

VISIBLE LANGUAGE

The quarterly concerned with all that is involved in our being literate

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LITERACY AND COMPETENCY

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at Harvard Graduate School of Education*

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LITERACY AND COMPETENCY

The proceedings of a conference hosted by the Reading Laboratory at Harvard Graduate School of Education

This issue of *Visible Language* presents the edited proceedings of the Conference on Literacy and Competency which was planned to stimulate a broad discussion of views surrounding the relationship between being literate and being competent. The three distinguished guest speakers discussed concerns of particular interest to them and suggested ways in which educators might respond to those concerns and to the more general concern over the decline in verbal competence in schools and society. The discussions that followed each presentation are included in this volume as well as the welcoming remarks to conferees given by Paul Ylvisaker, Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Several themes emerged from the papers and ensuing discussions. Each of these themes was developed in the context of viewing literacy as writing, reading, and oral language competence. Richard Venezky focussed on the content of basal reading programs in particular, and discussion of *content* as a general theme emerged in later discussions. The theme of *motivation* was introduced with respect to adult literacy programs by Carman St. John Hunter and it, too, was discussed within a wider context. Different perspectives on the theme of *comprehension* (or intended meaning) emerged from the presentations of David Olson and Richard Venezky. Whereas Professor Venezky looked at the teaching of comprehension in an historical perspective, Professor Olson tackled the relationship between "what is said" (print or speech) and "what is meant."

Conferees reaffirmed that the successful development of literacy programs involve (as do other learning tasks) the materials used in instruction, the motivations of the learner, the prior knowledge of the learners, and the inter-relatedness of these factors. And, particular attention was given to the educational, political, and social context in which instruction occurred. Without presuming to encapsulate the dominant issues, my own views are imposed on those of the participants in suggesting that it is a sense of the importance of the inter-relatedness of these factors that is often missing as literacy programs are developed for all age groups. In many instances, educators/publishers design program content that they feel will motivate

students, will promote enjoyment, and thus foster more reading. But such content, Venezky argued, is very often incongruent with what students need in order to cope with the subject matter of schooling and what adults need in order to cope with the world. The breadth of content necessary to develop a general skill in reading remains open to question as does the issue of whether that general skill will transfer to the varied situations confronting the scholar or the citizen in today's world.

Olson suggested that the ability to know what is said (to decode sentences) and the ability to understand what is meant (to comprehend) might be enhanced by mastery of the concepts of "say" and "mean" (and other intentional predicates) while the ability to relate what is said to what is meant might be enhanced by practice in creating or imagining "possible worlds." It would appear, then, that if learners were given variety in their content of instruction, varied language structures and intended meanings, and that if they participated in relevant discussions of the authors' intended meanings, literacy and competence would develop in a spiral fashion. Material to be mastered (understood) would then include world literature, texts in science and social studies, math stories/problems, instructions, news items, etc., and such content would be motivating for aesthetic and practical reasons.

Motivation for illiterate adults, Carman St. John-Hunter posited, should be strengthened by an understanding of how reading competence can provide the learners with a sense of personal power over some of the conditions that affect their lives. Again, the recognition of a more direct relationship of motivation and content might be expedient for changing people's perceptions of themselves as well as for achieving literacy.

These brief introductory remarks are my own view of some dominant issues. Many others will emerge as you read the papers and discussions. The conference produced no all-encompassing answers to the literacy problem, nor was it expected to, but we hope that it did offer some further insights that might be shared with educators, administrators, publishers, and policy makers, insights that will help us to move toward a more literate society.

We are immensely grateful to each of the participants of this conference, to Carl H. Pfortzheimer, Jr., whose support to the Reading Laboratory enabled us to host the conference, to Jeanne Chall, Director of the Reading Laboratory at HGSE, to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and to the committee members, especially Mary Leslie, Susan Robinson, and Beth Warren.

Helen M. Popp

INTRODUCTIONS

We do welcome you in the sense of bringing a new charge to us, of regenerating, challenging us, in the work that we are trying to do here. I am excited about the topic. It goes to the core of things these days.

Not long ago I became intrigued with the number of languages that Americans must be able to live with — if not totally understand — in order to be confident as citizens. I discovered there are thirty-six languages spoken by the parents of school children in Cambridge; seventy in Arlington, Va.; forty-five in Colorado Springs; eighty-two in Los Angeles; eighty-seven in Chicago. But it isn't simply different languages, it's the art of communicating and being competent in the diverse levels of American speech that is important. What we do each day is to absorb, penetrate through such media as television and our literature, penetrate different dialects, cultures, different levels all the way through street language to the advanced specialties in technology. It is a skill that an American child must be able to acquire in order to be competent in our day. I would not even guess the number of sublanguages we have to master in our daily lives, but it should include the body language that goes with each of our different cultures. When we teach literacy, clearly we are into a multi-faceted business, one of extreme complexity. I personally await the challenge that you will give us today in thinking through the art of making people literate.

Paul Ylvisaker

We will be thinking about literacy and about competence in a broad sense. We are dealing with the uses of literacy, and my own concern is with the way language and the experiences and life of our schools is being fragmented in so many ways. Our curriculum ought to be involved with writing, speaking, and talking as holistic activities. To have a proper sense of how to write, you need a sense of the relationship between audience and writer. To talk well most of us, certainly to start with, need a kind of social context. Particularly in the schools, those of us who are trying to help our students to write and to talk and to read and to listen are running against heavy trends in the culture; trends that drown out the human voice, that deny people face-to-face audiences. In many ways the culture itself encourages a kind of passivity in people which is very much the enemy of live writing and live speech and alert reading. People need to communicate properly, but as teachers we are fighting for spaces to make audiences—to make listeners, to make readers. We are fighting for the essential dialogue on which language rests. My own prediction is that the most useful things you will get out of the papers which follow are, first, a kind of historical perspective generally missing from the field of reading and from education in general, and second, a better understanding of the social and racial context in which writing and talking go on.

Jay Featherstone

The Origins of the Present-day Chasm between Adult Literacy Needs and School Literacy Instruction

Richard L. Venezky

Through processes that originated in the eighteenth century — but were greatly accelerated by Brahmin academics at the end of the nineteenth — a separation has developed between literacy instruction in the schools and the literacy needs of the competent citizen. Formal reading instruction today is primarily oriented toward understanding and appreciation of fine literature. Non-fiction materials are treated as unpleasant and boorish intruders into the otherwise serene, romantic kingdom of plot, character, and author's viewpoint. A single impotent stratagem centering on rapid skimming with rereading is usually suggested for all non-fiction, be it math story problem, cooking recipe, or biological exposition. The result of this disparity, as revealed by the more valid components of various national literacy surveys, is the ever apparent chasm between competency needs and literacy instruction, a chasm that can be crossed only through a reorientation of literacy training toward the true needs of society.

Sigmund Freud at the age of 81, in commenting on psychoanalysis, touched on one of the great truths about education. Freud wrote in a small text called *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937) the following: "It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those 'impossible' professions in which one can be sure before-hand of achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government."¹ Throughout the history of education in the United States the public has more often than not been dissatisfied with what the schools were doing. No matter how the schools behaved, the public (or some highly vocal subset thereof) wanted something different. Literacy instruction, as the central focus of primary education, has been the most visible target of the school's critics. The level of literacy attainment in the general population has been a public concern since the earliest settlement of North America, yet it is an issue that differs from many other problems faced by educators today in that it is, to a large degree, solvable. And it is solvable by means other than revolution, dismantling of the current schooling system, or other cataclysmic events.

What I will argue here is, first, that there exists a large chasm between adult literacy needs — as assayed by the literacy demands of work, citizenship, and recreation — and the literacy instruction of the schools. In particular, I will argue that while the literacy needs of the adult center primarily on obtaining information from non-fictional texts, literacy instruction in the schools concentrates almost exclusively on fictional texts and literary appreciation. Second, I will demonstrate that the origins of this chasm can be found in the socialization of schooling which has proceeded for over 300 years in America, and that this socialization has often worked against achieving higher reading ability. Finally, I will present a plan for making literacy instruction more congruent with the literacy needs of society. This argument for the prosecution is divided into four sections, each starting with the letter C. The first will deal with the *chasm*, the second with *comprehension*, the third with *content* (meaning content of readers), and the last with *conclusions*.

Chasm

First, what is a chasm? The term was first used in print in English around 1619 in the phrase: “that gaping casma and insatiable gulf of the souls appetite.”² Thomas Huxley, the biologist, wrote in 1878: “the Colorado River flows at the bottom of a profound chasm.” And Samuel Coleridge in “Kubla Khan” said “But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted / Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover.” None of these usages, however, comes as close to how I intend the term here as what Walpole wrote in the eighteenth century: “The fables with which our own writers have replenished the chasms in our history.” What I mean by a chasm in this context is simply a big, yawning hollow that exists between the form of literacy that is promulgated by the schools under the curricular title of reading instruction, and what adults need to survive as good citizens, as productive contributors to the national good, as realizers of their own potentials.

What are these skills, abilities, or competencies that adults need? If we examine what a school child must do, we see that by sixth grade more than 75% of what the child must read within the school is not the fiction that is the main substance of school based literacy programs, but rather non-narrative and nonfictional materials. By the middle grades the child must be able to gain meaning from a science text, a social studies text, a math text, and a variety of other informational materials that begin to approximate the very materials that the average adult must cope with in what we call adult life. By senior high school perhaps as much as 90% of the student’s

required reading, including those out-of-school materials necessary for success at the secondary level, are non-fiction.

But we can go further and ask, What do adults read? Part of the answer to this comes from a survey, done in the middle 1960s by the Michigan Urban Center.³ About 2000 adults were asked to keep a diary of what they did for an entire day. The results showed that approximately five minutes per day were spent reading books, and of these books perhaps less than 15% were fiction. Similar results, although with different subject populations, have been found in studies done at Educational Testing Service and elsewhere (Sharon, 1972; Heath, 1980). Although book sales continue to increase, the materials that are showing the highest acceleration are trade magazines and textbooks; that is, non-fiction materials that deal with either how to do something better (which is a current mania of American adulthood) or with job-related topics.

Why, though, a concern for the types of texts that adults read, or that schools use in reading instruction? The critical evidence for the chasm argument is not simply the weighting of genres, but rather the analysis of competency skills required for obtaining meaning from different types of materials. What adults read is heavily laden with graphs and charts, with compound and complex sentences, with quantifiers and qualifiers, and with logical conditionals such as *if—then*, *while*, *until*, and *whenever*. The competencies required to obtain information from IRS forms, from automobile warranties, from operating guides for microwave ovens, and from the telephone book frontmatter are of a different ilk from the literary skills which dominate present-day reading instruction. Following the story line in the *Three Little Pigs* or understanding Hester Prynne's conflict between social tradition and personal freedom are representative of the comprehension skills stressed in the schools today. That these skills are desirable outcomes of schooling is not argued; however, these skills seldom lead to the abilities required for understanding most non-fiction materials.

Finding the main idea of a short story has marginal application to understanding science descriptions where no single main idea exists; building character descriptions has little application to comprehending math story problems where the characters, if they exist, are usually irrelevant to the problem solutions; and predicting outcomes of fictional tales has no application to reading charts and graphs. Yet finding the main idea of a story, building character descriptions, and predicting story outcomes are the most important components of literacy instruction today. Although there is an occasional acknowledgment within the basal programs of the

existence of non-fictional texts, these sops toward content-area reading are generally brief, bland, and without serious emphasis.

An examination of the two leading basal reading programs used in the schools today reveals that more than 90% of their reading selections, based on page counts, are fiction. The remainder, which consists of highly sanitized and abbreviated excerpts, is treated as a boorish intrusion into the otherwise serene and romantic kingdom of plot, character, and author's viewpoint. What little is offered for comprehending these encroachments on fine writing is generally assigned rather than taught. No group activities here, no round-robin reading, no "creative extensions." Just take the bitter pill quickly and get on with the sunnier side of life.

It is important to note at this point that the competencies not being taught adequately in the literacy programs are complex skills that are seldom obtained easily by school children outside of school. Warranties (even the simplified ones), science articles, and microwave oven instructions require an ability to make inferences, untangle conditional statements, and restructure densely packed information, the very skills which the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress survey showed students were doing more and more poorly.⁴ These are also the skills that the Louis Harris and Associates survey showed millions of adults were lacking.⁵

The consequences of this chasm between school instruction and adult literacy needs can be seen in examples outside of literacy surveys. One such outcome is Caterpillar Fundamental English, a reduced form of English that Caterpillar Tractor Company now uses to write its operating and repair manuals.⁶ This modern day equivalent to Ogden and Richards *Basic English* utilizes a lexicon of approximately 800 words, with an accompanying dictionary that gives a single meaning to each word, and a writer's guide that defines usable sentence types and other stylistic simplifications. Although the original motivation for this *patois* was derived largely from the limited command of English among employees and customers in Caterpillar's foreign subsidiaries, its continual use in this country and the licensing of about 30 other U. S. firms to adapt the system to their own needs is based in part on the less than adequate ability among domestic workers to read technical materials.⁷

Similarly, the U.S. military has started to abandon its program for providing general literacy ability to recruits who enlist with inadequate reading skills. Instead, the military is moving toward occupational literacy, wherein one learns only the literacy skills required for an assigned military occupational specialty.⁸

These facts contrast rather starkly with the sophistry of a small group of "literacy loyalist" who roam the country extolling the virtues of modern schooling and exclaiming to wedding guests, congressmen, and housewives how well the schools are doing in teaching reading. The evidence they invoke is usually some small gain in reading ability over the last 40 years or so for a particular grade in one county or another, usually in the Midwest. The issue, unfortunately, is not where we are today compared to forty years ago or compared to the Minutemen or to the heralds in Charlemagne's court, but rather, where we are today in relation to today's needs. The needs today for literacy are very different from the needs of 1940, or of 1776 or of 800. And the evidence we have indicates a less than satisfactory situation.

In summary, the chasm story is quite simple. Adults need a certain set of literacy skills for success in everyday life: for work, for citizenship, and for recreation. The schools are teaching something else, and this something else isn't leading to what adults need. Reading tests that tap only the elementary level reading skills give the misleading impression that literacy programs are succeeding, but assessments of high school level students and of adults indicate otherwise, as do the literacy-related policies of the industrial employers and of the military. In even simpler terms, the schools are not stressing reading, but literary appreciation. This is why the chasm exists. What remains to be explained is how this state of incongruence came to be and what can be done about it.

Comprehension

If a chasm exists, where did it come from? One hypothesis is that it derives from sloth, avarice, greed, and ignorance on the part of teachers, administrators, publishers, and professors of education. In this there is probably an element of truth, but not enough to account for the enormous yawning hollow that now exists between adult abilities and school instruction. Another hypothesis and one that fits more into the current trends of educational history attributes this problem to a conspiracy by the rich to deny opportunities for advancement to the working class, the poor, and the minorities. With sufficient struggling, one could rally some evidence for this hypothesis also, but in general the rich as a group have throughout the history of American education been singularly unsuccessful at consistently promoting anything outside of hemophilia.

The third hypothesis and the one I will marshal support for here is that throughout the history of education in this country the public school has been a particularly weak and vulnerable institution, continually dominated

by the more general attitudes and beliefs of society, rather than being in charge of its own affairs. Literacy instruction in particular, because it is the dominant concern of the primary school, has been heavily influenced by this socialization of schooling, and in ways that have led to the current situation. In other words, literacy instruction has suffered from being other directed rather than inner directed. The need of society to transmit its beliefs, its myths, and its rituals to the young has in each generation dominated the content and methodology of literacy instruction. In the past 100 years this condition has blocked the ability of schools to focus on teaching text comprehension, primarily because the social need to stress cultural refinement has led to an emphasis on "good" literature in literacy programs, almost to the total exclusion of non-fictional texts. To understand this, however, one must follow the various stages that comprehension instruction has progressed through, from the early colonial period, through the nineteenth century awakening, the rise of industrial society, the progressive era, and into modern times where true comprehension instruction might have emerged, but was stultified by behavioral psychology.

When public schooling began in this country in the 1640s, the dominant view of the child was derived strictly from theology. The child was considered to be sin prone, hostile to learning, and incapable of understanding. Children were treated as miniature but deficient adults, to be dressed as adults and given toys that made obvious to them what the adult world looked like.⁹ From this world view or *kinderanschauung*, rote learning with stiff doses of discipline were natural derivatives, with almost no emphasis on meaning. Reading was not taught for general literacy, but for personal salvation. Each Calvinist was to read and interpret the Bible by himself.

When Noah Webster published his first speller in 1783 (which was roughly 31 years after Benjamin Franklin almost killed himself with his kite experiment and just two years after Mozart's death, the theological view of the child was still popular. But by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as America evolved into a more secular state and as the European enlightenment began to infiltrate across the Atlantic, a philosophically based *kinderanschauung* began to dominate education. Now the child was seen no longer in terms of original sin, but as a developing individual with natural child-interests and limited but developing learning capacity. Rousseau, as operationalized by Pestalozzi, formed the basis for this educational reform, which Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and others fostered in the middle 1800s. Nevertheless, the conditions of schooling and the continued emphasis on oral reading still militated against a strong concern for teaching reading comprehension.

When independence was declared in this country, approximately 2% of the population lived in urban areas. By 1800 this figure had risen to 3.3% and by 1860 to only 16%. Therefore, schooling for most children in the eighteenth and the larger part of the nineteenth century meant the onerous, rural schoolhouse, an institution that was seldom recalled romantically or charitably. Clifton Johnson, who attended a rural New England school in the late 1860s, claimed: "Notable men have come from 'the little red schoolhouses,' but this was because of their own native energy and thrifty acquisitiveness, and was not due to any superlative virtues of the schools themselves."¹⁰

On the quality of instruction in the rural schoolhouse, the Reverend Warren Burton wrote in 1833: "Few of the better methods of teaching . . . had then found their way out of, or into, the brain of the pedagogical profession."¹¹

Abraham Lincoln, who attended rural schools on the frontiers of Kentucky and Indiana in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was even less charitable than Burton in describing his school masters: "No qualification was ever required beyond readin', writin', and cypherin' to the Rule of Three: If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard."¹²

In summing up the rural school of the late 1820s, Maxine Green writes: "The typical district 'school' was no better than a charity school. Delapidated in appearance, inept and shiftless in the service it rendered, it remained open for about two months each year."¹³

The autobiographies of people like John Muir and Abraham Lincoln provide further testimony not only on the conditions of the rural schoolhouse, but also on the limited amount of time that children spent in school. (Yet somehow both Muir and Lincoln, and many of their contemporaries, became competent adults, able to read and comprehend both non-fiction and fiction.)

But the factor that most inhibited attention to comprehension until the early part of this century was an emphasis on oral reading. From the origins of literacy through classical antiquity and into the middle ages and the Renaissance, silent reading was apparently unusual.¹⁴ There is, for example, the well known story of St. Augustine being startled by the sight of St. Ambrose reading without moving his lips. Roman laws from the second and third centuries required that one maintain a particular distance from the nearest hearer while reading state documents. And the Benedictine reforms of the ninth and tenth centuries attended to the problem of exces-

sive noise which resulted from 'private' reading. Until perhaps the time of Chaucer, silent reading was not common even for adults. For schooling, however, oral reading continued to be stressed until the beginning of the twentieth century. James Wickersham, a lecturer and principal of the Pennsylvania State Normal School and later superintendent of the Pennsylvania common schools, wrote at the end of the Civil War: "Reading, as a branch of instruction, is the art of giving proper oral expression to written or printed composition . . . Skill in Reading may be desired for the purpose of understanding written or printed language, and without any intention of reading for the benefit of others, but it is evident that a teacher can only judge of such skill by an oral exhibition of it."¹⁵

The opening statement in *McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader* leaves no doubt about the purpose of reading in the nineteenth century. "The great object to be accomplished in reading as a rhetorical exercise is to convey to the hearer, fully and clearly, the ideas and feelings of the writer."¹⁶

Stress on oral reading resulted from several factors. First, the literacy rate in the country outside of the Northeast was low. Therefore, training for reading aloud to illiterate family members and friends was a necessity. Then, the low level of daily school attendance and the short period in which people stayed in school probably provided insufficient exposure to print to build up fluent silent reading ability. (This changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in the progressive era in American education, when enforcement of compulsory attendance laws was started in earnest. Thus, while the average child in 1870 spent less than 45 days in school, by 1918 the average child was spending much more than twice that amount of time.)

