Launching effective LD individualized reading

Margaret Lillian Werner

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LAUNCHING EFFECTIVE LD
INDIVIDUALIZED READING

by
Margaret Lillian Werner

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION
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[Signature]
(Advisor)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Limitations of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II  SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement at Appropriate Instructional Reading Level: Its Importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing Oral Reading and Comprehension Miscues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Test Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III  SUMMARY AND FINDINGS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Informal Reading Inventory.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sample of Patterns that Should Be Noted but not Recorded as Miscues in Scoring Oral Reading Passages.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sample of Types of Miscues Used in Scoring Oral Reading Passages and Suggested Means of Recording the Miscues</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The first concern of the teacher of reading is to place the pupils in appropriate readers. Once an interesting and motivating series of books has been chosen, on whatever basis, each pupil must be assigned to the specific book in that series that will assist him to become a competent reader. The pupil should be placed in a reader that is neither too easy nor too difficult. Although most teachers agree with this concept, there is little agreement as to how pupils should be placed in readers that are, for each child, "just right" (Lovitt, 1976, p. 18).

To accomplish this task, teachers rely upon a suitable type of evaluation. This assessment is usually determined by administering some kind of a reading test: the norm-referenced, or standardized test, the placement test accompanying the selected basal reader, or an informal reading test. This procedure is generally in practice for all children. However, certain children, because of learning disabilities, have specific types of problems. This study was concerned with that type of children; it attempted to determine why the Informal Reading Inventory
is an appropriate testing device to assess the proper reading levels and the patterns of miscues which inhibit learning disabled children's progress in reading.

Statement of the Problem

Results of the survey reported by Tarnopol (1976, p. 287) and done by Silverman and Metz (1973) estimated that 3.1 percent of the elementary school children in the United States could use special instruction for Specific Learning Disabilities; of this 3.1 percent, an estimated total of 1.9 percent was receiving that special instruction. These children are of normal or higher intelligence yet they are failing to learn to read. Since many of these children are in regular classrooms, the major responsibility for their reading evaluation program rests with classroom teachers. Placement at proper levels and the detection of specific types of miscues of individual learning disabled pupils require a diagnostic type of reading test.

Daniels (1970) investigated the methods used in public schools to more nearly meet the individual reading instruction needs of the pupils of the elementary grades. This investigation showed that the more commonly used standardized tests proved to be of very little diagnostic value and summarized his findings by stating:

Although diagnostic information is not a consideration of this study, it is a consideration of the teachers. As such, it cannot be divorced from the implications
of the results of this study. Consequently, it can be said that the Modified Criterion of the IRI is an acceptable reading group placement criterion and has the advantage of providing diagnostic information. (pp. 215-216)

The focus of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Informal Reading Inventory with learning disabled pupils in finding appropriate reading levels and in diagnosing the critical skills necessary for success in the area of reading.

In appraising the appropriateness of the Informal Reading Inventory, this study had, as its specific objectives, to ascertain answers to the following questions as related to children with learning disabilities:

1. What are the advantages of the IRI in determining the correct instructional reading level?

2. How can the IRI assist the teacher in determining miscue patterns that interfere with the individual's mastery of basic word-attack skills?

3. How can it be useful in identifying deficits in the language areas which interfere with the individual's comprehension of selections read?

4. Can these findings offer the teacher information helpful in planning individual reading instruction for the learning disabled pupils?
Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study dealt with evaluative measures of children with specific learning disabilities whose chronological grade placement is grades two through five. The pupils included those who are either receiving special education assistance in a special setting or are enrolled in a regular classroom. In terms of academic skills, it was limited to reading and the means of a more precise identification of the individual's strengths and weaknesses in the reading act.

Because of the complexity of reading skills involved in an adequate reading program and the complexity of disorders that learning disabled pupils encounter in processing printed selections, it was necessary to limit this study to:

a. Means of determining the pupil's appropriate instructional reading level;

b. Diagnosing word-attack skills related to visual and auditory perceptions;

c. Diagnosing literal and simple interpretive comprehension skills requiring visual and auditory language associations.

