

California State University at Northridge
(San Fernando Valley State College)

TEACHER'S RATINGS OF CHICANO
CHILDREN'S READING PERFORMANCE

A project submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

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by

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The necessity of distinguishing carefully between reading and speaking, especially the ability to read with comprehension and the ability to speak as the teacher does, has been pointed up for some time. The consequences of confusing these two sets of performance variables have been dealt with by, among others, Ecroyd (1968), Goodman (1965), and Wardhaugh (1969).

As Modiano indicated in a recent article entitled "Where Are the Children?" many teachers can and do accept the child where he is with his many manifestations of individual differences, "but acceptance all too often does not extend to differences in speech." (Modiano, 1969).

Tinker and McCullough (1968) commented on the disadvantaged listener and speaker in the following:

"Their family's use of English may dispense with word endings or word beginnings, and substitute postures, gestures, and facial expressions for all but one or two words in a sentence... Knowledge and use of 'book English' are essential readiness for reading English in school books. The old recipe for providing readiness is still a pretty good one: Seat the child beside a great talker and let nature take its course."

Gilbert (1971) studied the attitudes of 250 experienced white male and female teachers. Ethnic background, socio-economic statuses and language cues of the speakers were the relevant variables.

He found that the Black speakers were rated significantly lower than the white speakers matched on SES and

language levels. Rated most negatively was the middle class Black speaker, who seemed to have the most significant impact on the teachers' rating. Race did not dominate initial impressions of teachers. But the SES and language factors appeared to compound and magnify the racial bias rather than relieve it.

Therefore, the necessity of distinguishing carefully between reading and speaking should be focused on. Do teachers fairly assess, in general, students who speak other than the way the teacher speaks?

Statement of Problem:

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of speech variation and labels assigned to children of differential reading ability, socio-economic background (SES) and ethnic membership on teachers' ratings of reading performance.

Hypothesis:

Teachers' attitudes toward language, and children's speech in particular, will not significantly affect their assessment of children's oral reading.

Procedure:

Subjects: Thirty-six teachers in a graduate course in reading were asked to rate the reading performance of some eighth grade boys.

Method of Data Collection: A forty-word standard passage with a difficulty range of about eighth grade

level was read into a tape recorder by four eighth grade boys representing four different levels of reading ability, two different levels of SES and two different ethnic groups.

One boy was a white eighth grader from a low SES background and with a low reading level. A white counterpart was an upper SES boy with above grade level reading ability. Similarly, one Mexican-American was an eighth grade boy with a low SES and low reading ability. His counterpart was a Mexican-American boy of higher SES and above grade level reading ability.

SES was determined by parents occupation and income. Reading levels came from school records and teachers' assessments that concurred. The tape recordings were judged for level of reading performance by a panel of three reading specialists.

The teachers were given no criteria for rating beyond the instruction that they were to use their own judgement. Their task was to rate eight readers, using a rating sheet containing a scale of one to five which represents "poor" to "very good." The recordings of the eight readers actually consisted of the same tape presented two times for each of the eighth graders. Two random orders of the readers were used to control for an order effect.

One-half of the rating sheets contained labels by each of the numbers for each of the cases (LW, for example, for L-lower SES, W-white). The other rating sheets

did not contain labels.

Scoring Procedures:

A scoring procedure was adopted for the responses to the four readers rated two times. Corresponding to the independent measures of reading achievement scores (LC-8th grade reading level; LW-6th grade reading level; HW-10th grade reading level; HC is 9th grade reading level) as well as unanimous judgements of a panel of reading specialists which matched these achievement scores, a score of 3 was assigned:

when LW was rated	1	(Poor)
" LC "	"	2 (Fair)
" HC "	"	4 (Good)
" HW "	"	5 (Very Good)

A score of 2 was assigned:

when LW was rated	2	(Fair)
" LC "	"	3 (Average)
" HW "	"	4 (Good)
" HC "	"	5 (Very Good)

A score of 1 was assigned:

when LW was rated	3	(Average)
" LC "	"	1 (Poor)
" HW "	"	3 (Average)
" HC "	"	3 (Average)

Analysis of Variance:

With 18 cases in each cell, the mean score in Table VII were computed on the basis of the ratings shown in Table VI. A two-way analysis of variance yielded no significant differences for groups (with or without labels). Nor was there a significant interaction between groups and reader-type. Reader-type, however, was signi-

ficant at the .001 level.

Results and Discussion:

The ratings of all 36 subjects, those with and without labels, were highly consistent and reasonably accurate in accord with the prior assigned levels for three of the four readers. They corresponded to the independent measure of reading achievement (Iowa scores) as well as the judgements of a panel of reading specialists which matched these achievement scores, HW is a better reader than HC who is better than LC who is better than LW. HW was rated at tenth grade reading level, HC at the ninth, LC at about eighth, and LW at 5.5 to 6th grade level.

