

Teacher Training Reading Syllabus

UNIT TWO

Word Attack

by

William Hampton and Robert H. Geeslin



APPALACHIAN ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

Morehead State University

Morehead, Kentucky 40351

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WORD ATTACK

by

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INTRODUCTION

This unit presents two alternate systems for teaching word attack (decoding) skills. First, the traditional synthetic phonic approach is discussed by William Hampton. Second, traditional approaches are critiqued, a theory-plus-research foundation is laid, and an alternative approach is suggested by Geeslin and Geeslin.

This unit is not a "step-by-step" guide to trainers. To be so explicit would involve greater resources than those available, because every material used by students will introduce word attack quite differently and because the trainer's task will vary greatly depending upon the past history of the teachers with whom he must deal. Depending upon this past history, the trainer may have to devote much time to explanations of weaknesses of traditional systems and to causing concomitant attitude change in teachers before he can expect to teach a new approach. In other cases, the materials in use will dictate classroom procedures; while some situations may call for no more than a simple demonstration of a relatively simple technique.

The Editors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ii

PART I

FIRST SESSION: WORD ATTACK SKILLS 1

 Introduction. 1
 Consonants 2
 Basic Knowledge 2
 A Pattern for Teaching Letter Sounds (Phonics)* 4
 Vowels 7
 Some Vowel Principles 9

SECOND SESSION: WORD ATTACK 12

 Structural Analysis 12
 Syllabication 14

THIRD SESSION: WORD ATTACK 16

 Use of the Dictionary and Context Clues. 16

APPENDIX 17

 Phonics Content 17

GLOSSARY 19

PART II

WORD ATTACK: APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING. 22

WORD ATTACK SKILLS

by William Hampton, Ph.D.

FIRST SESSION:

Introduction

Word attack skills include: phonics, structural analysis, context, clues, and use of the dictionary.

Heilman presents the following outline of the major phonic tasks which must be taught:

1. Auditory discrimination of speech sounds in words.
2. Written letters are used to represent these speech sounds.
3. The sound represented by a letter or letters in a known word can be used to unlock the pronunciation of unknown words in which these particular letters occur.
4. Sound of consonants.
 - a. Initial position in words.
 - b. Final position in words.
5. Consonants which are blended.
6. Special consonant digraphs (th, ch, sh, wh).
7. Vowel sounds.
 - a. Short vowel sounds.
 - b. Long vowel sounds.
 - c. Double vowels.
 - (1) Digraphs.
 - (2) Diphthongs (oi, ow).

- d. Vowels followed by r.
- e. Effect of final e.
- f. Final y sounded as long i.

- 8. Silent consonants.
- 9. Syllabication.
- 10. Accent.

Consonants

The teaching of word attack skills should begin with the teaching of consonant sounds. Since a great many of the consonants have only one sound, it is an easier task for the student to begin at this point. (See pp. 1-6 in Programmed Word Attack for Teachers, PWAT.)

The consonants cannot be sounded in isolation and no attempt should be made to teach them as though they could be. The teacher should present a word that begins with the consonant to be taught. Several words with the same beginning sound should be presented. Words that begin with a different sound should then be contrasted with the words beginning with the sound being taught. (See pp. 7-8 in PWAT.)

Basic Knowledge

The basis of phonics is speech and not the written word.

- A. The smallest segment of speech is the phoneme. It is the smallest distinguishing feature of language.

Examples:

- 1. "hat" has three phonemes: /h/a/t/.
- 2. "pill" and "bill" differ in only one phoneme: the first.
- 3. bet and bit differ in only one phoneme: the second.

- B. Phonemes are divided into three classes: consonants, vowels, and semi-vowels.
- C. Consonants are phonemes which, when spoken, produce audible friction. The flow of the air (and the sound) is stopped or retarded during the making of the sound. If the vocal cords are vibrating when the sound is made, we say it is a voiced sound. If the vocal cords are not vibrating we say it is voiceless or "whispered."

1. If the air is stopped sometime during the making of the sound, a stop consonant is produced.

Examples: bad, pit, keg

p, t, k are unvoiced (or voiceless) stops.

b, d, g, are voiced stops.

2. If the air flow is restricted so that friction is set up and heard when the sound is expelled, the sound is a fricative.

fat-yat, the-with, see-whiz, she-pleasure, he.

The voiceless fricatives are: f, th, s, sh, h.

The voiced fricatives are: v, z, th, zh.

3. Combinations of stops and fricatives are called affricates:

Examples: Church (voiceless)

Judge (voiceless)

4. Other consonants are:

a. nasals: me, no, ring, (all voiced).

b. alveolar: love, run.

c. alveo-palatal: Yet (also called a "semi-vowel").

A Pattern for Teaching Letter Sounds (Phonics)*

Forward

This plan is based upon the premise that the phonics to be taught should be "whole word phonics"; the type in which you do not attempt to teach the sounds in isolation. You do not speak of the "duh" sound or the "s-s-s" sound. You should speak of the "sound you hear at the beginning of 'dog,'" the sound you hear at the beginning of 'Sally,' etc." Phonics instruction should not begin until several sight words have been learned (at least 4 or 5 of which contain the sound you intend to teach--and in the same position).

- I. Beginning consonant sounds (the initial "s" is taken as an example).