Definitions

The following definitions will serve to clarify terms as they are used in this research paper.
Specific learning disabilities:

Children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include such conditions as perceptual handicap, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental disadvantage. (as defined by U. S. Office of Education, 1970)

Informal Reading Inventory: A nonstandardized reading test. A child's abilities in reading are tested using excerpts from a graded set of books or a single text. The child's reading performance is evaluated against predetermined standards (McCracken, 1967, p. 79).

Instructional reading level: The book level at which the child can profit from and needs instruction from a teacher (McCracken, 1967, p. 83).

Frustration level: The lowest book at which the child cannot be expected to learn to read even with excellent instruction (McCracken, 1967, p. 79).

Miscue: An actual observed response in or which does not match the expected response (Goodman, 1976, p. 5).

Summary

Scores obtained from standard measures of reading achievement are inadequate in terms of providing practical knowledge necessary for individualized instruction. In
In the case of a learning disabled child, care must be taken to specifically determine the problem areas that prevent him from learning to read fluently. It was the purpose of this research to study the IRI as an instrument for level placement and a basis for analyzing miscues of SLD children whose chronological grade placement is grades two through five.

In this chapter, the purpose of the study was stated: the scope and limitations were outlined and pertinent definitions given.
CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

The ability to read is an essential skill for all who live in a democratic society, including those who are slow or disabled learners. Reading permits the individual to participate in a democratic society; it enables him or her to develop marketable skills; it permits participation in social or cultural affairs; it can fulfill emotional and spiritual needs; and finally, it offers a means of entertainment and enjoyment. (Kirk, Kliebhan, and Lerner, 1978, pp. 15-16)

The impact of this and similar statements by leading authorities is of prime concern to today's teachers who are responsible for planning and implementing reading instruction for every child. It emphasizes the need for searching every aspect of the child's academic development in an effort to find or remove the causal factors contributing to his reading problems, especially of those children who have a different basic learning style from the rest of the pupils. Tarnapol (1976) states it this way: "Children with specific reading difficulties need individual techniques to help them overcome their reading problems. This means that programs must be tailor-made for each child; it means that strengths must be utilized and weaknesses compensated for as fully as possible" (pp. 206-207).
To establish a base upon which the pupil's strengths will be used to compensate for weaknesses while concomittantly attempting to strengthen the weak areas is dependent upon a thorough assessment of the reading process as demonstrated by the individual. Kirk, Kliebhan and Lerner (1978) explain assessment in this manner:

A major reason for evaluating a pupil, whether it be accomplished informally or formally, is to help organize a teaching program. In general, a child is assessed on the basis of: (a) interindividual evaluation and (b) intraindividual evaluation (Kirk & Kirk, 1971). The more common type, interindividual testing, determines the level of functioning of an individual in comparison to others of the same age. The IQ score is an example of interindividual testing for it compares one child with another. The formal reading test yields a grade level score, such as 1.8 or 3.2, which also compares one child with another and is used primarily for classification and placement purposes, it does not aid in organizing a remedial program for a particular child (pp. 156-157).

Intraindividual testing procedures, in contrast, require an analysis of what the child can do and cannot do in a specific situation or in a variety of situations. The analysis is made without comparing the child with other children. In this approach, the emphasis is on the child's behavior on various tasks. The purpose of intraindividual testing is to provide a teaching program for a particular child. Both formal and informal measures can be used for both interindividual and intraindividual testing. (Kirk & Kirk, 1971, pp. 206-207)

Intraindividual evaluation was the focus of this research. Literature related to informal assessment and, in particular, the Informal Reading Inventory, was surveyed. The major areas selected for discussion were: (1) Placement at Appropriate Instructional Reading Level: Its Importance;
(2) Analyzing Oral Reading and Comprehension Miscues; and
(3) Utilization of Test Data.

