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The Initial Reading Program in Mexico

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THE INITIAL READING PROGRAM
IN MEXICO

by
Louise Marion Cadwell

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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LIFE

Louise Marion Cadwell was born in Chicago, Illinois, February 8, 1922.

She was graduated from Harper High School, Chicago, Illinois, January, 1944, and from Illinois Institute of Technology, June, 1944, with the degree of Bachelor of Science.

The author attended Mexico City College from February to June, 1942. During the summers of 1940 to 1944 inclusive, she took courses at the National University of Mexico.

She attended Chicago Teachers College, Chicago, Illinois, from January to September, 1949. She began her graduate studies at Loyola University in June, 1951.

PREFACE

In nearly all parts of the world reading is considered to be the most important subject in the curriculum. It makes up a large part of the school life in most schools. To illustrate its importance in Mexico, the child is given a reading test at the end of each school year, the results of which determine whether he passes into the next higher grade or is retained in the same grade. Reading is, therefore, the "critical" subject throughout the elementary schools of Mexico.

Since the bibliography on this subject available in the United States is inadequate, the author deemed it necessary to obtain most of the information from original sources in Mexico City. The study, therefore, rests on the author's personal observations in the classrooms in Mexico and on information about techniques and methods used in the teaching of reading which was obtained from first grade teachers, heads of departments and various authorities in the Mexican system of education.

It is with genuine sincerity that the author expresses appreciation and thanks to the following individuals and agencies who have made this thesis possible.

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To Directora señorita Carmen Domínguez, Departamento de Escuelas Particulares de la Secretaría de Educación Pública.

To Profesora Rosaura Zapata, Jefe "Dirección General de Educación Pre-Primaria."

To the following first grade teachers: Profesora Hilda Cisneros Limas, Profesora Beatriz Escamilla and Profesora Mercedes Hernández.

To El Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía, México, D. F.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This thesis is a descriptive and illustrative study of the reading program of the first grade in the Mexican schools, operated by the federal government in Mexico City.

The purpose of this investigation is to learn the history of the reading methods used in Mexico City, how reading is presently taught, the extent and nature of the reading readiness program and the methods used in the teaching of initial reading. No attempt has been made to evaluate or appraise the Mexican program of education.

Definition of Terms

In order to achieve consistency and clarification, the terms used in this thesis must be defined.

El Silabario de San Miquel: The syllabary of Saint Michael.

Los Cartels Murales: Wall Cards

El Fonetismo: The Phonetism

Clinica Medico Pedagogia: Medical pedagogical clinic

Clinica de la Conducta: Psychological clinic

Lenguaje: Language

Secretaría de Educación Pública: Secretary of Public

Education

El método onomatepéyico: The onomatepeyic method

El método global o natural: The global or natural

method.

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF THE TEACHING OF READING IN MEXICO

In the historical evolution of the teaching of reading in Mexico, there are two distinct periods: the old and the new. The old period dates back to the fifteenth century when printing was invented and the new period began in the early years of the nineteenth century and extends to the present time.

The modifications in the didactics of reading were radical after the invention of printing. In the first place, all of the texts, exclusively manuscripts, were changed to printed texts. Secondly, the use of printing tended toward standardization of symbols. Thirdly, two different alphabets were made; a printed alphabet and a written alphabet. Fourthly, new methods and procedures appeared. Fifthly, reading and writing were fused.¹

El Silabario de San Miguel

For many years, the teaching of reading in Mexico was done by the use of the silabarios made by a Mexican priest, San Miguel. In thirty-eight lessons he introduced the various syl-

1 Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía, México, D. F.

labic combinations that could be formed with the consonants and vowels: indirect syllables, direct simple, direct composite, inversed simple, inversed mixed simple and mixed composite. In this method there were: (1) mnemonic study of the vowels, (2) study of the consonants, (3) study of the words by syllables, and (4) a visual reading of the letters, of the syllables, and of the words. Writing had to be taught separately since the syllabary technique had printed letters, both capital and small.²

Rafael Ramírez describes this technique as "detestable" because:

- (1) Es completamente antipedagógico pues comienza no con lo que el niño entiende (frases o palabras), sino con los nombres de símbolos (las letras) que carecen de sentido.

(It is completely antipedagogical because it does not begin with the things that the child understands, such as sentences or words; but with the names of the letters which are not meaningful.)

- (2) No es lógico en su principio básico, pues los nombres de las letras no producen las palabras. Por ejemplo: g - a - ga; t - o - to; no da gato, sino geagateoto.

(It is not logical because the names of the letters do not produce words. For example: g - a - ga; t - o - to; does not produce gato 'cat' but geagateoto.)

- (3) El método es excesivamente tedioso y aburrido en su contenido, a causa de que olvida los intereses infantiles y a causa también de que hace abstracción completa de la vida.

(The method is very tedious and boring in its contents because it ignores interests of children and is com-

pletely abstract in the life of the child.)

- (4) El aprendizaje de la lectura por este método es muy laborioso y difícil, pues para lograrlo, el niño consume una enorme suma de tiempo y de energía.³

(The learning of reading by this method is very laborious and difficult since it consumes, on the part of the child, an enormous amount of time and energy.)

Los Cartels Murales

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a new method in the teaching of reading was invented for the purpose of teaching reading faster. The author of this method, Señor José Moviano Vallejo, was not a teacher, but he tried to teach reading by combining all of the consonants in the alphabet with only one vowel. According to this method, reading and writing were taught separately. The child learned the words through syllabication and through spelling. The one advantage of this method was that it could be used with large groups of children. The cartels which were used with this method were large sheets of paper which were placed on the wall in the classroom. The instructors would teach the children to read the words written on the cartels through sound and sight.⁴

3 Rafael, Ramírez, La Enseñanza de la Lectura, México, D.F., Editorial Tecnicoeducativa, 1946, 77.

4 Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía, México, D.F.

El Fonetismo

The spelling and syllabication of the word in reading lasted for the rest of the nineteenth century and extended into the early twentieth century. Early in the twentieth century, the phonic method appeared--a method developed by Professor Enrique C. Rébsamen. In this method the author introduced the simultaneous teaching of reading and writing, the teaching of the sounds of the letters, pre-reading and pre-writing exercises, exercises to develop auditory and visual discrimination, exercises to develop motor control, writing and reading of small printed and manuscript letters and writing and reading of printed capital and manuscript letters.

The following exercises were introduced to develop visual discrimination and muscular coordination: tracing points, tracing straight lines, tracing angles, tracing curved lines, drawing sticks, drawing hooks, drawing fish hooks, drawing arcs and drawing canes.

This effort was more scientific and more pedagogical and required competent teachers. It abandoned the cartels and introduced books. It soon spread throughout the entire Republic with effective results, since the children were taught how to read and write at the same time. However, the Rébsamen technique consumed so much time and entailed so much work on the part of

both teacher and pupil, that it was abandoned in many schools.⁵

⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE READING READINESS PROGRAM

The Need for a Pre-reading Program

Professor Dolores Guzmán, who is the head of the Pedagogical Institute, believes that there is not much of a need for a pre-reading program in the first grade in Mexico, since the Mexican child of six years of age possesses the necessary abilities and skills required for reading before he enters first grade. The school merely guides and develops the already possessed abilities and skills. The Mexican child of five and six is more advanced mentally, socially and emotionally than the child of like age in other nations, particularly Europe and the United States. The mind of a Mexican child of ten years is comparable to that of a sixteen year old child of other countries. This factor of maturity is due to a number of reasons: geographical location, standards of living and home environment. As soon as the Mexican child is able to walk, he becomes a wage earner and is given adult responsibilities.¹

1 Profesora Dolores Medina Guzmán, Jefe del Laboratorio de Pedagogía del Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía dependiente de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, México, D.F. (Personal Interview)

Unfortunately, however, because of economic reasons, the Department of Education is not financially able to provide the bright child with special instruction and special attention. Therefore, many of these children develop into criminals.²

The Kindergarten Program

The government schools provide two years of kindergarten training. The child enters the first year of kindergarten at the age of four or five and the second year at the age of five or six. This preliminary period is designed to develop readiness for reading and for other activities required in the first grade.³

At the end of the second year of kindergarten, the Detroit-Engel test is administered to every child. In the event that the child does not show readiness for first grade, he is retained in kindergarten for another year, providing his stature and physical growth are proportionate to that of a six year old child; otherwise the child is passed into first grade with the possibility of failure.⁴

It is a common belief among first grade teachers that

2 Ibid.

3 Profesora Rosaura Zapato, Jefe "Dirección General de Educación Pre-Primaria" México, D.F. (Personal Interview)

4 Ibid.

the reading success of the child in the first grade is greatly influenced by the training received in the kindergarten.

