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A Description and Review of Research of the Initial Teaching Alphabet

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A DESCRIPTION AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH OF THE

INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET

(TITLE)

BY

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PLAN B PAPER

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Statement

Many people are dissatisfied with the standards of reading in Britain, the United States, and other English-speaking countries. For over a century there have been teachers who have felt that the alphabet and spelling of English is one of the main reasons why children have so much difficulty in learning to read. Printed words are only a kind of code for the spoken language, and the vital thing the child has to learn in the early stages is that the groups of letters on the page are signs which stand for the words he has already learned to speak at home. The trouble with the alphabet and spelling which we use as a code for spoken English is that it is too difficult for little children in the elementary school.

One way in which it is very difficult for young learners is that there is too much for them to learn at the start. Children may learn the code in two ways: (a) they learn what the printed word as a whole means, and (b) they learn what sound each letter stands for and can piece the word together from the separate sounds. The usual English alphabet and spelling overloads the young child whichever way is used.

If the beginner is trying to learn what the word "and" looks like in print, he finds that it is not just "and", but also "AND", "And", "&" etc. If the child is trying to learn what the second sound in the work "by" looks like in print he finds that it is not just"y" as in "by" but also "igh" as in "high", "ie" as in "die", "uy" as in "buy", "ye" as in "bye", "is" as in "island", "eye" as in "eye", "aye" as in "aye", "i" as in "rind"

and so on. Here are nine different ways in which this single sound can
be written--and there are many more. Spoken English can be broken down into
a set of about forty distinctive speech-sounds, yet there are over two thou-
sand ways of writing them in our traditional orthography.

The result of this great variety in writing the sounds is that the
letters of the traditional orthography alphabet often do not seem to mean
the same thing from one word to the next, and this, in turn, adds to the
difficulty of traditional orthography as a medium for young beginners learn-
ing to read. The letter "o" stands for one sound in "gone", but a different
sound in "done", and it changes its value twice more in "bone" and "one".
It is very difficult to break a code when the letters of the code keep
changing their value as they do in English spelling.

You might think that it can't be helped. That's just the way English
is spelled and children will have to put up with it, and their teachers,
parents and employers will have to put up with a quarter of the population
being poor readers until our spelling is put right. But this is not nec-
essarily true. The damage may be caused by springing all these difficulties
on children when they are too young and too inexperienced to cope with them.

i.t.a. is based on the idea that you start with something easy for the
beginner and keep back the difficulties until he has grasped the general
idea of getting meaning out of print. This gives the child both the ground-
ing and the confidence to tackle the problems of English spelling later.
In other school subjects we start with easy work first and then go on to
more difficult things later. i.t.a. enables the same principle to be applied
to the written medium in the teaching of reading writing.[1]

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[1] John Downing, How Your Children Are Being Taught To Read With The Initial Teaching Alphabet, (Great Britain: Bookprint Limited, Kingswood and Crawley) p.2.

Purpose of the Study

In the last few years many studies have been conducted on the Initial Teaching Alphabet. The purpose of this study is to survey the literature and bring under one corner the currently existing information and research data about the Initial Teaching Alphabet.

Description of Terms

The following definitions are pertinent to the understanding of this study. Throughout this paper the letters i.t.a. will refer to the Initial Teaching Alphabet. Lower-case letters are used for the abbreviation because the alphabet uses only lower-case letters. Capitals are larger versions of the lower-case shapes.[2] The letters t.o. are used to refer to Traditional Orthography which means the letters in the usual twenty-six-letter alphabet.

Description of the Initial Teaching Alphabet

The Initial Teaching Alphabet is a phonic writing-system used to teach beginning reading. In itself, i.t.a. is not a program, it is an alphabet. It has forty-four symbols instead of the conventional twenty-six; each of the forty-four symbols represents one and only one sound. The alphabet is basically phonemic rather than strictly phonetic. Twenty-four of the forty-four symbols are the traditional ones; fourteen of the augmentations look very much like two familiar letters joined together. These are taught to children as individual characters just as we all have been taught to accept w as a separate letter instead of two v's joined together. The letters q and x are not represented. The other special symbols represent the remaining phonemes. The forms of the i.t.a. have been designed so that:

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[2] William D. Boutwell, "An Easier Way o Learn To Read--i.t.a.," P.T.A. Magazine, 59 (September, 1964), p.13.

1. Each symbol stands for its own sound.

2. Individual characters replace the conplex combinations of letters used in standard spelling.

3. Left-to-right sequence is consistently maintained. The beginning reader does not have to move from right to left to decode a word. Example: lien rather that line

The result is that whenever a child sees a symbol it is read in its own meaningful way. In our conventional alphabet, two thousand or more visual patterns are used for the forty-odd sounds of English speech. These two thousand visual patterns are reduced to only eighty-eight in the Initial Teaching Alphabet. Therefore, once these forty-four symbols are associated with their respective sounds, any word can be read by the child.

As for the problem of capital letters, which introduce a number of new visual patterns in our traditional system, it doesn't exist. In i.t.a., a larger version of a letter becomes its capital. Within the design of the letter and its use as a consistent symbol are built other special considerations which reduce the differences between the appearance of the words in the Initial Teaching Alphabet. i.t.a. is a special learning tool with built-in devices to make the transition to the spelling children will use for the rest of their lives easy and rapid. This transfer to the traditional alphabet takes place as soon as reading fluency permits. This may be any time from six months to fifteen months after starting school, depending upon the degree of his reading readiness at the beginning of the program.[3]

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[3] The Story of i.t.a., (New York: Initial Teaching Alphabet Publications, Inc., 1965), p.5

CHAPTER II

History of i.t.a.

The seeds of i.t.a. were planted more than one hundred years ago in 1850 in England when Sir Isaac Pitman, schoolmaster from Someset, invented Pitman shorthand which is phonic. In devising his shorthand Sir Isaac made a close study of the phonic basis of English. These notes were preserved and came into the hands of Sir James Pitman, publisher and member of Parliament.[4]

Sir James Pitman points out what everyone knows--that our printed English is phonically phony. Our standard spelling is full of "booby traps". Unfortunately, our printed English became fixed long before linguistic experts appeared on the scene. English spelling is a poor job of trying to fuse together sounds from German, Anglo-Saxon, French and other letters with Latin letters.

Sir James Pitman had no ambition to change the standrad alphabet or English spelling. Reading his grandfather's notes, he wondered if the beginning reader might not make better progress if the alphabetical symbols could be made to represent exactly and distinctly the sounds used in every-day speech. To do this, Sir James didn't try to do away with our present alphabet (except for two symbols). He added symbols so that the reader could easily identify the five different kinds of "o" sounds we use, different "e" sounds and so on.

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[4]Boutwell, (September, 1964), p. 12.

Pitman's idea was that the young beginners should use the simplier and more reliable i.t.a. until they have become confident and fluent in reading books printed in it, and that then they should transfer their skill and confidence to reading books printed in the traditional alphabet and spelling of English. The characters of i.t.a. and its rules of spelling have been very carefully designed to make it easier for children to transfer from i.t.a. to standard print.

He first called his new alphabet Augmented Roman because it was an expansion of our present Roman alphabet. Later, because the alphabet is designed only as a stage in beginning reading, the name was changed to Initial Teaching Alphabet.

In 1960 Sir James Pitman took his phonic alphabet to the University of London Institute of Education. There the project was placed in the hands of Research Office, John W. Downing, a psychologist with teaching experience in education and industry. To make a test in the schools, books in i.t.a. were needed. These came from a number of London publishers. Already there are more than two hundred children's books printed in i.t.a. With books available, a pilot test program began in the British schools under the watchful eyes of researchers. Classes using i.t.a. were matched with classes taught by traditional methods.

The first large-scale pilot program in the United States began at Lehigh University in Bethlehen, Pennsylvania in 1963. The First American project got under way with the first American i.t.a. readers, the Early-to-Read series by Tanyzer and Mazurkiewicz.[5] Starting with the Lehigh University project at Bethlehen, Pennsylvania, the i.t.a. movement has

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[5]Ibid., p.13.

fanned out over the country. In 1966 at least seventy thousand students in forty-two states are being introduced to reading with i.t.a. according to A.J.Mazurkiewicz, director of i.t.a. Studies Center at Lehigh University. That is forty times as many students as were studying i.t.a. in this country in 1963, suggesting that the unorthodox import from Great Britain is beyond the initial experimental stage. In Lompoc, California, it is now used with all first grade students whose parents approve, in secondary remedial programs and in an adult literacy program. Officials at San Quentin State Prison and at Oregon State Penitentiary found i.t.a. instruction successful with adult illiterates when other methods failed. In New York State one hundred schools are cooperating in a program that uses i.t.a. in a varity of ways--teaching first graders to read, introducing kindergarteners to language concepts, helping emotionally disturbed children, and experimenting in teaching communication to deaf, brain damaged, and retarded children.[6]

[6]"Students in Forty-Two States Are Studying i.t.a.", Phi Delta Kappan, 48 (January, 1966), p.282.

CHAPTER III

Review of Related Literature

The use of the Initial Teaching Alphabet has spread rapidly since the
first British research project in 1961. Many more experiments with i.t.a. have
been conducted in Britain and several are being conducted in the United States.
Educators are anxious to find an answer to the reading problems of many
people, and they are hoping to find it in the Initial Teaching Alphabet.
Many educators feel that i.t.a. is helpful in reducing failure in beginning
reading, but others of them are skeptical about the advantages of it.

Sir Edward Boyle explained there was good reason to think that slow
starters and average children would benefit most from the use of i.t.a.
Sir James Pitman commented that learning to read was the most important
foundation of education. He believed that the new alphabet was sufficiently
established for the fact to be recogniaed that it was unfair on a child to
confront him with the difficulties of the traditional orthography when he
first went to school. The burden of proof was now on those in education
to justify the traditional system, which violated the main teaching principles.

There were two hundred per cent better results at the end of two years in
classes using the i.t.a. compared to those using the old system. Teaching
by i.t.a. has important possibilitèes for teaching English as a foreign
language and Sir Edward Boyle felt that the Minister of Education should
urge its advantages on his colleagues. It should also be considered for
prisons where remedial teaching already is proving beneficial.

