



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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Canoeing, going out to a shipwreck in a tugboat, being shown over a helicopter, a microwave station, a tuna boat and visiting a seal colony are just a few of many other learning situations where the classroom has been the wider environment.

The Language Experience Approach has provided numerous opportunities for the children to think, speak, listen, react, read, share, be listened to and acquire modified forms of language. It has also provided opportunities for the introduction of word attack skills to be done in a more meaningful context. The eight stimulus interest areas mentioned are only those which we have found to be useful guides and it is natural that headings would differ in each school. However, I believe several of the self-concept area headings could not be left out of any language experience approach to the teaching of reading. The children have gained a great deal through this experience-based learning program.

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TREAT YOURSELF TO

A READING AND WRITING EXPLOSION



G.H. Edwards,
Principal,
Yarrabah S.S.,
Via Cairns.

Engaged as we are in the essential task of assisting Aboriginal children to decode and encode a language which presents many problems to them, it behoves us to strive for the one aspect that many teachers - particularly those new to the field of Aboriginal education, and those charged with the teaching of reading to our school beginners - appear to miss. The reference, of course, is to relevancy.

How many of us, in retrospect, have been guilty of peddling irrelevant or "foreign" reading materials during our careers? Are we

still guilty? Do your children readily relate to the books you present for their use? If not, then the following thoughts and suggestions may have some value in your situation, be it one where a tribal language is still the main means of communication, one where a bi-lingual program is in force, or where English (or a non-standard form of it) is the main communication medium.

WHAT IS EXPERIENCE READING?

Experience reading materials are reading materials made by the teacher and children, and are based upon the children's in-school and out-of-school experiences. They are child-centred, situationally valid, convey important information, are very interesting, and are therefore highly relevant.

Experience reading may be summaries or stories of something that has happened, something that is happening, or something that is going to happen; it is data, information or knowledge collected and then shared in written form with others; it is one fine way of expressing oneself and should generally consist of ideas communicated by children; it can easily be part of the total work program and incorporate any part of the curriculum; it is one way of stimulating children towards further creative effort; it is recognized as an excellent means whereby teachers of lower grades may introduce and reinforce those standard English structures which cause young Aboriginal children most confusion and concern; it should, where possible, be illustrated with action photographs of the chief characters concerned, namely the children. Again, the objective is relevancy.

It should be clear that experience reading is the end product of other activities involving teacher and child. Experience reading pre-supposes lively, stimulating situations which have been encountered in day-to-day school and home existence.

Certainly, experience reading pre-supposes experience writing, and this should be preceded by experience language activities. For infants, these language activities may be teacher-initiated as an introduction to the study of new standard structures, or may be various language games incorporating language units and new vocabulary; for older children it may be group or paired discussions relevant to some class activity, project or excursion.

Diagrammatically, experience reading lies towards the right hand end of this continuum:-

STIMULATING SITUATION	ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES	EXPERIENCE WRITING	EXPERIENCE READING
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One will readily recognize that considerable practice will be gained along this continuum in sequencing and problem solving skills, areas which - when couched in standard English structures - present difficulty to speakers of non-standard forms. Here again the use of photographs is encouraged as a concrete bridge for the child to walk.

Experience reading materials may be either temporary or permanent in nature. Thus it may serve a short term purpose such as daily news sheets, emphasise an area of weakness until competency is gained, or be the written plans of an individual, or group, bent on some activity or area of research.

For temporary purposes cheap butcher's paper is an ideal surface on which to record. Hung around the infant rooms as a unit or theme progresses, these sheets provide ideal "changes of pace" during the day for children to go on a reading walk. They are easily displayed in the community as a means of meaningful home-school contact, and if damaged, represent no great material loss.

Where a more permanent form of recording is required, better quality coloured triplex sheeting, or mapping books are useful.

Children become very attached to these materials, teachers find them ideal for revision or reinforcement purposes, and it is wise to keep a permanent coverage, especially for children of lower grades, as useful, relevant readers are scarce.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF EXPERIENCE READING?

As experience writing, and therefore experience reading, should not be restricted to any one section of the school, its scope knows no bounds. It has relevancy and interest for all grade levels and should not be confined to primary school children only. In our situation it has found an important niche in the lower secondary area also.

Listed below are some examples of the form and scope that experience reading can take:-

- ..morning news sheets;
- ..captioned photograph books;
- ..arrangements, or a series of photographs, accompanied by explanatory writing;
- ..captioned drawings;
- ..lists of all kinds, for example, class budget, shopping list for class cooking, clothing for extended tour, food list for overnight excursion;
- ..captioned bulletin board displays;
- ..copies of letters sent to firms, companies, individuals seeking assistance, information, expressing thanks;
- ..captioned maps of all kinds;
- ..comic strips;
- ..riddles, jokes, quizzes;
- ..posters advertising coming events;
- ..captioned displays of objects, for example, museum - "This box jelly fish...";
- ..result sheets of many kinds;
- ..captioned cartoons;
- ..cards and pamphlets of various kinds, for example, Birthday, Christmas, Congratulations;
- ..annotated graphs;
- ..annotations on various kinds of recording charts;
- ..notes, invitations to class function;
- ..notices and circulars;
- ..signposts;
- ..labels of many types, for example, on class cooking, bottles of jam;
- ..advertisements - sales of class cooking, sewing;
- ..class or school newspapers, magazines;
- ..recipes for cooking session;
- ..procedure to be followed in carrying out various activities;
- ..screen printing on t-shirts, pillow cases, bed sheets;
- ..diaries of trips, tours;
- ..reports, summaries of work attempted and or covered;
- ..captioned flow charts;
- ..tourist brochures prepared after a visit to an area, or in response to request for information about own district;
- ..a story of a class activity, for example, "Making Fried Rice", "How We Fixed the School Bog Hole", "Our Garden", "The Chillagoe Caves", "Excursion", "Our Pied Mouse Has Babies", "Watch Our Chickens Grow".

SOME FURTHER ADVANTAGES

Experience reading has many advantages for all children. From an early age they can listen to, and practise grammatical closure, word usage and vocabulary development, tense forms, gender, number and punctuation (especially the major signposts utilized), and direct speech.

In other curriculum areas it offers excellent opportunities for concept development particularly in the fields of Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

Words which are peculiar to an area should find their place in the readers, as should "experience" words i.e. those encountered by children whilst away on field trips, excursions, tours.

The contributions made by the children are recorded and therefore seen by them as important, thus aiding the development of a positive self-concept.

The need to be able to read will become very evident to the child if this idea is used and enlarged upon. His experiences should, therefore, be more satisfying.

It is another ideal way of involving the local community in the school's activities and thus affords opportunities for liaison between teacher and parent.

Experience readers which are illustrated with clear, carefully-selected photographs, can be used as the foundation of a dynamic visual literacy program.

NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

Very little equipment - and thus only a small monetary outlay, is required to make this venture a satisfying and fruitful one for all concerned. Those who are satisfied with the standard "once only" photograph from a black and white Polaroid camera can begin for an outlay of as little as \$20. For the more fastidious - those requiring enlargements, multiple copies, and better definition - a suitable 35mm camera and a developing and enlarging outfit is the answer. Even allowing for the purchase of a flash unit which will again

widen the scope, an individual or school can set up for under \$200.¹

This is an exciting approach well worth consideration. It is an approach currently receiving considerable attention in some of our schools, in some cases with startling and highly significant results.

Give yourself, your class and your school, a boost. Try it!

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THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING IN A TRIBALLY-ORIENTED

SPECIAL ABORIGINAL SCHOOL



R.M. Lines
S.A.

The following article is an extract from Mr. Lines' dissertation for his Advanced Diploma Course at Torrens College of Advanced Education, Adelaide.

BICULTURAL INTERACTION

In considering the difficulties which arise in a bicultural situation, it is important to realize that although it can often act as a catalyst, the bicultural situation is not always the origin of the conflict but merely serves to amplify any personal tensions or problems which may already exist.

The stresses and problems of life in a bicultural situation arise largely from the teacher's past experiences. In each case the teachers at Ernabella came from a monocultural, middle-class background. Their families were relatively affluent and able to keep their children at a tertiary institution for periods ranging from two to four years. Similarly they were all brought up to accept (and hold as desirable) certain traits and modes of behaviour which conform to the general Euro-Australian pattern. While these permeate

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1. Barker, F.H.: Black and white photography in a black and white school. *The Aboriginal Child at School*, Vol.2 No.3, June 1974.