Los niños debía ser antecedente forzosa de la escuela primaria, traen siempre una preparación valiosa hábitos de aseo, de trabajo en comunidad; saben oír y atender, dibujar, modelar, tienen costumbre de expresarse cantan.⁵

(The children who come from kindergarten and enter first grade are always well prepared. Kindergarten should be compulsory. This preparation includes the formation of healthy habits; the children are trained to work with other children; they learn to be attentive, they learn how to draw and model, they learn how to express their needs and they learn how to sing.)

The number of kindergartens operating in the Republic from 1947 to 1953 and enrollment in the kindergartens throughout the Republic from 1947 to 1953 is illustrated by Table I and Table II.⁶

5 Rosaura Lechuga, El Mundo del Niño, México, D.F. Editorial Patria, S. A., 1952, 15-16.

6 Dirección General de Educación Pre-Escolar, México, D.F. (Wall Chart)

TABLE I
 NUMBER OF KINDERGARTENS OPERATING
 IN THE MEXICAL REPUBLIC

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1947	630
1948	770
1949	839
1950	859
1951	1,008
1952	1,147
1953	1,196

TABLE II
 ENROLLMENT IN KINDERGARTENS THROUGHOUT
 THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1947	50,888
1948	52,093
1949	56,632
1950	56,695
1951	66,975
1952	111,432
1953	114,383

The First Grade Program

When the child enters the first grade, the Detroit-Engel test is administered, the results of which determine the particular group into which he will be placed. The child is placed according to mental and chronological age. The first group comprises children who are above average in intelligence; the second group consists of those children of normal intelligence; the third group is made up of those who deviate slightly from the normal pattern; while the fourth group comprises children who are dull or sub-normal in intelligence. The latter group is referred to the Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía, and are given a series of mental examinations. This group is usually sent to a special school where they receive special help and attention.

Since these groups vary considerably in readiness for reading, the readiness program in the first grade is determined by the needs and abilities of each group. The children in the first group require little or no additional preparation for learning to read when they enter first grade. However, the children in the second and particularly in the third group require more preparation and a longer period of preparation. In the majority of schools, however, this period of preparation is relatively short. The private schools have a preparatory reading

grade, comparable to the 1-C grade in the Chicago Public School system.

In the event the child fails the reading test at the end of the school year, he remains another year or perhaps two in the first grade. In many instances, the child becomes discouraged and develops feelings of emotional and social inadequacy, the results of which are truancy and dropping out of school.⁷

It is alarming to learn the number of children who fail first grade; in fact, some of them repeat first grade as many as two or three times. The number of children who abandon school is also alarming. Less than ten per cent of children who enter first grade complete the sixth grade. These children develop an inferiority complex and display a dislike for their teachers. Many of these children would have needed only special help and consideration from their teachers. The teacher must realize that not all of her children are alike physically, mentally, emotionally or socially. She cannot, therefore, expect the same results in reading and other academic subjects from all of them.

⁷ Profesora Antonia Lopez Macías, subdirectora de Dirección General de Alfabetización Secretaría de Educación Pública, México, D.F. (Personal Interview)

A pre-reading program is therefore indispensable.⁸

It is interesting to note that the teacher has the obligation of instructing the slow child during the vacation period, in order that he may catch up with the rest of his classmates by the time school opens again.

If the child is at any time in poor physical condition, he is referred to the Clinica Medico Pedagogía, where he is given a thorough physical examination. If the child displays feelings of inadequacy, restlessness, shyness and nervousness, he is referred to the Clinica de la Conducta, so that the cause of his difficulty may be diagnosed.⁹

Es a la maestra del primer año a la que corresponde prepararlos para a tarea que van a emprender y para ello tiene que conocerlos considerar que todos son diferentes y saber cuáles y de qué calidad son esas diferencias. Conocer hasta donde es posible sus problemas de hogar, que tanto afectan su vida emocional: conocer su ambiente social, sus capacidades, aptitudes, estado de salud, sus experiencias, costumbres, voluntad para aprender, en una palabra, sus condiciones físicas personales y sociales.¹⁰

(It is the obligation of the first grade teacher to prepare the child for reading. The teacher must know her children.)

⁸ Rosaura Lechuga, El Mundo del Niño, México, D.F., Editorial Patria, S. A., 1952, 13.

⁹ Profesora Delores Medina Guzmán, Jefe del Laboratorio de Pedagogía del Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía dependiente de la Secretaría de Educación. (Personal Interview)

¹⁰ Rosaura Lechuga, El Mundo del Niño, 16.

The teacher must know her children. She must realize that not all of her children are alike. She must realize that all of them are different and she must know what the differences are and how big they are. The teacher must be acquainted, as far as possible, with the problems that exist at home and to what extent they affect the emotional life of the child. The teacher must be acquainted with the social makeup of the child, his ability, his aptitude, his health, his experiences, his customs, his desire to learn. In other words, the teacher must know the physical, personal and social make-up of each child.)

Factors in Reading Readiness

Señorita Rosaura Lechuga believes that the success of the child in reading depends upon how well the teacher knows the weaknesses and abilities of each child. Readiness for reading depends upon a number of factors, physical, emotional, mental and social.

The following physical factors are indications of lack of readiness:

Es enfermizo, está palido o demasiado delgado. Es irascible, pasivo, inatento. Se acerca o aleja demasiado el libro de los ojos. No ve lo que está en el pizarrón. Tiene los párpados o los ojos enrojecidos. No oye bien. No controla los músculos de la mano y del brazo y sus dibujos y trazos demasiado defectuosos. Es zurdo.¹¹

(He is sickly, pale or too thin. He is choleric, inactive, inattentive. He holds the book too near or too far from his eyes. He does not see what is on the blackboard. He has blinking or inflamed eyes. He does not hear well. He does not have control of the muscles of the hand or the arm and his drawings and tracings are very defective. He is left-handed.)

11 Ibid.

The following emotional characteristics indicate lack of readiness: "Es tímido, melancólico, caprichoso, inquieto, descuidado."¹² (He is timid, melancholy, capricious, troublesome, careless.)

The following mental characteristics indicate lack of readiness: "No retiene lo que se le dice. No sabe ejecutar órdenes. No puedo realizar un trabajo que dure cierto tiempo. No tiene hábitos sociales."¹³ (He does not retain what is said. He does not know how to execute orders. He is unable to perform a task that takes some time. He does not have good social habits.)

The following social characteristics indicate lack of readiness:

No es bueno con sus compañeros, ni respetuoso con la maestra. Tiene la costumbre de criticar. No es limpio ni ordenado. No es puntual ni cumplido. No hace bien la parte que le toca en el trabajo de conjunto. No es tolerante, servicial ni generoso. No reconoce la justicia. No le gusta hacer las cosas bien hechas.¹⁴

(He is not nice to his friends nor does he respect his teacher. He has the habit of criticizing. He is not clean nor orderly. He is not punctual nor obedient. He is unwilling to do his share of work when working with a group. He is not tolerant, obliging nor generous.)

If the child is sickly, pale and suffers from frequent

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

colds and headaches, a doctor should be consulted and the child should be given a thorough physical examination. Frequently, the child may have defective hearing or eyesight. If a physical handicap is not found, the teacher should try to locate the source of maladjustment.

