

A PILOT STUDY OF A FIRST GRADE
LINGUISTIC READING APPROACH

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The value of various approaches to beginning reading has been a topic of great concern to educators.

Dodds states:

The present decade has witnessed an assortment of approaches to reading instruction....The broad spectrum of current thinking includes basal readers, ITA, Words in Color, Linguistics, language-experience, phonics, and personalized reading.¹

Great dissatisfaction with the results of the traditional basal reader approach is very evident. There is a consuming interest among educators to improve the reading achievement over that which has been attained by the basal reader approach.

The U. S. office of Education Department of Health, Education and Welfare² sponsored twenty-seven research studies on the teaching of beginning reading during the academic year of 1964 and 1965.

During the past ten years there has been increased attention paid to those who propose the teaching of beginning reading by using materials based on linguistic findings. Professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers and the International Reading Association have provided workshops dealing with linguistics and reading at their annual conventions. Professional journals such as The Reading Teacher and Elementary English are

¹William J. Dodds, "Highlights From the History of Reading Instruction," The Reading Teacher, XXI (December, 1967), p. 279.

²Guy L. Bond and Robert Dykstra, "The Cooperative Research Program in First-Grade Reading Instruction," Reading Research Quarterly, 11 (Summer 1967), p. 5-142.

publishing an increasing number of articles dealing with linguistics and classroom experimentation with linguistic materials.

There has been much criticism of the results of the basal reader approach, specifically by the linguists who have made proposals based on the findings of their scientific study of the language. Fries,³ Bloomfield and Barnhart,⁴ and Lefevre,⁵ as well as others, have advocated methods and materials for teaching beginning reading based on linguistic findings.

Linguistics as applied to a beginning reading program is a systematic approach based upon the analysis of symbol sound relationships. The linguists have separated those words which are consistently represented by patterns according to the regularity of their spelling from those which are exceptions to the patterns. Those patterned words are used in stories with the irregularly spelled words presented last or as necessary in the material to make it have the correct meaning. The chief characteristics of the approach is to teach the relationship of phonemes to their corresponding letter symbols.

Another linguistic approach to the teaching of first grade reading is to start with the unitary meaning-bearing sentence of structural functions clearly signalled and patterned by (a) intonation; (b) syntactical functions in basic sentence patterns; (c) structure words; and (d) word form changes. In this approach the child masters the graphic system by giving his attention to larger patterns and develops his own inductive sound-spelling relationships.

³Charles Fries, Linguistics and Reading (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963).

⁴Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence Barnhart, Let's Read (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961).

⁵Carl L. Lefevre, Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964).

This would be accomplished largely through his writing. In reading he would need formal spelling instruction only to get him over difficulties.⁶

Lefevre states:

It is my deliberate method to proceed from the large structure of sentence-level utterances, step by step down through the component elements to that speech atom, the phoneme. I believe that this is the most fruitful approach for learning and teaching the graphic system of the already known mother tongue.⁷

Lerner concluded that in the global theory of reading which considers the systems of: (1) skills and abilities in reading, (2) the reading-learning process, and (3) the teaching of reading linguistics has potential applicability.

In the first major aspect, skills and abilities, there are two spots of possible applicability. First, in the word perception element, phonological skill in phoneme-grapheme relationships may be helpful in decoding the printed symbol. Second, in the comprehension element, the skill of sentence sense is important. Intonation is the linguistic ability which helps to translate the secondary printed sentence back to the primary oral form of English. In the third system linguistics has little to contribute.⁸

In the learning-reading process linguistics can help the teacher of reading acquire attitudes and perspectives toward the integral role of language in the developmental and thinking processes of the child. The linguists stress the importance of a child's native language. It is his link with the

⁶Arthur Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1967) pp. 247-8.

⁷Lefevre, op. cit., p. 73.

⁸Janet Lerner, "A Global Theory of Reading," The Reading Teacher, XXI (February, 1968), p. 421.

outside world. Linguistics can help the teacher develop respect for various dialects and an acceptance of different language levels. Every teacher should realize that the child's language provides a significant starting point in the education process.⁹

Studies comparing the traditional basal reader approach and a linguistic approach to the teaching of beginning reading have been made by Schneyer,¹⁰ Edward,¹¹ and Sheldon and Lashinger.¹²

Other studies using the linguistic approach were made by Goldberg and Rasmussen,¹³ Ruddell,¹⁴ White,¹⁵ and Shawaker.¹⁶

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Wesley Schneyer, "Reading Achievement of First Grade Children Taught by a Linguistic Approach and a Basal Reader Approach," The Reading Teacher, XIX (May, 1966), pp. 647-52.

¹¹Sister May Edward, "A Modified Linguistic Versus a Composite Basal Reading Program," The Reading Teacher, XVII (April, 1964), pp. 511-15.

¹²William D. Sheldon and Donald Lashinger, Effect of First Grade Instruction Using Basal Readers, Modified Linguistic Materials, and Linguistic Readers (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University, 1966).

¹³Lynn Goldberg and Donald Rasmussen, "Linguistics and Reading," Elementary English, XL (March, 1963), pp. 242-47.

¹⁴Robert Ruddell, "Reading Instruction in First Grade with Varying Emphasis on the Regularity of Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence and the Relation of Language Structure to Meaning," The Reading Teacher, XIX (May, 1966), pp. 653-60.

