

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INITIAL TEACHING ALPHABET
AND ITS USE IN BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION

BY

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

B. F. Skinner in his book THE TECHNOLOGY OF TEACHING has stated that there have been some promising advances made in the field of learning. Educators the world over have experimented with new techniques, devices, methods and media. Experimentation has shown that some of those trends in education have proved successful, whereas, other trends were short lived and left little or no impact upon the learning process in particular nor upon education in general.

Since the subject of reading was of major concern to educators as well as to parents, and since success in that area was so important to children, much experimentation and research was being carried on in this field. (16)*

Every year thousands of first graders had entered school for the first time. These children came to school with a wide range of interests, understandings and background experiences. For most of these children, learning to read had undoubtedly been a pleasant and successful adventure, but for some others, the inability to learn to read had been an insurmountable barrier to their future.

*Numbers in parentheses refer to numbered references in the bibliography; those after the colon are page numbers.

Albert J. Harris says:

"In the average first grade classroom of 25 students or less, approximately one-fourth of the pupils have left the first grade with a 1.0 or less on a reading achievement test. These figures are overwhelming to parents as well as to educators. Where are we failing these youngsters . . ." (23:207)

It was the conviction of this writer that the potential of all children should be tapped from the earliest stages of their formal education to the completion of their education. A variety of activities, material and techniques should have been employed in order to stimulate each learner to achieve his optimum level. Therefore, it was not the aim of the author to determine whether or not one program was superior to another but rather to investigate one of the trends in beginning reading, namely, the Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.).

The Initial Teaching Alphabet was a relatively new reading medium. In spite of the fact that many studies had been done, there had been very little actual research conducted to determine the effectiveness of this program. Since I.T.A. began in the year 1960, it had been widely used in some sections of the United States as well as in England. (27) Therefore, the writer felt it was a timely topic which definitely needed further investigation.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this paper was to trace the development of I.T.A. from its first beginnings, to describe and explain the alphabet, to determine its advantages and disadvantages and, finally, to give a report of the results obtained from a cross-country sampling of schools in the United States which have used I.T.A.

Need for the Study

Newspapers and magazines were filled with articles about the reading programs which were being tested in classrooms throughout the United States. "The teaching of reading has received more attention in the past decade than at any other time. Never before has the teacher been confronted with so many recommendations for novel approaches." (18:116)

The Initial Teaching Alphabet was one of the trends which had been of concern to both educators and parents. Therefore, by means of this investigation, the writer attempted to arrive at, and report some conclusions concerning I.T.A.

Procedure

A thorough investigation of related literature was made at Montana State University library, Gonzaga University, Spokane Public libraries and at Willamette University in

Salem, Oregon. Personal books, periodicals and bulletins were also used as resource materials.

Information regarding schools using I.T.A. was obtained through correspondence with superintendents of schools, school supervisors and from classroom teachers. A questionnaire was sent to 115 classroom teachers who had used I.T.A. Magazine and newspaper articles also aided in giving clues regarding the use of the Initial Teaching Alphabet in the schools.

Definition of Terms

The Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.) is a set of 44 symbols representing most of the sounds in the English language. This set of symbols is comprised of 24 of the traditional symbols used in the English alphabet, 14 augmentations resembling two familiar letters joined together; and 8 special symbols representing the remaining English phonemes.

The abbreviation I.T.A. was used in literature throughout the United States. i/t/a and i t a were abbreviations which were interchangeably used by American publishers; however, each abbreviation refers to the Initial Teaching Alphabet as has been given in the previous definition. In England, the abbreviation i.t.a. was consistently used in reference to this alphabet.

Augmented Roman Alphabet (A.R.) was the term originally

given to the Initial Teaching Alphabet by Sir James Pitman of England. However, the abbreviation A.R. was sometimes used in literature in the United States, and referred to the use of the traditional English alphabet.

Traditional Orthography (T.O.) was a term given to the traditional English alphabet and was used in literature to distinguish the present form of the English alphabet from I.T.A.

Limitations

The investigator was limited to materials found in Montana State University library, Gonzaga University and Spokane Public libraries in Spokane, Washington and to Willamette University library in Salem, Oregon.

There was no roster available to the investigator of schools using I.T.A., therefore, information regarding these schools was obtained through personal contact or through correspondence only.

At the time this study was made, the I.T.A. was just eight years old and was considered to have been in the experimental stages in most of the schools using the program.

The resource material pertaining to I.T.A. was limited due to the length of time the program had been in existence. The amount of research was confined to the British experiment

and one large experiment in the United States, that being the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania experiment. Several smaller experiments have been reported.

In the following chapter the writer discussed the history and early development of the Initial Teaching Alphabet.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

John Downing had traced the history of an augmented alphabet back as far as the sixteenth century to John Hart. Mr. Hart was responsible for the publication of the first reader printed in an augmented alphabet.

In regard to the earliest ideas of an alphabet change, Downing says:

"To find the beginnings of the general idea that English children need a new writing system for their language when they are first learning to read it would be necessary to go back several centuries. For example, as long ago as 1570 John Hart published the first reader printed in an augmented alphabet with regular spellings for English. One would have to go even further back than this to consider why a new augmented writing system was thought to be necessary in the 16C." (14:40)

The history of I.T.A., according to John Bainbridge, has gone back to the revealing of the contents of the will of the noted English writer, George Bernard Shaw, in March of 1951. In Shaw's will, there was a clause directing the executor to use the income from his estate, for the first 21 years after his death, to establish and promote the use of a phonetic alphabet.

Shaw considered the 26 letter Romanic alphabet unsatisfactory because it could not express 16 sounds in the English language without ". . . combining vowels such as 'oo' in look, or using digraphs such as 'th' in though". (1:167)

What was needed, Shaw said, was an alphabet in which one letter would produce one sound.

