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Oral Reading, Silent Reading, and Listening Comprehension: A Comparative Study for Above-Average and Below-Average Readers

Rita M. Joost

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ORAL READING, SILENT READING, AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION
A COMPARATIVE STUDY FOR ABOVE-AVERAGE
AND BELOW-AVERAGE READERS

RITA M. JOOST
MASTERS PROJECT
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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Is there a significant difference among the following three groups of second grade children with regards to the degree to which they comprehend the content of a reading passage:

1. Children with below-average reading ability who read the passage silently.
2. Children with below-average reading ability who read the passage orally.
3. Children with below-average reading ability who listened to the passage read to them.

Is there a significant difference among the following three groups of second grade children with regards to the degree to which they comprehend the content of a reading passage:

1. Children with above-average reading ability who read the passage silently.
2. Children with above-average reading ability who read the passage orally.
3. Children with above-average reading ability who listened to the passage read to them.
Is there a significant difference among the following three groups of fifth grade children with regards to the degree to which they comprehend the content of a reading passage:

1. Children with below-average reading ability, who read the passage silently.
2. Children with below-average reading ability who read the passage orally.
3. Children with below-average reading ability who listened to the passage read to them.

Is there a significant difference among the following three groups of fifth grade children with regards to the degree to which they comprehend the content of a reading passage:

1. Children with above-average reading ability who read the passage silently.
2. Children with above-average reading ability who read the passage orally.
3. Children with above-average reading ability who listened to the passage read to them.
In my four years of teaching Title I reading I have observed teachers in the first and second grades teaching phonic skills to their students and these students successfully reading word lists that can be "sounded out". I have also observed teachers teaching sight words to their students and the students successfully learning these sight words. But I have noticed that although a student is able to read a word in a list he may not be able to decode the word in a sentence.

I have also observed students who can read orally with fluency and expression but are unable to answer questions about what they have read. These observations stand as evidence to me that there must be more to reading than phonic skills and word recognition skills.

The role that decoding and word recognition plays in the reading process needs to be investigated further as the research has yielded conflicting results. Much of the reading instruction taking place in the classroom today is based upon the belief that reading is comprised of mastering a multitude of subskills, specifically decoding and comprehending skills. Yet, if poor readers are also poor listeners and if good readers are also good listeners, then the present interest in decoding and, by extension, the promulgation of phonics seem to be entirely misplaced. In other words, if students have just as much
difficulty understanding what they hear as they do what they read, then decoding or word recognition must not be their primary problem. Therefore, it would be misguided to emphasize decoding as the major stumbling block for poor readers. The problem might be the readers' inability to understand the message after it is received thereby making meaning out of the message. This kind of problem would warrant an emphasis in developing and expanding the students' experiences resulting in understanding more fully and deeply the world around them consequently building their general verbal competence.

By comparing listening comprehension to reading comprehension for above-average and below-average readers, one can come to some conclusions about where the problem resides for poor readers—whether it be lack of phonic skills or lack of general verbal competence. Because teachers need to know better where to invest their resources, investigations such as mine need to be done.

Since I have informally observed my Title I students, particularly the first and second graders comprehending much better after reading orally, I want to investigate in a formal study whether oral reading is indeed more effective than silent reading for below-average readers as a mode of reception for comprehension. Research in this area has also yielded conflicting results. Some researchers have reported that silent reading is more effective in terms of comprehension while others have reported that oral reading is more effective. But much of this
research was based on the grade level of the students and the scores were not analyzed according to the students' reading ability. In my study I want to take into consideration the reading ability of the students to see if there is a difference in terms of the mode of reception which is most effective for comprehension. The mode found to be most effective can then be used for effective learning in the classroom.

Not until 1971 was research done comparing all three modes of reception at one time and since then only three studies were done only one of which was published. Since the studies have been few in number and have yielded conflicting results, I would like to add to the research controlling for two sources of error which have been reported as contributing factors to the conflicting findings--intersubject variation and the degree of difficulty of material.
If spoken language is in fact a different language from the written form, then we would expect little if any correlation between listening and reading comprehension. However, most of the researchers suggest a positive correlation between reading and listening (Duker, Sticht, Mosenthal, Kintsch, Reed, Smiley, and Guthrie and Tyler).

Duker (1965) collected the results of many early studies of the relationship between reading and listening. He cites 23 major studies between 1926 and 1961, with correlations ranging from a low of .45 to a high of .70, with a mean of .59. Sticht and others (1974), in one of the more extended studies found the same cognitive process at work in both reading and listening and therefore, a high correlation between the two. Walker (1975-76) reported that reading and listening were similar, but that reading "demands relatively greater precision of communication. Mosenthal (1976) used syllogisms in written and aural forms to test differences in comprehension. He reached essentially the same conclusions as others: "A common linguistic competence underlies both silent reading and oral language processing". The one new point that Mosenthal makes is that reading aloud seems to have some unique qualities not accounted for by either listening or reading silently.
Kintsch and Kozminsky (1977) had students write 60-80 word summaries after having read and listened to stories. They concluded that the "processes underlying listening comprehension and skilled reading were similar". Reed (1977) likewise found a high degree of relationship between reading and listening. Smiley and others (1977) investigated the importance of decoding skills as an explanation of poor reading performance raising three methodological considerations. 1) They opted for recall of passages of relative importance as the best measure of comprehension. They reported: "The ability to concentrate on main events to the exclusion of nonessential material is a basic cognitive process essential for all comprehension activities, whether in the context of listening or or of reading". 2) They decided to use two relatively obscure folktales as the source of their passages. Folktales derive from an oral tradition so they partake of both speech and prose. Also, the students' general background knowledge would be little help in responding to the questions. 3) They decided to present the material for the reading group a few lines at a time on a screen for exactly the same period of time it took a reader to recite those lines on a tape for the listening group.

