

Methods of Teaching Reading in Schools Bring Debate on Phonics

Vast Difference In Techniques Opens Discussion

By LOUIS CASSELS

UPI Correspondent

Ever since Dr. Rudolf Flesch stirred a national controversy with his book, "Why Johnny Can't Read," U. S. schools have been telling parents that they do use phonics to teach reading.

Many parents have accepted this assurance at face value. They cannot understand why proponents of basic education continue to demand that schools adopt a phonics method of reading instruction.

The answer is simple: There is a vast difference between using some phonics in teaching reading, which practically all schools do, and using a basic phonics approach, which very few schools do.

Learns Alphabet

In the basic phonics approach, a child begins by learning the alphabet. He is taught to recognize each letter by name, shape and sound. He learns how letters are blended together into sounds called syllables and words. Since he already knows thousands of words by sound, the discovery that letters are symbols of sounds gives him a "key" by which he can recognize words when he sees them in written form.

This was the standard method of teaching reading for hundreds of years. It is still the principal method used in European schools. But it has been abandoned by the vast majority of U. S. schools during the past 40 years.

Today, most U. S. schools begin reading instruction with what is commonly called the "look-say" method. It is based on the belief that children should learn to read, from the outset, in the way that educated adults read - by taking in a whole word at a glance.

Visual Clues
Under this method, a child is first taught to recognize words by visual clues - that is, by shape and configuration.

Later, in the second and third grades, he learns the individual letters of the alphabet, and thereafter he may be taught how to use the sounds of these letters as a supplement or alternative to visual clues in deciphering a strange word.

This is what schools mean when they say they use phonics as one of a "variety of methods" of teaching reading. Proponents of the "look-say" method claim that it enables children to read faster, and with greater comprehension. They say that the phonics approach makes children "word-callers" rather than "thought-getters" - that is, they learn to pronounce words but not necessarily to derive any meaning from them.

Proponents of phonics reply that the new method (which they call "word-guessing") may sound fine in theory, but in practice it has filled U. S. schools with a shockingly high proportion of poor readers.

Goes To Rapid Reading

They deny that children taught by phonics fail to comprehend the meaning of the words they read. And they assert that a child, having once learned to "sound out" strange words, can and does go on to rapid visual recognition of familiar words.

Educators who favor the new method say that many children are not "ready" for reading in the first grade, because of psychological immaturity or an inability to make the necessary discriminations in visual or aural perception. They say the modern approach takes account of individual differences and lets each child learn to read at his own pace.

Basic education advocates assert that all this talk about "reading readiness" is pseudoscientific mumbo-jumbo, designed to cover up the failures of the look-say approach.

Any Can Be Taught

They say that schools using a basic phonics method have demonstrated that virtually any child (other than the small minority of seriously handicapped) can be taught to read in the first grade.

It is difficult for a layman to know who is right in this very important controversy. Most parents will probably find their attitudes strongly affected by what has happened to their own children. If your child has learned to read easily and well by the new method, you have no reason to doubt its efficacy. But if he's stumbling through school with a "reading disability" that will handicap him all his life, you may be one for America's schools to resume teaching the ABC's in the first grade.



POLICE THROW STONES—Riot police pick up cobblestones to throw them back at demonstrators at Algiers during protest rioting sparked by French President Charles de Gaulle's visit to promote his plan of self-determination for Algeria. (UPI Radiotelephoto)

Oregon Congressmen Describe Udall As Man of Intelligence, Integrity

By A. ROBERT SMITH

Mail Tribune

Washington Correspondent

Washington - (Special) -

Two Oregon members of Congress who know Stewart Udall, the new Interior secretary designate, describe him as a man of ability, intelligence, courage and integrity.

Rep. Edith Green and Rep. Al Ullman, who have both served with Udall on the same House committees ever since they came to Congress, expect him to be a strong cabinet member despite his youth. Udall is 40.

"He has been one of my closest friends and working associates for the past six years," said Congresswoman Green of Portland.

Both Mrs. Green and Udall came to Congress after the 1954 election. Both were appointed to the same committees, Labor and Education and the Interior and Insular Affairs committees. Mrs. Green later left the Interior committee after Ullman's election in 1956 so that he could serve on that committee.

Great Understanding
"He has a great understanding of the problems of the West," said Mrs. Green. "It's a meaningful appointment as far as Oregon is concerned."

Many times I have discussed with him problems of timberland management, access roads and timber sales policies that will make possible successful bidding by the small timber operator.

Both Oregon lawmakers recalled that Udall was with them in their efforts to put through the federal Hells Canyon dam authorization bill. A coalition of the Republican members and several southern Democrats kept the bill bottled up in that committee in 1957 after it had passed the Senate.

"I look forward to a very aggressive Interior Department administration which would include some overhauling of some bureaus which I think is needed," declared Congressman Ullman of Baker.

