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THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELECTED ORAL LANGUAGE COMPONENTS TO
READING ACHIEVEMENT OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

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Patricia Hagey Olson

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GRADUATE COLLEGE

I hereby recommend that this dissertation prepared under my
direction by Patricia Hagey Olson
entitled The Relationship of Selected Oral Language Components
to Reading Achievement of Third Grade Students
be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
 CHAPTER	
1. THE PROBLEM	1
Background	2
Statement of the Problem	8
Importance of the Study	8
Definition of Terms	9
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	11
Oral Language Acquisition	13
Oral Language and Reading	15
3. DESIGN OF THE STUDY	22
Population	22
Sample	23
Instruments of Measurement	23
Pilot Study	32
Administration of the Instruments	33
Reading Achievement Test	33
Oral Language Measurement Instrument	34
Research Hypotheses	36
Analysis of Data	37
Assumptions	39
Limitations of the Study	39
4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	40
Findings Regarding the Hypotheses	40
Hypothesis #1	40
Hypothesis #2	41
Hypothesis #3	41
Hypothesis #4	42

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued

	Page
Ancillary Findings	42
Reliability Coefficients of the Oral Language Test	42
Summary of the Findings	43
5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	45
Restatement of the Problem	45
Background Research	46
Conclusions and Implications	47
Findings	50
Conclusions	50
Implications	51
Recommendations for Further Research	51
APPENDIX A: TEST OF UNDERSTANDING OF SYNONYMS AND HOMOPHONES	52
LIST OF REFERENCES	65

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Correlation coefficients and levels of significance for hypotheses 1, 2, and 4	41
2. Split-half reliability coefficients of the oral language test	43

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship of reading achievement of third-grade students and their understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language.

There were four hypotheses tested. The first predicted that there would be a significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language. The second predicted that there would be a significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language. The third predicted that there would be a significant difference between the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language. The fourth hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language.

The study was done with 100 subjects randomly chosen from 117 students enrolled in four third-grade classes also randomly chosen from nine in three middle-class schools in the metropolitan area of Tucson, Arizona. The ethnic groups represented were Anglo, Mexican-American,

American-Indian and Oriental. English was reported spoken in all the homes.

There were two instruments used to collect the data for the study. Reading achievement was measured by the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test. The understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language was measured by an instrument developed by the researcher which consisted of 100 items--50 synonyms and 50 homophones.

The Pearson Product Moment was used to ascertain correlations between reading achievement and understanding of the oral language components. The Fisher Z-transformation was used to test those correlations for significance at the alpha level of .05. The significance of the difference between the correlation of reading achievement and the understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and reading achievement and the understanding of homophones in contextual oral language was tested by the Fisher Z-transformation for significance at the alpha level of .05.

Findings showed that there was a significant correlation between reading achievement and each of the oral components as well as both oral components together. The difference between the correlations of each of the oral language components with reading achievement was far below the .05 level.

The findings of the study support the following conclusions.

1. Third-graders' understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language is related to their reading achievement.

2. Third-graders' understanding of homophones in contextual oral language is related to their reading achievement.
3. Third-graders' combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language is related to their reading achievement.
4. There is no significant difference between the correlation of third-graders' understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and their reading achievement and the correlation of their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language and their reading achievement.

The findings imply that educators developing oral language programs might consider the direct teaching of synonyms and homophones and how they change their meanings by the context in which they are used.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Reading is an extremely complicated and highly integrated process of numerous skills. The large number of skills that make up this process is one of the main reasons why reading specialists cannot agree on one concise definition of reading. Looking through the literature one can find definitions that are concise, such as that of Gray (1960), and those that are complicated, as that of Goodman (1970). The defining of reading to the agreement of all is an enigma to which one could possibly devote his life's work.

In spite of the disagreement in the defining of the reading process itself, there can be found agreement as to many factors known to make up the reading process. In general, an agreement can be found as to an interrelatedness of the communication processes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Smith and Dechant 1961, N. Smith 1963, Spache and Spache 1969).

Many studies have been done concerning the interrelation of these skills, among which can be found studies such as the one by Heider and Heider (1940) in which the relationship of oral language experiences and written language development was highlighted. The differences between the language development of children with hearing deficiencies and that of normal children was investigated, and it was found that those children

with hearing deficiencies had more difficulty describing natural phenomena and were in general behind the normal children in written language development.

An increased interest has focused attention and stimulated investigations into the relationship between oral language and reading achievement. In speaking of this relationship, Frank Smith (1973, p. 138) says, "Reading is also a language activity, and a child expected to learn to read who has a deficient comprehension of spoken language obviously has a problem, but the problem is not one of reading." Most reading specialists and specialists in allied fields are agreed that there is a definite relationship between these two skills, however the specific components of the oral language that bring about this relationship have not been satisfactorily identified (Goodman 1973, Stauffer 1970, F. Smith 1973).

Background

In order to understand more clearly how oral language and reading achievement are related it is necessary to survey what is known about the acquisition of oral language itself. Understanding appears to be the motivating factor throughout the acquisition of the communication skills. At first, in order to reproduce a phoneme, the child must be able to categorize it from all the others he hears. This process involves discriminate listening which promotes understanding and leads to the attempted reproduction. This discriminate listening is a lifelong process although it appears to be at its highest level of efficiency during the first few years of life in most people (F. Smith 1973,

Stauffer 1970). As to discriminate listening, Emans (1973, p. 931)

explains:

The infant produces human sounds. The child explores producing these sounds by contrasting them, producing first one and then the other. He refines the sounds by focusing on the different sounds. As he interacts with his linguistic environment he matches the various sounds he already can produce with the commonalities or generalizations he notices in what he hears. Eventually he drops the sounds he does not hear.

After the classifying of these phonemes, they are used to elicit a feedback in the form of a reaction from the child's environment. This feedback is then used to attach a meaning to the sounds through the process of association. Stauffer (1970, p. 3) says that "The infant who learns to make the sound da-da and learns to associate it with the adults about him has learned from repeated experience to use sound to produce a response." At this point listening and speaking skills begin to overlap and run concurrently in the acquisition of aural-oral skills. This phenomenon continues to overlap with the acquisition of the other communication skills of reading and writing and the time comes when all four skills are working together toward an indefinable level of proficiency which varies with the individual.

The research work of Fraser, Bellugi and Brown (1963) supports the view that children must understand grammatical contrasts before they can reproduce them. Strickland (1962) and Loban (1965) reported that there is a strong relationship between children's listening comprehension, their demonstrated use of oral language, and reading achievement. These findings imply that if a speaker can produce language in a meaningful manner, the level of understanding should be higher and thereby

enhance the development of all his communication skills. Carroll (1969, p. 15) declares in a discussion of listening and speaking skills, "The only way we can know about them, even inferentially, is through the analysis of the speaker's 'performance'--i.e., his use of them in talking or understanding, or even reading and writing." It is for this reason that studies have been made attempting to isolate and identify the components of oral language.

The studies of Strickland (1962), Loban (1965), Harrell (1957), and O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) attempted to describe oral and written language in children at different levels of development. The oral language part of the Strickland (1962) study suggested that there is definitely a relationship between sentence complexity and grade level, while the Loban (1965) work showed that the average communication unit length increased all through the elementary grades. In the study by Harrell (1957) in which he compared certain language variables in the speech and writing of children aged 9, 11, 13 and 15 using a short movie to stimulate oral and written responses, it was found that the number as well as the length of adverb and adjective clauses increased in both speech and writing as the age increased.

Investigators have looked for relationships between specific language components and reading achievement. In one study Gibbons (1941) found that the ability to see relationship between parts of a sentence is an essential factor in understanding the sentence and is related to reading achievement. Another study by Tally (1965) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, dealt with bilingual fourth and sixth graders. This study was

an enriched language arts program which centered, among other facets of language, on multiple meanings of words, idioms and figures of speech. The study was a pretest-posttest control group study of reading gains made by fourth and sixth-grade students. It was found that the experimental group made statistically significant gains in reading achievement at the end of the six-month period of the enriched language arts program. Draper and Moeller (1971) did a study in which emphasis was placed on synonyms, antonyms and homonyms. After 90 lessons on radio, fourth and fifth graders gained three to four months more than expected in spelling, vocabulary, and reading achievement.

