

R E A C T

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REACT

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STUDIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING & LEARNING
STUDIES IN AESTHETIC EDUCATION

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OVERVIEW

by Amy Sobrielo and Chia Wai Hon

This issue focuses on two major themes. In the first eight abstracts we return to the theme of English Language Teaching and Learning (which was featured in our first issue), as there is a growing pool of local studies in this area. The inclusion of Aesthetic Education as this issue's second theme seems to us timely. Art, music, dance and movement (physical education) are receiving more attention than they did in the past. Today we have the art elective programme, special music programmes for schools and, of course, the new PE College. The 15 studies "abstracted" in this issue have been chosen for their freshness in approach and relevance to the local situation.

English Language Teaching and Learning

Of the eight studies in English Language Teaching and Learning, three are on testing, another three look at factors affecting language use and language learning, one examines the development of our pupils' spoken English and yet another compares two kinds of language laboratory materials.

One of the problems English Language teachers have to face is setting or designing good tests of language ability. Good tests are necessarily those which are valid and reliable, but often, teachers have little time to check on the quality of their tests. In her study, Ann Piper introduces what she calls the C-test (or cued-test). She shows us how to draw up such a test and, using research results, tells us how the C-test compares with the well-known cloze test. In "Testing Oral Proficiency in English", Winnie Tan examines the oral interview and finds **it** a reliable measure of oral proficiency. Another problem teachers have is choosing appropriate texts for their pupils. For ideas on how to test for the readability of texts, teachers should read Wong Kim Lan's study in which she examines five methods of measuring readability. Furthermore how best to use the language laboratory, what taped materials to use, etc are questions which constitute another fuzzy area for some language teachers. Lee Hong Leng compares two kinds of taped materials, the structure-drill type and the functional type.

Social factors like socio-economic status, family size, exposure to the mass-media can have important effects on pupils' reading performance (as demonstrated in David Williams' study) and on language use, for example, what language a pupil chooses to use, and to whom and when he uses **it**. Both Hee Piang Chin and Lana Khong using different samples examine language use and the factors which affect the use of a language. On the same topic of language use, Isa Moynihan and her colleagues attempt to find the pattern of development of the spoken English of pupils in Singapore. In so doing, they also identify the areas of greatest difficulty for these children when speaking English.

Aesthetic Education

There are seven abstracts in this section, three on art, two on music, one each on dance and physical education. In the abstract, "Do Children Learn from Observation?", Nancy Smith concludes that contrary to popular belief young children do draw from observation when given a choice. This is quite a revelation as **it** is believed that the young child can only draw what he knows, not what he sees. In "Developmental Characteristics of Children's Clay Modelling" Eleese Brown identifies and records the significant changes in clay figures made by children aged three to eleven. This should add to the meagre information we have on three-dimensional art work. The problem of schools offering the art elective programme is how to identify potential candidates for this programme. The suggestions given in Denise Hickey's "Testing for the Art Elective Programme" should prove useful.

The two abstracts on music make interesting reading. **It** is a well-known fact that youngsters prefer loud music with a strong primitive beat to the more sophisticated concert hall or drawing room variety. The abstract, "Fast Music Please and No Singing", is an impassioned plea to music teachers to take into account youngsters' preferences and to work gradually towards winning them over to the more soothing and harmonious sound of music. As all teachers know, one of the highlights of the annual Singapore Youth Festival is the band competition. Schools and, in particular, the young musicians involved take this competition very seriously judging from the frenetic scenes at the finals when winners and losers, openly and unabashedly, give vent to repressed tension and anxiety. Are band competitions worthwhile? Are they beneficial to the musical growth of the performing students? Interesting views on this topic are given in the abstract entitled "School Band Competitions".

The dance is a much neglected art form in our schools, when men teachers fight shy about teaching **it** and male students look upon **it** as a feminine activity more suited to girls. The abstract, "Children's Dance", takes a hard look at the status and teaching of dance in elementary schools in the US. Finally, do land-based activities have the edge on swimming in terms of all-round physical development? A feasibility study conducted by a Singapore Sports Council and Ministry of Education team came to an interesting conclusion, and this is reported in the abstract, "Land-based Physical Education vs Swimming".

A Concluding Word

The 15 studies have been selected for their relevance to issues important to you as teachers. We hope you will find the abstracts useful. However, **if** you want the richness of detail which abstracts cannot possibly have, you are encouraged to read the original reports which are deposited in the IE Library.

TESTING ORAL PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

by WINNIE TAN SWEE LING

Abstract by Trevor Wilson

WHY WAS THE STUDY DONE?

Is the Oral Interview a reliable and valid measure of oral proficiency? This study attempts to answer this question.

Some research in oral testing has been done recently in the United States but very little has been done in Singapore.

As the Oral Interview has proved to be a reliable measure of oral proficiency in the United States, it was felt that it would be beneficial finding out whether the same was true for Singapore.

HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

The subjects were forty pupils from a school in Singapore.

- Great care was taken to ensure that the subjects were representative of the school population.

The raters were eight teachers with varying degrees of teaching experience from four different schools.

- For the interview, two forms of assessment were investigated - an Analytic method and an Impressionistic method.

Rating scales for both methods were drawn up in conjunction with a sample tape with graduated levels of proficiency.

All responses were recorded on tape and rated later.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE RESULTS?

The results indicated that the Oral Interview was a reliable measure of oral proficiency.

Of the two forms of assessment, the Impressionistic scoring was shown to be slightly more reliable than the Analytic scoring.

- Generally, the raters were shown to agree substantially in their ratings.
- It was found that it was more reliable to average the scores of two markers.

HOW DID OTHER FORMS OF TESTING MEASURE UP?

- Reading Aloud - This appeared to be a valid substitute for the Oral Interview in that whatever score was achieved was very close to the score achieved in the Oral Interview.
- Picture-level Description - This was also a worthwhile substitute for the Oral Interview which produced comparable results.
- Situation Response - This was seen as a complementary test incorporating communicative strategies not tested in the traditional test of oral proficiency.
- Elicited Imitation (Cued responses) - This was the least effective measure. More research needs to be done in this area before it can be considered in a test of oral proficiency.

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS?

In view of its importance in Singapore, the Oral English examination must be well conducted and reliably assessed.

Given the situation in Singapore where a large number of teachers from different schools are asked to rate an even larger number of pupils, steps must be taken to see that equivalent standards are established across raters.

It is important that definite guidelines on how each test is to be rated be issued.

A rating scale and graduated tapes for the different levels of proficiency should be made available to schools.

