

Changes in Commercial Text for Beginning Readers: What Are Kids Asked to Do?

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We Would Do Well to Remember...

Thorndike's Laws of Learning (1903)

- exercise (*practice*)
- identical elements (*keep some stuff the same*)
- readiness (*appropriate rigor/pace for new stuff*)
- effect (*learner appreciates outcome*)

These laws influenced “**vocabulary control**” aka word choice in commercial reading programs.

Applying Thorndike's Laws

Text written and produced by publishers

(e.g., Scott Foresman, Ginn, 1930-1985)

- emphasized Whole Word a.k.a. Look-Say method
- heavy use of high frequency words (e.g., look, said)

1956 Scott Foresman Preprimer #1 used
17 unique words at least 12x each

T's Laws are:

- exercise
- identical elements
- readiness
- effect

Are T's Laws met?
Which ones and how?



Who Is It?

Dick said, "Who is here?
Who is it, Mother?"

Mother said, "It is Dick."

"Oh, Mother," said Dick.

"You can see who it is."

Scott Foresman

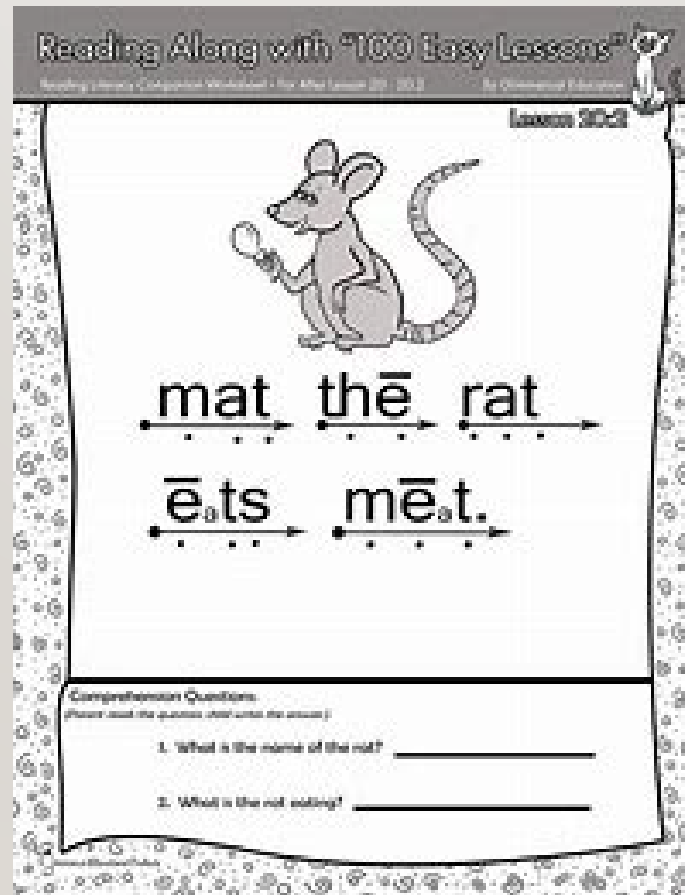
After Indictments by Flesch, 1955 & Chall, 1967

- phonics skills not represented in text (primarily high frequency words (e.g., Dick and Jane))
- 1965+ some publishers applied Thorndike's Laws to create decodable text
 - Lippincott
 - Sullivan
 - SRA-DISTAR
 - SRA Reading Mastery
 - many of the decodable texts in use today.

Applying Thorndike's Laws

- T's Laws are:
- exercise
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Are T's Laws met?
Which ones and how?



The Bad Fan

Dad ran to the fan.

Dad had to fan Nan.

Dad had to fan Dan.

Dad had a bad fan.

Can Dad fan Nan?

Can Dad fan Dan?

Sad Dad!

Sad Nan!

Sad Dan!

T's Laws are:
- exercise
- identical elements
- readiness
- effect

Are T's Laws met?
Which ones and how?

man	Dad	bag	
ran	sad	rag	ragbag
fan	pad	tag	
can	had	Wag	wag
pan	mad	and	
tan	bad		
van			



Thorndike Who? Phonics What?