With the rise of major metropolitan centers and increased industrialization and bureaucracy, schooling became more organized and more complex, and school districts with large administrative staffs came into being. School buildings grew larger, classes were age-graded, and the school staff divided into teachers, principals, and eventually subject-matter specialists. Having students for more days per year and more years on the average than ever before created the opportunity for teaching reading skills beyond oral enunciation. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century when the need for teaching silent reading was becoming obvious to the more enlightened educators, no generally accepted procedures existed for evaluating silent reading. But the solution to this problem was already underway.

Beginning in Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig in the late 1870s, experimental psychologists began empirical investigations of human physical and mental abilities. Spurred by the Darwinian emphasis on variability of human

traits, Cattell, Galton, and others turned these procedures to the development of tests for various physical and mental abilities. This pursuit merged with the early I. Q. work of Binet and Henri to produce in the United States standardized tests for achievement in school subjects. The first published school test was Thorndike's handwriting scale (1910), but math and oral reading tests followed within a few years. By 1915 standardized silent reading tests were available and were quickly employed at the school and district level.

All the props were in place now for the appearance of strong comprehension instruction. Unfortunately, at this same time the dominant psychology in America shifted to behaviorism and the emerging cognitive base for comprehension instruction failed to receive significant attention again until the 1950s. Where previously psychologists were concerned about the stages through which information passed in perception and recognition, and the ways in which ideas were retained in memory after reading or listening, the new psychology was interested only in stimulus and response. "Any problem of education," Thorndike wrote in 1914, "may be put in the forms: — 'Given a certain desired change in a man, what situation shall we create to produce it, either directly or by the response which it provokes from him?'"¹⁷ The central nervous system, the behaviorist were willing to admit, existed but had no practical relevance whatsoever for psychology. What went on within the head could not be observed, therefore one should learn to manipulate the environment, and thereby induce through the laws of association and contiguity the various behaviors that were desired.

What behavioral psychology produced was a lack of concern among psychologists and therefore among school people for the mental processes which characterized comprehension. For example, Woodworth's text on experimental psychology, which was the backbone of experimental psychology courses in this country from its first edition in 1938 until fairly recently, contains a long and well developed chapter on research on reading.¹⁸ A large number of topics are covered in that chapter, ranging from the history of writing to word recognition, but never once is the word "comprehension" mentioned nor is a single study on comprehension reviewed. In the revision of the text in 1954, the reading material is expanded, but distributed across chapters.¹⁹ Again, comprehension is not mentioned. The *Seventeenth Yearbook of the National Elementary Principal*, issued in 1938, contains a lengthy section on newer practices in reading in the elementary school — with chapters on readiness, beginning instruction, cultivating appreciation and good taste in reading, and other topics — but not a single discussion of

comprehension. And in Anderson and Dearborn's 1952 text on the psychology and pedagogy of reading, there are chapters on readiness, on beginning reading, on word perception, and on teaching methods, but no chapter on comprehension.²⁰ The word "comprehension" is mentioned here and there, but mainly in reference to comprehension tests. This situation in the middle 1930s was summarized succinctly in a text on the psychology of elementary school subjects: "As a psychological process little is known about comprehension."²¹

It is remarkable that at a time when psychology was accepted fully within the school, and when psychologists and educators agreed that understanding was the most important goal of teaching reading, hardly a word is ever mentioned about comprehension. This situation does not begin to change until the revival of cognitive psychology in the 1950s, but only now in the 1980s do we see the beginnings of a psychological base for teaching comprehension, particularly in studies on memory structure and learning strategies.

Linguistics has been no more help than psychology up to the present time in building a scientific base for teaching comprehension. The origins of modern linguistics in this country, through Sapir and Bloomfield, had within it almost no concern for meaning. Meaning was viewed as a part of language, but something to be left until most of the other problems were resolved. Even the early transformational grammars left meaning as an adjunct, to be added somewhere after the base structure was generated. But this situation also has changed. Linguists are now interested in the analysis of texts, among other topics in semantics, semiotics, and pragmatics.

In summary, the teaching of comprehension was not a concern in the early days of reading instruction because the primary emphasis in the classroom was on oral reading, children spent too little time in school to become proficient silent readers, and the prevailing beliefs in the early years of American education about children's abilities were such that understanding was not emphasized in instruction. With the educational enlightenment of the nineteenth century, education became more meaning centered, but oral reading still dominated. At the beginning of the twentieth century emphasis in reading instruction began to turn to comprehension, but the advent of behaviorism retarded the psychological study of comprehension processes until the 1950s.

Content

In general, the content of school readers over the last 300 years has been viewed in each generation as the essence of elementary education. Every culture attempts to perpetuate itself by teaching to its children its myths, its rituals, and its social fantasies. In this way the children are to faithfully join the culture and continue it for another generation. In Biblical times parents were commanded to learn the customs and “to teach them diligently unto thy children.” In Colonial America, when personal salvation was a major concern, the content of the readers was strictly religious: the Bible and the catechism. After independence, the content of the readers began to reflect a concern for patriotism and for morality. As we moved into industrialization in the middle of the nineteenth century, the content of the readers reflected a desire to produce the compliant worker who would march off at sun-up to the factory, labor through the day until the sun went down, and accept whatever reward the captains of industry might bestow upon him.

The content of readers at this time also reflected the conflicts within Protestant America between morality and materialism. By the end of the 1800s the rich were portrayed as having exceptional character, giving rewards to others for their efforts. Virtue no longer had much meaning by itself; it was performance that was rewarded in society. Parallel to the development of the industrial paragon, battles raged over the inclusion of nursery rhymes and fiction in readers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century various Sunday School movements opposed the inclusion of fiction in readers because they felt that God had revealed his plan in only one way and to allow children to divert their attention from the reality of the life they were to face was somehow to move them closer to the clutches of the great Satan. Nevertheless, an indigenous literature arose in this country by the middle of the nineteenth century and began to appear almost immediately in children’s readers, although carefully selected to reflect those values that society felt it stood for.

Soon literature began to dominate the school readers, replacing the homilies, nature essays, and Bible excerpts that characterized the *McGuffey Readers* and other reading materials of the previous generation. At the end of the nineteenth century Charles Elliott, Nicholas Butler Murray, William T. Harris, and others who were active in the National Education Association and the Committee of Fifteen pressed the schools to teach reading from good literature. Elliott himself called the content of readers at that time “ineffable trash.”²² What grew out of this period has remained until now as the dominant emphasis in the content of readers.

In summary, the content of school readers has reflected throughout the history of this country the images and aspirations of the social majority. From the religious themes of the New England Calvinists, to the morality and patriotism of the post revolutionary period, to the business ethic of the last century, and the cultural refinement of this century, children have been shown in their school readers what their elders want them to believe are the noblest aspirations of the American citizen. The modern view, perhaps by neglect, is that school readers should demonstrate good literary tastes; hence, little non-fiction in the reading programs.²³

Conclusions

We have arrived at our present chasm between literacy instruction and literacy needs by way of two seemingly unrelated paths. One path stretches from a time when we didn't need to teach comprehension to the present time when we desperately need to teach it. The other path stretches from Bible and catechism selections to modern eclectic fiction. Until recently no psychological base existed for building a rational comprehension instruction. However, even in the 1920s practical techniques were available for teaching comprehension of content area materials. For example, a committee appointed by the National Society for the Study of Education described in 1925 pedagogical approaches for teaching elementary and secondary students how to read math story problems, social studies texts, and a variety of other non-fictional materials.²⁴ A clear distinction was drawn between recreational reading (i.e., fiction) and what the authors called work-type reading. Metacognition played a major role in the committee's recommendations as did the reduction of complex tasks to sequences of simpler subtasks.

The skills required for reading graphs and charts, for deriving time lines, and for diagramming math story problems (among others) are as complex and as sophisticated as those required for deciding on main idea and characterization, yet somehow the former set, because they apply primarily to utilitarian materials, have been relegated to a low status in the school curriculum while the latter, since they involve the student in "high" literature, have been elevated far beyond their importance. Tools and techniques are available for teaching the study of non-fictional texts. What is lacking is a willingness on the part of the schools to provide an honored place for non-fiction in the literacy program.

There is no rational defense for reading programs that avoid math story problems, science texts, social studies texts, and the full range of other materials that reflect the reading tasks faced by school students and adults. There is no longer an excuse for schools to perseverate on the niceties of narrative plot, characterization, and author's point of view. Literature should definitely remain in the curriculum, but it should have its place like science, math, social studies, and the other required subjects. Schools must and can teach those literacy skills that adults desperately need to survive in society.

Clarence Darrow, in his summary for the jury in the Leopold and Loeb case, cited the following verse from Omar Khayyam, which seems appropriate for ending here.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Pity nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

The past is behind us. As a famous comedian once said, "The future lies ahead." The challenge now is to select the best methods for teaching nonfiction, non-narrative comprehension, and to teach these methods diligently unto our teachers.

1. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, XXIII. Translated from the German under the general editorship of James Stachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1974.
2. The citations that follow are quoted from the *Oxford English dictionary*, s.v. *chasm*, except for Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," which is quoted from Charles W. Eliot (Ed.), *The Harvard classics*, XLI. New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1910, p. 702.
3. John Robinson. *How Americans use time*. New York: Praeger Press, 1977.
4. National Assessment of Educational Progress. *Three national assessments of reading: Changes in performance, 1970-1980*. Report No. 11-R-1. Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado, 1981.
5. The Harris survey (Louis Harris and Associates, *Survival literacy: conducted for the National Reading Council*. New York: Louis Harris and Associates, 1970) attempted to assess survival literacy skills as defined by the abilities required to complete various types of application forms (e.g., driver's license, social security benefits). Five forms were used, of which one (Application for Medicaid) had a disproportionately high failure rate. However, even when responses to this form are removed, 7.25 percent of the total adult population of the USA is estimated to be marginally literate at best.
6. C. A. Verbeke. Catepillar Fundamental English. *Training and Development Journal*, Febr., 1973 (unpaginated reprint, American Society for Training and Development).
7. Private communication.
8. See John S. Caylor, Ongoing R. & D. in Army literacy training. (In Thomas G. Sticht and Diane W. Zapf (Eds.), *Reading and readability research in the Armed Services*. Human Resources Research Organization, Alexandria, Virginia, 1976.)
9. Bernard Wishy. *The child and the republic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968.
10. Clifton Johnson. *Old-time schools and school-books*. New York: Dover, 1963, p. 134. [First published by Macmillan in 1904.]
11. Warren Burton. *The district school as it was*. Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1897, p. 9. [First published in 1833.]
12. Cited in C. Johnson, *Old-time schools*, p. 129.
13. Maxine Greene. *The public school and the private vision*. New York: Random House, 1965, p. 13.
14. G. L. Hendrickson. Ancient reading. *Classical Journal*, 1929-30, XXV, 182-196.
15. James Pyle Wickersham. *Methods of instruction*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1865, p. 208.
16. *McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader*, 1879 edition [Reissued with a foreword by Henry Steele Commager. New York: Signet Classics, 1962.]
17. Edward Lee Thorndike. *Education, a first book*. New York: Macmillan, 1914.
18. Robert W. Woodworth. *Experimental psychology*. New York: Henry Holt, 1938.
19. Robert S. Woodworth and Harold Schlosberg. *Experimental psychology*, revised edition. New York: Henry Holt, 1954.

20. Irving H. Anderson and Walter F. Dearborn. *The psychology of teaching reading*. New York: Ronald Press, 1952.
21. Luella Cole. *Psychology of the elementary school subjects*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1934, p. 34.
22. Charles W. Eliot. *Educational reform*. New York: Century, 1898 [Reissued by Arno Press, 1969.]
23. The argument here is not against the teaching of a cultural view, but against the limited content of school readers. On the obligation of the school to teach cultural values, there is little argument. The United States Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Board of Education* (347 U. S. 483, 1954), stated: "Today it [education] is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment" (at 493).
24. Report of the National Committee on Reading. *Twenty-fourth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part II. Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing, 1925.

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DISCUSSION

Jay Featherstone

It is interesting that the fiction/non-fiction chasm is so profound that reading has come mainly to mean fiction in our schools. The sturdiness, the strengths of good writing that I saw in British classrooms in the 1960's was that much of the work was science writing and writing about things other than what we call "creative writing." The kids wrote about a lot of things.

It's a question of balance that you are arguing. I'm fascinated because one of the lines in American literature that most interests me is the long tradition Americans have of writing imaginatively about reality. Non-fiction writing is, in fact, one of the major modes of American literature. One of the great classics is the first half of Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* which is very much Twain's own account of how he got an education. There is a long strain in American writing which shows, as one poet puts it, that reality sandwiches are one of the most interesting modes to write about. The problem I have, Richard, is to put your historical perspective and the argument you give in sensible terms, because one of the other historic threats to intelligent thinking about schooling in America is Philistinism and anti-intellectualism. In the current context, arguments for minimums have a way of turning into maximums. I'm afraid we are going to get another round of one education for the elite and one education for Orwell's "proles." It would be tragic if the accurate historic sense you have given us were translated into second-rate curriculum for proles and another curriculum for those worthy of fiction. I think the issue is not fiction versus non-fiction. I think the real problem both for the little bit of non-fiction reading and for the great deal of fiction reading that goes on in schools is the divorce of language and experiences. That is an equally grave problem for all modes of reading and writing because there is a disconnection between the kind of reading people do and any kind of experience that they might be having. I suggest that underlying your distinction is a more generic distinction on that mode. I think the threat of Philistinism and of a second-rate curriculum for second-rate people is so vivid now in the current political climate that I would be very worried about the implications of what you suggest if people didn't hear your very thoughtful interpretation of them.

David Olson

Richard's emphasis on comprehension is extremely well taken. I agree that our notions of comprehension have evolved and that our understanding of the mental activities involved in comprehension have improved. These developments give us a much better framework for thinking about reading and reading comprehension than we had even a decade ago. My paper also deals with those kinds of problems. However, the distinction between fiction and job-related or content-related types of reading is perhaps somewhat overstated. It seems to me that reading programs in the school attempt to acquaint students with a sufficiently broad range of expressions, registers, and genre in the language so that they have a general basis or general skill for all comprehension tasks. This skill can then be used for more specific purposes. It's often impossible to anticipate the precise use that anyone would want to put his or her language to or to exactly anticipate the job-related or the content-related types of linguistic structures that the child may have to deal with in adult life. Instead, it should be possible to develop a very general level of competence in the uses of language both in expression and in comprehension. That's the role that what is loosely called "narrative fiction" plays. Sometimes narrative fiction teaches important messages but more often it is also just showing the child the use of imagination in the comprehension and expression of language. As such, it is a fairly decent, general procedure for the elaboration of the child's linguistic skills.

Carman St. John Hunter

I think you gave a clue, Richard, about the problem of fiction and non-fiction when you said part of the problem is whose literature and whose heritage are we getting through the literature. Many people's literature and expression of their cultural background are excluded for a whole lot of reasons that are contained in those guidelines.

Richard Venezky

Let me respond first to the concern from Jay and David over whether the proper distinction here is fiction/non-fiction, or if there is a more important underlying issue, such as a concern with language and experience. I use the fiction/non-fiction distinction because that's what the schools use. Fiction very well could be used to teach all necessary reading skills that adults need to deal with in their lives. Unfortunately, what fiction has come to mean in the schools is not understanding the underlying language that is available

for the writer to say things, including the reasons that certain options are chosen. Nor does it mean anymore a vicarious reliving of the past, of fantasy worlds, of involvement in cultures other than those that one has grown up in. Instead, fiction has been boiled down to a group of little skills that for the most part children can and usually do acquire on their own. Recent studies of story grammars give support to this notion.

Learning what the plot of a story is, learning about characterization, predicting outcomes, and so on have become the bread and butter of comprehension instruction in today's schools. In many programs fiction has become synonymous with getting the main idea of the story. I don't disagree that good comprehension teaching could be based on literature. There are examples of all types of writing styles and forms in fiction. I would love to see both fiction and non-fiction used in the schools in a way that draws on the child's experience and that deals with language. One can find in such writers as Hawthorne marvelous, realistic descriptions of places and of objects that could be used to teach the same skills that are needed to read in a biology text when a forest or a swamp is described. Almost any of the skills that are needed to read social studies—such as development of events along time lines—can be found in fiction, too, but we don't use fiction for those purposes.

As for Americans fictionalizing reality, I think the content of readers has always reflected not what exists, but what people want society to be. We Americans are dreamers. We believe in things like the pastoral dream, yet we're also very practical people. I think it was D. H. Lawrence who noted that the Americans are always inventing machines to do something. "Let a machine do it." I think that's very much part of our national attitude, and I think schooling through the content of the readers, reflects this dichotomy between the ideal society on one hand and the creative, practical society on the other.

It's very interesting to note that, according to Frederick Jackson Turner, the frontier closed about the same time that elitism—as reflected in building reading only on good fiction—entered into our schooling practices. The new idea was (and still is) that we should make every American into a cultured citizen. We had accomplished everything else: we were a military power, an industrial power, we had settled the land. Now we were to compete with Paris and Rome and London in music and art and literature. That's what drove Charles W. Elliot and others to want good fiction to be the basis of reading programs: to build the cultured citizen. But the reality was, as I think Jay pointed out, that we had always been a very practical people.

I am not advocating a nuts and bolts approach to teaching reading comprehension. That's not what I'm after; instead, I want balanced instruction that attends to the total range of materials that children and adults encounter, including literature. We need to deal with fiction as well as with instructions on fire extinguishers, advertisements, science texts, and so on. What is needed is a little more balance in the reading selections and skills taught. Leslie Fielder, for example, has emphasized the importance of treating ephemeral writing. If ads, bubble gum wrappers, and so on are a worthy concern of the literary critic, then they also can be of the school. What I'm trying to say is that I would love to see literature taught better, but I also would like to see people taught how to understand the language of math stories as well as the language of literature. And the language of math story problems is quite different from the language of narrative fiction.

David Olson

It occurs to me that there is another way of realizing the interest you have expressed in a variety of types of reading activities. The usefulness of letting children read the scripts for television commercials would put them in a better position to see what the structure of that discourse is. Perhaps they would become somewhat capable of criticism of that genre just as they learn to be critical of certain types of prose and poetry. I would agree with Richard that there could be a considerable broadening of the kinds of things that children read and the kinds of critical activities that they engage in.

We have set up some polarities which probably will be useful for thinking about problems of literacy. Jay introduced the one between experience and language generally. One that Richard introduced was the distinction between fiction and other forms of writing. A third one I would like to put out for consideration is the difference between speaking and writing generally. When we talk about fiction as opposed to expository writing, for example, we should note that those are both forms of written discourse. One of the main difficulties with literacy is not just the variations in the types of things children read, but the fact that suddenly children are dealing with a written text as opposed to participating in an oral discussion. Certainly dealing with written text must bring additional considerations; reading makes demands on comprehension processes and on prior experiences that differ from those made in dealing with ordinary oral discourse.

