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A Curriculum for Language Arts in Lincoln Prevocational School Bremerton, Washington

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A CURRICULUM FOR LANGUAGE ARTS IN
LINCOLN PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOL
BREMERTON, WASHINGTON



A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College



In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education



by
Roy A. Williamson
August 1970

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Proper education helps the worker in finding a job, and it helps him to progress more rapidly (12:8533). Research workers have found that inability to read blocks general education, and it is estimated that 8 to 15 per cent of the school population is characterized by varying degrees of reading disabilities (1:2). It then becomes necessary for the schools to seek methods for improving the reading ability of the students.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

It was the purpose of this study (1) to determine whether the proposed reading program, a program using tape recorders, would improve reading disabilities; (2) to compare it with the regular program; and (3) to evaluate these findings for use in the curriculum.

Importance of the Study

In the Prevocational Program the student has found it necessary to be able to read to have the ability to find a job. This has created for the student a motivation to

try to improve his reading ability. The school needs to provide a method of reading instruction that will encourage this initiative in the student (3:57).

It was the purpose of this study to establish a curriculum in reading that will enable the student to be able to read forms and instructions found in their laboratory.

The researcher felt that the use of a tape recorder would be a good method to help the students to improve their reading abilities. It should be a pleasant method; it should be a stimulating situation free of undue pressures. There would be no failures and the progress should be made a continuing one. It should be able to satisfy many of the twenty-three points stressed by Bond as necessary for effective reading instruction (3:57-58).

From readings and experience the writer has found that group teaching, even in a special class, is not likely to be successful in correcting a reading disability, at the secondary level (9:108). It requires a diagnostic study, followed by special methods of individual instructions designed to build up the deficient parts of the reading process (11:82).

A report to the National Education Association convention disclosed that one out of four students nationwide have reading deficiencies. It also implied that half the unemployed between 16 and 21 years of age are

functionally illiterate (6:5). The report urged more individualized classroom instruction.

Metz, in The World Book Encyclopedia, pointed out that proper education is helpful in getting a job, and also helps the worker to progress more rapidly (12:8533).

Betts said, "Research workers have found that the inability to read blocks general educational progress" (1:6). It seems necessary for the schools to seek a curriculum that will improve the students' reading ability as much as possible.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

For the purpose of this study, these terms are defined as follows:

Preliminary Training Group

Fifty students selected by chance to determine if they would be able to operate the equipment used in the research.

Final Research Group

Thirty-two students randomly taken from the preliminary group.

Experimental Group

Sixteen students drawn alternately from the preliminary training group, and encouraged to use the tape

recorder to correct their mistakes in reading, by reading on the tape and listening to their reading.

Control Group

The sixteen remaining students from the research group, allowed to use the tape recorders only while reading for research data.

Reading Booth

A small closet made to eliminate much of the distractions in the classroom, and used by the students while reading for the research.

Errors

Skipped words, mispronounced words, and repeating.

WPM

Words per minute, the number of words covered in the reading minus the number of skipped words, divided by the number of minutes spent reading.

Percent of Error

The number of mispronounced words divided by the number of words read.

Reading Period

Two minutes of the periodic readings scheduled during the research.

Reading Speed

The words per minute read by the student.

Basal Reading Speed

The reading speed of the student on the story read at the beginning of the research.

Final Reading Speed

The reading speed of the student on the story at the end of the research.

Basal Percent of Error

The percent of error in the story read at the beginning of the research.

Final Percent of Error

The percent of error in the story read at the end of the research.

Average Reading Rate

The total of the forty reading rates of each student, divided by forty to get the average.

Average Percent of Error

The total of the forty percent of errors of each student, divided by forty to get the average percent of error.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was confined to 32 students in the ninth grade, and to the prevocational classes at Lincoln Prevocational School in Bremerton, Washington. Although it was recognized that there would be other students in the other two high schools that could profit from the program, it would make the population and location too cumbersome. These students could be included if the study proved worthwhile. Some students had to be dropped from the study because of poor attendance or scheduling problems, leaving a sample of 20.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

The remainder of the study enlarges on the following materials:

Chapter II presents a brief review of literature dealing with improvement of reading abilities.

Chapter III describes the plan of the research.

Chapter IV enlarges on how the research was conducted. It tells how the statistics were found and presents graph charts for comparisons.

Chapter V evaluates the findings and suggests how one might use the findings in setting up a curriculum.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the related literature was to justify a study of how much the use of a tape recorder would be in the improving of students' reading abilities. It was also to point out the problems that had been encountered in previously tried methods, especially at the secondary level.

Many of our students have been in special education classes for several years. They seemingly have made very little progress with standard helps.

Betts, in his book, The Prevention and Correction of Reading Difficulties, stressed the prevention and correction of reading difficulties in the elementary grades. Betts classified reading difficulties as: (1) specific reading difficulties, those low in one or two skills, as stuttering, slurring, and stammering, which are generally taken care of by a speech therapist; (2) general reading disabilities, a lack of basic and elementary skills evidenced by disagreeable attitudes and confusion (1:77). These are the disabilities that cause students problems in reading.

McCallister, in his book, Remedial and Corrective

Instructions in Reading, pointed out that pupils with reading difficulties are easily found in the upper grades and in high schools. It is estimated that over 31 percent are two or more grades behind at the eighth grade level. He seemed to feel there is little help for students at the high school level (11:3). He also pointed out the need for graded reading material (11:99).

Virginia Schaad, in an article, "Tape Recorder Aids Language," told of using a tape recorder to aid her students in expressing themselves in a language class (13:30).