- A. Step I: Establishing auditory perception. (Helping the student to accurately hear the sound.)

The instructor should pronounce some known sight words such as "see," "Sam," "said," and "something." (These should not be visible when they are pronounced in this step.)

Have the students listen for the first sound in each word while you are pronouncing the words. You may have to pronounce them several times and have the students say them to themselves and get the "feel" of the way in which they are alike.

- B. Step II: Establishing visual-auditory perception. (Helping the student to see that in the words a certain letter stands for a certain sound.)

Pronounce the words as in Step I and write each on the board as you say it.

*Adapted from "Acquiring Word-Recognition Skills," The University of Missouri Bulletin, Volume 49, Number 2, Education Series No. 43, 1948 (out of print).

Lead the students to see that the beginning of the words not only sound alike but look alike.

Have the students underline or box the first letter in each word to show that those letters having the same sound in each word are the same.

(The outcome that you desire is for the students to arrive at the idea that the letter "s" has a certain sound, but do not pronounce it, or other consonants in isolation; many of them do not have one distinctive sound, and most consonants cannot be effectively pronounced unless you add a vowel sound to them.)

C. Step III: Giving the student practice in applying his understanding in reading.

Use games and devices to get the student to apply the understanding in contextual (actual reading) situations.

Examples:

1. Riddles may be read by the instructor:

- a. "You put it on food,
It comes from a shaker,
What is it?" --salt.
- b. "It is very sweet,
We eat it on pancakes,
What is it?" --syrup.
- c. "He wears a uniform,
He is in the army,
What is he called?" --soldier.

2. Choosing the correct word (words to be read by the instructor):

- "I cut with a _____." (saw, knife, blade)
 "The boat will _____." (go, sail, float)
 "They are going to _____." (work, play, sing)

3. Have the student choose pictures of objects beginning with the "same sound you hear at

the beginning of 'Sam': sun, saw, sock, etc. Catalogs and magazines can be used in this step. Students can cut magazine pictures showing an object, the name of which begins with the sound you are teaching.

4. From groups of four or five pictures have students choose the one picture that begins with the "same sound you hear at the beginning of 'Sam'":

telephone rabbit house car spoon

5. Have the students make new words by substituting the learned sound for the initial sound in a sight word they already recognize.

Example:

<u>Sight Word</u>	<u>New Word</u>
run	sun
candy	sandy
went	sent
tell	sell
day	say

Use a similar procedure to teach other consonant sounds.

6. When two or more initial consonant sounds have been learned (s and f; for example) the students may make individual consonant sound cards to hold up to indicate the initial sounds of the words the instructor pronounces.

Example:

"soap" (student holds up s card)
 "five" (student holds up f card)
 "find"
 "Sam," etc.

7. Charts may be kept on which are listed words beginning with a certain consonant sound. (The words should be those occurring in the reading lesson in the text.)

II. Consonants in the final position and in the medial position may be taught using a procedure similar to the one above.

(Note: Not all the steps listed above would be done in one day, but at the beginning of each lesson in teaching the sound the instructor should review the previous steps.)

(Some excellent procedures for the teaching of consonant blends may be found on p. 32 of Phonics in Proper Perspective by Arthur W. Heilman, Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.)

Vowels

The letters a, e, i, o, u, and y are called vowel letters. Each of these letters represents, among others, two sounds: a long vowel sound and a short vowel sound.

A vowel is "long" if it says its name.

A has its long sound in such words as these:

say, ate, came, made, take, paper

A has its short sound in such words as these:

at, am, can, had, grass, want

The letter e has its long sound in:

eat, see, me, these

E has its short sound in:

ever, yes, well, let

The letter i has its long sound in:

kind, like, ride, kite

I has its short sound in:

if, six, sit, will

O is long in:

old, no, cold, row

O is short in:

ot, dollar, box

U has its long sound in:

use, mule, music

U has its short sound in:

up, us, much, run

Y is sometimes a consonant when it has the sound as in yes, young.

Y is also a vowel as in dry, my, deny. It has the same sound as long I. Short i and short vowel y also have the same sound--gymn, him.

Y has a short sound in hurry and hickory.

Sometimes vowels are not long or short. They have a different sound.

Example: Ball. The a has a sound which is not long or short.

When the letter after a is l or w, it is not long or short.

Example: Care. A before r or re is a sound that is not long or short.

Vowels are spoken without audible friction; their identity (quality) is governed by the position of the tongue when they are made. In the speech encountered in moving from one geographical region to another, vowels vary much more than consonants. They are involved in most dialect differences.

1. A pure vowel is made with the tongue in one fixed position. The pure vowels (as they exist in common words in most American dialects) are:

<u>bi</u> t /i/	* <u>any</u> /ɪ/	<u>boo</u> k /u/
<u>be</u> t /e/	<u>bu</u> t /ə/	<u>beau</u> (or "gonna") /o/
<u>ba</u> t /æ/	<u>no</u> t /ɑ/	<u>bo</u> ught /ɔ/

(*occurs in many syllables receiving minimum stress)

2. Diphthongs are sequences of two vowel phonemes or a vowel and a semi-vowel.

<u>bea</u> t /biyt/	<u>use</u> /yuwz/
<u>bai</u> t /beyt/	<u>bou</u> t /bawt/
<u>bite</u> /bayt/	<u>boa</u> t /bowt/
<u>oil</u> /oil/	<u>boo</u> t /buwt/

3. Semi-vowels are phonemes having the characteristics of both consonants and vowels. When they are in the initial position in a syllable they are consonants. In the final position they are vowels. (See no. 2 above.) The /y/ is a movement of the tongue, upward and backward, but its most noticeable characteristic is the lip rounding that accompanies the tongue movement.

