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AN ANALYSIS OF THE INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET  
AND ITS PRACTICES  
IN SELECTED FAIRFIELD COUNTY SCHOOLS

AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
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MASTER OF SCIENCE

by  
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The initial teaching alphabet (i.t.a.), devised by Sir James Pitman is a simple, systematic code of sound for beginners. It is a simplification of the medium of the early material with which a child is required to deal. He learns forty-five characters instead of 2,000. The i.t.a. has forty-four symbols instead of the conventional twenty-six; each of the forty-four symbols represents one and only one sound.

The author analyzed i.t.a. and its effectiveness in beginning reading and creative writing and its practice in selected schools in Fairfield County. Research findings from available literature were confined to the more recent studies on i.t.a. i.t.a. was not compared to other reading programs, except in reports where both i.t.a. and T.O. were compared.

A practical approach to i.t.a. was pursued by analysing what is involved in teaching i.t.a. in classrooms in first grade in selected schools in Fairfield County. The author limited observations and interviews of teachers and principals (by a questionnaire) to those who are using i.t.a. in their first grade reading programs. Example questions asked: (1) are there sufficient materials available in i.t.a., (2) are phonics and creative writing effective tools of i.t.a.?

Results of findings on available research showed that the over-all interpretation suggests that in the lower primary grades, the i.t.a. population is superior to the control T.O. population in word recognition, and total reading ability, but with no significant difference in comprehension. In the upper primary grades, evidence shows that T.O. taught children are approximately equal to those who were taught by i.t.a. No study thus far has shown that there is any danger that i.t.a. children will score significantly lower than T.O. children. Studies have shown that T.O. children do not write as long and as interesting stories as i.t.a. children. T.O. spelling achievement for i.t.a. children in first grade is no different from that of T.O. children. It appears that the by-products of i.t.a., the ability to express oneself and to read earlier and with more confidence are i.t.a.'s strong points.

Results of interviews and questionnaire in Fairfield County schools were generally in favor of i.t.a. and many were enthusiastically so. Of the six school districts, involving twelve schools, three are no longer using i.t.a. The others are having success with i.t.a., although they do not believe it to be the answer to all problems in reading.