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Comprehension elements in three kindergarten basals

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Abstract

Despite our capacity for obtaining information in a variety of ways, reading remains a very important tool , The process of learning to read begins before reading readiness activities are introduced in Kindergarten. The heart of the reading process is comprehension, and the primary aim of reading instruction is to develop readers who understand and react to what they read (McCracken & McCracken, 1972). In short, they must comprehend the passage.

COMPREHENSION ELEMENTS IN THREE KINDERGARTEN BASALS

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Despite our capacity for obtaining information in a variety of ways, reading remains a very important tool. The process of learning to read begins before reading readiness activities are introduced in Kindergarten. The heart of the reading process is comprehension, and the primary aim of reading instruction is to develop readers who understand and react to what they read (McCracken & McCracken, 1972). In short, they must comprehend the passage.

Technology is rapidly changing the needs of our world. Essential skills such as comprehension, analysis, solving problems, and drawing conclusions are being slighted (A Nation At Risk, 1983). A study reported in 1981 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) compared mean reading scores from the 1970 and 1980 assessments to see whether reading ability levels had improved during that ten year period. Their findings were as follows: 9-year-olds read better, 13-year-olds read slightly better, 17-year-olds read slightly worse, boys and those from rural and disadvantaged urban communities

made greater gains than those from advantaged communities, blacks made greater gains than whites, and the worst readers improved the most (Forbes, 1981). Another study done by the NAEP (Forbes, 1982) concluded that in the area of comprehension students were understanding what they read. However, high-risk students achieved more in the early years of schooling than in the middle or high school levels. Also, children at the middle and high school levels had trouble going back to the text to support their point of view.

As readiness programs are begun in kindergarten, building comprehension should be a part of that program. The study also concluded that emphasis on early reading attainment was important in developing the enjoyment of reading and reading comprehension among students. It is important that the child learn to understand what the author is trying to say even at the kindergarten level (Cunningham, 1975; Spiegel, 1983). To date, many teachers are focusing on phonics skills and slighting comprehension skills at the kindergarten level (Palardy, 1984). Studies report that only rarely do kindergarten teachers indicate that building comprehension is a part of their readiness program (Durkin, 1978-79; Spiegel, 1983). Thus, it

seems timely to examine the nature of the kindergarten curriculum as regards comprehension instruction.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the comprehension strands found in three kindergarten level basal reading materials. Specifically the following questions were addressed: (1) What are the different types of comprehension activities in the kindergarten level basal materials? (2) What percentage of total lessons present comprehension activities?

Importance of the Study

With the launching of Sputnik by Russia on October 4, 1957, there was a push for changes in the educational system. Bruner (1960) discussed how education in science could be improved in our primary and secondary schools. Hunt (1962) and Bloom (1964) both stressed the crucial importance of a child's early learning environment. Concern for kindergarten and prekindergarten schooling, as in the Head Start programs which were later formulated, was a reality. Curious about what was being taught in the primary grades, Durkin in a classroom observation study (1978-79), found that almost no comprehension instruction was seen when grade 3 classrooms were

observed; however, considerable time was allocated to comprehension assessment and written exercises.

Spiegel (1983) reported results that were similar to Durkin's. She had been questioning kindergarten teachers about their reading readiness programs for four years. Her results indicated that the reading readiness programs were designed to teach letter names, consonant sounds, and fine motor skills. Occasionally listening skills, following directions, and interest in reading were mentioned as other skills were introduced in readiness programs. However, only rarely did kindergarten teachers report that building comprehension was part of their readiness program. Palardy (1984) also noted many teachers were focussing on phonics skills and slighting comprehension skills at the kindergarten level.

Since basals are the predominant mode of instruction in American schools, basal materials should begin in kindergarten to develop the comprehension skills that will be used throughout the basal reading series (Cunningham, 1975; Spiegel, 1983). As children in the upper grades are having trouble with higher level cognitive processing (A Nation At Risk, 1983), there is a need to determine what is being done in comprehension at the beginning of the reading

curriculum. To date, few studies have examined the nature of the Kindergarten comprehension strand in basal instruction. This study examined the nature of the Kindergarten comprehension strand in three major basal reading series.

Assumptions

There are some basic assumptions underlying this study. First, it is assumed that Kindergarten basals are used in Kindergarten reading programs. Secondly, it is assumed that Kindergarten basals can be compared on their comprehension strands. Third, it is assumed that comprehension elements are taught in Kindergarten. Lastly, it is assumed that children can benefit from comprehension instruction.

Limitations of the Study

One possible limitation of this study is that by only comparing three basals, the findings of the study may not be generalizable to all basal reading materials. Also, other variables or materials may be used to develop a good comprehension program and this study does not take these factors into account.

Definition of Terms

The terms in this study are defined as follows:

Reading Readiness: A stage in the child's development at which he will be successful at beginning

reading instruction based on learned knowledge and skills (Harris & Sipay, 1980).