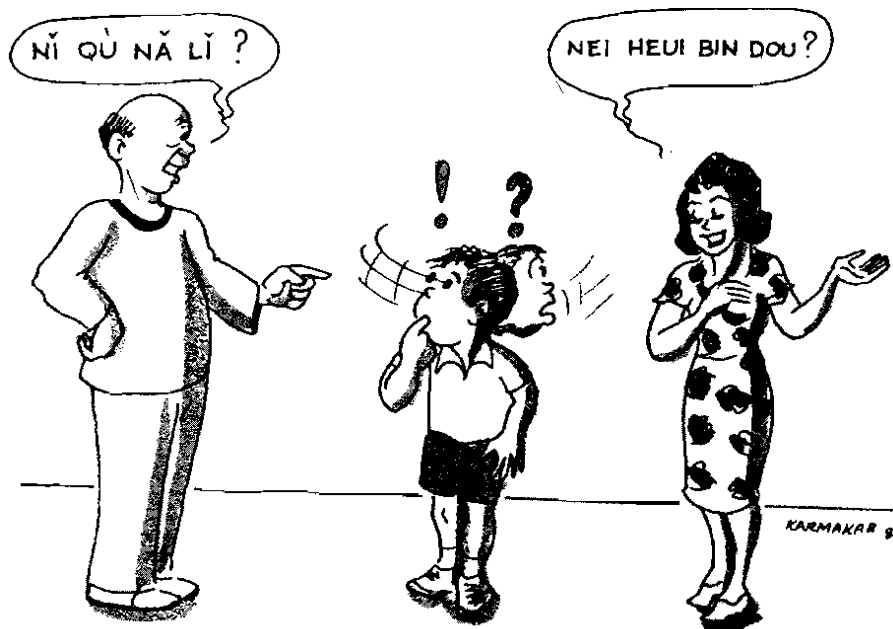
- All new raters should be given training in the assessing of oral proficiency.
- **It** is important that the present practice of using two raters to rate an oral performance be continued.

This abstract is based on "Testing Oral Proficiency in English at the Secondary Level" (1981), a master's thesis which is available at the IE Library.

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE AMONG PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

by LANA KHONG YIU LAN

Abstract by Robert Yeo



This study looked at factors in the home which successfully influence second-language learning in pre-school children. Three 'home' factors were considered, namely, (a) socio-economic background, (b) family size and relationships among family members, and (c) extent of verbal communication among family members and use of the mass-media. The performance of children in class was also another factor considered.

WHO WERE THE PUPILS IN THE STUDY?

126 Chinese children in six classes were drawn from three People's Association kindergartens. The children came from both the first- and second-year sessions of the 2-year kindergartens and comprised 59 boys and 67 girls with an average age of 4½ years. The language background of the children studied falls into two groups:

- (1) the dominant group in which dialect only or dialect and Mandarin were spoken, and
- (2) the English-oriented group, in which English was used as the main language and dialects were used as well.

HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

-Data were gathered according to the factors influencing second language learning, using questionnaires, verbal tests and classroom observations.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE FINDINGS?

Persistence of Dialect. In both groups, dialect continued to be used despite governmental pressure to discourage it.

The Increasing Use of Mandarin. Dialect was used in communication with elderly family members, usually grandparents. But Mandarin, in the first group, was increasingly used by younger adults and their children.

The Influence of the Father's Education. The more highly educated the father, the stronger his commitment to the language of his education and the greater the likelihood of his active use of it in the home. This was especially true of Chinese-educated fathers.

The Influence of Adults and Older Siblings as Language Models for Young Children. How much a language is used, by whom and with whom, influence the child's perception of the significance of that language in relation to other languages. It was found that older children were often spoken to in the school language (Mandarin or English) while younger children were spoken to in dialect.

Adjusting to the Pre-School Environment. As the child moves from the accommodating environment of the home into the more open climate of the school, he has to learn to fend for himself. Such a change, in the two case-studies cited, though traumatic, can help the child in second-language learning as he makes guesses and approximations in the language.

WHAT DO THESE FINDINGS MEAN?

Pre-school exposure to a second language is beneficial to the child's language learning.

As the family is the main influence on the child's second language learning, children from families where the second language is not used, need special attention at school.

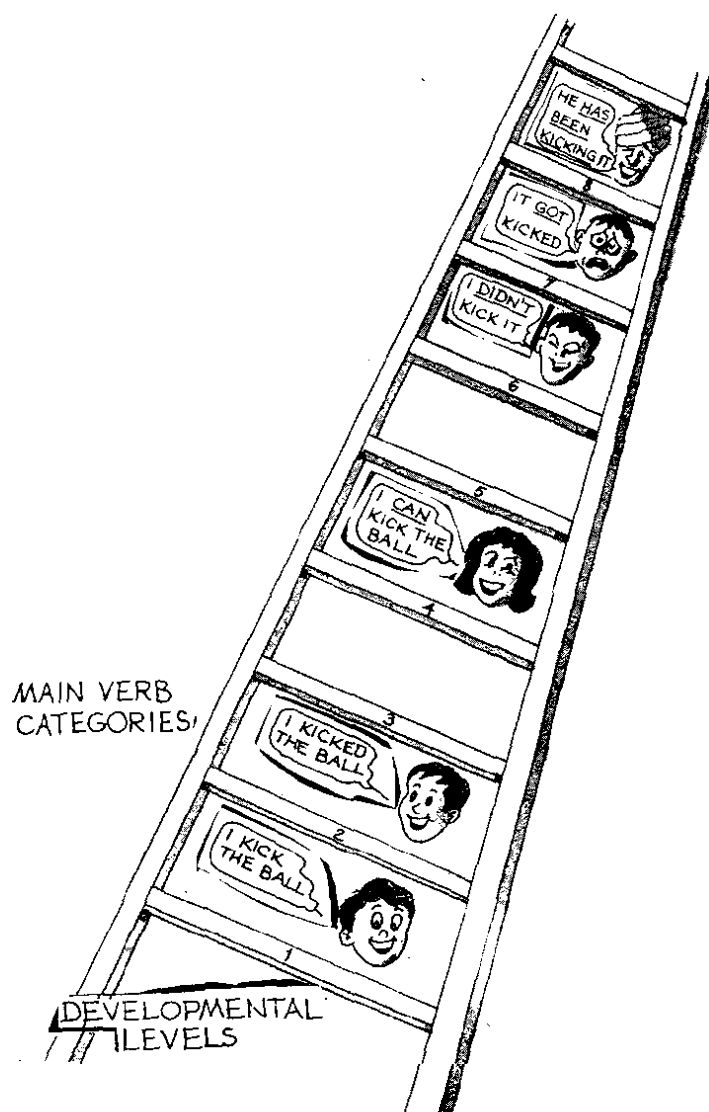
Pre-school teachers and parents of pre-schoolers need to work together to encourage the pupils' use of the second language in and outside school.

This abstract is based on a master's thesis entitled "Second-Language Socialization : A Study of Pre-school Children in Singapore " (1981). It is available at the IE Library.

AN ANALYSIS OF SPOKEN ENGLISH

by ISA MOYNIHAN AND OTHERS

Abstract by Amy Sobrielo



HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

20 boys and 20 girls aged 7 to 8 years from two Singapore primary schools were tape-recorded individually while talking to an adult. The results were then compared with those of a similar study conducted in *New Zealand*.

The **purpose of the study**, where the Singapore children were concerned, was to provide teachers and school administrators with more precise information about:

- the pattern of development, among Singapore children, in the main grammatical categories in English;
- the areas of greatest difficulty for these children;
- the possible causes of such difficulty.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE RESULTS?

Four of the findings will be of most interest to schools. Briefly they are:

- the pattern of development was similar in first and second language acquisition;
- the Singapore children all showed difficulty in handling certain complex verb forms and conjunctions;
- **it** was apparently "easy" verb forms (e.g. simple present and past and simple present and past continuous) that caused the most difficulty for the Singapore children;
- the language environment seemed to be the crucial factor, outweighing the effects of home background and parents' education level.