In an article, "Secondary Level Reading Aids," Dr. Dorris Lee pointed out the need to have interesting material at the students' reading level to motivate them to read (10:42). Denny, in an article, "The Listening Table Aids Reading," told about using cartridge tapes for help in a reading program (4:10).

Kottmeyer, in his book, Teacher's Guide for Remedial Reading, told about some methods used in remedial reading programs to improve the students' reading abilities. These programs were mostly used in the elementary schools. He pointed out that almost all modern basal reading series present sight vocabulary, phonetics instruction, and consonant sound drills (9:7). He felt that many reading disabilities are caused by forcing the pupil to read before he is ready (9:23). He stressed that there is no justification for a remedial program unless it

is controlled by a method different from the regular reading instructions (9:6). He pointed out that workers in the remedial field have concluded that reading disabilities are usually caused by several factors rather than by one. He felt that poor teaching or poor learning conditions are responsible for many of the reading disabilities (9:16). He stressed the need for the student to be able to use language orally before he will be able to read (9:23). He felt that a skilled, sympathetic, and understanding teacher is a basic element in therapy for reading improvement (9:22). He pointed out that oral reading is necessary for the correction of bad habits, such as: guessing or word substitution, word reversals, confusion of letters, word omission, losing the place, skipping lines, and repeating (9:159).

In a personal interview with Mr. Jackson, an instructor of Remedial Reading at Central Washington State College during the summer of 1969, he pointed out the difficulties with rules for pronunciation of the English language. He felt as Kottmeyer, that the possibilities of helping the student diminished very rapidly in the secondary school (9:6).

Summarizing the Reading Problems

The general feeling seems to be that it is very difficult to improve the reading disabilities of the students in the secondary school. The problem is not the

lack of materials, but that the young people are not interested in reading. They have been conditioned against reading, especially oral reading. Schools have made reading a constant source of possible failure and humiliation. Oral reading before a group has many times caused them to withdraw from reading. If they were not among the better readers, the embarrassment caused them to shun books and reading.

It was with the knowledge of these pitfalls that the writer began to seek a method for helping these students. The writer felt that the use of the tape recorder and reading booths would allow privacy. Using teachers who are sympathetic to the students' problems and combining skills in teaching, it was hoped to have some success in improving some of the students' reading abilities.

CHAPTER III

PLAN OF RESEARCH

Establishing the Population

The population included all students in the Lincoln Prevocational School who were willing to work in a research program to help improve their reading abilities. It was decided that only those students with reading abilities between second and sixth grade levels would be accepted for the research groups; it was felt that a student with reading ability below the second grade level would need more individual help, and a student with reading ability above the sixth grade level would profit very little from the planned program.

Selection of the Preliminary Group

The preliminary group consisted of 50 students, who were selected for the Preliminary Research Group in the following manner: The names of all the students in the established population were put into a container and fifty names were drawn. Their reading levels were more accurately determined by checking their percent of error, which, for the purpose of this study, should be between .5 percent and 7.0 percent. The Preliminary Research Group were trained in the use of the equipment and the

procedures for the research, during a training period which lasted twenty school days.

Selection of the Final Research Group

At the end of the training period, the names of all the students remaining in the Preliminary Research Group were placed in a container. The selection of the Final Research Group was made by drawing names alternately for the Experimental and Control groups. To reduce the number in each group to 12 students, the groups were separated into grade levels. When there were more students in a grade level in one group, the names of the students in this group were placed in the container, and the same number of names were drawn as in the other group; the names left in the container were eliminated. Further eliminations were made by drawing names from grade levels, beginning with the upper level and proceeding to the lower level. After final selection, each group contained twelve students; two students were named as alternates in each group, leaving ten students in each group to be compared in the evaluation of the research.

The Research Program

Each student read and recorded a complete story on Side 1 of his tape cartridge; this reading remained on the tape for comparison at the end of the study. The student then used Side 2 of his tape for recording his periodic

readings. The reading periods were of three minute duration two times a week for twenty weeks, or forty reading periods. Two minutes of this reading were used for the research data. The student marked in his book the place at which he stopped each time and continued reading from there, unless there was not enough reading material left to last three minutes. In this case the student was allowed to finish the story and start the timing with the beginning of the next story. After each reading the tapes were checked by the examiner and made ready for the next reading period. At the end of the forty reading periods, the student read and recorded a selected complete story on Side 2 of his tape, which was left on the tape. The two stories on the tape cartridge contained readings from which to compute basal and final reading rates and basal and final percent of errors. Graphs were made of each student's reading rate and percent of errors, and charts were made of each student's basal and final rate of reading and his basal and final percent of error. The average rate of reading and average percent of error were computed for each student. The average rate of reading and the average percent of error were also computed for each group. These averages, as well as the grade level standings, were compared, and the results determined the value of the program in a school curriculum.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESEARCH

The Approval for the Research

The plans for the research were presented to Don Smith, the Special Education Director, and to James Hoffner, Superintendent of Schools, in the Bremerton District. It was approved to be used as part of the language arts program in the Lincoln Prevocational School. Four cartridge type tape recorders were purchased for the program and other equipment and materials were promised if needed. The plan was then presented to the faculty of the school, and their cooperation was offered to help carry out the program. The students of the school were told the research plans. All students willing to participate in the program were asked to take a Diagnostic Spelling Test (9:88) in their English classes. Seventy-eight of the eighty-seven students took the test and participated in the research.