The initial Teaching Alphabet was designed specifically to reduce the difficulty of transferring to conventional spelling later. There was much evidence that most children read it more quickly, transferred to traditional orthography easily and dropped the i.t.a. when the time came, as readily as they had learned.[7]

In Frank Zeitz's article "i.t.a. and the Below-Average Child" he states that the i.t.a. is the most nearly absolute phonetic spelling of the words of the English language and renders the child's reading world less complex. The fact that each symbol has a "sound name: rather than a completely unrelated name, as in the case of the letter"w", adds to the simplicity.

In i.t.a., as it is used by Dr. Albert Mazurdiewicz, Lehigh University and Dr. Albert Tanyzer, Hofstra University in their Early-to-Read series, there exist certain complexities. Although this is excellent for the average and above-average readers, the existing complexities create some confusion and chaos in the learning process of the below-average child.

The ideal system, the simpliest system, is one consisting of a pure one-to-one correspondence between symbol and sound. Such does not exist in today's use of i.t.a. The following are examples of complexities, violations of the pure, simple one-to-one correspondence relationship between symbol and sound. They fall into three classes: (1) one sound being represented by two or more symbols; (2) one symbol eliciting two or more sounds; (3) the including of silent letters.

The "c", "k", and "ck" produce the sound that is common to cat, key,

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[7] Sir Edward Boyle, "New Alphabet Approved--Boost For Slow Starters", Times Education Supplement, 2550, (April 3, 1964), p.850.

and back. The "y" plays a triple role. It can sound like the beginning

sound of yard. It may be sounded as the ɛ̄ sound in words like "happy"

and "funny". It may even sound like the "i" in the word very. The "ir",

"er", and "ur" all represent one single sound, the "r" in the word rabbit

and rascal. The "a" has a split personality. It sounds like "a" in apple.

It is also used for the schwa sound, for which there is no i.t.a. symbol,

unless the "u" is used. Using this "a" in words like "above" creates momentary

confusion for the below-average reader. The "t" sound is inserted, although

in pronunciation it is omitted in words like "catch" and "watch". The "ue"

sound is not a pure sound. In fact it is the combination of the two sounds

"y" and "ω". The combinations of "o" and "r", "or" and "a" and "r", "ar"

produce the name of the eighteenth letter of the alphabet. The "a" and "o"

produce the same sound.

The above complexities could be rendered simple within the framework

of i.t.a. Only a schwa sound symbol need be added.

Further confusion is caused by the repeated use of the "o" where "au"

is demanded. Log, dog, and soft are examples.

Using the British pronunciation to determine the i.t.a. coding of

words like "been" and "against" adds to the complexity.

Dr. Mazurkiewicz and Dr. Tanyzer are aiming at two targets at the same

time: the simplification of reading and the keeping of the i.t.a. spellings

as close to the traditional standard spellings as possible. This dualism

of purpose is the cause of many of the above-mentioned complexities.[8]

Special attention must be given to the below-average child. As the

existing i.t.a. is employed to usher the average and the above-average child

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[8] Frank Zeitz, "i.t.a. and the Below-Average Child", The Reading Teacher,
19, (April, 1966), p. 516.

child into reading, so a completely simple one-to-one correspondence between symbol and sound form of i.t.a. is needed to introduce the below-average student into the existing i.t.a. The below-average child demands special consideration, this simplification, if he is expected to succeed. For the below-average child the i.t.a. pronunciation should be as close to the typical local pronunciation as possible. As accents change from region to region, so the i.t.a. for the below-average child should change.

There are two needs of the below-average child that must be met. First, a simple, pure one-to-one relationship should be maintained between symbol and sound. Second, the pronunciation of the printed word should be as close to the typical, local pronunciation as possible. Compliance with these two needs would create a means of introducing the below-average child to the present form of i.t.a. and on to the standard alphabet. Compliance with these needs would result in simplicity, a simplicity that would offer greater success to the below-average child. This simplification is needed now, before i.t.a. is completely accepted throughout the United States.[9]

Highlights for Teachers states that the major problem with i.t.a. is that it adds one more transition which the child must make; for soon after having learned the modified alphabet, he must learn the traditional alphabet, if he is to read many books. So few books are written inthis new manner that the teacher depends to a large extent upon experience charts and stories she prepares with the children. This practice and the enthusiasm of the teacher may be responsible for some of the gains reported, rather than the i.t.a. method itself.

The use of this program should be limited to carefully controlled

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[9]Ibid., p. 517.

experimental situations. The results of some experimental programs will be available in the next few years when i.t.a. may be more accurately and fairly evaluated.[10]

John Downing observed that several misconceptions about i.t.a. have developed and felt that there was a need to clear up some of the confusions. The first misconception mentioned by Mr. Downing is that i.t.a. is not a method of reading instruction. i.t.a. is a medium not a method. Sir James Pitman envisaged that i.t.a. would be used by teachers following a look-say approach as well as some who might prefer to start with phonics. When i.t.a. readers are introduced the teacher should continue to use the reading methods that she has used in the past. The most popular misconception at the present time is that i.t.a. is a systematic phonics approach. Not only is this not true because i.t.a. was proposed as a printing and writing system for young children which could be used with any method of teaching reading, but also it is incorrect to associate i.t.a. with a synthetic phonics approach because the majority of i.t.a. teachers in Britain just do not begin reading by the formal phonics approach. Teachers in several of the i.t.a. projects in the United States also do not begin reading by a systematic phonics approach. Like their British colleagues they have recognized that the philosophy behind the reading-for-meaning approach remains unshaken either by i.t.a. or by the i.t.a. research. i.t.a. is a system of printing for beginners books which may be used with any method. More than ninety per cent of British teachers using i.t.a. have an eclectic approach to reading, beginning with an emphasis on reading for meaning, through the sentence of whole-

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[10] "Modified or Extended Alphabet", Highlights For Teachers. 1, p.2.

word approach. Phonics generally was taught by most teachers, but not until
the second year (age six plus). With i.t.a. phonics is still postponed until
after an initial look-say period; however, the phonics teaching comes a good
deal earlier than with the traditional approach.[11]

Mr. Downing says i.t.a. is not a scheme of forcing precocious readers.
It is true that reading instruction in the British i.t.a. experiment often
began around five, but this was not a special feature of i.t.a. Beginning
reading is normally started at an earlier age in Britain. The truth is that
in the British schools using i.t.a., teachers have continued their usual
policy of delaying no pupil who is capable of learning rapidly and avoiding
any pressure on any child who requires a slower pace.[12]

i.t.a. is not a panacea. Gans says that the i.t.a. approach to reading
is at its beginning. As yet there are not enough results from experimenta-
tion going on to warrant the extravagant claims that are being made for it.
Only broad and longitudinal evaluation which yields reliable conclusions can
determine its permanent place in the teaching of reading. Professional
educators should disown any salesman for i.t.a. who tells parents that all
children will, at the end of the first grade, be reading at the third-
grade level. Quite apart from its cruel raising of impossible expectations,
such a statement would be unnecessarily damaging to the true worth of i.t.a.
The smaller but genuine benefit which i.t.a. seems actually to bring to many
children is great enough to make it a really important advance in the teach-
ing of reading.[13]

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[11]John Downing, "Current Misconceptions About i.t.a.", Elementary
English, 42, (May, 1965), p.492.

[12]Ibid., p.494.

[13]Ibid., p.495.

While research reports do show that i.t.a. has brought most children important advantages in their learning of reading and written composition, they do not show that i.t.a. is a panacea. It is always difficult to establish a realistic criterion of failure in reading in young children, but a reasonable estimate on the basis of some of our test data would be that poor response to beginning reading instruction is probably reduced in i.t.a. classes to about one-third or one-quarter of what it is in classes where traditionally printed materials are used. Nevertheless, there are some children who made a poor response even when i.t.a. materials are used.

Another misleading claim that had been made for i.t.a. is that any teacher can use it just by learning the new characters in i.t.a. and by investing in a set of i.t.a. readers for her class. i.t.a. is definitely not to be recommended for teachers looking for an easy time. The teacher who wishes to use i.t.a. with her preferred methods of reading instruction needs to make a consistent and conscious effort to master for herself the i.t.a. and its spelling patterns if she is to get real benefit from it for her students. The teacher must prepare herself fully if she is to help her children with i.t.a.[14]

i.t.a. does not suffer from a shortage of materials. Although American publishers have been slower to produce i.t.a. materials, there are many British books available in i.t.a. Some educators in America seem to be under the misapprehension that the i.t.a. approach depends on about ten books printed in i.t.a. This is far from the truth. Altogether there are about three hundred books published in i.t.a. and the number is growing quite rapidly.

Another related misconception is that i.t.a. books are best restricted

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[14]Ibid., p.496.

to school use, and not allowed for home use. On the contrary, in the British research, it has been found best to provide i.t.a. books to children outside school by making them available through book stores and the free public library services.[15]

It is often assumed that i.t.a. is a phonetic alphabet with a one-to one relationship between the i.t.a. characters and the speech sounds of English. But i.t.a. is not a phonetic alphabet because it is not designed to represent precisely the sounds that individuals make in speaking English. i.t.a. is an alphabet designed for teaching beginning reading in any part of the English-speaking world, and for this reason i.t.a. cannot be expected to reflect regional differences of pronunciation. Like the t.o. it is a standard writing system. When it is understood that i.t.a. is a device for grading the difficulties of the t.o. and not for giving a precise representation of any particular individual's pronunciation, a number of other misconceptions about the characteristics of i.t.a. can be corrected.[16]

i.t.a. is not the ultimate in simplification. i.t.a. does not reduce the number of print symbols to the minimum required on a forty-one-sound analysis of English.

i.t.a. is not concerned with spelling reform. Sir James Pitman had made it clear from the outset that i.t.a. is not a proposal for spelling reform. If it were, then we should almost certainly want to introduce maximum regularity of symbol-to-sound relationship and to reduce the alternative ways of symbolizing each sound to the minimum of one.

i.t.a. is not phonetic, not completely regular, and not as simple as

[15] Ibid., p.498.
[16] Ibid., p.499.

it might be precisely because it is not a spelling reform. i.t.a.'s purpose is to grade the difficulties of the English writing system for beginners learning to read who will eventually need to transfer their reading and writing skills to t.o. Therefore, i.t.a. is deliberately designed as a compromise between the aim of simplicity and regularity for the beginning and the aim to ease transfer once fluency in i.t.a. reading and writing has been achieved-- hense Sir James Pitman's design of characters and the rules for their use in spelling during the initial i.t.a. learning period.

