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NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS.

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THE TEACHING OF READING

IN

NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS

An Historical Analysis.

by

Frank E. Atchison

A Thesis submitted to the Department of Education
in the University of Sydney as part of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education with Honours.

JANUARY, 1960.

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* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

"In the history of education, there are more theories and methods of teaching reading than of teaching any other subject",*¹ but still there is no one method which meets with full, general approval.*² This is only to be expected, for reading is an activity which has a place in every field of education, and reading and education are so intimately related that any change in our cultural, religious, economic, or political life, which has altered the purpose and objectives of education, has also effected changes in the methods and materials used in the teaching of reading. There can, therefore, be no final, complete answer to the question: "How should we teach Johnny to read?" for as our ever-changing civilization ushers in newer educational philosophies, it introduces the need for appropriate adjustments in the reading programmes of our schools.

The teaching of reading, as described in so many modern textbooks on the subject, is based on studies which pass lightly over these social aspects and concentrate primarily on the psychological and physiological problems involved. Research studies of this type seek an ideal answer to what is essentially a psychological

*1. Quoted from Col. Francis Parker by C.R. Long in The Aim and Method of the Reading Lesson, Macmillan & Co., London, 1904.

*2. Typical of the publications which attack modern methods are: R.F. Flesch, Why Johnny Cannot Read, Harper, New York, 1955 & J.C. Daniels and H. Diack, Progress in Reading, Institute of Education, University of Nottingham, 1956.

question: "How does Johnny learn to read?" In doing this, they perform an essential function, giving direction and depth to much of our progress, but their effect upon the actual teaching of reading, especially in our primary schools, has been somewhat superficial and certainly not commensurate with what they have to offer. Any attempt to translate into practice the findings of purely psychological or physiological research on the reading process, soon encounters very real historical and sociological barriers which may prevent the new teaching procedures from making any progress at all. Then from across the stagnant, educational backwaters comes the popular cry: "It doesn't work in my school!" Herein lies the limitation, however, of the psychological, child-centred approach to the teaching of reading. Valuable as it undoubtedly is - no one would deny this - it is not enough, for what happens in the classroom cannot be dissociated from the educational system of the community, its traditions, and its problems. Even if a method of teaching is psychologically sound, it must be condemned as impracticable if it requires small class-loads, a liberal school budget, a wealth of special reading books and materials, unusual ability on the part of the teachers, ample library facilities, enlightened parent co-operation, or any other condition of the type which most school authorities to-day are still genuinely unable to bring about or to control.

This suggests that the teaching of reading should be studied, not only as an educational and psychological problem, but also as a sociological one. A recent international survey in which this

approach is recommended, states that the choice of reading methods must be partially determined by such things as the school organization of the country concerned and the structure of its language.*1 This new emphasis, which can be discerned already in several countries, has brought to our attention the surprisingly large number of ways in which social matters and children's reading are interrelated. In France, Paul Hazard has put forward the view that "we can disregard the literature for childhood only if we consider unimportant the way in which a national soul is formed and sustained".*2 In England, George Orwell has broken new ground with a disturbing essay on the use of children's literature for political purposes:

"All fiction from the novels in the mushroom libraries downwards is censored in the interests of the ruling class. And boys' fiction above all, the blood-and-thunder stuff which nearly every boy devours at some time or other, is sodden in the worst illusions of 1910. This fact is only unimportant if one believes that what is read in childhood leaves no impression behind." *3

Even in America, the happy hunting-ground of the physiologist with his tachistoscope and other mechanical devices for reading, the significance of social factors has not been overlooked. W.S. Gray, for example, advises teachers to "make detailed studies of the

*1. UNESCO, International Conference on Public Education, Collected recommendations, 1934-1950, p.77. Publication Number 125, International Bureau of Education, Geneva.

*2. Paul Hazard, Les Livres, les Enfants, et les Hommes, Flammarion, Paris, 1932. Translation by Marguerite Mitchell, Books, Children and Men, Horn Books, Boston, 1943.

*3. George Orwell, "Boys' Weeklies", (First published in Inside the Whale, 1939), Critical Essays, p.82, Secker and Warburg, London, 1946.

social environments of their various pupils and the nature of the understandings, attitudes, and interests of each child",*¹ while Josette Frank urges educators and parents to revise their established concepts of the role of reading in a child's life now that the modern child can acquire entertainment and knowledge more effectively and efficiently through the new mass media of communication.*² But the most revealing evidence of the growing recognition of the sociological side of the reading problem is of a negative nature. During the 'Why-Johnny-cannot-read' controversy in 1955-56, the defenders of the developmental reading schemes used just as many sociological arguments as psychological ones to deflect the arrows of their critics. Thus, Gordon Dupee wrote:

"Johnny is likely to do what is honored in his own home and what is honored in the society of which he is becoming aware. And ours is a society which does not honour reading. We turn our own depreciation of reading to indignation and blame the school." *³

Intentionally or otherwise, statements of this kind expose the flaw in any approach to the teaching of reading which does not take into consideration far more than the actual reading process.

BASIC CONTENTIONS

This brief discussion, touching on different points of view

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- *1. W.S. Gray, "Social Aspects", Developing Permanent Interest In Reading, (comp. & ed.) Helen M. Robinson, S.E.M. No.84, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956, p.15.
 - *2. Josette Frank, Your Child's Reading To-day, pp.19-25, Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York, 1954.
 - *3. Gordon Dupee, "Can Johnny's Parents Read", Saturday Review, XXXIX, (June 2, 1956), p.5.

concerning the main principle upon which reading instruction should be built, has given us a glimpse of a confused educational world; its confidence undermined by opposing theories, and its professional status weakened by the obvious discrepancies between theory and practice. In common with every other school subject, reading has suffered from the piecemeal, haphazard nature of educational research which stems more often from individual interests than from an organized, comprehensive attack on basic problems.*¹ The result has been a Topsy-like growth of schemes and methods. While this state of affairs prevails, little permanent progress in the teaching of reading can be made in our schools. Hence, there is a real need for a thorough, searching analysis of every problem relating to children's reading - an honest unbiased analysis which may enable educationists, ultimately, to fuse the aims of the subject, research findings, educational theory, and classroom practice into a consistent and coherent pattern. This is a tall order, beyond the resources of the individual student.

At this stage, however, there is a place for limited inquiries into particular aspects of the proposed analysis, designed to open up the whole matter in a general sense. Such is the purpose of the present thesis. It deals with the complex nature of reading and attempts, through a survey of reading difficulties, to analyze this complexity according to the five major sources from which it arises - the physiological, the psychological, the educational, the

*1. Norton L. Beach, "Research Goes Into Action". Journal of Educational Research, Vol.47, p.351, 1954.

linguistic, and the sociological. The effect of this complexity upon actual teaching practice is then illustrated by means of an historical analysis of the teaching of reading in New South Wales primary schools since 1788.*¹ The basic contentions underlying this work are as follows:

- a. Reading is a most complex activity.
- b. In the past, its complexity has not been clearly understood by teachers nor given adequate consideration by school authorities in the planning of reading instruction.
- c. To-day, because of these sins of omission, we do not know nearly enough about the effect of specific social conditions or educational systems upon "the child's growth in and through reading". *²
- d. Therefore, improved reading instruction in a particular area, such as the state of New South Wales, cannot be achieved until a study has been made of the history of the teaching of the subject in that area and the social problems peculiar to it have been given the attention they demand.
- e. When the reading problem - as understood by modern psychologists, physiologists, and educationists - is examined against the background of endeavour which past generations in New South Wales have made to overcome it, our educational authorities will have available the basic information for a realistic and scientific review of the teaching of reading in this state.

GENERAL PLAN OF THE THESIS

Part A contains an analysis of the nature and extent of the complexity of the learning and teaching of reading. One chapter

*1. This date has been used because of its historical implications. The first schoolhouse was not opened until 1793.

*2. The writer feels justified in using American phraseology and idiom for concepts which are as yet not well developed in this country, partly because it is in keeping with the general trend in our educational vocabulary, and partly because it has the merit of being concise and meaningful.

is devoted to each of the four main sources of this complexity: the CHILD, the SOCIETY, the LANGUAGE, and the SCHOOL. The chapter on the Child deals primarily with difficulties of a psychological or physiological nature and with the role of reading in the total growth and development of the child; that on the Society deals with the aims, standards, and problems of our society in relation to reading; that on the Language deals with difficulties caused by differences between the spoken and the written languages, and by certain unique characteristics of the English language, and finally, that on the School deals with difficulties attributable to the school system, the teacher, or the educational environment. It will be readily realized, of course, that these divisions overlap in some respects and that most reading difficulties cannot be traced back to a solitary cause.*¹ A fact which merely serves to strengthen the basic contention that "reading is a most complex activity".

In Part B a survey is made of the methods and materials used in the teaching of reading in New South Wales since 1788. This involves some examination of the educational principles underlying their use, for changes in the content of school readers and in teaching methods were not fortuitous, they grew out of changing school conditions and advancing - or retreating - educational philosophies. Consequently, it has been possible to divide the historical analysis into periods in each of which new theories of

*1. See C.M. Fleming, Research and the Basic Curriculum, pp.12-13, Uni. of London Press, London, 1946, for an account of the 'specificity' characteristic of the 1915 - 1925 decade.

education have fostered a new emphasis in the teaching of reading. Each period of changing emphasis is treated in a separate chapter of the thesis, but this division is not intended to convey the impression that there was no overlapping or merging of aims, materials, and methods from period to period. Even to-day it is still possible to observe teachers in New South Wales schools employing methods which, officially, have long since faded into oblivion.*1

Part B is not intended as a narrative or descriptive history - or as an antiquarian study! It is an attempt to see past failures and successes in their true historical and educational perspective, to probe into the human motives underlying the different approaches to reading, to sift out the essential strengths of each period of emphasis from the dross of temporary fads, personal whims, and false reasoning, and, above all, to seek out afresh whatever was worthwhile in the old. It proceeds on the assumption that acquaintance with the educational past will lead to a better understanding of present-day reading problems, and that modern educational theories cannot be effectively transplanted from one culture to another until the traditions and sociological differences of the new culture have been taken into account.

Finally, Part C consists of an essay reviewing the basic

*1. In addition, as Nila Banton Smith states in "Successive Emphases in American Reading Instruction", Teachers College Record, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College Columbia University, December, 1932, p.189 : "every period ... was marked by some authors whose convictions varied from the great body of opinion".

contentions of the thesis and, at the same time, summarizing the fundamental questions raised in Part A and placing them alongside the more mundane issues outlined in Part B. In brief, reading in theory is balanced against reading in action. From this certain recommendations emerge, but no attempt is made to proselytize or to put forward any personal scheme for the teaching of reading. As indicated earlier, the purpose of the thesis is to open up the case for a broad, disinterested, liberal study of the reading problem, not to close it.

PART A

THE COMPLEXITY
Of The
READING PROBLEM.

"The dear people do not know how long it takes to learn to read. I have been at it all my life and I cannot yet say I have reached the goal."
..... GOETHE

Learning to read has traditionally been accepted as part of a child's schooling, yet it is an area of education which still confronts the teacher with a profusion of unsolved problems. This undesirable and tantalizing state of affairs cannot be attributed to a lack of interest in reading^{*1} or to a dearth of ideas for teaching it. The educational field is littered with burnt-out reading schemes. The basic assumption or pre-supposition of this thesis is that most of these reading problems persist because of our failure to realize to the full that reading is not a simple, but a very complex, elaborate activity. Although modern teachers are aware that reading involves much more than mere word recognition, and that there is more to the teaching of reading than saying, "All right Johnny, you read next", in general, they do not understand the real complexity of reading. Their lack of knowledge derives, to some extent, from the fragmentary nature of much of the reading research work which, in the past, has been characterized by isolated, unco-ordinated investigations, half-completed projects, and partially-tested hypotheses.^{*2} Hence, a need has developed for studies in which the findings of research are organized, for the benefit of the non-specialist teacher, into

*1. Between 1881 and 1948, 2700 scientific studies relating to reading were published in the United States and England. See the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. W.S. Monroe, Macmillan Co., 1950, p.965.

*2. The annual survey of reading research made by W.S. Gray is too condensed and disjointed for general teaching purposes. W.S. Gray, Annual "Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading", July, 1924 to June, 1931, Elementary School Journal; from July, 1931 to the present this summary has been published once a year in the Journal of Educational Research.

broad, comprehensive surveys of basic reading problems.

Chapters 1 to 1V, inclusive, constitute a study of this type. They deal with the general problem of the complexity of the learning and teaching of reading. Four major sources of this complexity are identified:

- (a) the growth and development of the child as a whole, but more particularly his language growth and the way in which he gradually becomes a reader,
- (b) the aims, standards, conditions, and temporary problems of the society to which the young reader belongs,
- (c) the peculiarities of the English language - its structure, grammatical irregularities, and chaotic spelling,
- (d) the educational environment*¹ in which the child is taught to read.

The aim of the analysis of each of these sources, and of the associated reading difficulties, is to prove that the teaching of reading is "not some petty, technical detail which anyone with some commonsense could solve out of hand,"*² but quite the opposite. For, as the analysis indicates, reading is the end-product of a complex interaction of specific demands, needs, and influences emanating from the child, the society, the language, and the school.

*1. The term "environment" includes: teaching methods and materials used in reading lessons; educational theory relating to the learning process, and the educational climate of the classroom.

*2. Harold B. Dunkel, "Educational News and Editorial Comment", Elementary School Journal, p.71, November, 1956.

CHAPTER 1:THE CHILD

Whether we study reading as a process involving visual perception co-ordinated with various physiological activities, or as a mental process in which symbols are recognized and translated into thought units, or as a linguistic activity involving the association of printed words with spoken words, or as a means by which man becomes acquainted with the knowledge and culture accumulated by his and other societies, we ultimately find ourselves faced with the fact that reading is basically a human activity and only secondarily an activity dealing with words, language and the recording of ideas. Even the philologists admit this, for they have repeatedly pointed out that language has no real existence apart from the people who use it, that the queer black symbols of the written language have no meaning in themselves. It is the reader who brings meaning to these symbols. Clearly then, the method of teaching reading must be influenced to no small degree by the nature of the reader.

Colonel Francis Parker defined reading as "getting thought by means of written or printed words arranged in sentences".*¹ But this definition is not quite in keeping with modern language theory in that it fails to place sufficient emphasis upon that part of the reading act which must take place before the reader can get thought

*1. Colonel F.W. Parker, Talks on Teaching, p.22, Memorial Edition, E.L. Kellogg & Co., New York, 1903.

from the written language, nor does it include in the reading act the reaction of the reader to the meaning he has acquired. These extensions to the definition are important, for at the beginning of this century New South Wales teachers acknowledged Parker's definition yet taught children to "get the meaning" by narrow phonic and phonetic methods which reduced reading to little more than a language activity and contradicted the intended meaning of Parker's definition. To avoid this possibility most modern reading authorities accept E.L. Thorndike's definition of reading as thinking under the stimulus of the printed page.*¹ Here the word "thinking" identifies reading as a human activity and implies that the reader is not an 'empty vessel' into which the meaning is poured.

Logically, then, our analysis of the nature and extent of the complexity of the learning and teaching of reading must begin with the child. The foundations of successful teaching methods in reading will be laid in a broad understanding of the way in which children grow and the way in which they develop proficiency in the use of their native tongue. In other words, learning to read is an integral part of the child's language growth which, in turn, is a vital aspect of his total growth - physical, mental, social, and emotional. And the child's reading difficulties, as we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, may arise not only from within the reading activity itself, but also from the child's failure to make adequate progress in other areas of language growth, and in his total growth as a person.

*1. E.L. Thorndike, "Reading as Reasoning", Journal of Educational Psychology, pp.323-332, Vol.8, 1917.

We shall begin then by studying reading in relation to the child as a whole, for as Wrightstone and Campbell have stated:

"It is the whole child that goes to school - that engages in the multitude of activities that go to make up his life. It is the whole child with whom the teacher and counsellor work. It is this idea of seeing the whole child and helping him function acceptably that constitutes guidance in the modern school. No teacher should consider that he has a satisfactory theory of learning unless he sees that each new way of behaving involves, at least to some degree, a remaking of the whole organism." *1

i. The Inter-relatedness of Reading Growth and Total Growth

The gradual growth and development of the child towards maturity "is the end product of a complex interaction between maturation and nurture"*2- using "nurture" to include environmental factors and all of the experiences and types of learning which produce achievement on the part of the child. For convenience sake, the major strands of development, such as those leading to mental, physical, emotional and social maturity, may be discussed in isolation, but it must at all times be remembered that they are closely inter-related parts of the child's total development. In the following discussion on the inter-relatedness of specific developmental strands, no attempt has been made to make a comprehensive survey but merely to state the basic relationship and to give sufficient authoritative proof of its validity.

(a) Mental or Intellectual Development

Irrespective of scientific data, few practising teachers

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- *1. J.W. Wrightstone & D.S. Campbell, "Evaluation of Growth in the Social Education", Social Studies and the American Way of Life, p.49, Part III. Row, Peterson & Co., Evanston, 1942.
- *2. W.C. Olson, Psychological Foundations of the Curriculum, p.5a, Educational Studies & Documents No.26, UNESCO, Paris, '57.

would doubt that there is a relationship between reading ability and degree of general intelligence even though some intelligent children are poor readers. Schonell states that the "level of general intelligence is one of the factors closely conditioning success in reading",^{*1} the child's mental age being related to "the level and accuracy of his power of word recognition and of comprehension",^{*1} and his intelligence quotient being related to "the speed of learning that can be expected from him".^{*1} He traces this relationship back to the fact that general intelligence shows itself in just those abilities which the child needs most in reading: to be able to "see relationships between items of knowledge", and then to be able to "apply these relationships to new situations".^{*1} But in addition, reading involves other mental powers such as memory, recalling events in their correct sequence, anticipating meaning from the context of a situation, and powers of reasoning. Other things being equal, the bright child obviously has a distinct advantage over the dull child in learning to read. For experimental proof of this we may turn to the work of Clark,^{*2} who found that reading ability and mental age are positively correlated, or to the work of Bleismer,^{*3} who compared the reading abilities of bright and dull children of comparable mental ages and found that the bright children were superior in total reading comprehension, locating and recognizing factual details, recognizing main ideas, and drawing

*1. F.J. Schonell, The Psychology and Teaching of Reading, p.18, Oliver and Boyd Ltd., Edinburgh, 1945.

*2. Clark, "Evaluating School Achievement in Basic Skills in Relation to Mental Ability", Journal of Educational Research, pp. 179-191, November, 1952.

