Quick Reviews

QUICK REVIEWS
Homer Carter Reading Council

Betts, Emmett A., "Readability?" *The Spelling Progress Bulletin* (Fall 1977) 17:2-5.

The use of readabilityy instruments can prove to be more difficult than is commonly held. Due to the complexity and diversity of factors involved; i.e., the reader, interest, concepts, typography, orthography, structure, vocabulary, it is easy to misuse readability formulas. As few articles are written which do not vary in many of these factors from paragraph to paragraph, it is impossible to expect any one reading formula to give correct data for the entire article. The author sees the need for more research with readability formulas in regard to the measurement of concept burden and complexity. The counting of words and sentence elements is too frequently an indirect method, and has little application for complexities of concepts.

Braun, Carl, "Pygmalion in the Reading Circle," *Academic Therapy*, (Summer 1977) 12:445-454.

The idea that teachers bring about certain reading performance levels by their expectations is the basis for this well-written article. Braun offers several classroom episodes as examples of the phenomenon which seems to prevail although there is little empirical evidence that we can point to. The article is cause for serious self-analysis by teachers; in fact, we should *all* ask ourselves whether we are indeed causing behavior in others by the expectations we have for them.

Cambourne, Brian, "Getting to Goodman: An Analysis of the Goodman Model of Reading, With Some Suggestions for Evaluation" *Reading Research Quarterly* (1976-77) 12: 605-636.

Cambourne, moved by the quote from the book *Improving Reading Research*, by Farr, Weintraub and Tone, that "we look at other types of research (other than classical empirical design) and recognize them as valuable" took it upon himself to discuss thoroughly the controversial Goodman Model of Reading. The author seemed really interested in getting *at* rather than getting *to* Goodman.

Cassidy, Jack, "The SIQ Test," *Journal of Reading* (October 1977) 21:45-50.

No one yet has published a "Sexist Intelligence Quotient" test, until this interesting and rather surprising treatment of the controversial matter appeared. It may amuse some, and it may arouse a bit of reflection in others. The score interpretation, along with the rationale for the answers, accompanies the test. It is well worth the time to take, and we recommend you do.

Chambers, Aiden, "Letter From England: Talking About Reading: Back to the Basics? Part I" *The Horn Book Magazine* (October 1977) 53:567-574.

The author was asked to comment on the subject of literacy in England and United States. He states that people are no longer satisfied to accept for their children a minimum functional ability to read and write. The standards expected from schools have steadily risen. Reading Series were born because teachers have too many children to teach at once; therefore, since teachers go on using them, four protective defenses are essential: (1) Children should be provided with the best series from the literary point of view; (2) They should be helped to "proper" books with all possible speed; (3) No one series or teaching method should be used, but a number of them; and (4) The Reading Series and the method used with them should only be part of the reading environment. Many proper books should always be available whether or not they can read them.

Teachers and librarians should apply themselves with greater skill and vigor to the real task that is theirs; to lead children on from a superficial reading skill decoding — to an appreciation of those books that yield the deepest meanings and greatest pleasures.

Cunningham, Patricia M., "Teachers' Correction Responses to Black-Dialect Miscues Which Are Non-Meaning-Changing," *Reading Research Quarterly*, (1976-77) 12:637-653.

The author, concerned that black children as a group in this country are not learning to read well, showed in her study that it is not the language of the black children which interferes with their learning to read, but the reaction of their teachers' ignorance of this language. "Teachers need to be adequately trained to understand the dialects of the children they teach, and especially, to recognize meaning equivalence; and must also learn acceptance of black dialect as a complex grammatical system."

Dishner, Ernest K., and John E. Reance, "Getting Started: Using the Textbook Diagnostically" *Reading World* (October 1977) 17:36-49.

In view of the fact that secondary students who are referred to remedial reading teachers are still dropping out of school, ways must be found for content teachers to help students master their textbook materials in the classroom. The suggestions offered in this article are intended to provide the means by which reading people can provide practical assistance to the content area teacher. Using these quick and easy evaluative devices, the content teacher can obtain sufficient information from which to make effective instructional decisions.

Earle, Richard (editor), *Classroom Practice in Reading,* 122 pps., International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware, 1977.

The direct teaching of reading skills or processes in the classroom is the topic of this new set of articles. The volume, in five sections, is organized according to a diagnostic/prescriptive model of classroom instruction. The five major steps in this process are development of the instructional system, followed by evaluation, materials selection, methods, and management.

Empacher, Marjorie, "Diagnostic Teaching of Reading," *The New England Reading Association Journal,* (Fall 1977) 12:12-17.

