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### **The Relationship between the Primary Method of Reading Instruction and the Writing Skill of Fifth Grade Students**

Diane Corcoran Nielsen

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRIMARY METHOD OF READING  
fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science  
at St. Cloud State INSTRUCTION AND THE WRITING SKILL the final  
evaluation committee.  
OF FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS

by

Diane Corcoran Nielsen

B.A., University of Iowa, 1972

*Roger Horn*  
Chairperson  
A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of *Wayne W. Ayers*

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science

*Wayne W. Ayers*  
Dean

School of Graduate Studies

St. Cloud, Minnesota

November, 1983

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This thesis submitted by Diane Corcoran Nielsen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

Diane Corcoran Nielsen

PROBLEM:

A reading test score and a writing sample were obtained from 32 fifth grade students in an attempt to test two hypotheses. First, that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills. Secondly, that children who are taught reading primarily through a language experience approach (LEA) will have stronger writing skills than children who are taught reading primarily through a traditional basal approach (TBA) when neither instructional group had an organized writing curriculum in their school.

PROCEDURE:

Since each group took a different standardized reading test, percentile ranks from the comprehension subtest of each instrument were used as a measure of reading skill. The writing sample collected was narrative in nature and completed following the viewing of a soundless film. This study utilized a test system developed and scored by the researcher.

Roger Rouch

Chairperson

Lynette V.C. Char

The Kendall Correlation Coefficient (tau) was used to test the relationship between reading skills and writing skills. The Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to test for differences between the mean rank scores of two instructional subgroups (TBA and LEA) on the three writing scores (organization/situation enhancement, sensory detail and total).

Wayne W. Ayers

FINDINGS:

The data of this study supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills. However, the experimental hypothesis that there is a difference between the writing skill of students from the two instructional reading groups failed to be substantiated by the data of this study.

Wayne M. Stibbith

Dean

School of Graduate Studies

## CONCLUSION:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRIMARY METHOD OF READING INSTRUCTION AND THE WRITING SKILL OF FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS

Diane Corcoran Nielsen

## PROBLEM:

A reading test score and a writing sample were obtained from 52 fifth grade students in an attempt to test two hypotheses. First, that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills. Secondly, that children who are taught reading primarily through a language experience approach (LEA) will have stronger writing skills than children who are taught reading primarily through a traditional basal approach (TBA) when neither instructional group had an organized writing curriculum in their school.

## PROCEDURE:

Since each group took a different standardized reading test, percentile ranks from the comprehension subtest of each instrument were used as a measure of reading skill. The writing sample collected was narrative in nature and completed by the students following the viewing of a soundless film. This study utilized a trait scoring system developed and scored by the researcher.

The Kendall Correlation Coefficient (Tau) was used to test the relationship between reading skills and writing skills. The Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to test the null hypothesis that there are no differences between the mean rank score of two instructional subgroups (TBA and LEA) on the three writing scores (organization/situation enhancement, sensory detail and total).

## FINDINGS:

The data of this study supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills. However, the experimental hypothesis that there is a difference between the writing skill of students from the two instructional reading groups failed to be substantiated by the data of this study.

CONCLUSIONS:

Before confirming the findings of this study, the researcher suggested that further investigation, carefully designed and controlled, be conducted in the area of reading/writing relationships. Particular attention should be paid to the examination of various instructional practices in reading and writing which could assist teachers in the most efficient and effective methods of instruction.

contributions toward the completion of this project:

To my committee, Roger Rouch, adviser and chairperson, Floyd

November 1983  
Month Year

...tical analysis, and lastly to my friend and mentor, Lynette Char, for guidance and encouragement.

Approved by Research Committee:

To the students, teachers, and participating schools who so willingly gave of their time:



Roger K. Rouch

Chairperson

And, most especially, to my dear husband, Nials, and children, Matthew and Katherine, for their never-ending patience and support.

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to be a top priority in American education. However, recent surveys indicate that while we are training our teachers and spending national and classroom time and money on reading skill development, and making impressive gains in this area, little attention has been given to the development of writing skill.

Surveys conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) point out the discrepancies between reading and writing skill development. Three extensive reading assessments were conducted between the years 1970 and 1980. A steady gain was reported in all four areas scored: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, reference skills and total, for the 9 and 13 year old students, with the largest gains, 9.9%, made by black nine year old students. The performance level of the 17 year old group declined slightly over the 10 year period, with the only significant drop, 2.1%, in inferential comprehension (Three National Assessments of Reading, 1982).

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

#### Background of the Problem

Both the school community and the general public have traditionally cited the development of strong reading and writing skills to be a top priority in American education. However, recent surveys indicate that while we are training our teachers and spending national and classroom time and money on reading skill development, and making impressive gains in this area, little attention has been given to the development of writing skill.