Basal Reader Series: Preplanned, sequentially organized, detailed, commercial materials and methods to teach developmental reading skills (Durkin, 1978; Harris & Sipay, 1980).

Basal Reader: A graded book containing material designed to teach and reinforce specific skills, such as decoding, meaning vocabulary, and comprehension (Durkin, 1978; Ekwall, 1981).

Comprehension: Getting meaning through the use of appropriate materials. It is an internal, unobservable process. This definition also recognizes that comprehension has to be inferred from a reader's behavior (Durkin, 1978).

Literal Comprehension: Refers to the acquisition of factual ideas and information (Burns & Bassett, 1982; Harris & Sipay, 1980).

Interpretive Comprehension: Refers to inferential comprehension. It is the understanding of ideas that are not directly stated but implied (Burns & Bassett, 1982; Harris & Sipay, 1980).

Applicative Comprehension: Refers to comprehension at the critical and creative level. It involves an evaluation of the ideas presented and goes

beyond implications derived from the text (Harris & Sipay, 1980).

Teacher's Manual or Guidebook: A book accompanying each basal reader which instructs teachers in how to use the material in the basal reader to advance the children's reading skills. The manual is either a separate book or is bound together with a copy of the reader (Durkin, 1978; Harris & Sipay, 1980).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter will examine several factors related to analysis of the comprehension strands in basal readers. First, the prevalence of basal readers in American school systems will be discussed. Next, comprehension instruction and the basal reading series will be discussed by examining some of the studies that have researched this area. The next section will be on comprehension and the kindergarten children and will cite some characteristics of kindergarten children with implications for comprehension. Next, the components of a reading readiness program are described. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the review of related literature.

Prevalence of Basals

Many materials are used to teach reading. One prominent set of instructional materials is called the basal reading series. Basals are used in many classrooms throughout the United States. The most prevalent approach to teaching reading comprehension is through basals. Three reports of the prevalence of basal readers were found. Russell (1961) stated that 95% of teachers use a basal series. Jenkins and Pany

(1978) "reported that between 91 and 98% of primary grade teachers use a basal series on all or most days of the year" (p. 7). Durkin (1978) identified basal series as having a definite impact on instruction because they were used in as many as 90-95% of primary classrooms and only a little less often in the middle and upper grades. In short, most children in America learn to read using basal reading materials and most major basal reading series have kindergarten-level materials. The kindergarten basal is used to help prepare children for the reading program that will be continued in first grade.

Comprehension Instruction in Basals

In a basal reading series, comprehension skills are but one of the skill areas addressed. Jenkins and Pany (1978) described reading comprehension programs for grades three through eight in three reading series. Several dominant methods of reading instruction were selected for review in this study. They included: basal readers, the DISTAR program (Science Research Associates, 1974-1975), objectives-based reading systems, language experience, and psycholinguistic materials. They cited five features of comprehension instruction: text involved, skill emphasis, instructional procedures, skills taught, and

requirements for skill mastery. The dominant instructional procedure for reading comprehension was questioning. Clear differences in emphasis appeared among the reading series as reflected in the number of exercises and questions devoted to various skills. Only DISTAR stressed the mastery of comprehension skills and specified error correction procedures.

Another examination of reading comprehension instruction was completed by Durkin (1981). She examined reading comprehension instruction in five basal reading series (K-6). Pathfinder published by Allyn and Bacon (1978), Reading 720 by Ginn and Company (1979), Bookmark Reading Program by Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich (1979), Houghton Mifflin Reading Series (1979), and Basics in Reading by Scott, Foresman and Company (1978). These series were chosen due to their current copyright dates and because they were leading sellers and widely promoted. Hers was the only study located that assessed reading comprehension at the kindergarten level.

Durkin made an assumption that grade 4-6 manuals would offer more comprehension instruction than those for kindergarten through grade 3. She later retracted this statement and concluded that authors of K-3 manuals did provide adequate comprehension instruction.

Durkin (1981) concluded that one common characteristic in all five of the basal reading series was the tendency to offer numerous application and practice exercises instead of direct, explicit instruction. All five series dealt with assessment procedures and the amount of questioning in all the manuals seemed excessive to the author. Few attempts were made to explain "what it means to answer a question, and what the possible strategies are for getting it answered" (p. 50).

As the readiness elements in a kindergarten basal should prepare the children for first-grade reading instruction, Bond and Dykstra's (1967) classic study is of interest. Bond and Dykstra compiled a report for the Coordinating Center of the Cooperative Research Program in First-Grade Reading Instruction. The data in this report were compiled from 27 individual studies. Three basic questions were asked in this study:

1. To what extent are various pupil, teacher, class, school, and community characteristics related to pupil achievement in first-grade reading and spelling?

2. Which of the many approaches to initial reading instruction produces superior reading and spelling achievement at the end of the first grade?

