Judith Sheehan

**Notes/Outline: Smith’s *American Reading Instruction***

**Norman Stahl’s Epilogue and P.David Pearson’s *American Reading Instruction Since 1967***

Stahl’s Epilogue:

* Stahl questions whether this book from the 1930s, reissued in the 1960s, and again later in the 20th century is still important in the 21st century.
* He states that *American Reading Instruction* as “a touchstone of the past” (p. 413) can be a comfort while bringing wisdom to the reading profession in this time of political and pedagogical unrest (p. 413).
* The book’s staying power=an amazing research work given its breadth and depth without the benefit of technological research, would be deserving of a dissertation award, and shows doctoral students the importance of historical research. Also, Smith’s work has become THE source on the history of reading instruction of the masses (pp. 413-414).
* Although others (Manguel, Cavallo & Charter, Johns, Balmuth, Shannon, Monaghan, Brandt) have produced texts with more sophisticated historiography, Smith’s text was easily obtained, accessible, the first, and, at times, the only one students and others read on the topic (p. 415).
* It has become a classic, again a touchstone to the past and its importance in its time and informational for the current field of reading research, theory, and practice (p. 416).
* Stahl asks: “What can we gain by reading [Smith’s text] for the first time or even a second or third time?

Answers:

* 1. With a critical eye, we see that history teaches us first and best, seeing how others faced or avoided pedagogical problems, analyzing their successes and failures, raising our own questions.

2. The pendulum swing continues and is predictable, creating new markets and pedagogical power. Children will survive the swinging and still learn to read.

3. Reading is now really a profession now that it has a valued history which can be studied and applied.

4. The legacy confirms that literacy professionals have had more success than failure and can accept and overcome upcoming challenges (pp. 416-417).

**P. David Pearson’s *American Reading Instruction Since 1967***

* Starts with Jeanne Chall’s (1967) seminal work, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*

**Setting the Scene: Reading in the 1960’s**

* 1935-1965- Look-say approach –developed in the first third of the century, revised and extended in the middle third of the century; 90% of students learned via this method

-consisted of: high frequency sight words, practiced in formulated stories, teach phonics based on known words

**“Conventional Wisdom of the 1960s”- based on Jeanne Chall’s set of principles**

* Carry-over Developments Through 1935

-Readiness program- learning with a slow, easy beginning

-Look-say method (see above)- spread over years

-Vocabulary set up in order of decreasing frequency of usage in everyday language, written and oral

-skills lessons/practice

-reading of stories

-silent reading in areas of children’s interest and experiences

-importance of meaning

-small group instruction

-teacher as mediator, students as recipients

-reading as a perceptual process- Reading comprehension = decoding + listening comprehension (RC=Dec \* LC)

-translation of written to oral code- therefore, students were taught separate skills-letter to sound, sound to letter, etc. which was then practiced and tested

* **Elaborations from 1935-1965**

**-controlled text difficulty emerged in the 1930s, continued in the 1960s**

**-more involved skills practice**

**-by 1960’s (mentioned in Chall’s set of principles)- grade 1 goals of comprehension, interpretation, and contextualization of phonics instruction**

**-frequency principle paralleled whole-word or look-say approach of the words-to-reading method which DOMINATED**

**(pp. 419-422)**

**The Legacy of Scholarship of the 1960s**

Debate- What is the best way to teach beginning reading? (using empirical research)- U.S focused on the early reading-Cooperative Research Branch of the U.S. Office of Education funded “First Grade Studies”

-studies involved comparison of different teaching methods; *Research Research Quarterly*- new journal

-findings: any alternative to traditional basals resulted in equal or greater performance; researchers could now focus on the importance of the teacher

* Chall’s work- used critical review to investigate empirical research, basal readers’ content, and excellent classroom teaching practices

-findings: importance of early attention to code in early reading instruction

-recommendations: change in method, reexamine prevalent ideas about content,

reevaluate grade levels, new test development, improve reading research

* Title I resources
* Federal Right to Read Program

OVERALL FINDING- END OF THE TRADITIONAL LOOK-SAY BASALS; HOWEVER, ALTERED BASALS DOMINATED THE MARKET IN 1970s-1980s

CHANGES:

