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Study of the vocabulary development in selected first grade readers

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A STUDY OF THE VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT
IN SELECTED FIRST GRADE READERS

by

Sister Connie Beiriger, C.S.J.

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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approved for the Graduate Committee
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CHAPTER I

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

There has been a great deal of change in the reading material used in the primary grades within the past few years. Many questions have been raised about current methods. In fact, the teaching of beginning reading has been and continues to be a popular subject for debate among reading experts and the general public alike.

There has been extensive criticism of the vocabulary of the earlier readers which has resulted in re-evaluation and change in this facet of the readers. Another factor that has been instrumental in bringing about the change in vocabulary development has been the introduction of the study of linguistics into the reading field. A third reason for research in this area was the increased mobility of the population which causes some students to be exposed to several reading series within a single grade level. Hence, it is necessary to look at the basal reading series to evaluate the agreement or lack of agreement that may be evident with regard to the vocabulary used.

¹
Guy L. Bond and Robert Dykstra, "The Cooperative Research Program in First Grade Reading Instruction," Reading Research Quarterly, II (Summer, 1967), 9.

Statement of the Problem

Because of the great number of new reading series now on the market, the writer was prompted to examine four recent reading series with respect to the similarities and differences in their vocabulary development. The study included the approach, or method, used to develop the vocabulary and also the type and load of vocabulary in each series.

Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to the comparison of the four reading series which are listed in Table 1. These series were chosen since they were among the most recent and popular in use at the time.

TABLE 1
PUBLISHERS AND SERIES STUDIED

Publisher	Series	Date
American Book	READ Series	1968
Ginn	Reading 360	1969
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.	Bookmark Reading Program	1970
Houghton Mifflin	Houghton Mifflin Rdg. Prog.	1971

The writer examined only the first grade readers in each series with regard to the vocabulary development.

Significance of the Study

It was hoped that the contents of this paper would provide useful information about the varied essentials of vocabulary in the series examined. It was also intended that the study would aid teachers who are faced with the problem of selecting a reading series best suited to the vocabulary needs and abilities of specific groups of children. "The high correlation that is nearly always found between meaningful vocabulary and reading comprehension indicates that vocabulary development must be one of our most important areas of concern.¹

Summary

In this chapter the writer has introduced and stated the problem, presented the scope and limitations, and discussed the significance of the study. In the following chapter a review of related literature will be given.

1

Albert J. Harris, "Key Factors in a Successful Reading Program," Elementary English, XLVI (January, 1969), 71.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Beginning Reading Vocabularies--In General

"Vocabulary is, in a sense, the most open-ended aspect¹ of language." Beginning reading instruction has had as its prime goal the establishment of a basic sight vocabulary or an inventory of words which the child perceives in any and all situations. Certain assumptions underlie this focus on words, which have been regarded as being real entities with relatively stable meanings. The linguists tell us that words exist only in the flow of language. They consider language to be a code, or a stream of sounds or graphic signs, which can be used in a symbolic system to convey ideas, thoughts,² and desires to others.

Reading teachers must be seriously concerned with the development of vocabulary--not just with the number of words pupils recognize, but more especially, with the degree of understanding they have for those words with which they are

¹
Kenneth S. Goodman, "Children's Language and Experience: A Place to Begin," in Coordination Reading Instruction, ed. by Helen M. Robinson (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1971), 49.

²
Ibid.

somewhat familiar.¹

There has been a great awareness within the past several years of the "limitations in background of experience, in concept development, and in meaningful vocabulary that handicap thousands of children in their progress in school."² Children are able to comprehend the meaning of a word only after having had sufficient experience from which they can develop an appropriate concept of it. Vocabularies grow as children share experiences which broaden their interest in, and understanding of, their world. In the school setting the teacher should structure experiences in such a way that students are stimulated to use language and to express and receive communication with continuously-increasing satisfaction and skill.

Children begin school with varying degrees of fluency in their native language. They have an adequate vocabulary to relate their reactions to common experiences. When discussing subjects for which they have a firm background and interest, they bring forth a diverse and precise flow of words. Their vocabulary is more generalized and limited when relating to less-familiar topics. Hence, one of the principal duties of the classroom teacher is that of promoting the growth of the students' various meaning vocabularies. In general, authorities recognize four different vocabularies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1

Doris V. Smith, "Developmental Language Patterns of Children," in Linguistics in the Elementary School Classroom, compiled by Paul S. Anderson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), 82.

2

Harris, "Key Factors," p. 71.

The term reading vocabulary refers to all the words that he recognizes and understands in their written form. In beginning instruction, the words for a child's reading vocabulary are selected from words which are at least in his listening vocabulary--the words whose pronunciations and meanings are familiar enough to the child that he understands them when they are used orally by others. More ideally, though, a beginning reading vocabulary should be heavily weighted with words in his speaking vocabulary--words so familiar to¹ the child that he is able to use them in his own speech.

The listening vocabulary develops first, followed by the growth of a speaking vocabulary. Ordinarily, reading and writing vocabularies do not begin their rapid development until formal schooling begins.

