CHAPTER III
REVIEW OF THE WORK DONE IN ORAL READING MEASUREMENT

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The improvement in reading began at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thorndike published his handwriting scale. Then scales and tests appeared. Courtis Arithmetic tests, Hilligas’s composition scale, Buckingham spelling scale and then reading tests like the Gray Standardized Oral Reading Paragraphs published in 1915. Thirty-four studies were reported during 1910 and 200 studies were reported by 1920. Oral reading was given due importance during that time. The next decade was considered to be the golden decade when fundamental changes took place in reading approach. During this period as many as 713 investigations were reported. The studies of this period were mainly of (1) silent reading (2) individual differences and (3) remedial reading. During the first half of this decade silent reading was given much importance. Soon after that this extreme idea changed. They realised that oral reading had some unique importance. Thus both oral and silent readings were accepted. So the studies at the beginning were first limited to oral reading.
Then the importance was shifted to the other extreme of silent reading but soon both were recognised and balanced to each other. All these happened in two decades. The newly administered tests revealed that the pupils of the same grade and same class showed difference in talents in reading proving the individual differences. This had created a great change in the field of education.\(^1\) In 1926, the International Kindergarten Union in co-operation with the United States Bureau of Education conducted an investigation of pupils' readiness for reading instruction upon entrance to first grade. So the term 'reading readiness' was soon thought of seriously. Some 1200 studies were reported from 1930 to 1940. Most of these studies dealt with particular problems. The first doctoral dissertation on readiness was reported in 1927. Fourteen such studies were reported in 1937, fifteen in 1938, fourteen in 1939 and twelve in 1940.

Every decade some important changes occurred. During the period 1910 to 1920, it was the application of scientific measurement and investigation on reading, during 1920-30 it was the startling innovations of silent reading and of individual progression. During this period good interest was taken by all teachers and the concerned people in teaching reading as a part of the activity programme. Slowly various views came up in the next decade 1940-50. Recognition was given to interrelationships to studies, articles, speeches with reading to spelling, hand writing, vocabulary

and composition. So reading was not an isolated skill, but it was just one aspect of total language arts constellation mutually dependent upon and interactive with all other skills in the communication dimension.

A review of the oral reading test given in the following pages helped the investigator to understand how to construct an oral reading test for the pupils of standard VIII according to our local conditions. The investigator could also make a comparative study of the errors noticed during the oral reading of our pupils with that of the other authors of the various oral reading tests. No similar oral reading test in English was found to have been published in India before the present one. All the oral reading tests came across by the author were from different foreign countries. By the review of these tests the investigator could understand the factors to be measured in oral reading. The investigator could also understand the procedure, tools and findings of various oral reading tests which helped to give shape to the present test according to Indian conditions.

3.1 A few oral reading tests

Some of the oral reading tests are given below:

   Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. New York: 1955,

2. Dechant V. Emerald. Improving the Teaching of Reading  
The Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty was issued in 1937 and revised in 1955. It was the first diagnostic battery to organize the passages to be read by the pupil in a durable spiral bound booklet. This test is designed for grades 1 to 6 and is made up of the following sub-tests:

1. Oral Reading Test.
2. Silent Reading Test.
3. Listening Comprehension Test.
8. Writing Letters.
11. Learning to Hear Sounds in Words.
12. Learning Rate.
13. Phonic Spelling of Words.
14. Spelling Test and.
15. Handwriting Test.

In addition to the manual and pupil booklet there is a record booklet for the examiner, which contains several check lists, norms for the test and room for supplementary information, in addition to record forms for the various tests.
There are four sets of eight reading passages each, ranging in difficulty from first to sixth grade. One set is for oral reading, which is timed and scored on the basis of rate, with no scoring for errors. There are four to seven comprehension questions after each passage. A grade level is assigned for each passage, and the median of these is the grade score for oral reading.

This test is generally recommended for less severe cases. The profile is not as adequate as it might be in that makes no provision for recording tests 5 through 13.

Word recognition is tested with several lists, ranging in difficulty from first to sixth grade. These are printed on long, narrow cards and are exposed for approximately half a second by moving the shutter up or down. If the child does not recognize the word, the shutter is opened and he is encouraged to try to figure out the word. There are separate grade norms for flashed and untimed presentations.