Subjects in the first part of the experiment were 36 junior high students, most of whom were in the seventh grade. One group was composed of students from regular classes who were reading at or above grade level. The other group was composed of children in a U.S. federally finded program (Title I).
Each pausal unit in the two stories was rated on one of four levels according to its importance. For good readers, there was a significant difference in the amount of material recalled from Level 1 material (least important) to Level 4 (the most important). For the poor readers, however, only Level 4 material produced a significant change in the percent of material recalled. Poor readers had about as difficult a time after listening as they did after reading. The researchers conclude: "Good readers show better comprehension than poor readers and...good readers are sensitive to more gradations of importance. That both of these effects are obtained when the to-be-comprehended material is either read or heard...suggests that the same processes are involved in the two tasks."

Because the poor readers responded so inadequately to the recall questions, the researchers decided to play the tapes of the two folktales to first grade students and ask them the same recall questions. The first graders had essentially the same responses as the remedial seventh graders. This indicates that the poor-reading seventh graders suffered very little from decoding difficulty; they were unable to recall very much about a story after listening to it, and what is even more damaging, they were unable to distinguish gradations of importance of the material. Their understanding of these two folktales was on about a first grade level. The conclusion is clear: "poor readers also seem to be
Guthrie and Tyler (1976), however, found that poor readers were worse in reading than in listening, suggesting that decoding did play a role in reading performance. After doing a number of subtests of data, Guthrie and Tyler reached the tentative conclusion that poor readers were probably not decoding words completely: "During silent reading, poor readers may not decode as many words as good readers into sound forms that are easily processed in short-term memory". This was an interesting conclusion, since the readers all knew the 64 words used in the sentences. That is, knowing the words had little if any impact upon the level of comprehension.
Research Comparing Silent Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension

Results of studies comparing silent reading and listening comprehension vary. Hampleman (1958) and Durrell (1969) found that listening comprehension was more effective than silent reading comprehension. To the contrary, Larsen (1940), Many (1965), and Swalm (1974) found that reading comprehension was superior to listening comprehension. Haugh (1979) found no significant difference between either mode of reception in terms of comprehension effectiveness as did Swalm (1974) when he analyzed all the subjects together instead of by reading level.

Hampleman (1958) compared listening comprehension ability with reading comprehension ability of fourth and sixth grade children. To measure the listening and reading modes, the author administered the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test Form A to 304 randomly selected students. Half of all the students were administered the test orally while the other half took the test as a reading test. Listening comprehension was found to be significantly superior to reading comprehension for fourth grade pupils as well as sixth grade pupils, boys and girls. Durrell (1969) reported that listening comprehension was superior to silent reading comprehension up to sixth grade but that by the eighth grade silent reading and listening
comprehension were equivalent.

Larsen (1940) compared silent reading comprehension with listening comprehension of 150 university freshmen and found that there was a superiority of performance in reading comprehension over listening comprehension. Many's study (1965) seems to support Larsen's findings as he found silent reading to be superior over listening comprehension for all ability groups of sixth graders.

When the comprehension scores were analyzed according to ability levels of the readers, Larsen (1940) reported that below average readers comprehended almost as well by reading as by listening. However, Swalm (1974) and Crippen (1968) reported that the below-average readers comprehended better by listening than by silent reading. Larsen (1940) and Swalm (1974) were in agreement when they reported that the median groups (designated according to reading ability) showed a superiority in favor of silent reading comprehension over listening.

In a study involving 64 first graders, Haugh (1979) examined the relationship between listening comprehension and reading comprehension. Two forms of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Primary A were administered -- one orally and one silently. No significant difference was found between the mean score of the silent test and that of the orally administered test. This seems to support Swalm's (1974) findings when he analyzed comprehension scores according to the grade level of the subjects rather than by their reading ability level.
Conclusions from Related Research Studies

The following conclusions from the numerous research studies reviewed may be tentatively stated:

1. Listening comprehension seems to be definitely superior to reading comprehension in Grades 3, 4, and 5.

2. Reading comprehension seems to be only slightly superior to listening comprehension beginning approximately in Grade 7 and continuing up to the adult level.

3. Most of the studies which show reading comprehension to be superior to listening comprehension use recordings or radio presentations for their listening groups. In face-to-face listening situations, therefore, the two modes may be equivalent in effectiveness. This conclusion may not be safely drawn, however, from present research.

4. Listening comprehension is superior to reading comprehension with easy material. Reading is superior to listening with difficult material.

5. Listening comprehension is superior to reading comprehension with subjects of low mental ability. Reading is superior to listening with subjects of high mental ability. The two modes are about equally effective for those with average mental ability.
6. Listening comprehension seems to be at least equal to or superior to reading comprehension on tests of delayed recall.

7. Conclusion from these studies must be accepted with some reservations. Procedures and materials used varied widely.

8. There were no studies found which compared listening comprehension with reading comprehension on passages of varying length.

(Hampleman 1958)
Causes for the Variability of Results

Duker (1965) claimed the variability of results due to the difference in the learning materials presented, the diversity of characteristics among subjects and the different testing procedures. Swalm (1974) claimed the reason for disagreement in results was due to the interaction between the students reading ability and the different level of the material presented.