Selecting the Preliminary Training Group

It was felt that at least fifty students should be in the training group to represent a good sample of the population. The Diagnostic Spelling Test was graded; it was found that the test only placed thirty-seven students,

since it only placed those below second grade, at third grade, and above third grade. The second Diagnostic Spelling Test (9:89) was given. It placed students below third grade, at third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade or better. It was graded and the results were used to determine the names to be put into the container for selecting the preliminary training group. On the first test eight students' scores placed them below the second grade level. On the second test these students scored almost nothing. They were retested by having them read a list of words on tape (5:99-100). Three were found to be non-readers; three could read, but with over 25 percent error. These were eliminated from the program. The other two were kept in the program for further study. Six students scored in the second grade level on both tests. Twenty-three students scored in the third grade level on the first test; of these, in the second test twenty scored in the third grade level and three scored in the fourth grade level. Sixteen students scored in the fourth grade level in the second test, and ten students scored in the fifth grade level. Eighteen students' scores placed them in the sixth grade or better.

Eight names were removed from the list; they were all from the sixth grade. Their prevocational assignments took them from school for a semester. Two students withdrew from school. The sixty-two remaining names were put

into a container, and fifty names were drawn for the preliminary training group.

Preliminary Training

The preliminary training was to instruct the students on how to use the tape recorder and the procedure they were to follow for the research. It would determine if they would be able to carry out the study as planned. They were assigned books, Reader's Digest Reading Skill Builders, at their determined grade level. They practiced reading on the tape. These recordings were checked for percent of error, and the student was assigned to the book at the place where his percent of error was found to be between .5 percent and 7.0 percent. This is considered the instructional reading level by Kent State University.

It was found that there was a need for a reading booth to avoid distractions during the reading periods. It was possible to make booths, since each classroom had a cloak room. The school had been built as an elementary school, and the cloak room was an area three feet deep in the inside wall. The writer was given a purchase order for materials, and he built a booth as a sample for the district carpenters. They built four more reading booths in other classrooms. The reading booths were small rooms, three feet by four feet inside. The walls were covered with acoustical tile. The front had a twenty-four inch

wide door and a twelve-inch wide window. The door also had a glass sixteen inches wide; both the door glass and the window were twenty-four inches high and double glazed. These were equipped with a light, an electric outlet, and a shelf for the recorder. Blinds were installed for the window and door. The group was kept in training for five weeks, until the reading booths were ready for use.

Research Group

It was decided that since the prevocational program shifted students away from school, it would be necessary to increase the number of students in the research group. The fifty names of the students in the preliminary group were placed in the container, and twenty-six names were drawn for the research group. These were put back into the container and names were drawn alternately for the Experimental group and the Control group. Each group had one of the students with reading level below the second grade. The Experimental group had two students reading in the second grade level, and the Control group had two. Each group had two students reading in the third grade level. The Experimental group had five students reading in the fourth grade level, while the Control group had only four. Both groups had one student reading in the fifth grade level. The Experimental group had two students reading in the sixth grade level or better, and the Control group had two.

It was decided to take the two students reading below the second grade level from the program, since there were no first grade level Reader's Digest Skill Builder books available.

Research

The students were given numbers: the Experimental group were numbered E-1 to E-12, and the Control group, C-1 to C-12. The books were marked with the students' numbers, as were the tape cartridges. Four reading booths were to be used for the research. A storage place for their books and tapes was provided in each room on the teacher's desk. The students were assigned to read in one of their regular classrooms. Six students were assigned to each reading booth, three from the Experimental group, and three from the Control group. A story was selected from the books on each reading level as the basal reading. All students read and recorded their assigned story on Side 1 of the tape cartridge. These were checked for completeness and errors. The errors were marked in the individual books. Three markings were used: a straight line over the word if it was left out, a check mark if mispronounced, and an (R) for a repeat. These symbols were used in all checking of readings.

The Experimental group was encouraged to use the tape recorders whenever they had spare time. They were to

read and record, listen to their reading, and try to find their own errors. The Control group was to use the tape recorders only when they were recording a reading. The Experimental group was to read on the tape on Monday; this enabled the writer to check the tapes Monday night and return them to the students on Tuesday with the mispronounced words to study. Thursday, they read again, and the writer checked the tapes and returned them to the students on Friday with the mispronounced words to study. The Control group read on the tapes on Tuesday, and the writer checked them and had them ready to use again on Thursday. The Control group again read on Thursday, and the writer checked the tapes and had them read for use by the following Tuesday.

The reading periods were of approximately three minutes duration. Two minutes of the reading time was checked with a stop watch and used for the data for the research. This allowed the beginning and the ending of the reading period to be left off the research data. The student marked the place in the book, and continued the story for the next reading period. If it was felt there was not three minutes of reading left in the story, the student finished the story and started the timing at the beginning of the next story.

The research lasted for forty reading periods, or a time period of twenty weeks. This time had to be

extended for the following reasons: (1) absenteeism, (2) times when the student did not feel like reading, (3) poor audio recording, and (4) unrecorded readings. These delays caused some of the students to still be reading during the last month of the school year.

Computing the Data

To compute the data the students' books were used. All the errors had been marked in them, as were the beginning and ending of the timed part of the material covered during the reading periods. The time for the reading of the basal and final stories had been recorded in their books. The number of words in the reading sections was determined by counting. The number of words skipped was counted and subtracted from the total number of words in the section. This gave the number of words read. Dividing the number of words read by two gave the rate of reading in WPM. The repeats were not counted as mistakes, since they were part of the reading speed. The words mispronounced were counted and this number was divided by the number of words read to get the percent of error to the nearest tenth of a percent. The forty reading rates were totaled and divided by forty to get the average reading rate of the students, and the forty percent of error scores were totaled and divided by forty to get the average percent of error for the students. Charts, found in Appendix A, were

made and included the data for each student, showing the basal, average, final, and the forty rates of reading, and each student's percent of errors.

