

PREPARATION AND EVALUATION OF READING
MATERIALS FOR GRADE ONE

2881

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Reading

In the complex industrial and technological world of today, man is exposed to constant challenge and adventure. In our modern age, we have seen the advent of missiles and spaceships, the production of electronic machines and gadgets, of computers, and of videotapes. These place greater demands on our youth to keep pace with the progress of the times. At no time in the history of mankind has there been greater emphasis placed upon education as the key to advancement and development. All eyes are focused on our school system, which plays a vital role of training our men and women, in equipping them with certain skills with which to explore various disciplines independently. One of these important skills is reading proficiency.

In modern life, the importance of reading cannot be underestimated or denied. The success or failure of an individual greatly depends upon the mastery of this tool. To keep abreast with the latest trends, to mingle with people who are educated, one needs the ability to make mature and rational decisions which require proficiency in reading as well as comprehension.

The ability to read well is of prime importance. Reading enters into nearly every phase of school life. It is a tool by which pupils learn their lessons at each successive school level. It is as Bond and Tinker say, a key with which students could open the vast storehouse of knowledge that lies between the covers of books.¹ It is absolutely essential to successful schoolwork or study of any kind. Many students have shown that reading ability is a vital prerequisite for success in the elementary schools. School success in turn, determines the occupation one can enter and the cultural groups in which one may be accepted. Thus, the ability to read well open the way to a full and satisfying life for the individual.

Ruth Strang and others summarize all the benefits that one derives from reading thus:

If one can read well, he can function more effectively in daily activities, achieve more satisfactorily in school learning, satisfy emotional and intellectual need, maintain better personal and social adjustment, appreciate better our cultural heritage and be a better citizen.²

The importance of comprehension as a vital factor in developing a person and our country as a whole can be deduced

¹Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction (2nd ed.; New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 4.

²Ruth Strang, Constance M. Mc Cullough, and Arthur E. Traxler, The Improvement of Reading (3rd ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 334.

from this statement.

Singh also says that pupils should be encouraged to make use of the different reading skills. In using these skills, they would get adequate practice in the creative use of thinking and would become proficient in forming their ideas in reaction to reading.³

On the other hand, nonacquisition of these basic skills would develop a poor attitude toward reading, toward the teacher, and also toward the school. It may mar the pupil's entire educational progress, the result of which are scholastic failures which are often attributed to poor study habits, a major cause of which is poor reading skills.⁴

In school, teachers are aware that many of their instructional problems of one sort or another are closely related to the inability of children to read. Bond and Wagner say that teachers believe that lack of success in learning geography, for example, is often attributed to the poor reading of children.⁵

³Bir Singh, "Some Experience in Teaching Reading," English Teaching Forum, 19:1 (January, 1981), p. 38.

⁴Singh, ibid., p. 39.

⁵Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read (rev. ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 6.

In fact, results of some studies in the United States on the problem of reading reveal that from 8 to 25 per cent of the school children in public schools alone had difficulty in learning to read; and, in most schools, from 10 per cent to 25 per cent are two or more grades retarded in reading achievement.⁶

A report before the White House Conference on Children in 1970 cited that one school child out of four suffered serious reading difficulties.⁷ The gravity of the problem is further cited in a news item which appeared in the Philippines Daily Express on September 12, 1979. The news item reported that as many as six million adult Americans lack the language skills to perform everyday tasks.

The problem of reading is more seriously felt in the Philippines where reading is taught in a foreign language which is also the medium of instruction. Rodil⁸ cited the finding of the Swanson Committee that reading is one of the subjects in which one of the weaknesses of the Filipino students is found. She also cited the results of the Bureau

⁶Bond and Tinker, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷"The Right to Read," (A Report of Brum 7, White House Conference on Children, 1970), The Reading Teacher, XXV (March, 1972), p. 593.