G. B. Shaw believed that what the English speaking countries needed was an alphabet consisting of approximately 40 sounds, 16 of which would be vowels. He further believed that each letter in his proposed alphabet should be written with one stroke, like a shorthand symbol, therefore, an entirely new set of alphabetical characters would have to be designed.

Sir Isaac Pitman, inventor of the system of shorthand, was well known to Shaw, however, Pitman's grandson, Sir James Pitman, was the person with whom Shaw corresponded most on the subject of a phonetic alphabet.

In the JOURNAL OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS for 1952, mention was made of the proposal by Mont Follick and seconded by Sir James Pitman which asked the government to make provision for:

" . . .the determination of a suitable system of simplified spelling and for the investigation of the improvements in reading ability of children likely to result from the introduction of this system and to facilitate the subsequent introduction of the system in certain schools." (14:41)

It is believed that Sir James Pitman would have received more and faster support for his system of writing if he would have initiated the bill in the House himself. Mont Follick, the gentleman who proposed the bill, was

looking for support for a spelling reform which he had invented but which was far more difficult than the phonetic alphabet intended by Shaw or Pitman.

Pitman was a member of the House of Commons and did not permit this legislative body to forget that a bill had been proposed regarding the development of a phonetic system of writing. On the 27th of February 1953, during a session, Sir James referred to the reading situation thus:

"The present results in reading are so deplorable that this House and the Minister must take notice of them. Every year 400,000 to 500,000 five year olds began their schooling, of whom some 129,000 to 150,000 were destined to leave school unable to read properly. They could not read long or complicated sentences because the technique of reading absorbed so much of their faculties that, by the end of the sentences they had forgotten the beginning and could not understand it.

"We know that the same sort of figures happen in Australia and America, and it seems to be particularly connected with the English speaking world." (24:85)

Miss Florence Horsbrough was Minister of Education in England at the time the bill for an augmented alphabet was proposed. She personally was opposed to the bill, hence, was astonished by the strong support it gained. Mont Follick, during a session in the House of Commons, asked Miss Horsbrough for a statement of her policy regarding a proposal by a competent research organization which would serve to investigate possible improvements in the teaching of reading by means of a system of simplified spelling. The Minister stated that:

"Any such organization could rely on my interest and goodwill for their proposal designed to investigate possible improvement in the fields of education. . . ." (14:41)

Following that statement, Follick and Pitman agreed to withdraw the bill. They had no financial aid from the Government but now they were assured of cooperation. Sir James was encouraged by the Minister's message, by his high regard for Shaw and by the example of his grandfather, Sir Isaac Pitman. Having obtained encouragement from those three prominent English figures as well as from many of his colleagues, Sir James pursued the idea of Shaw's phonetic system and he invented the 44 symbol alphabet which came to be known as the Initial Teaching Alphabet.

The Beginning of I.T.A.

From 1953, the year the Minister of England gave her statement in the House of Commons regarding educational research, to 1960, Sir James spent much of his time perfecting the Initial Teaching Alphabet.

Experimentation with the I.T.A. program was begun in England in the summer of 1960 under the auspices of London University's Institute of Education. There the project was placed in the hands of research officer John Downing, a psychologist with teaching experience in primary and secondary schools and research experience in education and industry.

In September 1961, the University of London Institute of Education and the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales sponsored the launching of reading research program which began in the schools of England. The first important practical step which was taken toward the setting up of the original British I.T.A. experiment was to publish a pamphlet entitled Some Reasons Why We Are Initiating an Investigation into the Early Stages of Learning to Read when the Matter To Be Read Is Printed in a Special Form Alleged To Be Easy to Learn and Leading Easily to a Full Reading Skill.

This pamphlet which was dated 1960, was a document of great historical significance. It was an appeal for funds and for moral support but more important it was an indication of which school districts were most likely to cooperate with the research and in the experiment. Also included in this pamphlet was the "no copyright" declaration on the new phonetic alphabet. This impressed a number of readers, since the implication was that this new alphabet was not a commercial enterprise.

In 1960, on the occasion of addressing the Royal Society of Arts, Sir James Pitman reinforced the "no copyright" statement when he said, "The copyright in the characters has been made free to all." (31:28)

Design and Method of the Original
British I.T.A. Experiment

The design of the original experiment, begun in September of 1961, was very simple. There were some financial limitations placed upon the experiment but the chief reason for the simplicity of design was to provide the answers to four practical questions which educators were compelled to know before initiating I.T.A. into their schools.

The four questions were:

1. Can children learn to read more easily with I.T.A. than with T.O.?
2. Can children transfer training in I.T.A. to reading in T.O.?
3. What are the effects of beginning with I.T.A. on reading in T.O. in later stages?
4. How does I.T.A. effect other aspects of children's development, e.g., in creative writing, spelling, general intellectual and emotional development? (31:29)

The design of that first experiment was guided by two basic principles, the principle of scientific rigor and that of a real-life setting.

The principle of scientific rigor caused the Reading Research Unit to select a control and an experimental group design in which the experimental group used I.T.A. while the control group did not.

During the first year of the experiment, 1961-1962, limitations were placed upon the study because both the

experimental and the first control group had been composed of volunteers. Downing reported that there were a few hundred subjects for the first year experiment.

Following the principle of scientific rigor the groups were matched on the variables of age, sex, social class, non-verbal and verbal reasoning abilities, urban or rural locations, school organization, school size, pupil-teacher ratio and physical environment in school. Both the I.T.A. and the T.O. groups used the same basal readers, the experimental group's having been printed in I.T.A. whereas the control group's copies were printed in T.O. Testing during the early period in the first British experiment was done in I.T.A. for those learning in I.T.A. and in T.O. for those learning in T.O.

The teaching methodology of the experimental and control groups had been matched in the sense that both groups used methods derived from the freedom to choose teaching methods. This has been a traditional professional right of British teachers. The only restriction which was imposed by the Reading Research Unit on the teachers in both I.T.A. and T.O. classes was that during the period of the experiment they had to continue to teach reading and writing as they had done before the experiment began.