WHAT DO THE RESULTS SUGGEST?

The study team suggests that:

- perhaps there could be a re-ordering of language items in the New English Syllabus, for example, the Developmental Level 1 pronouns "me" and "mine" could be shifted so that they will be taught earlier than Level 2 pronouns "his" and "her".
- teachers re-allocate teaching time to take more account of the problems of the Singapore children, for example, spending more time on main verbs and conjunctions.
- most important, teachers should be models of good speech and should provide more opportunities for children to use the language as well as to learn its grammatical forms.

"An Analysis of Spoken English: A Developmental Approach" is a report on a research study carried out by a team of IE lecturers, namely, Dr Isa Moynihan, Miss Tan Kai Hui, Mrs Ooi Hui Pin and Mrs Judith Lucas, on children in two Singapore primary schools in 1982. This report is available at the IE Library.

FUNCTIONAL VS STRUCTURAL LANGUAGE LABORATORY MATERIALS

by LEE HONG LENG

Abstract by Terence Dwyer

How do structural taped materials (sentence-pattern drills) compare with functional taped materials (language items presented in a situation)? In order to find out, secondary three and four classes in some Singapore schools were used in a project which tested the use of these materials in the language laboratory.

WHY WAS THE PROJECT DONE?

There is a need to find alternative audiotape materials to those that adopt the traditional structural approach. More must be made of the language laboratory's role in presenting functional materials which provide practice for everyday communication in the real world.

HOW WAS THE PROJECT DONE?

Four tape programmes which served as examples of a structural approach and a functional approach were selected and compared.

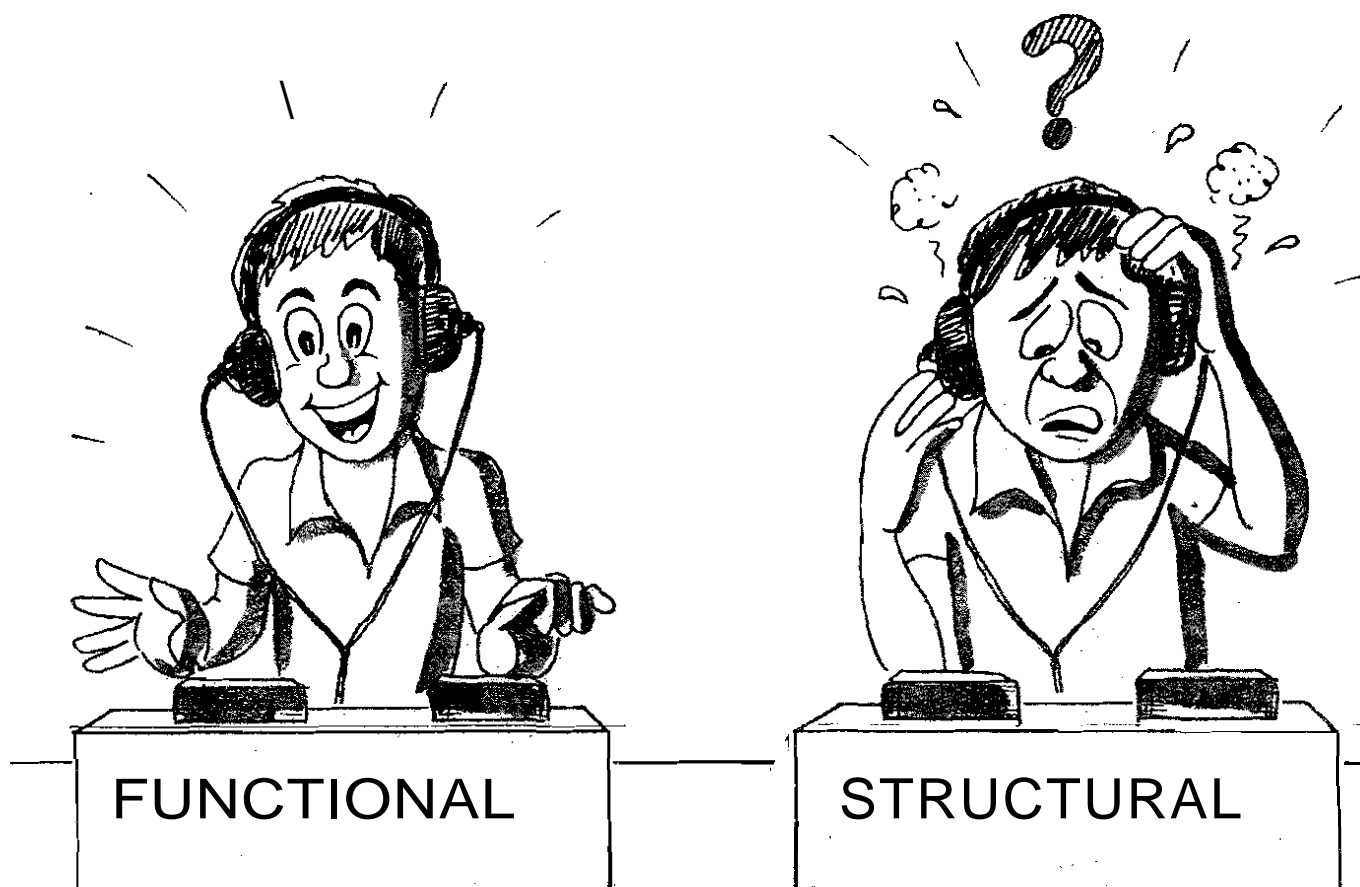
WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

- Structural audiotape materials do not prove effective with pupils. Although pupils can perform and repeat the drills correctly, they do not understand what they are saying. The pupils practise in a 'vacuum' not seeing the relevance of their responses.
- However, structures have to be learnt and there are some points of grammar which need to be isolated and drilled. Certain other structures, however, are simpler and can be learnt directly in communicative exchanges.
- Each pupil is isolated in his own booth in the language laboratory. This makes it difficult to adopt the functional approach since activities that require reaction to feedback cannot be easily practised. On the other hand, the language laboratory does rehearse certain communicative acts in the real world in that we regularly communicate via machines, eg. using the telephone.
- Functional courses provide better progression from one drill to another because of the situational context.
- Because of their situational content, functional courses are more likely to be culturally biased than structural courses.

WHAT WERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS?

Language work in the laboratory should be closely linked with the classroom programme thus supplementing and supporting all aspects of communication.

- Tapes should be produced locally to provide situational contexts in which students learn to relate language forms to communicative functions.
- Language laboratory practice should include open-ended drills which permit interaction between pupils.
- More conversation practice should be done in the language laboratory in which pupils continue a model dialogue and later create their own dialogues based on similar situations.
- In order to allow for more pair work, language laboratories should be technically modified to enable two pupils to work on the same machine.
- Teachers should continue to use structural tapes where intensive practice is called for in problem areas of grammar especially tenses.