3. Is any program uniquely effective or ineffective for pupils with high or low readiness for reading? (p. 5)

A number of instructional approaches were evaluated in this report. They were as follows: Basal, Basal plus Phonics, i.t.a., Linguistic, Language Experience, and Phonic/Linguistic. A brief description of each of the 27 projects was presented in an appendix. Common procedures for data collection and analysis as well as common experimental procedures were established. Common information about teacher, pupil, school, and community characteristics were also collected. The Coordinating Center also organized, analyzed, and interpreted the data common to each child in all 27 individual projects. Pre-instructional and post-instructional tests were given in each project. Each experimental program was designated to be 140 instructional days.

Results of the correlation analysis revealed the single best predictor of first-grade reading achievement was the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet prior to the beginning of reading instruction. Generally, they found that the non-basal programs tended to produce pupils with better word recognition skills than the basal programs. When measures of

comprehension, spelling, rate of accuracy of reading, and word study skills constituted the criterion of reading achievement, the differences between basal and non-basal programs were less consistent. They concluded that children learn to read by a variety of materials and methods. Also, combinations of programs were often superior to single approaches. As far as the level of readiness for reading, the analysis of treatments revealed that no method was especially effective or ineffective for pupils of high or low readiness (as measured by tests of intelligence, auditory discrimination, and letter knowledge). Therefore, the authors concluded that the superiority of a single method of reading instruction had not yet been determined. The authors suggested that a composite of methods might produce the best results and that an effort should be made to determine what each method would contribute to the reading program.

In order to describe beginning reading programs, studies by Chall (1977) and Beck and Block (1976) are described. The pupose of Chall's (1977) study was to critically analyze research comparing different approaches to beginning reading. She examined the correlational studies of beginning reading achievement. She also investigated the relationship between the

extent and kinds of reading failures children experienced and the methods used to instruct these children in the initial stages of reading. In addition, Chall interviewed the leading proponents of the various methods and observed these methods in use in schools. Five major recommendations were stated in her book: (1) a recommendation for the code-emphasis method in the beginning reading instruction, (2) a change in content in beginning reading materials, (3) a re-evaluation of grade levels or a less restricted vocabulary in the basal readers, (4) development of single-component tests, and (5) improvement of reading research.

Another study which examined beginning reading programs and the development of reading comprehension was Beck and Block's (1976) examination of the Ginn 720 Reading Program (Ginn, 1976) and the Palo Alto Reading Program (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973). These two reading series were compared on the basis of such factors as phoneme-grapheme correspondence and phonics instruction, sight word learning, and the development of reading comprehension. This study limited itself to "core" strands in the basal programs: decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary. However, the main focus of the study was acquiring word attack skills and word

recognition abilities. It also focused primarily on the teaching aspects of the series. Though Beck and Block basically excluded the readiness components of both series, it is still an important study to consider due to the reading comprehension elements in the study.

The discussion of comparative data included descriptions and defenses of the criteria used, facts about the series' treatment of each instructional area, and evaluative statements about both series regarding the child who has difficulty learning to read. Beck and Block concluded that both series do develop comprehension abilities. Within the Ginn series, the comprehension instruction and associated workbook activities were clearly labeled. However, the Palo Alto series did not list specific pages in which comprehension skills could be found, only the books in which the instruction could be found.

Both series needed a better system of comprehension task descriptions. Ginn labeled its comprehension instruction according to the ability that was supposed to be learned and Palo Alto described comprehension instruction in terms of test performance.

In this section a number of factors were addressed. The superiority of a single method of

reading instruction has not been determined. As the system of comprehension task descriptions for each basal reading series varied, it was difficult to compare the series on comprehension elements. Also there was no common strategy used in providing comprehension instruction in the basal series.

Comprehension and the Kindergarten Child

Kindergarten children range from age four to six. Each child is unique and no two look alike (with the exception of identical twins). They are no longer babies but still need lots of affection and support. They have individual differences, likes and dislikes, and are at different levels of maturation. They are eager to experience and react to the world around them. During this period, the child's oral language development is rapidly expanding (Cohen and Rudolph, 1977). One minute their vocabulary sounds like they're reciting a small section from Webster's Dictionary verbatim; the next, they're talking "baby talk." They generally love to run, climb, reach, and grasp and are very physical. This implies that their learning should be active, not passive. They can be very talkative one moment and quiet and passive the next. They have active imaginations and love to play "house" or "cowboys and Indians". They are creatures of feelings

and tend to express their feelings outwardly. In short, children are using their own language to comprehend the world around them. Due to these experiences and interests, Durkin (1978) advocated the language experience approach in teaching comprehension to kindergarten children since the text can vary with language levels and types of experiences.

In Gillet and Temple (1982) comprehension is associated with five steps for reading readiness: (1) competence as a language user, (2) sense of story structures, (3) concepts of written language, (4) the ability to match speech and print units, and (5) recognition of written words.