First results from the British i.t.a. research project seem to show that transfer is remarkably easy in reading and surprisingly effective in writing. In i.t.a. classes in Britain, no matter which of several i.t.a. basal reader series is being used, the transfer in reading is simply made by moving from the last i.t.a. reader to a reader of similar or a slightly easier level. No attempt to mix i.t.a. and t.o. on the same page has even been made in the British i.t.a. materials.[17]

In particular, it should be clearly recognized that i.t.a. is not a method of reading instruction to be set up as an alternative to other methods. Nor is i.t.a. a scheme for forcing precocious readers. i.t.a. is a way of grading the difficulties in print in beginners' books which should aid all traditional methods. At this stage, when no research is available on the question of teaching methodology with i.t.a., it would be particularly unfortunate if i.t.a. were associated with an outmoted synthetic phonics method or for that matter with any other method.

Also, i.t.a. should not be projected as easy to teach or as a panacea. It is neither. Teachers have to take trouble to master i.t.a. themselves,

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[17]Ibid., p.500.

and to learn to teach it properly. We must not forget that although the proportion of failures seems to be dramatically reduced in i.t.a. classes, failures do still occur.

A greater understanding of how human beings learn and use language, spoken and written, and of how the two are related, and what are the resources and constraints of each should be our aim. The i.t.a. experiments' most important contribution seems to be in helping to get people thinking about these larger issues.[18]

Warren G. Currs says that we should suspend judgement until more research has been completed and the data examined from a variety of viewpoints. Premature judgements can lead to rash statements which cloud the read issues and which compel teachers to take sides.

The i.t.a.experiments in England are scheduled to continue until 1974. Educators should carefully consider interim reports from both British and American studies, but should not at this time draw conclusions about the full significance of i.t.a.

Several factors make early appraisals of doubtful validity.

1. We do not know as yet the long-range effect of i.t.a. on reading and spelling performance, and may not clearly see what effect, if any, it will have until pupils who have taken part in the experiment reach fourth or fifth grade. It is entirely possible, although present evidence seems to indicate otherwise, that certain residual effects may later act as deterrents to fluent reading and accurate spelling. These possible effects need to be carefully weighed against the advantages claimed for early reading achievement.

2. We do not know as yet the extent to which the enthusiasm of the teachers and the glamour of an experimental situation lift pupils to higher reading achievement. We need to find out how well i.t.a. expedites learning after the initial enthusiasm and glamour have

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[18] Ibid., p. 501.

worn off. The "Hawthorne effect" can never be completely eliminated in educational experiments, since teacher enthusiasm in an uncontrollable variable. Of course, the fact that most of the experimental teachers have been enthusiastic about i.t.a. may itself be considered a credit to the new system.

3. Although many children have made a successful transition to t.o. without any apparent difficulty, there may be come children whose mental abilities or psychological sets make it difficult for them to discard one medium and to master another. Therefore, even as an instructional medium for general use in beginning reading, we will ultimately need more refined experiments to determine the types of learners for whom it works best. We also need to know the sort of program in which it functions best.

4. Too early acceptance is likely to bring about a sharp cleavage between the proponents and opponents of i.t.a. If educators only will suspend judgement until more evidence is available, it will be much easier to maintain a scientific atmosphere in which objective data can be weighed and sifted in the light of broader educational objectives.

5. Another reason for suspending judgement on i.t.a. is the fact that several significant research studies have demonstrated that late starters tend to catch up with and even surpass in reading ability those children who have received direct intensive reading instruction early in the first grade or in kindergarten. This is especially true when delayed instruction has been preceded by enriched readiness activities.[19]

Mr. Downing asks if there is anything wrong with the i.t.a. writing-system itself. The British report on five years of extensive research on i.t.a. in beginner's classes suggests that there is and that the next step in research should be to improve on the original i.t.a. writing system. Before giving more details, perhaps the context of this finding should be provided on a summary of the three main conclusions of the British research project:

1. t.o. is a serious cause of difficulty in the early stages of learning to read and write. Thus English spelling is a severe handicap to teachers and children in the English-speaking countries of the world.

2. i.t.a. generally leads to superior t.o. reading and t.o. spell-

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[19]John Downing & Warren G. Cutts, "The Value of i.t.a.", National Education Association Journal, 53, (September, 1964),p.22.

ing by the end of the third year in school. In word recognition the average i.t.a. student is five or six months advanced in reading t.o.

3. The success of i.t.a. in improving t.o. literacy skills comes only after a plateau or even regression in the growth of such skills at the stage of transition from i.t.a. to t.o.

The success of i.t.a. ought not be belittled. The difference between the i.t.a. reading of i.t.a. students and the t.o. reading of t.o. students up till the middle of the second year of school is truely remarkable. During the usual time of transition for most children (end of second year of beginning of third year) the average achievements to t.o. reading i.t.a. students are not worse than those of t.o. pupils, and by the end of the third year, the average i.t.a. pupil has regained a lead over the average t.o. student.

These are encouraging results, but they are not good enough. The plateau or regression effect at the transition stage suggests that attempts should be made to reduce this loss. Improvements in teaching methods and materials may help, but what is urgently needed now is a reappraisal of the i.t.a. writing-system itself. The goal of this new research should not be confined to improving the transitional aspect of i.t.a. It should also determine whether the residue of complexity and irregularity in i.t.a. can be still further reduced.

Perhaps the most interesting result from the British research is the discovery that children do not seem to be transferring in quite the manner originally envisaged by its inventor, Sir James Pitman. His i.t.a. characters and spelling conventions are supposed to maximize transfer of learning from i.t.a. to t.o. once fluency in the former has been achieved. He based this on the well-known research finding that fluent readers use only minimal cues situated chiefly in the upper part of the print. Therefore,

as far as possible the upper part of the i.t.a configurations of whole words similar to the upper part of the t.o. configurations of the same words. Study of the errors i.t.a. students make in reading t.o. indicates that we need to consider a smaller unit of processing than the top half of the configurations of whole words. The errors made by children after the transition stage occur often in words which have highly similar configurations, but some misleading individual letter or letters in the t.o. spelling seemed to have caused errors in the post-transition t.o. tests. Further evidence of such proactive interference has been found in McBride's research. He investigated the degree of difficulty with which children were able to transfer from i.t.a. to t.o. reading using basal reading series. The six most difficult words contained t.o. letters which had different sound values in i.t.a., such as " these, age, huge, whom, fruit, magician." Therefore an important area in which to seek improvements in i.t.a. is one related to these sources of proactive interference in individual letters.

In summary, something is wrong with the i.t.a. writing-system itself. Despite i.t.a.'s success, both before and after transition to t.o., there is clearly room for improvement on i.t.a.'s present design. It may even be necessary to evolve a new simplified and regularized writing system which will eventually supplant i.t.a. What is needed now is a series of experiments to ensure that every element in whatever simplified and regularized writing-system is adopted has been established empirically as the best possible solution in the total complex of problems involved in making the needs of the beginner compatible with maximal transfer efficiency at the later stage.[20]

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[20] John Downing, "What's Wrong With i.t.a.?", Phi Delta Kappan, 48, (February, 1967),p.263.

CHAPTER IV

Review of Research of i.t.a.

In September 1961, four hundred children in England began to learn to read with a new alphabet specially designed to give young children confidence in reading through a greater certainty of success in the beginning stage.

In the research conducted by the Reading Research Unit of the University of London Institute of Education, attainments of children using i.t.a. are being compared with the achievements of pupils learning with traditional orthography. As far as possible all factors other than the alphabet and spelling in the beginning reading books are being held constant in the two groups of classes. If the reading attainments of the two groups differ widely, therefore, we may trace the cause to differences in the alphabet and spelling.

The progress of the two groups has been very different indeed. After only five months the four- and five-year old beginners who were using i.t.a. materials were significantly in the lead, and their superiority increased as the months went by. By the end of the first school year the average i.t.a. child was at Primer 2 of the reading program, while the average t.o. pupil was still at Primer 1. Before the middle of the second year the average i.t.a. child had moved to Primer 4 while the t.o. boy or girl had reached Primer 2 level. After two years the position was beyond Primer 5 for the average pupil in the i.t.a. classes as compared with Primer 3 in the classes using t.o.

The pupils learning to read and write with i.t.a. have demonstrated great superiority in word building. For instance, on the Schonell graded word reading test at the end of the first year the average i.t.a. learner could read nineteen test words or more on the i.t.a. version of the test, whereas the average t.o. pupil using conventional print could read only five test words on the same test in conventional print. At the beginning of the fifth term the average scores were thirty-seven test words read correctly in the i.t.a. group and eleven in the t.o. group.

This superiority of the i.t.a. pupils in not confined to phonic word-building. They are also advanced in comprehension, accuracy in sentence reading and speed of reading.

In the schools using i.t.a. each child makes the transfer to reading traditional print when he individually is ready for this step. In these experiments a very few children have been transferred from i.t.a. to standard print after only two or three months, but most appear to reach the necessary level of fluency in i.t.a. during the second year of schooling.

Eighteen months after beginning to learn to read with the new alphabet the i.t.a. pupils achieved very superior scores on tests printed in the traditional alphabet and spelling. The children who began with i.t.a. and later transferred to t.o. have read the latter with much greater accuracy and comprehension than children who have been learning with t.o. from the beginning. For instance, on the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability after eighteen months at school, the average i.t.a. pupil scored twenty-three for accuracy and eight for comprehension when reading t.o., as compared with scores of nine and four respectively for the child who had been on t.o. from the outset. The i.t.a. pupil reads an average of thirty-four t.o. words per minute as compared with nineteen words per minute for the

average child in the classes in which t.o. had been taught from the start.

The results of giving the Schonell test in t.o. to both groups in the course of their third year has been analyzed. The average t.o. score for i.t.a. pupils was 34.4 as compared with only 24.1 for the children who started out with t.o. Thus a conservative estimate of i.t.a.'s effectiveness for the average pupil is that it saves one year in learning to read t.o.

The report on the first two years of the i.t.a. experiment stated that creative writing appears to be much improved in i.t.a. classes, and some teachers claim that the standard of creative writing has improved almost beyond comparison. These claims are at present under objective investigation at the Reading Research Unit, but already have some support from Southgate, who has observed in her independent study of i.t.a. that there is a great deal more writing which is spontaneous and correctly spelled.