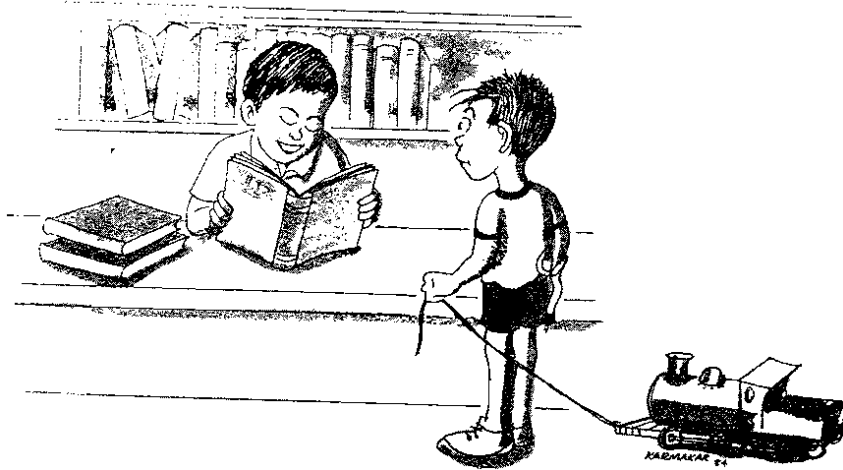
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Full title of the Project : "Functional or Structural? An Evaluation of Audiotape Programmes for Use in the Language Laboratory at Secondary 3 and 4 Levels in Singapore Secondary Schools" (1983). The project report is available at the IE Library.

FACTORS RELATED TO PERFORMANCE IN READING

by DAVID WILLIAMS

Abstract by Winnie Ng



This study assessed primary five pupils' performance in reading English as a second language in relation to a number of variables, in order to determine the accuracy with which reading scores could be predicted.

HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

The subjects were 368 primary five pupils (178 boys and 190 girls) selected from 12 classes in 12 different schools in Zaria, Nigeria. The children's ages ranged from 8 to 18 years. Of the 12 schools chosen, nine were government schools (where English was not taught until the primary four level) and three private schools (where English was the medium of instruction throughout the six years). The pupils in the government schools were also less privileged than those in the private schools from the socioeconomic point of view.

All the 368 children were given three tests on comprehension, vocabulary and rate of reading. In addition, each child, assisted by the teacher, had to complete a 24-item questionnaire which elicited information on factors associated with

- language environment
- reading resources
- attitude towards reading English
- exposure to the mass media (English)
- type of school
- sex difference
- age

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE RESULTS?

The most important predictors of reading performance were found to be: the type of school (which determined the pupils' opportunity to use English and which provided a key to the pupils' socioeconomic background), the effect of home language and a greater access to materials for reading English (including the use of the English dictionary). And, relative to their age, **it** was found that the younger pupils tended to do better in reading.

The other three factors, namely, attitude towards reading, sex difference and exposure to the mass media did not appear to be effective predictors of the children's performance in reading English as a second language.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

- In the school, as well as in the home, an atmosphere conducive to reading should be created.

Incompatibility between the language of the home and the language of instruction is likely to have an adverse effect on reading achievement.

- Reading as a natural habit in the family circle, as well as the presence of reading materials, influences achievement in reading.

Textbooks and supplementary readers appropriate to their culture should be based on a vocabulary selection suitable to the needs of second language readers.

- Children do much better in reading when classroom activities are reinforced in the home.

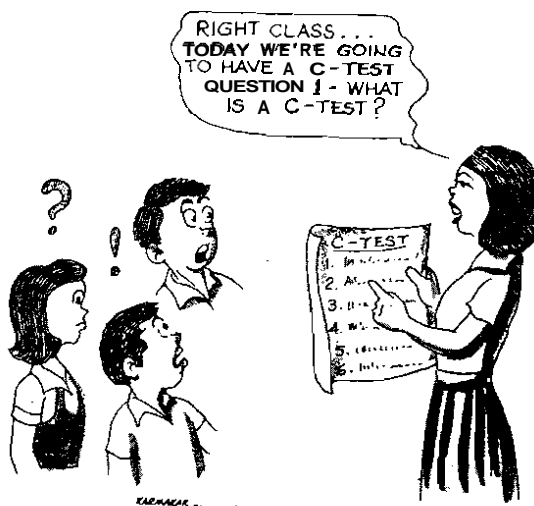
In the school, whole periods devoted to silent reading by both the teacher and pupils help to convey the impression that reading is a pleasurable activity.

This abstract is based on the article "Factors Related to Performance in Reading English as a Second Language" which appeared in Language Learning, Vol. 31, No. 1, June 1981. The journal is available at the IÉ Library.

THE CLOZE TEST AND C-TEST

by ANN PIPER

Abstract by Robert Heath



Can you answer the teacher's question? Most of us are familiar with cloze tests today, but what about a C (Cued)-Test? Perhaps you would like to try one.

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived with her mother, who was a widow. They we___ so po___ that o___ day th___ had not___ left t___ eat. T___ little gi___ went o___ into t___ woods t___ play. S___ was s___ hungry th she be___ to c___. An o___ woman ca___ up t___ her. "W___ are y___ crying, m___ child?" s___ asked. "Bec___ I am s___ hungry," said the little girl. "Then you shall be hungry no more," said the old woman.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH CLOZE TESTS?

Nothing very serious. As teachers who have used them know, they are easy to construct, simple to administer and brief, easy to mark, and they reduce fluctuation from one marker to another. A further point is that they can be made up and scored by teachers who have had no formal training in teaching English. But a few problems have emerged:

It can be hard to find suitable texts. Any texts with direct speech are not suitable. You cannot use emotionally-charged passages, or very humorous ones, or badly-written texts.

There is endless debate in staff-rooms over whether to use exact-word or appropriate-word scoring.

There is no agreement over interpreting scores. Is 48% a pass?

There are difficulties over the word deletion rate. Should it be every fifth word? Every seventh word?

HOW DO YOU MAKE UP A C-TEST?

- Select a suitable short text.
Leave the first sentence intact.
- Delete half of every second word, as in the sample above.
- Leave one-letter words in.
- Where words have an uneven number of letters the extra letter is deleted.

HOW WAS THE RESEARCH CARRIED OUT?

In an attempt to find out whether cloze tests or C-tests were superior, Ann Piper made up a cloze test and a C-test on three passages of medium difficulty. The deletion rate was 1 in 5 for the cloze. She gave the tests to 44 Dutch adults studying English as a second language. Half did the cloze and half did the C-tests. The results were compared with a multiple choice test, an oral assessment provided by the regular class teachers, a dictation, and a listening test.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?

The cloze proved to be better, overall. While the C-test was not bad, it did not turn out to be superior. The cloze results compared more closely with the other assessments (teacher ratings, dictation, listening test) for the lower ability groups than for the higher ability groups. Only with the brighter more advanced groups did the C-test prove more reliable.

WHAT DO THE RESULTS SUGGEST?