A whiplash pendulum swing away from basals decodables, and phonics (i.e., stultifying, lack of respect for kids & teachers' ability, inherently evil).

→ 1987 CA & 1990 TX single adoption markets drive text re-design. Teachers/Admins in these states were into...

- whole language → unabridged literature & predictable text for K-G2



Walrus, Walrus,
what do you hear? I hear a zookeeper
whistling in my ear.

T's Laws are:

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Are T's Laws met?
Which ones and how?

Back to Phonics & More Changes in Text

Hue & cry over 1995 CA NAEP G4 scores = LA
(39th in US)

- 1997-2000 decodable mandates in CA (75%) & TX (80%)

→ Changes in 1997+ Core Programs = literature + decodables
to be everything to everybody: EL, Tier II, G&T, balanced literacy...

G1 kids couldn't read the "main selections" even after the teachers read them aloud. Too many **unknown words** with **complex features** and **not enough repetition** too early in the school year (Juel & Roper-Schneider, 1985; Reitsma, 1983)

DUH.



T's Laws are:

- exercise
- identical elements
- readiness
- effect



Ants see Nat and Nan.



Nat and Nan sat.

Are T's Laws met?
Which ones and how?

Genre Nonfiction

Read
Together



Essential Question

How does your body
move?

Read about the fun ways
kids can move.



Go Digital!

Move It!

How can kids **move**?
We can move in lots of ways.
We use our bodies to help us.

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Heibert , 2005, *ESJ*; 2009, chapter

Analyzed Scott Foresman, 1962 – 2007

(only remaining program examined by Chall 1967/1983)

- K = mid year decodables
 - G1 & G2 = main selection texts
 - pulled 2,000 words (or 10 units) from a grade level
 - coded words: 0-7 zones of frequency in written English:
 - zones 0-2 = **HF** at least 100x in 1M words n= 930 words
 - 6-7 = **rare** only .01-9x in 1M words n=150,000 words
- Remember this number!*

Heibert , 2005, *ESJ*; 2009

Identified 2 dimensions of text that affects beg readers:

1. # new, unique words per 100 words (cognitive load)

Then, take those new, unique words & look at linguistic load:

2a. Frequency: # **HF** words (zones 1-2), **moderate** (zones 3-4), **rare** (zones 5-6)

2b. Decodability of words in zones sorted into categories:

- 1-3 graph/phon 1:1 (at, go)
- 4-5 vowel digraphs (ate, eat)
- 6-7 r-con & diphthongs (oar, owl)
- 8-9 polysyllabic

Remember these breakdowns!

What Is a New, Unique Word?

Count new unique words appearing in 100 words. (n=54)

Nat is at school. Nat sat. What does Nat have? Nat has Sam. Nat does not have Sam!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Sam sat. Sam is with Pam. Look! Sam can read. Can Nat? Nat can. Nat and

12 13 14 15 16

Sam like school.

17 18

Why do we have rules at school? Rules can help us get along. Rules can help us stay safe.

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

We raise our hands. We listen quietly. We obey safety rules. We let everyone play. What

30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

are your school rules?

41 42

Pip sits. Pip looks. Pip can jump! Pip is out. Go Pip! Pip looks up. It is very big. Pip can

43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53

look down. Pip...

54

What Is a New, Unique Word?

Count new, unique words in next 100 words.

...will go in. Will this hat fit Pip? It will! Pip will go here. Pip can look. Where will Pip go?

1 1 2 2 3 4 3 5 4 6 5 6 7

Pip will go home!

8

I live in the country. I live in a house. Not many people live near us. I live in the city. I live in

9 10 7 11 12 13 14 8 15 16 17 18 19

a big building. Lots of people live here.

9 20 21 22 23

I live in the country. I play in my yard. Lots of kids play with me. I live in the city. I play in

10 24 25 26 27 28

the playground. Lots of kids play with me.

29

I live in the country. My school is far away. I...

11 12 30 31

($n=31$ new, unique words; 12 used in previous text, →43 unique words,)

What Is a New, Unique Word?

Count new, unique words in next 100 words.

...ride the bus. I live in the city. My school is near my home. My mom walks with me.

1 1 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 3 9 4 5 6 10 11

Where do you live?