By the middle of their third year of schooling the i.t.a. pupils are able to spell t.o. words significantly better than the children who have been reading and writing with t.o. only. Although the spelling test was given in t.o. to both groups of children, forty-nine (fifteen per cent of them) of the three hundred eighteen i.t.a. children had not transferred to t.o. at the time of the testing.

Although caution must be exercised in respect of the findings to date, the results of the i.t.a. experiment in Britain indicate a fruitful line of inquiry has been found.[21]

Albert J. Mazurkiewicz has summarized the British findings on i.t.a. when materials are controlled. Although all of the data exists in a number of sources the following summary has been abstracted from the original

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[21] John Downing, "The i.t.a. (Initial Teaching Alphabet) Reading Experiment", Reading Teacher, 18, (November, 1964) pp. 105-109.

papers John Downing presented at seminars and symposia at Lehigh University.

1. Children learn to read much more rapidly when they learn Pitman's i.t.a.

2. Children can comprehend what they read much more readily if they have learned i.t.a. Twenty-seven per cent of the i.t.a. group have scores which would credit them with a comprehension reading rate of eight years two months and above on the test, whereas the chronological ages of these i.t.a. pupils were actually between five and one-half and six and three-quarters years. Less than six per cent of the control group children were so advanced.

3. Children can read faster when their books are printed in Pitman's i.t.a.

4. Children make more rapid progress through the reading program in i.t.a. classes.

5. Children recognize words more easily after i.t.a. instruction.

6. Children read with significantly better skill after the transfer from i.t.a. to t.o.

7. Children spell significantly better in t.o. after i.t.a. activity.[22]

The first major project in the United States using the Initial Teaching Alphabet was at Lehigh University in Bethlehen, Pennsylvania. This report gives the results of the i.t.a. project in fifteen first grades in 1963-1964 and thirty-one first grades in 1964-1965 in the Bethlehen Area Schools.

All children in the first grade during 1963-1964 were considered part of the project population. Approximately two-thirds of this population continued to receive instruction in a language arts-centered co-basal reading program. One-third of the students in fifteen classrooms located in twelve schools from differing socio-economic sections of the school system used the forty-four sound symbols of the i.t.a. as the learning medium.

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[22] Albert J. Mazurkiewicz, "A Summary Of British Findings On i.t.a. Use When Materials Are Controlled", The Initial Teaching Alphabet and the World of English, New York, The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, 1966, pp. 56-58.

Over forty per cent of the i.t.a. population was in schools from areas
of low socio-economic status.

At the beginning of the school year 1963-1964 results of the adminis-
tration of the California Test of Mental Maturity, Lower Primary, demonstra-
ted that the difference between the populations using different alphabets
was small and not significant.

In late May, 1964 Form W and in early September, 1964 Form X of the
Lower Primary level of the California Reading Test were administered to all
first graders to determine the degree of forgetting. Not all the i.t.a.
population had made formal transition to traditionally printed materials,
but all took these tests in traditional print. The loss of reading skill
usually demonstrated in the summer vacation was not apparent in the i.t.a.
population. Surprisingly, the i.t.a. population had improved in reading
skill over the summer for in September 11.82 per cent tested at a 3.5
grade level or better in contrast to 5.37 per cent of the t.o. population .
This was a six per cent increase at the 3.5-3.9 level for the i.t.a. group
as compared with only three per cent increase at the 3.5-3.9 level for the
t.o. group.

In their second year of formal education approximately fifteen per
cent began developmental reading instruction in a 3^1 reader with the emphasis
on thinking and comprehension skills. Approximately twenty per cent were
still using the i.t.a. program, reading in books five, six, and seven with
the majority in formal transition at the end of book six or in book seven
which is printed almost exclusively in traditional print. The remaining
sixty-five per cent were placed in a developmental reading program at the
2^2 level. The students could distinguish long and short vowels and consonants

in the beginning, middle and final positions. These skills are not mastered
by the average student in the t.o. program until the third grade.

In April, 1965 the teachers reported the instructional level of the
basal text used with groups in their classrooms. Teachers who received
t.o. students had been urged to move through the developmental readers as
rapidly as children demonstrated competency. These second grade instruction-
al levels are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Second Grade Instructional Levels of the i.t.a.
and t.o. Populations as of April 15, 1965

t.o. reader level	i.t.a. N=353 Percentage	t.o. N=868 Percentage
4-1	7.65	-
3-2	18.70	-
3-1	24.93	25.34
2-2	31.73	38.48
2-1	10.48	29.72
1st	-	6.22
Primer	-	.23
	93.49%	100.00% total

i.t.a. reader level		
3-1	1.13	
2-2	4.24	
2-1	.57	
1st	.57	
	6.51%	

100.00% total[23]

Spelling instruction was provided both as a group and as an individual
activity. As a group the classes investigated the spelling patterns and
individually children learned the traditional spellings for words they used

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[23]Rebecca W. Stewart, "i.t.a.--After Two Years", Elementary English,
42, (October, 1965), p.662.

in writing activities. The children discovered traditional spellings by using an i.t.a.--t.o.dictionary and their knowledge of the i.t.a. code. In one classroom where it was necessary to combine the i.t.a. and t.o. students, the t.o. children used this dictionary as enthusiastically as the i.t.a. children. The spelling section of the Stanford Achievement Test was administered to both populations in May, 1964 and May, 1965. The results in first grade indicated that there was no difference between the two populations in the ability to spell. This relieved the consciences of the researchers somewhat as it indicated that what parents had feared about the detrimental effect of i.t.a. on spelling was unfounded. The results of the May, 1965 administration of the spelling section of the Stanford Achievement Test supported the hunch which the staff had, that these i.t.a.-taught children might be better spellers.

When one examines the compositions the first graders produced in i.t.a. and a year later as second graders, several fascinating developments are apparent. First, the exposition is almost always in complete sentences. Second, punctuation appears naturally and correctly. All sentence patterns are present and the range of vocabulary is tremendous.

Some children were not promoted in the spring of 1964 and 1965, for no reading program in one year can eliminate the effect of cultural and verbal deprivation or provide a panacea for low mental ability or emotional blocks. But all the children retained in 1964 were reading and writing. In September they returned to first grade, but were not typical first-grade repeaters because they had retained what had been taught previously.[24]

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[24]Ibid., pp.661-665.

This study included twenty-two pairs of students matched for sex, age, reading readiness, and I.Q. The i.t.a. group attended the Western Michigan Campus School while the t.o. control group attended the Kalamazoo Public Schools. The authors report that they have reason to believe that the two schools represent similar socio-economic status levels. The authors report that teachers in the two shhools were considered comparable in terms of their quality, experience, and professional reputation.

The Metropolitan Achievement Test was the instrument used for evaluation. The final test was administered in May of the school year. Significant differences in favor of the i.t.a. group were found on the sub-tests of the Metropolitan Achievement Test measuring Word Knowledge, Word Discrimination, and Reading sub-tests. The authors also note that the data suggested that instruction with the i.t.a. medium was relatively more beneficial for boys in this study.[25]

The study conducted in Detroit, Michigan was a report on an adult basix education program. A total of forty-eight adults with a median age of forty-four years participated in the study. All were married, heads of household, and most had two adult dependents. Number of children per family ranged from one to twelve. Eleven of the subjects were white while thirty-seven were Negro. All subjects were receiving public assistance. The measured I.Q. range for the group was from forty to eighty-eight although the auhhor reports that these are probably under-estimates of the intellectual ability of the sample. Formal education ranged from zero to nine years with

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[25] J.R.Block, The i.t.a. foundation report, Hempstead, New Jersey, The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, Winter 1966, P.4.

a median of six years. The median reading level was slightly below the fourth grade. Nineteen of the subjects were assigned to i.t.a. training.

The i.t.a. group used the Early-to Read program as a basic set of materials. This was supplemented by locally transliterated materials. The t.o. control group used the SRA Reading in High Gear series supplemented with the Reader's Digest Adult Series and the SRA Laboratory, Elementary Edition, with additional supplementary materials.

The author reports that the majority of teachers had had very little formal teaching experience. Teachers in the t.o. group had somewhat more experience than those in the i.t.a. group. Records kept with regard to the amount of formal instruction in reading indicated that there was slightly less formal reading for the i.t.a. group than for the control group.

The Diagnostic Reading Scales was used as the evaluation instrument. The study was conducted over an eight-week period with approximately seventy hours of instruction in reading. According to the author, almost all of the students had made the transition to t.o. at the end of this time.

The subjects in the i.t.a. group whose pre-test reading scores suggest instructional reading levels between 0 and 4.0 scored significantly higher in Word Recognition and Instructional Level as measured by the Diagnostic Reading Scales than those with a similar reading level who used the t.o. materials. For those scoring above the fourth grade on the initial placement test, the t.o. sample scored significantly higher than the i.t.a. group in Word Recognition and Independent Silent Reading Level at the conclusion of the eight-week period. The author also reports a slightly higher absentee rate in the t.o. class as compared with the i.t.a. group.[26]

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[26]Ibid., p.5.

i.t.a. has been tried at all levels of learning. This next report discusses i.t.a. at the nursery school level. Miss Mason's School is a nonprofit, coeducational day school for young children located in Princeton, New Jersey. It has about one hundred and fifty boys and girls covering six years of education, from a three-year-old group through third grade. Students come from a widely differing family backgrounds; standards of admission are based not so much on the child's probable academic ability as on his parents' genuine interest in the school's philosophy.

i.t.a. was introduced to the four-year olds in the school in the fall of 1963. t.o. was retained in the kindergarten and first grade because of the familiarity the older children already had with the roman alphabet, names, sounds, and symbols.

During the last ten days of school at the end of May, 1965, a reading test was conducted in which each child read aloud from his current Downing reader and, when his reading did not pass the criterion, he read from the reader just prior to his current one. At the time of the testing, every child in both the four-year old and kindergarten class was reading, with the slowest reader being in the last one-third of Book 1, and the three best readers beyond the Rev. (b) level. The average child in the four-year group was achieving at Book 3 level and the average kindergarten child at the Book 6 level.

Several conclusions can be made from these tests.

