# Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer, 1978

**Dedicated to finding the causes of difficulties in learning reading and spelling.**


Summer, 1978

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Publisht quarterly | Editor and General Manager, | Assistant Editor, |
| Spring, Summer. Fall, Winter | Newell W. Tune, | Helen Bonnema Bisgard. |
| Subscription $3.00 a year. | 5848 Alcove Ave, | 13618 E. Bethany PI. #307 |
| Volume XVIII, No. 2 | No. Hollywood, Calif. 91607 | Aurora. CO. 80014 |

**Summer, 1978**

Editorial Board: Harvie Barnard. Emmett A. Betts, Helen Bisgard, Wilbur J. Kupfrian, William J. Reed, Ben D. Wood.


**Table of Contents**



## Late News

### Joint IRA-PSC Meeting, Fri. May 5, 1978 Houston, Tx.

General Topic: *Word Perception: Legitimating Phonics*

Chairperson: Dr. Katherine P. Betts

Participants:
Dr. Ira Aaron, Univ. of Georgia. "Phonic Rules-Values and Pitfalls".
Dr. Abraham F. Citron, Wayne State Univ, Detroit. "Reliability in Encoding".
Dr. Milton Jacobson, Univ. of Virginia. "Phonic Rules-Application/Exception Ratios".
Dr. Thomas D. Horn, Univ. of Texas at Austin "Miscues and What's-the-Next-Word Syndrome".
Dr. Emmett A. Betts, Univ. of Miami, Fla. "Word Perception: Strategies".
Dr. Richard L. Allington, New York Univ. at Albany "Word Perception: Linguistic Factors".

Resource persons:
Elsie Black, Reading Consultant, Rogers, Arkansas,
Millard Black, Reading Consultant, Rogers, Arkansas
Dr. Michael Strange, Univ. of Texas at Austin.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 p1 in the printed version]*

## 1. Speech and Word Perception, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.

There are three reasons why a teacher needs some basic knowledge of speech sounds:

1. *On-the-spot-help.* When a pupil asks for help on the word *squash* during his silent reading, the teacher asks, "What part do you need to know?" If the pupil points to *squ* and has not studied the /skw/-*squ* relationship, the teacher says, "That sound is usually spelled skw. Now what is the word?

If the pupil points to the *a* of *squash, the* teacher says, -"The sound is /a/, *ah.* What is the word?"

This procedure has several merits. The pupil is told only the sound represented by the letter(s), not the whole word. Telling him the word teaches him nothing, leaving him helpless when he sees *(squ)irrel, sw(a)mp* or some other new word. On the other hand, when he is told only the unknown sound-letter relationship, he has to *close* the word by fitting the sound into the sequence of sounds far the word – as /skwash/. Finally, the pupil makes a note of the word *squash* for study in a follow-up activity with other pupils who need the help and, therefore, are ready far it. In this need group, the pupils may study *quick, quack* and other /kw/-qu wards as well as *squash, square, squeak, squeeze,* and other */skw/-squ* words – if the help is needed on the initial consonant blend. Or, they may study *squash, swallow, swamp, quality,* and other words with vowel sound /a/.

*2. Maturity in speech production.* A knowledge of the sounds of speech helps the teacher to estimate the pupil's achievement in speech. While children learn to articulate the consonant sounds in *boy*, *pa*, and *ma* at an early age, (about 3 to 4 years), they do not learn to articulate the consonant sounds in *zoo, Sue,* and *raw* until a much later age. A knowledge of language development, especially speech reproduction, makes it possible far the teacher to identify the sounds and make decisions regarding the sequence in the development which is to be expected.

3. *Regional differences.* Since the American population is becoming increasingly mobile, a Bostonian teacher may have pupils from Utah, Iowa, Tennessee, and other speech regions. In this situation, the teacher needs to be aware of regional differences in speech – of the pupil from the south who says *far* for *fire,* or *fire* for *fair, of* the pupil from Iowa who says *water* /wot-ər, wat-ər/ with an *ah* sound rather than an *aw* sound. And the speech of the Bronx and Boston.

Hence, when the teacher gives on-the-spot help, she needs to know the child's possible pronunciation of the word.

In conclusion, each teacher needs to be aware of his of her own regional speech because there is no standard American English speech. Furthermore, there is a need to be aware of both regional differences and achievement in the production of speech sounds. Reading is, at least in part, the decoding of writing (orthography) into speech.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 pp2–9 in the printed version]*

# 2. Why Some Blacks are Successful in Life and Others are Failures, by Irene J. Martin*

*Hampton, Va.

**Topical Table of Contents**



The question has been asked many times but no satisfactory answers were usually received. The author will try to do better.

How is an individual's success in life determined? What is success? When does one consider that he has arrived? For some, it means they have successfully battled against poverty, and through their own initiative plus the help of others or even with the help of welfare assistance, managed to graduate from high school and college; and acquired a good paying job or position, with prospects of promotion, married and have homes of their own and respected families. They may have moved out of the ghetto into better housing areas or even into more exclusive areas of the city or suburbs. A two-car family with children in college or some specialized training such as nursing, business, teaching, etc. is within their grasp. For some others, they may have completed high school, taken civil service or government exams, passed the exams and secured positions which they hold until retirement and so they and their families are more or less secure. As in my city, the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, the largest privately owned shipyard in the country, operates a very exclusive Apprentice School, where after completing high school, young people may enroll, making a choice of the many skills offered, as electronics, welding, pipefitting, steel works, and many other areas where they earn money as they learn and from which they graduate after four years of training. Many blacks have taken advantage of this opportunity for training and preparation for a life's work. While they don't become famous, they become successful, upstanding citizens and taxpayers, churchgoers and important parts of the community. Thousands of others hold good jobs in the Shipyard, have cars, families, and consider themselves not rich or famous but successful people.

Then there are those who remained with the soil, agriculture. Many blacks became agricultural extension agents while others, though not famous, made it as farmers, helping to supply the needs of millions. This does not say that every farmer is a success, however.

So what is success? I believe it is when a person has reached and satisfied his aim or goal in life. And society classifies him as being successful.

So we come back to the question: Why are some blacks successful in life and others are failures?

Let us view the issues head on through the eyes and experience of two authorities who lived and worked with young people and whose combined years of experience as counselors, Mrs. N. a PHD at a large State College, and Mrs. H. R., Director of Guidance in a large high school in a large city, amount to more than eighty years.

Mrs. H. has submitted the following observations.

As a teacher and counselor having worked in several schools for more than 40 years, the writer has come in contact with all types of persons of both races – students, teachers, parents, and other citizens. From her experiences she could recite a multiplicity of reasons that cause students to achieve success and become effective participating citizens in later life. She could also cite many reasons why they drop out of school and contribute little or nothing to society. Let us categorize these many reasons. **[2]**

*Why some Blacks are Successful*

1. They are highly and easily motivated.
    A. Teachers have time & patience to help and encourage them.
    B. They have parents who are interested in helping them.
2. They have the mental capacity and desire to learn.
3. They are encouraged at home.
    A. They have good manners
    B. They are neat and clean.
    C. They are cooperative & friendly.
    D. They are easy to get along with.
4. They are easy to teach.
    A. They follow directions well.
    B. They have good study habits.
    C. They assume much responsibility for their own learning.
5. They have the determination to succeed.
6. These attributes developed in school, carry over into adult life and these persons become successful in their careers and in other home and community activities.
7. They often receive awards of some type for successes in school.
8. A variety of reading materials is always on hand at home.

*Why some Blacks are Failures*

1. They have little or no motivation at home and in school.
    A. Teachers and parents have very little patience with them.
    B. They are not willing to help much.
2. They have limited ability to learn.
3. Their home training is often limited.
    A. Their manners are often undesirable.
    B. They have very poor self-image.
    C. They are usually very poorly organized as persons and in school work.
4. They are not easy to teach.
    A. Teachers find it difficult to work with them.
    B. They have poor study habits.
    C. They have very little initiative.
5. They become discouraged very easily, quickly give up.
6. These habits cause them to do poorly in school and drop out. This pattern usually continues in later life on jobs and other community activities.

7. Often their small successes go unnoticed or ignored.
8. Often there is not even a newspaper in the home.

Mrs. H. feels that most school workers have a tendency to measure success and failure by the progress that the student has made at the various stages of his educational development. They base their opinions on past records and evaluations from the student's former teachers. Quite often teachers put themselves up as judges of what students can and cannot do. For these reasons, Mrs. H. believes that in some instances, the teachers contribute to the success or failure. There ore other reasons but these are the dominant ones.

Mrs. H. agrees with Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, who in their book, *Pygmalion to the Classroom,* proved that some teachers develop a self-fulfilling prophecy. They predict from the students past records that they will succeed or fail. They make their self-fulfilling prophecy come true by seeing to it that the students fail or succeed.

It does not have to be this way. The dedicated teacher should put forth every effort to make sure that she does everything possible to make sure that all achieve some degree of success, at least to his highest potential.

Mrs. N., PHD, having worked with 1300 pseudo-retardates in a teenage group, 3,000 8th grade boys in an advancement school, also other groups and as sponsor of an individualized study lab. says, "It was when I have seen my black students come alive and get going fast that I knew I was the `facilitator' of this growth, but really the 'boy' was the factor; I merely cleared away the obstacles, wound him up, provided the oil and fuel needed, *but he did it.* I cheered him on."

Mrs. N. having studied causes of failure on Carnegie Foundation Grant in 1964-67, makes the following observations: **[2]**

*Affirmative or Positive Views:*
1. The degree of environmental damage done to a child has prime importance; and asks the question, has he been conditioned to think *negatively*; does he feel he must fight the world perpetually rather than proceed with his own course of development, or does he see himself as still bound irrevocably to the tread mill?
2. He must have a strong person in whom he trusts implicitly, to feel confident that he can and will be permitted to succeed – total acceptance!
3. There must be a determination as to where he is on the ladder of learning, exactly what help he needs to achieve progress in raising himself to the next rung, and these needs must be very concretely met for him.
4. His program planners must be extremely sensitive to his potential for challenge, and the rate of learning he is presently able to manage.
5. He must see concretely the ultimate goal that this ladder will lead him to and experience constant reinforcement through a reward system that was pleasant to him.

*Negative Views:*
An extremely capable "Black" or "White" can be created into a dropout by:
1. Blotting out the prospects of success.
2. Having no one who "really believes in him" and is ready to fight for him.
3. Stating on the fourth rung of the ladder before he has completed the second and third rung – or making him start on the fourth rung when he really thinks he belongs on the sixth.
4. Pushing him at a rate of learning he is not yet ready to cope with – or going so slowly he is bored and quits.

5. Failing to show him a glorious horizon toward which he's really going or forgetting that pat on the back he needs to experience regularly.

Some additional observations from Dr. A. C., PHD, instructor on a certain university campus are as follows: [1]

1. Black students (sharp, good students) tell me that a mother, father, or both insisted on good grades at school and college career. Often it is a relative, an aunt, uncle or grandparents who provide the motivation. Some students agree that it was just understood in the family that above all else, you did well in school.
2. Several blacks who went to college on scholarships dug into their studies because they felt they were not good enough to become professional athletes otherwise.
3. A black man who now heads the department of Sociology in a certain college had told me of his academic motivation. He said that in his youth and young manhood, he was angry and bitter about the racism practiced against him and all blacks. He determined that he would master white culture as well or better than most whites – and use his position to fight prejudice and discrimination. He said that *most of the energy he used* to apply to his studies came from his *anger*.
4. A black friend of mine, a professor and author at Southwestern, told me that two teachers in his hometown encouraged him and helped him. Otherwise he feels that he would have ended up as many of his boy friends did – in jail or dead.
5. By and large black students tend to flow with their peers.
6. Very few blacks in my experience make academic excellence without some person or persons encouraging or pushing them. These are usually parents or a relative.
7. I have spoken with a number of black students who got to college because their parents were already middleclass.

We might conclude that the three above authorities have said it all in a nut shell. However, the problem still is: why are some blacks successful and others are failures? This is a many faceted issue, which involves motivation, orientation, socio-economics conditions, environment, the family, poor school attendance, low scholarship, poor study habits, lack of parent cooperation, etc.

Educational aims have always been to develop enlightened citizens, which is in line with the ultimate goals of democracy, which in turn is to insure the perpetuation of our democratic government and social system, to produce a moral nation, stressing character development, the moral value of work, of individualism, responsibility, and proper respect for law and other basic skills and values. Also to teach or provide vocational training and the skills of the white collar workers, and to enhance the national interest, especially as regards international relationships.

Education must be regarded as a human right, a necessity for survival in this technical competitive society. Realization of that must occur. Thinking people must work out the concept of educational equality for the races, sexes, social classes, and levels of mental and physical abilities. Affirmative action programs are an appropriate aspect of the start toward equity, especially at the higher education level. [3]

When this consideration is not provided, there comes a breakdown and frustration which results in one of our major causes for dropouts which is higher among black, students percentage wise. The U. S. Census for 1975 shows that 25% of black students aged 18-19 were high school dropouts, while white students in the same age bracket showed a dropout rate of 15%. According to this same report, some 200,000 of our ablest young people fail to carry their education beyond high school due to a lack of motivation, proper guidance or financial resources or discriminatory barriers; and a smaller number graduate.

"Dropout" is a useful unit of analysis in that it represents a gross behavioral distinction between educational success and failure. It is important not to let the concept obscure the broader problem of the development and adjustment of individuals in the context of the educational process. [4] (D. N. Lloyd). Although other aspects of the larger problem, success or failure must be taken into consideration.

While it is true that a great variety of causes contribute to failure among blacks, we consider the dropout factor as the greatest. First of all, dropouts are predictable from the third grade when the multiple prediction equation, according to Dr. L. N. Lloyd's study, is applied. In this study he finds that at least six or seven of every ten dropouts were correctly identified by characteristics exhibited in the third grade. Measures of background characteristics including school performance and tested achievement, were analyzed far four race-by-sex samples of third graders who were known to have later become high school dropouts or graduates. [5]

Results showed as early as 5 to 8 years before leaving school, dropouts differing significantly from graduates, in age, tested reading, I.Q. levels, and marks received in course work. In two white samples, dropouts differed from each other in parent's occupational and educational levels, family size, marital status of parents, and tested arithmetic and language skill achievement. The majority of dropouts showed difficulties in reading as early as the third grade.

In his multiple correlation with combined samples of white males, white females, negro males, negro females, Lloyd has made known some of his findings. He finds the extremes being a low prediction far white females and the high prediction for negro females. He shows in his chart that negros were more likely to withdraw in earlier grades than whites; also that males tend to drop out earlier than females. [6]

The table on the distribution of on the criterion variable grade of withdrawals in four samples of dropouts shows the medians to be: white males: 10th grade, white females: between 10th and 11th grade, negro males: between 9th and 10th grade, negro females: 10th grade. These results are barely statistically significant, but the statistics can not be considered reliable because of the much smaller samples of negros.

However it is significant that the largest number of withdrawals occur at the tenth grade level. It is at this point when many have decided to seek employment, to take jobs to help out their families, or they have become dissatisfied with their socio-economic status. They have decided that, in their non-language and non-mathematical position in the academic community, they just cannot cope with school. Besides many of their peers are no longer in school.

**Table 1**

Distribution on the Criterion Variable, Grade in the Four Samples of Dropouts

| | Grade of Withdrawal | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sample | 7th | 8th | 9th | 10th | 11th | 12th | Total |
| White males | 2 | 31 | 41 | 110 | 79 | 44 | 307 |
| % | 0.7 | 10.1 | 13.4 | 35.8 | 25.7 | 14.3 | 100.0 |
| White females | 1 | 7 | 22 | 61 | 60 | 49 | 200 |
| % | 0.5 | 3.5 | 11.0 | 30.5 | 30.0 | 24.5 | 100.0 |
| Negro males | 4 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 11 | 5 | 69 |
| % | 5.7 | 23.2 | 23.2 | 24.6 | 15.9 | 7.2 | 100.0 |
| Negro females | 3 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 19 | 6 | 56 |
| % | 5.4 | 10.7 | 21.4 | 17.9 | 33.9 | 10.7 | 100.0 |

Many forces that contribute to early withdrawal from school are experiences during elementary school years, although not clearly perceived then. Withdrawl is a result of several years of unsatisfactory progress as well as difficulties associated with home environment. They are often victims of parental lack of interest, failure to encourage student in search of education and identification. Early dropouts are characterized by higher number of course failures, often due to inability to learn to read with facility, more grades repeated, lower median I. Q. scores, a higher rate of absence, parents with lower educational and vocational or occupational levels, a higher frequency of broken homes, and lower achievement test scores, compared to later dropouts. (Nachman, Getson, and Rodgers)

Some studies show voluntary withdrawals to include the following reasons:
1. Entering the work forces, enlisting in the armed forces
2. Being needed at home
3. Marrying
4. Being unable to adjust to school and dropping out without adequate reasons
5. Inability to learn to read fluently
6. Other reasons are physical disabilities, uneducability, institutionalization and whereabouts unknown, (Shackleford.) **[6]**

Staying in school for some is indeed a major task. Also what happens to him in school is a crucial experience that sometimes determines the outcome of his vocational future or effectiveness as a citizen. So frequently large numbers of intellectually capable students leave school before graduation. They waste their mental capacities and opportunities which could eventually lead to a better life.

