ABSTRACT
              The traditional content of teacher preparation
courses in reading and language arts is compared with
competency-based courses which use as a base a working definition of
reading, psycholinguistic aspects of the reading process, and certain
linguistic features, such as the language development of children,
various grammars, and dialect variances. The development of personal
working definitions of reading by each student after sufficient
research and interaction and the application of the definition to
actual reading instruction are involved. Interaction based on the
Goodman Model of Reading focuses analysis and development of
instructional programs on the systems available to readers: the
graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic. Analysis of children's
language from the perspective of development and dialect features is
related to actual reading instruction. Addition of this basic
knowledge to accepted content dealing with basic reading
skills--phonics, word processing, comprehension, and study
skills--and their acquisition, materials evaluation, and various
approaches used in teaching reading, prepares reading teachers who
not only know what to teach and how to teach it, but also why they
are doing it and when it is appropriate to do so. (Author/TO)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Bruce A. Gutknecht, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
University of North Florida
College of Education
Elementary/Secondary Education
P. O. Box 17074
Jacksonville, Florida 32216

Basic Knowledge in Reading and Language Arts Courses
Symposium 19--Practical (Practically) Competency Based
Teacher Education: Reading and Language Arts
Royal Room Braniff Place
Friday, May 3, 2:00-4:45

Basic Knowledge in Reading and Language Arts Courses

The terms "competency-based" or "performance-based" are being heard with increasing frequency on campuses in schools of education, at professional educational conferences, in publications of State departments of education and even in elementary school classrooms.

State legislatures are requiring colleges of education to implement competency-based teacher education programs. State education departments and school districts are compiling lists of competencies which children are expected to be able to perform. Performance objectives and enabling activities are flowing, sometimes not so freely, from the minds and pens of college professors and class-room teachers alike.

College courses now consist of modules, learning packages, and support units instead of textbooks, lectures and exams.

What caused these changes? What will these changes cause?

It appears that the phenomena called accountability led the move towards competency-based education.

As the public, citizens and legislators alike, began to search for the reason behind the failure of public education; educational accountability emerged. As a doctor is judged by his success in treating patients

and an architect is judged by the durability of the structures
he designs, so some would reason a teacher should be judged
on the rate of success or failure of his students.

A variable that is often ignored is the manner of
measurement of the success or failure of the student. Is
his math performance measured in terms of knowledge of
basic facts or in his application of the facts to problem
solving? Is his reading performance based on knowledge of
individual word processing skills or on the application
of such skills along with syntactic and semantic skills
in gaining meaning from the printed page?

For the teacher whose competence is being measured
by the success or failure of his pupils the measurement
variable is an important issue.

If the teacher is a true professional, he should be
able to demonstrate that he is competent in his teaching.
This is quite different from the notion that a competent
teacher can be determined by counting college credits and
years of teaching.

In the field of reading, it seems easy to fit the
instruction into the competency-based format. One would
reason that all that's needed is a taxonomy of the skills
necessary for a child to be able to read. Then one could
simply check off one skill after another until all of
the skills are taught and learned and then the child will
be able to read.

One such taxonomy is the <u>Florida Catalog of Reading</u> <u>Objectives</u>. The reading skills are divided in the <u>catalog</u> into four major areas:

Decoding Skills

Word Processing Skills

Context Processing Skills

Work Study Skills.

This instrument not only lists the skills but behavioral objectives and criterion measures for determing whether or not the objectives have been met.

Another listing of reading skills is that used in the <u>Individually Paced Instruction in Reading</u> programs used in the Duval County Florida Schools. This listing dividies the reading skills as follows:

Vocabulary

Word analysis

Comprehension

Oral Reading

After all, doesn't every child need all of the skills in order to be able to read? Doesn't every child need to to follow a specific sequence of skills in order to be able to read?

The reading teacher can be held accountable with such a system. He can demonstrate that he can teach each individual skill from a long list of necessary reading skills.

Behavioral objectives and pre and post tests are included in this program. The objectives are keyed to a variety of instructional materials.

Believing that this sort of thing is what teachers, school districts, state departments of education, legislatures, and the public wants, publishers have entered the arena with similar programs.

The Fountain Valley Teacher Support System in Reading is such a program. It provides a list of 367 behavioral objectives divided into these skill areas:

Phonetic Analysis

Structural Analysis

Vocabulary Development

Comprehension

Study Skills

Self-scoring tests are provided along with a method of matching teaching alternatives from major basal texts and AV materials.

Following one of these programs is much like following a recipe.

If a person can read the directions on the cake mix box he can probably do an acceptable job in baking cake. In this case, a person not trained in baking can bake.

A person not trained in teaching can teach if he can follow the directions in the teacher's guide,

or follow the directions in one of the programs mentioned above.

According to Carl Wallen this approach will lead to only the short range goal of reading skills and not to the long range goals of good attitudes and interest in reading.

