THE EFFECTS OF TWO APPROACHES TO READING INSTRUCTION
UPON THE ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF
FIRST GRADE PUPILS

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THE EFFECTS OF TWO APPROACHES TO READING INSTRUCTION
UPON THE ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF
FIRST GRADE PUPILS

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By

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Children's oral language is currently the object of many research studies. It is known that normal children enter the first grade with the ability to use and respond to oral language. This ability is apparently the result of listening to and speaking the language used within the family and neighborhood. Children achieve communication of their wants, their ideas, and their emotions by means of a voluntarily produced system of meaningful sounds and by the gradual development of and understanding of the meaning of sounds expressed by others using the same system. Children learn this system largely through experience, "by ear."

Most children, when measured by expectancy standards appropriate to six year olds, have learned to understand and use this language freely and easily upon school entrance.

Assuming there is a satisfactory total development as well as oral language development during the preschool years, learning to read becomes a major task of children in the first grade. The skills begun in the first grade serve as a foundation for a lifetime of schooling and self-education.

Although the importance of reading in the first grade has been long recognized, probably no subject in the curriculum
has been the target for more persistent attack and criticism. The efficiency of various methods of instruction in reading has been the subject of extensive research for more than four decades (14, p. 7).

William S. Gray (7, p. 1122), writing in the most recent *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, summarized what he felt to be pertinent evidence regarding all recognized methods in 1952. In his summary, he concluded that the real issue of research about teaching methods should not be to determine which teaching procedure is the best, but to determine what each method contributes most effectively to the development of children. Allen (2, p. 59) re-emphasizes Gray's conclusion by stating:

> The real issue for studies in reading instruction is not one of analyzing two or more approaches to determine which one is the better and more desirable than the other, but rather to determine what each procedure contributes to pupil development (2, p. 59).

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study was to compare the relative gains made in the development of oral language skills in two groups of first grade pupils when two different approaches to beginning reading instruction were used. The two approaches were: (a) the language experience approach, *Approach A*, and (b) the traditional basal reader approach, *Approach B*. The six aspects of oral language development considered were: extent of verbalization, spoken vocabulary,
expressions of tentativeness, use of structural patterns, colorful and vivid expressions, and use of mazes.

The following sub-problems were involved:

1. To determine the status of oral language development exhibited by two groups of first grade pupils before and after a period of beginning reading instruction.

2. To determine whether pupils taught by the language experience approach, Approach A, demonstrated significantly greater gains in the various aspects of oral language development than pupils taught by the traditional basal reader approach, Approach B.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study were as follows:

1. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in six extent of verbalization aspects of oral language development when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, as follows:

   a. number of phonological units
   b. length of phonological units
   c. number of communication (sentence) units
   d. length of communication (sentence) units
   e. number of maze units
   f. length of maze units

2. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly
greater gains in three aspects of spoken vocabulary development when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, as follows:

a. diversity of words in student's oral vocabulary
b. frequency of occurrence of words in the English language
c. divergence of oral vocabulary from the textbook vocabulary

3. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the number of expressions of tentativeness used when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.

4. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the mature use of structural patterns in their utterances when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, as follows:

a. number of Noun-Linking Verb-Noun (N-LV-N) units
b. number of partial or incomplete units

5. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the number of colorful and vivid expressions used when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.
6. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by their mature use of mazes as edits and holders rather than as noises or repeats when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study rests on the belief that if improved development in oral language results from use of the language experience approach, serious questions will be raised as to the adequacy of the usual method based largely upon commercially prepared student materials. Although some teacher education courses in teaching of reading presently prepare teachers to teach through the language experience approach, some such courses do not.

Demonstrated superiority in the development of oral language through the use of the language experience approach would have serious implications for the kinds of materials which should be supplied for student use. Also, there would be implications relating to the kinds of pre-service education which should be provided for teachers.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following definitions of terms were used:
1. Reading involves the recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for the recall of meaning built up through past experience, and the construction of new meanings through manipulation of concepts already possessed by the reader.

2. An approach to reading is identified by its major emphases in terms of the methods, techniques and materials utilized by the teacher.

3. The basal reader approach is, in its most definitive sense, concerned with providing children with experiences which will help them learn how to read printed symbols (9, pp. 9-10). This may be contrasted with programs providing broader experiences in reading different types of printed materials and engaging in other independent activities for the purpose of greater generalized learning. Personal growth and recreational appreciation through reading are not, in most cases, primary objectives of the basal program. Remedial or corrective instruction is not considered a part of the basal reading program.

Skill development is central, the skills being those of analyzing, locating, interpreting, and comprehending written or printed symbols from the page. The development of reading skills which are common to all reading situations involving printed or written words is the primary objective. The method
fulfilling this objective involves direct, systematic instruction, usually on a daily basis, through the use of a basal "reader" text.

These readers present a sequential organization for development of reading skills. A controlled vocabulary is utilized in presenting and providing for this sequential organization. To provide for the differences in abilities of pupils, three or more flexible groups in the class are utilized. Pupils may advance at different speeds through this sequential program, but all must follow the predetermined sequence.

4. The language experience approach to teaching reading is recognition in daily practice that learning is usually more efficient when based upon the experience of the learner (10, p. 19). The development of the language experience approach is founded upon fundamental understandings which are cultivated in the thinking of each child as he lives and learns with other children and adults. Allen (3, p. 59) writes that the child conceptualizes the formula for reading as:

- What I can think about, I can talk about.
- What I can say, I can write—or someone can write for me.
- What I can write, I can read.
- I can read what I can write and what other people can write for me to read.

The language experience approach teacher recognizes that each child brings to school a unique language personality. He strives to preserve the individuality of each
person's language at the same time that certain common understandings and skills are being habituated.

The language experience approach to teaching reading requires that each child be given opportunities to work individually with the teacher, in small groups, and in the total class group. In each situation, the child is expected to express and record his own thoughts, ideas, aspirations, and ideals as well as to read and understand the thinking of others. His own expression is encouraged through the use of a variety of media such as painting, speaking, and writing. Student-prepared materials are used as basic sources of reading along with printed materials which are developed for general reading and the expressed purpose of teaching reading skills. The use of all kinds of books is necessary for the child to get a balanced program of reading and to increase his skills of word recognition and interpretation of reading. The child makes progress in reading and writing through self-expression. He evaluates his progress as he uses materials prepared for teaching reading skills.

5. **Oral language** is the spontaneous, spoken utterances made by children during structured interviews recorded on tape. Responses were segmented into phonological units, communication units, and mazes according to the scheme devised by Loban (11, pp. 14-15).
6. **Phonological unit** is an utterance occurring between silences; it is dependent upon the patterns of sound made by the human voice; it is judged by the contours of inflection, stress, and pause in the subjects' voices. Example: [Well] the boy's running / and the girl's running / [and the other boy] he's way behind with a ball / #.

7. **Communication units** are subdivisions of the larger phonological unit; they can be identified by the semantic meaning which is being communicated; they cannot be further subdivided without the loss of essential meaning. The phonological unit above contains three communication units; each separated by a bar.

8. **Language mazes** are tangles of language which do not make semantic sense and cannot be classified phonologically or semantically. They can be identified as noises, holders, repeats, or edits. The word [well] in brackets in the phonological unit above is a maze used as a holder. The words [and the other boy] in brackets in the phonological unit above comprise a maze which can be identified as an edit. Mazes used as edits and holders rather than as noises or repeats discriminate between students high and students low in oral language proficiency.

9. **Noises** are unintelligible sounds such as ah, er, and the like.

10. **Holders** are used to hold attention such as well, you see, and now uh.
11. **Repeats** are repetitions of words such as *you—you, I think—I think.*

12. **Edits** indicate a correction or change of direction in what is being said by the speaker.

13. **Extent of verbalization** has to do with the sheer magnitude of verbal responses in terms of number of phonological units, length of phonological units, number of communication (sentence) units, length of communication units, number of maze units, and length of maze units.

14. **Expressions of tentativeness** are statements of supposition, hypothesis, or condition; a definite measure of language maturity. (Examples: *It's supposed to be a boy, but I'm not sure. Let me think what they would be called.*)

15. **Structural patterns** comprise a linguistic system for classifying the language responses uttered by pupils into categories so as to determine their frequency of occurrence and variety of use by the subjects in this study. The frequency of use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun (N-LV-N) sentence pattern and the partial or incomplete sentence pattern discriminate between high and low oral language development students.

16. **Vivid and colorful expressions** are unique ways of saying something. They usually occur when a child attempts to use structural patterns or word change rules with which he is not familiar. Presence of these expressions is a mark of
oral proficiency. (Examples: The dog will juggle and wet himself off. She almost dropped her hands up.)

17. **Spoken vocabulary** is comprised of those words uttered by pupils in response to interview situation. The three aspects of vocabulary measured were: diversity, frequencies, and divergence.

18. **Diversity of vocabulary** is determined by the number of different words in each segment of 100 consecutive words.

19. **Frequency of occurrence** is determined by the frequency of usage of each word in the English language as found in the Thorndike-Lorge list of 30,000 words. This list was consulted for word placement.

20. **Divergence of vocabulary** is a measure of the extent the oral vocabulary of pupils differs from that of the basal reader materials.