A survey by Shackleford in a segregated Virginia school of all blacks, just prior to integration, produced the following data from a study involving 54 potential dropouts. **[6]**
1. The data from the Interest-Activity Questionnaire did not differ markedly from that of other students.
2. The I.Q. scores were somewhat lower than that of the rest of the school population.
3. The attendance records for the potential dropouts did not differ significantly from the rest of the school population.
4. That the scholastic grades for the potential dropouts and dropouts were predominately D's and E's.
5. That slightly over half of the parents attended school through the elementary grades.
6. That slightly over half of the fathers of *potential dropouts* were classified as unskilled workers, while over 85% of the *fathers of the dropouts* were classified in the same category.
7. That most of the potential dropouts varied in outlook from indifference to concern.

Not all dropouts are failures. A good example of this is J. T. J., a school dropout at age 13. He is now a member of the Original Watts Writers Workshop, and a free lance writer in Los Angeles. His unusual story of success began in a waiting line at a lunch counter in that city. At this lunch room, he was forced to wait until every white patron was served, although his mission was to secure coffee, donuts, cigarettes, etc. for his employers, who were white.

As the story goes, he dreaded the long waits; until one day he noticed a Lending Library in the lunch room. He picked up a book and as he thumbed through it, his attention was attracted to the poem that read,

> Out of the night that covers me,
> Black as the pit from pole to pole,
> I thank whatever Gods may be,
> For my unconquerable soul – - -

He began to think and read. Each day afterwards, he read until the entire book was finished. The waiting time seemed shortened. He continued this action until he had read every book in the Lending Library. He then sought out the black library at Booker T. Washington High. Here he borrowed and read books until, as he says, he became deep in the wonderful world of literature and life and found himself and his world at age eighteen. Friends saw great changes in him as a person and as an outstanding member of the community. He has now become well known as a free lance writer in Los Angeles.

Mrs. E. F., reared in a foster home by a very sweet and religious lady, had to leave school in the sixth grade to help her family. She worked as a waitress for Colonial Williamsburg and later married. While her sister and she were growing up, they decided that the most important thing they could give their children was a good education. With this kind of aspiration, she sent all six of her children through college. They were each interested in securing an education and in sticking together. As a result, her son became a specialist in internal medicine at George Washington University Hospital; he spent four years at Southern University, then later received a grant to attend the College of William and Mary. Her oldest daughter majored and received a degree in music and voice at Southern University and is now teaching music in junior high school. Two other daughters also received degrees in music and music therapy. Another serves as a loan closer in Mason McDuffie at Santa Ana, Calif. There is always one; so one daughter did become a dropout, but at the college level.

The success of blacks is heavily weighted on the side of the middle class family in which one or both parents are professional, business skilled tradesmen, civil service, or Armed Forces personnel. Often students themselves hold after-class jobs, thus showing an aspiration to succeed.

These students come from homes where there are library books, all sorts of reading materials, audio and visual materials. They are surrounded with music and many types of cultural advantages.

Margaret Walker, called Mother of Poets, as a child, surrounded by books and music, encouraged by Langston Hughes, submitted works to black magazines. She received the Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship for creative writing. She was a successful college professor.

Lorraine Hansberry, born in Chicago, was a niece of Dr. and Mrs. Leo Hansberry, reknowned African History Professor at Howard University. She was the first black playwright to win the New York Drama Critic Circle Award for "Raisin in the Sun." Others of her plays presented on Broadway were "Young, Gifted and Black" and "Les Blanc".

Recent studies show that more than 85% of the most capable black high school graduates from middle and upper socio-economic backgrounds are enrolled in college or other post secondary institutions. This annual report from the Dept. of H. E. W., Spring, 1977, says that black high school graduates are more likely to pursue post secondary education than whites from similar economic backgrounds.

In spite of the many handicapping circumstances, including poverty, prejudice, broken family situations, etc., it could be said that blacks have always had a desire for education. We see this, going back many years as early as Phyllis Wheatly who was kidnapped from Senegal, brought to America and sold into slavery. Purchased by a propserous tailor of Boston, she read the Bible, English classics and ancient Roman literature in Latin. She wrote her first poem at 14 years of age. She was the first slave and the second woman to publish a book in America.

Why do many blacks fail in life? One of the greatest hindrances to success for some can be laid to prejudice and practices of discrimination, subtle and otherwise. Young blacks are quite aware of the injustices practiced all around them at school and in public places, upon their families and friends. Some who are successful do so because they feel such anger that they are motivated to conquer the white man's culture.

I shall consider a very blatant case of prejudice. There is a noticeable shortage of lawyers in the nation. In 1974, of the 325,000 lawyers or attorneys, only 3,845 were blacks. In Alabama alone, of the 3,410 attorneys, only 28 were black. A suit was instituted against the Alabama Board of Bar Examiners by several plaintiffs and Attorney H. I. L., a graduate of the Harvard Law School, who failed the Bar Exam. three times in two years. The suit charges that Alabama's Bar examinations are discriminatory.

Meanwhile, a Pennsylvania panel of lawyers reported racial discrimination is the only hypothesis which explains the sharp contrast between black and white failure rates in the state. A former Detroit judge declares, "I've always felt that Bar exams served as devices to exclude blacks and other minorities from law."

A special committee in Pennsylvania was appointed to study Bar admissions and practices. They found that on the basis of the data in their study, they derived that (1) certain practices raised the strongest presumptions that blacks "are indeed discriminated against under procedures used in Pennsylvania;" (2) that certain examination practices(standards and procedures raise serious presumptions that not insubstantial numbers of all candidates (regardless of race) have been delayed or deprived of admission to the Bar through unequal or arbitrary and capricious actions of the Pennsylvania Board of Bar Examiners. Because this panel was composed of such distinguished (and a mixed group) of lawyers, this report, known as the Licouras Committee Report, lent some credibility to the discrimination charges leveled at other states.

Academic effort and losses here represent 19 years of preparation and a potential loss of thousands of dollars plus the stigma of incompetence. This represents a large block of blacks who may have been successful but for prejudice. . . [7]

Another example is, men who received education and training, many holding M.A. degrees in Administration and Supervision. They held positions as elementary and high school principals for many years, until school integration. Many were then removed and given offices over town, in charge of audio-visual supplies, government title programs or other positions of that nature.

There are few black teachers in supervisory positions regardless of their qualifications, while most of these positions are given to white teachers regardless of their inexperience or qualifications. This also holds true in many industrial situations.

One reads advertisements for help in the Help Wanted section. The most frequent response is, the position has been taken, or 'leave your name, we will call you.'

We cannot ignore that there are those among us who use the myth of inferiority to degrade blacks; scientists like A. R. Jensen of the Univ. of California, with his article on genes. There are these recurring attempts to pin a badge of inferiority on black people. These campaigns usually have arisen just when black people appeared to be making progress in throwing off the shackles of racial oppression. Whenever and wherever blacks have risen up to assert and exercise the rights of manhood, angrily casting off the fetters of racism and blatant discrimination, white men have sought to bar the door by rushing in the new Calvary – a band of pseudo-scientists armed with their

"documentation' of the black man's inferiority; that is, his unworthiness. "Inferiority of Blacks is but a myth,". . . (Carl T. Rowan)

While young blacks continue to wrestle with the myth of inferiority, a recent study by a Yale University psychologist deals a real blow to the theory that races differ genetically in intelligence. In this study, Sandra Scarr and her former colleagues found black children when adopted at infancy by advantaged white families show dramatic increases in I.Q. and school performance tests. Their I.Q.'s jumped by 20 points to 110 and above the national mean for whites.

Scarr and her colleagues at the Univ. of Minnesota studied 130 black and mixed race children from 4 to 13 years old who had been adopted by white Minnesota families of 101 children in the Twin Cities area. The move from deprived environment into an advantaged one boosted adopted children's I.Q.'s up the scale. **[8]**

Young people who are successful have fought through this over and over psychologically, and are still fighting it. What is to keep many young blacks who are less able to keep the faith? What do they have to believe in? Can they make it if they try?

Leaving off prejudice here; we consider an all important phase of education, the "peer group." The influence of the peer group is inestimable. According to the James Coleman report, he found that the big variable in school achievement was achievement level of peers at a given school. That is, if a child goes to a school where most of the kids work hard and do well, that child will work hard and do well. If a child is at a school where most of the kids goof off and the style is not so good, am to do school work, the child will follow this pattern. However, Dr. Citron feels that even if this holds in the mass, we can find children in low achieving schools who do well because of home support and home motivation. Further, low and high achieving schools correlate closely with socio-economic level of the homes, especially in neighborhood schools. He reminds us that some parents who did not finish grade school, insist on regular attendance and good grades so that the children will have a better chance than they.

"If we could give more kids parents who can and do support (psychological and practical aid) their children in doing their school work and in enjoying school and in reading at home, etc., we would move great numbers of children radically upward in school achievement. . ."( Dr. A. Citron)

To review briefly why some blacks are successful and others are failures, we find the socio-economic factor looms high. Indeed, it affects almost every facet of life's goals and achievements. Many persons who are poor have brilliant minds but not a chance to reach their full potential. On the other hand there are those who have middle or upper class backgrounds but lack motivation goals and inspiration. Many have next to nothing but are motivated, often receive scholarships and or aid from relatives. Then there are those less fortunate, as a matter of health or handicapping conditions holding them back.

One of the greatest deterents to success is early withdrawal from school. Besides poverty as a cause for withdrawal, Johnny still can't read. Ashamed of that fact, he withdrew from school. He cannot hold a moderate paying job if he cannot read and compute mathematics as is needed to clerk in a store. Only tonight on a TV show, a young man was shown driving his car. To secure his license, for the driver's test, someone had to read it to him. Also on the same show there was a young man from a middle class family who had finished high school and was experiencing great difficulty in finding a job because although he had graduated, he could read only on fourth grade level. How can he become a success? He has the ambition, but not the reading skill.

Oddly enough when in search far reasons for student dropouts, investigators rarely mention our spelling. They have researched race, socio-economics, mental ability, etc. but not spelling. It, along with the improper use of phonics, is one of the great sources of reading failure.

One author in the *SPB*, Harvie Barnard, says the Stop-Look-Say-and-Guess method of teaching reading has proved inferior to phonics in most of the reliable evaluations, yet it is used in many school systems. He says it should have been replaced by rational phonics years ago, but phonics as taught today is too phoney; hence is confusing to many pupils because 3/4 of the new words a pupil encounters do not conform to phonic rules. Thus, the confusion leads to "failure, frustration" to slow or retarded readers, to many non-readers, semi-literates, and too often, dropouts. The frustrated children become "the below grade level" pupils of the middle grades, and the principle source of delinquents in high school and teen-age years. According to Harvie Barnard and the consensus of councelors, principals, juvenile officers and others, it is from this distressingly large group of illiterates that criminals develop. They can not get jobs and if they do, they experience difficulty in keeping them. And so a life of crime becomes their lot. To them it is a matter of survival-by any means.

After accounting for the many inconsistencies (in the 85% as some say, or 88% by others) in building words out of phonetic elements, and the bad habit of letters changing their sound values for no good reason, Newell Tune **[9]** accounts for Johnny's actions thus: he sits beligerantly and defiantly at his desk looking at picture books-which he can understand, and feels that he is too stupid to learn this unreliable language. He has lost confidence in himself and he would rather get out of school. He defies the teacher to teach him anything. He finds more interest in disrupting the classroom by teasing someone who is trying to concentrate on the teacher. The patient teacher tries to help him with the rules for phonics which sometimes work for him and other times don't. So she teaches him the spelling method, which is slow and cumbersome; and the methods of teaching it uncertain.

The problem of comprehension frequently stems from phonics and spelling. How often it is that a student unravels the pronunciation, then doesn't know the meaning of the words, and the context clues mean very little to him. This happens all too often in the homes of the disadvantaged; thus making one more contribution to failure, lack of self-confidence, and the decision that "I just can't learn reading."

The purpose of both spelling and phonics is to provide the reader with the ability to pronounce or approximate the pronunciation of any word he meets in reading, which he does not know as a sight word. Phonic analysis in reading situations is simply utilizing one important reading skill.

Some phonetic elements are used as guides to spelling. The sequence used in learning the phonetic elements in reading is frequently used in the teaching of spelling although several phonetic elements must be combined to teach even the simplest spelling words. For example, in some second grade words every letter has a recognizable sound, as: *bed, has, run, sit,* etc. They incorporate the following phonetic elements: (1), single consonants, *b, d, b, s, r, t*; (2), short vowels, *a, e, i, o, u,* also the long vowels; (3), blends, *br, gr, tr, cl, st,* etc.; (4) vowel combinations, *oa*, *ea, ee, ai, ay,* and (5), consonant digraphs, etc.

Most spelling books indicate the phonetic elements in various words to help the student use his knowledge of phonics in matching letters with sounds.

Syllabication also acts as an aid to spelling. For example, many proficient spellers find that dividing words into syllables helps them to visualize and spell those words correctly. Also other phonetic

practices aid in spelling and reading. The knowledge about phonetic generalizations gained in reading can be a starting point for pupils in spelling.

Since phonics and spelling ate such important factors in learning to read, failure to grasp these subjects contributes to reading failure, eventual dropping out of school, illiteracy and a possible involvement in crime. But if some students *do* finish elementary school, the question is: can they master the irregularities and inconsistencies of our spelling sufficiently well to be able to take high school and college tests? The fact is that too often, too many give up and drop out. This is but a glimpse of the relationship between Reacting failure, Spelling failure, and Dropouts, which in turn predicate failure in life.

This kind of thing will continue to contribute to failures in life until children ate held back in early grades when they do not meet certain academic standards. Some states are saying a student can't receive a high school diploma unless he can pass ninth grade reading. This is necessary for a student's welfare. If he finds he must do this and is held back in early grades, he will learn to read.

As a first grade teacher some years ago, I was permitted to hold back even first graders. My contention was this: in the first grade you're building the foundation blocks. If those blocks are crumbly, your house is going to be weak. They knew how to read when 1 sent them on to second grade.

I may be dating myself, but everyone of those children were taught phonics, as well as other methods, as you cannot teach reading using just one method with our malphonetic spelling.

Success comes to students who not only have the motivation, but also must have the mental capacity. They must be encouraged and rewarded at home. They must have a plenty of reading materials, audio and visual games, etc. at home. They must have a determination to succeed. These ate the attributes that carry over into adult life and develop successful careers.

It is my sincere belief that the dropout problem would be almost negligible if all the Johnnys had learned to read before they were promoted beyond third grade, if they could not read on third grade level. Roma Gans, Professor at Columbia Univ. always preached this every summer to her classes, according to an article in *The Reading Teacher.* **[10]** In her book by the same title, she states that by no means beyond grade four. Today many educators call for "back to basics" and emphasizing reading and math.

Quoting from Cervantes, "Of much greater importance from analytic viewpoint than the question of finances or I.Q., was the inability of the dropout to read accurately, to communicate freely and the frequency of school retardation. Our questionnaire was reading (material) that should be understandable by a youth who was 17 or 18; the dropouts regularly needed assistance in answering it. It was obvious that their reading ability was extremely poor. In responding to the TAT's, the stories and themes invented by the dropouts were less than half as long as those of the graduates. Their ability to express themselves was clearly inferior. Almost one-third of our graduates were retarded in school by one year or mote, but a startling four out of five of our dropouts were one or mote years behind the normal grade level for their age." **[10]**

"Time and again the dropouts stated that they felt 'goofy' (in school) – their age mates had already graduated and they felt out of place. Their inability to read indicated two things to us: (1) teen-agers who do not read well enough for the work of their grade are likely to fail, feel frustrated and discouraged; (2) the lack of verbal skills and communication abilities pointed to the deficiencies of their home environment." **[10]**

"The dropout feels that he does not belong. He does not belong because he is retarded in school and thus separated from his age mates; he does not belong because his communication aptitudes-verbal and social- seem truncated. He does not belong because he is not participating in any of the activities of the school. Not one of out dropouts mentioned that he was participating in any activity at the time he withdrew from school, though participation in school activities is prominent among the school experiences of the graduates." **[10]**

The dropout regularly has little chance to develop himself within an expanding socio-economic universe. The fact is that there are so many of him – 7,500,000 during the 1960's. It is from this hard core of dropouts that a high proportion of gangsters, hoodlums, drug addicts, government dependent-prone, irresponsible and illegitimate patents of tomorrow will predictably be recruited. Many of their families have been on relief for a second and third generation. **[11]**

I would re-emphasize the fact that by and large, dropouts usually do not leave school because of finances or a need to be home. This is clearly brought out by the fact that mote than twice as many dropouts as stay-ins own cats. They might well have used their money for education had they been sufficiently motivated. Also the majority of them failed to take advantage of the opportunity to complete their high school or college work, by taking advantage of the G. I. Bill. This bill was planned specifically for those anxious to finish high school and take advantage of this economic assistance, but little interest was demonstrated in it.

Many things influence the dropouts' actions. No one or two categories would fit them all. Some things that influence the dropouts' actions are as follows:

1. The Family: The family of the dropout has fewer close friends than does the family of the stayins.
2. Upbringing: He is reared in a home which has less solidarity, less primary relatedness, and less paternal influence than that in which the stayin is reared.
3. The Peer Group. The dropouts personal friends will be typically not approved by his parents.
4. School Experiences: He was in trouble when he terminated his education and was only slightly involved, if at all, in any school activities during his academic years.
5. Thematic Apperception Test: Results from his TAT is characterized by: The youth culture of revolution, aggression, frustration and protest. In the words of Dr. James Conant, it will be explosive – "It is social dynamite."
6. Social Characteristics: He has a feeling of not belonging (because of size, speech, personality development, nationality, social class, family disgrace, retardation in school, dress, lack of friends among school mates, staff and others.)
7. Communicativeness: He does not relate to his teachers. In some interviews, he referred to them as squares in whom he cannot confide.
8. The father figure is weak or missing.
9. He is resentful of authority.
10. In many instances, there are unhappy family situations.

