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Developmental Reading

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THE MARVELLOUS SIXTIES are perhaps characterized by something far more mundane than lunar landings and heart transplants: during this decade probably more common people throughout the world have been affected by The Scramble for Literacy than by any other single event. During the last ten years millions of children and adults have learnt to read and write, while equally important, in the interests of the communication which is so essential for international understanding and co-operation in this shrinking world, millions have learnt to read and write more efficiently. As the frontiers of knowledge expand so the pace of education hots up: Glen Doman's book, *How to teach your baby to read*, is eloquent evidence of this. And the pacemaker — the educated man — can only stay out in front by stretching his intellect and energies to the uttermost. In order to inform himself of the multitude of world events which impinge on him daily, as well as to keep up to date with his own specialized concerns and interests in work and play, he must read and write more and more, and to increasingly better effect. Consequently, since reading is at the core of the whole educational process — we learn to read in order to read to learn — Rapid Reading, or Speed Reading, has come more and more into its own during the Flying Fifties and the Soaring Sixties. This is particularly true of the United States where every executive worth his salt has seemingly taken a crash course in Rapid Reading during the last ten years. 'After 15 hours study on our Dynamic Reading course you will be able to read the entire works of Will Shakespeare, or The Bible, in 1½ hours. Send $175 to Mularky, Etc.' (one of the examples quoted by Prof. G. Spache at the International Reading Congress held at the College of Education, Johannesburg, in July 1967). Inevitably Big Business has climbed onto the band-wagon and obscured much of the gold in the ideas underlying the promotion of faster, more efficient reading with a dross of dollars and ballyhoo. But the extravagant claims made for Rapid Reading courses 'dreamed up on Friday and sold on Monday' (thanks to Prof. G. Spache again) should not deter us from seeking to uncover the gold in the concept of Developmental Reading (as opposed to Rapid Reading) and seeking out the good course, or the good features in a course, from amongst the host of shoddy, spurious articles.

At this juncture it is worth pointing out that; (i) the failure rate among American College Freshmen is 4 in 10, or 40%, and poor reading contributes to this high failure rate, and that (ii) the State of Florida was given $22,000,000 by the Federal Government in one year, these moneys to be used solely for research into ways of improving reading. It is small wonder, therefore, that 'Reading has been taught to students at Syracuse University since 1925' (Leonard S. Braam and William D. Sheldon, *Developing Efficient Reading*, Introduction). Nor do I think that we in South Africa have reason to be complacent because the failure rate among our First Year university students is not as high. It must be remembered that the entry qualifications to many American Colleges of Higher Education are not as high as in South Africa and that this probably accounts for a considerable percentage of their First Year failures. Obviously in our young, robust, multi-racial and multi-lingual society we need to increase both literacy and literacy standards if we are to hold our own in the International Community: and one of the ways in which this can be achieved is by improving reading and reading standards in our schools, colleges, universities and homes.

What, then, is Developmental Reading, and how does it differ from Rapid Reading?

Definition: Developmental Reading is essentially further training in reading inasmuch as it aims to develop, or further, basic, foundational reading skills. It seeks to refine, or sharpen, reading proficiency. 'Reading is a developmental process which is never completely mastered. Improvement can be made in using reading as a process for learning all through life.' (*Ibid.*, Introduction). Whereas Rapid Reading courses aim only to increase the speed of silent reading while maintaining comprehension at about the 70% level, a good Developmental Reading programme aims to improve reading within the integrated field of English Study which includes oral and written expression and language study, as well as reading silently and aloud. It is also important to remember that 'the act of reading

is a thinking act' (Prof. G. Spache), and that no useful purpose is served by increasing the rate of reading to the point where it outstrips the rate of thinking. In short a person's reading rate must synchronize with his thinking rate.

How does Developmental Reading work in theory?

Description: There are two parts to the reading process:

(i) physiological: perceptual

(ii) psychological: interpretative.

