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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model for classifying initial approaches to the teaching of reading. The model consists of three dimensions: the degree of structuring of the program, the sequence of gradation of reading units, and the kind of symbol system used in the initial stages of reading instruction. The degrees of structuring refers to programs such as programed approaches (high degree of structuring), basal readers (medium degree of structuring), and language experience (low degree of structuring). The sequence of gradation dimension refers to reading approaches placed on a continuum of part-to-whole through whole-to-part. The symbol system is concerned with the symbol systems used in beginning reading and is subdivided into five parts which range from a sound related system to a non-alphabetic or non-sound related system. (WR)

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FORTY-FIVE WAYS TO TEACH READING

A paper presented to the Fifth International i.t.a. Conference on July 19, 1968 at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York

by

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The question of "What is the best way to begin the teaching of reading?" represents one of the major issues in the field of elementary education. In an attempt to answer this question, much research has been directed toward determining the advantages of one approach to teaching reading at the first grade level when compared to another approach or approaches. The purpose of this paper is not, however, to make evaluative statements regarding certain approaches, but, rather, to present a model for classifying, according to their major characteristics, the various approaches to beginning reading instruction. Such a model may be useful for comparing and contrasting the approaches not only because it provides for an orderly description, but because it permits one to account for several major factors simultaneously.

When considering the different ways to begin instruction in reading, it is possible for a person simply to be aware that approaches do differ without employing any sort of organizing principle that would categorize these differences into a meaningful pattern. When one is thinking on this level, he might simply list "the basal reader approach," the "i.t.a. approach," the

"programmed approach," and the "phonic approach" without being concerned with differentiations of degree and kind that exist in the differences.

Another way to think about approaches to initial reading instruction would be to note "contrasting pairs" on the basis of a single significant difference. Thus, a person might list "i.t.a. versus T.O. approaches," "phonic versus whole word approaches," "language experience versus basal reader approaches." The making of such distinctions could be considered a second level of differentiation. While some structure in the perception of differences exists at this level, certain important characteristics of the approaches remain unaccounted for.

A more complete analysis of the existing approaches to reading instruction can be obtained by considering several significant differences simultaneously. Three major characteristics of reading approaches begin to emerge as a result of a careful study of the various differences in approaches. These three major characteristics form the basis for the proposal of a classification model of three dimensions. The three dimensions of the model being proposed are as follows:

1. The Sequence of Gradation
2. The Degree of Structure
3. The Kind of Symbol System

Classifying each approach along these three dimensions can be thought of as the third level of differentiation. When one approach to teaching reading is to be compared with another approach or approaches, the task, then,

is one of describing each of the approaches along these three dimensions before making a direct comparison. The model attempts to provide for classification according to differences in degree as well as differences in kind. The model could be extended to include other dimensions, although the three proposed seem to give the most comprehensive categorizing system for initial reading instruction.

Figure 1 portrays the reading approach classification model based on three major characteristics of existing approaches to early instruction in reading. The top-to-bottom dimension of the model represents the first characteristic by which reading approaches can be classified, that is, the degree of structuring with approaches characterized by a low degree of structure falling toward the bottom of the model and those with higher degrees of structure falling toward the top portion of the model. The second characteristic for classifying approaches is represented by the front-to-back dimension of the model. An approach in which gradation in units of reading follow a part-to-whole pattern falls toward the front face of the model while those in which the gradation sequence is from whole-to-parts falls toward the rear. The third dimension is represented by the left-to-right dimension in the model. Those approaches characterized by use of phonemic alphabet during the early stages of reading instruction fall toward the left side of the model while those making use of traditional orthography (T.O.) or one of its two variants fall in the three portions in the middle of the model. Those approaches making use of a non-alphabet symbol system fall in the far right-hand portion of the model.

Figure 1 about here

A discussion including definitions of the terms for the three dimensions of the model is, perhaps, necessary in order to make clear how the classification of particular approaches is to be made on the model. A number of ways of teaching reading will be used to illustrate the process involved in placing an approach into one of the 45 cells of the model.