*3. Bleismer, "Reading Abilities of Bright & Dull Children of Comparable Mental Ages", J. Educ. Psych., p.321-31, October, 1954.

inferences and conclusions.

In some cases, therefore, reading disability may be attributable in part to mental immaturity or inadequate development of specific mental powers. The child may have been 'pushed' into reading before he had reached a mental age at which he could cope with the task; he may have been expected to progress at a rate beyond his intellectual capacity; he may have been obliged to learn by a phonic or phonetic method requiring a higher level of abstract reasoning than he has attained;^{*1} he may not have had the opportunity to exercise those powers of retention and of reasoning which he needs to understand and follow the teacher's directions during the reading lessons. It follows logically from the above points that a method of teaching reading cannot be adequate unless it provides for individual differences in mental maturity, develops those mental powers appropriate to reading, and is flexible enough to be adjusted at each level of advancement to wide variations in the rate of mental growth.

(b) Physical Development

The relationship between reading growth and physical growth is beyond question in some matters, although children have a way of compensating for physical defects which indicates that the relationship is not absolute. Obviously the child needs adequate health and vitality to keep an active interest in his reading. He needs good eyesight so that he can discriminate between similar letter shapes

*1. S.C. Garrison & N.T. Heard in "An Experimental Study of the Value of Phonetics", Peabody Journal of Education, Vol.1X, July, 1931, state that phonic training should be deferred until 7-8 years of age because it helps bright pupils more than dull.

and word patterns and he needs the eye-muscle skills necessary to establish the habits of regular and rhythmic horizontal eye movements during reading. As the latter comes mainly through maturation, the child should not be forced into reading before he has gained them. The child needs adequate hearing also, to enable him to discriminate between similar sounds and words. And finally, as W.H. Burton has stated so succinctly, the child needs:

"Sufficient kinesthetic co-ordination to carry out necessary activities in learning to read, such as:

- 2. Eye-motor control (for focusing the eyes on a symbol, following a line of type from left to right and sweeping back to the beginning of the next line, shifting from context to picture and vice versa, keeping the place).
- 4. Eye-voice co-ordination (for effective oral reading) *1

Other physical factors are not so decisively related. For example, while Lucille M. Harrison in her outstanding work on Reading Readiness *1a. includes cerebral dominance as a factor, Eve Malmquist after a recent study conducted in Sweden found that it was not related to poor reading ability. *2

The evidence strongly suggests that various physical factors may so limit a child's possibilities of benefiting from reading instruction or so obstruct his reading performance, as to constitute a definite source of reading disability. In the 1930's, Gesell pointed out that "the incidence of poor motor co-ordination, speech defects, and oculomotor defects" *3 was high among the population of

*1. W.H. Burton, Reading in Child Development, p.176.

*1a Lucille M. Harrison, Reading Readiness, 1938.

*2. Eve Malmquist, "Factors Related to Reading Disabilities in the First Grade of the Elementary School", Educational Research, p.69, Vol.1, No.1, November, 1958.

*3. Quoted in The Reading Teacher, p.125, Vol.12, No.2, Dec., 1958.

of reading clinics. While the fact that the development of the powers of visual perception is significantly related to reading growth has been shown by Jean Goins,^{*1} who also found that specific training in the recognition of visual forms increased reading ability. Roberts and Coleman secured similar evidence that poor readers are decidedly inferior on tests of visual perception.^{*2} All of which would lead us to assume that physical defects or slow physical maturation are possible sources of reading disability, even though we may not be prepared to accept completely Olson's assumption that progress in reading parallels growth in organismic age.^{*3}

Adequate reading instruction should, therefore, involve some survey of the child's general health and in particular of his motor, visual, and auditory development and level of competence. He may need more time to develop, or he may require positive medical attention. But the teacher can help considerably by adjusting the teaching method to the special needs of the child or by creating a stimulating environment. In any case, a method of teaching reading should be consistent with proven facts about the physical growth and development of children.

(c) Emotional Development

To the layman, there would probably seem to be no significant relationship between reading growth and emotional development.

*1. Jean T. Goins, Visual Perceptual Abilities and Early Reading Progress, Supplementary Educational Monographs, No.87, Univ. of Chicago Press, February, 1958.

*2. R. Roberts & J. Coleman, "An Investigation of the Role of Visual & Kinesthetic Factors in Reading Failure", Journal of Educational Research, p.445-51, Ll, February, 1958.

*3. W. Olson, Psychological Foundations of the Curriculum, pp.24-28.

This is understandable for no one has, as yet, established the exact nature of the relationship between emotional disturbances and reading disabilities. Yet the existence of this relationship can scarcely be doubted. In a review of relevant research, Nila Banton Smith showed that there is "a high incidence of emotional disturbances among children retarded in reading"*¹ and a Victorian psychologist, J.G. Lyle, has gone so far as to claim that "the problem of reading disability has now been recognized as having an emotional basis".*² Lyle contends that the beginning reading period corresponds with a period of rapid emotional development (5 - 7 years) "during which children begin to psychologically wean themselves from their mother and begin to adopt more active, independent roles." Failure to make this adjustment results in a fixation of emotional development, the child remains at the passive-dependent level and consequently can take no active part in learning situations. Other authorities believe that the reading failure precedes and causes the emotional disturbance. Whatever the truth may be, it has frequently been observed*³ that the overprotected child finds reading a difficult task to undertake alone, that children living in an atmosphere of inconsistency and unpredictability at home cannot readily adjust themselves to reading routines, and that "unfair pressures from adults" may block normal reading progress.

*1. Nila Banton Smith, "Research in Reading and the Emotions" School and Society, pp.8-10, LxxxI, January 8, 1955.

*2. J.G. Lyle, "Emotional Factors in Reading Disability - 1." The Slow Learning Child, pp.136-142, Vol.2, No.3, March, 1956.

*3. Marion Monroe, "Diagnosis and Treatment of Reading Disabilities," Educational Diagnosis, pp.214-5, 34th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Chicago, 1935.

The pattern of emotional development in children affects, not so much our choice of a specific method in the teaching of reading, but rather, our application of it. Research suggests that an emotional climate conducive to learning is a pre-requisite for the success of any method. Children with certain physical and mental handicaps may not be able to cope with the method being used with the whole class, and emotional blockages will occur if our approach to reading is not sufficiently flexible to embrace their individual needs. Remedial groups in particular need to be taught by methods far removed from those which the children have come to associate with failure, frustration and unhappiness. In general, good reading teaching^E arouses in the children feelings of personal pride in their achievement and enjoyment of the whole activity. It has about it a freshness, vitality, and lively purposefulness which is the antithesis to the atmosphere in a classroom reading lesson which begins day after day, and year after year, with that traditional command which wipes away all smiles: "Take out your Magazine!"

(d) Personality Development.

Reading growth is related to the development of the child's personality in that the child's concept of his 'self', his feeling of personal adequacy^{*1} in the reading situation, his confidence in himself, and his feeling of personal acceptance by parents, teachers and others, affects his learning. And conversely, success in learning to read helps to create a desirable self concept.^{*2} Then again,

*1. J.W. Staines, A Psychological and Sociological Investigation of the Self as a Significant Factor in Education, Ph.D. Thesis. London, 1954.

*2. C.M. Fleming, Teaching, p.60-61, Methuen & Co., London, 1958.

a child's growth in reading, the books which he reads, may extend his mental horizon and open up for him new fields of personal development which, in turn, stimulate further reading activity.

The possible effect of unfortunate personality development upon reading ability was shown years ago by F.M. Thrasher^{*1} and by C.R. Rogers,^{*2} whose studies indicate that a child who has improved his reading skill under special conditions in a remedial centre does not continue his new rate of improvement unless he is accepted back into his old class and his achievement in reading is approved by the group. Similar factors would seem to be operative when improvement in number skill effects a general improvement in a child's attitude towards school work including reading. The extent to which personality maladjustment contributes to reading failure was stressed by J. Richardson who, in his work with backward readers at the Queensland University Remedial Education Centre, found that a period of rehabilitation was needed to restore the child's faith in himself and create a favourable attitude towards reading before any permanent improvement could be effected in his reading skill.^{*3}

The relationship between what a child reads and the growth of his personality and its reciprocal effect upon further reading has not been fully studied. Experiments with bibliotherapy have shown, however, that certain reading materials may help a child to solve personal problems, make adjustments to his environment, face up to

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- *1. F.M. Thrasher, The Gang, Uni. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1927, - deals with backsliding among delinquents.
 - *2. C.R. Rogers, The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1939 - relates problem to educational sphere.
 - *3. J. Richardson, "Methods and Materials for Teaching Retarded Readers", The Slow Learning Child, Vol.1, No.2, p.54, Nov., '54.

his responsibilities, and overcome feelings of insecurity or inferiority. But no systematic enquiry has been made into the total effect of narrow, unimaginative reading programmes or a surfeit of comic books and trashy reading fare upon the developing personality. Recent studies in deprivation suggest that such reading may be a contributing factor to the anti-cultural attitude so common in our community.

In summing up then, there is enough evidence of this relationship to establish the point that the teaching of reading should employ means and ends in harmony with the principles of personality development. The child should learn by a method which makes success well-nigh inevitable and provides opportunities for him to see goals achieved and to use his new attainments in personally satisfying ways. Some of his reading matter should be comparatively easy, consolidating his abilities, building up his feeling of personal adequacy, and allowing him to pursue an interest without being frustrated by persistent problems. Other reading matter should challenge him to further his reading growth, to widen his personal horizon, and to become a better person.

(e) Social Development

Under modern social conditions, children learn to read in a class group. Hence there are certain levels of social development which he should reach before undertaking the task. He should have a co-operative attitude towards the teacher and his reading group, ready to share materials with others, to take part in reading games, and to respect the rights and property of others. He should have sufficient maturity to be able to participate in group activities,

to enjoy working with others, to be able to stand in front of a group and impart information or show an item of interest. Lack of maturity in any of these respects would obviously react against reading progress. Consequently, the teacher should be aware of the social competence of the children, prepare them for the types of activities involved in the learning process, and avoid introducing difficult reading situations, e.g., discussion group reading, until the children have the necessary social maturity.

In the above five sub-sections we have seen that reading growth is closely related to the intellectual, physical, emotional, personality, and social development of the child. Failure to realize this, to understand its educational implications, and to adapt reading methods and materials to the different ways in which children develop, has always been one of the major sources of reading difficulties in our schools. Our pioneer teachers used the same method of teaching reading with every child, quite ignorant of the fact that it was unsuited to the intellectual or physical limitations of particular children. If a child failed to learn, he went through the same book again using the same methods. One can just imagine the effect on his emotional stability, his self-concept, and his attitude towards reading. At the beginning of this century, educationists started to realize the relevance of certain physical factors to educational attainment, and in 1907 the Education Department carried out its first medical inspection of children - in the Sydney-Newcastle area 7,008 children were found to have defective sight! Teachers turned to consider the effect of certain methods of teaching reading (differentiated type) upon eyesight, but they

nevertheless continued to use formal, stereotyped methods which restricted the growth of the child's personality and taught him the mechanics of reading without making him a reader. To-day, the inter-relatedness of the various areas of personal, physical, and educational growth is understood in principle, even though not fully recognized by all authorities, and we can - and should - take advantage of this knowledge to increase the effectiveness of our reading teaching, and to contribute through reading to the all-round development of our pupils.

Each of the strands of human development (mental, physical, &c) may be further sub-divided for purposes of study. In Developmental Teaching, James Mursell identifies at least five aspects of human mental development: language development, the development of relational thinking (as in mathematics), the development of objective thinking (as in science), of social understanding, and of aesthetic responsiveness.*¹ Now if we proceed to sub-divide each of the strands dealt with in this chapter, a most significant point emerges. In varying degrees of importance, language development appears as an aspect of each of them. For the purposes of this thesis, it will suffice if we look briefly at the way in which language development derives from each of these strands of human development during the early years of life.

ii. The Relationship Between Language Growth and Total Growth

Linguistic activity in early infancy originates, in part, in

*1. James L. Mursell, Developmental Teaching, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1949.

the mental development of the child. Language provides the young with a means of acquiring and expanding his knowledge of the environment. After he has learned to associate certain sounds with particular objects, and to produce those sounds himself in the absence of the object, he has at his disposal a most convenient, efficient, and economical way of furthering his knowledge and thus of gaining some personal control of the world about him. Later, when he has learned to associate conventional symbols with particular ideas, and to produce those symbols himself, he is able to store or to seek knowledge, to enjoy contact with minds of other lands or other ages, and to develop the mental side of his life to new heights. Without language (verbal) man's intellectual development would be severely limited. These two aspects are so closely associated that from the age of twelve months onward "it becomes possible to make use of language as an objective measure of mental development".*¹

On the emotional side, we find that language growth enables the child, more effectively, to find security in his relations with other people. He masters the difficulties of speech all the more readily because the accomplishment makes him feel that he 'belongs', that he is closer to the speaker, that it bridges the great gap between him and his fellow creatures. We are all aware of the sense of isolation and insecurity which surrounds the deaf and dumb child and the New Australian child with no knowledge of English. In this respect, then, language development derives partly from the infant's

*1. A.F. Watts, The Language and Mental Development of Children, p.34, Geo. Harrap & Co., London, 1944.
See also, A.I. Gates & others, Educational Psychology, p.178.

desire to express something of his feelings and partly from that gregariousness which McDougall observed in human behaviour. At a later stage in the child's development, language helps him to make constructive use of his emotions*¹ in public speaking or dramatic work, and it provides an outlet for his emotional tensions.

Language originates on the physical side first as a form of breathing combined with a reaction to bodily discomfort. But at the level of vocalization, or lalling, it is a form of play. The child says "ma-ma" and "da-da" without having anything in mind except the sheer pleasure of making and hearing the sounds. This characteristic of the linguistic growth of children may be observed in their preference for stories with repetitive phrases such as: "Fe, fi, fo, fum &c." As a physical activity, language also involves much imitation by the child of the sounds he hears. This is why he learns to speak the language and accent of his closest associates and not necessarily the 'accepted' form of the language.

In the development of the child's personality, language gives the child a means of expressing himself through another medium, and in many ways his appreciation of a story, game, or incident, is not complete until he has told somebody about it. If a child feels insecure or is experiencing some personality difficulty, he will often draw attention to himself by overt and excessive linguistic activity. In later years, more advanced language forms allow for more subtle expression of personality which culminates in the development of an individual literary style.

*1. William H. Burton, Reading in Child Development, p.119, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1956.

Finally, the social development of the child requires some medium of communication enabling him to convey his ideas, feelings, and needs, and to understand the thoughts and wishes of others. Language fulfils this vital social requirement. And verbal language fulfils it more efficiently and more comprehensively than any other. Hence, language arises in the child and its development is stimulated because it is a social necessity. Once mastered it plays a vital role in his social life, helping him to establish more effective relations with his associates, to participate in their activities, and to secure and maintain status in group situations.

To sum up, then, every one of the major strands of human development is intimately associated with and affected by the language growth of the child: (see Diagram No.1)

- . mental development through his need for knowledge
- . emotional development through his need for security
- . personality development through his need for self-expression
- . social development through his need to communicate with others
- . physical development through his natural interest in play and imitating the behaviour of others.

The significance of this is: that the motives underlying language development and driving him on to make the effort necessary to acquire his native tongue, come from deep within the child himself. They do not arise primarily from his interest in language as such. He learns his language, not because of a superficial interest in sounds and symbols, but because of his urgent mental, emotional, social, personal, and physical needs. This point needs to be fully understood for it is the crux of the modern philosophy upon which child-centred reading methods are based.

iii. Reading Growth as an Aspect of Language Growth

Before we can use our knowledge of the forces underlying language development as a basis for further discussion of the reading problem, however, we must first establish quite definitely that reading growth is an aspect of language growth. That reading is not an isolated skill, nor a mere school subject that can be taught by following 'schemes' which do not reach beyond the level of methodology.

The child begins his language growth^{*1} when as a young baby he "listens" to the speech of his elders. At first his listening (see Diagram No.1) is vague and rather emotional, but as the months pass some of the sounds from his environment acquire specific meanings through association. Gradually his powers of listening mature until he can understand simple sentences and remember - and follow - simple directions. The listening vocabulary of the pre-school child grows rapidly, as does his ability to understand more complex language phenomena.^{*2} Growth in listening continues throughout the school years, especially the abilities concerned with listening to and understanding lessons, talks, discussions, stories, and broadcasts. Ultimately, at the adult stage, he may approach listening maturity, and be capable of listening critically to political speeches, radio plays, drama and choral speaking.

*1. Crying precedes listening, but has little in common with verbal, intelligent language. The brief summary of language development which follows is based on these works:

J. Piaget, The Language and Thought of the Child, London, 1928.
 S. Isaacs, Intellectual Growth in Young Children, London, 1930.
 E. Hurlock, Developmental Psychology.

*2. A. Gesell & F. Ilg, The Child From Five to Ten, pp..444-447.

In the linguistic evolution of the child, intelligent speech or speaking is the second developmental process to emerge. The cries of a young baby lack precise meaning - but not persistence! Gradually the cooing and babbling differentiates out into words and the spoken language, both emotive and referential, develops. Growth is most readily apparent in vocabulary (approx. 2,000 words at age 5 - 6 years^{*1}) but Schonell has pointed out also how as children grow up they tend to use longer sentences, compound forms, and more and more subordinate clauses.

The significant fact for our present purposes is that as well as being continuous, development in listening and development in speaking are closely related. Indeed, speaking grows primarily through listening, as is shown by the extreme difficulty experienced by congenitally deaf children in attempting to learn normal speech behaviour, because they are unable to listen to and hence to imitate others. This has well-known consequences in the classroom and is most relevant to the reading problem. In order to help children to use and to speak their language correctly, the teacher must herself provide a good model, use the language with skill and feeling, and give plenty of opportunities for the children to listen attentively to good speech and to mature clause and sentence patterns. Careful listening is an essential preparation for correct speaking.

Learning to read emerges next as the third stage in the developmental sequence of language tasks. The developmental grad-

*1. A.F. Watts, op. cit., pp. 31-60, gives a comprehensive survey of the growth and nature of children's vocabulary.

-ient in reading has been identified by Gesell and Ilg:^{*1}

" 18 MONTHS - Points to identified pictures in books.

2 YEARS - Names pictures in books.

2½ YEARS - Pretends to pick up objects from picture book.

3-3½ YEARS - May identify some capital letters in alphabet book or on blocks. May select a letter by form, such as a circular or angular one, to identify. May learn to identify by association as "M for Mommy". Enjoys songs about ABC or "The Jingling ABC's". Wants to look at pictures in book when being read to.