At the start, a child's reading vocabulary is very small compared to the many words comprising his speaking vocabulary. The relative size of the child's beginning vocabulary shrinks even more when compared to his extensive listening vocabulary.²

The teacher of initial reading relies upon the student's spoken vocabulary to help him make the transition from the spoken word to the printed word.

The foregoing discussion about different kinds of vocabularies suggests that the ability to read is related to abilities in listening and speaking. Especially in the beginning stages, reading can clearly be seen as an extension of the earlier language skills. It is a response to the written form of words that the child has heard in the speech of others or that he himself has spoken. In all subsequent stages, too, the different dimensions of language are interrelated.³

¹
Dolores Durkin, Teaching Them to Read (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1970), p. 5.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Beginning Reading Vocabularies--In Basal Readers

"The Basal reading series has been the backbone of the elementary reading program in the United States for many years."¹ These readers are usually used for the basic instructional program and supplemented by a variety of other reading materials. They are structured around a grade-level approach, with careful development of a sequential program and balanced skills. McCullough notes that,

The notion of balance as represented in basal readers is a quite varied one. ... Some teach more phonics rules than are useful. Some are strongly phonetic in the initial stages, often using only regularly sounded words at first. Others are concerned with using the children's own language and a sentence approach. In some, the emphasis upon sound systems makes any attempt at comprehension seem artificial and strained.²

In teaching children to read, the basal reader supporters, many eclectic promoters, and numerous teachers have contended that it is important to develop a basic sight vocabulary. This "sight vocabulary, it has been widely assumed, should include frequently used words--those already in most children's oral/aural vocabulary."³ They are learned as wholes so that the child can recognize and pronounce them at a glance. He does not have to analyze them.

¹
Bond and Dykstra, "The Cooperative Research Program," p. 11.

²
Constance M. McCullough, "Linguistics, Psychology, and the Teaching of Reading," Elementary English, XLIV (April, 1967), 361.

³
Dale D. Johnson, "The Dolch List Reexamined," The Reading Teacher, XXIV (February, 1971), 449.

Until recently the Dolch Basic Sight Word List, published in 1941, has been one of the most influential sight word lists used as a basis for vocabulary choice. Johnson believes that "the Dolch List, as a corpus, has outlived its usefulness and that a more adequate substitute is available."¹ He further comments,

Acknowledging the extent of young children's oral/aural vocabulary, is it not more important for primary reading materials to reflect what exists in present-day American English, than for sight word lists to reflect what occurs in beginning reading materials?²

The important point is to get meaning, sight, and sound together so that the child is launched on the road to reading. The sight word response becomes automatic--a direct stimulus-response. "Beginning phonics should deal with meaningful words while sight words should have a personal significance for the child."³

Sabaroff observes that the words generally used in a sight approach are frequently the most highly irregular. This makes it extremely laborious for a child to make any discoveries about the relation of sound to letter in the word.⁴

¹ Johnson, "Dolch List," p. 449.

² Ibid., p. 457.

³ Walter T. Petty, Issues and Problems in the Elementary Language Arts: A Book of Readings (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968), p. 150.

⁴ Rose E. Sabaroff, "Improving Achievement in Beginning Reading: A Linguistic Approach," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (March, 1970), 524.

Hence, beginning reading materials must be written according to the principles of learning and child development. Each child's maturity, experience, and rate of learning dictate the pace at which he can move through the primary stages of vocabulary development. There are numerous other factors, too, that determine the relative ease or difficulty with which a word is mastered in acquiring a sight vocabulary. Different words require a varied amount of repetitions. As Weintraub quotes Gates, "interest, motivation, length and shape of the word, its meaning and function that it serves in a sentence"¹ must all be taken into consideration.

Thereby, as a means of simplifying initial reading material, vocabulary control is most frequently used. It is one of a number of refinements of basal reading materials.

Vocabulary control is the process of limiting the number of new words presented in each succeeding reading selection so that the child can develop instantaneous word perception through a planned sequential pattern of introducing and maintaining vocabulary.²

Though there is much discussion concerning the need for and the extent of vocabulary control, nevertheless, most authorities agree that it is essential, at least, in the initial stages of reading. Some forms of governing word

¹
Samuel Weintraub, "What Research Says about Learning to Read," in Coordinating Reading Instruction, ed. by Helen M. Robinson (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1971), 194.

²
Clifford L. Bush and Mildred H. Huebner, Strategies for Reading in the Elementary School (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), 58.

choice is necessary in order to promote the development of word-meaning and word recognition skills which lead to fluent and comprehensive reading. However, some educators question the literary merit and content of many basal readers. They contend that the primary grade stories are dull and unreal because the vocabulary contained in a typical primary basic reader is too rigidly controlled.¹ Consequently, recent efforts have been made to improve the selection and control of words, especially in the primary basal readers. This has been done, mainly,

by selecting 'new' words more carefully, by introducing them at more uniform intervals, and reviewing them more frequently and systematically, by providing more careful analysis of their visual and auditory features, and in other ways.²

The words presented are ordinarily word lists, supplemented by the special vocabulary needed in each story. Thus, the quality of stories conform to the general reading achievement and interest of the reader. As the student matures in reading ability, the necessity for strict vocabulary control decreases.