* analytic phonics moved to beginning of grade 1 instead on end of grade 1-4
* change in content- adaptations of children’s literature (no more Dick & Jane, etc.)
* however, less noticeable differences in difficulty beyond grade 1
* single-component testing- also attributable to Bloom and Carroll’s mastery learning movement (complex domain decomposed into subcomponents –taught and mastered—leading to knowledge and skills mastery in a given domain)
* criterion-referenced tests
* curriculum-embedded assessments
* skills management systems- basals comprised of two parallel systems: graded anthologies with stories, nonfictions for oral and silent reading/discussion and embedded skills- phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and study skills
* teacher manuals= student text surrounded by teacher’s guide- suggestions/questions
* SHIFT IN THE EARLY 1970s- more difficult texts, more phonics, and a new skills development program
* WHAT DID NOT CHANGE: teacher still as mediator with students as recipients; reading still a perceptual process of translation

(pp. 422-429)

**Developments in the Last Third of the Century**

-fundamental shifts in our perspectives of reading and writing occurred in the 1970s

-conceptual revolutions in cognition, sociolinguists, and philosophy deeply affected reading curriculum and instruction of the 1980s-1990s

-Why reading suddenly a main topic of inquiry for scholars in various disciplines? Probably b/c reading is central to success in many areas in and out of school or that scholars outside of education felt that “educationists had it all wrong” (p. 429) – sounds familiar

**Background:**

**Linguistics: late 50s-early 60s**

* Charles Fries’ book, *Linguistics and Reading* (1962)= what the teaching of reading would look like from the linguistics perspective- i.e. not everything needs explicit teaching b/c some things are acquired from oral language (-ed pronounciations)
* Linguistics paradigm shift in the 1960s-1970s from conventional structural linguistics to transformational generative grammars

-Chomsky’s *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Theory of Syntax* (1965): ideas that humans are born with the ability to acquire language of their community (easy and natural to acquire within their environments even though language is complex)

* Served as the basis of psycholinguists- attempting to use Chomsky’s work as a model of language performance. Though this didn’t work, psycholinguists and psychologist now turned to studying language with complex, theoretical instruments

**Psycholinguistics: 60s-70s**

* Language acquisition scholars influenced a new view of reading-children were language participants and invented their own rules about oral language
* Brown & Goodman-found that children learn actively, infer rules, and test them
* By mid-1960s, these findings lead educators to assume reading and writing could be acquired naturally – to be tested empirically in later decades

Influential reading psycholinguists- Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith research/findings/ theories/influence on reading pedagogy:

-1965-oral reading errors as a view of reading comprehension processes

-“Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game” (1967)-readers use of 3 cues (syntactic, semantic, and graphophonemic) to construct meaning by reducing uncertainty, allowing for manageable word id and comprehension

-Smith’s *Understanding Reading* (1971)

* reading learned as a member of literate society, not taught
* teachers help children read, not teach it (shift from focus on teacher control to student involvement)
* reading as a constructive process with decision-making and predictions based on previous knowledge
* 4 sources of info.- orthographic, syntactic, semantic, visual- all redundant (visual shouldn’t be relied on too much= meaning can be lost)

-INFLUENCE ON READING PEDAGOGY:

1. Devalued classroom skills activity; valued MEANING-MAKING LITERACY EXPERIENCES
2. Valued natural language patterns texts for beginning readers-using own knowledge and prediction strategies
3. Helped educators to understand reading process and reader’s efforts- errors as “windows into the workings of the child’s mind”- creating understanding about reading process/strategies
4. Established miscues analysis and the theory of reading as a constructive process-w/oral and written language connections rather than reading as a perceptual/behavioral
5. Affected teaching and learning- that relationship and the rethinking of what needed to be taught

**Cognitive Psychology: 70s-80s**

-enabled psychology to expand constructs such as intention, motivation, etc. to include other phenomena: perception, attention, comprehension, learning, memory, executive control of all cognitive processes

-Paradigm shift—from behaviorist to intellectual, cognitive

1970s- became popular for psychologists to studying reading’s basic processes such as text comprehension, story grammars, expository texts (text-analysis tradition)

-although these studies revealed important info. about reading, they FOCUSED ONLY ON STRUCTURE, NOT READERS’ KNOWLEDGE moving to a new theory . . .

