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CLINICAL ANALYSIS OF A SPECIFIC CASE IN REMEDIAL READING

EVELYN C. COURTNEY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A great many studies of group differences in reading speed and comprehension have been reported, notably, by Gates (2), Gray (3), Betts (1), and others, but very few intensive studies of individual cases have been published. The specific case herein reported is that of C, a normal, healthy, well-developed high school boy of sixteen years. He came to the Psychology Department at Iowa State College upon recommendation of a private tutor to receive clinical help in remedial reading. The case was delegated to the writer as a specific problem in educational psychology. The problem developed, it seems, when C was ill during the time he would have been in the 3rd to 5th grades and during the period when reading skills were being emphasized. Apparently, something happened which resulted in faulty reading ability.

The subject's attitude toward learning, in general, is very good and his willingness to carry out remedial and practice exercises at home is noteworthy. The problem appeared to be largely that of proper diagnosis of the difficulty and remedial work in speed and comprehension. A rather detailed description of the analysis and remedial work will be given.

PROCEDURE

Because of the fact that C was a student in a neighboring school, he came to Iowa State College at Ames, on Saturday mornings for his work in corrective reading. At these times the following diagnostic and remedial helps were administered by the psychology department and the author. At the beginning, various professors in the department discussed with C some principles of good study habits, and the use of remedial exercises which would help him. A part of these conferences was devoted to mental hygiene in an attempt to increase his confidence in the enterprise. These interviews took the form of a clinical diagnosis of the particular problems relating to C.

The case originally suggested two possibilities besides the ordinary lack of skill in reading; namely: (a) the presence of motor or sensory aphasia, or (b) marked ocular defects which might contribute strongly to the difficulty. A standard vision test was given using regular optometric methods.

The ophthalmograph was used to measure the number of eye movements and regressions. Certain other abnormalities could also be observed from a study of the record.

The subject's general intelligence was measured by the Iowa State College Alertness Test which has been described in the literature by Rostrum and Lauer (4).

Speed and comprehension were measured by the Pressey Reading Speed and Comprehension Test and the Iowa Silent Reading Test. Other reading skills were measured by Sangren-Woody Reading Test.

With the preceding diagnosis completed, definite remedial work was begun as described in the following paragraph. The Harvard Reading Films were used to increase the subject's speed. A series of mimeographed exercises developed at Iowa State College were administered at intervals to increase speed and comprehension from the printed page. Oral reading was used in word recognition at which time a record was made and a list, composed of words mispronounced or not attempted in pronunciation while reading the material, was compiled. These words were analyzed by study of syllables, word beginnings, word endings and by similarity to and differentiation from known words. Additional outside reading was encouraged to increase interest, speed and comprehension. Word meanings were studied through collection of new words from reading material and the use of their synonyms. Special emphasis was put upon improvement in reading of material of various types, both with respect to speed and comprehension.

RESULTS

A vision test, given December 1, 1943, showed the subject's vision without glasses to be 20/30. The examiner stated that the subject had some uncorrected astigmatism which may have produced a certain amount of eye strain. Checked with his glasses, the subject showed greater defect than without them.

The results of the ophthalmograph shows a tendency to wait an unusually long period of time at certain fixations. The number of fixations was about normal and there were only slightly more than an average number of regressions.

The Iowa State College Alertness Test, administered February 27th gave the following results. C's score was 13 which gave him a rating of C. An estimated intelligence by means of transmutation tables, based on the Binet Test, would indicate an I. Q. of approximately 95.

Form A of the Pressey Reading Speed and Comprehension Test, given January 22, 1944, ranked C's comprehension in the lowest 10th decile for college students and his speed of 120 words per minute placed him considerably below the 5th percentile. Form B was given April 8, 1944 with the following results. During the first 5 minutes C read 136 words per minute, somewhat above the 6th percentile, and during the complete test he read 145 words per minute. His comprehension score was 24 which puts him at the 20th percentile for college students.

The result of the Sangren-Woody Profile Analysis Test given March 18th showed the following results.

Table I—Summary of Profile Analysis

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Grade Equivalent</i>	
1. Word Meaning	33	10 yrs. 10 mo.	
2. Rate	16	5	2
3. Fact Material	4	5	0
4. Total Meaning	4	5	1
5. Central Thought	8	9	6
6. Following Directions	6	6	6
7. Organization	11	8	10
8. Total Average	83	7	10

A series of mimeographed tests were given at intervals of one or two weeks. Three indexes, speed, comprehension and reading efficiency were computed. The results are shown in Table II.

Table II—Results of Mimeographed Tests

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Words/minute</i>	<i>Comprehension</i>	<i>Eff. Index</i>
Funeral of Baldur	1/29/44	167	40%	67
Blood Exams	2/25/44	100	55%	55
Home Remedies	2/ 5/44	107	65%	70
The Villi	2/29/44	130	40%	52
Old Belfries	3/11/44	130	35%	46
Spread of Ku Klux Klan	4/ 1/44	150	35%	52

These were not graded as to difficulty and the results are shown merely to indicate the nature of the practices given.

Harvard Reading films were used also as a remedial measure with the following results:

Table III—Results from Harvard Films

<i>Exercise</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Words/Minute</i>	<i>Comprehension</i>	<i>Eff. Index</i>
Little Arthur	1/29/44	175	25%	44
Rats and Man	2/25/44	175	32%	67
Parents' Brothers	4/ 6/44	200	25%	50
The Registered Letter	4/ 6/44	200	22%	44

The following observation includes a word list made March 31st. The first in each case is the correct word and the second is the word that C pronounced.

Table IV—Mispronunciations

1. Errors made with vowels	
hemp	hump
deck	dock
array	arrey
place	price

2. Errors made with consonants

swung	sprung
laden	laden
green	queen
white	while
slip	ship
form	from

3. Words that look alike or begin alike

trim	time
amusing	amazing
imitation	imagination
demonstration	dramatic
squared	squalled
pounded	poured
orderly	ordinary

4. Exchanged words that had similar meanings in context

normal	natural
steady	safely
feathers	plumage

5. Words with different endings

twenty-fifth	twenty-fourth
officials	officers
inspection	inspector
varies	varieties
four	forty

6. Words not familiar and no attempted pronunciation

stanchion
concerned
negative
attitudes
uniform
instinct
distribution
restrictions
reservoir
mediocre
fatalities
whether

The above shows some of the word difficulties that the subject meets in reading of text material. The list is of interest because it gives us a picture of his problem in word recognition. The groupings were made in order to diagnose C's difficulty and enabled the author to give specific help with the difficulties stated.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. This study reports an analysis of an individual case in remedial reading which showed poor habits acquired earlier in his *school life* as the principle factor.

2. The subject's visual acuity, intelligence and reading ability were sufficiently high to be considered of secondary importance in his reading difficulties.

3. From all testing and observation it is shown that C made improvement in rate and comprehension as well as in enjoyment of reading from reports obtained verbally.

4. It seems a much more complete analysis of cases of reading disability would greatly aid teachers in developing skill in handling and evaluating such cases.

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