Findings from the following studies tend to indicate that this interaction may indeed be an important variable in the relative effectiveness of both modes. Hampleman (1958) and Larsen (1940) reported on the effects of the difficulty of material upon reading comprehension and listening comprehension, while Kuthy and Reeves (1969), Bond and Tinker (1967), Swalm (1974), Crippen (1968) and Larsen (1940) reported on the effects of students reading ability upon reading and listening comprehension.

Hampleman (1958) found that for fourth and sixth grade pupils, listening comprehension showed a greater superiority over reading comprehension with easy material than with hard material. He suggested that if the reading material used in his study had been more difficult, reading comprehension may have been shown to be superior. Larsen (1940) in his study of 150 university freshmen concluded that the superiority of performance in reading comprehension over listening comprehension was found to be dependent upon the level of difficulty of the material.
Concerning the effects of students reading ability, Kuthy and Reeves (1969) indicated that the more developed a student's reading ability, the more effective silent reading was over listening for learning. Bond and Tinker (1967) stated that where pupils are skilled in reading, reading comprehension was equal to or superior to listening comprehension. Swalm (1974) in his study of 216 second, third, and fourth grade subjects found that when scores were analyzed by reading level, above-average students in all three grades showed a strong tendency to comprehend better when reading than they did when listening. However, in all three grade levels of students having below-average reading ability, listening was significantly more effective and silent reading was least effective for comprehending the material. Crippen (1968) found that above-average readers were better in silent reading while below-average readers were better in listening comprehension at the fifth grade level. However, significance was not reached for this comparison. Larsen (1940) reported in his study of 150 university freshmen that the higher the reading level of the student, the more superiority was the reading mode over the listening mode of presentation. The effect of the level of reading ability upon listening comprehension seems to be one point that all the researchers agree upon.
Research Comparing Oral Reading Comprehension and Silent Reading Comprehension

Not only has research comparing silent reading and listening comprehension yielded conflicting results, but so have studies examining oral reading and silent reading in terms of which is more effective for comprehending the material. Some studies reported oral reading comprehension to be superior. Rowell (1976) reported that the oral reading comprehension scores of both third and fifth graders were significantly higher than their silent reading comprehension scores. Belgum (1968) found that oral reading as a mode of presentation was significantly more effective than the informal telling or silent reading at sixth grade level. When Morris (1970) compared oral and silent reading comprehension of 91 fourth graders, he reported that the pupils' oral reading comprehension of basal reader, science, and social studies material was higher than silent reading comprehension of the materials. He further concluded that the pupils' ability to comprehend materials read would lag behind their ability to comprehend materials read orally.

Other studies have reported silent reading comprehension to be superior over oral reading comprehension. Pinter (1913) reported that with fourth grade children, silent reading was the most economical. The children read faster and retained per unit of time more of the material read. Pinter and Gilliland (1916) compared oral and silent reading at different grades. The rate of reading and the amount reproduced were taken into consideration.
They reported that for the college and high school group as well as the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, silent reading was much higher than oral reading comprehension. Mead (1917) with sixth grade children came to practically the same conclusion showing that each class reproduced a greater percentage of possible points by the silent method of reading than by the oral method.

Some investigations have reported mixed findings. Mullen (1917) examined the effect of oral reading and silent reading procedures on word pronunciation and comprehension of 124 junior high school poor readers. His results indicated that given a choice between oral and silent reading, it was worthwhile to spend five minutes to have the students read the vocabulary words aloud, as this appeared to be the significant feature. He found no differences associated with silent or oral reading of the paragraphs. When Swalm (1971) investigated the effect of oral reading, silent reading, and listening upon comprehension which was assessed by a cloze test, he reported that significant differences among the three methods existed only at second grade. Glenn (1971) reported that in many cases, oral reading aided comprehension, but some children answered more comprehension questions after reading orally, while others comprehended more after reading silently. Pinter and Gilliland (1916) investigated oral and silent reading at different grade levels taking into account the rate of reading and the amount reproduced when the student was asked to retell the
story. They found that for third and fourth graders the values for both methods were exactly the same. Layton (1978) in a study involving 117 first, second, fourth, and sixth graders, investigated the relationships found among the "Analytical Reading Inventory," the "Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty," and the "Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales" in terms of readability levels and oral and silent reading levels. He reported that no significant differences were found in the scores on the oral and silent reading subtest levels of the three tests. In a study to determine if the comprehension of 33 second grade students on a standardized test was the same whether the test was read silently or orally, Sposato (1979) found no significant differences between the two tests.
Research Comparing Oral Reading, Silent Reading, and Listening Comprehension

The research cited up to 1971 dealt with only two receptive modes at a time. Swalm (1972) was the first to compare all three modes. Only three studies have followed, one of which has been published; Mosenthal (1976), Kirkham (1977), and Elgart (1978). These studies have yielded conflicting results. Swalm (1972) and Kirkham (1977) found that the mode of presentation did not significantly affect comprehension, while Mosenthal (1976) and Elgart (1978) found that oral reading significantly affected the comprehension of material.

Swalm (1972) reported that when all second, third, and fourth grade subjects regardless of reading ability were analyzed together, the group reading orally scored significantly higher than both silent and listening groups only at the second grade. He found no significant difference at the third and fourth grade level.