Sequence of Gradation Dimension

Approaches to reading that are characterized by a part-to-whole sequence stand at the opposite end of a continuum from those that present a whole-to-part sequence. Between the two stand those approaches which can be classified as "mixed" or "eclectic." The fact that a continuum exists, that distinctions between these categories are not clear cut, is represented by the broken lines on the model.

A part-to-whole approach to teaching reading is based upon the belief that reading instruction should begin with small units, generally letters or other sound symbols, and should progress to increasingly larger units through the process of synthesis. In most of these approaches the sequence takes the child from the sounds of letters to words made up of combinations of these letters, from words he progresses to sentences, to paragraphs, and, finally to whole stories. Thus, the sequence of gradation is from the small to the large units of written communication.

One of the extreme part-to-whole approaches is the Progressive Choice reading method (Woolman, 1962) which actually begins with parts of letters which become synthesized into whole letters. The first three letters and letter sounds learned by the pupils are "M, O, and P." These three letters are used extensively in all of their possible sound combinations before the child learns new letter sounds. He finally proceeds to larger units of material which, at any given point, is made up of sounds and words that he had already learned. Other examples of the part-to-whole approach include the Lippincott readers (McCracken & Walcutt, 1963), and the Sullivan program (Sullivan Associates, 1963).

In sharp contrast to such approaches are those characterized by a whole-to-part sequence of gradation. Such approaches are based upon the belief that a child should begin with rather large units of reading material, possibly even stories. The process involves the analyzing or breaking down of larger units into successively smaller units so that, eventually, the child is analyzing words for their phonetic and structural elements. The "language experience" approach such as that described by Lee and Allen (1963), as well as by many others in the field of reading, is an example of the whole-to-part approach. Early reading instruction in such a case is based largely upon the use of "experience charts" which present a "short story" that has resulted from the combined efforts of teacher and children. Successive stages in this approach involve the children in identifying individual sentences in the story, breaking down the sentences into words, and, finally, separating the component structural and phonetic elements in the words. The Scott-Foresman

Reading Series follows the pattern of working from larger to smaller units. In this series pupils first learn to read words in the context of a preprimer format, and not until the primer level do pupils become really involved in analyzing the structural and phonetic elements in the words in their reading vocabulary, which consists, at that point, of 80 to 100 words.

Mixed or eclectic approaches to teaching reading, while they contain attributes of both of the polarized gradation sequences, are not purely one or the other. For example, the "Reading for Meaning" series (McKee, 1963) teaches during the readiness level, the names of the upper and lower case letters and the sounds of the consonants. However, upon moving into the preprimer level of this series, the pupil is not taught to synthesize these letter sounds into the next larger reading unit, the word. The progression is, rather, more like the Scott-Foresman approach from this point, except that the child makes use of his knowledge of consonant sounds as a word attack skill. Another example of the mixed approach includes the MacMillan readers (Harris & Clark, 1965).

Degree of Structuring

For the purpose of this model, the dimension of degree of structuring consists of three portions which are divided by broken lines. This like Sequence of Gradation is a continuum, and the broken lines indicate that the difference between one approach and another is only a matter of the degree which is present.

Approaches characterized by a high degree of structuring are based upon the belief that, in learning to read, the child should proceed through

a sequence of very carefully pre-determined steps. The sequence and nature of each of these little steps has been carefully and thoroughly worked out by the author of the material. Programmed approaches to reading instruction are excellent examples of reading approaches with high degree of structuring. For instance, in the Sullivan materials mentioned earlier, the child proceeds through a series of "frames." After responding to the content of one frame, he checks his answer and proceeds to the next frame. The primary material used in the child's reading program is made up of hundreds, in fact thousands, of such frames. The Progressive Choice approach also mentioned earlier, is another example of the highly structured approach to teaching reading.

Certain approaches to teaching reading are characterized by their built-in flexibility and would be classified on this model as "low structured approaches." Such approaches are based upon the premise that a reading approach should be flexible so that it can take advantage of the vocabulary, interest and experiences of a particular child or group of children. The reading materials which these children use in the process of learning to read are generally teacher-made materials such as experience charts related to the children's own activities and vocabularies.