Audience Participant

I want to corroborate Jay Featherstone's response. I did hear your paper, Professor Venezky, very much as an anti-intellectual statement. I was struck also by the contrast between Jay's opening comments and the thread of your particular presentation. Jay brought out the issue of fragmentation as an enemy and contributor to incompetency. He picked up on some of the old progressive ideas of building in the schools a writing, speaking, reading community. His discussion was about the holistic view of literacy. In your presentation you separated the notion of reading through the basal reader and the other kind of reading—80% of which is non-narrative in the sixth grade—as something other than reading.

Richard Venezky

Perhaps the term reading is getting confused. What I'm talking about is what the schools today label as reading; that is, the entry in the daily lesson plan that in most schools, K through 8, is called "reading." There are also entities called reading programs that publishers produce, and also reading programs created by teachers. But my concern here is to deal with the reality in the schools. Why is it that the content of reading instruction in the schools (that is, literacy instruction) is so different from what we see adults reading on the streets? Why is it so different from what those very children choose to read when they walk out of their reading classes? My point in giving you those figures—which come from a very rough scan of reading instruction—is that these kids have to read their social studies text and their history book and their math story problems. Yet teachers are complaining more and more that the kids can't read these things. In fact, the child who does well in the sixth grade reader often cannot read a sixth grade social studies book with anywhere near the same comprehension. Some publishers are attacking that problem by reducing the readability (and concomitantly the content) of their content area materials, sometimes by two grade levels. I find that very frightening. I wasn't attending to the dream of integrating the liberal arts which has been realized already in a small number of schools. My concern here is to talk about the gap that exists between what instruction for literacy is today and what I see as adult literacy needs. I'm all for integrating liberal arts. I'm even in favor of throwing out of the schools completely a separate class called reading instruction after second or third grade, and moving what is now taught in such classes into the various content areas, including literature. Teach those skills needed to read litera-

ture in a literature class; teach those skills needed to understand the vocabulary and text structures of science texts in a science class. I think one of the problems we face in reading instruction is that we insist on dumping too large a load on a single strand in the curriculum.

Audience Participant

I don't think the question we are discussing is focused enough, because literacy for me as a teacher isn't a problem of the difference between what the schools are teaching and what adults need. The problem is that there are some students who are getting it and there are a great many others who aren't. If you want us all to follow your concluding directive, I would be very distressed because it feels as though we will have, as Jay said, an elitist society. We will further crystallize the difference between two groups of students. If there's one thing that comes out of the research on what makes effective schooling, it's the fact that you really need to set your expectations high. Your conclusion doesn't seem to go along with the idea of keeping expectations high for all students.

Richard Venezky

I'm not quite sure you and I are in the same place. I don't know where you teach, what kinds of problems you have, what you do in your classroom . . .

Audience Participant I'm in an inner-city urban school.

Richard Venezky

My most recent experience is also in the inner-urban schools, doing case studies of both successful and unsuccessful school reading programs. Where we find successful reading instruction in an inner-urban school, we generally find a well-organized program that has people at various levels performing tasks that are appropriate for their levels. We find principals directing the curriculum, reading specialists serving as resources to the teachers, and teachers drawing on the full range of resources available through the school and the district to work with students. But we also see, as others do, that some school children come in ready to be taught, familiar with the curriculum, familiar with the school processes, and with a total support system outside the school to insure that they acquire what the school is trying to teach. Other students who do not come so well prepared and do not have the same support system have much more trouble in achieving well. One possibility is that differences in student performance are the re-

sult of the schools not teaching very much at all. For example, some studies on comprehension show that there's almost no direct instruction time for comprehension in the schools today. Yet some students learn to comprehend in spite of this, and the schools take credit for these students' achievements. If you feel that the thrust in schooling today should be to help those kids who in the past have not been helped very much, then you've got to make some decisions. Are you going to go on teaching reading comprehension with 90% literature while students need to learn how to read social studies and math texts?

Audience Participant

No one is saying that we want to take college bound students away from literature and have them start reading IRS forms or have them filling out job applications. We're saying that students who have real problems ought to have a curriculum centered around what they really need outside of school. I'm not clear why it's not a concern for students who are getting literature courses. How do we assume they will be able to do the things that are required of them as adults?

Richard Venezky

I am not advocating a dual curriculum. My concern is the approach to teaching reading to everyone. I don't mean to say that kids who tend to do poorly in reading ought to get the practical, vocational curriculum and the kids who tend to succeed ought to get fine literature and advanced skills. What I'm after is a change in the total teaching of reading so that it's balanced and draws on the full range of text-types and text experiences that are required to deal with everything one has to do in life. All I'm really saying is that there's a terrible imbalance now. Even those wonderful kids coming out of Shaker Heights and Oak Park in Chicago, who score so high on the SAT's, have had declining SAT verbal scores since the middle 1960's.

Audience Participant

I'd like to ask a question and make a point. How is what you have said related to your notions about child development? I think this needs to be addressed in relation to teaching reading. My comment is: I think people are picking up a signal that has to do with minimal competency. People are also picking up on the fact that we now have an elite culture. People don't want to accept or recognize it, but in fact we do have dual education: about

the age of ninth grade and on up, most kids who are getting literature are also getting advanced courses in science and math; while the other half are reading content area textbooks that are two or three grade levels below their own.

I'd like also to point out to Jay Featherstone that in making your opening remarks about your philosophy of integrating language instruction you did not mention reading.

Richard Venezky

In what way would I tap into the developing child? The first thing that comes to mind is that many good teachers have found that the first or second grade child is interested in a lot of things other than fiction. The child at that level likes to read baseball cards, road signs, and the like. In every culture, and in every region, there are dominant interests for different age levels. These are rarely incorporated into literacy programs. If we believe that motivation is a major issue in the early years of teaching literacy, then it would seem reasonable to ask that more of the environmental materials be included. But I wouldn't build a curriculum just on ability on the one hand, nor just on interest on the other. I would try to take both into account. One could then try to use current interest to build higher levels of ability.

Jay Featherstone

I'm sorry I left out reading. It seems to me that what is happening with reading is part of the basis for my concern about the fragmentation of language in the schools and in culture generally. When it comes to reading, my primary concern is that people study and read a significant text. I agree that the significant text is most important. I think that's the heart of the matter and that's why, when I see people doing workbooks, my heart sinks.

Audience Participant

I'm an attorney and I've been working with a group of people who have been challenging competency tests and programs in several cities, primarily in the state of Florida. Some of the things you have said really struck me, particularly with reference to the function of literacy tests. I've looked at those tests and they reflect a lot of the kinds of things I suspect you were talking about. At a gross level, we have looked at the curriculum in the school and the objectives of items in the test.

How do they teach metrics, and how do they test metrics? You've suggested to me now that it might be worth looking at the content of texts. It might be worthwhile looking more closely at some of those issues where we're trying to get a handle on whether or not the tests reflect accurately the things taught in the schools. Is the test a fair test? When you talk about the chasm, I wonder if it's worth looking into what kinds of reading material kids use in the schools as compared to what kinds of reading skills they're willing to acquire? A large number in our area are black kids. I question how much of their own life and culture is reflected in those tests. How much that has to do with how well they comprehend or how well they attend to what they are reading is a question. I wonder if you would have any thoughts about this or other avenues I might pursue.

Richard Venezky

It sounds to me as if you're already doing all the things I would suggest. I guess I would start by asking, "What are the stated goals of these programs within the schools?" Then I would make sure these are reasonable goals for the kinds of students going to those schools. I don't think it's enough to justify schooling goals on national standards or minimal national standards alone. Schools exist within communities and communities often have special interests and needs of their own. The main question is whether or not the school's goals are reasonable for the needs within the community, as well as within the state and country.

Literacy for Empowerment and Social Change

Carman St. John Hunter

While it may be true that the electronic age has devalued literacy, what seems more serious is the way in which certain groups have been so devalued that they are inhibited in their acquisition of literacy skills. Many poor and minority students are prevented from developing their cognitive and manipulative skills beyond a minimal level. Perhaps what needs changing is not the level of skills in literacy or functional competence but the level of hope and expectation among bypassed people in our society. Action research might be designed to focus on competencies presently existing and valued and, at the same time, on the changes that occur when groups develop new hope for themselves and a more dynamic vision of the options available to them.

“Is there a different literacy for different groups of people?”

“Has literacy been devalued in our society?”

These and other questions on the brochure that introduced this conference have already been reflected in our discussions. I believe that one need not spend very much time producing evidence that literacy is devalued in our society just because it has become less necessary. One need not read to keep up with what is going on even in distant parts of the world. And we are losing the habit of writing letters to keep in contact with family and friends. It is not even necessary to be literate to initiate actions that change the course of history. Instant electronic communication is a powerful reality that for many has taken the place of reading and writing.

In this group I need not rehearse statistics to prove that most of the programs set up to improve literacy levels in this country have been failures.

I have been asked to be part of this conference not because of any expertise in teaching—although I was a high school teacher for a small number of years—but because of a study which David Harman (formerly of the Harvard Graduate School of Education) and I did on the extent of adult illiteracy in this country. In the course of doing that study, several things became very clear to us. We understood as we had not before that approximately 65 million adults in this country have serious literacy-related difficulties. That is the number of persons 16 years of age or older who are without a high school diploma and not presently enrolled in school. We realize that

many who have not graduated from high school get along very well and that many who *do* have high school diplomas do *not* do well. However, allowing for these differences, it is still safe to say that about 65 million adults have more serious problems with reading and writing than most of us in this room imagine.

David and I were not content with the grade-level standard sometimes used to define or measure literacy. Nor did we find the type of testing for functional competence introduced through the adult performance level studies very helpful. It was our contention that while broad statistical definitions may be interesting to educational agencies, school systems, and policy groups, those with literacy-related problems have their own inner measures: Can I do what I want and need to do in order to accomplish my own goals? Can I fulfill the demands that are made on me by the society, by my community, family, job? Am I able to fulfill my personal aspirations? Once we ask questions like these, we begin to understand that literacy is something more than a set of technical competencies. Literacy is closely related to self-reliance and a sense of personal power over conditions that affect one's life.

We realized, too, that among the population group most affected with literacy problems, there are vast differences. Some return as adults to programs leading toward the GED or toward new job skills and do very well. Yet the majority of persons for whom these programs are intended never enter or, if they do, drop out without ever receiving the intended credentials. Those of you who have looked at our study know that we developed four categories among the 65 million as a very rough way of distinguishing among the different responses to offered programs.

There is one group of people who take advantage of the existing programs, complete them, and achieve the desired credentials. They are trying to catch up with peers who have higher levels of schooling. They are highly motivated and are able to overcome the immense difficulties of returning to the classroom, meeting requirements, and passing examinations.

The second group are those who are everyone's "favorite illiterates," the people "just like us." They may suffer from dyslexia or from psychological or emotional handicaps that made learning in school difficult. Once they overcome the shame of not having learned "when they were supposed to," they are capable of moving with help, often in one-on-one situations provided by Literacy Volunteers of America or Laubach Literacy. Their stories sound much like religious conversions. These two groups of people are well served

by existing types of programs if they can just be reached and given the positive encouragement that they require in order to succeed.

Our major concern in the study focused on people who have serious literacy problems but who do not find literacy to be their major priority. While they have very low levels of technical literacy on any kind of scale, this is not what they see as central to their problems. Literacy programs per se are never the route they choose toward desirable changes in their lives.

Who are these persons and what happened to them as they went through the schools? Carolyn Persell in her study, *Education and Inequality* (1977), has examined relevant research on who does not learn in our schools. Her findings matched what we discovered about adults in our Groups 3 and 4. She demonstrates that class and racial biases of the society as a whole are reflected in the schools, seriously affecting educational access and achievement among the poor and the minorities. Grading practices, tracking, differing school environments, the scope of curriculum options, teacher expectations and styles all influence educational outcomes. Many poor and minority students are prevented from developing their cognitive and manipulative skills beyond a very minimal level. In addition, they are socialized for low opportunity, low-paying jobs, and they are systematically — although perhaps unconsciously on the part of teachers — taught to see themselves as unable to pursue any occupation or activity that requires educational qualifications. These adults do not and will not return for whatever kind of program is offered unless they see some pay-off, some immediate results. The results they look for are related to being able to achieve a new level of participation in society — increased earning power, increased access to the products and privileges that advertising tells them represent the norm in America. Advancing one or more grade levels will not change their marginal situations in society.

There is a contradiction between our ideology and our practice. The ideology behind ABE and other poverty programs was that they would “assure full participation in all of society by all of the groups in the society.” Within our schools and in the programs that have been set up for adults that is not what happens. What is wrong?

Some see the answer in competency-based education. I am convinced that these educators are on the wrong track. What is needed is not the ability to write checks, fill out forms, or read bus schedules. What is missing is the ability to be agents, or as Paulo Freire calls it, to be subjects of our own destiny and to influence what is happening around us. It is not merely the poor who suffer from this incapacity, but it is they who suffer most.

I would summarize my observations about the four groups by noting that Groups 1 and 2 are socially and economically placed to take advantage of the increased opportunities that credentials and new skills open for them. Groups 3 and 4 are unable to change their social or economic status merely through schooling. They are more acutely aware of their inability to be agents of their own destiny than most of us, including those in Groups 1 and 2. Any real solution to the problem of low literacy levels must come to grips with the universal need for human competence, that is, the ability to influence what happens to us, to understand the forces that act on us, and to reach decisions and take action as free agents.

Warren Zeigler (1977) has done some very interesting thinking about these matters. He uses the term civic literacy to describe the capacity to influence what happens to us in a positive way, the ability to feel good about what we do, and to see that our actions produce results. He describes what exists today as a client society. For every need that exists there is an expert out there. We are clients in the areas of health and education where we have become dependent on faceless systems that control us. We are clients in the political arena where closely structured party systems take the place of citizens joining together to speak for themselves.

All of this may seem far removed from the questions we are addressing today — i.e. learning to read for understanding, to write clearly, to express ourselves in speech. Yet I am convinced that those skills are more closely related to a sense of personal identity and to the conviction that we can do something about what is happening to us than they are to teaching techniques.

I do not want to suggest that teaching objectives, skills, and methodologies are unimportant. I do, however, want to emphasize that unless these are understood in the context of such concerns as “reading for what,” “writing to express what meaning,” and “speaking about what reality”, then they may indeed be of little importance. As educators we are called to join our educational goals with the quest for basic human competence among those we teach.

Another person who has drawn ideas from Paulo Freire as well as from his own experience to reach some conclusions relevant to this discussion is Jack Mezirow of Teachers College, Columbia University. His reflections on the results of consciousness raising in the women’s movement and on programs of nonformal education in the Third World have led him to coin a term for education that builds not only on the obvious needs of learners but, also, on the causes of those needs, i.e., the incongruities and contra-

dictions in their psychological, social, or economic situation. He calls this approach “perspective transformation.” People become aware of the assumptions that shape their actions and of the inhibiting nature of some of these assumptions. Situations of stress often lead to new understanding of the ways in which old perspectives limit their ability to act in response to reality. Mezirow suggests that true education should be a means of leading people to move toward meaning perspectives that are more inclusive and enhance their sense of agency or control and, thus, provide a clearer meaning and direction in life.

If we return for a moment to the difficulties experienced by children who are poor and/or belong to racial minorities as these were described by Carolyn Persell, we can realize that their problems were exacerbated because they were perceived as unable to learn. People who are treated as deficient come to believe that about themselves. They accept dependency and client status throughout their adult lives. The programs that are set up for them as adults are also based on the expectation that they are unable to become agents of their own destinies. And so the cycle continues. That is what produces a two-tiered system and creates “different literacies for different groups” in our society. That is the way that we create a permanent underclass. The question to us as educators and citizens is whether we want this to continue.

It is not only the meaning perspective of the learner that must be progressively changing. Our own meaning perspective as educators must also be transformed. If we see certain people as unable to contribute their own meaning to society or as having nothing worthwhile to express, then they will, indeed, remain illiterate in the most comprehensive sense of the term. If, however, there can be a change in the predominant view that the children of the poor cannot learn and that adults who failed or were failed by the system are incapable of learning, then there may also be a change in the learning that takes place.

Some illustrations come to mind that demonstrate what can happen when the perspectives of both teachers and learners are open. In Puerto Rico a group of young educators began working with people in an area of San Juan that had been written off by both the radical left and the social service providers. The young people knew enough to find friends in the community whose endorsement and physical presence could bring about their acceptance by residents tired of outside interventions. The young educators began with a series of meetings asking what people wanted to learn. They were astonished—and somewhat taken aback—when the people said they

wanted to qualify for the GED and they wanted their new friends to act like teachers in the traditional definition of the role. For a year the teachers did just that and a group of adults were drilled in academic subjects. Five or six of them passed the GED examination. Once that happened, it was as though all the participants believed that they *could* do it if they wanted to. Interest in academic subjects alone became less intense. Each year some people qualified for the GED but they did so through learning activities that were wide-ranging in subject-matter and also closely related to practical concerns for improving the quality of life in the neighborhood.

In Philadelphia a group has developed an approach that combines the teaching of basic skills and preparation for the GED exam with reading content that presents the problems, conflicts, and potential in students' everyday lives. The students are adult women, many of them with grown families. They live in a depressed zone where industry has moved away leaving burnt out factories and thousands of unemployed. The curriculum consists of units focused on the women's real concerns for such areas as parenting, education, and unemployment. Newspaper articles, open-ended stories, tapes, and pictures are used. A brainstorm method helps the learners to concentrate on the ideas presented as well as to practice recalling what they have heard or read. They move through a series of steps that begin with isolating the key words; they then group the words to show the key ideas; then they relate the key ideas to each other in order to understand the *main idea* expressed. The method allows the learners to bring their own ideas and experiences to bear on the subject. Discussion questions are not seen as a way to find answers but as a means to point up the real problems and conflicts embodied in the material. Finally, discovery questions direct the learners' attention outside the classroom to the larger social context of what has been presented. Learners are encouraged to discover community resources for addressing the problems as they affect themselves and their neighborhood. Although the material used is quite different from the subject matter required for the GED examination, the majority of those who take the exam succeed.

In these situations and in others with which I am familiar, both here and in the Third World, the competencies being nurtured are those that enable the learner to see old problems in a new way. Writing and oral fluency are related to thinking and reasoning. Teachers and learners are confident in each others' ability to change.

The transmission of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that result in immediately measurable behavioral changes is too narrow a goal for education.

Instead we may need to ask ourselves seriously whether we want to develop *objects* or *agents* through our educational processes. If it is the latter, then we may be called to redefine our priorities and to explore some very new terrain. The ideas and tentative thinking of those I have quoted here represent a few of the signposts for our journey.

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DISCUSSION

David Olson

One of the points that Carman St. John Hunter stressed is that we may be able to understand literacy and society better if we compare indigenous literacy programs with more school-related literacy activities. This has to do with the notion of what you called “agency” — helping people release their own experience via indigenous literacy programs. Let them participate, you suggest, as opposed to being mere recipients. In the context of the school, agency would be achieved through the balance between the activities of reading and writing. If we identify literacy with reading, as we’re very often tempted to do, and deny children opportunities for serious writing, we’re turning children into consumers, into being mere recipients of a tradition. Reading is certainly an important function, but it should be coupled with the opportunities for expression as well. That is where writing comes in. I don’t know why writing has been so undervalued in school except that written products are time consuming for teachers to mark. I think it might be more serious than that. It may go back to something that Richard Venezky said earlier, namely that one of the functions of literacy in our society has been simply to equip people to fit into the existing social order. Authorities could use written directives to influence the masses rather than the masses using literacy to influence authority. For purposes of social control it is more important for people to read than to write. One direction in which we could move, then, is away from the notion of identifying literacy with reading, and think of literacy as having to do with the expressive powers of writing as well as the interpretive problems of reading. I was impressed that this conference was called the literacy conference rather than just the reading conference — language competence can no longer be identified with reading competence.