**Limitations of the Study**

1. This study was limited to those elements of oral language development listed in the problem. It is recognized that other elements are present in the total development of oral language, such as style, use of movables, subordination, etc., but no attempt was made to include them.

2. Application of the conclusions of this research is limited to situations in which there are similar populations and similar educational systems.
Basic Assumptions

1. Children’s language can be used as a measure of oral language development.

2. The technique used to analyze oral language development was valid for purposes of this study.

Related Research

Traditionally, the teaching of reading has been carried on through the use of specially prepared reading textbooks. Reading specialists have given thoughtful attention to the production of textbooks in which reading skills are developed with a scientifically selected and controlled vocabulary. The vocabulary load of the beginning books in series of basal readers has been gradually and consistently lowered and simplified (15, p. 29).

A rigidly controlled vocabulary is vigorously defended by most, but not all, reading specialists.

Allen (1), Fay (5), Kearney (8), and Witty (19) disagree with the controlled vocabulary enthusiasts. Allen (l, p. 26) writes:

The concocted language of today’s reading materials and language exercises may have built-in regression for the language development of most students—both bright and dull. A student’s future as a reader is determined to a much greater extent by the oral language which he understands and produces than by his skills in attacking new words.
This study was designed to determine whether regression in oral language development occurs when students are taught reading through the use of these controlled vocabulary materials.

Chall (4) questions some of the assumptions underlying control of syntax and vocabulary in basal reader materials. She asks whether the use of a formula to build written instructional materials interferes with the normal language learning. Russel and Fea (13, p. 898) point out that research on this question is lacking. This study was designed to shed some pertinent evidence on the answer to this question through measurement and comparison of structural patterns and vocabularies used by students when taught reading by two different methods.

Strickland (17) says, "No child should be given a printed book until he has made one of his own." She maintains (16, p. 40) that basal reading materials with their rigidly controlled vocabulary are not interesting to children. She advocates beginning reading by putting down a child's own talk and making this "talk written down" into booklets and chart stories. She like Allen (1) feels that young children tend to use language in colorful and vivid ways, but by the time they get well into the grades they are using it in dull, colorless, and conventional ways. They call for a way to teach reading to be found whereby the colorful individuality
and flavor of children's early language may be maintained. The present study attempted to measure and compare any loss or gain in the colorful individuality and flavor brought about by two systematic methods of reading instruction.

Pooley (12) urges that we "let the child's experiences of life teach and give him constant practice in the language he should know." Smith (14, pp. 8-10) reports that experience charts were advocated in the decade 1920-1930 as a means of introducing children to beginning reading. The use of experience charts was practically universal from 1930-1940. She reported in 1962 that "this approach may contribute something new, but it has not done so yet." This study contributes to this needed knowledge by attempting to determine the relative effects of an experience approach to beginning reading and the traditional basal reader approach on the oral language development of children.

Four reported research projects have special significance and relation to this study. The first of these is reported as a doctoral dissertation; the next two are reported in professional monographs; and the fourth has been reported as a pilot study to the professor directing the present study.

Lane (9) reports a study concerned with three approaches to the teaching of reading. The three approaches are: basal reader, individualized, and language experience. The problem of his study was to develop a written descriptive and analytical
definition of the three approaches in terms of (1) teacher evaluation of in-service education programs designed to acquaint them with the approach which each individually selected; (2) the consequences of implementing the selected approach in classrooms in terms of teacher reaction and evaluation; and (3) the consequences of implementing the approaches in terms of pupil scores on standardized achievement tests in reading, measures of attitude toward reading, and scores on personal and social adjustment tests made by pupils taught by the participating teachers in selected school districts, grades one through six, in a California county.

Pupil test data were derived from the 1,274 pupils who were in the classrooms of the participating teachers. Findings indicate that all three approach groups of teachers rated the in-service phase above average on a five-point scale. Each group also rated the elements of the particular approach which they implemented during the experimental period as above average.

Among the conclusions reached was the conclusion that the approaches themselves were judged to be practical, workable, and significant by the classroom teachers. It was also concluded that when teachers take part in a study such as this one, pupils may be expected to exceed expectancies in achievement gains. Pupils in the basic group achieved 12.5
months; in the individualized group, 12.9 months; and in
the language experience group 12.9 months. These gains took
place over an eight month period when 8.0 to 8.5 months of
gain would be expected normally. No clear-cut superiority
in reading achievement gains for any one of the approaches,
when compared with any one of the other two approaches, is
indicated by the findings of this study.

The present study is needed as a follow-up to Lane's in
that it compares the oral language development of pupils
taught by the traditional basal reader method and the language
experience approach. The present study was conducted in the
same area using the same type of in-service program for
teachers as Lane reported. A review of the research relat-
ing to the oral language abilities of elementary school pupils
reveals that oral language can now be analyzed and quantified
better than ever before. The next two studies reviewed are
largely responsible for this advance.

One study making a major contribution to the refinement
of a procedure for analysing and quantifying children's lan-
guage has been described by Loban (11, pp. 11, 31-88). The
methods described made it possible to replicate the procedures
so as to scientifically study language in both its semantic
and structural aspects. The previously nebulous and fluc-
tuating phenomenon of human symbolic language has now been
stabilized. Three new criteria for distinguishing stages in
growth of language—mazes, evidence of tentative thinking, and colorful and vivid expressions—were identified. Normative data are presented on such questions as the size of children's vocabulary, the use and control of sentence patterns, and the interrelations of oral language and competence in writing, reading, and listening. This study employs Loban's technique of segmenting samples of oral language. It differs in that it compares the oral language of two groups of children taught beginning reading by different methods rather than merely establishing normative data.

Strickland (18, pp. 4-6, 104-106) reports the third important study related to the present research. She reports a descriptive comparison of the structure of sentences used by children in their oral language with the structure of sentences in selected samples of textbook material designed for their grade level. The spoken language of children in the elementary grades was recorded in a loosely structured situation. The spoken language was then analyzed to determine the syntactic structure of sentences, length of sentences, and the frequency of occurrence of certain patterns of syntax. The frequency of use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun sentence pattern and the partial or incomplete sentence pattern was found to discriminate between high and low oral
language development students. This aspect was measured for the two groups in this study.

In addition, mazes used as holders or edits rather than as noises or repeats were found to discriminate between students high in oral language proficiency and students low in oral language proficiency. This study measured and compared the increase or decrease in the use of mazes as holders or edits for the two groups.

Representative series of basal reading textbooks were checked to determine the point at which sentence patterns commonly used by children began to appear in the textbooks. Selected language samples from readers were analyzed to determine the frequency of occurrence of patterns used by children.

Findings of this aspect of her study include: (1) children learn fairly thoroughly at an early age the basic structures of their language; (2) the oral language children use is far more advanced than the language of the books in which they are taught to read; (3) patterns of sentence structure appear to be introduced into textbooks at random; (4) once a sentence pattern is introduced it seems not to be followed by repetition or effort at mastery; and (5) the generally accepted plan of controlled vocabulary does not appear with regard to control over sentence structure. This study is a natural follow-up to Strickland's in that it compares the oral language development of children taught reading by two
approaches, one of which uses some of the same materials analyzed in her research.

Giles (6) reports the fourth study of special significance to the present study. It was the purpose of his study to: (1) collect samples of oral language from first grade pupils in structured interviews before and after a period of basal reader instruction; (2) to repeat the use of procedures for analyzing and quantifying oral language developed by Loban so as to determine the oral language status of students before and after the program of basal reading instruction; (3) to compare or analyze the findings so as to draw some tentative conclusions as to oral language development in first grade pupils before and after basal reading instruction; and (4) to use these tentative conclusions to generate some significant hypotheses which could be scientifically tested in the present study.

This preliminary study found that: (1) the mean number and length of phonological, communication (sentence), and maze units decreased during a period of basal reading instruction; (2) the mean percentage of words used which were found on the Lorge-Thorndike list of 1,000 most frequently used words in the English language increased during basal reading instruction, and the mean percentage of oral vocabulary words common to the vocabulary of reading instructional materials increased during a period of basal reader instruction; (3)
expressions of tentativeness appeared in the oral language samples of only one-third of the subjects before basal reading instruction and in more than half the samples following basal reading instruction; and (4) the use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun sentence pattern decreased during the period of basal reading instruction.

It was tentatively concluded that pupils taught beginning reading through the use of the traditional basal reader method regress in oral language development. The present study was designed to measure and compare the oral language development of first grade pupils taught beginning reading by one of two different approaches so as to empirically test this tentative conclusion.

Summary

In this chapter, the problem of this research and the purposes and hypotheses are set out. A statement of its significance is given and particular terms used are defined. Limitations are enumerated and basic assumptions held are listed. Relevant aspects of related research are also presented. In the next chapter a description of the organization and design of the study is given.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


18. *The Language of Elementary School Children: Its Relationship to the Language of Reading Textbooks and the Quality of Reading of Selected Children*, Bloomington, School of Education, Indiana University, 1962.

The problem of this study was to compare the relative gains made in the development of oral language skills of two groups of first grade pupils when two different approaches to beginning reading instruction were used. The solution of this problem required the measurement or quantification of the various aspects of oral language. Six aspects of oral language were measured and compared. The oral language development status of each subject was determined prior to the beginning of reading instruction by the appropriate method. The status of each subject's oral language development was again determined following a seven month period of reading instruction. One group was taught by the language experience approach. The second group was taught by the traditional basal reader approach.