Ullman contended that the Interior Department was downgraded in importance during the Eisenhower administration because "the administration has been less concerned with development of our own resources, and in some instances has stymied development particularly river development with its policy of no new starts."

"Bonneville Power administration was downgraded," added Ullman, "and it was in

the red last year, inexcusably so, because of the administration's policies on power."

Both Oregon solons recalled that Udall was a participant in their successful work to correct deficiencies in the Klamath termination act. Udall was described by Ullman as an expert on Indian affairs.

"I would expect a drastic shuffle in the Bureau of Indian Affairs," said Ullman. He said he thinks Udall does not consider the idea of termination of federal supervision over Indian tribes as a necessary solution for the problems of other tribes.

Udall's congressional district embraces all of Arizona outside its major city, Phoenix, which means as a congressman he had to cope with many of the different western problems over which Interior has jurisdiction - water, public lands, Indians, parks, timber, etc.

Allied in Reform Bill
Udall and Mrs. Green were allied in the labor reform bill fight last year. The refusal of these two and three other Democratic members of the Labor Committee to bow to organized labor pressure has been credited with the committee's reporting out an effective reform measure to match the one Sen. John F. Kennedy was putting through the Senate.

"He's a man of great ability and absolute integrity," said Mrs. Green. Both congressmen were active in the early period of the Kennedy drive for the presidency. Udall is credited with wresting the Arizona delegation away from the forces of

Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, but Udall is understood to have been pleased with Johnson's later nomination for vice president.

Like Mrs. Green, Udall led the Kennedy campaign in his state during the fall election but failed to carry it for the Democratic candidate.



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Scientists Studying Molecule in Effort To Learn Secrets of Life

Editor's Note: Less than two decades ago science exposed the secrets of non-living matter and thus produced the hydrogen bomb. Now scientists around the world are exposing the secret of living matter—of life itself.

Will they be fully successful? What will it mean if they are? How much progress has been made? What is the outlook?

Delos Smith, science editor of United Press International, tells the exciting story in four dispatches, the first of which follows.

By DELOS SMITH

UPI Science Editor

New York—(UPI)—Science believes it has its hands on the base material of all life. In hundreds of laboratories in all parts of the world, it is busily turning the stuff inside out to learn every one of its countless secrets.

This base material is a molecule—the molecule of deoxyribonucleic acid, known by the initials DNA. Science eventually is going to get at all its secrets, you may be sure, and the potential rewards seem to be without limit.

Cancer and many other dread diseases could be eliminated. The life spans of all forms of life, and not of human beings alone, could be lengthened indefinitely. People or any other organisms could be born ideally endowed. It might even become possible to create life forms which do not now exist.

Such an unlocking of the secrets of life would be man's greatest achievement. It would far overshadow the scientific unlocking of the secrets of non-living matter which led to the hydrogen bomb.

In Distant Future
It may not come in this generation or in the next or even in this century. Science hopes that it will come sooner rather than later. But it is confronted with the fact that base material of all life is complex almost beyond comprehension.

Molecules generally are the smallest units of any given chemical substance which can manifest its chemical activity independently. This molecule of DNA seems to be life's queen bee molecule from which spring all other essential molecules of life.

Molecules come into being because certain chemical elements have affinities for others. This causes them to get bound together. All substances are made up of elemental atoms bound into molecules. This is as true of non-living substances such as air, water and minerals as of living substances such as a jelly fish, a rose, a rattlesnake and a person.

The atoms are the same in the non-living and the living and some of their molecules are identical. Therefore, the differences between the non-living and the living have to be in the differences between the atomic organizations of their molecules.

Scientists have been trying to understand the secrets of life for centuries. In the last century they boiled down the quest to this fundamental: If they were ever going to expose life's secrets, they would first have to understand the molecular organizations and the chemical relationships in and among the molecules which add up to life.

Concentrate on Cell
Only then did they start making headway. Their attention became concentrated on the cell, the basic unit of life. Some forms of life have only one cell but an adult human being who weighs around 160 pounds has about 60,000 billion cells. Just one cell can be made up of millions of molecules and one molecule may contain no fewer bound atoms.

Anyone who has ever seen a single cell, whether from an onion or a man, magnified under a microscope never gets over his astonishment. A

liveller life in terms of movement hardly can be imagined, even though it is on a microscopic scale.

There is no suggestion of anarchy in this movement. The regularity of activity is that which a drill sergeant imposes upon his charges. Beyond any question, something is in command, something which animates and which also controls.

Generations of scientists have wracked their brains trying to identify this something. Their instrumentation and techniques, rather than their brains, were inadequate for the task. Both have been vastly improved over the past two decades, and now science knows with reasonable certainty what something is. It is that queen bee molecule—DNA.

Next: What DNA is and how it works.

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