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SLATTON, Thomas D., 1938-
A COMPARISON OF THREE STRATEGIES AND TEACHER
INFLUENCE ON BEGINNING READING SKILL
ACHIEVEMENT.

The University of North Carolina at
Greensboro, Ph.D., 1977
Education, elementary

A COMPARISON OF THREE STRATEGIES AND

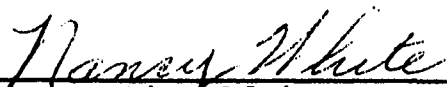TEACHER INFLUENCE ON BEGINNING

READING SKILL ACHIEVEMENT

by

Thomas D. Slatton

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1977

Approved by

Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Adviser _____

Committee Members _____

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December 2, 1977
Date of Acceptance by Committee

December 2, 1977
Date of Final Oral Examination

ii

SLATTON, THOMAS D. A Comparison of Three Strategies and
Teacher Influence on Beginning Reading Skill Achievement.
(1977)
Directed by: Dr. Nancy White. Pp. 71.

This study is an investigation of the use of three
different methods of teaching beginning reading by each of
six teachers to equal numbers of elementary students of
similar social and economic backgrounds.

The three systems utilized included the Ginn 360
Basal Reading Series, the Wisconsin Design for Word Attack
Skill Development, and the Van Allen Language Experience Pro-
grams. All teachers participated in in-service workshops
conducted by this writer.

The pre- and posttest experimental design spanned a
ten-week period. Gains in reading achievement were compared
among systems utilized and among teachers participating.

Results indicated that there was no significant dif-
ference in achievement due to a particular instructional
method used. However, results supported the fact that
individual teachers accounted for significant differences in
reading achievement.

It was concluded that gains in reading achievement by
students in the primary grades is not dependent on the
method utilized to teach reading. Rather, gains are attribu-
table to individual differences among teachers.

Suggestions for further research included the isola-
tion of the less quantifiable personality factors of
teachers to provide a closer match of teacher and pupil,
wherever possible, to maximize success.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher wishes to acknowledge several individuals whose efforts were helpful in designing and completing the present study.

An especial appreciation is expressed to Dr. Nancy White, Associate Professor of Child Development and Family Relations, dissertation adviser and committee chairman, for her encouragement and guidance.

Acknowledgment is also extended to Dr. James Watson, Chairman, Child Development and Family Relations; Dr. Wayne Ladd, Assistant Professor of Health and Physical Education; Dr. Patrick Mattern, Assistant Professor of Education; and Dr. Elisabeth Bowles, Associate Professor of Education.

An expression of thanks is offered to my mother and my late father for the value they placed on education.

Finally, to Roslyn, Cindy, and Monte a sincere expression of graditude is extended for their love and support throughout this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most educators who teach reading agree that the cognitive stage of intellectual functioning must be successfully developed in order for a child to achieve adequately in beginning reading (Pulaski, 1971). Simple basic cognitive processes that rely upon formulation of logical patterns include recognizing classes, associating with prior learning, reversibility of thought, using symbol systems and reasoning inductively (Pulaski, 1971).

Recent statistics from the United States Office of Education (1974) support the contention that reading instruction has failed to meet the needs of American youth. The drop-out rates, supported by the numbers of citizens unable to function at basic literacy levels, indicate a need to research the strategies utilized in all reading instruction. Beginning reading instruction is of prime importance to combat such problems. Halloway (1973) pointed out that current school practices are to blame for some of this illiteracy.

In 1968 Maslow proposed as a basic tenet of a theory of development that behavior is determined to a large extent by a person's basic needs. Elementary physiological and psychological drives, such as nutrition, self-esteem, and feelings of safety, must be recognized and satisfied before

more formal reading education can be instituted. Even
though federal school lunch, breakfast, and preschool pro-
grams have attempted to fulfill these needs, schools con-
tinue to channel sensitive, individual students into reading
classes on the basis of age and tradition.

It is therefore left to the individual classroom
teachers to work with a multiplicity of problems brought by
students to the reading situation. The range of these prob-
lems is extensive. Yet, at the core, one must adhere to the
advice of Donald Quick (1973) that ". . . educators should
continue to gain insight into the necessity, relevance and
importance promoting positive self concepts among young
learners in the classroom" (p. 79). Support from Wylie
(1973), Coopersmith (1967), Combs (1959), and Purkey (1966)
suggested that there are positive correlations associated
both with promoting positive self-concepts and with provid-
ing an educational setting that will stimulate achievement,
motivation, and the academic progress of the learner (Quick,
1973).

Not only must researchers be concerned with the prob-
lems and processes involved in the teaching of beginning
reading, they must be aware of the psycho-social results of
their own interpersonal relationships with students. In
order to enhance self-concept development, it has been argued
(Health, Education and Welfare, 1975) that professionals must
teach teachers about how self-concept develops and how to

handle inappropriate behaviors so that focus is on the behavior, not on the child. It has been nationally validated in this same study that improving self-concept and increasing the rate of academic growth can be achieved among children whose views of self and school have been negative.

Thus, one cannot investigate only the method of teaching beginning reading to ascertain potential weaknesses in reading instruction as a cause for functional illiteracy in this country. One must investigate the development of positive self-concepts which change undesirable behavior. Educators cannot overlook the role of the teacher in this process. Influences come through teachers (Nathier, 1976) and by way of teachers (Brown, 1976).

The problem, thus, is intertwined with focus on method utilized in beginning reading instruction and effect of teacher influence in the reading process. Any investigation into results achieved by any particular initial reading method must be coupled with adequate provision for the role and concomitant influence of the reading teacher.

The purpose of this research was to investigate two facets of beginning reading skills. Specifically, the study focused on three methods for teaching beginning reading skills and on the influence that six teachers had on student achievement.

The 6 by 3 factorial design was utilized in an effort to gain insight into the present problems of poor reading

peformance on the part of many citizens in the United
States.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study several terms must be
defined as they relate to the methods and procedures used.
These definitions are:

1. Beginning reading skills, an array of cognitive
abilities that seem essential for the competence to begin
the act of reading. These include those skills measured by
the California Achievement Test (level I, Forms A and B),
which will be referred to in this dissertation as CAT.

2. Teaching method or strategy, a set of procedures or
an organization designed to produce successful achievement
in a given skill or topical area.

3. Highly structured program, a term used in
reference to the systematic approach that is required to
implement level A of the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill
Development which will be referred to in this dissertation
as WDRS.

4. Semi-structured program, the approach that is
required to implement Levels I through XX of the Ginn 360
Basal Reading Series, which will be referred to in this dis-
sertation as 360 BRS.

5. Un-structured program, the approach that is
required to implement Level I of the Van Allen Language
Experience Program, which will be referred to in this dis-
sertation as VLE.

An assumption was made that participating students and teachers would be regular in attendance for the entire experimental period.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this research are:

1. After completing instruction in three methods of beginning reading, the subjects will show no significant differences in the changes in reading ability.

2. Teacher influence will make no significant difference in the changes of reading ability achieved by the subjects.

Purpose

One purpose of this study was to measure the changes in reading ability among sample groups of students after experimental periods in which each of six teachers utilized each of three methods of beginning reading instruction.

Another purpose of this study was to measure the changes in reading ability among sample groups of students in order to determine teacher influence in the reading process.

Method and Procedure

This investigation involved study of six teachers using each of three different approaches to beginning reading instruction. Pre- and posttesting of students' reading ability were made by utilization of both district and nationally standardized tests. Careful anecdotal records

were kept of each teacher's performance and personality. Comparisons were made of student gains in reading according to both teaching method and teacher characteristics.

Aukerman (1971) categorized all formal beginning reading instruction into ten separate units. Three methods of initial reading instruction were selected because they were different in theory and practice. The three methods selected represented three of these categories. Selected were the WDRS, representing a highly systematic skills approach to teaching beginning reading which corresponds to Aukerman's Basic Phonemic Approach; the 360 BRS, a basal reader approach to teaching reading which relates to Aukerman's Phonemic Pronunciation Approach; and the VLE program, a highly unstructured system which Aukerman categorizes as the Language Experience Approach.

The following discussion explores the background, processes, and reasons for the selection of each teaching method.