It is worth noting that studies have shown that it cannot be assumed that the student is to become a dropout because of his low I.Q., as studies have shown that there is a vast overlapping of basic intellectual capacities between the dropout and the graduate. The U.S. Dept. of Labor's study of 22,000 dropouts found that the majority of dropouts (54%) had average intelligence of 90-110 I.Q. or better.

Because of his failure in school and unemployment or dead-end, poor paying laborers jobs, he views himself as a second class citizen. Thus, his defense becomes hostility, against the outer world's depreciation of him and his position. Thus, he and graduates grow further apart and more alien toward each other. And – the condition of being out of work, out of school, and out of touch,

gives him a very demoralizing status. So we look at him far what goes on in his mind. A TAT Report produced the following results,*[12] relative to specific characteristics of dropouts. It of course goes without saying that no one subject could be afflicted with all of these characteristics, yet as undesirable as they are, many are beseiged by these problems. When the dropout is failing his classes, he has a poor image of himself, considers himself a second class citizen and is beseiged by many of the following characteristics – how can he be successful?

*TAT Report

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Troubled | 9. Dissatisfied | 17. Pawn of environment |
| 2. Antagonistic | 10. Maladjusted | 18. Non-methodical |
| 3. Hostile | 11. Impulsive | 19. Anti-authority |
| 4. Instinctoid | 12. Unstable | 20. Double standard |
| 5. Pessimistic | 13. Hyperactive | 21. Violent solution |
| 6. Destructive | 14. Outer needs | 22. Leisure & thrill oriented |
| 7. Concrete | 15. Weak image | 23. Classbound |
| 8. Radical | 16. Deficiency | 24. Sexually exploiting oriented |

One negative reaction of several dropouts was that they generally disliked the teachers and counselors. They rarely discussed their problems with teachers or parents, but rather with their peers who frequently were dropouts or undesirable, from the parents point of view.

While the dropouts contribute to many serious problems, and many are potential criminals, not all dropouts are failures. Many have been lucky or had saleable talents and have made it good. However opportunities for the future have much dimmer prospects. Technology is getting a strangle hold on jobs once held by the school leavers. A simple example is *self service* at most gasoline stations. Literally hundreds of examples can be cited. Encouraging, however, is the fact that according to *Time Magazine,* Nov. 14, 1977, the dropout, who was such a great worry in the alienated, rebellious 1960's, is no longer so common. The number of high school students who drop out before graduation has fallen to about 25%, down from the dropout rate in the sixties (31%) and 1950 (37%). At the same time, about 45% of those who do graduate now go on to college, up from 33% in 1960. Still one third of the nation's children are dropouts. In spite of this, the health of U. S. education in the mid-1970's, particularly that of the high schools, is in deepening trouble. This must be remedied.

The story of successful blacks is one of determination, motivation, luck, talent, and assistance from some source or other.

World attention has been focused on the issue of race as never before and the status of the negro in the United States is being scrutinized with extreme care by people in every phase of American life, in education, in economics, in all sociological areas, and religion. It is only natural to consider, why many are successful in life's ventures while many more are failures. Since school dropouts account for much of this failure, many studies have been made by educators to determine how many dropout, *how* many dropout, the economic and age levels, and *why* they dropout. These studies are made in order to determine preventive methods, what agencies should be involved, and the school systems' responsibility to these students. Since reading and math. rate so prominently in contributing to dropping out, school officials all over the country are now taking a new look at basics. This could go a long way toward new images, new personalities, and new outlooks for the potential dropouts. The successful blacks had the good fortune to be born into the middle class where family asperations, inspirations, hopes and future were taken for granted, more or less. In the middle class homes, parents were most frequently high school and college graduates. They hold positions in the community. Their jobs pay average and above average salaries. They are skilled

workers or professionals. Students were encouraged and helped by the relatives – grandparents, aunts, etc.

Many are sufficiently interested in getting an education that they work their way through law school. Others like John Hope Franklin, author and historian, who was helped by a benevolent white professor, Dr. T. H. Currier, who encouraged him by paying his way through his freshman year at Harvard, where later he received his M.A. and Ph.D. He also worked to help himself. Still others benefitting from one or more of the many scholarships available, have gone right to the top of the success ladder.

A friend of mine is an example of another family influence. She, herself, is an *only child,* who holds her Ph.D. degree; her father, three higher degrees, and her mother, an M.A. She, herself, is a college professor whose income is over the $ 20,000 mark. Her father assisted several others. The questionnaire, [See Appendix] which I executed myself, showed in answer to this question: Who or what exerted the greatest influence on your decision to attend and graduate from college? Five said that Dad's influence: he said, "you must go to college." Personal desire, eight; family expectations, eleven; and availability of scholarship, seven.

The story of a successful Civil Engineering Assistant, and retired Army Colonel, is one for the books, and one that exhibits personal aspiration and persistence. The fact that his high school counselor tried very hard to tout him off from going to college. Unusual, I would say. Meanwhile his mother worked her way through college and was one of the founders of one of the outstanding black sororities, and his father was a high school graduate. He could not be dissuaded.

We still must forever contend with the poor. Blacks find it difficult to look forward to moving upward in the system and a high percentage of blacks are unemployed. The most important problem facing this country today is the plight of the young, hopeless, and poor people in our urban centers. Their problems can only be solved with meaningful employment at living wages. Until this is done, our major cities will remain tinder boxes that might explode at any minute, with the malcontent dropouts at the center of it. Only the Federal Government has the power and means to solve this problem.

**Table 1**

*The number of siblings in families of subjects on the basis of number and per cent*

| *Subjects* | *Siblings* | *Per Cent* |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 9 | 6.6 |
| 1 | 8 | 3.3 |
| 0 | 7 | 0 |
| 2 | 6 | 6.6 |
| 1 | 5 | 3.3 |
| 1 | 4 | 3.3 |
| 5 | 3 | 16.6 |
| 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 17 | 0 | 56.6 |
| 30 | 46 | 99.6 |

The subjects considered successful, are from families of varied sizes. The Table shows that while two subjects had nine siblings, five subjects had three, but it is noteworthy that 17 subjects had no siblings at all.

Because of the large size of six of the families (20%), it would suggest that slight economic difficulties would contribute to lower attendance. Yet only six (20%) became dropouts.

**Table 2**

*Academic achievement of* parents *of successful subjects by number and per cent*

| *Parent's education* | *number* | *per cent* |
|---|---|---|
| Graduate degree | 6 | 20.0 |
| Graduated from college | 5 | 16.6 |
| Graduated from high school | 1 | 3.3 |
| Completed elementary school | 10 | 33.3 |
| Below elementary school | 1 | 3.3 |
| No formal schooling | 1 | 3.3 |
| No answer | 1 | 3.3 |
| Number of dropouts | 5 | 16.6 |
| | 30 | 99.7 |

This table shows that while more than one third of the parents graduated from college, another one had only completed elementary school. One parent with no education at all, influenced his five children to graduate from college.

Regardless of the size of the family, the main ingredients for the happy home are security, love, companionship and happiness, which are apparently present in all of these homes which have produced success-motivated families. It has been said that the successful blacks seem to be more heavily weighted on the side of the middle-class family.

**Table 3**

*Academic achievement* of *successful subjects by number and per cent*

| *Degrees held* | *number of subjects* | *per cent* |
|---|---|---|
| Ph.D. | 3 | 10 |
| Masters | 8 | 26.6 |
| Bachelors | 18 | 60. |
| Other (Engineering) | 1 | 3.3 |
| | 30 | 99.9 |

The subject holding Ph.D. also holds D.Humanities (Honorary). Three are college professors; one is a physician, one a surgeon. Two are self-employed, and five are retired. Still others are teachers, and one, an accountant.

**Table 4**

*Economic status of successful subjects by number and per cent*

| *Income of subjects* | *number* | *per cent* |
|---|---|---|
| Over $20,000 | 5 | 16.6 |
| Self-employed | 2 | 6.6 |
| Retired | 5 | 16.6 |
| No comment | 18 | 60.0 |
| | 30 | 99.8 |

## Appendix

**Questionnaire – Educational and Socio-economic Background**

1. Name.....(may be omitted)
2. Marital status: married ..... single ..... divorced .....
3. Number in family.....

*Education:*

1. Did you graduate from high school? ..... .college?.....
   post graduate? ..... What degrees do you hold? .....
2. Did others in your family attend college?..... .....How many of them?.....
3. Were you fortunate to receive one or more scholarships?
4. Why. did you decide to attend college? .....
5. Who or what exerted the greatest influence on your decision to go to college?.....
6. Was your education at any point influenced by prejudice? .....
   If so how did you cope?.....

*Your family:*

1. At what grade did parents leave school?.Father..Mother?
2. Number of sisters ..... brothers ..... dropouts .....
3. Were there rewards for good performance in school work?
4. Did everyone have a specified time for study?..... a special place?.....
5. Were there many childrens' books and other reading materials available in your home,
   as well as educational games? ... .. ..... ..... . .....
6. Did the family take trips and celebrate holidays together?
7. Would you say that all in all you had a happy home?.....

*Employment:*

1. Are you now employed? ..... Employed in the area for which you were trained?.....
2. Does your salary exceed $ 20,000?.....
3. What is your occupation?.....
4. Are you politically active?.....

*For dropouts:*

1. What factors led to your decision to withdraw from school? health? ..... handicapping condition? ..... frequent failure .....dislike of school? ..... other? .....
2. Was it the inability to understand printing in books,
   causing failure to learn to read and spell?.....
3. Was it a dislike for the teacher? ..... Felt that you had no friends?.....
4. Did your parents try to discourage you from leaving school? 5. Did it become necessary for you to withdraw in order to earn money for the family? ..... Or, did you follow the example of some of your friends and quit?.....
6. Are you gainfully employed now?.....
7. What is your occupation?.....
8. Do you have any regrets over having withdrawn from school rather than graduating?.....
9. Did you receive instruction in phonics when you were in school? .....
10. Had you been taught phonics, do you think you would been a better speller
    and a better reader?.....

## Bibliography


Lloyd, Dee Norman. Factors Related to Grade of Withdrawal of High School Dropouts. Lab. paper no. 24, NIMH 1968.

Lloyd, D. N. and Gail Bleach. Prediction of High School Dropout or Graduation, from Third Grade Data. NIMH 1972.

Lloyd, D. N. Multiple Analysis of Antecedent Relationships to High School Dropout or Graduation. Lab paper no. 21,'67

*Ebony Magazine.* Sep. 1961, 16-48, 9, 'Tragedy of Dropouts.'

*Ebony,* Oct. 1974, 33,67, 54, 'Great Moments in Black History.'

*Ebony,* Dec. 1977, 'The Whys Behind Black Lawyer Shortage.'

*Crisis Magazines*, Apr. 1961, June 1977.

Cervantes, Lucius F. *The Dropouts*, 1965

Alexander and Saylor Editors, *Modern Secondary Education,* Basic Principles & Practices, NIMH, 1959.

Shackleford, Winnifred. *The Dropout and Potential Dropout*. MA Thesis, 1964, Hampton Institute Library.

Levin, H. Community *Control of Schools,* 1968.

*Time Magazine,* Nov. 14, 1977

*Jet Magazine,* Sept. 1977. 'Number of Blacks in Work Force Rising.' p. 34. by Ernest Green.

Exhibition of 100 Black Women, Smithsonian Institute *Change* (A Higher Education Magazine), Feb. 3, 1972.


Quite a number of other references were consulted but unless they were quoted or material from them used they were not listed here. NIMH refers to National Institute of Mental Health.

## Notes

[1] The N. N. S. & D. D. Co. was established Apr. 8, 1889. It is famous for having built many Forrestal type carriers and battleships for the U. S. Navy. Of the 18,000 employees, a very large percentage are black.

[2] Personal response to questionnaire.

[3] *Crisis Magazine,* Apr. 1977.

[4] Lloyd, Dee Norman, *Factors Related to Grade of Withdrawl of High School Dropouts,* Laboratory Paper No. 24.

[5] Distribution on Criterion Variable, Grade of Withdrawl, in the four samples of dropouts, Dee Norman Lloyd, *Ibid.*

[6] Shackleford, Winifred. *The Dropout and Potential Dropout.*

[7] *Ebony Magazine,* Alex Poinsett, Dec. 1974, p. 95.

[8] *San Francisco Chronicle,* Timnick, Lois: *Times Human Behavior Writer.*

[9] *Spelling Progress Bulletin,* vol. XVII, no. 2, "Why Johnny Still Can't Learn to Read."

[10] Cervantes, Lucius F. *The Dropout*, pp. 101-102.

[11] Cervantes, *ibid*, pp. 101-102.

[12] Cervantes, *ibid,* p. 194.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 p10 in the printed version]*

## Nicholas von Hoffman. VALLEY NEWS. Tuesday, December 27, 1977.

## 3. Why must Johnny learn how to read?

WASHINGTON – Every few months from one section of the country or another comes fresh news confirming the fact that many children pass in, through and out of school without learning to read or figure. So parents and other taxpayers demand that kids who didn't learn anything be held back, a practice that was given up some years ago when sombody noticed tha the first grade at P.S. 40 had 11 6- footers in it.

Being a 14-year-old Big Stoop in a class of otherwise bright and proficient 10-year-old chums is thought to cause anxiety and inferiority feelings in the larger, laggard scholar who may then wap his litle buddies around in a paroxysm of misplaced resentment. To get around this problem it's being suggested that kids who don't even know the easier part of the multiplication table be shunted off to special classes – a scholastic chain gang where they will crack their rock-like heads learning that 6 x 8 equals 48.

If they don't learn to read, as they probably won't, at last they will be failing out of sight. No more diplomas for the boneheads; henceforth, all they get is a certificate of attendance.

Behind all this concern and activity are some propositions that may or may not be true. Proposition One is that schools are to teach reading and writing; Proposition Two is that when they don't it's the teachers' fault and the taxpayers are getting cheated; No. Three is that if you don't have an abnormally depressed IQ you can and you must learn to read and do elementary arithmetic.

Of course, all depends on No. 3. We know from ourselves and our friends it doesn't follow that if you can read you can count. Some of us are whizzes at numbers and can barely read; the reverse is even more common. As for the goal of a totally literate society, while it may be possible to teach everyone but the mentally handicapped how to read, it also may be very expensive.

Somewhere we hit the law of diminishing returns. The cost in teachers, remedial reading instructors, counselors and therapists, physical and psychological, to drive Nasty Nate and Snide Sally into learning how to read is much too expensive. The society isn't going to get its money back on that investment.

It is necessary to teach everybody how to read and figure? what about using the milions of dollars that math instruction is going to cost us to give away hand-held calculators to all thoe who can't count by signify a desire to do comparison shopping at the supermarket? If there is no readily apparent reason why so much money should be spent so that everybody – literally everybody – in our society, can do long division, the need for 100 percent literacy is not apparent either.

Somebody will say if you cant read, you can't be an informed voter, and that's the end of democracy as we've known it. Yet all the surveys show that nearly half of the populace get their national and international news from television, so democracy either is dead already or keeping it alive doesn't have much to do with reading.

Work is another question. It is generally agreed on the basis of the scantiest information that you can't hold down a job if you lack these two basic skills. If that's so, the reason has less to do with the work itself than with how the job requirements are set up. Why does a bus driver in an exact-change-only system have to know how to add and subtract? Similarly, a personnel manual may

require an 800-word reading vocabulary for a job which involves no more than reading an on-and-off switch.

Teachers who are supposed to learn (sic) the recalcitrant dunces don't care for proficiency exams; they prefer to speak of instructing their obtuse charges in such things as "life coping skills," an odious expression hatched in the gastrointestinal tract of a professor of ed-psych no doubt. The danger is that pupils will be made to pass an exam in this amorphous subject, and those flunking life coping will be adjudged socially incompetent at an even higher financial cost to the community.

All children must go to school. There is nothing else to be done with them once they escape infant exposure, but all children don't have to learn while they're there. For some, romping about with the coping skills teacher is the answer, while the rest of us acknowledge defeat and admit that occasionally high standards aren't the best standards.

## Public forum. VALLEY NEWS. Thursday, Dec. 29, 1977.

## 4. Rebuttal to the above by Newell W. Tune.

I have just had the displeasure of reading Nicholas von Hoffman's article on "Why must Johnny learn to read?" (Valley News, Dec. 27, 1977). I am surprised that you would even consider publishing such a monstrous assortment of misconceptions, illogical thoughts, and unsound deductions – unless it was to start a controversy!

In the first place, it is a gross misconception that a jobholder (any jobholder) can adequately do justice to any job without a reasonable or fair knowledge of reading English. Some do for a while, but they are the first to be fired when there is any slackening of work. Sometimes they are not fired sooner because the jobholder pretends he knows how to read and does a creditable job of pretending.

Another fundamentally unsound premise is that persons in such menial, low paying jobs are satisfied with their job and don't expect or want to get a promotion. Only those with low IQ's, low self-esteem, and inability to see or plan for the future, can be satisfied with those menial, low paying jobs – and these are among the small minority.

Most persons in such poor positions hope to better themselves and are only using such a job as a stepping stone. And if at first, they don't realize the need to read and write to adequately express themselves, they will after they are turned down for promotion or fired because of mistakes due to the inability to read and follow the printed instructions.

In another area, inability to read is the first step towards a life of crime. Statistics show that there are from three to four times as many illiterates in our penal institutions as the national average for illiterates (depending upon geographical location). We had in our magazine in 1972-'73 an eight-page article on the four steps to crime: Reading failure, dropout, delinquency, and crime.