Marjorie Empacher makes a strong case for the diagnostic training of undergraduate students in reading. While major clinical courses and training are usually reserved for graduate students, the author sees a very real need for all pre-service teachers to receive much greater course work in reading than is usually given.
Due to mainstreaming trends, accountability, public expectations, and marginal budgets, today's classroom teacher must be well prepared in the teaching of reading.
Salem State College has designed a diagnostic training program that allows its pre-service education majors to experience clinical and diagnostic work in a lab-class, the goal of which is to give students the best possible training in reading *before* entering the classroom.

Goodman, Kenneth S., "From the Strawman to the Tin Woodman; a Response to Mosenthal" *Reading Research Quarterly* (1976-77) 12:575-585.

Goodman chastises Peter Mosenthal's criticism of him (RRQ, Vol. XII, #1), and reprimands the Research Quarterly for

publishing Mosenthal's "Psycholinguistic Properties of Aural and Visual Comprehension as Determined by Children's Abilities to Comprehend Syllogisms." The author retaliates on seventeen counts of misrepresentation in that article. He says Mosenthal doesn't know much about his (Goodman's) research and doesn't think RRQ with its excellent reputation has any business printing such misrepresentations. Goodman welcomes a viable critique of his work. Mosenthal certainly didn't provide one!

Guthrie, John T. (editor), *Cognition, Curriculum, and Comprehension,* 300 pps., International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware, 1977.

The editor of this comprehensive volume has collected papers from an interdisciplinary seminar on "The Development of Reading Comprehension." In his preface, Guthrie says "In the history of reading, scientific inquiry and practices of teaching have never been closer together than they are today. From many disciplines, researchers are embracing the challenge of explaining reading comprehension as it occurs in complex, everyday situations." Topics included in this collection include language comprehension and fast decoding, purpose in reading, syntax and semantics, child language research, an applied behavior analysis approach, design for developing comprehension skills, and fundamental cognitive processes, among others.

Harker, W. John, "Selecting Instructional Materials for Content Area Reading,"*Journal of Reading* (November 1977) 21:126-130.

As a reading consultant to schools, the author suggests five criteria which should be used in the choice of new texts. He discusses with total clarity what textbook selection committees should pay close attention to: the readability level; the burden of new concepts introduced; background information assumed by the text writers; the smoothness in organization; and the format or style of presentation of the text. This is must reading for all middle and secondary school content teachers.

Hentoff, Nat, "Who's to Blame?" The Politics of Educational Malpractice," *Learning,* (October 1977) 6:40-49.

Nat Hentoff is a writer on educational concerns and the author of novels for children. Reading educators should be ready to answer his charges "If the schools aren't ready to put their house in order, others are ready to do it for them." He suggests "Parents, teachers, and administrators should work together to set clear learning goals from kindergarten on."

Hood, Joyce, "Sight Words Are Not Going Out of Style," *The Education Digest* (September 1977) 42:53-55.

   Core vocabulary is used differently with different approaches. Traditional readers of 1940 and 1950 taught instant recognition of core words as whole words one by one. Sentence reading and story reading followed. Critics suggested a second way—urging that only core words which followed predictable spelling patterns be taught. The third approach is the whole language approach. The core word is learned through natural sounding sentences rich with contextual clues. How can a teacher determine which children are ready in advance and which are not? The rule of thumb for mastery is identification of 80 percent of the words in the text list.

Kepler, Karen, and Randall Jill Weinick, "Individualization: Subversion of Elementary Schooling" *The Education Digest* (October 1977) 43:17-20.

   When individualization becomes the total educational program for the child instead of an effective method for teaching some content areas, some skills, and some children, the schools are in danger of becoming uniform throughout the nation, not unique. The authors point out the value of individualization, but caution teachers about losing the primary unit of interaction—the class. The interaction of the class has much value in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies instruction.

Kovalcik, Alfred L., "Another Look at Reading Readiness," *The Education Digest* (September 1977) 43:48-50.

   Readiness is multidimensional. Reliance on a single criterion of age to determine readiness is folly; reliance on a diagnosis of the child's language level is more useful. Parents and teachers need to learn how to create experiences that will allow children to grow at their own rates. They need to recognize readiness when it is present so instruction may proceed.

McNinch, George H., and Mark G. Richmond, "Teachers' Perceptions of Their Principal's Role in Elementary School Reading Instruction" *Reading World* (October 1977) 17:55-63.

   Taking their cue from the recent papers proposing a stronger instructional role for administrators connected with reading programs, these authors have developed and used survey in-struments to determine teachers' attitudes on the matter. Their findings indicate a need for more and closer supervision and leadership in reading programs. Appendix A offers teachers a

measurement questionnaire to use in schools, the results of which would serve as strong suggestions to the administrators.