Teachers, whether using the language experience approach or the traditional basal reader approach, have many common goals so far as the development of a balanced reading program is concerned. To achieve these common goals, each approach has a plan for developing a basic sight vocabulary and competence in using a variety of word recognition skills,
of providing a wide variety of reading materials, of integrating the various communication skills, and of developing a genuine desire to read. Goals of the two methods are much the same. However, the approaches are vastly different.

Comparison of Teaching Approaches

In the language experience approach a basic sight vocabulary is developed on an individual basis—from experience to oral language to written language to recall of written language. This usually means recognition of words of high frequency in our language as a result of repetition. Each child gradually gains a personally tailored sight vocabulary which is functional and which goes beyond the words in a basal reader program. The control of vocabulary in early stages of reading is an individual matter. Ceilings are lifted for all children.

In the traditional basal reader approach a basic sight vocabulary is developed through carefully prepared materials which introduce and re-introduce words represented in the pre-primers and primers, and which repeat each word a sufficient number of times for most children to recognize them at sight. Each child is introduced to the same basic sight words, but not necessarily at the same rate. Children gain some acquaintance with a variety of sight vocabulary words in experience charts carefully worded to introduce those words appearing in
the current lesson and other readiness materials developed in the class.

Phonics instruction in the language experience approach is a necessary and natural part of the instructional program. Educators have known for a long time that there is a closer relationship between phonics and writing than between phonics and reading. Appropriate application of this knowledge is made in this approach. The desire to create stories provides a powerful motivation to acquire skill in selecting the correct symbols to represent the sounds of oral language. Phonetic understandings are developed from a "say it" to a "see it" sequence. This insures that the understandings are applied to the real language experience of each individual, including skills of listening, speaking, word recognition, and spelling.

Phonics instruction in the traditional basal reading approach is integrated into the development of a variety of word-recognition skills. Children first learn to hear the sounds of letters in words, and emphasis is placed on the sounds of letters as they appear in words which are introduced in reading materials. Basically it is a "see it" to a "say it" sequency. This approach facilitates the building of word groups which begin alike, end alike, or rhyme. The words studied are those which will be met in the child's reading and not necessarily in his speaking or writing.
Phonics skills are learned gradually in a planned, sequential order.

Many materials for reading are developed by children in the language experience approach. Pupil authorship is emphasized as an important aspect of language development. Children learn to recognize enough words from their own dictation and writing so that they can read with little or no systematic instruction what other people have written. Children select their own reading material when they are reading for pleasure or for enrichment of reading experiences. Assigned reading is used only for purposes which are understandable and useful in solving problems.

Reading materials are developed and used in a sequential series—from the easiest to the more difficult materials in the traditional basal reader approach. As a child goes from one level to the next, he encounters a gradually increasing number of new words and new reading problems. He is assured a measure of success because of the careful planning of the work load. All children in a reading group use the same books for instruction in "how to read," but individual variation is achieved in practice exercises and related materials. Children are encouraged to read for pleasure and for fun from any of the other books in the classroom library.

Teachers who use the language experience approach do not attempt to distinguish between reading development and the
development of other communication skills—listening, speaking, and writing. In fact, a time for writing might be looked upon as a most profitable experience for developing word-recognition skills for reading.

Teachers who use the traditional basal reader approach give special attention and time allocation to the "how to read" part of reading instruction. Relationships of reading to other communication skills are strengthened through individual and group activities growing out of the reading. Many speaking, writing, and listening skills are developed around the predetermined vocabulary and story ideas of the reading material.

In the language experience approach motivation for reading is stimulated through the child’s realization that his oral language expression, based upon his own experiences and thoughts, can be written and read along with reading the thoughts and ideas of others.

Children taught by the traditional basal reader approach are motivated to read by being helped to see the relation of their own experiences to the story or selection to be read, by the desire to find the solution to the story character’s problem, or in other ways. They are helped to acquire the vocabulary and skills necessary for success in each new reading task.
The language experience classroom is organized to facilitate production, sharing, and reading of graphic and written materials based upon the thoughts, ideas, and concerns of the children in the class.

The traditional basal reader classroom is organized so that it includes regular reading periods to take care of direct teaching of reading and appropriate follow-up activities. Handwriting, spelling, written expression and usage are taught at other times and are given attention during the reading lesson situation.

In the language experience approach pupil progress is based on ability to express personal ideas in oral and written form as well as skill in reading material of ever-increasing difficulty. Comprehension and interpretation are judged as reading skills. Growth in depth of thinking, clarity of expression, sentence sense, and correct spelling are revealed clearly as children discuss their experiences and then write their own ideas.

In the traditional basal reader approach pupil progress is based on the acquisition of skills necessary to read successfully a given level of materials. Informal practice materials give pupils and teacher information about specific strengths and difficulties. In addition to regular oral reading checks on word recognition and comprehension, standardized tests may be used to measure progress.
Operation of Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach makes no distinction between the program of reading and the program for developing the other language skills. In the beginning, the first grade teacher encourages opportunities for creative work with crayons, pencils, paints, as well as through the medium of language. These activities are reported by McCarthy (10, p. 505) and Meckel (12, p. 970) as enhancing opportunities to engage in oral language experiences. As a child expresses himself through oral language, the teacher pulls out a sentence or two which sums up what the child said. This short composition is written by the teacher as the child watches. Group compositions are also recorded as the children look on. As the teacher writes she calls attention to items that are important to reading such as letter formation, association of sounds with symbols, repetition of the same sound symbols and the function of capitalization and punctuation. These group compositions are used as a basis for discussion in which letters and words are recognized. Children read these group compositions as well as their own individual compositions.

As soon as a child makes a "commitment," that is expresses a desire to write his own language expression, he is given opportunities to do so, and the teacher enlarges her role to facilitate growth in all the communication skills. When children become able to write independently they are provided
with basic vocabulary word lists as well as with words of general interest. Thus they develop control over a basic vocabulary through their writing experiences. As children develop in reading ability they are given increasing opportunities to read from books for interest and research purposes.

The language experience approach makes use of the thinking of individual children in the development of materials promoting skill development more than other approaches. It is called the language experience approach because teachers use as a major guide a listing of language experiences which must be developed as much as possible in order to assure effective communication. The words "language experience approach" seem to describe the methods and techniques employed.

The twenty language experiences selected for the basic framework of the language experience approach in the 1959-60 study reported by Lane (6) were ones which, when implemented at the classroom level, required the selection of learning experiences which generate productive thinking, allow freedom of expression, stimulate individuality, value ingenuity, satisfy curiosity, and promote a personal satisfaction to the extent that learning to read becomes a lifelong experience which requires ever-maturing and more complex skills and knowledge. The first detailed descriptions of this approach resulted in the development of a list of twenty specific elements which could be said to characterize it in classroom
practice. These twenty elements, or language experiences, have been listed by Allen (2, pp. 61-62) as follows:

1. Sharing experiences--The ability to tell or illustrate something on a purely personal basis.
2. Discussion experiences--The ability to interact with what other people say and write.
3. Listening to stories--The ability to hear what others have to say and relate it to their own experiences.
4. Telling stories--The ability to organize one's thinking so that it can be shared orally or through dictation in a clear and interesting manner.
5. Dictating--The ability to choose, from all that might be said, the most important part for someone to write and read.
6. Developing speaking, writing, and reading relationships--The ability to conceptualize reading as speech that has been written.
7. Making and reading books--The ability to organize one's ideas into a form that others can use and the ability to use the ideas which others have shared through books.
8. Developing awareness of common vocabulary--The ability to recognize that our language contains many words and patterns of expression.
9. Expanding vocabulary--The ability to expand one's vocabulary through listening and speaking, followed by writing and reading.
10. Writing independently--The ability to write one's own ideas and present them in a form for others to read.
11. Reading whole books--The ability to read books for information, recreation, and improvement of reading skills on an individualized and personalized basis.
12. Improving style and form--The ability to profit from listening to and reading well-written materials.
13. Using a variety of resources--The ability to recognize and use many resources in expanding vocabulary, improving oral and written expression, and sharing.
14. Reading a variety of symbols--The ability to read symbols--the clock, calendar, radio dial, and thermometer--in their total environment.
15. Studying words--The ability to find the correct pronunciation and meaning of words and to spell the words in writing activities.
16. Improving comprehension--The ability, through oral and written activities, to gain skill in following directions, understanding words in the context of sentences and paragraphs, reproducing the thought in a passage, and reading for general significance.

17. Outlining--The ability to use various methods of briefly restating ideas in the order in which they were written or spoken.

18. Summarizing--The ability to get the main impression, outstanding ideas, or the details of what has been read or spoken.

19. Integrating and assimilating ideas--The ability to use reading and listening for specific purposes of a personal nature.

20. Reading critically--The ability to determine the validity and reliability of statements.

These language experiences become the major framework within which children learn to read. Obviously the ones at the bottom of the list require more maturity on the part of the learner and more background of experience than those at the top of the list. These then would have their greatest application at higher grade levels.

Gradually this list has been refined and reorganized under three major categories: (1) converting experiences to words, (2) studying the words themselves, and (3) recognizing words and relating them to experiences. Nielsen (13, pp. 168-174) discusses these reorganized elements and gives considerable amplification of each, including classroom practices.