7 8 9

Flip is my pet. Flip is big. Flip can not go in. Flip is sad. Flip pulls me in. Flip and I go

10 11 12 13 14 15 12 13 16

to class. Flip sits. Be good, Flip! Flip likes class. The kids like Flip. Miss Black is mad.

14 15 16 17 18 19 17 20 21 22 23

Sit down, Flip. Look at Miss Black. Flip has a plan. Flip did it! The class claps. Can

24 25 18 19 26 20 27 28 21 29 22

Flip come back? "Flip can," said Miss Black. Flip is glad!

30 31 32 33

What do pets need? Like all living...

34 35 36 23 37 38

(n=38 new, unique words; 61 unique words, 23 used in previous text)

Text	1962 GI	1983 GI	1993 GI	2000 GI	2007 Kinder GI	2017 Wonders Kinder GI
Beginning of Year Text Average # New, Unique words/100 Running Words	10	5	29	21	n/a	n/a 32 in 2 samples
Middle of Year Text Average # New, Unique words/100					12 22.9	n/a
End of Year Text Average # New, Unique words/100	8	10	20	19	n/a	

What is the trend for new, unique words in PPI text over time?

Text	1962 GI	1983 GI	1993 GI	2000 GI	2007 Kinder GI
Beginning of Year Text Mean # New, Unique words/100	10	5	29	21	n/a
Middle of Year Text Mean # New, Unique words/100					12 22.9
End of Year Text Mean # New, Unique words/100	8	10	20	19	n/a
Average Repetition of Words	10	20	3.4	4.8	4.5
Singletons BOY - EOY	0 - 7	5 - 17	46 - 41	41 - 42	n/a

What is the trend for word repetition in
Scott Foresman GI-End text over time?

What is the trend for singleton words over time?

Text	1962 GI	1983 GI	1993 GI	2000 GI	2007 Kinder	GI
Beginning of Year Text Mean # New, Unique words/100	10	5	29	21	n/a	
Middle of Year Text Mean # New, Unique words/100					12	22.9
End of Year Text Mean # New, Unique words/100	8	10	20	19	n/a	
Average Repetition of Words	10	20	3.4	4.8	4.5	
Singletons BOY - EOY	0 - 7	5 - 17	46 - 41	41 - 42	n/a	
% Words in 1000 Most Frequent (i.e., Zones 0-2)	60	53	34	37	58	82
% decodable words in zones 0-2	17	20	29	30	n/a	
Average Decodability in Zones 0-1					4.0	5.3

Whole
Language

Whole Word



Zones 0-2: Too large a corpus?

1-3 graph/phon 1:1 (*at, go*)
 4-5 vowel digraphs (*ate, eat*)
 6-7 r-con & diphthongs (*oar, owl*)
 8-9 polysyllabic

What kinds of **decoding tasks** do these texts pose?

Heibert , 2005, *ESJ*; 2009

8 The (Mis)Match between Texts and Students

TABLE 1.1. Frequency and Decodability of Words in Grade-Level Text Samples

Word zone	Grade							NAEP
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	
0-1	37 ^a (4.0 ^b)	63 (5.3)	65 (5.3)	62 (5.4)	62 (5.4)	62 (5.6)	66 (5.0)	58 (5.3)
2	21 (3.7)	19 (5.8)	20 (6.4)	21 (6.5)	19 (6.4)	16 (6.9)	16 (6.2)	22 (5.6)
3-4	23 (2.7)	11 (5.9)	8 (6.3)	10 (5.7)	11 (6.9)	11 (7.0)	12 (7.0)	14 (6.7)
5-6	19 (2.6)	7 (6.9)	7 (6.9)	7 (7.0)	8 (7.4)	11 (7.5)	6 (7.3)	6 (5.9)
New, unique words per 100	12.1	22.9	21.7	29.8	30.8	33.4	32.1	62.6

^aPercentage of total words in particular word zones.
^bAverage decodability of words in particular word zones.

Heibert, E.H. (2009). The (mis)match between texts and students. In E.H. Heibert & Sailors, M. *Finding the Right Texts: What Works for Beginning and Struggling Readers* (pp. 1-20). NY: Guilford.