The actual judgment concerning the type and amount of control for young readers rests with the teacher. The

¹
Nicholas Criscuolo, "Exploring the Value of Basal Readers," Peabody Journal of Education, XLII (September, 1964), 98.

²
Arthur I. Gates, "Vocabulary Control in Basal Reading Material," in Reading Instruction: Dimensions and Issues, ed. by William K. Durr (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), 239.

strengths and weaknesses of each child differ; thereby causing a need for more diverse materials in respect to vocabulary repetition and difficulty.¹

Research shows that in basal series there are certain words that are common to all, plus particular words unique to each program alone. Among the words presented in the early readers are usually the high service words of the English Language like 'the', 'was', and 'said'. They have the name service words because due to "their frequency in written material they are highly serviceable."² The selection of these words is based on their frequency in our spoken language. Hence, many of these service words are presented right at the beginning, in spite of the fact that they are not interesting and are irregular in spelling; thus, making them difficult for students to learn.³

Critics of basal programs dispute the use of frequency in the language as a standard for choosing primary vocabularies. Authors of linguistic readers, and others, suggest using spelling patterns as a basis for word choice. "The argument of linguist is that a selection of words based on similarity in spelling patterns encourages children to arrive at an awareness of 'the difference any letter makes in a word'."⁴

¹ Weintraub, "Learning to Read," p. 195.

² Durkin, Teaching Them to Read, p. 118.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 135-36.

Staiger says,

Indications are that the initial reading vocabulary should be selected with a greater balance between phonetically regular words and high utility words. It is likely that introducing words solely on the basis of frequency of use presents an unusually complex decoding task for the beginning reader. On the other hand, it appears that presenting only phonetically regular words makes it very difficult to write meaningful material.¹

Beginning Reading Vocabularies--With Linguistic Basis

It is evident that basal readers are changing in format, content, and emphasis as they absorb the ideas suggested by advocates of linguistics. The typical basal reading series belongs to, what Chall refers to as, the "meaning-emphasis" category which emphasizes from the very beginning the necessity of reading for meaning. Many current programs, however, are characterized by the "code-emphasis" program, which is an early concentrated stress on learning the alphabetic code which typifies printed English. This is especially true of a number of recently-published "linguistic"² programs.

With the entrance of linguists into the field of reading instruction, there has been and continues to be, much discussion and controversy concerning linguistics and

1

Ralph C. Staiger, "Basal Reader Programs: How Do They Stand Today?" in Current Issues in Reading, ed. by Nila Banton Smith (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969), 292.

2

Jeanne S. Chall, Learning to Read: The Great Debate (St. Louis: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), p. 137.

its contribution to reading. Durkin is of the opinion that

today, in the case of instructional materials, the term linguistic refers only to those which reflect the recommendations of linguists. Not all their recommendations have been the same; in fact, in certain instances they are contradictory. However some linguists who have made proposals about teaching reading have also been active in the production of instructional materials, so their readers have come to be called 'linguistic'. Although these linguistic readers vary in some of their details they do share certain general characteristics.¹

Though the term 'linguistic approach or method' is popular in use, numerous authorities doubt that there can be a linguistic approach, as such. Wardhaugh believes there might be a "linguistic perspective, some kind of basic knowledge which can be applied to reading instruction." He contends that reading teachers need a deeper awareness of contemporary linguistic ideas to become more familiar with the linguistic content of reading.²

It is an axiom of linguistics that language is first spoken, then written. Our written language is produced by means of encoding speech sounds into graphic symbols. The linguistic scientist defines reading as a decoding process-- "putting the sounds which the printed symbols represent back into spoken form."³ The shapes represent speech; meaning is

1

Durkin, Teaching Them to Read, p. 135.

2

Ronald Wardhaugh, "Is the Linguistic Approach an Improvement in Reading Instruction?" in Current Issues in Reading, ed. by Nila Banton Smith (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969), 265.

3

Robert C. Aukerman, Approaches to Beginning Reading (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1971), p. 147.

not found in the marks but in the speech which the marks represent. Thus, a child can read, according to the linguist, when he is able to recognize symbol-sound correspondence to the point that he can respond to the marks with appropriate speech. This involves more than just reproducing the individual letter sounds in sequence and grouping them into the correct spoken sound which they collectively represent. Moreover, it requires inflection, intonation, and accent which are implied through pitch, stress and juncture. These are taught and understood through the use of punctuation marks, boldface type, size, and words all in capital letters.¹

Until recently, reading teachers have traditionally taught only phonics, whereby the speech sounds were taught as representing letters and groups of letters. Hildreth says,

We need now to extend the study of 'phonics' to include the speech melodies of phrases and sentences, which in print are in part signaled by punctuation marks. That is, we need to teach larger segments of sound than we have traditionally taught. We need, further, to teach these larger segments of sound in association with meaning. Comprehending the meanings of phrases or sentences is the central problem for the reader. The ability to comprehend such meanings is developed by the child's experience primarily and mainly with the oral language. The more extensive the child's experience in the language of speech, therefore, the better equipped he is likely to be in getting an author's meaning.²

In the linguistics-in-reading programs most words presented in the beginning readers are phonemically regular

1

Aukerman, Beginning Reading, p. 147.