In a statistic study, it was learned that about 20 per cent of the children in third grade had visual deficiencies which proved to be an impediment in successful reading.¹⁵

Adequate auditory and visual discrimination and muscular coordination are essential for effective reading and writing. To develop these abilities, Rosaura Lechuga suggests the following exercises: describing objects and pictures, separating buttons of different sizes and shapes, imitating sounds, telling and re-telling of stories, composing simple poems, learning simple songs, dramatizing stories, playing games, constructing houses with blocks, drawing, modeling, cutting and folding.¹⁶

Experiences, both first-hand and vicarious, are necessary to the child. If the child does not have experiences, he will lack ideas. Ideas are necessary for effective reading.

Visitas a los alrededores de la escuela, para conocer jardines, plantas, pájaros y flores; a los edificios públicos, talleres, fábricas, tiendas, mercados, sobre las que plati-

15 Ibid., 14.

16 Ibid.

quen y comenten después en el salón. Hacer álbumes de frutas, flores, muebles, piedras; clasificarlas por su color, su forma, su procedencia.¹⁷

(Visits in and around the schools, in order to know the gardens, plants, birds and flowers; visits to public buildings, factories, stores, markets, in order to have something to talk about in school. The children should make albums of fruits, flowers, furniture, stones, classifying them by their color, size and origin.)

The child must be taught to live with others. This is one of the most important tasks of the teacher. There are many children who do not know how to cooperate and get along successfully with other children; many of them are impolite and have little or no respect for their playmates. Good habits must be taught by the teacher and she must supervise the children closely to see that they are just, polite and cooperative. It is not necessary to be severe. Frequently severity and lack of understanding produce bad results. Children require understanding and they must have affection and love. Those children who are mistreated, suffer emotional distress and anxiety. Frequently problem children come from homes and often they have been abandoned by their parents or the parents have failed to give them the love and affection that they need. From the moment the teacher receives the children, she has a marvelous task to perform; teaching them friendliness, helping them to get rid of their fears and selfishness and surrounding them with affection and love.

17 Ibid.

Dedicadas dos semanas aproximadamente a esta interesante etapa de preparación, ha llegado el momento de iniciar la lectura.¹⁸

(Approximately after two weeks of this preparation, the time to teach reading has come.)

18 Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

General and specific objectives

The general objectives of the language arts program are two-fold: to develop in the child the ability to use his language correctly--both oral and written, and to give the child an instrument for the acquisition of his culture.¹

The specific objectives for teaching the language arts are as follows:

- (1) Oral reading: to develop in the child the ability to express himself adequately and to give an artistic value to his reading.
- (2) Silent reading: to develop rapidity in reading and adequate comprehension of it; to develop favorable study habits.
- (3) Recitation and dramatization: to enrich the child's vocabulary.
- (4) Elocution: to develop in the child the ability to express himself adequately; to correct defective forms of oral

¹ J. Rubio Villagran y Carlos Peza de la Vega, Agenda del Maestro, México, D.F., Monte de Piedad numero 15, Despacho 402, 1950, 431-432.

expression.

(5) Writing: to give the child a means of communication; to develop in the child the ability to write clearly and rapidly.

(6) Composition: to develop in the child the ability to reason; to develop in the child the ability to express himself with simplicity, accuracy, beauty and clarity.

(7) Vocabulary: to enrich and develop the vocabulary of the child; to acquaint him with the literal and figurative meaning of words.

(8) Grammar: to develop in the child the ability to use words accurately in both written and oral expression.

(9) Spelling: to teach the child accurate spelling of words and proper punctuation.²

Contents of the First Grade Program

It is interesting to note that the school year in Mexico is adjusted to the climate of the different regions of the country. In the lowlands and tropical regions, the new school year begins in September and ends in June, while in the mountainous regions and Mexico City, the new school year begins in February and ends in November.

2 Ibid.

The following general activities have been suggested for the school year beginning in February.

(1) Oral reading: stories and games to develop auditory and visual discrimination.

(2) Silent reading: exercises composed of commands that require both individual and collective participation, the purpose of which is to develop mental powers and develop discipline. The teacher, for example, will give a command and the child will carry it out without speaking.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of short stories and poems which are of interest to the child; simple dramatizations.

(4) Elocution: easy conversation and narration of tales and stories.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; for example, drawing balls and other objects which are of interest to the child; writing letters, words, short phrases and sentences which have meaning for the child.³

The following general activities have been suggested for use in the month of March.

(1) Oral reading: exercises, games and stories to de-

³ Programas para las Escuelas Primarias, Primer Grado, México, D.F., Ediciones "Para el Maestro," 1944, 5-6.

velop auditory and visual discrimination.

(2) Silent reading: using games and riddles.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of short stories and poems relating to spring, flowers, expropriation of the petroleum industry and Benito Juarez' birthday; simple dramatizations.

(4) Elocution: conversation relating to significant holidays of the month, experiences of the child; narration of simple stories.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; writing letters, words, short phrases and sentences which are of interest to the child.

(6) Spelling: teaching the use of capital letters.⁴

The following general activities have been suggested for the month of April.

(1) Oral reading: exercises, games and stories to develop auditory and visual discrimination.

(2) Silent reading: interpretation of pictures by a short sentence.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of stories, interesting experiences and poems; simple dramatizations.

4 Ibid., 6-7.

(4) Elocution: conversations which are of interest to the child; for example, his toys, his friends, his family, his home, and any other interesting experiences.

(5) Writing: drawing pictures and playing games to develop motor coordination; writing of letters, words, short phrases and sentences.

(6) Composition: composing short sentences comprising pictures, drawings and interesting objects.

(7) Vocabulary: development of the vocabulary of the child by means of stories and conversation; correcting the vocabulary defects of the child.

(8) Grammar: exercises to distinguish between masculine and feminine nouns and adverbs. The child should be encouraged to talk about his playmates, his dog, his cat and other domestic animals.

(9) Spelling: Exercises in using capital letters; teaching the use of the period.⁵

The following general activities have been suggested to be used during the month of May.

(1) Oral reading: exercises, games and stories to develop auditory and visual discrimination; reading of short phrases and sentences.

5 Ibid.

(2) Reading: using games and riddles; answering simple questions.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of easy stories and poems pertinent to the child's experiences and to the significant holidays of the month; simple dramatizations.

(4) Elocution: conversations pertinent to the interests of the child and to significant holidays of the month.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; writing of words, short phrases and sentences.

(6) Composition: composing short sentences, describing pictures, drawings and significant holidays of the month.

(7) Vocabulary: developing the vocabulary of the child by means of conversation and stories; correcting the vocabulary errors of the child.

(8) Grammar: exercises to help distinguish between masculine and feminine nouns and adverbs; exercises to help distinguish between singular and plural.

(9) Spelling: exercises in using the letters r and rr, j; exercises in using the letter g in the syllables ga, go, gui; exercises in using the accent.⁶

6 Ibid., 8-9.

The following general activities have been suggested for the month of June.

(1) Oral reading: exercises, games and stories to develop auditory and visual discrimination; reading of short phrases and sentences.

(2) Silent reading: exercises with riddles; answering easy questions.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of easy stories and poems pertinent to the interests of the child; simple dramatizations.

(4) Elocution: conversations pertinent to experiences of the child.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; writing of words, short phrases and sentences.

(6) Composition: composing easy sentences and stories pertinent to the interests and experiences of the child.

(7) Vocabulary: widening the vocabulary of the child through conversation and stories; correcting errors in grammar and sentence structure.

(8) Grammar: exercises to teach augmentative and the diminutive; example--comparison of medium, large and small objects.

(9) Spelling: exercises in using the syllables ga, go, gu.⁷

The following activities have been suggested to be used during the month of July.

(1) Oral reading: reading of easy phrases and sentences.

(2) Silent reading: answering questions pertinent to the interests of the child.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of stories and poems pertinent to the experiences and interests of the child; simple dramatizations.

(4) Elocution: meaningful conversation and narration of stories.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop adequate muscular coordination; copying of meaningful phrases and sentences from the blackboard.

(6) Composition: composing short sentences and stories pertinent to the life of the child.

(7) Vocabulary: development of the vocabulary of the child through conversation and stories; correcting errors in grammar and sentence structure.