1. There is considerable variation in achievement within the two classes.

2. All the kindergarten children are successfully launched into phonics, which is started at the end of Book 3.

3. About one-third of the four-year olds are well started on phonics, and have jumped far beyond the other members of their class who, while they are reading, are still at the point where

they make little use of phonic clues.

4. The good readers among the four-year olds are up to or ahead of the average readers in the kindergarten.

The overall conclusion is this: For the children in Miss Mason's School, i.t.a. works. These children are reading substantially earlier and better than they had with t.o. All of the kindergarten children are well into reading. And while progress has been slower for most of the four-year olds, all of them are reading successfully and many of them have advanced rapidly far into the Downing readers.[27]

In order to determine the feasibility of using i.t.a. as a remedial reading tool, an exploratory study was started in February, 1965 with a group of junior and senior high school retarded readers who had been identified by school authorities as potential dropouts. Twenty-seven disabled readers, in grades nine through eleven, were selected for this pilot program. They were divided into two groups, one consisting of fifteen ninth-grade students and the other of twelve students in grades ten through twelve. Because the proposed pilot program involved only a small number of students and only for approximately four months, it was not possible to conduct a controlled study.

Although the following i.t.a. study was intended to be exploratory and not a controlled experiment yielding statistical results, a subjective evaluation seemed possible based on the observations of the teachers and researchers.

1. Disabled readers at the secondary level having major deficiencies in word-recognition skills were able to master quickly the characters of the Initial Teaching Alphabet after only six of seven sessions. The relatively short period required to teach the alphabet was probably due to the fact that the students already possessed some reading ability in t.o., and consequently were familiar with

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[27] F. Mary Mason, "i.t.a. At M ss Mason's School--Nursery Level", The Initial Teaching Alphabet and The World of English, Albert J. Mazurkie-wicz, New York, The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, 1966, pp. 146-149.

many of the i.t.a. characters that were the same or nearly the same as letters in the conventional alphabet.

2. After the students had learned the forty-four i.t.a. characters and had caught the concept of blending sounds into words, they became capable of reading material of successively higher levels of readability.

3. Students seemed to show more positive attitudes toward learning and greater interest in reading magazines, books, and newspapers than they had previously shown before the project began. Students reported that they read more frequently and widely than they had prior to the beginning of the project.

4. Teachers in other subject matter areas reported a general improvement in the students' classroom performance and better work habits.

5. Because of the greater confidence that students had in attacking new words and in mastering the printed code, they seemed to attend more closely to word parts rather than reverting to faulty habits which they had acquired in t.o. reading, wuch as omitting an unfamiliar word or guessing widely at it, using configurational or context clues as a basis for analysis. Students demonstrated persistence in working out the pronunciation of new words as a result of their i.t.a. training.

6. Teachers noted that they could devote more time to the developmental of comprehension and interpretation skills after the students had developed a degree of competence in learning the mechanical skills of reading.

7. There was little evidence to indicate that comprehension suffered as a result of the i.t.a. training.

8. Teachers observed that students were more confident as a result of their successful achievement. As one student was reported to have said, "No wonder I never learned to read before, they gave me the wrong alphabet!" No longer did this student feel that the cause of his failure was his inability to learn.

9. The Initial Teaching Alphabet was apparently an important motivation factor in this exploratory study and, no doubt, its appearnace of novelty contributed in some degree to the success of the students. Students could not associate learning in i.t.a. with previous failure and frustration which they may have experienced while learning to read in t.o.

10. The consistency of the i.t.a. medium significantly reduces the remedial readers' burden in mastering the mechanical skills of reading.

11. Students reported that they were not disturbed or confused by seeing words written in the conventional alphabet during the training period when they were being instructed with i.t.a.

It would appear that this exploratory program to determine the effects

of i.t.a. on the reading improvement of disabled readers at the secondary

level, who were having major word-recognition problems, suggests that i.t.a.

is a promising resource for remedial instruction. Whether i.t.a. would be

beneficial with individuals who have little or no word-perception difficulties,

but who were primarily deficient in comprehension and vocabulary skills,

was not explored in this study.[28]

The study in Oakland County, Michigan involved nine hundred five students

in twelve school districts. Approximately one-third were assigned to each

of the three experimental groups, i.t.a., language arts, and basic readers.

Subjects were grouped homogeniously and matched for socio-economic back-

ground and I.Q.

The i.t.a. group used the Downing Reading Series with additional library

corner books. The Language Arts Group followed with some variations with

the Language-Experience model developed in San Diego, California, using t.o.

Mr. Hahn reports that books authored by children, first dictated to the

teacher, provided the beginning reading material. This was supplemented by

Little Owl Books. Teachers used From Speech to Print Phonics, by Murphy and

Durrell. Control groups used a Basal Reader Series which the teachers had

not tried before. This was supplemented by From Speech to Print Phonics.

Teachers were selected by districts on the basis of teaching ability

and experience. The average teacher had taught seven years and had some

work beyond a bachelor's degree. According to Hahn, all thirty-six teachers

were given equal opportunity for intensive in-service training, were released

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[28] Harold J. Tanyzer, "Using i.t.a. With Disabled Readers At The Secondary Level", The Initial Teaching Alphabet and The World of English, Albert J. Mazurkiewicz, New York, The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, 1966, pp.166-169.

to share promising practices and to work with visiting consultants, had
access to a reading resource person, and received personal recognition for
accomplishments in this study. Each teacher was asked to employ a rela-
tively unfamilar reading program in an effort to partially control for the
Hawthorne effect.

Several tests were administered for evaluation of the study. The
Stanford Achievement Test and the San Diego County Reading Attitude test
were used. Sub-groups of fifty-five children from each of the three groups
were selected randomly and administered the Gilmore Oral Reading Scale, the
Fry Word List, and The Gates Word List and the Karlsen Word List. Final evalua-
tion took place in May of the school year. At this point, Hahn reports
eightly per cent of the i.t.a. class had made the transition to t.o.

Both the i.t.a. and the Language Arts group scored significantly higher
than the basal reader series group on the Word Reading sub-test of the Stan-
ford Achievement Test. Further, the Language Arts groups and the basal read-
er systems scored significantly higher than the i.t.a. group in spelling, but
when i.t.a.spellings were accepted there was no significant difference. No
significant differences were obtained on Paragraph Meaning, Vocabulary, or
Word Study sub-tests, nor were differences observed on the Arithmetic sub-
test. In the sub-samples of fifty-five children, no significant differences
were found on the Gilmore scales or on the Oarlsen Word List. The i.t.a.
children recognized significantly more words on both the Fry and Gates
Word Lists than the other groups. No significant differences were found with
the San Diego Reading Attitude Test.

No statistical analysis was made of writing ability, although the study
concludes that both the i.t.a. and the Language Arts groups wrote freely and

extensively throughout most of the school year. Mr. Hahn noted that it appeared that time for writing was more restricted in the basic reader approach, and less writing was evident.[29]

A total of three hundred sixty-five first-grade readers in New Castle, Pennsylvania were assigned randomly to one of four different reading methods.

The four groups used the following sets of materials: The basic t.o. control group used the Scott, Foresman series; a second t.o. group used the Scott, Foresman readers supplemented with Phonics and Word Power; a third t.o. group used the Lippincott Readers (a phonics-oriented approach). The i.t.a. group used the Early-to-Read series.

Teachers volunteered for the study and, in general, were assigned to the particular group they indicated as their first choice. Teachers were matched on the Hayes Teacher Rating scale for competency. All teachers received a three-day in-service training program supplemented by equal amounts of training during the period of the study. All received approximately equal attention and assistance in a partial attempt to balance the Hawthorne effect.

The Stanford Achievement Test was administered to the total group. A random sample of thirty students from each group also received the Gilmore Oral Reading Test, the Gates Word Pronounciation Test and the Fry Oral Reading Test. Final tests were administered after one hundred forty days of instruction. At this point seventy-four per cent of the i.t.a. group had made the transition to t.o.

Hayes divided his subjects into three I.Q. groups. In the high third, the i.t.a. and Lippincott groups scored significantly higher than the two

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[29] J.R. Block, The i.t.a. foundation report, p.9.

other groups on both the Fry and Gates Word lists. Further, the i.t.a. group scored significantly higher than other groups on the Gilmore Oral Reading Test. On the Stanford Achievement Test, the Lippincott and i.t.a. means were significantly higher than the other two groups on the sub-tests of Word Reading and Paragraph Meaning and Word Study Skills. Mr. Hayes noted that no comparisons were made in Spelling for i.t.a. since the conclusions would vary depending on whether or not spelling in i.t.a. was counted as correct.

For the average I.Q. third, i.t.a. and Lippincott groups usually showed higher silent achievement. The Lippincott and i.t.a. scores were significantly higher than Scott, Foresman and Phonics and Word Power scores on Word Meaning and Word Study Skills. On Paragraph Meaning, the Lippincott and i.t.a. scores were significantly higher than the Phonics and Word Power with the i.t.a. group usually highest in oral achievement.

For the low I.Q. third, the i.t.a. score was generally highest in both silent and oral achievement. In Word Reading, the i.t.a. mean was significantly higher than the means for the Phonics and Word Power, Scott, Foresman, and Lippincott groups. The i.t.a. group scored significantly higher than Lippincott in Word Study Skills. On the Fry list, the Lippincott and i.t.a. groups had significantly higher means than the Scott, Foresman and Phonics and Word Power. The i.t.a. mean was significantly higher on the Gates list than the Phonics and Word Power mean.[30]

Of the one hundred seventy-nine first-grade children in the Clearfield, Pennsylvania area included in the study, ninety-five were in i.t.a. classes while eighty-four were in the t.o. control group. Students were

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[30]Ibid., p. 10.

matched for mean I.Q. level.

The i.t.a. group used the Early-to-Read series. The reading materials
for the control group were referred to as a basal reading series supple-
mented with language arts experiences and supplementary reading from co-
basal series.

The California Reading Test was the instrument used for evaluation.
In addition, teacher-determined instructional levels were used in the evalua-
tion. Evaluation instruments were administered in May of the academic school
year. No data is presented indicating the percentage of students who had
made the transition to t.o.

The i.t.a. group scored higher but not significantly so on the Compre-
hension and Vocabulary sub-tests as well as on the total reading score on
the California Reading Test. According to the teacher-determined instruction-
al levels, eighty-nine per cent of the i.t.a. group were at the second grade
reading level or above while no students in the control group were rated as
performing at this level.