In an attempt to investigate the relationship among selected components of oral language suggested by the foregoing studies of written language components, Hersvall (1973) did a study in which he suggested that the best prediction of the ability for learning to read after one year is given by the spoken language in combination with tests of general school readiness and tests of reading and writing readiness. Bougere (1968) also investigated selected oral language components as predictors of reading readiness. The oral language components consisted of mainly communication unit length and word frequency. Upon analysis of the reliability of the language components, word frequency was found to have such low reliability that it was deleted from the data. Although in this study no single language component was found to be a better predictor of reading readiness than the Metropolitan Readiness Test, the communication unit length was found to enhance the test when used with it. In her study Bougere suggested that investigation of the quality of oral language rather than the quantity should be made.

In discussing the various programs set up to give language background necessary for achievement, Rosen (1970, p. 282) states that "Variables must be identified in such programs which supply precise information as to what in specific approaches is both effective and efficient for various types of pupils in realizing significant changes in desired language and reading outcomes." In order to begin to meet the needs of children it is necessary first to identify the specific components found in the oral language of children.

Gray (1960, p. 64) says, "If the primary child is to use meaning clues functionally as an aid in attacking new printed symbols, the symbol must represent a word that he uses in his oral language--it must fall naturally into a speech pattern that he uses in his own conversation, and the context in which it occurs must represent ideas that he uses in his own thinking" and Fraser et al. (1963) agree that children must first understand before being able to reproduce grammatical constructs. If these premises are true, an investigation into how well children understand oral language is indicated. As oral language is communication, just so is reading the communication of ideas from one person to another. In order to receive a communication, the receiver must be able to understand all the components that go into the making up of that communication. F. Smith (1971, p. 223) says that the majority of children come to school with "a firm grasp of language" and "have a rich and fully functioning knowledge of the spoken aspect of his language." Therefore, the discovery of what specifically allows one to interpret an oral communication should give some insight into what it is that allows one to receive the same communication in the written form.

Since communication signifies meaning those components that relay that meaning need to be investigated. The use of an isolated word seldom relays meaning without some type of contextual surrounding, be it words, pictures, emotional atmosphere, or sounds. The distinction between meanings of many homophones (words which sound alike) can only be made when they are used in contextual language. Gray (1960, p. 23), in discussing the use of context clues, states "Only through the use of context clues can a reader associate the appropriate meaning with a visual form like bank, as the phrases 'money in the bank,' 'on the bank of the stream,' 'bank the fire,' and 'the third bank of seats' prove." This same example is applicable to oral language. If the listener cannot associate the correct meaning for the word bank, or if he has only one meaning in his "storehouse," he is definitely at a disadvantage to understand the communication. This use of context to signal appropriate meanings is one of the components of oral language that children bring to school. Emans (1974, p. 290) contends, "Children use context in their oral language easily and naturally." While Spache (1968, p. 237) wrote that "Even before formal reading has begun, the child learns to 'read' signs by the place in which he finds them, their shape, and color. Preschool children, for example, demonstrate the use of context in reading street signs, names on mail boxes, and stop signs."

As English is full of homophones which derive their meanings from their "settings" and synonyms, which have various shades and degrees of meanings, the knowledge of these two components and their usage should enhance the understanding of a communication whether it is spoken or written.

Statement of the Problem

It was the purpose of this study to isolate and describe third-graders' understanding of these two specific language components in oral language and to investigate the relationship of that understanding to reading achievement. More specifically, it was the purpose of this study to attempt to answer the following questions.

1. Is there a significant relationship between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language?
2. Is there a significant relationship between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language?
3. Is there a significant difference between the relationship of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language?
4. Is there a significant relationship between third-graders' reading achievement and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language?

Importance of the Study

It is vitally necessary to gather more information about the understanding of oral language that enhances achievement in reading. If the specific components of oral language could be identified, the frustrations of those who teach as well as those who are learning could

be alleviated to a great extent. This study was an attempt to investigate two specific components of oral language in relation to reading achievement. At the least such a study could narrow the field of investigation, and at the most it could give some insight concerning oral language elements that enhance reading achievement.

With an insight as to specific components of oral language that may have a bearing on achievement in reading, further investigation will be given new direction and those attempting to help children learn to read can begin to emphasize those specific components from the very beginning. This study was centered on multiple meanings and meaning shades found in the English language as this facet of language learning has not been given the attention recommended by Gibbons (1941), Tally (1965), and Draper and Moeller (1971). Although these studies suggest a relationship of these components to reading achievement, the components themselves were not isolated but used in conjunction with other facets of oral language, i.e., patterns, intonation, etc. The studies also included written language and graphic representations of words which tend to cloud the oral language component. In this study an attempt was made to maintain oral language as such and to isolate the specific components being investigated while using them in a natural setting.

Definition of Terms

The following are terms used throughout this dissertation.

Reading achievement--The total raw score obtained from the Word Knowledge and Reading: Part A (Sentences) and Part B (Stories) which

make up the reading test of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (Durost et al. 1970), Elementary Level.

"Synonym--A word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the language as joyful, elated, and glad" (Random House 1966).

"Homophone--A word pronounced the same as, but differing in meaning from another, whether spelled the same way or not, as heir and air" (Random House 1966).

"Sentence--A grammatical unit of one or more words, bearing minimal syntactical relation to the words that precede or follow it, often preceded and followed by pauses, having one of a small number of characteristic intonation patterns, and typically expressing an independent statement, question, request, command, etc., as Fire! or Summer is here or Who is it?" (Random House 1966).

Middle Class--This term contains two divisions: upper-middle and lower-middle. Upper-middle class people generally have professional or executive positions and have earned a college degree. Lower-middle class people are generally white collar clerks, neighborhood businessmen or farmers, who live in a tract home in the suburbs. Additionally, middle class people are generally members of clubs, Parent Teacher Associations, and other civic organizations (Havighurst and Newgarten 1962).

Understanding--The ability to correctly identify homophones and synonyms in the Oral Language Test of this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Oral language competency is an area that has been contributed to the field of reading by that of linguistics (Loban 1965). Reading, a complexity of interrelated skills that overlap into the fields of psychology, neurology, physiology, sociology, linguistics, psycholinguistics, and language learning, is itself communication. To communicate anything is to transfer one's thought to another (N. Smith 1963, Spache and Spache 1969, Stauffer 1970). The literature on the skills of communication is far reaching and therefore only that literature pertinent to this study was chosen for review.

To begin to understand how oral language might contribute to reading achievement it is necessary to first understand the function of oral language and how it is acquired. Language is a function of society and as such is an interaction of all the facets of human behavior. Stauffer (1970, p. 3) in discussing language learning which he refers to as "language-experience" states "The intimate relationship of language-experience and social-personal communication is clearly apparent from the early days of human life." Julio B. De Quiros (1973, p. 72) extends this same idea to what he calls "reading-writing." In a presentation to the Fourth IRA World Congress on Reading in Buenos Aires, he reminded his listeners that "Reading-writing developed in permanent or settled

communities. This fact may be taken into account by teaching theorists; reading-writing requires an intense human interrelationship."

Being a function of society, language is communication. Man's need to express his inner thoughts in interaction with his environment gives rise to language itself. Stauffer (1970, p. 4) very aptly defines the function of language in the following manner: "To think of communication and language in a person-to-person sense or in the social sense is to think of them functionally. The function of language is to communicate. Communication is the primary purpose of language."

Since language is communication and communication itself involves thinking, it is reasonable to consider that listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are the skills of communication, are an outgrowth of thought. In its own right, thought is an outgrowth of man's interaction with his environment.

The particular sounds used in any language are strictly arbitrary as to meaning (Moore 1969). It is the utterance of a sound by one individual and its correct interpretation by another individual that is called language. For the correct interpretation by the receiver of that sound there must be a thorough understanding of all facets that produced that particular sound or combination of sounds. This in turn involves the many shades of meanings these sounds may convey. This same process applies to reading and in order to understand how best to help children read with understanding it is necessary to attempt to understand how their oral language is acquired and try to isolate the facets of that

language that might influence reading achievement. According to Gleason (1969, p. 27),

In a very general way, it must be obvious that the more we know about a child's mind and his language the better we are able to instruct him in further language skills, like reading and writing. If we know what his spoken language is like and what kind of thinking underlies it, his difficulties with written language are more understandable and even more predictable.