Some Vowel Principles

1. Vowels are much more variable than consonants. Each vowel letter stands for two or more sounds.
2. A long vowel is one pronounced like its own name.

Examples: ate, me, ice, oats, use, my (when y is used as a vowel, it has the same sound as a long or short i.)

Generalization:

If there are two vowels in a one-syllable word or accented syllable, the first is usually long, the second is silent.

If there is only one vowel in a one-syllable word or accented syllable and it comes at the end of the syllable, it is long.

3. A short vowel is the most frequent sound of a vowel letter. The underlined vowels are short: at, ever, it, odd, up, had, let, hit, hot, but, hymn.

Generalization:

If there is only one vowel in a one-syllable word or accented syllable and it is followed by a consonant, it is short.

4. R-controlled vowels occur when a vowel is followed by an r. The vowel and the r following are pronounced practically as one vowel sound. The r strongly influences the pronunciation of the vowel.

Examples: car, her, sir, for, fur.

5. L-andW-controlled vowels occur when an l or w follow a vowel, particularly the vowel a. The l or w causes the vowel to be pronounced like the vowel in "paw."
6. A diphthong is a combination of two vowel letters which stand for two vowel sounds made in such rapid succession they seem almost like one sound.

The u sound in but is the same as the a sound in about. This sound is called the schwa/ə/. Any of the vowels may have the schwa sound.

Think of the pronunciation of each word below and put a check mark over the vowel letter that stands for the schwa sound. The first two are done for you.

✓ ago	freedom	metal
✓ offend	button	patrol
brighten	table	giant
canvas	garden	chorus
success	wisdom	support
recent	parade	microphone
burden	lemonade	afraid
cripple	balloon	fearful
quiet	marine	riddle
history	pupil	salary
lion	dragon	listen
machine	quarrel	salute
oppose	needle	awhile

(See the Appendix for a summary of speech sounds.)

SECOND SESSION: WORD ATTACK

Structural Analysis

The process of breaking a word into its parts in order to then determine the whole is termed structural analysis. One kind of structural analysis is concerned with inflectional endings. Inflectional endings instruction should begin during the early reading stages. Usually root words are considered regular if the s, ed, and ing are added. During the same instructional period, compound or double words are introduced. Instruction in the use of affixes, or additions to words, is not introduced until a later period.

It must be understood that structural analysis is not to be taught as though it were unrelated to phonics. The student should use his phonic skills to identify the additional code presented in the inflectional endings and affixes. He can use the same skills to recognize the compound words.

Here are some suggestions for teaching the student how to recognize and use affixes as a word attack skill:

Step I: Decide what prefix, suffix, or root you want to teach.

Example:

Prefix dis meaning "opposite, or reverse of."

Step II: List on the blackboard some words you are sure students know the meanings of. (If you are teaching the meaning of a prefix or suffix, these should be words to which the

prefix or suffix can be added, as in Step IV below.)
 These words should contain the root to be taught.

agree	courteous
able	qualify
arm (verb)	prove
believe	joint

Step III: Through discussion develop the meaning of each word. Let the students supply the meanings through sentences using each of the words or by directly defining the words.

Step IV: Add the prefix or suffix to each of the words in the list in Step II. (If you are teaching the meaning of a root, Steps IV and V will be omitted.)

<u>dis</u> agreement	<u>dis</u> courteously
<u>dis</u> abled	<u>dis</u> qualify
<u>dis</u> arm	<u>dis</u> proved
<u>dis</u> believe	<u>dis</u> joint

Step V: Ask the students what the words now mean. Follow the same procedure as that outlined in Step III above.

Step VI: Ask the students to tell what they think the prefix, suffix, or root means (or, in the teaching of prefixes or suffixes—what effect the adding of the prefix or suffix has on the root). Have students check the dictionary for the exact meaning. Be sure the change in meaning is attributed to the affix.

Step VII: Ask the students to supply other words in which the prefix, suffix, or root is used. (In teaching a prefix or suffix it may be necessary to point out that the same combination of letters may occur in a word without actually forming a prefix or suffix.)

SYLLABICATION

Syllabication is the ability to break words into syllables. Syllabication is probably the word attack skill most used by the mature reader. The following are some basic principles for dividing words into syllables:

1. If there are two consonants between two vowels, the word is usually divided between the consonants. (Note: Consonants usually pronounced together--such as ch, bl, sn, th--are usually counted as one consonant in applying this principle: con/trast, in/spect.)
2. If a vowel element is followed by a single consonant or consonant team, the syllable frequently divides before the consonant:

a/fraid pro/gram e/lect po/lice

3. Most prefixes and suffixes form separate syllables:

implica/tion American/ism service/able dis/lodge un/tle

4. If a word ends in le, preceded by a consonant, that consonant usually begins the last syllable: han/dle, sta/ble

The following exercise may be used to apply the above principles:

Before the students are taught to divide words into syllables they should be taught to determine the number of syllables in words.