When we read we see first, and translate, or decode, second. In the event of either perceptual or mental malfunction, we falter in our reading, and our efficiency is diminished. Both perception and interpretation are improvable: 'Reading is a process that demands continuous and specific practice in order that efficiency be maintained at a high level' (Braam and Sheldon; *Op.cit.*, Introduction). 'There is now an integrated 12-year reading program in American schools and colleges' (Prof. A. J. Harris speaking at the aforementioned Reading Congress); and the limit to which these two interdependent parts of the reading process are improvable is determined at least in part by the individual's visual and intellectual acuity.

I do not propose to talk about the physiology of perception here: for one thing it should constitute the subject of a separate paper, and for another most of us have sufficiently good vision not to be bothered unduly in actually following with the eye lines of print on a page. However, it is important to note that a good Developmental Reading programme takes account of the experimental findings of optometrists and other specialists in this regard: most reading material in these programmes is presented in columnar form because it has been found that people can read ± 6 words in a line ± 80 mm. long more quickly and easily than they can read say, ± 10 words in a line ± 100 mm. long. For most people a line 80 millimetres (3.2 inches) long can, with a small amount of tolerance, be most easily read. A line shorter by 12 millimetres reduces the speed by 4 per cent, and a line longer by 35 millimetres reduces the speed by 7 per cent' (Charles Fries, *Linguistics and Reading*, p.213). (The SRA Reading Laboratories print most of their Power and Rate Builders in columns 80 mm. wide, but the EDL Controlled Reading Study Guides are printed in columns 56 mm. wide, which is somewhat less than the lower limit of tolerance cited by Fries). The shorter lines no doubt facilitate rapid fusion on the return sweep from the end of one line to the start of the next. Most of us lose time on this return sweep because, having binocular vision, our eyes have to re-fuse after a rapid movement from left to right, or from right to left, and the longer this sweep the more they tend to diverge and the more likely we are to focus at the beginning of the wrong line, which in turn leads to regressive eye movements, 'picking up the thread' again, and other time-wasting practices.

As far as intelligence is concerned, 'The level of intelligence is not critical in learning to read unless the I.Q. is below 60' (K. Gardner speaking in Johannesburg in July 1967), but obviously the more intelligent the child the more easily he should learn to read, and the more efficient a reader he should become: 'Word recognition tests of reading ability are the best predictors of academic ability that we have' (K. Gardner); 'Ability grouping in American High Schools is generally done on the basis of reading comprehension tests' (A. J. Harris).

Consequently Developmental Reading courses aim to improve both perception and interpretation of the written word, and because intelligence varies rather more than vision when both are applied to something like reading it is fairly obvious that such a course will improve the *processing* more than the *perceiving* of data. For example, tachistoscope training (which is one of the cornerstones of the EDL philosophy and method) improves concentration (and hence performance) as much as it improves perception. (Significantly the slower boys with whom I have worked here in Grahamstown have complained of headaches after a 10-minute session on the tachistoscope, working with either numbers or words, and they have said that these have been due to mental strain more than eye-strain. Certainly if you do not recognize a word easily because you have a small vocabulary, and a reduced ability and experience with which to attack words, it stands to reason that you will have to concentrate much harder to pick up words flashed on a screen at 1/10 or 1/100 sec.). It takes the average adult 1/100 sec. to perceive, or read, and 1/4 sec. to interpret, or recognize, a word and there is an obvious physical limit to the amount of improvement which can be effected through 'hardware' practice. A person may be able to skim at 3,000 w.p.m. but he cannot read at much more than 650 w.p.m. because it is physically impossible to do so. Needless to say, the more words that you know the faster you will be able to read because the quicker your brain will recognize words and interpret phrases. Train-

ing in quick and accurate word recognition is more important to efficient reading than training eye movements and trying to widen perceptual span, or eye-grasp, as the Americans often call it. It does not pay to make the reader too self-conscious of his eye-movements: it is *meaning* rather than *mechanism* that counts. Devices, or 'hardware' do not widen the visual span because we cannot change the retina. So we cannot be trained to read in phrases or groups. Our eyes make 90 fixations per 100 running words, reading at 300-400 w.p.m., so if we increase our speed we simply select some words and phrases and drop others. Adaptability, and the ability to vary one's pace of reading according to the difficulty of the material, combined with the ability to skim and scan, are the keys to faster, more efficient reading.

