Investigation of audience response to dramatic poetic literature when perceived through silent reading and oral group reading

Anabel Osborn

The University of Montana

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AN INVESTIGATION OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO DRAMATIC
POETIC LITERATURE WHEN PERCEIVED THROUGH SILENT
READING AND ORAL GROUP READING

by

Anabel Osborn

B.A. University of Washington, 1941

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of the requirements for the degree of

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1968

Approved by:

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date
Sincerest thanks are extended to Dr. James L. Owen for his time and guidance during the preparation of this thesis. The writer also thanks Dr. R. Wayne Pace for his suggestions regarding the final manuscript.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years a difference of opinion has existed regarding the relative effectiveness of silent reading and oral reading as a means of presenting poetry in literature classes. The need to read at a faster rate has placed an emphasis on the skills of silent reading; however, proponents of oral interpretation believe that many of the values of poetry are found only in an oral reading experience. The claims of the advocates of oral reading are based on limited experimental evidence. There is a need to determine whether students have a differential response to poetry when the silent reading experience is compared with the oral reading experience.

Teacher's manuals for the study of literature and the literature anthologies commonly used in high school English classes contain suggestions as to the methods that teachers should use in teaching poetry. One of the methods frequently suggested is choral reading. In a well known literature anthology for tenth grade English, ten selections are listed as suitable for group reading. The teachers' guide accompanying this text calls attention to group reading as a method to be used by the teacher.

\[\text{1}^{\text{William Ellers and others, The Study of Literature, (Ginn and Company, 1964), p. 626.}}\]

\[\text{2}^{\text{Robert C. Pooley and others, Wide Wide World of Literature, (Scott Foresman and Company, 1963), pp. 65, 105, 132, 163, 178, 199, 224, 279.}}\]

\[\text{3}^{\text{Robert C. Pooley and others, Guidebook for Wide Wide World of Literature, (Scott Foresman and Company, 1963), p. 116.}}\]
Speech texts also contain chapters on Choral Reading, or, as it is often called, Choric Interpretation:

You may wish to try group interpretation in the classroom or more formally for an assembly program . . . your attention to technical details will vary with the purpose for which you are going to use the choric work. 4

Just as group discussion facilitates speech activities for students in public speaking, so, too, does group interaction in oral reading contribute to feelings of security and a we-are-all-in-this-together attitude . . . more of the author's mood may be revealed by such a reading than by a single reader. 5

In a book published by the National Council of Teachers of English to assist teachers in developing methods of teaching literature and composition, Chapter Twelve is devoted to choral speaking and oral reading. The authors claim that literature is experienced more deeply when heard or said than when it is merely read silently and that oral group reading enhances the "imagery" and "emotional tone" of the poetry for the listener and reader. 6 In a course of study prepared in 1959 by the Speech Association of America to guide teachers in planning a semester of speech in the secondary schools, choral reading was suggested as a way to be used in


presenting poetry in the high school speech class. Pearl H. Faulk, speech supervisor of the Tulsa public schools, wrote an article for a widely circulated national educational journal in which she suggested that choral reading should be used in the classroom as a means of involving the shy child and developing "clear, rhythmical, meaningful speech."\(^7\)

Although a number of authorities seem to agree that choral reading is a method to be used in the presentation of poetry in the school classroom, there is no evidence that experimental research has been done to compare an "oral group reading" approach to poetry with a "silent reading" approach. Studies have been done in closely related fields and these will be examined in Chapter II.

Choral reading may be described as the interpretation of prose or poetry by many or several voices speaking together. As the term choral reading may also apply to a performance by a group after a number of rehearsals, the more limiting term, "group reading," will be used in this study.

The Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts is a tool designed to measure the connotative meaning an individual has for linguistic stimuli. In the present study this instrument is used to investigate audience response to dramatic poetry when perceived through silent reading and oral group reading.


Purpose of the Study

This study sought to determine whether there is a difference in audience response to dramatic poetic literature which can be attributed to the method by which literature is presented and perceived. The two methods investigated were: silent reading and oral group reading. The criterion test was the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

(1) Is there a significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Manner when the literature is perceived by oral group reading rather than silent reading?