Placement at Appropriate Instructional Reading Level: Its Importance

The cliché "Teaching must start where the child is" has great significance in all academic areas, including reading. The importance of placing a pupil at his appropriate reading level for instructional purposes cannot be overemphasized. All instruction must be at a level where the child meets sufficient challenge to learn but he must have adequate readiness for that level to avoid the danger of overestimating it.

The seriousness of this factor is pointed out by Steirmagle (1976) whose research led her to believe that 60 percent of our reading failures are caused by the assignment of materials that are too difficult (p. 261).

Harmer (1967), in a summary of cautions to be taken in determining children's functional reading levels, concluded with this remark:

Moreover, if the deception is in the direction of overestimating reading ability and is transferred to the pupils by having them use reading materials that are too difficult, the result may very well reduce the possibility of success and may in turn develop negative attitudes toward reading on the part of the students. (p. 61)

More serious consequences which resulted from placing pupils at a level in which they were physiologically frustrated were studied. The result was dramatically stated:
For example, students in the Ekwall polygraph study, when they became frustrated exhibited the same signs as someone afraid of a crowd about to get up to give a speech before a large audience or of someone shaken by an automobile accident. Is it any wonder that students do not choose to read difficult material unless forced to? Can you imagine a situation in which every time you were forced to read you experienced the feelings of a person after an automobile accident? (Ekwall, 1976, p. 165)

This is further borne out in the following statement by Gaudry and Spielberger (1974):

Reading is more adversely influenced by anxiety than arithmetic, but performance in both of these areas is impaired by high anxiety by the end of the elementary grades. This should make us all acutely sensitive in L.D. children and prompt us to help them relax and enjoy their reading and language lessons in a pleasant atmosphere. (p. 403)

To ensure against the stress resulting from the error of placement at the frustrational level, care must be taken in the selection of the proper achievement test. Ekwall believes that reading skills should be tested in a situation that is analogous to an actual reading situation. He states: "The important question to keep in mind in examining any diagnostic test is: does the student have to perform in a situation similar to what he would have to do when actually reading?" (Ekwall, 1976, p. 3).

Bradley (1976) makes two important contributions to aid in test selection in these statements:

When a test prescribes materials that are too difficult, overplacement error is likely to produce negativism, frustration, stress and reduced progress. Questionable achievement tests can produce needless harm for the student and a waste of school resources. (pp. 237-238)
His second statement is in conclusion of a study of standardized reading achievement tests. He said:

This suggests that a preferred way to measure a student's level of achievement in a basal reading series is with an informal reading test that is representative of the content of that program. However, if the above is impossible or impractical, an informal reading test based on a basal reading series different from the one used for instruction is probably more valid for instructional placement than any of the three reading tests studied. (Bradley, 1976, p. 244)

Other research that supports the use of informal inventories are the following:

In the discussion on the selection of standardized reading achievement tests as indicators of functional reading levels, Harmer (1967) related the findings of two studies, one by Sipay (1964) and another by Harbiger (1958-1959). Sipay compared the results of three well-known standardized tests with the achievement levels of an informal reading inventory. He found that two of the three standardized tests yielded significantly higher grade placement scores than did the informal inventory. In an earlier study done by Harbiger (1958-1959) which also employed standardized tests and an informal reading test, the difference between the scores led him to conclude that the results of standardized tests more often than not place children at their frustration reading levels (pp. 59-61).

Harmer (1967) sums up this study by stating: "A conclusion which might be drawn from the Sipay and Harbiger
studies is that standardized tests tend to overrate pupils when compared to informal inventories" (p. 60).