Competence as a language user is another phrase for the child's oral language development. As for story structure, reading to a child is very important. This act helps children understand the commonalities among stories. In concepts of written language, the children need to be aware of the many purposes of reading and writing. Next, the ability to match speech and print units is the awareness that a group of letters clustered together with space on either side stands for a word. They need to be aware of the concept of the spoken word in print. Lastly, in the recognition of written words the beginning reader is

developing a basic sight word list. Children also need to know that reading is not only to "render print out loud" (Gillet & Temple, 1982, p. 36). They need to know that reading is also finding things out.

Spiegel, in "Readiness for Reading Comprehension" (1983), discussed comprehension at the kindergarten level. She stated that an effective comprehension component in a kindergarten curriculum requires a series of lessons in which there is teacher-child interaction, with careful attention given to how the child arrived at an answer. These activities are built around the concept of parallel lessons. In Cunningham's (1975) model for parallel lessons, the processes of comprehension are taught at the listening level and then transferred to the reading task. "With each mode the teacher first models the processes, then helps the children recognize and later generate good responses" (p. 14).

There is another characteristic of kindergarten children. It is difficult to keep the attention of young children when they are part of a large group (Durkin, 1978). This implies that readings should not be taught in a large group at the kindergarten level. In short, kindergarten children are unique individuals

who are in the process of growing and reacting with their environment whether at home or at school.

In conclusion, many theorists believe that young children can benefit from comprehension instruction. The language experience approach is one way to teach comprehension to kindergarten children since this approach builds on their own interests and language levels. Also Cunningham's (1975) model for parallel lessons could be used with kindergarten children. In this approach, the processes of comprehension are taught at the listening levels and transferred to the reading task.

A Reading Readiness Program

As 95% of the kindergarten children will use basal reading readiness materials in the schools, it is important to have a better understanding of a reading readiness program and what it entails (Durkin, 1978). It will also help to understand the nature of the learning environment in kindergarten.

Gillet and Temple (1982) discussed five factors in the acquisition of reading ability: (1) competence as a language user, (2) sense of story structure, (3) concepts of written language, (4) the ability to match speech and print units, and (5) recognition of written words.

Durkin (1978) advocated the language experience approach in teaching and preparing the kindergarten child for reading. She discussed seven goals in teaching the child about reading:

1. Interest children in learning to read.

2. Help children acquire some understanding of what reading and learning to read are all about and demonstrate the connection between spoken and written language.

3. Teach about the left-to-right, top-to-bottom orientation of written English.

4. Teach the meaning of "word" and the function of space in establishing word boundaries.

5. Teach children the meanings of terms that figure in reading instruction.

6. Teach children to discriminate visually among letters and among words.

7. Teach children the names of letters (p. 178).

Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham and Moore (1983) discussed seven reading readiness ingredients in a reading readiness program:

1. Children who are successful readers know what reading is for.

2. Children who are successful readers need to have an adequate background of information so that what they read makes sense.

3. Children who are successful readers expect that what they hear read to them and what they read for themselves will make sense.

4. Children who are successful readers know the conventions and the jargon of print.

5. Children who are successful readers can auditorily and visually discriminate letters and words.

6. Children who are successful readers have an interest in reading and a desire to learn how to read.

7. Children who are successful readers have had experiences with both story and expository text structures (pp. 4-5).

All three textbooks share some similarities in recommended comprehension activities. All state that children who are successful readers know the purposes of reading. The three textbooks also include in their list of readiness skills that children must have an interest in reading and a desire to learn how to read. Concepts of written language were also very important as children who were successful readers expected that what they read for themselves would make sense. Additionally, all three textbooks advocated reading to

the child. Gillet and Temple (1982) and Cunningham, et al. (1983) agreed that children needed to listen to stories read aloud to give the children a sense of story structures.

As for reading readiness comprehension activities that differ, only Cunningham, et al. mentioned that children must have an adequate background of information. These authors also advocated exposing children to expository texts in order to understand them as well as story structures.

Summary of Review of Related Literature

Since basal readers are used in as many as 98% of primary classrooms, it is important to determine if basal materials meet the challenge of providing appropriate comprehension instruction for kindergarten children. As no system of comprehension task description has been agreed upon and there is no common strategy used in providing comprehension instruction in the basal series, it is difficult to compare findings of the various studies. As for comprehension and the kindergarten child, the language experience approach and creative retelling are two excellent ways to help the child comprehend. Also, the characteristics of kindergarten children demand that such instruction be provided independently or in small groups, be based on

children's oral language, and be built upon the child's experiences and interests. The foundation for future reading development needs to be carefully laid by using basic readiness steps in Kindergarten.

There is now a movement toward academic achievement in the eighties just as there was one in the sixties. Spiegel (1983), Chall (1977), and Durkin (1978) have all noted the importance of teaching comprehension in the elementary grades in this information age.