Kirkham (1977) compared and assessed students' literal comprehension of information read silently, read orally, or presented orally on videotape. The findings of this study revealed that the mode of presentation did not significantly affect the literal comprehension of third, sixth, and twelfth grade students which seems to support Swalm's (1972) findings at the third and fourth grades.

However, when Mosenthal (1976) compared reading aloud, reading silently, and listening under four conditions of match or mismatch
between sentences and pictures, he reported that reading aloud gave access to linguistic competence in a manner different from silent reading and listening for the 60 undergraduates. Elgart (1978) compared silent reading, oral reading, and listening comprehension of 45 third grade students attempting to control for intersubject variation and differences in degree of reading materials which she considered to be two sources of error. The results showed that oral reading was significantly more effective than silent reading in comprehending material.
PROCEDURES

1. Research Design

The school's competency test was used to select the above-average and below-average readers from the second and fifth grades. Then the students in each grade were randomly assigned to one of three groups for testing purposes. In order to balance the effects of practice and gradual rapport between the examiner and examinees, the order of testing the three modes of reception (silent, oral, listening) were rotated among the three testing groups.

All three groups read orally, read silently, and listened to a series of test questions taken from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.

The oral reading tests were given individually. The student received a selection card which he/she read out loud. After completing the selection, the student answered the comprehension questions by marking the answers believed to be correct on his/her answer sheet.

The silent reading tests were given to no more than 7 students at a time. After reading each selection card silently, each
student answered the comprehension questions on a separate answer sheet.

During the listening test the author read each selection card once to no more than 7 students at a time in the second grade. The fifth grade students listened to a tape recording of the selection which was played once. The pupils did not receive a copy of the selection, but did receive a copy of the question. Each student answered the comprehension questions on a separate answer sheet.

The directions to each test were read to the students to ensure standardization of the testing procedures. The students were given two practice cards before each test. More practice cards had been prepared in case the students needed additional practice. This was done to ensure that the students were familiar with the mechanics of the test and understood the directions, thus eliminating the chance that any student might have missed an answer due to a misunderstanding of the directions.

The relative effectiveness of the mode of reception (silent, oral, listening) was compared at each grade level for the above-average readers and the below-average readers. The independent variable was the mode of reception; the dependent variable was the score of the number of correct responses.
2. Instrumentation

A. Test Measurements

The school's competency test for grade two (appendix page 59) and grade five (appendix page 65) were used to identify the above-average and below-average readers.

The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, Level B, Form 1 (appendix page 75) was administered to the second graders to assess the level of comprehension for each receptive mode - oral reading, silent reading, and listening.

The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test Level D, Form 3 (appendix page 79) was given to the fifth graders to assess the level of comprehension for each receptive mode - oral reading, silent reading, and listening.

B. Competency Tests

The competency tests for grades two and five were teacher-made tests which were approved by the principal and the other reading teachers. They were given at the end of the school year as a requirement for promotion to the next year's grade. Each competency test was designed to identify those students who had or had not mastered the skills taught during the school year which were considered nec-
necessary for success in the next year's grade.

C. Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test

Format
All items were multiple choice. All words read by the student were printed in black. Pictures were used in Level B.

Standardization
Standardization was carried out in May 1977. The sampling plan was based on the Fourth Count of the 1970 U.S. Census, which gives data on the basis of school district boundaries. The districts were stratified according to (1) geographic region, (2) district enrollment size, and (3) district socioeconomic characteristics: median family income and median years of schooling completed by adults. Districts were selected to produce within each region a representative proportion of black and Hispanic students. A total of 74 school districts participated in the equating. The norming samples included approximately 5,000 students per grade.

Test Validity
In developing the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, the following steps were taken to assure test validity for most school reading programs: (a) Content of compre-
hension passages was chosen according to a plan that specified the proportion of natural science, social science, humanities, and narrative material for each test. (b) For Level B, the passages were written to suit the knowledge and interests of children beginning to read; passages for older students were chosen from published sources that represent the wide range of materials such students encounter in their reading. (c) Both literal and inferential questions were written to test understanding of the passages. (d) Approximately twice the number of items needed for the test was developed for a national tryout; from this pool, only items of appropriate difficulty and usefulness as test items were chosen.

Reliability
Alternate-forms and Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 reliability coefficients were computed for each test level. The K-R 20 reliability coefficient for Level B Form 1 was .92. The reliability coefficient for Level D Form 3 was .90.

Rationale
The basic premise for the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was that it is useful for teachers and schools to know the general level of reading achievement of individual students, throughout their entire school careers. In
evaluating reading achievement, comprehension was the main concern. The comprehension exercises were intended to represent fairly the kinds of information that teachers generally expect students to gain from the materials they read.

3. Sampling and Treatment

The school's competency test was administered to all the second and fifth graders. Letters requesting parental permission to test their child for the purposes of this study were sent home with every student in the second and fifth grades. (See appendix page 84)

Then the students whose parents refused this request for further testing were eliminated from this study.

The students who scored in the top third of each participating class were identified as the above-average readers. The students who scored in the bottom third of each class were identified as the below-average readers.

There was a total of 38 students who participated in this study:

GRADE 2
Class Size = 30 students
Above-Average Readers = 10 students
Below-Average Readers = 10 students
Total Participants = 20 students
After the students had been identified as above-average or below-average readers, they were assigned to one of three groups for each grade. All three groups in each grade read orally, read silently, and listened to a series of selections taken from the Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension Test (Level B, Form 1 for the second graders; Level D, Form 3 for the fifth graders).

The order of the tests was rotated among the three groups as shown on the next page.