⁸Carmen F. Rodil, "Teaching the Filipino Child to Read," The Catholic Teacher, XI (January, 1976), p. 1.

of Public Schools Survey of 1960 which found that the reading achievement of Filipino students was two years behind that of students in 1925.⁹ These findings are further supported by a report of former Minister of Education and Culture Juan L. Manuel, to some 500 superintendents attending the annual convention at the Teachers' Camp, Baguio City, on April 19, 1979. His report said that at least 45 per cent of Grade Six pupils in the Philippines' public elementary schools can neither read nor compute. He attributed the poor quality of elementary school graduates to incompetent teachers and officials, shortage of necessary instructional materials like teaching aids and devices, and lack of supplementary reading materials.¹⁰ He further lamented the fact that "some products of the elementary level are semi-literates, which is one of the tragedies of public education in the Philippines today."¹¹

Even among children of superior mental ability, the problem of reading is felt. Rodil quoted Paul Witty, a prominent author in reading:

The fact merits emphasis that, not infrequently, mentally superior students make surprisingly poor scholastic records because of their inability to read.

The inability to read fluently contributes substantially to our social and economic ills. The report of Forum 7,

⁹Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰Bulletin Today, April 21, 1979, pp. 1-11.

¹¹"Program seeks to restore lost prestige of teachers," Philippines Sunday Express, December 2, 1979, p. 2, col. 9.

during the White House Conference said that many of our delinquent and criminal offenders have a history of inadequate school achievement, which is attributed to poor study habits and poor comprehension of subjects in school.¹² It has also been mentioned that people of inadequate reading development are also unemployable since only 25 per cent of the jobs now available can be described as unskilled or fit for the low-achieving reader.

Since a reading lag definitely and adversely affects academic achievement, pupils must be helped out of this deficiency. Their reading deficiencies should not be allowed to accumulate to the extent that these will affect their intellectual and social growth. Reading deficiencies can inflict "financial and vocational penalties, cause psychological wounds and impute the shame of social stigma."¹³

To help solve this problem, the reading teacher has the task to help pupils develop their interest in, and genuine love for reading and to help them acquire basic reading skills.

According to Russel,¹⁴ there are at least three basic factors which determine what a child will read. These are:

¹²"The Right to Read," op. cit., p. 594.

¹³Bond and Wagner, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁴David H. Russel Children Learn to Read (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1959), p. 10.

(1) the needs and interest of the child, (2) the reading ability of the child or the reading difficulty of the material, and (3) the accessibility of the material.

In accord with the statement above, the teacher could meet the child's reading needs, interests, and abilities if she could provide varied reading materials that are within the child's reading level and experiential background. The materials should contain concepts within their sphere of understanding and should be written in a language not too far beyond the structures and vocabulary which they find easy and familiar.¹⁵

Statement of the Problem

One of the causes of poor reading instruction in the elementary schools is the insufficiency of reading materials. Alano¹⁶ states that the need for adequate reading materials has always been a problem in public schools.

The findings of the Survey on Outcomes of Elementary Education (SOUTELE) reveal the same reason for pupils' difficulties with reading and writing. Shortage of instructional materials has been pointed out as the very reason why

¹⁵Minda C. Sutarja and J. D. Bowen, "Basic Readers for English Teachers," PCLS Monograph, Series No. 4 (Quezon City: Phoenix Publishing House), p. 49.

¹⁶Angeles Alano, "Collect, Adopt, and Use Varied Reading Materials," The Reading Teacher, XXX:3 (March, 1972), p. 15.

45 per cent of Grade VI pupils in the elementary schools could hardly read with understanding.¹⁷

Reading materials in public schools such as books, workbooks, and other reading materials are few, expensive, and not suited to the reading levels of school children for whom they have been intended. Because reading materials are limited and inappropriate, children are deprived of the enjoyment, delight, and pleasure of discovering new things in print.

To help children acquire reading skills and to provide teachers with suitable and varied materials to facilitate the pupils' acquisition of these reading skills at their own rate or capacity, this project has been undertaken.

This project study is also an attempt to evaluate reading materials which are based on the abilities and interests of Grade I pupils, among thirteen districts in Region VI. This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What types of stories appeal to Grade I pupils?
2. How valid and usable are the reading selections prepared by the researcher?
3. How valid and reliable are the test exercises that accompany each selection?

¹⁷Emmanuel Magubat, "Who Is Accountable for Pupils Who Cannot Read?" The Filipino Teacher, XXXVII:2 (November, 1982), p. 29.