(8) Grammar: exercises in using and distinguishing

7 Ibid., 10-11.

feminine and masculine nouns and adverbs.

(9) Spelling: exercises in using the syllables que, qui; exercises in using the question and the exclamation mark.⁸

The following general activities have been suggested for the month of August.

(1) Oral reading: reading of easy and interesting materials.

(2) Silent reading: answering questions pertinent to the interests of the child; interpretation of pictures by one or more short sentences.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of simple stories and poems which relate to the interests and experiences of the child; simple dramatizations.

(4) Elocution: oral reproduction of stories and fairy tales.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; writing of meaningful sentences and short stories.

(6) Composition: composing sentences and short stories which the child will enjoy.

(7) Vocabulary: developing the vocabulary of the child by means of conversation and stories; correcting errors in grammar

⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

and sentence structure.

(8) Grammar: exercises in writing the syllables que, and qui.

(9) Spelling: exercises in using the exclamation and the question mark; exercises in using capital letters; exercises in using such letters as r, rr, g, j and the syllables ga, go, gu, gue, gui, que, qui; exercises in using the accent.⁹

The following general activities have been suggested for the month of September.

(1) Oral reading: reading easy and interesting materials.

(2) Silent reading: answering easy questions; recreational reading.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of stories and poems related to the interests and experiences of the child; simple dramatization.

(4) Elocution: narration of stories; meaningful conversation.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; copying and dictation of sentences and easy stories pertinent to the interests of the child.

(6) Composition: composing sentences and short stories.

9 Ibid., 12-13.

(7) Vocabulary: exercises to develop the vocabulary of the child and correcting defects in both oral and written expression.

(8) Grammar: review of preceding exercises.

(9) Spelling: dictation of words that the children have already learned.¹⁰

The following general activities have been suggested for the month of October.

(1) Oral reading: reading of easy materials.

(2) Silent reading: answering of easy questions.

(3) Recitation and dramatization: memorization and recitation of stories and poems related to the interests of the child; dramatization and narration of stories.

(4) Elocution: narration of stories; meaningful conversation.

(5) Writing: drawing exercises and games to develop muscular coordination; copying and dictation of simple sentences and stories.

(6) Composition: composing sentences and short stories which are related to the interests of the child.

(7) Vocabulary: exercises to develop the vocabulary of the child and correcting defects in both written and oral expression.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

(8) Grammar: review of preceding exercises.

(9) Spelling: exercises in using capital letters; exercises in the use of such letters as r, rr, j, g; exercises in the use of the syllables ga, go, gu, gue, gui, que, qui; exercises in the use of the question and exclamation marks.¹¹

During the month of November, a general review takes place which is followed by a final examination.¹²

Adaptation and Application of the Program

The activities involved in the language arts program are meaningful to the child and are employed in all of the government elementary schools throughout the Republic; these activities are applicable to all normal children.

Mexico is a diversified country, socially, physically, economically and politically. The Mexican children, likewise, show diversified dispositions and customs, which are in accord with the regions in which they live. The schools are diversified in their organization. The organization of the schools and the availability of materials depend upon such factors as geographical location, climate, communication and transportation, industries and production, modes of living, habits and customs. The prepara-

11 Ibid., 15-16.

12 Ibid., 16.

tion and competence of the teachers vary considerably.

Modern educational methods and techniques must, therefore, be modified in order to be compatible with the geographical location, climate, transportation and communication, industries and production, modes of living, habits, customs of the inhabitants and training and competence of the teachers. Furthermore, the problems that arise demand study and reflection, but this does not mean that these educational problems cannot be solved. The teacher, however, must be acquainted with the social and physical characteristics of a given area in which the school is located, in addition to the facilities that are available. Only then can the teacher succeed in adjusting her program to the specific needs of the child. These adaptations are merely ways to a means and are not ends in themselves. Adaptations are made with the purpose of applying them to the prevailing conditions and with the purpose of improving the conditions, circumstances and situations of a particular place or region. Improvement is, therefore, the primary task of education.¹³

The language arts program must be adapted to the needs of the child and the success of the program depends upon the following factors:

¹³ J. Rubio Villagran y Carlos Peza de la Vega, Agenda del Maestro, México, D.F., Monte de Piedad numero 15, Despacho 402, 1950, 414-416.

. . . por su origen, por su situación en la familia, por la indole de su naturaleza y psiquica, por sus relaciones medio natural y social en que se encuentra, su edad, su sexo, sus inclinaciones, sus intereses, sus aspiraciones, sus modas de impresion y reaccion, su personalidad en una palabra.¹⁴

(. . . his origin, his place in the family, his physical and mental state, his relationship with the group, his age, sex, interests, aspirations, inclinations, in one word, his personality.)

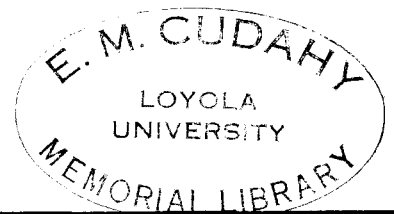
The teacher, therefore, has the obligation and the duty to know all of her children because without this important requisite, the child will not succeed in school.

Y no ha de contentarse con las indicaciones vagas, imprecisas o abstractas de los libros, que sólo tienen en cuenta al niño en general.¹⁵

(The teacher should not be satisfied with the rules that she abstracts from books because these rules are made for children in general.)

14 Ibid., 416.

15 Ibid.



CHAPTER V

THE TEACHING OF INITIAL READING

The Role of Silent and Oral Reading

Professor Rafeel Ramírez recognizes the different roles silent and oral reading have in the various grades. In the first grade, ninety per cent of the time should be devoted to oral reading; while the remaining ten per cent should be used for silent reading. However, with each higher grade, the time devoted to oral gradually decreases and the time spent on silent reading gradually increases.¹

Development of Abilities and Skills

In the first grade, the following abilities and skills should be developed.

(1) The ability to read orally from the blackboard, reader, or from any printed or manuscript page, simple phrases and sentences; these should be read as a whole and not word by word.

1 Rafael Ramírez, La Enseñanza de la Lectura, México, D.F., Editorial Tecnicoeducativa, 1946, 46.

(2) The ability to pronounce words distinctly and clearly without hesitation, repetitions or omissions.

(3) The ability to read orally without moving the head or pointing to the words with the finger or with a pencil.

(4) The ability to understand what is read.

(5) The ability to read orally before an audience.

(6) The ability to read manuscript and printed letters, both capital and small.

(7) The development of such habits as good reading position, proper handling of books and the proper care of books.

(8) The development of such attitudes as an ardent desire to read, the feeling that reading is a source of pleasure, the love for reading, the feeling that reading is a tool for acquiring needed and necessary knowledge and the desire to own books and go to the library.²

Recommendations for the First Grade Teacher

Professor Rafael Ramírez gives some worthwhile suggestions or recommendations to the first grade teacher.

(1) En el ciclo inferior debe predominar la lectura oral sobre la lectura en silencio. En esta ultima apenas se iniciara a los niños, acentuándose los ejercicios respectivos en el segundo año más que en el primero. La lectura oral desde el primer instante debe ser lectura comprensive.

2 Ibid., 47-48.

In the first grade, oral reading should be stressed much more than silent reading. Silent reading is taught only to a slight degree because as the child progresses further, silent reading will be stressed more and more. From the very beginning, oral reading must be comprehended.)

(2) Procúrese en la enseñanza no recurrir al análisis, al fonetismo y la onomatopeya, sino en los casos en que por la dificultad de la lectura se hagan absolutamente necesarios esos procedimientos. La lectura debe atacarse por unidades de ideas o pensamientos.

(In teaching reading do not stress the phonetic or onomatopoeic techniques, only in special cases where it is really necessary. Reading must be taught as units of ideas or thoughts.)

(3) Introdúzcanse dentro de las clases, juegos educativos de lectura, trabajos de expresión gráfica o concreta y dramatizaciones de lo que se haya leído o de lo que se va a leer.

(Introduce educational reading games, pictures and dramatization of what has been read or what is going to be read.)