History of the Language Experience Approach

This approach first came to be called the language experience approach when it was developed and tested in a research
study evolving from the expressed needs of school districts and teachers conducted by the San Diego County Department of Education during the 1959-60 school year. This research study, for which data were collected in 1959-60, has been extensively described and reported by Lane (8), Allen and Lee (4), Allen (2), and Vogt (16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21).

The language experience approach to reading instruction has focused national attention on San Diego County, California. The man whose imagination and understanding of children was largely responsible for developing this approach is R. Van Allen, presently a professor of education at the University of Arizona. His speeches and extensive writings serve as basic source material for any research proposing to give a historical account of the evolution of the language experience approach.

Examination of his earlier writings (3; 1, pp. 109-116) and the 1959 writing of Boyer (5, pp. 26-34) refer to this approach as the "creative writing" approach to reading. Lane (8) and Vogt (16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21) are responsible for the most complete account of the development of this approach to its present level from the standpoint of reporting controlled comparative studies.

Articles appearing in Claremont College Reading Conference Yearbooks from 1959 through 1965 record the progressive evolution of this approach to reading from the
"creative writing" approach to reading to the language experience approach to reading. This evolutionary process is continuing at the present time. Nielson (13, pp. 168-174) discusses this approach as the experience approach to language arts in the current yearbook in that series.

Selection of Teachers

Elementary teachers in San Diego County have worked for several years with the staff members of the County Department of Education to develop what they believe to be improved ways of teaching reading in the primary grades. This intense interest in curriculum improvement prompted the launching of the 1959-60 reading study previously referred to. This study involved sixty-seven teachers who volunteered to teach by one of three methods—including the traditional basal reader approach and the language experience approach. The project was exploratory in nature and is reported in a doctoral dissertation (8) completed at North Texas State University. Teachers have continued to manifest interest in these approaches. The four teachers chosen for this study were participants in that 1959-60 study.

Because of their continued interest, the County Department of Education provides a continuing in-service education program for teachers throughout the area. These in-service meetings are conducted by competent curriculum coordinators who specialize in one of the three approaches to teaching of reading for
which they serve as consultant. Large numbers of teachers continue to choose one of these methods to adopt into their classrooms. They attend these in-service meetings prior to implementing their chosen approach to teaching reading in the classroom. They receive three hours of graduate credit for attendance at these in-service meetings through U.C.L.A. simply by paying the tuition fee. The teachers chosen to participate in this study were currently enrolled for credit during the time of the study.

Teachers met with consultants in their respective approaches for a total of forty-five and one-half hours of instruction. The training period began the first week of school, culminating shortly after the collection of post-test data. Each approach group examined materials appropriate to their method for use in the classroom during their training sessions. They also read selected references and research from a bibliography prepared for their chosen approach. They prepared lessons for classroom presentation based upon appropriate approach ideas and philosophy. Some meetings were held after school while others occurred on Saturdays or days when teachers were released from their classes for attendance.

Teachers spent seven hours on the first Saturday after school began with a major consultant in their respective approaches. R. Van Allen of the University of Arizona served
as principal consultant to the language experience approach group. Mildred Dawson of Sacramento State College served as principal consultant to the basal reader approach group. The teachers participating in this study attended an "Exploration in Communication Conference" held in San Diego on January 22 and 23, 1965, to hear addresses by reading authorities, including: James N. Squire, Executive Secretary, National Council of Teachers of English; Donald Durrell, Professor of Education, Boston University; and Carlton Singleton, Editorial Director, Wesleyan University.

The four teachers selected to participate in this study were similar in the following areas: training, experience, and commitment to the chosen approach as measured by the teachers inventory of approaches to reading developed by Lane (8). Two teachers taught reading by the language experience approach while two taught by the traditional basal reader approach. They participated in an equal number of in-service meetings devoted to training in one of the particular approaches to the teaching of beginning reading being compared.

One teacher using the language experience approach resigned from her position shortly after the pre-test interviews had been completed. However, it was possible to employ a teacher of like experience who attended all remaining
in-service meetings. She actually began teaching at the implementation phase of the teaching approach.

Description of Subjects

The seventy-four subjects on whom complete pre- and post-test data were obtained came from four representative intact groups of first grade children enrolled in the public schools of San Diego County, California, during the 1964-65 school year. Each class had a beginning of school enrollment of twenty-three to twenty-five pupils. Enrollment fluctuation was such during the year that approximately twenty pupils per class completed the ten month school year in the same class and school in which they began in September. Pupils who were repeating first grade were excluded from the study. Pupils withdrawing from the class during the year were not included because of incomplete pre- and post-test data. Data on three subjects was lost due to an error in the operating of electronic equipment during the interview sessions which resulted in not recording three interviews.

The two schools included in the study were located in attendance areas drawing students who did not differ widely in socio-economic status, chronological age, sex, or intelligence. The attendance areas represented were characterized as generally middle class with a very few lower class homes and only an occasional upper class residence. The assessed
value of the homes from which subjects came was obtained from the office of the county tax assessor. The mean assessed home value for the basal group was $13,648. The mean assessed home value for the language experience group was $13,452. The mean chronological age for the basal reader group was computed to be six years and four months. The mean chronological age for the language experience group was six years and five months. There were seventeen males and twenty-two females in the basal reader group. There were nineteen females and sixteen males in the language experience group. The mean intelligence score for the basal reader group was 101.36 and 103.43 for the language experience group.

Daily schedules, so far as time allotments for the two groups were concerned, were similar. Pupils attended classes for 240 minutes of classroom instruction per day. One hundred and twenty of the 240 minutes were devoted to reading instruction and the language arts by each group daily. Reading and the other language arts were separated in the traditional basal reader group whereas no distinction was made between these subjects for the language experience group. Twenty minutes of each day were devoted to physical education. Arithmetic, social studies, health and science, and the fine arts divided the balance of the instructional time.

Intelligence Quotients were obtained for each subject by using the Pintner-Cunningham Primary Test. These tests
were routinely administered to all first grade children in the schools participating in the study by personnel of the schools in charge of testing as a part of the regular school program. Tests were provided by the schools as a part of their usual service.

**Procedures for Collecting Data**

In the present study evidence concerning the seventy-four subjects' use, development, and control of oral language were required on each subject before and after a period of beginning reading instruction. Plans were carried out to collect data concerning (a) six aspects of their extent of verbalization, (b) three aspects of their vocabulary, (c) their expressions of tentativeness, (d) their use of basic structural sentence patterns, (e) their use of mazes, and (f) their use of colorful and vivid expressions before and after a period of beginning reading instruction using one of the two approaches. Background information on date of birth, sex, parental occupation, value of home, and measures of intelligence were gathered as reported in the description of the sample of subjects.

Each subject was interviewed individually and his spoken responses recorded on magnetic tape to preserve his voice. Telephone instruments were used as microphones. The telephone "microphones" were a part of a standard Teletrainer Kit available to all schools and furnished by the local telephone
company through its educational representative. The Tele-trainer Kit is comprised of two working telephones on long cords, one for the subject and one for the person doing the interviewing in this study, plus a simple-to-use control panel which enabled the interviewing person to provide ringing signals. This kit also enabled the interview conductor to have immediate knowledge as to whether the responses were of sufficient magnitude of volume to be recorded. An extension cord was provided to connect the equipment with a recorder so that the conversation samples could be preserved for later transcription and analysis. The success of this technique had been previously demonstrated in a pilot study by Giles (6).

Recordings were made in school settings familiar to the subjects. Each interview followed a standardized form. In cases where extra questions were asked, the purpose was solely to encourage the flow of language already on its way. At the beginning of the interview, the examiner encouraged the child to become "talkative" by asking him questions about playmates, games, illnesses, and wishes. Next, the child was shown, for the remainder of the interview, a series of pictures, the same pictures being used for all subjects. Only responses to the series of pictures were transcribed and analyzed. Two "warm-up" pictures preceded the test pictures. Each subject was encouraged to talk as much as he desired about each picture. The pictures chosen were those
found in the pilot study by Giles (6) to elicit the greatest amount of verbalization and interest from first grade pupils. The subjects were reminded at the time of presentation of each new picture to tell what they saw and thought about each picture. New pictures were presented to each subject when it became obvious that he had completed his observations about the previous one.

Oral language samples were transcribed into typewritten form. These transcriptions were segmented according to the linguistic scheme used and reported by Loban (9, pp. 14-15). Communication units (sentences) were then analyzed and categorized according to ten basic structural patterns described by Roberts (14, pp. 21-54), plus a partial or incomplete category. The six aspects of oral language development were thus analyzed and quantified from these transcriptions. The aspects of oral language measured and compared for the two approach to reading groups were those found by Loban (9) and Strickland (15) to differentiate between high and low oral language proficiency students.

The tapes were audited as many times as necessary to assure proper division of the speech into phonological units. This was accomplished through careful attention to juncture, intonation, and meaning. These transcriptions of the child's oral language constitute the most important data collected in
the study. It was necessary to listen to each transcript from eight to ten times before perfect transcription was achieved.