In this chapter, many of the components of a reading readiness program as described by textbook authors were identified. These authors were found to have similar comprehension elements: The only major difference was that Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, and Moore (1983) advocated exposing kindergarten children to expository texts.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In this study, three reading readiness series were assessed to determine the types of comprehension activities found in kindergarten level basal materials. The frequency of presentation of the comprehension activities described in the basals was also tallied. In this chapter the sequence of readiness skills of the three selected basal series is presented. Then a typical lesson from each of the three reading series is given. Finally, the method of analysis for determining the type and frequency of readiness comprehension skills in the selected basals is detailed.

Sequence of Readiness Skills in Three Basal Series

The American Readers by D.C. Heath and Company (1983), the Ginn Reading Program by Ginn and Company, (1982), and the Scott Foresman Reading Series by Scott Foresman and Company (1981) were assessed. They were chosen randomly from a selection of twelve reading series from the University of Northern Iowa Reading Clinic. Twelve slips of paper of equal size, containing the names of each of the reading series were placed in a box from which three names were drawn.

The American Readers Series (D.C. Heath, 1983) consists of 17 reading basals for grades K-8. Warming Up is the first kindergarten basal and consists of five units. Each unit contains 13 lessons with the exception of Unit 5 which contains 12 lessons. There are a total of 64 lessons in Warming Up. Each lesson is contained on one page.

The second kindergarten basal which comes after Warming Up is Reaching Out. It also contains five units: Units 2 and 4 have 26 lessons, Unit 1 has 18 lessons, Unit 3 has 14 lessons, and Unit 5 has 12 lessons. Reaching Out has a total of 96 lessons. As noted in Warming Up, each lesson in Reaching Out is on one page.

The pacing of the series in kindergarten as suggested by the teacher's manual was to complete Warming Up with its 64 individual lessons by mid-year. Reaching Out with its 96 individual lessons was to be completed by the end of the year.

The Ginn Reading Program (1982) consists of fifteen reading levels for grades K-8. The kindergarten level book is Animal Crackers. It consists of nine units of instruction. Each unit begins with a literature selection that provides a theme for the instruction in the unit. Each unit

provides instruction in seven areas: shapes and colors, visual discrimination (letter recognition), auditory discrimination (sound matching), vocabulary, comprehension, life and study skills, and extensions (telling stories, pantomiming, and dramatizing stories). No specific pacing for this series is suggested. The Level 1 book is called One Potato, Two and is the readiness level following Animal Crackers. It consists of seven units of instruction. Six of the units begin with a literature selection or language experience lesson. The final unit of the series provides a comprehensive skills review. Each unit provides instruction in the same seven categories as listed above for Animal Crackers.

The Scott, Foresman Reading Series (1981) consists of 14 reading levels for grades K-8. There are two sections in the teacher's edition called Early Learning Lessons in Hello, Sunshine. The first section, "Early Learning Lessons," has 30 lessons. Hello, Sunshine consists of 93 lessons most of which teach one page in the child's consumable book. Skills are divided into the following categories: recognizing letters, recognizing details, recognizing relationships, using context, left-to-right and top-to-bottom progression, listening skills, using numbered items, and working

independently. There also is an optional part which is included in the reading series which associates initial consonant letters with their sounds.

The pacing of the series in Kindergarten as suggested by the teacher's edition was to complete this level; Hello, Sunshine, in one year. Hello, Sunshine (which takes about one semester to complete) could be supplemented with "Early Learning Lessons" in various ways as well as with reinforcement and enrichment activities suggested at the end of Hello, Sunshine lessons.

All the examined basal reading series present readiness concepts. However, Scott, Foresman devotes early learning lessons to these readiness skills in the teacher's manual. All three series divide children's books into lessons which consist of one page. The pacing of the lessons varies among the series.

Typical Lesson in Three Kindergarten Basals

Within each of the units, modules, or levels are lessons. Lessons are compact, clearly focused plans for linking successful teaching to successful learning. It is therefore important to know what a typical lesson might look like in each of the three reading programs.

A typical lesson in Heath consists of four steps. They are as follows: prepare, teach, reteach, and

teach additional skills. Also, the objectives are listed for the lesson. Prepare means preparing the children for the page. Next, the page is taught and the pupil is guided through the lesson in careful steps. Then, the teacher reinforces the page or reteaches skills and provides practice for using the skills and extending the skills. Lastly, other related basic skills are taught.

A typical lesson in Ginn consists of four steps. These four steps are as follows in Animal Crackers: teaching, practicing, extending, and additional activities. The "teaching" section provides instruction in shapes, colors, auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension, or life and study skills. The "practice" section provides practice for the skill presented in the previous section. The "extending" activities (language, literature, creativity) all help students apply ideas and skills to materials and experiences beyond the lesson. "Additional Activities" are practical, brief suggestions for using the skills presented during formal teaching.

In One Potato, Two, the teaching section provides instruction in vocabulary, comprehension, decoding, life skills, or study skills. The four steps are as

follows: introducing the lesson, using the page, reinforcing the lesson, and extending the lesson. "Using the page" provides pupils with the opportunity to apply what they learned in the first part of the lesson. For example, life skills include listening to and following directions or identifying safety signs. In "reinforcing the lesson," activities for pupils who need extra reinforcement are planned. "Extension activities" would then follow.