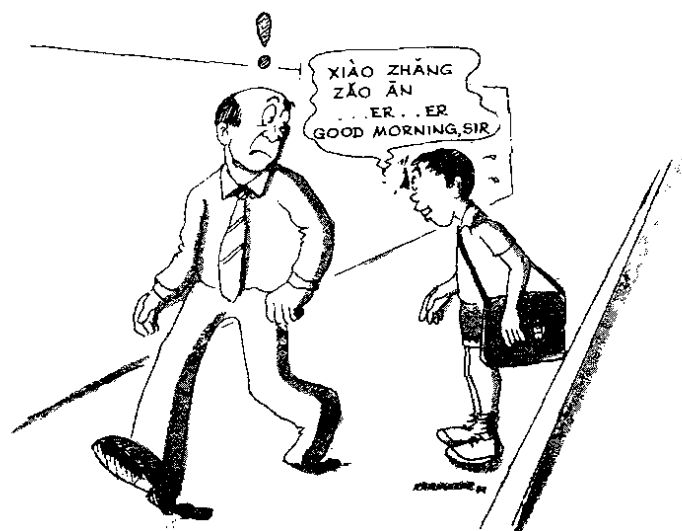
- If you are already using cloze you are quite safe to stick with it. Cloze is reliable. It is a good test over the whole ability range.
- If you haven't included cloze in your regular English testing programme you might consider doing so. It is a better test of English language proficiency than many of the fill-in-the-verb English grammar tests around.
- If you have a high ability group, try a C-test.
- Just for variation a C-test would be worth trying. It could be a refreshing change for teachers and pupils.

This article entitled "A Comparison of the Cloze and C-test as Placement Test Items" can be found in The British Journal of Language Teaching, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring 1983). A copy is available in the LE Library.

PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE BY SECONDARY ONE PUPILS

by HEE PIANG CHIN

Abstract by D. P. de Souza



The study attempts to add to the fairly brief list of local research on the question of who speaks what language to whom and when. In addition, the study provided an opportunity to find out whether the assumption that different groups of students reveal different patterns of language use was valid.

WHAT WAS THE STUDY ABOUT?

The study aimed at

- finding out what languages students used in a range of different situations both within and outside the school;
- observing whether the variations were connected with the fact that the students took different supplementary language programmes in school (which could be taken to mean that they came from different language backgrounds).

HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

The study was based on secondary one students in a Special Assistance Plan (SAP) school. The batch chosen belonged to the year 1979 when the scheme was first implemented and included students who opted for three different supplementary language programmes: the Immersion Programme (IP), the Supplementary English Language Programme (SELP) and the Supplementary Chinese Language Programme (SCLP).

Unlike other studies, this study used the language diary as the main instrument of data collection. The diary recorded the speech events the students were involved in within the contexts of (1) the family (i.e. in the home); (2) education (i.e. in school); (3) transaction (i.e. in buying and selling situations); and (4) recreation (i.e. in places involving sports and leisure).

A questionnaire was also used to supplement the diary. The questionnaire provided information about the background of the students.

Each student was given a four-page diary which contained fifteen spaces for recording the speech events that the student participated in during the course of the day.

The diaries were for three separate days: a school day, a Saturday and a school holiday.

Altogether 298 sets of diaries were returned. Out of these, 49 were incomplete; the analysis was thus based on the returns of 249 students who sent in complete sets.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

- It was discovered that the language the student used depended on whom he was addressing, eg. teachers, principals, family members or friends.

The age of the person whom the student was addressing was also a significant factor - especially within the context of the family.

Yet another factor influencing language choice was whether the situation was a formal or informal one. Thus, in the school situation, the preferred languages were the school languages, especially English.

The assumption that students taking different supplementary language programmes would show different patterns of language use did not quite hold. There was little variation in the choice of language used in different situations among students from the three different supplementary programmes. The only exception was in the context of situations involving friends.

WHAT DO THE FINDINGS MEAN TO TEACHERS?

- Where school languages can be used when interacting with friends and family members, then more emphasis should be placed on influencing students to use them.
- Teachers should, in selecting teaching materials, take into account the different situations in which students use school languages.

The complete title of this study is "Patterns of Language Use by Secondary One Pupils in Different Supplementary Programmes in SAP Schools" (1983). This is an MA thesis in Applied Linguistics and is available at the IE library.

MEASURING READABILITY

By WONG KIM LAN

Abstract by Rita V. Skuja



One of the problems faced by English language teachers in Singapore is how to choose, from a large selection of reading comprehension materials, appropriate texts to meet the needs of particular groups of pupils whose English language proficiency varies widely.

WHY WAS THIS STUDY UNDERTAKEN?

The study set out to discover which of six objective measures of readability was the most accurate and efficient in predicting levels of difficulty in comprehension texts; as well as which one, if any, was the most suitable for non-native English readers in Singapore.

HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

A total of six expository and descriptive passages, of varying levels of difficulty, were used as a basis for the study. These passages, which were 280-300 words in length, were adapted from newspaper articles and a secondary one pupil's essay.

The passages were prepared with 50 blanks according to the cloze procedure, and tested on 116 secondary one pupils in a preliminary survey and 508 secondary one pupils in the actual research study. The passages were then ranked in difficulty according to the cloze test results.

This ranking was then compared with the results obtained from five other measures of readability, because different formulae measure different variables of vocabulary and/or syntax and use different criteria for predicting readability. The following were used:

<u>Test Used</u>	<u>What did the test count?</u>
1. Content Word Ratio	- The percentage of content words in a text, ie. the words that carry the meaning as opposed to the structural words in the text.
2. Coleman's Type-Token Ratio (T.T.R.)	- Same as (1) above except that content words which are repeated are counted only once.
3. Fog Formula	- The number of polysyllabic words as well as words per sentence.
4. Noss Formula	- The number of easy function words and non-finite verbs, as well as content words in a text.
5. Proposed Lexical Availability Measure (L.A.M.)	- Similar to (2) above, but also includes a list of words commonly used by Singapore schoolchildren.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

- The readability indices calculated by the Fog formula, Noss formula and the proposed Lexical Availability Measure closely matched those from the cloze test.

The Noss formula yielded readability indices that matched the cloze results more closely than that of the L.A.M. However, the use of the Noss measure is more complicated since **it** involves more language components in its calculations than the L.A.M.

- The Fog formula, although matching the cloze results closely, assigned reading grades that were three levels too high for secondary one pupils in Singapore.

After considering the above factors, Wong concludes that the cloze procedure appears to be the most reliable and efficient of all the measures examined.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS?

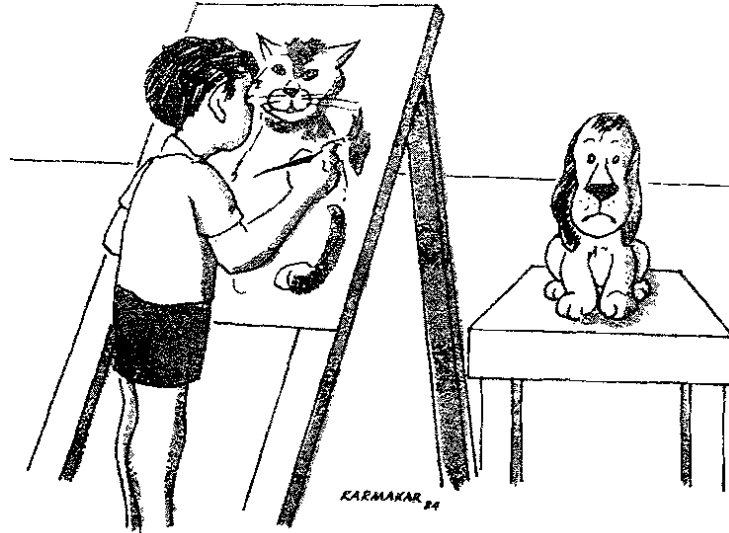
- At the moment the cloze procedure appears to be the most reliable method of predicting the reading level of a text in the Singapore situation.
- Further research is required to validate the accuracy of other commonly used formulae to discover the extent to which appropriate adjustments are required for Singapore pupils.