It was noted by John Downing that the policy of allowing teachers to choose their own teaching methods violated

the basic principle of scientific rigor, in that it was not known precisely which method was used. The violation had been tolerated, however, because the principle of scientific rigor and the real-life setting are seldom compatible.

It was the second principle, that of ensuring that the experiment had been immediately meaningful to the teachers through its having been conducted under real-life classroom conditions, which justified the freedom of choice of teaching methodology. If a method had been dictated it would have been a very odd situation for British teachers and such dictation would have constituted an important extraneous variable in the experiment. Therefore, the normal liberal approach to teaching methods was preserved.

The First I.T.A. Experiment

In September of 1961, the three year I.T.A. experiment was first begun in England. Twenty schools participated in the initial program. In 1962 there were 75 participating schools and in 1963, 200 schools had joined the experiment. The first set of basic readers which were transliterated and used were the Janet and John Readers published by the Houghton Mifflin Company.

The first statistical report had been given by John Downing at the Twenty-seventh Education Conference held on November 1 and 2, 1962, in New York City. In reporting the

results, Downing said:

"In July of 1962, at the end of the first school year, 62% of the I.T.A. group had passed the beginning of Book Two, whereas by that time only 23% of the control group had done so; six months later, in January 1963, the proportion was still only 55% in the control group. In other words, after one and a half years nearly half of the control group were not yet beyond Book One, while only 15% of the I.T.A. pupils remained at that stage." (11:44)

Downing conducted other research during this initial experiment. One investigation was a comparison in word recognition. The Schnoll Graded Word Reading Test was used for determining this skill. The standard version and spelling of the English alphabet had been given to the control group while the experimental group had taken the same test transliterated in I.T.A. The test, Downing reported, was given twice; the first time toward the end of the first school year in June 1962 and again half way through the second year in February 1963. Mr. Downing, in reporting the results of this Word Recognition Test stated that the findings confirmed those previously given on reading in general. His report was as follows:

"At the end of the first school year the I.T.A. group had very much higher scores than the control group, and eight months later the superiority of word recognition in I.T.A. was even more marked. For instance, 50% of the I.T.A. group scored ten or more in June 1962, compared with only 16% of the control group, and eight months later the control group still had not reached the 50% level. Only 44% of the children learning the conventional method could score ten

or more after one year and a half, whereas by this time nearly 80% of the I.T.A. pupils reached this level of achievement in word recognition." (11:47)

Another test which was administered was the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability. This was a comprehensive reading test consisting of six passages of English narrative prose. The control pupils were given the standard edition, Form C, while the experimental group was given the identical test but transliterated into I.T.A. The results were:

"Only seven percent of the I.T.A. group scored nil in this test as compared with 43% of the control group. As many as 62% of the I.T.A. pupils scored 21 or more as compared with only 10% of the control group." (11:51)

Other skills such as comprehension, speed of reading and spelling were also tested. The results obtained from these tests followed a similar pattern of those previously reported in this paper in that the I.T.A. group tested significantly higher.

In summing up the preliminary reports for the 1962 Twenty-seventh Educational Conference, Downing reported that the following conclusions were drawn from those samples which had already been reported:

"Young children get through their beginning reading program faster when their books are printed in I.T.A.

"They can recognize more words in print when they are in I.T.A.

"They can more readily read continuous English prose accurately when it is printed in I.T.A.

"They can comprehend more continuous English in print if I.T.A. is used.

"They can read faster when the medium is I.T.A." (11:57)

The results of the first I.T.A. experiment which were reported at the Twenty-seventh Educational Conference looked promising. Downing himself, though, cautioned his listeners by saying:

". . .The data we are now able to present are from only a segment of our total sample which happens to have entered the experimental and control groups earliest. The ideal comparison between experimental and control schools is therefore not yet approachable. We are only at the beginning of a long term study, and these early results are presented as part of the history of our work to date. Final and conclusive issues connected with the use of I.T.A. for beginning reading have been thoroughly investigated under the rigorous scientific control of our complete research program. We would only submit that the preliminary evidence indicates that Sir James Pitman's Initial Teaching Alphabet, with its design for transfer to conventional print at the later stage, does appear to be a very promising solution to the problem of teaching beginners to read." (11:62)

I.T.A. Experiment in the United States

Educators throughout the United States had watched the launching of the I.T.A. program in England with care. Some looked at it from a skeptical point of view whereas others waited for the first statistical report in eager anticipation.

Mrs. Anita Metzger, Principal of the Metzger School in Ventnor, New Jersey and Dr. Albert Mazurkiewicz, an Associate

Professor of Education at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania were two of the many American educators who not only viewed the British experiment from afar, but who visited the schools in England and Wales and completed a course of study on the use and effectiveness of I.T.A. under John Downing.

In January of 1963 Mrs. Metzger introduced I.T.A. into her kindergarten. She was the first American educator to bring I.T.A. into the United States. Metzger School was a private institution, therefore, Mrs. Metzger was able to begin the program without undue pressure from the district, county or state. Her biggest concern in the beginning had been to sell the idea of a new beginning alphabet to the parents of her kindergarten children. She accomplished this in a very short time because by the end of the school term, in June 1963, the children in Metzger School kindergarten were successfully reading in I.T.A.

The largest experiment using I.T.A. in the United States was the Lehigh-Bethlehem I.T.A. Study in Pennsylvania. This study was begun in September of 1963 under the direction of Dr. Mazurkiewicz and Dr. Rebecca Stewart, Director of Elementary Education for the Bethlehem Area School System. This particular program received impetus from John Downing's oral and written reports to the American educational bodies as well as from Dr. Mazurkiewicz's personal contact with

Downing. The Ford Foundation Grant was given for the further research of the I.T.A. Study.