¹⁵Evelyn Mae White, "Linguistic Learning Cycles," The Reading Teacher XXI (February, 1968), pp. 411-46.

¹⁶Annette Shawaker, "A Substitute for the Whole-Word Method," The Reading Teacher, XX (February, 1967), pp. 426-35.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to determine if there were significant differences in visual discrimination test scores and in reading test scores at the end of the first grade of pupils who had been taught by a linguistic approach to beginning reading and those who used a traditional basal reader approach.

LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to the pupils in the three first grades in the elementary schools of Clay Center, Kansas, Unified District 379.

Another limitation was the fact that the teachers and the pupils were not assigned randomly.

Some of the variables not controlled were: (1) instructional time, (2) teacher competence, and (3) pupils' cultural background.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Linguistics. Fries writes that:

Linguistics is a linguistic science and as a body of knowledge and understanding concerning the nature and functioning of human language, built up out of information about the structure, the operation, and the history of a wide range of very diverse human languages by means of those techniques and procedures that have proved most successful in establishing verifiable generalizations concerning relationships among linguistic phenomena.¹⁷

Phoneme. A phoneme is the smallest class of significant speech sounds. The 'segmental' phonemes are the nine simple vowels, the three semi-vowels, and the twenty-one consonants of American English.¹⁸

¹⁷Fries, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁸Lefevre, op. cit., p. XIV.

Morpheme. Morphemes are the basic meaning-bearing units of language. A morpheme is an indivisible language element patterned out of phonemes. Morphemes include word bases (roots), prefixes, suffixes, and word-form changes, or inflections.¹⁹

Visual discrimination. Visual discrimination is the ability to distinguish similarities and differences in size, shape, and color of objects and in the forms of printed words.²⁰

Grapheme. A grapheme is a written letter of the alphabet which represents only one phoneme (sound), and the sound is the one most frequently associated with a given grapheme.²¹

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Paul McKee, The Teaching of Reading (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 146.

²¹Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (second edition, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1967) p. 244.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The development of effective reading programs has probably been studied more often by educational research workers than any other area. In spite of these results we are still seeking the "magic formula" that will solve all reading problems for all children.

Methods of teaching young people how to read have developed historically from the alphabet and spelling systems to word, sentence, phonic, and story method. Early in 1920 the concept of vocabulary control was introduced. This concept of the controlled vocabulary resulted in the development of series of reading textbooks. The revised editions of many of these basic readers are currently used in the classroom today.

Heilman states:

Every generation has questioned its educational systems, its school's curriculum, and the school's methodology in teaching basic subjects. Questions such as education for whom and education for what have never been satisfactorily answered because they continue to be asked again and again.¹

Dawson notes that schools which formerly lagged behind are revamping curricula and adopting new methods and materials for teaching to keep pace with a rapidly changing society.²

¹Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1961), p. 22.

²Mildred A. Dawson, "Looking Ahead in Reading," The Reading Teacher XXI (November, 1967), p. 121.

According to Niles, one of the forces at work to produce new materials for the teaching of reading is the now almost universal recognition that skill in reading is the foundation for all academic success.³

Dawson states:

Linguistics seem to undergird a 'New English' that is increasingly being adopted in schools. Cooperative research projects and rapid advances in automation promise to have influence on some curricula in the very near future.⁴

McKee's interpretation of language and linguistic efforts is:

Words in any language are oral symbols for objects, actions, ideas, relationships, and many other things. The system by which words are formed, inflected, and put together to communicate facts and ideas is the grammar of the language and the grammar of one language is different from that of any other....What linguists have tried to do is develop a grammar which truly describes the English language as it is used today, not one which prescribes how it should be used.⁵

The linguistic approach is one of the newest approaches to reading instruction.

Lefevre states:

It is time for the field of reading to reflect the great contribution made by the twentieth century language scholars to our understanding of reflective and conceptual thought.⁶

The scientific study of language as practiced in the United States in the nineteenth century was based upon that of European scholars working in

³Olive S. Niles, "Looking at New Materials," The Instructor, LXXVI (November, 1966), p. 121.

⁴Dawson, loc. cit.

⁵Paul McKee, "Linguistics and the Elementary Language Arts Program," The Instructor, LXXV (March, 1966), p. 19.

⁶Carl A. Lefevre, Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. XXI.

historical comparative linguistics, in phonetics, and in linguistic geography. Since the world wars, linguistics, the scientific study of language, in the United States has had a parallel development with that of Europe.

In America the development of linguistics was a result of efforts to record and analyze the individual languages of the separate families of the American Indian languages of America.⁷

Fries States:

For American structural linguists that have given special vigor to the linguistic work in this country since 1925, Edward Sapir furnished the basic point of view and Bloomfield provided the detailed statement of principles of analysis.⁸

According to Chall the work of Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries have had the greatest linguistic effect on beginning reading programs. Their emphasis on decoding as the first step in learning to read has resulted in greater stress on earlier emphasis on the alphabet, phonics, spelling, and writing.⁹

Types of linguists. There are three types of linguistic scientists, each concerned with his own sphere of language research.

One school, that of the phonologist, is concerned with the analysis of the sounds of spoken and written language. Leonard Bloomfield is credited with the identification of the various phonemes which are the basic sounds of our language. The phonologists' concept of the act of reading is a translation of the sounds for which the letters stand first into vocal sounds then

⁷Charles C. Fries, Linguistics and Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 59.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Jean Chall, "What are Teachers' Concerns About How Children Learn to Read?" The Instructor, LXXVII (March, 1968), p. 95.

into words and finally into sentences. Meaningful units are subordinate to the translation into sounds.¹⁰

The second school of linguists are grammarians or structural linguists who have investigated the structure of language.