If this is not enuf (sic) to convince you of the falsity of many of the deductions in this article, I could go on and give you a lot more reasons – but I hope you can on your own see the folly of such a line of reasoning.

NEWELL W. TUNE Editor,
Spelling Progress Bulletin, North Hollywood

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 pp11,12 in the printed version]*

## 5. Spelling and Reading: How are They Related? by Leo Fay*

*Indiana Univ., Bloomington, Indiana.

Children in this country's colonial period were told:

> "And if you can't read,
> pray endeavor to spell,
> for frequently by spelling,
> you will learn to read well."

Far over a century children were taught to read using Webster's Bluebacked Speller, (which incidentally, proclaimed that it had taught "millions to read and not one to sin.") Today, the interrelationship among the communication skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are again being recognized as important in curriculum planning and teaching.

Studies of the relationship between spelling and reading and the history of their instruction consistently show that the two are significantly, but not *totally,* related. Poor readers are also poor spellers, the experts say, but the reverse is most often not the case. Good readers tend to be good spellers, but frequently superior readers may be mediocre or even poor spellers.

The purpose of this brochure is to explain the seeming contradiction of this, as well as the necessary difference in the methods of learning to *read* well as opposed to learning to s*pell* well. Spelling and reading should operate synergistically, and each complements the other.

### The Discrepancy

The relationship between reading and spelling concerns the child's ability to work with word forms and to recognize the words that he encounters. From this follows the ability to grasp the author's meaning. In one respect, spelling is the reverse of reading. When he is spelling, the child must think of the letters that represent the sounds of the word he wishes to spell. He puts the sounds into a code or symbol form represented by the alphabet. This process is sometimes called "encoding." When reading, the process is reversed. The child encounters the total word and must decode it to unlock its meaning. He has to associate the printed symbols with the sound of the word.

Some efficient readers pay little attention to the individual letters of a word and may be poor spellers. A good reader makes maximum use of the context or the sense of what he is reading, and is able to identify words with a minimum attention to their detail. The general shape of the wad, its root or other major component parts make it unnecessary for him to examine carefully the word's *spelling* structure.

### Handicap factor

The erratic nature of English spelling is another facto which explains the good reader, poor speller phenomenon. The value of our alphabetic writing system is often lost because of the inconsistencies of pronunciation. Early in his life the child encounters *goes-does, to-go.* Spelling, too, is illogical: *bear-bare, their-there;* and many other like-unlike sets of words add to his confusion in both

reading and spelling. Some words he must simply memorize – others have rules and sub-rules, and exceptions to the rules.

There are approximately 43 sounds in the English language but only 26 letters to represent them. In addition, the same sound may be represented in several different ways. Consequently, learning to spell English is more difficult than learning to spell most other modern languages, just as learning to read English is more difficult than learning to read other languages which have more *consistent* systems.

The magnitude of our problem becomes apparent with comparisons to other languages. Italian and Turkish both use 27 letters to represent 27 basic sounds. German uses 38 symbols for 36 sounds. Russian uses 36 symbols for 34 sounds; and English uses 379 symbols (letters or combinations of letters) to represent 43 sounds. This complexity can add between one and two years to the time an average child needs to learn to read English in comparison with the time needed for an average child learning to read Spanish, far example.

Ben Franklin, George Bernard Shaw and Theodore Roosevelt were among those who have proposed simplified or reformed spelling to improve both reading and spelling skills. Several current reading systems – i.t.a., Unifon, the World English Alphabet, and the New Single Sound Alphabet – all attempt to overcome this problem by providing the beginning reader with a more consistent spelling system.
In recent years, bills to reform our spelling have been introduced in almost every session of Congress, but have never been taken seriously. Change would be complicated and perhaps only partially successful because of the dialectal differences that exist in all parts of the English speaking world.

**Some Techniques**

Poor readers usually make the same kind of errors in spelling that they make in recognizing words. This is why some form of spelling test or analysis of spelling errors is generally included when diagnosing a student's ability to analyze words when reading. The kinds of mistakes he makes in spelling will be very much like the mispronunciation errors he makes when reading orally because there is a tendency for pupils to spell wads as they pronounce them.

Grade scores, however, are not useful is helping a child to become a more effective speller or reader. Finding his mistakes and helping him to overcome them is more useful. Teachers should determine how the student approaches spelling and the recognition of words. Is he systematic? Is his system an effective one, and does he use it efficiently?

The techniques used in reading and spelling should not *conflict* with each other. For example, the teacher who is trying to help children see words in larger units when reading, should not develop contradictory habits by teaching children to spell on a letter-by-letter basis.

The simplest way to review what progress a child is making in both reading and spelling is to examine samples of his reading and writing. For reading, record the way he reads – degree of fluency, expression, rate-and list errors in pronunciation. For spelling, record actual misspellings.

The relationship between reading and spelling will often be revealed by common kinds of mistakes. Reversals (saw for was; *stop* for *spot),* omissions, additions, substitutions, and ignorance of the alphabet, are common mistakes of poor spellers and are typical of poor readers as well.

Poor spellers often try to spell non-phonetic wads phonetically (*Wensday* for *Wednesday; or enuf* for *enough*), distort spelling because mispronunciation (*Febuary* for *February*) or omit the middles or, more often, the ends of words.

In most schools, beginning activities with words in reading and in spelling are much alike. Whole words, not components, are the child's initial contact in beginning reading lessons. In spelling, too, the child begins to write before he knows the sound elements and their letter representations. At first he copies the teacher's model or words that he sees elsewhere. He tries to make a correct copy, rather than to remember all of the letters. In developing beginning competence in reading and. writing, the teacher guides children to understanding of the alphabetic principle that letters represent sounds in a systematic manner. This principle is *basic to learning when encountering new words* in reading, and when correctly spelling words produced independently, rather than copying. Later, syllabic structure and meaning – the root, prefix and suffix system – are taught as a basis far developing maturity in reading and spelling. Finally, to become a secure and independent reader and speller, one must use the dictionary well and frequently. Early instruction in its use is indispensable.

## Mastering the System

It is clear that success in reading depends on mastering the system of English spelling. The system is a code: the reader must decode; the speller must encode. Learning to read well and to spell efficiently are complementary activities – success or difficulty in both go hand in hand – but the relationship is far from absolute. A good speller may have trouble with reading which demands a high level of comprehension, and a good reader, who excells at interpreting words in context, may be a miserable speller. Simplification of English spelling would ease a lot of the problems of both, but until that occurs the advice given to colonial children is probably as good as any!

## Bibliography

The resources of ERIC/CRIER, Indiana University, were used in the preparation of this paper.

## References

Horn, Ernest, *Teaching Spelling,* "What Research Says to the Teacher," Series No. 3, Washington, D. C., Dept. of Classroom Teacher, National Education Assoc., 1967.

Anderson, Paul S., *Language Skills* in *Elementary Education,* New York: the MacMillan Co., 1964.

Moffe, H. James, A *Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13;* A Handbook for Teachers. New York: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1968.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 pp12–15 in the printed version]*

## 6. The probability of reading failure in i.t.a. and t.o., by John Downing, Ph.D.*

*Prof. of Education, Univ. of Victoria, Victoria, B.C. Canada.

Bishop Butler, writing about religion in 1756, made the very wise observation that `probability is the very guide of life.' In most cultures it seems to be a universal human trait to be hopeful and optimistic about the future. When in desperate straits, a belief in probable escape has great survival value. But actual survival depends on the individual's good judgment of the statistical probabilities of the outcomes of alternative strategies of avoiding danger.

Reading failure is a desperate strait to be in. Survival in school, at home, or at work, is extremely difficult for the illiterate or semi-literate. Unfortunately, it is impossible to protect all children from experiencing failure in learning to read. Research on the causes of reading disability has found them to be legion. However, research has not left us hopelessly ignorant. We do know some of the probabilities. For example, certain situations are hazardous because they increase the probability that children may fail in learning to read.

In the *Comparative Reading* study (Downing, 1973) of children's experiences in learning to read in 14 different countries, it was found that there is a universal problem-solving situation for all beginners everywhere. It is one in which the child tries to understand the information provided by the teacher by relating it to what he (the child) already knows about language. For example, reading failure is associated with articulation defects. It is not certain that a child with such a handicap will fail. Many do not. But the probability of failure is higher than for many other handicaps. Most articulation defects clear up by themselves by the age of 7 or 8. Thus, in countries like Sweden and Finland where formal schooling does not begin until age 7, the probability of reading failure for the child with articulation defects is low because it is very likely that he will have grown out of his difficulty before anyone teaches him reading. In countries like England, on the other hand,the probability of reading failure for such children is high because formal schooling begins at age five. Since teachers in England canna raise the legal age for entry to school, they have to watch carefully for such handicaps and avoid placing too much emphasis on teaching methods which involve phonemic analysis of speech. This is how `probability is the very guide of life' in the teaching of reading.

### Language hazards

In the *Comparative Reading* study we found that languages differ considerably in the kinds of hazards they contain for children learning to read. This is a question of probability again, and one in which there is no easy solution. For example, if we could choose a language for learning to read in, it is likely that we would choose Japanese. Several factors seem to be related to success in teaching reading in Japan. One appears to be the national language. The Kana characters which children learn first are symbols for syllables. Each character represents one syllable and one syllable only. This has two advantages for the Japanese learner in comparison with his English-speaking counterpart:

(1) the syllable is easier to discriminate in auditory perception than is the phoneme (usually considered to be the sound unit represented by the letters of the English alphabet). Correspondingly, the syllable is easier to conceptualize than the phoneme (Liberman, 1973);

(2) the regularity of the Kana syllabary is *easier for the child to perceive and understand* than the coding system of the traditional orthography (t.o.) of English. Since English-speaking children cannot be brought up on Japanese, the probability of reading failure arising from the great complexity of t.o. must guide our teaching in some more practical manner.

**Some Bullock recommendations**

The Bullock Committee (Dept. of Education and Science, 1975) gave considerable attention to the problem of language hazards. It concluded: 'We must emphasize that this level of decoding is of particular importance in the early stages of learning to read, and the complexity of English spelling patterns does appear to retard progress' (p. 87). Four types of complexity in t.o. are commonly recognized as causing this retardation:

(1) The same phoneme has several different spellings. For instance, the single phoneme heard in the word *eye* and in every word in the sentence *I like my pie.* There are more than 20 alternative spellings for this English phoneme.
(2) The same letter represents several different phonemes. For instance, the letter *o* in *some women do go on* represents a different phoneme in each word.
(3) The phonemic analysis of words is confusing because the number of letters is often different from the number of phonemes. For instance, *thought* has 7 letters for 3 phonemes.
(4) A large number of English words have the 'magic *e'* ending that is a hangover from a pronunciation change that occurred in the 14th century. For instance, *name, bite, note, cute.* In modern English this causes a breach of the left-to-right rule of reading since the final phoneme is represented not by the final letter, but by the second letter from the right.

Whatever the historical reasons for present-day English spelling, and no matter how many lengthy explanations are given by linguists for the conventions of t.o., the psychological fact remains that its complexity makes it *difficult for the young child to perceive and understand* the system in t.o. Learning to read with t.o. is hazardous and, therefore, the probability of failure is consequently high. The Bullock Report recognizes that this fact is well established by research and that one way to reduce the probability of failure at the beginning stage is to use the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.):

> We have already noted the bewildering complexities of the English spelling system, and it is self-evident that a simplification of the relationship between sound and spelling must make it much easier for a child to make progress in the early stages. If there were fewer items to be learned, this alone must reduce the time required, and if there are fewer ambiguities, there will be less confusion. All this is amply confirmed by research. Following a careful review of all the evidence, the authors of the Schools Council Report (Warburton and Southgate, 1969) on i.t.a. came to this conclusion: 'There is no evidence whatsoever for the belief that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in traditional orthography. It would appear that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in the initial teaching alphabet.' (p. 110).

Warburton and Southgate arrived at this conclusion after reviewing all the many test results from investigations comparing i.t.a. beginners with t.o. beginners. Not one single test showed that t.o. beginners were superior readers, writers and spellers to i.t.a. beginners. Not all tests clearly gave the

superiority to i.t.a. beginners, but many did. The probabilities for success clearly favoured starting with i.t.a.

Not every member of the Bullock Committee was an i.t.a. supporter, but all members signed the Report, without abstention, recommending that,

> schools which choose to adopt it should be given every support. We also feel that teachers should examine the question of i.t.a. on its merits. We hope they will make their own objective assessment of the various arguments for and against, and do not accept the tendentious statements that are still made by some of its advocates and opponents (p. 112).

**Tendentious statements**

The i.t.a. is used in about 10% of schools, according to the Bullock Committee Report. Probably that proportion would be higher if it had not been for the exaggerated claims and tendentious statements made by i.t.a.'s advocates in the early years of its experimental trials. The Bullock Committee noted that 'Some of the more pressing advocacy of i.t.a. is likely to have been counter-productive. The experienced infant teacher can only be irritated by the suggestion that all that is needed to bring about general improvement in reading is the introduction of a simplified code' (p. 110). It is a pity that this quite unnecessary irritation was caused. All that needed to be stated by i.t.a. advocates was that the probability of children experiencing reading failure had been significantly reduced in classes where i.t.a. had been introduced.

Unfortunately, the irritation caused by tendentious statements from i.t.a.'s advocates seems to have triggered off equally tendentious statements from its opponents. The advocates have quietened down in recent years, perhaps because they have recognized their past mistakes, but the opponents have succeeded in making it fashionable to scoff at i.t.a. teachers as innocent victims of propaganda. It is sometimes suggested that teachers who use i.t.a. know nothing about the `modern' science of linguistics and its distinguished experts, such as Chomsky. For example, Roberts (1975) in his review of the Bullock Report in this journal, comments that,

> The use of morphemic letter clusters has a direct bearing on whether or not to use i.t.a. although this is not stated in the Report. The arguments of Chomsky (1970) indicate that in terms of real understanding of the written code a strong argument can be made for retaining traditional orthography.... (p. 16).

Doubtless, Roberts' statement has been quoted with glee by opponents of i.t.a. That is most unfortunate for teachers, student teachers, parents and children-not because i.t.a. is a cure for all reading evils-but because Roberts is wrong, and teachers are being misled by following fashions fed by such unsupported statements.

Roberts is wrong on two counts:

(1) i.t.a.'s design does take account of the morphemic letter clusters of t.o. That is why i.t.a. is not a simple letter/sound system. The i.t.a. cannot be learned in five minutes by teachers who want to use it. It takes time and effort precisely because of the spelling rules for the teacher's (not the children's) writing which must consider such problems as the morphemic letter clusters of t.o. that Roberts hints are unknown to i.t.a.'s designers and teachers who use it.

(2) Chomsky's arguments are not considered `strong arguments. . . for retaining traditional orthography' by most linguists or psycholinguists. As so often happens in education, fashions are lagging behind developments in related sciences. Chomsky name-dropping is no longer *de rigueur* in linguistics or psychology (if it ever were). Noam Chomsky's (1957,1965,1970) theory in relation to English orthography has been dismissed theoretically or disproved empirically.

A full discussion of Chomsky's theory requires a great deal of space (cf., for example, Downing, in press). The main point for teachers of reading is that Noam Chomsky claimed that t.o. does not represent phonemes at all. This led him to propose that 'the rules of sound-letter correspondence need hardly be taught' (N. Chomsky, 1970, p. 15). His English grammar led him to propose that t.o. is a system of 'lexical representation' (p. 4) and that, as such, it is 'a near-optimal system for representing the spoken language.' Noam Chomsky's own evidence does not bear up under scrutiny, particularly from the historical point of view (cf. Scragg, 1974). This was quickly noted by his colleagues in linguistics. Francis (1970) found Chomsky's claims for the reality of lexical representation 'extravagant and unsupported' (p. 51). Vacheck (1973) remarked that 'Clearly as a piece of apology for present-day English spelling, the argumentation adduced by Chomsky and Halle (1968) is hardly convincing. . .'(p. 68). Psychologists who have tested Chomsky's claims have made many interesting discoveries as a result, but they do not provide evidence supporting Chomsky's views on the nature and quality of t.o. (for example, Robinson, 1967; Moskowitz, 1971; Steinberg, 1973; Simons, 1975).

Roberts' reference to 'Chomsky' thus seems to be just the kind of 'tendentious statement' which the Bullock Report urges teachers not to accept.

## Objective pros and cons

Let us follow Bullock's recommendation 'to examine the question of i.t.a. on its merits,' and make 'an objective assessment of the various arguments for and against.' Keeping to the theme of this article, we should do this in terms of 'probability' as 'the very guide of life' in classrooms.

The most important professional question is-is the probability of reading failure greater when i.t.a. is used in the initial phase or when t.o. is used at this stage? In the main report on the two original British experiments on i.t.a. (Downing, 1967), I concluded that there was negligible difference between the lowest 10% in the i.t.a. and t.o. samples. However, Vernon (1967) provided an analysis of the data indicating that the original conclusions were false. She wrote that on the Neale test at the third year,

> in the i.t.a. group 9.8% obtained ten marks or less for accuracy and 13.9% obtained five marks or less for comprehension (in both cases these marks correspond to reading ages of under 7 years). The corresponding frequencies for the t.o. group were 17.5% and 24.7% respectively. Thus it would seem that, contrary to Downing's conclusion, there *were* fewer children of poor reading ability in the i.t.a. than in the t.o. group (pp.157-8).

Vernon's criticism was well-founded. When we re-examined the data along the lines she suggested, we found that the probability of poor reading attainments was much lower in the i.t.a. group than in the t.o. group on almost every test used.