Carman St. John Hunter

Just a quick comment: it is interesting that the experience of people working with groups, such as the ones I was describing, is that people are far more willing to say that they need help with writing or with spelling, than they will say they need help with reading. I don’t know why, but it is a phenomenon that I’ve heard over and over again.

Richard Venezky

I had the sense that the methods you've discussed seem to be working best in situations where the traditional forms had already produced failure; that is, with groups that had been through school and failed. Do you think these techniques would work before failure? Is there any application of these techniques to urban schooling today, particularly in the elementary school? And what are the problems, especially of complying with or changing the expectations of the existing system?

Carman St. John Hunter

I think I really don't know the answer to that. I do know some teachers who, in limited ways, have tried some things like this in urban schools and they say it works. But that is looking at something little and not the whole system. I do know that Jack Mezirow, for instance, says that we only change our perspective when we're confronted with a dilemma, with a contradiction. Therefore, it doesn't mean you have to have failed in order to find a methodology which helps you to see your own power in an area, whether that area is reading or something else. You don't have to be a failure; you may indeed just confront something that you can't do, and if you really get a new picture of yourself as being able to do it, then you will be able to do it better.

Jay Featherstone

I have three quick points. One is that a kind of generic theme coming out of a lot of the work that we're talking about is the whole question of passivity, treating people as passive. An underlying point is that people are makers of their own meanings and actors on their own behalf in programs that work. If there's a transfer, that might be part of the transfer. In an expert society, I talk, you listen. My mother may be the only person in America who talks back to the CBS evening news.

The second point is that the implications for school are very important. Being aware of the social and class dimensions of the issues we're talking about is absolutely crucial. That kind of insight is useful if it gives us perspective and leads us to rethink our practice, and it's the kind of insight that is profoundly demoralizing if you then think that schools can do nothing. One of the many sad features of the way the sixties wound down was that people read the research and the political conclusions of the period to indicate that you can't change society, that you can't do anything in schools. It is a fact that lots of poor people and black people are, in fact, learning in schools.

Since it is such a demoralized time in education, I think it is particularly important for us not to lose heart in that same way.

And the last point: in the end, literacy and competence are not technical issues. Whether or not we realize it in our work, they usually involve some moral and political dimension. If we don't see that, we're missing out on something that we're doing.

Audience Participant

Does it really make a difference what kind of content material teachers use to teach reading? In terms of your special literacy programs, can the students actualize control of themselves? It seems that what you need to do is give people who are not reading a context in which to feel that they want to read. They therefore will then learn how to read. Over the years . . . kids have learned how to read despite the way that reading is taught in school. I was wondering how these observations are relevant to schools in the broad area of literacy.

Richard Venezky

There are two issues that have to be looked at, even though I'm not sure they're independent. One is motivation. Let's take a typical inner city school that has very few resources, and has teachers who at best are neutral towards the learning abilities of the student. With these limitations plus political appointment of principals and the political appointment of superintendents, such situations tend to exhibit little motivation for struggling to reach high achievement. Therefore, no matter what you do at the classroom level, no matter what kind of materials you have, you're going to have problems in schooling. If we're interested in schooling opportunities and schooling outcomes, then perhaps a concern for fiction or non-fiction skills or for kinds of materials used in teaching reading will lead nowhere until fundamental changes are made in the organization and management of the school.

The second issue concerns the difficulty in predicting the outcomes of different approaches to education. In the sixties we thought we were doing a lot of good for the disadvantaged with Title I (and I'm sure a lot of good things have come out of Title I). But the attitude of Title I is that schools don't have to change. Schools can go on pretending that all children come out of the same middle class, white, Protestant background. Title I will provide funds to give shots to kids to make them look that way. Furthermore, Title I was based on the assumption that if you gave those shots early enough, the

students who received them could manage in the schools without further assistance. In hindsight, this attitude has been proven to be fundamentally wrong. But it shows, nevertheless, how difficult it is to predict what will cause schooling to improve.

There are facilitative contexts such as Carman Hunter has talked about, but if we contextualize schooling as an independent entity that outside agents impose on people, then schooling has little chance of working. It may work with certain people, but it hasn't worked on the majority who seem to need help in achieving. I'm not sure I'm answering your question as much as telling you why I don't think I can answer it. I'm all for what Carman is saying, but I'm not sure that it is enough to make the changes suggested. There are things on the broader level that have to be done that relate to the goals of schools and the resources they have, to the attitude of people, and the way that society manages its schools. I'm not convinced that society really cares yet.

Audience Participant

How can you get schools to assess reading comprehension that's based on literary basal readers as compared to reading comprehension required for history, science, and math books? Part of the problem might be the duality of looking at reading that way. What are some practical things that schools may need to start thinking in order to move away from that duality of context versus comprehension?

Richard Venezky

One way might be to fragment even further, to develop literacy instruction within each of these areas that requires literacy. Once this is done we will obviously see some overlap of instruction that will need to be eliminated somehow. But for some reason it has been taboo to waste time in a math program teaching kids how to read the math book. There are some signs of a change but in general, reading is what you do in the reading course. There are parallels to this problem in the delivery of university computing services. For many years the computing center has been the source of all knowledge on computing outside of the computer sciences department. This was practicable when only a small percentage of the faculty and students needed computing. But now practically everybody needs computing and consequently everyone is going to have to learn to do some of their own processing; one center is no longer capable of delivering the total service. But the older men-

tality still exists: if you need computing, you go to the computing center. If you need reading, you go to the reading teacher. In a sense all teachers have to become a reading teacher.

Carman St. John Hunter

I support everything you have said. There is one very interesting fact that is, for me, a clue to what in the world we thought we were doing in the sixties. We were doing something for some people who were going to be brought into what was already okay, our mainstream. Only once in a while could you read an article by someone like Charles Willie who said, "If you bring people in, the people who are already there are going to benefit maybe even more than the people who come in." Why? Because the diversification of that school society is going to help them learn a little more about the diversification of their society as a whole. What we did, however, was to bring people in but then never own what they brought with them. We sort of said, "Put that all away." If we can ever learn to open some of those different experiences up to each other before we end the whole experiment, we might become a little more culturally diverse.

Audience Participant

At the risk of insulting a lot of people here, I think one of the things we also have to look at is who become teachers and why they become teachers. I remember when I was in graduate school, somebody citing a study which included a "compassion" measure. There are a lot of theories that people who go into the helping professions — teaching and social work — have a vested interest in keeping people dependent and not becoming competent, because it feeds into whatever their ego needs are. To be in power, teacher knows best

I don't see very many courses for teachers on how to motivate children, how to make them confident. Colleges teach a lot of other things about how to teach, but not motivation or why it's important. How to work with families in helping the community, helping the family, helping the child is rarely taught. I think we have to look at the whole child and the family and the community; that's all part of this picture.

Jay Featherstone

Yes, I think knowing those things are good, but I think it's a mistake to start off by thinking that the teachers as a group are any less compassionate than the rest of the human race — or more.

Are you concerned that maybe you're asking teachers to be miracle workers? I mean, we're really expecting a tremendous amount from teachers. We're entrusting the development of the child's psyche, inculcation of values, the ability to master various skills and materials. Then, on top of that, we're asking that the teacher be able to go out and work with the family, deal with special motivational needs and, of course by law, the teacher has to deal with handicaps in one form or another, language development, non-English speakers and so on. How much can we expect for \$12,000 a year and very little job security? I realize it is not the purpose here just to discuss the situation of the teacher in America today. But somewhere along the line I think we have to face the reality that if we're talking about children acquiring things from a service institution, then we have to ask, "Have we provided the resources to that institution to deliver those services?" Previously a lawyer was talking about a court situation contesting competency guidelines. Well, it may very well be that one can demonstrate that the resources aren't there under normal ordinary situations to deliver the goods.

Carman St. John Hunter

One of the implications of what Warren Ziegler was talking about is that we begin to consider some of the ways in which teachers have been forced to take on all the roles of all the institutions — the family, the community, the everybody. Those groups need to get back the ability to be agents of what they're supposed to be agents of.

Audience Participant

I want to make a comment that stems from the last three or four comments. I think that many of us don't understand — the society at large does not understand — the function of institutions. Exactly what are the functions of a school or any kind of educational institution? Many people come to the institution who may have value in education, for example, but they don't necessarily understand the process of getting this system to meet all their needs. Then, a lot of problems occur. I work at Roxbury Community College in the Boston area and I've had a student who has continued to come to the class and act out. He is a 24-year-old man who is very interested in going

through this institution, but no one ever explained to him that he should see the dean of students, or a counselor, or some other person who can provide adequate information to help him have his needs met. So many times the responsibility is all on the teachers, the instructors, or the administration and we fail to realize that there are areas of responsibilities to which we cannot adjust ourselves. A lot of people don't learn to read or write because they don't know what an end to this road is or what they have to do in order to become proficient.

I think teaching is a kind of a personal thing with everyone. I got into teaching because I had a friend, a 32-year-old man, who could neither read nor write. He felt that because I graduated from college I should know how to teach him to read and write. I didn't teach him. (But I did get into education and later into graduate school.) I could not teach him, and I began to wonder why did I spend all that time at the University of California.

Audience Participant

I also agree that all other segments of society should start to take back their responsibilities, but I take objection with the feeling that teachers do not need to be trained. Where do we get this wonderful new perception? Where do we get this new view of the world and what learning is? How do we learn to have children take on being a change agent? How do we take what we've learned from this history of where we've been? This conflict in dualism exists — math teachers still see reading as something for the reading teacher. How do we take this entire problem and translate it if it isn't with the upcoming teachers?

Audience Participant

Many of the benefits that Carman Hunter mentioned as occurring in these non-formal programs can also occur in a formal program, in a school system. I've had experience in setting up different programs and found that some people discovered a self-confidence they hadn't realized before. I mention this because I think that you should not discount your formal school structures as being a means for many people to get what they need — a raising of their own self image.

What is Said and What is Meant in Speech and Writing

David R. Olson

This paper advances and experimentally evaluates the argument that in ordinary oral language the intentions of the speaker (what is meant) has primacy over the actual expressions used (what is said). In reading and writing this relationship is reversed. The cognitive consequences of attention to linguistic form (what is said), a form of metalinguistic competence, and the possible origins of this competence are discussed.

Reading and writing are, in the last analysis, linguistic skills. An improved understanding of them in the past decade has come in part from pursuing the relations between oral and written language and from examining their differences. These are the relations I shall examine in this paper.

The most obvious parts of language, it seems, are the most difficult to formulate adequate theories for. Clearly, language consists of a string of noises or marks on paper which expresses the meaning or intention of a speaker. We use language to express ourselves and to recover the intentions, ideas, and feelings of others. That, it seems to me, is the obvious part. Yet this shared intentionality, these meanings, have proven to be the most obscure and most difficult strands of language to unravel theoretically. We all, in some sense, know what meaning is, yet meaning remains one of the most obscure and yet critical issues in psychology, in philosophy, and in education. As Gilbert Ryle (1956) pointed out, "The story of twentieth-century philosophy is very largely the story of this notion of sense or meaning" (p. 8).

But is it possible that our understanding of *meaning* is more apparent than real? What has meaning? Do these sentences I speak have meaning? Or do I as a speaker have meaning? Do you as listeners have meaning? Do words have meaning? What does it mean to understand me as opposed to understanding my sentences? More importantly, how are the two, what sentences mean and what people mean by them, related?

As an aside, we may note that the study of reading has been blessed (one could almost equally well say cursed) with both theories which are sensitive to the structure of language — giving rise to theories of decoding, word and letter recognition, and with the mental processes involved in recovering a linguistic form from written symbols — and with theories which are concerned with meaning and with comprehension, with reading for meaning,

and so on, where meanings are thoughts, ideas, intention of speaker/writer and listener/reader. Theories of the first sort handle meaning as intention poorly while theories of the latter sort tend to underestimate the importance of linguistic structure or linguistic form and the processes involved in processing those forms. These days the talk is more of interactive “top down” and “bottom up” processes; certainly a step in the right direction but still problematic in that so-called “bottom-up” processes involve knowledge and expectancies in much the same way as the so-called “top-down” ones do, the difference being only whether one is analyzing subordinate structures such as letters or words or superordinate structures such as meanings and intentions. I think we may do better by reconstruing the problem in terms of the nature of the relation between *what is said* and *what is meant*, where “what is said” could be thought of as the bottom-up process and “what is meant” could be

Grice (1957) was among the first to pursue this distinction and I shall develop it here. By “what is said” I mean the linguistic form of an expression; the very words employed and their syntactic relations, or what may be called the semantic structure. By “what is meant” I mean the speaker’s intentions in uttering that sentence. Now what is their relation? The simplest notion is that “you say what you mean,” and perhaps ideally that is so. When you say “Snow is white,” that sentence expresses the speaker’s meaning or intention to assert as true the proposition that snow is white. And some have suggested that we may have a set of implicit linguistic rules that go directly from intentions to sentences.

But we need not go far afield before we encounter sentences which are perfectly comprehensible, that is, from which we can derive appropriate sets of intentions but the intention or meaning is not fully expressed by the sentence. Winograd (1980) provides one example: Suppose a child is reading the following text: “Tommy had just been given a new set of blocks. He was opening the box when he saw Jimmy coming in.” Winograd continues: “There is no mention of what is in the box — no clue as to what box it is at all. But the person reading the text makes the immediate assumption that it is the box which contains the set of blocks. We can do this not because of any property of the sentence but because we know that new items often come in boxes, and that opening the box is the usual thing to do. We derive an intention, in other words, not merely from sentences but from prior knowledge of the world” (p. 214).

To give another simple example, consider the following sentence spoken of a shared acquaintance, John. “John went to the theatre last night but he forgot

his ticket and they wouldn't let him in." How do we know who "they" are; there is no antecedent for the pronoun in the text. Where does it come from? From the same place as Winograd's antecedent came from. On the basis of what we know about theatres, tickets, doormen, and the like, we infer that "they" are the ticket takers at the theatre. But the sentence per se gave no indication that such was the case. Clearly we must expand our notion of how sentences are related to intended and recovered meanings to include at least three constituents: sentences (S), possible worlds (PW), and intended meanings (M). Figure 1 shows this relationship and provides some synonyms for these terms.

About semantic structure or linguistic form, the S column of Figure 1, I shall have little to say although knowledge of the structure of language is critical to both oral and written language and great progress has been made in the analysis of these structures (Chomsky, 1980) and their acquisition by children (Brown, 1970; de Villiers and de Villiers, 1978). About possible worlds, PW, I shall have somewhat more to say. A possible world is simply an imaginative world; the real world is one such world but our imagination is not bounded by actuality. We may say (or think), for example, "If only I hadn't bought a Pinto . . ." or "I wish that this was Friday" and on that basis we now live in a possible world which is basically like the real world except in the specified aspects (Kripke, 1970). Note that sentences can be the key to alternative possible worlds just as the key to the real world. Most importantly, possible worlds may be built up or stipulated on the basis of language. Sentences may be considered as recipes for building possible worlds. That indeed, is what most reading is and all study is: building imaginative, conceptual, possible worlds on the basis of linguistic forms. These entertained possible worlds are, these days, talked about in terms of schemata, scripts, cognitions, beliefs, and the like, and a good deal of progress has been made in describing the structure of this knowledge and its role in comprehension and production of language (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Rumelhart, 1980).

But it is meaning, intended meaning, that requires more analysis and consideration. What do we mean by "meaning"? by reading for meaning? by understanding? We have a clear sense of understanding or of failure to understand, but we lack a clear and explicit theory of understanding and meaning.

"Understand," like "mean," is a basic or undefined term. Read a story to a child. If we see signs of pleasure or excitement we assume the child understands. If the story is greeted by puzzled looks or questions such as "What?" we assume he or she has not understood. We judge understanding through indirect means — what the child says or does. We cannot access "under-

standing” directly. Even worse, we cannot explain the concept by appeal to simpler concepts: “understand” means “to make sense of.” But that is even worse. The expressions *to mean*, *to understand*, are members of a class of verbs which are sometimes called “intentional predicates” (Dennet, 1981; Fodor, 1975) along with such verbs as *know*, *believe*, *remember*, *forget*, *notice*, *think*, *perceive* (cf. the speech act verbs *say*, *assert*, *tell*, and *promise*; Carole Chomsky, 1969). They are verbs which express “propositional attitudes” or psychological states or mental states. Together they make up what may be called a commonsensical theory of mind. They are concepts which, it is assumed, every child will acquire informally in the process of growing up and hence, are not the focus of instruction in the schools. On the other hand, they are, if we take a behavioristic attitude, mere mentalistic concepts which are irrelevant to human behavior and hence are as well forgotten; to quote Leonard Bloomfield: “Scientific description requires none of the mentalistic terms” (1939, p. 13). Rather, as I shall argue, they are the basic concepts for the intentional management of our minds. To the extent that these concepts are absent or fuzzy, to that extent a child or an adult is not in a position to manage voluntarily their mental activities of knowing, meaning, intending, believing, guessing, or understanding.

Although important, concepts such as *mean*, *understand*, *know*, and the mental activities they express are not well understood for three related reasons. First, they are indirectly inferred from other more observable activities such as talking, commanding, arguing, telling, requesting, and the like and hence they are more difficult to access. Secondly, as aspects of language and language comprehension they require more abstract theories than such observable surface structure properties as phonology, syntax, and lexical structures. Although in modern linguistics there is great interest in the structure of meaning, and in linguistic philosophy there is a great interest in the structure of meaning intentions, there remains a Bloomfield legacy in our attitudes to written language. Reading is more easily thought of as the perception and analysis of aspects of surface structure such as letters, words, and sentences than it is to the deeper levels of structure, namely, meaning, intention, understanding, and comprehension. Thirdly, Venezky’s previous observation that historically the teaching of reading had very little to do with comprehension — the *McGuffey Readers*, for example, being concerned with oral reading for an audience — again suggests a lack of understanding of, or concern with, comprehension, meaning, and the like.

What I propose to do is to elaborate somewhat upon the structure of intention and meaning, its relation to “saying” and then consider some of the ways

that relation may be altered by writing. These relations are also displayed in Figure 1. Notice first the relation between what was said and what was meant; there is no direct mapping from saying to meaning. That relation is established only through a third term, namely, a possible world or context. As an aside, I would point out that the central question as to this relation between language and thought, like the question of the relation between sentences and meanings, has proven recalcitrant for just this reason; there is no direct relation between language and thought. All language is related to thought or meaning only through an agreed upon or presupposed possible world.

To return to our theme of the relation between “what is said” and “what is meant,” we may say that a sentence meaning (S), together with a context or possible world (PW) specifies an intended meaning (M). Some of the implications of a three-term theory of the relation between what is said and what is meant are indicated in Figure 1. I shall mention briefly two of them. First, whether the sentence or the PW is taken as invariant determines whether we arrive at a casual meaning or a literal meaning. Angela Hildyard and I have elsewhere (Olson and Hildyard, in press) provided some evidence that children most readily compute a casual meaning rather than a literal meaning and that the latter is at least associated with literacy. Secondly, it suggests that metaphor is difficult because one must preserve both linguistic form and the stored prior knowledge of a possible world, and children have difficulty in doing both.