In the second grade there were seven students in each of groups one and two, and six students in group three. In the fifth grade there were six students in each of the three groups.
The tests were given in the following order to counteract the effects of practice and gradual development of rapport between the examiner and the examinee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP 1</th>
<th>GROUP 2</th>
<th>GROUP 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(7 Students)</td>
<td>(7 Students)</td>
<td>(6 Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Reading Test</td>
<td>Oral Reading Test</td>
<td>Listening Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Test</td>
<td>Listening Test</td>
<td>Silent Reading Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Test</td>
<td>Silent Reading Test</td>
<td>Oral Reading Test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - In grade 5 the number of students in each testing group was 6.
Grade Two

The paragraphs from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level B were divided into three groups of approximately equal difficulty. This was done by dividing the consecutive test paragraphs into groups of three (paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 made up the first group; 4, 5, and 6 made up the second group, etc.) One member from each group was then randomly assigned to one of three selections for testing purposes, so that the groups were as follows:

Selections A: #19, 21, 24, 26, 31, 33, 37, 38
Selections B: #17, 22, 25, 28, 29, 32, 36, 39
Selections C: #18, 20, 23, 27, 30, 34, 35, 40

Each selection in the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test was followed by multiple choice questions designed to measure comprehension. There was a total of eight comprehension questions for each of the three selections making a total of twenty-four comprehension questions when the three tests are combined.

The oral reading tests were given individually. The student received a selection card which he/she read aloud. After completing the selection the student chose one of the four pictures right above the story that went with the story and marked the corresponding letter on his/her answer sheet.

The following directions were read to the students:
The answers to this reading test that you will be taking must be marked on an answer sheet. Do not make any marks on it until I give you directions.

Write your name on the blank in the upper right-hand corner next to the word "Name". In the upper left-hand corner next to the word "Mode" write "O-R-A-L". (The following was written on the chalkboard: Mode Oral, Name __________.)

This test measures how well you understand what you read when you read orally or out loud. I will give you a card with a story and four pictures above the story. You are to read the story out loud and next decide which of the four pictures right above the story goes with the story. Look at the letter under the picture you chose and mark that letter on your answer sheet by filling in the oval above that letter.

Let's do a practice card together.

On this card you see a row of pictures that shows: a girl running, a girl turning a cartwheel, a girl sitting, and a girl standing. Under this row of pictures is a short story. Read the story out loud with me: Jane is sitting.

One of the four pictures right above the story goes with the story, Jane is sitting. Put your finger on that
picture. What letter is under that picture? (Examiner pauses then asks the answer.) Yes, the letter is "B", so you are to fill in the oval above the letter "B" on your answer sheet next to S1.

Let's try another practice card together. This time you read the story out loud and then mark the answer on your answer sheet next to S2. (At this time the examiner made sure the student understood the directions and was able to make the appropriate mark on his/her answer sheet. More practice cards were provided for those students who were having difficulty.)

Final instructions were as follows:

You will do best if you mark an answer space for each question even if you are not sure of the answer. Mark the one you think is right and go on.

This test is not timed so you may take the time you need to read the story and answer the questions. If you make a mistake make sure you erase it and mark the answer space you meant to mark.

If you find that you have made a mistake while reading, don't be afraid to go back and correct yourself. Also, if you come to a hard word feel free to take your time to figure it out.
The silent reading comprehension test was given to each of the three testing groups. After reading each selection card, the student decided which of the four pictures above the story went with the story and then marked the corresponding letter on his/her answer sheet. The directions for this test were the same as the directions that were given for the above oral reading test.

The listening test was given to each of the three testing groups. The pupils did not receive a copy of the selection card, but were given a card with four pictures. The examiner read each selection card once. After listening to a selection, the student decided which of the four pictures went with the story and then marked the corresponding letter on his/her answer sheet.

The following directions were read to the students:

The answers to this listening test that you will be taking must be marked on an answer sheet. I am going to give you an answer sheet. Do not make any marks on it until I give you directions.

Write your name in the upper right-hand corner on the blank next to the word "Name". In the upper left-hand corner next to the word "Mode" write "L-I-S-T-E-N-I-N-G". (The following was be written on the chalkboard: Mode Listening ; Name ________ )
This test measures how well you understand what is read to you when you listen to a story. You are to take the first card from your stack. Listen carefully to the story that I will read to you, then decide which of the four pictures on your card goes with the story. Look at the letter on your answer sheet by filling in the oval above that letter.

Let's do a practice card together. Take the first card from your stack. Notice that the number of this card is S1. (Examiner pointed to the number in the upper right-hand corner.) You will mark your answer for this card next to S1 on your answer sheet.

Ready: (Examiner read:) *Emma is part of a TV news team. She reads the city news each night on the six o'clock show.* Which picture on your card goes with the story? Put your finger on that picture. Now look at the letter below the picture you are pointing to. What is the letter? (Examiner paused then asked a student the answer.) Yes, the letter is C. So you are to fill in the oval above the letter C on your answer sheet next to S1.

Let's do another practice card together. Take the next card from your stack and get ready to listen. (At this time the examiner made sure the students understood
the directions and were able to make the appropriate mark on their answer sheets. (If it was found the students were having trouble following the directions, more practice cards were given.)

You will do best if you mark an answer space for each question even if you are not sure of the answer. Mark the one you think is right and go on.

This test is not timed, so you will be given the time you need to answer each question. If you make a mistake make sure you erase it and mark the answer space you meant to mark. You must listen carefully because I will read each story only one time.