(2) Is there a significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Seriousness when the literature is perceived by oral group reading rather than silent reading?

(3) Is there a significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Esthetic when the literature is perceived by oral group reading rather than silent reading?

(4) Is there a significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Ethical when the literature is perceived by oral group reading rather than silent reading?

(5) Is the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts able to measure similarities and differences in audience response to methods of presentation and perception of dramatic poetic literature?
Definitions of Terms Used

Silent reading is defined as the act of a solitary person translating unpronounced words of written material visually as opposed to producing them aloud.

Oral group reading is defined as the act of a number of persons pronouncing aloud words of written material at the same or at nearly the same time, but without prior rehearsals. The term is used to distinguish oral group reading from choral reading.

Dramatic poetic literature is defined as material written to be performed in a theatre and organized into a pattern that can be identified as having some of the characteristics of poetry.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to an experimental investigation of audience response to the "meaning" of a Greek ode for an audience when perceived by silent reading and oral group reading. The group subjected to the oral group reading treatment was directed to read the selection at sight, antiphonally. This involved both a participating and a listening experience. The material was read only once. There were no critical evaluations of the meaning of the poetry and no attempts to suggest in the oral directions the mood or tone of the poetry being read.

The group subjected to the silent reading treatment was directed to read the selection silently. This involved only a silent reading experience. The same
reading time, one minute and fifty seconds, was allowed for the silent reading treatment as was used in the oral group reading. Although the group was instructed to read the selection carefully, no effort was made to influence the reading speed or to hinder rereading of the material. There were no critical evaluations of the meaning of the poetry and no attempt to suggest, in the oral directions, the mood or tone of the poetry being read.

Organization of the Chapters

The remainder of this report is divided into four chapters: Chapter II contains a review of the literature pertinent to the present investigation, Chapter III contains the procedures for gathering the data. Chapter IV contains a presentation of the results, and Chapter V contains a summary of the findings, conclusions, and implications.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present chapter is divided into three parts. The first section reviews opinions and points of view regarding oral group reading, oral reading, and silent reading as methods of presenting literature. The second section discusses some of the experimental studies that have compared silent reading with various oral approaches: listening, acting, readers theatre, and oral interpretation. The third section discusses the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts as a measuring device for experimental studies in the field of literature.

Oral Group Reading Versus Silent Reading

Oral group reading is one of the oldest speech forms. Records show its use in Greece at the festival of Dionysus. In the ancient Greek drama, the Greek chorus commented on the action while the actors spoke the dialogue of the chief characters. The Hebrews used an antiphonal chorus of reading and response in their temples. Troubadors of France, Germany, and England recited tales of heroic deeds and the audience joined in chanting together the refrains. In our

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
liturgical churches The Lord's Prayer, The Nicene Creed, and The Psalms as well as other liturgical literature are recited together as oral group reading. In our civil ceremonies the pledge to the flag, the boy scout oath, and service club collects are recited together as oral group reading.13

Louise Abney describes oral group reading as a worthwhile activity for class groups from kindergarten through college. "Its classroom value in appreciation and enjoyment of poetry and its contribution to better speech and better reading far surpass its auditorium value."14

Other writers in the field of oral interpretation share Louise Abney's belief in the values of oral reading. Marion Robinson and Rozetta Thurston insist that

Poetry cannot awaken within the reader its full measure of beauty until he speaks it or hears it spoken. To stimulate deeper appreciation for poetry we must increase the opportunities to experience it brought to life . . . those who participate probably derive more pleasure from it than the hearers.15

Jere Veilleux, author of a recent book on oral interpretation,16 expresses the thought that most poets and audiences believe in the value of reading or hearing poetry aloud to assure its most complete effect.17 He further notes that although

13Ibid., p. 368.


the reader may focus more fully on the text when there is no interpreter present between the written word and the reader, the oral reading experience gives a compensating emphasis on the simultaneous quality of the poetry's visual and aural aspects.  

