Works Covered In Graduate Reading Reasearch Courses: Two Surveys

Daniel L. Pearce
Eastern Montana College

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons

Part of the Education Commons

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
**Dorothy J. McGinnis
Reading Center and Clinic**

WORKS COVERED IN GRADUATE READING RESEARCH COURSES: TWO SURVEYS

DANIEL L. PEARCE
Eastern Montana College
Billings

What studies should be covered in a graduate reading research course? How should the course be structured? These are questions I considered before teaching a reading research course for the first time. An investigation of the literature found little on reading research courses. While some works identified important studies, articles, and books (Froese, 1981; Manzo, 1983; Pearce and Bader, 1980; and Singer, 1985), none specifically addressed reading research courses. Gentile, Kamil, and Blanchard's Reading Research Revisited (1983) identified studies and furnished a structure. The studies covered, however, appeared to be the editors' choices.

In an attempt to answer questions about course content and structure, a two part study was conducted. The first part was a survey to identify reading selections for a research course. A follow-up survey attempted to clarify why certain selections had been named.

FIRST SURVEY
Method and Questionnaire

A survey of recent reading journals and conference proceedings identified 300 reading professors at United States institutions offering graduate reading courses. While this procedure biased the survey toward professionally active professors, it was assumed they would be more likely to respond.

The 300 professors were sent a cover letter, a coded response form (which identified respondents), and a postage paid return envelope. The cover letter outlined the purpose of the survey and asked for a list of selections for a graduate reading research course.

The response form asked for the highest level of degree offered at that institution (doctorate or master's

degree) and whether or not the respondent taught a reading research course. The response form also contained the headings <u>Author</u>, <u>Title of Study</u>, and <u>Bibliographic Data</u> with space under each for listing studies and articles. Five weeks after the initial mailing, a second mailing was made to those who had not responded.

Analysis of Returns

Survey responses included letters outlining what would be covered and why, course syllabi, multi-paged bibliographies of research studies and articles, and response forms with varying numbers of selections listed.

Responses were compiled into a list of citations. Tabulations performed on this data included:

1) frequency counts of citation by title for the whole survey
2) frequency counts of citation by author
3) frequency counts of different works by an author
4) frequency counts by level of institution
5) frequency counts for those teaching a reading research course

Results

The 102 professors responding to this survey (34% response) provided 878 citations for 642 works. The distribution of returns for the two information categories were: Teach reading research course (yes, 53; no, 38; unclassified, 11); level of institution (masters, 36; doctoral, 49, unclassified, 17). Selections cited five or more times are listed below.

Times Cited

Durkin, D. (1978-1979). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction. <u>Reading Research Quarterly</u>, <u>14</u>, 481-533.   33

Thorndike, E. L. (1917). Reading as reasoning: A study of mistakes in paragraph reading. <u>The Journal of Educational Psychology</u>, <u>8</u>, 323-332.   18

Bond, G., & Dykstra, R. (1967). The cooperative research program in first grade reading   12

instruction. Reading Research Quarterly,
2, 5-142.

Gentile, L.M., Kamil, M.L., & Blanchard, J.S.   11
(1983). Reading Research Revisited.
Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill.

Morphett, M.V., & Washburne, C. (1931). When   11
should children begin to read? Elementary
School Journal, 31, 496-503.

Chall, J.S. (1967). Learning to read: The great   9
debate. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Clymer, T. (1963). The utility of phonic gener-   9
alizations in the primary grades. The Read-
ing Teacher, 16, 252-258.

Durkin, D. (1981). Reading comprehension in-   9
struction in five basal reader series. Read-
ing Research Quarterly, 16, 515-544.

Goodman, K. S. (1965). A linguistic study of cues and   9
miscues in reading. Elementary English, 42,
639-643.

Davis, F.B. (1944). Fundamental factors of compre-   7
hension in reading. Psychometrika, 9, 185-97.

Durkin, D. (1966). Children who read early. New   6
York: Teachers College Press.

Gates, A. (1937). The necessary mental age for   6
beginning reading. Elementary School
Journal, 37, 497-508.

Guszak, F.B. (1967). Teacher questioning and read-   6
ing. The Reading Teacher, 21, 227-234.

Mandler, J.M., & N.S.Johnson (1977) Remembrance   6
of thinged parsed: Story structure and recall.
Cognitive Psychology, 9, 111-151

Marshall,N. & M. Glock (1978-79). Comprehension of   6
connected discourse: A study into the relation-
ship between the structure of a text and infor-
mation recalled. Reading Research Quarterly,
14, 10-56.