And to this end all the experts, and authors of Developmental Reading programmes, stress the importance of the acquisition of an extensive sight vocabulary: 'Vocabulary is central to both communication and thinking, and the only way to gather vocabulary is by extensive reading in a wide variety of sources. The reading programme must be rich and varied to avoid intellectual malnutrition' (Prof. A. J. Harris); 'Rate, comprehension and vocabulary must develop interdependently. Size of vocabulary is one of the most important determinants of rate and understanding' (Prof. G. Spache); 'A leading object of this work is to enable the scholar, while learning to READ, to UNDERSTAND, at the same time, the MEANING of the words he is reading' (Charles C. Fries, *Op.cit.*, p.103); 'Since words are the keys to meaning, the first task in teaching children and adults to read should be to develop skill in word recognition' (William S. Gray, *The Teaching of Reading and Writing*, p.110); 'Vocabulary improvement, then, can be as easy as increasing our passive vocabulary — the number of words we recognize and understand. These words will then be available when we need them' (Myron D. Herrick, *The Collier Quick and Easy Guide to Rapid Reading*, p.39); 'Below each selection is a glossary in which all the difficult words in the selection are defined. When you have finished the second reading of the selection, look up in the glossary the meanings of all the words which you do not know . . . Certainly, this ability to recognize word meanings is basic to the reading process' (Walter S. Guiler and Claire J. Raath, *Developmental Reading, a College program to measure and improve reading ability*, pp.viii-ix); 'A good reader has a large vocabulary' (Braam and Sheldon, *Op.cit.*, p.29). Every Developmental Reading programme and text that I have seen has numerous word-building exercises: work with prefixes and suffixes, and roots; synonyms and antonyms; classifications, and the like. (Children enjoy working through these to a point, the point being the point of saturation which of course varies from one child to another, and from one programme to another, but which for the average 12 year-old in Std. V working on SRA IIIA Reading Laboratory seems to be about 4 Power Builders a week, or $\pm$ 1 concentrated hour on somewhat mechanical, time-consuming exercises. For those of my readers who are acquainted with the Reading Laboratory, most boys enjoyed the Rate Builders, the 'How well did you read?' sections of the Power Builders and the Listening Skill Builders most. They liked the 'Learn about words' sections of the Power Builders least).

Flexibility is stressed in programmes for older pupils and college students: 'Remember, flexibility is the important factor in improvement, not speed alone. Flexibility in reading is considered to be that aspect of reading which causes the reader to be both adaptable and versatile. The flexible reader adapts his reading to the purpose with which he approaches the printed page, the degree of his own familiarity with the subject of the material. The goal of a flexible reader is to obtain the desired degree of understanding with the greatest amount of efficiency' (Braam and Sheldon, *Op.cit.*, p.17). Obviously there is no point in training children to be selective in their reading, and regularly to practise techniques such as skimming and scanning, together with more dubious techniques such as swirling, reading down the centre of a column with only one fixation per line of $\pm$ 6 words, and indenting, all of which are devices to force the reader to drop words and 'get the drift' of a passage, until they are pretty proficient readers with Reading Ages of $\pm$ 15.0 on standardized Word Reading and Comprehension tests and until they are wide and mature readers into the bargain. After all, it is futile to drop words until you know what words you are dropping.