Oral Language Acquisition

Children are born with a built-in ability to produce any of the sounds which occur in the world's languages (Carroll 1969). The babbling of a baby begins to exhibit only those elements which belong to its native language between the ninth and twelfth month of life. Before that time the sounds of all the world's tongues may be distinguished. The foreign sounds begin to disappear as the child begins to eliminate those sounds which are not necessary to oral interaction with adults in his environment (Gleason 1969, Ervin-Tripp 1971).

The acquisition of language is a developmental process as is well described in the following studies. These studies are our main source of components found in the oral language of children. Strickland (1962) conducted a study in which the main objective was the relationship of children's oral language to the language of basal readers. The first step in her study was to gather samples of children's oral language for the purpose of analysis. Using 575 students from grades one through six, she gathered the children in small informal groups of two or three around a tape recorder. The conversation stimuli consisted of well-known and liked literary figurines such as Red Riding Hood, Alice in

Wonderland, and Tom Sawyer. The ensuing conversations were transposed and analyzed for syntactic structures of sentences, frequency of occurrence of certain patterns of syntax, amount and kinds of subordination, length of sentences, and flow of language. It was reported that children's language showed developmental growth from grades one through six. The length of communication units increased with age. The number of clauses also increased while the number of utterances that have no meaning such as well, uh, so, and, to which Strickland refers as "mazes," began to decrease with age. By the sixth grade comparatively few "mazes" appeared.

The O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris study (1967) was done with kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and seventh grade children. It was observed that the oral language was superior in complexity to written language in grades three and four but by seventh grade the written language had become superior to the oral.

Along the same lines Loban (1965) did a seven-year study of 338 children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The speech and writings were studied and again it was reported that the communication unit length increased and became more complex with age.

It is this developmental process which suggests that with the increase in complexity of sentences comes the better ability to manipulate fine meanings of words which is the main characteristic of an effective speaker. A study by Harrell (1957) compared the language variables of composition, clause length, number of adverb, and number of adjective clauses in the speech and writing of 9, 11, 13, and 15-year

olds. It was found, as in the other studies, that the length of the compositions and clauses used in both the oral and written language increased with age. The number of subordinate clauses also increased with age. Adverbs and adjective clauses were more prevalent in written language than in oral and the percentage gain of the variables was greater in writing than in speech. These studies imply that as age increases, the ability to manipulate words for meaning increases also. This increase in ability to understand and manipulate meanings should influence the ability to comprehend communication in written form.

Oral Language and Reading

Reading specialists became interested in the relationship between oral language and reading. Studies investigating the language components mentioned in the previous section have been made in regards to a relationship between oral language and reading readiness and achievement. However most of these studies include some form of written language. Ruddell (1970) conducted a longitudinal study in which he sought to investigate the effect on decoding and comprehension skills of four reading programs. The programs varied in their emphasis on (1) the regularity of grapheme-phoneme correspondence that was programmed into the vocabulary presented and (2) on language structure as related to meaning. There was a secondary objective to determine the relationship between morphological and syntactical language development in grade one, and comprehension achievement in grades two and three. The study was done in the Oakland Unified School District, Oakland, California. One program used a basal reader that made little attempt to control the

grapheme-phoneme regularities of the vocabulary that was presented. Another program used a basal reader and a detailed control of grapheme-phoneme regularities of the vocabulary that was presented. Both of these programs had a counterpart which supplemented the same basic program with emphasis on "meaning contrasts within basic patterns of language structures through word substitution, pattern expansion and elaboration, pattern inversions, and pattern transformations. The importance of noun, verb, phrase, clause and question markers in relation to meaning change was also emphasized" (Ruddell 1970, p. 2). In the first year of the investigation, it was found that a program in grade one that controls for regularities in grapheme-phoneme correspondences and emphasizes language structures produces higher decoding skills than the program that did not control these elements. However in the second and third year, the program that did not control the correspondences produced higher Word Study Skills achievement in the second year than did the program that controlled the correspondences. Although Ruddell's study was based mainly upon the reading aspect of language skills, the emphasis upon oral language components in the supplementary material gave rise to further investigations.

A study by Bougere (1968, p. 1) was done in an attempt to isolate oral language from written language. She compared the "(1) number of T-units (communication units) spoken in an experimental situation; (2) mean length of the T-unit; (3) ratio of subordinate clause length to T-unit length; (4) ratio of sentence-combining transformations to T-units; (5) percent of words at Thorndike-Lorge frequency levels 3 and 5;

and (7) the type token ratio." Her objectives were: to discover any relationship between the experimental language measures and first-grade reading achievement; whether any one of the experimental language measures predict reading achievement as well as the Metropolitan Readiness Test; and to what degree does any one or any combination of the language measures add to the predictive value of the standardized reading readiness test. The test was administered to 60 first-grade pupils in a south Chicago suburb with a population of fairly wide socio-economic range. Individual interviews were used to obtain the language samples through the use of three stimuli; two silent cartoon films and one series of illustrations from a widely used basal primer. There was a uniform schedule of questions in which the child was asked to tell the story of the stimulus in his own words and to respond to a "thought question." Upon analysis of the language samples the Thorndike-Lorge frequency levels had such low reliabilities that they were eliminated from the data used in testing the hypotheses. The study discovered that none of the language measures alone had as much value in predicting reading achievement as the Metropolitan Readiness Test, however the mean T-unit length added significantly to the prediction value.

In 1971 Hersvall (1973) did a study on school beginners in which he first described the child's oral language and attempted to validate various hypotheses as to the predictive value of different variables related to reading and spelling ability. He discovered that by the end of one year the best prediction of ability was the spoken language along with tests of general school readiness and tests of reading and writing

readiness. In the second part of his study he did an experimental investigation of the effect of speech training on reading and spelling ability after one year of school. It was discovered that the experimental group showed a little greater gain in reading and writing skills than the control group.

Three other studies, although involving written forms of language, investigated different components of language and were a definite influence on the present study. Gibbons (1941) conducted a study in which she attempted to determine if there is a relationship between the ability to understand the meaning of a sentence by the ability to see relationships between the parts of that sentence. She also attempted to determine any relationship between the ability to see relationships between parts of a sentence and the ability to read. The subjects were 25 third-grade children. The children were administered a battery of tests which consisted of (1) a disarranged phrase test in which 15 sentences of varied difficulty and structure were chosen, the phrases of each sentence were placed in column form and the children were asked to arrange each so that it made sense; (2) a sentence completion and a question test were used to test the sentence understanding of the preceding test; and (3) the Gates Standardized Reading Test to measure reading achievement. The study results indicated that the ability to see relationship between parts of a sentence is necessary for the understanding of that sentence and is in turn related to reaching achievement.

In 1965 Tally did a study in which she used 123 bilingual fourth and sixth graders. Sixty of the children were used in the experimental

group and 63 in the control group. Pretests and posttests were administered to both groups which consisted of (1) two teacher constructed tests of idioms; (2) two teacher constructed tests of multiple meanings; (3) the California Test of Mental Maturity; and (4) the California Reading Achievement Test, Form W. While the control group received the standard language arts program, the experimental group received a language arts program that consisted of concentrated English language instruction which included oral English as a second language as well as instruction in reading and writing. Also included in the program was the study of concepts and vocabulary which encompassed multiple meanings of words, idioms, and figures of speech. The period of instruction lasted for six months. It was discovered that the experimental group made statistically significant gains in reading achievement and mental maturity over the gains made by the control group.

Another study was done by Draper and Moeller (1971) in which they designed and implemented a radio program for the St. Louis Vocabulary Project. The program was designed to investigate the effect on spelling, vocabulary, and reading achievement of fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students. The instruction was presented three times a week from September through May 1969-1970 and consisted of 90 radio programs. It was estimated that 24,000 students received 1,800 new words with special emphasis on deductive, direct teaching of word meanings with illustrations. Stress was also placed upon synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and variant word forms. Comparisons were made on pretest, expected, posttest and posttest scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and

Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test. The results showed that most of the children in fourth and fifth grades gained three to four months more than was expected. However, sixth-grade students did not meet the expected gains.