The Bethlehem experiment, though not long in preparation, had not moved as smoothly as it may have appeared. The idea of a new writing system excited the interest of many; some viewed it as The Panacea, some as an idea worth trying and still others were extremely skeptical. News articles flooded the magazines and newspapers. Many of these articles were written by reading specialists, teachers, and some by parents, all questioning the use of I.T.A.

Warren Cutts, a reading specialist from the United States office of Education said:

"This is a very interesting thing, but we don't know yet what the long range effect will be. Many new methods and media of teaching have been tried through the years and have proved disappointing. I am very much in favor of this experiment but I say, "Let's take a closer look." We don't know yet whether there will be any residual effect on the child from using the Initial Teaching Alphabet. Only time will tell." (9:76)

Dr. William Sheldon, the director of the Reading and Language Arts Center at the Syracuse School of Education and Dr. Roma Gans, Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, both experts in the field of reading, questioned the wisdom of initiating a large scale program which had not proven itself. Sheldon wrote: "We suspect that the optimism of several of the I.T.A. research workers is unwarranted in regard to all pupils. . ." (18:130) And he further questioned

whether or not the use of I.T.A. was sound psychologically. He said that a number of reading specialists have scoffed at I.T.A. and have labelled it a passing fad.

Dr. Roma Gans took the same position as did Dr. Sheldon. He said:

" . . . those who are enthusiastic about the new medium and who are indeed adopting it must recognize the fact that I.T.A. is not as yet based upon research results. We see I.T.A. with its 44 symbols being presented as the latest guarantee that all children, using this one plan, will become successful readers." (18:35)

Not all American educators then, were convinced that I.T.A. was a good thing. One of the best reading specialists in the country, Dr. Donald Durrell of Boston University predicted that, "It will be forgotten in ten years." (8:34)

The research findings of the English experiment served as a basis for the first large American Schools experiment using the Initial Teaching Alphabet. Dr. Mazurkiewicz had carefully followed the English experiment and had personally made a study of activities of I.T.A. teachers in England. He lost no time in getting the ground work done and in initiating the program in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Albert Mazurkiewicz stated the position of the experiment when he wrote in November 1964, "Essentially this Lehigh-Bethlehem I.T.A. Study is first a demonstration of the use of the Initial Teaching Alphabet in reading instruction and secondly an evaluation of its effectiveness." (32:766)

The program in Bethlehem was patterned after that in England. The English program had begun at that time the third and final year of experimentation. John Downing and other English educators such as Professors Cyril Burt, P. E. Vernon and Dr. Joyce Morris offered many constructive suggestions for the Lehigh-Bethlehem Study.

In the fall of 1963, then, one-third of the total first grade population in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania was given instruction in reading using I.T.A., two-thirds of the total population served as the control group. The students of the two groups were matched on the basis of sex, age, intelligence, readiness and on socio-economic backgrounds. That experiment was to last three years as did the British experiment. The second year of the experiment though, two-thirds of all in-coming first graders received instruction in I.T.A. and one-third served as the control group. In the third and final year the entire first grade population was taught to read by the use of the I.T.A. reading medium.

Since I.T.A. is a medium for and not a method of teaching reading, long periods of preparation were unnecessary for the teachers. The majority of the teachers involved in the I.T.A. program during its first year in Bethlehem were volunteer teachers and were given two and one-half days of workshop training under Dr. Mazurkiewicz. In reporting on the results of the workshop Dr. Mazurkiewicz summarized as

follows:

"Workshop training included two elements of prime importance: how to write the alphabet and how to spell using the Initial Teaching Alphabet. The teachers readily learned the twenty additional symbols but admitted having difficulty in learning to transcribe sounds into print." (32:767)

Fifteen first grade classes comprised the one-third I.T.A. population in 1963. The exact methodology used by those 15 classroom teachers was not clearly stated but what was stated was:

"The methodology used emphasized the deciphering of the printed code by teaching children to associate each of the 44 symbols of I.T.A. with the spoken sound it represents. Simultaneously, reading activities that develop thinking skills were stressed to insure that children approached reading from the outset as a meaningful process." (32:768)

The text books which were used for the Lehigh-Bethlehem Experiment were the I.T.A. Easy-To-Read Series by Tanyzer and Mazurkiewicz and were published by I.T.A. publications of New York.

Observations of the experiment were carefully made and the results were kept and published beginning with the first ten weeks mark. At that time it was reported that 10% of the I.T.A. group could read and deal effectively with a vocabulary of 320 words in comparison to the same percentage of children using T.O. in the co-basal program having mastered only 66 sight words.

The transition from I.T.A. to T.O. began very early

for some children during that first year of experimentation. In an early report given to Dr. Mazurkiewicz it was stated that some children had begun the transition by the fourth month, however, formal instruction in transition had taken place in April. And about 67% of the students had made the transition by the end of the ninth month of school.

The statistics given for the ninth month of the Bethlehem Area Experiment were:

"Some 91% of the I.T.A. population achieved the second grade or above as compared with 67.4% of the T.O. population. Better than 29% of the I.T.A. population achieved third reader or above grade levels as compared to 10.8% of the T.O. population. An examination of the portion of the population below the second grade level norm for year end testing indicated that 9% of the I.T.A. group scored below that grade while almost 33% of the T.O. group were below it. While none of the I.T.A. population achieved below the 1.5% grade level over 11% of the T.O. population did." (32:770)

The conclusions which were drawn at the end of the first year's experiment were that the program thus far had been successful, however, many educators agreed that it was too early to take sides for or against the use of I.T.A.

Nancy Larrick, former President of the International Reading Association and a well known writer about children and their education followed the first year experiment in Bethlehem very carefully. She visited the Bethlehem Area Schools and made several interesting and worthwhile observations.