For example, if we take *Janet and John Book III* as marking the beginning of a real grasp of reading and anything below that level as representing uncertainty as to whether 'the penny has dropped' yet, we get the results shown in Table 1. The trend is quite clear. The proportion of nonreaders was less among i.t.a. pupils than among t.o. pupils even in the first year infants' class. The difference between the children using *Janet and John* in i.t.a. and the other children using *Janet and John* in t.o. increased with time. By the end of 2½ years, the proportion on non-readers was very much smaller in the i.t.a. group than in the t.o. group.

**Table 1**

*Probability of failure to reach Janet and John Book III years in school percentage of children below Book III*

| | *i.t.a. group* | *t.o. group* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 61.6 | 81.1 |
| 1 | 31.0 | 54.8 |
| 2 | 17.7 | 35.7 |
| $2^1/_3$ | 10.1 | 25.9 |

On the Schonell Graded Word Reading Test we considered that a score of four or less constituted non-reading. Similarly on the Neale Test poor readers were categorized as those who had scores of ten or less for accuracy and speed, and a score of five or less for comprehension. The i.t.a. pupils were tested in i.t.a. and the t.o. pupils in t.o. The results are shown in Table 2. Note that one cannot make valid comparisons between the Schonell and Neale tests or between the individual sub-tests of the Neale instrument. Each cut-off point for categorizing the non-reader is arbitrary and different. However, it is clear that on every test, except speed, the probability of being a non-reader or a poor reader was much lower in the i.t.a. classes than it was in the t.o. classes.

**Table 2**

*Probability of being a non-reader on test score*

| *Test* | *Years in school* | *i.t.a. group* | *t.o. group* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Schonell | 1 | 36.2 | 62.3 |
| Schonell | 1½ | 14.4 | 27.7 |
| | | | |
| Neale-accuracy | 1½ | 27.7 | 54.5 |
| Neale-speed | 1½ | 17.4 | 19.4 |
| Neale-comprehension | 1½ | 46.8 | 69.3 |

After the middle of the second year in the British i.t.a. experiments, the i.t.a. pupils were tested on t.o. tests to evaluate the effectiveness of i.t.a. on transfer to t.o. The comparison was made to answer the question-is the probability of failure in t.o. less when the pupil begins with t.o. or is it less when the pupil begins with i.t.a. and changes over later to t.o.?

At first, the encouragingly good results of i.t.a. prior to transfer to t.o. seemed lost when we began to test in t.o. The present writer referred to it as a 'setback' for the i.t.a. pupils. This was a mistaken judgment. For one reason, we did not take sufficient account of the fact that we were testing the whole sample of i.t.a. pupils in t.o. at a time when a considerable proportion of these children had not yet been transferred from i.t.a. to t.o. by their teachers. Thus the earlier tests were largely

invalid. Subsequently, as more and more i.t.a. pupils moved on to t.o. reading, the advantages of i.t.a. reasserted itself. The latest tests given before the experiments ended provided the best guide.

The results are shown in Table 3. The pupil was classified as a poor reader if he scored five or less on the N.F.E.R. Sentence Reading Test 1 (silent reading comprehension). The pupil was regarded as failing the test altogether if he scored zero on a subtest in the N.F.E.R. English Progress Test. He was regarded as having poor overall English attainments if he scored nine or less on the whole test.

**Table 3**

*Probability of failure in fifth year of schooling*

| *Test* | *Years in school* | *i.t.a. group* | *t.o. group* |
|---|---|---|---|
| N.F.E.R. Sentence Reading Test 1 | 4½ | 2.6 | 14.1 |
| N.F.E.R. English Progress Test: | | | |
| (i) Capital letters | 5 | 14.1 | 31.5 |
| (ii) Story comprehension | 5 | 8.7 | 14.1 |
| (iii) Past & present tenses | 5 | 19.6 | 41.3 |
| (iv) Spelling | 5 | 22.8 | 42.4 |
| (v) Sentence completion | 5 | 6.5 | 22.8 |
| (vi) Abbreviations | 5 | 31.5 | 53.3 |
| (vii) Overall English | 5 | 13.1 | 32.6 |

There is no need to dwell on the details. The overall conclusion is quite clear. The probability of failure in literacy in English t.o. in the fifth year of school was considerably lower when the pupil had begun with i.t.a. than when the pupil had begun with t.o.

These results were published with all the details of sampling, matching and statistical procedures in psychological and medical journals several years ago (Downing, 1969; Downing and Latham, 1969). They may not have been given sufficient consideration in educational circles as yet.

## Conclusion

Of course, there are other pros and cons to be considered, but we do not have such objective evidence about them as we do on the probabilities of failure in i.t.a. as compared with t.o. For instance, it is probable that the head-teacher will need to spend more time explaining to parents how his school teaches reading when i.t.a. is used than when t.o. is used. The probability of other special activities being needed is higher in i.t.a. schools than in t.o. schools. But we do not have any firm data on such problems.

Summing up, the Bullock Report has urged us to judge i.t.a. on its merits, and has reminded us that the Schools Council Report concluded that it is more effective to learn t.o. through the medium of i.t.a. An examination of the comparative progress of children in i.t.a. and t.o. classes shows a consistent trend. The probability of failure is considerably greater when t.o. is used than when i.t.a. is used. If Bishop Butler was right that 'probability is the very guide of life,' it would seem timely for these facts to become more widely known among educators.

**Bibliography**


Chomsky, C. (1970). Reading, writing and phonology. *Harvard Educational Review.* 40, 287-309.

Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic Structures.* The Hague: Mouton.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax.* The Hague: Mouton.

Chomsky, N. (1970). Phonology and reading, In H. Levin and J. P. Williams (editors). *Basic Studies on Reading,* New York: Basic Books.

Chomsky, N. and Halle, M. (1968). *Sound Pattern of English.* New York: Harper & Row.

Department of Education & Science (1975). *A Language for Life* (The Bullock Report). London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Downing, J. (1967). Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alpha. bet. London: Cassell.

Downing, J. (1969). New experimental evidence of the effectiveness of i.t.a. in preventing disabilities of reading and spelling. *Developmental Medecine and Child Neurology, 5,* 547-555.

Downing, J. (1973). *Comparative Reading.* London: Collier-Macmillan, and New York: Macmillan.

Downing, J. (In press). Linguistic awareness and English orthography. *Journal of Reading Behavior*.

Downing, J. and Latham, W. (1969). A follow-up of children in the first i.t.a experiment. *British Jour. of Educational Psychology,* 39, 303-305.

Francis, W. N. (1970). Linguistics and reading: a commentary on chapters 1 to 3. In H. Levin and J. F. Williams (editors), *Basic Studies on Reading.* New York: Basic Books.

Liberman, I. Y.(1973). Segmentation of the spoken word and reading acquisition. *Bulletin of the Orton* Soc:23, 65-67. Moskowitz, A.(1971). *The Acqusition of Phonology.* Doctoral dissertation, Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, Calif.

Roberts, G. (1975). Early reading. *Reading,* 9, 14-23.

Robinson, J. (1967). The Development of Certain Pronunciation Skills in the Case of Suffixed Words. Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass.

Scragg, D. G. (1974). *A History of English Spelling.* Manchester Univ. Press, and New York: Barnes & Noble.

Simons, H. D. (1975). Transformational phonology and reading acquisition. *Jour. of Reading Behaviour, 7,* 49-59.

Steinberg, D, (1973). Phonology, reading, and Chomsky and Halle's optimal *orthography. Jour. of Psycholinguistic Research,* 2, 239-258.

Vacheck, J. (1973). *Written Language.* The Hague: Mouton. Vernon, M. D. (1967). Evaluations-chp. 11. In J. Downing et al.., *The i.t.a. Symposium.* Slough, Bucks: N.F.E.R.

Warburton, F. W. and Southgate, V. (1969). i. *t. a.: An Independent Evaluation.* (The Schools Council Report). London: Murray, and Edinburgh: Chambers.


-o0o-


[Spelling Progress Bulletin, Fall 1978 p10]


An Apology

We inadvertently omitted giving credit to the United Kingdom Reading Assoc. when reprinting in our Summer issue Dr. John Downing's article, "The Probability of Reading Failure in i.t.a. and t.o." from their publication *Reading,* vol. 11, no. 3, Dec. 1977.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 pp15–18 in the printed version]*

# 7. All the Way with Phonics, by Abraham F. Citron, Ph.D.*

* Wayne State Univ., College of Educ., Detroit, Mich, 48202
Presented at the joint IRA-PSC meeting, Houston, Tx, May 5, '78.
This paper uses SR-1, Spelling Reform one, which spells each short 'e' sound with an 'e', as explained at the end.

**Abstract**
All symbolic learning requires reliable cues. A red traffic light means 'stop' and nothing else. A 3 always means three units and nothing else. In education, we are reliable in all symbol systems save our orthography.

Alphabetic writing is a phonemic system; thus, "legitimating phonics" should mean going back to the alphabetic system from which our spelling has strayed.

Four experiments with 5th and 6th graders show that students make 48% fewer errors spelling words in phonemic forms than in traditional farms. Also, in one of these experiments, with 621 students in 9 schools in the Detroit metropolitan area, mastery, or the number of perfect papers, jumped from 3.1%. in traditional forms to 53% in phonemic forms. (All results are significant at the .01 confidence level or better.)

Following the lead of the Australian Teachers Federation, which endorsed Spelling Reform One in 1975, spelling each short 'e' sound with and 'e' ('head' = 'hed', 'bread' = 'bred', 'any' = 'eny', etc.), it is suggested that one change be made every four years for forty years. This would revolutionize our spelling, would greatly improve our reading and literacy level, and would mark a new era in education in the English speaking world.

## All the Way with Phonics

1. *Reliability and the Symbols of Language*
The symbols of speech are sounds. A child brought up in a sub-culture using the three phonemes English uses for 'dog,' will learn this; for this sound, connected to the meaning, is what the. child hears and learns to speak. (Unless the subculture form is "dawg," in which case that is what the child learns.) It is to be noted that in order the child learn, the symbols must be reliable. In the family and in the subculture `dog' always sounds like `dog' ,'cat' always sounds like `cat', 'pig' always sounds like 'pig' and so on. The speaking system works because of this reliability. We never find a mentally and physically normal child who does not learn to speak.

Whenever we want quick, complete comprehension by everyone, we fashion a simple symbol, absolutely reliable. That is, it always means precisely what is intended and nothing else.

A red traffic light means `stop' and nothing else. A directional arrow with the hed **[1]** to the right means 'go toward the right' and nothing else. We never tell a child the right shoe belongs on the left foot. We always tell the children that the big clock hand shows minutes and the little hand designates the hour. We never reverse this because we do not want to confuse the children. We teach children that a 3 means three units and nothing else. Three is always 3 and never 4 or 7. We are perfectly consistent with our number system.

This consistency and reliability is absolutely fundamental to a symbol system meant for everyone in a given society. The symbols of writing are the letters of our alphabet. To a child, the sounds of speech are reliable but the marks (symbols) of writing are unreliable.

He wonders, is the 'c' in 'can' like the 'c' in 'cat' or is it like the 'c' in 'cent' or 'certain' or 'cello'? Is the 'o' in 'dog' like the 'o' in `do' or is it like the 'o' in 'not', or what? Is the 'g' in 'dog' like the 'g' in 'gang' or like the 'g' in 'giant'? Is the 'p' in 'pig' like the 'p' in 'pony' or like the in 'phone'?

The only place in all education at which we are intentionally inconsistent and unreliable is in our orthographic system, the way we put letters together to form words. Here, and here alone, we indulge in great unreliability, and it is precisely here that large percentages of our children experience grave difficulties, difficulties in spelling, writing, and reading. We confuse innocent children with an irregular, irrational and frustrating system. A professor of language has rightly called our spelling "the world's most awsome mess." (Mario Pei, 1965).

II *Alphabetic Writing is Phonics*
Alphabetic writing (originated somewhere in the 2nd millenium, B.C.) (Pei, 1965) is the original phonics. An alphabetic system of writing is a sound-to-symbol system which attempts to allocate one written character (grapheme) to one spoken sound (phoneme) of the language. (Diringer, 1968) (Hanna, Hodges & Hanna, 1971). This was a magnificently civilizing advance over all types of picture writing, since it reduced the number of characters to be mastered from the thousands or the hundreds to somewhere in the twenties, thus bringing literacy potentially within the grasp of everyone who shared a given spoken tongue.

But the 41 to 51 phonemes of English have never had their own alphabet; early writers borrowed the Latin alphabet of 24 characters, adding on 2 from the Runic symbols of the time. Hence, from the first, writers were forced to deviate widely from the alphabetic principle. Further, written English has had a long, haphazard, rich development, mostly under feudal and upper class control, full of borrowings from meny languages, and utilizing different styles of spelling at different periods. The result is the current system with its merciless mixture of phonic intent with all sorts of unphonic and nonphonic forms. Thus, legitimating phonics is nothing other than a "back to basics" move to use an alphabet as cues for the expression of sound, which is the intent of all alphabetic writing.

III *Four Experiments in Natural Spelling.*
There is considerable evidence that children using i.t.a. (Initial Teaching Alphabet) learn to read more quickly than children using traditional forms. (Downing, 1967), (Pitman & St. John, 1969), (Yarington, 1961). Further, it must be pointed out that in our culture, with children surrounded by traditional forms, it is next to impossible to obtain a noncontaminated experiment in i.t.a., or in eny other non-traditional system. Short of shipping children to an isolated island, the school situation cannot be cut off from the street signs, cereal boxes, comic books, T-V guides, and other traditional reading material. Also, children know that i.t.a. is a "game," whereas they feel traditional forms are real. It is probable that experimental results under-represent effects of i.t.a.

The i.t.a. people are on the right track; they are genuine alphabetists. They utilized 10 additional alphabetic characters. Their system was used only as an "initial teaching" medium. As soon as the child had learned to read at a given level in i.t.a., the child had to be switched over to reading in the traditional system. Among the reasons why i.t.a. has not caught on are requirements for special training of teachers, and, with characteristic conservatism, meny educators fail to see its advantages.

But suppose we are not so perfectionist and there is no detour? Suppose we use our present alphabet, but in a more reliable way? Suppose we use our letters in a more consistent way, with some diacritic marks for beginners? How would students react to spelling in such a system?

Four such experiments have been performed: two in 1975 (Citron, 1976), the third in May, 1976 (Baker, 1977), the fourth in Jan. and Feb. 1977. Summaries of these are as follows:

Sixth graders, 621 in 26 classes in 9 schools of the Detroit metropolitan area (inner city, outer city and suburban) were tested. The following seven words were used:

| *traditional spelling* | *phonemic spelling* | |
|---|---|---|
| believe | belevv | (More strictly phonemic |
| height | hyt | forms: bēlēv, hit, |
| photograph | fotograf | rēsēv, thrū, wā, were |
| receive | reseev | not used because |
| through | thru | they require diacritic |
| tongue | tung | marks and further |
| weigh | wa | explanation.) |

These words were used despite the fact that a number of students alredy knew the traditional spelling of some of them. One by one, the traditional forms were placed on the board, defined by the instructor, (myself), used by two students in sentences. One minute each was given to examin, with the instructor, the spelling of these words, which were then erased and dictated to the students. Pencils were put down and papers turned over. The phonemic forms were then placed on the board, examined, discussed for one minute each, after which they were erased and agen dictated. This time the students were asked to write them in phonemic forms.

The students were told that this was an experiment in spelling the way words sound, and that their efforts would not affect their grades in spelling. They were urged to try their best to get every word right in both forms. Interest in marks on both forms indicated high levels of effort on both.

(Alternation of start: In one lesson the students would start with traditional forms, the next lesson with phonemic forms.)

In the traditional forms 1481 words were misspelled; in the phonemic, 764, or 48% less. (Results significant at the .001 level). A second result is the sharp increase in the number of perfect papers in the phonemic forms, from 192 or 31% in the traditional forms to 332 or 53% in the phonemic forms. Obviously the phonemic forms encourage mastery. How is it that 53% of these students get all seven words correct after only a seven minute exposure? We can only speculate but two hypotheses press forward: Isn't it because (a) these forms are shorter, and (b) these forms follow a rational pattern?

But this was only a "one shot, one exposure" experiment. What would happen if students worked with phonemic forms over a period of weeks? In Oct. and Nov. of 1975, two suburban (Detroit area) sixth grade classes were involved in a four week experiment. The teachers volunteered their classes and the students accepted the discussions and quizzes as one of a number of experiments in phonemic spelling. The experimenter (myself) visited each class, one of 21 students, the other of 22 students, on Mon., Wed., and Friday of each week for a period of 25 to 40 minutes. The first week was used for orientation, general rules (all c's and g's are hard, etc.), and getting used to putting words into phonemic spelling. In the following three weeks, a total of 39 words were used (such as *ionosphere, believable, acquiesce, caffeine, concession.* etc.) Procedure was similar to that used in the first experiment. Errors by weeks and forms were as follows:

| | *words* | *traditional errors* | *phonemicerrors* | | *Phonemic % less errors* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st week | 6 | 80 | 56 | | 30% |
| 2nd week | 12 | 247 | 176 | | 28% |
| 3rd week | 21 | 477 | 284 | | 40% |
| Totals | 39 | 804 | 516 | av. | 35.8% |

All differences are significant at the .01 level.