The competent reading teacher should be able to do more then follow explicit directions in his teaching. He should have knowledge and skills necessary to determine and provide appropriate instructional programs for children.

The base of such knowledge and skills must be a definition of reading, awareness of the reading process, and a linguistic background which includes knowledge of the development of language in children.

Definition

Reading has been defined in a number of ways. Any reading educator that you might ask could probably state a definition for reading.

Following are several definitions of reading.

"A mature reader engages in the following activities. when he reads: 1. He decodes printed words, 2. He comprehends meanings, 3. He reacts to the meanings he has developed, 4. He uses some of the meanings."-William S. Gray.

"Reading is a complex process by which a reader reconstructs to some degree, a message encoded by a writer in graphic language." - Kenneth L. Goodman.

"Reading is a mental process involving the interpretation of signs perceived through the sense organs ...Which requres grasping meanings through associations which have been formed between oral experience and the printed sentence constructions." - Gertrude Hildreth

"Reading has been defined as a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problemsolving."-National Society for the Study of Education.

"Recognizing, or distinguishing between, printed word symbols is an absolutely necessary prerequisite for reading. But the mere pronunication of words is not reading until this act of recognition evokes meaning(s)..." Arthur W. Heilman

"...not only do fluent readers not convert written words into sounds before they can comprehend writing, but that in fact it is impossible for them to do so-- fluent reading is accomplished too fast for the translation into sound to occur, and the prior comprehension of meaning is a prerequisite for sounding out many sentences." Frank Smith.

If a vast number of definitions of reading were examined, some common characteristics would be evident. These are recognition and comprehension, although other

similar terms may be used.

It is important for the teacher of reading to have
a working definition of reading, for her definition well
determine how she teaches it.

For some, reading is fluent, flawless word calling.
For others reading involves getting the meaning of the
words. Both of these definitions have shortcomings.
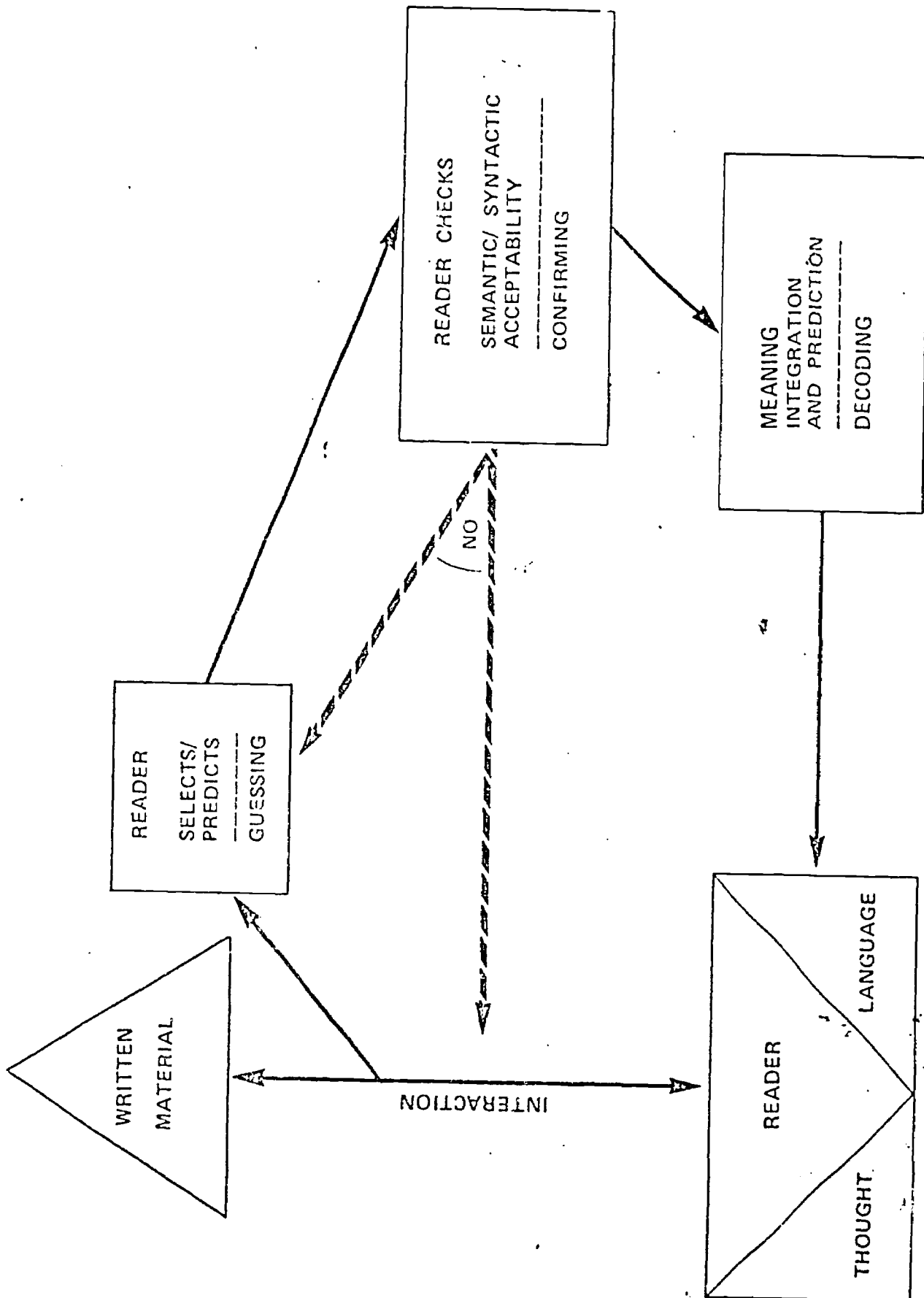However, whatever a person's definition, it will affect
the way she teaches.