Mosenthal, Peter, "Bridge Principles in an Abridged Reply to Goodman" *Reading Research Quarterly* (1976-77) 12:586-604.

In answering Goodman's charges, Mosenthal maintains he didn't question Goodman's data, merely how he arrived at it. Saying he was not attacking internal principles but *bridge* principles (those that connect certain theoretical entities that can't be measurable behavior), author Mosenthal maintains Goodman has established only the first step in formulating a research paradigm with his taxonomy, and hopefully, Goodman will become aware that another research phase is possible.

Ortiz, Rose Katz, "Using Questioning As A Tool in Reading" *Journal of Reading* (November 1977) 21:109-114.

We believe Ortiz describes an original approach to questioning for comprehension, and we further believe that if the methods described are used regularly in classroom work, beneficial changes in learning styles are almost certain to result. In a unique account, the author explains her own progression from discovery of questioning for concentration and purpose to the use of questions to help students master text reading. Questioning is a skill which should be emphasized, rather than merely finding answers.

Page, William D., "Comprehending and Cloze Performance . . ." *Reading World* (October 1977) 17:17-21.

This study compares comprehension scores drawn from oral reading performance with post oral-reading cloze test scores. Results showed a persistent relationship and findings that provide corroboration for the theories and methodology of miscue analysis.

Rathbun, Dorothy, "How to Get Middle Schoolers to Read When They're Not Too Thrilled About the Idea," *Learning* (August/September 1977) 6:122-136.

This article is for anyone who deals with middle school children. Practical ideas dealing with getting them started, finding ample materials, and other solutions to typical problems abound in the article. Encouraging, enthusiastic, and realistic, the author has obviously spent a great deal of time and thought on reluctant middle school readers.

Sanacore, Joseph, "Reading Supervisors — Teachers Have Needs" *The Clearing House* (September 1977) 51:17-21.

The author is an English-reading coordinator in New York, and he makes a strong case for better understanding and communications between reading supervisors and teachers. An especially cogent suggestion is to clarify relations and positions with written job descriptions for personnel at all levels. This reviewer can add only one thought to the set of ideas: learn to give one another undivided attention when listening during interviews. It could obviate many of the other recommendations.

Seitz, Victoria, *Social Class and Ethnic Group Differences in Learning to Read,* 35 pps., International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, Newark, Delaware, 1977.

This is the first in a series of IRA publications on the development of the reading process. The purpose of the present volume, according to Dr. Seitz of Yale University, is to discuss alternative testable hypotheses which might account for the poorer reading performancy of lower-class children. Separate consideration is given to ethnicity, which is often confused with class, according to the author.

Strange, Michael, and Richard L. Allington "Considering Text Variables in Content Area Reading" *Journal of Reading* (November 1977) 21:149-152.

Strange and Allington give excellent advice to the content teacher who is making reading assignments in the textbook. They recommend a careful pre-assignment analysis of the word difficulty, sentence complexity, paragraph (importance to goal) use, and abstract concept load. It is a well organized and persuasive article, but we cannot help wishing that articles like this did not need writing in the first place.

Suid, Roberta, "Learning's Winter Reading for Children" *Learning* (November 1977) 6:73-76.

The books reviewed in this article by the *Learning* book review editor are recommended as superior books for purchase by parents. Many topnotch publishers are bringing hardback and paperback versions out in the same season. This set of reviews covers 20 hardbacks and 16 paperbacks.

Werttemberger, Yvonne, "Personal Tapes/Better Reading" *Instructor* (October 1977) 37:190-94.

The particular value of this article is its practicality. The author not only outlines the use of cassette tapes for individualization of teaching, but gives many ideas for implementation of measurement and progress evaluation.

White, Robert, "Reading Skills in the English Class" *The Clearing House* (September 1977) 51:32-35.

Many excellent suggestions are given in this article for organizing systematic help to make reading improvement an all-school phenomenon through the initiative of the English teachers. We are painfully aware of the fact that most content teachers already believe English teachers are the only people who give instruction in reading, and we think that English teachers who qualify themselves to teach improvement of reading in all content areas will truly be operating above and beyond the call of duty.

Yap, Kim O., "Relationship Between Amount of Reading Activity and Reading Achievement" *Reading World* (October 1977) 17:23-29.

The significance of this study is best shown in the following quotes from the Summary and Conclusions: 1) an increase in reading is likely to increase reading achievement as measured by standardized tests; and 2) the influence of the amount of reading activity is apparently stronger than that of IQ on reading achievement as measured by standardized tests.