This is an abstract of a master's thesis entitled "Measuring Readability of Reading Comprehension Materials in English for Secondary Level" (1983). It is available at the RELC Library.

DO CHILDREN LEARN FROM OBSERVATION ?

by Nancy R Smith

Abstract by John Tan Peng Chieu



WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

The issue, fundamental and controversial, that confronts teachers in the teaching of art is: do children draw mainly from memory or from observation? In an attempt to resolve this issue, a study in 1905 investigated 100,000 children's drawings in Munich and concluded that children sometimes disregarded the models or objects they saw. The researcher also found that :

- 32% of the children drew a full face when the head of the model was in fact turning to the left,
2% drew just the reversed profile,
- 66% drew the view presented to them.

These research findings were significant and were later confirmed by other studies. It was further concluded that memory drawing was better or equal to observation drawing. Art educators were ultimately led to believe that children could not and should not draw from observation.

WHAT WERE THE QUESTIONS FOR THIS STUDY?

The questions for this study were :

- Would children sometimes choose to draw from observation if given the opportunity?
- How would observation drawings differ from memory drawings?

THE STUDY

The researcher conducted an art programme with a group of 12 boys and girls between the ages of seven and nine. In 12 class meetings of 1½ hours each, observation drawing was interspersed with other activities.

The children were led to look carefully at the models including live animals and to explore previous experiences and associations with the subject matter, but they were not instructed in drawing skill. They had the option to create a picture with a story, produce an observation drawing, or work on an activity of their own choice. It was clear in the class sessions that children sometimes chose to draw from observation. The result showed that on only eight out of 45 occasions did children choose not to draw from observation. It also noted that on seven out of eight occasions the children were not interested in the objects. Interest in the model or object was an important motivating factor in observation drawing.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

From the drawings it was clear that observation drawings differed from memory drawings. The following differences were noted :

Observation drawings were rich in detail including overlapping whereas memory drawings were highly simplified.

- Observation drawings revealed the use of unconventional orientations unlike memory drawings using convenient orientations of objects.
- Observation drawings had detailed outlines or complex contoured shapes rather than simple geometric shapes.
- All the drawings were flat or two-dimensional. The absence of volume was interpreted as a significant characteristic of children's drawings.

From the evidence it was clear that further research would be needed to fully understand the developmental stages of observation drawing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

What are the implications for teachers?

- The study reaffirms the contention that classroom teaching of memory drawing is still an accepted approach.
- It shows that children do draw from observation.

Teachers can include observation drawing as part of their teaching strategy. This will provide them with a better insight into the way children draw and enhance their knowledge of art teaching in the classroom. A comparative study of memory and observation drawing can be made by teachers from their direct experience in the classroom in order to provide more up-to-date information and data for reference.

This is an abstract of Nancy R Smith's article, "Drawing Conclusions: Do Children Draw From Observation?" in Art Education, Vol. 36, No. 5, September 1983. The journal is available at the IE Library.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN'S CLAY MODELLING

by Eleese V Brown

by Sim Tonq Khern



WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

We are familiar with the development of children and the way they draw and paint, but we are not certain about how they handle clay in three-dimensional form. We cannot tell whether the changes in clay figures are the result of natural maturation or of teaching. This study outlines an attempt to document the significant changes in clay figures made by children aged three to eleven.

HOW WAS THE STUDY CARRIED OUT?

The study examined the clay figures made by 441 children (213 girls, 228 boys). Each clay figure was completed in one working session. Two sessions were held to ensure a standard of reliability. 406 children (194 girls, 212 boys) completed both the clay figures. The four judges were trained and tested for reliability. They then judged the clay figures according to a descriptive checklist of 135 items for the primary and secondary characteristics. From the data the investigator then analysed the significant changes and pattern of growth.

WHAT DID THE FINDINGS SHOW?

The study revealed a smooth, continuous progression of growth in the clay figures, although certain characteristics were more apparent at different age levels. It noted significant changes in the three to six age groups. This could be due to the transition in visual forms. From age three to eleven significant changes in the primary characteristics were noted a total of 52 times. Below the age of six girls were found to be more advanced than boys, but by six there was no significant difference. In a related study with the same children in two Draw-A-Man sessions the findings revealed that children were more advanced in drawing figures than in clay figure modelling.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Teachers should consider the developmental characteristics of children when planning the art curriculum and teaching strategy. They should be sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of the children in clay modelling, which would not be as detailed, naturalistic, and sophisticated as in drawing. By allowing children to work with clay at an early age the gap between drawing and modelling could be reduced.

Eleese Virginia Brown's article, "Developmental Characteristics of Clay Figures Made by Children from Age Three Through Age Eleven", is found in Studies In Art Education, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1975. The journal is available in the IE Library.

TESTING

FOR THE ART ELECTIVE PROGRAMME

by Denise Hickey

Abstract by Chia Wai Hon

WHAT IS THE ART ELECTIVE PROGRAMME?

It is a programme planned to cater to bright pupils who have the potential for intensive development in art. The programme emphasizes the theoretical and the practical aspects of the art discipline. It also gives more prominence to design education and art history/appreciation.

PURPOSE OF THE TEST

In any normal pupil population there are different combinations of art ability, eg., (i) High Creatives and High Academics, (ii) High Creatives and Low Academics, (iii) Low Creatives and High Academics, and (iv) Low Creatives and Low Academics. The test was to identify pupils of the first category for the Art Elective schools.

HOW WAS THE TEST CARRIED OUT?

Pilot testing was carried out at two centres, First Toa Payoh Primary School and Maha Bodhi School with four classes of primary six pupils. In all, 131 pupils were pilot-tested. The tests used included:

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking - Figural Form A which tested for fluency and flexibility in visual expression, originality of response and the ability to elaborate on details.

The Barron Welsh Art Scale which required the pupil to state his like or dislike of some 60 drawings.

A Drawing Test in which the pupil first drew a clay pot from observation and later introduced some imaginative elements to transform the object.

In addition, a prepared form with statements characterizing talented children in art was given to the teachers of those classes to be pilot-tested. The teachers were asked to recommend talented children corresponding with the statements on the form.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

The Report noted that:

- There was little relationship between the Barron Welsh Scale and the Creative Thinking Test, or the Teacher Recommendation;

- The Barron Welsh Scale was not an appropriate instrument for use in the Art Elective Programme;
- The Teacher Recommendation showed some affinity with the pupil's performance in the first part of the Drawing Test, i.e. drawing from life but hardly any in the second part, i.e. drawing from imagination.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR TESTING FOR THE ART ELECTIVE PROGRAMME

The Report proposed that a composite score be obtained from:

- The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking,
- A Portfolio of the pupil's art work over the years,
- A Project set two weeks in advance of an interview,
- An Interview to probe the pupil's interest in art and to gauge his capacity to cope with the Art Elective Programme. At the same time the interview could serve (if necessary) to determine the authenticity of the authorship of the pre-set project,
- The Teacher's Recommendation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

To help identify pupils for the Art Elective schools:

- There should be more emphasis given to problem solving and the creative approach to art teaching.
- A portfolio to be kept of every pupil's work.
- A profile of the pupil's ability and progress in art to be kept over the years (P4 - P6).