In an attempt to isolate some of the specific problems of children, researchers have investigated the many different types of programs implemented by the schools to help children acquire the English background necessary for achievement in school. Ethel Capps (1970) reported on a remedial type program that was set up for students at the Intermountain Indian School. It was an individualized program with weekly contracts for each child. The contracts were divided into five sections entitled "word attack," "vocabulary growth," "comprehension," "related skills," and "study skills." The contracts were geared to encourage self-evaluation by the student with the teacher acting as a resource person to help in the accomplishment of tasks and the evaluation of the quality of the work. Students were not introduced to formal reading procedures until their aural-oral language background was deemed sufficient for success in dealing with the printed material. Each child was given daily oral work. Children were scheduled for eight weeks of instruction in this program. Those attending the center for eight weeks of instruction showed an average gain of nearly three months on vocabulary and two months in comprehension as opposed to the average gain of one month revealed in their previous school record. The gain was measured on the Gates-MacGinitie test. Although oral reading was not taught as such, it was used as a diagnostic tool and on the post Gilmore

Oral Reading Inventory: "The average gain in oral accuracy was five and one-half months with nine and one-half months' gain in comprehension" (Capps (1970, p. 259).

The few works that have involved multiple meanings of words such as that of Tally (1965), Draper and Moeller (1971), and Gibbons (1941) found definite indications of a relationship between synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, and idiomatic expression and reading achievement. However, in all cases the studies encompassed most of these components along with other facets of oral language such as concept development and quantity of vocabulary. They also involved reading and writing and did not isolate the oral language components. It is with these problems in mind that the present study was formulated in an attempt to isolate the components of synonyms and homophones in the oral language of children.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The general plan for the study was as follows. Subjects for the study were selected from three middle class schools in a metropolitan area. An oral language measurement instrument was developed by the researcher. A pilot study was conducted for purposes of evaluating the oral language instrument. In this study the instrument was administered to one third-grade class and a random sample of 20 was made for purposes of the pilot study only. None of the scores were used in the study itself. Upon completion of the pilot study, necessary adjustments to the oral language instrument were made, and the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test, Elementary Level, and the Oral Language Test were administered to four third-grade classes randomly chosen from a total of nine in the three schools. A random sample of 100 subjects was made for purposes of analysis. The statistical analysis of the data was appropriate for the stated hypotheses of the study. Following are the specific procedures of the study.

Population

The population of the study was 117 students in four third-grade classes of three middle class schools designated as such by the school administration. Third-grade subjects were chosen because they have

achieved a certain amount of independent reading ability that would facilitate the test task. The ages ranged from 7 years and 11 months to 10 years and 10 months. The ethnic groups that were represented were 97 percent Anglo, 2 percent Mexican-American, 1 percent American-Indian, and 1 percent Oriental. It was reported by the administration that English was spoken in all the homes. This information was desired in an attempt to avoid any possible bilingual problems.

Sample

The sample consisted of 100 subjects randomly chosen from the 117 students in the four third-grade classes of the three middle class schools. The ages ranged from 7 years and 11 months to 10 years and 10 months with a median age of 8 years and 6 months. As in the population, all but four of the subjects were of the Anglo ethnic group with English spoken in the home. Of the four subjects who were not of the Anglo ethnic group, two were Mexican-American, one was American-Indian, and one was Oriental. It was reported by the school that English was also spoken in these homes.

Instruments of Measurement

There were two instruments of measurement and they were as follows.

1. Reading achievement was measured by the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test, Elementary Level. This test was chosen as it is widely used and is considered a well-constructed test. The

total raw score of the subtests Word Knowledge, and Reading were used for purposes of analysis.

2. As discussed previously, the manipulation of words for effective oral communication involves the understanding of multiple meanings and shades of meaning. Therefore, an oral language instrument was developed by the researcher in the following manner.

Part I. Synonyms--

Step 1: Selection of word list--The EDL Core Vocabulary (Taylor and Frackenpohl 1960) Grade Three list consisting of 758 words was used for choice of stimulus words. This source of stimulus words and words to be used in the sentences was chosen because of its wide variety of sources, such as Rinsland, Basic Vocabulary of Elementary School Children, and ten Basal Reader Series: American Book Company; Bobbs-Merrill Company; Ginn and Company; D. C. Heath and Company; Houghton Mifflin; Laidlaw Brothers; Macmillan Company; Row Peterson and Company; Scott, Foresman and Company; and Silver Burdett Company. Sources of children's oral vocabulary alone were not chosen for the stimulus words due to the fact that the act of reading is a recognition process as opposed to a recall process. The words that are understood and not necessarily used in the speaker's vocabulary are a definite factor in reading comprehension.

Step 2: Selection of criteria for synonyms and meanings-- Roget's Thesaurus (1972) and the "Definition of Terms" were used in the decision as to whether words were synonyms or not. The

School Dictionary (1974) was used for the choice of meanings to be used in the formation of sentences. This choice of source was made as it is one of the most up-to-date dictionaries for schools and its meanings are listed according to frequency of usage.

Step 3: Choice of meanings to be used in sentence formation--

Each pair of synonyms had to have three meanings listed to assure the formation of two pairs of sentences. In one pair of sentences where the only word changed was the synonym itself, the meanings were the same. In the other pair of sentences where, again, the only word changed was the synonym itself, the meanings were different. In the sentences where the words were considered synonymous, the first synonymous meaning of the two words listed in the dictionary was used. In the sentences where the words were not synonymous, the first different meaning applicable in the same sentence was used. Therefore, three meanings were listed with each pair of synonyms; one meaning that was synonymous, and one different meaning for each word.

Step 4: Listing of synonyms--All words appearing on the third-grade list of the EDL Core Vocabulary (Taylor and Frackenhohl 1960) that were considered synonyms as defined in the "Definition of Terms," that were sighted as such in Roget's Thesaurus (1972), and that had different meanings applicable in the same sentence were listed. This process produced 97 pairs of synonyms.

Step 8: Random selection of double pairs of sentences--

Using the "Table of Random Digits" (Minium 1969, p. 454), 25 sets of double sentences were randomly chosen for test items. This procedure produced 50 pairs of sentences--25 in which the stimulus words were synonymous and 25 in which the same words were not synonymous.

Step 9: Numbering of all pairs of sentences--Each pair of

sentences were arbitrarily assigned a numeral from 1 to 50 for purposes of random assignment of test items.

Step 10: Random assignment of test items--Again using the

"Table of Random Digits" (Minium 1969, p. 454), the sentence pairs were randomly assigned to the 50 positions on the test.

Step 11: Formation of an answer sheet and a key--As this

was a group test an answer sheet was developed by the researcher to simplify the task of the test for the subjects. Each item was represented by a numeral and two boxes. Immediately following the numeral and to the left of one box appeared, in capital letters, the word YES to signify, yes--the stimulus words meant the same or nearly the same. Immediately following that box and to the left of the other box appears, in capital letters, the word NO to signify, no--the stimulus words did not mean the same or nearly the same. A large X was to be placed in the chosen box.

Example: 1. YES NO

In addition to a capital Y signifying YES and a capital N signifying NO appearing on the teacher's copy of the test, an answer sheet was filled in as a key for purposes of scoring the test.

Step 12: Scoring--The scoring of the test was the totaling of all correct answers. A possible score of 50 could be obtained. This score was added to the score from the homophone subtest to produce a possible total oral language score of 100 points.

Part II. Homophones--

Step 1: Selection of word list--The EDL Core Vocabulary (Taylor and Frackenpohl 1960), Grade Three list consisting of 758 words was again used for choice of stimulus words as in the test for synonyms.

Step 2: Selection of criteria for homophones and meanings--The School Dictionary (1974) and the "Definition of Terms" were used in the decision as to whether words were homophones or not as with the synonym subtest for the same reasons.

Step 3: Listing of homophones--All words appearing on the third-grade list of the EDL Core Vocabulary (Taylor and Frackenpohl 1960), and that were considered homophones as defined in the "Definition of Terms" and had at least two meaning entries in The School Dictionary (1974) were placed in a list. As homonyms are also homophones (Random House 1966), they were listed beside the first word appearing on the third-grade list. The two words comprised one listing and represented their respective first meaning entry thus giving the required two meanings for

that listing. Only those homonyms which appeared on the primary, first, second, or third-grade lists of the EDL Core Vocabulary (Taylor and Frackenpohl 1960) were used. This process produced 518 homophones.