Two oral language samples were collected from each subject. The first sample was collected early in October prior to the implementation of the reading instruction period. The second sample was collected in May after seven months of reading instruction. Telephones, just as they had in the earlier study by Giles (6), proved to be as satisfactory as microphones. They also proved to encourage the flow of language as the subjects were already familiar with its use. Recording time, for the responses to be analyzed, required from eight to fifteen minutes per subject. The establishment of rapport, explanation of interview procedure, and preliminary instruction required an additional five to eight minutes per subject.

The collection of data followed a prearranged sequence. The sequence followed is reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Two teachers were chosen for each approach from the total number of teachers participating in the in-service training sessions. Teachers selected were similar in training, experience, and commitment to teach by the chosen approach as measured by the teacher inventory of approaches to reading developed by Lane (8). These teachers participated in an equal number of in-service meetings devoted to training in their particular approach. Dates for pre-test interviews
were arranged with the teachers to be conducted in late September and early October of 1964.

All interviews were conducted in school settings familiar to the subjects. A classroom regularly used for projecting films was used in one school, and a special instruction room in the other. Both rooms were similarly furnished and of the same approximate size. All pupils in the traditional basal reader approach were interviewed before beginning those of the language experience group. It was necessary to return once or twice to each of the respective schools to interview absen-tees at the regularly scheduled interview time. These pre-test interviews began the last week of September of 1964 and lasted for four consecutive weeks.

Pinter-Cunningham Primary Tests were administered by regular school personnel of each of the schools. Results were furnished for this research. Tests were provided by the schools as a part of their regular service. Tests were also scored by regular school district employees.

Teachers began the implementation phase of their chosen approach in October upon completion of the pre-test interviews. They continued their in-service preparation led by competent consultants as previously described. The approach implementation phase extended from October through May.

The post-test interviews were conducted, beginning the first week of May, 1965, extending through the next four
consecutive weeks. The basal reader approach students were again interviewed first. It was again necessary to return to each school once or twice to complete interview sessions for absentees. The same person conducted all pre-test and post-test interviews. School settings were the same for each group as they were for the pre-test interview.

Information regarding age, assessed home value, and intelligence test results were collected on those students completing pre- and post-test interviews prior to the close of school in June from official school and tax records. The data were quantified and prepared for International Business Machine Punch Cards during the summer of 1965.

Procedures for Treating the Data

Hypotheses one through six required the computing of the means, standard deviations, and differences in the means of changes for the language experience and the traditional basal reader approach groups. The two groups were further divided by sexes so as to compare the performance of the boys of the language experience group with the performance of boys of the basal reader group. This separate comparison of girls versus girls was also done.

In order to evaluate the oral language development resulting from the two approaches to reading instruction Fisher's t technique was used to test the significance of differences between the means obtained from the two approach
groups, and from the subgroups. Tests for the significance of the difference between the means of the groups were made on the following variables: number of phonological units, length of phonological units, number of communication units, length of communication units, number of maze units, length of maze units, vocabulary diversity, vocabulary frequency, vocabulary divergence, number of expressions of tentativeness, use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun sentence pattern, use of the partial sentence pattern, number of colorful and vivid expressions, and use of mazes. The .05 level of confidence was used to determine statistical significance. Tables in McNemar (11) and Guilford (7) were consulted.

Summary

This study was an experimental design. This chapter has reviewed the theoretical framework of the two approaches to beginning reading instruction compared. Additional historical information has been recorded relative to the less well known language experience approach. The process of selecting the teachers and a description of the subjects involved in the study has been given. The procedures for collecting the data were outlined and the statistical steps required for testing the hypotheses were reported. In the next chapter, the data will be presented under headings related to the hypotheses being tested. Tables will be included wherever helpful.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The basic problem of this study was to compare the relative gains made in the development of oral language skills by two groups of first grade pupils taught beginning reading by different approaches. One group was taught beginning reading by the language experience approach, Approach A. The other group was taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, Approach B. Six aspects of oral language were measured and compared.

The oral language development status of each subject was determined prior to the beginning of reading instruction by the appropriate method. The status of each subject's oral language development was again determined following a seven month period of reading instruction. The mean gains or losses in oral language development in each of the six aspects of oral language development chosen for comparison were then determined.

Fisher's t technique was used to test the significance of differences between the mean gains obtained from the two approach groups and from boys and girls as separate approach subgroups. Fisher's t tables found in McNemar (5, p. 430), Fisher (1, p. 44), and Guilford (3, p. 610) were consulted.
Table I indicates that the students who participated in the language experience approach group were comparable to the students who participated in the traditional basal reader approach group on the variables of chronological age, sex, assessed home value and measured intelligence. The one month difference in chronological age between the mean of the language experience group and the basal reader group was considered, for all practical purposes, to be insignificant.

**TABLE I**

**LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE GROUP COMPARED WITH BASAL READER GROUP ON FOUR VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Language Experience Group (N=35)</th>
<th>Basal Reader Group (N=39)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
<td>6-5</td>
<td>6-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed Home Value</td>
<td>$13,452</td>
<td>$13,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measured Intelligence</td>
<td>103.43</td>
<td>101.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Boys)</td>
<td>N=16</td>
<td>N=17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Girls)</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td>N=22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This seemed to be equally true for the difference in assessed home value of approximately 200 dollars and for the difference of 2.07 between the total mean I. Q. of the language experience group and the basal reader group. Thus, the language experience group and the basal reader group were considered to be comparable in terms of chronological age, sex, assessed home value and measured intelligence.
value, and measured intelligence. These two comparable groups were taught by different approaches so as to determine whether the approaches produced significantly different development in six aspects of oral language.

Results of the investigation are presented according to oral language development gains in the six extent of verbalization aspects, the three aspects of spoken vocabulary, the number of expressions of tentativeness, the mature use of two structural patterns, the number of colorful and vivid expressions, and the mature use of mazes. Presentation of the data follows the order established in the listing of the hypotheses to be tested in Chapter I. Tables are presented relative to each hypothesis which outline the results of the study as obtained through the use of the t test.

The First Hypothesis

It was stated in the first hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the mean gains in six aspects of extent of verbalization with the language experience group exceeding the traditional basal reader group. The treatment of the six extent of verbalization variables by Fisher's t technique is presented in Table II. A t score of at least 1.67 was required for significance at the .05 level and a t score of at least 2.39 was required for significance at .01 level for tests of significance for the total group. A t score of 1.70 was required for significance
**TABLE II**

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE GROUP AND THE TRADITIONAL BASAL READER GROUP IN SIX EXTENT OF VERBALIZATION VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Verbalization Variable</th>
<th>Approach A</th>
<th>Approach B</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a Number of Phono. Units</td>
<td>-5.23</td>
<td>-8.49</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Length of Phono. Units</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c Number of Comm. Units</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>-9.41</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d Length of Comm. Units</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e Number of Maze Units</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-11.59</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f Length of Maze Units</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys Subgroup</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a Number of Phono. Units</td>
<td>-2.81</td>
<td>-13.24</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Length of Phono. Units</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c Number of Comm. Units</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>-14.59</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d Length of Comm. Units</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e Number of Maze Units</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-22.71</td>
<td>23.58</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f Length of Maze Units</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls Subgroup</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a Number of Phono. Units</td>
<td>-7.26</td>
<td>-4.82</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b Length of Phono. Units</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c Number of Comm. Units</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-5.41</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d Length of Comm. Units</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>1e Number of Maze Units</td>
<td>-.79</td>
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<td>2.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>1f Length of Maze Units</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
at the .05 level and a $t$ score of 2.46 was required for significance at the .01 level for the approach subgroups when divided by sexes.

Not a single extent of verbalization aspect had a mean difference reaching the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the first hypothesis was rejected. However, a difference between the mean gains for three aspects of extent of verbalization was found at greater than the .10 level of significance. This difference was in the direction hypothesized for each of the six aspects. Those aspects significant at the .10 level were: (lb) average length of phonological unit, (lc) number of communication units, and (le) number of maze units.

When the subjects were separated by sexes and the data for boys examined alone, the $t$ score fell below the .05 level of significance again for all six extent of verbalization variables. It was again necessary to reject the first hypothesis for the boys as a subgroup. However, information in Table II indicates that differences between boys of the language experience and boys of the basal reader subgroups were significant for four of the six variables at better than the .10 level of confidence. These differences were in the direction hypothesized. The four extent of verbalization variables with differences exceeding the .10 level of significance were: (1a) number of phonological units, (1c) number of communication
units, (ld) average length of communication units, and (le) number of maze units.

Examination of the data presented in Table II for the girls alone revealed a difference significant at better than the .05 level of confidence for one of the six extent of verbalization variables. Therefore, the first hypothesis was accepted for girls on variable lb, average length of phonological units. No other differences were found to exceed the .05 level of significance in the six extent of verbalization variables between the girls of the two subgroups.

The data presented in this study on the number and length of communication units and the number and length of maze units were compared with the data presented on first grade pupils by Loban (4), Strickland (6), and Giles (2) whenever appropriate. Some comparisons proved interesting. Loban found pupils he interviewed at the end of first grade to use an average of 7.74 fewer communication units at the end of first grade than they had used at the end of kindergarten. Subjects in the present study who were taught by the traditional basal reader approach were found to use an average of 9.41 fewer communication units at the end of the first grade than they had used when interviewed at the beginning of school in September. However, the subjects in the present study who were taught by the language experience approach did not display regression in the average number of communication units they used.
Rather, they were found to use an average of .51 more communication units at the end of first grade than they had used in September.