A typical lesson in Scott, Foresman consists of four steps in the "Early Learning Lessons." The headings are: skill objectives, materials, introduce, and guide learning experiences. In the section called "introduce" the skills objective is introduced to the children. In Hello, Sunshine most lessons are a single page and also have four headings: skill objectives, introduce, guide learning experiences, and reinforce/enrich. Sometimes a fifth heading is listed called "further practice."

Heath's American Readers, the Ginn Reading Program, and the Scott, Foresman Reading Program are very similar in their concept of a typical lesson. They all incorporate the same four components preparing or introducing the lesson, teaching the page, reteaching

skills for extra reinforcement, and extending the skills or lesson.

Procedure for Analyzing Lessons

In this paper, three levels of comprehension were addressed: literal, interpretive, and applicative. These levels have been defined earlier in this paper.

Ruddell's classification (in Harris and Sipay, 1980) of the seven subskills of comprehension was used (See Table 1). These seven subskills were as follows: details, sequence, cause and effect, main idea, predicting outcomes, valuing, and problem solving. Every fifth lesson in each of the five basal teacher's editions was checked for the purpose of identifying and recording data to match these seven subskills. Interrater reliability was checked by having a graduate student, trained in the use of the rating scale who applied the scale to two lessons in each of the five basal series books.

In order to determine an answer to Question One, every fifth lesson in each basal was examined to identify any of the seven subskills presented in the lesson. The skills were further classified to

Table 1

Number of Comprehension Skills

Comprehension Levels

Skill Competencies	Literal	Interpretive	Applicative
1. Details			
a. Identifying			
b. Comparing			
c. Classifying			
2. Sequence			
3. Cause & Effect			
4. Main Idea			
5. Predicting Outcome			
6. Valuing			
a. Personal Judgement			
b. Character Trait Identification			
c. Author's Motive Identification			
7. Problem Solving			

determine which level of comprehension was addressed in the lesson (literal, interpretive, or applicative). Comprehension in connection with a real reading passage or picture details was counted. For example, if a poem was read and discussed, each question about the poem was classified and tallied. The same strategy applied for a story read to the children. Each question about the story was classified and tallied. If no questions were asked about a story but a discussion was to follow, the examiner gave three tally marks for discussion as generally three discussion questions followed. Also any pictures that pertained to a story were assessed and questions about the picture were classified and tallied. If in discussing picture details, a language experience story was generated from a concept, the examiner gave five tally marks as generally five sentences were generated for the language experience story. All tallies were then compiled and converted to numbers on the comprehension charts. A separate comprehension chart was compiled for each book assessed (See Appendix A).

To determine an answer to Question Two, three reading readiness series were assessed to compare the percentage of comprehension lessons in the teacher's manual to the total number of lessons. Every lesson in

all five basals was examined to see if comprehension elements were present. For each lesson that had comprehension elements, one tally mark was written.

Summary

All three basal reading series had similar readiness concepts in them, however Scott, Foresman combined some of these elements and put them into an early learning section. All three series divided children's books into lessons which consisted of one page, with the recommended pacing varied among manuals. Lastly, the method of analysis for determining the readiness comprehension skills in selected basals using Ruddell's classification of comprehension strands (Harris and Sipay, 1980) and the method for determining the frequency of presentation of these comprehension activities were detailed.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In this section, three reading readiness series were assessed to compare their comprehension strands. Specifically, the following questions were addressed: (1) What are the different types of comprehension activities in the kindergarten level basal materials? (2) What percentage of total lessons present comprehension activities? A summary of the analysis of the data is then presented.

Types of Comprehension Activities

To answer the first question about the different types of comprehension activities in kindergarten basal materials, Ruddell's classification of reading comprehension subskills (in Harris and Sipay, 1980) was used. In Ruddell's classification there are three comprehension levels: literal, interpretive, and applicative. There are also seven subskills listed for each level: details, sequence, cause and effect, main idea, predicting outcome, valuing, and problem solving. Every fifth lesson in three reading series, the American Readers (Heath), the Ginn Reading Series, and the Scott Foresman Reading Series, was analyzed. Within these three series, five basal books were

examined. They were: One Potato Two (Ginn), Animal Crackers (Ginn), Warming Up (Heath), Reaching Out (Heath), and Hello, Sunshine (Scott, Foresman) and are listed in Appendix A. These comprehension skill competencies were then tallied using Ruddell's classification (See Table 1) and converted into numerals for ease of interpretation.

First each lesson analyzed was sorted into the appropriate level of literal, interpretive, or applicative and then further categorized under the seven subskills.