- A. How many vowel letters do you see in each word below?
Write the number in the first blank under the word.
- B. How many vowel sounds do you hear in each word below?
Write the number in the second blank under the word.

umbrella	suitcase	boast	pinwheel
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____

The number of vowel sounds that you hear in a word tells you how many syllables the word contains.

Read each word below and in the blank before it, write the number of syllables it contains.

_____ scream	_____ starve	_____ elbow
_____ creek	_____ kitchen	_____ monkey
_____ slide	_____ although	_____ beggar
_____ oak	_____ cheek	_____ apron
_____ meantime	_____ gain	_____ argue
_____ hopeless	_____ husband	_____ aside
_____ customer	_____ holiday	_____ grove
_____ dreary	_____ stroke	_____ bonnet
_____ buggy	_____ maybe	_____ salute
_____ declare	_____ honk	_____ admit
_____ performing	_____ sandwich	_____ agreed
_____ valentine	_____ tonight	_____ ugly
_____ turnip	_____ staircase	_____ stagecoach

Divide the following words into syllables, and in the blank before each word put the number of the principles (p. 14) which helped you to divide the words correctly.

_____ en/ter	_____ assembly	_____ contradict
_____ mar/ble	_____ magistrate	_____ incomprehensible
_____ ba/con	_____ broken	_____ pinnacle
_____ com/pre/hend	_____ patron	_____ emphatic
_____ extra	_____ improvisation	_____ admit
_____ locomotive	_____ prudent	_____ fortress

THIRD SESSION: WORD ATTACK

Use of the Dictionary and Context Clues

The dictionary is an excellent tool for word attack, but without some phonetic knowledge it loses most of its effectiveness. The pronunciation keys in the dictionary are often overlooked by students. It is very important that students understand how to use the keys to unlock the pronunciation of new words. Read the guide to use of the dictionary in any good dictionary before you do the following exercise. The marks used in the dictionary to indicate accent, stress, and whether the vowel is long or short are termed diacritical marks.

In the system of phonetic respelling used in dictionaries to make pronunciation clearer, a minimum number of symbols is used to represent a particular sound. The symbol used to represent a sound is frequently the one which stands for the sound most often used in English spelling. Many dictionaries use the schwa symbol (ə) and diacritical marks to indicate how specific vowels are to be pronounced:

Examples:

honor-[/]onə

treasure- tre[✓]zhər

position- p^ˌzishən

hook- hūk

bear- bē

cow- kou

cycle- si'kəl

father- fāther

pledge- plej

ball- bōl

white- hwit

air- ar

fur- fēr

loose- lūs

boy- boi

derby- dər bē

(See pp. 53-63 in PWAT.)

APPENDIX
PHONICS CONTENT

1. Sounds of stable consonants

b d f j h k l m n p q r t v w y z

2. Sounds of variable consonants

c (city, cat)

s (see, swas)

g (gentle, go)

x (xox, xylophone)

3. Sounds of consonant digraphs:

sh (she)

th (the)

ng (ring)

ch (choose)

th (three)

4. Sounds of consonant blends

bl, br, dr, fl, fr, gl, gr, wh, cl, cr, pl, pr, sk,

sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw, tr, tw, shr, thr, str

5. Short vowel patterns

Closed syllable: at, ever, it, ot, up, myth

6. Long vowel patterns:

Open syllable: me, so, sky, ma-ple, Bi-ble, mu-sic

Vowel digraph: rain, cean, pie, boat, sue

Final e pattern: cake, Pete, ride, smoke, mule

7. Two sounds of oo:

too, broom

look, foot, wool

8. Sound of er, ir, ur, or:

<u>her</u>	<u>sir</u>	<u>fur</u>
<u>germ</u>	<u>dirt</u>	<u>burn</u>

9. *Sounds of oy, oi:

<u>boy</u>	<u>oil</u>
<u>toy</u>	<u>coin</u>

10. *Sounds of ou, ow:

<u>out</u>	<u>cow</u>	<u>snow</u>
<u>now</u>	<u>know</u>	<u>blow</u>
<u>found</u>	<u>flower</u>	<u>throw</u>

11. *Sounds of au, aw, all, al:

<u>haul</u>	<u>saw</u>	<u>ball</u>	<u>malt</u>
<u>caught</u>	<u>aw/ful</u>	<u>stall</u>	<u>fal/ter</u>
<u>daugh/ter</u>	<u>lawn</u>	<u>small</u>	<u>walk</u>
<u>crawl</u>			

12. Sounds of ed endings:

<u>called</u>	<u>started</u>	<u>baked</u>
<u>showed</u>	<u>wanted</u>	<u>helped</u>

*The vowel diphthongs in nos. 9, 10, 11 are often missing in several of the Appalachian dialects.

GLOSSARY

Accent mark: A mark used in writing or printing to indicate a specific sound value, stress, or pitch, to distinguish words otherwise identically spelled, or to indicate that an ordinarily mute vowel should be pronounced.

Affix: A sound or sequence of sounds or, in writing, a letter or sequence of letters occurring as a bound form attached to the beginning or end of a word, base, or phrase or inserted within a word or base and serving to produce a derivative word (as un- in untie, -ate in chlorate, ish in morning-after-ish) or an inflectional form (as -s in cats).