Grade 5

The sixteen paragraphs from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level D, Form 3 were divided into groups of approximate equal difficulty using the same procedures as described for grade two.

Each selection in the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was followed by multiple choice questions designed to measure comprehension. There was a total of twelve comprehension questions for each of the three selections.
The oral reading tests were given individually. The student received a selection card which he/she read aloud. After completing the selection, the student turned the card over and proceeded to read the comprehension questions. The student then marked the letter of the answer believed to be correct on the separate answer sheet. When the student finished answering the questions, the next card was given.

The following directions were read to each student:

The answers to this reading test that you will be taking must be marked on an answer sheet. I am going to give you an answer sheet. Do not make any marks on it until I give you directions.

Write your name at the top where it says "Name". In the upper left-hand corner next to the word "Mode" write "Oral". (The examiner wrote the word "Oral" on the chalkboard.)

This test measures how well you understand what you read when you read orally or out loud. I will give you a card with a story on the front and questions about the story on the back. You are to read the story out loud then turn the card over, read the questions out loud and decide which answer is correct. Look at the letter in front of the answer you chose and mark that letter on your answer sheet by filling the oval above the letter.
Let's do a practice card together.
(The student was given a card which he/she read aloud, then turned the card over and read the question aloud. Next he/she marked the appropriate letter on the answer sheet. At this time the examiner made sure the student understood the directions and was able to correctly follow them. More practice cards were given if the student was having trouble with the directions.)

Final directions were as follows:

You will do best if you mark an answer space for each question even if you are not sure of the answer. Mark the one you think is right and go on.

This test is not timed so you may take the time you need to read the story and answer the questions. If you make a mistake, make sure you erase it and mark the answer space you meant to mark.

If you find that you have made a mistake while reading don't be afraid to go back and correct yourself. Also, if you come to a hard word, feel free to take your time to figure it out.

Once you turn the card over to the question side you may not turn the card back to the story side. In other words, you may not look back in the story for the answers.
The silent reading comprehension test was given to each of the three testing groups. After reading the selection silently, the student turned the card over and proceeded to read the comprehension questions. The student marked the letter of the answer believed to be correct on the separate answer sheet. When the student finished answering the questions he/she took the next card from the stack and followed the same procedure until all the cards had been read and answered. There was no time limit on this test.

The following directions were read to the students:

The answers to this reading test that you will be taking must be marked on a separate answer sheet. I am going to give you an answer sheet. Do not make any marks on it until I give you directions.

Write your name on the blank in the upper right-hand corner next to the word "Name". In the upper left-hand corner next to the "Mode" write "Silent". (The examiner wrote the words "Mode" and "Silent" on the chalkboard.)

This test measures how well you understand what you read when you read silently or to yourself. I will give you a stack of cards. Each card will have a story on the front and questions about the story on the back. You are to read the story silently, next turn the card over, read the questions then mark the letter of the correct answer on your answer sheet.
Let's do a practice card together.

Read the sample story to yourself as I read it aloud:

It may take hours for a baby bird to "pip" or break out of its egg. On top of the baby bird's bill is a tiny "tooth" that the bird uses to crack the hard shell. This egg tooth breaks off soon after the bird is hatched.

On the back of the card there are two questions. Question 1 asks: "How does the baby bird usually get out of its shell?" Below the question are four possible answers. They are: the mother breaks open the shell, the shell breaks open by itself, the egg falls out of the nest, the baby bird breaks open the shell.

The story says that the baby bird breaks out of its egg, and that it cracks the shell. So the correct answer is "the baby bird breaks open the shell." This answer has the letter "D" in front of it, so the answer to question S1 is "D". Now look at your answer sheet. Find row S1 on your copy of the answer sheet. Mark space "D" by filling in the oval above the letter "D".

Now look at question S2. Question S2 is an unfinished sentence. It says: "On the baby bird's bill is a . . . ." One of the four words below the sentence finishes the sentence correctly. Read each of these words to yourself and decide which one is right. Then look at the letter in
front of that word. Mark the space for the same letter in row S2 on your answer sheet. Do not mark on your reading card.

Let's do another practice card. This time you read the card and answer the questions by yourself then we will check your answers together. (At this time the examiner made sure the students understood the directions and were able to follow them correctly. More practice cards were given if the students were having trouble with the directions.

The final directions were as follows:

After you read each story, turn the card over on the back, read the question, and decide which answer is right. Then look at the letter in front of that answer, and mark the space for the same letter on your answer sheet. Then go to the next question. After you finish answering the questions on the back of the first card, take the next card from the stack and continue in the same manner until you have read and answered all the cards.

You will do best if you mark an answer space for each question even if you are not sure of the answer. Mark the one you think is right and go on.

This test is not timed so you may take the time you need to read the story and answer the questions.

If you make a mistake make sure you erase it, then mark the answer you meant to mark.
Once you turn the card over to the question side, you may not turn the card back to the story side. In other words, you may not look back in the story for the answer.

The listening test was given to each of the three testing groups. The students listened to a tape recording of the story. After listening to a selection, the students were given a card with the comprehension questions. The students listened to the taped comprehension questions after which they marked the letter of the answer believed to be correct on their answer sheets. The students did not receive a copy of the reading selection, but they did receive a copy of the questions. This was done to minimize mistakes extraneous of understanding the material read.

The following directions were read to the students:

The answers to this listening test that you will be taking must be marked on an answer sheet. I am going to give you an answer sheet. Do not make any marks on it until I give you directions.