Schema Theory: “the structure of human knowledge as it is represented in memory” (p. 437)

* Related to Piaget’s developmental theories and types of learning: assimilation and accommodation
* Frederic Bartlett- cultural schemata theory predated constructivist cognition and learning models by 60 years=readers actively construct meaning, rather than receiving it
* Schema theory=popular in the reading field b/c it is a credible view of reading comprehension for the following reasons: considers prior knowledge, explains interpretation differences due to differences in background, or how lack of background knowledge limits understanding of new experiences or texts
* EFFECTS OF THIS THEORY: encouraged the examination of texts from the view of the knowledge and cultural backgrounds of students, promoted constructivist view of comprehension with its ambiguity about text meaning

**Sociolinguistics:**

-developed side-by-side with psycholinguistic

-Labov, Baratz, Shuy- sociolinguists who contributed indirectly to reading scholarship

-ISSUES: DIALECT AND READING

* Each dialect= well-developed linguistic system, each different, not deficient
* Need to accommodate children’s use of dialect in reading/writing learning

Ex. Early 1960s-Black-dialect readers-soon disappeared b/c parents wanted mainstream materials for their children

* Holding off on the teaching of reading and writing until oral language was standardized
* Highlight: recognition that children can translate a standard English text into a dialect, not making errors
* However, schools still viewed dialects as oral language errors

-ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS:

* expanding the meaning of context to include all literacy experience-home, school, instructional, noninstructional, etc.
* knowledge and language as socially and culturally constructed
* THEREBY, READING AS A PART OF THE WORLD
* how school success was one dimensional by relying on one’s ability to use language in that one setting
* Expanding our view of language and behavior
* Recommendation changes in the classroom- less competitive, learning from each other

**Literary Theory Perspective: 80s**

* “New Criticism”- the primary tradition of literary criticism post-WWII until the 1980s- students/teachers focused on the true meaning of text
* Reader-response theory-authority to the reader=affected teaching practices
* Rosenblatt’s texts- her view=meaning is in the transaction between the reader and the text

**The Pedagogical Correlates of New Perspectives**

* Continuance of Chall’s influence into the 80s along with new viewpoints

**Comprehension on Center Stage- 70s-80s**

* Part of reading classrooms from the 30s-70s,
* Center for the Study of Reading (federally funded study) placed nat’l attention on comprehension

-research from that study and others focused on strategies to improve comprehension through instruction, monitoring, organizers, etc.

**Literature-Based Reading: late 80s**

* Intensified greatly in the late 80s (appeared briefly and intensely after Chall’s work too)
* 2 characteristics in BASALS however: EXCERPTING AND ADAPTING- reducing vocabulary difficulty and grammatical complexity and taking out offensive material-words/themes
* Played a supplementary role in school reading programs- children selecting and independently reading own books- occurred even in the 60s
* **FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THIS MOVEMENT:**

-Rosenblatt’s reader response theory

-Research- “just plain reading” as important in elementary programs- Anderson et al’s *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1985)

-Atwell’s *In the Middle.* . . (1987)-persuasive account of reading reluctant adolescent readers with existing literature and reading workshops

-1988 CA Reading Framework- call for more challenging texts for all grade levelsw/ real literature

-EFFECTS ON PUBLISHING- 80s-90s: interpretative questions, little vocabulary control, skills in the appendix

-Book clubs and literature circles-voluntary structures, teacher-influenced cultural practices (ways to interact and support each other)

**Process Writing: mid 80s:**

* Held a strong position in elementary LA curriculum
* 70s-80s-Sociolinguistic influence-writing to real audiences/purposes; psycholinguistic- focus on quality of thinking and problem solving less on spelling and grammar;constructivist-writing most transparent of all instructional activities
* Writing as a way to make sense, legitimate and revealing-new view of early writing developments (influenced by Graves and Calkins)
* Reading and writing as connected