Affricate: Phonetics: a stop and its immediately following release through the articulatory position for a continuant nonsyllabic usually homorganic consonant (as the /t/ and /sh/ that are the constituents of the /ch/ in why choose and that are different from the /t/ and /sh/ of white shoes).

Auditory discrimination: The making or perceiving of a distinction or difference through hearing.

Consonant: One of a class of speech sounds (as p, g, n, l, s, r, w) characterized by constriction or closure at one or more points in the breath channel; broadly: any sound in a syllable other than the one most prominent sound.

Context clues: The weaving together of the information or key that guides through an intricate procedure or maze of difficulties.

Diacritical mark: A modifying mark or sign over, under, after, or through an orthographic or phonetic character or combination of characters indicating a phonetic or semantic value different from that given the unmarked or otherwise marked character.

Dialect: A variety of language that is used by one group of persons and has features of vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation distinguishing it from other varieties used by other groups.

Dictionary: A reference book containing words usually alphabetically arranged along with information about their forms, pronunciations, functions, etymologies, meanings, and syntactical and idiomatic uses.

Digraph: A group of two successive letters whose phonetic value is a single sound or whose value is not the sum of a value borne by each in other occurrences.

Diphthong: A gliding monosyllabic speech item that starts at or near the articulatory position for one vowel and moves to or toward the position for another, and that is usually indicated in phonetic transcription by two symbols representing often only approximately the beginning and ending limits of the glide.

Fricative: Characterized by frictional passage of the expired voiced or voiceless breath against a narrowing at some point in the vocal tract.

Phonics: A method of teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning the phonetic value of letters and letter groups.

Prefix: A sound or sequence of sounds or, in writing, a letter or sequence of letters occurring as a bound form attached to a beginning of a word, base, or phrase, and serving to produce a derivative word or an inflectional form.

Root: The simple element inferred as common to all the words of a group in a language or in related languages.

Schwa: An unstressed mid-central vowel that is the usual sound of the first and last vowels of the English word America.

Speech: The act of speaking; communication or expression of thoughts in spoken words; a form of spoken communication or expression developed by a particular group of people.

Structural analysis: Noting structural changes which differentiate between words having common roots, such as the addition of inflectional endings or combining two words to form compounds.

Suffix: An affix occurring at the end of a word, base, or phrase; to add or annex to the end of a word, base, or phrase.

Syllabication: The act, process, or method of forming or dividing words into syllables.

Syllable: One or more letters in a word usually set off from the rest of the word by a centered dot or a hyphen and roughly, but often not exactly, corresponding to the syllables of spoken language and treated as helps to the ascertainment of pronunciation or as markers of places where a word may be hyphenated at the end of a written or printed line.

Synonym: One of two or more words of the same language and grammatical category having the same or nearly the same essential or generic meaning and differing only in connotation, application, or idiomatic use.

Vowels: One of a class of speech sounds in the articulation of which the oral part of the breath channel is not blocked and is not constricted enough to cause audible friction; a letter or other symbol representing a vowel, usually used in English of a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y.

WORD ATTACK

APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING*

By

Robert H. Geeslin and Carol M. Geeslin

This paper has the purpose of examining a few common approaches to the teaching of reading. Since the authors' biases and prejudices toward some of these approaches will certainly be evident, we have made an attempt to present the premises on which our biases are based. Hopefully, these premises openly reflect the inclinations of the authors, and readers will accept or reject our arguments with the same honesty.

It is frequently said that "there is no one best method for teaching all adults to read." This statement has been so often repeated that it has become a sacred cow, an assumed truism. Perhaps it is true, but many paraphrases of it seem obviously false. These authors most strenuously object to the specific alteration: "There is no best method of teaching reading." This mis-statement translates into "one method of teaching reading is about as useful as any other," which is not necessarily so. What, then, is the better approach?

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Chall dichotomized beginning reading instruction into code or meaning emphasis.¹ Her review of the research, some over fifty years old, tends to show code emphasis approaches producing better readers than meaning emphasis approaches.

Although the studies Chall reports are old and perhaps poorly designed in some instances, these authors will not quibble with the findings because we feel most are not relevant, because the reward:punishment ratio in most teaching situations is not conducive to efficient learning. The studies, then, may only show that code emphasis methods allowed the teacher to be more positive than negative. No one knows what result would have been found if the meaning emphasis classes had been set up on an 80:20 reward:reproof ratio. Such old comparative studies show very little except that under the circumstances, one approach exceeded another. If the general circumstances of the traditional teaching-learning situation can be changed, the results of such research may prove to be completely worthless.

As more recent statements by psycholinguists, notably Goodman, point out, the student must learn to deal with three types of cues in order to learn to read. These cues are the grapho-phonetic, semantic, and syntactic. The student generally has a good grasp of the semantic and syntactic cues but needs to learn how to apply them to reading, and such application is

¹J. Chall, Learning to Read: The Great Debate (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967).

learned from reading meaningful content. These statements may be interpreted as support for a meaning-emphasis program.