Time taken for the test is 30 to 90 minutes. The test is meant for pupils from pre-reading to 12 years. Skills tested are:

1. Visual memory
2. Visual memory of word forms
3. Letter recognition

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4. Phonics
5. Learning rates
6. Listening comprehension

II At primary level
1. Oral Reading (comprehension, reading errors, speed)
2. Silent Reading (recall, mechanics of reading)
3. Listening test (comprehension)
4. Word recognition and analysis (use of tachistoscope)
5. Supplementary test of written spelling, and speed of hand writing
6. Suggestions for informal tests of suitability of text books for instruction, evaluating study abilities, speed of reading, reading interests and effort.

The administration and interpretation of the test requires an appropriate course of training and a considerable amount of practice.

2. Gates Reading Diagnostic Test, Revised Edition.
   Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

The Gates Reading Diagnostic Test is an individual test and tests ability in recognizing words, in recognizing separate syllables, in blending sounds, and in recognizing
single letters. Gates test demands a knowledge of the child's mental age, his grade placement and a measure of his silent reading ability. It is designed for grades 1 to 8.

The test contains a number of sub-tests. The Oral Reading Test presents eleven paragraphs of increasing difficulty. The child reads each paragraph and continues to do so until eleven errors or more are made on two successive paragraphs. The time taken to read each of these is recorded. The errors are analysed and reference is then made to tables to determine whether or not the errors made are excessive. Tables are given for words omitted, words added, repetitions, mispronunciations, full reversals, reversal of parts, wrong beginnings, wrong middles, wrong endings, and wrong in several parts.

A second test is the Oral Vocabulary Test. This consists of 30 sentences each containing a key word. The child matches a key word with one of four word choices. This test is recommended for fourth grade or later and can be used in lieu of an intelligence test.

The Reversals Test consists of 30 common words which if reversed could make another word. The child pronounces each word. Examples are: ton, saw etc.
The Phrase Perception Test consists of 26 phrases of from two to four words each. The phrases, beginning with the easier ones, are shown to the child for one-half second each.

The Un timed Word Perception Test permits the child to work out the recognition and pronunciation of each word. The test continues until the child has missed ten consecutive words.

The spelling test is made up of forty words. The teacher pronounces the word and the child spells it out.

The Gates Test also is accompanied by a test on visual Word Perception Techniques which permits a more intensive diagnosis. It is composed of sub-tests on syllabication, using combinations of nonsense syllables, recognition of syllables which must be pronounced; the recognition of phonograms, a test on sound blendings; and letter soundings.

In addition to the Visual Perception Test a test on auditory perception is provided. It consists of four tests: the blending of letter sounds; the giving of letters for sounds; giving words when the initial sound is provided; and giving words when the final sound is provided.

This individual test is designed for grades 1 to 8 and measures comprehension, rate and accuracy of oral reading. There are ten paragraphs starting with easy ones having only simple sentences and then the paragraphs are arranged in an increasing difficulty. Below each paragraph, there are five questions each. They are short answer type of questions. Time taken to read each paragraph is to be marked below each. The common errors made by the students are classified into eight types; it is to be marked in the columns provided below each paragraph. It is testing the errors made by the pupils and also the correct answers, i.e. the comprehension. Test summary is to be written after the testing is over. Accuracy, comprehension and rate are to be marked. The tone, voice, volume etc., of the pupil during the reading is to be written. Columns are provided to write the comments; if there are any.

This test was revised in 1968 and has two new forms, C and D. The material includes a manual, a spinal bound booklet containing the reading passages for both forms, and a separate examiner's record booklet for each form. Each form contains ten passages ranging from pre-primer to high school in difficulty. Norms for accuracy and comprehension are given in the form of grade equivalents, stamines and "performance ratings". Rate is not combined with accuracy, but is given a separate rating as slow, average, or fast. The test was standardized using 6,455 pupils in six widely separated communities.
The most helpful Gilmore score is the one for accuracy, since the comprehension score, based entirely on recall of details, is not comparable to scores on silent reading comprehension tests. Although rate is not counted directly in the accuracy score, it appears indirectly since, hesitations, repetitions, and self-corrected mispronunciations are counted as errors. The error classification used is: substitutions, words aided by the examiner, mispronunciations, disregard of punctuations, insertions, hesitations, repetitions and omissions. The pupil reads all selections between one which he can read with no more than two errors and one on which he makes ten or more errors. This usually provides a sufficient record for qualitative analysis of oral reading, as well as for scores.