Heilman states:

Structuralists point out that single words are rarely meaning bearing units. Words work together in larger wholes. It is with larger language patterns that the structural linguist wishes to begin reading instruction. Not words-to-phrases-to-sentences, but rather he wishes to begin with the sentence as the basic meaning-bearing pattern. The structuralists feel that the child must start with oral reading of sentences with instructional emphasis on his noting and practicing intonation patterns he already recognizes and uses in his speech.¹¹

Lefevre states:

The American English sentence should be read not as a sequence of words but as a unitary meaning-bearing sequence of structural functions clearly signalled by (a) intonation; (b) syntactical functions in basic sentence patterns; (c) structure words; and (d) word-form changes.¹²

The third type of linguist, the psycholinguists, deals with the identification of the elements of prose style, such as abstractness, ornamentation, and personalization. This school does not appear to have emphasized the direct implications of its studies for reading instruction.

Objections to current methods. Many linguists denounce the phonic approach to reading. They feel phonics tend to isolate speech sounds. Teaching a child to read by phonic analysis results in pronunciation unlike his auditory memories of the word.

¹⁰George D. Spache, Reading in the Elementary Schools (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1964), pp. 117-8.

¹¹Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 247-8.

¹²Lefevre, op. cit., p. XX.

The whole word method is also criticized by linguists who believe that a child learns to read by spelling the word. The word method is inconsistent and confusing because words in most basal series are not phonetically consistent in the sounds that the spelling portrays. According to this theory the primary school vocabulary should be controlled in the regularities of the sounds the words contain.

In recent criticism of the sight word method the linguists assume that it is synonymous with guessing and memorization of the word. The same authors accuse the phonic approaches used in the basal method of having no systematic approach to sounds and of neglecting to teach all possible sounds represented by all letter combinations.¹³

Limitations of the linguistic approach. The linguists who denounce the teaching of word recognition as destructive of sentence sense and the recognition of the significance of the complete element or sentence, do not seem to recognize that reading is first a word recognition task and secondly a process of interpretation of word combinations.

Success in reading is not completely dependent upon auditory memory for speech. Deaf children who have no auditory memories as a source of reference can learn to read. Thus auditory memories are helpful but not absolutely essential for beginning readers.¹⁴

¹³Spache, op. cit., p. 120.

¹⁴Spache, op. cit., p. 125.

Heilman states:

Without doubt, reading instruction can be strengthened as teachers acquire some of the important insights which linguists have discovered. On the other hand, linguists as scientists are in no way responsible for finding applications for their discoveries. Few have actively engaged in relating their discoveries to the school curriculum. As a result, linguistics has had little impact on the content of the curriculum particularly at the elementary level.¹⁵

Recently some linguists have evolved theories relative to methodology and instructional material but these have not been tested longitudinally in the classroom. There is not enough research data upon which to base definite conclusions.¹⁶

Dawson states:

The influence of linguistics is already being felt. Systems for teaching beginning reading are springing up in many parts of the United States....Structural linguistics seems to have a great contribution to make to the teaching of oral reading....The teacher who understands the system of word clustering and intonations as the basis of meaning cannot be satisfied with mere word calling in oral reading. He will know that the child who really comprehends the situation and ideas involved in the selection he is reading will reflect his understanding by inflecting his voice properly in giving the correct intonation to the words within the clusters.¹⁷

Betts states:

Linguistics can become a new fad in reading instruction or, this relatively new approach to the scientific study of language can contribute to the restructuring of both materials and methods and, therefore, contribute to pupil achievement.¹⁸

¹⁵Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1967), p. 251.

¹⁶Heilman, op. cit., p. 252.

¹⁷Dawson, op. cit., pp. 123-24.

¹⁸Emmett A. Betts, "Reading: Linguistics," Education, 83 (1963), pp. 515-26.

Betts recognized that some linguists being neither teachers nor reading specialists, tend to overemphasize the application of linguistic principles teaching reading. The primary objection seems to be that some linguists fail to consider how the principles can be applied to the situation; however, their specific methodological principles of linguistics undoubtedly can contribute much to more effective teaching of reading.¹⁹

Hildreth states:

Reading is primarily a linguistic process, one which requires grasping sentence meanings primarily in oral context....Too seldom pupils realize that reading is not just pronouncing but associating sounds with meaning, and that meaning is expressed not only by single sounds words but by the larger syntactical units of phrases and sentences.²⁰

Karlsen tells us:

We probably cannot speak of a 'linguistic approach' to the teaching of reading at the present time since we are not entirely in agreement as to what this might be.²¹

All methods of teaching reading should be "linguistic" in that they should be consistent with the linguistic structure of the language. No method of teaching reading is universally best. We must seek methods which give results with each particular language.²²

A LINGUISTIC APPROACH

Fundamental principles. Language is the principal means through which our experience of the world and of ourselves can be understood, categorized,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 524.

²⁰ Gertrude Hildreth, "Linguistic Factors in Early Reading Instruction," The Reading Teacher, III (December, 1964), p. 172.

²¹ Bjorn Karlsen, "Children's Reading and the Linguistic Structure of Languages," The Reading Teacher, III (December, 1964), p. 187.