Basal Reader Approach

The basal reader approach to teaching reading, according to Matthes (1972), is the most widely used method in the United States. Surveys indicate that between 85 and 95% of all elementary school teachers use a basal reading approach as the core of their reading program. The basal reader approach has been researched more frequently than any other method of teaching reading (Habecker, 1965). Results

of research indicated that the basal reading approach is a carefully designed, elaborately constructed tool for the teacher to use (Matthes, 1972).

The basal reading approach has been built around a coordinated series of materials that attempt to provide a systematic and sequential development of reading proficiency (Matthes, 1972). The basal reading approach is concerned with all aspects of the act of reading (Gray, 1947).

Finally, most major publishing companies publish basal reading series. They follow the same type of guidelines, yet each company produces a unique set of materials. The content of the material is, for the most part, a collection of adaptations of old and original selections. Almost all of the selections are in a narrative style (Durkin, 1966).

Basal readers are usually produced as a set or a series of books. Many companies, such as Harper and Row, Holt Reinhart and Winston, and Scott Foresman, produce readers through grade nine; and the usual format has been one book per grade per year (Ragan, 1966). However, in 1977 teachers are encouraged to allow students to advance at their own rate. This is apparent by the many levels that are included in major texts such as Ginn, MacMillan, et al. Each reader is accompanied by a teacher's guide or manual, explaining the program as produced by the editor and authors. The manual explains in detail how to use the materials day by

day and page by page. The guide suggests skill activities, often in the form of a Directed Reading Teaching Activity, and a workbook is usually provided for skill practice (Strang, 1962). This activity, known as a DRTA, usually takes the following form:

    I.   Introduction

        A. Story Discussion
        B. Vocabulary Introduction

   II.   Directed Reading

        A. Questions (oral)
        B. Silent Reading
        C. Discussion (oral)

  III.   Oral Reading

        A. Questions
        B. Guided Oral Reading

   IV.   Skill Development

        A. Word Analysis
        B. Interpretation Skills
        C. Vocabulary Development
        D. Practice of Skills (worksheets)

    V.   Supplementary Activities

        A. Broaden Horizons
        B. Special Events

Matthes (1972) stated that all basal reader approaches focused on three objectives: scope, sequence, and organization. In 1968, Robinson outlined lists of advantages and disadvantages of the basal approach. Some of his major points are summarized.

    <u>Advantages</u>. The following is a list of advantages that the basal reader offers.

1. Comprehensive reading programs provide systematic instruction from pre-readers through upper elementary grades.

2. Teachers' guides provide suggestions and a step-by-step outline for teaching that are helpful for the beginning teachers.

3. The reading skills are presented in a systematic order.

4. The materials are sequentially scaled in difficulty.

5. The selections are good reading choices, illustrated by selected artists.

6. The continuity of characters, especially in beginning readers, helps the child to become familiar with the material and causes more confidence in reading.

7. Often the content of the material deals with experiences and interests common to the child in the reading situation.

8. Core vocabulary is established.

9. This approach provides diagnostic tools.

10. Preparation of the materials is usually the work of several experts in reading.

11. A basal series allows the teacher flexibility in dealing with individualized differences.

Disadvantages. The following is a list of disadvantages that the basal reader offers.

1. The approach may contribute to a sterotyped form of reading.

2. Often the approach strictly limits the reading done by the child to that of just the basal.

3. Basal readers and their manuals discourage individual instruction.

4. For many years, basal readers have been geared for middle-class, white suburban children.

5. The financial investment in a series is large.

6. Basal readers often fail to provide an adequate foundation for reading in other content areas.

7. The basal approach is often dependent primarily upon the visual or sight-word method. This method, however, does depend upon the company publishing the material and does not account for individual learning styles.

8. This approach may monopolize classroom time and leave little or no time for creative activities.

9. Very often the material is too difficult for the lower third of the class and, at the same time, is insufficiently challenging for the superior children.

10. Skills may be developed in isolation from the reading act, yet transfer is assumed.

Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach to teaching reading is based on the assumption that experiences encompassing all the language arts contribute to reading development

(Allen, 1963). Rubin (1975) stated that the language experience approach to reading utilizes the experiences of the children. It is a non-structured emerging reading program based on the inventiveness of both teachers and students.

Van Allen has established a set of basic premises for the language experience approach.

1. The communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are closely related.

2. Reading is completely interwoven with all the other language arts.

3. Reading is concerned with words that arouse meaningful responses based on the individual experience of the learner.

4. Words have no inherent meaning.

5. Spoken words are sound symbols that arouse meaning in the mind of the listener.

6. Written words are visual symbols that, when associated with known symbols, arouse meaning in the mind of the reader.

7. Reading develops meaning from patterns of symbols which one recognizes and endows with meaning. Reading arouses or calls up meanings. It does not provide them.

The language experience approach is a sharp contrast to the basal or programmed approach. There are no exact guidelines or materials. The language experience approach

uses the child's speech to determine the language patterns of what he will read, and the child's experiences determine the reading content. The emphasis is not on decoding the printed page, rather it is on speaking to express ideas followed by the encoding of that thought into written form. The psychology of learning to read is based on the fact that since the child is dealing with words made up of his own experiences, he will have more of an incentive to learn to read (Rubin, 1975).

Stauffer (1970) described language experience as being in sharp contrast not only to the content of pre-primers, but also to the memoriter approach to word learning. Language experience, he stated, ". . . does not require pupils to have word lists to take home. It requires a novel, vivid, different experience within the grasp of the student" (p. 12).

The comparative advantages and disadvantages of the language experience approach were summarized by Matthes (1972).

Advantages. The following is a list of advantages that the language experience approach offers.

1. It integrates the various facets of speaking, writing, reading, and listening instruction in the curriculum.

2. The importance of each child's own oral language background is recognized and utilized in printed form.

3. It helps children become increasingly sensitive to their environment by discussing and recording their experiences.

4. Language development is assured in a program that encourages self-expression in many media throughout the day.

5. This type of approach promotes confidence in language usage.

Disadvantages. The following is a list of disadvantages that the language experience approach offers.

1. It can be extremely limiting if a child only experiences his own written expressions.

2. There is no planned sequence of reading skills.

3. There is no concrete method to evaluate progress.

4. Children may have difficulty in the transition of reading and comprehending the written expression of other children or other books.

5. This approach falsely assumes that the reading, writing, speaking, and listening vocabularies of children are equally developed and can be easily transferred from one vocabulary to another.

6. The children have no real means of attacking a word that was unfamiliar to them or to their listening language.

The Systematic Approach

The four main purposes of a systematic approach to reading instruction are:

1. To identify and describe behaviorally the skills that appear to be essential to competence in reading.

2. To assess individual pupil's skill development status.

3. To manage instruction of children with different skill development needs.

4. To monitor each pupil's progress.

The design includes six elements: word attack, comprehension, study skills, self-directed reading, interpretive reading, and creative reading. Heavy emphasis is placed on skill development.

The basic framework is a management system for guiding children's reading skill development, that is, an organized approach to teaching reading skills. The major operations called for in the design are identification of essential content, statement of objectives, assessment, identification of appropriate teaching/learning activities; and evaluation. A management component has been added to bring all operations together. Graphically, these components are represented by Askov's (1972) design as shown in Figure 1.

The Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development includes all of the components that are required to implement a skill-centered approach to reading instruction based on the framework in Figure 1. With the list of essential skills as a foundation, the design includes a specific
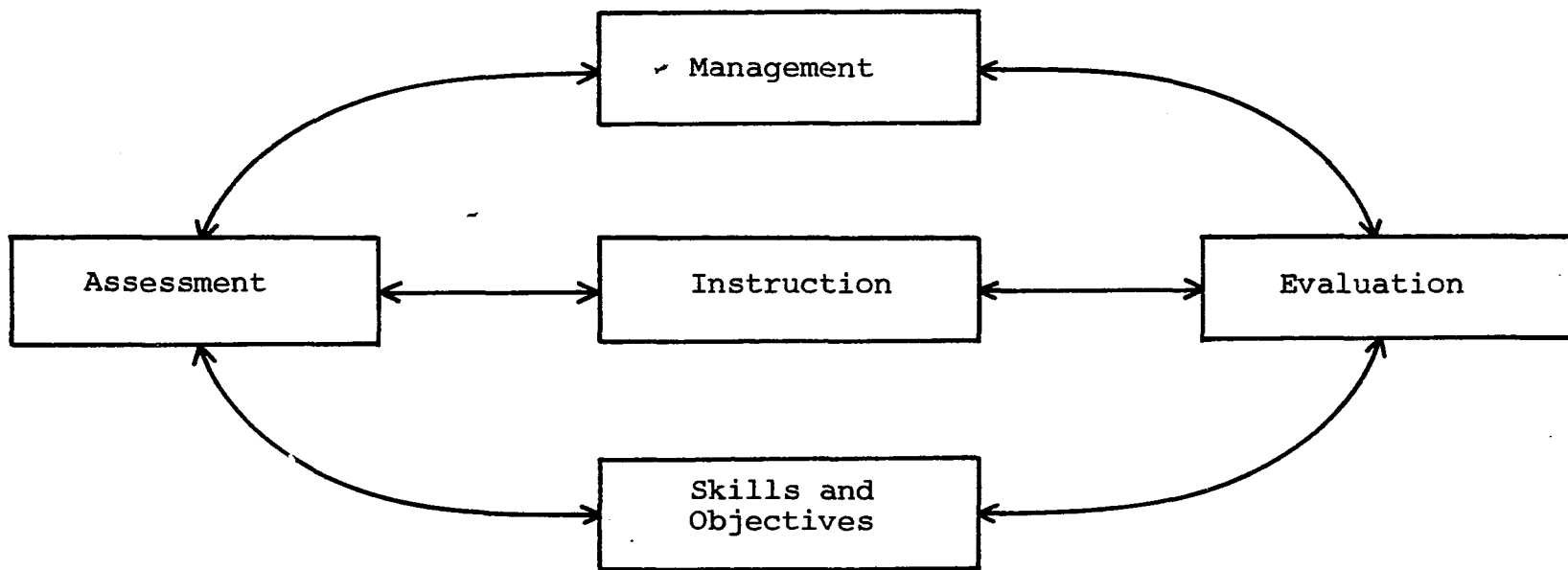
Figure 1.   Framework for Organizing Skill Development

behavioral objective for each skill in the word attack, comprehension and study skills areas and descriptive objectives for the remaining areas; machine-scorable criterion-referenced tests and/or guides to individual skill assessment for each behavioral objective; profile cards that permit the systematic grouping and regrouping of pupils according to skill development needs; and resource files of suggested published materials and teaching procedures keyed to specific skills (Appendix A). Thus, the design provides a skill-centered base for an elementary school reading program, means for focusing on individual's skill development, and a management system for both pupils and instructional materials.

In addition, manuals are provided to assist with the implementation of the design. The rationale and guidelines are addressed to central office personnel, principals, and others who will provide leadership in planning and implementation. The components included here are represented in Figure 2.

Advantages. The following is a list of advantages that the systematic approach offers.

1. The teachers are given an exact plan to follow.

2. The teachers can organize for instruction at all times.

3. Student progress is monitored very closely by record cards that are kept for each pupil.

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          ┌──────────────────────────┐
          │       Management         │
          │ Rationale and Guidelines │
          │    Teacher's Planning    │
          │                  Guides  │
          │      Profile Cards       │
          └──────────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│      Assessment        │   │                         │   │                  │
│  Wisconsin Tests of    │   │      Instruction        │   │   Evaluation     │
│            Reading     │   │ Teacher's Resource Files│   │                  │
│   Skill Development     │   │                         │   │                  │
│ Guides to Individual   │   │                         │   │                  │
│    Skill Assessment     │   └─────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
└────────────────────────┘

          ┌──────────────────────────┐
          │   Skills and Objectives  │
          │  "Outline of Reading     │
          │                 Skills"  │
          │  "Statement of Skills    │
          │        and Objectives"   │
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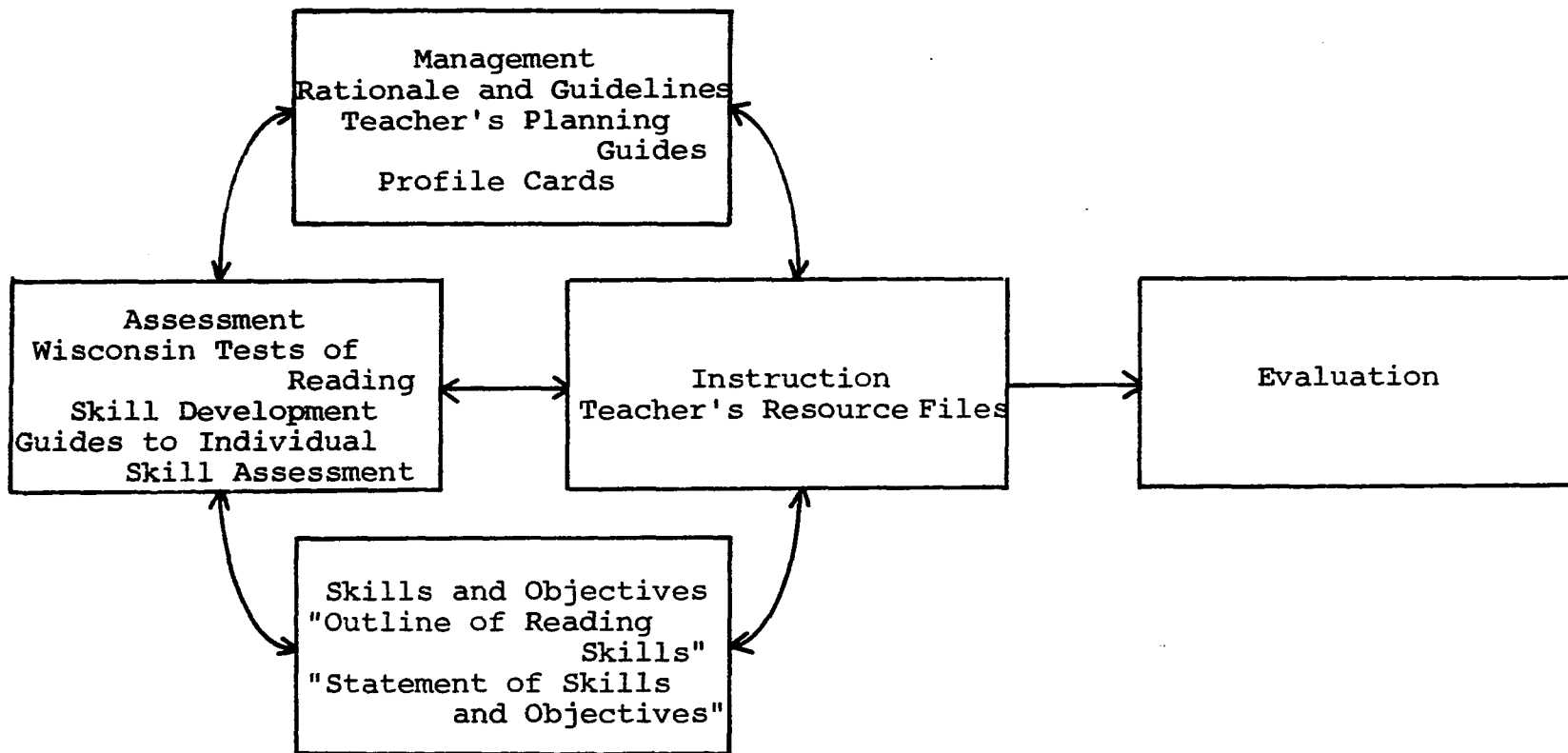
Figure 2. Design Components within the Framework for Organizing Skill Development

Disadvantages. The following is a list of dis-
advantages that the systematic approach offers.

1. Teachers lose some flexibility and become rigidly
tied to time schedules.

2. The placement tests are limited in certain cul-
tural communities.

3. The design is too word attack oriented; teachers
tend to teach only word attack skills when using the design.

Experimental Design

This study was designed to incorporate a pre-, post-
test situation utilizing an experimental period in which
three distinct types of reading instruction were presented.
This allowed the researcher to evaluate the interaction
between the method and the teacher and also to study the
influence the teachers had toward reading achievement for
the sample groups. The ten-week study was divided into
three time periods--pretest, experimentation, and posttest.

