading. At present, the general trend seems to be to combine a phonics component with other types of reading instruction, and many instructional materials are prepared on this basis.

Lou E. Burmeister has concluded that the vast number of phonics generalizations about consonants, vowels, and phonic syllabication has burdened teachers who incorporate phonics instruction into their reading programs. And he is supported in this belief by Ronald Wardhaugh. (111) While Burmeister still urges the use of those *useful* generalizations in teaching reading:

> The teacher should always keep in mind that phonics deals with relationships between printed symbols and sounds and that phonics will be of no help to the reader interested in getting meaning unless he orally knows the word being attacked. (11)

Unless the alphabetic symbols produce sounds that in turn produce meaning for the reader, Burmeister contends that "utilizing phonic skills can be busywork." (11)

Linguistics Approach

Cohen concludes that a number of linguistic readers and workbooks have been successful in tests conducted with urban students. (17) On the other hand, Wardhaugh, after examining a number of studies where the linguistic method appears to have produced higher reading achievement than other instructional methods, proposes that there really is no linguistic "method":

> "There appears to be no more justification for talking about *a linguistic method* or various *linguistic methods* of teaching reading, particularly beginning reading, than for talking about a linguistic method or methods of teaching a foreign language. Linguistic methods are methods that linguists employ in doing linguistic research and possibly in teaching linguistics. Reading is not linguistics. It has a large linguistic content, but it also has content that is nonlinguistic; consequently, methods for teaching reading must draw on other sources in addition to linguistic ones. But such methods should build on sound linguistic knowledge. (111)

He also concludes that the reading improvement he has observed might have resulted as much from the fact that there was simply a change in the method of instruction, the very newness creating an improvement (known as the *Hawthorne effect*) as from any particular merit in the linguistically oriented reading materials. (110) However, if linguistics is used to obtain a new "perspective" on reading instruction, then linguistic research can lead to more effective teaching methods. (111)

On the other hand, A. S. Carton cautions that while application of linguistic principles to the teaching of reading can be beneficial, "No single blindly-applied method can be universally appropriate." (13)

Although research in the area of bilingual education is still in relatively beginning stages, Richard D. Arnold has cited a number of promising elementary-level experiments conducted with Mexican-Americans, Blacks, and Whites. (1) Joan T. Feeley describes several totally English-oriented programs for teaching non-English-speaking students to read, and finds them generally insufficient or ineffective.

Going on to look at bilingual programs in Mexico (involving Spanish and an Indian language) and in Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and New York (all involving English and Spanish), she contends that the results available thus far are encouraging when students are instructed and allowed to become literate first in their native language and then receive instruction in the standard language later. (28)

After studying syntax characteristics of four groups of Arizona third-graders—bilingual students scoring both high and low on the reading section of the Metropolitan Achievement Test and monolingual students in the same categories—Patricia D. Van Metre concludes:

> The children, bilingual and monolingual, who scored low on the reading test scored with little difference on the syntactic constructions investigated.
>
> At no time could any qualitative differences in the answers given by monolingual and bilingual children in response to the test items be discerned. *If children were developing at a slower rate linguistically, they appeared to be developing in the same manner, whether they were bilingual or monolingual.* (107)

Rather than linguistic differences, Van Metre feels that the reason these bilingual students are developing the way they are is the way in which they are learning two languages:

> One might posit that at times in Southwestern communities the two languages being learned by the small child are not clearly differentiated for him, since he may hear both languages spoken by the same adults in his home, and sometimes the two languages are mixed in form. Such mixture is an anticipated phenomenon resulting from the collision of two languages, but for the child first learning language and having no concept of "language" in the formal sense, his linguistic input may seem to him to be one complex system which he must process. (107)

As for a solution to this problem, Van Metre proposes:

> . . . that while children should be presented with a rich and varied linguistic input, a wide range of children's responses (language production) should be accepted and respected in order to allow for expected differences in language ability.

Furthermore, schools might play an important role in differen-

tiating for the child the two languages which he is processing by presenting one or both languages in standard form and unmixed form. Perhaps each adult in the classroom should speak only one language to the young child, English *or* Spanish, so that he is assisted in his perceptions of the two language systems. (107)

Certainly on the basis of the general lack of success of many traditional programs for non-English-speaking students, the field of bilingual education must be considered an appropriate area for further research.

The student who comes to school speaking and comprehending a non-standard English dialect faces a special problem. As Robert B. Ruddell writes:

> It is quite common that the standard form of English has received high priority in our own backgrounds, owing to parental and teacher emphasis placed upon "good English" and in turn social mobility. . . . Due to limited information available in past years, the general public often regards non-standard dialects as class markers for uneducated persons of low social status. (81)

Thus there is a reluctance among some teachers to attempt the same approach as proposed for bilingual education—that of teaching students first in their native language and then in the standard language—because in this case the "native language" is thought to be inherently incorrect. However, Ruddell points out:

> . . . the responsibility as classroom teachers to develop our own and our student's appreciation of non-standard dialects as we come to understand the highly regular and consistent nature of these language forms. (81)

Kenneth S. Goodman supports this type of approach on the basis of his study of students' reading miscues that result from dialectic differences. He proposes that when a teacher corrects such miscues, she/he is cutting students off from their linguistic competencies and causing them to lose sight of the meaning in favor of sheer word recognition accuracy; therefore, he concludes that teachers must end this type of dialect rejection if they are to succeed in teaching non-standard speakers to read. (39)

Sociolinguists have offered a number of alternatives to help these

non-standard speakers learn to read. Roger W. Shuy (86) suggests that instructional materials be adjusted to the social dialect of the student, while William A. Stewart (98) proposes that such a change in reading materials take place only in the beginning reading stages, followed by instruction using transitional materials designed to give gradual competence in the standard language.