2

Gertrude Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors in Early Reading Instruction," in Linguistics in the Elementary School Classroom, compiled by Paul S. Anderson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), p. 149.

and fit a pattern. The pupil is guided from identifying a specific phoneme-grapheme relationship in a series of similar words to identifying other specific relationships which fall into the same overall pattern. These relationships form patterns to aid the student in using his analytic skills from known to unknown elements, and then synthesizing the results of his analysis to master new words.

A new pattern opens a whole new array of words that draw on all previously learned information. Since the number of new words a child can decode expands rapidly,¹ a larger repertoire of words becomes available quickly.

The patterns are presented in such a way that the child must discover the structure in words. Linguistic materials make use of minimal pairs such as, can-fan, can-man, and man-fan, to help children see the difference that any letter makes in a word. The student is also led to discover the characteristic sounds of consonants and vowels as they appear in certain positions.² In many cases, the pupil is encouraged to use sound-symbol relationships as the basic word recognition technique by withholding from him such clues as pictures and word length.

From the foregoing discussion, one can observe that vocabulary development with a linguistic basis offers many advantages. It helps students break the code and to discover how spoken language is set down in writing. It aids them in

1

Sabaroff, "Improving Achievement," p. 527.

2

Ibid.

getting at the system that is operating and enables them to find out how words are structured. Thus, they become aware that the arrangement of letters in a word controls the way these letters function.¹

Chall concludes in her recent book that the code-emphasis reading programs tend to produce better overall reading achievement, at least in the initial stages of instruction, than do meaning-emphasis programs.² Weintraub says that,

Research evidence does not point to a single best approach to teaching vocabulary, but rather indicates that a variety of techniques are useful. Each technique appears to have drawbacks. If one were used alone, vocabulary growth would be subject to the weaknesses and limitations of that particular method. Because of its importance for comprehension, directed vocabulary instruction utilizing numerous useful techniques appears to be the most promising approach.³

A final important factor in vocabulary development is the stimulation of an interest in words and their meanings. One means of doing this is to provide real experiences in which new words and their meanings are absorbed easily and quickly. The experience which a child gets in understanding language from speaking and listening is extended by his experience in reading. The young reader constantly learns more about both vocabulary and sentence sense as he continues

1

Sabaroff, "Improving Achievement," p. 525.

2

Chall, The Great Debate, p. 137.

3

Samuel Weintraub, "The Development of Meaning Vocabulary in Reading," The Reading Teacher, XXII (November, 1968), 175.

to read and comprehend increasingly difficult material.¹

Summary

Throughout this chapter, the writer has reviewed and discussed the related literature concerning vocabulary development. The general concept of vocabulary development was considered first, with further emphasis given to word-service programs in basal readers and the development of vocabulary with a linguistic basis. In the subsequent chapter the writer will explain the procedure used in examining the vocabulary development in selected first grade readers.

1

Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors," p. 149.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE OF VOCABULARY STUDY

Purpose of the Study

Research shows that reading is a central concern of educators, and that the effective teaching of reading ranks high on any list of priorities.¹ There is an increasing awareness of the differing needs of children today. They come to first steps in reading with widely different language experiences, and with varying backgrounds and interests. Thus, the search for reading materials and teaching-learning approaches which actually work is a continuing process; and new materials frequently appear which are significantly different from traditional programs.

The common practice in most American elementary schools today is the selection of a basal reading series for use in the teaching of reading. Hence, the writer was motivated to examine the first grade readers of four up-dated and widely used basal series to determine the resemblances and variances in the development of the essentials of vocabulary. Particular emphasis was given to the study of the approach used in developing the vocabulary, and the type and amount of vocabulary presented in each series. It was

1

Bond and Dykstra, "Cooperative Research Program," p. 9.

the writer's aspiration to furnish needed information concerning vocabulary development to assist teachers in choosing a suitable reading series to meet the differing vocabulary needs of students in beginning reading.

Construction of Guidelines for Examination

There are certain essential facets of vocabulary found in all the various programs, though they may differ in development and procedure. Thus, to help in the examination of the readers, the writer constructed a list of general guidelines to follow in comparing the texts in each series. The guidelines were formulated after the writer reviewed the literature on vocabulary development and pursued the Word Service Programs in the varying series. The points considered in the guidelines were chosen because of the importance placed on these significant areas of vocabulary development by leading persons in the field of current reading instruction.¹

Examination of Readers

The overall examination proceeded as follows: the writer chose four basal series which were the most recently revised and more commonly adopted; namely, The American Book's READ Series, Ginn's Reading 360, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich's Bookmark Reading Program, and Houghton Mifflin's Reading Program.