Approaches to teaching reading which are neither as highly structured as, for example, the programmed reading approaches, nor on the other hand, as flexible as the language experience approaches, would fall in the middle portion of this dimension. Most teachers in the United States make use of one or more basal reading series in their reading program. The "Basal Reader" approach is a good example of those approaches which have a medium degree of structuring.

In addition to the readers and workbooks for the children, such approaches provide teachers' manuals with more or less detailed suggestions for conducting the reading lesson. These prepared materials and teachers' guides cause the program to be considerably more structured than the language experience approaches. On the other hand, the degree of structure provided by these materials does not nearly approximate the high degree of structure found in approaches where each little step has been carefully worked out in advance as in programmed instruction.

The Kind of Symbol System

The nature of the symbol system used in beginning reading instruction has served as the focus for a large share of the research in the past few years. A great deal of attention has been directed toward the variations in this dimension, particularly with regard to some of the new developments in programs available. This dimension is subdivided into five portions with the symbol systems that are most nearly sound related on the left and proceeding to the non-alphabetic or non-sound-related system on the right. The five subdivisions of this dimension are represented by discreet sets of cells, not a continuum as in the other two dimensions. In other words, when approaches are classified along this dimension, they tend to fall rather clearly into one category or the other and do not differ from each other only in degree.

The "phonemic alphabet" approaches are those approaches which initially require the child to read material written in a "phonemic" system. After developing some point of proficiency in beginning reading, the child typically makes a transition from the "phonemic" system into T.O. Phonemic

systems generally contain approximately 40 characters, one for each of the major sounds in the English language. Many phonemic alphabet schemes have been employed in beginning reading instruction, and several are in use currently. The Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) is the best known of the phonemic alphabets being used at the present. Figure 2 (Woodcock, 1965a) presents the Initial Teaching Alphabet. One of the major advantages claimed for such an alphabet is that it has a more consistent orthography with respect to lower case and capital forms of letters. This feature of i.t.a. is shown in Figure 3. Another major advantage of using phonemic alphabets is the high sound-to-symbol relationship which can be obtained. Figure 4 illustrates this feature as seen in i.t.a.

Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 about here

Figure 4 about here

One of the early instructional programs in i.t.a. to be published was the Downing Readers (Downing, 1963). With the information that this approach is whole-to-part in sequence of reading units, we are at the point in our discussion where we know enough about a particular approach to place it

into its correct cell in the model. The fact that the Downing materials are basal reading materials, that they are whole-to-part oriented, and that they make use of a phonemic alphabet puts them into the middle of the back row of cells to the far left of the model. The Early-to-Read series authored by Tanyzer and Mazurkiewicz (1964) utilizes i.t.a. and is characterized by a much more part-to-whole approach than that found in Downing's series; however, the presence of certain whole-to-part aspects in the Early-to-Read series place it most appropriately in the mixed approach area. Thus, the second approach which we place in this model, the Early-to-Read series, would fall in the middle cell of the phonemic alphabet portion of the model. Since i.t.a. is an alphabet and not an approach to teaching reading itself, it can be used in other types of materials and approaches, for example, some of the teachers participating in the Peabody-Chicago-Detroit Reading Project used i.t.a. in a language experience approach with mentally retarded children (Woodcock, 1967). Such an approach would be classified as a whole-to-part approach with a low degree of structuring and would thus fall in the back lower cell of the phonemic alphabet portion of the model.

Other initial reading programs which have a theoretical basis similar to that underlying the i.t.a. approach are receiving some attention in the U.S. Malone (1964) has developed a set of basal reading materials making use of his "UNIFON". "UNIFON" is a 40 character alphabet shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 about here

Some approaches to teaching reading have attempted to indicate a sound-symbol relationship without going to an extended alphabet. They use traditional orthography and follow a procedure of "elaborating" in some way upon the letter forms of the alphabet. The purpose of these elaborations is to provide the child with further cues to the sounds of the letters. Words in Color (Gattegno, 1962), for instance, uses the traditional 26-letter alphabet, but the orthography is elaborated by presenting each major sound in a selected color. At each appearance of a particular sound, regardless of how it is spelled, the combination of letters representing that sound are colored according to the color code. Such a scheme is also followed by the Color Phonics System published in England (Bannatyne, 1966). Fry (1964) has prepared materials using diacritical markings to represent the sounds of the letters. Such a procedure results in another form of elaborated T.O. The Words-in-Color approach is an approach characterized by a medium degree of structuring and a part-to-whole orientation, and, therefore, its position would be the middle front cell of the elaborated T.O. portion of the model.