²² Ibid., p. 193.

and symbolized. Because of language we can communicate effectively with others who have cultural experiences in common with our own. Language--spoken language--is a symbolization of human experiences within groups having and sharing a culture in common. Writing is a symbolization of language and, thus, a symbolization of a symbolization. Therefore, the linguist considers it unscientific to equate the word "language" with printed material.²³

The linguistic scientist's first area of concern is the relationship between language as spoken and the representation of spoken language in writing systems. The basis of the reading process is this relationship. We learn to speak very early in life. We learn to read and write on a formal and technical level of awareness. We usually think that the printed material is more important to us than the ephemera of everyday speech. We are convinced that speech is only a pale imitation of writing which we consider to be the real language. Writing is secondary to language both functionally and historically. Language is not the marks we make, it is the noises we make. Man has been writing language for only about six or seven thousand years but he has been talking upwards of a million years.

It has been said, "The English language is formed of 26 letters" but English is not a phonetic language where each letter has only one sound as in the Romance languages. Letters represent the sounds of our language; they do not have sounds.

Another confusion between language and writing is the misconception of what meaning really does mean. It is false to assume that the reader makes a direct connection between printed words and "real-life" meanings. To get

²³Jack E. Richardson, Henry Lee Smith, Jr., and Bernard J. Weiss, "Teacher's Plan Book for the Preprimers," The Linguistic Readers (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 5.

the meaning from the printed page depends upon how well the reader can furnish the oral counterparts. These, then, in turn release the meanings which the reader already possesses as a speaker of the language and as a member of the culture.

The primary and most difficult task in learning to read is learning to react to a group of letters by furnishing the utterances for which the letters stand.²⁴

Problems inherent in the writing system. The English writing system is technically called alphabetic and is based on what is called the "phonemic principle". According to this theory, each letter should consistently stand for one sound (phoneme) in the language. For example, the words pin and bin are distinguished by the contrasting initial consonant sounds. The linguistically significant difference between these beginning sounds is the lack of the presence of vocal chord vibrations in the "p" sound which are present in the "b" sound. If the English writing system were entirely based on the phonemic principle we would use only one letter for one phoneme. This ideal is far from being realized in English spelling. The English writing system is not a perfect reflection of the speech system. Therefore, reading material presented to the child should be carefully controlled.²⁵

Our writing system shows further evidence of incompleteness in its failure to represent consistently, if at all, the speech features of stress, pitch, and juncture which are absolutely essential to the meaning one intends to communicate.²⁶

²⁴Ibid., pp. 5-6.

²⁵Ibid., p. 7.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 6-7.

In the following examples we can hear contrasts in stress if they are read for the meaning in parentheses.

lighthouse-keeper

(keeper of a lighthouse)

light housekeeper

(one who does light housekeeping)

Light housekeeper

(a housekeeper who is not dark or heavy)

For examples of pitch phonemes, listen to yourself read the following:

Why's he going to Paris?

(What's his reason?)

Why's he going to Paris?

(and not some other city?)

Why's he going to Paris?

(and not someone else?)²⁷

Compare the spoken words "night rate" and "nitrate" for an example of internal juncture.

Obviously, typography does not accurately signal the meaning which are conveyed orally by stress, pitch, and juncture. Therefore, a teacher must be fully aware of how these speech features function. Dull, halting, expressionless reading may completely obscure the meaning of the material. Many children read aloud without proper intonation. This may be caused by overemphasis on reading words as words--one at a time. Each word does have to be read before fluency can be obtained. This depends upon first grasping the phonemic

²⁷Ibid., p. 8.

principle--that is with materials which have dependable alphabetic-phonemic relationship.

Differences among the various American dialects cannot be ignored as a factor in the selection of initial reading vocabulary. For example, not all native speakers consider dog, log, and frog as rhyming words. The Linguistic Readers are designed to minimize the problems presented by the dialectal features of spoken English. Any reader based on purely phonemic-alphabetic considerations would be imperfect and incomplete.²⁸

Learning to read systematically. Any material that can help the grasp the principle of our writing system will hasten and reinforce the control of the reading process. The child's oral-auditory control of language should make learning to read less difficult. Children should not be considered ignorant of language because they are not yet literate.

The teacher must aid the beginning reader to grasp with his own language ability and at his own speed, the phonemic principle.²⁹

RELATED RESEARCH

Research on the linguistic approach and studies comparing the linguistic and the traditional basal reader approach to first grade reading has increased rapidly since 1965.

Major findings of an investigation conducted by J. Wesley Schneyer on the achievement of first grade children taught by a linguistic approach and a basal reader method revealed that when the two treatment groups were considered as a

²⁸Ibid., p. 9.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

whole, neither approach resulted in significantly higher reading achievement than the other.

Schneyer states:

It seems apparent at this time that final answers to some of the crucial questions concerning reading achievement under initially different approaches to learning to read must be held in abeyance.³⁰

Sheldon and Lashinger conducted a first grade reading study at Syracuse University using three sets of materials designed for the teaching of beginning reading. They were basal readers, modified linguistic material, and linguistic readers.

The results of the comparison of these three approaches to beginning reading showed that no one of the approaches was more effective than the others in teaching children to read.

Achievement measures showed that children learned to read at an acceptable level. In each treatment group some children failed to learn to read; therefore, no one approach was completely successful for all children using it.