In terms of subjective evaluation, especially with slow students there
was a success factor evident that is not normally found in t.o. programs.
These children readily worked in the materials and with the teacher. The
attention span and work habits of the children were excellent. Many of the
former seat work activities used by these teachers when using t.o. materials
gave way to expressive work of a more mature nature.

Rather than finding a classroom divided into three reading groups with
approximately one-third of the class in each group, there was from fifty to
sixty per cent of the pupils performing in the first group, twenty-five to
thirty per cent in the middle group, and ten to twenty per cent in the slowest
group. Careful evaluation of these groups indicated that they were progressing

satisfactorily and that, in addition to mastering symbols and sounds, they were developing reading habits that enabled them to understand and interpret their reading experiences.[31]

The subjects of this next study were nine hundred eighty first-grade students of Waterford Township School System, Pontiac, Michigan. Final data is presented on twenty-one i.t.a. classes and twenty-one control classes. Some evaluation instruments were administered to randomly selected groups of five children from each class.

The evaluation instruments used were the Writing-Spelling Test, the Botell Reading Inventory, and a twenty-two-word spelling test. The Writing-Spelling Test involved asking the children to write on the topic "What I do to have fun." Writing time permitted was six minutes. All instruments appeared to have been scored according to t.o. standards; however, this is not specifically stated in the report. Tests were administered at the end of one academic year. At this point the author indicates that approximately eighty-five per cent of the children had made the transition from i.t.a. to t.o.

Although average scores are presented for each of the evaluation instruments, statistical analysis was not attempted by the author. In addition, since sample size and the variability of scores was not indicated, the i.t.a. Foundation was not able to perform these analyses. General statistical results are presented in view of the fact that the number of students in the study was large and some sense of the magnitude of the difference may be estimated.

On the Writing-Spelling Tests the average number of words used by the i.t.a. group was 26.8 as compared with 17.6 for the control group. The

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[31] Ibid., p.11.

average number of words spelled correctly revealed a much smaller difference, being 13.7 for the i.t.a. group and 11.6 for the control group. The author made special reference to the fact that there was no formal attempt to teach spelling to the i.t.a. groups.

Using random samples of approximately one hundred children in each group, the i.t.a. group received a score of 67.2 on the Botell Reading Inventory as compared to 28.2 for the control group. Using the twenty-two-word spelling test administered to all children, the i.t.a. classes spelled an average of 15.1 words correctly as compared to 11.2 for the control group.

The author also reports on the results of the i.t.a. group and three control groups at the end of grade two. No data regarding their comparability are presented; however, for two groups each of i.t.a. and t.o. children who took the Gates Advanced Primary Reading Test, the i.t.a. children scored higher on both measures of Word Recognition and a Paragraph Meaning than the control groups. Testing of significance was not possible on the basis of data provided; however, comparing Word Recognition scores in one school, one i.t.a. class achieved a grade level score of four months above its t.o. control, while in the other school the i.t.a. class received a score of one year above its. t.o. control. Data for Paragraph Meaning for these classes suggested a five-month superiority for both i.t.a. groups over their controls. In still a third school, the Metropolitan Upper Primary Reading Test was administered to second-year students. Again, testing for the significance of differences was not possible from data provided. The i.t.a. group scored six months above its t.o. control in Word Recognition. A difference of three months in grade level was found for the Word Discrimination sub-test and an

These included the use of experience stories, overhead projectors, individual and group instruction, and writing activities. The new medium seemed to work equally well with both look-say and phonics approaches. It worked well with large groups, with small groups, with individuals, and in team-teaching situations.

Children in the council's i.t.a. Reading Project made excellent progress in learning to read. Teachers reported that they were able to read a great variety of materials in a very short time. In fact, many of the kindergarten children learned to read more quickly and easily than their first grade brothers and sisters who were not in the i.t.a. classes. Not only were they able to recognize any new word they met, but they also read with a great deal of comprehension.

A large number of the children had made the transition to traditional print by the end of the year. Little or no attempt was made to teach transition; it occurred naturally after the children were reading fluently in i.t.a. It was found that those children who did make the transfer were able to read traditional materials at the third and fourth grade level.

Writing skills were developed along with the reading skills. Because the i.t.a. sound-symbol code is so reliable, the children could write any word they could pronounce. The quantity and quality of creative writing in the i.t.a. classes astounded the teachers. Not only did the i.t.a. children use a greater vocabulary, but they also used longer sentences. In addition they displayed a greater tendency to express opinions and feelings in their writing.

Children who made the transfer to reading traditional print continued to use a number of i.t.a. forms in their writing, but it was observed that

t hey used more and more traditional spellings. No attempt was made to present formal spelling rules.

Several other interesting effects were observed in the i.t.a. classes. Behavior problems were at a minimum and children exhibited an extraordinary amount of independence and self-direction. Language patterns became extremely well developed among i.t.a. children. A number of children who entered school with speech difficulties amazed therapists with their rapid progress.[33]

Commencing in August, 1964 plans were made in Park View School, Illinois School District Number 96, to use i.t.a. as a means of teaching reading to first year students.

Three hundred fifty-three children entering school at the first year level were administered the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test during the first week of September, 1964. Of the one hundred four students who scored between the fiftieth and the eighty-seventh precentile on the test, sixty-six children were randomly selected to be in the program. After alphabetizing these students, the odd numbered students were in i.t.a. and the even numbered students were in t.o. Teachers of like ability, education and experience were selected to conduct the two classes. The teacher using the i.t.a. technique spent the previous summer in Oxford, England, to learn about methods of teaching i.t.a. The teacher of the t.o. group used the Scott-Foresman Basal Readers. Proper materials and basic textbooks were secured.

Preliminary data from the 1964-1965 program indicated that it warranted further study at all ability levels and should involve more students. The program was expanded to four classes on one-half day sessions during the

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[33]Tina Thoburn, i.t.a. Project, Cleveland, Ohio, Educational Research Council of Greater Cleveland, 1964, pp. 7-10.

1965-1966 school year. Instead of thirty-three students in i.t.a., there were one hundred twenty. The evidence from the 1965-1966 study indicates that gains were accomplished although not as significant as the 1964-1965 study.[34]

It was suggested that the i.t.a. group be carried on for the next few years before the final evaluation and recommendations are made.

The purpose of this next study was to investigate with first-grade underprivileged children the efficancy of (1) the Peabody Language Development Kit (PLDK) in stimulating oral language and verbal intelligence, and (2) the initial teaching alphabet in teaching beginning reading. The subjects for this study were three hundred sixty-nine first-grade culturally disadvantaged children in the Nashville, Tennessee Metropolitan Public Schools. The mean I.Q. for the group as measured by the Stanford-Binet was 84.9.

The i.t.a. group used the Early-to-Read series. The t.o. materials were not identified. A total of three experimental groups and one control group was used. One experimental group used i.t.a. in conjunction with the Peabody Language Development Kit. Another group used i.t.a. without the PLDK. A third experimental group used the PLDK without i.t.a. The control group used neither i.t.a. nor the PLDK.

Teachers in the experimental groups were provided with a small supplementary stipend and were asked to attend in-service training sessions during the year. The authors report that in general there seemed to be more opportunity for support for the experimental group teachers than the control group. They comment, therefore, that as a result, the influence of the Hawthorne effect cannot be ruled out. The authors also point out that since there

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[34]David R. Pauley, Appendix L, A Report On The Development Of i.t.a. In District #96, 1966, pp. 1-2.

were three experimental groups, one may wish to consider the fact that the Hawthorne variable acted approximately equally in each. They suggest therefore that comparisons between experimental groups may be made with greater confidence of freedom from influence of the Hawthorne effect than comparisons between experimental and control groups.

The evaluation instruments were the Metropolitan School Achievement Test, the Illinois Test of Psycho-Linguistic Abilities, The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Peabody Language Production Inventory. The Metropolitan Achievement Test was administered in both i.t.a. and the t.o. The results cited here deal only with the t.o. versions. Final tests were taken in the spring of the academic year. No indication is available with regard to the number of children who had made the transition from i.t.a. to t.o.

The experimental group using both i.t.a. and PLDK and the i.t.a. only group scored significantly higher on the Metropolitan Achievement Test than the other groups. Groups receiving the PLDK either alone or in combination with i.t.a. scored significantly higher than the other two groups on the Illinois Test of Psycho-Linguistic Abilities, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Peabody Language Production Inventory.[35]

This next study consisted of fifty-five children in the i.t.a. group a nd forty-eight in the control group in the first grade in the Lawrence Public School in New York. One i.t.a. class and one t.o. class in each of two schools were used. Children were randomly assigned to i.t.a. and t.o. classes and were found to be equal in average age and I.Q. reading readiness.

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[35] J.R. Block, The i.t.a. foundation report, p.6.

The i.t.a. group used the Early-to-Read series. One t.o class used the Ginn reading series, while the other used the Scott, Foresman Sixties Edition.

All teachers volunteered for the study and were matched in terms of length of service, college background and competence as observed in the classroom by three administrators. Before assignment to either an i.t.a. or t.o. class, all teachers attended a three-day workshop during which about one-half the time was devoted to a discussion of i.t.a. and the other half to general problems associated with teaching reading. Supervisors met with teachers an average of once every six weeks to discuss progress. The author noted that the i.t.a. teachers tended to be more hesitant and cautious about the program. In an attempt to minimize the Hawthorne effect, the t.o. teachers were permitted to any of the classrooms in the study.

The Metropolitan Reading Test, Primary II was used as the instrument for evaluation. The instruments were administered in June at the end of first grade and again in February mid-way through the second grade. At the June administration, it was noted that approximately seventy-three per cent of the i.t.a. class had made the transition to t.o. By February, all i.t.a. children had completed the transition.

No significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups on the Metropolitan Reading Test sub-scores of Word Knowledge, Word Discrimination or Reading either at the end of first grade or half way through the second grade.[36]

In Clearfield Area Schools, Pennsylvania, four classes, ninety-six first graders without kindergarten experience, began working with the

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[36]Ibid., p.7.

Early-to-Read i.t.a. program in September, 1964.

From the beginning, teachers observed performances that were more mature than those of previous t.o. groups.