Robinson,H.M. (1946) Why pupils fail in reading   6

Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

Smith,N.B. (1965). American Reading Instruction.   6
    Newark, DE: International Reading Assoc.

Goodman,K.S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic   5
    guessing game. Jrnl. of the Reading Specialist,
    6, 126-135.

Laberge,D. & S.J.Samuels. (1974). Toward a theory   5
    of automatic information processing in reading.
    Cognitive Psychology, 6, 293-323.

Loban,W. (1976). Language development: Kinder-   5
    garten--grade 12. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Frequency of Citation by Author

    The most cited authors of the 118 given are listed by rank, times cited, and number of different citations.

Author (by rank)	Times Cited	# of Different Citations
Durkin, D.	56	5
Goodman, K. S.	24	9
Dykstra, R.	18	5
Anderson, R. C.	15	8
Samuels, S. J.	15	10
Chall, J. S.	14	5
Thorndike, E. L.	13	2
Davis, F. B.	13	5
Pearson, P. D.	13	8
Meyer, B. J. F.	12	9

Teaching Reading Research Courses

    The 53 professors who teach a graduate reading research course listed 528 selections. Selections cited five or more times are given below.

	Times Cited
Durkin, D. (1978-79). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction.	21
Thorndike, E.L. (1917). Reading as reasoning: A study of mistakes in paragraph reading.	10

Bond,G. & R. Dykstra. (1967). The coopera-   9
    tive research program in first grade reading.

Gentile, L.M., M.L.Kamil, & J.S.Blanchard.   8
    (1983). Reading research revisited.

Durkin, D. (1981). Reading comprehension instruc-   7
    tion in five basal reader series.

Morphett,M.V. & C. Washburne (1931). When   6
    should children begin to read?

Chall, J.S. (1967). Learning to read: The   6
    great debate.

Goodman, K.S. (1965). A linguistic study of   6
    cues and miscues in reading.

Davis, F. B. (1944). Fundamental factors of com-   5
    prehension in reading.

Mandler, J.M. and N. S. Johnson. (1977). Remem-   5
    brance of things parsed; Story structure and
    recall.

Discussion

Readings

The results of this survey indicate that reading professors differ as to which studies they would cover in a reading research course. Durkin's (1978-79) study was the only selection for which a clear concensus existed.

A comparison of this data with Froese's (1981) and Manzo's (1983) results identified some common selections. Of the 20 works named five or more times in this survey, seven were also among the 10 most cited works in Froese's study and on the list of works given by Manzo. These works were: Bond and Dykstra (1967), Chall (1967), Durkin (1966), Huey (1908), Robinson (1946), Smith (1965), and Thorndike (1917). However, five of these are books and whether or not they are appropriate for a reading research course is an open question.

As might be expected, the most cited works were the same for both doctoral and master's level institutions. However, a difference between the two groups emerged in the number of selections named. The 49 professors teaching

at doctoral institutions named 438 studies, while the 36 professors teaching at master's institutions named 226. Given the differences in student populations, it is possible that professors at master's level institutions did not feel the need to cover as wide a variety of studies.

Course Structure

The responses on this survey also furnished information on approaches used in teaching reading research courses. Four general approaches were evident in the return data: textbook, topical readings, specific studies, and student interest.

1. While different variations of the text approach existed, the studies covered were largely determined by a specific text. Among the texts used as either the sole or primary source of studies were Reading Research Revisited (Gentile, Kamil, & Blanchard, 1983), Theoretical Models and Processes in Reading (Singer and Ruddell, 1970), and "recent issues" of Reading Research Quarterly.

2. Some professors identified topical areas being covered (i.e., ethnographic, process, metalinguistic awareness, etc.). Within each topical area, designated studies were discussed.

3. With a specific studies approach, professors named individual selections which were covered in some depth. Unlike the topical approach, the specific studies approach used the readings themselves to reveal trends in thinking and research in the field.

4. Some respondents stated that no specific studies could be named since student interest determined works examined. In one variation studies covered varied according to the professor's current interests.

SECOND SURVEY

A follow-up investigation attempted to determine why the most cited selections in the initial study had been named.

Method

All professors (30) who cited at least two works, which were named four or more times in the first survey, were recontacted. These individuals were asked why they had named certain works.

Each received a cover letter, a response form, and a postage paid envelope. The cover letter requested assistance in a follow-up investigation and listed those studies and articles named by that professor which were among the 27 works cited four or more times. Each was asked to explain why s/he had named those works for study. Five categories of reasons were provided and professors were asked to indicate which category best described their rationale for choosing each work. The five categories were: 1) exemplary nature of the research; 2) historical importance; 3) topical importance; 4) specific aspects--if so, what; and 5) other reasons--if so, what.