Ekwall (1976) in his statement regarding the inadequacy of measurements to provide practical knowledge that is necessary for individual instructions states:

Betts (1946) had this feeling when he described the criteria and idea of administering informal reading inventories (IRIs). Betts's feeling about the need for such an instrument has been demonstrated and written about many times since. (pp. 260-261)

Durrell reiterated the feelings of these authorities as quoted by Hull (1974) in this statement: "Informal tests based upon reading materials used in the classroom and observation of faulty habits and weaknesses in regular instruction provide the best basis for planning classroom instruction" (p. 5).

Kaluger and Kolson (1969) stated: "Informal testing and continuous diagnostic teaching can be powerful. A clinician needs to determine his strengths and weaknesses in order that he/she may use the strengths to overcome the weaknesses" (p. 132).

Lovitt and Hansen (1976) stated: "From the point of view of the applied behavior analyst, the IRI placement method has much to recommend it. When an IRI is used, the pupil's performance is directly measured for the reading material is the same throughout testing and instruction" (p. 348).
The validity of the Milwaukee Public School's Informal Reading Inventory was studied by Held (1977) who formed this conclusion:

The relatively high correlations between IRI instructional levels and classroom teachers' instructional reading levels establish the validity of the IRI for use as a placement instrument with elementary grade students attending Title I schools. (p. 7)

Analyzing Oral Reading and Comprehension Miscues

Burke and Goodman (1970) started from the rather simple premise which states that nothing a child does when he/she reads orally is accidental or random. They, then attempted to describe the deviations between what the child actually read orally and what he/she was expected to read. Traditionally, this was referred to as "analyzing errors." Burke and Goodman (1970) preferred to call them "miscues" because they believed strongly that children use the same cues and involve the same mental processes in producing both expected and unexpected responses. With this theory in mind, they described the miscues of a subject used in a study which was done in 1969. The analysis of the subject's 109 miscues indicated the following relationships:

1. There was little relationship between the number of miscues and comprehension.
2. Some miscues did not result in changed meanings.
3. Miscues were more apt to be corrected when meaning had been affected.
4. Miscues tended to be corrected when resulting syntax was unacceptable.
5. One half of the miscues involved substitutions. From 60 percent to 100 percent of the substitu-
tions did not involve a change in grammatical function.

6. Dialect involved miscues did not cause meaning change (p. 128).

After completion of further research, Goodman and Burke constructed the Reading Miscue Inventory (1972).
The procedures used in the RMI give teachers the opportunity to study and note the interaction between the language of the child and the printed language of the author. The observations made provide the teacher a means by which to understand how a child brings his thinking and language to the reading task at hand. It shows the teacher how a child's background experiences are an important factor in his ability to interpret the meaning of a selection.

Goodman (1972) refers to this type of analysis as a "qualitative" rather than a "quantitative" miscue analysis and defends her position in this statement:

Research for the last ten years on reading miscues continuously reaffirms the conclusion that when a reader's errors are simply counted and this quantitative information is used for placement, the reader may be encouraged to read material which is either too simple or too difficult for him. Reader's miscues must be evaluated based on the degree to which the miscue disrupts the meaning of the written material. Once the miscue has been produced by the reader, it is then important to assess the effectiveness of the strategies he uses when meaning is disrupted. This
Qualitative analysis of miscues can enable a teacher to help a reader select appropriate written material. It also provides specific information regarding a reader's strengths and weaknesses which can be used to plan a personalized reading program. Miscues are a natural part of the reading process. By placing a premium on error counts a teacher begins to believe that minimizing miscuing behavior is desirable. Such is not the case. The number of miscues a reader makes is much less significant than the meaning of the language which results when a miscue has occurred. (p. 32)

Reactions to the RMI have been numerous—both positive and negative. Extremes might be the mistaken labelling of Kenneth instead of Yetta as "strawman" by Mosenthal (1976) to the extension of Goodman's miscue terms by Price (1976). He categorized the miscues as related to comprehension in this fashion:

- **Supercues** (indicate meaningful processing) or semantically and syntactically acceptable oral reading errors (AORE) and

- **Pseudocues** (indicate meaningless processing) as semantically and syntactically unacceptable oral reading errors (UNORE) (p. 234).

