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*American Reading Instruction*

Chapter Eight: The Period of International Conflict (1935-1950)

**An Overview**

*Smith’s Thesis*

International conflicts and World War II had immediate effects on reading.

*International Conflicts and WWII: Major Effects on Reading during 1935-1950*

1. Reduced production of research and instructional materials
2. New view of how reading might contribute to living effectually in American democracy
3. New emphasis on the social values of reading
4. New attention reading at the high school, college, and adult level
5. A tightening of informal procedures for reading instruction and renewed attention to systematic reading instruction

**The New Reading Materials**

*Professional Books*

1. New feature: some address solely one specific aspect of reading (e.g., Waple’s *What Reading Does to People*; Harrison’s *Reading Readiness*; Luckiesh and Moss’s *Reading as a Visual Task*)
2. Publication of first two books dedicated to reading at the secondary level: Bond and Bond’s *Developmental Reading in High School*; Strang, McCullough, and Traxler’s *Problems in the Improvement of Reading*.
3. Several books dedicated to various aspects of reading disability (e.g., McCalliester’s *Remedial and Corrective Instruction in Reading*; Monroe’s *Children Who Cannot Read*)

*Courses of Study*

1. Multiple courses of study were published in 1948.
2. The new courses of study stated broad reading objectives, similar to those of preceding period, and added one or two objectives related to reading in a complex modern society.
3. Some courses of study listed principles instead of objectives (e.g., Reading is a lifelong process).

*Teachers’ Manuals*

1. The number of teacher manuals for a series of readers grew; the number of pages per manual grew as well.
2. More manuals for the first-grade level, including readiness and preprimer books.
3. More manuals for second and third grades.
4. The topics covered in the manuals often included: “a balanced reading program, word recognition, comprehension, study activities, relationships to other subjects, evaluation and testing, and enrichment activities” (p. 257).
5. Manuals suggested procedures for teaching students to read specific pages within the readers.

*Characteristics of Basal Readers*

1. Reduced number of basal readers published during this period.
2. Several changes to the readers
   1. An emphasis on reading readiness and new readiness materials.
   2. Content was still mostly realistic but also drew more on literature; poetry was also included.
   3. Art work occupied more space and was more vivid. Pictures appeared in various places.
   4. Elimination of the hanging indention.
   5. Reduced vocabulary in beginning readers.
3. Representative readers of the period: *The Reading for Interest Series;* Smith’s *The Learning to Read Program*; *The Ginn Basic Readers*; *The Betts Basic Readers.*
4. Many primers of the previous period continued to be used or were revised slightly.

**Methods of Reading Instruction as Advocated by Basal Readers**

1. New concept: Interrelationship: reading and other language arts; reading and other curricular areas.
2. Trends: Recognizing the importance of (1) general child development to reading instruction and (2) reading readiness at all ages.
3. Context clues and structural analysis appeared for the first time as techniques to help readers indentify new words.
4. Phonics: visual and auditory discrimination of the consonants were taught in first grade; phonic analysis was delayed until second grade; all phonic elements were covered by the end of third grade.
5. Skill development programs grew, with readers listing long skill charts identifying many skills.
6. Attention to individual learning differences and the necessity to tailor reading instruction to differences.

**Reading Instruction at the Secondary and College Levels**

1. 1948-1950: increased attention to reading instruction at secondary and post-secondary levels.
2. New concept: teaching developmental reading at the secondary level; likely a result of increase in research reports on reading at the upper levels.
3. Emphasis on reading in the content areas.

**Reading Research**

1. Reading research flourished during 1935-1940; however, the number of research studies diminished greatly from 1940 to 1950.
2. The number of doctoral dissertations in reading decreased during the period.
3. High-interest topics in research included:
   1. “diagnosis and remedial work with emphasis on causes and visual defects; reading interests; vocabulary load and meaningful vocabulary; phonics, particularly its limitations and values; evaluation of reading tests; effective reading and study habits; reading in the content subjects; and the hygiene of reading” (p. 278).
4. Major points to note
   1. 1940: Peak of interest in reading readiness.
   2. Early 1940s: Reading in the content areas
   3. Early 1940s: Readability.
   4. Mid to late 1940s: Relationships between reading and other language arts.
   5. Throughout period: Sociology, physiology, and psychology of reading.
   6. Throughout period: All academic levels and ages explored, from kindergarten to adults.
   7. Throughout period: Laboratory studies in addition to research within classrooms and reading centers. Some of the classroom and reading center research was criticized for quality, design, and statistical technique.
   8. Throughout period: Highest number of studies dedicated to reading disability.
5. Increased interest in reading disability
   1. Informal diagnosis of reading disabilities with basal readers developed.
   2. Multiple causation theory developed during this period, theorizing that reading disability might be due to any of several different causes.
   3. Two diagnostic innovations emerged: Betts’s telebinocular and American Optical Company’s opthalmagraph.
   4. Trend: Reading clinics within public schools. By 1942 Reading clinic was a classification under the “Reading” in the *Educational Index*.