1

Appendix, p. 39.

The preprimers, primer and first reader of each series were selected for comparison with regard to their respective approach to vocabulary.

Particular emphasis was given to the examination and comparison of three facets of vocabulary: the approach, type, and amount. The method of decoding and use of language patterns were reviewed with respect to the approach used in each series to develop the vocabulary. The type of vocabulary was studied to determine how each program classified the vocabulary and the basis used in its word selection; namely, their frequency in language, and/or regularity in phoneme-grapheme relationships. Consideration was given to the amount of vocabulary introduced; especially, to the progressive increase of words from one level to the next, and sufficient repetition to insure learning. In conducting the examination on these three points, the writer followed the constructed guidelines as a pattern.

Summary

In this chapter the writer has restated the purpose of her study, and reported the procedure followed in examining and comparing the designated areas of vocabulary in the selected basal series. A guideline was also constructed for use in the examination of the readers. In the forthcoming chapter the writer will report the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS CONCERNING VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Approach, or Method, Used to Develop Vocabulary

"The most vital and significant aspect of learning to read is the recognition of words."¹ Sufficient sequential and varied instruction is necessary in the use of context and word-structure clues, and sound-symbol knowledge; all of which may be used as tools to unlock words. This is accomplished in various degrees and procedures in differing basal programs. Having examined the vocabulary development in the four selected basal programs of this study, the writer relates in the present chapter the findings in each series, considering the points on the constructed guidelines.

The vocabulary in The American Book Company's READ Series is based on the conventionally-used oral language of children.

Its introduction has been planned to allow children to meet groups of words which follow a particular consistent pattern of orthography and phonology from which they can abstract similar phonic and structural elements.²

1

Donald C. Cushenbery, Reading Improvement in the Elementary School (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), p. 59.

2

Marjorie Seddon Johnson, and others, The READ Reading Series' Teacher's Edition (Cincinnati: American Book Company, 1968), p. v.

The approach to the development of word recognition involves abilities and skills of both analysis and synthesis. The student acquires, at the beginning, a basic recognition vocabulary by encountering concurrently various words which fall into a set pattern.

As new instances of the pattern occur, they are presented in boxes with "known" words from that pattern so that the child can be aided in using his analytic skills and then synthesizing the results of his analysis to master the "new" word.¹

The ability to generalize is the important skill acquired and used.

The words are introduced in a verbal or psychological setting along with the aid of pictures, thereby giving the student skill in using context clues and bringing meaning to the word. He is given the opportunity to meet the new vocabulary in a meaningful setting, using his experiences and oral language background, before reading the words in a story.

The READ Series word-recognition is based on the modern linguistic principles when considering linguistics from its authors' point of view on linguistics, as 'total language development'--placing importance on a wide spectrum of language learnings. The philosophy of the series

begins with the concept that visual language symbols serve to record the oral language which one uses to express his ideas, his feelings, his needs, etc. These visual symbols are not conceived as individual entities, but as part of an overall linguistic pattern. They convey meaning only as they are interpreted as the visual counterparts of what might have been said.²

1

Johnson, READ Teacher's Edition, p. v.

2

Ibid., p. iv.

There is a very definite awareness of the association between the oral language and written symbols.

The sentence pattern is the natural flow of the child's language. The use of contractions, idiomatic expressions, and elliptical sentences (in which a few words carry a complete thought) enhance this natural style.¹

In Ginn's Reading 360 Program the emphasis on decoding is of major importance, and one of its strong points. In this series decoding is defined as "the process of unlocking, analyzing, or solving a written word on the basis of known phonemic and structural clues."² The stress is placed on sound, on association of sound with letter, and on the use of sound-letter knowledge in the analysis of new words; as well as the technique of meaning and context clues. The language elements deal not only with the syllable and word, but also with the phrase, sentence, and paragraph.

Linguistic principles are utilized in this program, mainly, in the sound-symbol decoding.

In Reading 360, the children first observe their own speech sounds and those of others and then learn that these speech sounds may be represented by letters combined to represent words. In short, the approach of Reading 360's decoding program is a change from the letter-to-sound approach to a sound-to-letter approach.³

1

Johnson, READ Teacher's Edition, pp. iii-v.

2

Theodore Clymer, and others, Reading 360 Teacher's Edition (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1969), p. 14.

3

Reading 360 Word Analysis Program (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1971), p. 5. (Advertising material from Ginn)

This is a somewhat different aspect of the linguistic principles stressed in the READ Series which were based more on the language-experience relationship.

As a result of the strong emphasis placed on decoding, the interesting and vital content is not impeded, and natural sentence patterns and spontaneous expressions are evident in the very earliest reader. To a great degree, the types of stories and story content reinforce the important decoding skills, and tend to control the introduction of the sound-symbol relationships especially at the earlier levels.

In Harcourt Brace Jovanovich's Bookmark Reading Program the vocabulary and word recognition skills are developed in their Word Service Program. Its emphasis on decoding is from the standpoint of meaning. The students are encouraged to use their sound-symbol knowledge with context clues to attack new words.