An important implication of this study was that because of the great range of differences in the class means within treatment groups further study of factors other than materials and methods seems to be necessary. The most obvious were teacher variable, classroom climate, environmental influence, and I.Q.³¹

³⁰J. Wesley Schneyer, "Reading Achievement of First Grade Children Taught by a Linguistic Approach and a Basal Reader Approach," The Reading Teacher, XIX (May, 1966), p. 652.

³¹William Sheldon and Donald Lashinger, Effect of First Grade Instruction Using Basal Readers, Modified Linguistic Materials, and Linguistic Readers (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University, 1966).

Another study involving a linguistic modified approach versus a basal reading program was conducted by Sister Mary Edward. In this study the subjects had received instruction in one of the two approaches for three years. Analysis of the data was given at the beginning of the fourth year.

The findings show that both groups performed above the national norms on all reading tests. The children of the experimental group had fewer orientation problems, possessed greater ability to analyze words visually, recognized words in isolation more readily, had greater phonetic knowledge, and used context with greater facility than children taught with the control method. There was no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their ability to synthesize words.

Low and average ability groups appeared to profit more greatly than did children of high ability in the modified linguistic approach.³²

Ruddell's study of reading instruction in first grade with varying emphasis on the regularity of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and the relation of language structure to meaning gave the following conclusions:

1. The first grade reading programs possessing a high degree of consistency in grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the vocabulary introduced showed significantly higher (a) word study skills, (b) word reading, and (c) regular word identification scores than the control groups.
2. The first grade reading program making provision for a high degree of consistency in grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the vocabulary introduced and placing special emphasis on

³²Sister Mary Edward, "A Modified Linguistic Versus a Composite Basal Reader Program," The Reading Teacher, XVII (April, 1964), pp. 511-15.

language structure as related to meaning showed irregular word identification scores significantly higher than scores for the reading programs making little provision for constant correspondences and placing special emphasis on language structure as related to meaning.

3. The first grade reading program making provisions for a high degree of consistency in grapheme-phoneme correspondences and placing special emphasis on language structure as related to meaning showed significantly higher (a) sentence meaning and (b) paragraph meaning scores than did the program placing no special emphasis on language structure as related to meaning.
4. Sentence meaning, paragraph meaning and vocabulary achievement of first grade children at the end of grade one are a function of the control which they exhibit over certain aspects of (a) their syntactical language and (b) their morphological language system.³³

Shawaker used linguistically based books in developing a method to help those with auditory perceptual disabilities. She used linguistic material because it starts with phonemically irregular words and works gradually to irregular words in the language.

Materials used were Fries reader, Harper and Row Preprimers, and the Walcutt McCracken primer.

³³Robert B. Ruddell, "Reading Instruction in First Grade with Varying Emphasis on the Regularity of Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences and the Relation of Language Structure to Meaning," The Reading Teacher, XIX (May, 1966), pp. 653-60.

This method worked for Shawaker and she presented it "with the hope that some children will learn to read who have not been able even to start to read before."³⁴

Research indicates we are not sure what impact linguistics will have on reading materials and instruction. Experts do not agree on the linguistic facts about American English. They acknowledge that more analysis and study of our language is needed before conclusive facts are known.³⁵

Children learn to read as well with the linguistic approach as with the traditional basal readers and in some instances, certain areas of performance have been superior. However, there have been no consistent results reported.

The research now being carried out in the field of reading shows we really are looking ahead in reading.

³⁴Annette Shawaker, "A Substitute for the Whole-Word Method," The Reading Teacher, XX (February, 1967), p. 431.

³⁵Dawson, op. cit., p. 123.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

SAMPLE

Three groups of first grade children who attended the elementary schools in Clay Center, Kansas, Unified District 379, during the school year of 1967-1968 were the subjects.

There were seventy-three pupils in the two Control groups and twenty-four pupils in the Experimental group. The writer was involved as the first grade teacher of the Experimental group.

PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

The Control groups were started in the reading readiness books of a basal reader, The Developmental Reading Series, by Lyons and Carnhan.¹

Upon completion of the readiness books, the Control groups were given the Harper and Row Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness.² This test was administered September 20, 1967.

Results of this test indicated all pupils were ready for formal reading.

The Control groups used the preprimers to this series of basic readers. Upon completion of these preprimers each pupil was tested on the vocabulary list for these preprimers. As the pupils showed readiness for the primer they

¹Guy Bond, Marie Cuddy, and Kathleen Wise, The Developmental Reading Series (Chicago: Lyons and Carnahan, Inc., 1962).

²Bryan H. Van Roekel, Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1966).

were started in that reader of the series.

The Control groups used phonic Key Cards, phonic workbooks to this basic series, and worksheets made from suggestions given in the teacher's manuals.

During the time the preprimers, primer, and the first reader were taught the classes were divided into three levels for group instruction.

The Experimental group was taught the readiness book of The Linguistic Readers³ beginning August 30, 1967 and completing it September 19, 1967.

The Harper and Row Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness⁴ was administered September 20, 1967.

The Experimental group completed the Linguistic Preprimers by December 18, 1967. The children were kept in one group during this phase of the reading program. Upon completion of these preprimers each child was given a word recognition test. The words used consisted of the vocabulary list of the Harper and Row Linguistic Preprimers. Results showed five pupils missed one word each with others having perfect scores.

The Experimental group was then taught the primer and first reader of this series. During this period, the group was divided into two levels for instruction. These divisions were very flexible. Several pupils moved from one level to the next higher level as their achievement in reading skills and oral reading showed outstanding improvement.