The underlying principle that the reader supplies semantic concepts to get meaning from reading and uses only necessary graphic cues has caused criticism of Goodman by such authorities as Gleitman and Rozin who stated:

We believe that a learner's first tentative clue to reading comes through the appreciation that there are some rough relations between the squiggles on the page and the sounds of his own language. Woe to the learner who thinks this is all there is to know, or to the speaker-listener who believes the spoken language should be conceived solely as sound strings. (1972, p. 500)
These authorities show a definite respect for phonics and a linguistics approach to the teaching of reading. Despite the controversy, the miscue concept is exciting. It provides the teacher with a great deal of insight into what strengths and weaknesses a child shows when he is reading orally. The IRI lends itself to a situation which is similar to what a pupil does when he is actually reading. According to Gutknecht (1971), perceptually handicapped children and normal children use the same process in reading; the only difference he notes between them is that handicapped children have more trouble and take more time acquiring the reading process than other children require. Therefore, it is feasible to use an IRI for SLD children to determine appropriate instructional reading levels and to determine types of miscues. However, a less sophisticated type of analysis than the RMA can be of practical value in diagnosing word-attack skills related to visual and auditory perceptions and in diagnosing literal and simple interpretive skills requiring visual and auditory language associations. The Milwaukee Public School's Informal Reading Inventory (1977) poses these questions as suggestions to teachers evaluating a pupil's reading behavior:

1. Are there any identifiable miscue patterns in the oral reading of paragraphs? In the responses obtained from comprehension questions?
2. What type of graphic pattern strengths are found in the oral reading paragraphs in terms of initial, medial, or final substitutions of vowels or consonants in words?

3. Is the child using the syntactic and semantic levels of language, i.e., are the child's substitutions, insertions and omissions syntactically appropriate within the sentence in which they occur? (p. 11)

One selection of that respective inventory has been reproduced as Figure 1 to illustrate the use of an IRI to determine the appropriate instructional level and to provide exact diagnostic information. Both miscues in oral reading and inability to comprehend the material read are used in determining the correct instructional level. The comprehension check identifies the types of questions as factual (literal), inferential (interpretive) and vocabulary (word meaning). Simple recording procedures enable the teacher to note the pattern of the thinking process employed by the child.

The writer studied Mann and Suiter's (1974) list of types of observations to be made in a learning disabilities approach to determine the applicability of the selection to the diagnosis of an LD's reading deficits. The types of observations suggested by Mann and Suiter are:
Motivation:
Have you ever seen pictures of the Washington Monument or the White House? This is a story about a family who actually saw them when they visited Washington, D.C. Let's read the story to find out how they felt about their visit.

My father told us that the Washington Monument was not too far from the White House. So we walked from the White House to the Monument. The Washington Monument goes up and up. And you can see all over the city from the Monument. Jimmy thought that was the best part of the trip.

But the very best part for me was at night. We went back to the cherry trees. My father said, "Look!" And there in back of the trees I saw the Washington Monument. There were lots of lights near it.

"Isn't that beautiful!" said Mother.

She had my hand and Jimmy's. I put my other hand in Daddy's. And there we were, in the night, looking at that light. That was the very best part of my trip to Washington.

COMPREHENSION CHECK:  
RESPONSE:

I. 1. Which would be a better name for the story: A Trip to Washington or The White House?

1. A Trip to Washington

I. 2. How do you know the Monument was close to the White House?

2. The family walked to the monument.
I. 3. How do you know that the Washington Monument is tall?
3. It goes up and up; you can see all over the city from it.