4 YEARS - ... Enjoys having adult print his name on his products. May identify a letter without naming. "That's in my name." &c.

As the developmental process continues the child learns to read with appropriate expression, to comprehend and evaluate what he reads, and to read simply for enjoyment.

But Gesell & Ilg's reading gradient misses the essential point that reading is a part of the continuum of language development. Listening and speaking provide the basic foundation for success in learning to read. Just as careful listening is a prerequisite of correct speech, so too, careful listening and adequate speech development are preparatory stages in learning to read. Children with auditory defects have special difficulties in learning to read, they may confuse sounds and associate ideas with incorrect sound-names, &c. Research has repeatedly shown the interrelationship between listening and reading. Lewis^{*1} has shown that training in listening has a significant effect upon subsequent reading ability. While Hampleman has shown that listening compre-

*1. op. cit., p.395.

*2. Maurice S. Lewis, "The Effect of Training in Listening Upon Reading", Journal of Communication, pp.115-9, November, 1953.

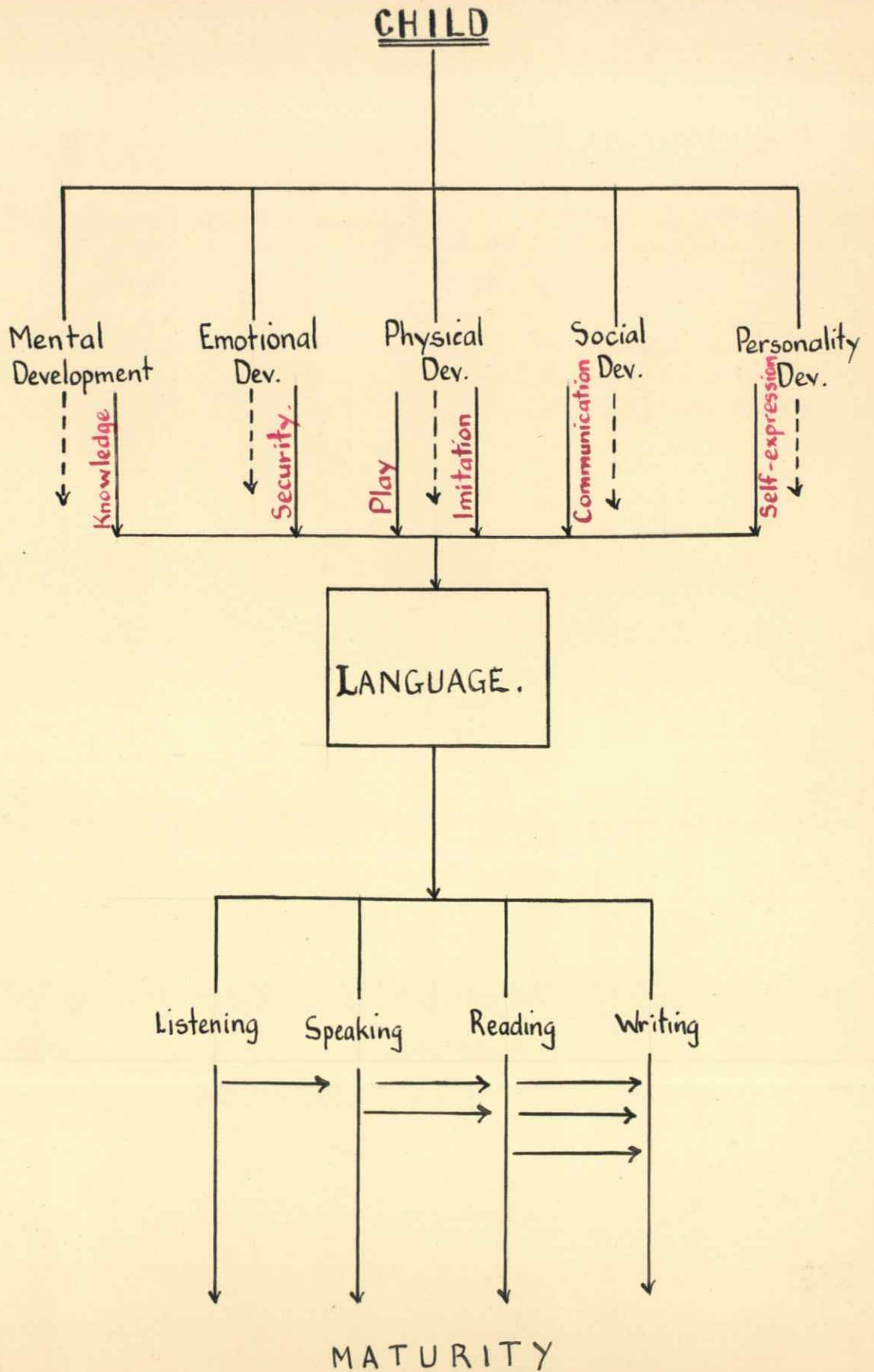
-hension in the primary grades is always superior to reading comprehension^{*1} and, in a sense, is indicative of the progress which can be expected in reading comprehension. Similarly, children with speech defects and with a limited grasp of the spoken language have considerable difficulty in learning to read. After all, if a child cannot pronounce a particular word, is not too sure of its meaning, and never uses it in his everyday language, it is asking too much to expect him to read it with accuracy and confidence. Or if a child hardly ever speaks in complete and connected sentences, it is certainly going to be more difficult for him to learn to read sentences with the proper intonation. Without labouring the point further, it is abundantly clear that reading is one of the language arts, and that success in reading is dependent upon prior success - to some extent at least - in listening and speaking.

Diagram No.1 shows in a condensed form how language growth is related to the total growth of the child, how it derives from and fulfils a felt need in each of the major strands of development, how reading growth fits in to the broader pattern of language development, and how it is related to success in listening and speaking.*2

*1. Richard S. Hampleman, "Comparison of Listening and Reading Comprehension Ability of Fourth and Sixth Grade Pupils", Elementary English, p.49-53, XXXV, January, 1958.

*2. For the sake of completeness the diagram has been extended to include writing, i.e., the ability to express ideas in written English. It is interesting to note, however, that the child must reach a certain level of proficiency in listening, speaking, and reading, before he is ready to put his thoughts down on paper. Listening - speaking - reading - writing: this is the developmental sequence which lies at the core of the teaching of any aspect of English.

Diagram No.1: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT



iv. The Child and His Reading

One of the basic contentions of this thesis is that reading is a most complex activity and that one of the sources of the complexity is the CHILD. We are now in a position to verify this contention by summing up the points made in this chapter. It would be possible to do this by listing the numerous factors - each one identified by some study or experiment in the psychology and physiology of reading^{*1} - which are found in some or all children and contribute to their reading difficulties. But reading study already suffers from its share of text-books with exhaustive and exhausting lists of "factors related to reading disabilities". It is possible, and certainly more useful to the classroom teacher, to pinpoint the central principle underlying reading activity so that the many research findings, teaching methods, and remedial problems may be seen in their true perspective within a total picture.

We have seen that reading is not an isolated skill that may be acquired by learning a few tricks of association between symbols and sounds. That success in reading pre-supposes a measure of proficiency in the different branches of the spoken language, and that lack of ability in the preliminary language arts increases the child's reading problem just as outstanding ability lessens it. In brief, it has been shown that reading growth is an integral part of the child's language growth. We have seen, also, that the basic drive leading to language development comes from within the child

*1. For example, Albert J. Harris, "Lateral Dominance, Directional Confusion, and Reading Disability", pp.283-94, Journal of Psychology, XLV, October, 1957.

himself, from his need for knowledge and security, from his desire to communicate with others and to express his own personality, and from his interest in play and imitation. It follows then that reading growth, being an aspect of language growth, will make optimum progress if it derives from and fulfils the same basic needs of the child in ways which are beyond the resources of the spoken language. Thus, when the child's need for knowledge of his environment reaches a level at which the spoken language no longer provides answers adequately and efficiently, the child should grow into reading as the next stage in his mental development. Similarly, when his communicative needs stretch out beyond his immediate oral environment, the child should grow into reading and writing as a necessary part of his social development. He should not learn to read because he is six or because mother wants him to, but because he needs what reading can give him, his emotional and personal development is being restricted by the natural limitations of the spoken word. He should not learn to read by methods which dissect the written language into sound or sight elements and reduce the whole process to a drill in the mechanics of language, he should learn by methods which grow out of his interest in books, in playing new games with words, in imitating the behaviour of grown-ups. He should learn to read by methods based on the belief that reading is an indispensable part of the child's mental, emotional, social and personal development; that at a certain stage his developmental needs can be best satisfied by reading because of its unique advantages; that he will turn to reading and become a reader when, and to the extent that, reading fulfils his need for knowledge, security, communication, and self-expression; and that he must have

reached the level of mental, emotional, social and personal maturity at which these needs appear, and a certain level of physical maturity, before he is ready to learn to read. This does not deny the effectiveness of teaching and other environmental factors as means of promoting - or retarding - these types of development.

From the viewpoint of pure theory, then, the complexity of reading arises from the relationship between reading growth, language growth, and total growth. And the child is a major source of reading difficulties because of the many ways in which his mental, emotional, social, physical, and personality development may slow down, behave abnormally, or become defective, in itself or in relation to the other strands. In practice, however, superimposed upon these basic complexities and intensifying them in all respects, is the lack of understanding of the real nature of the reading problem in both society and our schools.

To conclude, let us look at the practical significance of this theory. When we come to analyze the teaching of reading in New South Wales schools and compare what actually happened during each period with this theoretical ideal, we can see immediately the essential ^a weaknesses. We can see, for example, that the old A-B-C method failed because the non-academic child found in it no fulfilment of his basic needs, but a meaningless teacher-imposed task more prone to frustrate them. And we can see that the later Jones, Ellis, and Caldwell methods were wrong because they had to arouse and maintain the child's interests in activities that were not related to his real purpose in learning to read. If we turn for a moment to the confused and disorderly field of reading research

we can again see the significance of this philosophy of reading. For example, as mentioned earlier, A.J. Harris has brought forward experimental evidence to show that there "is a significant relationship between certain aspects of lateral dominance and reading disability". But the equally authoritative George D. Spache states that "factors no longer generally accepted as causal are those concerned with laterality, such as handedness, eye-hand dominance, cerebral dominance, and reversals."^{*1} Whom are we to believe? Both statements are based on experimental evidence. We can understand the reason for the different findings when we remember that some children will overcome all kinds of handicaps in learning to read because their learning is motivated by their basic needs, by the way in which it is giving them control over their environment, adding to their feeling of personal security, building up their social status. Lateral dominance only becomes a causal factor when the felt need for reading within the child is not sufficiently strong to overcome it.

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*1. George D. Spache, "Factors Which Produce Defective Reading", p.50, Corrective Reading in Classroom and Clinic, Helen M. Robinson (ed.), S.E.M. No.79, Uni. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953.

CHAPTER 2:THE SOCIETY

Australian children are born into a 'reading' society.*¹ Every agency in the community assumes, rightly or wrongly, that all adults have attained some level of literacy*² - that they can read public notices, safety warnings, advertisements, timetables, electricity accounts, hire-purchase agreements, traffic signs and notices, income tax returns, and the multiplicity of forms associated with a modern, social-welfare state. Therefore, despite the increasing use of audio-visual forms of communication, a non-reader is a serious handicap to our 'paper civilization'. Nevertheless, illogical as it may seem, this same 'reading' society tends to think and act in ways which may endanger the progress of the potential or immature reader. This paradoxical situation may be analyzed under the following headings:

- . our concept of children's reading standards
- . our fundamental purpose in teaching children to read
- . the conditions which we accept in our schools, and
- . our handling of new problems relating to reading.

*1. In 1953, the Australian per capita book consumption of 21 shillings a year was among the highest in the world, and we had a bookshop for every 14,000 of our population (cf. 30,000 in Britain). See Australian Reading Habits, Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol.12, No.3, p.35, May 25, 1953. Tutorial Classes Department, University of Sydney, Sydney.

*2. During the war our Armed Services demanded reading ability equal to that reached by the average fourth grade child (9 years of age). In general, our daily newspapers rank at about the thirteen-year-old-level in reading ability.

i. Our Concept of Children's Reading Standards

(a) The Quantitative Aspect.

Taking reading for granted as an essential social skill,^{*1} our society expects its children to achieve fairly specific reading standards appropriate to their stage of development. The first grade child is expected to begin reading simple material, the fourth grade child is expected to have sufficient mastery of word-attack techniques^{*2} to engage successfully in independent reading, and the young tyro at high school is expected to be proficient in the use of reading as a study skill. These standards are time-honoured and reasonable, but difficulties arise when parents and even teachers fail to recognize that individual children may reach these standards at different ages, and that the rate of reading growth is not constant for all children.^{*3} Instead of taking full account of such differences and adapting their expectations and demands to each child's 'ability and aptitude', these adults tend to become personally involved in the child's apparent failure and exert pressure on him to "keep up with the Jones's". All too

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- *1. There is, of course, some illiteracy in Australia. An Army Education Service wartime survey classified 4 per cent of enlisted Army personnel as - "illiterate to all intents and purposes". (Australian Reading Habits, p.35)
- *2. At the end of fourth grade the child should be able to use context, word-form, structural analysis, and phonetic analysis in the recognition of 'unknown' words which lie within his meaning vocabulary but outside of his reading vocabulary.
- *3. Intellectual capacities develop at different rates and reach maturity at different ages. See D. Wechsler, "Intellectual Development and Psychological Maturity", Child Development, Vol.21, pp.45-50, 1950.

frequently this causes unhealthy tensions to build up, emotional factors are introduced into the situation,^{*1} and the child's task of learning to read becomes more difficult and more complex.

This predicament is not uncommon at the beginning reading stage when book-minded parents, eagerly looking forward to the day when their children will burst into the wonderful world of books, become over-anxious if their six-year olds are making slow progress. Ordinarily, a child with a chronological age of six and a half years^{*2} has sufficient mental capacity to learn to read, and curriculum activities for first grade involve the reading of very easy prose as a normal accomplishment for that educational level,^{*3} but any observant Infants' teacher knows that a constellation of other factors - physical, social, emotional, linguistic, personal, or cultural - may intervene and retard the reading growth of particular children. The child's age, chronological or mental, is only one of the many determinants of reading ability, and as George Spache points out:

"Present-day thinking about the significance of intellectual

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- *1. A classical example of the complex interweaving of the social and the psychological sides of the reading problem.
 - *2. A comparison of the progress of first grade pupils of different chronological and mental ages in general reading ability concluded that a mental age of 6½ years is the optimum time at which to begin reading. See Mabel V. Morphett & Carleton Washburne, "When Should Children Begin to Read?" Elementary School Journal, Vol.31, pp.496-503, 1931. Other experiments favour delaying reading until the eighth year. See P. Witty & D. Kopel, Educ. Admin. & Sup., Vol.22, pp.401-418, 1936.
 - *3. New South Wales Department of Education, Curriculum for Primary Schools, p.83, Government Printer, Sydney, 1952.

factors in the causation of reading difficulties shows ... much less tendency to attribute reading retardation to low intelligence as the basic, almost common cause." *1

Quite apart from this now widely accepted theory that "the child's observable progress and performance are the resultant of innumerable factors, both internal and external,"*2 there are other theories relating to the distribution of human skills and to the nature of child growth which need to be considered by parents when their children appear to be dropping behind in the reading race. But these theories involve concepts which are highly unpalatable to many parents. The latter, for example, will agree that a random sample of a thousand first grade children would include a few children with a reading age of 8+ years and also, at the opposite end of a normal distribution of abilities, a few children who would not be ready to read for several years. But they are reluctant to admit that this characteristic scatter of human skills could be relevant to their own problem. Statistics only apply to other people's children. This ostrich-like attitude is as unwise as it is human.

Especially significant, at this stage, is the principle of individuality of child growth as stated by C.V. Millard:

" Although the growth patterns of all children show certain common characteristics, individuality within these characteristics is

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- *1. G.D. Spache, "Factors Which Produce Defective Reading", Helen M. Robinson (ed.), Corrective Reading in Classroom and Clinic, p.52, S.E.M. No.79, Uni. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953.
- *2. Cyril Burt, "General Ability & Special Aptitudes", p.13, Educational Research, Vol.1 No.2, February, 1959. Published for The National Foundation For Educational Research in England and Wales by Newnes Educ. Publishing Co., London.

to be expected. No two children grow quite alike ... Some children are tall at one time in reference to a given group of children and short at a later age. Some are short at one time and tall later, and many others are found between these extremes."*1

Some children are late beginners, others develop very early. Some progress at different rates in different abilities, others proceed more smoothly. Within the general pattern of human growth and development the variations are limitless. Adults recognize this principle in reference to physical growth but, illogically, they often ignore it when considering reading growth. But just as there are some children who cannot "stand momentarily alone" until they are fifteen months of age compared with the normal thirteen months, and some who cannot use scissors at six years of age compared with the normal four years,*2 and some who take a size ten shoe when their age-group size is a twelve, so there are children who, for various reasons, may not be ready to learn to read until they are seven, eight, or more. This does not mean that they will always be retarded readers*3 any more than a reluctance to walk early in infancy means that the child concerned will not achieve adequate

*1. C.V. Millard, Child Growth and Development in the Elementary School Years, p.12, D.C. Heath & Co., Boston, 1951. Millard's statements are based on the work carried out by the Society for Research in Child Development, Washington.

*2. Arnold Gesell & Frances L. Ilg, The Child From Five To Ten, pp. 231-237, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1946.

*3. Elizabeth Hurlock, however, citing the research findings of Illingworth, Gesell, Terman, and others, claims that "the common belief that the baby who is physically or mentally below average will 'catch-up' to the average has not been substantiated by scientific evidence". (Child Development, p.15, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1956.) Although this is true in general, in individual cases the rate and pattern of development may show great variability under varying conditions. (See Millard.)

mastery of this skill later in his life. But whereas parents show only slight concern about a child who is slow to walk, and probably only laugh at their six year old's lack of dexterity with scissors, they react with marked sensitivity to any suspicion that they may have a reading failure in the family. They search anxiously for more than is within the child's power to give and their anxiety, becoming known to the child, may destroy his confidence in himself and then precipitate emotional disturbances which aggravate his reading difficulty.

Thus, by imposing quantitative standards which bear little relation to the capacity of individual children, society unwittingly creates problems which breed reading disabilities. Admittedly every parent has the right to follow his child's progress closely and to probe into any below-standard performance, but this right carries with it the obligation to understand the true nature of the situation. Without achieving expert status, the parent can become an enlightened participant in the education of his child. By learning how children grow into reading, and by becoming acquainted with the factors which affect this growth - including the social, economic, and educational conditions of the locality - the parent can gradually develop a sound concept of reading standards. By pushing his thinking beyond the naive notion that, if sufficient energy and effort are expended, any child can be "brought up to standard", he is forging a vital link in the chain of parent-teacher guidance, giving his child security and the possibility of making optimum progress in his reading.