However, Chall claims that early reading is a different task from later reading-by-proficient-readers. She feels that "learning the code" is a prerequisite to other reading.² This stand, in fact, is not contrary to the assertions of the psycholinguistics. To say the reader uses grapho-
phonic cues is to say he uses information from the print as related to the oral language. The psycholinguists' argument, then, requires the student to read the words and does not deny that the word reading ability is the primary task.

Further evidence that the psycholinguists are not in disagreement with Chall is Goodman's statement that the reader already knows the syntactic structures and ". . . is able to use this information before he learns to read his native language."³ Likewise, much of the semantic component is presented before the reading task, for ". . . the reader utilizes his experiential conceptual background to create a meaning context. If the reader lacks relevant knowledge, he cannot supply this semantic component. . . ." ⁴ Learning to apply his knowledge of the syntactic and semantic components of the language may, indeed, require

²J. Chall, ibid., p. 307.

³K.S. Goodman, "Analysis of Oral Reading Miscues: Applied Psycholinguistics," Reading Research Quarterly, Vol. 5 (Fall, 1969), p. 17.

⁴K.S. Goodman, ibid.

the reading of meaningful material; however, the student brings to the task these two skills while he does not have the skill of using the grapho-
phonic cues from the beginning. It is the learning of these skills that makes early reading different from later reading, supporting Chall's contention that code emphasis is the proper starting place in beginning reading.⁵

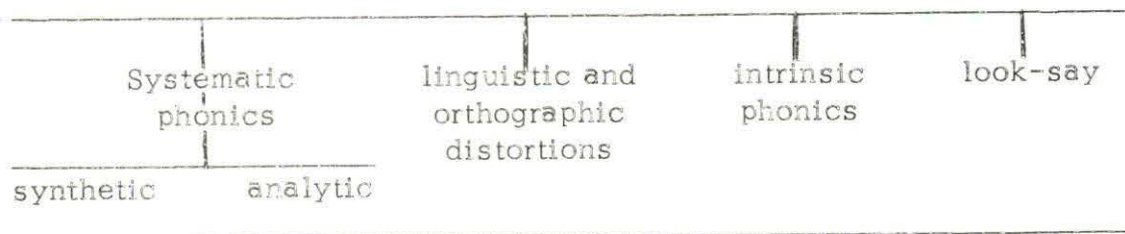
This discussion, then, narrows the teacher's search for a "best" method. She must find the "best method" for each of her students. Those who lack skill in the use of basic grapho-
phonic cues must be taught to decode; those who lack facility in syntactic components must be taught oral language; and those who lack the knowledge required to add the semantic component must be taught the major concepts contained in the material. Beginning readers and most "reading failures" lack the grapho-
phonic skills and must learn to decode. The question of a "best method" for teachers of beginning reading to adults is then limited to a search of the code emphasis approaches.

Code emphasis approaches may be divided into the categories of synthetic phonics, which emphasizes the sounds of letters and proper blending; analytical phonics, which emphasizes similarities between words; and orthographic distortions, which assign colors to letters according to phonetic value, change the alphabet, and other various distortions. Each of these approaches may further be classed as systematic

⁵ J. Chall, op. cit., p. 307.

or intrinsic, according to Chall.⁶ Systematic phonics teaches " . . . phonics early and systematically--usually, but not always, before sight (whole) words. Such programs usually . . . [teach] phonics separately from connected reading."⁷ Intrinsic phonics approaches have, historically, ". . . stressed sight or thought reading, introduced phonics later, and taught a more moderate amount of it--all intrinsic to meaningful reading, which was the supreme consideration. . . Other means of identifying words, e.g., context and picture clues, received greater stress than word analysis."⁸

Emphasis Continuum, Code to Meaning



Rather than attempt to examine every material or sequence of teaching, the remainder of this paper will be devoted to an examination of the categories into which particular programs fall. The teacher who wishes to examine a specific program may then classify it and obtain a close estimate of its efficiency. The classifications and evaluations that follow are for beginning reading or remedial programs only. The

⁶ J. Chall, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

⁷ Ibid., p. 102.

⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

teacher who is teaching students who have already developed skills in using the grapho-phonetic information will wish to evaluate material as appropriate in difficulty level and concept load. For her, an examination of (1) the "fit" between the student and the material using a placement inventory, (2) the comprehension exercises fitting the student's developed level, (3) the purposes for which the material may be read, and (4) the critical reading opportunities provided by the material, will provide a basis for evaluation.

An evaluation of reading approaches may be based upon the following assumptions, all else being equal:

1. The approach that requires the fewest intermediate steps is the most efficient.
2. The approach that teaches the most simultaneously is the more efficient.
3. The approach that more nearly approximates the final use to which reading skills will be put is the more efficient.
4. The approach which allows for individualized instruction (preferably through multiple-flexible grouping) is more efficient than the approach which leads itself to lock-step teaching.
5. The approach which requires the use of grapho-phonetic cues teaches the use of those cues more efficiently than approaches which provide other cues which can be used to decode.
6. The approach which begins by teaching the most-used words and words that lead to useful generalizations is more efficient than the approach which begins with words that are uncommon and/or which do not lead to useful generalizations about the sound-symbol relationship.
7. The approach that teaches the most reading and the least about reading is more efficient than the approach that teaches more about reading to the detriment of teaching reading itself.

All systems of orthographic distortion based upon additional cues, whether color or additional symbols (not a different set of symbols) may be dismissed as inefficient on the basis of assumption 5.