Literal Level

Under the comprehension level in the skill area of details, there were three parts: identifying, comparing, and classifying details. Only two of the basals included any comparing or classifying details. They were Hello, Sunshine and Warming Up. In comparing details, Warming Up had three skills lessons and Hello, Sunshine had six skills lessons. In classifying details, Warming Up had three skills lessons and Hello, Sunshine had one skill lesson. In identifying details at the literal level, Animal Crackers had 45 detail skills lessons; One Potato Two had 89 detail skills lessons; Warming Up had 18 detail skills lessons;

Reaching Out had 33 detail skills lessons; and Hello, Sunshine had 49 detail skills lessons.

Under the literal comprehension level in the skill area of sequence, Animal Crackers had four sequence skills lessons, One Potato Two had seven sequence skills lessons, Warming Up had nine sequence skills lessons, Reaching Out, had no sequence skills lessons in the lessons analyzed. Only one basal series addressed the skill competency of cause and effect. This was the series Reaching Out. The other basals did not include any cause and effect lessons.

The skill competency, main idea, was addressed only in Warming Up and Reaching Out. The other basals did not include any main idea lessons.

The skill competency, predicting outcome, was present in four of the five basals. Animal Crackers had ten skills lessons in predicting outcomes. One Potato Two had one skill lesson in predicting outcome, Warming Up had six skills lessons in predicting outcome, Reaching Out had four skills lessons in predicting outcome, Hello, Sunshine had no skills lessons in predicting outcome. Furthermore, none of the basals examined had any skills competencies at the literal level for kindergarten on valuing or problem solving.

A total of 347 comprehension skills lessons were tallied. Eighty six percent of the skill competencies lessons tallied were at the literal level. Of those, 234, or 78 percent, of the literal level lessons were on identifying details. Of the seven skill areas at the literal level only five total skill areas were included in any of the basal lessons.

Interpretive Level

The number of comprehension skills at the interpretive level was also assessed. In identifying details at the interpretive level, Animal Crackers had five detail skills lessons, One Potato Two had thirty-one detail skills lessons, Warming Up and Reaching Out each had one detail skill lesson, and Hello, Sunshine had four detail skills lessons. None of the basals examined had any skill competencies lessons at the interpretive level on sequence, cause and effect, main idea, predicting outcome, valuing or problem solving. Forty-two lessons, or 12 percent of all comprehension lessons were at the interpretive level.

Applicative Level

Finally, the number of comprenension skills at the applicative level was assessed. Only three of the basals had applicative skills. In identifying details

at the applicative level, Animal Crackers and Warming Up each had one detail skill lesson, and Hello, Sunshine had three detail skills lessons. One Potato Two and Reaching Out had no detail skills lessons. Only five lessons, or one percent, of all 347 comprehension lessons analyzed were at the applicative level.

Percentage of Comprehension Activities

To answer the question about the percentage of total lessons containing comprehension lessons, five basal books in three reading readiness series were assessed to compare the number of comprehension lessons in the teacher's manual to the total number of lessons. Table 2 summarizes these data. For each lesson that had any of Ruddell's elements, one tally mark was written. In Animal Crackers, 18 percent of the lessons had comprehension elements in them. In One Potato Two, 44 percent of the lessons had comprehension elements in them. In Reaching Out, 16 percent of the lessons had comprehension elements in them. In Warming Up, 28 percent of the lessons had comprehension elements in them. In Hello, Sunshine, 27 percent of the lessons had comprehension elements in them.

The number of comprehension lessons in comparison to total lessons was very low in all the basals except One Potato Two. However, even in that basal, only 44 percent of the lessons had comprehension elements in them.

Table 2

A Comparison of Comprehension Lessons To Total Lessons

	Total Lessons	Comp. Lessons	% of Comp.
Animal Crackers	117	21	18%
One Potato Two	87	38	44%
Reaching Out	96	15	16%
Warming Up	64	18	28%
Hello Sunshine	126	31	27%

Interrater reliability was checked by having a graduate student, trained in the use of the rating scale, apply the scale to two lessons in each of the five basal series books. Eighty-six percent iterrater reliability was attained when applying the rating scale. Points of disagreement were resolved through discussion.

Summary

The overwhelming majority of comprehension lessons in five kindergarten basals required students to identify details at the literal level. Few examples of interpretive and applicative levels of comprehension existed in the kindergarten basals examined. Two books did not include any applicative level skills. Eighty-six percent of the tallies were at the literal level. Forty-two lessons, or twelve percent of all comprehension lessons were at the interpretive level. Only one percent of all 347 comprehension lessons analyzed was at the applicative level. Also, the percentage of lessons with comprehension elements in five reading readiness basal books ranged from 16% to 44% of the total number of lessons.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations for further research. All generalizations based on this study should be considered within the limitations of this study listed in Chapter 1.

Summary

In this paper, the comprehension strands found in three Kindergarten level basal reading materials were computed by examining every fifth lesson in each of five Kindergarten basals to note types of comprehension lessons. Additionally, the percentage of all the lessons in the five basal books which had comprehension elements was computed.