(b) The Qualitative Aspect

The adult community creates further difficulties through its inability to think and act, consistently and logically, on matters relating to the qualitative standard of the material read by children. There is a widely held belief - not over-zealously championed - that children should read 'good' books, but there are differences of opinion about the meaning of this chameleon-like expression. There are parents who expect their children to curl up in a quiet corner with a classic while they relax in front of the television with a trashy pictorial magazine, and there are sections of the community, preoccupied with their commercial empires, who do great harm by producing 'cheap' second-rate books and vulgar comics which entice the young reader away from better, more-demanding material, and have a deleterious effect upon his level of taste. Many of our reading problems, and some of the social ones too, would fade away if adults honestly recognized the value of worthwhile books, set a good example by reading them, and gave the publishers of bad books no quarter.*1

What should children read? With nostalgic memories, more sentimental than accurate, parents usually list their own childhood favourites: the tales of Robin Hood, King Arthur, Robinson Crusoe, Ulysses, Gulliver, Huckleberry Finn, Brer Rabbit, etcetera. These are a part of the wonderful treasure house of English literature, a part of every child's literary heritage, no one would

*1. E. Blishen, "From Comics to Books", in From Comics to Classics, p.21, a report on a conference held in London, 3rd November, 1956.

deny him these, but they are not enough. Our concept of 'good' books for to-day's child must include other considerations. James Daugherty, for example, in attacking "the complacent oldsters satisfied with handing the rising generation a gas-mask and a copy of Alice in Wonderland with which to tread the bomb-strewn path of childhood",*¹ has reminded us that admiration for the classics should not blind us to the child's need for books which will help him to "look the present in the face".*²

The general drift towards a child-centred approach to all educational matters has produced a dilemma about qualitative reading standards, arising from a clash between the advocates of the new, progressive, democratic education and the traditionalists. While agreeing that the child needs guidance in his selection of good reading matter, the progressive school tends to define 'good' as 'appealing to young readers'.*³ Josette Frank, putting this philosophy in a nutshell, says: "Let the child read whatever he wants to. What he does not understand will not hurt him; what he does understand he is ready for."*⁴ The test of a good book is the extent to which it satisfies the child's interests and furthers his development as a well-adjusted person.

*1. Quoted by Dorothy Neal White from a speech made by James Daugherty to the American Library Association when he accepted the Newbery Medal in 1940, About Books for Children, p.4, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Series No.26, 1946.

*2. Ibid., p.5. Geoffrey Trease's Call To Arms is quoted as an example of a 'good' modern story which children should read.

*3. Josette Frank, op cit., p.256.

*4. op cit., p.51 and elsewhere.

On the other hand, Geoffrey Trease, a modern children's author with traditionalist leanings, bluntly dismisses the notion that what children read should be determined purely by their likes as "part of the modern myth that all children are angels of instinctive wisdom and all adults are blundering, pompous fools".*¹ The traditionalists fear that if standards are left to the capricious whim of each child, both the standards and the child will suffer. The child will be tempted by the superficial attractions of cheap novels, trivial reading matter, and gaudy pulp magazines, and will turn away from reading of permanent value, from the kind of reading which 'maketh a full man'. Shallow reading, skimming through the froth and bubble, may satisfy momentary interests but it soon stunts the child's mental growth, his wisdom, insight and intellectual power. If he indulges in this alone, he will miss the civilizing influence of the great masterpieces of English literature; engrossed in his narrow isolating interests he will tend to forget what he is living for.*²

Between the extremes of complete freedom for the child and 'censorship' of his reading, various compromises are now being made, and wisely so, for the whole problem bristles with complexities. After Flesch and Bestor stirred up much soul-searching among American educationists, many progressive teachers examined

*1. Geoffrey Trease, Tales Out of School, p.11, Heinemann, London, 1948.

*2. K.C. Masterman, "Introducing Children to a Heritage of Literature", Education News, Vol.7, No.3, June 1959, p.9, Commonwealth Office of Education, Sydney.

afresh the role of pupil interest in their reading programmes and adopted modifications of the type implied by Ruth Strickland:

"Interests do not grow in a vacuum. They are stimulated by experience. It would be folly to try to build a curriculum entirely about children's expressed interests because each child's interests are limited to what he has had a chance to be interested in (Hence, the teacher's task is) not only to feed the interests the child already possesses but to open up new avenues of interest and opportunity." *1

In the opposing camp, a similar retreat towards a central position has taken the form of increased endeavours to present 'good' literature to children in a more interesting and palatable form. The academic treatment of literature, appealing to the gifted few, has lost ground before freer methods which enlist the aid of the stage, radio, television, the film and the recording in encouraging the child to read widely and establish sound standards. Even the more conventional teachers have come to realize that without interest the child will not read, but they do not wait for the child to develop an interest in a specific field, nor do they follow in the wake of his individual interests. They decide what is best for him then initiate lively activities to promote and maintain interest in the reading which they have selected. Unfortunately, unscrupulous groups with alien motives have taken advantage of this trend and rendered society a disservice by publishing diluted and mutilated classics in comic-strip form.

The problem of the qualitative standard of children's reading material is a twentieth-century development. While the religious

*1. Ruth Strickland, "Making the Most of Children's Interests in the Teaching of Reading", The Reading Teacher, p.137, Vol.11, No.3, Feb., 1958, The International Reading Assoc'n.

or the cultural themes dominated reading books in New South Wales schools, neither teachers nor parents seriously questioned the content of school readers - only the children were unhappy! But when the emphasis swung away from these themes opposing interests within the community clashed. At least three major developments have contributed to the present confusion over standards:

(a) The N.S.W. Public Instruction Act of 1880 and its subsequent Amendments aimed to provide education for all children and, inter alia, to teach every child to read. This meant that children from under-privileged homes were brought into contact with a way of life and books which their parents could not understand and, therefore, treated with suspicion not unmixed with contempt. This feeling added weight to the reaction of technological groups against bookish education removed from everyday life, and led to the compilation of school readers which broke away from the literary tradition. But from the viewpoint of the literati, democracy and mediocrity came to New South Wales education in the one year.

(b) The material progress of our civilization this century, while raising the quality of children's books and libraries, has also made available to children a spate of worthless reading matter at small cost. The mighty resources of our age have spawned some curiously perverted offspring. In M.M. Lewis's words:

"These good things - the spreading abroad of education throughout the whole of society, the development of printing from the time of Caxton onwards, and the extraordinary impetus that has been given within the last sixty years to the reproduction of pictures - all these have converged together to produce the comic." *1

*1. M.M. Lewis, "The Challenge of Illiteracy", From Comics to Classics, Report on a conference held in London, 3 Nov., 1956.

When few could read, books were scarce but their quality was high. To-day, when nearly everyone can read and books are plentiful, the majority of books are scarcely worth reading and rarely warrant a second reading. As demand governs supply in this field, the problem is largely a sociological one and the community must look to its own standards and values before passing judgment on the quality of juvenile reading matter. To make a person a better reader we must first make him a better person, for as A.B. Clegg once said,^{*1} it is comparatively easy to teach a child to read, it is more difficult to teach him to want to read, but it is more difficult still to teach him to want to read what is worthwhile.

(c) The third significant development which has confused our thinking on reading standards has been the changing emphasis in reading instruction since the turn of the century. As the main emphasis has moved on from content to process to reader, concern for the literary, intellectual, and spiritual value of the books used in the classroom has tended to diminish. During the period of linguistic emphasis (1902 - 1945) teachers were so pre-occupied with logical 'systems' of teaching the mechanics of reading that they allowed the structure of the language to dictate what the child read. The stories in the school readers^{*2} had no literary or cultural value, they merely provided an opportunity for repetitive teaching of the next step in the 'system'. In the modern period the emphasis has shifted to the child, to the reader and his reaction

*1. From a speech delivered by A.B. Clegg, Director of Education in the West Riding of Yorkshire, to the New Education Fellowship Conference at Newcastle in September, 1957.

*2. This was characteristic of the early books in the Ellis, Jones, and Caldwell systems.

to what he reads, to the effect of the reading situation upon his total development. The content of modern basic readers is, in no small measure, controlled by the reading teacher's demand for the inclusion of 'child-centred' words - words which occur frequently in the child's spoken vocabulary, or in lists of common words, or have a high interest-value to the child. That is, the usefulness of the words to the child overshadows their usefulness in the story and receives more consideration than does the intrinsic quality of the stories as stories.

Clearly, the whole question of qualitative standards involves a variety of issues. Should schools teach reading in its broadest sense or in its limited sense?^{*1} Should reading programmes grow out of pupils' current interests or be determined by more mature and experienced minds? Is the child the best judge of what he should be reading? Is the teacher, in the early stages, teaching reading or literature or both? Until these issues are resolved by the social groups responsible for their development liberalizing their approach and examining the validity of their assumptions, permanent progress in the teaching of reading is being hampered by their well-meaning but ill-informed intentions. At present a real need exists for clear unbiassed thinking about the proper place and purpose of basal reading, curricular reading, literary reading, recreatory reading and corrective reading in a balanced programme.^{*2}

*1. See W.H. Burton, Reading in Child Development, pp.5-35, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1956, for an explanation of these terms.

*2. See Gerald A. Yoakam, "The Reading-Study Approach to Printed Materials", The Reading Teacher, Vol.11, No.3, Feb., 1958, (p.147).

The foregoing sections illustrate how our type of society, by its very nature, complicates the reading problem in schools. Whenever we fail to acknowledge the limitations of quantitative standards in assessing the reading growth of a particular child, whenever we bring to the complex problem of qualitative reading standards, narrow, fixed, prejudiced beliefs, we act contrary to our best interests as a reading society.

Our community has not always been a reading society, however. It has not always valued and felt the need for universal literacy as we do in modern times. The present historical study reveals that in the early days of the settlement in New South Wales illiteracy was fairly common and didn't unduly hinder the ordinary folk in their everyday activities. There was no demand for large numbers of skilled literate technicians, as there is in modern industry. Many parents preferred to rear their children in ignorance and sections of the governing classes viewed with alarm any attempt to teach the masses to read. Obviously, the difficulties described earlier in this chapter, arising from the over-anxiety of modern parents and the unreal expectations of a 'reading-conscious' society, just did not exist to any noticeable degree a century or more ago. This suggests that the reading problem is by no means a static problem which can be solved, absolutely and finally, for all times. Each age must find its own solution in terms of its own special needs and problems as we shall see in the following survey of the ever-changing pattern of the goals, the problems, and the conditions of our society in relation to reading instruction.

ii. The Shifting Goals of Reading Instruction

I.A. Richards once wrote that "we always read for some purpose - unless some sad, bad, mad schoolteacher has got hold of us." *1

The point was well made for teachers are inclined to commit the sin of setting children to read material quite unconnected with anything that they have been doing, seeing, discussing or - until the beginning of the lesson - reading. Week after week they tell the children to "take out the School Magazine" and read stories and articles which, in many cases, fulfil no evident purpose for the children who, prompted by no real desire to gain enjoyment, experience or information, put into their reading only enough enthusiasm and effort to placate the teacher. This artificial and tense situation destroys interest . Children should read for a purpose. Purpose supplies the driving force which maintains effort and makes worthwhile achievements possible.

Why do children read? Some, no doubt, read to please their parents and teacher, to gain some reward, to avoid punishment, to be better than the other fellow. But such goals are not sufficient, worthy or, in fact, genuine reading goals at all. The child's real purpose in reading, a purpose which if satisfied may lead to a life-long love of reading, is to exploit the symbols of reading for what they can help him to know, to be , to feel. He expects books to delight him, to bring adventure, stimulation and laughter, to teach him to understand the great world about him and, above all,

*1. I.A. Richards, How To Read a Page, p.20, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1942.

to understand himself. In a sense each child's purpose is an individual one for he must find in reading something which satisfies his own individual needs. This is nowhere better stated than in the writings of the well-beloved children's author, Robert Louis Stevenson:

"In anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the biggest kaleidoscope dance of images, incapable of sleep or continuous thought. The words, if the book be eloquent, should run thenceforward in our ears like the noise of breakers, and the story, if it be a story, repeat itself in a thousand coloured pictures to the eye. It was for this last pleasure that we read so closely and loved our books so dearly in the bright, troubled period of boyhood. Eloquence and thought, character and conversation were but obstacles to brush aside as we dug blithely after a certain sort of incident, like a pig for truffles. For my part, I liked a story to begin with an old wayside inn One and all, at least, and each with his particular fancy, we read story-books in childhood, not for eloquence or character or thought, but for some quality of the brute incident. That quality was not mere bloodshed or wonder. Although each of these was welcome in its place, the charm for the sake of which we read depended on something different from either." *1

Not for eloquence or character or thought! Ah, there's the rub. For while the child digs hungrily after brute incident or whatever his personal need may be, the teacher attempts to guide the scuffle along a pre-determined course relevant to the teacher's purpose. The teacher wants the child to gain rich and varied personal experience, information and enjoyment from reading - as the child does - but in addition the teacher wants the child to develop those reading habits and skills that make for efficient reading*2...matters of minor significance to the child. This is the

*1. R.L. Stevenson, Memories and Portraits, XV.

*2. N.S.W. Curriculum for Primary Schools, p.96, 1952.

core difficulty: to make the child's immediate objectives and the teacher's more remote, ultimate objectives compatible. It is not an insurmountable difficulty. The child wants to behave effectually in the world in which he is growing up. If his school reading aids him in finding his way more maturely in that world, he will welcome the instruction which the teacher gives him to improve his reading ability. If the child sees a purpose for becoming a better reader, he will be willing to try to improve. Children are not averse to the learning of commonplace skills; they are only opposed to practising skills for which they can see no particular need - to practice that is play acting rather than reality.

In as much as the basic human needs of children do not vary from age to age, the child's primary reading aim remains unaffected by changing social conditions. But the teacher is preparing the child for life in a society which is not static, therefore, from time to time, the teacher's aims do change to meet the new kind of demand for reading being made by society. The educational problem is to provide reading instruction which is in harmony with the developing needs of society but is not incompatible with the unvarying central purpose of the child.

Even within the short life of our New South Wales school system, the role of reading in society has been recast several times. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, oral reading had a prominent place in everyday affairs, in religious activities, in family life, in the dissemination of ideas, and in popular forms of entertainment. Hence, school instruction in this

subject concentrated on the development of good habits in oral reading:

"Reading may be called good when it is easy, firm, and clear in tone, definite and exact in enunciation, without affectation, expressing the meaning intended with distinctness, and joining with this, expression of sentiment, judgment and taste." *1

With the development of the 'free, compulsory, and secular' concept of education and the general acceptance of the principle that all children should be given the opportunity to learn to read, the need for oral reading in the community started to decline but it never died out either as a fine art or as a communicative skill. In the schools it survived with reduced emphasis, partly because of our mass teaching methods and partly because of its value as a diagnostic and testing technique.

Towards the end of the century, social and industrial conditions called for higher educational standards, better-trained workers, and a more literate community. Schools were confronted with the task of 'mass producing' readers. The teacher's aim now was to give the child a simple master-key with which to unlock the great repositories of knowledge and literature previously barred to all but the learned minority. Hence, the emphasis in reading instruction moved on to the systematic teaching of the mechanical skills of reading, especially the word-recognition skills. This was the heyday of the 'reading systems': the Ellis system, the

*1. This quotation comes from a report made by W. M'Intyre, Inspector of Schools in the Armidale District and published in the Report of the Council of Education Upon the Conditions of the Public Schools in 1867, p.44, Sydney, 1868.

Jones and other diacritic systems, not to mention the profusion of phonic or phonetic systems.

The result often proved disheartening: the child making the right noises without necessarily knowing their meaning. This, combined with a variety of educational and social factors - the successful construction of standardized reading tests,^{*1} the snow-balling criticism of mass teaching techniques,^{*2} the increased participation of the ordinary worker in civic and parliamentary activities, the need for informed leaders and educated citizens in our young democracy - led to the shifting of emphasis in schools from oral reading to silent reading, from word-recognition skills to reading for understanding. A mere knowledge of the rudimentary reading of 'words' was no longer adequate. A broader concept of reading began to permeate educational thinking and to shape new methods of teaching. Children were encouraged to read for meaning, to think rather than to indulge in mere word-calling, "to understand and interpret content, to grasp organization, and to recall and apply what they read".^{*3} In short, reading for comprehension had emerged as the major teacher goal over-shadowing all others and imposing a new pattern of reading lessons.

*1. Starch's comprehension tests belong to this period. D. Starch, Educational Measurements, New York, Macmillan, 1916.

*2. The outstanding constructive critics were Sir John Adams, John Dewey, and Carl Washburne.

*3. This still remains the purpose underlying reading activities in a subject-centred type of curriculum. See G. Spache, "Reading in Various Curriculum Fields", The Reading Teacher, pp. 158-164, Vol.xi, February, 1958.

In the modern era, social changes have modified the objectives of reading instruction still further. New, attractive media of communication are dominating children's leisure time and invading the schoolroom opening new doors to learning especially for the reluctant reader. To meet this challenge the school has been forced to make books and reading activities more interesting and to make 'the desire to read' one of its major goals. Parallel with this, the tempo of modern life has brought forward as another objective the need for "a streamlined type of reading ability"*¹ including skimming techniques, efficient reading habits, and rapid reading well beyond "the horse-and-buggy rate of 300 words a minute".*¹ But the most important of the new objectives emanates from present-day democratic philosophy regarding the supreme importance of the individual and from associated studies in child development. Most objectives to-day centre on the child, on safeguarding and nurturin^{/g} the boundless, unpredictable potentialities of the human spirit.

The aim of our society in relation to school reading has, in the last century or so, shifted on from the training of oral readers to the teaching of the mechanics of reading, then to the promotion of study-type reading, and finally to developing reading programmes that broaden and enrich personal growth. What the future holds we know not. But the central problem will always remain to be solved by each succeeding generation. How to make reading a tremendously satisfying, purposeful, and real experience for the child while,

*1. Nila B. Smith, Historical Turning Points in the Teaching of Reading, reprinted from N.E.A. Journal, May 1952, by Silver Burdett Company in Teachers' Service Publication, Number 1.

at the same time, incorporating into his reading programme activities designed to teach the habits, skills, understandings, and attitudes demanded in the reader by contemporary society.

iii. Our Approach to New Problems

The difficulty of teaching reading is intensified at times by community misunderstanding of the real nature of the process. This becomes most noticeable when both the school and the society are faced with a new problem necessitating a review of children's reading. At the 'groping-after-an-answer' stage, public opinion tends to be as much influenced by the prejudiced statements of vested interests, by irrelevant arguments, and by blatant ill-founded opinions, as it is by the findings of sound research. Such cloudy thinking obscures the basic issues, and consequently, the general public often approaches a new problem with little realization of what the problem really is. To illustrate this, let us consider briefly two reading problems confronting the people of New South Wales to-day.