Miss Larrick noted on visiting three classrooms that the Teacher's Guide for the Mazurkiewicz-Tanyzer Series was written in the old style of question and answer, therefore, the approach the teachers were using stifled the creativity of both the teachers and the pupils. She observed that the teachers in all three classrooms were teaching the same story and that they were asking the same questions.

It was further observed by Miss Larrick that the children in the middle and upper groups which she visited read and wrote more fluently than any first graders she had ever previously seen. She commented, however, on the fact that all of the children's activities seemed to have been shelved. She said:

"There was no evidence of science projects under way, no rock collection or seed boxes. Most of the experience charts dictated by children and the stories they wrote were about pictures in their workbooks rather than their own interests and experiences." (12:67)

The observations made by Miss Larrick and suggested to the teachers in the Bethlehem schools were well received and acted upon during the second year of the Bethlehem Experiment.

Dr. Rebecca Stewart described what happened to that first experimental population as they moved into the second grade:

". . . Approximately 15% began developmental reading instruction in 3¹ reader with the emphasis

on thinking and comprehension skills. Approximately 20% were still using the I.T.A. program reading in Books 5, 6, and 7 with the majority in formal transition at the end of Book 6 or in Book 7 which is printed almost exclusively in traditional print. The remaining 65% were placed in a developmental program at the 2² level." (38:661)

A report was not given by Dr. Stewart regarding the control population on entering second grade other than that the data collected from The California Reading Test indicated that neither population suffered from forgetting, but that the I.T.A. population showed a 6% increase in reading comprehension skill. The percentage of gain of the control group was near 1.3%.

Dr. Stewart, at the end of the second year of experimentation, gave a statistical report of the 31 first grade classes which had used I.T.A. in 1964-1965 in the Bethlehem Area Schools. The population was again matched on terms of sex, age, socio-economic backgrounds and I.Q. In April of 1965 she requested the report of the teachers on the level of texts used for reading instruction. The report was given in the form of a Table: (38:664)

Table VII

Instructional Level Achievement of the 1964-1965
First Grade Population in April 1965

<u>Reader Level</u>	Proportion of I.T.A. <u>N = 926</u>	Proportion of T.O. <u>N = 453</u>
3-1 T.O.	32.18	-
3-1 (I.T.A. Book 6)	15.44	-
2-2 (I.T.A. Book 5)	17.17	.66
2-1 (I.T.A. Book 4)	21.38	26.05
1 (I.T.A. Book 3)	4.32	53.42
P (I.T.A. Book 2)	5.94	14.57
PP and below	3.56	5.30

The results indicated a much higher instructional level for those children who had been using I.T.A. In summarizing the experiment after two years, Dr. Rebecca Stewart wrote:

"Using I.T.A. as the initial teaching medium for teaching reading provided a learning environment which made observable differences in reading achievement, in independent learning, in motivation, in perserverence, in the ability to observe, and in the ability to write.

"The first two years of teaching with I.T.A. have not been problem-free. The flood of visitors, the interest of the mass media, and the hundreds of letters continue and yet we know these externals are unimportant in relation to the opportunities I.T.A. have opened for the children and for the teachers. For the children it has meant an early and easier introduction to the joys of reading, the status symbol of the educated man. For the teacher it has been a revelation of the ability of students to persevere, to learn independently, to enjoy a learning task. Most of all there is the satisfaction of seeing all children learn, not all at the same rate or with the same proficiency, but all learning and revelling in the task." (38:665)

In the third and final year of the Lehigh-Bethlehem experiment the statistical results followed the pattern of the previous two years in the Bethlehem experiment. The results indicated that the I.T.A. pupils read sooner than did the T.O. students. The results of the Bethlehem experiment coincided with the results obtained on the British experiment which was completed in 1964.

Miss Rita McNerney, Project Coordinator of the Bethlehem Area School District issued a newsletter at the close of the experiment in Bethlehem. In this newsletter she gave a summary of the three year experiment. The results which she presented were most favorable toward I.T.A. as a beginning reading medium. Miss McNerney reported:

"The three year evaluation shows that children in I.T.A. materials:

1. Learn more readily, achieve significantly superior reading skill at an earlier time, read more widely, write more prolifically, extensively and with a higher degree of proficiency than their T.O. counterparts and have no difficulty in making a reading transition to T.O. materials when they are allowed to develop the appropriate confidence and efficiency levels.

2. Spelling skill in I.T.A. (better described as encoding) approaches perfection fairly early. The transition to spelling in T.O. is relatively easy when directed instruction and guidance is given in subsequent years and achievement in spelling on standardized tests and in creative writing significantly better than the achievement of T.O. taught children at the end of the second and third years.

3. Word recognition achievement in T.O. at the end of the first and second years is significantly better for I.T.A. taught children but no differences are found at the end of the third year from the T.O. taught population.

4. The lack of inhibition in writing for I.T.A. taught children noted early in the first year continues unabated into the second and third years and significant differences are found in these children's creative writing in terms of the number of running words and the number of polysyllabic words used. No differences in the use of the mechanics of reading were found between the populations.

5. Comprehension as measured by instructional levels and reader level achievement in all years favor the I.T.A. population, while standardized test achievement in comprehension shows no differences from the T.O. population.

6. No inferior results on such measures as rate of reading or accuracy of reading are found, suggesting that the I.T.A. to T.O. procedure establishes no negative characteristics, no hinderances on later achievement." (34:1,2)

From the reports which have been given on the two largest I.T.A. experiments, the one conducted in England and the one in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, it has been concluded that I.T.A. is a successful reading medium.

Miscellaneous I.T.A. Studies

Hundreds of other schools in the United States, both public and private have used I.T.A. since it was first introduced into this country. The I.T.A. medium has been used with adult groups, with the educably mentally retarded, with

older normal children who may have had a reading block or some psychological difficulty which impeded their reading progress, and with preschool children. The largest percentage of I.T.A. students, however, has been the normal first grade student.