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Similarly, three writing assessments were conducted by the NAEP in the years 1969-79. These surveys affirm the concern voiced by many American educators and parents: American students are deficient in writing skill. Each assessment compiled information about the writing skills of 9, 13, and 17 year old students. A variety of writing tasks such as descriptive, expressive and persuasive writing were analyzed for factors of overall quality, coherence, cohesion, rhetorical effectiveness, syntactic fluency and mechanical correctness. The students were also asked a number of questions concerning their writing experiences, training and attitudes. The results of this decade long assessment indicate three different patterns of strengths, weaknesses and changes reported in detail in Writing Achievement, 1969-79, Volumes I-III (Writing Achievement, 1980). The following five statements from an NAEP leaflet on the three assessments (Writing Achievement, 1982), briefly summarize the results.

- At ages 17 and 13, expressive writing skills were improving or remaining at the same level, while persuasive and descriptive skills appeared to be declining.
- Error analysis does not reveal any major changes in the commission of errors over a decade's time at any age.
- A majority of students at each age demonstrated control over the conventions of writing, but a minority of from 10%-25% appeared to have very serious problems with writing.
- Syntactic analysis reveals that embedding rates and various indices of subordination and coordination remained identical or very similar at ages 13 and 17 from assessment to assessment. This is largely so at age 9. But some indicators do reflect a bit of growth over the decade.
- Enjoyment of writing seems to decline from age to age. Two-thirds of the 9-year-olds said they enjoy writing, compared with 59% of the 13-year-olds and 53% of the 17-year-olds. (p. 7)

It takes time and practice to improve any skill. Justifiably, reading instruction has been allotted a considerable block of time in the average school day. Writing, also considered one of the "basic skills," traditionally has not been given similar time consideration. Hughes (1978) in studying 8-11 year old students, found them to be engaged in writing activities an average of 1 1/3 hours per week. Similarly, Timothy Shanahan (1979) surveyed 14 schools grades 1-6 and reported the mean time spent on writing activities to be 62 minutes per week. Finally, in the NAEP assessments (Writing Achievements, 1982) very few students, 7% of the 17 year olds and 3% of the 13 year olds, reported that they routinely engaged in the total writing process from prewriting, through multiple drafts and teacher feedback, to a final written product.

According to Donald Graves (1978), a similar differentiation between reading and writing dominates the availability of research and the recognition by the U.S. Office of Education of exemplary programs. Graves states, "Research on writing is decades behind that on reading. Research on all aspects of writing has produced only about as many studies as has research on the topic of reading readiness alone" (p. 12). He also reported that of the exemplary programs in language, 46 were in reading, only 7 included any writing objectives at all, and just 1 was designated for the specific development of writing skill.

State teacher certification requirements and teacher training programs reinforce the imbalance between a teacher's ability to teach reading and his/her ability to teach writing. Teachers are trained

to teach reading. Their effectiveness in the instruction of reading has been confirmed by numerous studies. However, most teachers have not been prepared to teach writing. Graves (1978) reported that a recent survey of 36 universities counted 169 courses offered in reading, 30 in children's literature, 21 in language arts, and only 2 in the teaching of writing.

The years of productive research, teacher training, public awareness and support has been rewarded with a nation of more proficient readers. Since reading instruction has such a firm foundation in our schools and teacher training programs, it is sensible to suggest that we look to commonalities in the psycholinguistic processes of reading and writing in order to provide students with the most efficient and effective instruction.

#### Statement of the Problem

This study is an attempt to investigate the following questions.

1. What does research and theory tell us about the relationships between the psycholinguistic processes of reading and writing?
2. How can the utilization of this understanding effect instructional practice in reading and writing?
3. Is there a correlation between reading ability and writing ability?
4. Is there a correlation between the primary method of reading instruction and the ability to compose a narrative story?

### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the following.

1. The population was limited to 52 students.
2. All participating students were in the fifth grade.
3. The study was conducted for one year only.
4. Only one writing sample, a narrative paragraph, was used.
5. The scoring of the writing sample was done using a single scoring instrument and one individual rater.

### Definition of Terms

The following are terms defined as they were used in this study.

Language Experience Approach (LEA). An approach to reading instruction which utilizes the personal thoughts and language of the child in the production of reading material to be read by the child and used as a vehicle for learning other reading and language skills. The language experience approach contains five components: the stimulus, oral discussion, writing, follow-up and honoring.

Organization and situation enhancement. Traits scored in the narrative writing sample. The primary traits of organization: beginning, middle and end in conjunction with the secondary traits of enhancement answering the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How. Presence or absence of paragraphing was also included. See Appendix B for further detail.

Sensory detail. Traits scored in the narrative writing sample which included the presence or absence of character names, character description and dialogue. See Appendix B for further detail.