Write your name in the upper right-hand corner on the blank next to the word "Name". In the upper left-hand corner next to the word "Mode" write "Listening". (The examiner wrote the words "Mode" and "Listening" on the chalkboard.)

This test measures how well you understand what is read to you when you listen to a story. You are to listen care-
fully to the story that will be played on the tape recorder. After the story has been played, you are to take the first card in your stack and read silently while the questions are being read to you on the tape recorder. After the questions have been read, I will stop the recorder while you are to answer the questions by filling the oval above the correct letter on your answer sheet.

Let's try one together. (The examiner played the first selection on the recorder, then checked to make sure the students marked the correct answer space.) Let's try another one. (The examiner played the next selection on the recorder, then checked the students' answers.)

The final directions were as follows:

You will do your best if you mark an answer space for each question even if you are not sure of the answer. Mark the one you think is right and go on.

If you make a mistake, make sure you erase it and then mark the answer you meant to mark.

Each selection will be read only one time, so you must listen carefully. I will give you the time you need to answer the questions which you may refer to on your cards.

NOTE: Before each test the examiner had the students check their stack of cards to ensure they were in proper numerical order.
4. Statistical Analysis

A one factor analysis of variance routine was used to test each of the following null hypotheses:

\[ H_01: \mu_A = \mu_B = \mu_C \quad (\gamma < .05) \]

Where:
- \( A \) = silent reading comprehension scores from above-average second graders
- \( B \) = oral reading comprehension scores from above-average second graders
- \( C \) = listening comprehension scores from above-average second graders

\[ H_02: \mu_D = \mu_E = \mu_F \quad (\gamma < .05) \]

Where:
- \( D \) = silent reading comprehension scores from below-average second graders
- \( E \) = oral reading comprehension scores from below-average second graders
- \( F \) = listening comprehension scores from below-average second graders

\[ H_03: \mu_G = \mu_H = \mu_I \quad (\gamma < .05) \]

Where:
- \( G \) = silent reading comprehension scores from above-average fifth graders
- \( H \) = oral reading comprehension scores from above-average fifth graders
- \( I \) = listening comprehension scores from above-average fifth graders

\[ H_04: \mu_J = \mu_K = \mu_L \quad (\gamma < .05) \]

Where:
- \( J \) = silent reading comprehension scores from below-average fifth graders
- \( K \) = oral reading comprehension scores from below-average fifth graders
- \( L \) = listening comprehension scores from below-average fifth graders
In the event that $H_0^2$ was rejected, the Scheffe Test for multiple comparison was used to locate pairs which were significantly different.

The Dunnett Test for multiple comparisons was also used to locate pairs which were significantly different in the event that $H_0^2$ was rejected.
RESULTS

The mean comprehension scores for the three modes of reception of the three groups in each grade are depicted in Table 1.

An Analysis of Variance was performed to determine differences in comprehension scores. The analysis (summarized in Tables 2, 3, 6, 7) reported that there were no significant differences at the .05 level between groups of subjects tested except for the second grade below-average readers (H₀₂).

Since a significant difference was found between the groups of below-average second graders, the Scheffe Test for multiple comparison was used to locate pairs which were significantly different. This test (summarized in Table 4) indicated that there was not a significant difference at the .05 level between any of the pairs.

The Dunnett Test for Multiple Comparisons was also used to locate pairs which were significantly different (depicted in Table 5) in further testing H₀₂. This test indicated that there was no significant difference at the .05 level between any of the pairs of below-average second grade readers.
## TABLE 1

### MEAN COMPREHENSION SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Group Tested</th>
<th>Silent Mode</th>
<th>Oral Mode</th>
<th>Listening Mode</th>
<th>F Value Critical Region</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_{01}$</td>
<td>Above-Average</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.273</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Second Graders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{02}$</td>
<td>Below-Average</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>*3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Graders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{03}$</td>
<td>Above-Average</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.6049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{04}$</td>
<td>Below-Average</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.102</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Graders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Significant Difference
TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

To Test $H_{01}: \mu_A = \mu_B = \mu_C$  \( (\alpha < .05) \)

Where $A =$ silent reading comprehension scores from above-average second graders

$B =$ oral reading comprehension scores from above-average second graders

$C =$ listening comprehension scores from above-average second graders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>3.2666</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22.666</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$F(2, 27, .05) \approx 3.33$

2.273 $\approx F \leq 3.33$

\* Failed to Reject $H_{01}$
TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

To Test $H_{02}$: $\mu_D = \mu_E = \mu_F$

Where $D =$ silent reading comprehension scores from below-average second graders

$E =$ oral reading comprehension scores from below-average second graders

$F =$ listening comprehension scores from below-average second graders

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
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<td>9.733</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.829</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95.86</td>
<td>29</td>
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</table>

$F(2, 27, .05) \approx 3.33$

$3.44 \approx F* > 3.33$

* $H_{02}$ Is Rejected
TABLE 4

SCHIFFE TEST
FOR MULTIPLE COMPARISONS

Since \( H_{02} \) was rejected, the Scheffe Test for Multiple Comparison was used to locate pairs which were significantly different.