(4) la clase reglamentaria de lectura debe ser diaria con una duración de 20 minutos.

(There should be a daily reading lesson lasting 20 minutes.)

(5) En otro momento del día escolar bastante separado de la clase, practíquense algunos ejercicios complementarios de lectura.

(At some time during the school day, other than the reading time, exercises related to reading should be done.)

(6) No engloben los maestros la enseñanza de la escritura dentro de la clase de lectura. Escribir es una cosa diversa de leer y, por lo tanto, debe enseñarse en una clase diferente.³

(Do not mix the teaching of reading and writing. Writing is different from reading, thus reading and writing must be taught separately.)

An Illustrated Lesson in Beginning Reading

Professor Rafael Ramirez describes a reading lesson presented by a first grade teacher. The teacher told her children the following story:

"Esta era una viejecita, muy arrugadita, que barriendo, barriendo se encontró medio. . ." (There was an old woman, very wrinkled, who while sweeping and sweeping found an old coin. . .) As soon as the teacher finished the story and after she and the children conversed together, the children were able to retell the story with expression. Albums were made by the children and they were illustrated with drawings related to the story. The teacher also made her own album from large sheets of cardboard. She divided the story into short simple reading lessons. On the first page of her album she wrote the following: "Una viejecita, muy arrugadita, barriendo, barriendo, se encontró medio." (An old woman, very wrinkled, sweeping and sweeping, found an old coin.) This page was illustrated with a colorful picture of an old woman sweeping.

The teacher then continued with the rest of the story. "¿Que haré con este medio? Si compro pan, se me acaba, y si compro queso se me acaba también. . ." (What shall I do with this coin? If I buy bread, I won't have any money left, and if I buy cheese, I won't have any money left. . .) The teacher wrote the following on cardboard strips and placed them in the front of the

classroom. "Una viejecita, muy arrugadita, barriendo, barriendo, se encontró medio." (An old woman, very wrinkled, sweeping and sweeping, found an old coin.) The brightest children were asked to read the cardboard strips first and gradually all of the children were able to read them.

In order to avoid memorization the teacher devised a game entitled: "¿Quién es la viejecita sabia?" (who is the wise old woman?) The purpose of the game was to be able to identify all of the phrases on the cardboard strips. The child who was able to accomplish this would be the wise old woman. This game lasted for about ten minutes. Not all of the children, however, were successful. Those children who were not successful were given special help and attention.

The next lesson consisted of completing phrases in the story. Incomplete phrases were printed on large sheets of paper. For example:

"Una.....,
, arrugadita,
, barriendo,
 se encontró.....,

The teacher explained to the children that she had the missing words in a box on her desk. Those children who didn't meet with success in this lesson were given special help in word study. This teacher believes that:

El material de lectura debe ser cautivadas. Cómo quiere usted que aprendar las criaturas cuando se les ponen lecciones con frases como estas: "Si sé," "la mula es mala." Las frases en si son repugnantes, y luego piense usted que no tienen conexión unas con otras.

(The material used in the teaching of reading must be attractive. How can you expect them to learn if you use sentences like this: "Yes, I know," "The mule is bad." These sentences are repellent and are not related to one another.)

On the following day, the teacher wrote the next part of the story on the second page of her album; on the third day she wrote the next part of her story and this continued until the entire story was written in the album. The children copied the story part by part in their albums and illustrated each part with the appropriate illustrations.

As soon as the children knew how to read the complete story of the old woman, the teacher gave them a reader. This reader was based upon the following requirements:

Ha de tener buena literatura, naturalmente dentro de la esfera de intereses y comprensión de las criaturas. Su literatura será variada: conciones de cuna, experiencias infantiles de la vida doméstica y escolar, cuentos de hadas, poemitas, historietas y fábulas, leyendas y mitos etc., ha de estar bellemente ilustrado, porque los grabados, en un buen sistema de lectura, son a menudo una parte integrante del método para enseñar. Finalmente, el contenido del libro que yo escoja, ha de estar ajustado a las experiencias de mis niños.⁴

(It must have good literature which is within the interests and comprehension of the children. Its stories should be diversified: lullabies, children's home experiences and

4 Ibid., 70-77.

experiences at school, fairy tales, short poems, fables, legends, myths, etc. It has to be beautifully illustrated, since pictures often play a very important part in the teaching method. Finally, the contents of the book that I choose must be adapted to the experiences of my children.)

The method that has just been described is advantageous for a number of reasons. First, reading acquires significance and meaning from the very beginning; secondly, the children are not burdened with phonics and analysis; thirdly, the children are better able to grasp the significance and meaning of what is read; fourthly, the children take an active part in reading--through games and other meaningful activities; and fifthly, the contents of the reader have meaning and significance for children because they are based upon the experiences and interests of children.⁵

Appraisal of Reading

At the end of the first year, the child is given a standardized test, the name of which is "Lenguaje." This test is put out by the Secretaría de Educación Pública. It measures oral reading, writing and spelling.

Rapidity in oral reading is measured by tabulating the number of words that the child is able to read in two minutes. It is recommended that this test be given to a few children at a time. The results will be less accurate if it is used with large groups of children.

5 Ibid., 78-79.

The child first reads the paragraph silently and then orally. To save time, while one child is reading silently the other child reads orally. It is recommended that the teacher does not interrupt the child while he is reading for the purpose of correcting errors.

It is necessary that the teacher have at her disposal a large sheet of paper with a list of the names of all of her children, with the following items:

- (1) Number of errors
- (2) Number of correct words
- (3) Score

The total sum of errors is recorded in the column marked number of errors; the number of words read correctly is tabulated in the column marked number of correct words; and the final score is tabulated by subtracting the number of errors from the number of words read correctly by the child. Such items as mispronunciation, syllabication, accenting the wrong words, and skipping words and lines, are counted as errors.⁶

The following story is used in the appraisal of oral reading.

⁶ Secretaría de Educación Pública, Manual de Direcciones Para La Aplicación y Calificación de Las Pruebas Pedagógicas de Promoción, Primer Año, México, D.F., Talleres, Gráficos de la S.E.P., 1952, 4.

5
 En una casita vivía una coneja con sus tres conejitos. 10
 Cuando ella salía a trabajar, dejaba la casa bien cerrada, 20
 para proteger a sus hijos del lobo que quería devorarlos y 30
 esperaba siempre el momento en que estuvieran solos para 40
 comérselos.

45
 Un día en que la mamá coneja había salido, el lobo se 55
 acercó a la puerta y llamó diciendo que traía un bonito 65
 regalo para los conejitos; pero ellos no le creyeron, ni 75
 se asomaron, pues tenían miedo, mucho miedo de los afilados 85
 dientes del lobo. Se estuvieron quietos, sin hacer ruido 95
 para que el lobo no los oyera. 100

105
 El lobo volvió a llamar más fuerte, quería que salieran a 110
 recibir las zanahorias que había cortado en el huerto vecino. 120
 Pero como los conejitos eran listos y además obedientes, 130
 abrieron y se salvaron de ser devorados por el lobo. 140

145
 Cuando regresó mamá coneja, encontró a sus conejitos to- 150
 davía temblando de miedo, pero sanos y salvos y muy contenta 160
 sacó de canastita unas frescas zanahorias, que regaló a sus 170
 hijos como premio por haberla obedecido. 180 7

Appraisal of oral reading is shown in Table III.⁸

TABLE III

APPRAISAL OF ORAL READING IN
THE FIRST GRADE

Rate of Oral Reading	Classification	Number of Words
Very rapidly	10	128 or more
Rapidly	9	103 - 127
Average	8	83 - 122
Average	7	66 - 82
Slow	6	43 - 65
Very slow	5	42 or less

As soon as tests for oral reading are administered to the children, the teacher reads the instructions indicated at the top of the page. To make certain that all of the children understand how to do the test, it is recommended that the teacher put the example on the blackboard. Any part of the test that is not understood by the children must be made clear by the teacher.

⁸ Ibid.