Traditional Basal Approach (TBA). An approach to reading instruction which utilizes commercially prepared basal readers and workbooks which systematically move the child through preplanned stories and skill lessons.

Writing. Individual thought in the form of the written word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

of reading and writing have been extensively studied and reviewed in the literature. Generally, these disciplines have been examined exclusive of one another with consideration given primarily to elementary school reading skills and instructional practices, and college level composition. The relationship between reading and writing has not been widely investigated. It was not until November, 1981, that the term "Reading/Writing Relationship" appeared as an identifier in ERIC, the national clearinghouse for educational literature (Thesaurus, 1982). In recent years, researchers and theoreticians from various fields have attempted to explain common factors involved in the process of reading text and in the process of writing text. Efforts have been made to describe a link between reading and writing for a better understanding of these psycholinguistic processes, as well as the utilization of this understanding for more efficient and effective instruction in reading and writing. A review of the literature on the relationship between reading and writing will be discussed: empirical research, instructional practice, and theory.

#### Empirical Research

A variety of correlational studies have been conducted between



## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For many years the fields of reading and writing have been extensively studied and reviewed in the literature. Generally, these disciplines have been examined exclusive of one another with consideration given primarily to elementary school reading skills and instructional practices, and college level composition. The relationship between reading and writing has not been widely investigated. It was not until November, 1981, that the term "Reading/Writing Relationship" appeared as an identifier in ERIC, the national clearinghouse for educational literature (Thesaurus, 1982). In recent years, researchers and theoreticians from various fields have attempted to explain common factors involved in the process of reading text and in the process of writing text. Efforts have been made to describe a link between reading and writing for a better understanding of these psycholinguistic processes, as well as utilization of this understanding for more efficient and effective instruction in reading and writing. A review of the literature on the relationship between reading and writing will be discussed: empirical research, instructional practice, and theory.

#### Empirical Research

A variety of correctional studies have been conducted between

reading factors and writing factors. VanDeWeghe (1978) noted several studies (Donelson, Maloney, Barbig and Nakamura) investigating relationships between reading background and writing performance. Better writers were found to own more books, read more often, watch less T.V. and have access to more newspapers and magazines. Steidl, as reported by VanDeWeghe, studied 920 students grades 5, 7, 9, and 12, and discovered that attitudes toward reading significantly predicted success in writing. Significant relationships between reading scores on standardized tests and composite writing scores were cited by Haynes (1978) and Baden (1981). However, Thomas, as noted by VanDeWeghe, found little relationship between the ability to read and the ability to write following his investigation of 405 college freshmen.

Studies correlating reading achievement scores and measures of written syntactic complexity appear most often in the limited literature on the relationship between reading and writing. Two generalizations may be made from the available studies. First, that there is a significant relationship between reading comprehension and the written syntax of an individual, has been reported by Evanechko, Ollila and Armstrong (1974), Smith and Evans as noted by Maguire (1978), and Hughes (1978). Secondly, frequent involvement in written discourse, whether it is formal practice in sentence combining activities as investigated by Hughes (1978), and Stotsky as noted by Walmsley (1978), or free writing as studied by Clay and Hughes (Hughes, 1978), significantly increases the reading comprehension of students.

### Instructional Practice

The integration of the teaching of reading skills and the teaching of writing skills is not a new concept. The language experience approach to reading instruction has been utilized to different degrees in classrooms since Dr. Roach Van Allen of the University of Arizona began promoting the method in the nineteen sixties (Aukerman, 1971).

That early writing experiences may lead to younger and more motivated readers, has been suggested by three studies (Cazen, Clay and Goodman) reported by Maguire (1978). Clay in her research with primary and preprimary children in Britain and New Zealand, felt that time spent experimenting with the formation of their own letters, words and sentences provided these young children with a tremendous motivation to read not possible with reading instruction alone. Hughes (1978) reported Clay as speaking of writing behaviors as playing the role of organizers of reading behaviors, since in written discourse a child must call upon all features of his personal language hierarchy.

A common suggestion for integrating the instruction of reading and writing is reading literature and either keeping a journal on what has been read (Flynn, 1980), or attempting to use the literature as a model for writing (Stewig, 1975). Study skill models, such as the "Read, Generate Questions, Write" strategy as advocated by Rhoder (1981), are often suggested methods of content material instruction.

The most controversial approach to the integration of reading and writing instruction may be termed a writing approach to reading

(Maguire, 1978). Hughes (1978) reported the practice to be common and very successful in England. In his cross-cultural study with 516 British and American children, Hughes reported some startling findings. The American 8-11 year olds had formal reading instruction and an average of 1 1/3 hours per week of writing, usually on an assigned topic. The British children had no basals or reading groups and an average of 9 1/4 hours per week of experience with written discourse. For all children the reading comprehension percentiles correlated highly with the written syntactic maturity scores. The British children scored much higher in syntactic maturity and were thus more competent writers and readers than the American children. Hughes concluded that the time spent on writing may be more beneficial to reading skill, as well as to writing skill, than time spent strictly on reading instruction. Donald Graves (1978), a professor from the University of New Hampshire, strongly advocates a change in American education, giving writing instruction the status and time that reading instruction has traditionally been given.