F. 4. What was one of the children's names?
4. Jimmy

V. 5. What word means "a short journey" or "vacation"?
5. trip

F. 6. Who said "Look!"
6. Father

V. 7. What word is the name of a fruit?
7. cherry

F. 8. Who was holding the children's hands?
8. Mother

F. 9. Which did Jimmy enjoy more--the White House or the Monument?
9. Monument

I. 10. Why do you think the night was enjoyed the best?
10. the lights were lit; lights were near the monument; etc. (one answer)

SUMMARY DATA:

Instructional Level
Comprehension - 7 or 8 correct responses
Pronunciation - 2 - 13 miscues

Frustration Level
Comprehension - 6 or fewer correct responses
Pronunciation - 14 or more miscues

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(1) reading errors primarily due to auditory channel deficits and (2) reading errors primarily due to visual channel deficits (p. 40).

Examples of the type that could be found in auditory channel deficits when using the MPS IRI for diagnosing deficits include:

- **Auditory Acuity and/or Discrimination:** the pupil may read "Washington" as "Washington" or "cherry" as "cheery".

- **Auditory-Visual Associative Memory:** the pupil may see no relationship between the word seen and the word read and pronounce "white" as "brick" or "lights" as "trees".

- **Auditory-Visual Associative Memory:** the pupil may be unable to sound out an unfamiliar word as "told" or "Monument".

- **Auditory Closure:** the pupil may be unable to blend sounds to make words as "thought" or "part".

- **Auditory-Visual Memory:** the pupil may use a synonym for the correct word and read "Mother" as "Mommy" or "Father" as "Dad".

- **Auditory-Visual Associative Memory:** the pupil may substitute words and read "the" as "a" or "in" as "on".
Examples of the type that could be found in visual channel deficits include:

- **rate of perception**: the pupil may exhibit word-by-word reading.
- **visual figure-ground or ocular motor**: the pupil may skip lines, words or be unable to keep his/her place when reading.
- **visual memory and/or misperception**: the pupil may add words that do or do not change the meaning.
- **visual sequential memory and/or spatial**: the pupil may reverse words or letters and read "was" as "saw" or "did" as "bib".

In checking comprehension patterns a visual channel deficit could include:

- **receptive and expressive language**: the child may repeat words, phrases or whole sentences in an attempt to get meaning and/or he may distort the meaning by ignoring punctuation.

Figure 2 illustrates those types of miscues that are semantically and syntactically acceptable and, therefore, are recorded but not counted as miscues in determining the appropriate instructional level; e.g. self correction (c), repetition (r) and dialect substitution.

Figure 3 illustrates those types of miscue patterns that interfere with a pupil's mastery of basic word-attack skills, e.g., reversals, substitutions, words pronounced by
Our Trip to Washington

My father told us that the Washington Monument was not too far from the White House. So we walked from the White House to the Monument. The Washington Monument goes up and up. And you can see all over the city from the Monument.

Figure 2

Sample of Patterns that Should Be Noted but not Recorded as Miscues in Scoring Oral Reading Passages.

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SAMPLE FORM

Our Trip to Washington

My father told me that the Washington Monument was not too far from the White House. So we walked from the White House to the Monument. The Washington Monument goes up and up. And you can see all over the city from the Monument.

FIGURE 3

Sample of Types of Miscues Used in Scoring Oral Reading Passages and Suggested Means of Recording the Miscues.

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examiner (P), insertions and omissions. Controversy related to the question of the appropriateness in counting supercues or substitutions that do not interfere with meaning, e.g., and see and the omission of too, in determining the instructional level is understandable. However, awareness of these miscues, whether they are counted or not, has value for diagnostic/instructional purposes for the individual child.

The importance of gathering all possible information for use in formulating an appropriate instructional program for LD children is emphasized by Vance (1977). Although he notes that two divisions are available—formal and informal—he places stress on the importance of informal measures in the following statement:

Informal tests combine diagnostic values of observation with content that is closely geared to instruction. The purpose of the informal examination is not to label a child, but to prepare an instructional program based upon his performance and needs. (p. 302)

Utilization of Test Data

The utilization of test data as a means of establishing a base line for instruction in reading is noted by these authorities:

Williams (196) listed four principles of a supervised practice approach of teaching reading, one of which was: "The children must have the opportunity to read material at appropriate levels of difficulty" (p. 309).