As soon as the children start the test, no questions or interruptions are allowed. If this initial explanation is understood by the children, they will not encounter difficulties. For each part of the test answered correctly, one point is given; the maximum number of points is twelve.⁹

Figures 1 to 4 which follow have no individual titles but are published under the general title of Comprension de la Lectura. They are tests which show how silent reading can be appraised through the measurement of comprehension.¹⁰

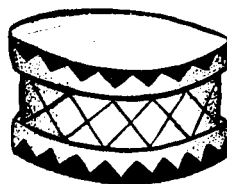
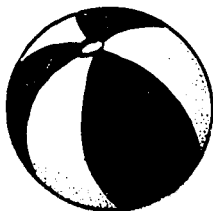
9 Ibid., 6.

10 Secretaría de Educación Pública, Lenguaje, México, D.F., Talleres Gráficos de la S.E.P., 1952, 1-6.

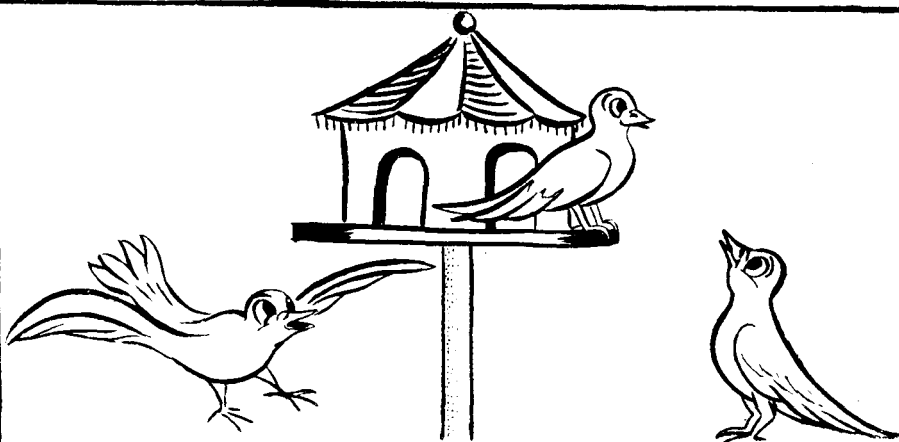
COMPRESION DE LA LECTURA

INSTRUCCIONES: Lee cuidadosamente cada una de las oraciones que están abajo de los dibujos. Marca cada uno de ellos con lo que se te ordena.

EJEMPLO

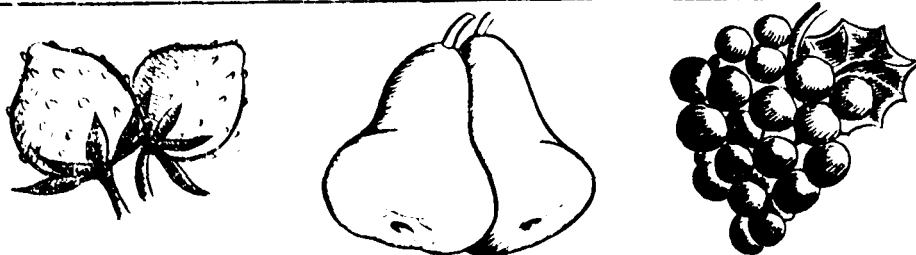


1. Dibuja una ruedita arriba del tambor.



2. Señala con una cruz la paloma que está parada en el palomar.

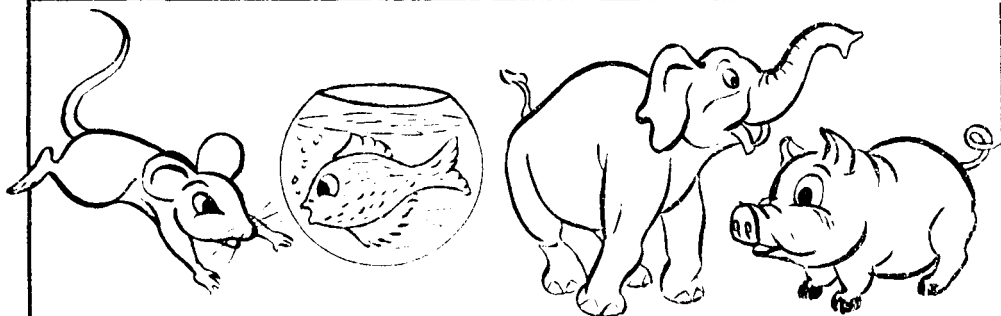
Fig. 1



3. Encierra las peras en una rueda.

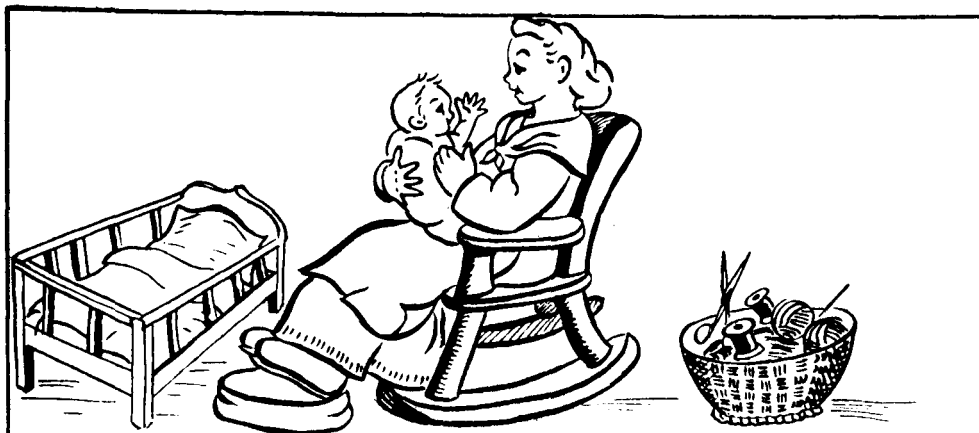


4. Señala con una cruz a la niña que vende flores.



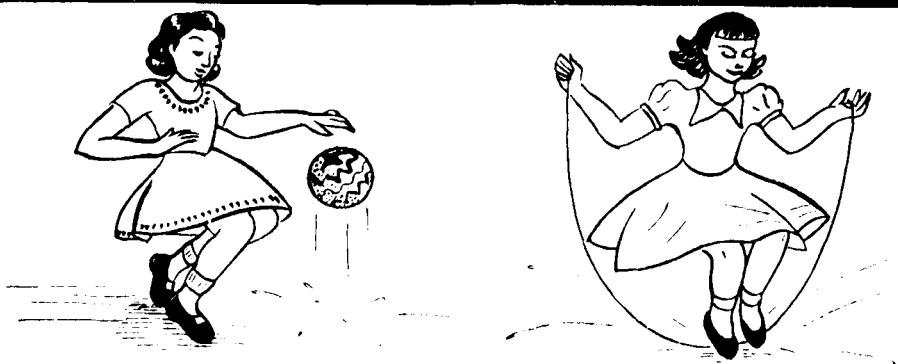
5. Dibuja una ruedita arriba del animal que vive en el agua.

Fig. 2



Mamá dejó de coser para arrullar a Lalo.
 Cuando Lalo se duerma, mamá lo acostará en su cuna.

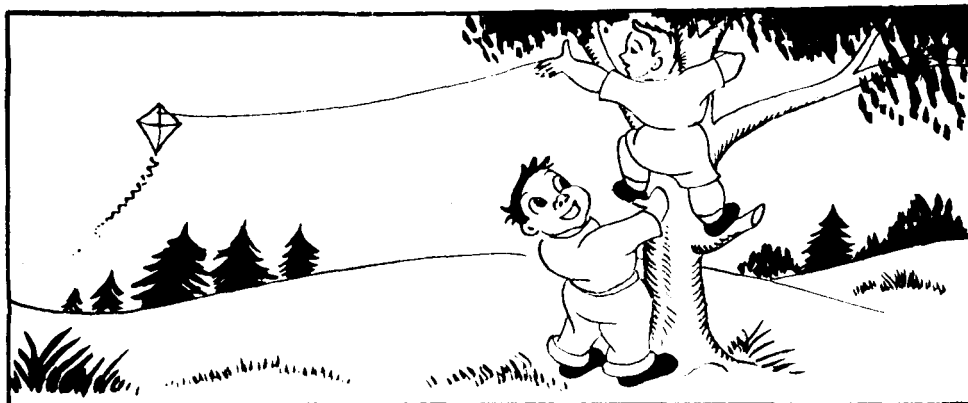
6. Dibuja una cruz en donde duerme Lalo.