Evaluation of the Data

The data shows that of the Experimental group, five students increased their WPM, and four students decreased their percent of error. The Control group data shows that none of the students increased their reading rates; three lowered their percent of errors. These data can be found on the graphs in Appendix A.

Group averages. The average basal and final reading rates were computed. The results were as follows: The Experimental group shows an average of a .6 WPM gain, and a .01 percent of error loss. The Control group shows a 10.2 WPM loss, and a percent of error increase of .47. These data can be found in Table 1.

Grade averages. The Experimental group data by grades shows reading rate gains in the second, third, and fifth grades, and a percent of error decrease in grades two and three. The Control group shows no WPM gain in any grade and a decrease in percent of error in grades two and three. These data can be found in Table 2.

Reading rates changed to percent. The results of the reading rates were computed to change WPM into percent.

Table 1

Change of Average of Reading Rates
and Percent of Error by Group

| | WPM | | | Percent of Error | | |
|---------|-------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|--------|
| | Basal | Final | Change | Basal | Final | Change |
| Group E | 90.3 | 90.9 | + .6 | 4.66 | 4.65 | -.01 |
| Group C | 97.4 | 87.2 | -10.2 | 6.27 | 6.74 | +.47 |

Table 2

Change of Average Reading Rates and
Percent of Error by Grades

| Group | Grade | WPM | | | Percent of Error | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|--------|
| | | Basal | Final | Change | Basal | Final | Change |
| E | 6th | 125.0 | 105.0 | - 20.0 | 1.40 | 2.40 | + 1.00 |
| E | 5th | 124.0 | 131.0 | + 7.0 | 1.20 | 1.70 | + .50 |
| E | 4th | 84.2 | 82.0 | - 2.2 | 4.90 | 11.40 | + 6.14 |
| E | 3rd | 94.0 | 106.0 | + 12.0 | 6.40 | 4.50 | - 1.90 |
| E | 2nd | 69.5 | 78.5 | + 9.0 | 6.55 | 3.65 | - 2.90 |
| C | 6th | 123.0 | 117.0 | - 6.0 | 2.10 | 2.70 | + .60 |
| C | 5th | 55.0 | 55.0 | 0.0 | 3.40 | 3.40 | 0.00 |
| C | 4th | 102.0 | 82.0 | - 20.0 | 9.30 | 11.30 | + 2.00 |
| C | 3rd | 94.0 | 89.0 | - 5.0 | 5.95 | 5.55 | - .40 |
| C | 2nd | 54.0 | 40.0 | - 14.0 | 13.20 | 11.00 | - 2.20 |

The Experimental group average shows a .66 percent gain and the Control group 10.5 percent loss. By grades the Experimental group shows a 5.6 percent gain in the 5th, a 12.8 percent gain in the 3rd, and a 12.9 percent gain in the 2nd. The Control group shows percentage losses in all grades with the exception of the 5th grade, which showed no change. These data can be found in Table 3.

Discussion

The researcher evaluated the results by comparison. It was felt that the comparison of the individual parts would be too lengthy, and the comparison of just the basal and final data would not show all the facts of the research. The writer used the group averages and grade averages for comparison.

The group averages show that the Experimental group increased their reading rate and decreased their percent of error, while the Control group decreased their reading rate and increased their percent of error. This would indicate that the use of the tape recorder was a help in improving reading abilities. This would bear out Knott-meyer's (5:6) belief that the program needs to be different from the regular reading program if it is to help the remedial student. The second and third grades in the Experimental group had an increase in reading rates, as well as a decrease in their percent of error, which would indicate

Table 3
Reading Rates Stated in Percent

| | Experimental | Control |
|---------------|--------------|---------|
| Group Average | + .66 | - 10.5 |
| 6th grade | - 16.00 | - 4.9 |
| 5th grade | + 5.60 | 0.0 |
| 4th grade | - 2.60 | - 19.6 |
| 3rd grade | + 12.80 | - 5.3 |
| 2nd grade | + 12.90 | - 25.9 |

that hearing themselves try to read is a motivation for those reading in the lower grade levels. The fourth and sixth grades Experimental group decreased in reading rates and the fifth grade had only a small increase. This substantiates the general feeling of some authors, among them Knottmeyer (5:6), Betts (3:6), and Bond (4:57), that the students are harder to motivate to improve their reading in the upper grade levels. The tapes did point out reversals, word substitutions, and confusion of letters, as Knottmeyer (5:159) stressed oral reading would.

The writer found there were numerous variables of which he had no control, and they probably had some effect on the research. Therefore a knowledge of some of these needs to be established. The scheduling of the students in the school where the research was conducted did not allow a definite time for the Experimental group to use the tape recorders for listening and correcting of errors. The researcher was not always able to keep the students in the Control group from using the tape recorders in their free time. The second and third grade readers liked to use the tapes and would occasionally find extra reading on their tapes. This could account for their reduction in errors. All the students in the school were handicapped in some way, either emotionally, mentally, or vocationally. Therefore, the emotional climate of the school could not be controlled.