In spite of these claims for the use of oral reading in the presentation of poetry in the classroom, the emphasis in our schools for the past decade has been in the area of silent reading. Comprehension, retention, and speed are the chief goals of reading instruction. In over four hundred studies of reading problems published between 1953 and 1959, little or no attention was given to the problems of improving oral reading. Cross and Carney believe that as a result of the stress on silent reading, oral reading has been neglected. They state that the use of oral reading would offer opportunities in the classroom to more deeply experience the music of poetry and other forms of emotional literature.

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18 Ibid.


20 Ibid.

Literature on Oral Reading, Silent Reading, and Listening

A number of experimental studies have been conducted to determine audience response to methods of literature presentation. Paul Campbell conducted an experiment on the retention and comprehension of poetry resulting from a silent reading and from an oral interpretation presented by a trained reader. Campbell concluded, "Oral interpretation is superior in neither retention nor comprehension and is in fact significantly inferior in terms of retention to silent reading." 22

Raymond E. Collins completed an experimental investigation on the comprehension of prose materials when read silently and when read aloud by the participants in the experiment. Collins concluded, "Oral readers scored significantly higher in comprehension than silent readers." 23

James D. Young conducted an experimental study which compared vocabulary growth when the material was perceived by oral reading, silent reading, and listening. Young concluded:

Vocabulary gains made by tape recording context materials were significantly smaller . . . vocabulary growth by subjects reading aloud the context materials was greater than for silent reading. 24


Barbara H. Cheris and Henry R. Austin reported an experiment to determine if studying silent reading skills would improve oral reading ability. The emphasis in the drill was on speed and comprehension. No training in oral reading skills was given. Cheris and Austin found that six weeks of training in silent reading reduced the students' tendency to make "fluffs" as well as improved the accuracy in oral reading of material at the college level.25

In 1958 Lillian N. Finch made a study of the degree of retention which occurs when the material is presented by choral reading. Two twenty-minute rehearsals were conducted daily over a period of two weeks. Her study indicated that historical facts can be taught by group exercises in reading aloud and that there will be a high degree of retention of these facts.26

In summary, then, almost all of these experiments were conducted to determine retention, comprehension, improvement of vocabulary or accuracy. The unique contribution of oral reading to what may be termed the "appreciation" level has been less frequently explored.

Two experimental studies, using as a measuring device the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts,27 have been conducted to determine audience


response to methods of presenting literature. Daniel Witt conducted an experiment on audience response to realistic and anti-realistic drama as presented by silent reading, readers theatre and acting. He found that audience response to the Esthetic factor was not affected by the method of presentation; however, the response to the Serious, Manner, and Ethical factors were stronger when the presentation was by readers theatre or acting instead of silent reading. Judy Svore made a study on audience response to prose literature. She found that the audience response to the Serious factor was stronger when the material was presented by readers theatre rather than by silent reading. The other factors were not affected by the method of presentation.

Both Witt and Svore found the factor of Serious significantly stronger when the material was presented as readers theatre rather than as silent reading. They also found that the factor of Esthetic was not affected by the method used to perceive the literature; their results were not consistent with reference to the factors of Manner and Ethical Value. Both studies found that the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts was a useful measuring device to examine differences in audience response.


30Ibid., p. 64.
In the above two studies, two kinds of literature were examined: prose was used in the Svore study, realistic and anti-realistic drama in the Witt study. A third genre, dramatic poetry was examined in the present study. Two methods of presentation were used: oral group reading and silent reading. Oral group reading was unlike oral interpretation, readers theatre, or acting, but it did involve an oral presentation.