(a) Television versus Reading

Our progressive civilization has presented us with a unique problem, the temptation of television. With a minimum of physical and mental effort the after-school viewer vicariously projects himself through time and space, roams Sherwood Forest with Robin Hood, gazes at the wonders of the modern industrial world, absorbs facts right and left, and stares into the lives and hearts of people. Why should he labour at the slow, tedious business of reading when he can get from television all that he could get from a

book - entertainment, knowledge, opinions and attitudes - and get them in a fraction of the time? Television serials excite his imagination with vivid, 'action-packed' adventures, but school readers reward his hard work with nothing more gripping than a "pallid plot" about ordinary children doing ordinary things down on Mr. Brown's farm. Why should he make the effort?

It is not difficult to find reasons why he should make the effort to read, and the rapid expansion of children's libraries in the last decade indicates that he does read, more than ever! But, nevertheless, the sceptics fear that we are raising a generation of reluctant readers who will forsake the language of books and turn to "the language of radio; the language of the cartoon; the language of the bold, black, condensed Gothic headline; the language of the motion picture; and the language of television."^{*1} A few librarians, authors and publishers have made dire predictions;^{*2} worried parents have tried to protect their children from infection by shutting television out of their lives; in the popular mind the basic problem has become confused with matters relating to meal-times, eyesight, homework, and morals; and educationists have made hasty surveys of the growth of television's popularity at the expense of reading. Any approach of this kind, based on the belief that television is a threat to reading, is wrong.

*1. Paul A. Wagner, "Relationship of Mass Media to Reading Interests", in Developing Permanent Interest in Reading, (ed.) Helen M. Robinson, p.91, Supplementary Educational Monographs, No.84, December 1956, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

*2. See Dr. Paul Witty's conclusions in The New York Times, 22nd April, 1951.

Television is a challenge to reading but not a threat. Any attempt to attack television, to oppose reading against viewing as rivals for the child's attention, to urge youngsters to go to reading for those things which they can get more efficiently and vividly from television, to laud the virtue of reading for its own sake and to decry viewing as a less worthy mental activity, is based on a misunderstanding of the problem.*¹ Television is a challenge to publishers to produce attractive, readable books on a wide range of subjects, so that every child, irrespective of his reading level, may delve unhindered into the well of knowledge or of culture. It is a challenge to authors to experiment with new literary forms and themes more in keeping with the interests and tempo of modern life. It is a challenge to teachers to make learning to read a fascinating, purposeful experience. But above all, it is a challenge to curriculum specialists to discover the new role of reading in this age of audio-visual miracles which offers the child "all this and reading too".*²

The last-mentioned challenge holds the key to the problem. Radio, the motion picture, and television are artistic and communicative forms in their own right. Each can give something which the others can not. Each has advantages over reading in at least one field. The radio is a peculiarly suitable medium for the presentation of fantasy, poetry, and imaginative literature. The film can appeal to mass emotions beyond the reach of books and is, therefore,

*1. Moreover, censorship rarely provides more than a temporary answer to any problem.

*2. Josette Frank, op. cit., p.17.

a superior medium for the presentation of spectacle and the arousing of mass emotion, as was well illustrated in the film versions of Julius Caesar and The Ten Commandments. The unique strengths of television await thorough exploration but its versatility and intimacy are qualities of considerable promise. What about reading? What advantages do books have over other forms of communication? The answer to this is the answer to television.

Children should make the effort to learn to read, and they do, because books are superior in three important respects:

1. Books are still the great repositories of the accumulated knowledge of our civilization. There are books on practically every subject and, to the average child, they are more readily available and more useful than films, recordings or any other modern medium. He can pore over a book, reading and re-reading a difficult or a favourite part again and again, but he cannot stop a television programme and ask questions.

2. Books promote individual freedom. With books the child is free to pursue any interest whenever and however he feels inclined; his range of interests and entertainment is not dictated by a programme committee on which he has no vote. He is tied neither to time nor to place and can be as individual as he wishes in reading for personal growth.

3. Books foster independent thought and mental acuity. The power of words depends upon the collaborative activity of the reader, for he cannot get meaning from the page unless he takes meaning to the page and this tends to stimulate the reasoning processes. Reading makes a demand upon the reader to arrive at his

own interpretation of the author's intended meaning and to use his own imaginative powers in developing mental images of characters and scenes, whereas, television provides ready-made answers and encourages 'potted thinking'. Reading demands more but the ultimate rewards are correspondingly greater for, as Coleridge noted years ago, it is an activity of the whole soul of man.

If the school and the society understand these special advantages possessed by reading and endeavour to teach children to turn to reading when, because of these advantages, it actually is the best answer to their needs, then the children will become readers. If they remember that reading is only one of many forms of communication, that it is not always the best form, and that it is only a means to an end, all will be well. Reading will no longer be treated as a sacred cow, to be worshipped for itself, and the curriculum specialists can go ahead developing its true role as an essential part of every child's language growth. Then television also may be better appreciated as an additional - but not a rival - means of furthering the child's growth. Yoked to a common purpose they can pull together. They can become valuable partners in the educative process. The teacher can utilize the fascination and the mesmerizing appeal of television to capture 'reality' in the classroom, to reach the child in a language which he can grasp, and to involve him in meaningful life-experiences which may lead to avid reading and stimulate linguistic and mental growth. Modern society must ultimately approach the television problem along these lines, other approaches involve erroneous concepts of reading and intensify the difficulty of teaching children to become readers.

(b) Reading in the Secondary School

Another reading problem now confronting this State and calling for immediate action is the need for reading instruction in our secondary schools, particularly in the new 'area' or 'comprehensive' high schools. When admission to high school was restricted to pupils with certain academic qualifications, the majority of entrants had sufficient reading ability to cope with the content of the secondary-school textbooks. They would undoubtedly have benefited from guidance in the use of reading for study purposes, from exercises to increase their speed of reading, and from lessons on the nature of mature reading, but they had the intelligence and the background of success in reading to enable them to blunder through without receiving definite instruction in the subject. This omission of reading from the secondary-school curriculum^{*1} came about because of a general misunderstanding of the nature of reading growth. It was wrongly assumed that, having mastered the techniques of word-recognition and rudimentary comprehension skills at primary school, the child could read. No further instruction was needed and his future progress depended entirely on practice and effort.

Although secondary-school teachers occasionally despaired of pupils who could read a book yet remain intellectually unscathed by the experience, this false assumption caused no real concern. Now, however, the situation is changing. Almost every child is proceeding to some form of secondary education, and soon every

*1. A mythical beast! The fact that we have only isolated subject syllabi is significant of our narrow subject-centred approach.

child in his first few years at a comprehensive high school may be studying a common core of subjects.*¹ In the words of Chaucer's Pardoner "What nedeth it to sermone of it more?" Even allowing for some diluting of the course and for improved textbooks compiled in collaboration with reading specialists, these children must be given assistance in acquiring the techniques of more advanced reading or much of their secondary education will be wasted.

Goethe said that learning to read is a task occupying a lifetime and, with great assiduity, the modern developmental psychologists have discovered that he was right. They have unearthed masses of evidence*² proving that growth in reading is continuous throughout broad progressive stages of development reaching from very early childhood well into adult life. Following up this basic concept they have devised developmental reading programmes which recognize that appropriate reading skills must be taught in every year from kindergarten to college, and provide all the types of reading experience and reading guidance needed at each stage of

*1. None of this criticism of our approach to reading in the secondary school applies to the General Activity classes. Right from their inception the need for continued reading instruction has been a prime consideration.

*2. For the most part, this evidence has been collated in the Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education, the Reports of Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading at Chicago University, and the Yearbooks of Claremont College Reading Conference, California. For secondary-school reading see:

Reading in the High School and College, Forty-seventh N.S.S.E. Yearbook, Part 11, 1948.

Adult Reading, Fifty-fifth N.S.S.E. Yearbook, Part 11, 1956, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

development. At the secondary-school level they have identified a need for, and a 'readiness' for, instruction in comparatively mature reading skills including the locating, selecting, evaluating, organizing and integrating of information. Primary school children have not the mental maturity to work with reading symbols in these advanced study situations but secondary pupils have. Nevertheless, our secondary pupils, who need these skills and are ready for them, are receiving no official, organized instruction in them at all because the community does not understand that the need for it exists.

Both the television and the secondary school issues illustrate the difficulties which arise when society approaches a reading problem with little knowledge and less skill. The teacher's task is made doubly hard by having to tussle not only with the natural immaturity of the child but also with the inadequacy of social thinking.

iv. The Conditions in Our Schools

Finally, social factors have an important bearing on the teaching of reading in that they largely determine conditions within the school and the quality of the educational environment. The unfortunate effect upon reading methods and results of our ever-present teacher-shortage, over-crowded classrooms, meagre school libraries, and penny-pinching basic reading material needs no elaboration.*¹

*1. The N.S.W. Education Department cannot be blamed for these unsatisfactory conditions in the schools. The public gets what it deserves, that is, what it is prepared to pay for. The budget is inadequate not the administration.

Indeed, these conditions are so well-known and so numerous that it will be necessary to limit the present discussion to a few typical examples.

(a) The Professional Preparation of Teachers

After two years at a training college the young teacher has reached something less than professional standards in his work. In reading, for example, he has an elementary knowledge of the principles underlying the teaching of the subject and of the main types of reading lessons; he has some acquaintance with the School Magazine and the Infants' School readers, and he has collected 'ideas' and aids that will make his lessons appealing to the children. But his understanding of the psychology, physiology and sociology of reading, of remedial reading theory, and of the relationship between reading, the other language arts, and child growth and development, leaves much to be desired - for the simple reason that his two-year course is already too over-crowded to allow more than a cursory mention of these matters. Consequently, his knowledge of children's reading has not the professional scope and depth of a dentist's knowledge of children's teeth or a general practitioner's knowledge of children's illnesses. This is a curious condition which society tolerates, and in fact, staunchly supports.*¹

*1. At a Parent-Teacher Education Council Conference held at Newcastle on 18th August, 1959, the author of this thesis moved a resolution on teacher-training calling for, inter alia, ... "an increase in the period of professional preparation to a minimum of four years beyond the Leaving Certificate level for all teachers". However, this proposal was not acceptable to Mr. S. Liebert, the State President of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations, nor to many delegates from local parent organizations and had to be amended - and virtually deleted - before the general resolution was passed.

Our sense of values is awry. Six years to learn how to care for children's teeth, two years to learn how to care for their minds! Society is reluctant to give teaching professional status and to meet the cost of having fully-qualified teachers for its children and, as history shows, this creates unfavourable conditions which increase the difficulty of the learning process. Up to the middle of last century, local teachers received no organized training and, as the cynics remarked, their main qualification for the work was their lack of success in other professions. In 1851, William Wilkins instituted the pupil-teacher system which put into the schools, in charge of classes, physically and mentally immature youngsters of 14 or 15 years of age, with only a primary school education, no training in teaching, and no knowledge of educational theory or methodology. Until they picked up a few practical hints on the art of teaching, these pupil-teachers spent their time "in vain endeavours to obtain order", and had such a bad effect upon reading standards - and education generally - that finally inspectors warned against the common practice of delegating to them the vital, formative tasks of teaching the alphabet and the elements of reading.*¹ Following Commissioners Knibbs and Turner's report (1903) which recognized the "difference between practice in teaching and training",*² the pupil-teacher system was abolished. But the

*1. From the 1867 report of the Sydney District Inspectors, E. Johnson and J.S. Jones, printed in the Report of the Council of Education upon the Condition of the Public Schools for 1867, p.127, Government Printer, Sydney, 1868.

*2. G.H. Knibbs and J.W. Turner, Interim Report of the Commissioners on Certain Parts of Primary Education, p.19, Government Printer, Sydney, 1903.

Commissioners' recommendation that "the period in the training college should be initially two years, to be changed later to three years, viz., in three or four years' time"*¹ was not fully implemented. To-day, the increase to three years is long overdue, and urgently needed, for our understanding of the educative process, of child development, and of the teaching of subjects such as reading has expanded greatly since 1903. But much of our knowledge of these matters - the outcome of expensive research and study - is not getting into the schools, to the teachers who should know it and be using it. And what the teachers are doing about reading is many years behind what educationists, who have systematically studied the theory and practice of teaching reading, know that they ought to be doing. This means that we are not making full use of our educational resources. And this condition will persist until the community accepts responsibility for a longer period of professional preparation and organized periods of intensive in-service training.*²

(b) Facilities for Special Lessons

The Education Department has shown commendable concern for children who require specialized teaching. Educational Clinics and the School Counselling Service, ~~employing~~ Guidance Officers, Mental Survey Testers, itinerant Remedial Teachers, and other highly-skilled officers, provide a comprehensive programme of special services throughout the state. In the past, however, this tended

*1. Ibid., p. 59.

*2. At present, the average Post-College Course consists of only five lectures.

to lead to the segregation in special classes of children who could not meet normal classroom demands. But to-day, this simple yet dangerous and expensive practice is gradually being replaced by other types of organization based on the view that:

"In order to provide equal educational opportunities for pupils who are exceptional in these respects, it is necessary that they receive the same kind of schooling as their brothers and sisters, plus the specialized treatment or training their condition requires". *1

In this respect we are keeping abreast of advanced educational thought abroad.*2 We no longer unnecessarily inflict social isolation upon children who have 'special problems', for we realize that their intellectual growth and their social and emotional growth are interrelated parts of their total development. We prefer to give these children special lessons either individually or in small groups under exceptional or special teachers, but all this is done within the orbit of normal school life and often in their 'home' classroom.

To do this successfully, the schools must have certain facilities: plenty of working space, a quiet room, rooms for specific purposes, some special equipment, a liberal supply of attractive books for reading, arithmetic and other keystone subjects, a wide range of achievement and diagnostic test materials, unhurried work schedules, and so forth. But because the older concepts of special

*1. Quoted by H.P. Silverman in "The Needs of the Mentally Retarded - Legislative Committee Findings", The Slow Learning Child, p.14, Vol.6, No.1, July, 1959, Uni. of Queensland, Brisbane, from the Bulletin of the California State Department of Education, Vol.XXIV, No.10, August, 1955.

*2. For special and traditional reasons considerable segregation occurs and is widely favoured.

education die hard, much of this work is being done under makeshift conditions which fall below desirable standards. The following report from a teacher actively engaged in work with backward readers is typical:

"I have been fortunate enough to get one special period per week on each of two groups of ten backward readers, one first year group, one second year. Conditions of work have not been good no room being available, these lessons were given in an open hall which is a main artery to the office and staff-rooms. Sometimes a cinema operates at the other end. Delinquents stand there awaiting justice. The music room is adjacent. The pupils gather round a long table rather too close to one another." *1

Under such conditions it is not possible to use to full advantage what research has discovered concerning the education of the exceptional child. And the responsibility for this lies with the community. From the teachers should come the enthusiasm, the understanding, and the 'know-how', but the onus is on the community to provide the facilities needed for effective special education. It is in this sense, through its control of the physical condition of the schools, that society further complicates the process of teaching children to read.

v. Conclusion

Children's reading may be visualized as amoeba-like, perpetually changing shape as new interests and fresh reading purposes develop only to be hedged in and modified by a diversity of social influences (see Diagram No.2). These influences exert pressure on the child's reading growth, shaping it into the existing pattern

*1. G.J. Hughson, "The Problem of the Backward Reader in the High School", An English-History Bulletin for teachers in secondary schools, No.14, p.51, Dept. of Education, Sydney, 1958.

of the culture as yet another means of preserving and promoting the ideals and purposes of society.

The progress of the young reader may be obstructed by at least four major forces all emanating from society. First, society may have specific reasons for wanting to teach its children to read, but the reading instruction which is an expression of these social purposes may clash with the personal reasons driving the child on to making the effort necessary to learn to read. Society may want each child to master the skills of reading so that he can play an effective role in its 'paper' civilization, whereas, the child may be primarily concerned with using reading for his own personal growth. The two aims are not incompatible, but they may become so under incompetent teachers. Moreover, new social developments may usher in new reading aims but the fundamental reading aim of the child remains constant. And to make the confusion thrice confounded, a school system which does not keep abreast of social progress^{*1} may waste time diligently pursuing reading aims that the society has outgrown.

Second, society may put obstacles in the path of individual readers by expecting quantitative standards of achievement that are out of harmony with their particular growth patterns, because they tend to be arbitrary and inflexible. On the other hand, our qualitative reading standards are ill-defined and give the child no real guide as to what he should read. Society to-day is so

*1. The danger of the educational system rather than the needs of society dictating reading goals can easily arise in a highly centralized system which educates and trains its own teachers.

confused about basic values and beliefs that it just does not know for certain what the child should be reading. Nor does it set a good example for the child to follow in the reading of adults.