During the first week, students were pretested in
reading ability using the CAT (level 1, Forms A and B), and
the GCRT. Scores were obtained for vocabulary and comprehen-
sion levels for each subject. (Appendix B and C)

The next eight weeks were devoted to actual reading
instruction. There were six teachers each instructing three
groups of approximately nine students each for periods of
twenty-five minutes a day in the basal reader series. There
were six groups of approximately nine students each being

instructed for twenty-five minutes a day in the language experience program, while the remaining six groups of approximately nine students each were being instructed twenty-five minutes a day in the systematic program. Table 1 shows the methods, groups, and teachers in the present study.

Groups 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 used the WDRS exclusively. Groups 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17 used the 360 BRS approach to reading. Groups 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 used the VLE approach. At the end of this eight week period, the CAT (Form 1, level B) was re-administered. This week-long posttest period concluded the ten-week study. Table 2 shows the calendar for the present study.

Results were tabulated to determine changes in reading ability and the influence of the respective teachers. Statistics were examined for an indication of whether methods were responsible for reading achievement or whether teacher influence was the responsible variable. To supplement statistical results, each teacher was visited on a bi-weekly basis by this writer at which time the teacher was evaluated and rated on the Reading Teacher Observation Checklist proposed by Robeck and Wilson (1974). Table 3 shows the rating scales that were used.

Materials Utilized

This study utilized certain materials which included:

(a) CAT (Level I, Forms A and B)

Table 1

Methods, Groups, and Teachers

Teachers	Method 1	Method 2	Method 3
Teacher 1	Group 1 9 students random selection	Group 2 9 students random selection	Group 3 9 students random selection
Teacher 2	Group 4 9 students random selection	Group 5 9 students random selection	Group 6 9 students random selection
Teacher 3	Group 7 9 students random selection	Group 8 9 students random selection	Group 9 9 students random selection
Teacher 4	Group 10 9 students random selection	Group 11 9 students random selection	Group 12 9 students random selection
Teacher 5	Group 13 9 students random selection	Group 14 9 students random selection	Group 15 9 students random selection
Teacher 6	Group 16 9 students random selection	Group 17 9 students random selection	Group 18 9 students random selection

Table 2

Weekly Calendar for the Study

1 Week Pretest	California Achievement Tests Greensboro Criterion Reference Tests
2 Week	Study Begins
3	Study
4	Study
5	Study
6	Study
7	Study
8	Study
9	Study
Week 10 Posttest	California Achievement Tests

Table 3

Reading Teacher Observation Check List

Observed Conditions	Rating Scales
1. Environment for Reading	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. Levels of Instruction	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. Scope of Word Analysis	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Comprehension and Study Skills	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Oral Reading and Enrichment	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. Organization and Preparation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Attention to Specific Weaknesses	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. Techniques for Reinforcement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. Provision for Self-Direction	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. Relationship to Other Subjects	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. Aloof-Responsive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. Restricted-Understanding	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. Dull-Stimulating	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. Stereotyped--Original	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. Apathetic--Alert	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. Uncertain--Confident	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. Disorganized--Systematic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. Inflexible--Adaptable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(b) GCRT

(c) 360 BRS (Teachers' Manual for Levels I to XX)

(d) VLE (Level I)

(e) WDRS (Teachers' Guide Level A)

(f) The Wilson Robeck Reading Teacher Observation Scale.

Agency Setting

This study was conducted at Calvin Wiley Elementary School in Greensboro, North Carolina. The school was located in an inner city section of Greensboro. The school housed grades K, 1, and 2 and utilized a team teaching instructional organization. There were 17 certified teachers, 4 aides, a principal, and a counselor. Varied support services operating from the central administrative offices were available.

Selection of Teachers

The principal of the school gained permission from the superintendent of schools to allow the research to be conducted. She then invited the researcher to attend a faculty meeting at which time he presented the project to the faculty of 17 members. It was explained that six teachers were needed to carry out the research. Each teacher on the faculty was given the opportunity to volunteer to partici- pate in the study. Six teachers indicated interest and were selected. Remuneration was given to teachers for time spent in workshops. There were three black and three white teachers. All teachers were female.

Preparation of Teachers

The six participating classroom teachers agreed to become involved in six hours of in-service training. The in-service sessions were conducted by this writer prior to the experimental period to insure uniformity and validity for the study. Included in the scope of the training were directions involving the administration of the pre- and posttests, methods and strategies for successful use of the three selected beginning reading approaches, and guidelines for the construction of the reading instructional groups.

Selection and Description of Subjects

The principal of the school and the researcher took the list of all 379 students enrolled in the school and grouped them in 18 groups of nine each. One hundred sixty-two subjects were selected through the use of a random grouping method. The randomization process was done by utilizing a table of random numbers and assigning to each student a number that allowed him to be randomly placed in any one of the 18 groups of nine. This was equal to three groups of nine for each of the six participating teachers. When these 18 groups were selected from the total school enrollment, the subjects were then randomly assigned to one of the six teachers and one of the three methods. Since 21 of the original 162 had moved, 141 subjects completed the experiment. There were 68 males and 74 females. There were 39 white, 28 black, and 1 oriental males. There were 33

white, 40 black, and 1 oriental females. The average family income was less than $5,000.00 annually, and 65% of the families were on social welfare programs. The subjects ranged in age from 60 to 84 months.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of the literature of some of the major trends of teaching reading.

Trends of Reading Instruction in America

The alphabet method was the first and most widely used approach in this country to teach boys and girls to read. At that time, no age was considered critical for beginning to teach reading skills. The alphabet method was predominant in America until the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Schreiner and Tanner, 1976). Whitty (1946) pointed out the most typical style of teaching the alphabet method consisted of five steps. These included memorizing the names of the letters and identification of both the capital and small forms; spelling and pronouncing syllables of two letters; recognizing syllables of three letters; and presentation of monosyllabic words. Larger units, including phrases, sentences, and stories were then introduced. Students were also required to memorize Biblical materials. Emphasis was placed on oral reading, since those members of Puritan families who could read were required to read scripture orally to other family members (Morgenstern, 1966).

The most significant printed aid in helping students read by the alphabet method was the New England Primer

published about 1683. The Primer was designed to present the alphabet in a list of words, containing two to six syllables. The Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed usually followed. Much of the material was from the Bible; some of it was paraphrased, and some original verse was included (Whitty, 1946).

In 1647 the Auld Deluder Satan Law was passed in the state of Massachusetts. This law required children to learn to read so that the forces of Satan could be counteracted through Biblical readings. Religious training served as the cornerstone to living in the early years.

A second aid that served as a supplement to the New England Primer was the famous hornbook. The hornbook consisted of a short-handled paddle made of wood or of cardboard, four or five inches by two and a half inches in size. A leaf of vellum or paper pasted upon the paddle was inscribed with a cross and the alphabet in both capital and small letters. It often contained Biblical passages. The paper side of the hornbook was covered with a transparent sheet of horn (Whitty, 1946). A study by Schreiner and Tanner (1976) reported reading instruction with the use of the hornbook consisted mainly of nongraded progress. Each student studied at his own pace and recited individually to his teacher. There were no attempts made by the teachers to group students for reading instruction.

Increased enrollment in schools led to the introduction of the monitorial system and to a rather broad sectioning of children by levels (Morgenstern, 1966). With the advent of the general levels system, it became obvious that new teaching aids were needed. The leader in the development of these materials was Noah Webster, who constructed a series of readers under the title <u>Grammatical Institute</u>. This series was published around 1790 and was the forerunner of the famous <u>Blue Back Speller</u> (Whitty, 1946). Students used the <u>Grammatical Institute</u> much the same way they used the <u>New England Primer</u> and the hornbook. Students were taught to memorize and then to recite what they had memorized (French, 1964).

Not until 1840 did a carefully graded reader appear. This book reflected the trend toward establishing grades in schools. Lyman Cobb was the first, according to Chamberlin (1942), to compile a carefully graded set of readers in America. The most widely used series of graded readers was prepared by William Holmes McGuffey. His series of readers was used from 1836 until the 1920's and, it is estimated, sold over 122,000,000 copies (Whitty, 1946).