Other approaches while adhering to T.O. are designed to maintain the sound-symbol relationship through another means. These efforts have involved controlling the introduction of irregular words until after the children have learned to read words which, for the most part, are spelled as they sound. The end result is a sort of 26-letter "phonemic" alphabet and is described here as "Controlled T.O." Among the series described earlier which would fall into this category are included the Sullivan materials, the Lippincott materials and

the Progressive Choice method. All three of these employ the part-to-whole sequence of gradation. Since the Sullivan materials and the Progressive Choice materials are highly structured programmed approaches, they would fall in the forward upper cell of the controlled T.O. portion of the model. The Lippincott series is not as highly structured, since it is essentially a basal reader series and this approach would fall in the middle front cell in the controlled T.O. portion of the model.

The Bloomfield-Barnhart materials (1961), an example of a whole-to-part sequenced basal reader approach to teaching reading, also controls the introduction of irregular words until after some skill in reading the regular forms of words has been developed. Thus, this approach would fall in the middle back of the controlled T.O. portion of the model.

The next set of approaches are represented by the portion of the model labled simply "T.O." These are the approaches which use the English alphabet in its natural state without any attempt to control the introduction of words on the basis of their regularity of spelling. Language experience approaches and most basal reader approaches would typically fall in this category. Thus, if a teacher were using a language experience approach and the traditional 26-letter alphabet, her approach would probably fall in the lower back cell of the T.O. portion of the model. The Scott-Foresman series uses T.O., and, since it is a basal reader approach and is whole-to-part oriented, it would fall in the middle back portion of the T.O. portion of the model. On the other hand, Houghton Mifflin, which is also a basal reader program using T.O. would fall

in the middle of the T.O. portion of the model since it follows a mixed approach with respect to the sequence of gradation dimension.

The last section having to do with the kind of symbol system represents the non-alphabetic approaches. Such an approach, for example, one which uses rebus symbols, makes no attempt to show a sound-symbol relationship. Like the "phonemic" alphabet approaches, the "rebus approaches" to teaching reading involve a two-stage process. In these approaches the children first learn to "read" using picture and geometric symbols representing words. Figure 6 presents an illustrative rebus vocabulary and a short passage written in rebus. Since rebuses are very easy for a pupil to learn and remember, his early acquaintance with the process of reading proceeds rapidly (Woodcock, 1968). After having learned to "read" using rebuses, the T.O. words are gradually substituted for the rebuses in a transitional program.

Figure 6 about here

One experimental and one commercially published rebus program have been prepared. The experimental program, the Rebus Reading Series (Woodcock, 1965b), was developed for use in the Peabody-Chicago-Detroit Reading Project and consisted of a set of eight readers with associated pupil and teacher materials. Since this approach is mixed with respect to the sequence of gradation dimension, it would be placed in the middle cell of the non-alphabetic portion of the model. More recently a programmed version of the rebus

program has been prepared which is known as the Peabody Rebus Reading Program (Woodcock, Clark, & Davies, 1968). This program is a rather highly structured approach, making use of three programmed textbooks and two readers to take the children through the readiness and preprimer levels covered in traditional programs. At the end of the program the children have a T.O. vocabulary of one hundred twenty words as well as certain other skills. This approach, with its whole-to-part orientation, would fall in the upper back portion of the non-alphabetic portion of the model.

Summary

A model for classifying initial approaches to the teaching of reading has been presented. This model consists of three dimensions: the first dimension involves the degree of structuring in the program, the second dimension involves the sequence of gradation of reading units, and the third provides for categorizing by the kind of symbol system used in the initial stages of reading instruction. Reading approaches can be classified according to their definitive features and can be compared and contrasted with one another in a more complete and orderly way by reference to their position on the model.