This abstract is based on Dr Denise Hickey's "Report on the Pilot-Testing for Singapore's Art Elective Programme for Secondary Schools and Recommendations for Selection and Testing Procedures for the Programme" (Ministry of Education, 1983). A copy of the report is available at the IE Library.

FAST MUSIC PLEASE AND NO SINGING

by Albert LeBlanc and Richard Cote

Abstract by Louise S C Cheng

WHAT WAS THE STUDY ABOUT?

Children today tend to prefer jazz to classical music. Contemporary music is more pleasing to their ears than the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this study Professor LeBlanc and his colleagues went one step further to find out what type of jazz music the eleven and twelve year olds in the State of Michigan liked.

HOW WAS THE STUDY CARRIED OUT?

36 musical excerpts of traditional jazz were selected from the period 1925 to 1940. The instrumentalists and vocalists were the best performers of their day, represented by Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Benny Goodman and others. This listening tape of 36 examples of both vocal and instrumental jazz was played in three different tempos - fast, slow and moderate.

354 students mainly from the working class of a farming area were chosen to listen to the taped music. Their listening behaviour was observed and recorded. They were then asked to state what they liked or disliked about (i) vocal or instrumental music, and (ii) fast, slow or moderate tempo music, and also to write an account explaining their preferences.

THE FINDINGS

The responses of the children may be summarised as follows :

- 93% commented that they disliked slow tempos;
- 80% mentioned their dislike for the vocal medium.

This is the second time that LeBlanc's research study has revealed that children do react to the speed in a piece of music. It indicates that "tempo" does influence the young listeners' musical preferences.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MUSIC TEACHERS

The young, growing adolescent in Singapore prefers modern jazz to serious classical music. Why is this so? Is it because of the type of person that our teenager is - full of energy, alert and alive to his environment? or is it due to the environment itself? - the radio.

the TV set in the home, the (Walkman) earphones he wears on his head, the Rediffusion set blaring the latest pop hits as he has his hair cut or a drink at a food centre.

Perhaps it is the faster heart-beat of the teenager who takes the noisy, bustling pace of city life in his stride. He likes speed; he rides the motor-cycle faster than the law permits. He is the "speed maniac" that music teachers have to face in the classroom today.

In the beginning the music selected will have to match the teenager's preference for fast tempo. Gradually at the appropriate moment, the music-teacher can change the student's preference for "hot, fast tempo" to "soothing sounds" through the introduction of music by Percy Faith, Mantovani and others - music that is more relaxing and does not elicit the response to dance, jive or any other body movement that exerts energy.



This abstract is based on the article "Tempo Influences Children's Preferences" by Albert LeBlanc and Richard Cote in the Journal of Research in Music Education, Vol. 31, No. 1, Spring 1983. The journal is available at the IÉ Library.

SCHOOL BAND COMPETITIONS

by Vernon Burnsed and James Sochinski

Abstract by Leong Yoon Pin

OPINIONS DIFFER ON THE VALUE OF BAND COMPETITIONS

Members of school and college bands have increasingly come to regard participation in band competitions as a normal activity. However, opinions are divided as to whether competitions are beneficial to the musical growth of the performing students.

RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES

At a recent in-service conference held by the Band Committee and the Research Committee of the Southern Division of the Music Educators' National Conference in the U.S., presentations and panel discussions were held to discuss the findings on the attitudes of students, parents, administrators and band directors towards the question of whether band competitions did contribute to musical growth.

FIRST SURVEY ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Altogether 421 schools took part in the survey which revealed that :

- High school students had positive attitudes towards marching competitions;
- Male students showed better attitudes than female students;
Senior students in college had more positive attitudes than those in the junior years;
- A negative relationship existed between the number of competitions entered and the size of high school bands, that is, the larger the school band, the fewer competitions entered.

THE ATTITUDES OF PRINCIPALS AND BAND DIRECTORS

The highest rating on value was given to "improving public relations for the schools" and "personal benefits to students relating to discipline, responsibility and pride". The lowest rating given by the directors was to "improving playing skills and knowledge about music". 60 per cent of the directors also acknowledged the fact that their participation in contests was partly due to pressure from parents, students and administrators.

THE ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS

The findings of a second survey on students' and parents' attitudes towards such contests gave, as expected, the highest rating to "improving public relations for the schools" and the lowest rating to "improving playing skills and knowledge about music". In addition, the motivational value of contests was also rated comparatively low.

The most negative aspects mentioned in the findings were long practices, biased judging and the effects of losing. The positive aspects were the development of discipline and pride.

BAND DIRECTORS' VIEWS ON THE FINDINGS

- Marching competitions had not affected the composition and choice of instruments in their individual programmes.
- The primary benefits of such competitions were sociological and extra-musical.
- Competitions did not have an adverse effect on students' musicianship generally. The musicianship of the percussionists seemed to have improved whereas that of the woodwind players might have declined.
- There was pressure from parents, students and administrators to compete.
- There were differences in attitude towards competitions between students of different grades, with junior and senior students being the most positive.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS IN SINGAPORE

What implications do the findings of this article have for our band instructors? First, competition should not be the only activity to be emphasised in the programme of a school or college band. Secondly, the training for acquisition of playing skills by band members should be given its proper place in a progressive skill learning programme. Thirdly, should the development of musicianship and music knowledge in band members be considered desirable, some modification of the present programme would have to be made.

This abstract was based on the article entitled "Research on Competitions" by Vernon Burnsed and James Sochinski, in Music Educators' Journal, Vol. 70, No. 2, October 1983. A copy of the article is available at the circulation counter in the IE Library.

CHILDREN'S DANCE

by Gladys A Fleming

Abstract by Ong Siong Ngo

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT ABOUT?

Both physical education and dance are good media for healthy exercise, recreation, enjoyment and the development of coordination and skill. Dance has much to offer in the development of rhythm, creativity and self-expression which is so important to the child. The dance educators in America were concerned that children all over America should be given the chance to dance. Hence, they initiated and carried out this project as a research study into the status and teaching of dance in elementary schools. When designing the project, leaders of various disciplines were consulted and the task force of professionals worked closely with state, regional and national groups. The data collected were carefully and systematically processed.

HOW WAS THE PROJECT CONDUCTED?

A nation-wide status study was conducted to determine the status of dance in elementary education., The task force identified the areas needing research and development, and then drew up the guidelines.

Sub-groups were formed to carry out the following:

- the development of guidelines for quality programmes in children's dance,
- pilot projects,
- the recording of resources that were available as well as those that were formulated as the project progressed and the "success stories" from the pilot projects,
- the review of elementary school physical education textbooks and curriculum guides,
- the development of bibliographies,
- the liaison with other **organisations** and groups, and
- the identification of areas needing research.