The alphabet method remained dominant in America until around 1828 when Samual Worchester called for adoption of the word method. Whitty (1946) explained the pattern and method of development from the late 1850's until recent times.

Despite the general acceptance of the word method,
protests were numerous. Parents became disturbed
when they discovered that children did not know the
names of letters in the words they could pronounce.
Additional criticism of the word method arose when
it was found that children taught in this manner
were unprepared to attack new words in unfamiliar
settings. To remedy this situation, phonic systems
were developed. They had been used earlier in other
countries, but they did not become popular in
America until the latter quarter of the nineteenth
century. The phonic method, however, soon proved to
have serious limitations. Educators found that
children attempted laboriously and often with little
success, to spell by sound (p. 212).

Subsequently, modifications of the phonics approach,
called phonetic system, were developed. This system
involved the process of providing a symbol for each sound.
The labor involved in trying to determine the sound caused
great concern for students because they were not learning
the meanings of words. There were also many problems with
the phonetic spelling system. Words were spelled by the way
they sounded (Whitty, 1946).

The most frequently used method for classroom instruc-
tion was the highly graded system of organization. Horace
Mann was very prominent in influencing American educators
on the Prussian Plan that advocated a highly graded approach
to teaching. Few, if any, attempts were made to make allow-
ances for either qualitative or quantitative differences in
children's talents and accomplishments (Sartain, 1968).
Morgenstern's investigations of grouping for instruction in
the elementary school proved that by the late nineteenth
century, sensitive educators had begun to urge changes that

would break the lockstep in which they found their pupils
trapped. Attempts were made to differentiate progress
rates, to differentiate curricula, and to add subjects to
that curriculum. Reading was undergoing a change from the
pure alphabet, pure phonic, pure sight word method, to a new
system of phrase, sentence, and story approaches to reading.
Whitty (1946) reported that this change had taken place
about the turn of the twentieth century and continued for
the first two decades of that century. Emphasis was placed
on cognitive processes, and oral reading was stressed.
Matthes (1972) reported that textbooks had also improved by
this time. Publishers had begun to use more readible type.
Silver Burdett and Company had produced a set of readers in
1894 written by Edward G. Ward. This set of readers
stressed the significance of the basic sight words before
beginning the teaching of phonics.

Not until World War I did silent reading gain popu-
larity. Smith (1961) determined that by this time silent
reading had become the major objective for teaching reading.
She also pointed out what she thought to be the only other
major change in reading--the creation of standardized
instruments to measure reading achievement and the develop-
ment of scientific techniques for studying reading.

Authorities had begun to advocate the use of silent
and oral reading as a combination method for reading
instruction. Betts (1946) discovered that this combination

was best used in a judicious manner. Textbooks and other
reading material had begun to feature the story theme as a
method for developing proper habit and skills for learning
to read. New basal series were promoting word lists and
many were featuring content areas of instruction.

Scientific studies concerning content and methodology
were prolific. From 1925 to 1935, twelve hundred scientific
studies were carried out that related to practically all
phases of reading, its general nature, the fundamental pro-
cesses involved, factors that influenced progress in learn-
ing to read, the realistic merits of different methods of
promoting growth, the characteristics of readable material,
and the nature and causes of reading disabilities (Gray,
1947).

These scientific studies, along with the emerging
theories on child development, brought about a plea for a
more comprehensive reading program. As the committee for
the Forty-Seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the
Study of Education reported

> A much more comprehensive program of reading
> instruction that (that which) has been provided in
> the past is needed. It is not sufficient to plan
> merely for the development of habits that underlie
> accurate recognition, speed and comprehension in
> silent reading, and fluent oral reading. Equally,
> if not more important, is the need for development
> and refinement of habits of interpretation, critical
> evaluation and application of facts apprehended
> (p. 108).

Between World War I and World War II, general reading
habits were emphasized, but specific abilities were

neglected. For example, many study guides included provision for acquiring the understanding of a central theme of a paragraph, or to note details or to follow directions in different types of selections. These guides gave very little attention to the development of proficiency in critical reading or word attack skills (Gates, 1947).

In most recent years, help given to children in school has ranged from instruction of the whole class to individual help. Fewer schools expected children to chant in unison as the teacher pointed to words in a book or on a blackboard, but one could still find a carryover. Children in small ability groups were expected to read in turn (Yardley, 1973).

A more modern approach to learning to read begins with the life experiences of the child. The abstract symbols representing those experiences are introduced, in harmony with the psychological principle that learning is experience rather than merely memorization and repetition of meaningless symbols (Ragan, 1966).

Otto suggested that objectives of the modern reading program should include extension and enrichment of the child's experiences and the creation of a broad interest and taste for reading. He also suggested that the modern reading program should include satisfactory progress in skills such as comprehension and speed (Askov, 1972).

The methods and philosophies of teaching reading in modern times are supported by reading materials that are attractively designed, colorfully illustrated, and filled with high interest materials that introduce beginning readers to a variety of well-written stories and skill reinforcement activities. Media have also become very widely used in teaching reading (Austin, 1974).

The dominant method of reading instruction involves use of the basal reader with supportive supplementary materials of many descriptions (Aukerman, 1971). Provisions for learning skills are provided in many ways. The modern program and text seek to establish interest in reading and to foster sufficient and effective reading habits. Recently Matthes (1972) stated,

> Textbooks (today) are better from the standpoint of sheer literary quality. We have passed the stage when simple exposition is considered good enough. Centerally simplicity and clarity are essential, but something more is needed. The intangible characteristics of style have been given much weight. More effort has been made to secure authors who have real ability in writing for children. Editors have been more convinced to preserve style in the editing of manuscript. The result is a more interesting textbook (p. 306).

The modern approach emphasized the need for the beginning reading process to agree with the level of material and the method that best relates to the child's experience and ability and to develop an articulation of sequential skills that will continue as long as the student needs training in reading (Austin, 1974).

Concentration today has shifted from student and textbook research entirely to the study of the influence of teacher characteristics on the teaching-learning process. The United States Office of Education (1975) has attempted to show that it is a change in teacher behavior that causes change in student behavior and concomitantly, achievement. Project "Positive Attitude Toward Learning" has been nationally validated for both improving self-concept and increasing the rate of academic growth in children whose view of self and of school have been negative. Training teachers in certain aspects of classroom and interpersonal behavior has thus caused a positive change in the direction of desired student behavior.

The importance of the role of the teacher has usually been a subject of studies dealing with remedial reading or other one-on-one tutorial situations. Rozwell and Natchez (1971) as well as Bond and Tinker (1973) have described the basic characteristics of the successful remedial reading teacher as one who embodies certain personal characteristics of sympathy, compassion, and understanding as well as solid professional training. However, little more than good training has been deemed a necessity for teachers of whole groups of children.

Some investigation has been accomplished in the field of authoritarianism. Nathier (1976) showed that teachers can actually break the social-educational cycle of

authoritarianism. Her project was designed to facilitate better tolerance among learners. More research into roles and effects of teacher behavior must be done in order to provide a better understanding of both the long and short range effects of teacher action in the classroom.

Another focal point of recent research has been the personality and background of the teachers of special or handicapped children. Lazar (1976) revealed that most students enrolled in special education teacher preparation programs began with the understanding that they had to accept the idiosyncrasies of handicapped children. Attempts to isolate which characteristics of these student-teachers caused the high compassion indices only showed that they scored in the average or normal range on self-concept scores. Again, more investigation needs to be done in an attempt to discover the actual nature of successful teachers' personal dispositions.

Nathier (1976) insisted that the school must provide influences to and through the teacher. Brown (1976) perceived teachers in different fashions. In a study involving students who did not know their final grades and who evaluated themselves and their teachers, it was shown that the ones who learned more, as evidenced by their achieving better grades and evaluations, saw their teachers as doing a better job. Therefore, students could actually ascertain specific traits in teachers and evaluate them positively.

Once again, the specific nature of these traits must be isolated through further research.

Rupley (1976) investigated ways of identifying effective reading teachers. He cautioned against a sweeping "back-to-basics" campaign without first identifying characteristics of effective teachers. It is not the method alone he cautioned, but certain, as yet undefined, traits of teachers that cause significant learning results.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study the relationship between three strategies for teaching beginning reading skills and the influence of the teacher concerning the achievement of the subjects was investigated in grades K, 1, and 2. Results relevant to the two hypotheses are reported.