The Experimental group used phonic Key Cards, charts, and materials suggested in the teacher's manuals for this series.

All groups used the libraries which were located in the first grade rooms of each school.

³Jack E. Richardson, Jr., Henry Lee Smith, Jr., and Bernard J. Weiss, The Linguistic Readers (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965).

⁴Van Roekel, loc. cit.

Measuring devices. The Harper and Row Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness⁵ was used to measure readiness for formal reading. The Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests⁶ were used to determine the intelligence of each pupil.

A Visual Discrimination Test⁷ was constructed for this study. The categories of this test were Real Words, Combination of Real and Nonsense Words, and Nonsense Words. This test was given to all groups April 5, 1968.

The SRA Achievement Series⁸, Form D, was used to measure reading achievement. The categories on this test were Verbal-Pictorial Association, Language Perception, Comprehension, and Vocabulary. This test was administered to all children participating in this study the week of April 22-26, 1968.

Instructional period. The instructional period consisted of one hundred sixty days. It started August 30, 1967 and ended May 1, 1968.

Method of gathering data. Scores were taken from the Harper and Row Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness⁹ given September 20, 1967, the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests¹⁰ administered February 28, 1968, and the Visual Discrimination Test¹¹ given April 5, 1968.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Arthur Otis, Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1939).

⁷Constructed by the writer for this study.

⁸Louis P. Thorpe, D. Welty Lefever, and Robert Naslund, SRA Achievement Series, Form D (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1963).

⁹Van Roekel, loc. cit.

¹⁰Otis, loc. cit.

¹¹Constructed by the writer for this study.

Scores from the SRA Achievement Series,¹² Form D, given April 22-26, 1968 were used to determine reading achievement.

Method of analysis. The three groups were compared in each of the tests' categories by finding the mean scores and the standard deviations. The t-test was used to determine if there were significant differences at the .05 level between the mean scores of the Experimental and the Control groups on the categories of each test used as a measuring device. The number of like scores for each group on the Visual Discrimination Test was also determined and scores were compared.

¹²Louis P. Thorpe, D. Welty Lefever, and Robert Naslund, SRA Achievement Series, Form D (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1963).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE DATA

Introduction. This pilot study was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the results of a linguistic and a basal reader approach to the teaching of reading in the first grade. Tests of reading readiness, intelligence, and visual discrimination were given during the instructional period. A reading achievement test was administered at the end of the instructional period.

Analysis of tests given during the study. The Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness¹ was administered September 20, 1967.

¹Bryan H. Van Roekel, Pre-Reading Test of Scholastic Ability to Determine Reading Readiness (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1966).

TABLE I
 MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON THE HARPER
 AND ROW PRE-READING TEST OF SCHOLASTIC ABILITY
 TO DETERMINE READING READINESS

	Experimental Group		Control Group I		Control Group II	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Visual Discrimination	24	1.85	23	2.53	24	1.90
Auditory Similarities Rhyming Words	19	2.10	19	1.69	16	4.05
Relationships	23	2.29	21	3.30	23	2.24
Auditory Similarities Initial Sounds	16	3.63	15	4.35	14	4.55
Concepts	19	.73	19	1.31	19	1.72
Story Interpretation	21	1.86	22	1.34	19	2.22
Total Score	122	9.22	118	9.88	114	10.17

Results of this test revealed that each pupil was ready for formal beginning reading instruction. There was no significant difference between the Experimental group and Control Group I. The t -ratio was 1.39. For 45 subjects, a t -value of 2.014 was required to be significant at the .05 level of significance.² However, between the Experimental group and Control Group II, a t -ratio of 2.81 was found. For 52 subjects, this exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008. Therefore, on the pre-reading test, the Experimental group and Control Group I did not differ significantly while the Experimental group and Control

²J. P. Guilford, Fundamental Statistics in Psychology and Education (3rd edition; New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 539.

Group II did, with the Experimental Group being significantly higher than Control Group II.

The Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests³ were administered to the three groups February 18, 1968. Results of the test are shown in Table II.

TABLE II
MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS
ON THE OTIS QUICK-SCORING
MENTAL ABILITY TESTS
ALPHA TEST

	Experimental Group	Control Group I	Control Group II
Non-Verbal Score	52.66	57.47	47.71
Verbal Score	65.45	56.47	55.46
Total Score	118.11	107.94	103.17
I.Q.	120	113	110
Standard Deviation	9.50	8.47	9.70

Table II shows the Experimental group had higher I.Q. mean scores than the Control groups. Lack of random assignment and cultural influence could have influenced these results. However, a t-test applied to these data showed that these differences were sufficiently large to be significantly different. Between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 2.60 was found which exceeded the value of $t_{.05}$ of 2.014. Similarly, the t-ratio between the Experimental group and the Control Group II exceeded the required

³Arthur Otis, Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1939).

t-value of 2.008 (the computed t-ratio being 3.67). Therefore, it was concluded that the Experimental group was significantly higher than both the Control groups on the results of the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests.⁴

A Visual Discrimination Test⁵ constructed for this study was given to the three groups April 5, 1968. The categories on this test were Real Words, Combination of Real and Nonsense Words, and Nonsense Words. Table III shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each category on this test.