Developmental Reading programmes, then, aim to improve concentration, increase vocabulary, maintain comprehension at at least 70 per cent level, while stepping up the rate of reading (and eradicating such hindrances as sub-vocalization and regressive eye movements), and foster flexibility (in older, more proficient readers). They all set out to do this by moving the reader through carefully graded passages which he has to read against time, after which he has to answer a number of multiple-choice questions on

what he has just read. The passages themselves may be either narrative or non-fictional, but in practice narrative passages give way progressively to non-fictional passages as the reader advances in age and proficiency. All passages should be rigorously controlled in four aspects: (i) the familiarity and suitability of particular topics to particular age groups; (ii) the length of sentences; (iii) the number of many-syllabled word; (iv) the number of words that are unfamiliar. Pupils and students are advised to work on the programme regularly and frequently, usually for a period of 3 months: 'It is recommended that a schedule of frequent, relatively short periods of time be established for doing the exercises . . . Setting aside a short period (20-30 minutes) per day to attack the problem of improving reading efficiency is most desirable. Such a schedule will produce much better results than devoting a full evening or half a day once a week, to the improvement of reading skills' (*Ibid.*, Introduction). In addition, those taking the course should practise the disciplines suggested by the author(s) assiduously, both when they are working on the programme and also elsewhere in their study courses, and in their recreational reading.

How does Developmental Reading work in practice, in the classroom?

Distillation: I could be facetious, and complete this section by simply answering my own rhetorical question, 'Pretty well, in the hands of competent, conscientious teachers', but this applies to virtually everything educational and would not be very helpful so I will briefly set out what I have learned from teaching to three different programmes. If what follows seems like a catalogue of shortcomings it is not intended to be so: I would not now be engaged with research into Developmental Reading if I thought it a waste of time; nor would I have said what I did above if I was unhappy about all that I have learned. What I offer now, therefore, is intended to qualify rather than nullify the claims of authors and educationists for the (ofttimes unqualified) success of a particular programme.

Firstly, let me say that with highly motivated adults, and particularly with those who come to them voluntarily, further reading programmes do work wonders. Edward Fry's experience in Uganda (vide, *Teaching Faster Reading*, Cambridge University Press, 1965, *Reading Faster—A Drill Book*, Cambridge University Press, 1963, and *Reading Speed Improvement in Africa*, Teacher Education, Vol. 5, No. 3, Feb. 1965) is proof of this. With children at school it is a little different, which is why I add 'in the classroom' above.

Before embarking on a Developmental Reading course, it is as well for the teacher to test his pupils' reading ability on a standardized test of attainment. This serves two main purposes: (i) it provides him with a base measure from which to gauge increments as objectively as it is possible to do; (ii) it should raise the level of his enthusiasm to teach to the new course because he will now be able to measure the gains made by children under his tutelage. If one tests attainment at the beginning of an academic year, and then re-tests at the end of the year, one can usually proudly pat oneself on the back and point out to one's Head in a Record of Work that the following gains have been made. Teachers need to make these assessments for their own as well as for the children's good. It could be argued that the teacher will be so eager to show improvements that he will 'teach to the tests'; or at least that the notorious Hawthorne Effect will account for some of the gains that his pupils might make: 'The innovators I observed, no matter what their approach, had the spirit of pioneers .. . It was hard to get the new innovators to admit that some children were failing under the new approach. They were all convinced that they had attained better results since initiating the new program' (Jeanne Chall, *Learning to Read, the Great Debate*, p.272). These might be valid objections in the case of the research worker in the field making claims for a particular programme or method on the basis of results which he has not treated statistically for precisely this effect, but I do not think that one need criticize teachers on this score. After all, whether the children benefit more from the programme, or their teacher's handling of it, hardly matters.

Tests that I favour because they are quickly and easily administered to groups of children, and because they can be quickly and easily marked, are Comprehension tests. I also prefer them to Word Reading tests because reading is essentially a thought-getting process and from early days (once a child has achieved a Reading Age of $\pm$ 8.0) they yield a measure of his ability to understanding what he is reading. Word Reading Tests, on the other hand, primarily test the child's ability to recognize and decode words. Though there is generally a high correlation between the two the latter have to be individually administered, with the attendant psychological difficulties of testee unease due to shyness or nervousness, so that in most respects Comprehension tests are the more easily administered, fairer measures of reading ability. Ideally, of course, both types of test should be used, and if it was possible I would use the following pairs of tests at the following levels:

	Comprehension Test	*Word Reading Test*
Sub B — Std. I	Schonell R2	Burt (Re-arranged)
Stds. II and III	Schonell R3 or N. F. E. R. Sentence Test I	Schonell R1
Stds. IV and V	Schonell R4 or Daniels and Diack's Reading Experience Test R12	Burt (Re-arranged) or Schonell R1
Stds. VI—X	N. F. E. R. Secondary Reading Test 1—3	Vernon

Most claims for the dramatic success of programmes like the SRA Reading Laboratories have been made on the basis of results achieved on Word Reading tests, and since these measure only one facet of reading achievement, and a mechanical one at that, such claims must be regarded with reserve. Two factors tend to enhance results achieved on Word Reading tests: (i) it is easier to make, and measure, gains in mechanical competence than it is to make, and measure, gains in insight and understanding; and 'barking-at-print' or 'word-calling' tests, are essentially tests of mechanical competence; (ii) word recognition tests generally are made up of 100 or more words arranged in groups of 10 corresponding to a year's growth in reading achievement: thus a score of 10 words on Schonell's Test R1 will give a child a R.A. of 6.0 (he is given a basic credit of 5.0 before he starts reading because he enters the Infant School in his sixth year in Britain), while a score of 25 words on the same test will convert to a R.A. of 7.6 ($25 \div 10 = 2.5$, or 2 years 6 months, + 5 years 0 months = 7.6); consequently for every additional word he recognizes he gains a month; and it is not difficult to pick up 10 extra words in, say, 6 months, in which case the child will be supposed to have increased his R.A. by a year in 6 months; silent reading tests of comprehension, on the other hand, have shorter scales (the Schonell tests are made upon 18 and 40 items), and since they are timed it is relatively harder to increase one's standard score dramatically in the short term. My experience with 8 different classes in 4 different schools suggests that boys, at least, do not make dramatic gains in either comprehension, vocabulary, or spelling, as a result of working with three different Developmental Reading programmes taught by different teachers for a period of 20 weeks. Nor do they make spectacular gains in Verbal Intelligence, Verbal Reasoning or English Attainment. Nearly all Experimental Groups made gains over the Control Groups with which they were matched, but these were only statistically significant in one of the three sub-groups working with EDL devices (the Controlled Reader and Tachistoscope) and materials (Study Guides E, F and GH, and Grade V-VIII words) in respect of Vocabulary (as measured by the South African Silent Reading Group Test, Junior, Forms A and B), and in two of the three sub-groups working with *Double-Up* (my own developmental reading programme) in respect of Verbal Intelligence (as measured by the New South African Group Test, Intermediate), Spelling (as measured by Schonell Spelling Tests, Forms A and B) and English Attainment (as measured by Moray House Tests 34 and 35). I taught to the EDL devices and programmes in two Std. V classes in one school, while 3 other teachers taught my programme for the same 20-week period in 3 other Std. V classes in 2 other schools. Boys who worked on the SRA Laboratory made no statistically significant gains as a group over control group, in either Verbal Intelligence, Vocabulary, Comprehension of Paragraphs and Sentences, or Spelling, although like boys working with EDL and *Double-Up*, individuals made gains of up to 20 points and more in V.I.Q.'s, V.R.Q.'s and E.Q.'s, and 2 years and more in Vocabulary, Paragraph and Sentences Standard Placement Ages; while mean gains favoured the Experimental Groups over the Control Groups in nearly every case. For example, two Experimental Groups working on *Double-Up* made up 9 months and 8 months respectively in silent reading comprehension (as

measured by Schonell's Test R4), compared with the Control Group's 6 months over the same 20-week period; the Experimental Group working with SRA III A Laboratory made up 9 months in Vocabulary and 8 months in Comprehension of Paragraphs (both as measured by sub-tests of S.A.S.R.G.T.), compared with the Control Group's 4 months and -2 months; and the Experimental Group working with EDL 'hardware' and materials made up 11 months in Vocabulary and 2 months in the Comprehension of Sentences (as measured by the same S.A.S.R.G.T. sub-tests), compared with the Control Group's 4 months and 0 months (I do not regard the Paragraphs and Sentence sub-tests in the parallel forms of the S.A.S.R.G.T. as being altogether reliable, which accounts for the seemingly poor results achieved in Comprehension). Nevertheless, these gains were not large enough to be statistically significant.

