

PREPARATION OF MATERIALS TO DEVELOP READING READINESS

IN CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE

G. Srinivasachari
South Indian Teachers' Union, Council of
Educational Research

Summary

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The study defines reading readiness as the point at which learning to read proceeds with minimum of difficulty in the case of a child. It involved the preparation of Reading Readiness Tests based on word meaning, sentence meaning, visual perception, auditory discrimination, and copying for children 4 - 5 years of age, and testing the reliability and validity of these tests. It concludes with recommendations for discovering individual reading readiness, allowing the child to develop reading skills at his own pace, providing a variety of interesting reading material, and making reading fun for the child.

Report

The major objectives of the project were (i) to prepare materials such as pictures, charts for the development of Reading Readiness; (ii) to prepare Reading Readiness Tests and administer them to children of the pre - school age, and (iii) to determine the reliability and validity of the tests.

For the purpose of this project reading readiness is interpreted as the point at which learning to read proceeds with a minimum of difficulty in the case of a child.

Procedure:

A questionnaire was issued to teachers of Standard 1 in 27 schools situated in different environments in the city of Madras. The answers showed that most teachers have only vague ideas about reading readiness and that discovery of readiness is incidental, not generally pre-planned. There is, however, clear evidence in support of the need for reading readiness tests.

With the use of the words-list prepared by the S.I.T.U. Council of Educational Research in its earlier project on the Functional Vocabulary of pre-school-age children preliminary studies were made for the choice of

items for the following tests modelled on those that had been prepared by the National Council of Educational Research and Training for Hindi children:

- i) Word meaning test
- ii) Sentence meaning test
- iii) Visual perception test
- iv) Auditory discrimination test
- v) Copying test

The first two tests were both verbal and non-verbal; the fourth consisted of three parts: initial sounds, final sounds and middle sounds of words.

Sample:

The target of the sample was 342 children (boys:203 girls:239) drawn from 15 nursery schools situated in different parts of Madras. The socio-economic level of the children was decided on the occupational basis of the parents. High: Low is as 3:4 in the sample (244) to which all the tests were administered. The sample was incidental in the sense that the investigators accepted the schools that readily and willingly offered to participate in the Project; it was purposive because care was taken to secure a fair representation of children of both sexes belonging to different socio-economic levels and different environments in an urban area.

Children tested belonged to the age group 4 to 5.

Findings:

1. Children of 4 + were ready to take instruction in reading
2. Girls (4 to 5 +) scored better in reading readiness tests than boys.
3. The copying test was not so easy for the children as the visual perception test.
4. Nursery school children from the low income group were as able as their compeers from high income group in their performance in reading readiness tests. (This may need validating after making a wider study).
5. Children exhibited equal ability in doing verbal and non-verbal tests.
6. Children of what was called the pre-school age was in firm possession of essential language elements to profit by reading.
7. There was an urgent need for
 - a) Reading Readiness work books,
 - b) Pre-primers and
 - c) thoughtfully planned materials, such as, card boxes of letters and words for building words and sentences.
8. The reading readiness tests prepared by the S.I.T.U. Council of Educational Research could be used

- a) for diagnostic purposes at the time of admitting children to standard 1 and
 - b) for making children below 5 + more ready to learn to read than they actually were
9. The tests, verbal and non-verbal, helped in the preparation of languages materials to be used in pre-primers and primers.
10. All children were not equally equipped to commence reading.

Reliability :

Formula A: number 81, called rational equivalence by Henry E. Garrett and R.S. Wordsworth, was applied to the test scores. The reliability coefficient obtained was. 94.

Recommendations:

There was no one time at which all children were ready to read. Whether the child began to read early or late depended on the reactions of his nature and nurture, which factors varied from child to child.

It was, therefore, recommended that in teaching children 3 - 5 the following principles be adopted:

- i) Accept the child as he is.
- ii) Allow him to develop reading skill at his own pace.
- iii) Provide him with a variety of interesting reading readiness materials and try to turn the work of learning to read into an interesting play.

All young children should be given the chance to begin their schooling in first standard, and the first standard should be for three year olds, Four year olds should go to the second standard and five year olds to the third standard. This would considerably reduce wastage.

A phased programme of education of children from 3 to 5 should be entrusted to the State Institute of Education, for that is the stage at which experiments may be easily and fruitfully conducted. These institutes according to the recommendation of the Education Commission (1964-66) are to be charged with the duty of training teachers for the so-called pre-primer stage.

The preparation of reading readiness materials should be entrusted to the Institute of Education in the State, as well as to private agencies engaged in research.

Steps should be taken to prepare a curriculum guide for teaching children 3 - 5.

Suggestions for further work:

There is a need for a survey of the materials now available and used in nursery schools with a view to studying their adequacy and educational value and suggesting the production of desirable additional materials.

A pre-primer is an urgent necessity. This is not intended to serve as a text book. This may consist of as many books as there are sections in the S. I. T. U. Council's classified list of words plus other books with pictures and suggestions for activities.