Step 4: Choice of meanings used in sentence formation--Each homophone had to have two meaning entries for the formation of two pairs of sentences. In the first pair of sentences the homophones had different meanings, and in the second pair of sentences they had the same meaning. In an attempt to avoid arbitrary choice of meaning used for the homophones in the sentences where they had the same meaning, a numeral was used to designate the first or second dictionary entry. The numeral "1" or "2" was placed to the right of each listing. The numeral was alternated beginning with "1" beside the first listing, "2" beside the second, "1" beside the third and so on until all listings had been assigned a numeral. The numeral "1" represented the first entry and the numeral "2" represented the second meaning entry.

Example: act 1
 against 2
 ant aunt 1
 bait 2
 band 1

Step 5: Numbering of homophones--Each of the 518 homophones listed were arbitrarily assigned a numeral from 1 to 518 for purposes of random selection of test items.

Step 6: Random selection of test items--Using the "Table of Random Digits" (Minium 1969, p. 454), 25 homophones were randomly chosen for test items. This procedure produced 50 pairs of sentences--25 in which the homophones had the same meaning and 25 in which the same homophones had different meanings.

Step 7: Choice of words for use in sentences--All words appearing in the sentences were found in the primary, first, second or third-grade lists of the EDL Core Vocabulary (Taylor and Frackenpohl 1960). Those homophones that were chosen were used in the exact form they appeared on the list. Words other than the homophones were not necessarily used in the exact form they appeared on the list as endings such as s, es, ed, ing, and 's may have been added.

Step 8: Formation of double pairs of sentences--Using The School Dictionary (1974) for meanings used in the formation of the sentences, two pairs of sentences were written for each test item. In the first pair of sentences the homophones had different meanings which were the first and second meaning entries in the dictionary. In the second pair of sentences the homophones had the same meaning and that meaning was designated by the numeral appearing to the right of the listing. The numeral "1" designated the first meaning entry and the numeral "2" designated the second meaning entry. In the case of the homophone with a homonym, the numeral "1" designated the first meaning entry of the homophone and the numeral "2" designated the first meaning

entry of its homonym. This procedure produced 25 double pairs of sentences.

Step 9: Numbering of all pairs of sentences--Each pair of sentences were arbitrarily assigned a numeral from 1 to 50 for purposes of random assignment of test items.

Step 10: Random assignment of test items--Again using the "Table of Random Digits" (Minium 1969, p. 454) the sentence pairs were randomly assigned to the 50 positions on the test.

Step 11: Formation of an answer sheet and a key--As this was a group test, an answer sheet was developed by the researcher to simplify the task of the test for the subjects. Each item was represented by a numeral and two boxes. Immediately following the numeral and to the left of one box appeared, in capital letters, the word YES to signify, yes--the stimulus words meant the same or nearly the same. Immediately following that box and to the left of the other box appears, in capital letters, the word NO to signify, no--the stimulus words did not mean the same or nearly the same. A large X was to be placed in the chosen box.

Example: 1. YES NO

In addition to a capital Y signifying YES and a capital N signifying NO appearing on the teacher's copy of the test, an answer sheet was filled in as a key for purposes of scoring the test.

Step 12: Scoring--The scoring of the test was the totaling of all correct answers. A possible score of 50 could be obtained.

This score was added to the score from the synonym subtest to produce a possible total oral language score of 100 points.

Pilot Study

The pilot study consisted of the administration of a prototype of the oral language instrument which was prepared by the researcher. The test was given to 26 students of one third-grade class in a middle class school. The scores of 20 subjects were randomly chosen for purposes of the pilot study. The subjects ranged from age 8 to 10 years and were all classified by the school as of the Anglo ethnic group with English spoken in the home.

The purpose of the pilot study was to obtain answers to the following prestated questions. The researcher and two judges, who were third-grade teachers, determined answers to the following questions.

Question #1. Is the oral language measurement instrument appropriate as to choice of stimulus words and their existence in the subjects' aural-oral vocabularies as determined by no one item being unknown by all subjects?

There was no one item unknown by all 20 subjects therefore the choice of items was maintained on the test.

Question #2. Is the method of administration of the oral language instrument feasible?

It was decided to shorten the oral directions by the examiner as the original method tended to lengthen the time of administration and was not compatible with the examinees.

Question #3. What is the length of time for administration of the oral language instrument and its effect upon the examinees as to fatigue or loss of attention?

The administration of the oral language instrument of measurement took from 45 minutes to one hour with an approximate five-minute break between the two subtests. There was no evidence of undue fatigue or loss of attention among the examinees.

Question #4. Is the test reliable as measured by the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula which is appropriate for a test of the split-half type? (Thorndike and Hagan 1969, p. 183).

The entire test was administered at one sitting. The Pearson Product Moment was applied to find the correlation coefficient between the odd and even items. By means of the Spearman-Brown Formula applied to the correlation coefficient, a reliability of .84 was obtained. The same process was used to ascertain the reliability of each of the two subtests separately. The synonyms had a reliability of .60 and the homophones had a reliability of .75. All these reliabilities were deemed sufficient (Thorndike and Hagan 1969, p. 194). A copy of the oral language instrument may be found in Appendix A of this dissertation.

Administration of the Instruments

The administration of the testing instruments was as follows.

Reading Achievement Test

The standardized reading test was administered by the researcher to avoid differences in administration which might occur if classroom

teachers administered the test to their respective classes. It was administered alternately with the oral language instrument. Through random assignment, two classes were given the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test first and two classes were given the Oral Language Test first. This procedure was followed in an attempt to avoid any influence of test order on the data.

Oral Language Measurement Instrument

The oral language instrument was administered on a group basis to one class at a time and was administered alternately with the reading achievement test as stated previously. It was administered by the following procedures.

1. Each student was given an answer sheet on which to mark his answers for both subtests and the examiner explained the test and the procedures. She explained to the students that she would read two sentences to them and they were to listen carefully and decide whether the sentences had the same, nearly the same or entirely different meaning. Directing the students to look at their answer sheets she explained that if the sentences had the same or nearly the same meaning, they would mark a big X in the box to the right of the YES; if the sentences had an entirely different meaning, they would mark a big X in the box to the right of the NO. She then proceeded to do the two sample sentences provided in the test making sure that all students understood what was required of them.

2. Synonym subtest--The examiner gave orally, two sentences and asked if they had the same, nearly the same or entirely different meanings. She gave the sentences twice and then directed the students to mark their answer sheets with a big X in the box to the right of the YES, if the sentences had the same or nearly the same meaning or in the box to the right of the NO if the sentences had entirely different meanings. No special emphasis was given to the stimulus words.

Example: May I have a candy?
 May I have a sweet? YES NO

We went to visit the candy lady.
 We went to visit the sweet lady. YES NO

Fifty pairs of sentences were given. All yes or no responses were marked by the examinees on the supplied answer sheet. Upon completion of Part I: Synonyms, the students were given a short break to get a drink, walk around, etc.

3. Homophone subtest--Immediately after the short break, Part II: Homophones was administered. The examiner explained to the students that she would give them a word and then read two sentences in which that word was used. They were to listen very carefully and decide whether that word had the same meaning in both sentences or an entirely different meaning in each of the two sentences. If the word had the same meaning in the two sentences they were to mark a big X in the box to the right of the YES, but if it had two entirely different meanings, they were to mark a big X in the box to the right of the NO. She then proceeded to

do the two sample sentences provided in the test making sure that all students understood what was required of them. She then proceeded to the test itself reading each homophone and its accompanying sentences twice and asking if the word had the same meaning in the two sentences or an entirely different meaning in each. She directed the students to mark their answer sheets with a big X in the box to the right of the YES if the word had the same meaning in the two sentences, or in the box to the right of the NO if the word had a different meaning in each of the two sentences. No special emphasis was given to the stimulus word during the reading of the sentences.

Example: Pillow
 Mother made a pretty pillow for my bed.
 The teacher told him to pillow his head on his hands.