Twenty-four professors answered this second survey, furnishing 54 responses for 23 different selections. The tabulation for responses by categories follows: "Exemplary work" 3; "historical importance" 12; "topic" 8; "specific aspect" 10; and "other reasons" 21. The results for selections for which three or more responses were received are given below.

Table 1

Responses for selections named 3 or more times.

Categories

	Total	Exemplary work	Historical importance	Topic	Specific aspect	Other reasons
Durkin (1978-79)	11	1		3	2	5
Thorndike (1917)	5		3	1		1
Bond & Dykstra (1967)	4	1	1		1	1
Morphett & Washburne (1931)	3		1		1	1
Clymer (1963)	3		1	1		1
Durkin (1981)	3			1	1	1
Goodman (1965)	3		1		1	1
Marshall & Glock (1978-79)	3			1	1	1

Discussion

The varied and individual reasons professors gave for citing certain works are illustrated by the large number of responses in the "other reasons" category, more than in any of the four other categories. For instance, of the 11 respondents who cited Durking (1978-79), five marked "other reasons." The "other reasons" given for naming Durkin's work included: 1) school based study; 2) controversial findings; 3) example of how investigator's choices determined findings; 4) uniqueness of study; and 5) instructional implications. These responses suggested that while Durkin's investigation is widely regarded as being important, professors' views of it differ. This reasoning is supported by various reactions (Cloer, 1980; Heap, 1982; Hodges, 1980; Shannon, 1980; Viti, 1980).

While professors' perceptions of studies varied, apparently one common reason for choosing a work was that it was "historically important." This category was the second more cited after "other reasons." However, with the exception of Thorndike's study (1917), no concensus existed on which studies where historically important.

Almost none of the professors claimed that the studies they named were exemplary. Besides the two studies named in Table 1, only Loban's longitudinal study (1976) was cited as being exemplary.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that reading professors would include a wide range of selections in a graduate reading research course. It also showed that even among the most named studies and articles, the reasons individual professors had for citing works varied.

While it is hoped that the results of these surveys will help professors determine how reading research courses might be approached for purposes of study, additional investigations to more specifically identify a common core of studies and discover why these selections are special would be useful. Such information (if it could be identifed) would serve as the basis for future students' exploration of the field of reading.

Author's Note

REFERENCES

Bond, G. & Dykstra, R. (1967). The cooperative research program in 1st-grade reading instruction. Reading Research Quarterly, 2, 5-142.

Chall, J.S. (1967). Learning to read: The great debate. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cloer, C.T. (1980). Letters to the editors. Reading Research Quarterly, 15, 566-568.

Durkin, D. (1966). Children who read early. New York: Teachers College Press.

-----. (1978-79). What classroom observations reveal about reading comprehension instruction. Reading Research Quarterly. 14, 481-533.

Froese, V. (1981). Classics in reading: A survey (ERIC Document Repro. Serv. # ED 182 465).

Gentile, L.M., Kamil,M.L., & Blanchard,J.S. (1983). Reading Research Revisited. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill.

Heap, J.L. (1982). Understanding classroom events: A critique of Durkin with an alternative. Journal of Reading Behavior, 14, 391-412.

Hodges, C.A. (1980). Toward a broader definition of comprehension instruction. Reading Research Quarterly, 15, 299-306.

Huey, E. B. (1908). The psychology and pedagogy of reading. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Loban, W. (1976). Language development: Kindergarten-Grade 12. Urbana IL: NCTE.

Manzo,A.V. (Dec.'83) Toward a core curriculum for reading education. Paper, Amer. Reading Forum, Sarasota, FL.

Pearce, D. L. & Bader, L.A. (1980). Reading about reading: A survey. Reading World, 17, 369-374.

Robinson, H. M. (1946) Why pupils fail in reading. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shannon, P. (1980). Letters to the editors. Reading Research Quarterly, 15, 565.

Singer, H. (1985). A century of landmarks in reading research. In H. Singer & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), Theoretical models and processes of reading (3rd ed.) pp. 8-20. Newark, Del.: IRA.

Singer, H. & Ruddell, R. B. (Eds.). (1970). Theoretical models and processes in reading (2nd ed.) Newark, Del.: IRA.

Smith, N. B. (1965). American reading instruction. Newark, Del.: IRA.

Thorndike, E.L. (1917) Reading as reasoning: A study of mistakes in paragraph reading. The Journal of Educational Psychology, 8, 323-332.

Viti, R. (1980). Letters to the editors. Reading Research Quarterly, 15, 566.