Adelita y Susana juegan en el patio de su casa.
 Susana brinca la cuerda.
 Adelita juega con la pelota.

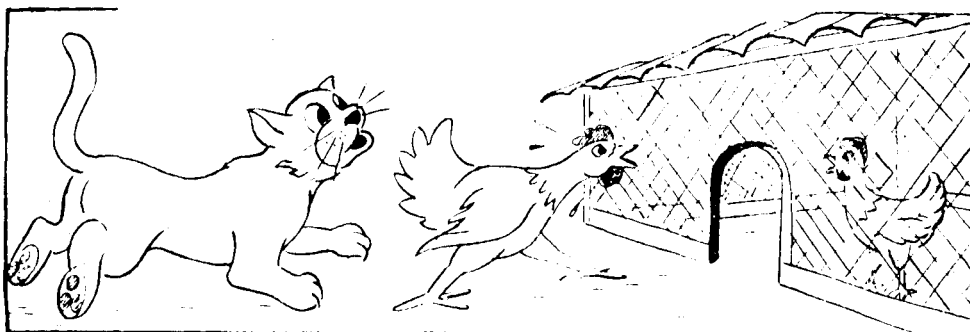
7. Señala con una cruz el juguete de Adela.

8. Dibuja una ruedita en el vestido de Susana.



Memo y Luis juegan con un papalote.
 El papalote se enredó en la rama de un árbol.
 Luis sube al árbol para bajarlo y Memo lo ayuda.

9. Señala con una cruz al niño que ayuda a Luis a subir al árbol.
 10. Dibuja una ruedita sobre lo que quieren alcanzar los niños.



Mi gato se llama Pipo.
 Pipo es travieso y juguetón. Le gusta asustar a las gallinas.
 Las gallinas cuando lo ven, corren a esconderse en el gallinero.

11. Dibuja una ruedita arriba del animal que asusta a las gallinas.
 12. Tacha con una cruz el lugar donde se esconden las gallinas.

CHAPTER VI

CURRENT METHODS USED IN THE TEACHING OF INITIAL READING

Regulations do not require the use of any one particular method in the teaching of reading. The experienced teacher realizes, however, not all methods can be used successfully with all children. The application and success of any method is conditioned by the child's environment and the preparation and training of the teacher. The best methods fail when teachers are not competent. This is why the Department of Education gives the teacher the right to select the method she considers most appropriate. However, the method selected must respect the dignity and worth of each child. In addition, it must not, in any way interfere with the normal development of the child. Those methods which take into account children's experiences, those methods that awaken the interest, stimulate initiative and develop the creative spirit of the child, are the methods that will be most successful.¹

¹ J. Rubio Villagran y Carlos Peza de la Vega, Agenda del Maestro, México, D.F., Monte de Piedad, numero 15, Despacho 402, 1950, 422-423.

The two most widely used methods in teaching reading are "el métado onomatepéyico" and "el métado global o natural."

El Métado Onomatepéyico

Professor Gregorio Torres Quintero, author of this method, contends that it is superior to any other method because of its simplicity and enduring success with children.²



This method is phonetic because it employs the sound of the letters and not their names. The sound is essentially onomatepeyic which means that the sounds of the letters represent noises and voices produced by man, animals and objects. It is analytical, because in this method, words are divided into syllables. It is synthetical, because words are formed from the syllables. Lastly, it is simultaneous, because the child learns reading and writing together.³

The value of this method lies in the attractive and appealing way in which the vowels and consonants are taught, in the selection of meaningful words and in the teaching of the letters

2 Gregorio Torres Quintero, Método Onomatopéyico Reducido Para Enseñar a Leer, México, D.F., Domicilio de la Editora, Baltimore 101, inside cover "Instrucciones"--no date.

3 Gregorio Torres Quintero, Guia del Método Onomatopéyico, México, D.F., Editorial Patria, S. A., 1950, 69.

of the alphabet, not by their names, but by their onomatopoeic sounds.⁴

In conversations with Profesora Mercedes Hernandez the writer found out that preparatory exercises were essential before the child actually learned the mechanics of reading and writing. Pre-writing exercises are given during the first, second and third weeks of school. All of the letters, lines and arcs are taught by means of games. By way of example, the teacher would recite a poem, repeating it several times until the children were able to recite it. The name of the poem, "Jack Jumps over the Candlestick," would then be dramatized by the children. Some children would be asked to go to the blackboard and draw the candlestick, representing it by two simple lines. . Then they were asked to represent the path Jack followed when jumping over the candlestick, forward and backward, which is represented by simple curved lines, like this: . This is first done in the air, then on the blackboard and finally on paper. The teacher directs the recitation of the poem with a ruler or a stick, moving to the left and to the right with the recitation of each line. Such rhythmical exercises continue for three consecutive days since both the drawings of the candlestick formed by straight

⁴ Gregorio Torres Quintero, Método Onomatopéyico Reducido Para Enseñar a Leer, inside cover.

lines and the sweeping jumps formed by curved lines, are necessary preparatory exercises for writing.⁵

Pre-reading exercises include simple language activities. Ordinary conversation, the purpose of which is to enrich the vocabulary of the child, constitutes an important language activity. In addition, words are divided into syllables.

After a few weeks of preparatory exercises, the actual teaching of reading and writing is begun. Five steps are used in the teaching of a vowel or a consonant.

- (1) A story is told in order that the children may find the onomatopoeic sound.
- (2) The children sound out the letter.
- (3) The children find words beginning with the same sound.
- (4) The teacher writes the letter on the blackboard.
- (5) The children write the letter first in the air, then on the blackboard, and finally on paper.⁶

The following letters are associated with onomatopoeic sounds:

i--the cry of a mouse iiii (as in polite)

u--the whistle of a train uuuu (as in moon)

⁵ Profesora Mercedes Hernandez, first grade teacher, "Escuela República del Brasil Anexa a la Nacional de Maestros departamento de señoritas," México, D.F., México. (Personal Interview)

⁶ Ibid.

- o--the shout of a horse trainer oooo (as in for)
- a--the cry of a frightened child aaaa (as in far)
- e--repetition of a question eeee (as in met)
- s--the sound of a firecracker ssss (as in sassaparilla)
- r--the noise of an automobile rrrr (as in very)
- rr--the noise of a wagon going down a stone street
rr rr rr rr (it has a rolling sound)
- m--the moo of a cow mmmm (same as in English)
- t--the ticking of a clock tttt (different from English t
 in that it is sounded by placing the tip of the tongue
 between the teeth)
- l--the sound of a dog lapping water llll (same as in
 English)
- j--the panting of a dog jjjj (has a sound similar to English
h but very much more aspirated, like the German ach)
- f--the hissing of an angry cat ffff (the same as in English)
- n--the ringing of a bell nnnn (the same as in English)
- c--the cackling of a hen cccc (before a, o, u or before
 another consonant, has the sound of the English k, as in
 carro (car), costo (cost), cubo (cube), clase (class),
 crema (cream), acto (act)
- q--the cackling of a hen qqqq (same as in English)
- g--the sound of a person gargling gggg (before a, o, u or
 before a consonant, has the sound of English g in gas,

go, gun, grand. Before e, i, it has the sound of English h)

ch--the noise of splashing water ch ch ch ch (like English ch in cheese, riches. It never has the sound of k, nor of ch in machine)

ll--the noise of a saw ll ll ll ll (this is a special letter which sounds very much like English ll in million, brilliant, or more like the combination ll-y in all year)

b and v--the baa of a sheep bbbb; vvvv (both have a softer sound than an English b)