**Integrated Instruction:**

* Two stances re: integration= how to integrate reading with other LA (writing, speaking, and listening) and across subject areas
* Goes back to Dewey and other progressives- teaching and learning across curricula
* From Dewey-late 80s- integration had little consideration
* Changed perspective in the late 80s-language/reading best taught with other purposes, activities, and learning activities-sociolinguistic perspective

**WHOLE LANGUAGE:**

* MOST SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT IN THE LAST 30 YEARS-THE METHOD OF THE 90s
* Possible to see whole language as an integration of comprehension, literature-based reading, integrated instruction, and process writing-the strengths and weaknesses of each area included
* INFLUENCES/TENETS OF WHOLE LANGUAGE:
* Child-centered pedagogy of the progressive movement w/child as most important in informing the curriculum
* Radical constructivist epistemology-all readers make their own meanings for encountered texts
* Authentic activity- real texts/tasks
* Integration-w/in LA and b/t LA and other subject areas
* Politics- suspicious of mandates and controls beyond the classroom- faith and hope in the teachers
* Key principles-influenced by all of the literary theories previously mentioned
* Questioned use of basals (and early code emphasis)-IRONIC since it influenced the basal reader in the 90s even though the movement opposed them

-activities and tools of whole language-“basalized” (p.450)

-more deeper questions re: students’ responses

-class libraries-thematic, enrichment

-centralized integration (extension of themes present in 20s-30s as peripheral)

* Vocabulary control done by early 90s-literature was central; phonics in the background
* Publishers-backgrounded skills and foregrounded integrated LA activities

WHOLE LANGUAGE OPPONENTS

* -resistance thru-out the country-some places never accepted it
* -some implementations did not match the philosophical or curricular tenets of whole language
* -became whole class instruction, all kids getting the same literature
* -scholars and educators had different views of skills, conventions, and strategies-inconsistent practices emerged

WHOLE LANGUAGE- MAJOR SHIFTS

* -embraced by 90s-Whole Language Umbrella
* -working on how to teach=conventional wisdom of the time
* -COMPARED TO THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY
* -teachers as facilitators, child-centered, students as decision-makers
* -materials- what was encountered in life-not contrived texts/tasks
* -activities/tasks that support learning where students are-skills recontextualized
* -reading as meaning-making
* -reader=active participant-creating the message
* -no prepreading period of reading readiness with preparation for the reading tasks- all were makers of meaning
* -new direction, however, did not survive for long

**THE DEMISE OF WHOLE LANGUAGE- pendulum swing back to skills**

Converging Factors:

1. “Unintended curriculum casualities”

* Whole language did not have a strong base of support to survive any opposition esp. political
* Relegation of skills as unworthy of teaching and acquired through experience was not accepted by teachers/scholars; many supported a balanced approach
* Strategy instruction disappeared in the basals of the 90s even though the whole language was not against cognitive strategies-revision of the 80s strategies should have been part of the whole language rhetoric but was not.
* Lack of structural emphasis of texts in whole language caused concern because it expected students to infer, to read like a writer; most wanted a compromise between formulaic approach and discovery approach of whole language
* Content area reading suffered in the whole language era, particularly concerning to middle and high school teachers, since expository texts had no role in the whole language movement and did not provide anything to accommodate expository texts and how students will need to read and understand them on their own in college and at work.

1. Questionable applications

* Problem of keeping the movement’s integrity w/o imposing the controls it opposes.
* Misapplication of whole language by textbook industry and by the use of whole-class instruction-led to more criticisms that resulted from practices not part of the movement itself

-Misapplication may have been a result of a lack of a plan for proper professional development, leaving educators with only shallow knowledge that led to misguided practices

1. Dissatisfaction with any doctrinaire views (or extreme views)

* Many voiced a desire for balanced approaches
* Educators/scholars questioned: skills “catching” rather than teaching, the ban on instructional texts in favor of authentic texts, the exclusivity of the movement, the little progress in the area of expository texts and content area reading
* Whole language was not embraced as the conventional wisdom of its time.