TABLE III
MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS
ON THE VISUAL DISCRIMINATION TEST

	Experimental Group		Control Group I		Control Group II	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Real Words	9	1.14	9	1.60	9	1.67
Combination of Real and Nonsense Words	9	.84	8	1.90	9	2.10
Nonsense Words	9	.79	8	2.25	8	2.32

Table III shows there were significant differences between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 2.84 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.014. Similarly, between the Experimental group and Control Group II, the t-ratio of 2.84 exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008. It was

⁴Because there were significant differences in mean mental ability between the three groups, it would have been best to analyze the post-test results using an analysis of covariance. However, on the advice of the writer's advisor, this was not done. Instead, a simple comparison using Fisher's t was used on the post-test results.

⁵Visual Discrimination Test constructed by the writer for this study. See Appendix for copy.

concluded that the Experimental group was significantly higher than both of the Control groups on the results of this test of visual discrimination.

The number of scores which were alike on the Visual Discrimination Test were compared.

TABLE IV
NUMBER OF LIKE SCORES ON THE
VISUAL DISCRIMINATION TEST

Score	Experimental Group Number	Control Group I Number	Control Group II Number
30	3	2	3
29	7	5	8
28	6	2	5
27	5	2	3
26	1	1	3
25	2	4	1
24		1	1
23		1	1
22			
21			
20			
19		1	1
18			1
17			
16			
15			
14			
13		1	
12		1	
10			
9			
8			
7			
6			1

Table IV indicated that the pupils in each group could have scored even higher since there were some perfect scores. The test was too easy. But, the writer conjectures that the Experimental group would have done significantly better than the Control groups if the test had been of appropriate length and

discrimination. This belief is based on an examination of the results which shows that the Experimental group had no scores below 25 whereas the other groups had 18 per cent or more of the pupils score below 25. (This is also reflected in the small standard deviation for the Experimental group--1.4-- compared with the relatively large standard deviations of 4.5 and 4.9 for Control Groups I and II, respectively.)

Another factor which contributed to the writer forming this judgment is that a visual examination of the results of the visual discrimination of the Pre-Reading Test (See Table I) indicates that there were virtually no differences between the three groups. This seems to suggest that pupils in the Experimental group made greater growth in this skill than did pupils in the Control groups. It is hypothesized that this superior growth is due to the type of visual processes demanded of pupils using the Harper-Row Linguistic Readers.

Analysis of post-experiment test results. At the end of the instructional period of one hundred sixty days, a test of reading achievement was administered to all children in the three groups. The SRA Achievement Series,⁶ Form D, was used for this purpose. It contained four subtests, Verbal-Pictorial Association, Language Perception, Comprehension, and Vocabulary.

The SRA Achievement Series, Form D, was administered to the three groups during the week of April 22-26, 1968. Table V shows the results of this test.

⁶Louis P. Thorpe, D. Welty Lefever, and Robert Naslund, SRA Achievement Series, Form D, (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1963).

TABLE V
 MEAN SCORES AND GRADE EQUIVALENTS
 ON THE SRA ACHIEVEMENT
 SERIES FORM D

	Experimental Group		Control Group I		Control Group II	
	Mean	G. E.	Mean	G. E.	Mean	G. E.
Verbal-Pictorial Association	26.42	2.6	13.10	1.6	16.18	1.8
Language Perception	104.33	2.9	84.52	1.8	93.61	2.3
Comprehension	22.79	2.7	11.14	1.5	15.60	1.9
Vocabulary	18.08	2.5	11.09	1.9	9.11	1.6
Total Reading	171.62	2.7	119.85	1.7	134.50	2.0

The reading achievement test was administered near the end of the eighth month of instruction. At that time a grade equivalency of 1.8 would be expected for a normal first grade pupil.

Table V shows the Experimental group had higher raw scores and grade equivalent means than the Control groups.

There were statistically significant differences between the Experimental group and both Control groups on each category of the reading achievement test.

On the Verbal-Pictorial Association subtest between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 6.049 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.014. Similarly, between the Experiment group and Control Group II, the t-ratio of 4.872 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008.

Significant differences were found on the Language Perception subtest. Between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 3.832 was

found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.014. Similarly, between the Experimental group and Control Group II, a t-ratio of 2.487 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008.

Between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 6.932 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.014 on the Comprehension subtest. The Experimental group was also significantly different than Control Group II on the Comprehension category. A t-ratio of 5.000 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008.

On the Vocabulary subtest, between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 3.629 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.014. Similarly, between the Experimental group and Control Group II, a t-ratio of 5.610 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008.

There were significant differences on the Total Reading category of this test. Between the Experimental group and Control Group I, a t-ratio of 5.567 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.014. Between the Experimental group and Control Group II, a t-ratio of 4.512 was found which exceeded the $t_{.05}$ value of 2.008.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to compare the visual discrimination abilities and reading achievement results of first grade pupils taught by a linguistic approach to reading with the results of pupils taught by a traditional basal reader approach.

SUMMARY

The sample consisted of three groups of children who attended the first grades in the elementary schools of Clay Center, Kansas, Unified District 379.

The Experimental group used Harper and Row's Linguistic Readers and the Control groups used The Developmental Series by Lyons and Carnahan.

Four tests were administered during the instructional period of one hundred sixty days.

The results of these measures were:

1. The pre-reading test showed no significant difference between the Experimental group and Control Group I. However, the Experimental group was significantly higher than Control Group II.
2. The Experimental group was significantly higher than both of the Control groups on the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests.
3. The Experimental group was significantly higher than both of the Control groups on the results of a visual discrimination test.