YES NO

Pillow
 We had a fight with the pillow last night.
 Get your pillow and sleep on the floor.

YES NO

Fifty pairs of sentences were given. All yes or no responses were marked by the examinees on the supplied answer sheet.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested.

1. There is no significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language (Problem #1).

2. There is no significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language (Problem #2).
3. There is no significant difference between the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and that of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language (Problem #3).
4. There is no significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language (Problem #4).

Analysis of Data

The following statistical analysis of the data was performed.

1. The correlation between reading achievement and understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language by third graders was calculated for each subject using the Pearson Product Moment and reported. The correlation coefficient for the relationship of reading achievement and the understanding of synonyms was tested for significance at the alpha level of .05 (Hypothesis #1).
2. The correlation between reading achievement and understanding of homophones in contextual oral language by third graders was calculated for each subject using the Pearson Product Moment and reported. The correlation coefficient for the relationship of reading achievement and the understanding of homophones was tested for significance at the alpha level of .05 (Hypothesis #2).

3. The difference between the correlations of reading achievement and the understanding of synonyms and that of reading achievement and the understanding of homophones in contextual oral language by third graders was tested for significance at the alpha level of .05 (Hypothesis #3).
4. The correlation between reading achievement and the combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language by third graders was calculated using the Pearson Product Moment and reported. The correlation coefficient for the relationship of reading achievement and the combined understanding of synonyms and homophones was tested for significance at the alpha level of .05 (Hypothesis #4).
5. The testing of the correlation coefficients for significance at the alpha level of .05 is deemed sufficient for the investigation of the existence of the relationships in this study (Glass and Stanley 1970, p. 282).
6. A test was made for each set of correlations between the oral language subtests and reading achievement using the test for dependent samples. The Fisher Z-transformation was used for significant differences between those correlations (Glass and Stanley 1970, p. 313).

Assumptions

Following are the assumptions of this study.

1. Children's oral language patterns have not been so conditioned to word associations that responses to the oral language instrument indicated rote memory.
2. The stimuli of the oral language instrument were appropriate for third-grade children.

Limitations of the Study

The following are considered to be limitations of the study.

1. The sample used for the study was selected from only third graders in three middle class schools.
2. The measurement instruments did not eliminate the element of chance correct answers.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following section consists of a detailed report and discussion of the findings regarding the research hypotheses, ancillary findings and a summary of the findings of the study.

Findings Regarding the Hypotheses

The following is a detailed report and discussion of the findings regarding each research hypothesis. All correlations were tested for significance at the alpha level of .05. A summary of the findings for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 is reported in Table 1.

Hypothesis #1

The correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language was found to be significant at the alpha level of .001. As this was far above the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding agrees with the Draper and Moeller (1971) study in which they emphasized the teaching of synonyms as part of their study in which reading achievement improved with the direct teaching of this language component in conjunction with antonyms and homonyms.

Table 1. Correlation coefficients and levels of significance for hypotheses 1, 2, and 4.

	Metro. Read. Achiev. Total	Oral Language Synonyms	Oral Language Homophones
Oral Language Synonyms	r = .3838 p = .001		
Oral Language Homophones	r = .2675 p = .004	r = .2608 p = .004	
Oral Lang. Total Syn. and Hom.	r = .4116 p = .001	r = .8034 p = .001	r = .7843 p = .001

Hypothesis #2

The correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language was found to be significant at the alpha level of .004. As this was far above the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. These findings verify the study of Tally (1965) in which she emphasized multiple meanings of words and the study by Ruddell (1970) where a supplementary language program emphasized the change in meanings by patterns of language.

Hypothesis #3

The difference between the correlation of reading achievement of third graders and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral

language and the correlation of reading achievement of third graders and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language was found to be far below the alpha level of .05 and the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore it was found that both third-graders' understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language separately have approximately the same importance to their reading achievement.

Hypothesis #4

The correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language was found to be significant at the alpha level of .001. As this was far above the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Besides adding two more oral language components to those found by Strickland (1962) and Loban (1965), these findings verify the premise that children who have learned to use contextual settings to guide their choice of meanings for words in oral language tend to do better on reading achievement tests (F. Smith 1973, Gray 1970, Emans 1973).

Ancillary Findings

The following is a report on findings that do not pertain directly to the research hypotheses.

Reliability Coefficients of the Oral Language Test

A summary of the findings of the split-half test and the Spearman Brown reliability coefficients is reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Split-half reliability coefficients of the oral language test.

	r	Spearman Brown
Synonym Subtest	.48	.65
Homophone Subtest	.22	.36
Total Oral Language Test	.28	.44

The Pearson Product Moment was applied to the odd and even items on the Oral Language Test in order to obtain correlation coefficients for the split-half test. The Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula was computed to obtain a reliability coefficient for the total test and each of the subtests. It was found that with 100 subjects, the whole test had a reliability coefficient of .44; the synonym subtest .65; and the homophone subtest .36. As the coefficient for the homophone subtest was lower than that obtained for the pilot study, it is possible that the task on that subtest may have been inconsistently difficult for the subject of the study.

Summary of the Findings

In this chapter were presented the results of the statistical analysis of the data that was collected in investigating the relationship of reading achievement of third graders and their understanding of

synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language. The statistical analyses of the data yielded the following findings.

1. There is a significant relationship between reading achievement of third graders and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language.
2. There is a significant relationship between reading achievement of third graders and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language.
3. There is no significant difference between the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language.
4. There is a significant relationship between reading achievement of third graders and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section will present a restatement of the problem, a short review of background research, a restatement of the procedures of the study, conclusions drawn on the findings of the study, implications suggested by those findings, and recommendations for further research as an outgrowth of the study.

Restatement of the Problem

Reading specialists are generally agreed that there is a relationship between oral language and reading achievement. However, the specific components of oral language which contribute to that relationship have not been satisfactorily identified. Many studies have been done in an attempt to describe the components of oral language; to discover the components that contribute to reading readiness; and to discover those that contribute to reading achievement. Most of the studies investigating reading achievement involved some form of graphic representation of oral language and thereby clouded the oral language components. This study was an attempt to isolate two specific oral language components and investigate their relationship to reading achievement.

Background Research

Gibbons (1941) did a study in which she investigated the ability of third graders to see relationships between the parts of a sentence and the relationship of this ability to reading achievement. She found a definite relationship between these two variables. However the study involved reading and writing only.

Tally (1965) did an experimental pretest, posttest control group study with bilingual fourth and sixth graders in which multiple meanings of words, idioms, and figures of speech along with other facets of language were emphasized in an enriched language arts program. Significant gains in reading achievement were found at the end of a six-month period. Again in this study the oral language components were clouded by reading and writing.

Bougere (1968) investigated the possibility of selected oral language components as better predictors of reading readiness than the Metropolitan Readiness Test. No one of the oral language components proved to be a better predictor, although the communication unit length tended to enhance the Metropolitan Readiness Test. This study suggested that other components of oral language should be investigated.

Draper and Moeller (1971) did a study in which they presented 90 lessons on radio to fourth, fifth and sixth-grade students in which they emphasized synonyms, antonyms and homonyms. At the end of the study it was found that the fourth and fifth-grade students gained three to four months more than was expected in spelling, vocabulary, and reading achievement. The researchers in these studies were not attempting to

isolate oral language components, however their efforts suggested possible specific oral language components to be investigated in relationship to reading achievement.

Conclusions and Implications

The following conclusions and implications are organized according to the findings regarding the research hypotheses and the ancillary findings. These conclusions pertain to only populations and conditions similar to those of this study.

Conclusions and implications pertaining to the hypotheses of the study are as follows.

1. Hypothesis #1 stated that there would be no significant correlation between third-graders' understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and their reading achievement.

Findings--It was found that the correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language was significant above the alpha level of .05, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusions--These findings suggest that third-graders' understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language are one of the factors related to their reading achievement.

Implications--The findings of this hypothesis imply that educators developing and implementing oral language programs might include the direct teaching of the different meanings of synonyms through the use of contextual settings as determiners of the choice between possible words.

