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University of Iowa
SERVICE BULLETIN

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VOL. XV

JANUARY 10, 1931

NO. 2

Announcement of

**THE VALIDATION OF THE IOWA ELEMENTARY
LANGUAGE TESTS**

by

HARVEY LEIGH BALLENGER, Ph.D.

Published by the State University of Iowa and obtainable
from the Department of Publications at \$0.75 a copy.

The results of our language teaching have been very unsatisfactory. One important reason for this condition is our failure to form language objectives and to check up on our teaching in line with these objectives. The development of a language ability cannot be left to a general type of instruction but must be the result of the formation of a number of definite language habits.

An analysis of the language field shows that ability to express oneself in either oral or written form is not acquired as a whole, but is composed of many unit skills the sum total of which represents language ability. In written language alone there are many skills instead of one. These include the correct use of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Each of these can, in turn, be reduced to more elementary skills, such as selecting those with the proper meaning, choosing the ones that are correct in their usage, and also using words in their correct form.

Groups of words should be arranged which will not include such things as slang, faulty expressions, or double negatives; and sentences should be complete and properly organized. In both sentence and paragraph the proper capitalizations and punctuations represent a very important skill, and the abilities to include in a paragraph only those things which pertain to a certain specific topic and to arrange them in a logical order are of fundamental importance.

Habitual skill in the use of these factors in language should be an objective of our teaching. An outline of language ability including the points in the above analysis as well as others appears in detail in this study and was used as a basis upon which to develop a group of tests which could adequately measure pupil's ability in the various language skills growing out of this analysis. Only those which could be measured

objectively were included in the experimental edition of the tests. Reports which have been made upon language errors commonly made by children were also given consideration in the development of the tests.

The experimental edition was given to nearly one thousand Iowa school children in grades four to nine inclusive and the results tabulated and given statistical treatment in order to determine the items which were the most reliable and valid.

A detailed description of the Iowa Elementary Language Tests is made a part of the study. These include tests in spelling, word meaning, choice of words, correct usage, grammatical form recognition (given only in grades six to nine), faulty expressions, sentence sense, sentence structure, sentence organization, capitalization, punctuation, paragraph structure, and paragraph organization.

Each of the tests is criticized upon the basis of its performance as to validity, reliability, ease of administration, objectivity of scoring, interpretation of results, diagnostic value, number and equivalence of duplicate forms, and mechanical features.

A high degree of validity was secured by (a) including only material which has been found, through research, to be socially useful, (b) making a pre-survey of recent textbooks and courses of study in language which influenced the decisions made in regard to excluding some items from the tests and retaining others, (c) giving consideration to the recommendations of committees on curricula, (d) securing judgments of competent persons, (e) determining correlation coefficients against teachers' estimates of their pupils' abilities in written language, (f) determining interest correlations as suggested by Dr. Terman. The average correlation of each of the tests with the other tests

is, in every case, lower than the correlation of that test with the whole group of tests.

The average reliability of the group of tests is .881 ranging from .700 to .956. An explanation is also given of the way by which a revised form of greater reliability and validity can be developed from the experimental edition.