### Theory

Reading/writing relationship. Several theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain the nature of the relationship between reading and writing. Shanahan (1981) states that the nature of the relationship changes over time. He describes the beginning reader as being at the word recognition/word production level and the advanced reader as performing at a prose comprehension/prose production level. Just as much of the empirical research concentrates on the correlation

between written syntactic complexity and reading comprehension, so too does the suggested theory. Hughes (1978), Wresch (1979) and Garbarino (1980) all consider syntactic maturity to be the "link" between reading and writing.

Two theoreticians, Walmsley (1978) and Kucer (1981), define the reading/writing relationship from a multi-concept perspective. Walmsley reviewed a model by Mosenthal, Allington and himself that maintains that the acts of writing and reading take place in terms of the reader or writer's involvement in four common contexts: linguistic, social, schematic and strategic. These contexts may affect the reader or writer similarly or quite differently in the process of reading or writing. Stephen B. Kucer called upon theories of reading and text comprehension in an attempt to build a theoretical link between the reading and writing processes. He interprets these processes as not mirror images of one another, but rather running parallel and using the same mechanisms. His model proposes that there are five "language universals" that undergird both processes. The following is a brief explanation of these five factors.

1. The "Knowledge Domain" consists of all linguistic and conceptual knowledge at the disposal of the reader or writer, in the form of schemata, where relevant schemata are sought out, manipulated and new ideas are activated in the form of text comprehension or text production.
2. The second language universal, referred to as the "Context of Situation and Register," considers the fact that reading and writing are social processes. Kucer states, "Text

processing is proceeded and directed by the language user's understanding of the context of the situation in which the processing occurs. This understanding sets parameters on the meanings and structures which can be realized in any given instance of text processing" (Kucer, p. 7).

3. The "Strategies" is the language universal which explains the concept that writers and readers employ both linguistic and cognitive information processing strategies when creating meanings in or from text.

4. The "Text Processor" is essentially the centralized guide of the system. It coordinates the functions of the system: allocation of resources, synthesis, storage and retrieval of data.

5. The final concept in Kucer's model of factors common to both reading and writing is referred to as the "Evolving Text." It may be explained as the result of the processing of previous and current linguistic, cognitive and social data.

Common to both Walmsley and Kucer's multi-concept theories on the reading/writing relationship are four factors. In essence they suggest that reading and writing are active processes drawing upon the same pool of cognitive, linguistic and social operations. A review of cognitive, language acquisition and discourse theory may clarify previously reviewed literature in an attempt to draw conclusions from literature regarding instructional practice in the areas of reading and writing.

Cognitive development theory. Although the relative importance of reading and writing instruction in the curriculum may be debated, both are functions of language. Using language assists in the development of thought, the basis of all learning. Klein (1981) emphasizes the importance of language in cognitive development by stating, "Using language enables us to restructure mental schemata, perceive reality in new ways, and redesign the strategies we employ to attack problems" (p. 448).

Cognitive development theorists have described the role of language in the development of thought. The three major theorists: Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, have each interpreted this role differently. Susanna Pflaum (1978) reviewed Piaget's theory. Piaget felt that the logical thought of children developed through an unconscious ordering of experience from their environment. Piaget's concepts of "assimilation" and "accommodation" are the basis of his theory. The child "assimilates" environmental input into his present cognitive structure. The present structure is changed or "accommodated" if the input is new. According to Piaget it is through these processes that humans learn (Pflaum, p. 5). Piaget considers the development of thought to be rooted in sensorimotor experiences. Language thus transmits what is already understood. Therefore, according to Piaget, thought stimulates language development (Cramer, 1978, p. 7).

The Russian psychologist, Lev S. Vygotsky, considers the relationship of thought to language quite differently. Vygotsky identifies language as a major factor in the development of thought

structures. Vygotsky would contend that it is the role of the teacher to stimulate the use of a variety of language patterns. Thus expanding the child's thinking patterns (Cramer, 1978, p. 8).

A third theorist, Jerome Bruner, finds agreement with elements of both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories. He agrees with Vygotsky that language plays a major role in the development of thought structures. Similar to Piaget, he sees certain developmental experiences as prerequisites to the acquisition of language. Bruner goes beyond to say that in the process of learning language, children develop certain strategies that can be applied to other types of learning. He feels that children learn rules that govern language (Cramer, p. 8).