The school program was also partly controlled by the regular program in the area, and this threw the reading schedule off at times.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

This was a study to determine the value of a program using tape recorders to improve the reading abilities of remedial students. It was conducted in the Lincoln Prevocational school in Bremerton, Washington. The population was all the students in the school that were willing to participate in the study. A preliminary group was chosen by random sampling and taught how to operate the tape recorders and the directions to follow. This group had fifty students in it. The research group was chosen from this group by random sampling and divided into two groups by alternate drawing. These groups had 12 students in each group, 10 students for the final stage of the study and 2 alternates for possible dropouts. Their reading levels were determined, and each was assigned a reading book and a tape cartridge. They were given numbers, E for Experimental group and C for Control group, followed by their individual number.

The program was a basal reading, a complete story, and forty periodic readings, three minutes in length. This was followed by a final reading of another complete story. The Experimental group was allowed to use the tape

recorders to listen to their readings as well as to record the readings, and they were given the words they were mispronouncing and told how to pronounce them. The Control group read on the tapes only for the research data.

The data was taken at the end of each reading period by marking off two minutes of the reading time from the three minutes, and the errors were marked in the student's book. A data card was made for each student, and from these cards the chart and the tables were made. The conclusions were made by comparison of these tables.

The tables showed that the Experimental group had gained in their reading rates in the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grades, and the Control group showed no gain in any grade. The Experimental group had less percent of error in the 2nd and 3rd grades. It was concluded that the tape recorders did help improve the reading ability of the students.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussion established the fact that the Experimental group did increase their reading rate and decrease their percent of error more than the Control group. Therefore, the use of the tape recorder did improve the student's reading abilities. The Experimental group's fourth and sixth grades reading rates decreased and their percent of error increased, while the fifth grade reading rate increased and its percent of error decreased, which would

indicate there should be further study at these levels. The fact that the use of tape recorders can help improve reading ability and there is so much need nationwide, as expressed by the National Education Association (6:5), indicates that there should be studies made to see if it would be helpful in the regular high schools. Many of the variables that were uncontrollable in the prevocational school would be easier to control in the regular high school; therefore, a study should be made there soon, since the possibility of helping the students decreases rapidly in the secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusions it is recommended a program using tape recorders be included in the curriculum for the students reading in the second and third grade levels. It is further recommended that further study be made with the program at the higher reading levels. It is also recommended that the special education classes in junior high school be studied to see if the program could be moved down into those grades to start helping the students as early as possible. It is also recommended that the regular high school set up a reading center to study the possibilities of its helping the students that are becoming dropouts.

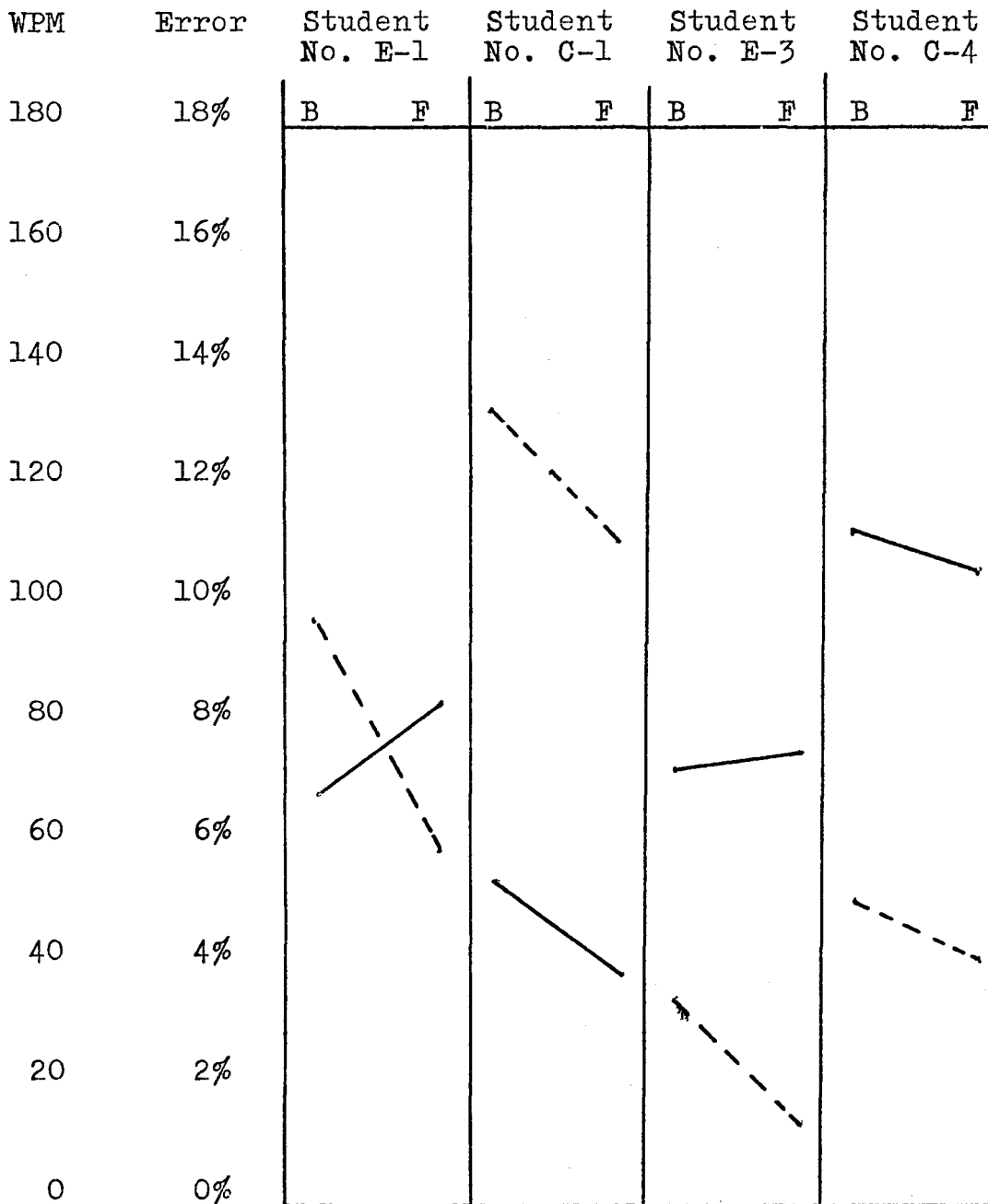
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APPENDIX A