Because children encounter words in meaningful context, they are able to decode many words which are only partially consistent with the one-to-one phoneme-grapheme correspondence. They use context and initial consonant knowledge to decode words that contain vowel letters that represent other than the so-called short vowel sounds. Gradually, too, they learn that a few consonant letters represent more than a single consonant sound. Consequently, they develop from the beginning an expectation that certain letters can represent more than a single sound. They learn to use context as a guide to identify, for example, the different phonemes represented by 'a' in 'was' and 'ran'. This development of context as an aid to decoding permits even the first books in this series to use natural, readable English that makes reading worthwhile.¹

1

Margaret Early, and others, The Bookmark Reading Program's Teacher's Edition (Chicago: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), p. 2.

Since the Word Service lessons precede the reading of the story, each new word is introduced, traced and re-used in reading exercises before children encounter the word in the story.

The Bookmark Program incorporates linguistic knowledge in the sense that it moves from speech to print and it develops clues to meaning that are carried by word forms, word order, and syntactic structures. But the belief that "reading is a process of apprehending meaning, not merely one of associating sounds with symbols"¹ is apparent throughout the readers.

The speech and sentence patterns progressively move from simple to more and more complex sentences throughout the first year program.

They are typical of narrative prose. That is, they conform to the "story-book style" with which children are familiar through listening to stories read to them. And, in fact, the sentence patterns are not unlike those used by children themselves when they are relating events. However, there has been no attempt to make these stories seem to be "talk written down."²

Here, the Bookmark Program differs in its natural language patterns from the other three selected series. One reason for this is that the program's restricted vocabulary does not easily lend itself to natural speech patterns.

The Houghton Mifflin Reading Program develops an early independence in decoding which utilizes meaning clues, letter-sound associations and grammatical structures. As in

1

Early, Bookmark's Teacher's Edition, p. vii.

2

Ibid., p. 7.

the Bookmark Program, meaning is also an important part of the decoding strategy taught in the Houghton Mifflin Program.

Pupils are taught to use context clues in decoding prior to their use in the first preprimer. "This printed context always consists of words that have been used so frequently that pupils recall them instantly."¹ Direct instruction is given first in the letter-sound relationship for the consonants, and then for the vowels later on in progressive stages. The 'letter-sound' association presented in this program is in contrast to the 'sound-letter' relationship in the three other series examined.

The linguistic principles incorporated in this reading series rest primarily with context; that is, that the printed language the students meet is a correct graphic representation of their own oral language.

The strong contextual structure of the Houghton Mifflin Readers, together with the linguistic and phonological knowledge established at early levels, make word introduction prior to the reading unnecessary from the first preprimer on.²

In the other programs of this study the words are introduced before the reading of the stories.

The stories are composed of the children's natural language, which convey action and conflict in familiar language patterns.³

¹
p. 4. (An Overview of The Houghton Mifflin Reading Program,
Advertising brochure from company; no author given)

²
Ibid., p. 5.

³
Teacher's Edition (William K. Durr, and others, The Houghton Mifflin Readers'
(Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), pp. 17-24.)

Type of Vocabulary Used

The development of word recognition was formerly based on so-called high-frequency words that children used in their conversation. Nearly all the basal reading series published prior to the last two or three years, introduced words in rather inane situations, assuming that the constant repetition of the words within a preselected number of lines or pages would assure recognition by the child.¹

Since this type of vocabulary caused much confusion for a number of students, many current basal programs have revised their selection of words and classified them according to the manner of word-attack skills needed for their recognition.

The READ Series has no specified classifications, as such. The vocabulary in this program is based almost entirely on phoneme-grapheme consistencies in the language, whereby the spelling regularity of words form patterns. The 'word patterns' allow the student to discover useful generalizations about the language. "These generalizations are then constantly reinforced by continuous repetition as new situations are encountered and new generalizations are formulated."² The student is able to decode words which he has not previously encountered, but which contain parts which are familiar to him.

The "function words" which are irregular in spelling but most frequently used in speaking are introduced in READ gradually and are presented in meaningful context.³

¹
What's New in Reading: A Handbook for Parents
(Cincinnati: American Book Co., 1968), p. 7. (Booklet from the company; no author given)

²
Ibid., p. 8.

³
Johnson, READ Teacher's Edition, pp. iv-v.

Reading 360 has categorized each word according to the way it is first introduced at the particular level at which it occurs. The classification is: basic, decodable, and enrichment.

A word is called basic if it is a word of high utility and if the child has not yet been taught the skills to decode the word independently.

Decodable words contain sound-symbol correspondences and conform to spelling patterns which have been taught and maintained at a particular point in the program.

Enrichment words are helpful and sometimes necessary to a particular selection, but of low utility for the rest of the program. No attempt is made to repeat or to insure mastery of enrichment words.¹

In the back of each teacher's manual is a list of additional decodable words which are not presented in the readers, but which the student is capable of decoding independently by using the skills he has acquired up to that level. These words appear in the exercise pages of the textbooks as well as in the additional activities.