Such a model may have a number of uses. In the field of scientific investigation a model of this sort may be helpful in designing studies so that comparisons between approaches to teaching reading can be made that will, in fact, be true comparisons that take into account the chief major characteristics of the approaches. Likewise, consumers of research, through their familiarity with the use of such a model, can better evaluate the design and results of

studies comparing approaches to teaching reading. In the practical school situation, such a model may prove useful in helping teachers to evaluate and compare the different reading approaches presented to schools by various publishers. Supervisors may find such a model helpful in counseling with their elementary teachers with respect to the approaches and materials used in their rooms. For example, a teacher may wish to supplement her existing instructional program in reading but does not wish to use materials that represent a different overall approach. This model would be helpful in identifying which of the existing approaches are most alike or different with regard to a particular set of characteristics. For the many teachers who use a combination of approaches the model may make possible a more specific delimiation of the theoretical intentions as well as of the practical goals underlying each of the approaches they are using. The clinical teacher of reading may also find such a model helpful in matching instructional approaches to the instructional needs of remedial readers who have different sorts of problems. And, finally, such a model demonstrates the number of possible approaches now "missing," which could be worthy of development.

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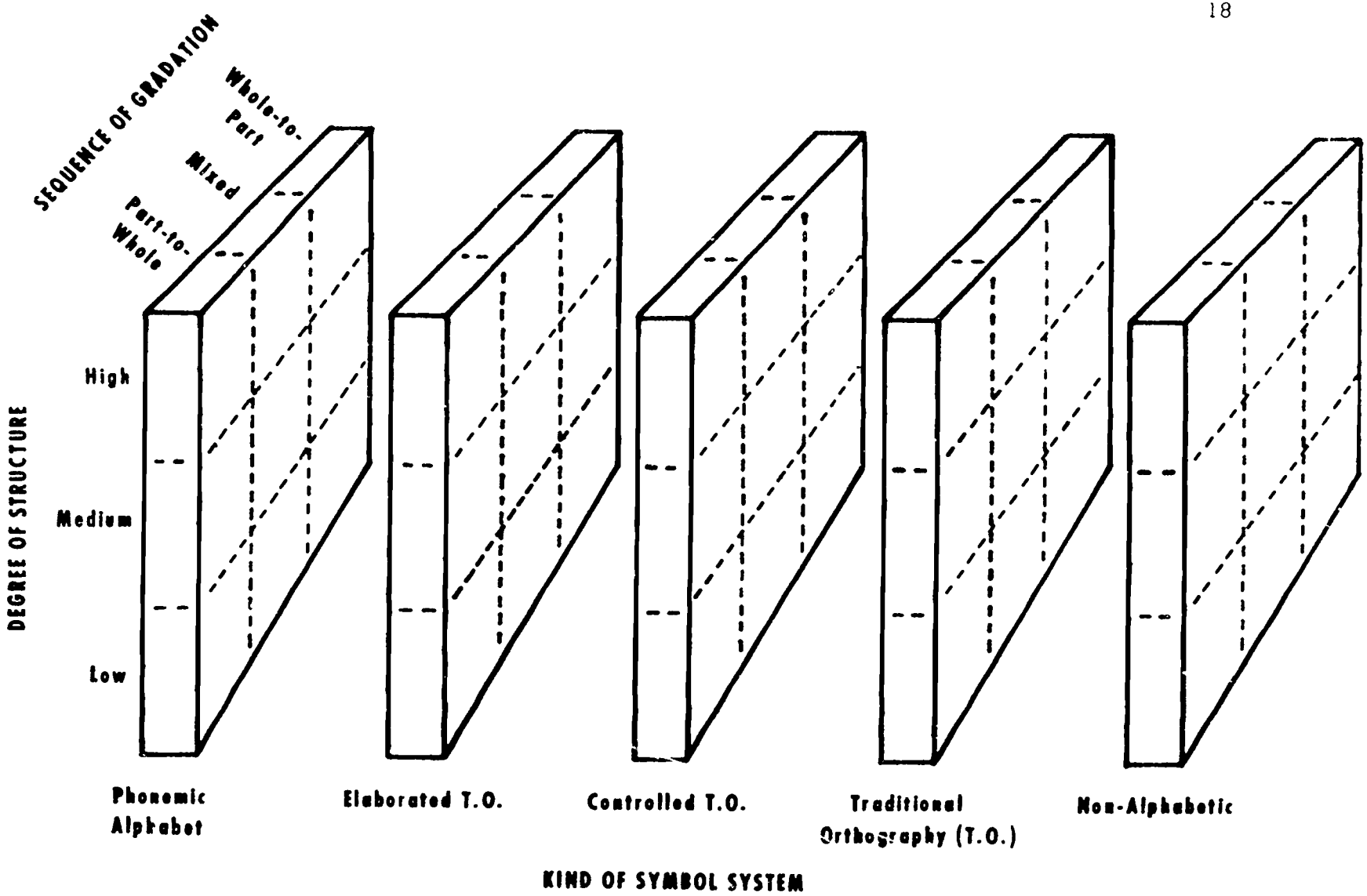