In Detroit, Michigan, Dr. Gerald E. Clark, Jr. from the University of Detroit conducted a study using 53 adult males, most of whom were illiterate. The program lasted eight weeks consisting of approximately 70 hours of formal training.

The final report on this particular study was segmented due to the fact that several teachers participated in the program and chose to report at different times. The conclusions drawn on this program from the materials at hand were that it was successful in that the 53 men learned to read past the second book. The main difficulty was that there were too few high interest low vocabulary books for these men once they had made the transition to T.O.

Another program of interest was the I.T.A. program at the State Prison in San Quentin, California. This program was conducted by Mr. Keith Whitwell. A brief report on the I.T.A. program submitted early in the spring of 1965 by Mr. Whitwell after one quarter of working with I.T.A. follows:

"Our program at San Quentin primarily concerned ten men at first grade literacy training level. Five

of these men were completely illiterate and five had very limited reading and writing ability at the time of their initial enrollment in the I.T.A. program. All ten had received previous training in reading with traditional orthography. Eight of the ten men made definite, positive progress with I.T.A., and yet, five of these eight had made no real progress with T.O. Two men were simply not able to forget T.O. training sufficiently to fully utilize I.T.A.; i.e., they continued to name letters and to approach their reading problems by using T.O. In spite of this we are enthusiastic because five of the men had not made worthwhile reading and writing progress with T.O., and all five men are now reading and writing. Only one man made the full transition from I.T.A. to T.O. and he did it in a matter of four weeks; his ability to learn to read so quickly is really unusual with respect to the average illiterate student we enroll." (25:214)

A number of programs had developed in which disadvantaged children profited from the use of I.T.A. In Nashville, Tennessee a group of Southern Negro children were taught to read by using I.T.A. and the Peabody Language Development Kit. The Otis Orchard School in Spokane, Washington used I.T.A. on a group of children who had been placed in special education. A parochial school in Markham, Illinois also set up an I.T.A. program for a group of children in special education. These were but a few of the workable programs which had been established for the disadvantaged child.

Nursery School and Kindergarten I.T.A. training had been carried on in Princeton, New Jersey, Santa Barbara, California, St. Cloud, Minnesota, Superior, Wisconsin and many other places.

The highest percentage of I.T.A. programs, though, had been carried on in first grade classrooms with children of normal or average intelligence. Dr. Goldman, a specialist in the field of reading stated:

"Educators have been sufficiently impressed with the results yielded by I.T.A. Significant superiority in reading skills, as compared to levels obtained through the use of traditional orthography, has been reported. . . It has been indicated that on every test given to measure word recognition, accuracy, speed of reading, reading level and comprehension, children have scored significantly higher with the use of I.T.A. than the children given traditional reading approaches." (21:19)

From the statistics and observations which had been reported the wide use of I.T.A. in its earliest stages seemed to have been justified. On the other hand, Dr. Jeanne Chall of the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University made a special plea of caution regarding the wide use of I.T.A. at such an early stage in its development. Dr. Chall, after carefully scrutinizing the published results of both the English and the United States experiments said:

"So far, the experimental evidence is still too limited to allow definite conclusions about the long-term advantages (and disadvantages) of using a modified alphabet. That I.T.A. had its share of failures we know from a paper Sir James Pitman presented at the Educational Records Bureau Conference in 1963. We also can infer some lack of success from Downing's report revealing that after two years, 15% of I.T.A. trained children had not yet been transferred to T.O.; this figure recalls the number of failures in grades above the first revealed by various surveys made in the United States of children taught without modified alphabets (Bond and Tinker 1957). Furthermore, we

need more studies comparing I.T.A. with other innovative methods and materials that put a greater stress on early acquisition of the alphabetic principle - the linguistic approaches of Bloomfield and Fries and the systematic phonics - linguistic programs." (6:123)

An observation which seems to have been shared by many able onlookers was that I.T.A. was not to be overlooked in the educational realm. The promise it held for beginning reading improvement, creative writing and interest in books and learning was worth the risk of possible failure. Our best authorities have agreed that success in education depended first and last on skill in reading. They have also agreed that our efforts to teach all children to read well has left much to be desired. Perhaps I.T.A. will have been the key which opened the door to a truly literate society.

The following chapter will deal with the results of a questionnaire which was sent to 115 I.T.A. teachers.

CHAPTER III

SURVEY OF TEACHER OPINION

In order to determine the use and effectiveness of I.T.A. as a beginning reading medium, a questionnaire was sent to 115 classroom teachers who had used I.T.A. The teachers were randomly chosen from schools across the United States.

Results of the Questionnaire

Of the 115 teachers, 89 answered the questionnaire. Two of the teachers were working with an individualized tutoring program and did not feel they could adequately answer the questionnaire; 11 teachers had discontinued the use of I.T.A. and 13 did not respond.

Table 1 showed the results of Questions 1, 2 and 3. These three questions dealt with the teacher preparation and experience. Throughout this chapter, No. refers to the number of responses given by the teachers to the questionnaire.

TABLE 1. TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING OF I.T.A. TEACHERS

Yrs. of teaching experience	No.	Yrs. of teaching I.T.A.	No.	Training in I.T.A.	No.
25 or more	24	7-8	5	Course in College	6
15-24	35	5-6	18	Workshop	51
5-14	19	3-4	49	In-service	11
0-4	11	1-2	17	No training	21
TOTALS	89		89		89

Table 1 revealed that 66% of the teachers answering the questionnaire had been teaching fifteen years or longer. That figure indicated that the majority of the teachers were experienced teachers. A total of 79% of the teachers had been teaching I.T.A. three years or longer. From these figures, it is evident that the greatest percentage of teachers who had answered the questionnaire were experienced teachers having used both I.T.A. and T.O. and were, therefore, in a position to evaluate both alphabets from an objective point of view. The results showed that 87% of the teachers using I.T.A. had some formal training in using the I.T.A. medium.