ñ--the crying of an angry or frightened child ñ ñ ñ ñ (like ny in canyon, ronyon)

p--the pop of a cannon ppp (same as in English)

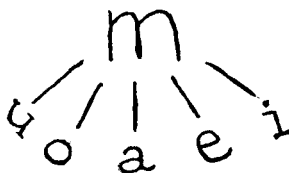
z--the sound of fireworks zzzz (as in English s in less)

x--the sound of a sneeze xxxx (sounds like ks or gs, never like sh)⁷

By way of an illustration, Profesora Mercedes Hernandez told the children a story about a mouse who got caught in a trap while going after a piece of cheese. In its agony it cried out iiii. A picture of a mouse was held up before the children. The teacher encouraged the children to produce the same sound and af-

⁷ Gregorio Torres Quintero, Método Onomatopéyico Reducido Para Enseñar A Leer, 1-14.

terwards an illustration was drawn on the blackboard. The children then copied the picture in their writing books. Other sounds were taught in a similar way. According to Profesora Hernandez, "knowledge of sounds is necessary before the first word can be taught." The first word taught was mamá, "mother." In order to teach this word the teacher told the children a story about somebody's mother, illustrating it with a picture. The teacher encouraged the children to pronounce the word slowly, breaking it into syllables. The children were encouraged to find other words beginning with the same sound. Profesora Hernandez wrote the word on the blackboard and afterward the children wrote the word in the air, then on the blackboard and finally in their writing books. The following illustration or exercise was put on the blackboard to unite the letter m with the vowels.



Various words were made from this illustration: for example, mamá, mamá, ama, amo, etc. Other words were taught in a similar way.⁸

⁸ Illustrated lesson by Profesora Mercedes Hernandez, first grade teacher, "Escuela Republica del Brasil Anexa a la Nacional de Maestro departamento de señoritas," México, D.F.

El Método Global o Natural

This method is more recent and some teachers deem it to be one of the most practical and effective methods in the teaching of reading.⁹

This method is called global because it is used throughout the world, notably in the United States and Argentina. It is said to be simultaneous because reading and writing are taught together. It is natural because it utilizes all of the faculties of the child. Instead of teaching reading solely by phonics, it begins with the teaching of ideas, sentences, phrases, meaningful words, and lastly by sounds. The underlying philosophy of this method is that in order to insure successful reading, the visual presentation of printed materials should be related to the child's language.¹⁰

Pre-reading and pre-writing exercises are indispensable activities. The duration of this preparatory period depends on the capacity and experiential background of the children. Games are used to develop auditory and visual discrimination; vowels are taught during this period; exercises to distinguish manuscript and printed letters are given; sentences are analyzed into

9 Profesora Hilda Cisneros Limas, first grade teacher, "Escuela Republica del Brasil Anexa a la Nacional de Maestros departamento de señoritas," México, D.F. (Personal Interview)

10 Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía, México, D.F.

words, and pre-writing exercises consisting of tracing, drawing and modeling are stressed.¹¹

After this preliminary period the teacher distributes readers to the children. As soon as the children have an adequate sight vocabulary they are given exercises in analyzing words into syllables, formation of similar words and word families. Knowledge of these two syllabic techniques enables the children to form new words and sentences.¹²

By way of an illustration of this method demonstrated by Profesora Hilda Cisneros Limas, first grade teacher, the following sentence was written on the blackboard, the purpose of which was to teach the word lima. "Esta es una lima." The first step consisted of having each child smell, touch and taste a large green lime. The second step consisted of analyzing the sentence into words. The third step consisted of analyzing the words into syllables. "Es/ta es u/na li/ma." The children were then encouraged to think of words that began with the same initial sound as lima. After this was accomplished, Profesora Limas proceeded to write another sentence of similar structure on the blackboard. "Esta es una manzana." To insure success in learn-

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

ing the word manzana, each child had the experience of touching, smelling and tasting an apple. The sentence and words were similarly analyzed into their component parts. In addition, the two sentences were compared for similarities and differences. Profesora Limas has great faith in her technique. She claims that after a short time, all of her children were able to analyze and construct new words and sentences with ease.¹³

13 Illustration by Profesora Hilda Cisneros Limas, first grade teacher, "Escuela Republica del Brasil Anexa a la Nacional de Maestros departamento de señoritas, México, D.F.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The act of reading makes up a large part of school life in Mexico. It is considered to be the most important subject in the curriculum.

The competent first grade teacher in Mexico is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of a reading-readiness program. She realizes that each child is a "unique" individual different from other children mentally, physically, socially and emotionally. She recognizes the important role that home and environmental experiences play in reading success.

The earlier methods used in the teaching of reading in Mexico disregarded interests, experiential background, needs, etc., although the Rébsamen technique was formerly valuable, it is no longer considered adequate. The onomatopoeic method has been very valuable in teaching reading during the past years and a large number of teachers still use it. However, the global or natural method appears to be more scientific. It recognizes individual differences; meaningfulness and interest are two of its chief concerns.

Whatever method is used it must take into consideration the "whole" child and not merely his intellectual growth. It is of primary importance that the teacher adjust the application of the method to the needs of her particular children. The reading program must be based upon material that is interesting to the child. He must feel a genuine need for reading. Last but not least, the methods should develop linguistic, dramatic, artistic and constructive activities.

Materials and supplies such as charts, paper, crayons, paints, pencils, picture books, clay, etc., are not furnished by the Mexican government, since government funds are inadequate. Many classrooms are bare except for small tables and chairs used by the children and the teacher's desk and chair. In spite of this, the classroom environment is a warm and inviting one. The relationship between the children and the teachers is, for the most part, close and friendly. Many of the teachers the writer met spend much time outside of school hours constructing teaching materials and tutoring children free of charge. The Mexican teacher is a fine example of a real teacher. She must be, in order to put up with an average monthly income of only 600 pesos, which amounts to a little under \$70.00 in American money.

During the Colonial period, 1521-1821, there were comparatively few schools for the Mexican children. It was chiefly children from wealthy homes who received an adequate education.

During the regime of Porfirio Diaz, 1867-1910, nearly ninety per cent of the population could not read or write. "Dictator" Diaz called a noted Swiss educator, Enrique Rébsamen, to Mexico. He established the first training school for teachers at Jalapa, Vera Cruz. It was not until 1917, however, that any notable progress was made in education.

In 1921, President Obregon appointed José Vasconcelos, Minister of Education. This brilliant man began the work of educating the millions of Mexicans who never before had been given the opportunity to study and to learn. There are now thousands of federal, state and city schools. By 1935 illiteracy in Mexico had dropped from the 1892 high of close to ninety per cent to about sixty per cent.

School children in the plateau regions in and around Mexico City have their vacations during December and January, the coldest months of the year. That is because no heat is provided in school buildings and it would be uncomfortable for children to sit and study. In the northern and extreme southern parts of Mexico, because of intense summer heat, children are out of school during the months of June, July and August.

Public education in Mexico has made great progress during the past ten years. For the last fifteen years the Mexican government has carried on an extensive school building program. This was especially true of the Cardenas administration which

was in power from 1934 to 1940. During the next administration, that of Camacho, congress passed a law forcing people to provide all servants in the home with daily instruction in reading and writing, given by a qualified person. Those who failed to comply with this law were to be punished by a heavy fine.

Illiteracy has been much reduced, so that now only about thirty per cent of the people are still unable to read and write, which is a notable improvement in a short period of time.

President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, the current president, is doing an excellent job in the great task of education in Mexico. By way of exemplifying this statement, the budget for education in 1940 was about 78,676,674 pesos (approximately 9,048,450 American dollars). In 1946, 207,900,000 pesos were set aside for education (approximately 24,174,418 American dollars). In 1954 more than 400,000,000 pesos have been set aside for education (approximately 46,511,628 American dollars). It is interesting to note that his policy toward education and religion is one of absolute tolerance.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Louise Marion
Cadwell has been read and approved.

The final copies have been examined by the
director of the thesis and the signature which appears
below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have
been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given
final approval with reference to content, form, and
mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts.

May 10, 1954
Date

Lucy Bynum
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