Language acquisition theory. How language is acquired has been debated for years. The nativist would state that learning to speak is natural and inevitable, primarily a function of innate linguistic structures. Dahl (1981) explained the nativist viewpoint: "The human being is equipped with an innate capacity for processing linguistic data in the environment, sorting out the data, establishing a structured set of rules and then using the set of rules to generate an infinite number of creative sentences" (p. 4). A strong behaviorist would take a very different viewpoint. Behaviorists consider the child's language acquisition as the result of the child's imitation of adult language coupled with reward for successful approximation of adult form. Therefore, a behaviorist would view the adult's role as primary (Cramer, 1978, pp. 9-10). Cognitive theory is similar to



the nativist theory. It refers to innate neurological structures, rather than linguistic structures, as being responsible for language learning. A cognitivist would state that it is these innate cognitive structures which control the pace of language acquisition (Cramer, 1978, pp. 12-13).

Beyond the conflicting theories regarding what is responsible for language acquisition is the widely agreed upon concept that humans acquire the basics of language structure in a predictable sequence, without direct instruction, generally between the ages of four and six (Cramer, 1978, p. 13).

Discourse theory. As previously stated, reading and writing are active, cognitive, linguistic and social operations. Discourse theory explains the social factors. Discourse may be defined as, "Verbal expression in speech or writing" (Morris, 1969-70, p. 376).

Human beings seem to have an innate desire to communicate.

Very young children use language to communicate needs. As they get a little older they use their language, often in monologue fashion, to narrate their activity. Thus in the early years language is close to the self. Piaget would refer to this use of language as "egocentric," where the child is unable to speak considering another point of view because he/she sees no other than his/her own. Two individuals in particular, James Moffett and James Britton, have attempted to describe the functions of language and how it develops beyond the needs and viewpoint of the self. Their work is often referred to as discourse theory.

James Moffett, an educator from Harvard University, sees growth in discourse as movement from the center of the self, outward. "Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the self enlarges, assimilating the world to itself and accommodating itself to the world, as Piaget puts it" (Moffett, 1968, p. 59). Moffett considers discourse as having three elements: the speaker, the listener and the subject. He uses other terms to describe these elements for example, the narrator, the auditor and the story, or the informer, the informed and the information (Moffett, p. 14). Moffet explains further how these elements, particularly speaker and listener (or audience), interact as a person progresses through the "four stages of discourse." As was stated previously, Moffett sees the growth in discourse away from the self. Note this progression, in the following chart, from the self to an unknown group, and that the activity changes to meet the needs of the audience.

#### The Four Stages of Discourse

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Audience</u>
1. inner verbalization (thinking/reflection)	the speaker--himself/herself
2. outer vocalization (speaking/conversation)	another person standing nearby
3. correspondence (writing)	another person, different time and place, some relation to the speaker
4. formal writing (publishing)	unknown group of people extended over space and time (Moffett, p. 33)

Thus, according to Moffett it is the relationship of the speaker and the audience as well as the subject that determines the type of discourse.

An Englishman, James Britton (1970), also interprets language as beginning with that close to the self, which he labels "expressive." The role of the speaker in "expressive" language is that of "participant" where action and speech are closely related. As the speaker becomes more and more of a "spectator" he/she uses language to refer to, report on and interpret action. At this point in growth the individual is using language to get things done. Britton labels this function of discourse as "referential." At about the same time as the "referential" is developing so is the "poetic." The "poetic" function of discourse is a representation of the thoughts and feelings of the speaker where the "... end result is an artifact of language" (Brown, p. 3).

Nancy Martin (1971) has looked at the writings of children of two age groups, 7 and 11 year olds, in light of Britton's functions of language. She found that indeed the students seem to develop from primarily "expressive" writers, utilizing essentially speech written down, to more "referential" writers, including the beginning of some generalizing and conceptual thinking on the part of the eleven year olds.

The use of language develops thought. Bruner (1958) stressed

Conclusions

The reading/writing relationship has not been widely investigated. The limited literature on the subject: empirical research, instructional practice, and theory, has been reviewed. The reading/writing relationship has not been clearly defined in the literature. However it may be suggested that reading and writing are active processes which feed from the same pool of cognitive, linguistic and

social operations. Therefore, considerable space has been given to a discussion of cognitive, language acquisition and discourse theory, areas which have been researched for many years, in an attempt to draw conclusions regarding instructional practice in reading and writing.

The following generalizations may be made from a review of this literature. Learning to read and write are active, personal operations, developed in a fairly predictable sequence, through a variety of trial and error experiences, where the development of thought is paramount. Learning to read and write, just as acquiring oral language, proceeds through a series of stages. The stages may be word recognition/word production levels, stages of syntactic maturity, or stages of social understanding and communication as suggested by discourse theory.

The development of reading and writing skill requires active, personal involvement, beginning with experiences read and written which are as Britton (1971) would state, "close to the self." One may then move on to using words and understanding the written words of less familiar territory.