The third experiment was performed by Dr.Gertrude Baker, a counselor in the Detroit Public School system, who worked with four classes in three schools in May, 1976; two in Detroit, one suburban. (Baker, 1977). A total of 119 fifth and sixth graders were involved in nine sessions with Dr. Baker. 54 of these students were black, 65 were white. Students studied and wrote five words per lesson, using the procedure outlined in the first experiment. Total traditional form errors for the first eight days were 1347; total phonemic errors were 725, or 45% less. On the final day Dr. Baker submitted fifteen words, supposedly unfamiliar to the students. Each was defined and used in two sentences, but not presented visually. This was a "no study" test. On this test the students made 795 errors in traditional forms and 363, or 54% less, in phonemic forms. These results are significant at the .001 level. No significant differences were found between number of errors made by black and white students.

The fourth experiment was conducted at the Avery School, Berkeley School Dist., Southfield, Mich., in Mr. Tom McPhillip's fifth grade class in Feb. and Mar. 1977. I worked with this class each Monday through Thursday from 9:30 to 10:10 AM for four weeks. It consisted of 22 white middle class students and a boy from Lebanon enrolled at the beginning of the semester.

Five words, chosen to be unfamiliar to these students, were studied and written each day. Procedure followed that of experiment number one, giving equal time of ten minutes to each list. A representative sample of the 80 words used is as follows:

| *traditional spelling* | *phonemic spelling* | |
|---|---|---|
| receive | rēsēv | (Long vowels, except i, are |
| grieve | grēv | by a diacritic bar above.) |
| tutor | tūtr | |
| hygiene | hijēn | (Long i is shown by i) |
| illegible | ilejubl | |
| atmosphere | atmusfir | |
| acknowledge | acnalej | ("Wide-mouth" *a* is |
| bereaved | bērēvd | shown by a) |

Daily scores and percentages are as follows:

| *day* | *traditional errors* | *phonemic errors* | *% fewer phonemic* | *% fewer traditional* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | 37 | 3 | 92% | |
| 2nd | 13 | 18 | | 33% |
| 3rd | 22 | 15 | 32% | |
| 4th | 11 | 14 | | 21% |
| 5th | 48 | 38 | 21% | |
| 6th | 30 | 21 | 33% | |
| 7th | 26 | 19 | 27% | |
| 8th | 23 | 13 | 43% | |
| 9th | 34 | 23 | 37% | |
| 10th | 32 | 16 | 50% | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11th | 17 | 8 | | 53% | |
| 12th | 10 | 5 | | 50% | |
| 13th | 29 | 26 | | 10% | |
| 14th | 24 | 15 | | 37% | |
| 15th | 95 | 28 | | 70% | |
| 16th | 70 | 11 | | 83% | |
| Totals | 522 | 272 | av. | 47% | fewer errors totaling all days |

Differences between traditional and phonemic errors are significant at the .001 level. On two days out of the 16, early in the experiment, the phonemic errors outnumbered the traditional errors.

The errors and percentages changed radically in the last two days because the procedure changed. On these two days, five one-syllable words were dictated, defined, used in sentences and written without eny visual presentation.

On the 15th day, these words were: *clique, beau, reign, plaque, sluice.* On the 16th day they were: *lieu, lode, ode, peat, perse.* Since the students were unfamiliar with these words, they proved difficult to spell in traditional forms, but since they are one syllable, they proved relatively simple in phonemic forms. Not one student wrote five words correctly in traditional form, but on the 15th day, 12 students or 55% of those present, wrote them perfectly in phonemic form. On the 16th day, agen no student wrote all five words correctly in traditional form. (The best papers were those of eight students who each had two errors.) But 16 of the 22 present, or 72.7%, wrote the words perfectly in phonemic form.

In summary it should be sed that these fifth and sixth graders, trained for four to six years in traditional spelling forms, did remarkably better on short exposure, using phonemic forms. Dr. Baker kept a record of errors on traditional forms, and, as expected, most of these errors are in the direction of how the word sounds. The fact is that children are naturally phonemic spellers and we expend much effort, somewhat unsuccessfully, to train them out of it.

IV *A Note on Differing Dialects*

Objection is often made to phonemic spelling on a standard English pronunciation base because it is pointed out that large numbers of American children do not speak a standard English dialect. There are reasons to believe this objection is insubstantial. Dr. Baker's sampling contained 54 black students and 65 white students; no significant differences were found in their scores either in traditional or phonemic forms. Dr. Baker has reported that the black children in this sample spoke a non-standard English dialect.

Further, there is a characteristic of phonemic spelling that makes it helpful to all, no matter what dialect they speak. This is the fact that it shortens almost every word it affects. If a person seys 'haid,' for example, 'hed' is simpler to learn than the standard 'head.' If a person seys 'mo' for the standard 'more,' a spelling of 'mor' helps. It may fairly be sed that although phonemic spelling helps speakers of standard English the most, it helps all speakers of English.

V *A Step-by-Step Transition*

Why don t we change? So called etymological and lexical objections do not stand examination. The real reason is massive public reluctance to disturb comfortable habits. As a graduate student put it: "I've learned to operate in one system and I'll be damned if I'll learn another." New forms look "silly" to masses of people who never tire of ridiculing "sound-out" spelling.

Active also here are dynamics of class privilege, position and power, with those enjoying economic and prestige rewards for even minor skill in the written forms, not at all eager to cheapen the cost of arrival.

There is a widespred misunderstanding that a simplified spelling would constitute a lowering of academic standards. Meny teachers feel that they do not wish to sacrifice the tradition and the "richness" of our written forms for the sake of the minority of students who have difficulties. There are those who feel that all academic learning, to be worthwhile, must be somewhat difficult. Hence, to make something simpler is to tarnish it and to detract from its worth. These people feel that 'love' is noble, romantic, poetic, and and that 'luv' is coarse, ignorant, repugnant.

These objections may be ill-founded and irrational, but they are strong and stubborn.

To minimize popular objections and the costs of change, the Australian Teachers Federation endorsed (1975) SR-1, Spelling Reform One, and, by implication, a step-by-step method of spelling reform. SR-1 calls for spelling every short 'e' sound with an 'e.' Thus, *bread is* written *bred, head is hed, friend* is */rend, said* is *sed,* etc. This would affect about 120 out of the 25,000 most commonly used English words. Advocates do not wish to get bogged down in discussions of further steps until SR-1 is well established, for they feel it is this endless discussion which has been an important factor in blocking eny first step. (Lindgren, 1965).

Step-by-step changes would create minimum dislocation, would allow each interlocking generational group to maintain competence, would give publishers time and options on republishing materials. If, for example, one change were to be made every four years, a fairly complete reform could be made in less than 50 years.

Over the years the savings in time, typing, printing, paper, and on all operations of getting words in readable form, would be tremendous, far outweighing the costs of changeover.

But the big point is the gains for children and for future generations in academic achievement, in employment, in social and career stimulation, in greater literacy. Improvement will be gradual with the step-by-step process, and certainly we will still have reading problems, but general improvement will be so marked that we will have entered a new era in education in the English-speaking world.

**References**


1. Baker, Gertrude E. A Comparison of Traditional and Phonemic Spelling Forms with Fifth and Sixth Grade Students. Doctoral Dissertation, Wayne State Univ., Detroit, Mich, 1977.
2. Citron, Abraham F. "English Orthography as Conspicuous Consumption," *National Directory* of *Educational Sociology,* Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb., 1976, 16-23.
3. Diringer, David. *The Alphabet: A Key to the History of Mankind,* Funk & Wagnalls, New York, Vol. 1, 1968, p. 163.
4. Downing, John. *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet.* Cassell & Co., Ltd. London, 1967.
5. Hanna, Paul R.; Hodges, Richard E., & Hanna, Jean S. *Spelling: Structure and Strategies,* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1971, 16-17, 39.
6. Lindgren, Harry. *Spelling Reform: A New Approach,* Alpha Books, Sidney, Australia, 1969.
7. Pei, Mario. *The Story of Language,* Mentor Books, New York, 1965, 337, 98.
8. Pitman, Sir James, & St. John, John. *Alphabets and Reading,* Pitman Publishing Corp., London, 1969, 147210.
9. Yarington, David; Gentry, Atron & Mazurkiewicz, Albert. "Literacy, Racism, Spelling and the Reading Problem in America," Unpublished paper written in 1961. David J. Yarington is Head of the English Dept., Lake Superior State College, Saulte Ste. Marie, Mich., 49783.


-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 pp18,19 in the printed version]*

# 8. Teacher Competence; Phonemics, Orthographics, and Perception, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.*

*Winter Haven, Fla.
Presented at 23rd Convention of IRA, Houston, Tx, May 5, 1978.

English has an alphabetic writing system for representing the sounds (phonemes) of speech. This relationship between sounds and the characters representing them is a loose one for many reasons, revealed in the history of *evolution* of the Greco-Roman alphabet with its own phonemic (sound)system and grammar through Old English and Middle English to Modern English – all influencing American speech and spellings. Yes, the evolution of the alphabetic code of writing, or set of graphic (visual) symbols, substituted for vocal signals of American speech has produced many anomalies in spelling which present formidable roadblocks for beginners in reading, whether native speakers or others learning to read English as a second language.

Since Valentin Ikelsamer, circa 1534, introduced the concept of *phonics,* or the study of the variable and static relationships between phonemics and graphemics, word perception has been equated with phonics. To be sure, teaching practices have been diluted liberally with sight, or whole-word, "methods" – often reduced to the absurd telling-the-pupil-the -word procedure. To worsen the situation, phonics instruction has been freighted with ineffective and often confusing gimcrackery by phonic zealots and other well-intentioned educators who understand neither phonemics nor orthography, including its morphological basis.

The alphabetic writing system is a rather complex one for representing both the phonemes of speech and the morphology (the stems and affixes which are the meaning-bearing units) of language. Basically, the system of language is understood by children who are prepared for learning to read, as reflected in their language facility. But the transfer from a speech system to a writing system is complicated by the irregularity of English spellings of common words (e.g., *come*, *have, too)* and the "unstressed" function words (e.g., *and, or),* often mistaught as stressed words. Hence, the complexities and complications of the alphabetic writing system, as possible roadblocks in learning to read, require a high level of teacher competence to insure transition from speaking to reading.

While it is crucial for teachers to understand the language-the stimuli-with which they are dealing directly, there is more to teaching the word-perception facet of reading. Textbooks and brochures on phonics, for example, are replete with phonic boners which confuse and defeat the eager beginner in learning to read: memorizing phonic rules which sometimes have as many exceptions as applications, attempts to say consonants in isolation (e.g., "pub" for /p/), attempts to "blend" distorted sounds into words (e.g., *"buh-a-tuh"* for *bat),* insisting on the learner's pronunciation of silent letters (e.g., *b* in *climb),* and so on. These confusions and frustrations are eliminated when teachers understand not only phonemics and orthography but also the psychological processes of perception and cognition.

Basic to the teaching of phonics are these considerations:
1. The teacher's working knowledge of phonemics (sound families, or categories or classes of non-contrastive allophones), as the phonemes /ə/ in *again, cut,* /ər/ in *her, heard,* /sh/ in *sugar, ship,* /o/ in *all, law, /yü/* in *few, music,* /aü/ in *out, how,* etc.

Notes:
a. It is not necessary for a teacher to study *phonetics* and to learn the International Phonetic Alphabet. Instead, a course in *phonemics,* which emphasizes only the *pronunciation symbols* in a dictionary rather than *phonemic* symbols, is a pragmatic basis on which to teach phonics.

b. The study of phonemics embraces segmental phonemes (e.g., /k/-/a/-/t/ in *cat*) and syllable stress. Equally important to the linguistic facet of context clues, or constraints, are the suprasegmental phonemes: stress, (intensity, including phrase stress), pitch, and juncture (pitch-pause signals).

c. Intonation – the tone or rhythm of language discussed in terms of stress, pitch and juncture – signals one facet of meaning, bridging speech and writing. Insight regarding intonation *can* preclude the word-by-word reading which divorces speech and writing for beginners. This insight *can* preclude the teaching of unstressed words in phrases as isolated, stressed words.

d. Linguistics embraces:
(1) Phonology (structure of language, speech)
(a) Phonetics (speech sounds)
(b) Phonemics (classes of *distinctive* speech sounds)
(2) Grammar (higher level structures)
(a) Morphology (informational parts of words)
(b) Syntax (sentence structure)

e. Phonemics contributes to an understanding of word perception in reading instruction; grammar, to the thinking-comprehension, semantic, or conceptual-facet of reading instruction.

f. The teaching of reading involves more than linguistic structure, more than decoding writing (graphemes) into speech sounds (phonemes). In brief, reading is a dual process: decoding writing into speech; decoding the message,

2. The teacher's automatic interpretation of pronunciation symbols, especially in a dictionary that has one symbol for one phoneme, as G & C Merriam's *Webster's New Elementary Dictionary* (Some extant elementary dictionaries, for example, use /ū/ when they have the /y/ and /ü/ for the /yü/ glide.)

3. The teacher's working knowledge of the writing system (conventional word spellings, or the representation of language by writing, or orthography)

a. It is not necessary for the teacher to become an expert in orthography; instead, basic information is needed regarding spellings ranging from regular (e.g., *sat, bet, sit, hot, but)* to partially irregular (e.g., *have, noise*) to highly irregular (*one, you, any*).

b. Knowledge of the vagaries of traditional spelling is essential to the teacher's decisions:
(1) To use very sparingly: telling the pupil a whole word on which help is asked (e.g., the rare spellings for *you* and *one* which negate the applicability of phonic skills
(2) To tell the pupil only the sounds) – not the whole word – represented by an unknown vowel phonogram (e.g., *ar* in *park, oi* in *noise)*
(3) To have the pupil *apply* a *previously learned* skill to the *unknown* part of a whole word (e.g., *kn* in *knee* after learning *know* and *knife; ind* in *bind* after learning *kind, find,* etc.)

c. Knowledge of the morphological (meaningful, or semantic, units of language, as stems, affixes, etc.) basis of language in relation to prediction of pronunciations from spellings

4. The teacher's basic knowledge of the psychology of perception which is highly relevant to learning in intonational settings
a. Awareness of crucial factors in word perception
(1) Readability of material
(a) *Independent* reading level for extensive reading and study-type activities
(b) *Instructional* reading level for reinforcing the pupil's motivation, learning new word-perception skills, and developing concepts
(2) Motivations

(a) Awareness of a personal *need* for identifying an unknown part of a word or a spelling pattern, identified during the first, or silent reading of a selection
(b) Attention focused on a specific need; e.g., on sc in *scene, ough* in *through*
(c) Learning *set,* as a determiner and organizing factor; e.g., hearing syllables in a spoken word before identifying spellings of the syllables
(d) Knowledge; e.g., levels of abstraction *(Pug, hound, dog, animal, life);* spelling patterns, or rules, (e.g., *at-cap, kite-note),* sounds represented by *s* in *see, was, sure,* etc.
(e) Skills; e.g., analogy *(street-meet* versus *one-bone)*
(f) Values; e.g., reading in the home
(g) Intent based on self-selection of specific needs to learn and on self-evaluation of achievement
(h) Awareness of success, self-determined
(i) Aspiration (or expectancy of achievement), goals self-established regarding information, recreation, future vocation
(j) Interest: in the content of a specific selection or vocabulary
(k) Attitudes, toward school and reading activities in particular
(l) Etc.

(3) Meaning (grammatical and cognitive), a crucial factor in both perception and comprehension; i.e., knowing a word *form* in its syntactical setting
(4) *Grouping* (or chunking) pronounceable parts of a monosyllable or the syllables of a lexical word; e.g. *ca, a* or *ap* in *cap;* or *lett* in *letter*
(5) *Meaning,* structural (e.g., a function word as *then* or *of*) or referential (e.g., the word *hot*)
(6) *Contrast,* (e.g., the sound patterns of /'sit/ and /'sat/ or the spelling paterns of *hat-hate*)
(7) *Closure,* perceptual and cognitive. For example, identifying the whole word *park* after being told the sound Air/ (except in the N. E. United States!) and consumating with cognitive "meaning"
(8) *Feedback* from perception of lexical words to speech, and during a directed reading activity, from teacher to learner
(9) *Application* to other words with the same spelling pattern, and finally to pseudo words; e.g., *sat-hat to jat-dat*

b. Awareness of types of perceptual learning
(1) Category learning; e.g., *at-hat-cap*
(2) Cue learning; e,g., *ind-kind, oo-moon*
(3) Probability learning; e.g., *oo* in *moon-look, ew* in *sew-dew*
(4) Alternative learning (morphophonemic spellings) e.g., *ass(u)me-ass(u)mption, m(ea)n-m(ea)nt,*

c. Discrimination learning; e.g., speech sounds and lexical words

d. Cognition; e.g., meaning of a word in a sentence to evaluate validity of a word *form* identified via phonic skills

**In Conclusion**

The word-perception facet of reading instruction is escalated to the degree that teacher preparation includes the *foundations*: (1) the phonemic and morphological bases of language (speech), (2) the structure of the orthographic, or writing, system, and (3) the affective (motivational) and perceptual/cognitive processes which the learner uses for the identification of unknown written words and for recognition. When these professional competencies are acquired, the need for legitimating phonics via respellings of irregularly spelled words for beginners and increased emphasis on morphemes (the meaning-carrying units, as stems and affixes) and morphophonological spellings at succeeding levels of instruction is brought into focus.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1979 pp19–23 in the printed version]*

# 9. Teacher Competence: Phonics Quotient, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D, LL.D.

* Presented at the 23rd Convention of IRA, Houston, Tx, May 5, 1978.

A relatively high phonics quotient (P.Q.) is required for teaching the effective, automatic use of phonic skills. This P.Q. requires, among other things, an awareness of speech sounds (phonemes), orthography (the spelling system), grammar (syntax and morphology), psychology (motivation, perception, and cognition).