During the month of January, fifty per cent of the pupils moved into Book 4 materials with significant differences in reading and writing ability evident.

The teachers all indicated that they were well pleased with their first attempt with i.t.a. All expressed the desire to continue and insisted that there were many aspects of the program that could not be tested and that were significant to the early growth and development of children. Speech, listening, writing, seatwork, and individual creative experiences were very much a positive part of the program in addition to the reading progress.

May 1965----Teacher Determined Instructional Levels

Reader Level	i.t.a.--95 Pupils	t.o.--84 Pupils
3rd	62.10%	
2nd	27.37%	
1st	10.53%	
P		52.38%
PP		44.05%
		3.57%

May 26, 1965--California Reading Test, Lower Primary, Form W

37% of i.t.a. pupils scored at 2.0 or above in comprehension

44% of i.t.a. pupils scored at 2.0 or above in vocabulary
36% of t.o. group.

47% of i.t.a. pupils scored at 2.0 or above in total reading.
30% of t.o. group.[37]

In this study, sixty-one first-grade children in Mukilteo, Washington were randomly assigned to either an i.t.a. group (N=34) or a t.o. control group (N=26). Groups were found to be equal in terms of I.Q., letter recog-

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[37]Herman, Fred D., "Clearfield Area Schools, Pennsylvania", i.t.a. Bulletin, 3, (Winter, 1966), pp.2-3.

nition, and a pre-reading measure. In addition to the t.o. control group, three existing t.o. classes were used as sub-controls in an attempt to control for the Hawthorne effect. These latter classes did not know they were part of a study while the first t.o. group did.

The i.t.a. group used the Early-to-Read series along with a number of specially transliterated materials to supplement the limited number of books available at the time of the study. The control group used the Ginn basal reading series.

The teachers for the i.t.a. and the t.o. group were assigned randomly. According to records kept by the teachers, i.t.a. groups spent more time in writing and arithmetic while the t.o. control spent more time directly involved in reading.

The evaluation instruments consisted of the Standard Reading Inventory and the Stanford Achievement Test. This report deals with an interim report which is based on the results administered in May of the first academic year. No data is provided with regard to the number of students who failed to make the transition from i.t.a. to t.o. at the time the tests were administered.

The i.t.a. group performed at a significantly higher level than either the control group or the sub-controls on the Standard Reading Inventory in terms of the number of words pronounced correctly. They also achieved significantly higher maximum and minimum instructional levels as determined by the Stanford Achievement Test. However, on Paragraph Meaning, Vocabulary, Spelling, Word Study and Arithmetic sub-tests, while the experimental group scored significantly higher than the sub-controls, they did not score significantly higher than the sub-controls on these measures.

In recording the amount of time pupils spent working independently,

no significant differences were found between the experimental group and any of the controls.[38]

The Stockton Unified School District in California has been using i.t.a. since 1964. The program was inaugurated for first and second graders and selected remedial readers at Hazelton School, which is situated in a low socio-economic area. These disadvantaged children fail, or experience difficulty in reading, because they lack backgrounds of experience which equip them to function successfully in school and life. The complexity of the traditional reading code may be a compounding factor.

Three first grade classes were taught with i.t.a. at Hazelton School. The Downing Readers were used as supplementary readers. In each classroom, the teaching method was based on the development of a sight vocabulary before the teaching of phonics. Once a limited sight vocabulary was acquired, more and more emphasis was placed on phonics. When the child knows all forty-four sounds, he is well on his way to independent reading.

Although no first grade group transferred from i.t.a. to t.o. at the end of the first year (June, 1965), one group of children was ready. These children transferred to t.o. in early September without experiencing any difficulty. At this time, December 1965, they are in a third grade reader.

The other first graders made less progress, but the overall reading achievement was still higher than had previously been the case. The following chart compared the reader placement of the first graders using i.t.a. in May 1965 to first graders using t.o. in May 1964:

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[38] J.R.Block, The i.t.a. foundation report, p.13.

Reader Placement, Hazelton School First Graders

Reader	t.o. May 1964	i.t.a. May 1965
2		19%
1st	18%	31%
p_3	26%	29%
pp_2	32%	10%
pp_1	6%	11%
pp	18%	

Second graders were also included in the program as most children at
Hazelton School make little reading progress in the first grade. There-
fore it was decided to see how well these students would do with i.t.a. after
spending one year with t.o. All second graders transferred to i.t.a. in
October 1964. The following chart compares the second graders in May, 1965
using i.t.a. and second graders in May 1964 using t.o.:

Reader Placement, Hazelton School Second Graders

Reader	t.o. May 1964	i.t.a. May 1965
3^1		11%
2^2	22%	58%
2^1	22%	15%
1st	38%	8%
P	18%	8%

One important note is that these second graders experienced no diff-
iculty when transferring from t.o. to i.t.a. early in October nor did they
encounter any problem in transferring back later in the year.

Selected remedial students were also included in the i.t.a. program.
These children were third and fourth graders. They were given a pre-test
in October and a post-test in May. The following chart depicts the differ-
ence in achievement on pre-and post-test.

i.t.a. Remedial Readers: Achievement Test Scores

Grade Placement Test Score	Pre-Test Oct. 1964	Post-Test May 1965
4.0-4.4		23%
3.5-3.9		8%
3.0-3.4		31%
2.5-2.9		23%
2.0-2.4	42%	8%
1.5-1.9	58%	8%

The average growth was thirteen months. There was a range of two months achievement to over twenty-three months. It should be pointed out that this is a small sample (twenty-five students), but the results indicate that i.t.a. is successful as a tool for remedial readers.

One aspect of i.t.a. that must be included in any discussion of its benefits is the marked change in the attitude of the children in the program. In particular, the attitude of the remedial students improved significantly. Generally, those who had been behavior problems ceased to cause disturbance after being in the program. Their self-confidence when approaching reading and other subjects in the school curriculum increased measurably and they appeared to develop a more wholesome attitude toward their school, their teachers and their peers. An overall improvement in attitude was also noted in the first and second grade children.[39]

In the next study Mr. Tanyzer used six hundred forty-three first-grade students in three different Long Island Communities. Communities were considered approximately equal in terms of the intelligence levels of the first-grade population, mean family income, the entrance age to grade one, and the average reading achievement level at the end of grade one. Pre-tests of reading readiness of the children indicated that those in the community using the Lippincott series in t.o. scored consistently higher than either the i.t.a. group or the other t.o. control group.

The i.t.a. group used the _Early-to-Read_ series. The t.o. control group used the Scott, Foresman series and the third group used a phonetically-oriented approach published by Lippincott.

Teachers volunteered to participate in the study within their own commun-

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[39] i.t.a. Bulletin, Winter, 1966, p.3.

ities except in the case of the community using the phonically-oriented
t.o. series where all first-grade classrooms were used. Each teacher attend-
ed a three-day workshop emphasizing the reading technique they were to use.
They were observed throughout the study to insure that experimental proced-
ures were being followed. Each teacher also kept a log of teaching experi-
ence. In general, these logs indicated the experience was quite comparable
with the exception of the phonically-oriented approach in which the teachers
spent somewhat less time in teaching reading than those teaching the other
two groups. Teachers in the three groups were not completely comparable.
The authors report that the teachers in the i.t.a. group tended to be younger,
with less teaching experience than either of the two t.o. control groups.

The Stanford Achievement Test was the basic evaluation instrument used.
In addition, random sub-samples of children took the Gates Word Pronuncia-
tion Test, the Karlsen Phonemic Word Test, the Phonetically Regular Words
Oral Reading Test and the Gilmore Oral Reading Test. Final tests of the study
were taken after one hundred forty days of instruction. At this point, approx-
imately sixty per cent of the i.t.a. group had made the transition to t.o.

Generally, the i.t.a. and the phonetically-oriented t.o. groups scored
significantly higher in reading achievement measures than did the Scott,
Foresman eclectic approach. The phonetically-oriented approach in t.o.
produced significantly higher scoreson both the Vocabulary and Spelling
sub-tests than either the i.t.a. group or the other t.o. control group.
Both the i.t.a. and the phonetically-oriented t.o. approach produced signi-
ficantly higher scores on the word pronounciation tests. No significant
difference was indicated in Reading Rate as measured by the Gilmore Oral
Reading Scale, but the i.t.a. group scored significantly higher than the

other groups on the Accuracy sub-test of the scale.

According to Tanyzer, a comparison of written compositions produced by the three groups indicated that i.t.a. children tended to write earlier in the school year and more frequently and easily than children in either of the t.o. programs.[40]

Dr. Edward Fry, director of the reading center at Rutgers University in New Jersey has written a paper *The Diacritical Marking System and a Preliminary Comparison with the i.t.a.* In the Diacritical Marking System a bar is drawn over a vowel, for instance to indicate that the vowel is long, or a diagonal line slashes out the final e to indicate that it is mute. The rules represent a compromise between a system accurate enough to satisfy a phonetician and what is practical to teach a first grade child.

In America a number of experiments on the first stages of reading were conducted during the school year 1964-1965. One of these studies was designed to compare the traditional system, i.t.a. and the Diacritical Marking System. Seven first grade classes in New Jersey chosen at random were taught to read by the Diacritical Marking System, seven by the traditional method, and seven by i.t.a. Certain differences in conditions were apparently unavoidable. The average I.Q. of the traditional classes was higher. The children in the i.t.a. classes had specially written and printed primers, with more of a phonic and language experience approach than the standard Allyn and Bacon primers used by the rest.

The Diacritical Marking System children had their standard primers specially marked and duplicated by phote-offset.

After a few months the classes were given the same test--the paragraph

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[40] J.R. Block, *The i.t.a. foundation report*, p.18.

meaning sub-test of the Stanford Achievement Test, Form W, Primary I Battery.
When the average score for each group was worked out and group averages com-
pared, the result was no significant difference. The group with the slight-
ly higher I.Q. average--the traditional orthography group--had a slightly
higher reading score.

These t.o. children also had the apparent advantage of taking a test
that was written traditionally; many of the children in the other two groups
had not yet formally transferred to traditional orthography. However, the
formal transfer is thought to be something of a sham problem as most of the
children were already reading simple traditional books for recreation. A
traditional spelling test was also given and in this the i.t.a. children
did less well than the rest.