Figure 1. MODEL FOR CLASSIFYING READING APPROACHES

a	æ	ɑ	au	b	c	ch
at	ate	arm	all	bed	cat	chap
d	e	ee	f	g	h	i
dog	elm	even	fox	go	hat	it
ie	j	k	l	m	n	ng
ice	jug	kite	like	mad	note	ring
o	œ	ω	ωω	oi	ou	p
on	over	took	soon	oil	out	put
r	r	s	z	sh	ʒ	t
run	her	sit	is	shoe	measure	top
th	th	u	ue	v	w	wh
thin	then	up	use	vase	web	what
y	z					
yet	zip					

Figure 2. The Initial Teaching Alphabet of 44 characters. (Figures 2, 3, and 4 are reprinted from Woodcock, i.t.a. for Teachers.)

T.O.	i.t.a.
big	big
Big	big
BIG	big

Figure 3. Comparison of T.O. and i.t.a. letter forms.

T.O.	i.t.a.
I	ie
aye	ie
eye	ie
lie	lie
high	hie
by	bie
buy	bie
ride	ried
rye	rie

Figure 4. Comparison of T.O. and i.t.a. Spellings for the long "i" sound.

THE NEW SINGLE-SOUND ALPHABET

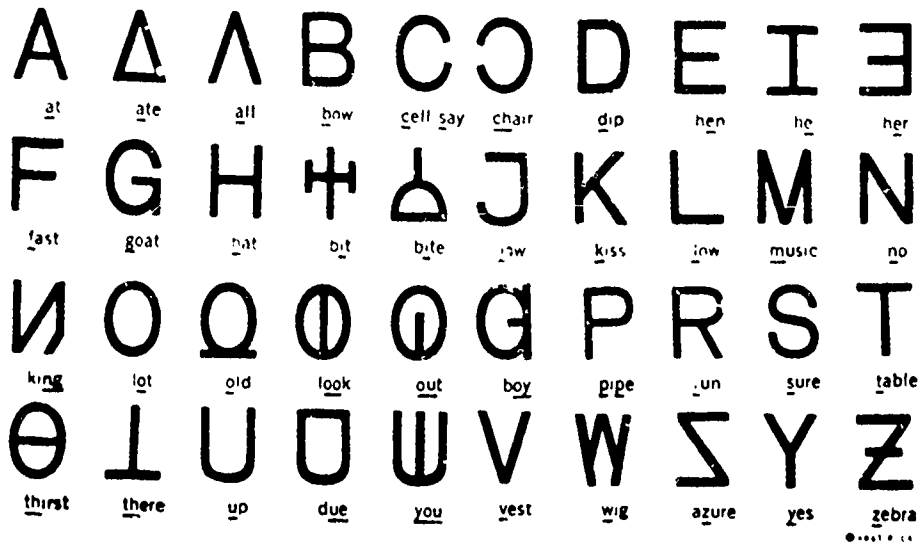

Figure 5. The UNIFON alphabet.

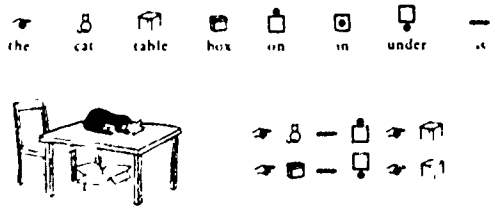

Figure 6. Illustrative rebus vocabulary and passage.