Ammon (1974) states: "When a diagnosis is precise, corrective lessons can be developed which focus more accurately on the needs of the reader" (p. 343).
Bradley and Ames (1976) state:

The importance of proper instruction placement in a reading program cannot be denied. It has been asserted that the determination of a student's instructional constitutes an important step in any reading program. Reading instruction implemented with materials of unsuitable difficulty can lead to a number of undesirable consequences including impaired progress and enjoyment. (p. 101)

Duffey and Fedner (1978) state:

Educational diagnosis should reveal what a child knows and does not know. It should specify the next appropriate step for instruction and should assist the teacher in avoiding unnecessary review for certain students. (p. 248)

Authorities whose statements were specifically related to LD pupils are quoted as follows:

Mann and Suiter (1977) state:

Reading is a dynamic process in which perception, memory, language and affect must function harmoniously with each other. Many educators feel that a unitary approach to teaching reading cannot be used for children exhibiting a variety of learning deficits. Remedial plans must take into consideration the patterns of strengths and weaknesses. (pp. 169-170)

In articles by both Summers (1977) and Keogh and Becker (1973), an individualized educational program (IEP) is advocated for the purpose of helping the LD child's weaknesses to be compensated for by special adaptive techniques. They project the thinking that the purpose of evaluation is not to identify deficits but to provide information useful in planning instruction for the child. Keogh and Becker (1973) sum it up by stating: "Simply because a child does not perform a task does not mean that he is not able to perform it. It is equally useful to know what the child can do and to identify compensatory strengths" (p. 8).
Richardson and Bradley (1974) state:

Clearly the range of reading disabilities found in most populations of handicapped children is so heterogeneous that no one approach, even though it may involve several well-proven methodologies, can possibly be suitable for all children. (p. 345)

Duffey and Fedner (1978) encourage education specialists and teachers to make use of and to refine technology available to them. They caution that, only by the work of a miracle, has much haphazard education worked for many children. However, there is a large population of special children who cannot benefit from haphazard instruction. These children need to receive the benefit of accurate educational diagnosis with instruction based upon that diagnosis.

Finally, an emphatic statement made by Gilhool (1973) follows: "If an exceptional child is assigned to a program not appropriate to him, he might as well be excluded from schooling" (p. 605).

Summary

The summary of literature shows that placement at the appropriate instructional reading level is basic in all types of reading programs. To assure appropriate placement, proper evaluative measures are imperative. Many authorities agree that the use of the IRI is a valid criterion for assessing the correct level for instruction in reading.

Furthermore, thorough testing via informal procedures can be effective in analyzing miscues as a means of providing
specific insights into the pupil's strengths and weaknesses. Specific reading patterns, more unique to the learning disabled child, can be properly identified.

The purpose of testing is twofold: to determine the reading achievement and to use the data as a basis for planning reading teaching strategies. Authorities agree that adequate reading instruction with all children is dependent upon the prudent interpretation of test data.
CHAPTER III
SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Summary

The purpose of this research paper was to study the Informal Reading Inventory as regards its effectiveness in finding appropriate instructional reading levels and in diagnosing those reading skills essential for success in reading achievement, especially for pupils with learning disabilities.

This paper had, as its specific objectives, to ascertain answers to the following questions related to learning disabled children:

1. What are the advantages of the IRI in determining the correct instructional reading level?
2. How can the IRI assist the teacher in determining miscue patterns that interfere with the individual’s mastery of basic word-attack skills?
3. How can it be useful in identifying deficits in the language areas which interfere with the individual’s comprehension of selections read?
4. Can these findings offer the teacher information helpful in planning individual reading instruction for learning disabled pupils?