Section IV of the Diagnostic Reading Tests includes a graded series of paragraphs for oral reading. There are two levels of difficulty, lower and upper. The other tests of this battery are for group administration.


There are four forms A, B, C, D, reading passage booklet for each form. There are record booklet and manual for each form. Each form contains 13 reading selections or passages. Four comprehension questions, intended to be checks on
comprehension of literal meaning rather than accurate or precise measures of high level understanding and a check list or tallying column for various types of pronunciation error accompany each passages. A separate booklet of reading passages for use by the examinee is provided with each form, as is also an 8-page examiner's record booklet. The latter contains the 13 reading passages for a given form, with the front page of the record booklet being a summary page for separate and total passage scores, types of errors, and observations. The important functions of the test are: (1) To assess oral reading skill and (2) to aid in diagnosing reading difficulties. Detailed directions for administering and scoring the test and for interpreting and recording errors are given in the manual. Time needed for reading each passage, types of errors made, responses to comprehension questions, and other observations and comments are recorded by the examiner during administration of the test. Eight types of errors are noted: aid in words, gross and partial mispronunciations, omissions, insertions, substitutions, repetitions and insertions. Each passage is scored on the basis of time required for reading it and the number of errors. A total passage score is then used for converting to a grade equivalent score. The reading passages were so constructed as to be of progressive levels of difficulty ranging from a pre-primary level to college or adult levels. The average case tested will read at least five passages
before a terminal point is reached. One of the unique features of the test is the use of picture to introduce the first selection, in line with regular classroom practice of beginning reading levels. The "tentative norms" presented in the manual are based on results obtained by administering all four forms of the test to each of approximately 20 boys and 20 girls in each of grades 1-12. A detailed and careful presentation of "interpretation of the scores" is provided in the manual. Some attention is given to causes for specific types of errors. Detailed interpretation of three illustrative examples or sample records or data is also included.

Testing is usually begun two passages below the level corresponding to the pupil's grade; the procedure is explained in the manual. The reading of each passage must be timed, and the passage score is based on a combination of number of errors and time; the passage scores are summed to get a total score. The manual gives separate grade norms for boys and girls, for each form. The test was standardized on a population of 502 children with an average IQ of 110; and so the grade scores obtained are probably a little lower than they should be. The Gray Oral Reading Test should be viewed as a very welcome and useful addition to the stock of measuring tools in the field of reading.

This test has scaled sections for evaluating the pupil's oral reading abilities (instructional level); for sampling the silent reading abilities until an independent level is reached; and for evaluating the pupil's auditory comprehension (the potential level at which a pupil could function).


This individual test, for grades 1 to 10, has nine paragraphs of increasing difficulty and provides measures for comprehension, mechanical errors and rate. The following errors are noted: repetition of words, unknown words, oral spelling of words, inserted or miscalled words, omitted words, lines skipped and lines reread.


Analysis oral reading errors made by 20 second graders taught either by an integrated reading-language programme or controlled letter sound correspondence approach. Following oral reading of basal story and retelling, or reading deviations were examined using the Reading Miscue inventory. The results were that error trends reflected the instructional approach that subjects had received. Subjects taught by
Instructional approach which emphasized letter sound correspondence produced more non-words and fewer omissions and also produced oral reading errors with high graphic and sound similarity. Subjects taught by reading for meaning approach generated more semantically acceptable oral reading errors and understood more of what they had read.  