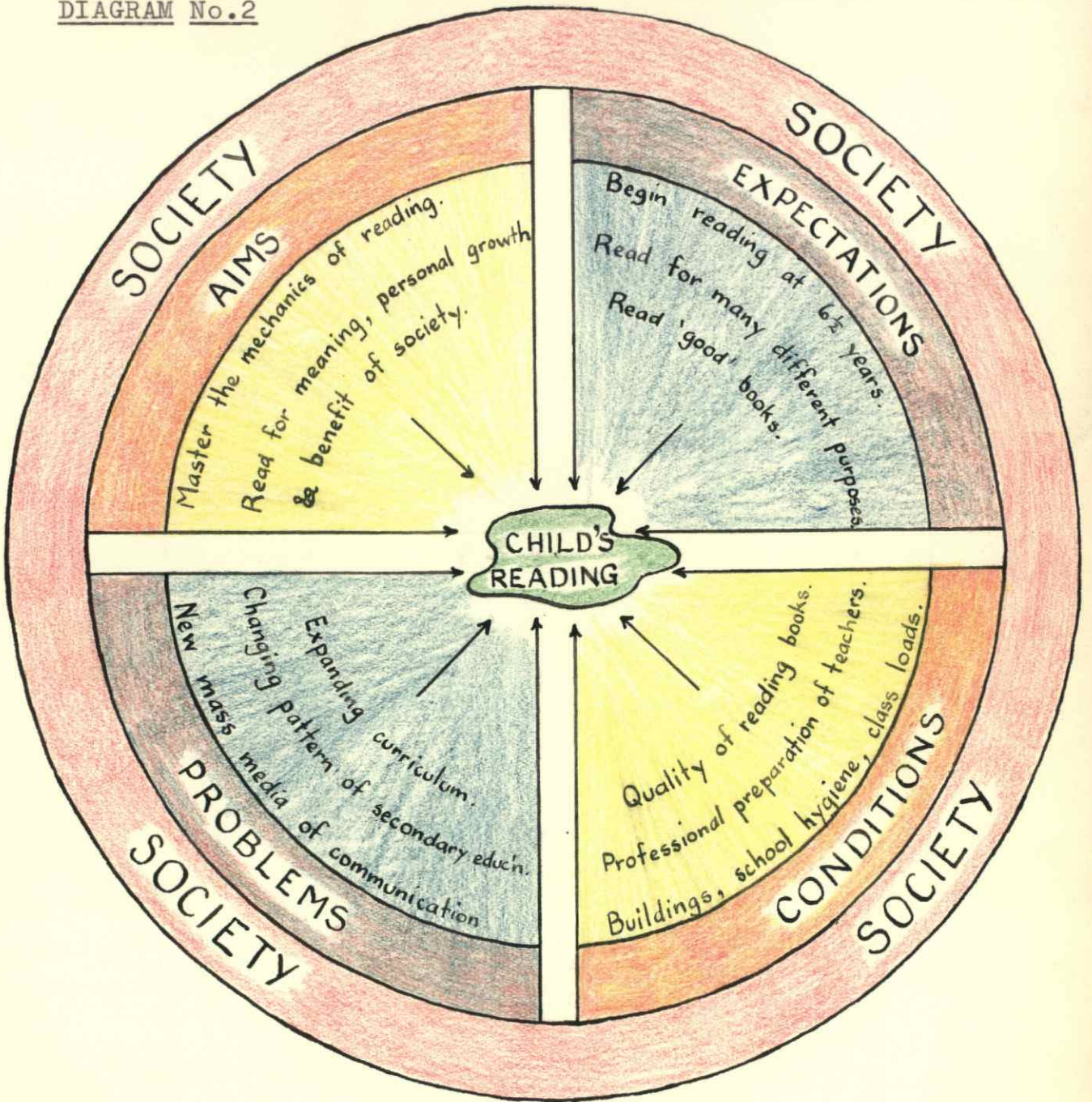
Third, when a new problem affecting children's reading arises, the community seldom thinks through to a solution based on knowledge of the way in which children grow into reading and the purpose which it fulfills in their lives. The tendency rather is to see the problem mainly in terms of the hopes, fears, and interests of the adult community and, because of this, to arrive at decisions which help to destroy the reading habits which those same decisions sought to protect and to nourish.

And finally, society is responsible for the limited school environment in which most children learn to read. Under such conditions the child's reading is determined not by his interests or his needs but by the books available, and the teacher finds it difficult to get the right book for the right child, or to reveal to the child the extent and depth of his literary heritage, or to guide the child in reading for better living.

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DIAGRAM No.2



SOCIETY & READING

Basically, the child's reading grows out of his own need for knowledge, enjoyment, security, expression and communication, but numerous social influences exert pressure from without and thus help to determine the nature and the direction of the reading growth. Difficulties arise when the aims, expectations, and conditions of society are:

1. at variance with the natural growth pattern of the child,
2. confusing and inconsistent in themselves.

CHAPTER 3:THE LANGUAGE

In discussing the way in which the English language, with its many peculiarities and inconsistencies, contributes to the child's reading problem, and in seeking a teaching method which minimizes the difficulties, we must shun two popular but fallacious approaches. In the first place no matter how faulty and deficient our language may be, or how strong may be our Shavian desires to reform it, we must accept the language as it is. Past experience and the views of philologists weigh very heavily against Utopian reading schemes associated with spelling reform, an extension of our alphabet, or other forms of language simplification. Sweeping linguistic reform involves factors beyond the immediate control of the reading specialist and, in any case, the adult population is not likely to burden itself with inconvenient language changes just for the sake of Johnny's reading. Johnny must learn to read the language as he has inherited it - or suffer the consequences.

In the second place we must eschew the modern heresy that the child does not need to know anything about the workings of his language, but that it is sufficient if he can use it - rather like a woman driving a motor car! Any approach to reading which completely neglects basic instruction about the elements of language is dangerous. It leaves the child at the mercy of his limited experience, and if this fails he has no general principles from which he may work. To become a confident, self-reliant reader the child must, at some stage, acquire a basic understanding of the

broad principles underlying the form and the construction of his language.

i. The Language Problem in Reading

All would be well if the written language were an exact and consistent representation of the spoken language, if the spoken language remained unaffected by time and place, and if language communicated human thought and expression in a perfectly logical and orderly way. But none of these conditions prevail and to understand why they don't we must look briefly at some of the characteristics of language.

(a) Language is a human activity. Although the 'external divine-origin theory', which was universally accepted as late as the nineteenth century, encouraged man to think of his language as a ready-made gift from God, even the words of the Bible suggest that it has always been an essentially human activity:

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field." *1

Language has no separate existence apart from man. There is no language which is the perfect language, as the ancients believed Hebrew to be, and there are no language forms or practices which have more than human authority. Language has arisen purely as a human activity for communicating information, thoughts, and feelings. This explains why the world's languages differ so greatly in sound, spelling, and structure.

*1. Genesis, Chapter 2, Verses 19 and 20.

Because it is a human activity, language is subject to the limitations and prejudices of human thought as well as its ingenuity and flexibility. And when the child comes to reading his written language he soon runs up against its all-too-human failings. For example, he finds that one-word form may have more than one meaning and pronunciation ("p¹resent" cf. "p¹resent", "r¹ecord" cf. "r¹ecord"), that the spelling of words is a most unreliable guide to their pronunciation, and that the method of writing the language allows of many different interpretations of it in the spoken form. The child is faced with the difficulty of learning to read written symbols which, because of man's mental shortcomings and conservative nature, do not convey meaning as unambiguously as the spoken language does with the aid of accent, emphasis, and intonation.

(b) Language is always changing. Living languages are always changing and developing. Normally we do not notice the continual, albeit slow, changes in pronunciation, spelling, grammar and syntax, but we may notice the more obvious changes in word meaning and vocabulary. Such change is the inevitable outcome of the close relationship between language and human thought, complicated by physiological and psychological factors which seem to be beyond human control (e.g., the great vowel shift of the fourteenth century^{*1}). Changes in grammar and spelling operate at a slower speed than changes in vocabulary, while some phonetic changes are imperceptibly slow and others rapid. In general, the oral aspects

*1. See Otto Jespersen, Essentials of English Grammar, p.34, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1933.

of language change much more rapidly than the written aspects which come largely under the control of the educated and conservative sections of the community. Printers in particular are notorious for their conservatism in linguistic matters. Consequently, during the last five hundred years a number of changes in spoken English have not been reflected in written English and a gap of centuries has developed between our pronunciation and our spelling. Our spelling to-day corresponds roughly to the pronunciation of English in the fifteenth century, but it is quite irrational as a representation of modern pronunciation. And our children face the problem of learning to read a written language in which spelling and sound seem at times to have no relation to each other, even though the spelling of the language has always been based primarily on phonetic principles.

(c) The development of a language is influenced by political and social history. The growth of a language and its developmental tendencies are much more likely to reflect what has happened to its users than what they have consciously tried to do to improve their language. For example, Old English scribes in the seventh century, adopting and adapting an Irish version of the Roman script gave the original written form of our language a phonetic spelling, as nearly as possible. "Queen" was written "cwēn" and so on. To-day our spelling has many anomalies and complexities which are more the result of political and social developments than otherwise. After the Norman Conquest many scribes of French origin used French spelling habits in their rendering of French words in English. One example is the use of "c" for "s", as in the borrowed word "city".

Because of this our young readers tussle with the confusion between soft "c" and "s" (and also soft "g" and "j") when, in fact, the distinctions involved have no value except in so far as they preserve the etymological history of the word and remind us that we were once ruled by the French. To take another example, Old English was a comparatively pure language and new vocabulary was built up from within the resources of the language mainly by a process of compounding (O.E. *daeges eage* = day's eye, Modern English - daisy). As time went on, the English people adopted Latin practices in word-formation, especially after the Christianizing of England by St. Augustine and again during the Renaissance. This even led to the adoption of the Latin plural forms in some cases. More word-formation techniques came in with the Old Norse people in 855 A.D. and the French in 1066 A.D. Then when the British Empire began to spread in the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries, the practice developed of absorbing all kinds of foreign words into the language, sometimes in accordance with English methods of word-formation and sometimes not. The net result of all this is not only a cosmopolitan vocabulary, but also a heterogeneous language structure which considerably increases the child's difficulties in word recognition. Some words follow the Germanic principle of compounding, some are derived from Latin or Greek prefixes and suffixes, others have been taken from foreign tongues with different linguistic rules, and the child has no way of sorting out which is which. In later years he may realize that the political and social history of the race lies fossilized amid the chaos, but that is no help to the immature reader trying to unravel the syllabic structure of a new word.

Briefly, it amounts to this. Some of the child's reading difficulties may be traced to the fact that the written language is by no means a perfect human invention, that it lags centuries behind the spoken language with which the child is reasonably well acquainted when he enters school, and that its development has often been a fortuitous affair thrust upon its users by the social and political events in their lives and rarely the result of planned linguistic reform. Consequently, in the word recognition area of reading the child's growth of independence in attacking new words is slowed down by the chaotic disorder of English spelling and by the variety of methods used in the formation of English words. In the meaning area of reading growth, problems arise out of the inadequacies of the written language as a medium for conveying subtleties of intonation and emphasis. While the homonyms and synonyms which abound in English largely as an aftermath of the Norse and French invasions add to the child's comprehension difficulties.

Before passing on to a consideration of practices which have been devised to help the youngsters over these hurdles, we must give slightly more detailed attention to English spelling, for of all the characteristics of the language which hinder reading progress this is the most troublesome. Pity the poor child who has to master a spelling in which:

1. One letter may stand for more than one sound ("hat", "father").
2. One sound may be represented by many different spellings ("he", "bee", "key", "quay", "people", "machine").
3. Two or more sounds are represented by one letter (the "d" plus "j" sounds by "g" alone).

4. One sound is represented by two letters. (The single sound of "th" in "thick", or of "ch" in "church").

5. Sometimes letters are silent ("knee", "plate", "psalm").

As Wyld points out in The Growth of English all of these undesirable features have developed gradually from a complex of historical and linguistic causes and are so deeply embedded in the language as to make reform exceedingly difficult. A modified programme of reform after the American manner would be feasible, but the adoption of a thorough-going phonetic spelling would not be possible without destroying the unity of written English throughout the world. And it is most unlikely that the Americans, or the Australians, or the Irish, would relinquish their variety of pronunciation for the English variety, or vice versa. Granting then that children will be burdened with the present spelling for years to come, let us examine some of the attempts which teachers have made to devise ways around the language obstacle.

ii. How Educationists Have Attempted to Solve the Language Problem in Reading

In 1786 Sir William Jones presented his conclusions on the Sanskrit language to the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, and the modern science of Comparative Philology was born. There followed a century or more of tremendous interest in language study culminating with the works of the great philologists: Jespersen, Bradley, Sweet, Wyld, Pearsall Smith and Richards. Among other things, this scientific study of language turned Englishmen's thoughts to the spelling of their own language and the difficulties which children faced in learning to read it. And they realized that although the

European languages in general followed the phonetic principle in their spelling, using letter-sound characters,*¹ other major world languages did not attempt to indicate the sound of a word in its spelling. The Chinese used ideographs or word-concept characters which represented ideas or concepts, whole words rather than the separate sounds of a word. The Japanese used syllable-sound characters which represented the sound of a whole syllable. This meant that spelling need not necessarily be tied to sound, it could equally well be tied to meaning. In reading, it meant that a child did not necessarily have to spell out the letters of a word, he could perhaps read it as a whole - rather like an ideograph. And the spelling of words such as "colonel" was certainly more like ideographic than phonetic spelling. Language scholars lost faith in the old A-B-C method of teaching reading when they realized that it did not suit phonetic spelling, for it did not give the sound of a word, and it did not suit ideographic spelling techniques, for it distracted attention from the pattern of the word as a whole.

The findings of linguistic research added weight, therefore, to the arguments in favour of the 'look-and-say' or word method of teaching reading which reached England in the 1840's and Australia a generation later. This method works on the principle that a word symbol represents an idea as well as a sound, and that the child can associate the symbol with the idea without analyzing out the separate sound elements. In the initial stages, the method treats

*1. Mario A. Pei, The World's Chief Languages, p.15, Third Edn., George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1949.

the spelling of a word not as a number of separate letters but as a shape or a pattern - a kind of ideograph. Children can learn by this method, as they did in China for many centuries, and they quickly grasp a limited sight vocabulary which enables them to read specially prepared material. Indeed, the outstanding merit of the word method is the psychological effect of its immediate success upon the child. But the Chinese found that the task of learning the entire language by this method soon became a great strain on the memory of the learner and took a long time. Similarly, experience with the word method in New South Wales has shown that children who are taught in the Infants' school by this method only, cannot cope with the School Magazine in Third Grade because they have no way of recognizing new words. Because the spelling of many everyday English words such as "the", "was", "said", and "there" is unphonetic, it would seem to be a good idea to treat them as word patterns in the early stages of learning to read, and again, because the word method is the fastest way of giving the young reader the sweet taste of success, it would seem to have a real place at the beginning reading level, but the English language has developed far beyond an ideographic form and we do the child a wrong if we neglect to instruct him in those principles of language construction which are more appropriate to the Germanic and Romance languages and which will give him reading independence more rapidly and more decisively.

While some educationists were experimenting with 'look-and-say' techniques, others in the mid-nineteenth century turned to the phonic method. The linguistic theory underlying this method

rests on the fact that English is, despite its idiosyncrasies, an alphabetic language in which each letter or group of letters represents the sound of one, or sometimes more, phonemes. Old English had a phonetic spelling, individual scribes down to 1500 A.D. made efforts to keep the spelling more or less phonetic, and after the invention of printing in 1475 the spelling was fixed as a roughly phonetic rendering of the London dialect of the time. Adherents of the phonic method assume, therefore, that the phonic element in English is sufficiently large to form the basis for a reading method. This method, as developed in New South Wales in the 1920's by Miss Agnes E. Caldwell, consists of teaching the simple sounds, giving the child exercises in blending these sounds into words, and then gradually introducing for each sound the variant spellings which English has acquired over the years.

It is a fact that approximately fifty percent of the words in English are phonetic, and it is surely wise to give the child a key which enables him to unlock half of the words in his language. But this approach to the language problem in reading leaves some issues unsolved. The other half of the language is not phonetic and the child has no way of determining whether he should apply phonetic rules or not. In normal English phonetic and unphonetic words are used side by side, which means that a phonetic school reading book cannot be written in normal English. The non-phonetic elements must be excluded or kept to a minimum, and so the children read sentences such as: "Pip bit him on the leg, nip, nip" (N.S.W. 'Red' Primer 1, p.5). It would seem unwise, therefore, to rely exclusively upon a teaching method which is only 50%

efficient, which begins reading with strange, twisted sentences foreign to the learner's normal speech, which reduces meaning - the very essence of language - to a secondary status, which concentrates the attention so narrowly upon the mechanical processes of reading that it tends to produce 'word readers' and "interferes with the idea of grasping words, phrases and sentences as meaningful language units!"*¹ The phonic method definitely suits highly phonetic languages such as those of India*² and Spain, but when used to teach the reading of a partly phonetic language such as English it must be supplemented by other aids to word recognition, such as context clues, ability to analyze the structure of words, and skill in the use of a dictionary.

In the 1880's the agitation for spelling reform in English was at its height. In England and America, especially, amateur phoneticians invented new, expanded alphabets which would give the language a one symbol - one sound spelling. Their efforts bore little fruit, for as Professor Skeat remarked:

"The indignant writers were discussing a subject which they had never studied and which they did not understand; and they did so with perfect honesty because they were not in the least aware of their ignorance." *³

The point of interest to us is that their experiments with new alphabets carried over into the teaching of reading and began the rash of highly individual phonetic methods such as those of Leigh and Shearer in America, Dale in England, and Ellis in Australia.

*1. F.J. Schonell, The Psychology and Teaching of Reading, p.47.

*2. E.W. Menzel, Suggestions for the Teaching of Reading in India, p.48, O.U.P., Madras, 1944. (Teaching in India, Series No.X)

*3. Professor Skeat, The Problem of Spelling Reform, 1881.

Phonetic methods work on the principle that our existing alphabet of twenty-six letters cannot adequately represent the forty-four*¹ sounds of the spoken language. They are attempts to produce an ideal state of affairs in which one symbol always stands for one sound, so that once the child has learned the symbols and associated them with the corresponding sounds, he can read anything within his meaning vocabulary. To achieve this ideal, the inventors usually start with the normal alphabet then expand it to forty or more characters by means of additional characters, tampering with existing letter shapes, placing diacritical marks adjacent to the normal letters, using differentiated type or type in different colours. In the initial stages the child reads from specially prepared primers printed according to the phonetic scheme of the inventor and gradually he is weaned from these to normal print.

Some of the phonetic methods had supplementary features which have value, e.g., the hand signs in the Jones system, but otherwise it is difficult to see any merit in them at all. They usually have linguistic weaknesses, they have no co-ordinated system of handwriting, and they defy major educational principles. From a linguistic viewpoint, it is not possible to have a phonetic alphabet type of spelling, for English consists of many different dialects, pronunciation within one dialect differs slightly from generation to generation, and the same word is pronounced in different ways in different sentences depending on the stress. Each dialect community would require its own alphabet, and even then individual

*1. The fact that phonetician cannot agree on the exact number of sounds is indicative of the fallacy underlying this approach to the language problem.

differences in pronunciation would creep in. Of course, you could have one alphabet covering all of the sounds of English and then let everyone spell according to his own pronunciation, but this would cause great confusion and soon destroy the effectiveness of written English as an international language.