Those systems based upon learning to read an orthography or alphabet different from that commonly in use may also be abruptly dismissed for a violation of assumptions 1 and 3: these approaches require several intermediate steps, and the initial task is far removed from the final one. In the first place, the student must learn more than is to be used, and in the second, there are few direct elements for transfer; consequently, the student must learn to read twice.

Since we have already decided upon an initial use of code emphasis, the intrinsic phonics systems may be dismissed by definition: they stress the use of cues other than the grapho-phonetic and they stress meaning emphasis. Intrinsic phonics systems do teach decoding, but as a secondary matter, and only after beginning with a sight word approach.

Of the original categories, only systematic phonics remains; therefore, systematic phonics approaches would seem to have a better chance of meeting the requirements of the "best beginning method." However, there are two different extremes of systematic phonics. At one extreme is the purely synthetic method, while at the opposite extreme is the purely analytical method. Between the two extremes lie synthetic methods that present some words analytically and analytical methods that present the "sounds of some letters or word parts" and require their "blending" with other units.

Any type of systematic phonics approach is difficult to summarily dismiss as inefficient, as much because many teachers are dedicated to synthetic phonics as because the difficulties of each system are elusive to proficient readers and are hard to grasp. Beginning with the first assumption, that each intermediate step adds inefficiency, synthetic phonics may be examined for intermediate steps which detract from efficiency.

Synthetic phonics teaches the "sounds of letters." Actually, it does not, for there are over 40 sounds of the vowel "a" and synthetic programs usually "teach" only two. Further, the students already know the sounds represented by the letters. They may not be able to produce a particular word when shown the visual symbol, but that the sounds are already known is easily proven by asking the student, "Say 'Jack was able to argue all day.'" True to form, the student will recognize the sounds and will, in turn, produce them. What better evidence could one have that the student "knows" those sounds?

Very well, the synthetic system begins by "teaching" something the student already knows, but some would argue that this is hair-splitting. They contend the approach actually teaches the association between sound and letter. The less refined systems do a very poor job of this, for they attach a schwa (ə) to the consonants, showing that the consonant has no "sound" but is a particular distortion of the vowel that follows (or precedes) it. The student, then, must learn the consonant plus schwa.

Then the student must unlearn this distorted presentation. For example, look at the word "schwa." It is NOT pronounced as ssChUh (blow of air for "w") ah. Look at "kept," it is NOT pronounced kUHehPUHtuh or even KUHEHpuhTUH. The student must learn to "blend," that is, take out the distortions he was taught.

Later programs have attempted to remove these great stumbling blocks by reducing the distortions. However, the distortions remain--the effect of a letter configuration in a global sound (a word or larger unit) is not taught and must still be learned as an intermediate step. This violates assumption 1, showing low efficiency.

Many synthetic programs require the learning of terminology and rules. The inclusion of terminology of a special nature violates assumption 7: these programs teach about reading. The student who must learn to mark vowels with a macron or a breve or who must distinguish between a blend and a diagraph is asked to do a specialist's task that has nothing to do with learning to decode. In this context, there are two major faults with the marking of vowels. First is the terminology (do you know what a "macron" is?) and the utility of the task (if you don't know what a macron is, how did you learn to read?). Second is the function of the exercise. Given a list of words in which the vowels must be marked, the student must be able to decode the words before he can mark the vowels. How, the, does the exercise teach him to read? Obviously, the student learns no reading from such lessons, which results in the lowest possible efficiency.

The teaching of rules has been battered by many other authors. If one is interested in the utility of the rules (how many "work" when they should), he is referred to Theodore Clymer's article.⁹ The teaching of rules has more wrong with it than just the fact that the rules don't work. Learning rules (or "formulating generalizations," if you prefer) is one more intermediate step in the learning process, and is in violation of assumption 1. Furthermore, many of the rules require terminology or concepts in violation of assumption 7. The teaching of rules is also in violation of assumption 3, for rules are not used by readers in the decoding process (and thank goodness, because they just don't work!). Such programs, then, lack efficiency.

If expense is a factor (which it is not since the government would pay almost any price for a method or approach that would teach every adult to read), it is interesting to note that most synthetic phonics programs include a multitude of charts, workbooks, ditto masters, transparencies, and records (because the teacher can't make the appropriate sounds and must have recordings of "experts" in order to teach the student to make the sound properly. One might ask "If the teacher can't, why should the students have to learn?"). Of course, these additional materials all are meant to aid the teaching of the many untrue, irrelevant,

⁹ T. Clymer, "The Utility of Phonic Generalizations in the Primary Grades," The Reading Teacher, Vol. 16 (January, 1963), pp. 252-258.

or "about reading" aspects of the approach, that is, the useless aspects. Such expense for such low return should mean that these types of programs are not purchased.

A teacher who is examining a synthetic program should also look at the words taught in the initial states. The majority of words should appear on lists of most frequently used words. There are several lists, one being the Geeslin list of 300 commonly used words. The words presented initially should also lead to useful generalizations about the visual language. Of course, words with concrete referents are easiest for the young child, but older children and adults have less problem with abstract words.