The following questions are designed to stimulate thinking about selected concepts relevant to phonics as a facet of word perception.
-- The nature of word perception
-- The application/exception ratios of vowel rules
-- The spellings of consonant sounds
-- "Silent," or mute letters (i. e., *not*, signaling pronunciation)
-- Syllabication

Opinions and keys are given at the end of this discussion
1. Word perception requires:
a. The exclusive use of phonic skills (for both perception and re-cognition)
(agree _____ disagree _____)
b. The use of phonic skills on words spelled regularly, and whole word (sight word) skills on words with highly irregular spellings
(agree _____ disagree _____)
c. An awareness of *different* spellings (phonograms) to represent the *same* speech sound
(agree _____ disagree _____)
d. An awareness of *difernt* sounds represented by the *same* spelling
(agree _____ disagree _____)
e. *Automatic* use of skills and abilities during the ongoing processes of reading
(agree _____ disagree _____)
f. The use of informational parts of words such as roots, prefixes, suffixes, and inflectional endings
(agree _____ disagree _____)
g. The use of syntax to arrive at the linguistic meaning of wads
(agree _____ disagree _____)
h. The ability to discriminate between the referential and emotive meanings
(agree _____ disagree _____)
i. Both the identification of the word form and of the meaning of the word in its intonational setting
(agree _____ disagree _____)

2. The optimum time for *application* of *learned* phonic skills is:
a. Before the first, or silent, reading, of a selection
(agree _____ disagree _____)
b. During the first, or silent, reading of a selection
(agree _____ disagree _____)
c. Following the first, or silent, reading of a selection, by applying the skill to other common words unrelated to the selection
(agree _____ disagree _____)

d. By drilling on a list of randomly selected words, related or unrelated to the vocabulary of a selection (agree _____ disagree _____)
e. By encouraging pupils to ask for *help* during individualized reading activities (agree _____ disagree _____)

3. Which pairs of words rhyme, as *sunny, honey*?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gone-done | ( ) | high-tie | ( ) | weigh-say | ( ) | room-tomb | ( ) |
| were-there | ( ) | porpoise-noise | ( ) | through-too | ( ) | corps-store | ( ) |
| people-steeple | ( ) | watch-match | ( ) | owe-oh | ( ) | tough-bough | ( ) |
| sieve-believe | ( ) | sure-myrrh | ( ) | hearse-nurse | ( ) | | |

4. In which words does a final *e* signal a preceding "long" vowel sound, as in *ate* and *note*?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| came | ( ) | note | ( ) | house | ( ) | mete | ( ) |
| five | ( ) | judge | ( ) | these | ( ) | kite | ( ) |
| come | ( ) | ate | ( ) | sense | ( ) | rule | ( ) |
| are | ( ) | | | | | | |

5. In which words does the final *e* signal both a preceding "long" vowel and the /s/ sound of *c*?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| place | ( ) | race | ( ) | police | ( ) | piece | ( ) |
| palace | ( ) | dance | ( ) | rice | ( ) | wince | ( ) |
| ice | ( ) | face | ( ) | since | ( ) | | |

6. In which words is the /ü/, or ōō, sound heard, as in *moon?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| shoe | ( ) | should | ( ) | move | ( ) | wolf | ( ) |
| stood | ( ) | threw | ( ) | full | ( ) | blue | ( ) |
| who | ( ) | food | ( ) | through | ( ) | adieu | ( ) |
| flew | ( ) | fruit | ( ) | rule | ( ) | flood | ( ) |

7. In which words is the sound of /ər/ heard, as in *bird/* bərd/?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| first | ( ) | word | ( ) | manicure | ( ) | journey | ( ) |
| pear | ( ) | hurry | ( ) | myrtle | ( ) | exercise | ( ) |
| board | ( ) | bury | ( ) | turn | ( ) | stern | ( ) |
| bear | ( ) | whirl | ( ) | elixir | ( ) | very | ( ) |
| heard | ( ) | | | | | | |

8. In which words do two vowel letters represent a "short" vowel sound, as in *bat, bet, sit, hot, cut?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| said | ( ) | break | ( ) | weigh | ( ) | plaid | ( ) |
| build | ( ) | friend | ( ) | guest | ( ) | caution | ( ) |
| been | ( ) | pear | ( ) | sieve | ( ) | aesthetic | ( ) |
| bread | ( ) | meant | ( ) | gauge | ( ) | | |

9. In which words do two final (at the end of syllables) consonants signal a "short" vowel, as in *will* /i/?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| little | ( ) | kind | ( ) | fall | ( ) | doubt | ( ) |
| back | ( ) | buzz | ( ) | spinning | ( ) | less | ( ) |
| apple | ( ) | won't | ( ) | sunny | ( ) | cuff | ( ) |

10. In which words is the "short" /e/ heard, as in *get?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| said | ( ) | friend | ( ) | fame | ( ) | heifer | ( ) |
| was | ( ) | bread | ( ) | leopard | ( ) | senate | ( ) |
| any | ( ) | bear | ( ) | haul | ( ) | aesthetic | ( ) |

11. What letter(s) represent a simple (elementary) vowel sound in these words?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| first | ( ) | does | ( ) | took | ( ) | feed | ( ) |
| head | ( ) | put | ( ) | should | ( ) | says | ( ) |
| hot | ( ) | jaw | ( ) | | | | |

12. How many spellings of the sound /sh/ in these words?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| she | ( ) | machine | ( ) | social | ( ) | pension | ( ) |
| sure | ( ) | sugar | ( ) | mission | ( ) | negotiate | ( ) |
| chef | ( ) | ocean | ( ) | issue | ( ) | schist | ( ) |
| nation | ( ) | position | ( ) | anxious | ( ) | | |

Total number of spellings ( )

13. In which words is the *voiced* sound of *th* heard, as in *there?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| thin | ( ) | something | ( ) | together | ( ) | either | ( ) |
| mother | ( ) | path | ( ) | anthill | ( ) | parenthesis | ( ) |
| both | ( ) | other | ( ) | ether | ( ) | wealthy | ( ) |
| thought | ( ) | tenth | ( ) | shorthand | ( ) | | |

14. In which words do the letters *qu* represent the /kw/ sound, as in *quit?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| quick | ( ) | conquer | ( ) | quote | ( ) | quest | ( ) |
| licquor | ( ) | quiz | ( ) | quotient | ( ) | qualify | ( ) |
| lacquer | ( ) | queer | ( ) | mosquito | ( ) | quay | ( ) |
| queen | ( ) | quarter | ( ) | quoit | ( ) | plaque | ( ) |

15. In which words is the sound of/j/ heard, as in *jet?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| large | ( ) | ghost | ( ) | guest | ( ) | intrigue | ( ) |
| jam | ( ) | soldier | ( ) | gorgeous | ( ) | cordial | ( ) |
| gentle | ( ) | journey | ( ) | examine | ( ) | rogue | ( ) |
| ridge | ( ) | knowledge | ( ) | verdure | ( ) | exaggerate | ( ) |

16. In which words is the sound /w/ heard, as in *we?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| who | ( ) | grow | ( ) | now | ( ) | write | ( ) |
| saw | ( ) | one | ( ) | away | ( ) | well | ( ) |
| quick | ( ) | choir | ( ) | | | | |

17. In which words does a *digraph* (two letters) represent an elementary consonant (phoneme) sound, as *gn* /n/ in *gnat?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| catch | ( ) | short | ( ) | drive | ( ) | phone | ( ) |
| this | ( ) | machine | ( ) | know | ( ) | choir | ( ) |
| hats | ( ) | quiet | ( ) | bath | ( ) | glisten | ( ) |
| pick | ( ) | this | ( ) | sing | ( ) | vision | ( ) |
| hand | ( ) | chaos | ( ) | | | | |

18. In which words are there letters which represent no sound, as in *of(t)en?*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| climb | ( ) | who | ( ) | Wednesday | ( ) | receipt | ( ) |
| doubt | ( ) | want | ( ) | hymn | ( ) | condemn | ( ) |
| debt | ( ) | know | ( ) | moon | ( ) | psychology | ( ) |
| try | ( ) | hour | ( ) | island | ( ) | plant | ( ) |
| walk | ( ) | milk | ( ) | reign | ( ) | subtle | ( ) |

19. In which words is the number of vowel positions (places) equal to the number of syllables, as in *spoken* (2)?

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| garden | ( ) | speaking | ( ) | particular | ( ) | strain | ( ) |
| hungry | ( ) | terminal | ( ) | encounters | ( ) | national | ( ) |
| greedy | ( ) | mountain | ( ) | graduate | ( ) | creation | ( ) |
| giant | ( ) | beautiful | ( ) | | | | |

20. Which of these self-help devices do you favor for signaling the pronunciation of irregularly spelled words for beginners in reading?

a. Respelling within the pattern of regularly spelled words:

| *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| any | eny | does | duz | his | hiz | said | sed |
| are | at | from | frum | laugh | laf | talk | tawk or tauk |
| as | az | go | go | of | ov | to | too |
| been | bin | has | haz | once | wuns | was | wuz |
| come | cum or kum | have | hav | one | wun | who | hoo |
| do | doo | high | hi | pretty | prit-y | you | yoo |

b. Respellings from an elementary dictionary (G & C Merriam's *Webster's New Elementary Dictionary*)

| *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| any | en-ē | does | dəz | his | hiz | said | sed |
| are | ar | from | frəm | laugh | laf | talk | tok |
| as | az | go | gō | of | əv | to | tü |
| been | bin | has | haz | once | wəns | was | wəz |
| come | kam | have | hav | one | wən | who | hü |
| do | dü | high | hi | pretty | prit-ē | you | yü |

c. Respellings based on Godfrey Dewey's *World English Spelling (WES) Dictionary*

| *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| any | eny | does | duz | his | hiz | said | sed |
| are | ar | from | from | laugh | laf | talk | tank |
| as | az | go | goe | of | ov | to | to |
| been | been | has | haz | once | wuns | was | woz |
| come | cum | have | hav | one | wun | who | hoo |
| do | doo | high | hī | pretty | pritty | you | yoo |

d. Respellings based on Pitman's i.t.a.

Notes:

1. Ligatures, or digraphics, are used: e.g., œ and ʃh.
2. The z is used to represent /z/ spelled z as in *zoo;* the reversed s is used to represent /z/ spelled *s* as in *was*.
3. The loop in ʊ distinguishes the sound /ü/ in *spoon* from the sound /u̇/ represented by u in *book*.
4. The character ʃh is used to represent voiced /th/; the character th, to represent voiceless /th/.
5. Rules for using i.t.a. are given in Pitman & St. John *Alphabets for Reading*, Ch. 7, "The Initial Teaching Alphabet," pp 117-146.

d. Respellings based on Pitman's i.t.a.

| *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* |
|---|---|---|---|
| any | eny | his | hiz |
| are | ar | laugh | laf |
| as | az | of | ov |
| been | bee n | once | wuns |
| come | cum | one | wun |
| do | dʊ | pretty | pritty |
| does | duz | said | sed |
| from | from | talk | tauk |
| go | gœ | to | tʊ |
| has | haz | was | woz |
| have | hav | who | hʊ |
| high | hi | you | yʊ |

e. Respellings based on Wijk's *Regularized English*

| *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* | *Word* | *Respelling* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| any | eny | does | duz | his | hiz | said | sed |
| are | are | from | from | laugh | laf | talk | tauk |
| as | az | go | go | of | ov | to | to |
| been | been | has | haz | once | wunce | was | woz |
| come | cum | have | hav | one | wun | who | hoo |
| do | doo | high | high | pretty | pritty | you | yoo |

21. How could these words be respelled to serve as self help aids for beginners in reading?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| said _ _ _ _ _ | mother _ _ _ _ _ | climb _ _ _ _ _ | half _ _ _ _ _ |
| was _ _ _ _ _ | know _ _ _ _ _ | scent _ _ _ _ _ | tongue _ _ _ _ _ |
| of _ _ _ _ _ | knife _ _ _ _ _ | heart _ _ _ _ _ | |

## Opinions and Keys

1. Word perception
   a. Phonic skills cannot be applied to all words.
   b. Phonic and "whole-word "skills applied to traditional English spellings are facets of methodology.
   c. Different spellings for the same phoneme are indigenous to traditional English orthography.
   d. The same spellings for different sounds are indigenous to traditional English orthography.
   e. Automation of word-perception skills is the goal of effective reading instruction.
   f. Roots and affixes (prefixes, suffixes) are phonomorphological cues to traditional English orthography.
   g. Syntactic cues are crucial to word perception.

2. Application of learner skills
   a. Some reading programs introduce new vocabulary effectively before using the words in a selection.
   b. During the silent reading, the emphasis is on application.
   c. New skills are emphasized following the silent reading during which the learner identifies his specific needs, but special attention is given to relevant, analogous words.
   d. Drilling on isolated lists of unrelated words yields highly questionable carryover to the ongoing reading process.
   e. Immediate help (not telling) on unknown words or parts of words promotes automatic use of skills.

3. Rhyming words: people-steeple, high-tie, weigh-say, through-too, owe-oh, hearse-nurse, room-tomb, corps-store – the spellings not withstanding, believe it or not

4. Final e
Exceptions: come, are, judge, house, sense

5. Final e, "long" vowel plus /s/ for c
Exceptions: palace, dance, police, since, piece (debatable), wince

6. Phoneme /ü/, or ōō
Exceptions: stood, should, full, wolf, flood

7. Phoneme /ər/
Exceptions: pear, board, bear, bury, very, manicure

8. "Short" vowel sounds
Exceptions: break, weigh, gauge

9. Two final consonants (gemination)
Exceptions: kind, won't, doubt

10. "Short" e /e/
Exceptions: was, fame, haul

11. Simple (elementary) vowel sounds Application:
*ir* /ər/ (first), *ea* /e/ (head), *o* /ö/ (hot), *oe* /ə/ (does), *u* /u/ (put), *aw* /o/ (jaw), *oo* /u/ (took), *ou* /u/ (should), *ay* /e/ (says)

12. Spellings of the sound /sh/
Application: eleven spellings
*sh* (she), *s* (sure, sugar), *ch* (chef, machine), *t(i)* (nation, position, negotiate), *c(e)* (ocean, *c(i)* (social), *ss(i)* (mission), *ss* (issue), *x(i)* (anxious), *s(i)* (pension), *sch* (schist)

13. Voiced sound of th /th/
Application: mother, other, together, either

14. Letters qu represent the /kw/ sound
Exceptions: licquor, lacquer, conquer, mosquito, plaque, (quoit, quay – depending on pronunciation)

15. Sound of /j/
Exceptions: ghost, guest, rogue, examine, intrigue

16. Sound of /w/
Exceptions: who, saw, grow, now, write

17. Digraph (two letters) representing elementary consonant sound
Exceptions: ca(tch), ha(ts), ha(nd), quiet, (dr)ive, choir

18. "Silent", or mute letters
Exceptions: try, want, milk, moon, plant

19. Number of vowel positions equal to number of syllables
Exceptions: gi-ant, grad-u-ate, cre-a-tion

20. Respellings for beginners in reading

*Your* selection:

| | |
|---|---|
| a. Respellings within regular patterns | ( ) |
| b. Respellings from elementary dictionary | ( ) |
| c. WES respellings | ( ) |
| d. Pitman's i.t.a. | ( ) |
| e. Wijk's *Regularized English* | ( ) |
| f. None of the above | ( ) |

21. Send your proposed respellings to: Dr. Emmett A. Betts, Winter Haven.

**In Conclusion**

The above informal inventory of teacher competence emphasized *selected* concepts in teaching phonic skills which contribute to independence and versatility in reading. At the same time, attention is focused on some problems, from a phonics point of view, inherent in the traditional English spelling system and possible, or probable, immediate solutions. But these options need to be thoughtfully examined by teachers and extended via multidisciplinary research, especially experimental.

Two facets of word perception were highlighted:
l. Sounds (phonemes), phonograms (graphemes), and the variable relationship between the two

2. The legitimating of phonics via phonemically based respellings, for *beginners* in reading, to facilitate learning by analogy (spelling patterns) and, therefore, reduce the need for *probability* learning.

There are, however, other crucial facets of word perception; e.g., morphological spellings, syntactic cues, and so on. Furthermore, there is a psychological basis of word perception – the foundations of methodology. How often is the learner frustrated by teacher-selected material too difficult to read and, therefore, causing an aversion to reading as well as the use of crutches (e.g., word-by-word reading, or word calling)? How often is the high achiever frustrated by materials far below interests, skills, abilities, and motivations. This fourth *R*-Regimentation – is a facet of life, being replaced by the big D-Differentation – at a glacier pace.

In any event, the above informal inventory of teacher competence is designed to yield cerebration on selected beginnings for escalating reading instruction – not to yield a sterile score. In each item, there are suggested concepts and attitudes that can be put into practice at once – tomorrow and, yes, today!

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 pp24–26 in the printed version]*

# 10. Word Perception: Strategies and Tactics, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.

* Presented at 23rd Convention of IRA, Houston, Tx, May 5, 1978.