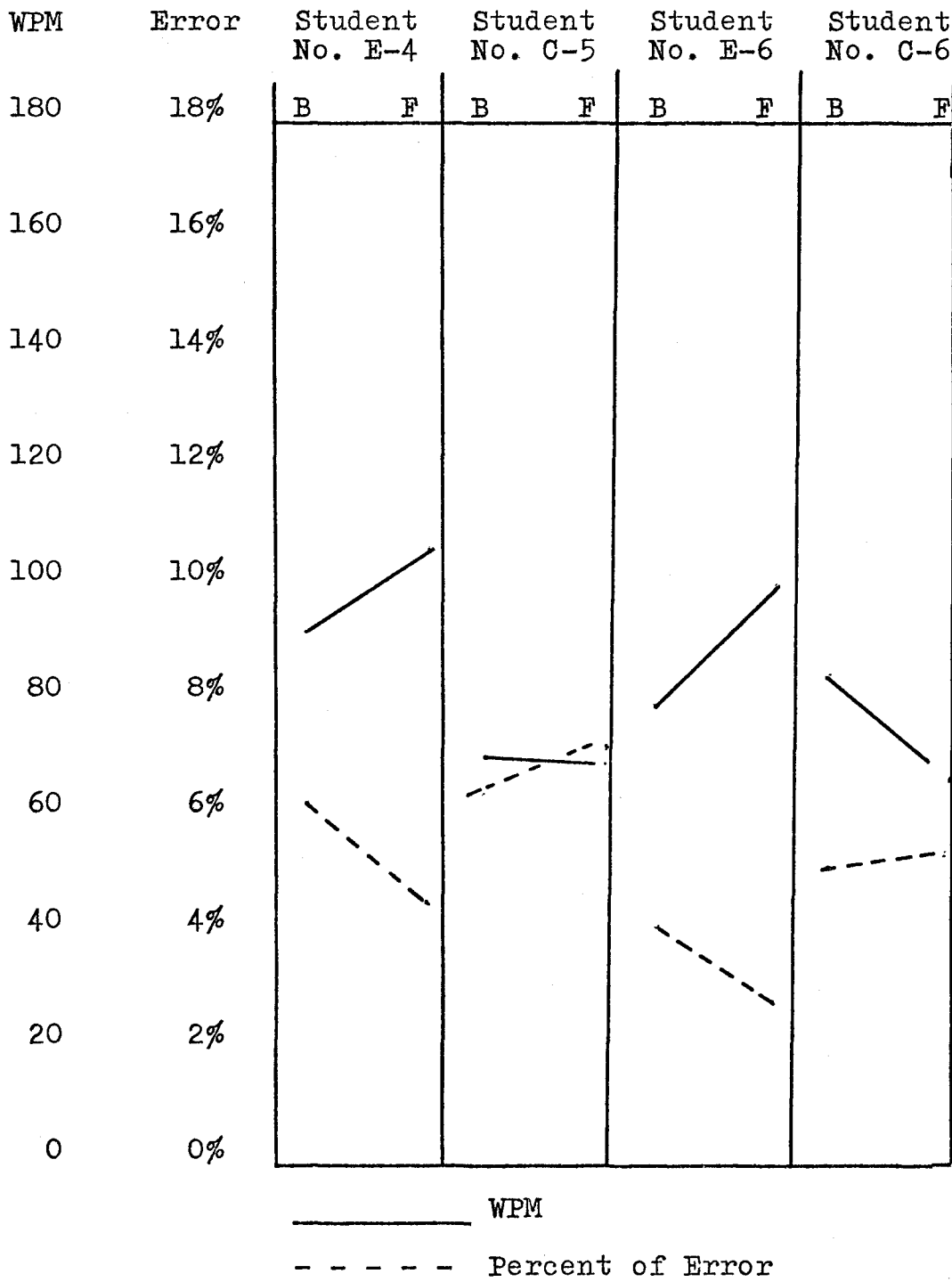
BASAL AND FINAL RATES OF READING AND PERCENT OF ERRORS