In contrast to the above, the purely analytical phonics programs may be judged by the same criteria. First, analytical phonics is not dependent upon the teaching of sight words. The so-called "linguistic" programs such as those published by Charles E. Merrill or Clarence L. Barnhart do not begin with groups of sight words. They do begin with whole words, but this is as it should be. The use of whole words meet assumption 3, for the student will be reading whole words in the final process. Furthermore, the student will be analyzing whole words, not synthesizing them; therefore, the analytical approach more nearly resembles the final skill than does the synthetic approach.

Elsewhere, we have given the theoretical basis for the stand that the analytical approach meets assumption 2: it teaches the most at any one

time.¹⁰ The analytical approach teaches groups of words as well as the decoding process. That these groups are learned more rapidly when presented in the spelling/aural pattern than when presented individually is also supported elsewhere.¹¹

Assumption 5 is easily met by the analytical approach, for only grapho-phonetic cues are used in teaching decoding.

The teaching of most-often-used words does not, at first glance, seem to be a part of the analytical method. The words that make up a spelling pattern are used in the method no matter how rarely they appear in adult material. However, the patterns (the decoding aspect) are learned more quickly with a greater number of words, rather than fewer words. So the inclusion of rarely-used words facilitates the students' learning rather than detracts from it. Of course, the interested teacher can be sure she begins with patterns that include frequently used words. The point is that no other decoding approach allows this choice of teaching the visual language with examples of the teacher's choice.

The second qualification of assumption 6, generalization from the words presented, is met by the analytical approach more readily than by any other approach. The synthetic approaches have their generalizations and exceptions and exceptions to exceptions. The analytical approach

¹⁰ R.H. Geeslin and C.M. Geeslin, Teaching/Reading, Second Experimental Edition. (Madison, Florida: READ Center, 1970).

¹¹ Ibid.

has none of this. There are patterns; some have many members while others have only two members. There are, of course, some words that do not fit any pattern and must be taught by sight, but they also fit no generalization in the other approaches and are taught as sight words by these programs. Some patterns are aurally similar and some are visually similar; these may be taught in contrast. The contrasting of patterns of visually-similar/aurally-different words allows for an internalization of the visual cues rather than confusion between words that should fit a rule or the exception but don't, a common fault of synthetic programs. The contrast of aurally-similar/visually-different patterns has the same advantage as the contrast of visually-similar/aurally-different patterns.

Of course, the "linguistic" programs can be spoiled by teachers who insist that the students know the terminology.

"This is a morpheme, Mr. Moore, a morpheme!"

However, the option of not using the specialist's vocabulary is open to users of the analytical approach, something quite startling to teachers comfortable with macrons, breves, and ssTUHrr- 1b-naGUH/string.

The fourth assumption has not been discussed in the examination of any classification. Programs all differ in their structure. Some actually encourage whole-class instruction, others promote the "teaching of groups." There are a few programs that suggest multiple-flexible grouping or pulling together those students who need the same instruction,

allows them the justification of advocating their inefficient system because "some student may be expected to learn best by this method." They bring research evidence to prove their point. Moreover, the evidence is loaded strongly in their favor. Hawthorne-effects and students who lie three deviations from the norm are used in research that promotes over-generalizations. The facts of learning are contrary to the fallacy that there is no one best method. The key is the word best. Students whose ability and/or achievement lies within two standard deviations of the mean can learn to decode best, with the most efficient internalization and with the highest utility from one method. That they also learn from other methods, and that the remaining students require other techniques does not generalize to permit the statement that such other methods are of great enough efficiency or high enough utility to be used in the average classroom.

Those who support synthetic phonics programs or sight word programs have long attacked each other as well as the analytical or "linguistic" approach. Their motive is self-preservation. There are too many authorities who have too much reputation, not to mention royalties, at stake to support any causes but their own and the general "everybody is right" position. In addition, there are too many presses, and too many materials stored in too many warehouses for the financial empire of the publishers to support any causes but their own and that great blinder "there is no one best method."

These congenial sub-sets of the field are very hypocritical. While espousing the idea that no one method is best, they are also busy attacking every method but their own and are, simultaneously, defending their own "best methods." In anticipation of doubters (or worse), and in summary, several points should be clarified.

First, there is a sound-symbol relationship in English. All methods, except the pure "sight words only" method, assumes this relationship. A few words (of, a, was, etc.) are taught as sight words by almost all systems. Yet, these words, admittedly of very high utility, are used as sword and sledge by advocates of almost any program to attack advocates of any or all other approaches. These few words must be taught as sight words. However, introducing them in direct contrast to the pattern they usually appear to fit will increase the efficiency of learning. For example, the word "are" should be contrasted with the pattern: bare, care, dare, hare, mare, pare, rare, etc.

Second, the decoding task is most efficiently taught by a direct use of whole words as global units. Teaching of segments that contain distortions and/or require conscious transfer is inefficient.

Third, efficient reading is recognized as a process of habitual (internalized) meaning response to the recognition of sight words following anticipation of usage from the context. The method described can now be advocated only for the decoding process, as mentioned earlier. The reading of running words for meaning must be concomitantly

taught if students are to become efficient readers. This is not to say that any supplementary material has introduced words in a sequence that should be followed. Quite the contrary, most introduce words of great irregularity first. New running word (meaning emphasis) materials are badly needed, but the structure must follow the decoding sequence if students are to learn efficiently.