In previous meetings on word perception, cosponsored by IRA and PSC, these nitty-gritty questions were raised repeatedly by the audience:

1. What help can be given to the learner when he/she requests aid on an unknown word during the silent, *of* first, reading of a selection

Premises of the questioner:

a. Help is given immediately and quickly, with a bare minimum of interruption of the reading process. In this situation, the emphasis is on the application of previously learned *skills.*
b. The selection is at the learner's instructional (teaching) reading level where he learns *new* concepts and word-perception *skills.* That is, the material is *readable.*
c. An optimum of about one new vocabulary item in 70 to 80 running words is introduced, making possible rhythmical reading and fluent thinking about the content.
d. Learner motivation is capitalized upon by identification of the part of the word (e.g., of of *noise)* on which help is requested.
e. Application of phonic skills (previously learned) is insured by asking, "What is the usual sound of ?" For example, if help is requested on the *ou* in *around,* attention is directed to the usual sound of ou in out previously studied.
f. "New" learning is facilitated when help is requested on a phonogram by saying, "Those letters represent the sound _" For example, if help is requested on *oa* in *coat* (the /ō/ for *oa* not previously learned), the teacher merely informs, "The oa stands for the sound /ō/"
g. Learner perception and re-cognition are facilitated by (perceptual) *closure*; i.e., by having the pupil say the part and the whole word. For example, "/ō/ for oa; the word is boat."
h. Learner perception and cognition are further facilitated by asking, "Does the word fit the sentence?" That is, perceptual closure is followed by cognitive closure of the word in its syntactic setting.
i. Decoding the word (i.e., the phoneme-grapheme relationships) and decoding the message (cognition, or comprehension) are imperatives in the reading process.

2. What help is given on learning new word-perception skills?

Related questions:

a. *When is* this help given, before or after the first, or silent, reading of the selection?
b. What procedure is used on a long phonics countdown? On a short phonics countdown?
c. What other procedures are used for teaching new word-perception skills?

Premises

a. Learner motivation is captured when help is given on *specific* needs (e.g., *ind* of *find* or the *or* of *word*) following the reading-study activity in which they are identified and studied *by the learner* via a need group.
b. Re-cognition and awareness of success are further insured by application to other lexical words (e.g., *kind, mind, bind)* or to pseudo words (e.g., *dind, jind, nind).*

3. Why is *telling-the-learner-the-word* an unproductive procedure?
Premise:
Teaching is not synonymous with "telling"; e.g., telling the child the word *pick* in one situation promotes dependence on the teacher for identifying *picks, picked, picking* in subsequent situations.

4. When is a sight, or whole word, "method" appropriate?
Premises:

a. Sight "methods" are plural, employing pictured word cards, flash cards, drills on isolated common wads, telling, and so on; not all of these are productive of word-perception and re-cognition skills.
b. The vagaries of English spelling preclude the use of phonic skills for signals to pronunciation of some words; e.g., one, some, you.
c. Interferences with (veridical) word perception are precluded by focusing attention on the pronounceable units of a *stressed* word or syllable; e.g., the word farm has three pronounceable units (far-, -ar-, -arm). (Note: this procedure is basic to both short and long phonic countdowns.)
d. Paired-associate learning – e.g., learning the association between the word *one* and the numeral *1* may be used (with irregularly spelled words) as a legitimate "whole-word" method rather than telling-the-child-the-word "method" to develop reading fluency.
e. Perception is consumated in meaning – lexical, semantic, syntactic, orthographic (e.g., punctuation), morphological (e.g., morphemic *s* in boys).

5. What are desirable procedures for developing effective word-perception skills on irregularly spelled words?

a. Highly irregular: *one* /wən/, *you* /yü/, *eye* /ī/, *once* /wan(t)s/
b. Vowel spellings: *said, was, does, again, could, should, field, bread, grow, many, say*
c. Final *e*, split-digraph, violations: *come, have, love, some, done, give*
d. Vowel alternates: *look-moon;* consonant alternates: *leaf-leaves*
e. *wh* words: *when /*'wen, hwen/, *what* /(')hwat, wat, hwət, wət/, *where* /(')hwer, wer, (h)wər/, *why* /(')hwi, wi,/, *who* /(')hit/
f. *th* words:
   Voiceless /th/: *thin, think*
   Voiced /th/: *than, that, them, then, this*
   Alternate *th*: *with* /(') wi*th*, (')with/
   Exceptions: *t-h*: *anthill, shorthand*
g. Function words (unstressed in phrases): *and* /ən(d), (')an(d), n/, *or*, /ər, r, (')tar/, *for* /fər, (')for/
h. Rare spellings: *of* /əv, ə, 'av/, *sew* /'sō/
i. Homographs: *read* /rēd/*-read* /'red/, *bow* /bō/*bow* /bau/, *live* /'liv/*-live* /'līv/
j. Homophones: *dear-deer, by-buy, to-too-two, seem-seam, know-no*
k. Spellings for /ər/: *bird, her, work, heard, were, purr, myrrh*

6. Why is the use of so-called "linguistic" readers; emphasizing regularly spelled words, for beginners no longer in vogue?
Premises of questioner:

a. Regularly spelled words – e.g., *rat-hat, pig-dig* – facilitate learning the alphabetic principle of the English writing system.
b. Conversely, irregularly spelled words – e.g., *one, you, of, night* – increase perceptual hazards for beginners.

c. Intonation patterns, crucial to rhythmical oral and silent reading, tend to preclude word-by-word reading. Some linguists, following the admonitions of Leonard Bloomfield, attempted to write beginning reading materials using regularly spelled words. As a result, they violated intonation patterns by over emphasizing closed-syllable words and *under*emphasizing function words. (E.g., "Nan can fan Dan. . . Dan had a tan hat.")

7. Why are the *th-wh* words confusing to some learners?

Premises:

a. Initial *letters th* and *wh* occur in commonly used words; e.g., *the-that-with-this, which-when-who.*

b. The digraph *th* represents both voiced and voiceless consonant sounds voiced in *that;* voiceless in *thank.*

c. The letters *t* and *h* are rarely used in two different syllables; e.g., *shorthand, anthill.*

d. The letters *wh* represent /h/ in *who* and usually /hw/ in *when, what, where.*

8. What are context cues?

Context clues, or constraints, include

a. Syntactic signals to meaning

(l) Word order: (e.g., pursuit of happiness versus happiness of pursuit; Dick hit Tom versus Tom hit Dick) arrangement of sentences – questions and statements; phrase sequences; sentence closure subjects and predicates

(2) Intonation: punctuation signals; phrase stress, especially the unstressing of function words (e.g., can /kən/ versus /'kan/

(3) Function words: noun markers (e.g., the, a), verb markers (e.g., has, will); phrase markers, including word connectors (e.g., run and hide) and word-group connectors (e.g., under the tree)

(4) Inflections: morphemic changes, the addition of suffixes (e.g., ride-rides) and morphophonemic shifts (e.g., man-men, goose-geese) which adapt words to syntactic structure with NO change in lexical meaning

(5) Derivational contrast: words with the same base but different in the number and nature of derivational affixes-i.e., prefixes and suffixes (e.g., like, dislike, unlike, likely, likeable, likeness, etc.)

b. Semantic constraints

(l) Probability of appropriate words for a linguistic and pragmatic context

(2) Shifts in meaning (e.g., bat – an animal, a baseball bat, to bat an eye, etc.)

(3) Levels of abstraction (e.g., *lark-bird-animal-life)*

(4) Classification (e.g., *Pug* and other *dogs)* and indexing (birds, such as the *lark, cardinal,* and *robin)*

(5) Definite (e.g., *one day)* and indefinite (e.g., *some day)* terms

(6) Contrasted ideas (e.g., once *slim* but now *heavy,* the *wealthy* and the *impoverished)*

(7) Related ideas (e.g., . . . a *fraction* of an *inch)*

(8) Analogy (e.g., . . . as *bald* as an *egg)*

(9) Summary-type generalization (. . . depressed stocks. . . devalued dollar. . . grocery prices higher. . . strikes not settled. . . *Economic indicators*

(10) Direct explanation (e.g., A *jackaroo* is a *tenderfoot* around the place.)

c. Pragmatic constraints

(1) Behavioral effects

(2) Interaction with the author

(3) Social context in which reader operates

(4) Reaction to written messages; i.e., thinking and interpretation

(5) Social attitudes (e.g., use of *please, thank you)*

d. Orthographic-morphologic signals
    (1) Appositional explanations
        (a) Signaled by commas; e.g., *Thor, the god of war,*
        (b) Signaled by parenthesis; e.g., *one* (l)
        (c) Signaled by dashes; e.g., We – you and 1 – were fortunate
        (d) Signaled by brackets; e.g., *it* [*the ship*]
    (2) Omitted material
        (a) Abbreviated word forms (e.g., *rat.* for *mountain*)
        (b) Contractions (e.g., *hasn't* for *has not)*
        (c) Three dots (. . .) for omitted words
        (d) Four dots (. . . .) for omitted sentences and words
        (e) Terms, such as *et cetera*
    (3) Quote "signals" (e.g., "put *to bed")*
    (4) Familiar expressions (e.g., "law of gravity")
    (5) Anticipation from direct quotation ("Pardon, kind sir," *pleaded* the merchant. . .)
    (6) Emphasis
        (a) Underlining (typing) or italics (printing)
        (b) Upper-case letters (e.g., NEVER)
        (c) Exclamation point (!)
    (7) Spelling (e.g., homophones)

[Note: The system of punctuation is morphemic and syntactic (i.e., grammatic rather than phonemic). The first, morphemic, deals with the structure of words; the second, syntactic, with the structure of sentences.]

9. Is there a difference between the linguist's concept of *spelling patterns* and the educator's concept of *vowel rules* used for generalizations?

[Note:The linguistic method of legitimating phonics via consistent spellings is plural! To begin, there are traditional, structural, and transformational concepts of grammar. Not all linguists endorse Leonard Bloomfield's approach to use of analogic processes via the study of regularly spelled words – i.e., spelling patterns.]

a. The (C)VC spelling pattern (e.g., *at-hat-cat, bat-but-bet-bit)* is a restatement of the "short-vowel" rule, applicable to 68% of common words.
b. The (C)VC-e spelling pattern (e.g., *ate-made-ride. kite-hope-time*) *is* a restatement of the final-e, or split-digraph, rule, applicable to 68% of common words.
c. The (C)VVC spelling pattern (e.g., *beat-mean, rain-mail, road-coat*) *is,* in part, a restatement of the vowel-digraph rule, applicable to only 50% of common words.
d. Many minor patterns and complex, complicated vowel rules are used to "explain" a diversity of spellings.

10. What steps can be taken to insure the *automatic* use of word-perception skills?
Premises:
a. To insure automation of skills, individualized reading requires the material to be at the learner's *independent* reading level in terms of motivation and the rate at which "new" concepts and perceptual skills are introduced.
b. To further insure automation of skills, group-directed reading/study activities require the material to be within a narrow range of the learner's *instructional* reading level – to

foster the development of permanent interests, the acquisition of semantic and perceptual decoding skills and abilities.

c. Learner focus on the *unknown* part of a word (e.g., *qu* of *quick*) facilitates automatic attention to a need.

d. To capitalize on *feedback* between the lexical word (e.g., *snow*) and pronunciation (e.g., /'snō/, there must first be feed (i.e., systematic study of various facets of word perception, as *ow* spelling of /ō/ in *snow*, the syntactic (noun or verb) setting of *snow*, and so on.)

**In Conclusion**

Phonics is defined as a study of the relationship between sounds and letters (phonemes and graphemes). As one approach to teaching word perception, the assumption is made that the English writing system is phonemically based (on the alphabetic principle). This partial truth has caused zealots and well-intentioned persons to propose weird, confusing, self-defeating programs of phonics, spelling patterns, and initial teaching alphabets.

First, phonic rules are statements of varying possibilities and probabilities rather than absolutes, as witnessed. for example, for the many sounds represented by the letter a and the spellings for the sound /sh/. When phonic rules (phonographotactics) are viewed in terms of types of perceptual learning and of perceptual factors (psycholinguistics), somewhat effective, realistic strategies can be developed to capitalize on grapheme-phoneme correspondences. The "catch-22" question: how is it possible to legitimate phonics for a spelling system that has been described by scholars as complex, complicated, and somewhat chaotic.

Second, when phonic programs are limited to narrow spelling-sound (phoneme) relationships, word perception fails to be reinforced by the learner's complex interaction to form (syntax), content (semantics), and use (pragmatics) – three types of learned language behavior fundamental to reading. In short, English orthography is broadly based, embracing far more than graphemes in relation to phonemes. Hence, reading processes include decoding at higher linguistic/cognitive levels (contexts).

Third, to be considered a legitimate approach to word perception, effective phonics instruction includes meaning-the cohesive, essential element. In fact, word perception is a design for the exploration of a word in its total context and is completed when meaning is insured. Hence, the meaning rather than the bare word *form is* best remembered: i.e., recalled for re-cognition.

But meaning has several dimensions: grammatical (syntactic and morphologic), lexical, referential (denotive and cognotive), literal and metaphorical, polysemantic, and so on. In fact, meaningfulness is what reading is all about.

Fourth, some spellings are "phonemic" (e.g., *last-fast*) in the respect that grapheme-phoneme relationships are revealed by analogy of spelling patterns. Others are morphological spellings (e.g., vowel sounds in *k(i)nd-k(i)ndred;* the vowel and consonant sounds in *s(ig)n-s(ig)nature.* However, not all "phonemic" spellings signal pronunciation; neither do all morphophonological spellings.

Why is word perception so complex? Because language (speech) is complex and, therefore, orthography is not only complex but also somewhat arbitrary. These understandings are essential to legitimating phonics instruction.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1979 p26 in the printed version]*

## 11. Word Perception: Linguistic Factors, by Richard Allington*

* Dept. of Reading, State Univ. of New York at Albany, Albany, N.Y.
Abstract of a paper presented at the 23rd Annual Convention of International Reading Assoc, Houston, Tx, May 5, 1978

There are several factors concerning word perception and word recognition which are too often overlooked. First, several studies (Talmsley, 1977; Cunningham, 1977, Menzel, 1974) have shown that real words are recognized with greater ease than nonsense words, even nonsense words which are composed of common grapheme-phoneme patterns. The reader who cannot recognize a nonsense word often can recognize a real word which exhibits the same orthographic structure.

Second, poor readers misreadings in isolation have little correspondence to their misreadings in context (Allington, in press; Allington, Franzen, Fitzgerald, 1977). One cannot accurately predict oral reading errors in context from either a test of words in isolation or particularly a test employing nonsense words.

Third, visual similarity is not sufficient condition to produce oral reading errors (Allington and Fleming, in press). There is an interaction between the availability and utilization of semantic-syntactic cues and visual similarity which works to produce oral reading errors. Misreadings of *was* for *saw,* for instance, cannot be attributed solely to visual similarity or to a visual perceptual deficit (Vellutino, *et al,* 1977; Allington, *et al,* 1976) or phonic irregularity but rather to some interaction of these factors with availability and utilization of contextual information (Allington and Strange, 1977; 1978).

Fourth, poor readers seem to process text at the graphemic and phonemic levels, attending more to matching visual configurations and phonemic responses, while good readers more often process at a semantic level (Allington, Mosenthal, Gormley, Walmsley, 1978). This strategy seems often to develop in poor readers unwittingly by teachers (Allington, 1978) who direct readers attention differently depending upon the pupil's reading ability level.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 p26 in the printed version]*

## Worthy Quotes

Be unselfish in your consideration of such changes in spelling as would hinder you little yet be of tremendous aid to future generations and foreigners. N. W. Tune

One rule that many teachers fail to teach is: whenever in writing a sentence, you have to pause in reading to make the meaning clear, you should put in a comma. Newell Tune

A mind is a terrible thing to waste. United Negro College Bulletin.

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1979 p26 in the printed version]*

## 12. Phonics, Miscues, and What's-The-Next-Word Syndrome, by Thomas D. Horn*

*Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction, Univ. of Texas, Austin.
Presented at the 23rd IRA Convention, Houston, Tx, May 5, 1978

The widely overused and misused practice of "reading around the circle" not infrequently produces a scenario something like this: (Pupil reading from basal) " 'Hurry ' said Dad. The store will be closed.' Will. . . (pause)." Teacher, prompting, ". . . saddled." Pupil, starting over, "Will saddled up his horse as. . . (pause." Teacher, "Sound it out," Pupil, "Kwuh, kwt. . . quietly." Teacher, prompting, "Quickly." Pupil, starting over one more time,"Will saddled up his horse as quickly as he could!'

As Ken Goodman often reiterates, reading is almost never miscue-free and the main reader cues for miscue correction are: (1) graphophonic; (2) meaning; and (3) grammatical fit. Proficient readers rarely find it, necessary to identify every single word in material that is being read. If the preceding context does not provide a clue to an unknown or tentatively known word, they read on to see if the following context is of help.

The pupil in the above scenario is a victim of the "What's the next-word" syndrome. He has been "trained" by the teacher to stop dead at whatever word he doesn't know. There is no development of an individualized cueing system. Whenever this pupil comes to a word he does not recognize or cannot identify, he is stuck on dead center instead of applying miscue correction strategies. As an example of an alternative to stopping, he could have been encouraged to substitute "hmmm" for troublesome words, thus resulting in "Will *hmmm up* his horse as *hmmm* as he could."

Next, he considers possible words that might fit, e.g., *hitched;* this isn't too bad meaningwise, but obviously is a graphophonic mismatch with *saddled.* Chances are he'll come up with the right word, TV being what it is, but he might have decided on *hitched.*

The miscue of *quietly* for *quickly* is a good example of being near but yet so far, graphophonically. By being told the correct word, the pupil gets practice in neither the use of graphophonic nor meaning cues. On his own, the existence of *hurry* in the preceding context may well be enough to elicit *quickly* or he could go with *fast.* But it takes practice and teacher encouragement to initiate and strengthen miscue strategies instead of being overly preoccupied with letter-sound (graphophonic) relationships.

-o0o-