The Measuring Instrument

The Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts, a widely accepted measuring instrument for measuring communicative concepts connected with theatre, was chosen for use in the present investigation. It is a scaling technique by which subjects rate various concepts on the seven-step bi-polar adjectival scales. Each step on the scale is assigned a numerical weight or value from one through seven. This allows the researcher to quantitatively measure qualitative judgments of subjects to various concepts.\(^{31}\)

Smith developed his measuring instrument by using the techniques developed by Charles E. Osgood and his associates in 1957 for measuring connotative meanings.\(^{32}\) Osgood used the term "concept" as a synonym for stimulus. The selection of a concept will depend upon the specific investigation in which the

\(^{31}\)The numerical values assigned to the semantic spaces on each scale in this study were 1 through 7 as shown in Appendix C.

semantic differential is to be used.\textsuperscript{33}

By January 1966 an estimated 500 experimental studies had used some form of the Semantic Differential as a measuring instrument.\textsuperscript{34} William E. Arnold has stated:

One of the comparatively new and, to some, esoteric instruments currently being utilized in speech is the semantic differential . . . Through extensive use of the factor analysis (a statistical method for finding groups of continua which are highly correlated with one another but are not necessarily correlated with other continua), Osgood and his associates determined that meaning could be described by as few as three continua. These decisive continua were labeled "evaluative" (good-bad), "activity" (active-passive), and "potency" (strong-weak.).\textsuperscript{35}

Using the same techniques by which Osgood and his associates had developed the original Semantic Differential, Raymond G. Smith developed the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts. The Smith study involved a thirty-thousand item cube of data collected from one hundred students enrolled in speech and theatre courses. The concepts in the study included theatre history and tragedy. The three concepts developed by Osgood were changed to four:

1. Manner or action measured by the scales: calm-excitable and hot-cold;
2. seriousness measured by the scales: light-heavy, serious-humorous, and tense-relaxed;
3. ethical measured by the scales: honest-dishonest, valuable-worthless, and true-false; and
4. esthetic measured by the scales: beautiful-ugly,

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 77


pleasurable—painful, and pleasing—annoying.  

Smith felt that the Semantic Differential for Theatre "should provide a useful new measuring instrument for persons interested in conducting experimental research in theatre arts."  

Summary  
The purpose of this chapter was to present a review of the theoretical and experimental literature related to this study. The chapter was divided into three sections. The first section presented a case for oral group reading, the second discussed the experimental studies which have been conducted, and the third examined the measuring instrument which was used in the study. Chapter III will present the experimental method and procedures used in the investigation.


37Ibid., p. 8.
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Selection of the Subjects

The subjects used in this study were a group of sixty-nine high school students enrolled from June 26 through July 14, 1967, in the High School Speech Camp directed and sponsored by the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Montana. These subjects were divided into two groups by the use of a table of random numbers. Thirty-seven students were assigned to group A (oral group reading); thirty-two were assigned to group B (silent reading). The students were between the ages of fifteen and eighteen and had reached the junior or senior level in the secondary schools. The average age was sixteen. All the subjects, in accordance with an attendance requirement of the speech institute, were ranked in the upper third of their respective high school classes in terms of scholarship. In addition, each student had received a personal recommendation from his high school principal. These two qualifications seemed to indicate that the subjects were capable of a meaningful response within the test situation.

Although more students came from Montana than any other state, fourteen other states were represented in the camp. This provided a cross section of students of various high school backgrounds.

Because some members of the class were absent on the day of the test, the number of students in each group was not equal.
Setting for the Experiment

As this study was concerned with teaching methods used in the secondary classroom, the setting was kept as closely as possible to resemble that of a normal schoolroom situation. Two rooms in the Business Administration Building, used for speech camp classes, were selected for the experiment. Subjects in both experimental groups remained seated in chairs facing the front of the room. The investigator stood before the group to give directions.

Selection of the Dramatic Poetic Literature

The investigator felt that the material selected for use in this investigation should meet several criteria: 1) it should be recognized as poetry; 2) it should be related to theatre concepts; 3) it should be well adapted for perception through silent reading; 4) it should appear to be equally well adapted to perception through oral group reading; 5) the theme should have universal appeal; 6) the selection should be short enough to be easily read within the time allotted for the experiment.