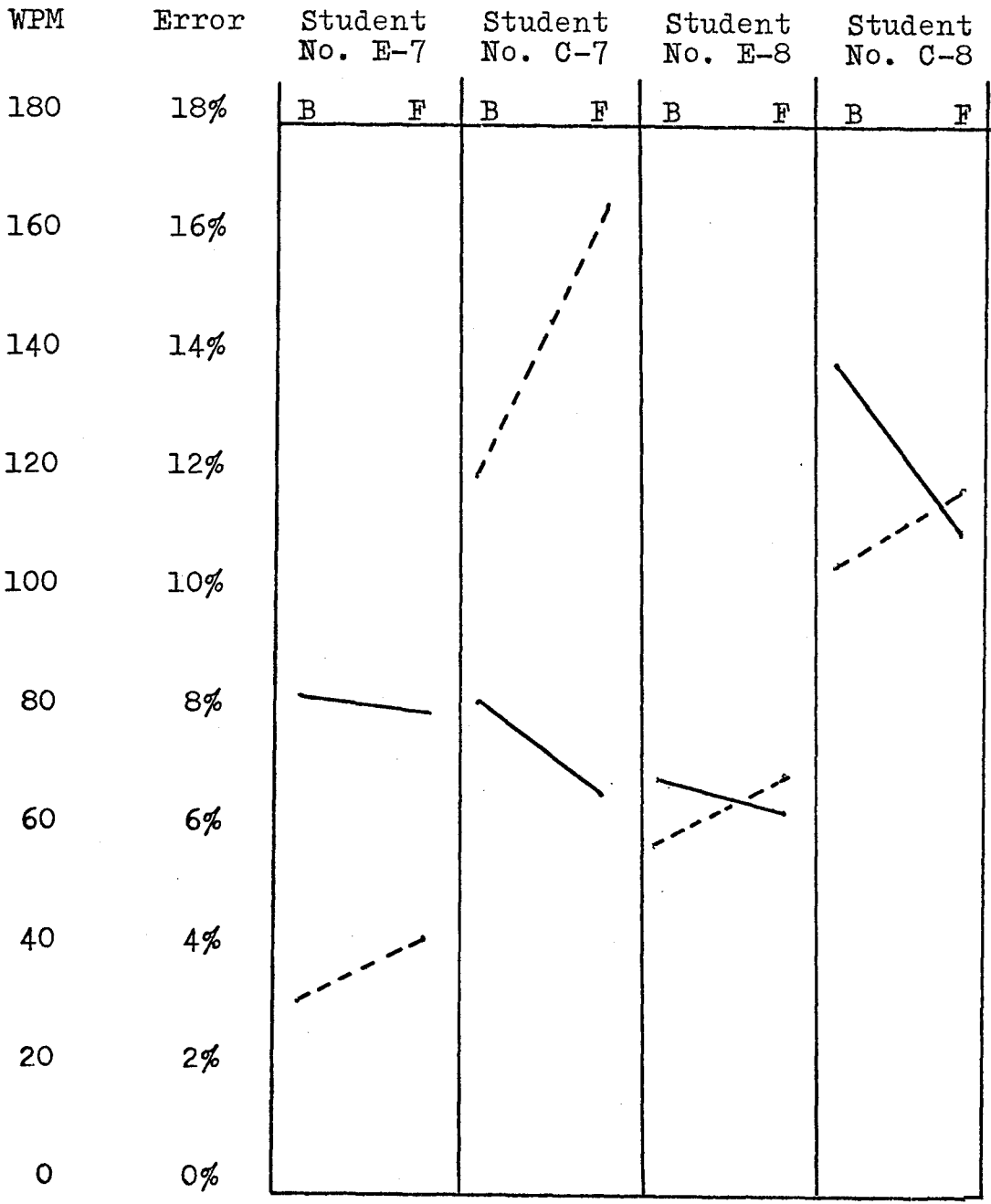
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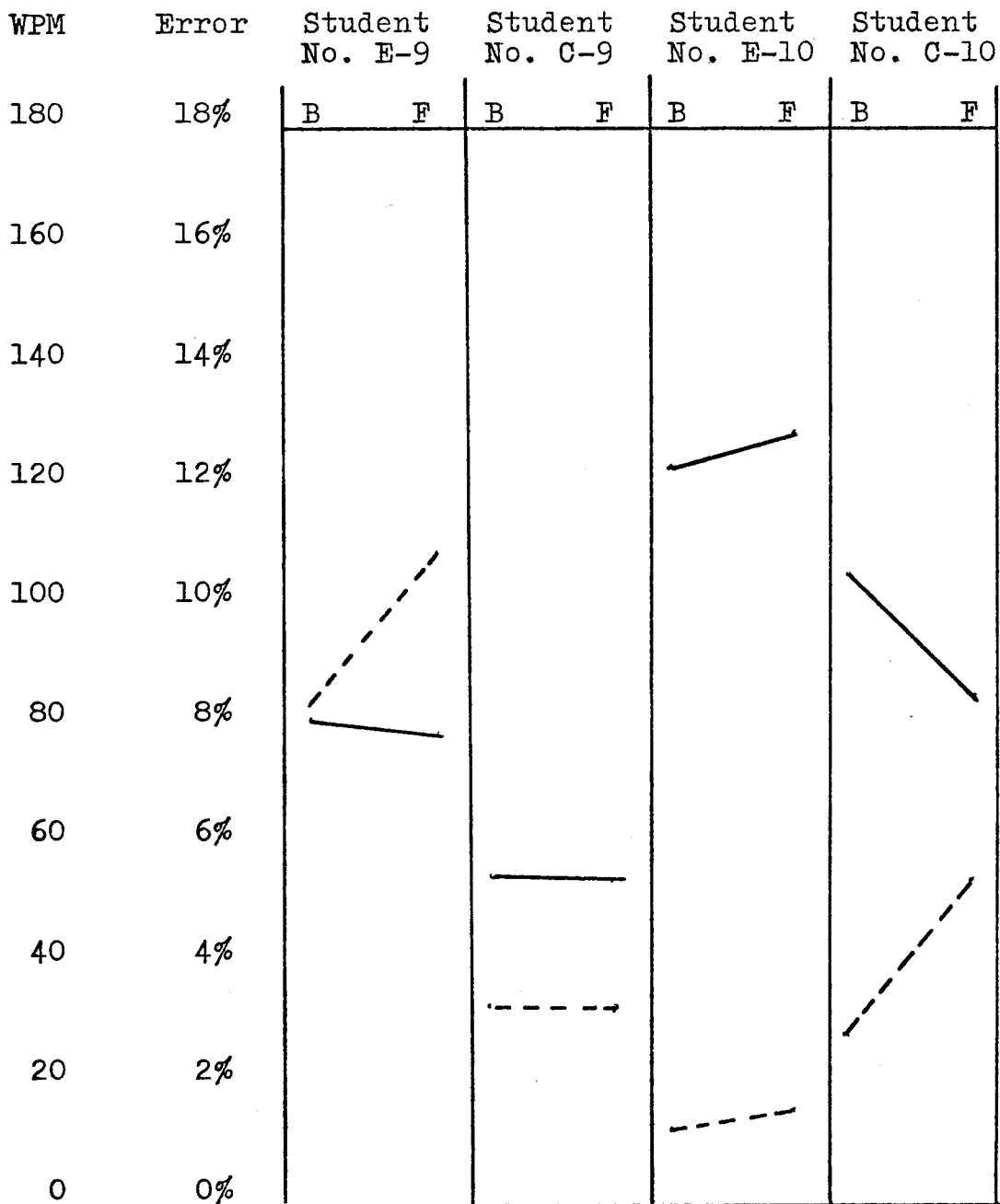


