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A SECOND GRADE EXPERIMENT WITH A NEW READING-LANGUAGE PROCESS*

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Experimentation with innovative reading and language instructional processes is a vital necessity if teaching is to be effective and keep pace with our ever-changing society.¹ Pupils need to learn to read and read well if they are to become contributing citizens and since they learn best through various approaches, it seems logical that many reading instructional models should be made available for teachers to use. This implies that new programs should be discovered and also that they be tested in order to determine their viability with students in the classroom. Such is the nature of this report.

The *Picture-Vocabulary-Story (P-V-S)*² concept is a new approach to reading and language instruction and is similar to but goes well beyond the currently popular language experience process. *Picture-Vocabulary-Story (P-V-S)* materials provide for greater control over the learning medium yet they also make for greater flexibility in the learning process. This would appear to be a unique advantage not enjoyed by other approaches.

Most teachers are indeed well aware of the plethora of reading materials available for classroom instruction. One need merely attend state or national conventions such as those sponsored by the International Reading Association and it becomes obvious that reading programs exist in vast profusion. Yet, as of this writing, there is nothing quite like the *Picture-Vocabulary-Story (P-V-S)* materials. Many processes and procedures come almost close to the new *P-V-S* medium³⁻⁴⁻⁵

* Bruce A. Lloyd, *Picture-Vocabulary-Story (P-V-S)*, Kalamazoo, Michigan: the author, 1972, 36 pp.

¹ Harry Singer and Robert B. Ruddell (Eds.) *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*, Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1970.

² Bruce A. Lloyd, "P-V-S: A New Approach to Teaching Communication Skills," *Reading Horizons*. Vol. 14, No. 2, Winter, 1974, pp. 69-74.

³ Helen F. Darrow and Virgil M. Howes, *Approaches to Individualized Reading*, New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, Inc., 1960.

⁴ Virgil E. Herrick and Marcella Nerbovig, *Using Experience Charts With Children*, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1964.

⁵ Doris M. Lee and Roach Van Allen, *Learning to Read Through Experience* (2nd Ed.) New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963.

but fall somewhat short of its unique characteristics. Even the latest modern approaches seem too limited in concept and more or less bound by the thinking that is upwards of a dozen years old.⁶

So it would seem that the time is ripe for a new concept to reach the reading horizon. Hopefully the *P-V-S* medium is an idea whose time has come. This, of course, remains to be seen.

The P-V-S Medium

Each Picture-Vocabulary-Story activity consists of a file folder on which words (vocabulary) have been printed and a series of matching word (vocabulary) cards. On the reverse side of the vocabulary cards picture segments have been mounted. The pupil using the *P-V-S* material simply matches vocabulary, placing each word card over the corresponding word on the file folder. When that task is properly completed, the pupil closes the folder, carefully turns or flips it over and opens it. Now he is looking at the assembled picture and the vocabulary relating to it. Using the picture and the vocabulary as the focal point or guide, the pupil can react in several ways. He may write a story of his own explaining his interpretation of or feelings about the picture and use the vocabulary provided on the folder. He may tell his story to the teacher (or aide) who can subsequently write it for him. Or he may simply draw his own picture to illustrate his thoughts and then tell about it. There are many uses of this approach for developing reading-language skills.

Introduction

The *P-V-S* medium has been used informally by teachers who have had the material explained in the author's graduate reading classes. However, there have been no pilot studies to determine objectively the effects of the procedure on pupil reading or language achievement. It is to this end that the present study is directed.

Design

Initially a series of twenty-four *P-V-S* activity folders was constructed and boxed for subsequent use with pupils. The chief researcher then met with the school principal and participating teachers to explain the procedures. Early in the fall term he administered reading pretests to the experimental group and control group of second grade pupils.

⁶ Robert B. Ruddell *et. al.* (Eds.) *Resources in Reading-Language Instruction*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974.

Subsequently the materials were brought to the experimental classroom and procedures for using them explained to the children. Later, during a P.T.A. open house, the experiment was explained to parents. With that the study began. It lasted for twelve weeks and then reading post tests (alternate forms of the pretest) were administered. Data were subsequently treated and the results appear elsewhere in this report.

Procedures

Pupils in the experimental group worked with the P-V-S materials twice each week for the duration of the study. The total class was divided into six smaller groups of four pupils each. This facilitated the attempt at individualizing instruction. The Research Assistant (an honors student) worked with the pupils on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the experiment. She made certain that students selected a different P-V-S folder to work with each time she met with them. This provided exposure to all P-V-S items available.

On a given day a pupil would select one P-V-S activity to work with during the small group meeting which took place in an adjoining "study room." Once there, he would assemble his "puzzle" by placing the vocabulary cards over the corresponding word on the file folder page. Then he would close it, carefully flip it over, and open it to reveal the picture. After contemplating the picture (and the story it told) he would attempt to write or tell about his own interpretation of the story using as many of the words as he could.

The Research Assistant would help the pupil with his writing or listen to his oral story and write it for him. On occasion, some of the more immature pupils chose simply to copy, pronounce, and explain the vocabulary of a given P-V-S folder. The built-in flexibility was designed to allow each pupil to proceed or progress at his own pace and attempt to work at his own reading level. The time involved was about thirty minutes per group each day.

Although the children had to work with each P-V-S folder in the kit they soon developed a liking for certain ones. Consequently, those who wished could reassemble a favorite "puzzle" during free time in class.

Pupils in the control group had no special activities beyond the regular language-experience approach and individualized reading program included in the course of study.

Data Treatment and Findings

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Primary B, Form 1, was

administered to the experimental group and the control group prior to using the experimental medium. Twelve weeks later Form 2 (alternate form) was given to the same pupils. This reading test measured two factors, (1) vocabulary and (2) comprehension. No other tests were used.

In treating the data for differences in reading achievement, post test increases in both vocabulary and comprehension were evident. On the average, the experimental group gained almost eight points in vocabulary. This difference, $p = .075$, approached significance. The mean gain in comprehension was almost three and one half points but was not significant.

Discussion

The objective evaluation of this experimental program indicates that positive gains were made in vocabulary and comprehension. The vocabulary gain approached significance, but comprehension gains did not.

It would appear that the experimental program did have some positive effect and one must speculate that such gains could have been significant had there been a larger number ($N=24$) of pupils in the experimental group. More than one third of them were absent because of illness on the day the post test was administered. Later efforts to administer the post test to those who missed it did not work out because of administrative problems.

Subjective evaluation of the experimental program indicated beyond any doubt that it was successful. Pupils were always eager to work on their "puzzles." They looked forward to sessions with the Research Assistant and came to think of her as their "own teacher." The regular teacher noted that the pupils seemed to be able to verbalize at a higher level than her previous classes. Moreover, many pupils seemed to gain in writing skills as well as interest in reading.

Recommendations for Further Study

Although the present experiment was something less than a smashing success, gains were positive. The results indicate that there appears to have been some seminal effect on the reading and language achievement of the pupils. Further studies using the *Picture-Vocabulary-Story* medium seem warranted. When further studies are conducted, attention should be given to the following:

1. Larger numbers of pupils should be involved in the experimental program so that more definite conclusions can be made.

2. Measures of expectancy or potential should be made of experimental group pupils so that the real significance of gains can be determined.
3. The timing of the program should be such that the school curriculum does not conflict with the experiment.
4. Twelve weeks is a relatively short time span and it seems justified to recommend that the program should be carried out for an entire academic year.
5. Reading or language tests of greater sensitivity should be utilized in order to determine the effect of the program on a greater number of factors than just vocabulary and comprehension.