To compare \( \mu_1 \) to \( \mu_2 \)
Scheffe \( F = 2.862 \)
\( 2.862 \approx F^* \leq 3.33 \)
\( \therefore \) Failed to Reject \( H_{02} \)

To compare \( \mu_1 \) to \( \mu_3 \)
Scheffe \( F = 2.261 \)
\( 2.261 \approx F^* \leq 3.33 \)
\( \therefore \) Failed to Reject \( H_{02} \)

To compare \( \mu_2 \) to \( \mu_3 \)
Scheffe \( F = .0353 \)
\( .0353 \approx F^* \leq 3.33 \)
\( \therefore \) Failed to Reject \( H_{02} \)
TABLE 5

DUNNETT TEST
FOR MULTIPLE COMPARISONS

Since $H_{02}$ was rejected by the Analysis of Variance Test, the Dunnett Test for Multiple Comparisons was used to locate pairs which were significantly different.

To Compare $H_1$

\[ T(27, .05) \approx 2.53 \]
\[ 2.39 \approx F_* \leq 2.53 \]
\[ \therefore \text{Failed to Reject } H_{02} \]

To Compare $H_2$

\[ T(27, .05) \approx 2.53 \]
\[ 2.12 \approx F_* \leq 2.53 \]
\[ \therefore \text{Failed to Reject } H_{02} \]

To Compare $H_3$

\[ T(27, .05) \approx 2.53 \]
\[ .266 \approx F_* \leq 2.53 \]
\[ \therefore \text{Failed to Reject } H_{02} \]
TABLE 6

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

To Test \( H_{03} \): \( \mu_G = \mu_H = \mu_I \)

Where \( G \) = silent reading comprehension scores from above-average fifth graders

\( H \) = oral reading comprehension scores from above-average fifth graders

\( I \) = listening comprehension scores from above-average fifth graders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
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<th>MS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2.481</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>98.444</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.101</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103.407</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( F(2, 24, .05) \approx 3.40 \)

\( 0.6049 < \bar{F} < 3.40 \)

\( * \) Failed to Reject \( H_{03} \)
TABLE 7

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

To Test $H_{04}$: $\mu_J = \mu_K = \mu_L$

Where $J =$ silent reading comprehension scores from below-average fifth graders

$K =$ oral reading comprehension scores from below-average fifth graders

$J =$ listening comprehension scores from below-average fifth graders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>0.962</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>113.111</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114.074</td>
<td>26</td>
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</table>

$F(2, 24, .05) \approx 3.40$

$0.102 \approx F^* \leq 3.40$

\[\therefore\] Failed to Reject $H_{04}$
CONCLUSION

This study has compared silent reading comprehension, oral reading comprehension, and listening comprehension for above-average and below-average readers to determine if one mode of reception is significantly more effective than the others for comprehending.

The subjects were selected from the second and fifth grades at St. Paul's Catholic School.

The results of this study showed that there was an absence of a pronounced reading-listening difference (except for below-average second graders) which lends some support to the theoretical position that reading and listening involve identical comprehension skills.

Within the limits of this study a difference in the mode of reception did exist for the second grade below-average readers in favor of oral reading.

This difference in favor of oral reading tends to support the position taken that by reading orally a student is forced to pay closer attention to the words and not only sees the word but hears the word when it is read aloud, therefore, oral reading may be superior for comprehending.

This finding also tends to confirm the researcher's observations that the Title I students (below-average readers) seemed to comprehend more effectively when reading orally rather than silently.
After analyzing the mean comprehension scores of the fifth graders, it appeared that for this group the poor readers were also poor listeners, scoring 1.5 years below the above-average readers in both listening and reading. This suggests that for this group an emphasis should be placed on building the students' general verbal competence.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

A larger sample size would be desirable for future studies in this area. The method of designating the above-average and below-average readers could be improved by selecting a smaller percentage of the class at the top and bottom levels. That is, designating the top and bottom fourth of the class (versus one-third in the present study) as the above and below-average readers. By establishing a greater distinction between the two groups of readers, more accurate results might be obtained.

To provide more accurate results, it would be advantageous to have more than twelve comprehension questions for each test.

Finally, possible test bias could be better equalized by rotating the modality in which each test is given. For instance, Group 1's listening test would become Group 2's silent reading test and Group 3's oral reading test.
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APPENDIX A

COMPETENCY TEST
GRADE TWO
-59-
2. Make these sentences tell a story. Number them 1 through 4 in the order:

[Paragraph of text removed for privacy]
APPENDIX B

COMPETENCY TEST

GRADE FIVE
SKILLS FOR SCHOOL READING: LEVEL B © 1970 HBJ
SKILLS FOR SCHOOL READING: LEVEL B © 1970 HBJ
APPENDIX C

GATES-MACGINITIE
READING TEST
LEVEL B
FORM 1
APPENDIX D

GATES-MACGINITIE
READING TEST
LEVEL D
FORM 3
APPENDIX E

LETTERS TO PARENTS
Dear parents,

I am investigating the relative effectiveness of listening comprehension, silent reading comprehension, and oral reading comprehension for my thesis at UNF. I would like to have your permission to test your child in these areas. The results of these tests will remain strictly confidential and students' names will not be used in my paper as my study does not concern itself with individuals but rather groups of students.

I appreciate your cooperation in this research project. I will be happy to report my results to you as it relates to your child.

Sincerely,

Rita M. Joost

Child's Name ____________________________ Grade __________

Yes. My child may participate in the above testing ________________

No. I prefer that my child not be tested ________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Competency Test %</th>
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### COMPREHENSION SCORES
GRADE TWO BELOW-AVERAGE READERS

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## COMPREHENSION SCORES
GRADE FIVE BELOW-AVERAGE READERS

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