

*Review Article*

# Teaching Beginning Reading the Phonovisual-Rap (Pvr) Way (A Colloquium)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Critics and avid observers of the school system say that the quality of instruction has so drastically deteriorated that one can find quite a number of students in all the three levels of the educational hierarchy-elementary, secondary and tertiary - who have inadequate language skills to express themselves effectively either in oral or written forms; who cannot even compose simple mathematical problems, much more interpret scientific phenomena; who cannot distinguish between fact or opinion; evaluate events and happenings and many, many more. The list is endless. Many are quite in accord that these are due to the poor reading abilities of the students.

Although these may seem highly opinionated, these nevertheless can find support from the statements of prominent educational planners of the Department of Education (DepEd) when they said that education is beset with problems which are concretized into the low performance of pupils in practically all subject areas of the curriculum. An analysis of the poor performance of the pupils will show that the root of these problems is related to the inability to read.<sup>1</sup>

This observation was made almost two decades ago, and yet these past realities are still strongly felt today. Take the statement of Bernard when he said, "People from all walks of life generally complain about the low quality of elementary graduates that public school produces. Unbelievable but true, in English, for instance, many Grade VI pupils are word readers, syllable readers, and even non-readers, with low or no comprehension at all. The majority of them do not have the mastery of the four basic operations in mathematics. Their knowledge about their country's geography and history is completely inadequate. Their cursive writing is below standard.

A deeper look into the problem would indeed reveal that when basic skills in reading are not well developed, subsequent learning in other areas would be affected. Chat et al. wrote that "proficiency in reading affects to a large extent the pupil's accomplishment in the different content subjects. The essential points in a history lesson may easily be gathered when one read effectively. Problem-solving in arithmetic is often a difficulty because of failure to interpret the conditions given in the problem. Even one's appreciation of good literature depends to a great extent upon his reading background and experience. Schools have apparently failed to develop the various reading abilities necessary for effective word study in school subjects.

How, then, can the child gain an understanding of what he reads? How could he get a glimpse of the world's excitement, pleasure, and wisdom if he has not acquired the reading and thinking ability to give and get meaning from the printed symbols? The teacher's dilemma is how a child could be helped to acquire the necessary reading and thinking ability.

This kind of dilemma is also faced by the teachers in the University Laboratory Elementary School of the University of Eastern Philippines. Grade I and II teachers in the ULES are encountering difficulties in letting the pupils learn how to read. The problem is made more serious with pupils who have no preschool training. That is why pupils that have no preschool training are not accepted in Grade I. The problem is compounded because the school is a laboratory school. Teacher-trainees are not yet skilled in teaching the pupils how to read. What happens is the Grade I and II pupils become deficient in reading. These pupils become poor comprehenders of reading materials. These are factors that impede pupils from becoming good readers with adequate recognition and comprehension skills.



In pursuit of the goal to make readers out of all school children, curriculum planners and educational experts have devised different approaches to make the teaching and learning of reading more effective and meaningful and to give every child the magic key that will open to him the world of excitement and enlightenment. One of these approaches is the phonovisual-rap which can be used to upgrade reading skills.

### ***A. Historical Development***

The Phonovisual Method, as cited by Smith, can be historically likened to Icklesamer's Phonic Method, which was popularized in 1934. This started in Germany when Icklesamer declared the sounds of letters should be introduced first before the names of the letters.

The phonovisual method is a combination of two or more methods. This is designed for the use of existing basal and other approaches. It was used by the primary schools founded by Lucille Schoolfield, Josefina Timberlake, and Marie Buckley in Chicago in 1948. Independence and speed of learning are so enhanced that there is the opportunity for greatly enriched reading. This method is based on the use of pictorial charts arranged in scientific phonetic foundation together with a definite plan for training for auditory and visual discrimination.

This method of reading had also been advocated in France and Switzerland in 1955. It was introduced by Pestalozzi, who wished that children would know sounds and letter names. In early times, French phonic text made children learn the sound of letters with suitable pictures. Pestalozzi further suggested that the written word be accompanied by a picture or with an object. The object or the picture is the familiar stimulus to a concept that the child already possesses.

This method was further enhanced by Smith and Dechant in Oklahoma in the 1970s. They declared that auditory and visual discrimination are major factors in perceptual development. They further said that association of the spoken and the written word is essential in learning to read and that it requires so much care on the part of the teacher. For the ease of associations, it seems necessary that the child's eye be on the written word, and at the same time, he says the spoken word.

In 1960, James Asher first offered the Total Physical Response (TPR) as one alternative to the Audiolingual Approach (listen and say approach). His method, based on techniques advocated much earlier by Harold and Dorothy Palmer in 1925, involves the giving of command to which the pupils react.

The concept of Total Physical Response became the basis for jazz chants wherein the language learners are exposed to rhythm and body movement while chanting. Jazz chants, according to Amato, were developed by Carolyn Graham, an ESL teacher a jazz musician, in order to provide language learners with a rhythmic means to improving speaking and listening skills. Through the chants, the student can be exposed to natural intonation patterns and idiomatic expressions in often provocative, sometimes humorous situations. Feelings are expressed in the playing out of the common rituals of everyday life. Because the chants are often in dialogue

This paper highly recommends the use of the Phonovisual Method in teaching beginning reading with rap as the added feature. Thus, the new method is called the Phonovisual-rap. While the Phonovisual Method develops the basic word recognition skills in the beginning readers, the rap will be used as a practice exercise in reading. The rhythm and cadence of the words being read the rap way will make the reading activity more enjoyable to the learners. In this way, the pupils will learn how to read words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and stories.