But my more immediate purpose is to examine how literate adults and pre-literate children manage these constituents in speaking and in understanding the speech of others. Clearly, children have some knowledge of the relation between sayings and meanings. Even very young children have some intentions and they express them through language (among other things). Furthermore, there is no doubt that children recover intended meanings of others. Three examples are shown in Figure 1. Children, hearing the sentence “I hear talking” spoken in the classroom, know that the teacher means “Be quiet” (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Similarly, “Where’s the salt?” asked at the table means “Pass the salt,” and in an argument over shared goods the sentence “You have more than me” means “Give me some,” and so on. Hence, children appear to know how to derive intentions from expressions, even when the relation is somewhat indirect.

It is also the case that pre-school children know something about the terms expressing these constituents; they have some understanding of the predicates *say* and *mean*. One of the earliest language games parents play with their language-learning children is one in which the adult points to

S	+	PW	→	M
“Said”				“Meant”
semantic structure		knowledge of the world		intended meaning
or		or		or
linguistic meaning		knowledge of context		speaker’s meaning
or		or		or
sentence meaning		possible world		utterance meaning
“I hear talking”		in school		Be quiet
“Where’s the salt?”		at table		Pass the salt
“You have more than me”		in dispute over shared goods		Give me some

Varieties of M

Casual meaning.

(W is invariant)

$S \rightarrow S'$

$S' + PW \rightarrow M$

Piaget: S : Are there more ducks or animals?

$\rightarrow S'$: Are there more ducks or rabbits?

Literal meaning.

(S is invariant)

$PW \rightarrow PW'$

$S + PW' \rightarrow M$

Are there more ducks or animals

PW ducks/rabbits $\rightarrow PW'$ ducks/animals

Indirect speech act and metaphor.

(S and PW are invariant)

$M \rightarrow M'$

$S + W \rightarrow M'$

John is a chicken.

You have more than me.

I hear talking

Figure 1. Some relations of sentences and contexts in determination of meaning

some object, names it, and tells the child to "say it." This "saying" game is found, as well, in some nonliterate societies (Schefflin, personal communication). In a recent study Angela Hildyard, Elaine Minsky, and I asked kindergarten, grade one, and grade two children the questions: "What did x say?" or "What did x mean?" following statements in a story which had either a direct literal meaning or an indirect sarcastic meaning. The "say" questions were answered appropriately with a verbatim answer for both direct and indirect questions more than 65% of the time by kindergarten children and above 90% by the grade two children. The *mean* questions, on the other hand, were answered by giving an intention by only 39% of the kindergarten children and only 56% of the grade two children. The grade one children fell in between. Children appear to have difficulty computing the intended meaning when it is not congruent with what was said. Although most of the children realized that something more than the words were called for when asked the *mean* questions, several of the youngest children either failed to answer or gave a literal interpretation of sentences which in context should have been interpreted sarcastically.

Even if children are beginning to sort out the relations between what is said and what is meant when these are explicitly elicited by the adult, they seem to have little or no awareness, in their own ordinary comprehension and production, of both what was said and what was meant and their interrelations; they have, it seems, little or no awareness of the sentence meaning in its own right. Two other studies have shown that this lack of awareness has important consequences on children's recall and on their judgements of the adequacy of messages.

In one of these studies Angela Hildyard and I read a story about two children named Kevin and Susie who go to a movie, buy and share some popcorn, and concludes with Kevin complaining "You have more than me." When asked what Kevin had said, more than half of the kindergarten children replied "Give me some." By grade two the majority reported verbatim what had been said and when asked, indicated that they knew what was meant as well.

The more recent study was carried out by Elizabeth Robinson in Bristol and by Hillel Goelman and me in Toronto. In some of her earlier studies, Elizabeth Robinson, in collaboration with Peter Robinson (Robinson and Robinson, 1977a, 1977b), had discovered that in cases of communication failure in which responsibility could logically be traced to the speaker and his or her inadequate message, children invariably "blamed the listener." To illustrate, an example is provided in Figure 2. If the child in a communi-

A child and an adult, separated by a screen, each have in front of them a collection of objects. The task is to tell the other what to pick up.

Blue flower	Red flower
Blue hat	Red hat
Blue lollipop	Red lollipop

Child: (Holding a blue flower) Pick up the flower!

Adult: (Picks up the red flower) This one?

Child: No, you got the wrong one.

You made a mistake. You didn't try hard enough

(*Listener-blamer*)

Adult: Did you say the blue flower?

Child: Yes. (*Conflation of said/meant*)

Figure 2.

cation game intends to say "blue flower" and inappropriately says just "flower," and the listener picks a red flower, the child *blames the listener* for not picking the right one. As Robinson points out, it seems not to occur to the child that the speaker or his message may be at fault. This tendency disappears in the first year or two of schooling.

Our collaborative study (Robinson, Goelman, and Olson, in preparation), was designed to determine if the pattern of "blaming the listener" was the result of the inability to differentiate what was said from the intentions of the speaker, what we may call a conflation of the said/meant distinction. To this end we (Robinson in Bristol and Goelman and I in Canada) repeated the game but this time on each occasion that the child inappropriately blamed the listener, we asked the child what the speaker had said. This question was asked only when, by looking (on the sly) at the object in the speaker's hand, or when the adult was speaker, at his or her own hand, it was clear what the actual intended object had been. Hence, we have independent evidence both of what was *said* and what the speaker *meant*. The hypothesis was that the listener blamers are not aware of the difference between what the speaker said and what the speaker meant or of the possible discrepancy. If he conflates what was said with what was meant, he should answer the *say* question with a correct description of the intended object rather than with a repetition of the original sentence. If he differentiates the two, he has the option of saying something of the form "I (you) said x but I (you) meant y." Specifically, we looked at cases in which there

was a discrepancy between what was said and what was meant. Figure 2 shows the course of these exchanges. To take one such case, if the child says "flower" while holding (intending) a *blue flower*, and is then asked "What did you say?", the child tended to reply "the blue flower." That, of course, was what he *meant*, not what he had *said*. In the Bristol part of the study almost every "listener blamer" made the error described above; the child reported the intention when asked "What did you (I) say?". In the Toronto part of the study, 75% of the time when kindergarten children were speakers and their inadequate descriptions led to an error on the part of the listener, they both blamed the listener for the failure and claimed, wrongly, that they had said or given an adequate description. That is, 75% of the time the children gave back their intention when they were asked what they had *said*. Even when they were listeners they still adopted this pattern over 50% of the time, while, if they made the distinction, they should have used it not at all. In sum, these studies indicate that children assume that they have said what they meant and they assume that adults meant what they said, but until they have been in school for a year or more, they do not make the differentiation in their own thinking or use that distinction in blaming the speaker for his inadequate message.

It appears, then, that children are not well aware of the difference between the linguistic form and its intended meanings and their possible interrelations. I will conclude by pointing out why that awareness is associated with the acquisition of literacy.

The differentiation of what was said from what was meant is associated with literacy because writing preserves the surface structure, what was said, independently of the intention it expresses, what was meant. In oral language, what was said is ephemeral; what is preserved is the meanings and intentions of the speaker. This new sensitivity to what was said is shown both in cross cultural studies and in ontogenetic studies of children growing up in a literate culture. Several anthropologists including Lord, Parry, Goody, and Finnegan, have noted that in the oral societies they studied, there was no word equivalent to our "word." There is a term for any unit of speech varying from a single sound to a whole discourse, but the notion that utterances consist of sentences decomposable into words, each with distinctive labels, along with such concepts as syllable, word, sentence and the like, appear to be a literate invention.

Correspondingly, prior to attending school, children in our societies have only rudimentary knowledge of the terms referring to words, sentences,

letters, and as we saw meanings. The acquisition of these terms, usually described as metalinguistic awareness, is generally associated with the acquisition of literacy skills. Francis (1974), for example, found that most beginning readers thought a word was a unit of print rather than a unit of speech.

But it is also possible that some children acquire a knowledge of these distinctions prior to learning to read. Once such concepts and their corresponding linguistic expressions are part of the ordinary language of a society, one can, by simply learning to speak the language, begin to make the distinctions we have discussed herein. Once the terms, know, believe, say, mean, sentence, and the like are part of the language, the concepts which were originally tied to literacy, may be acquired through the acquisition of an elaborated oral language. This appears to be the case in a study reported by Robinson (1980). Some adults used the expression "What do you mean?" in their requests for clarification in talking with their children. These children in fact, came to differentiate what was said and what was meant, and they were the children who were able to recognize the inadequacy of messages and so blamed the speaker rather than the listener for communication failure. And they acquired that distinction between sentences and intentions quite independently of learning to read and write. Yet the concepts themselves and the terms expressing those concepts may have, historically, been based upon the invention of a written form of language.

In either case, written language appears to be the basic source of the distinction between what is said and what is meant; for some children it appears to be the immediate cause while for others it is only the indirect cause.

And the concepts of "say" and "mean" may be just the tip of the iceberg. Vendler (1972) and Searle (1979) have noted that "say" is merely one of a whole set of speech act verbs including *assert*, *ask*, *tell*, and *promise* and "mean" is the merely most obvious of the intentional or mental state verbs including *believe*, *want*, *know*, and *intend* verbs that children master about the same time as the concepts of say and mean (Astington, 1981; cf., Chomsky, 1969). These conceptual differentiations may be the key to unlocking the world of intentionality. And it all begins, I have suggested, with the attention to language an attention fostered by literacy, whether through children's encounters with books and learning to read, or through the speaking practices of literate adults.

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DISCUSSION

Carman St. John Hunter

I sat here thinking about adults because there were some fascinating questions raised about what people do with all those levels. It would be interesting to do some of the same experiments with adults. It is so much a linguistic problem having to do with the English language. So many of the adults who are in remedial programs, or whatever we call them, do well if they get the meaning of the words, but what do they do when literal meaning slips around a bit more?

David Olson

I think that's very important too. Actually we have tried to do some studies on Canadian adults who are nonliterate. Generally it seems that they don't make the distinctions I've described very well, but they have some sensitivity to them. However, it's difficult to get an adult population that is merely non-literate. Usually the samples we get are people in job retraining and so on, and about a third of them are perfectly normal, but there's always a subgroup of them that have other severe problems.

Carman St. John Hunter

There's a wonderful story about a group in Brazil. The project had to do with health and avoiding disease and so forth. The leader showed a picture of people following a little coffin, a child's coffin. The leader said, "How many times have you seen this?" People looked sort of puzzled and then one man said, "Not ever." And the teacher said, "But, doesn't this happen very often in your village?" Answer: "Oh yes, but we've never seen the picture before."

Richard Venezky

David, I was a little confused about where you stand on certain issues. I saw the relationship between language and cognition as central to everything you were talking about. But when you arrived at the communication game (which I take to be a variation on the Glucksburg-Kraus paradigm) and you concentrated on language forms, especially in quoting Elizabeth Robinson and the "listener-blamers," I began to suspect a difference between the way others have treated the developmental stages in performance with that paradigm and what you're talking about. Glucksburg and Kraus have, I believe, looked at the issue from a Piagetian standpoint, related to decentration: at what point can the child who is giving directions place him or herself in the

context of the listener? The issue is not that there is something wrong with the language used when the child says, “Pick up a rose”; clearly the child at the ages represented can say, “Pick up a red rose” or “Pick up a pink rose.” Nor is the issue the ability to produce the language forms; instead, it’s an inability to realize that the other person doesn’t know which rose you’re thinking about.

David Olson

That’s a very interesting issue and I think it is possible to sort those alternatives out through research, but it hasn’t yet been done. My bias certainly is that the domain of so-called social cognition — namely, that you can’t visualize the world of the other — is not a good theory. In other words, I prefer my explanation. But I suppose having strong feelings one way or the other won’t actually answer the question.

It is possible that what others have called egocentrism is simply not that they have no feelings for the position of the other person, but that they don’t realize that there is this discrepancy between the structure of language and the structure of intentions. So they’re in no position to modify their language or even see that it is inadequate for their own purposes. The children will assume that they’ve said what they meant. So it’s not just that the listener is having trouble. They’re both having the same trouble; namely, realizing the relation between intentions and expressions. The basis of the problem is that they don’t even realize there are two things to be coordinated.

Richard Venezky

Is there any real difference between those two viewpoints? Both viewpoints assume that the other person reads your mind.

David Olson

But the linguistic theory says the other person has read your mind on the basis of a convention; namely, a linguistic form. Whereas the other theory says that you can handle your linguistic forms when you have this audience awareness and sensitivity. There is something to that, but I don’t think it goes far or even in the right direction.

Richard Venezky

Well, I’m not sure how far this theory goes in explaining children’s behavior. I recall a film done by a group at Ohio State University that shows subjects at three different age levels playing the communication

game. Each member of a pair had a set of blocks with an unusual shape drawn on each, and one person was to explain to the other how to arrange the blocks in a particular configuration. What's so interesting in relation to the conversation here is that, the first thing that is shown in the film is a kindergarten child, a little girl, very busily picking up the blocks and looking at the picture she had to duplicate. Finally, when she gets finished she says, "Okay, Candy, now you do it." I'm not sure exactly how to handle that, but I can't see that directly as a language problem.

David Olson

No, I agree with that. At some point the child probably not only has difficulty recognizing sentence meanings and intentions, but may have the additional problem of not realizing fully what's visible from another perspective. If you take even a two-year-old and blindfold him, or blindfold the person he's talking to, they suddenly talk differently than if the listener wasn't blindfolded. So they do know; they take the audience into account in some way. Catherine Snow could probably tell you about those studies better than I could. So it is an open question, I would say. There are competing lines of argument and some must have to do with egocentrism as Piaget suggested.

Richard Venezky

It is interesting to think that there are paradigms whereby you could start to tease out these characteristics.

Jay Featherstone

If you had to relate your point of view with actual practice in the schools, what would it start to look like? What are the implications of looking at things that way?

David Olson

Well, it is a dilemma, because on the one hand I am sensitive to the fact that this kind of language play is comfortable to a particular cultural group and a particular cultural orientation. You play language games, you start to make fine distinctions between things like "know" and "believe," and "say" and "mean," and things of that sort that people in other cultures might not make. But I don't see any way to get into this kind of analysis of meaning except through starting to make those kinds of distinctions.

In other words, I guess I would have some cultural imperialism in my views about literacy. There is a kind of thinking and a kind of interpretation that can be encouraged through reading and writing. I would try to find occasions for letting kids learn these things. They would acquire many of the same skills orally simply through learning how to make their views clear, learning how to defend their views against counter arguments with other people, and things of that sort. Schools can provide opportunities for speaking and writing and, as well, give some attention to making clear the kinds of lexical choices for expressing ideas, repairing utterances, editing within text, and things like that.

Richard Venezky

What would be the implications of your position for teaching adults and children how to give better directions? That is, what would you concentrate on?

David Olson

It certainly won't do to just say "pay attention to what you said as opposed to what you meant." I see the dilemma in this. One could set up a crash course for teaching all these speech act verbs and intentional predicates. And once they are labelled and explicitly taught, everyone may come to know the difference between "think" and "believe" and that knowledge would be rather trivial. However, unless people can discriminate "think," "know," "intend," "predict," and the like and use them appropriately in their discourse, they're in conceptual trouble. The only way to make those concepts meaningful is probably the way one makes any other concept meaningful: children must relate them to their own perceptions and actions. That doesn't go very far. We do have programs in schools for teaching everything else; we may as well add these concepts to the list of things that are worth learning in school and that may be taught.

Richard Venezky

I strongly agree with your opening statement about the importance of sentence level comprehension. I think that many comprehension problems stem from higher level understanding.

David Olson Rather than word level, you mean.

Richard Venezky

Yes. Clearly there are vocabulary problems, but in a sense we know something about dealing with vocabulary. We don't know much about dealing with sentence level problems. We see lots of cases where the words are clear but the sentence is not.

Carman St. John Hunter

Often what is described in a piece of writing is fantasy. The experience of the people who read it varies, and the whole question of dealing with what is actually the intention of the sentences is to describe a world that doesn't exist. It's really a fantasy world. When you try to look at that piece of writing (granted you don't do it with little kids) you don't have to go far before you can begin to enable people to see that in some writing the intention is to describe an America that is what we would like it to be. The reality of the people reading is that they know it's not like that. At what stage do you begin to deal with the differences between a created fantasy and reality? For instance, I have always been grateful that I was brought up in a dual nationality household in which it was all right to laugh about what Americans said because we were really Canadians, and vice-versa. With one parent of each nationality, I learned to analyze the fact that people say things about their reality that have to be taken with a little grain of salt.

Audience Participant

You seem to be suggesting that part of the reason children are not reading as well in American schools as they once did is because of things that go on in departments of psychology in universities. You suggested that we do have adequate psychology to teach reading to children. Dr. Olson and other people today are certainly providing a type of cognitive theory and addressing the question of comprehension. How would the kind of work they're doing inform teachers in schools around this country what they can do to help children read better?

Richard Venezky

I'll try to answer that, but I'm not sure that I have any wise words of wisdom, as Pogo would say. Let me qualify one thing. I don't think I said (if I did, I did not mean to say) that we're not doing as well today as we once did. I'm not exactly sure how one goes about comparing literacy

today to any earlier stage. My own view happens to be that it's meaningless to compare on an absolute level. It's only meaningful to compare literacy abilities in relationship to literacy needs. Now obviously that raises all kinds of problems. How do you decide what literacy needs are? But I realize that was not the basis of your question. There are, I believe, from a didactic standpoint two extremely different views of how research affects practice. One viewpoint can be drawn from Geraldine Clifford's article in the *Second Handbook of Research on Teaching* about the relationship between research and instruction. There she laboriously, and at times tediously, but always informatively, probes curriculum area by curriculum area, looking for cases where research led directly to changes in practice. It's in general a futile search. After dozens of pages and hundreds of references, she finds few clear examples of direct research into practice; instead, she finds a stronger case for cultural diffusion. That is, she finds research results that have become accepted in general society, believed in, and incorporated into everyday conversation. From there, because teachers and school administrators are part of society, the practices enter the schoolhouse in a sense through the basement door. Clifford points to, for example, Freudian psychology as an example of this. Freudian psychology never got through the front door of the schools, at least not in the world I know. But it certainly entered in the vocabulary and in the thinking of the clinical psychologists and the classroom teachers who used Freudian terms in everyday life.

Computers are also entering the classroom, through cultural diffusion. In the sixties they were pushed in by engineers, computer scientists, and some psychologists, but their promise never materialized. Today parents, PTA groups, and teachers are scraping up funds for buying classroom computers. But they're not doing this because they've read of recent research on the value of computer-aided instruction. Once microcomputers became relatively cheap and accessible to the average citizen, the schools assumed that they were desirable and they began to diffuse into the classrooms.

The other view—and the view I think we preach in most of our educational psychology courses—is based on the belief that once you discover something in the laboratory, you should put out a booklet for teachers explaining how it's to be used. The National Institute of Education believes in that paradigm and has given many grants to do research, to reduce that research to a form that teachers can understand, and to disseminate it to teachers. Now, I suggest that you ask the NIE what they

think teachers should do, for example, with results from studies on story grammars. I don't believe this avenue has been very fruitful in the past. For example, asking teachers to come to conferences where people talk about research and end up saying, "It seems obvious what the implications are for instruction," creates high anxiety or frustration, but not much else.

What we need is a position between these two views. Research such as we've been talking about here, and a lot of other cognitively based research, has strong implications for immediate redesign of instruction. But teachers, in general, cannot translate these results into new instructional designs, and we can't wait for cultural diffusion.