It was of great interest to the writer to know approximately what percentage of schools had adopted I.T.A. for all first grade pupils. Information regarding the

grouping of pupils and the method of placing pupils into I.T.A. or T.O. programs was also of interest, and therefore, requested. The results of these questions have been shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. FIRST GRADE CLASSES USING THE I.T.A. MEDIUM

Complete first grades presently using I.T.A.	No.	How I.T.A. classes were chosen	No.	Grouping of I.T.A. class	No.
Yes, all first graders	19	All first grade students	11	Hetero- genously	22
No, not all	64	Testing	43	Homogenously	64
No response	6	Principal determines	14	Special class	3
		Teacher determines	9		
		Parent request	6		
		Other	6		
TOTALS	89		89		89

Table 3 revealed information regarding the schools which had adopted the I.T.A. program for all first grades but discontinued the program. The reasons for discontinuing the program have been shown.

TABLE 3. DISCONTINUANCE OF I.T.A.

Previous adoption of I.T.A. in grade one	No.	Reasons for discontinuing I.T.A.	No.
Adopted I.T.A./Continuing I.T.A.	19	Lack of materials	6
Adopted I.T.A./Discontinued I.T.A.	20	Parental objection	8
Never adopted I.T.A. for all	50	Lack of qualified teachers	2
		Reasons unknown	4
TOTALS	89		20

The results of Tables 2 and 3 indicated that I.T.A. had been used on a trial basis. At one time 44% of the schools sampled adopted I.T.A. for all first graders but for various reasons 20 schools had dropped the program. Only 21% of the selected schools had adopted I.T.A. for all first graders in the school. Three of the six teachers who had not answered the question as to whether or not all first grade pupils were taught by the use of I.T.A. stated that I.T.A. had been used in special programs and not as a first grade program. Parent request for I.T.A. was only .06% in all the schools contacted, whereas, parental objection to the program was .09%. This indicated that I.T.A. was not necessarily well accepted by parents.

The figures showed that 71% of the teachers preferred

homogenous grouping. The method of choosing the students to participate in the I.T.A. program favored the testing procedure by 48% of the schools sampled.

Some children made the transition from I.T.A. to T.O. in the first grade and some did not make it until second grade or later. Table 4 shows the transition as reported by the I.T.A. teachers.

TABLE 4. TRANSITION FROM I.T.A. TO T.O.

Level at which transition is made from I.T.A. to T.O.	No.
Grade 1, first semester	0
Grade 1, second semester	69
Grade 2, first semester	15
Grade 2, second semester	2
Later than grade 2	3
TOTALS	89

The above Table indicated that 77% of the teachers included in this survey stated that the transition from I.T.A. to T.O. had been made during the first grade.

I.T.A. is a beginning reading medium but the use of this medium has also affected other school subjects, among these are creative writing, spelling, and phonics. This survey showed which school subjects were most affected by the

use of I.T.A.

Table 5 presented the teacher opinions as to which subjects were most affected by the use of I.T.A. It also showed in which subjects the transition was most easily made.

TABLE 5. SUBJECTS MOST AFFECTED BY I.T.A. AND THE TRANSITION FROM I.T.A.

Subjects most affected by the use of I.T.A.	No.	Transition most easily made in	No.
Reading	31	Reading	74
Spelling	7	Spelling	9
Phonics	8	Phonics	-
Creative writing	39	Creative writing	2
Uncertain	10	Uncertain	8
Unanswered	4	Unanswered	6
TOTALS	89		89

Teacher opinion, as has been shown in Table 5, indicated that creative writing and reading ability were the subjects most affected by the use of I.T.A. The transition from I.T.A. to T.O. is undoubtedly most easily made in the field of reading.

A question was asked of the teachers regarding the future of I.T.A. and whether or not they thought sufficient research had been done on the subject. The responses to

these questions have been shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6. THE FUTURE OF I.T.A.

I.T.A. is here to stay	No.	I.T.A. needs more research	No.
Yes	56	Yes	33
No	17	No	42
Uncertain	16	Uncertain	14
TOTALS	89		89

According to Table 6, opinions differed widely regarding the future of I.T.A. as a reading medium. It was difficult to predict what the future of I.T.A. will be. Each year, however, more schools were reported as having tried the I.T.A. medium for at least some of their first graders.

Educators recognized the fact that success in any given area of the curriculum depended to a great extent upon the knowledge, interest and enthusiasm of the teacher. A question was asked of the teachers regarding how they viewed their success as I.T.A. teachers. The results are tabulated in Table 7.

TABLE 7. SELF-EVALUATION OF I.T.A. TEACHERS

Self-evaluation of teachers	No.
More successful teaching I.T.A.	53
As successful as in T.O.	34
Less successful teaching I.T.A.	2
TOTAL	89

The results of Table 7 showed that 59% of the teachers felt more successful in I.T.A. instruction than in T.O. teaching. That percentage led the writer to conclude that the recent training for and the enthusiasm of a new program accounts for this percentage.

Comments by I.T.A. Advocates

The following are comments made by the teachers to item 12 on the questionnaire:

The second grade teacher is sold on it. She has taught 17 years and she says it is the best year of teaching she has ever had. We only wish we would have found it years ago.

I.T.A. is the only way to start out a group of beginners. I've taught for 35 years and I have never had such success in teaching reading. The enthusiasm on the part of the children is unbelievable. We are using the I.T.A. EASY TO READ series and I could not keep the children in one or two groups. I had to individualize because I couldn't hold some of them back.

This is my first year of teaching with I.T.A. I have found it most successful thus far but I have reservations about using it for all children. In my past experience I have noticed that slower children often have trouble with phonics and so I would hesitate using I.T.A. with a slower group of youngsters.

This is my second year of teaching with I.T.A. I am not at all sold on it. I am seeking a position where I.T.A. is not used.