Educationally, the phonetic methods offend in many respects. They do not grow out of the child's natural interests in language. They dissect language in a logical, adult manner and direct the child's attention to meaningless elements within words, expecting of him a level of abstract reasoning beyond his years. They teach the child something which he later has to unlearn - and it is in the unlearning process that most of these schemes collapse. They clutter up the learning process with all manner of obtrusive debris quite irrelevant to the ultimate aim in teaching reading, and when all the smoke of battle has blown away the child's reading independence is limited to the tricks he has been taught. However attractive phonetic systems may appear to the inexperienced teacher, they should never again find a place in our schools for they give a lop-sided, incorrect view of language. The emphasis placed on the sounds and the spelling of the language is entirely out of perspective. The fact that language is a human activity, an activity which - for six year olds - is bursting at the seams with human emotion, feeling, and meaning, is lost to sight.

The inevitable reaction against these dry-as-dust schemes, and the developing interest among language scholars in the science of semantics, brought about new attempts to solve the language difficulty in reading. Known by such names as the sentence method,

the story method, the Nursery Rhyme method, and so on, these methods all derive from the meaning side of language. They work on the principle that in learning to speak the child is motivated by a desire to communicate with others, to express his feelings, and to gain knowledge of the world about him. This desire is so strong that he soon masters most of the irregular verb forms, the common homonyms, and the other irrational elements of the spoken language. There seems to be no reason why the child's interests, purposes, and needs, if skilfully stimulated and guided, could not carry him over the irrational elements in the written language in the same way. To achieve this, the advocates of the above methods realize that the reading activity must be interesting, purposeful, and meaningful. The child must become a reader, not because it is expected of him, nor to avoid punishment, but because he wants to.

The usual practice in such methods is to expose the child to a situation in which he feels^a compelling need to read. It may be a part in a class play which has to be memorized, a favourite story, a letter from the teacher or a friend, a record of an excursion, or a Christmas card for mother. The general procedure is for the child to follow the teacher's reading of the material as a whole, until he can "read" it himself. Then the teacher directs attention to interesting words and so a stock vocabulary is built up for future occasions. The method has some excellent features. It is interesting, it works from the whole to the part, it grows out of the child's immediate needs and uses words from his own vocabulary, and it fixes in his mind the notion that reading is not just a 'lot of words' - it is a ready source of

ideas, enjoyment and excitement^e. Whether or not the teacher adopts the sentence method of teaching reading, there should always be some reading of this kind at the beginning reading stage, for a child does not realize the true significance of reading^{until} he finds himself in print.

Unfortunately, these methods have become involved with a side issue concerning the unit of language. Broadly speaking, some reading scholars claim that the method of teaching reading should be determined by the natural unit in language. But what is the natural unit? Those who claim that the phrase is the unit of thought contend that the phrase method is the correct way of teaching reading, and with the aid of flash cards they make valiant endeavours to stretch out the child's eye span until he can absorb a phrase at one fixation. Those who claim that the sentence is the natural unit of language, contend that the child must always read complete sentences otherwise he does not get the total meaning. Without further ado, we can say that although it is important that the child should always get the full meaning of what he reads, the reading method should not be based on a recognition of thought units. Reading is only partially a thought process, it is also a physiological process, and the reading method must be tempered by the nature of the visual process. Obviously the child cannot see a sentence at one fixation, as a matter of fact he cannot even see a phrase at one fixation.*¹ In reading, eye fixations occur at more or less regular intervals along the line. The width of the

*1. See I.H. Anderson and W. Dearborn, The Psychology of Teaching Reading, p.238, The Ronald Press, New York, 1952.

eye-span depends upon visual factors and does not correspond with the thought units. Therefore, a method of reading based on units of thought could quite conceivably be a physiological impossibility. We should pursue the sentence method for the importance which it gives to meaning, but we should be careful when we talk about it as a reading unit. The reading of a sentence may involve a number of reading "acts" drawn into a meaningful whole by mental processes. And a satisfactory method of teaching reading must give consideration to reading in the narrower sense as well as to reading in the broader, 'sentence' sense.

The sentence method has made a valuable contribution to the ultimate solution of the language problem in reading, but like all the others it is inadequate. The difficulty with the sentence method lies in its fundamental assumption that the urge to read should come about in much the same way as the urge to speak. Many children, even under skilful teachers, do not experience any compelling need to read. And of course, our ancestors got along quite well without reading and so do some mothers and fathers with television sets. The point is that the spoken language is the primary form, a part of ourselves. The written language is only a secondary form of language, an auxiliary form derived from the spoken for use on special occasions. Speech and thought are well-nigh inseparable. Without speech we are dehumanized, without writing we are merely inconvenienced. Speech come^s naturally but a taste for reading has to be acquire^d. This is the central weakness in the sentence method: the teacher must kindle in each child an interest sufficiently personal and absorbing to make him want to master a secondary language activity.

iii. An Overview of the Language Problem in Reading

We may now summarize the argument of this chapter under the following points:

1. The nature of the English Language is such that it presents a special problem in the teaching of reading. This problem manifests itself primarily in the area of word recognition, because of our chaotic spelling and variety of word-formation techniques, and in the area of meaning, because of the comparative inefficiency of the written language as a medium of communication, and the profusion of homonyms and synonyms in our heterogeneous vocabulary.

2. We cannot anticipate that in the foreseeable future the problem will be solved by radical linguistic reform designed to make English spelling an absolutely logical and consistent representation of English pronunciation. We must accept the language as a fait accompli.

3. Numerous methods have already been devised to overcome the obstacles which our children encounter in learning to read their own language, but not one of them is an adequate solution. The phonic and phonetic methods concentrate on the word recognition area at the expense of the child's interest in reading as a purposeful human activity. The sentence and story methods concentrate on the meaning area and gradually incorporate word recognition techniques. They assume that every child will acquire sufficient interest in reading activities to enable him to take in the mechanics of the reading process 'in his stride', or, that a carefully graded programme of word recognition skills can develop within a reading programme based on the child's immediate interests and

needs. The validity of both of these assumptions is open to question.

4. This theoretical analysis of the attempts to overcome the language problem, supplemented in Part B of this thesis by a detailed survey of specific attempts made in New South Wales, does suggest that reading is a very complex activity and that no one method, such as phonics, is the magic word that will open all doors to the young reader.

5. The analysis also suggests that we must guard against methods, such as those used in New South Wales between 1905 and 1941, which over-emphasise the linguistic side of reading. We must bear in mind that reading is also a physiological, a mental, and even an emotional activity. That it is a complex of these and a good reading method must achieve a harmonious development of all of these aspects concurrently.

Our reading method must be influenced by the nature of English but no amount of linguistic juggling will, on its own, ever constitute an adequate method. The language problem in reading looks impossible only as long as we look upon it as a purely linguistic issue; it begins to fade when we see reading growth as a human activity which may call upon the child's interests, his personality and his emotions to help him over the rough, irrational parts. We should stop trying to reduce reading to schematic units and concentrate on developing it as a human activity. This can be done without ignoring the fact that reading is, after all, a language activity and the child cannot become a reader in the fullest sense of the word until he can cope with the language difficulties.

CHAPTER 4:THE SCHOOL

In the last three chapters, the complex nature of reading has been traced to the inter-relationship between a child's reading, his language growth, and his total personal development. And the way in which certain psychological and physiological factors, the aims and problems of society, and the idiosyncrasies of the English language, intensify and extend this complexity, has also been surveyed. Finally, attention must be focussed on those contributory factors which emanate from the school situation.

The modern school accepts the task of teaching the child to read as one of its major responsibilities. It is in the classroom that the child and the written language are brought together under specially prepared conditions for the express purpose of achieving this personally- and socially- desirable goal. Nevertheless, the school situation itself gives rise to another group of complications which may be analyzed under the following headings:

- . the educational climate of the classroom
- . the nature of the learning process
- . the reading programme
- . the reading materials.

i. The Educational Climate of the Classroom

The child's progress in reading, the extent to which he develops a permanent interest in the activity, the type of reading that he does, and his whole attitude towards books, is enormously

influenced by the general atmosphere which prevails during reading lessons. The findings of research^{*1} suggest that the interests of the child are best served by a democratic climate. That a formal approach to reading, authoritatively controlled by the teacher, and proceeding according to rigid routines, may achieve impressive results more quickly, but that a 'democratic' approach makes for better readers in the long run. Professor Toynbee has pointed out^{*1a} that "democracy" to-day is a charismatic or at any rate a talismanic word, and even in educational circles it does mean different things to different teachers. Most modern teachers pay lip-service at least to the general concepts involved, and profess to use 'democratic' methods, but when translating the word from utterance into practice, they act in diverse ways. The characteristics which distinguish a democratic classroom situation in the present context were listed by Kurt Lewin in a report on a group behaviour experiment.^{*1} According to Lewin, in a democratic social group, the individual:

(a) Participates in the shaping of his own affairs. Which, as applied to reading teaching, means that the child should be encouraged and assisted by the teacher to take part in class discussions and decisions on what they shall read, why, and what activities they shall carry out in relation to it. He should be permitted, with guidance, to select his own library and reading books, and to plan reading lists specially suited to his own needs and interests.

1a. From a statement made by Professor Arnold J. Toynbee in the Second Dyason Lecture for 1956.

1. K. Lewin, R. Lippitt, & R. White, "The 'Social Climate' of Children's Groups", Journal of Social Psychology, Vol.X, 1939. This is a general study but the principles apply here.

(b) Understands the general purpose and direction of his work. The child should be thoroughly aware of the aims and purposes underlying his reading. For example, while reading around a central theme topic, say, "The Mysteries of the Sea", he should realize that he is not only expanding his knowledge of that part of his environment associated with tides, currents, weather, fishing, &c., but also engaging in activities which will develop skill in locating information, organizing and evaluating ideas, and other study aspects of reading. This is where the non-democratic approach to education is basically unsound. Its methods and materials are so divorced from the child's immediate need for knowledge, expression, and the social advantages of reading, that the child displays no real enthusiasm for school-work even when it is sugar-coated with extraneous frills and incentives. The non-democratic teacher therefore assumes that if the child is not interested in the content of his lessons, he certainly will not be interested in the educative processes which that content is designed to develop. So these processes are not mentioned or discussed, but taught 'incidentally', and almost surreptitiously, in the guise of 'interesting games and activities'. Thus there arises the incompatibility of teacher and pupil objectives referred to in page 57 of this thesis. This problem need never arise if reading is taught as a necessary part of the child's mental, social, and personal development (see page 38), and the teaching situation develops according to truly democratic principles. Under those conditions, the child takes a keen interest in his reading, and in becoming a better reader, because it is all part of a plan devised by himself to meet his own needs. He understands and approves both its processes and its purposes.

(c) Maintains personal freedom throughout the activity. The child should never feel that he is reading purely to satisfy the whim of the teacher. There should always be the feeling that his reading is a very personal affair. This does not exclude hard work. It is only human nature to work harder and longer when you are working for your own interests and gain. Moreover, the child should feel free, having regard for the democratic rights and responsibilities of other members of the class (and of the teacher), to join in the reading activities of other groups or to co-opt interested classmates to help with his own plans.

(d) Expects a fair, just evaluation and recognition of his work. Democracy breeds personal security for it respects human dignity and it does not indulge in irrational or arbitrary judgments. The child reacts favourably to a democratic classroom in which he knows that he will receive fair praise when it is merited, full recognition of all his efforts and contributions, constructive criticism when his work falls below the standard sought, and an objective assessment of his level of achievement.

It is interesting - and most reassuring - to note that the kind of reading teaching which emerges from our theory that reading is an aspect of language growth and closely related to the total development of the child (see Chapter 1), is identical in spirit and in general principles of planning with that which emerges from the application of democratic theory to classroom practice in reading. One cannot help feeling, therefore, that both of these theories are founded on a firm basis of fundamental truth. And one can readily realize why reading difficulties accumulate and the problem of

teaching reading becomes more and more complicated in a formal classroom in which the child only works because he is made to, and has no feeling of personal need for the activities and lessons. Speaking purely subjectively, from my ten years experience as a classroom teacher and another ten years as a supervisor of student teachers' lessons and an observer of demonstration lessons, I believe that these two theories combined constitute the key to successful teaching. Important as they may be, specific teaching methods and techniques, teaching materials, spacious classrooms and other facilities are of secondary concern compared with the establishment of a 'democratic' classroom climate in which the person most interested in the educative process, most aware of the need for it, most involved in establishing, working towards and reaching goals - the person doing most of the work - is the child himself. It is the failure to achieve this learning climate which leads to an active dislike of reading, disciplinary problems, lack of effort, and the employment of compensatory mechanisms which make the best of methods and the most elaborate facilities practically useless and ineffective.

ii. The Nature of the Learning Process

The teaching of reading should be conducted, not only in a 'democratic' climate in accordance with our knowledge of child growth and development, but also in accordance with our understanding of the learning process. For in the teaching of reading, as in the teaching of most subjects, we attempt to regulate the conditions of learning in order to achieve efficiency in the acquisition of knowledge and skill, or in the development of an attitude.



Learning is a multiple activity, or as it is stated in the law of contiguity: "When two experiences or bodily events have occurred together or in immediate succession they become connected in such a way that the presence of one will call out the other."*1 It follows that when a child is learning to read he is associating with that experience other apparently unrelated experiences such as the teacher's reaction to his efforts, the embarrassment of reading in a group situation, and the disinterest or enthusiasm of his parents. These associated experiences may build negative - or positive - attitudes towards reading. Hence the learning process calls for a well-graded preparatory course designed to eliminate failure. Being cognizant of the law of association and of the effect of success upon subsequent behaviour, the teacher should plan this preparatory course so that it provides for individual differences in rates of development, encourages well-motivated oral expression in group activities, and allows the child to take an interest in his own success through the methods used for systematically assessing results. Parental interest in modern reading practice is invited, reading materials are designed to attract children, and every effort is made to associate learning to read with success and with pleasurable experiences.

Learning is more effective if it takes place in meaningful situations or if its relevance to some desirable goal is clearly understood.*2 This generalization, together with our increased

*1. H.A. Carr, "The Laws of Association", Psychological Review, Vol.38, pp.213-28, 1931.

*2. National Society for the Study of Education, Curriculum Reconstruction, p.1, 44th Year Book, Part 1, 1945.

understanding of the limitations of the transfer of training,^{*1} has undermined much of the earlier faith in isolated drill and practice techniques. This is especially relevant to teaching in the word recognition area of reading growth. Hence, in building up a child's initial sight vocabulary, word-list drills should be replaced by experience charts and methods involving the use of words in context - sometimes picture context. Of course, the value of phonetic and structural analysis cannot be overlooked (see Chapter 3) and at some stage drills must be given in difficult sound combinations, sound blending and syllabification, but these drills must only be given when the child needs them, they must grow out of the material he is reading and never degenerate into meaningless phonic exercises. At all times the child should be taught to use these analytic techniques in conjunction with the context and so develop a systematic word-recognition attack based on meaning. This emphasis upon meaning units harmonizes with the Gestalt viewpoint on learning.^{*2} The school will contribute greatly to the reading problem if it ignores this fundamental principle of the learning process. If it employs practices which drill the meaningless elements of language, trusting that the learning will be transferred to meaningful situations, it is not promoting efficient learning and it is introducing unnecessary complications into the reading problem.

Children learn more quickly and effectively when they really

*1. P.T. Orata, "Recent Research Studies on Transfer of Training", Journal of Educational Research, Vol.35, pp.81-101, 1941.

*2. See W. Kohler, Gestalt Psychology, Liveright Publishing Corp., 1947.

try to learn,*¹ especially when the effort to learn is largely attributable to intense interest. This known effect of effort and interest upon learning should be utilized by the teacher in the organization of the children's reading programme. Failure to do so will make the learning process much more difficult for them. Reading holds but temporary interest for the children from a straight-out skill viewpoint - a mere puzzle of symbols providing clues to thought. On the other hand, lasting enthusiasm of the type which carries over into life outside the school may come from the mental and emotional stimulus the children derive from the thoughts locked within the symbols. Hence reading activities should be organized around the children's centres of interest, such as "Our Street" or "The Circus",*² and the children should read to satisfy their interests in relation to that topic, project, or theme. In this way, active learning is encouraged and soon permeates the children's whole approach to the subject. For example, when the interested child encounters word-recognition difficulties, he will attack from every angle: meaning, sight, and sound; structural analysis and context, until he worries them out. Indeed attack, attack based on intense interest, lies at the very core of reading success. The interested reader does not wait for someone to tell him a word, he ferrets it out for himself. But this kind of learning, based on the principles of interest and effort, does not develop in a school which expects the children to be interested in "Piggy Grunter" one day and "The Spiny Ant-Eater" the next day, merely because it

*1. See C. Bloor, The Process of Learning, Kegan Paul, 1930.

*2. See A. Gates, M. Huber, C. Peardon, F. Salisbury, To-day's Work-Play Books, Macmillan Co., 1945.

happens to be the title of the next story ^{the} in a basic reader or the School Magazine.

Many other characteristics of effective and efficient learning, in addition to those concerned with association, meaning, and interest, should be found in good reading teaching. Thus, considerable economy in learning will result if difficulties are graded so that the learner progresses by almost imperceptible degrees towards mastery of more advanced reading skills, more complex types of comprehension, and more mature modes of thinking and reacting to his reading. Much harm can be done by pushing the child through an erratic, ill-graded reading programme with no clean-cut logical organization. The teacher must know where he is going and why. Difficulties of ideas and of language, of vocabulary and of sentence structure, must be carefully prepared for and controlled, with a systematic progression from the known to the unknown. The benefits of systematic learning must be recognized by arranging the sections of work in logical^{*1} sequence, making full use of previously acquired knowledges, skills and attitudes. And finally, the reading teacher should promote learning through appeals to the different senses by providing a diversity of reading activities and a wide range of reading materials - books, magazines, newspapers, and material compiled by the children themselves.

Although there is still much that educationists do not know about the learning process, they know enough to be able to bring the child and his language together in ways, and under conditions,

*1. The word "logical" here includes the connotation "psychological" (cf. Nancy Catty, A First Book on Teaching, p.5).

which promote reading growth and eliminate some of the complexity associated with learning to read. However, if the school does not make use of research findings on the learning process, if it uses teaching techniques which do not make use of association, interest and meaning in the learning situation, the child's reading problem assumes greater proportions, and the whole reading activity becomes increasingly complex.

iii. The Reading Programme

In discussing the part played by the school situation in eliminating or adding to the child's reading difficulties, full recognition must be given to the importance of the teachers's programme or syllabus of instruction in reading. A well-balanced programme is necessary if the child is to make optimum progress towards maturity as a reader. In general, this programme should have two characteristics: it should be planned in accordance with our knowledge of the way in which children grow and develop, and it should be based on an understanding of the nature of reading. For the sake of brevity, we shall now consider the Infants' school reading programme as an example of the effect of the principles of child growth and development upon school practice, and we shall consider the Primary school programme as an example of the effect of the nature of reading upon school practices. It should be clearly understood that the ideal presented below would minimize the reading problem and that contrary practices would add to the complexity of the learning and teaching of reading.