David Olson

I would like to respond somewhat along the same line, but maybe a little less despairingly. I agree with Richard completely that there is no simple solution to the application of implications from research. But the thing I notice is that, in a sense, we are all in this together. It's very interesting that cognitive psychologists got interested in comprehension in the last few years. As Richard pointed out, in the last twenty years or so there's been a lot of talk about comprehension. It seemed important if we were to understand what's going on in schools, and psychologists got interested in it about the same time. Psychologists make some contributions to our understanding, but teachers are already trying to come to grips with problems in comprehension and interpretation by bringing background experiences into classroom discourse. We're all in this together; we just pursue different aspects of it. Maybe some of the things that are tried in schools feed back to laboratories and some things from laboratories feed out to schools. But for some problems you have to actually make a particular program for changing things if you want to achieve particular goals.

Richard Venezky

To ensure further that nobody goes home too happy, I would like to point out that a study of the history of reading research leads to two seemingly contradictory conclusions. One is that the best work by far in the study of reading has been done by experimental psychologists who studied reading problems. Large numbers of school psychologists, ophthalmologists, electrical engineers, and the like have studied reading, but our theories about reading are derived primarily from the work of such experimental psychologists as J. M. Catell, Raymond Dodge and Rudolf Pinter.

The other conclusion is that it is difficult to find an experimental psychologist who has studied reading for the purpose of improving reading instruction. In fact, through the whole history of the study of reading psychologists have, for the most part, touched on reading research only in pursuit of a more general understanding of human information processing. Catell, for example, had little interest in improving reading instruction; he was interested in the speed of mental events, in human variability, and other hard-core psychological issues. The story grammar people today, in spite of pretenses about obvious implications for instruction, are interested in a much broader model of how information is processed. Throughout the last 100 years one can find experimental work that looked particularly important for reading practice. As soon as this work reached a point where practical implications were ready to be worked out, however, the experimental psychologists moved on to other problems. So, while the best work comes out of experimental psychologists, I'm hard pressed to name very many who did their work with the interest of following through to assist in applications.

Audience Participant

I'm curious about what people's expectations are in terms of research. When I go to conferences or conventions like this I have the feeling that people expect that there is going to be some great answer. I'm wondering whether or not we really need any more research in reading. I'm wondering if we don't know enough to solve problems. I'm wondering if comprehension really can be improved. I don't think you can teach it. So what are people looking for in terms of practical applications from research done by cognitive psychologists in the area of comprehension?

Richard Venezky

All I'm saying is that people are going on, doing further research with the hope of proving that you're wrong. It happens to be that there are a good number of people who believe as you do. I don't know any research that shows you're wrong on this point, but I think the kind of work that David and others talk about is really oriented towards exploring that question. Can we learn something that would allow us to teach comprehension better? Basically, that is the sole motivation.

Jeanne Chall

Instead of taking time for conclusions, let me have a little time to answer now. I agree with both of you. Basically teachers know pretty much, and much of the current research, much of what is coming out of Illinois and other centers, is a beautiful confirmation of what they know. Your point, David, is marvelous on this; I love the words you use — “possible worlds” or “p. w.’s.” How could any third grade or fourth grade teacher ever teach anything without knowing that that is what is happening with their children? Because in building their worlds (whether or not she was told or alerted to it by Illinois or by Delaware or by OISE) she knows that they must read information and content. Richard made the good point in suggesting, “Let us look at what 90% of the children in this country are doing every day for at least $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour a day in basal readers.” You may not like basal readers, they may not be participatory in your view, but that’s what children do. And what is in those books makes a difference. I want to say that the issue of fiction versus non-fiction is an important issue. It sounds so small, so common-sense.

Another point made is very important. We know a great deal that we could apply right away. But why don’t we do so? When Richard was talking, there were so many different interpretations. The people in the audience seemed to understand differently because of a simple thing: deep down everybody knows that we’re teaching something very, very profound. It makes a difference that each person learns to read. The parents know it, the teachers know it, the publishers know it, and I think everybody is trying to do something about it. There are many reasons why there is so much fiction in the basals, and so much not-so-good fiction. I don’t think it’s related much to behaviorist psychology; I think it’s related more to other things — to good intentions of reading educators, school people, and publishers. And that is the desire that children be happy, they should love reading, they shouldn’t have it too difficult. So stories are easier; they have a lower readability level. They should be more relevant because when you start reading about science or about history, there are more concepts and previous knowledge to build up. It is harder. And that is why the question of what should be in basal readers is a very difficult one that needs serious study.

Audience Participant

I have a question for Olson. It concerns the works that you cited from Sylvia Scribner as one example of how the logic of written language contrasts sometimes very dramatically with the logic of conversations. Do you think that kids acquire this logic? I am asking you to make a sweeping generalization to the direct experience of texts. Did you say that school-type tasks which require close attention to linguistic forms also play a very important role, but that the experience with the text itself is not sufficient?

David Olson

I think that the experience of written texts drives you toward that anyway. I think that you wouldn't even have to teach these school-like tasks if children read enough primers, especially if the primers started to get a little more into "possible worlds." Kids would be perfectly set up for those "logical" questions which appeal to wording.

There is a big argument about whether test questions are valid or not. In a sense they're valid because they appeal to a particular type of discourse and to a particular orientation to language, an orientation which is the school's business to pass on to children. But on the other hand, these test questions are not fair, because if a child's more ordinary uses of language predominate and if he or she still hasn't learned to cope with the logical aspects of text, then he or she will try to treat texts as if they're ordinary conversational questions as did A. R. Luria's traditional subjects. So, it is both a matter of learning to deal with school-type questions and of learning to deal with written texts. But those things are very much of a piece.

Audience Participant

I think there's a question of real issue from Venezky's discussion. In his paper the issues are not between fiction and non-fiction, the issues really are not between whether students are learning something that is directly applicable to adult life or not; they are really issues of quality. The issue that Professor Chall brought up, the quality of what's in a basal reader, and the quality of the way the teacher teaches, as Olson discussed, are the real issues. How do you learn to deal with different kinds of sentences, different kinds of prose in the material that's in the basal reader? The next question would be, is it expository or narrative, not fiction or non-fiction or are students going to read different kinds of text? I think the real question is "How bad is literature that is bad literature?"

My other question concerns academic learning versus training: the issue of a two-track education system that was brought up earlier. If all students are reading high quality material and there is high quality teaching of how to think about what they're reading, it seems to me that they're all getting an academic education and there's not really any argument about that.

Richard Venezky

What's in the reading texts is basically narrative fiction, with very little expository writing. My own views are that there are high level (from a cognitive standpoint) comprehension problems that come from non-narrative, non-fiction texts that are hard to find represented well in narrative fiction. The information density and some of the structural forms of science writing today, for example, are somewhat hard to find in fiction. If we want to teach students how to deal with high density informational materials, we're going to have to find high density information materials. Furthermore, there is a type of reading that tends to be taught, whether it's with good or poor fiction, that's a one pass, forward-going form of reading. You read a story, we're told, by starting at the beginning and reading straight through. Regressions, we're told, reflect reading failure. But you can't read a science article that way and you shouldn't. You will not comprehend it.

In 1925 a study committee on content area reading appointed by the NSSE made a distinction between *recreational reading* and *work type reading*. Recreational reading is what you do when your goal is mainly to enjoy yourself, to get something interesting, to live in another world, in a "p. w." That's a good part of what we're teaching in the schools. But there's also a need to teach people a type of reading where you have to work at understanding a text. You may have to restructure the text or draw diagrams to figure out the logic of certain sentences, or look things up in a dictionary. Because of the needs created by work-type reading, we can't solve the reading problem just by placing better fiction in the schools. What we need, as I've said before, is a balance. We need to look at the underlying structures that we have to deal with: the if-then-else clauses that are so difficult at certain age levels, the ways to deal with complex sentence structures in social studies or science texts. We have to find ways to teach these things regardless of where they are found. These are not trivial skills. They should not be looked at like running a lathe or jumping on pogo sticks. They are representative of the highest level of cognitive functioning that we've ever

tried to teach in the elementary and secondary schools. So my response basically is that I don't see just better fiction as the answer.

Carman St. John Hunter

I'm glad you answered that question because to me that was a clearer statement of the point you made this morning. It was very helpful to me, and I would only add that I feel that way too. I have problems sometimes when people use the word "quality." It often means the teaching of an elitist literature and I'd like to combine quality with life reality. By that I mean not just what we've always read as quality literature, and not stories that come out well in the end with tragedy and suffering screened out, but a combination which can mean quality from the past and contemporary quality and it should be grounded in reality.

I think it is extremely important to broaden the scope of the literature we read, beyond the literature of our English ancestors. It should spread out to some of the good translations that exist in the literature of the world which deals in different ways with the total reality of human experience.

Jay Featherstone

There are two separate issues which I think should be kept distinct. One is the issue of whether English teaching and other language teaching, broadly speaking, in American schools will do justice to the variety of peoples and traditions that exist in the country. An old order is crumbling. We are a country of differing people. In cultural terms, the shocks of this are beginning to be felt. Whose stories about America get included in the curriculum, and whose heroes and whose legends? All are up for grabs, in a sense, and the culture is shifting toward a more pluralistic culture. I don't think that shift is the same thing as not insisting on high quality literature. Whatever we do has to be good. I want black kids, for instance, to have access to Ralph Ellison. Although quality is a value laden word — indeed, you were uncomfortable raising it for discussion — it's a very important concept for us as teachers. What we try to get students into is a tradition. When Ralph Ellison writes, he's writing out of his particular experience, out of black experience in America, albeit Oklahoma and the South. He's drawing on Mark Twain, on Faulkner, on that stream of English. Among our many complicated roles touched on here, we are representative of that tradition. As teachers now in America we stand as representatives trying to make that tradition more pluralistic, but it's still the English language. That's what we are teaching.

My wife recently finished a book about a family with disabled children. There were some very sad stories and grim material, and the first person she showed it to in a publishing house said, "We won't publish this book. In fact, we won't even handle it unless you can make the ending more upbeat." It's not just a problem for the schools or the kids. It's a relentlessly upbeat culture that doesn't like to talk about the sad things and the grim stories.

Richard Venezky It's like doing Hamlet without the prince.

Jeanne Chall

With regard to quality and difficulty, some of the research shows that perhaps textbooks have gotten too easy and that this has contributed to the decline in SAT scores. The fact that fiction predominates in the readers also means that the books are easier. Richard mentioned that textbooks are two grade levels below the grades for which they are written, and still they have trouble doing the content.

A theme that kept running through the discussion concerned content versus technique. I should like to propose that reading instruction suffers without the content. You've got to pick the proper content in order to have the proper arguments with a child. How do you get a main idea if the composition doesn't even have a main idea that is worth getting at? It seems to me that increasingly more difficult, ever more challenging books are needed so that the children will learn by grappling with them. Is technique necessary? Are exercises necessary? Sentences may be selected to teach well certain aspects of reading and language. They can probably help, but sentences and exercises alone will fall flat if they are not put back into reality, into context. Thorndike used to call it "transfer." You've got to build for transfer.

*Universal ability to read and write !
It is perhaps strange that so many who today accept this objective without question should forget how recently it received social approval, and forget too the enormous inertia, and indeed active opposition, which the pioneers of the idea had to overcome in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even in so-called advanced countries. Perhaps these pioneers erred in believing that this ability alone would liberate from ignorance, disease and poverty; perhaps, as a consequence, they erred too in concentrating on this ability without relating it to welfare, social progress and democratic growth.*

William S. Gray
*The Teaching of Reading and Writing:
An International Survey.*
UNESCO Monographs on Fundamental Education, X.
Paris: UNESCO, 1956, p. 9.

intu his'n. Sez he, 'That jis' makes four munths, an' mos' a half, don't hit, Missis McKildrin?' She never sed one word. Wat reached fur the hath, an' got a dead fire-coal; then he made a mark clean acrost a floorplank. Sez he, 'Aprile,' a-holdin down the coal ontu the aind ove the mark, like he wer fear'd hit mout blow away afore he got hit christened Aprile. Sez he, 'May'—an' he marked across the board agin; then he counted the marks, one, two, a-dottin at em wif the coal. 'June,' an' he marked agin, one, two, three; counted wif the pint ove the coal. He scratched his head wif the littil finger ove the han holdin the charcoal, an' he drawed hit slowly acrost the board agin, peepin onder his wrist tu see when hit reached the crack, an' sez he 'July,' es he lifted the coal; 'one, two, three, four,' countin frum lef tu right, an' then frum right tu lef. 'That haint but four, no way I kin fix hit. Ole Pike hissef cudn't make hit five, ef he wer tu sifer ontu hit ontill his laigs turned intu figger eights.' Then he made a mark, haf acrost a plank, spit on his finger, an' rubbed off a haf inch ove the aind, an' sez he, 'Mos' haf ove August.' He looked up at the widder, an' thar she wer, same es ever, still a-holdin the flask agin her bussum, an' sez he 'Four months, an' mos' a haf. *Haint enuf, is hit mammy?* hits jis' 'bout (lackin a littil) *haf enuf*, haint hit, mammy?'

"Missis McKildrin shuck her head sorter onsartin like, an' sez she, 'Take a drap more sperrits, Watty, my dear pet; dus yu mine buyin that ar rar ripe seed, frum the peddler?' Wat nodded his head, an' looked 'what ove hit,' but didn't say hit.

"This is what cums ove hit, an' four months an' a haf am rar ripe time fur babys, adzackly. Tu be sure, hit lacks a day ur two, but Margarit Jane wer allers a pow'ful interprizin gal, an' a yearly rizer.' Sez Wat,

"How about the 'taters?'

"Oh, *we* et 'taters es big es goose aigs, afore ole Missis Collinze's blossomed.'

"How 'bout co'n?'

"Oh, we shaved down roasin years afore hern tassel'd—'

"An' peas?'

"Yes son, we hed gobs an' lots in three weeks. Everything cums in adzackly half the time that hit takes the ole sort, an' yu *knows*, my darlin son, yu planted hit waseful. I tho't then yu'd rar ripe everything on the place. Yu planted *often*, too, didn't yu luv? fur fear hit wudn't cum up.'

"Ye-ye-s-s he—he did,' sed Mary a-cryin. Wat studied pow'ful deep a spell, an' the widder jis' waited. Widders allers wait, an' allers win. At las, sez he, 'Mammy.' She looked at Mary, an' winked these yere words at her, es plain es she cud a-talked em. 'Yu hearn him call me *mammy twist*. I'se got *him* now. His back-bone's a-limberin fas', he'll own the baby yet, see ef he don't. Jis' hole still my darter, an' let yer mammy knead this dough, then yu may bake hit es brown es yu please.'

Eye Dialect as a Problem in Graphics

Paul H. Bowdre, Jr.

This paper examines the problems involved in arranging the letters of the English alphabet into nonstandard spellings for the purpose of producing eye dialect spellings. It argues that the writer of eye dialect is under certain restrictions imposed by the fact that the reader must be able to associate the eye dialect spelling with the standard spelling. These restrictions, and how various writers dealt with them, are illustrated by the use of various eye dialect spellings from literary works.

The production of eye dialect forms poses a problem in graphics. Certain of the symbols available in our writing system must be selected and arranged in a particular order to produce the desired effect on both eye and ear. However, it should be understood here that many writers of eye dialect are not aware of the problem at all. They are often under the impression that they are actually indicating nonstandard pronunciations when in reality the spellings they use are eye dialect.

Some writers probably use distorted spellings without regard to the pronunciations they represent simply because such spellings are a traditional way of portraying the speech of a dialect character. This haphazard use of distorted spellings inevitably produces some eye dialect forms. Still others may intend to convey the impression that "This is the way the speaker would spell the word if he had to write it." In the discussion which follows it had been assumed, for convenience, that the writer is consciously and purposely using eye dialect. However, whether or not he is aware that he is using it, the same considerations involving the arranging of graphic symbols to indicate a standard pronunciation — that is, the problem in graphics — still exist.

The problem in graphics is the same for the writer of eye dialect as it is for the writer of substandard dialect or regional dialect except for one

An excerpt from "Rare Ripe Garden-seed" by George Washington Harris, one of the stories in *The Literature of the South*, edited by Richmond Croom Beatty et al. Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1952.

important point. The writer of eye dialect combines letters of the alphabet to indicate a standard pronunciation, while the other combines them to indicate an actual, existing nonstandard pronunciation. The writer of eye dialect need not have made a study of peculiarities of regional (or national) nonstandard speech. He merely uses an alternative nonstandard spelling of a word that will yet indicate its standard pronunciation. (He is not, however, looking for alternative *standard* spellings that exist in English in a few cases, such as *catalog* and *catalogue*.)

The inexact "fit" of English makes this task possible, and in many cases relatively easy. There is an exceedingly inexact correspondence between the sounds and letters of English. However, there is an important requirement which complicates the deliberate writing of eye dialect (or of any other kind of dialect, for that matter). The requirement is that the reader must be able to associate the unfamiliar eye dialect spelling with the standard spelling. The eye dialect spelling means nothing to him unless he can recognize what word or words it is intended to represent.

In the process of associating a dialect form with its standard form (and thus understanding its meaning), three factors are involved: context, similarity of appearance, and similarity of pronunciation. Let us consider each of these factors using the nonstandard spelling *wuz* for the word *was*. This nonstandard spelling is eye dialect since it appears to represent [wəz], the pronunciation of *was* which all speakers use in unstressed position — that is, the letter *u* often represents [ə] in standard English spelling. (Phonetic symbols used here are from Pyles, 1971.)

The first of the three factors, context, refers to the fact that the reader has been led to expect a certain word by the written matter which preceded and followed it. It may be that in the context of the matter being read, the word *was* "makes sense" at the particular point where the nonstandard written form *wuz* occurs. This in itself would provide a hint to the reader as to what standard spelling the nonstandard form was intended to represent.

However, context is only one of the considerations involved. It can easily be seen that the similarity of appearance of the two words on the printed page has something to do with the matter of association — that is, *wuz* and *was* look very much alike. For one thing they have the same number of letters, and perhaps equally important they both begin with the letter *w*. If similarity of appearance were not of importance, and context alone provided a sufficient hint to the reader, then some such combination of letters as *jrstvx* might just as well be used to represent *was* as the combination *wuz*. In actuality, however, the sudden appearance of *jrstvx* would be

highly confusing to the reader, and it is thus evident that similarity of appearance is another important consideration in the association of a dialect spelling with its standard spelling.

There is a third important consideration, moreover, that must be added to context and similarity of appearance. If these two were the sole determining factors of whether the reader could decipher the nonstandard spelling, the author might as well represent *was* by the spelling *wkz* as the spelling *wuz*. From the standpoint of context and similarity of appearance there is no apparent advantage in the use of one over the other. There is an advantage in using *wuz* from the standpoint of pronunciation, however. In the English writing system, the letter *u* frequently represents the sound [ə]. The letter *k*, on the other hand, never represents this sound. Since [ə] is the vowel sound in a standard pronunciation of *was*, the use of *u* is preferable to the use of *k* on phonological grounds.

In the writing of eye dialect, therefore, the writer is concerned with the factors mentioned above. There is very little he needs to worry about in connection with context. Ordinarily, regardless of which word or words he chooses to spell in a nonstandard manner, the sentence structure and the "sense" of the words preceding and following the chosen words will give the reader some hint as to what standard spellings will "make sense" when substituted for the nonstandard ones. However, in many cases, the hint received from context is not enough for the reader. Often there are points in a literary passage where more than one word will "make sense."

Similarity of appearance is probably as important as context. As G. B. Shaw is supposed to have pointed out, the word *fish* may be represented by *ghoti* if one interprets the *gh* as representing the final sound of *tough*, the *o* as the stressed vowel of *women*, and the *ti* as the medial consonant of *nation*. But the use of *ghoti* for *fish* would be quite misleading to the reader because of its lack of similarity of appearance.