It is the greatest thing that could have happened in this century!

God bless Sir James Pitman!

Frankly I wouldn't waste money on this program. We had just as good reading results without it.

As a reading medium I.T.A. is fine but as a writing tool it is magnificent! The creative writing these children put out is superior to any I've seen in my 16 years of teaching first grade.

If I.T.A. is used properly, I can't help but see how it can be a success. I have seen teachers step into the program unprepared, though, and they are at a disadvantage. I feel it is unfair to the teachers and to the I.T.A. program.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Initial Teaching Alphabet which was begun in England in 1961 has rapidly spread through most English speaking countries. It is a beginning reading medium which has been used to help beginners master the sounds of the English language more efficiently. The variety of material available for reading instruction indicated the numerous attempts to solve the difficulties children ordinarily had in achieving reading skill in early grades.

Results which were available from comparable populations suggested that traditional orthography was a significant source of difficulty in beginning reading. Therefore, Pitman designed the Initial Teaching Alphabet as an interim teaching medium to be used only until the pupil is ready to transfer to conventional print.

The need for a phonetic alphabet has been known for years. Several attempts had been made to invent such an alphabet but each attempt was put aside in anticipation of something better.

Sir James Pitman, a member of the House of Parliament, was the person most responsible for the invention and rapid growth of the Initial Teaching Alphabet. In 1961 the English schools, under the guidance of John Downing, piloted the

first I.T.A. program. By 1963 I.T.A. had already begun to spread through the United States with a large experimental program leading the way under the direction of Dr. Albert Mazurkiewicz of Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The two initial experiments, the one conducted in England and the one in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, reported significantly higher reading results in the areas of comprehension, word analysis and speed in reading over the results obtained from the control groups. It was also reported that the ability to do creative writing was also greatly enhanced by the use of a phonetic alphabet.

I.T.A. is a medium which can be used with any method of teaching reading. There is a series of I.T.A. Readers available but any series of basal readers could have been transliterated into I.T.A.

Interest on the part of parents and educators as exemplified in literature, regarding a new reading medium had been high since they have realized that the success in beginning reading instruction determines future success. The results of this study show, though, that parent interest and enthusiasm had decreased considerably in a period of eight years.

A cross country survey sampling was taken to determine the use and effectiveness of I.T.A. in the American schools.

Eighty-nine out of 115 teachers responded to the questionnaire and the responses were given in Chapter III.

Conclusions

There have been educators over the entire United States who have been convinced, since the founding of the Initial Teaching Alphabet, that it has been the most effective reading medium in existence. On the other hand, there are those educators who have had experience with I.T.A. and who suggest that it be given a more systematic and thorough investigation.

Teachers, reading specialists and parents were impressed as they visited the classrooms which piloted the two initial I.T.A. programs. However, when some of those same teachers began using I.T.A. they concluded that it was not as effective, as a reading medium, as they had believed it to be.

This survey has indicated that the teachers contacted seemed to favor the use of I.T.A. as a writing or spelling medium. Only 34% of them reported that reading was the subject most affected by the use of I.T.A.

Perhaps then, the loud acclaims for I.T.A. were made before the alphabet had been sufficiently tried. Even though I.T.A. was never devised as a spelling reform it seems to

have proved effective in this area for the primary child. Reports from I.T.A. teachers indicated that creative self-expression was enhanced by the use of I.T.A.

Recommendations

I.T.A. was a reading medium which proved successful for the instruction of some children. It was not a cure-all for the reading difficulties of all beginning readers. It is going to have to be the decision of the educators to decide when and with whom the Initial Teaching Alphabet will be most effective.

The final evaluation of I.T.A. is yet to come. The use of the alphabet needs further study.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Letter Sent to I.T.A. Teachers

The following is a copy of the letter which was sent to 115 randomly selected teachers who were or had been teaching I.T.A.

2116 East First Ave.
Spokane, Washington 99202
September 18, 1968

Dear I.T.A. Teachers,

I am a graduate student at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. As a partial fulfillment toward a Masters degree in Elementary Education, I am writing my professional paper on the Initial Teaching Alphabet.

It is quite natural, I feel, to turn to you for some information regarding I.T.A. Enclosed is a questionnaire which I am requesting that you fill out and return to me by November 15th in the self-addressed envelope provided. If you wish a copy of the results of this study, please indicate the same.

The creative writing aspect of I.T.A. is of great interest to me. If you have any original stories written by your pupils, I would be most interested in seeing them and perhaps even using them for my paper.

Thanking you for your interest and support, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Sister Mary Goretti

APPENDIX

Appendix B

Questionnaire Sent to I.T.A. Teachers

The following is a copy of the questionnaire which was sent to 115 randomly selected teachers who were or had been teaching I.T.A.:

1. How many years of teaching experience have you had?
2. How many years have you taught I.T.A.?
3. How long a teacher-training period did you have in preparation for teaching I.T.A.?
Was this preparation by means of a workshop_____,
a college course_____, in-service days_____?
4. Is I.T.A. being taught to all first graders in your school? Had I.T.A. ever been adopted for all first graders in your school? If so, why was it discontinued?
5. If I.T.A. is not taught to all first graders, how are the groups chosen?
6. How are the I.T.A. classes grouped? Heterogenously_____
Homogenously_____Special Education_____
7. Approximately when was or when will the transition be made from I.T.A. to T.O.?
First semester, first grade___First semester, second grade___,
Second semester, first grade___, Second semester, second grade___.
8. Which of the following subjects was most affected by the use of I.T.A.?
Reading___Phonics___Creative writing___Spelling___
9. In which of the above subject areas is the transition most easily made?

10. Do you feel I.T.A. still needs research?
Do you feel I.T.A. is here to stay as a beginning reading medium?
11. As an I.T.A. teacher do you feel more successful_____,
as successful_____ or less successful_____ than
you did in teaching T.O.?
12. Additional Comments