The use of language develops thought. Moffett (1968) stressed this role of language by stating, "Writing is the embodiment of the mind in language" (p. 28). This may be interpreted as the words of others comprehended then added to the present schemata of the reader, or the thoughts of the individual and the words of others manipulated in the mind and restructured into the written form by the writer.

The language experience approach to reading accommodates the active, personal nature of language learning. It provides for the integration of reading and writing, where one's own words and thoughts are a more integral part of the process of learning to read. Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that a group of children taught to read primarily through a language experience approach will be better writers than a group of children taught to read primarily through a traditional basal approach when neither group had a writing program in their schools.

who are taught reading primarily through a traditional basal approach when neither instructional group had an organized writing curriculum in their school. The following is a description of the population, materials, and procedures used in this study.

#### Population

In May, 1982, fifty-two randomly selected students participated in this study. Twenty-four of the subjects, 11 girls and 13 boys, had been taught to read primarily through the traditional basal approach. This group will be referred to as the TBA group. The remaining 28 subjects, 17 girls and 11 boys, had been taught to read primarily through the language experience approach. This group will be referred to as the LEA group. The two instructional groups of students attended two different schools in the same central Minnesota city. School A had an organized writing program as part of their curriculum.

Materials and Procedures

Reading test collection and scoring. All of the subjects had

Chapter III

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to test the hypotheses that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills, and that children who are taught reading primarily through a language experience approach will have stronger writing skills than children who are taught reading primarily through a traditional basal approach when neither instructional group had an organized writing curriculum in their school. The following is a description of the population, materials, and procedures used in this study.

Population

In May, 1982, fifty-two randomly selected students participated in this study. Twenty-four of the subjects, 11 girls and 13 boys, had been taught to read primarily through the traditional basal approach. This group will be referred to as the TBA group. The remaining 28 subjects, 17 girls and 11 boys, had been taught to read primarily through the language experience approach. This group will be referred to as the LEA group. The two instructional groups of students attended two different schools in the same central Minnesota city. Neither school had an organized writing program as part of their curriculum.

STATE UNIVERSITY

## Materials and Procedures

### Reading test collection and scoring.

All of the students had taken a standardized reading test in the spring of this, their fifth grade year. The TBA group had taken the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), the LEA group was administered the Stanford Achievement Test. Since two different standardized reading tests were utilized in this study, percentile ranks from the comprehension subtest of each instrument were used as a measure of reading skill.

### Writing sample collection.

The writing sample collection was conducted at the same time in each school, 9 a.m., on two adjoining days. A 14 minute, soundless film entitled, People Soup (Arkin, 1970), was used as a common stimulus for writing. Students used their own pencils. Paper was supplied, as well as additional pencils. The researcher read each group the same instructions. A copy of these instructions is included in Appendix A. The papers were collected at the end of the given twenty minutes. Twenty minutes proved to be sufficient time for the majority of students. A few students seemed to feel rushed when the announcement of five minutes left was given.

### Writing sample scoring.

The evaluation of written discourse may be conducted for different purposes, utilizing a variety of formats. Commonly, a tally of grammatical and/or mechanical correctness is conducted. This kind of evaluation may provide considerable information about the technical competence of the writer, which is important in a communication, yet yield no information about the content of the message.

writing. The purpose of discourse is to communicate something to an audience. Thus, the success of a piece of writing lies in its ability to reach this goal.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has developed a method of rating writing samples to determine how successful the composition was at accomplishing its purpose be it persuasive, explanatory, descriptive, or narrative in nature, as was the purpose of the writing sample in this study. This system of rating writing samples entitled, Primary Trait Scoring, in essence, defines those variables in a composition necessary to successfully meet the given goal of the writing task. Secondary traits, additional information which complement the primary trait, are often also scored. Essentially this method allows the rater to develop scoring guides to measure any aspect of writing considered worth measuring (Mullis, 1975).

This study utilized a trait scoring system yielding three writing scores: one for organization and situation enhancement (0-10 points), one for sensory detail (0-3 points), and a third, a total of the first two (0-13 points). See the Definition of Terms in Chapter I for an explanation of the scoring categories. Since all subjects in this study had written some narration on their papers, a total score of zero was not possible. Decisions on the traits to be scored were based on the purpose of the writing task: narration. A copy of the scoring guide developed for this study is included in Appendix B.

Each writing sample was rated by the researcher. First, a master sheet of initials, sex, and school was prepared in order to



identify the subject's group following the scoring procedure. The researcher then shuffled all 52 papers and read through them once without rating them. The following day the papers were again shuffled, individually read twice, and scored following the second reading. The scores were then recorded on the master sheet.

### Statistical Analysis of Data

Kendall Correlation Coefficient. The Kendall Correlation Coefficient (Tau) was used to examine the null hypotheses that there are no correlations between the reading skills and the writing skills of both subgroups (TBA and LEA) and the total group. The rule for rejecting the null hypothesis was established at the .05 level of significance.