The reading instruction of the teacher who believes
reading is nothing more then phoneming the graphemes
will involve mainly phonics and word processing skills.
The children will do much oral reading, during which
the emphasis will be on correcting of all errors.

The reading instruction of the teacher who feels
that reading involves the communication of meaning
from author to reader will focus on comprehension and
study skills. Oral reading will not focus on error
eradication, but on comprehension.

The Reading Process

In order to teach reading effectively, the teacher
needs to have an awareness of the processes employed by
the reader. There appears to be no one model of the
reading process acceptable to all reading·educators.

Bruce A. Gutknecht

The model devised by Goodman as found in the NCTE
publication, Reading:Process and Program presents
reading as a selecting, predicting, confirming, and
integrating process. A modified version of the model
follows.

READER CHECKS

SEMANTIC/ SYNTACTIC
ACCEPTABILITY

CONFIRMING

MEANING

INTEGRATION
AND PREDICTION

DECODING

NO

READER

SELECTS/
PREDICTS

GUESSING

WRITTEN
MATERIAL

INTERACTION

READER

LANGUAGE

THOUGHT

As the reader scans the material he selects from the graphic input cues which will be most productive in the search for meaning. On the basis of the selected cues the reader hypothesizes or predicts, the meaning or grammatical acceptability of what it is, he is reading. Based on a feeling of syntax or meaning which has been built from the context and previous experience, the reader seeks to confirm his prediction. If the preduction seems to fit in, the reader arrives at comprehension of the message from the author. If it does not fit in the reader considers again the previously selected cues or selects new cues.

This model accounts for the three types of processing a successful reader uses: grapho-phonic, syntactic, and semantic. Since comprehension depends on the successful use of these systems, any reading instruction that ignores one, or over-emphasizes another, will not equip the child to become a successful reader.

Being aware of the reading process, be it the model presented above, or another, the teacher gains two advantages over the teacher caught in the "follow the teacher's manual" syndrome.

First, the teacher can organize reading instruction according to the systems used by the reader--grapho-phonic, syntactic, and sementic--according to the model presented above.

Secondly, the teacher should be able to spot the place

at which the process broke down, and then provide

appropriate alternative instruction.

Childrens Language

Most children come to school for the first time

with a rather well developed oral language facility.

This oral communication is based on the phonological,

syntactic, and semantic wealth they have been building

up during the pre-school years. Some linguists have

estimated that the six year 1d may have a 20,000 word

vocabulary. Stauffer says that the average six year

old has a vocabulary of 7500 words.

Whatever the size of the vocabulary, the point is

that children do come to school well equiped to

communicate orally.

If teachers really intend to build further instruction

on what strengths the child already has, they need to

know how language develops in children as well as

certain linguistic features such as the origin and history

of the English language, types of grammars, and the

features of various dialects.

Various sources are used in the presentation/

discussion of children's language development. They

include:

Russell Stauffer. The Language-Experience
Approach to Teaching Reading.

Frank Smith. Understanding Reading.

Smith, Goodman, and Meredith. Language and
    Thinking in the Elementary School.

Helen Robinson. Coordinating Reading Instruction.

Hodges and Rudorf. Language and Learning to Read.

An introduction to various linguistic features of English
is developed through the use of sources such as:

Ronald Wardhaugh. Reading: A Linguistic Perspective.

Gerald Duffy. Teaching Linguistics.

Armed with the type of background in the development

of language in children and certain linguistic insights

as described above, the teacher is able to break out

of the "follow the teacher's manual" syndome.

The teacher education program at the University of

North Florida in the area of reading and language arts

is based on the development of working definitions of

reading, knowledge of the process children use when

they read, and a certain linguistic background which

includes a basic understanding of how language develops

in children.

On this base are built the competencies needed for

effective reading teaching, which include the abilities

to help children learn to use phonics, word processing,

comprehension, and study skills, and to analyze

the reading of children in order to plan instructional

programs for them in order that they develop into

successful readers.

The teacher with these competencies is truly a
professional, who feels confidence in her own abilities,
and accepts responsibility for being accountable for
her reading instruction.

4/4/74