The instruments used to measure reading comprehension and reading vocabulary skills were selected with the understanding that the director of testing would permit no other forms of tests to be administered to the subjects. The reliability and validity for the CAT was obtained from the test publisher. Verification can be obtained by referring to the test guide manual. The GCRT was not validated on a national scale.

An analysis of co-variance was used to analyze the data. Mean scores were used in order to elaborate on achievement growth regarding comprehension and vocabulary for each of the experimental conditions. The results of four reading observations for each teacher are also reported in this chapter.

Results of H_1

In this section the results relating to H_1, which is concerned with beneficial correlates of one method as opposed to two other methods, are presented.

H_1:   After completing instruction in three methods of beginning reading, the subjects will show no significant differences in the changes in reading ability.

In order to test the first hypothesis, three methods of instruction were manipulated among six teachers. These methods were the basal reading approach to teaching reading, the language experience approach to teaching reading, and the systematic approach to teaching reading. The GCRT and the CAT (Level I, Forms A and B) were the dependent measures that were used to measure all three treatments. Subjects were rated on the basis of the raw scores made on the GCRT and the CAT, (Form A) at the pretesting setting. The scores were then compared to the raw score that each subject made on the posttest for each measure which was administered after eight weeks of initial instruction by the six teachers during an eight week time span.

Data were analyzed by an analysis of co-variance. Verbal and comprehension scores served as co-variates. Results of the co-variance can be seen in Table 4. There were no significant differences among methods. Differences were found between teachers at the $p < .01$ level.

No significant interactions were found for teacher by method. Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted. For further clarification of the results see Table 5. This table shows the mean gain for each group after eight weeks of instruction and after the posttest was administered. The

Table 4

Analysis of Co-variance

Source	DF	SS	MS	F
Covariates				
- Verbal	1	247.18	247.18	1.92
- Comprehension	1	8.81	8.81	.07
Methods	2	6.11	3.06	.97
Teacher	5	2811.33	$\frac{2811.33}{5}$	4.37*
Teacher and Method	10	1734.16	173.42	1.35
Error	121	15570.72	128.68	----
TOTAL	140	20378.31		

*Significant at .01 Level

Table 5

Change as Measured by Pre- and Posttest
(Raw Scores)

N	Method	Greensboro Criterion Reference Tests Change	California Achievement Tests Change
49	1	8.4286	8.7382
49	2	8.6735	8.9354
43	3	8.6512	7.9998

gains are shown for both the Greensboro Criterion Reference Test and the California Achievement Test.

Discussion of H_1

Method comparisons have produced much controversy as research paradigms. Samuels (1969) and Stolurow et al. (1960) questioned the utility of such studies. However, Marks (1964) postulated that concurrent observation of teacher-pupil relationships can be identified and theories can be generated from these observations. Newell and Simon (1961) suggested that method comparisons could be very valuable when the computer was a used instrument for analyzing the results.

Bliesmer and Yarborough (1965) using 484 subjects conducted a thorough study of ten methods of teaching beginning reading skills. Statistics obtained indicated that the programs of initial reading instruction based upon one category of methods were more effective in grade one than were those based upon another category. There were two basic psychological-pedagogical theories representing the methods they used. One was the analytic technique that involves teaching children whole words and then, through various analytic techniques, recognition of the letters and sounds. The second method was the synthetic technique which is based upon the belief that the child should be taught certain letter-sound relationships or word elements before he/she begins to read. The First Grade Reading Studies U.S. Office

of Education (1966) indicated that students seem to learn to read better by using the synthetic method.

Chall (1967) presented a number of conclusions from her study <u>Learning to Read: The Great Debate</u>. Among these conclusion are:

    1. Methods which have a code emphasis (earlier, heavier, or more direct emphasis on teaching the sound values of letters) produced better overall reading achievement by the beginning of fourth grade than methods with a meaning emphasis (phonics introduced later; more moderate in amount or through a process of analyzing known sight words or by use of context).

    2. The child reads faster in the early stages of learning by meaning-emphasis methods, but the advantage is lost by third or fourth grade. Also, the meaning emphasis is associated with poorer comprehension and vocabulary in about the third grade, probably because of poorer word recognition.

    3. Under a code emphasis the child reads more slowly at the beginning because he is stressing accuracy, but by grade three or four his rate is at least equal to that produced under a meaning emphasis. Also, the early advantage in word recognition accuracy produces better vocabulary and comprehension on silent reading tests by grade two.

    4. Teaching the code can be done by a variety of methods. The direct teaching of letter-sound correspondences is as successful or more successful than the "discovery" approach of the so-called linguistic methods.

    5. Modified alphabet schemes (such as Initial Teaching Alphabet) may of course be used with code emphasis or meaning emphasis. When these methods are used with control of words or spelling patterns so that the child may discover the letter-sound correspondence, children master the code more effectively than when exposed to high frequency irregularly spelled words with late and little phonics.

    6. Children of average or below average scholastic aptitude and lower socio-economic background

probably perform better under a code emphasis than a
meaning emphasis although the differences do not
show up immediately. The differences between a code
emphasis and a meaning emphasis are not as great for
high scholastic aptitude children because they tend
to discover sound-letter relationships even though
not directly taught.

7. Ability to give the names of letters of the
alphabet prior to learning to read helps the child
whether under a code or meaning emphasis (p. 883).

Conditions of the Study

The present study did not reveal significant dif-
ferences among the three methods used. It is recommended
that methods with more varied approaches be studied, and
that there should be a larger number of students and
teachers in a follow-up study.

Results of H_2

In this section, results are discussed for the second
hypothesis that dealt with the relationship between teacher
influence and beginning reading achievement.

H_2: Teacher influence will make no significant dif-
ference in the change of reading ability achieved by the
subjects.

Table 3 indicates that teacher influence in beginning
reading is significant at the $p < .01$ level. For further
clarification, Table 6 elaborates on the finding presented
for H_2. The adjusted mean scores for each group, each
method, and each teacher is shown. Table 6 indicates a dif-
ferent mean from teacher to teacher. Table 7 is a summary
table that shows the results of growth in achievement of

Table 6

Means Adjusted for Greensboro
Criterion Reference Tests
(Raw Scores)

N	Method	Teacher	Change
6	1	1	7.5712
9	2	1	2.5185
8	3	1	9.4826
7	1	2	-4.6780
0	2	2	8.5698
8	3	2	-0.8796
9	1	3	3.3943
9	2	3	7.5128
8	3	3	5.4820
5	1	4	11.6764
7	2	4	13.6319
4	3	4	7.7237
11	1	5	10.7262
8	2	5	14.4205
8	3	5	8.2360
11	1	6	18.9610
7	2	6	8.5199
7	3	6	19.2186

Table 7

Total Achievement Change
(Raw Scores)

N	Teacher	Greensboro Criterion Reference Tests Change	California Achievement Tests Change
23	1	6.0870	6.2589
24	2	2.5417	1.5561
26	3	5.5769	5.4523
16	4	10.4375	11.5437
27	5	10.7407	11.0830
25	6	16.2800	16.1096

subjects for each teacher (allowing for the methods used).
It also groups all subjects together and computes a mean for
the total number of subjects. In view of these results, the
null hypotheses for H_2 was rejected.

Discussion H_2

Creemers (1975) conducted a study including 31
teachers and 671 first grade pupils who were selected accord-
ing to age, school career, reading ability and completeness
of research data. Each teacher was observed as she taught
35 reading lessons during the first six months of reading
instruction in the first grade. The observation scale used
for studying teachers' behavior resulted from the task
demands of the method. The results indicated that teachers
can be separated into groups on the basis of their task
setting behaviors, that a relationship exists between teach-
ing styles and the achievement of pupils, and that such
relationships generally do not appear to be different among
groups of pupils with different initial characteristics.
Lawson (1974) compared the reading achievement of students
in the first, third, and fifth year of attendance in graded
and nongraded elementary schools. This study was composed
of 338 selected students from six elementary schools. The
results indicated that the non-graded students performed
higher on achievement at the $p < .01$ level than did the
graded group. This was attributed to the different teaching
styles of the teachers in the experiment. Quirk (1973)

observed 34 different teachers and classrooms to determine what happens in a large variety of types of reading classes so that the relationships between what teachers and students do during reading instruction and how students learn to read could be studied systematically. His results indicated (at the p< .05 level) that some teachers have more influence on achievement than do others.