The factor of similarity of pronunciation is more complex than the other two and bears further discussion. In eye dialect, by definition, the pronunciation of the standard and the nonstandard written forms must be the same. But in the many cases where a large number of variant spellings represent the same sound in English, how does the dialect writer choose the most appropriate spelling?

The writer of eye dialect knows the pronunciation he is trying to represent with a nonstandard spelling, but he is faced with the problem of selecting combinations of letters that will convey that pronunciation to the reader. Since there is not a one-to-one relationship between letters and

sounds in English, he cannot be sure that his choice of letters will necessarily convey the desired sounds. For example, if he wishes to replace the *i* representing the vowel [ɪ] in *hit*, should he use the *ee* of *been* [bɪn], the *o* of *women* [wɪmɪn], the *u* of *busy* [bɪzɪ], the *y* of *myth* [mɪθ] or the *ui* of *build* [bɪld]? Each letter or letter combination represents [ɪ] in the examples given. The question arises as to whether there is a “usual” or “most common” letter (or letter combination) that ordinarily represents each sound and which can be counted on to bring that particular sound to the reader’s mind.

Thomas Pyles (1971) lists the vowel and consonant sounds of English, and what he considers to be their usual spellings. For example, of the many ways the sound [ʃ] may be spelled, *sh* is taken to be the usual way. The usual way of representing [ɪ] is with *i* as in *hit*, rather than such alternatives as the *o* in *women* or the *ee* in *been*. Pyles indicates that every sound has spellings which are more usual than the possible alternatives.

In addition, it should be pointed out that some of the “less usual” spellings are limited to certain positions in a word — *gh*, for example, represents [f] only in final position while *ti* represents [ʃ] only before a vowel standing for a weakly stressed [ə] (*nation*, *initial*, *militia*). It is this fact which accounts, at least partially, for the humor in the spelling *ghoti* for *fish*. The *gh* and *ti* are hopelessly out of position. Such positional limitations do impose a practical restriction on the writer in producing nonstandard spellings.

Based on the above, it would appear that the writer of eye dialect will solve the problem of pronunciation similarity if he uses the letter, or combinations of letters, which are usual or “regular” ones for representing the sounds of the word or words involved. Of course, in many cases this will not be possible because the “regular” spelling will be that found in the standard spelling. In these cases the eye dialect spelling should logically use an alternative “regular” spelling, if such is available. If only one spelling is at all “regular” — such as *p* for [p] at the beginning of a word — then no eye dialect spelling is feasible for that sound. In fact, those words for which eye dialect spellings are most often substituted are almost invariably words which have an unusual or “irregular” spelling of one or more of their sounds. Words like *liquor* (with its *qu* representation of [k]), *minute* (with its *u* for [ɪ]), and *women* (with its *o* for [ɪ]), are good examples. Apparently the writer of eye dialect unconsciously recognizes those places where the letter representing a particular sound is not the “regular” one.

Differences do appear in the eye dialect forms arrived at by different writers as alternative spellings for the same word (some examples are appended to this paper). It should be of interest to take note of several alternative spellings, and to evaluate which form is clearest from the standpoint of the reader.

The word *business* has been spelled in a number of ways that may be considered eye dialect. Let us compare two of them, the *bizness* of Robert Penn Warren and the *bus'ness* of Tennessee Williams. From the standpoint of similarity of appearance the form used by Williams is probably more easily recognized than that used by Warren. It changes only one letter, and the omitted *i* is replaced by an apostrophe. From the standpoint of similarity of pronunciation, however, Warren's form seems preferable. The substitution of *i* for *u* in the first syllable is actually a change from an infrequent way of representing [ɪ] to the most usual one. The complete elimination of the *i* is in keeping with the fact that it is not pronounced anyway: in current English the word is [bɪznɪs], not [bɪsnɪs]. The Williams' spelling, *bus'ness*, on the other hand, though it has made only one small change in the standard spelling, at first glance may appear to indicate [besnɪs]. This is because the reader is familiar with the word *bus*, and also because *bus* means [bɪz] to him only in *busy* and *business*. Williams has changed the spelling enough that the word he intends to represent may not be immediately obvious, and the reader may be misled into assuming [bəs] for *bus*.

The word *says* has been given alternative spellings by a number of writers. There would appear to be two reasons for the notice they have paid to *says*: first, it is a word that occurs quite often in dialogue, particularly when a story is told in the historical present; second, the letter combination *ays* is a very unusual way of representing the sound combination [ɛz]. Bret Harte and G. W. Harris use the eye dialect spelling *sez*, whereas Stephen Crane and James Russell Lowell use another eye dialect spelling *ses*. In both cases the unusual *ays* is changed—the writers agree on the usual *e* for [ɛ], but they disagree on the representation of [z]. According to Pyle's list, both *z* and *s* are "regular" spellings of [z], and thus it is difficult to say which spelling is to be preferred.

Sometimes there is good reason why the letter which usually represents a voiceless sound is found where a symbol for a voiced sound might seem called for. Bret Harte spelled *was* as *wus*, for example. The word *was*, by itself, may be represented phonetically by [wəz] when in an unstressed position. But Harte's *was* precedes the word *sick*, and the final [z] of *was* is unvoiced through assimilation with the unvoiced [s] which immediately

follows. Thus Harte is phonetically accurate in his spelling of *was* as *wus* in this particular instance. He is not always consistent in this respect, however, since logically he should use *wuz* when voiced sounds follow — instead he often sticks with *wus*.

Another word that has been given a variety of eye dialect spellings is the word *clothes* [kloz]. The spelling *close*, a form used by George Washington Harris and Artemus Ward, has the disadvantage of being the standard spelling of two different words — the verb *close* [kloz] and the adjective *close* [klos]. While it is true that within the context of a sentence confusion is not likely in this case, such will not always be the case where the eye dialect form actually is the standard spelling of another word. And even in the case of *close* for *clothes*, it seems probable that the reader will be somewhat distracted at first due to his normal association of *close* with meanings which have nothing to do with wearing apparel, and (in the case of the adjective *close* [klos]) with another pronunciation.

The eye dialect spelling *clo'se*, as used by Tennessee Williams is preferable to *close* in that the apostrophe precludes the reader's mistaking the word for either the verb or adjective spelled *close*. The apostrophe signals that certain letters have been omitted, which from the standpoint of similarity of appearance is desirable. However, with respect to similarity of pronunciation, the form used by Williams is inferior to a third form, *clo'es*, used by James Russell Lowell. Lowell's form indicates the loss of letters with an apostrophe, and, in addition, it uses a series of letters, *oes* (omitting the apostrophe since it does not affect the pronunciation), which are unmistakably [oz] in such familiar words as *toes*, *hoes*, *Joese*, *foese*, etc. The *oes* spelling clearly indicates the voiced sound [z], while *ose* may indicate either [z] or [s].

Examples such as the above seem to suggest that the writing of "good" eye dialect — that is, eye dialect which serves its purpose without confusing the reader — is a problem in graphics. Certain constraints imposed by the sound and writing system of the language must be adhered to by the writer in arranging his graphic symbols, the letters of his alphabet. He may not always be aware of these constraints, but they still determine the degree of success he will achieve with the nonstandard spellings he chooses.

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Mr. Dooley's Brogue: The Literary Dialect of Finley Peter Dunne

Clyde Thogmartin

Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley was once one of America's most popular humorous characters. Dunne's elaborate eye dialect tends to put off contemporary readers, but the Dooley essays lose much of their power and literary "flavor" when they are transcribed into standard English spelling. This study relates Dunn's respelling system to the pronunciation of Anglo-Irish and shows that Dunne's eye dialect is intended to represent many phonological features of English as it is spoken in Ireland, while avoiding other features whose inclusion would threaten readability. The authenticity of Mr. Dooley's dialect adds to the credibility of the character by giving the reader the illusion that he is listening to a real human voice belonging to a real member of a specific, historic Irish-American community.

Between 1892 and 1897 Finley Peter Dunne wrote a column in the *Chicago Evening Post* in a form of Anglo-Irish or Irish-American literary dialect, criticizing corruption in high places in Chicago city politics and commenting on society from the viewpoint of one Martin Dooley, a bachelor from Roscommon who kept a saloon on "Ar-rchey Road" (Archer Avenue) in the poor Irish neighborhood of Bridgeport. Mr. Dooley was invented because an earlier series of monologues featuring a "Colonel Malachi McNeery" had had to be terminated due to the protests of one "Colonel" Jim McGarry, a popular and sophisticated downtown Chicago pub-keeper, who was too obviously recognizable as the model for the loquacious fictional colonel (Ellis 1941, 75). As befitted someone who lived and kept shop in a poorer neighborhood, Mr. Dooley was a more down-to-earth and less learned character than Colonel McNeery. (See Fanning 1978, 25, for some of the differences between the two characters.)

Dunne ended the Mr. Dooley columns about Chicago politics and the life of the Irish-American poor in 1897. One recent critic (Fanning 1978) believes he did his best and most incisive writing in these early pieces, but Dunne did not gain national fame until he revived Mr. Dooley to comment on the Spanish-American war of 1898. The columns on the Spanish-American war were a national sensation. They were widely reprinted and quoted, leading to national syndication and to the publication of several

books of previously written pieces (Ellis 1941, 120 et seq.; F. P. Dunne 1899a, 1899b).

After that, Dunne continued to write, but his pieces, although more popular and more widely quoted, dealt with general topics and with national and international affairs. He moved from Chicago to New York, and became the friend of such men as Mark Twain and Theodore Roosevelt, who read his columns at Cabinet meetings as Lincoln had done those of Petroleum V. Nasby. (Dunne's son Philip recounts the relationship with T. R. and other Presidents in Philip Dunne 1963, 98 et seq.) He set great store by the essays he wrote in standard English in the *American Magazine* from 1906 to 1913, but these never gained the popularity of the dialect pieces. He tried to revive Mr. Dooley to comment on Prohibition, but the times were different and he did not enjoy the same success. He was a member of the Establishment now, even serving as a character witness for one of the defendants in the Teapot Dome scandal. After retirement in 1927 he wrote almost nothing. He died in 1936.

What remains today of the fame of Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley? At the turn of the century, he was a household word throughout America, the subject of plays and popular songs. He has been quoted since then (and apparently even read) by such important figures in American public life as John F. Kennedy, Felix Frankfurter, James Reston, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Dooleyisms are still known and quoted by a few connoisseurs. For example:

"Thrust ivrybody, but cut the ca-ards."

"Pollytics ain't bean-bag."

"Among men, wet eye manes dhry heart."

"If ye dhrink before sivin, ye'll cry be ilivin."

"We're a gr-reat nation. An' th' best iv it is, we know we ar-re."

Scholarly interest in Dunne continues; witness two recent anthologies of the early Chicago pieces, some of which had never appeared before in book form (Fanning 1976; Schaaf 1977), and a critical study based on them (Fanning 1978). An anthology of some of the best-known columns, edited by Robert Hutchinson, appeared in 1963 and remained in print for years thereafter.

Nevertheless, Dunne's dialect pieces are not nearly as widely known and read today as the work of his older contemporary Mark Twain, who used dialect extensively in *Huckleberry Finn*. There are also dialect elements in the dialogue of Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, a work roughly

contemporary with the early Chicago pieces, which is still in print, read, and loved; but Dunne's work, which was once as widely known and as popular as theirs, is now the province of a few specialists and fans.

There are several reasons for this. Dunne's work may not have the intrinsic literary merit of Mark Twain and Stephen Crane, although he did rise above conventional American dialect humor in such tragic pieces as "On the Popularity of Firemen" and "The Idle Apprentice." Another possible reason for lack of current interest in Mr. Dooley is that many of the names and events mentioned no longer mean anything to the general reader, especially those in earlier pieces which refer to Chicago politics and long-forgotten Chicago politicians.

One of the greatest barriers to contemporary enjoyment of Dunne's Mr. Dooley articles is the language in which they were written, a literary dialect based on the Anglo-Irish spoken by the Chicago Irish working class. Unlike the dialects used by Mark Twain and by Stephen Crane, the language of Dunne's writings has no roots in popular American English, but belongs to a quite different dialect system.

Dunne, like most writers of dialect literature, did not speak the dialect he wrote. Neither did he speak a more socially prestigious dialect from the same region, unlike such writers as Mark Twain and Joel Chandler Harris. His son said he spoke "pure Chicagoese" (Philip Dunne 1963, 49). Nevertheless, Dunne had heard Anglo-Irish dialects all his life, as his father was from Queens County (now Laois County), Ireland, and his mother was from Kilkenny (Ellis 1941, 6). He was raised in the middle-class Irish Catholic neighborhood around St. Patrick's church on the near west side of Chicago, not in proletarian Bridgeport where Mr. Dooley held forth, but he must have heard as he was growing up what he later called "all the various accents of Ireland, from the awkward brogue of the 'far-downer' to the mild and aisy Elizabethan English of the southern Irishman, and all the exquisite variations to be heard between Armagh and Bantry Bay, with the difference that would naturally arise from substituting cinders and sulphuretted hydrogen for soft misty air and peat smoke" (F. P. Dunne 1899a, viii).

An excerpt from *Mr. Dooley in Peace and in War*. Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1899.

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF CERVERA'S FLEET.

[These comments were made by Mr. Dooley during a strike of the stereotypers, which caused the English newspapers of Chicago temporarily to suspend publication.]

"I HEAR," said Mr. Hennessy, "that th' stereopticons on th' newspapers have sthruck."

"I sh'd think they wud," said Mr. Dooley. "Th' las' time I was down town was iliction night, whin Charter Haitch's big la-ad was ilicted, an' they was wurrukin' th' stereopticons till they was black in th' face. What's th' news?"

"Th' What Cheer, Ioway, Lamp iv Freedom is on th' sthreets with a tillygram that Shafter has captured Sandago de Cuba, an' is now settin' on Gin'ral Pando's chest with his hands in his hair. But this is denied be th' Palo Gazoot, the Macoupin County Raygister, an' th' Meridian Sthreet Afro-American. I also see be th' Daily Scoor Card, th' Wine List, th' Deef Mute's Spokesman, th'

Morgue Life, the Bill iv Fare, th' Stock Yards Sthraight Steer, an' Jack's Tips on th' Races; the on'y daily paper printed in Chicago, that Sampson's fleet is in th' Suez Canal bombarding Cades. Th' North-western Christyan Advycate says this is not thru, but that George Dixon was outpointed be an English boxer in a twinty-r-round go in New York."

"Ye've got things mixed up," said Mr. Dooley. "I get th' news sthraight. 'Twas this way. Th' Spanish fleet was bottled up in Sandago Harbor, an' they dhrew th' cork. That's a joke. I see it in th' pa-apers. Th' gallant boys iv th' navy was settin' out on th' deck, defindin' their counthry an' dhrawin' three ca-ards apiece, whin th' Spanish admiral con-cluded 'twud be better f'r him to be destroyed on th' ragin' sea, him bein' a sailor, thin to have his fleet captured be cav'lry. Annyhow, he was willin' to take a chance; an' he says to his sailors: 'Spanyards,' he says, 'Castiles,' he says, 'we have et th' las' bed-tick,' he says; 'an', if we stay

here much longer,' he says, 'I'll have to have a steak off th' armor plate fried f'r ye,' he says. 'Lave us go out where we can have a r-run f'r our money,' he says. An' away they wint. I'll say this much f'r him, he's a brave man, a dam brave man. I don't like a Spanyard no more than ye do, Hinnessy. I niver see wan. But, if this here man was a — was a Zulu, I'd say he was a brave man. If I was aboard wan iv thim yachts that was converted, I'd go to this here Cervera, an' I'd say: 'Manuel,' I'd say, 'ye're all right, me boy. Ye ought to go to a doctor an' have ye'er eyes re-set, but ye're a good fellow. Go downstairs,' I'd say, 'into th' basemint iv the ship,' I'd say, 'an' open th' cupboard jus' nex' to th' head iv th' bed, an' find th' bottle marked "Floridy Wather," an' threat ye'er-silf kindly.' That's what I'd say to Cervera. He's all right.

"Well, whin our boys see th' Spanish fleet comin' out iv th' harbor, they gathered on th' deck an' sang th' naytional anthem,

'They'll be a hot time in th' ol' town to-night.' A lift-nant come up to where Admiral Sampson was settin' playin' sivin up with Admiral Schley. 'Bill,' he says, 'th' Spanish fleet is comin' out,' he says. 'What talk have ye?' says Sampson. 'Sind out some row-boats an' a yacht, an' desthroy thim. Clubs is thrumps,' he says, and he wint on playin'. Th' Spanish fleet was attackted on all sides be our br-rave la-ads, nobly assisted be th' dispatch boats iv the newspapers. Wan by wan they was desthroyed. Three battleships attackted th' converted yacht Gloucester. Th' Gloucester used to be owned be Pierpont Morgan; but 'twas converted, an' is now leadin' a dacint life. Th' Gloucester sunk thim all, th' Christobell Comma, the Viscera, an' th' Admiral O'Quinn. It thin wint up to two Spanish torpedo boats an' giv thim wan punch, an' away they wint. Be this time th' sojers had heerd of the victhry, an' they gathered on th' shore, singin' th' naytional anthem, 'They'll be a hot time in th' ol' town to-night, me

babby.' Th' gloryous ol' chune, to which Washington an' Grant an' Lincoln marched, was took up be th' sailors on th' ships, an' Admiral Cervera r-run wan iv his boats ashore, an' jumped into th' sea. At last accounts th' followin' dispatches had been received: 'To Willum McKinley: Congratulations on ye'er noble victhry. (Signed) Willum McKinley.' 'To Russell A. Alger: Ye done splendid. (Signed) Russell A. Alger.' 'To James Wilson, Sicroty iv Agriculture: This is a gr-reat day f'r Ioway. Ar-re ye much hur-rted? (Signed) James Wilson.'

"Where did ye hear all this?" asked Mr. Hennessy, in great amazement.

"I r-read it," said Mr. Dooley, impressively, "in the Staats Zeitung."

ON A LETTER TO MR. DEPEW.

"I USEN'T to know," said Mr. Dooley, "what me frind Gin'ral Sherman meant whin he said that thing about war. I've been through two iv thim, not to speak iv convictions an' prim'ries, an' divvle th' bit iv har-rm come to me no more thim if I was settin' on a roof playin' an accorjeen. But I know now what th' ol' la-ad meant. He meant war was hell whin 'twas over.

"I ain't heerd anny noise fr'm th' fellows that wint into threnches an' plugged th' villyanious Spanyard. Most iv thim is too weak to kick. But th' proud an' fearless pathrites who restrained thimsilves, an' didn't go to th' fr-ront, th' la-ads that sthuggled hard with their warlike tindincies, an' fin'ly downed thim an' stayed at home an' practised up upon th' typewriter, they're ragin' an' tearin' an' desthroyin' their foes.

"Did ye see what me frind Alger wrote to Chansy Depoo? Well, sir, Alger has been misthreated. There's a good man. I

In the 1890's all these varieties of Anglo-Irish were widely spoken in the United States, especially in the big cities of the Northeast and the Great Lakes. The respelling system that Dunne used to represent Mr. Dooley's pronunciation would have given Americans of that era enough hints so that they could fill in the gaps from their own knowledge of "Irish dialect." If Dunne had tried to transcribe Anglo-Irish accurately and in detail using the conventional alphabet, even his contemporaries would have been unable to read his columns with any enjoyment.