**Special Supervision in Reading**

1. The reading specialist in a public school was often called *reading supervisor, reading coordinator,* or *special supervisor in reading.*
2. In 1949, Betts wrote that
   1. General supervisors assisted teachers in identifying individual student needs and differentiating reading instruction
   2. Supervisors of reading instruction sometimes oversaw all language arts and worked under the director of elementary education
   3. Supervisors provided help through consultations, demonstrations, workshops, study groups, institutes and course-of-study committees

Timeline 1935-1950

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| Development in Reading or Literacy Instruction | Development in Reading Research |
| New view of how reading might contribute to living effectually in American democracy  New emphasis on the social values of reading  New attention to reading at the high school, college, and adult level  A tightening of informal procedures for reading instruction and renewed attention to systematic reading instruction  Methods of Reading Instruction as Advocated by Basal Readers   1. New concept: Interrelationship between reading and other language arts as well as other curricular areas. 2. Trends: Recognizing the importance of (1) general child development to reading instruction and (2) reading readiness at all ages. 3. Context clues and structural analysis appeared for the first time as techniques to help readers indentify new words 4. Phonics: visual and auditory discrimination of the consonants were taught in first grade; phonic analysis was delayed until second grade; all phonic elements were covered by the end of third grade. 5. Skill development programs grew, with readers listing long skill charts identifying many skills. 6. Attention to individual learning differences and the necessity to tailor reading instruction to differences. | Reduced production of research and instructional materials  The number of research reports, reading dissertations, new basal series all decreased relative to the preceding period. The decrease in published research and dissertations during the war years was likely due to would-be researchers participating instead in the war effort.  Reading Research   1. Reading research flourished during 1935-1940; however, the number of research studies diminished greatly from 1940 to 1950.    * The number of published reports from July 1943 to June 1944 dropped to 54—half the number reported per year from 1930 to 1940. After the war, the number of reports slowly increased, reaching 98 for the year of 1949-1950. 2. The number of doctoral dissertations in research decreased.    * In 1940, the year before WWII there were 114, but Smith found only 1 for the first year of the war in 1941. Dissertation production was unsteady during the rest of the period but ended with 12 in 1947, 17 in 1948, and 9 in 1949.    * As with published research, most dissertations addressed reading disability but also explored topics such as readability, language arts interrelationship and mechanical aids. 3. High-interest topics in research included    * “diagnosis and remedial work with emphasis on causes and visual defects; reading interests; vocabulary load and meaningful vocabulary; phonics, particularly its limitations and values; evaluation of reading tests; effective reading and study habits; reading in the content subjects; and the hygiene of reading” (p. 278).   1940: Peak of interest in reading readiness.   * + Accounts of published research on this topic decreased after 1940   Early 1940s: Reading in the content areas   * + 19 studies reported for 1940-1941; 18 for 1941-1942; continuing at a rate of 6-8 per year through 1950.   Early 1940s: Readability.  Mid to late 1940s: Relationships between reading and other language arts.  Throughout period: Sociology, physiology, and psychology of reading.  Throughout period: All academic levels and ages explored, from kindergarten to adults.  Throughout period: Laboratory studies in addition to research within classrooms and reading centers. Some of the classroom and reading center research was criticized for quality, design, and statistical technique.  Throughout period: Highest number of studies dedicated to reading disability.   1. Increased interest in reading disability.     Summaries of investigations, articles in educational journals, and new professional books during this period all indicate increased attention to reading disability.  Informal diagnosis of reading disabilities with basal readers developed.  Multiple causation theory developed during this period, theorizing that reading disability might be due to any of several different causes.  Two diagnostic innovations emerged: Betts’s telebinocular (to signal defects in vision) and American Optical Company’s opthalmagraph (to make photographic reproductions of eye movements).  Trend: Reading clinics within public schools. By 1942 Reading clinic was a classification under the “Reading” in the *Educational Index*. |