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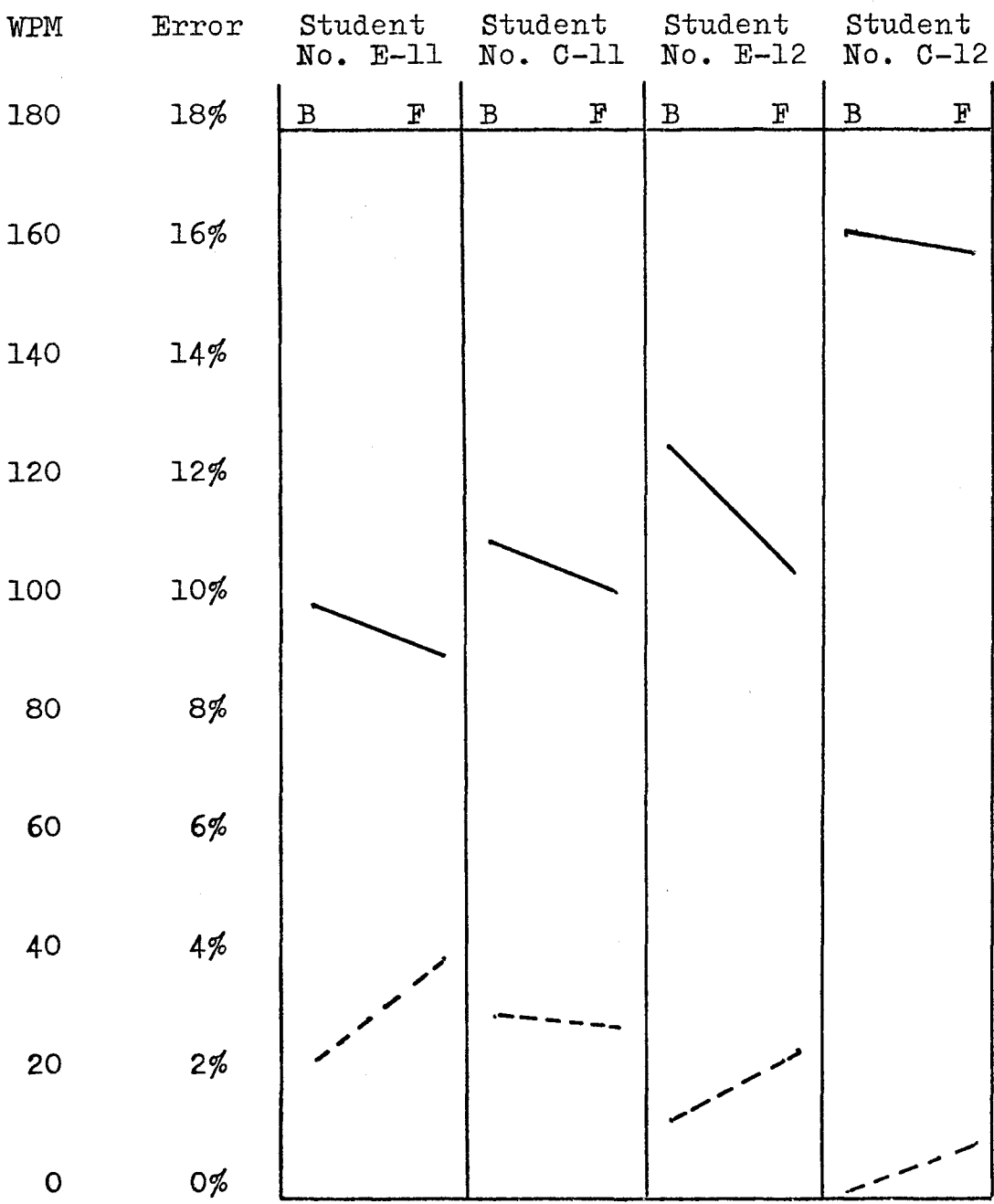
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BASAL AND FINAL RATES OF READING AND PERCENT OF ERRORS



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