1. Paradigm shift in the ideology of reading research

* Before 80s, qualitative research had little notice in reading research.
* 1990s- qualitative became more accepted due to the views of literacy as social/pedagogically influenced.
* This credibility paralleled the rise of the whole language movement.
* “Reliable, replicable” research is now in vogue-lg. samples, random groupings, scientific measures

–not build on the work of the 80s-90s

-goes back to the belief of reading as a perceptual process from 50s-60s

-SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC POLICY LEADERS

* Main Influence on this shift: phonemic awareness and phonics instructions

-Phonemic awareness=necessary but not sufficient condition for decoding and reading

-Emphasis on the code in early stages of reading development- however; there is not real agreement on the best way to instruct to encourage phonics development

-Research has been positioned by politicians to focus on those two areas without regard for research to the contrary.

1. Increase in the politicization of reading research and policy agenda

* Educational research is conducted to be taken into consideration by policymakers
* Only selective research is considered along with other information; policies can then be said to be supported by science rhetoric for mandates and initiatives regardless of the ironic lack of solid evidence
* Federal money has been withheld from professional developers if phonics are not primarily promoted (ex. Goals 2000)
* NCLB req’s”evidence-based practice,” scientifically based reading research”-mentioned 110 times in the Act
* Research v. Policy- becomes a “war” fueled by the press and scholars.
* Practitioners usually discuss and employ balanced approaches: whole language and skills-oriented – outside of the public eye within the confines of their classes and schools.

1. Increasing pressure for all educators, esp. in reading to produce measurable results

* Some whole language supporters oppose any external assessments; assessments should occur in a collaboration: student, teacher, parents.
* Those who accept external accountability or public reporting of assessments believe standardized and external measures are not valid indicators of whole language curricula goals.
* Assessments that are classroom based and individualized could work if accountability is required (90s performance assessments or portfolios were thought to work)
* However, these do not work for the public and policy-makers who do not trust teachers’ assessments.

1. Dramatic shift in the current model of professional development

* Early 90s professional development = models of teacher reflection and prerogative
* PD has shifted to training models about the knowledge and skills to administer scientifically based research in reading.
* Practice is now supposed to vary little from teacher to teacher instead of the teacher inquiry model which informed varied practices.

1. Who Holds the High Ground?

* Whole language placed teachers in the role of primary curriculum decision maker.
* Now seen as a privilege that may not be in the best interest of students and parents.
* Phonics puts reading into the hands of the public- a clever repositioning for advocates of phonics and skills.
* Created a political environment where whole language could not become mainstream because of the reluctance to accept external accountability.
* Vague evidence of growth and/or left to the teachers and/or a reluctance to adopt common standards allowed the public to question whole language and who was really benefitting from it: the students or the teachers?

**Looking Ahead: Will We Benefit From the Lessons of History?**

* One possibility: the paradigm of basic skills- phonics and heavy skills

-These advocates may gain ground if they can persuade governments at all levels and the educational publishing industry.

-Result would be moderate to substantial shifts: especially in kindergarten and grade 1 with explicit instruction. Writing aligns w/ whole language: literature-based reading and process writing- similar to early 90s and some 80s perspectives- RC=Dec\* LC returned along with teacher as transmitter of knowledge

* Another possibility: hybrid paradigm of whole language ideas and earlier traditions (skills, strategies, some vocab. control, early code emphasis)-“ecologically balanced” approach

-less shifts if this alternative dominates.

-it will give precedent to authentic texts/tasks, a lot of emphasis on writing, literature, response, comprehension w/ explicit phonics instruction, word id, comprehension, spelling, writing

-most differences in the early grades

-highly contextualized

-this approach is more like whole language philosophically- students as active meaning-makers

-this approach= favored by the author based his reading review of the research; it respects all of the research in the field, the “wisdom of practice,” and the professional history of reading-an alternative to the pendulum swinging that have infected the field for the majority of the 20th century.