On the other hand, gains made in word recognition (as measured severally by the Schonell R1, the Burt Re-arranged and the Vernon Tests) by a mixed group of boys and girls working on *Double-Up* throughout 1967 in a slow Std. VB stream in a large urban Primary School in Bulawayo were exciting. They began the year with a mean R.A. of 9.0 and ended the year with a mean R.A. of 10.8, both figures having been arrived at independently by the Head who tested all the children in January and November using the Schonell R1 Test. Intermediate mean measures in April (Burt Re-arranged Test) and August (Vernon Test), taken by the Class Teacher, came out at 9.11 and 10.6, so there can be no doubt that the class as a whole improved dramatically in word recognition and oral fluency during the course of the year. Unfortunately the only reliable mean measure of silent reading comprehension that we have is a figure of 9.11 derived from Schonell Test R4 given in April, although the mean aggregate raw score on the Vocabulary Paragraphs and Sentences sub-tests of the S.A.S.R.G.T. in May was 53 (Form B), while in November it rose to 64, which figures convert roughly to Standard Placement ages of 10.7 and 11.3 respectively. I cannot claim, therefore, that *Double-Up* does more than improve children's word recognition significantly, although I am convinced that it improves vocabulary and comprehension at least as much.

Certainly, though, the above figures show that Developmental Reading programmes are no panacea. They must be taught to, hard and continuously, if they are to achieve anything lasting and worthwhile. Children's work must be constantly supervised and marked to ensure that motivation is maintained at high level. If the teacher's interest in the children's progress flags for a moment the children's interest in the programme will surely wane, and the slower the child the more likely he will be to decelerate over the short as well as the long period. Furthermore, if work is not constantly checked, children soon start cheating. Despite close supervision on my part, and by the other 3 teachers concerned, more than 50% of the classes we taught during 1968 owned to cheating at some time or another. It is inevitable in a programme that is 90 per cent self-administrative, and in a society which is so highly competitive. Moreover, not only is it so easy to cheat on these programmes, but also most children see no harm in it — 50% of those who cheated felt that they had not learnt less as a result. So attractive are the SRA Laboratories, and so eager are the boys to advance through the various colours, that it is extremely difficult to resist the temptation to change answers, or ignore mistakes, or even not to complete answers that they are not sure of until they have fetched their answer keys. Such practices save time and effort, and also make for neater records. One lad felt sufficiently strong about cheating to write in answer to the question (in a questionnaire which they completed at the end of the course), 'Have you any other comments or suggestions?', 'Yes. The Reading Laboratory should be made so that a person cannot cheat.'

Developmental Reading programmes are emphatically not the answer to pedestrian teaching: the unimaginative, lazy teacher is not likely to be any better teaching from a programme than he is usually, and the poor disciplinarian will have an even more wretched time with an SRA Laboratory, or in the semi-dark of the EDL Projection Room, than he will in the normal run of hack lessons.

I would say categorically that the more the Developmental Reading course can be integrated with other aspects of English the more useful and fruitful it will prove. Some of my most successful lessons last year were what I call extension, or complementary, lessons. We played games, such as Logo Lotto and Word Cricket to reinforce and consolidate vocabulary gains, and we wrote free verse, individually and collectively, to give a dash of creativity and colour to the course.