The investigator believed that the Ode from the Greek play Antigone by Sophocles met these criteria: 1) The ode is classified as poetry. In the translation by Fitts and Fitzgerald, it is arranged in an easily recognized poetic form consisting of four stanzas, each stanza containing six lines. 2) The ode is related to theatre concepts. It is a portion of a tragedy written for a performance in a Greek theatre in the fifth century B.C. 3) The ode could be perceived through silent reading as it contains no difficult words or mythological references that would require definition or explanation. 4) The ode would be well adapted
to oral reading. It was included in a high school speech text as a selection for oral group reading.\textsuperscript{39} In the Greek theatre productions, the chorus is sometimes broken into two groups that speak responsively;\textsuperscript{40} hence the oral group reading would conform, in some degree, to the original method of presentation. 5) The theme of the ode has universal appeal. In the Greek plays the chorus functions as a background of public opinion against which the situation of the particular play is projected. Sophocles' greatest excellence is said to lie in his general view of life. In the choral ode from \textit{Antigone}, Sophocles "eloquently asserts the dignity, worth, and value of man," a universal theme. 6) The oral reading time of the selection was one minute and fifty seconds, well within the time allotted for the experiment.

\textit{Antigone} was written in the fifth century B.C. and has continued to be produced in most parts of the world since that time. The American Educational Theatre Association lists \textit{Antigone} as the third most frequently produced play in high school and college theatres. Ninety productions were reported between the years 1960 and 1965 and twenty productions during the 1964-65 season.\textsuperscript{42} The

\textsuperscript{39}Griffith, p. 340


\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. xx.

appearance of ancient Greek tragedies in numerous modern translations indicates their appeal for the modern audience. 43

The Data Gathering Instrument

The data gathering instrument for this study consisted of a four page dittoed booklet. The first two pages were instructions in the use of the semantic differential, the third page consisted of the semantic differential, and the fourth page was in the form of a questionnaire designed to obtain information regarding the subject's age, grade, and experience with the stimulus material used in the experiment. A copy of the data gathering instrument appears in Appendix B.

The Experimental Design

The experimental design of this study was developed to measure audience response to two methods of presentation and perception of dramatic poetic literature. The treatment of the material by silent reading was designated as A, and the treatment by oral group reading was designated as B. The responses to factor I were designated as $A_1$ and $B_1$. The responses to factor II were designated as $A_2$ and $B_2$. The responses to factor III, $A_3$ and $B_3$ and to factor IV as $A_4$ and $B_4$.

Because the study was made to determine if oral group reading produced no significant difference in response, produced a significantly stronger response, or produced a significantly weaker response than silent reading, a two tailed test was

was used. The two-tailed test provides two mutually exclusive regions for rejection and acceptance of alternate hypothesis. As the conductor of the experiment had made no previous experimental studies with the variables provided in this experiment, there were insufficient clues to allow the conductor of the experiment to venture a hypothesis and use a one tailed test. The experiment needed to show not merely that there was a difference between the two methods of perception but to make a decision between the two modes of presentation.\footnote{N. W. Downie and R. W. Heath, \textit{Basic Statistical Methods} (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1966), p. 126.}
### EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

#### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>SCALES</th>
<th>Group A Silent Reading</th>
<th>Group B Oral Group Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Manner</td>
<td>calm-excitable</td>
<td>A₁</td>
<td>B₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hot-cold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Seriousness</td>
<td>light-heavy</td>
<td>A₂</td>
<td>B₂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serious-humorous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tense-relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Ethical Value</td>
<td>honest-dishonest</td>
<td>A₃</td>
<td>B₃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>valuable-worthless</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>true-false</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Esthetic</td>
<td>beautiful-ugly</td>
<td>A₄</td>
<td>B₄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pleasurable-painful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pleasing-annoying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experimental Condition A (Silent Reading)

After the subjects were seated in the class room where the experiment was to be conducted, a copy of the dramatic poetic literature was placed face down on each desk. When everyone had received a copy, the investigator read the following instructions:

Would you please put all books and papers on the floor and make yourself comfortable. You should have a pencil or pen at hand to use later in the experiment. We are interested in learning more about the ways in which students like yourselves respond to material such as you will see in a moment. We will appreciate your attention and cooperation during this investigation. When the results of the study have been collected and evaluated, we would like to share them with you. You should have on your desk a copy of a manuscript. Please read this material through thoroughly and carefully. You will have ample time to complete a careful reading of the material. Please do not talk to your neighbor or discuss the reading material with anyone. Are there any questions? . . . You may begin reading.