Mann-Whitney U--Wilcoxon. The Mann-Whitney U--Wilcoxon Mean Rank Sum Test was utilized to test the null hypotheses that there are no differences between the mean rank scores of the two subgroups (TBA and LEA) on the writing scores (organization/situation enhancement, sensory detail, and total).

The rule for rejecting the null hypotheses was established at the .05 level of significance.

The null hypotheses of  $Tau=0$  were rejected in all nine cases. Low positive correlations with a range of .286 to .506 were obtained between reading comprehension scores and all three writing scores. Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients for each of the nine comparisons.

Chapter IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Kendall Correlation Coefficients Between Reading Comprehension Scores and Writing Scores

Two non-parametric statistical procedures, the Kendall Correlation Coefficient (Tau) and the Mann-Whitney U, were used to analyze the data of this study.

Relationship between Reading and Writing

The present study examined the relationship between the reading skills and the writing skills of elementary school children. The Kendall Correlation Coefficient (Tau) was used to test this relationship. The null hypotheses were of the form  $\tau=0$ . The Kendall Correlation Coefficient was calculated between reading comprehension scores and three writing scores (organization/situation enhancement, sensory detail and total score), yielding nine correlation coefficients for the two subgroups (TBA and LEA) and the total group. The rule for rejecting the null hypotheses was established at the .05 level of significance.

The null hypotheses of  $\tau=0$  were rejected in all nine cases. Low positive correlations with a range of .286 to .606 were obtained between reading comprehension scores and all three writing scores. Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients for each of the nine comparisons.

Differences in Writing Skill Between Two Instructional Reading Groups

Differences in writing skill were expected for the two instructional groups (TBA and LEA). The Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to test the null hypothesis that there were no differences between the two subgroups (TBA and LEA) on the three writing scores (organization/situation

Table 1

**Kendall Correlation Coefficients Between Reading Comprehension Scores and Writing Scores**

	N=24 Traditional Basal Approach (TBA)	N=28 Language Experience Approach (LEA)	N=52 Total Group
Writing--Organization	.446*	.334*	.348*
Writing--Sensory Detail	.606*	.286*	.400*
Writing--Total	.541*	.365*	.406*

\*significant at the .05 level.

Differences in Writing Skill Between Two Instructional Reading Groups

Differences in writing skill were expected for the two instructional groups (TBA and LEA). The Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to test the null hypotheses that there were no differences between the mean rank score of the two instructional subgroups (TBA and LEA) on the three writing scores (organization/situation enhancement, sensory detail and total). The null hypotheses failed to be rejected in all cases. Table 2 summarizes the group difference data. No differences were found between the two instructional groups.

	TBA	LEA	N	U	P
Writing--Organization	25.75	24	27.14	28	318.0 .7370
Writing--Sensory Detail	24.92	24	27.86	28	298.0 .4083
Writing--Total	25.27	24	27.55	28	306.5 .3852

Conclusions

The data of this study were concordant with the hypothesis that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills.

Mean Rank Comparisons of Traditional Basal Approach and Language Experience Approach on Writing Scores  
scores and all three writing scores support this conclusion.

	TBA	N	LEA	N	U	P
Writing--Organization	25.75	24	27.14	28	318.0	.7370
Writing--Sensory Detail	24.92	24	27.86	28	298.0	.4683
Writing--Total	25.27	24	27.55	28	306.5	.5852

## Conclusions

The data of this study were concordant with the hypothesis that there is a relationship between reading skills and writing skills.

Low positive correlations obtained between reading comprehension scores and all three writing scores support this conclusion.

Summary The hypothesis that there is a difference between the writing skill of students from the two instructional reading groups failed to be substantiated by the data of this study. Before confirming these findings, the researcher feels that further investigation of this hypothesis should be conducted using improved control of the experimental and extraneous variables. This will be discussed in Chapter V.

processes of reading and writing, the assumption was made that there is a positive correlation between reading and writing skill.

Additionally, it was predicted that a reading method such as the language experience approach, which utilizes a child's own thought and language in the production of written narrative, would produce better writers than would the traditional basal approach. The study did verify the first assumption that there is a positive correlation between reading skill and writing skill. However, that there is a difference in the writing ability of students taught to read primarily through two different approaches, the traditional basal and the language experience approach, was not confirmed by the data of this study.

## Recommendations

Confirmation of these findings should not be made without

further investigation. Repetition of this study, with the following changes in design, is recommended.

The study should be repeated by closely studying two groups of students from the beginning of their reading instruction.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Extraneous variables such as the amount of time spent in

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not there is a correlation between reading skill and writing skill, and a correlation between the primary method of reading instruction and the quality of a written narrative paragraph. Based on research and theory examining the relationships between the psycholinguistic processes of reading and writing, the assumption was made that there is a positive correlation between reading and writing skill.

Additionally, it was predicted that a reading method such as the language experience approach, which utilizes a child's own thought and language in the production of written narrative, would produce better writers than would the traditional basal approach. The study did verify the first assumption that there is a positive correlation between reading skill and writing skill. However, that there is a difference in the writing ability of students taught to read primarily through two different approaches, the traditional basal and the language experience approach, was not confirmed by the data of this study.

Further research is necessary

Recommendations

Confirmation of these findings should not be made without

further investigation. Repetition of this study, with the following changes in design, is recommended.

1. The study should be longitudinal, closely studying two groups of students from the beginning of their reading instruction.
2. Extraneous variables such as the amount of time spent in writing assignments, taking notes, letter writing, et cetera, should be monitored.
3. A collection of writing samples covering a variety of writing tasks such as narrative, persuasive, explanatory, et cetera, should be made.
4. The scoring instrument must be more sensitive to differences. For example it could include a broader scoring range for all traits.
5. Other rating measures such as holistic scoring, an evaluation of overall quality, the scoring of mechanical correctness, and a syntactic maturity rating could be included.
6. A group, rather than an individual, should be trained to score the writing samples.

Since teachers have a number of responsibilities in their instructional day, it is essential that teacher training institutions and inservice programs train them better to provide the most efficient and effective instruction. Further research is necessary in the area of reading/writing relationships with particular attention



given to the examination of various instructional practices in reading and writing and their effectiveness in efficiently improving these skills, and thus the thinking and learning tools of the student.

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APPENDIXES

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITING SAMPLE

My name is Mrs. Nielsen. I am a teacher studying how students write stories. I appreciate your help and cooperation in my study.

Today I am going to ask you to write a story for me. Right now put your initials: first, middle and last on the top of your paper. Under your initials write whether you are a girl or a boy. There is an example on the board. When you are finished, please put your pencil down and look up at me. Please do not talk to anyone. (Delay to follow the above directions.)

I will show you a 14 minute movie. The sound will be turned off. Please watch it carefully. When the movie is over I will give you 20 minutes to write a story about the movie. Feel free to

#### APPENDIX A

#### DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITING SAMPLE

use your imagination. Don't worry about spelling. I will write "5 minutes" on the board when there are 5 minutes left for writing. Again, I ask that you not talk to others during the movie or during your writing. (Now show the film.)

My name is Mrs. Nielsen. I am a teacher studying how students write stories. I appreciate your help and cooperation in my study.

Today I am going to ask you to write a story for me. Right now put your initials: first, middle and last on the top of your paper. Under your initials write whether you are a girl or a boy. There is an example on the board. When you are finished, please put your pencil down and look up at me. Please do not talk to anyone. (Delay to follow the above directions.)

I will show you a 14 minute movie. The sound will be turned off. Please watch it carefully. After the movie is over I will give you 20 minutes to write a story about the movie. Feel free to use your imagination. Don't worry about spelling. I will write "5 minutes" on the board when there are 5 minutes left for writing. Again, I ask that you not talk to others during the movie or during your writing. (Now show the film.)



Organization and Situation Enhancement

Beginning

- 0-No evidence of a beginning
- 1-Beginning present, not enhanced
- 2-Beginning present, enhanced with some detail
- 3-Beginning present, elaborately enhanced

Middle

- 0-No evidence of a middle
- 1-Middle present, not enhanced
- 2-Middle present, enhanced with some detail
- 3-Middle present, elaborately enhanced

APPENDIX B  
WRITING SAMPLE SCORING GUIDE

Ending

- 0-No evidence of an ending
- 1-Ending present, not enhanced
- 2-Ending present, enhanced with some detail
- 3-Ending present, elaborately enhanced

More than one paragraph

- 0-Not present
- 1-Present, evidenced by indentation or separation by a skipped line

Organization and Situation EnhancementBeginning

- 0-No evidence of a beginning
- 1-Beginning present, not enhanced
- 2-Beginning present, enhanced with some detail
- 3-Beginning present, elaborately enhanced

Middle

- 0-No evidence of a middle
- 1-Middle present, not enhanced
- 2-Middle present, enhanced with some detail
- 3-Middle present, elaborately enhanced

Ending

- 0-No evidence of an ending
- 1-Ending present, not enhanced
- 2-Ending present, enhanced with some detail
- 3-Ending present, elaborately enhanced

More than one paragraph

- 0-Not present
- 1-Present, evidenced by indentation or separation by a  
skipped line

Sensory DetailCharacter Names

0-Not present

1-At least one name given

Character Description

0-Not present

1-At least one character described

Dialogue

0-Not present

1-Present, evidenced by the use of quotation marks and/or the use of words such as "said" or "asked"