Loban found that his subjects used an average of 1.24 more words per communication unit at the end of first grade than at the end of kindergarten. Both groups of subjects in the present study were found to use longer communication units at the end of first grade. Although differences did not reach statistical significance, the language experience group had a greater increase in this respect than did the traditional basal reader group.

The present study confirms the findings of Giles with respect to basal reader subjects showing regression in length of communication units and mazes. Both groups of subjects in the present study were found to exhibit some regression in some aspects of the extent of verbalization displayed at the end of first grade.

Loban reported that subjects in his study used fewer mazes at the end of first grade and that fewer words were used in each maze than at the end of kindergarten. Data presented in Table II for the two groups indicate almost precisely the same change and in the same direction found by Loban.

The Second Hypothesis

It was stated in the second hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the mean gains of three
spoken vocabulary variables with the language experience group exceeding the traditional basal reader group. Findings relative to the second hypothesis are presented in Table III which show the significance of differences between the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group on these three variables. Again, a t score of 1.67 was required at the .05 level of significance and a t score of 2.33 was required at the .01 level of significance for the total group. A t score of 1.70 was required for significance at the .05 level and a t score of 2.46 was required for significance at the .01 level for the two approach subgroups when divided by sexes.

The results with respect to the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group reveal significant differences between the mean gains of the two groups on the variables of diversity of vocabulary and divergence of the spoken vocabulary from the vocabulary lists of the textbooks used as basal reading materials by the basal reader group. Significant differences favored the language experience groups.

With respect to diversity of vocabulary, the language experience group had a mean gain of .27, whereas the traditional basal reader group had a mean loss of 1.83 words for a difference in mean change during the seven month reading instructional period of 2.15 words. This mean difference in
change resulted in a \( t \) score of 2.24. This difference proved to be significant at better than the .01 level. Therefore, the second hypothesis was accepted with regard to vocabulary diversity.

With regard to divergence of spoken vocabulary from the vocabulary lists of basal reader textbooks, the language experience group had a mean gain of 3.87 more different words per segment of 100 consecutive words spoken which diverged from the list of vocabulary words common to textbooks used by the basal reader group, whereas the traditional basal reader group had a mean gain of only .40 more different words per segment of 100 consecutive words spoken for a difference in mean change during the seven month period of reading instruction of 3.47 words between the two groups. This mean difference in change resulted in a \( t \) score of 3.23, proving to be significant at better than the .001 level of confidence. Therefore, the second hypothesis was accepted with regard to vocabulary divergence.

No significant difference was found between the two groups with regard to vocabulary frequency. Both groups displayed a tendency to use more words from the high frequency levels of the Thorndike-Lorge list than from the low frequency levels following a period of reading instruction. Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected with regard to the variable of frequency of word use in the general population as measured by the Thorndike-Lorge list (7).
TABLE III
SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE
GROUP AND THE TRADITIONAL BASAL READER GROUP IN
THREE VOCABULARY VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Variable</th>
<th>Approach A</th>
<th>Approach B</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a Diversity</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-1.88</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b Frequency</td>
<td>- .34</td>
<td>-.95</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c Divergence</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Subgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a Diversity</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b Frequency</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-3.71</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c Divergence</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>-.50</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Subgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a Diversity</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b Frequency</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c Divergence</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separation of the two groups by sexes on the three vocabulary aspects reveals a most interesting phenomenon. The differences between girls of the language experience group and the girls of the basal reader group failed to reach the .05 level on the three variables of diversity, divergence, and frequency. Thus, hypothesis two was rejected on all three variables so far as girls were concerned. However, differences were significant at better than the .10 level on the diversity
and divergence variables. The differences favored the language experience group as hypothesized.

Analysis of the data related to the second hypothesis when boys alone were considered is most important. Scores for boys and girls in the two subgroups were very different. Although differences did not reach the required level of significance for girls, the opposite was true for boys.

The data revealed that boys of the language experience group introduced a mean of .19 more different words per 100 running words spoken into their oral language at the end of the seven month period of reading instruction. Boys of the traditional basal reader group were revealed to introduce a mean of 2.26 fewer different words per 100 consecutive words spoken into their oral language at the end of the period of reading instruction. This difference was significant at the .05 level. The second hypothesis was accepted for boys as a subgroup on the variable of diversity.

Analysis of the results revealed that boys of the language experience group included a mean of 4.41 more words which diverged from the list of vocabulary words common to the basal reader texts at the end of their period of reading instruction than at the beginning. On the other hand, boys of the traditional basal reader group included a mean of .50 more words which conformed to the list of vocabulary words common to the basal reader textbooks after a period of reading
instruction than before. This difference of 4.91 between the means of the two groups was significant at better than the .001 level. Therefore, the second hypothesis was accepted for the boys as a subgroup so far as divergence was concerned.

Findings of this study support the findings of the previous study by Giles (2) in which he found an increase in the mean percentage of spoken vocabulary words common to the vocabulary lists of reading instructional materials during a period of basal reader instruction. These findings were not applicable with respect to the language experience group. In fact, gains of the language experience group were in a direction opposite to those of the basal reader group.

This finding supports the conclusion of Strickland (6) that the oral language children use is far more advanced than the language of the books in which they are taught to read. Loban did not study this particular aspect of children's vocabulary.

The Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis as stated in Chapter I was that children taught beginning reading by the language experience approach would display significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the number of expressions of tentativeness used when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal
reader approach. The tenability of this hypothesis was also tested by the application of Fisher's $t$ technique. A $t$ score of 1.67 was required for significance at the .05 level and a $t$ score of 2.39 was required for significance at the .01 level for the total group. A $t$ score of 1.70 was required for significance at the .05 level and a $t$ score of 2.46 was required for significance at the .01 level for the two approach subgroups when divided by sexes. The data relative to the third hypothesis are presented in Table IV. In this table the significance of differences between the language experience approach group and the traditional basal reader group in the use of expressions of tentativeness are illustrated.

Analysis of the data reveals a difference between the mean gains of the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group which was significant at better than the .05 level. The language experience group had a mean gain of .54 expressions of tentativeness, whereas, the traditional basal reader group had a mean loss of .41 expressions of tentativeness during a period of reading instruction. This difference of .95 expressions of tentativeness resulted in a $t$ score of 1.75 which exceeded the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the third hypothesis was accepted for the total group.

Analysis of the data after separation of the two groups by sexes reveals something different. The data indicate
TABLE IV

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE GROUP AND THE TRADITIONAL BASAL READER GROUP IN THE USE OF EXPRESSIONS OF TENTATIVENESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions of Tentativeness</th>
<th>Approach A</th>
<th>Approach B</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Subgroup</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.10 (N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Subgroup</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that the boys of the language experience group had a mean gain of .31 expressions of tentativeness, whereas the boys of the traditional basal reader group had a mean loss of 1.12 expressions of tentativeness during a period of instruction in reading. However, even though this mean difference in change resulted in a difference of 1.43 expressions of tentativeness, the t score of 1.44 failed to reach the required .05 level of significance. It did exceed the .10 level of significance. Therefore, the third hypothesis was rejected when boys were considered as a subgroup.

Consideration of the data for girls as a subgroup disclosed that girls of the language experience group had a mean gain of .74 expressions of tentativeness while girls of the traditional basal reader group displayed a mean gain of .14 expressions of tentativeness during a period of reading instruction. This resulted in a difference in mean change
between the two groups of .60 expressions of tentativeness. This difference was translated into a $t$ score of 1.07, which was below the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the third hypothesis was rejected for girls as a subgroup.

The Fourth Hypothesis

It was stated in the fourth hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the gains in the mature use of two basic structural patterns made by the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group with the gains of the language experience group exceeding those of the traditional basal reader group. Treatment of the two structural pattern aspects by Fisher's $t$ technique is presented in Table V. As previously reported, $t$ scores of 1.67 and 2.39 were required for significance at the .05 and .01 levels. Again, $t$ scores of 1.70 and 2.46 were required for significance at the .05 and .01 levels when the approach subgroups by sexes were considered.

Analysis of the data pertinent to the use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun (N-LV-N) sentence pattern indicates that the language experience group recorded a mean loss of .14 N-LV-N sentences, while at the same time the traditional basal reader group recorded a mean loss of 1.18 for a difference in mean change of 1.04. This mean difference in change resulted in a $t$ score of 1.34, short of reaching the required score of 1.70 for significance at better than the .10 level.
The difference favored the language experience group as hypothesized. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was rejected with regard to the use of the N-LV-N sentence pattern for the total group.

**TABLE V**

**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE GROUP AND THE TRADITIONAL BASAL READER GROUP IN TWO STRUCTURAL PATTERN VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Pattern</th>
<th>Approach A</th>
<th>Approach B</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a N-LV-N</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.10(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b Partial</td>
<td>-5.09</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Subgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a N-LV-N</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.59</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b Partial</td>
<td>-4.94</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Subgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a N-LV-N</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b Partial</td>
<td>-5.21</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separation of the two groups by sexes was again done and the data re-examined. The scores of the groups of boys were considered first.

