

READING
for
TODAY'S PROBLEM BEGINNERS

A THREE-WAY ANALYSIS
with
NEEDS, METHODS, AND MATERIALS

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

by
Elizabeth Behunek
June 1970

Problem of the Thesis

Children today are conditioned, perceptually and conceptually by their early and constant experiences with electronic media. Thus confirmed in their egocentrically based focal consciousness (with global concepts of time and space) they go to school to learn the procedures of literacy. These consist of fragmentation, transformation of temporal concepts into spatial concepts, and reduction of all kinds of verbal communication to a linear, left-to-right continuum. For the slow learners, the problem is even worse. Since their capacity for adaptation and broadening of understanding is even more limited and the number and quality of problems they have is greater and more severe, they cannot make the necessary number of changes and adaptations. The purpose of this study is to analyze the situation and to find solutions for the problems in learning that it creates for the slow learners, particularly.

Procedure Used

The method used in this study was library research in the areas of reading programs, learning theory, psycholinguistic structure, learning problems, literature for children, and the early times of the human race. Beginning with abstraction of pertinent elements from various reading programs, they were analyzed in terms of models of learning

theory. So that the verbal material of the reading programs could be controlled as thoroughly and flexibly as possible, research in psycholinguistic theory was undertaken. Next, problems of slow learners in beginning reading were investigated, so that material from the reading programs could be coordinated with the finding. Literature for children was explored, both in terms of available material and children's needs and tastes.

On the basis of research in these areas, a subject for beginning reading material was chosen and a plan for constructing a story or stories laid out. The purpose of this construction was to involve the learner as effectively as possible in the process of learning to read.

Conclusions

1. Through examination of reading programs, we have seen that teaching reading can be considered at varying levels of complexity and dealt with differently according to the level at which it is viewed.
2. The level of complexity and the type of approach can be varied in several ways:
 - a. Through the sensory channels involved.
 - b. In the way of presenting material through the channel or channels involved.
 - c. With the kind of literary material used.
 - d. With the way the material is broken down into basic units; the way the basic units are

treated; and the way the material is built up out of basic units.

3. Within the range of practical applicability, the varying of approach must fit the varying needs of slow learners.
 - a. The range varies with the type of learning problem.
 - b. There is an applicable typology of approach, as far as material and handling go.
4. The either-or dichotomies of models of learning theory can be resolved through compromise theory and the compromise applied, through psycholinguistic analysis and the varied handling of material, to teaching methods.
5. All these things: varying the levels of complexity, diversification of sensory approach, subjection to psycholinguistic analysis for precision in constructing the proper approach, analysis of the needs of the learners, and analysis of the related model of learning, with appropriate diversification of teaching methods through relating to compromise learning theory, point to the need of a particular type of subject matter: one in which vital topics of the learner's milieu are handled.