On each question page of *Double-Up* there are two *Points for Discussion* which are designed to extend and invigorate each passage. For example,, 'Draw a Snurk on the blackboard, or create one in your next art lesson' (p.41); 'How many planets can you name? Can you say which of those you have named are ancient Greek or Roman Gods?' (children need opportunities for oral work: they learn far more from one another than they do from us); 'Enact this battle royal (the battle of Hastings), but not too violently!' (and they certainly need to dramatize lessons from time to time; it enhances visualization, and gives them a chance to get out of their desks and move expressively and purposefully). EDL and SRA and other Developmental Reading programmes are predominantly silent in their approach, inasmuch as they require children to read a passage to themselves and then answer multiple-choice or open-ended questions on it, which they go on to correct individually on their own. *Double-Up*, on the other hand, affords them an opportunity to read aloud, to discuss the meanings of words and phrases arising in passages, to argue the answers to questions, and to build words or solve anagrams collectively. It works this way: children read the passage silently and then answer the questions; then, when everyone has finished, one or more children read the passage aloud while other children watch the reader(s) for mispronunciations which are discussed when the passage is finished; then the questions are read aloud, and the answers are discussed, pupils being encouraged to turn back to the passage and skim to pick up the relevant sentence(s) when they are unconvinced or dissatisfied with the teacher's or a class-mate's choice of answers (there is no teacher's copy containing a list of correct answers, or separate answer key(s) as with the SRA Laboratories, because children should speak up and be prepared to justify their choice of a particular answer); finally graphs are completed and *Points for Discussion* are taken up. By these means I aim to wed *Double-Up* to other subjects and make it the hub of the English Studies programme. It is imperative that a Developmental Reading course be at once dynamic and broadly based if it is to appeal sustainedly to children and benefit them permanently.

This brings me to a consideration of the ideal duration of a Developmental Reading course. 'Reading-improvement courses are seldom shorter than six or seven weeks and seldom longer than eighteen weeks, with most courses lasting about ten weeks. If a course is too short there is hardly time for enough practice and ingraining of the desired skills and habits. If the course is stretched out too long the student loses interest and becomes bored with the whole topic. Spreading the course over too long a period keeps it from picking up the critical momentum that can be seen in the week-by-week improvement in the class average' (Edward Fry, *Teaching Faster Reading*, p. viii). While this sort of vague prescription is all very well for classes and programmes in general, much will obviously depend on the particular class, the particular programme, and, most important, the particular teacher. The programme which concentrates exclusively on increasing rate of reading, while maintaining comprehension at a satisfactory level, is likely to pall on children of all ages sonner than the programme which links up with other subjects and affords opportunity for 'the rub of minds'. In the same text Edward Fry assures us that 'Studies in the United States, where students were tested for reading speed and comprehension after six months or one year, generally showed between 60 and 100% retention of the gain, according to the group, type of course, and type of test used. Studies in Britain show essentially the same results' (p. xi). This is not very specific and, in any event, though his claims may hold true for College students and adults, I am dubious about their holding good for Primary and Secondary School pupils, particularly on a 10-15 week crash course. My experience has often proved just the contrary. Most Rhodesian Primary Schools have Reading Laboratories, and generally Stds. III-V have at least one term of a three term year on a Laboratory. Many children make dramatic gains, usually in word recognition, during this period, and quite often their attitude to reading is rejuvenated, too. But once the Laboratory is withdrawn many of them slip back appreciably in both attainment and attitude. The answer is certainly not to keep them on Laboratories for a longer continuous period: not only is this not recommended by their originator, Don Parker, but also the children themselves tire of the exercises because of the sustained concentration required and because the stories lack variety and the writing lacks spontaneity and sparkle: 'The SRA Laboratory tends to be very Readers' Digest-y and the humour, when there is any, is a bit ponderous' (a comment in a letter dated 30/7/68 from the Head of the English Department, Teachers' College, Bulawayo). Furthermore, many of the passages in both S.R.A. and EDL programmes are American in content and idiom: for example, 'A great day for Baseball', 'Florida's Floating Islands', 'Turning Point for Ike', 'At School with the FBI', 'The Great Rocker Riots' and 'Baseball's Noisy Man', to name but six of the 150 Power Builder passages in the SRA III A Laboratory. Then perhaps I