The project was conducted over six years (1967-1972) interspersed at regular intervals with working conferences to **monitor** the progress of the project. Eventually a national conference and the completion of this publication entitled "Children's Dance" concluded the project.

THE FINDINGS

From the pilot project and the seminars, two main findings were :

- interested classroom teachers could succeed in teaching dance,

- boys could enjoy dance lessons and men teachers could teach dance in the elementary school.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

This project report, which contains some interesting success stories and useful findings, may serve as an inspiration to teachers in Singapore, encouraging them to try to teach dance. As long as they are interested, teachers could learn to teach dance. Even men teachers in primary schools could take up the challenge.

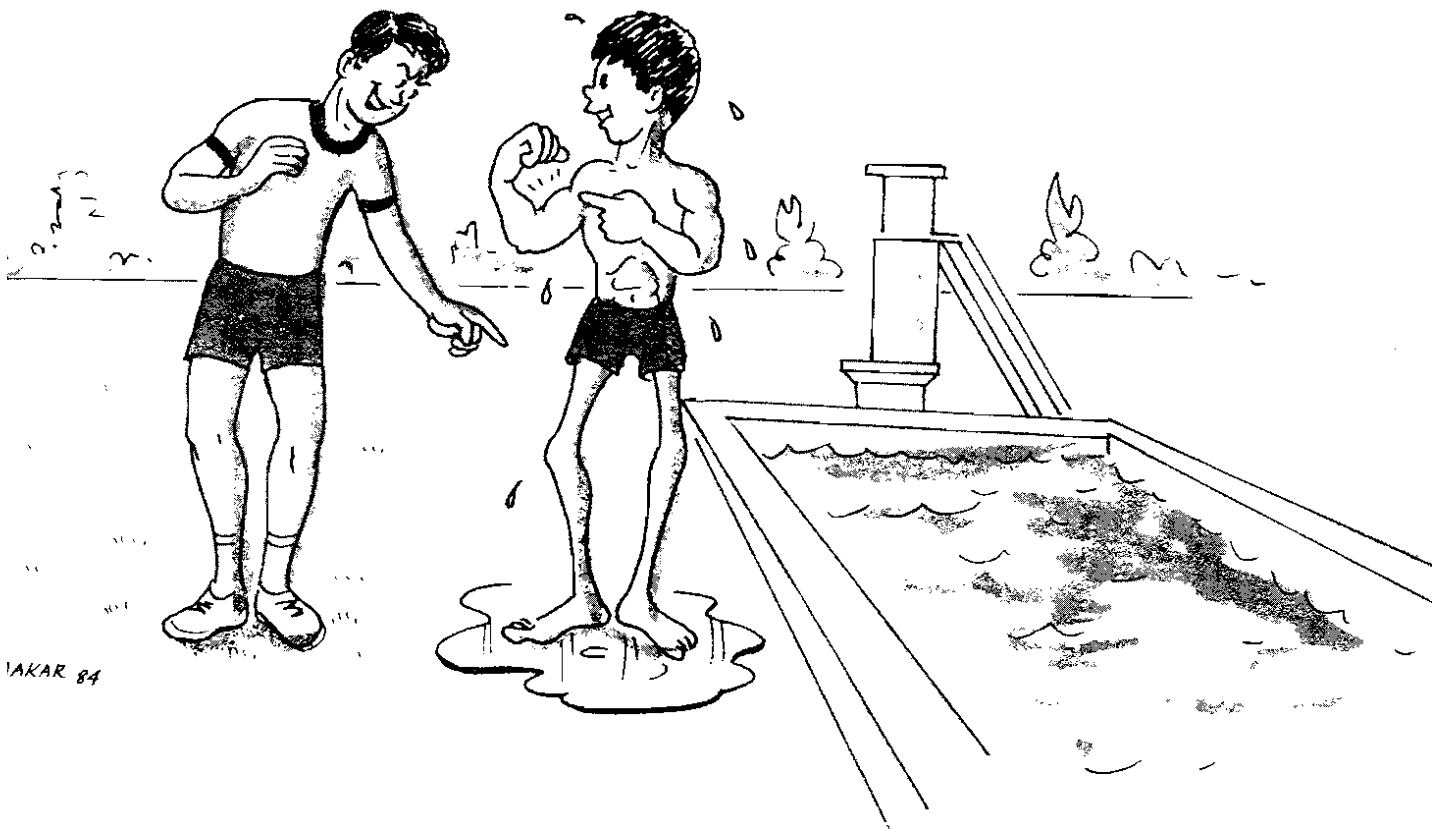


A copy of this report entitled "Children's Dance" by Gladys Andrews Fleming and a task force of dance specialists, is in the IE Library.

LAND-BASED PHYSICAL EDUCATION vs SWIMMING

by an SSC-MOE Study Team

Abstract by Lawrence Hoh



In 1982, the Ministry of Education launched two Physical Education programmes for selected all-male secondary schools and junior colleges on a project basis. The two programmes were known as the New Land-Based PE Programme (LPEP) and the Pilot Swimming Programme (PSP).

THE STUDY

The New Land-Based PE Programme concentrated on the traditional land-based activities with considerable emphasis on physical conditioning. On the other hand, the Pilot Swimming Programme consisted entirely of swimming for all PE lessons with participation in land-based sports continuing as part of the ECA programme. Using the National Physical Fitness Award NAPFA battery of tests as the instrument of measurement, a random sample of the pupils from both programmes was tested in a pre- and post-test situation. The tests were conducted by the medical team from the Sports Medicine and Research Centre of the Singapore Sports Council. Among other things, the main purpose of this project was to see whether the development of overall physical fitness as measured by the National Physical Fitness Award Battery was effective.

THE FINDINGS

A comparison of the fitness levels of pupils in both programmes over a period of eight months showed the following differences :

Pupils in the land-based PE programme continued to perform better in the 4 x 10m shuttle-run and the 2.4km run-walk items.

Pupils in the swimming programme fared poorly in the 4 x 10m shuttle-run.

Pupils in both programmes improved in the sit-up, standing, broad-jump and pull-up items.

Pupils in the swimming programme improved most significantly in the pull-up item.

The consistently poorer performance by pupils in the swimming programme in certain test items indicates that swimming is not as effective as land-based activities in developing the fitness components measured by those items.

- The 14-year old pupils in the LPEP are superior to their counterparts in the PSP in tests for speed, agility, leg power, abdominal strength and general endurance. However, for upper body strength pupils in the PSP seem to have the edge.
- Pupils in both programmes are physically fit and able to achieve the Bronze Award of the National Physical Fitness Test and meet MINDEF's Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

It is obvious that teachers should adopt the activities of the LPEP and include swimming as an activity to enable their pupils to achieve all-round physical development.

- Teachers should use the NAPFA test battery as an objective measurement of the level of physical fitness achieved by their pupils. This will also enable them to compare the results of different physical education programmes.

This abstract is based on the report entitled "Joint Progress Report on the New Land-based PE Programme (Phase 1) and the Pilot Swimming Programme (Phase 2)" (1983), prepared by a study team from the Singapore Sports Council and the Ministry of Education. A copy of the report is in the IE Library.