Boys in the language experience group displayed a loss of .37 sentences falling into the N-LV-N sentence pattern while boys of the traditional basal reader group displayed a loss of .59 sentences falling into the N-LV-N sentence pattern.
pattern. It can be seen from the data in Table V that this resulted in a difference in mean change between the two groups of .22 with a t score of only .16. This t score was far below the score required for the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was rejected on the variable of the N-LV-N structural pattern when the scores of the boys of the two groups were considered.

Girls in the language experience group displayed a gain of .05 sentences falling into the N-LV-N structured pattern while girls of the traditional basal reader group displayed a loss of 1.64 sentences falling into this pattern during a period of reading instruction. Those scores resulted in a mean difference of 1.69 between the two groups. This mean difference was translated to a t score of 1.84, exceeding the score of 1.70 required for significance at the .05 level. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was accepted for girls as a subgroup with respect to use of the N-LV-N structural pattern.

Analysis of the data pertinent to the use of the partial or incomplete sentence pattern indicates that the language experience group eliminated a mean of 5.09 of these expressions, while the traditional basal reader group increased their use of these expressions by a mean of 4.77, far exceeding the t score required for significance at even the .001 level. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was accepted with respect to use of the partial or incomplete sentence pattern.
Separation of the two groups for analysis was repeated, and scores for the boys were re-examined. Boys in the language experience group recorded a score of 4.94 fewer partial or incomplete sentences during the period of reading instruction. This difference in mean change of 7.53 is shown in Table V and resulted in a $t$ score of 4.47, far exceeding the score required for significance at the .001 level. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was accepted with respect to use of the partial or incomplete sentence pattern for boys as a subgroup.

Girls in the language experience approach group recorded a score of 5.21 fewer partial or incomplete sentences during their period of reading instruction. Girls in the traditional basal reader group recorded an increase of .32 more partial or incomplete sentences during their period of reading instruction. This difference in mean change of 5.53 resulted in a $t$ score of 2.74, which exceeded the score required at the .001 level of significance. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was also accepted for girls as a subgroup with respect to the use of the partial or incomplete sentence pattern.

The Fifth Hypothesis

It was stated in the fifth hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the mean gains of the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group with respect to their use of vivid and colorful expressions. Table VI graphically presents the significance of the
differences between the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group in their use of vivid and colorful expressions. Fisher's $t$ technique was applied to the scores to test the tenability of this hypothesis.

Analysis of the data reveals a difference between the mean gains of the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group which was significant at better than the .001 level. While the language experience group was increasing their use of vivid and colorful expressions by 1.00 during a period of reading instruction the traditional basal reader group was eliminating 1.08 of these expressions from their utterances. This difference of 2.08 vivid and colorful expressions between the two groups resulted in a $t$ score of 4.49, exceeding the .001 level of significance. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was accepted for the total group.

**TABLE VI**

**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE GROUP AND THE TRADITIONAL BASAL READER GROUP IN THE USE OF VIVID AND COLORFUL EXPRESSIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vivid and Colorful Expressions</th>
<th>Approach A</th>
<th>Approach B</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Subgroup</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Subgroup</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>-.86</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examination of the data in Table VI after separating the sexes reveals essentially the same information. Boys of the language experience group increased their use of these expressions by a mean of 1.44 while boys of the traditional basal reader group decreased their use of these expressions by a mean of 1.35 for a difference in mean change of 2.79. This difference resulted in a \( t \) score of 3.75, exceeding the .001 level of significance. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was accepted for boys as a subgroup.

Girls of the language experience group increased their use of these expressions by a mean of .63, while girls of the traditional basal reader group decreased their use of these expressions by a mean of .36, for a mean difference of 1.49. This difference resulted in a \( t \) score of 2.57, exceeding the .01 level of significance. Thus, the fifth hypothesis was accepted for girls as a subgroup.

The Sixth Hypothesis

It was stated in the sixth hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the gains in the mature use of mazes as holders and edits made by the language experience group and the traditional basal reader group, with the difference favoring the language experience group. The significance of differences between the two groups in their use of mazes as holders and edits is presented in Table VII.
TABLE VII

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE GROUP AND THE TRADITIONAL BASAL READER GROUP IN THEIR USE OF MAZES AS HOLDERS AND EDITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Mazes Variable</th>
<th>Approach A</th>
<th>Approach B</th>
<th>Mean Diff.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>-1.85</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Subgroup</td>
<td>12.37</td>
<td>-4.82</td>
<td>17.19</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Subgroup</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>- .45</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>(N.S.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Failed to reach significance by only .03 of a point on the t scale.

The level of significance reported in Table VII for the total group is accepted at .05, although it did not quite reach the required 1.67 score. The t score was actually 1.64. However, this was so close to the required score that it was considered, for all practical purposes, to have reached the required level of significance. This t score was the result of a mean gain in the use of mazes as holders and edits by the language experience group of 8.11, while the traditional basal reader group showed a loss of 1.85. This difference of 9.96 converted to a t score of 1.64 as noted. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis was accepted for the total group as noted.

Analysis of the data following separation of groups by sex was again performed. Boys of the language experience group were revealed to increase their use of mazes as holders and edits by a mean of 12.37. At the same time, boys of the
traditional basal reader group decreased their similar use of mazes by a mean of 4.32. This difference of mean change of 17.19 between the two groups of boys resulted in a t score of 1.92, exceeding the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis was accepted for boys as a subgroup.

Girls of the language experience group increased their use of mazes as holders and edits by 4.53, while girls of the traditional basal reader group increased their similar use of mazes by only .45. This difference in mean change resulted in a t score of .49, failing to reach the required .05 level of significance. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis was rejected for girls as a subgroup.

Summary

Comparisons of oral language development were made between a group of first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach and a group of first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach. The two approach groups were further subdivided by sexes for comparison. The findings are reviewed and summarized in the paragraphs which follow.

The results indicated that the total language experience group showed no statistically significant gains in six extent of verbalization aspects of oral language development over the total traditional basal reader group. However, there were
differences significant at better than the .10 level of confidence favoring the language experience group. The first hypothesis was rejected at the .05 level of significance for the total group.

The first hypothesis was also rejected in all six aspects for boys as a subgroup at the .05 level of significance. However, differences between the subgroups of girls exceeded the .05 level of significance in the sub-hypothesis relative to the average length of phonological units. This significant difference favored the girls of the language experience group. The first hypothesis was accepted on one variable for girls as a subgroup.

Findings revealed that significant differences between the two total groups and boys as a subgroup resulted during the period of reading instruction on two of the three vocabulary variables compared. Differences in mean gains and the Fisher's $t$ test for diversity and divergence of vocabulary were significant at better than the .01 level in favor of the language experience group. Differences in mean gains and the Fisher's $t$ test for frequency favored the language experience group, but failed to reach the required level of significance for the total group and boys or girls as subgroups on any of the three vocabulary variables. The second hypothesis was accepted for two of the three vocabulary variables studied.
The data indicate that significant differences in the use of expressions of tentativeness developed between the two groups during their period of reading instruction which favored the total language experience group. However, the differences did not reach the required .05 level of significance when the groups were divided by sexes. The third hypothesis was accepted for the total group.

The analysis of data relative to differences in the use of two structural patterns revealed that significant differences developed between the two groups in their use of partial or incomplete sentences. The differences in the mean gains and the Fisher's t test for the use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun structural pattern favored the language experience group at better than the .10 level, but failed to exceed the .05 level. The fourth hypothesis was accepted on one variable and rejected on the other.

Differences significant at better than the .01 level were found between the two groups in their use of vivid and colorful expressions. This difference favored the language experience group as hypothesized. The fifth hypothesis was accepted for the total group, and for both subgroups of boys and girls.

Differences, interpreted as significant at the .05 level developed between the two groups in their use of mazes as holders and edits. This difference, although failing to reach
The required z score of 1.67 by .03 point, was interpreted as significant at the .05 level. The sixth hypothesis was accepted for the total group and for boys as a subgroup.

The next chapter will present a summary of the study and a statement as to the conclusions reached. Recommendations for teaching practices, teacher preparation, and further research in this area will be listed.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Linguists say that normal children by ages four to six are practically adults, linguistically speaking. By this they mean that children have basic control over the sounds, vocabulary, and syntax of the spoken language. They state that children's vocabularies are frequently underestimated, rarely overestimated. A growing number of educators are becoming aware of the fact that the language patterns of basal reading materials used with first grade pupils has little to do with the "real" language used in their oral language situations. There is evidence that children find it easy to read stories that they write or their own stories that are written for them.

The comments of children, the observations of parents and teachers, and criticisms by scholars of books that are written for beginning readers all indicate that materials for successfully beginning reading instruction must meet several criteria. They must be related to oral expression, they must be interesting to children, and they must be easy for children to read. Basal reader series currently being used for beginning reading materials do not meet all these criteria. There is a need for using more material employing the vocabulary
and the sentence patterns that children use when talking about the things which interest them.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to compare the relative gains made in the development of oral language skills by two groups of first grade pupils so as to determine the effects of two approaches to reading instruction upon the oral language development of first grade pupils. The level of oral language development of the children was carefully determined by use of procedures and techniques developed and described by Loban (3), Strickland (4), and Giles (1).