As can be realized from the definition of the three types of words, the decoding program of Reading 360 utilizes both the basic vocabulary in the language, based on frequency of use; and also words with regular phoneme-grapheme relationships. In the beginning most words are basic, but as additional word-attack skills are acquired, more new words can be classed as decodable.²

In the Bookmark Reading Program,

almost all the words introduced in the Primary Readers are high-service words; they are words that children will

1

Clymer, Reading 360 Teacher's Edition, p. 24.

2

Ibid.

encounter very frequently in all their reading. A few words are special, (e.g., grasshopper) and have particular meanings, colorful associations, and often interesting configurations.¹

The high-service words are of two classifications: those which are phonetically regular in spelling and those which are irregularly spelled. At the preprimer level a high percentage of the regularly spelled words are presented using sound-symbol knowledge and context clues. Only a few words with spelling inconsistencies are introduced in the early levels, though their numbers increase progressively.

Inherent in the Houghton Mifflin Program is the philosophy that

a basal recognition vocabulary of extremely high-frequency words becomes of prime importance in developing independent power in reading. And this high-frequency vocabulary should ideally be that which pupils will find in reading matter intended for their early use.²

Hence, a few high-frequency words have been introduced at the readiness level. Beginning with the preprimer level, the high-frequency words have been used "as basal words, with sufficient repetition vocabularies."³ The vocabulary referred to as 'non-basal' words are those that are of relatively low-frequency, but vital to the content of certain stories.

There is no provision to make these non-basal words a part of

¹ Early, Bookmark's Teacher's Edition, p. 8.

² Durr, Houghton Mifflin Teacher's Edition, p. 20.

³ Ibid., p. 21.

the student's recognition vocabulary. In this program the greater emphasis is placed on vocabulary of high-frequency, with little stress on phoneme-grapheme associations.

Number of Words Introduced

Today's basal readers present a varied number of different words in their initial readers. The new vocabulary should be carefully controlled and presented according to the number of words which can be learned at a time by the average first grade child and the amount of repetition needed. The following tables show the progressive increase of NEW words which are introduced from one level to the next in each of the four selected series. The number enclosed within the parentheses () in the last column of every table indicates the cumulative number of words used in the series up to the particular level.

TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY LOAD FOR THE READ SERIES

Level	Title of Reader	New Pattern Words	New Function Words	Total New Words	Cumulative No. of Words
Pre-P 1	And So You Go	22	7	29	(29)
Pre-P 2	Be On the Go	37	3	40	(69)
Pre-P 3	Can You?	53	4	57	(126)
Primer	Days and Ways	174	7	181	(307)
1st Reader	Each and All	<u>305</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>315</u>	(622)
	TOTAL WORDS	591	31	622	

The vocabulary load in READ is high because the words are based on similarity in spelling patterns, allowing students to make generalizations. The understanding of these patterns makes it possible to meet words sooner than has been possible in some other methods. There is continuous review and repetition of every pattern.

TABLE 3
ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY LOAD FOR READING 360

Level	Title of Reader	New Basic Words	New Decodable Words	New Enrichment Words	Total New Words	Cumulative No. of Words
Level 2	My Sound and Word Book	29	-	-	29	(29)
Level 3	A Duck Is A Duck	29	-	-	29	(58)
Level 4	Helicopters & Gingerbread	38	3	-	41	(99)
Level 5	May I Come In?	115	45	66	226	(325)
Level 6	Seven Is Magic	<u>145</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>305</u>	(630)
	TOTAL WORDS	<u>356</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>149</u>	<u>630</u>	

32

The word "Level" has been used in this table since Reading 360 does not use the terms preprimer, primer, and first reader. This series has the highest vocabulary load of four series. The gradual presentation of each decoding skill provides the necessary repetition for word mastery.

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY LOAD FOR BOOKMARK READING PROGRAM

Level	Title of Reader	Phonetically Spelled Words	Irregularly Spelled Words	Total New Words	Cumulative No. of Words
Pre-P 1	Sun Up	22	9	31	(31)
Pre-P 2	A Happy Morning	25	10	35	(66)
Pre-P 3	A Magic Morning	29	3	32	(98)
Primer	Sun and Shadow	59	67	126	(224)
1st Reader	Together We Go	69	92	161	(385)
	TOTAL WORDS	<u>204</u>	<u>181</u>	<u>385</u>	

33

The number of words in this series is very low in comparison with the other programs in this study. The words with irregular spellings receive more repetition than those phonetically spelled. The repetitions are presented in meaningful content. "Consequently, repetition of words in this program is selective. Words of different kinds are repeated with greater or lesser frequency according to their usefulness."¹

¹ Early, Bookmark's Teacher's Edition, p. 8.