So far it would appear that the achievements of different classes vary
much more widely than do the achievements of different method groups. Child-
ren can be successfully taught to read the traditional method, by the Dia-
critical Marking System or by i.t.a. and none of these methods is significant-
ly superior or inferior. Evidence suggests that the really significant fac-
tors are teacher ability and the children's I.Q. By teacher ability is meant
not just the ability to teach but also the ability to get children to work
on their own. That these factors are significant is not put forward as a
remarkable discovery but rather because some adherents to some reading meth-
ods make loose claims that their particular method is so superior that it
can transcend differences in I.Q. or teaching ability.[41]

From the available evidence we may draw at least one fairly safe and
surprising assumption: experimentation with moderate diacritical marking,

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[40]Dr. Edward Fry, "The Diacritical Marking System and A Preliminary
Comparison With The i.t.a.," Times Educational Supplement, 2629,(October 8, 1965),
p.690.

consistently spelled word group, or an altered alphabet has never according
to any report, proved harmful to the beginning reader or the remedial read-
er. Even the period of transition from the substitute to the traditional
system appears to have produced no adverse effects.

Helen M. Robinson and Samuel Weintraub of the University of Chicago
are conducting a study to determine the effectiveness of i.t.a. as a medium
of reading instruction. The following hypotheses are to be tested:

1. Reading instruction using i.t.a. in the first grade will result
   in significantly higher achievement than will the same program in
   traditional orthography with pupils of average socio-economic
   levels.

2. Reading instruction using i.t.a. in the first grade will result
   in significantly higher achievement than will the same program in
   traditional orthography with pupils of low socio-economic levels.

3. No significant advantage from using either medium will be found
   with the pupils of high socio-economic levels.

4. Groups of pupils who are not ready for reading will make signifi-
   cantly greater progress when taught with i.t.a. than when taught
   with the traditional orthography.

5. Pupils taught with i.t.a. will show the following advantages:
   a. a more favorable attitude toward reading;
   b. a greater volume of personal reading;
   c. greater competence in creative writing.

6. As they progress through grades two and three, pupils who are
   taught with i.t.a. will continue to be significantly better read-
   ers than those taught by conventional orthography.

7. No advantages will result from the use of i.t.a. in spelling achieve-
   ment in the primary grades.

A total of twenty-one classrooms in ten schools are participating in
the study. One class each of control and experimental subjects will be
located in two schools in an upper middle class neighborhood, two in aver-
age, and two in a lower socio-economic group. None of the schools are in a
subruban school system; one school is located in an inner city slum area in

Chicago. The latter building has a ninety per cent Negro enrollment. The
other schools and classrooms range from all Caucasian to all Negro enroll-
ments. One building draws an integrated population including Negro, Caucas-
ian, and Oriental children.

The new Scott, Foresman Multi-Ethnic Series for the first grade has been
transliterated into i.t.a. This series, new to all teachers, will be used
in both t.o. and i.t.a. groups.

The study has been planned to proceed in several phases. The first
phase of the study is the conventional experimental-control type, but with
two experimental groups. Approximately four hundred and fifty children
are involved. The control groups and the first experimental group will
follow the procedures, methods, and materials used with the new Scott, Fores-
man Multi-Ethnic Readers. The second experimental group will use the Scott,
Foresman Multi-Ethnic Readers printed in i.t.a., but teachers will make
adaptations as needed to facilitate the use of the i.t.a. medium to the
fullest extent.

Included in the second experimental group is one classroom of children
who would ordinarily be repeating kindergarten. The teacher will be using
the i.t.a. materials with these pupils to note particularly the effect on
the medium on the learning ability of slower and of immature children.
Two other classrooms in the second experimental group will follow the i.t.a.
program, but various children will make the transfer at different times.
Fluency at the upper levels of first- and second-grade reading ability will
not be relied upon as the criterion measure for attempting the transfer to
t.o.; rather, some children will be changed to t.o. at the end of the pre-
primer level, others will be transferred at the primer level, and others at

the first-reader level.

All pupils will be given the <u>Metropolitan Readiness Test</u> sometime in September. Near the end of grade one, the <u>Huelsman Word Discrimination Test</u> and either the <u>Metropolitan Achievement Test, Primary Battery I</u> Or <u>II</u>, or the <u>Stanford Achievement Test, Primary I</u> Or <u>II</u>, will be given to all pupils. In addition, about fifty subjects from each group will be given the <u>Gray Oral Reading Test</u>.

The second phase of the experiment will take place during the second year of the study. At the beginning of the second year, those teachers who served in the first experimental group will be transferred to the control group; control teachers will then become experimental teachers. Procedures will remain the same or be modified slightly as suggested by the experiences during the first year. Teachers in the second experimental group will continue to improve their procedures in any way that appears to produce more effective results.

For the third phase of the study all pupils who remain in the schools will be tested at the end of grades two and three using appropriate forms of the <u>Metropolitan</u> or <u>Stanford Achievement Tests</u>. Special study will be made of any problems of spelling after transfer fromi.t.a. to t.o.

In summary, the proposed study of the i.t.a. medium may make a number of unique contributions:

1. Testing the medium itself will enable us to make a critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of i.t.a.

2. The use of case studies will aid in indentification of specific problems children may have with i.t.a. as well as the relative merit of the i.t.a. medium for immature and bright children.

3. The technique of having children transfer to t.o. at various stages in their reading development will aid in pinpointing the

best time for the transfer to be made.

4. The use of each teacher as her own control, combined with observations of the teaching situation, will permit a more rigorous control over the variables of the teacher.

5. The use of several evaluative criteria in addition to the standardized achievement test will provide information concerning a variety of aspects of learning to read.[41]

The report of this study did not contain any results or conclusions because the project has not been completed. It is to be a three year study and is not in the second year. No data or conclusions will be released until the project is completed.

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[41] Helen M. Robinson and Samuel Weintraub, "A Research Design For A Study of The Effectiveness Of i.t.a. As A Medium Of Reading Instruction", The Initial Teaching Alphabet and the World of English, Albert J. Mazurkiewicz, New York, The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, 1966, pp.298-302.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

Limitations

In the present form the Initail Teaching Alphabet is subject to some significant limitations. In the first place the Initial Teaching Alphabet is not a strictly phonetic alphabet with a one-to-one relationship between i.t.a. characters and the speech sounds of English. Conceivably this fact could prove to be a great handicap for certain individuals since these children cannot depend upon each word to be spelled phonetically as they could with a phonetic alphabet. Further, i.t.a. is not the ultimate in simplification; it does not reduce the number of print symbols to the minimum required on a forty-one-sound analysis of English. This fact is likely to prove to be extremely confusing to average and below-average readers. Also, the fact that the Initial Teaching Alphabet is not always consistent when put to use, the confidence of the child is lessened and it loses value as a medium for teaching these children to read. The lack of complete simplification seems not to affect in the same degree the above-average as they seem more able to cope with confusion. However, these children may be expected to learn to read and to read well through use of any of our present systems.

Finally, perhaps the most serious limitation is the fact that there must eventaully be the transfer from i.t.a. to t.o. Many of the present studies indicate that this does no harm to the children's ability to read

at a later time. Other studies indicate a regression in reading performance at this time which indicates the need to improve this process of transfer.

Some educational psychologists hold the viewpoint that one should never teach that which later must be "unlearned". The practice of expecting transfer at a later period from i.t.a. to t.o. is in conflict with an accepted principle of learning. The above-average readers have little difficulty in transferring and usually transfer early. However, in the case of the average and below-average readers the situation is much different. These children are likely to experience great difficulty and confusion in making the transition. Many of them still cling to i.t.a. late into their second year of school. These boys and girls have serious problems in learning to read through the use of a single alphabet without furthering the confusion by the addition of a second one.

Predictions for the Future

The Initial Teaching Alphabet is much like any of the other educational innovations; it is met with great acceptance by some, strong rejection by others, and probably with cautious optimism by most. In the opinion of this person, i.t.a. will not replace the widely accepted present basal reading programs. The main reason for this point of view is the fact that major concern must be with the average and below-average readers. The above-average readers have shown ability to learn to read when taught with any method. However, the average and below-average experience difficulty with the present systems of teaching reading and many of them do not learn to read adequately. Unfortunately, i.t.a. does not seem to be the answer to this problem.

Some resistance is the outgrowth of genuine educational concern. There is the fear that exposure of chilren to a temporary alphabet, no

matter how carefully designed and skillfully taught may jeopardize their
future reading ability; and since reading ability is so basic to the success
of the entire educational process, the effect is to ultimately undermine
the educational future of children.

Perhaps of lesser importance but nevertheless a truth, there could be
resistance to accept i.t.a. in many school systems for financial reasons.
These school systems have invested large sums of money in traditional texts
and basal series designed to teach beginning or remedial reading. For them
a shift to entirely new materials featuring a new alphabet would impose a
financial burden which many school systems would assume reluctantly.

It seems reasonable to assume that i.t.a. will never be universally
used. Many minds are already closed to the issue. Some teachers are con-
vinced that the Initial Teaching Alphabet is the solution for which they
have been waiting. Others are equally convinced that it does not work.
It can work with some, but definitely not with everyone. The limitations
would need to be taken into account before there could be any great deal
of acceptance. There is much that still needs to be learned about i.t.a.
At this point it is still experimental and many educators are waiting for
the results.

APPENDIX

ALPHABET (transliteration order)

i.o. letters   i.t.a. characters

("traditional" column)			("augmented" column)		
NO.	CHARACTER	NAME	NO.	CHARACTER	NAME
	•æ	ae			
	b	bee	25.	•ʒ	
	c	kee	26.	wh	
	d	dee	27.	ʤh	
	ee	ee	28.	ʧh	
	f	ef	29.	ɾh	
	g	gae	30.	ʃh	
	h	hae	31.	ʒ	
	ie	ie	32.	ŋ	
	j	jae			
	k	kae	33.	ɾ	u
	l	el			
	m	em	34.	a	ə
	n	en	35.	au	a
	œ	oe	36.	a	a
	p	pee	37.	e	e
	r	rae	38.	i	ii
	s	ess	39.	o	ot
	t	tee	40.	u	ut
	ue	ue	41.	ω	oot
	v	vee	42.	(ω)	oo
	w	wae	43.	ou	ow
	y				oi

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[42] John Downing, <u>How Your Children Are Being Taught To Read With The Initial Teaching Alphabet</u>, p. 11.

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