4. The measure of reading achievement was the SRA Achievement Series, Form D. The Experimental group was significantly higher on each category of the achievement test than both of the Control groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this pilot study have convinced the writer that the linguistic approach to the teaching of reading is an efficient method.

Whether the differences between groups which did exist were a result of lack of random assignment, teacher variable, material used or some other factor is not known at this time.

However, the writer believes that it is possible to conclude that the post-test differences showed that the Experimental group achieved more than the Control groups even though the initial differences were not statistically controlled. The reason for this belief is that the t-values on all the post-test results are larger than the t-values on the pre-test results which were significantly different. This seems to indicate that the Experimental group made a greater growth during the year than the Control groups. Therefore, the linguistic method may be superior to the basal reader approach to the teaching of first grade reading.

Wittick states:

As would be expected, there was greater variation between teachers within the methods than there was between methods. This again points up the importance of the teacher's role in learning....

A teacher who is successful with a given instructional program will be successful with that approach for pupils

of varying degrees of readiness and capability.¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study indicates the need for further research in the approaches to the teaching of reading in the first grade.

Further study of factors other than methods and materials seem to be necessary. Effects of teacher variable, environmental influence, school climate, and classroom climate are some important factors which should be studied.

Another area which should be investigated is the testing instruments. Do they currently favor the traditional basal reader approach?

Audio-visual aids which are available at the present time may also have an effect on the results of different approaches to first grade reading.

Supplementary readers using the linguistic approach to reading should be available for use in the classrooms.

The writer recommends that the Harper and Row Linguistic Readers be used in the second grade in the elementary school which the Experimental group attended as a follow up to this study before more definite conclusions can be stated about the superiority or inferiority of a linguistic approach to the teaching of beginning reading.

¹Mildred Letton Wittick, "Innovations in Reading Instruction: For Beginners," Innovations and Changes in Reading Instruction, ed. Helen Robinson, Sixteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) pp. 101-102.

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APPENDIX

VISUAL DISCRIMINATION TEST

Name _____

Date _____

Teacher _____

School _____

Real Words

Directions: Circle the word in each row which is like the word in the first column.

Sample:

in	on	an	in	no	at
all	fall	tall	ball	all	hall

cat	hat	fat	sat	cat	pat
look	took	look	book	cook	hook
head	read	head	dead	lead	bead
spot	top	hop	chop	stop	spot
when	that	when	then	than	this
were	where	here	cheer	there	were
flesh	flash	flush	flick	clash	flesh
premise	promise	premise	product	produce	pumice
pastor	posture	pasture	pastor	poster	pester
thorough	tough	thrown	thorough	through	thought

Combination of Real and Nonsense Words

dump	bump	qump	dump	pump	jump
cloak	clusk	clcak	clock	cloak	chaek
stray	shray	stray	spray	sharg	shrag
swimp	swing	swimt	swimp	swing	swimy
shair	choir	chair	star	shair	stair

weat	week	veak	waef	weat	wheat
shwrk	shurk	shwrk	shirt	sfruck	shrit
frown	towen	towel	lowen	town	frown
qarf	darf	qarf	cart	quarf	garf
stewl	stead	stowl	stewl	steal	stool

Nonsense Words

saetly	saehly	saetly	saefly	saefly	seafly
ditn	difn	divn	ditn	diwn	dihn
fvrl1	frull	furl1	fvrl1	fvrl1	fvrl1
shrvb	churb	shrvb	shurd	shrvb	shurb
grajes	garpes	darjes	grajes	yraies	gorpes
borvn	brovn	borvn	borun	burwh	borwn
niose	miose	voise	niose	noies	foice
grotvce	protuce	grotuce	protuca	porduce	grotvce
surrther	mwther	mwther	murrther	mwthar	murther
bueatiful	beautvful	baetiful	bountvful	bueatiful	dueatiful

A PILOT STUDY OF A FIRST GRADE
LINGUISTIC READING APPROACH

by

LAVERN SCHOOLEY

B.S., Kansas State University, 1962

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the results of a linguistic and a basal reader approach to first grade reading.

The sample consisted of seventy-three children who attended the first grades in the elementary schools of Clay Center, Kansas, Unified District 379, during the school year of 1967-1968.

The Experimental group used The Linguistic Readers by Harper and Row. The two Control groups used The Developmental Series by Lyons and Carnahan.

Tests of intelligence, reading readiness, visual discrimination, and reading achievement were administered during the instructional period of one hundred sixty days.

The results of these measures were: (1) no significant difference was found between the Experimental group and Control Group I on the pre-reading test, however, the Experimental group was significantly higher than Control Group II, (2) the Experimental group was significantly higher than both Control groups on the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests, (3) the Experimental group was significantly higher than both Control groups on the Visual Discrimination Test, (4) the Experimental group was significantly higher on each category of the SRA Achievement Series, Form D, than both of the Control groups.

The results of this study convinced the writer that the linguistic approach is an efficient method of teaching reading in the first grade.

Research has not established that linguistic approach to reading is superior to other methods. Further study of different approaches to the teaching of reading should be investigated.

The role of the teacher is very important as well as the methods and materials used in any approach to the teaching of reading.

Teachers, schools, and school systems that wish to experiment with various approaches to the teaching of first grade reading should consider The Linguistic Readers by Harper and Row as one of the possible efficient approaches.