2. Hypothesis #2 stated that there would be no significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language.

Findings--It was found that the correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language was significant above the alpha level of .05, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusions--These findings suggest that third-graders' understanding of homophones in contextual oral language are one of the factors related to their reading achievement.

Implications--The findings of this hypothesis imply that oral language programs might consider including the direct teaching of changing meanings of homophones according to their contextual settings. Early childhood programs perhaps might also consider the many oral games played with word meanings.

3. Hypothesis #3 stated that there would be no significant difference between the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and the correlation of third-graders' reading achievement and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language.

Findings--It was found that the difference between these two correlations was significant far below the .05 level and therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusions--These findings suggest that third-graders' understanding of synonyms in contextual oral language and their understanding of homophones in contextual oral language are of equal importance as to their contribution to third-graders' reading achievement.

Implications--The findings of this hypothesis suggest that synonyms and homophones should be treated with equal importance in any oral language training. The ability to understand the slight meaning differences of words according to the context in which they are used is just as important as the interpretation of the correct meaning for words that sound alike but change their meaning according to their contextual settings.

4. Hypothesis #4 stated that there would be no significant correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language.

Findings--It was found that the correlation between third-graders' reading achievement and their combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language was significant above the alpha level of .05, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusions--These findings suggest that third-graders' combined understanding of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language is one of the factors related to their reading achievement.

Implications--The findings of this hypothesis suggest that oral language training might include the direct teaching of synonyms and homophones in contextual oral language emphasizing the changing meanings caused by the context in which the words are used. The presentation of words in context rather than isolated in vocabulary lists helps spotlight the many possible meanings available to the recipient of a communication. The concept that words change their meaning according to the context in which they are found is basic to the correct interpretation of a communication. Perhaps oral language training should include the manipulation of words much in the same manner as other disciplines include the manipulation of concrete objects in the learning of fundamental concepts. Words are the concrete object of oral communication which can be played with by moving them around and by changing their feel and sound.

Conclusions and implications suggested by the ancillary findings of the study are as follows.

Findings

It was found that the Spearman Brown coefficient of reliability for the synonym subtest of the Oral Language Test was .65; for the homophone subtest .36; and for the total Oral Language Test .44.

Conclusions

These findings suggest that the synonym subtest was reliable in its measurement of the understanding of synonyms in contextual oral

language. However, the homophone subtest had a questionable reliability and lowered the reliability of the total test.

Implications

These findings imply that the task of the homophone subtest should be reviewed for difficulty.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following are recommendations for further research.

1. An experimental study involving the direct teaching of synonyms and homophones in oral contextual language should be made to investigate the possibility of any difference in the reading achievement of students who have received instruction in the use of synonyms and homophones in oral language and the reading achievement of those who have received no special instruction.
2. That a separate study of synonyms in oral language should be made investigating the use of these synonyms by children in their everyday oral language and the possibility of a relationship between this use and reading achievement.
3. Another study should be made investigating the different homophones children use in their everyday oral language and the possibility of a relationship between this use and reading achievement.
4. A study to attempt to develop a more reliable measurement instrument of the understanding of homophones in contextual oral language should be made.

APPENDIX A

TEST OF UNDERSTANDING OF SYNONYMS AND HOMOPHONES

Directions: Explain that this test is to see how well the examinee understands the meanings of the words and that there will be two parts to the test. Look at the answer sheet and point out to the children (1) two sample boxes, (2) two parts to the test with a double line down the middle separating them, and (3) explain that you will say the number for each set to help them keep their places.

Part I. Synonyms

I am going to read two sentences to you and then I will ask you if the sentences have the same, nearly the same, or an entirely different meaning. Look at your answer sheet where it says SAMPLES in the top left hand corner. (Point to it on your answer sheet and make sure all students find it!)

SAMPLES:

1. YES NO
2. YES NO

If the sentences have the same or nearly the same meaning, I want you to put a big X in the box to the right of the YES. If the sentences have an entirely different meaning, I want you to put a big X in the box to the right of the NO. I will read each pair of sentences two times and I want you to wait until I have read it the second time before marking your answers.

Now we will do two sample sets of sentences. This is sample number one. Listen carefully to the following sentences and decide

whether they have the same, nearly the same or different meanings.

(Read the sentences in a normal speaking voice giving no special emphasis to the synonyms.)

The cars went ahead slowly.
The cars went forward slowly.

(Repeat)

The cars went ahead slowly.
The cars went forward slowly.

If they have the same or nearly the same meaning, put a big X in the box to the right of the YES. If they have entirely different meanings, but a big X in the box to the right of the NO. (Call for the answer; If it is wrong, get the right answer from someone else and then discuss why that one is correct.) You should have put a big X in the box to the right of the YES.

Now let's try sample number two. Listen carefully and decide whether these sentences have the same, nearly the same, or entirely different meanings.

Father wore his new chain.
Father wore his new tie.

(Repeat)

Father wore his new chain.
Father wore his new tie.

(Call for the answer. If it is wrong, get the right answer from someone else and then discuss why that one is correct.) You should have put a big X in the box to the right of the NO.

We are going to do 50 pairs of these sentences. Some will have the same or nearly the same meaning and some will have entirely different

meanings. I will read the sentences twice and then you may mark your answers. Remember, if they have the same or nearly the same meaning, put a big X in the box to the right of the YES. If they have entirely different meanings, put a big X in the box to the right of the NO. Are there any questions about what you are to do? (Answer any questions and clarify any problems.)

(Do not read the isolated synonyms to the students. Read each pair of sentences twice and then call for the answer. DO NOT GIVE SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO THE SYNONYMS.)

1. line - stripe (N)
Mother is going to line the coat with wool.
Mother is going to stripe the coat with wool.
2. finger - feel (Y)
Mother began to feel the cloth.
Mother began to finger the cloth.
3. finger - feel (N)
The feel of her hand was cold.
The finger of her hand was cold.
4. candy - sweet (Y)
May I have a candy?
May I have a sweet?
5. bare - empty (Y)
The cupboard was bare.
The cupboard was empty.
6. puff - smoke (N)
That smoke came from her pocketbook.
That puff came from her pocketbook.
7. bare - empty (N)
The little boy's hands were bare.
The little boy's hands were empty.
8. beyond - past (Y)
He has gone beyond the house.
He has gone past the house.

9. jar - rock (N)
That is a big jar.
That is a big rock.
10. puff - smoke (Y)
Father is going to puff his pipe.
Father is going to smoke his pipe.
11. lick - beat (Y)
The new boy will lick you.
The new boy will beat you.
12. leaf - page (N)
The leaf fell down.
The page fell down.
13. clear - explain (N)
They are going to clear the crash.
They are going to explain the crash.
14. matter - interest (N)
The matter will cost too much.
The interest will cost too much.
15. held - kept (N)
My friend held my dog for me.
My friend kept my dog for me.
16. wink - twinkle (Y)
I like to watch the stars wink in the night sky.
I like to watch the stars twinkle in the night sky.
17. candy - sweet (N)
The candy lady gave me a gift.
The sweet lady gave me a gift.
18. boot - kick (N)
He got a boot in the shop.
He got a kick in the shop.
19. different - special (N)
A different train came to town.
A special train came to town.
20. matter - interest (Y)
That is of no matter to me.
That is of no interest to me.

21. beyond - past (N)
The beyond is scary.
The past is scary.
22. wink - twinkle (N)
Watch that boy's eye wink.
Watch that boy's eyes twinkle.
23. line - stripe (Y)
The men will put a line down the road.
The men will put a stripe down the road.
24. narrow - thin (Y)
Draw a narrow line on that paper.
Draw a thin line on that paper.
25. book - kick (Y)
Dad will boot the cat through the door.
Dad will kick the cat through the door.
26. drift - stream (Y)
That water will drift into the room.
That water will stream into the room.
27. course - direction (N)
He took a different direction in school.
He took a different course in school.
28. howl - weep (Y)
When he fell down, the boy began to howl.
When he fell down, the boy began to weep.
29. different - special (Y)
I have a different surprise.
I have a special surprise.
30. fur - wool (Y)
See how nice that lamb's fur is.
See how nice that lamb's wool is.
31. lick - beat (N)
May I lick the candy?
May I beat the candy?
32. act - pretend (Y)
Children like to act.
Children like to pretend.