The HC (or high SES Chicano) boy represented an exception to these findings. The HC reader received an accurate rating of "4" (good) from only 13 subjects. One subject rated him consistently "5" (very good), but 9 subjects consistently gave him a lower rating of "3" (average).

An indication of the consistency of these responses can be noted by looking at the total number of subjects whose ratings for the same reader were identical (indicated by A and B in Tables I - IV).

For the low SES Chicano (LC), 23 of 36 subjects responded both times with an identical rating. The low SES white (LW) reader elicited the same rating both trials from 32 of the 36 subjects. For the high SES white

reader, the number of same responses on both trials was 33 of 36 and 20 of 36 for the low SES (LC) Chicano reader. These findings indicate consistency, and only consistency.

As for the accuracy of these consistent ratings, 22 subjects rated the IC a 2(Fair) - - His assigned accurate rating - - and one subject rated him lower with a 1(Poor). For the IW reader, 24 subjects rated him accurately with a 1(Poor) and 7 subjects gave him a higher rating of 2 (Fair). For the HW 30 subjects rated him accurately with 5(Very Good), and only two rated him lower with a 4(Good).

At this point, the general pattern of these findings begins to dissolve. The HC reader received an accurate rating of 4(Good) from only 15 subjects. One subject consistently rated him 5(Very Good), but 11 subjects consistently gave him a lower rating of 3(Average). These figures point up the dramatic decline in the number of accurate yet consistent responses elicited by the HC reader.

Teachers are often taught to assess a child's reading performances level by administering what is sometimes called an informal reading inventory. Their subsequent judgements, of course, should be based only in part on this informal assessment, but many teachers give great weight to this sort of assessment. The main point to be noted is that they judge on what the child sounds like to them--gross and minor errors sometimes notwithstanding.

What a group of teachers was asked to do for this study does not differ substantially in kind from what is recommended generally as standard procedure in the teaching of reading. The teachers were able to avoid the effects of labelling the Chicano child, but were unable to fairly assess a good Chicano reader as being as good as he is.

These findings would seem to support the contention that many teachers tend to confuse norms of speaking and reading performance variables. This inability to distinguish between reading and speaking would appear to influence their judgement of children's reading. In particular, this confusion may prevail among teachers of reading who teach children whose speech differs considerably from their own.

T A B L E I

No. of Subjects with Consistent and Accurate Ratings*

	<u>Consistent</u>				<u>Consistent and Accurate</u>			
	<u>LC</u>	<u>LW</u>	<u>HW</u>	<u>HC</u>	<u>LC(2)</u>	<u>LW(1)</u>	<u>HW(5)</u>	<u>HC(4)</u>
<u>Without Labels</u>	10	11	15	9				
		4	2	3	10	11	15	9
				1				
<u>With Labels</u>	12	14	15	6				
	1	3		8	13	14	15	6
Total	23	32	32	27	23	35	30	15

*Figures in parentheses denote assigned ratings; consistency = two identical ratings; accuracy = matching prior determined levels; possible total in each = 36.

T A B L E II

Ratings of All Readers Heard Two Times *

	<u>1(Poor)</u>	<u>2(Fair)</u>	<u>3(Average)</u>	<u>4(Good)</u>	<u>5(Very Good)</u>	<u>Total</u>
IC	4 (2, 2)	55 (27, 28)	10 (7, 3)			72
LW	56 (27, 28)	18 (10, 8)	1 (1, 10)			72
HW			1 (0, 1)	6 (5, 1)	62 (31, 31)	72
HC		1 (1, 0)	30 (10, 20)	38 (22, 16)	6 (3, 3)	72
Total	60	74	42	44	68	288

* First and Second figures in parentheses denote respectively the number of ratings by ^{Ss} without and with labels.

T A B L E III
 Mean Scores on Ratings of Readers Heard Twice

<u>Group</u>	<u>Readers</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>LC</u>	<u>LW</u>	<u>HW</u>	<u>HC</u>	
Without Labels	5.3889	5.3333	5.7222	4.5556	5.2500
With Labels	5.2778	5.5556	5.7778	3.7222	5.0334
Total	5.3334	5.4445	5.7500	4.1389	5.1667

T A B L E IV
Analysis of Variance for Rating Means

	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Variance estimate</u>
Without/With labels (rows)	1.0000	1	1.0000
Reader-Types (columns)	54.0556	3	18.0185 *
Interaction	.9444	3	.3148
Within cells	181.0000	136	1.3044
Total	237.0000	143	

* Reader-Type $F = 12.83$; $p = .001$

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