LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

In her commentary, RRQ, 15 (2), Hodges expands Durkin's definition of reading comprehension instruction in RRQ, 14 (4), by adding categories for assessment, aid with assignments, preparation, and word meaning instruction. Hodges justifies this action by stating that Durkin's findings may be cited frequently as an explanation for poor reading scores, without explaining how good readers acquire their ability to comprehend (p. 299). However, Hodges's endeavor is unfortunate for two reasons. Durkin characterizes the activities under these added categories as sadly lacking merit when performed by the observed teachers. Furthermore, Hodges's commentary diverts attention from the intent, if not the point, of the article. Durkin implies that teachers appear to be substantially irrational—that is, there is a decline in their capacity to make intelligent instructional decisions based on their own insight. In short, she suggests that teachers are fettered by materials and disavow their instruction.

Durkin laments the paucity of knowledge concerning factors that influence teachers' actions during reading instruction (p. 525, 526). She offers three propositions as possible explanations (526):

1) Teachers are not involved with reading instruction; they do what is easy.
2) Teachers believe that reading materials can instruct.
3) Teachers think they are fulfilling instructional expectations of administrators and parents.

I would add a fourth proposition: Teachers may believe that commercially prepared materials embody scientific truth. To investigate these propositions, studies of teachers' alienation from reading instruction (proposition 1) and reification of instruction (the obverse of propositions 2 and 4) should be initiated. These subjective aspects must be accompanied by a study of the situational constraints upon teachers' perceptions and actions within reading programs (proposition 3).

Observational studies and commentaries will not test the truth of these propositions. Regardless of Dr. Rosenshine's protestations to the contrary, studies are needed that will involve teachers' perceptions of self, materials, and instruction. Without such investigations, reading researchers and professors will be left to conjecture about why teachers use commercially prepared materials during 90 percent of designated instructional time.

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