It was hypothesized that the group taught beginning reading by the language experience approach would demonstrate significantly greater gains in the various aspects of oral language development compared than would the group taught by the traditional basal reader method. The analysis of statistical data from pre-tests and post-tests using transcriptions of pupil utterances recorded in structured interviews supported the hypothesis of this study. The two approaches to reading instruction compared were chosen from among the three carefully described, analyzed, and evaluated by Lane (2).

Comparison of oral language development was made on the following variables: (1) six extent of verbalization aspects, (2) three spoken vocabulary aspects, (3) expressions of tentativeness, (4) two structural pattern aspects, (5) colorful and
vivid expressions, and (6) use of mazes. The total groups were compared on each of the variables and then the groups were divided by sex for further comparisons. Fisher's $t$ technique was used to test the tenability of all hypotheses. The .05 level of confidence was used to test the significance of each of the fourteen variables.

The hypotheses tested by this study were:

1. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in six extent of verbalization aspects of oral language development when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, as follows:

   a. number of phonological units
   b. length of phonological units
   c. number of communication (sentence) units
   d. length of communication (sentence) units
   e. number of maze units
   f. length of maze units

2. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in three aspects of spoken vocabulary development when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, as follows:

   a. diversity of words in student's vocabulary
   b. frequency of occurrence of words in the English language
   c. divergence of oral vocabulary from the textbook vocabulary
3. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the number of expressions of tentativeness used when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.

4. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the mature use of structural patterns in their utterances when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach, as follows:
   
   a. number of Noun-Linking Verb-Noun units
   b. number of partial or incomplete units

5. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by the number of colorful and vivid expressions used when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.

6. First grade pupils taught beginning reading by the language experience approach will demonstrate significantly greater gains in oral language development as determined by their mature use of mazes as edits and holders rather than as noises or repeats when compared to first grade pupils taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.
Seventy-four pupils enrolled in four regularly scheduled first grade classes in two elementary schools in a southern California county were included in this study. Four teachers participated in the study. The teachers were comparable in terms of certification, experience, and commitment to the approach they chose to use. Two teachers taught beginning reading by the language experience approach, and two taught beginning reading by the traditional basal reader approach.

When comparing the total approach groups, differences significant at the .05 level or better were not found on any of the six extent of verbalization variables of the first hypothesis. Therefore, the first hypothesis was rejected. No significant differences were found between the boys as subgroups on any of the six extent of verbalization variables. The first hypothesis was also rejected for boys. A difference significant at better than the .05 level was found between girls on one variable, average length of phonological unit. Therefore, the first hypothesis was accepted on this one variable when girls were considered as a subgroup.

Although the first hypothesis was rejected, differences favoring the total language experience group at better than the .10 level of significance were found on three extent of verbalization variables. These were: average length of phonological units, number of communication units, and number of mazes. Differences favoring the boys of the
language experience group significant at better than the .10 level were found on four of the six extent of verbalization variables. These were: average length of phonological units, number of communication units, average length of communication units, and number of mazes.

Comparison of the total approach groups found differences significant at better than the .05 level on two of the three vocabulary variables of the second hypothesis. The second hypothesis was accepted on the variables of diversity and divergence for the total groups. It was rejected for the total groups on the variable of frequency. Differences significant at better than the .05 level were found on these same variables for the boys as a subgroup. The second hypothesis was accepted on two variables for boys. No significant differences on any of the three vocabulary variables were found between the subgroups of girls. The second hypothesis was rejected for girls. Differences significant at better than the .10 level favoring the language experience girls were found on the variables of diversity and divergence.

The third hypothesis was accepted for the total group. The language experience group was found to use a significantly greater number of expressions of tentativeness. Although a difference significant at the .10 level was found favoring the boys of the language experience group, the third hypothesis was rejected for boys. It was also rejected for girls as a subgroup.
A difference favoring the language experience group was found on one of the two variables of the fourth hypothesis. Therefore, hypothesis four was accepted on the variable of use of the partial sentence pattern. It was rejected on the variable of use of the Noun-Linking Verb-Noun sentence pattern for the total group. Findings for the boys as subgroups were the same as for the total group. However, the fourth hypothesis was accepted on both variables for girls as a subgroup as differences were significant at better than the .05 level.

The fifth hypothesis was accepted for the total group, boys as a subgroup, and girls as a subgroup. The difference in the number of expressions of tentativeness used by the two groups was significant at better than the .01 level.

Hypothesis six was accepted for the total group as the t score of 1.64 was just .03 of a point below that required for statistical significance. It was unconditionally accepted for boys as a subgroup, but rejected for girls as a subgroup.

Conclusions

In the light of the evidence and within the limitations of this study, the following conclusions seem to be justified:

1. The language experience approach was more effective than the traditional basal reader approach as a method for presenting beginning reading instruction in encouraging the development of certain oral language skills. This method was more effective in the areas of diversity and divergence of
vocabulary, the use of expressions of tentativeness, the use of partial sentences, the use of vivid and colorful expressions, and the use and control of mazes.

2. The language experience approach is more effective in encouraging the oral language development of boys than for girls. Significant differences favoring language experience group boys were found on five variables, whereas differences favoring girls were found on only four variables. Differences exceeding the .10 level of confidence favored boys on five additional variables, but favored girls on only two additional variables.

3. It was found that beginning reading instruction by either approach encourages regression in the extent of verbalization of first grade pupils, but the greatest regression was found to occur in the basal reader group. It can thus be concluded that some regression of oral language results from beginning reading activities by either of the methods compared.

4. It can be concluded that first grade pupils need many opportunities to grapple with their own thoughts in situations where they have someone to whom they wish to communicate successfully.

5. The language experience approach was found to be more effective for boys than for girls. Boys as a group usually have trouble with reading six or seven times as often as girls. Thus it can be concluded that boys may be
rejecting basal reader materials currently being used for beginning reading instruction.

6. It can be concluded that the concocted language of today’s basal reading materials and reading workbook exercises may have built-in regression for the language development of pupils. Extensive time requirements of these materials detract from opportunities to engage in oral language activities.

Recommendations

It is suggested that writers preparing materials for basal reading instruction consider the findings of this study. These findings have a number of implications with regard to length of sentences, structural patterns of sentences, and vocabulary control for future materials. New materials should not perpetuate the underestimation of pupil oral language development.

The language experience approach is recommended for use in remedial classes so as to enhance the oral language skills of this group in which boys usually outnumber girls by six or seven to one. This is a primary recommendation resulting from the findings of this study, and is important in that implementing it would mean a reversal of direction for most remedial techniques.

Provision should be made for first grade pupils to have many opportunities to engage in activities which enhance the
opportunities for discussion, communication, and sharing in situations where they have someone to whom they wish to communicate successfully. Easel painting, clay manipulation, playing house, and creative dramatics are activities which encourage children to talk. Completing pages of a workbook, cutting with scissors, doing routine seatwork, and reading in the traditional reading circle are activities which restrict opportunity to make use of oral communication skills.

Teachers should increase their use of experience stories which are recorded just as they come from the lips of the children. It may be better to accept children's usage which does not ring true in the adult ear than to try and correct or purify the young pupil's usage because by taking down children's stories in their own language the teacher can be more certain that the words and the ideas behind the words have meaning for them. Classroom teachers in this study found that the most successful experience charts are written in the natural sentences of children. These sentences should be read aloud immediately by the pupil who spoke the sentence and by his classmates in the normal way in which the sentence was spoken in the first place. Beginning reading materials should be realistically based on those basic patterns and variations with which the child has already demonstrated ability.

Greater emphasis should be placed upon this approach in teacher education courses in the light of its demonstrated
superiority in the development of oral language skills. Student teachers should be expected to make use of this approach as well as the traditional basal reader approach.

Courses in diagnostic and remedial techniques taught to "special" teachers should include techniques in the language experience approach. This is especially important in the light of the finding in this study that this approach is superior with boys.

The evidence presented by this study suggested other areas for investigation. The following recommendations are made for future research in this area.

1. The effects of implementing these two approaches to reading instruction upon the oral language development of groups of students assigned to the various special or unusual groups such as mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, or gifted should be studied.

2. The effects of implementing these two approaches to reading instruction upon the written language skills of students should be studied at various grade levels.

3. The effects of implementing these two approaches to reading instruction throughout the grades upon the development of oral language skills should be studied on a longitudinal basis.

4. The oral language development of a group of students attending a kindergarten emphasizing activities calculated to
enhance oral language skills should be compared to the oral language development of a group of non-kindergarten students.

5. The oral language status of a group of children participating in Project Head Start activities which stresses giving children sharing, painting, discussion, and creative dramatics experiences should be compared with the oral language status of a group of non-participants.

6. The present study should be repeated with a larger group of pupils. The analysis should include the comparison of oral language development of high, middle, and low socio-economic status pupils.

7. The present study should be repeated with a larger group of pupils. The analysis should include a study of the differences between the two groups at various intelligence levels.

8. Additional studies should separate the variable of use of mazes into two variables as it is believed the differences tended to wash each other out to a certain degree in the present study.

9. Additional studies should be repeated with pupils being compared who were taught by the language experience approach with a group taught using extensive oral reading in all subject matter areas to measure regression of oral language resulting from the two approaches.
10. A follow-up study comparing the oral language development of students taught by the traditional basal reader group and other approaches, such as the phonetic keys to reading program, should be conducted.
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