28
A survey of related literature indicated that there is no unanimous agreement among educators regarding the validity of the IRI as opposed to standardized tests as measurements to be used for adequately appraising a pupil's reading status for instructional purposes. Many authorities express the opinion that practical knowledge is necessary for selecting the appropriate basal reader for the individual's developmental reading instruction. Authorities in the field of special education stress the need for planning individualized instruction based upon the patterns of strengths and of miscues as an aid in achieving reading instructional goals with learning disabled pupils. Although there is some controversy regarding the use of a highly sophisticated miscue inventory, most educators are enthusiastic about the miscue concept.

Findings

The use of the Informal Reading Inventory, which is an actual structured observation of the Specific Learning Disabled individual's reading performance, has been shown, in this study, to be of practical value in answering these questions posed as specific objectives:

1. With regard to the advantages of the IRI in determining correct instructional reading level, this review showed:

   a. That, while being tested with the IRI, the pupil does perform in a situation similar to that in
which he performs while actually reading.

b. In general, results of standardized tests, designed for group measurement, tend to over-estimate the pupil's functional reading levels, whereas, the IRI, based on the individual's oral reading competence, is designed to obtain the proper level for an individual's reading instruction.

2. Assessment of the IRI as a means of assisting the teacher in determining miscue patterns that interfere with the individual's mastery of basic work-attack skills indicated:

   That the IRI does provide a basis for diagnosing the reading errors that are due primarily to auditory channel and/or visual channel deficits associated with learning disabilities.

3. Concerning the usefulness of the IRI in identifying deficits in the language areas which interfere with the individual's comprehension, the study showed:

   a. That the teacher has the opportunity to note the means by which the child brings his thinking and language to reading when he responds to the questions that check his understanding of the selection read.

   b. That the IRI provides the opportunity to diagnose comprehension indicating a visual channel deficit
by observing the LD pupil's receptive and expressive language development.

4. Finally, in determining if these findings can offer the teacher information helpful in planning individual reading instruction for learning disabled pupils, authorities agree:

a. That, in the case of a learning disabled child, care must be taken to specifically determine the problem areas that prevent him/her from reading more fluently.

b. That teachers need to determine a pupil's strengths through intraindividual evaluation in order to use these strengths to overcome weaknesses.

c. That remediation and developmental reading lessons can be developed which focus on the LD child's strengths and weaknesses when a diagnosis is accurate and precise.

In conclusion, there is reason to feel optimistic about the future developments in helping children with reading whose problems are caused by learning disabilities. This optimism is supported by the Office of Education's (1977) call for an individualized education program for each handicapped child. The Office points out the importance of seeing LD children as individuals rather than
a part of a homogeneous group of handicapped children; thereby, they place importance on the IRP (Individualized Education Programs) and state:

Whatever the format of the IEP developed by a school system, there seems to be little question that the strength and viability of the approach will depend in a large measure on the breadth and quality of information gathered prior to writing it. (1977, p. 7)
APPENDIX
March 26, 1979

Michael R. McElwee
Supervisor, Title I Reading Centers
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5225 West Vliet Street
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Milwaukee, WI 53201

Dear Dr. McElwee:

This is a request for permission to reproduce pages 34, 35, 95, 96, and 97 of the Title I Informal Reading Inventory, 1977 Teacher's Edition. The purpose for reproduction is to include it as part of a research paper that I am writing as a requirement for a master's degree to be conferred by Cardinal Stritch College.

Your communication granting approval will be appreciated and included in the appendix of the paper.

Sincerely,

Margaret Werner

Margaret Werner
March 27, 1979

Margaret Werner
Supervising Teacher
Title VII, Follow the Child
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Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

Dear Miss Werner:

You have my permission to duplicate pages 34, 35, 95, 96, and 97 of the Title I Informal Reading Inventory, Teacher's Edition.

Sincerely,

Michael R. McElwee, Ph.D.

Michael R. McElwee, Ph.D.

MRM/nd
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