Investigates the differences in oral reading errors and corrections of 50 grade 2 pupils identified as either reflective (PBF) or impulsive (IMP). Kagan's Matching Familiar Figures Test was used in selecting PBF and IMP children. Two stories at second and third grade readability levels were given to subjects to read, and their oral reading and responses to questions were taped. Scores derived from the coding of errors were (1) total number of errors, (2) proportions of graphically similar and dissimilar errors, (3) proportions of errors contextually appropriate and inappropriate, (4) proportions of corrections, and proportions of corrections within categories of graphic similarity and contextual appropriateness. The following were among the findings. (1) more PBF than IMP subjects with low error scores but insignificant differences in mean number of errors.
(2) proportionately more graphically similar errors for RSF than for IMP subjects with no significant differences in other categories, (3) more corrections by RIF subjects, and (4) no significant differences between the 2 groups in number of repetitions, rate of reading, or in comprehension scores.


Attempts to determine if different communication roles in the oral interpretation situation results in different perceptions of a literary selection by its readers. Subjects were 139 university students, 65 of whom participated in an experiment involving a poem and 74, in an experiment with a prose passage. Subjects were given a selection to study and asked to write impressions of the main character. About half were told that they would be asked to interpret the selection orally and the others that they would hear an oral interpretation. Subjects who were to read aloud were assigned either to an audience familiar with the selection or to one unfamiliar with the selection. Analysis were made of subject written impressions and complexity scores obtained. Those who were told they would read the selection orally identified greater number of attributes of the central character than did these who
were to listen; however, the differences were not signifi-
cant. Persons who anticipated performing before an 
audience familiar with the literature had more detailed 
and complex initial impressions than those who anticipated 
performing before an audience unfamiliar with the selection. 
Non-significant differences on impression measures were 
found between the 2 classes of listeners.

10. Kowal, Sabine, O'Connor, Daniel C; O'Brien, Eileen 
    A; and Bryant, Earnest T. Temporal aspects of reading 
    aloud and speaking: three experiments. American 

    Assesses the number, length, and linguistic location 
of pauses made during oral reading of a foreign language. 
In experiment 1; 80 adults with varying proficiency in 
German read a short passage in German; the oral readings 
were tape recorded. Results indicated that the number of 
unfilled pauses within major syntactic units of words 
decreased over increasing levels of proficiency, as well as 
the number of unfilled pauses between units. There are in 
all three experiments. Also a functional difference between 
frequency and the length of pauses is suggested.

11. Mason, Jana M. Over generalization in learning to 
    read. Journal of Reading Behavior, Summer 1976, 8, 
    173-182.

    Analysis word pronunciation errors with 87 normal
ability, unskilled readers in grades 1- through 4 subjects were presented on cards 32 words differing a frequency of appearance, possession of vowels and vowel digraphs and frequency of vowel patterns. Errors were classified as initial consonant errors, short vowel substitutions, major vowel digraph pattern substitutions. Analysis of the errors revealed that the kinds of errors made varied with reading competency. Less able readers made errors reflecting reliance on a one-to-one correspondence between single letters and their sounds. More able readers made error that suggested an understanding of letter-cluster-to-sound rules. Less able readers further relied upon less effective rules than did the more able readers. Differential understanding of the vowel to sound patterns was proposed as the major source of disparity in reading performance among unskilled readers.


Questions whether semantically and syntactically acceptable or unacceptable oral reading errors predict comprehension scores as measured by a post oral reading close test. Forty-eight subjects from grades 2, 3, 4 and 6 were selected, divided evenly by sex, 3 ability groups, and grade. The finding indicated that semantically and
syntactically acceptable oral reading errors do not predict close test comprehension performance. However, unacceptable semantic and syntactic errors do predict such performance, with the relationship being negative.


Investigates the relationship between performance on a conventional cloze test and performance on a post oral reading cloze test using passages of 500-600 words. Subjects were 37 grade 2 and grade 3 children. Cloze tests of 50 or more items were prepared on the first half of 500 word passages and post oral reading cloze tests were constructed on the second half. Conventional cloze test scores were able to predict post oral reading cloze test scores with some degree of accuracy. Correlation coefficients between conventional cloze and post oral cloze scores achieved significance for grade 3 (.64) but not at grade 2.

In addition a few oral reading tests developed in foreign countries are given below:

