

COMPARISON OF TWO SCHOOL RATINGS ON THE FLORIDA ATLANTIC SPEECH TEST

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The broad purpose of the total migrant education program is to enable migrants to enter the mainstream of society. The assumption is often made that the earlier the preparation for entry into the mainstream, the greater probability of successful entry. Entry into the mainstream means at least two major accomplishments: attainment of adequate income and financial security, and acceptance by nonmigrants as persons rather than discrimination as members of a minority group.

One assumption concerning the means to such achievement is that of the importance of fluency of speech in the language of the dominant culture. If the observation is valid that language development is seriously limited in migrant children, then measures of degree of attainment in use of the language are needed, for several purposes. One of the purposes is to assess success of programs and techniques intended to foster oral communication. This article presents an initial evaluation of a language development phase of a program to upgrade the educational achievement of migrant elementary school children.

In the fall of 1968, F. Ward Brunson instigated the initial academic stages of a five-part program at Robert Markham Elementary School in Pompano Beach, Florida. The five broad categories included: (1) satisfaction of immediate physical needs, (2) improved teacher-student communication, (3) more pertinent teaching-learning activities, (4) more individually relevant curriculum, and (5) economic opportunity.

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Brunson's contribution began with teaching-learning activities that initially concentrated on multi-sensory, peer-produced and/or electronically assisted teaching materials. These materials were primarily student made books and slide-tapes which were pupil-narrated, color slide show presentations. These presentations capitalized upon the learners' own experiences by featuring the students in field trips, perceptual training, class plays, and other school activities.

The project was designed to focus the child's attention while involving him more completely in the educational process than usually occurs with such children. A multi-sensory approach involving the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile modalities was utilized in the peer productions whenever possible. It was theorized that utilization of several sense modalities combined with peer-communicating-with-peer would facilitate use of language and, thereby, subsequently enhance the academic achievement of these migrant children.

Evaluation

The Florida Atlantic Speech Test (FAST) was devised by F. Ward Brunson and Jacqueline Orlando* to evaluate the spoken vocabulary of students at Markham Elementary School.

The hypothesis was stated as follows: H_0 : As determined by the FAST test, there is no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence on paired V (Variety) scores of Markham students and paired age peers from another migrant school subsequent to six months exposure to the total programs of the two schools.

The members of a disproportionate random sample of 37 Markham students stratified by age into 7, 10, and 11 year olds were paired with an equal number from another nearby elementary school which served the same general area and ethnic group but which had had slightly higher achievement means. Both student groups were evaluated with FAST.

The test was administered by trained psychometrists. The test procedure consisted of showing three separate pictures, (a kitchen scene, a bedroom scene, and a school scene), requesting the children to tell about each picture, and tape recording the response.

The first 100 words of the response were numbered as to variety of words used. This resulted in a V, or Variety, score for each student. The three V scores for each student were also totaled. Markham students tended to have higher V scores. The results of the paired V score totals (Markham students vs. paired students from the comparison school) were examined with the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed Ranks Test. This statistical test gives consideration to the pair member which, in the present application, has the larger variety of words in response to the picture stimuli and also gives consideration to the magnitude of the difference in scores for members of each pair.

The null hypothesis was rejected at the .02 level of confidence. Hence the interpretation suggested is that a probable principal contributor to the difference was the multi-sensory, peer-productions program. Definitive conclusions cannot be drawn concerning the contribution of the multi-sensory, peer-productions program because of confounding effects of other elements of a total program. However, both the documented initial differences in achievement and the obvious student enjoyment subjectively judged by observers of the Markham scene tend to support the assumed source of difference. Further studies are aimed at the difficult task of separating out the confounded treatment effects.