(a) Child development and the Infants' school reading programme.

One of the concepts arising from child development study is

that there is a general pattern of maturation for all children.*1 This is the basic assumption underlying the reading programme and making it possible to establish stages through which most children will progress as their reading abilities develop. Of course, such a statement over-simplifies the position, otherwise reading would present few problems.

A child's functions and abilities develop in interaction with his environment and are not the result of maturation alone. As environmental influences, or experiential backgrounds, differ significantly within most class groups, teachers usually have to provide enrichment through excursions, pictures, films and discussions and thus develop the language concepts necessary for the comprehension of reading material. The teacher's concern with the child's linguistic maturity in pre-reading work is based on her awareness of his environmental deficiencies.

The effect of the environment on the child's development varies with the stage of maturation reached. For example, the pre-school child has a very short span of attention for abstract materials, his play is largely individual,*2 and only gradually does his social-emotional behaviour lose its egocentric bias. Consequently, the important part played by the environment in providing everyday reading materials, group play situations, and other experiences which develop the understandings necessary for successful

*1. This and other principles of child growth mentioned in this section are from:
C.V. Millard, Child Growth and Development, Heath, 1951, and
E. Hurlock, Child Development, McGraw-Hill, 1950.

*2. See J. Jersild, Child Psychology, Prentice-Hall, 1947 (3rd Ed.)

reading, is not effective if the child is not ready to assimilate them. A child is not ready to learn to read, therefore, until he is sufficiently mature mentally, physically, emotionally and linguistically to relate the meaningful situations in his environment to the abstract symbols of reading matter. And this fact should be reflected in the construction of a reading programme.

Nevertheless, modern reading readiness programmes do not invariably delay reading instruction until the child reaches a certain level of maturity - such as a mental age of $6\frac{1}{2}$ years. To do this is to assume that the reading programme and materials are static. Gates^{*1} believes that there is sufficient evidence to show that the critical level for learning to read will vary with the methods of instruction, the materials used, the size of the class, and the skill of the teacher. The teacher plays a decidedly active role. She investigates any physical handicaps which may be retarding the child's development towards readiness for reading. Visual and auditory weaknesses are remedied or improved, speech defects are analyzed and eradicated wherever possible, and the child's general health - so important for the concentration reading demands - is examined. In handling the various problems which sometimes block a child's social and emotional growth, the teacher may require a knowledge of his home background. Of course, she must always allow the child time to become adjusted to the new surroundings and new teacher before she proceeds to diagnose his difficulties and to select and prepare special situations in which he

*1. A. Gates, "The Necessary Mental Age for Beginning Reading", Elementary School Journal, Vol.37, pp.497-508, March, 1937.

will have the opportunity to succeed in individual or group achievements. In addition, the teacher progressively exposes the child to an educational environment which will encourage him to develop the linguistic concepts and the language ability necessary for meaningful reading. Backgrounds of experience and understanding are developed, vocabulary extended, correct speech fostered, the frequent use of normal oral English promoted, literary conventions (e.g., reading from left to right) are introduced, and a genuine interest in books aroused.

Child development studies have shown that although children follow a general pattern of continuous development, individual children vary greatly in the time they take to reach certain stages in that development. No two children grow alike. Recognition of such differences in the rate of growth of reading ability and achievement presents the teacher with a major problem. Thus, her programme must be sufficiently flexible to allow for individual work as well as group work and her standards must vary with different groups, no attempt being made to keep all pupils at the same reading level. The reading materials available to the children should cover a wide range of reading interests and abilities, sufficient to cater for the backward readers and also to provide a challenge to the more gifted children.*¹

Associated with the problem of individual differences in ability is the principle that although the development of the

*1. For the study of individual differences see:
A. Anastasi & J. Foley, Differential Psychology, Macmillan, '49.
Leona Tyler, The Psychology of Human Differences, Appleton-Century, 1947.

human organism is continuous throughout life, certain periods are characterized by intense activity and interest in special directions. To make the optimum contribution to the child's reading growth, the teacher needs to know the needs and interests peculiar to different age groups and to plan the content of her reading programme so that the motivation for reading lessons will not be forced and artificial. For example, by the sixth year, approximately one third of a child's concepts may refer to his home,^{*1} words such as "mother", "father", "baby", "dog", "washing", hold intense interest for him. This should serve as a guide to the teacher in her selection of primer material and in the building of experience charts. By the eighth year, however, a child's interests extend beyond his immediate environment and tales of foreign lands have a special appeal. In this fashion a knowledge of pupil interests is used to motivate the reading required to complete a programme of essential reading skills.

Although the rate and direction of growth differ at various life periods, development never ceases - the processes of change in the human being are continuous throughout his life. As part of this general condition, the development of reading ability is also continuous rather than saltatory. Despite the formal division into stages, this principle must be applied in constructing a reading programme. In the Infants' school, three stages are isolated - getting ready to read, beginning reading, and developing comparative independence in reading ability - but these divisions are not

*1. Mary M. Shirley, "Common Content in the Speech of Pre-School Children", Child Development, Vol. IX, pp. 333-346, Dec., 1938.

apparent in practice. There should be no precise stage at which pre-reading activities cease and formal reading commences. Rather does the child's facility in reading gradually emerge from and accompany his expanding interests and his need for greater reading independence. Similarly, five areas of reading growth - interest, word recognition, meaning, study skills, and appreciation - which are based on the nature of reading and will be dealt with in the next sub-section (iiib.), may be isolated but they also are interdependent and should be treated as such in the programme. Growth in each of these is continuous and begins at the pre-reading level. For example, the techniques used to expand a child's knowledge of word-meanings at the fifth grade level or enrich his meaning concepts at the beginning reading stage are merely extensions of reading readiness activities related to meaning. Or again, the 'look-and-say' vocabulary which a child learns at the beginning reading stage should be carefully increased by the scientifically controlled vocabularies of modern basic readers and gradually extended at different grade levels until in adult reading it becomes the major word-recognition technique. And in the study skills area, different skills are emphasized as the child progresses, and as his reading matures more complex thought processes are involved, more searching powers of comprehension demanded, and ultimately one expects the pupil to be able to read critically.

These are some of the features of a well-balanced reading programme which contributes to and receives reciprocal benefits from our knowledge of the way in which children grow. The school can do much to eradicate reading difficulties by putting such

a programme into effect, it can further complicate the reading problem by promoting programmes based on outmoded and fallacious philosophies of education. In constructing a reading programme full consideration must be given to every aspect of the educative process including the educational climate, the principles of child growth and development, the way in which children learn, and - as we shall see in the next sub-section - the nature of the subject.

(b) The Nature of Reading and the Primary School Reading Programme

As pointed out at the beginning of Chapter 3, we must accept the English language as it is and modify our teaching of reading to meet the unalterable demands of the language. Similarly, in constructing a reading programme we must, to some extent, be guided by the nature of the process which the child has to learn. The child may be the centre of the educative activity but he is not the whole of it. The reading growth of an individual may be divided into five areas: interest, word recognition, meaning or comprehension, study skills, and appreciation. Each of these areas stresses one aspect of reading either as a process or as a human activity. If a teacher concentrates in his teaching on one or more of these aspects to the exclusion of the others, he fails to develop the child as a full reader and, through the educative process itself, introduces additional complexities.

1. The Interest Area of Reading Growth. Normally, people do not write things down unless they have something to say. This is what gives reading matter its intrinsic interest. From books we can get information, enjoyment, a feeling of affinity with others and countless pleasures. Books have special advantages, a personal

appeal, and a usefulness which has caused people to treasure them through the ages and to read them rather than watch television or go to the movies. A reading programme should, therefore, exploit and develop this quality inherent in reading. It is part of the very nature of reading to be an interesting activity and the teacher who makes it otherwise, who reduces it to an intellectual exercise in sounds and symbols, has failed to teach his children to read. No matter how 'beautiful' may be their oral reproduction of the material. Realizing that the child's desire to read springs partly from his interest in reading content and partly from his ambition for skill achievement, the teacher should use these two purposes as 'capital stock' in planning material and learning activities for him to use in his basic reading experiences. For without interest children will not read. Without interest they will not use and develop the skills which he so meticulously drills.

The teacher's provision for growth in interest should be that of supplying his pupils with reading content which is full of action and abounds with interest-peak incidents. There should be a rich and compelling variety of stories, novels, poems, plays and articles, not to mention books that explain to the child the marvellous world in which he lives, and reference books to satisfy his inquiring mind. The teacher cannot rely wholly upon the material itself, however, to develop a permanent interest in reading. He must make sure that the activities used in each reading lesson are both purposeful and enjoyable to the children. They must never read 'round-the-class' merely for the oral practice or to fill in time. Every technique used during skill-development periods should

contribute to the children's personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

2. The Word-Recognition Area of Reading Growth. It is perfectly obvious that before the child can read he must be able to recognize the word symbols. And no amount of argument about child-centred methods, sentence methods, or the like, can disguise or alter this fact. In every reading programme, irrespective of the method or the approach, provision must be made for the teaching of word-recognition techniques which will guide the child towards reading independence. This does not mean that we should teach phonics - far from it. But it does mean that we must teach the child how to cope with a new word when he encounters it. Nothing is more helpless than the product of a pseudo-modern reading philosophy who, faced with a new word, can do nothing but wait for the teacher to tell him what it is. Successful teaching in this area requires:

- . definite instruction and practice in the use of all of the techniques which will help a child to recognize words - sight methods, picture clues, context clues, phonics, phonetic analysis, the structural analysis of words (including prefixes and suffixes), and the dictionary.
- . the teaching of these techniques (through practice and application) in graded steps and in an orderly sequence so that the child finally integrates all of them into a coherent method of attacking a new word.
- . the teaching of these word-getting techniques when the child has the level of maturity to profit by them and apply them. This will involve teaching some of the more complex aspects of phonics and word structure in the primary school grades.

In general, the child should be taught to organize all of the word-getting techniques into a method of attack of this type:

- a. Sight
- b. Context or picture clue
- c. Word form (for compound words)
- d. Structural analysis (prefixes, suffixes, syllables)

- e. Sounding the initial letters + context
- f. Complete phonetic analysis
- g. Dictionary
- h. Ask the teacher.

The child should work through these techniques in sequence. If one of them seems to give him the correct answer he should immediately and always check it with the context. If it proves adequate he need not apply the remaining techniques in the sequence.

Many of the backward readers in our primary schools to-day are having difficulties because they have never received adequate and organized instruction in word recognition. For some years it was fashionable to decry any form of word analysis and to rely entirely on sight methods. This practice is quite wrong. Ours is not an ideographic spelling. If we look closely at the nature of the language we can see that some knowledge of word analysis will greatly reduce the complexity of the reading problem.

3. The Meaning Area of Reading Growth. Reading involves understanding the meaning of symbols (vocabulary knowledge), getting meaning from groups of symbols (comprehension), and reacting to the meaning (thinking). A reading programme should, therefore, meet the child's expanding needs in all of these respects, for failure to get the precise meaning of a word as used in a particular context may cause a child as much trouble as not being able to work out the pronunciation of a word. Realizing that reading involves bringing meaning to symbols as well as getting meaning from the page, the teacher should extend the child's reading vocabulary by means of direct experience, class discussions, drawing illustrations of nouns, dramatizing verbs, exercises in synonyms and antonyms, &c.

To develop powers of comprehension and train the child in careful thinking, the programme should provide not only for the answering of factual questions based directly on the text but also for a variety of interpretive responses such as: evaluating statements, "reading between the lines", making inferences, discovering the "felt meaning", drawing conclusions, making comparisons, and arriving at generalizations. One of the reasons why so much adult reading is very slipshod and high school children can read right through a book without understanding or remembering more than a fraction of it, is that the primary school does not give the meaning area of growth the emphasis which it should have. Reading is indeed a much more complex activity than many teachers believe and poor teaching can cause weaknesses which do not come to the surface until many years later.

4. The Study Skills Area of Reading Growth. Reading is a means which mankind uses to acquire knowledge and to study in the broad sense of the word. A person who can 'read' cannot necessarily use that skill in study situations and isn't, therefore, a truly literate person. Hence, a reading programme should teach a child to make use of his reading. It should teach him to select material appropriate to his purpose and evaluate its importance, to organize his reading effectively, and summarize the results of his reading. It should teach him how to locate information and to use books of reference such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and yearbooks. A child may be an excellent oral or silent reader, but if he goes to a library and does not know how to read a catalogue, an index, foot notes or appendixes, his skill is of limited value to him. Much of

difficulty experienced by children in their first year at High School derives from the inadequate training which they have had in reading for study purposes. But learning how to use reading is just as much a part of the total reading activity as learning how to recognize the words.

5. The Appreciation Area of Reading Growth. The written word has an emotive meaning in most cases, in addition to a referential meaning. The meaning of a good poem, for example, comes not only from the actual words but also from the ideas associated with them, from the subtle undertones of meaning, from the word music, the rhythm and the allusions. A child who reads the words and misses all these other things can scarcely be said to have read the poem. This type of appreciative reading will grow along with the child's unfolding mental powers and increasing reading ability. But it does not grow unless it is fostered, nurtured and guided. The reading programme should lead children towards the pleasure that comes through reliving human experience as portrayed by the writers of good literature. It can do this through techniques of comparison and contrast, through subtle references to a deserving word, through expressive oral reading and dramatization. The teacher can do most, however, through his own contagious love of literature. This is an area of reading growth where many difficulties arise. It would be no exaggeration to say, that in trying to teach this side of reading, the school often creates more problems than it solves. This unhappy state of affairs will continue until the school ceases to treat books as pieces of language and begins to treat them as pieces of human emotion and experience.

On the one hand, reading is a process which requires certain word-recognition and meaning skills; on the other hand it is a human activity which calls for interest and appreciation on the part of the reader, together with the ability to make use ^{of} reading in study situations. Unless all of these areas of reading growth are given adequate emphasis at school, the child will not become a reader in the fullest sense. Schools have a strong tendency to concentrate on the word-recognition areas and more or less neglect the others, the worst offenders in this respect being the advocates of the various phonic and phonetic systems. In doing this they brand reading as an academic pursuit and breed a race of non-readers. This should leave no doubt concerning the complexity of the reading act.

iv. The Reading Materials.

Writing in the Elementary School Journal, Jean Simon said:

"not all authors of textbooks or readers have a perfectly clear idea of all the objects to be attained. Some give rein to the poetic side of their characters and, naturally, see in the child nothing but a love of poetry. Others moralize on every page. Others unwearingly inflict upon the reader a didactic display which makes their books monotonous and transforms them into dictionaries. Finally, there are many who know their language well but are not writers. Good reading books are rare." *1

How true this is! And how greatly is the child's task increased when the school presents him with inferior reading matter.

Quite apart from the quality of the content, there is also the question of the format of the book, the print, and other physical

*1. Jean Simon, "The Teaching of Reading and Writing: An International Survey", The Elementary School Journal, pp.91-92, November, 1956.

features. Considerable research has been carried out in reading hygiene, the physiology of reading and the nature of visual perception during reading,*¹ and learning to read can be made a much simpler task if these findings are incorporated into the construction of primers and readers. An excellent example of the practical application of such knowledge can be seen in The Bush Books,*² the special readers produced by the Commonwealth Office of Education for the use of aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. Among other things, the guiding principles that governed the construction and writing of these books were:

- " . that the English structures and vocabulary used should not go beyond those which would be familiar through earlier oral work;
- . that the words used should be those most frequently found in children's reading material but words not commonly heard in the Territory should be excluded;
- . that the introduction of new words and the repetition of these words should be controlled to ensure regular grading and as much repetition as possible;
- . that the reading difficulty of the books should be graded so that such matters as the length of line, length of sentence, number of words per page, number of new words per page, number of new words per book, total number of words per book, punctuation, etc., could be developed in an orderly way;
- . that the illustrations should be true to life in the Territory and should show mainly aboriginal people;
- . that the type size should be graded to suit the reading skills at different levels;
- . that the expressions used should avoid the artificialities sometimes to be found in elementary readers." *³

*1. See studies such as Jean Goins, Visual Perceptual Abilities and Early Reading Progress, Uni. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958.

*2. Commonwealth Office of Education, The Bush Books (1 to 6), Australia, n.d.

*3. Education News, p.4, Vol.5, No.2, April. 1955.

As a result, The Bush Books are more readable*¹ than those used by the children in our Departmental schools. The effect of the readability of a book upon the learning process can be seen quite readily by comparing a page from one of The Irish National Books (see Part B) with a page from a recent American primer.

Before leaving the question of the complexity of reading and the nature of the reading problem, some mention must be made of the special difficulties associated with oral reading, for this is the type of reading most favoured by our schools as a teaching medium. Oral reading is a more difficult art to master than silent reading for it really amounts to the reader's oral interpretation of his silent reading. Consequently, for effective oral reading the child must master three significant tasks:

1. He must grasp the ideas and feelings intended by the author. Before he can convey the author's thoughts and feelings to others, the oral reader must understand the meaning of the passage, sense the intended mood so that he can use expression purposefully, and react thoughtfully to the ideas presented and to the effects which the author is seeking to develop.

2. He must convey those ideas and feelings to others. The reader must be able to recognize the words in thought-units so that he is free to focus attention entirely on the act of transmitting the author's message, and adapting his interpretation to the interests and composition of his audience.

*1. Jeanne S. Chall, Readability: An Appraisal of Research and Application, Ohio State University Studies, Columbus, 1958. This excellent source book considers at length the reliability and validity of the various readability techniques.

3. He must use the techniques and skills of expression purposefully. A good oral reader, within the framework of his natural mode of expression, uses emphasis, correct pausing, accent, intonation, inflection, and variations in reading rate, to convey both meaning and feeling to his audience.

Considering all of these matters and what they mean in the way of mastery of eye and voice skills, it is small wonder that the concentration on oral reading in our schools does much to make learning to read a real problem for the child.*¹ By placing too much stress on it, the school makes the reading lesson a discouraging activity. For good oral reading is really a fine art, a culmination of all the skills and abilities which the child has developed both in reading and in oral expression.

In conclusion, the above discussion has indicated that although most reading difficulties arise from the nature of the child, the language, and the reading process, the school also contributes its share. The school largely determines when the child will read, what he shall read, how he shall be taught and what aspects of the activity shall be stressed. Any errors which may creep into these determinations add to the complexity of the reading activity and present the young reader with additional problems.

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*1. The artificiality of asking children to read orally without a proper audience situation aggravates the problem.