The results of the tally sheets for the five basals indicated that literal level comprehension of identifying details was stressed at the Kindergarten level and other comprehension skills and levels were markedly fewer. Eighty-six percent of the skill competencies were at the literal level. Few examples of interpretive and applicative comprehension levels existed in the Kindergarten basals examined. Of the

basals assessed only 16-44% of the lessons included comprehension elements.

Discussion of Findings

Numerous educators have indicated that kindergarten children can handle the three comprehension levels (Cunningham, 1975; Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, & Moore, 1983; Durkin, 1978; Gillet & Temple, 1982; Palardy, 1984; Spiegel, 1983). The basals examined in this study did not reflect this theory.

One possible explanation for the emphasis on literal level questions is that authors of basals feel the children can only handle questions at a lower cognitive level. A second possible reason for keeping questions at the literal level is that the authors had not used a skills checklist to come up with a balance of comprehension skills at each of the different levels. A final explanation for not including more comprehension elements in kindergarten level basals might be that the authors had used a comprehension skills checklist but had consciously chosen to focus on comprehension at the literal level in kindergarten. The authors of the basals included focused on comprehension elements in 16-44% of the lessons. They

may have felt the need to build other skills at the kindergarten level such as letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, color matching, and following directions rather than developing comprehension skills.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study sought to examine the types of comprehension activities found in kindergarten level basal materials and what percentage of total lessons presented lessons with comprehension activities. Although comprehension activities were presented in the examined kindergarten level materials, a different sampling of basal materials is needed. Findings might be altered if a different number of lessons were analyzed for comprehension elements. Additionally, findings might change if other basal materials were examined. Since some experts believe that all three comprehension levels should be taught at the kindergarten level, a number of research questions need to be addressed. Are kindergarten children able to process information at all three comprehension levels? In addition, can they benefit from instruction in these comprehension levels at the kindergarten level? Also, will children benefit in later school years from

comprehension instruction at the kindergarten level? Kindergarten basals and first grade basals need to be compared to determine if kindergarten basals actually do present skills designed to prepare children for first grade reading instruction by presenting the same balance of skills as are in the first grade basals.

A good deal of further research is needed at the kindergarten level to replicate and validate the findings of this study and expand its scope. There are few studies that have researched the area of comprehension instruction in basal materials especially at the kindergarten level. Therefore, more research in the area of comprehension instruction in kindergarten basal materials is needed.

Appendix A

Table 1

GINN READING PROGRAM

Animal Crackers

Number of Comprehension Skills

Comprehension Levels

Skill Competencies	Literal	Interpretive	Applicative
1. Details			
a. Identifying	45	5	1
b. Comparing			
c. Classifying			
2. Sequence	4		
3. Cause & Effect			
4. Main Idea			
5. Predicting Outcome	10		
6. Valuing			
a. Personal Judgement			
b. Character Trait Identification			
c. Author's Motive Identification			
7. Problem Solving			

Appendix A

Table 2

GINN READING PROGRAM

One Potato Two

Number of Comprehension Skills

Comprehension Levels

Skill Competencies	Literal	Interpretive	Applicative
1. Details			
a. Identifying	89	31	
b. Comparing			
c. Classifying			
2. Sequence	7		
3. Cause & Effect			
4. Main Idea			
5. Predicting Outcome	1		
6. Valuing			
a. Personal Judgement			
b. Character Trait Identification			
c. Author's Motive Identification			
7. Problem Solving			

Appendix A

Table 3

HEATH AMERICAN READERS

Warming Up

Number of Comprehension Skills

Comprehension Levels

Skill Competencies	Literal	Interpretive	Applicative
1. Details			
a. Identifying	18	1	1
b. Comparing	3		
c. Classifying	3		
2. Sequence	9		
3. Cause & Effect			
4. Main Idea	3		
5. Predicting Outcome	6		
6. Valuing			
a. Personal Judgement			
b. Character Trait Identification			
c. Author's Motive Identification			
7. Problem Solving			

Appendix A

Table 4

HEATH AMERICAN READERS

Reaching Out

Number of Comprehension Skills

Comprehension Levels

Skill Competencies	Literal	Interpretive	Applicative
1. Details			
a. Identifying	33	1	
b. Comparing			
c. Classifying			
2. Sequence			
3. Cause & Effect	4		
4. Main Idea	5		
5. Predicting Outcome	4		
6. Valuing			
a. Personal Judgement			
b. Character Trait Identification			
c. Author's Motive Identification			
7. Problem Solving			

Appendix A

Table 5

SCOTT, FORESMAN READING

Hello, Sunshine

Number of Comprehension Skills

Comprehension Levels

Skill Competencies	Literal	Interpretive	Applicative
1. Details			
a. Identifying	49	4	3
b. Comparing	6		
c. Classifying	1		
2. Sequence			
3. Cause & Effect			
4. Main Idea			
5. Predicting Outcome			
6. Valuing			
a. Personal Judgement			
b. Character Trait Identification			
c. Author's Motive Identification			
7. Problem Solving			

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