33. jar - rock (Y)
That news will jar Mother.
That news will rock Mother.
34. course - direction (Y)
What is your course from here?
What is your direction from here?
35. break - snap (N)
Did you break your fingers?
Did you snap your fingers?
36. howl - weep (N)
If you put the dog outside, he will howl.
If you put the dog outside, he will weep.
37. glove - mitten (Y)
My sister lost her glove.
My sister lost her mitten.
38. narrow - thin (N)
He is a very narrow man.
He is a very thin man.
39. leaf - page (Y)
May I have a leaf of your paper?
May I have a page of your paper?
40. drift - stream (N)
The little boy got stuck in the drift.
The little boy got stuck in the stream.
41. clear - explain (Y)
Will you clear the question for me?
Will you explain the question for me?
42. match - pair (Y)
The socks are a match.
The socks are a pair.
43. act - pretend (N)
They pretend to help.
They act to help.
44. fur - wool (N)
I have a good fur coat.
I have a good wool coat.

45. bait - tease (Y)
He likes to bait his sister.
He likes to tease his sister.
46. held - kept (Y)
He held the book until I got the money.
He kept the book until I got the money.
47. match - pair (N)
The match didn't work.
The pair didn't work.
48. bait - tease (N)
He will be the bait in the play.
He will be the tease in the play.
49. break - snap (Y)
The puppy will break that pencil.
The puppy will snap that pencil.
50. glove - mitten (N)
He caught the baseball because he had a glove.
He caught the baseball because he had a mitten.

Before beginning the next part of the test, give the children a short break to get a drink, stand up, etc.

Part II. Homophones

I am going to read a word to you and then I am going to read two sentences using that word. I will ask you if the word has the same meaning or a different meaning in the two sentences. Look at your answer sheet where it says SAMPLES.

SAMPLES:

1. YES NO
2. YES NO

If the word has the same meaning in the two sentences, I want you to put a big X in the box to the right of the YES. If the word has a different

meaning in the two sentences, I want you to put a big X in the box to the right of the NO. I will read the word and then I will read the two sentences twice and I want you to wait until I have read them the second time before marking your answer.

Now we will do two sample sets of sentences. This is sample number one. Listen carefully to the word and the following sentences and decide whether the word has the same or a different meaning in the sentences. (Read the word and then the sentences in a normal speaking voice giving no special emphasis to the homophone.)

able - He is an able doctor.
Our dog is an able mother.

(Repeat)

He is an able doctor.
Our dog is an able mother.

If the word able has the same meaning in the two sentences, put a big X in the box to the right of the YES. If it has a different meaning in the two sentences, put a big X in the box to the right of the NO. (Call for the answer. If it is wrong, get the right answer from someone else and discuss why that one is correct.) You should have put a big X in the box to the right of the YES.

Now let's try sample number two. Listen carefully and decide whether the word has the same meaning or different meanings in the two sentences.

beat - The boy beat the drum.
I beat you three times at that game.

(Repeat)

The boy beat the drum.
I beat you three times at that game.

(Call for the answer. If it is wrong, get the right answer from someone else and then discuss why that one is correct.) You should have put a big X in the box to the right of the NO.

We are going to do 50 pairs of these sentences. In some of the pairs the word will have the same meaning, and in some it will have different meanings. I will read the word first and then I will read the two sentences twice and then you may mark your answers. Remember if the word has the same meaning in the two sentences, put a big X in the box to the right of the YES. If it has a different meaning in the two sentences, put a big X in the box to the right of the NO. Are there any questions about what you are to do? (Answer any questions and clarify any problems.)

(Read each homophone and then read each pair of sentences twice and then call for the answer. DO NOT GIVE SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO THE HOMOPHONE.)

1. dug (N)
We dug the ground for Mother's garden.
Our dog dug a hole in the grass.
2. eight (ate) (Y)
Eight boys played baseball yesterday.
I have eight sisters and two brothers.
3. swam (Y)
The fall leaves swam in the stream.
The apples swam in the tub of water.
4. excite (Y)
The teacher's idea of a play will excite the class.
The idea of a baseball game will excite the boys.
5. eight (ate) (N)
I have eight apples in this bag.
The boys ate all the cookies.

6. excite (N)
The idea of a picnic will excite the children.
That story will excite anger.
7. thirsty (Y)
The whole land looked thirsty.
The trees are thirsty this year.
8. dead (Y)
A dead tree cannot grow leaves.
I had to dig up the dead plants.
9. thirsty (N)
The dog is thirsty.
That plant is thirsty.
10. handkerchief (N)
Here is a handkerchief for your tears.
She tied a handkerchief over her head.
11. frighten (N)
The clap of thunder will frighten the baby.
Our cat will frighten the birds away.
12. draw (Y)
The horses will be able to draw that cart.
Now you can draw your toy behind you.
13. creature (N)
The creature of the forest hid from the storm.
My sister is a slow creature.
14. path (Y)
They made a path through the crowd for us.
The children dug a path for the wagon in the sand.
15. welcome (Y)
The children will welcome the news of the party.
They will welcome the news of coming rain.
16. rub (N)
Rub the spot off that table.
Rub this on that burn.
17. dug (Y)
The boys dug a cave in the sand.
Father dug a hole for the new tree.

18. pillow (N)
Mother made a pretty pillow for my bed.
The teacher told him to pillow his head on his hands.
19. kill (Y)
Don't let the dog kill the kitten.
The snow will kill the plants.
20. kill (N)
Too much water will kill that plant.
If I lose this game, it will kill my chances for the trip.
21. welcome (N)
We will welcome you when you come to visit.
They will welcome the news that he is safe.
22. creature (Y)
The boys saw a creature in the lake.
If you are very still, you can hear a creature of the night.
23. slap (Y)
I can hear the slap of his bare feet on the floor.
The slap of his paint brush could be heard through the whole house.
24. slap (N)
Father will slap you if you talk that way.
We heard the slap all the way in our room.
25. draw (N)
I will draw the curtains.
Watch the dog draw the wagon.
26. swam (N)
I swam across the lake.
The boys' paper boats swam in the tub of water.
27. baggage (N)
Mother took her baggage on the trip.
The soldiers began to move the baggage.
28. path (N)
We found a path through the forest.
Father dug a path through the snow.
29. frighten (Y)
Did the crash frighten you?
That storm sure did frighten them.

30. search (Y)
I will search my room for the book.
They had to search the whole house before they found the kittens.
31. offer (N)
I will offer a letter of what I can do for you to judge.
Mother will offer to help watch the children.
32. pot (Y)
Where is the pot of tea for lunch?
Mother made a big pot of beans for dinner.
33. castle (N)
The prince lived in a castle.
Their new house is a castle.
34. offer (Y)
They will offer some toys for the children to buy.
Will you offer two dolls for me to choose from?
35. thirty (Y)
They swam for thirty minutes.
Do you have thirty pennies?
36. handkerchief (Y)
The man tied a handkerchief over his face against the blowing sand.
She tied a handkerchief over her hair because of the strong wind.
37. rub (Y)
Rub your cold hands to make them warm.
Don't rub that bite or it will get worse.
38. forget (N)
I forget the answer to that question.
Don't forget to shut the door.
39. pot (N)
Get the pot for Mother's new plant.
We drank a whole pot of coffee.
40. thirty (N)
There are thirty children in our class.
Write thirty on your paper.
41. search (N)
The men are going to search the forest for the lost boy.
Will you search your heart to excuse my mistake?

42. trade (N)
Father works in the fur trade.
Will you trade that doll for this book?
43. castle (Y)
The king built a castle on the river.
They saw a castle in the forest.
44. pillow (Y)
We had a fight with the pillow last night.
Get your pillow and sleep on the floor.
45. desk (N)
Mother keeps her letters in the desk.
When we got to the inn father went to the desk.
46. dead (N)
That plant is dead.
The baby was in a dead sleep.
47. baggage (Y)
She lost all her baggage on her vacation.
Father loaded the baggage in the car.
48. trade (Y)
The clothing trade has been good.
The wagon trade is dying.
49. forget (Y)
If you forget their name, ask Mother.
Did you forget the story?
50. desk (Y)
When he arrived he went to the desk to ask directions.
When you go to see the doctor, go to the desk and leave
your name.

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