

REACTION: EFFECTS OF LISTENING/READING TRANSFER

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The authors of this study have indicated that their purpose was to compare the effectiveness of parallel lessons in listening and silent reading to a more traditional basal approach to comprehension skills instruction. The results indicated that the group receiving the parallel lessons in listening and silent reading did significantly better on the higher order comprehension skills than the groups receiving lessons by a traditional basal approach. There was not a significant difference between the groups on the lower order comprehension skills at the literal level.

These results are not surprising since teachers using the basal teacher's manual exclusively often do not get to the higher order skills like interpretation, relationships, and appreciation. They become bogged down with introducing vocabulary, working with the structural and phonetic analysis skills, working with comprehension at the literal level, directing oral reading, and giving the children enough background to do the workbook pages that go with the lessons. The results in reverse seem to indicate that, if we are only interested in children learning decoding skills and in reading for information (or at the literal level), then the basal approach is enough. Skills such as asking for single item recall and finding the main idea are related to a literal interpretation of the story. If, on the other hand, we are concerned that children develop a higher order comprehension and thinking, such as singular and multiple inference, interpretation and concept analysis, relationships and differences, and appreciation and critical skills, we might need something else instead of or in addition to the basal approach.

One implication of this study is that active teacher involvement in the reading process might be a critical variable to developing better higher order comprehension skills. By getting the classroom teacher away from a reading program based solely on the basal and into an approach like the listening/reading transfer method, we are forcing them to get more involved in the reading process *with* the child. They become a participant in the lesson instead of just a rote giver of instructions and questions.

The basal approach is popular with teachers as it allows time to get things done while the children read and do the workbook pages and gives the teacher security in having covered "the essentials". The basal also does not take much preparation time for the teachers. As a matter of fact, many teachers can plan their reading lessons months in advance by just noting the basal pages to be covered and the corresponding workbook pages in their plan books.

The authors of this study have alluded that a problem with the basals is that they do not provide opportunity to read for a purpose. However, this reviewer has noted that teachers are often directed in basal manuals to ask a question to stimulate interest prior to asking the children to read. Doesn't that include reading for a purpose? The crux of the problem of the basal approach is the rote way it is often presented and the routine type of procedures that become established by the teachers using basals.

This study is valuable and should be replicated with elementary school children at different grade levels. In future studies, it might be well advised to assign children randomly

within classrooms to the experimental and control groups rather than assign whole classrooms into one group or the other. This type of research design would add to the validity of the findings as teacher effectiveness would not be a concomitant variable. Additionally, validity might be further increased by randomly assigning alternate forms of the pre and post tests to students in both groups to allow for possible difficulty differences between the forms.

Children enjoy being read to and it is possible that this enjoyment factor could be a concomitant variable positively affecting the children's attention and thereby affecting their comprehension of the intricacies of the story. One interesting extension of these studies could be to investigate the effect of this enjoyment factor.