This latter type of approach is also supported by Joan C. Baratz, who writes:

> Because of the mismatch between the ghetto child's system and that of the standard English textbook, because of the psychological consequences of denying the existence and legitimacy of the child's linguistic system, and because of the success of vernacular teaching around the world, it appears imperative that we teach the inner-city Negro child to read using his language as the basis for initial readers. In other words, first teach the child to read, and then teach him to read in standard English. Such a reading program would not only require accurate vernacular texts for the dialect speaker, but also necessitate the creation of a series of "transition readers" that would move the child, once he had mastered reading in the vernacular, from vernacular texts to standard English texts. (5)

Kenneth S. Goodman suggests still another alternative for students whose dialect does not differ significantly from standard English: students would be encouraged to read the same way that they speak. Thus, special dialect materials would not be needed, and the teacher would not attempt to change the children's dialect. (33) However, Joseph A. Fisher finds this alternative unsatisfactory for three reasons: (1) Continued use of standard texts will give the students a sense of rejection of their language; (2) More than a permissive attitude toward pronunciation is needed because of the syntactical and grammatical differences between the dialect and the standard language; (3) It would be difficult to establish evaluation criteria when students are allowed to alter pronunciation, change or drop endings, and even drop words. Because of these factors, Fisher is among those who favor reading materials written in non-standard dialect. (29)

Again, this is one of the many aspects of reading instruction that demands further investigation. James L. Laffey pinpoints one problem as that of learning to view the non-standard dialect as a different, rather than a deficit, language. Once this is accomplished, classroom

teachers will be able to make use of the theories and applications derived from further psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic research in order to improve reading instruction for the non-standard speaker. (72)

Initial Teaching Alphabet

There appears to be considerable question over the results of various programs experimenting with the i/t/a, as well as over the need to regularize English spelling in the first place.

Wardhaugh reports that experiments with the i/t/a thus far have been favorable—perhaps due somewhat to the Hawthorne effect mentioned earlier—but he still finds the evidence as a whole to be inconclusive. However, he does believe the system to be "well-thought-out" orthographically, "one of the more successful attempts to reform English spelling for a specific purpose." (111)

Tinker and McCullough caution educators to look beyond enthusiastic reports of achievement for further evidence of the advantages of such a system, the permanence of the reading gains, and the ease of the later transfer to traditional spelling:

> Several experiments using the i/t/a for initial reading and for remedial teaching are underway in both England and the United States. . . . It has already been noted that after two or three years of instruction differences in the reading levels of i/t/a students and those taught traditional orthography were smaller or nonexistent. However, since children who have used i/t/a seem to excel in word recognition and usually after three years are not reading below the level of children using the traditional alphabet, it seems that the i/t/a should receive further consideration, including several more years of careful experimentation to gather conclusive evidence on just how effective it really is. . . . (105)

Wardhaugh (111) feels that it may be necessary to regularize English spelling somehow in order to assist in the instruction of the beginning reader, but both Cohen (17) and Kohl (69) question the necessity of making English phonetically consistent for this purpose. Kohl, in particular, sees English spelling irregularities as presenting no significant problem. Utilizing Caleb Gattegno's chart of the 47 sounds in spoken English and the possible letter combinations that represent each sound (32), Kohl finds only about 150 distinct spelling varia-

tions. Because this is a finite number, he concludes that these irregularities can be mastered—and certainly this is a much easier task than that facing students of languages such as Chinese that involve much more complex and numerous symbols than English

Other Approaches to Instruction

Programmed Instruction

In looking at programmed instruction at the elementary level, Edward Fry finds support for the belief that computers, talking typewriters, and other teaching machines can provide beginning reading instruction. But also finds "no proof. . . that programmed instruction can do any more for beginning reading than regular classroom teaching or human tutoring." (31)

Nila Banton Smith reaches a similar conclusion when she states:

> Computers can, no doubt, be helpful in establishing certain elements of skill that require practice. But to teach other essential processes of reading, such as getting meanings from word symbols arranged in sentences, interpretation, critical reading, and appreciation, which do not lend themselves to predetermined answers, oral dialogue, mental interaction, and exchanges of thoughts are required. (79)