Dunne himself was a talented mimic who amused his club friends with his imitations of Irish dialect (Fanning 1978, 13). He applied his talent of mimicry and his own powers of observation to create an orthographic system which, judging from the popularity of the sketches with both readers and dialect comedians (Ellis 1941, 95), must not have formed a serious barrier either to oral interpretation or to reading. However, as the older generation of Irish-Americans passed away, no new waves of immigration came from Ireland, so that fewer and fewer Americans were familiar with the sounds of Anglo-Irish.

In 1963 Philip Dunne believed that the dialect spelling represented "an insurmountable hurdle to the modern lay reader." He favored having his father's work transcribed into standard English so that it could reach a wider audience. In an appendix to his loving memoir of his father, he presented several examples of this own "translations," as he called them, of some of his father's best-known essays. To the reader familiar with the original dialect form, the transcribed versions (Philip Dunne 1963, 270-307) lose much of their "flavor" and force. Fanning (1978, x) paraphrases Robert Frost to say "the flavor of Mr. Dooley is what gets lost in the translation."

In this study I intend to show two things: (1) Finley Peter Dunne's literary dialect is an accurate representation of certain features of Anglo-Irish speech which would stand out when heard by a speaker of Middle Western American English. (2) The Mr. Dooley pieces obtain a particular force and authenticity from being written in Anglo-Irish dialect.

The comments on the language of Mr. Dooley that follow are based on the first two Dooley collections, *Mr. Dooley in Peace and War* (1899a) and *Mr. Dooley in the Hearts of His Countrymen* (1899b), which include many of the most popular and typical essays, written when Dunne was in vintage form. I will also compare Mr. Dooley's brogue with that of his predecessor, Colonel McNeery, to show that Dunne became more selective, simplifying and dropping a few dialect features, as he gained experience in writing literary dialect. Finally, examination of an earlier dialect passage, which

Charles Fanning thinks may be attributed to Dunne, shows that its accurate phonetic transcription of all the features of Anglo-Irish speech definitely causes a deterioration in comprehensibility.

In what follows I shall try to compare the language of the Mr. Dooley pieces to Anglo-Irish as described in Hogan 1927; to a lesser extent I have also relied on Brook 1963, Gregg 1972, and, for the influence of Irish Gaelic on certain features of Anglo-Irish, on Greene 1966. Two native speakers of Anglo-Irish also helped me by reading an earlier draft of this paper and confirming or commenting on certain features. Both are Dubliners, but have travelled in all parts of Ireland and been in contact with people from many different backgrounds.

The vocabulary of the first two books of Dooley articles contains few items that are specifically Irish. Notable among these are a few words borrowed from Irish Gaelic: *avick*, used as a term of affectionate or jocular address from one man to another, from Irish *a mhic* (*mh* is pronounced *v*) 'my son'; *omadhaun*, Gaelic *amadán* 'fool,' and *soggarth*, Gaelic *sagart* 'priest.' These are used in contexts where their meanings are easily deduced—*soggarth*, for instance to refer to the officiant in "The Wedding of Two Great Fortunes"—so they merely add a touch of local color, rather than any serious suggestion that Mr. Dooley's first language was Irish Gaelic. Discernable Gaelic influences on Mr. Dooley's grammar are few, although he once uses *does be* for *is*, ostensibly in imitation of the Gaelic habitative (Cf. Greene 1966, 47).

Grammatical characteristics of Mr. Dooley's speech include doubly marked past tenses: *hurted*, *attackted*, *ownded*. Other past tenses include *ast* for 'asked,' *thrun* for 'threw,' *kilt* for 'killed,' *heerd* for 'heard,' and *et* for 'ate.' My informants have heard all these except *attackted*, but they think that only *thrun* is specifically Irish. *Et* is the usual British pronunciation.

Other grammatical phenomena include the sporadic use of *yon* as a demonstrative meaning 'over there,' as opposed to *this* 'near me' and *that* 'near you.' This is characteristic of many dialects of British and Irish English (Wakelin 1972b, 116). Moreover, *ye* is used for standard *you* universally, as subject, object, or object of a preposition. The possessive is always *ye'ers*. Additionally, *it's* is used side by side with the more "Irish" *'Tis* as the contraction of *it is*. Other contractions, such as *he don't*, *they'se*, *he ain't*, are just as much part of colloquial American speech as they are of Anglo-Irish.

Before discussing the systematic graphemes (letters, combinations of letters, spelling procedures) that Dunne used to give an overall impression

of Anglo-Irish pronunciation, it is helpful to distinguish these systematic procedures from the sporadic respellings of individual words, such as *babby* 'baby'; *med* 'made'; *anny, manny* for 'any,' 'many'; *wan* for 'one' or *minyits* 'minutes.' Such divergences from standard English as the addition of a *t* in *wunst* 'once,' *twict* 'twice,' and *chanst* 'chance' or the loss of one in *Kep* 'kept' or *nex* 'next' are phenomena involving individual words, not Dunne's systematic respelling procedures, and are beyond the scope of this article.

I shall first discuss how Dunne's respelling of the vowel sounds suggests the way Anglo-Irish speech impresses the Middle-Western American ear, then discuss the respelling of consonant sounds, and finally the way respelling suggests the rhythm of Irish speech.

Vowels

1. *ai, ay, a* before consonant and silent *e*, for Standard English spelling *ea*; *ray-* for *re-* as a prefix. This represents the retention of the historically older [e] as in *day, way* for the spelling *ea* in such words as *easy, mean, tea* (Hogan 1927, 65-67). The pronunciation President Reagan insists on for his name is an example of this. Dunne extends this vowel to words like *tajious* 'tedious,' *conganial* 'congenial,' and *aven* 'even,' as well as to the *re-* prefix in *raymimber* 'remember,' *rayport* 'report,' etc. "This was regarded in the nineteenth century as one of the most noticeable features of Irish pronunciation, but it is now dying out." (Brook 1963, 112) My Anglo-Irish informants assure me that is far from dying out, especially in the West of Ireland.

2. *i* for Std. *e*, when Std. *e* is pronounced like the vowel of *bet*, in examples like *whin* 'when,' *tinnis* 'tennis,' *iver* 'ever,' *dacint* 'decent,' often but not always before an *n*. Hogan (1927, 65) describes this vowel as "somewhat raised in Anglo-Irish." Dunne's spelling suggests that he heard it as raised from his [ɛ] in *bed* to [ɪ] in *bid*. One of my informants has this pronunciation, but the other does not.

3. *oo, u* for Std. *o, oa, ou* pronounced like the [o] *poach* or the [ɔ] of *score*, in examples like *gold* 'gold,' *coorse* 'coarse,' *befure* 'before,' *soord* 'sword.' Hogan mentions such pronunciations (1927, 66-7) as "still" heard in Anglo-Irish. My informants find it rare.

4. *aw* for *ow* in *know* and for *o* in *John, God*, suggests a low back vowel [ɔ] as in some pronunciations of *thought, caught*, contrasting with Dunne's (probable) [o] in *know* and [a] in *John, God*.

5. *u* for *oo, oul*, in *fut* 'foot,' *cud* 'could,' *shud* 'should,' *shtud* 'stood,' *tuk* 'took.' My informants have a vowel in these words which is higher and more fronted than Middle Western [U].

6. *a* plus doubled consonant for *al* in *Pammer House* 'Palmer House' suggests a fronted [a[<]], as in Standard British English (Wakelin 1972b, 86).

7. *on-* for Std. prefix *un-* in *onaisy* 'uneasy,' *onless*. Phonetically, it is probably a low back vowel, [a] or [ɔ]. My informants do not recognize this pronunciation.

8. *ar* or *ur* for Std. *er*, *ear*. Examples with *ur* are *turr'ble* 'terrible,' *purl* 'peril,' *hurtage* for 'heritage'; with *ar*, *larn* 'learn,' *resarve* 'reserve.' One of my informants considers pronunciations like [ʌ] in *peril*, *terrible* as typical of Dublin.

9. *i* for unaccented *e* pronounced like [ə] in the second syllable of *soda*, indicates a higher unaccented vowel than [ə], probably [ɪ] or [i̯]. Examples include *iv* 'of,' the second syllable of *tillygraft* 'telegraph' and the first syllable of *ilict* 'elect.' This is characteristic of British dialects in general (Pyles 1952, 238).

10. *ie*, *i*, *y*, for *oi*, as in *tiolet* 'toilet,' *hist* 'hoist,' *injin* 'enjoying,' *ile* 'oil.' In the earlier Colonel McNeery sketches, Dunne also used the opposite procedure, substituting *oi* for Std. *i*, *y*, in words like *moi* 'my,' *oye* 'eye.' Hogan points out that *oi* and *i* merged in Anglo-Irish (1927, 70). They both were pronounced [əi], like the vowel in *white* in Virginia (Gregg 1972, 128). Dunne may have found it confusing to render this merger by "crisscrossed" graphemes, or he may have found them too annoying for the reader.

11. *ru* before consonant or *lu* before consonant for Std. *r* or *l* before consonant, as in *goluf* 'golf,' *worruk* 'work,' *wurruld* 'world.' Hyper-corrected forms also occur, such as *purl* 'peril,' *Hur-cane* 'hurricane.' Brooks mentions epenthetic vowels occurring in Anglo-Irish between *r* or *l* and a following *m* (Brooks 1963, 113), but they apparently also develop in other environments. The use of this spelling is evidence that *rr* or *r-r* represents a flapped or trilled apico-alveolar consonant, rather than the retroflex vocoid of Midwestern American English. (See remark 5 under Consonants below.) My native informants recognize the pronunciations with epenthetic vowels.

Consonants

1. *th* for Std. *t*, *dh* for Std. *d* almost always occurs before *r* or *er*, as in *sthreet* 'street,' *betther* 'better,' *laddher* 'ladder,' *hundherd* 'hundred,' but sometimes in other positions as in *sthore* 'store.' Irish Gaelic has dental *t* and *d* pronounced with the tip of the tongue at the base of the upper teeth, (Brooks 1963, 112; Hogan 1927, 71), while English has alveolar *t*, *d* pronounced on the shelf behind the upper front teeth and interdental *th* [θ, ð]

with the tip of the tongue just beyond the edge of the front teeth. Both Brooks and Hogan, in the passages just cited, note the tendency of these two series of consonants to merge to a single dental series in Anglo-Irish. The auditory difference between a dental and an alveolar [t] is not very great. Dunne seems to note it only when [t] is in contact with [s] or [r] (Cf. examples cited above).

2. *gy* for *g* in *gyard* 'guard.' Hogan notes that [k,g] are "fronted," i.e., palatalized before the [a] of Anglo-Irish, attributing this to the influence of Gaelic (Hogan 1927, 75).

3. *sh* for *s*, as in *shtud* 'stood,' *shtrappin* 'strapping,' *rayshumed* 're-summed.' Hogan (1927, 76) says that English [s] is most often levelled with [ʃ] in Anglo-Irish and cites similar spellings from Irish dialect writings. The form *rayshumed* provides evidence of the devoicing of [ʒ] to [ʃ] also noted by Hogan (loc. cit.).

4. *n*' for *ng* is nearly universal, as in the tradition of American dialect writing, with occasional hypercorrections for humorous effect, such as *round robbing* for 'round robin.'

5. *n*' for *r* in *hear-rt*, *ar-rmy*, *hor-rses*, *r-rough r-riders*. Hogan says that Anglo-Irish [r] is usually "reverted," i.e., retroflex like American [r], but Dunne's deliberate respelling suggests a different sound, such as the tongue-tip trilled [r] of Southern Ireland also mentioned by Hogan (1927, 75).

6. *y* for Std. *i*. Some of these substitutions, such as *bullyon* 'bullion,' *Spanyard* 'Spaniard' are simply eye-spellings, but others, such as *glorious*, *Presbyteryan*, *Uniteryan* may represent what Hogan describes as a more tense [j] sound than in English, more like the German [j] (1927, 77).

7. *choo, joo* for *tu, du* does not represent a specific characteristic of Anglo-Irish, but of British and Irish English generally, because of the tendency of the first element in the [ju] diphthong in *duty, tune* to palatalize the preceding consonant, as in Mr. Dooley's *jooty, chune*. Dunne is not always consistent here, sometimes writing *dooty* and *dood* instead of *jood* 'dude,' implying the Middle Western vowel [u] and no palatalization.

8. Treatment of *h*. Hogan says "The Anglo-Irish aspirate is the same as in English. It is used in all positions as in Std. English" (1927, 77). This is reminiscent of one of Mr. Dooley's few metalinguistic comments, when he is trying to convince his skeptical friend Hennessy that he is related to Admiral Dewey, who had just won the battle of Manila Bay, "We dhrop a letter here and there, except th'haitches — we niver dhrop thim —."

My Anglo-Irish informants confirm the existence of the consonant pronunciations mentioned in points 1, 2, 5, and 6. They consider 3 (*sh* for *s*) typical of rural Ireland. In general, they believe that Mr. Dooley's language, as I have described it here, is not particularly characteristic of any one region of Ireland, certainly not of Mr. Dooley's Roscommon. They feel it shows a blend of Dublin, Midlands, and Southern features such as might have been heard from any random group of speakers in an Irish-American neighborhood.

Representing the Irish Lilt

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Anglo-Irish speech is an intonation pattern, the so-called "Irish lilt." People who are familiar with Anglo-Irish speech recognize the "lilt" when they hear it, but it would be very difficult to describe linguistically and at first glance it would seem impossible to represent in written language. Nevertheless, I believe that certain spellings and punctuations in the Mr. Dooley sketches are an attempt to suggest certain aspects of the rhythm and stress pattern of Anglo-Irish.

According to Pyles (1952, 238), one of the differences between American and British English is that the speaker of British English stresses accented syllables more strongly and unaccented syllables more lightly than does the American speaker. The Irish lilt apparently includes, among other intonation phenomena, an even greater difference between the length of accented and unaccented syllables than in British English.

The main evidence of lengthened syllables is the spelling *a-a* for *a*, whether it represents the [a], of *la-ads* or the [e] of *pa-apers*. The *a-a* often occurs before *r* in *ca-ars*, *wa-ard*, but hyphens between syllables that would be inexplicable, as far as the pronunciation of individual sounds is concerned, may be an attempt to portray a slowing of tempo on accented syllables in words like *or-chesthry* 'orchestra,' *projick-tyles* 'projectiles.' They may also represent a shift in stress toward the first syllable of the word in *see-gar*, *con-cealed*, considered by my informants as typical of Anglo-Irish.

Evidence for shortening or even eliminating vowels in unaccented syllables includes such spellings as *sicrety* for 'secretary,' *hishtry*, *victhry*, *cimithry*. Spellings of unstressed words with apostrophes abound in Mr. Dooley's dialect: *f'r* 'for,' *fr'm* 'from,' and constantly recurring *th'* 'the.' Some of these spellings may indicate complete ellipsis of the vowel, but in a spelling such as *nic'ssry* 'necessary,' where the ellipsis of one vowel is not marked in any way by spelling, the apostrophe must indicate a very short,

light vowel. If not, the word would be unpronounceable according to the usual rules of English.

Study of the Colonel McNeery sketches and some other dialect materials Dunne wrote prior to beginning the first Mr. Dooley series shows that he was experimenting and changing his respelling code. Sometimes he dropped procedures, such as *moi* for 'my' (usually spelled *me* in the Dooley work), or *oye* for 'eye,' presumably because it was confusing to the reader. Sometimes in the Colonel McNeery sketches he fails to write dialect at all for sentences at a time, something which never happens later with the less well-educated Mr. Dooley.

A comparison with other Chicago newspaper representations of Irish dialect in the same era will reveal something about the skill and judgment with which Dunne used dialect spelling. In particular, a passage which Fanning thinks may be attributable to Dunne from the *Chicago Times* of January 9, 1889 (cited in Fanning 1978, 11) shows a much more elaborate dialect style, closer to a phonetic transcription:

"Begobs!" ejaculated Officer P. Quinn to his friend Officer Weissnicht as they stood in Matt Connelly's saloon, next door to the station, looking at the red liquor in their glasses preparatory to engulfing it. "Begobs! 'Tis a gret note, indeed, fin the peppers does be joompin' on the pollis in thish sthyle. Didn't the two av us arresht tin thramps ashlap in a box-car lasht night but wan? . . .

"Be the Powers!" declared P. Quinn, "tis in mortal terror I am the whole livelong day, for fear the captain 'll git onto me pluckin' a banandy from the Dago's shtand beyant theer. Fur he's in the divil's own timper now, forbye the peppers does be clemmin' he meks more than his salary, shnoopin' things fin they coom handy. Oh, wirrashthru, 'tis no shnap a poor copper has these days at all, at all."

This is certainly more "Irish" than the dialect of the Mr. Dooley sketches, as it uses lavishly spellings like *sh* for *s* and grammatical devices like *does be* to translate the Gaelic present habitative which Dunne used only with great discretion, as well as items which Dunne seldom if ever used, such as *gret*, *peppers*, *clemmin'*, *meks* to indicate a closer or less diphthongized vowel than in Middle Western, *oo* for *u* in *joompin'*, *f* for *wh* in *fin* 'when' (Cf. Hogan 1927, 74), hypercorrections like *theer* for 'there' (as in Hogan 1927, 66), exotic vocabulary items like *beyant*, *forbye*, *wirrashthru*, *banandy* and Irish turns of phrase like *'Tis in mortal terror I am* (See Greene 1966, 41-42 for similar construction in Gaelic.)

It is also fatiguing to read for someone who is not intimately familiar with the more Gaelic-influenced varieties of Anglo-Irish and probably would never have gained the wide audience of the Mr. Dooley pieces. I do not think it is by Dunne because it lacks his wit and because it uses in a short sample of text devices to indicate dialect which he never or almost never used in the first two books of the Mr. Dooley sketches.

Conclusion

The comments I have made above about Dunne's choice of language and his repelling system show that they are both based on accurate observations of features present in a variety of Anglo-Irish dialects. The language he uses adds to the credibility of Mr. Dooley as a character, because it constantly reminds the reader that Dooley represents the urban Irish-American poor, with all their history of cultural alienation and fragmentation, and with the physical and spiritual hardships entailed by immigration (See Fanning 1978, 233). Mr. Dooley's dialect is the guarantee of his right to speak for them.

Charles Fanning, in his recent perceptive study of Dunne, points out that "Dunne's ear for the rhythms, contractions, and occasional rolled "r's" of Irish American common speech is everywhere remarkable. His ability to transfer these tones still living onto the page is central to the perennial freshness of the Dooley pieces; even in the least successful of them, we hear a real human voice" (Fanning 1978, 221). He asserts that Mr. Dooley differs from earlier characters in American dialect literature such as Hosea Biglow, Artemus Ward, and Petroleum V. Nasby because "he is a fully developed character who has been placed in a definite social and geographical context; in this he is unlike the isolated, shadowy figures — little more than disembodied rural voices — of his predecessors . . . Mr. Dooley is the first thoroughly localized community member in the American dialect tradition . . ." (Fanning 1978, 219).

Fanning argues that the effectiveness of the Mr. Dooley pieces derives in part from their being strongly grounded in a sense of "place" — the poor Irish neighborhood of Bridgeport in Chicago in the 1890's, a living community whose people and landmarks were well-known to Dunne's earliest contemporary readers. With the exception of Langston Hughes' Jesse Semple (Simple) in the Harlem of the 50's and 60's, very few American dialect humor heroes have had such strong roots in a community (Fanning 1978, 229-30). Clearly, Dunne's ability to sustain the literary illusion of an authentic, human, "Irish" voice — of a specific human voice in a specific

time, place and social milieu — is founded in part on his success in forging an eye dialect which gives a convincing impression of being authentic Anglo-Irish speech without trying to be a phonetic transcription.

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