The results from the data in Table 7 indicate a difference from teacher to teacher among the six teachers in the present study. Teacher number six had a much higher rate of influence on achievement than did the other five teachers. Therefore, one can say that teacher influence is an important factor in the process of the subjects learning beginning reading skills.

Results of the Teacher Observation Scales

In addition to the statistical results of the experiment, each teacher was visited on a bi-weekly basis and observed for a period of 30 minutes at a time. The investigator rated each teacher on her performance on 18 items taken from the Robeck and Wilson Reading Teacher Observation scale. It was possible for each teacher to score as high as seven on each item or as low as one. A mean score was computed for each teacher and each item on the scale. Table 8 shows this score for each of the six teachers. Table 9 shows a comparison between the total mean score for all 18 items on the checklist that each teacher received and the

Table 8

Reading Observation Results

Reading Condition Observed Item 1-18	Mean Score*					
	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
1. Environment for Reading	4	4	3	4	4	4
2. Levels of Instruction	3	2	3	4	4	4
3. Scope of Word Analysis	4	2	4	4	4	5
4. Comprehension and Study Skills	3	2	4	4	5	5
5. Oral Reading and Enrichment	4	3	5	3	6	5
6. Organization and Preparation	3	2	5	3	6	5
7. Attention to Specific Weaknesses	4	3	5	4	5	6
8. Techniques for Reinforcement	3	3	4	4	5	6
9. Provision for Self-Direction	5	4	3	3	4	6
10. Relationship to Other Subjects	4	4	2	2	4	5
11. Aloof--Responsive	3	2	3	2	3	5
12. Restricted--Understanding	2	2	2	1	3	5
13. Dull--Stimulating	1	2	3	4	4	6

Table 8 (continued)

Reading Condition Observed Item 1-18	Mean Score*					
	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
14. Stereotyped--Original	4	4	2	5	4	6
15. Apathetic--Alert	4	4	3	5	4	6
16. Uncertain--Confident	4	2	2	4	3	6
17. Disorganized-Systematic	4	2	4	3	3	6
18. Inflexible--Adaptable	4	4	3	2	3	7

*Each teacher was rated on a scale from 1 to 7 and mean scores were reported.

Table 9

Comparison Table for Observation and Change in Achievement

Teachers	Mean Total Score for Wilson Robeck Obser- vation Checklist	Mean Gain for Greensboro Criterion Reference Test	Mean Change for California Achievement Tests
1	3.5	6.0870	6.2589
2	2.8	2.5417	1.5561
3	3.3	5.5769	5.4623
4	3.4	10.4375	11.5437
5	3.9	10.7407	11.0830
6	5.1	16.2800	16.1096

changes her subjects made on both the GCRT and the CAT. Teacher six had the highest scores in both areas.

Discussion of the Teacher Observation Scale

The results of this study show the teacher to be a significant influence in reading achievement for the beginning reader. When one examines Table 9, it is obvious that teacher number six had a higher average rating than did the other teachers and that her students scored higher on the achievement tests. One can also note in Table 8 that teacher number six scored higher on items 11-18, indicating that she made the climate of the classroom warm and acceptable to the children. Koch (1968) reported that some children who had been languishing in homes characterized by the mothers' hostility thrived in a hospital environment that was emotionally supportive. These children who were subjects in this study may have been responding to the emotionally supportive atmosphere that was demonstrated by teacher number six. Teacher number two scored the lowest on the emotionally supportive items and her students scored the lowest on achievement gains. Teacher number six apparently supported the emotional needs of the subjects and had the ability to extend her understanding of these emotional needs to the classroom.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching children to read has always been one of the most important responsibilities of the elementary school. Every child needs to develop his reading ability fully in order to succeed in school and to discharge his responsibilities later as a citizen of a democratic society.

> Reading is the foundation of much of the enjoyment the individual gets out of life and is closely related to vocational efficiency. Reading is intimately related to the success of the democratic way of life. The citizen needs to understand the meaning of democracy and to keep well enough informed to act wisely in its behalf. He needs the ability to detect pernicious progaganda, to weigh the opinions of others, to talk intelligently, and to work effectively with others. American citizens are in a position to make decisions that influence the lives of most of the people in the world. To decide intelligently requires a high level of reading ability (Ragan, 1966, p. 258).

Traditional Methods of Teaching Beginning Reading

The evolution of methods of teaching beginning reading constitutes an interesting study. For many centuries, the first step in learning to read was memorization of the letters of the alphabet. It has been said that the Hebrew child centuries ago was given edible letters covered with honey so that he could discover how sweet the process of learning could be.

During colonial times, the content of the first books children were supposed to read was far removed from the experiences and concepts of children. The New England Primer contained such sentences as "In Adam's fall we sinned all" and "Peter denyed his Lord, and cryed." In Webster's Speller, published about 1800, reading was to be taught as spelling. First the letters were learned separately; then they were put together to form syllables; syllables were combined to form simple words; words were combined to form sentences; and finally, sentences were combined to form a short story.

The alphabet method of teaching beginning reading was replaced by the phonetic method. Instead of learning the letters first, children were introduced to the sounds that occur in many words; words with similar sounds were arranged to vertical columns, and most of the reading program was consumed by formal practice on sounds. After a long period of overemphasis on mechanical drill in phonics as the principal method of teaching beginning reading, a reaction against phonics began in the twenties and reached fanatic extremes in the early thirties. It was claimed that no systematic teaching of specific words by any method was necessary if the child was interested in learning to read and that "the best way to teach reading was not to teach it at all."

The failure of unplanned, haphazard procedures for teaching beginning reading became apparent, and parents as well as teachers began to insist that greater attention be given to the development of basic reading programs for the purpose of giving the child more independence in attacking new words.

Approaches to Beginning Instruction in Reading

There are multitudes of approaches to beginning instruction in reading. Three approaches that are currently used in school systems were selected for use in the present study. These were the basal reader approach, the systems approach, and the language experience approach.

The Basal-Reader Approach

Although emphasis varies from one series of basal readers to another, every series is intended to help the pupil build a reading vocabulary, develop an interest in books, increase his skill in word recognition, grasp the meaning of what he reads, and develop oral and silent reading skills. The beginning readers contain many pictures of children engaged in a variety of activities. The content is centered around the conversations of these children. Pupils look at the pictures, discuss them, and develop a basic sight vocabulary. This approach is frequently referred to as the "look-say" approach. New words are introduced gradually and repeated frequently to encourage mastery at sight; the

conversations among the children in the pictures, somewhat limited at first, are broadened to include a wider range of topics. Pupils are taught to recognize the sounds of letters, combinations of letters, and whole letters, but instruction is not limited to these devices. Austin (1974) identified the role of basal readers by stating, "When properly used, the basal reader serves as a springboard from a skills-development program to reading books in the classroom, school, or public library for pleasure and information" (p. 18).

The Systems Approach

Many varieties of the phonics are in use in schools today. A comparison of the phonics program presented in the basal readers with that presented by one of the leading publishers of materials to be used in the separate phonics approach reveals that the principal differences lie in the timing of systematic instruction in phonics and in the amount of time devoted to it in the first grade. The separate phonics program requires the pupil to learn the sounds of letters and the rules that apply to reading before he learns words by sight; the basal-reader approach delays the study of these items until the second grade. The phonics system, as designed by the Research and Development Center at the University of Wisconsin, was the system used in this study.

The Language-Experience Approach

This approach puts into practice what has been empha-sized earlier in the text concerning the interrelationships among the various communication skills. Recognizing that the child's success in reading is influenced by his spoken vocabulary, the teacher encourages the pupils to express their thoughts orally, to paint, and to use other means of expression. Emphasis is placed on pupil-prepared reading materials. The approach, when used properly, can create a favorable attitude toward reading, help the pupil understand the relationships existing among the various communication skills, and foster creative expression.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was designed to investigate three methods of teaching initial word attack skills. The three methods were (1) the 360 BRS Method; (2) the VLE Method; and (3) WDRS Method. The purposes were: (1) To determine whether one of the methods would prove more effective in helping students to attain greater achievement for learning beginning word attack skills than the other two methods; and (2) To determine whether the influence of the teachers was an important factor in the rate of achievement of the students. The hypotheses were:

H_1: After completing instruction in three methods of beginning reading, the subjects will show no significant dif-ferences in the changes in reading ability.

