

JUN 21 1964

A VALIDATION STUDY  
OF THE UTILITY OF  
FORTY-FIVE PHONIC GENERALIZATIONS  
TAUGHT IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

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

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

by  
John Dobush  
February 1967

In the January, 1963, issue of The Reading Teacher, an article appeared entitled "The Utility of Phonic Generalizations in the Primary Grades" written by Dr. Theodore Clymer. Clymer had undertaken a study to determine the usefulness of the basic phonic generalizations employed by teachers in grades one through three in the process of teaching children to read. Because Clymer's conclusions were drawn with only a nominal amount of statistical evidence to corroborate them, this validation study was undertaken.

It was expected that this expanded study would yield approximately the same results as Clymer's had shown but with certain modifications. Clymer's basic word list consisted of words taken from four basal reading series. This composite word list has a narrow base as a result of the many specialized words used in a particular story. Clymer also used the accumulative word lists of the four basal readers which possibly quadrupled the number of specialized words.

His use of the Gates Reading Vocabulary for the Primary Grades was inadequate since it is designed to show a very basic and concise vocabulary used by the primary child in the classroom. Clymer's final word list consisted of 2,600 words.

In this study the basic word list was taken from The

Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words by Edward L. Thorndike and the Scott, Foresman list which consists of all the words introduced in the 1956 editions of the primary basal readers used in grades one, two, and three. The Scott, Foresman list produces the stability of a controlled vocabulary and the Thorndike list made possible a more varied word list.

In integrating the two lists, duplicate words were eliminated, and inflected and derived forms were considered as individual entries. As a result of these considerations, the list for this study was concentrated into 3,491 words.

Clymer took each generalization as a separate entity and, in many cases, the true value of the generalization was obscured. Although a teacher presents a generalization as a separate entity, the concept is taught in relation to previously learned material. For that reason, this study has shown the relationship of the generalizations to one another as well as to the application of specific words.

Clymer used Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary and the authority for this study was Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, a more recent edition, with a considerably shortened pronunciation guide which in some instances caused a marked difference in the evaluations of the two studies.

The word list for this study having been compiled, it was arranged alphabetically and respelled phonetically according to the above-mentioned dictionary. The forty-five phonic generalizations that Clymer used in his research were applied

to this list and it was determined first if the particular word applied to the generalization and then if the words that applied either conformed or were exceptions to the specific generalization.

A simple percentage, called the percent of utility, was computed as a result of the number of words conforming in relation to the total number of words to which the generalization applied. A table summarized the results of the Clymer and Dobush studies, tabulating the findings side by side for easy comparison. These results were then interpreted, collectively or individually, as need was shown.

Clymer, in his study, discovered that only eighteen of the forty-five generalizations tested were of reasonable value, and he therefore questioned why the teaching of reading has worked as well as it has. Because Clymer's study was expanded, this study showed twenty-four of the forty-five generalizations to be acceptable.

The results of this study clearly indicate a definite need for some type of revision in materials dealing with phonic generalizations. One major recommendation could also be made: teachers should be given a comprehensive explanation of phonic generalizations taught in all elementary levels in order to insure the sequential development of the phonic generalizations.