Multi-Media Instruction

While audio-visual methods of instruction have generally been thought of as a means for enriching the classroom experience, caution is even urged here when applied to reading instruction. While involved with the CRAFT Project examining reading among disadvantaged Blacks in urban areas, Albert J. Harris observed the use and the resulting effects of a variety of audio-visual materials including tape recorders, overhead projectors, filmstrips, and cameras. Harris found that if teachers were well trained in using the equipment, audio-visual procedures did aid in developing reading skills. "However, for teachers who had not been carefully trained in audio-visual teaching, the more time spent with audio-visual procedures, the worse the reading test results." (49)

The Problem of Definitive Research

In 1967, Jeanne S Chall concluded that code-emphasis programs were superior, at least in the beginning stages, to meaning-emphasis programs as far as overall reading achievement is concerned. (14) In testing Chall's conclusions as part of the Cooperative Research Program in First Grade Instruction (9), Robert Dykstra reaches the type of conclusion that many others appear to have reached regarding the various types of reading programs. Although he has gathered evidence that generally supports Chall's theories.

> There is no clear evidence that the early emphasis on code per se is the *only* or even the primary reason for the relative effectiveness of the code-emphasis programs. . . . The possibility exists that some other characteristic of these programs (higher expectations of pupil achievement, for example) may be a more crucial element in determining pupil achievement than the emphasis on code-breaking. It is also possible that some particular combination of factors within the code-emphasis programs accounted for their effectiveness. There is some evidence for this conjecture in that the various code-emphasis programs did not appear to be equally effective. (26)

The U S Office of Education has sponsored a number of widely publicized Cooperative Reading Studies. And as the results of these studies are quoted for various purposes, Sipay warns the teacher to be aware of the limitations of such research Among these limitations, he lists lack of control of implementation of programs by individual teachers, lack of clearcut definitions of programs, the effect of teachers, instructional settings, and tests used for evaluation; the influence of the Hawthorne effect, and the fact that long-range effects have not been determined. (89)

Perhaps Dykstra has pinpointed a problem with research into the effectiveness of reading instruction techniques that seems to have resulted in a general unwillingness to totally accept one specific method to the exclusion of all others:

> The major types of programs which were compared differed in a number of respects in addition to the varying emphases on code and meaning . Unfortunately, studies of this nature compare *one complex* of instructional factors with *another complex* of instructional factors, thereby making it impossible to isolate the single

characteristic (if indeed there is one) which makes one program more effective than another. (26)

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

And so the debate continues among the meaning emphasizers, the code emphasizers, and those who fall somewhere in between, seeking to combine both aspects into an effective reading program. But what does all this mean to the classroom teacher who is faced with the necessity of actually putting some sort of program into effect in everyday instruction?

Generally, research seems to lead to two possible conclusions thus far—both of which point to the classroom teacher as the ultimate determinant of success in any type of reading program.

Eve Malmquist states that:

> Research has shown that there does not exist one method of reading which is best for all children. Rather, teachers should look for some proper combination of methods best fitted to each child. More research is needed, however, in order to identify procedures for teachers to match appropriate methods to the aptitudes, skills, and interests of each child. (76)

This same conclusion is expressed by Ethel M. King: "One thing is certain, no one method of teaching reading will prove equally effective for all pupils in all schools by all teachers." (66)

And apparently there is one variable in the process of teaching students to read that is both vital to success and within the control of the individual teacher. According to George D. Spache:

> our reading research into the effectiveness of various instructional methods in classroom or remedial situations is often pointless. Such comparative research tends to ignore the fact that the dynamic practices of the teacher and the kinds of teacher-pupil interactions she promotes are the most important determinants of pupils' achievements. The collected results of the large scale First Grade Reading Studies . . . strongly reaffirm this fact. Hardly any real differences in pupil achievement were found in comparisons among

a half-dozen different approaches in carefully equated populations [9]. Rather, in almost every study, achievement varied more from one teacher's classroom to the next than it varied according to the methods or materials employed. (94)

Tinker and McCullough find that experimental classes usually show greater achievement than control classes, no matter which instructional technique is used. However, they feel that the teacher's drive and determination during the experimental stage—whether or not she/he is a highly skilled reading teacher—is a greater factor in students' progress than the actual teaching method employed. (105)

King indicates that the differences in teaching styles and professional competencies among teachers have a definite effect on achievement. (66) In fact, according to Malmquist,

> Many studies indicate that the teacher is a more important variable in reading instruction than are the teaching methods and instructional materials. Nevertheless, reading research has not yet succeeded in identifying the characteristics of effective reading teachers. (76)

There are many questions left to be answered about how students learn to read and what can be done to facilitate this process for each student, no matter what needs, skills, or interests she/he brings to the classroom. Since none of the techniques so far developed appears to be the ultimate answer to reading success, the answer may lie in a combination of existing procedures or even in a totally new procedure as yet undeveloped or untested. Perhaps more important areas for further investigation would include recommendations on specific techniques for successfully meeting each student's needs in learning to read and specific competencies needed by the classroom teacher to bring about effective reading—rather than continued comparison of overall approaches to reading instruction. However, the salient point remains that no reading program operates by itself. The teacher is still the single catalyst who can determine success or failure of a reading program, no matter where its emphasis lies.

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