H_2: Teacher influence will make no significant dif-
ference in the change of reading ability achieved by the
subjects.

A 6 by 3 factoral design was utilized. There were
six cells with three groups in each of the cells resulting
in 18 groups of subjects. Six teachers spent 25 minutes per
day, instructional time, with each of the three methods.

The measures used in the experiment were two pretests
that were administered to each subject and two posttests.
These tests were: The CAT (Form 1, level A and B) and the
GCRT.

The data were analyzed by using an analysis of
covariance, by comparing mean achievement gains, and by using
a teacher observation scale.

The findings revealed the following: (1) There were
no significant results concerning the superiority of one
method over the other; (2) The influence of the teacher was
significant at the .01 level.

<u>Conclusions</u>

Educational publishing companies provide a varied and
thorough choice of basal and supplemental reading materials.
School districts spend money, time, and energy conducting
research into the optimum program for use in particular
locales. This writer does not dispute the wisdom of
thorough investigation into available materials. However,
it appears that, excepting extraordinary examples of

student population, including but not limited to the area of corrective or remedial teaching of reading, routine search committee endeavors may be headed into incorrect causes.

In fact, it has been repeatedly shown that pilot research projects undertaken by both individuals and commercial enterprises "prove" the superiority of one program over another only as long as the researcher's training or enthusiasm prevails in the project's duration. An example of this tendency can be found in an unpublished study conducted in the Newark, New Jersey (Polinsky, 1975). The inner-city character of the schools was illustrated in part by reading scores, as measured by standardized reading achievement tests, significantly below the national and regional averages. Even after allowances were made statistically for the extremely low-income nature of the district, low reading scores prevailed. A reading program designed for inner-city children that relied heavily on the auditory repetition of sound-symbol relationships designed by George Cureton was introduced by Mr. Cureton into several elementary schools. At other schools the Distar Instructional System was utilized. A third system, the Lippincott Basal Reading Series, was included in still more elementary schools. Each system was introduced by different researchers, and some teacher-training was involved. Results indicated initially that the Cureton method was superior in terms of teacher response and pupil achievement. As Mr. Cureton

gained recognition and became more actively involved in the commercial aspects of his enterprise, his direct influence in the teaching-learning process was diminished. Even though the project is still in effect, the differences in student achievement have declined and reading scores, although higher now than before the project's inception, are leveling off to more comparable gains among schools. This leveling off process placed the Cureton system into the ranks of "just another series" and illustrates this writer's premise that the system alone does not account for extraordinary reading gains among students.

<u>Recommendations</u>

The recommendations that are listed in this section are offered on the basis of the philosophy which this writer has formulated about teachers who teach beginning reading classes. Teachers have influence on the success or failure of beginning reading students. These influences are pre-determined characteristics which have not been researched in a thorough manner. The following recommendations are made on the basis that they can help to shed light on some of the unanswered questions about who should teach children in beginning reading classes. It is recommended that teachers who teach beginning reading:

(1) Should not have too high or too low intelligence quotients. Teachers who have very high intelligence quo-tients may tend to be less supportive of young children who

do not have abilities that parallel with high intelligence. Some of these abilities are an expanded vocabulary, a long attention span, and an appreciation of books and magazines. Teachers who have very low intelligence quotients may not be capable of understanding a theoretical model of reading nor would they be able to implement a successful plan for guiding a youngster through a successful reading experience.

(2) Should maintain emotional stability at all times when they are working with children. Teachers who are not emotionally stable may create doubt and insecurity because of their inconsistant behavior with the children.

(3) Should maintain proper health, rest, and relaxation. Teachers should function at their peak physical ability in order to be alert to the needs of the students.

(4) Should demonstrate a strong desire for success. This desire is projected to the students and becomes contageous.

(5) Should demonstrate a knowledge of cognitive and physical child development characteristics. Teachers should know when a normal child is most likely to be able to function at certain levels of cognition. These same teachers should be able to demonstrate a knowledge of physical development of young children. Teachers who do not give cognitive and physical characteristics attention may be seriously retarding the beginning reader.

(6) Should demonstrate an ability to understand various cultural idiosyncrasies. Teachers who are not able to adjust to various cultural differences may be creating a threatening situation for the beginning reader, who may be made to feel reading is not something his culture values.

(7) Should be good decision makers, and should be able to decide if students are ready for certain reading experiences. A teacher who is not able to make the right decisions about the child's reading needs may be hampering future success.

Finally, it is suggested that follow-up studies should be conducted that attempt to determine the merits of each of the seven recommendations.

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APPENDIX A

WISCONSIN DESIGN PROFILE SHEET

Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development
Word Attack

LEVEL A

1. Rhyming words
2. Rhyming phrases
3. Shapes
4. Letters, numbers
5. Words, phrases
6. TO--Colors
7. Initial consonants
   All A skills

LEVEL B

1. Sight vocabulary
2. TO--Left-right sequence
3. Beginning consonants
4. Ending consonants
5. Consonant blends
6. Rhyming elements
7. Short vowels
8. Consonant digraphs
9. Compound words
10. Contractions
11. Base words
12. Plurals
13. Possessives
    All B skills

LEVEL C

1. Sight vocabulary
2. Consonant variants
3. Consonant blends
4. Long vowels
5. Vowels + $\underline{r}$, $\underline{a}$ + $\underline{l}$, $\underline{a}$ + $\underline{w}$
6. Diphthongs
7. Long & short $\underline{OO}$
8. Middle vowel
9. Two vowels separated
10. Two vowels together
11. Final vowel
12. Consonant digraphs
13. Base words
14. Plurals
15. Homonyms
16. Synonyms, antonyms
17. TO--Independent application
18. Multiple meanings
    All C skills

LEVEL D

1. Sight vocabulary
2. Consonant blends
3. Silent letters
4. Syllabication
5. Accent
6. Schwa
7. Possessives
   All D skills

NOTE: Skills marked TO are assessed by Teacher Observation

APPENDIX B

GREENSBORO CRITERION REFERENCE TEST
(SAMPLE PAGE 5 OF THE VOCABULARY
TEXT SECTION)

OBJECTIVE II: BUILDING SIGHT VOCABULARY

We have attached for your use the basic sight vocabulary words taught in most major basal series at each reader level from Pre-primer (pp) through the third grade, second semester (3^2).

If your child can read aloud 90% of the sight words, a "mastery" rating can be given for that level. The highest level at which your child has mastered 90% of the words is the level that should be recorded on the "Parent's Check List."

If your child has mastered the words at the 3^2 reader level, he/she has achieved reading proficiency of the sight vocabulary words considered most important for reading success. Your child is on his/her way toward reading proficiency and should be encouraged toward broader reading experiences.

This is not a timed test and credit should be given if your child corrects himself.

Number of words correct for mastery at each reader level

1st Pre-primer:	13 out of 15
2nd Pre-primer:	16 out of 18
3rd Pre-primer:	17 out of 19
Primer:	57 out of 63
First Reader:	82 out of 91
2^1 Reader:	98 out of 108
2^2 Reader:	126 out of 140
3^1 Reader:	108 out of 120
3^2 Reader:	83 out of 92

APPENDIX C

CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST
(SAMPLE PAGE 9 of
LEVEL I FORM A)

Read each of the stories and do the items that follow. Fill
in the space next to the answer you choose for each item.

> A small boy named Henry lived in the city.
> He had a pet dog, a kitten, and two birds in
> his home. Henry liked to play with the dog
> best.

Henry lived in the

   city

   country

   forest

   mountains

Henry was

   large

   old

   sad

   small

Which animal did the
boy like best?

   the bird

   the dog

   the kitten

   the turtle

When Henry takes care of
his animals, he is

   busy

   lazy

   sorry

   worried

How many pets did
Henry have?

   one

   two

   three

   four

Which of these is the best
title for the story?

   "Books"

   "Dogs"

   "Parents"

   "Pets"