### ***B. Situational Analysis***

There have been tremendous interest and concern about the technique of teaching children to read. Each year thousands of pesos are spent to make reading instruction possible. The public concern with reading is reflected in many books, magazines, journals, pamphlets, and studies devoted to the subject.

The methods and materials for teaching reading have changed over the years. Many approaches have been developed. Some of these approaches have gained wide acceptance. Others have received little attention. In many instances, more than one approach has been utilized simultaneously. Educators who advocate an eclectic approach urge teachers to use the best technology and materials from each approach in order to meet the widely varying needs of the children in any classroom.

### ***C. Progress in the field***

The phonovisual Method is one of the important methods in teaching reading. The objective of using the method is for pupils to learn to read in the most effective way and at the time when pupils are in their first few months in school. The research conducted at Boston University has sought to establish the importance of knowledge of the letter names and sounds to success at the beginning of reading. The investigations, many of which have not been published, have, for the most part, demonstrated conclusively that

teaching letter names and sounds are an important aid to such instruction.

Hildreth further asserts that the best research at this time clearly indicates the advisability of beginning first with individual letters and their sounds as an approach to initial reading instruction. In order to attain better results, and the children are helped to learn a keyword for each of the initial consonant sounds. Later these keywords are extended to consonant blends, various vowels sounds, diphthongs, and onographs.

Another step that was made to improve the Phonovisual Method of teaching reading is the use of "Direct Instructional System in Teaching and Remediation" or the DISTAR method, which is used in teaching beginning reading specifically in kindergarten. This method consists of the following steps; (a) symbol action games; (b) sound blending or sound it out; (c) spelling by sounds; (d) reading stories with picture clues. The different sounds are sequenced, beginning with the sound of /m/ as represented by the letter m. The short and long vowel sounds are also introduced. This method is specifically for the teaching of beginning reading in English.

The DISTAR method has relevance to this empirical study since reading starts with the production of sounds of the letters. However, no attempt is made on the comprehension of the selected reading. It focuses only on the reading and association of sound to the letter symbol. In the phonovisual method, meaning is also emphasized in every lesson.

On the other hand, one of the readings in Continuing Education for Teachers of English as Second Language maintains that the characteristics of language are as follows: (1) Language is purposive, non-random, and conceptual. It is used to express one's thoughts. Feelings, etc., and to manipulate one's environment in order to get things done. To be understood, one has to follow the rules and recognize patterns of language. One who learns the language must know when and what sounds can be combined; (2) Language doesn't develop in a vacuum. It is used in a given situation; (3) Language is similarly structured or the so-called "language universals." Despite the uniqueness of a language, the following are common to all languages: (a) all languages are composed of meaningful sounds- no matter how languages are examined, we find the same sounds occurring again and again. In reading, we utter sounds of the graphic symbols that we see on printed pages. If the child can produce and blend the individual sounds of the letters, then he can read words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and the entire discourse; (b) some languages permit a combination of two or more

consonants, such as in plato (Filipino) and plaza (English). These consonant clusters are very difficult for the children to attack if they are not acquainted with the sounds. Reading words containing these sounds or letter combinations is postponed until the next grade, thus leaving the learning of these combinations to change for the pupils to discover; they have never been taught at all by the teacher; (c) some languages like Tagalog have vowel before consonant combinations such as *estudyante*. If and when the children are taught the basic sounds of the letters of the alphabet, and they know how to blend these sounds, then there is no reason why teachers have to postpone the reading of syllables having the vowel-consonant pattern up to the second semester of Grade One.

Considering the aforementioned principles of language may improve the phonovisual methods of teaching reading on the ground that us a language-related process.

## II. CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are deduced from the phonovisual-rap method of teaching beginning reading.

In the phonovisual method of teaching beginning reading, the child learns the sound of letters (and rules or generalizations which he is to apply in reading) before he learns words as sight words. The long and short sounds of vowels are taught first.

In learning to read, the child should develop analytic skills from the beginning. The sight word method delays the introduction of phonic analysis too long. Starting with vowel sounds is justified because the vowels can "stand-alone"-they can be produced without any consonant before or after them. When they learn these, they have valuable and useful tools in all reading situations. It follows that with these skills, children become independent in their reading much earlier, and there is less need for rigidly controlled vocabulary and constant repetition of the same words in text materials. Children taught by the Phonovisual Method perform a variety of reading tasks much better compared with those taught in other methods. It will be more so rap is added in the teaching method.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

As an offshoot of this study, the researcher gives the following recommendations:

Teachers should be given ample time to prepare the necessary instructional materials to be used in teaching the subject to better facilitate the teaching-learning process.

Likewise, seminar workshops and other forms of training regarding the phonovisual-rap way of teaching reading must be conducted, particularly among English reading teachers.

Moreover, a certain technique will not work equally well with all children. Thus, English reading teachers must be updated on the different techniques and strategies in teaching reading to cater to pupils' individual differences in learning.

It is further recommended that proper orientation and close monitoring of teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession must be practiced not only by classroom teachers but also by administrators and other employees in the service to gradually minimize and discard negative manifestations whenever new strategies and other innovations are introduced in the field.

To obtain mastery in teaching the subject, proper assignment and utilization of teachers' capabilities and expertise in teaching the subjects must be considered.

A seminar workshop on the construction of rap exercises or materials for beginning readers should be conducted. Experts in reading and teaching reading practitioners in the field should be gathered and pool

their resources together to come up with rap materials for the teaching of all English sounds.

Using the Phonovisual-Rap Method, experimental research should be conducted with two groups of subjects, the control and

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