am old-fashioned but American usages like 'He had gotten word through to officials' (EDL Study Guide F, p.96), 'He rounded up the biggest, strongest, meanest crew on the island' and 'The whale dove to the bottom of the sea' (EDL Study Guide GH, p.10) irritate me. In the aforementioned questionnaires a number of boys in both SRA and EDL Experimental Groups commented unfavourably about the American content, if not the idiom, of the programmes: 'Have a South African Reading Laboratory made. S.A. spelling. Make an Afrikaans one for Afrikaans children. Have more subjects on S.A.'; 'They should have some South African stories'; 'I think the laboratory should be changed into English Spelling, not American, with not so many American stories'; 'There should be a South African version of the Reading Laboratory because the American version of the Reading Laboratory is a bit difficult to understand.'; 'I have learnt quite a lot about American States!' The Australians have long since created their own version of the Reading Laboratory, and were it not for its limitations I would suggest that South Africa might do the same. But for the reasons already stated, I believe that the SRA and EDL approaches should be widened in scope and extended in time. The short, 'narrow' crash course is of distinctly limited value, as the results of the standardized tests already discussed, show, unless it is reinforced and extended by imaginative teaching, or unless it is followed by a refresher course, or courses. On the other hand, a programme like *Double-Up*, which is designed to run 'in smaller doses' for an entire year, and which is integrated, and integrative, in its approach, is more likely to sustain children's interest and bring about permanent improvements in both oral and silent reading, as well as in vocabulary and written expression. Two unsolicited comments bear me out: (i) 'I like this very much — especially in relation to the context of the teaching environment . . . I guess that there should be something for everyone here' (K. Gardner); (ii) 'The best part of all, for my money, is the *For Discussion* section which, with a lively teacher, I think would really make English, as I see it, live with the children' (Vice-Principal, Teachers' College, Bulawayo, writing in a letter dated 5/7/68).

Naturally, one's programme expresses one's philosophy to a degree, but my argument here is for the philosophy rather than the programme. In summary it is simply this: teaching programmes are designed to supplement, not supplant, the teacher, and every programme, no matter what it is designed to teach, is just as good, or as bad, as the teacher who teaches it. But having said this it must be obvious that some programmes are more useful supplements than others, and I would say that the more a Developmental Reading programme aims to do and the wider its appeal, the longer its duration, and more integrative its function, the more likely it is to promote reading efficiency within the larger context of English Studies, and ultimately within the total study pattern.

In conclusion, and appropriately, what do children think of Developmental Reading?

Determination: They seem to agree that it works as well as the teacher works: thus in one class, working with Mr. X, the boys report: 'I'm glad that the laboratory teacher takes so much interest in our work'; 'I would very much like Mr. X to teach us in Std. 6 with a more advanced programme. I have learnt a great deal from the reading laboratory'; while in another class, working with Mr. Y, they said, in answer to the question, 'What did you enjoy least about Reading Lab. periods?', 'The fact that the teacher did not mark my work', and 'Lack of supervision'; and in answer to the question, 'Have you any other comments or suggestions?', 'The first thing is to get a better teacher to teach it to you then secondly half the class are not interested and just cheat they are wasting your time as well as every one else's'; and finally in a third class, working with Mrs. Z, they conclude, 'We have not done enough discussing of stories'; 'We should be able to act some of the things'. In general, however, they approve of the programmes, with some sensible reservations, such as 'I think that *Double-Up* should have more skrikie stories and more about hunting.' A fair 'telescope' appraisal of all three programmes reads, 'I have discovered that my enjoyment of books has increased because of more understanding of vocabulary . . . It has made my grammar and compo writing much easier and I write quicker . . . I have learned to read easily and efficiently during the past months . . . It is a pleasant way of learning English and most of the stories have been interesting.' One lad in a *Double-Up* group sums up sagely: 'It is an excellent way of learning English, because when you grow up, people do not want to know what parts of speech you know, they want to know how you speak. And *Double-Up* certainly helps one to use his tongue.' But this boy deserves to have the last word: 'It is a good way to learn English and makes the class much better than the dreary old English class'.