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF VOCABULARY LOAD FOR HOUGHTON MIFFLIN READING

Level	Title of Reader	Basal New Words	Non-Basal New Words	Total New Words	Cumulative No. of Words
Readiness	Get Ready to Start	15	-	15	(15)
Pre-P 1	Tigers	17	7	24	(39)
Pre-P 2	Lions	33	20	53	(92)
Pre-P 3	Dinosaurs	31	20	51	(143)
Primer	Rainbows	81	119	200	(343)
1st Reader	Signposts	<u>26</u>	<u>147</u>	<u>173</u>	(516)
	TOTAL WORDS	203	313	516	

34

The vocabulary load in this program differs from the others in the fact that it already introduces 15 high-frequency words in the readiness level, previous to the first preprimer. The units in each level provide a gradual presentation of new words so that very few sentences ever contain more than a single new word, especially at the preprimer level. The basal words are given enough repetition to insure instant recognition. Less, but sufficient, repetition is provided for the non-basal words.

Examination of the four tables indicates that not all of the basal programs introduce new words at the same rate, nor do they all have the same vocabulary load. The greatest increase in the introduction of new words occurs at the primer level in each of the series. However, Bush and Huebner suggest that "the number of different words in a basal reader is not nearly as important as the number of phoneme-phonogram relationships, the internal structure of the words."¹ It is also Dechant's belief that this greater emphasis on word structure "would lead to more meaningful learning, to better transfer of learning from one situation to another, and to less interference with learning."²

Summary

In this chapter, the writer has reported the findings which were obtained from the examination of the readers. The vocabulary development program of each of the selected series was presented, and comparisons were made. The main similarities and differences in each program were discussed with regard to the emphasis on decoding, basis of word selection and the amount of words presented. A summary and conclusion will be given in the following chapter.

1

Bush and Huebner, Strategies for Reading, p. 59.

2

Emerald V. Dechant, Improving the Teaching of Reading (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 204.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Implications

Having studied three different aspects of vocabulary development in each of the four selected basal series, several observations were made. There is in each one a greater emphasis on decoding than in previous basal programs. The decoding process allows for a wider variation in methods of teaching word-identification skills; and this variation is found, both, within the series itself, and also among the different series. Yet, whatever the approach, the purpose behind each is "to help the pupil to pronounce an unknown word which is a part of his listening or speaking vocabulary."¹

The recent incorporation of modern linguistic principles and use of natural language patterns, though differing in certain degrees from series to series, aids the beginning reader in understanding the relationship among words in increasingly complex units, and consequently, bring more comprehensive meaning to his reading.

The series differ in their selection of vocabulary type and load in relation to their respective approaches to

1

Cushenbery, Reading Improvement, p. 60.

decoding and linguistic emphases. In general, they use two ways to develop a wide vocabulary; namely, rely heavily on learning the words in a meaningful context, and apply phoneme-grapheme generalizations. The real difference depends on which of these two methods receives the greater emphasis in each series. This, too, determines the type of vocabulary presented and the amount. Hildreth's

study of a school beginner's progress in learning words supports the view that the oral language with which children are familiar provides the basis for their learning to recognize words. Words more often used by the individual in speaking are normally easier to recall in print.¹

Staiger believes

the expectation of pupil accomplishment in initial reading instruction probably should be raised. Programs which introduced words at a more rapid rate have tended to produce pupils with superior word recognition abilities at the end of first grade. Children today tend to be better equipped for reading instruction when they enter first grade than they were some years ago, and they are probably prepared to learn more words and develop more mature study skills than are currently expected of them in many programs.²

Conclusion

Due to the fact that children learn at different rates and have varied language, culture, and experiential backgrounds, it is difficult to find a reading program suitable to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. Hopefully, the contents

1

Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors," p. 150.

2

Staiger, "Basal Reader Programs," pp. 291-92.

of this paper will furnish beneficial and practical information concerning the essentials of vocabulary development; and also guide teachers in choosing the appropriate decoding program best suited for the specific individual and group needs of students. Research has shown that

a close relationship exists between knowledge of word meanings and reading achievement, and that direct methods of teaching vocabulary, where the teacher plans for and reinforces the learning of words in context, give pupils greater command of vocabulary than do methods which depend upon incidental learnings only.¹

Yet, it is the opinion of this writer that the most important emphasis must be placed on the teacher--not just on the particular program. The teacher holds the key which can unlock for the students the best in any vocabulary development program.

1

Marguerite B. Bougere, "Vocabulary Development in the Primary Grades," in Forging Ahead in Reading, ed. by J. Allen Figurel (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1968), 75.

APPENDIX

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINATION OF VOCABULARY

The Approach, or Method, Used to Develop The Vocabulary in Each Series

1. The emphasis on decoding in each program
2. The systematic use of multiple word-attack skills, such as, sound-symbol knowledge, word structure clues, and context clues
3. The incorporation of modern linguistic principles into the word-service program
4. The development of vocabulary in natural language patterns

The Type of Vocabulary Used in Each Series (The major criterion for selecting words)

1. The classification of words to aid children in decoding independently
2. The utilization of basic vocabulary in the language, based on frequency in use
3. The vocabulary based on regular phoneme-grapheme relationships

The Amount of Words Introduced in Each Series

1. The progressive increase of words from one level to the next
2. The gradual presentation and sufficient repetition of words to assure learning

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