At the end of a one-minute and fifty-second reading period the students were asked to stop reading and to pass their manuscripts to the right. After the manuscripts had been collected, the semantic differential booklets were distributed. When the subjects had all received their booklets, the following instructions were read:

Would you please look at the semantic differential booklet. Read the instructions silently while I read them aloud.

After reading the instructions on the first page, the investigator said:

Would you please turn to the next page and continue to read the instructions silently while I read them aloud? Do not turn to the third page until asked to do so.
After reading the instructions and having the subjects mark a sample scale, the following message was read:

Are there any questions? Would you please turn to the next page and fill in the scales. When you have finished marking the scales, turn to the last page and complete the questionnaire. You may now begin.

The subjects were given as much time as they wished to complete the booklet. When they were completed, the investigator collected them and thanked the subjects for their cooperation.

Experimental Condition B (Oral Group Reading)

As the investigator felt that the predominance of boys on one side of the room and girls on the other would create an uncontrolled variable in the sound of the group voice texture, the investigator asked the students to move into seats nearer the front of the room. They were instructed to fill in the empty chairs so that a more even distribution of boys and girls would be found on both sides of the room. When the students were reseated the same introductory procedure was used as in Experimental Condition A. However, when the phrase, "You have on your desk a copy of written materials . . ." was reached, these instructions were substituted:

You are to be divided into two groups. Those seated on the right next to the door will be called the A group. Those seated on the left next to the windows will be called the O group. Group A and Group O! Pick up the manuscript on your desk. You will notice that the first stanza is marked "Strophe I." Group A will read these six lines aloud together. The next stanza is marked "Antistrophe I." After Group A has read the first stanza, Group O will read the second stanza, then Group A will read Strophe II, and then Group O will read Antistrophe II. Read aloud with your group. Stop at the ends of lines only if there is punctuation. Do not read faster or slower or louder than other readers
around you. Are there any questions? . . . Group A will now please begin.

The investigator read aloud with both groups, to set the pace and to keep the group together. After the reading was completed (in one minute and fifty-seconds) the investigator collected the manuscripts and distributed the semantic differential booklets. The procedure continued as in Experimental Condition A.

Summary

Sixty-nine students of the High School Speech Camp were divided by a table of random numbers into two sections. One section experienced oral group reading of a Greek ode; the other section experienced silent reading of the same ode. Each audience was then asked to respond to the meaning of the ode by marking the adjectival bi-polar scales on the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts. The analysis of the data should show if there was any significant difference between audience responses to the two methods of presentation and perception. The statistical treatment of the data and the results of this investigation will be presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to determine whether students have a differential response to poetry when the silent reading experience is compared with the oral reading experience. The experiment included two groups -- A and B. Group A read a selection of poetry responsively as an oral group reading. The subjects were members of the 1967 High School Speech Camp sponsored by the University of Montana.

The data gathering instrument, The Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts, was contained in a four page booklet. Page one of the booklet contained directions for marking the scales of the semantic differential; page two contained a sample scale using a concept to be judged that was unrelated to the purpose of the actual investigation. Page three contained not only the eleven scales of the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts, but three additional scales, included to eliminate the possibility of the subjects recognizing the factors being tapped.

The individual scales on page three of the semantic differential were redistributed and adjectival terms arbitrarily reversed to provide a greater degree of validity. If the weighting of each scale were found on the same side, subjects would tend to be influenced by this arrangement of adjectival terms and their
response to the connotative meanings of the terms would not be a true response.

Appendix C contains the scale weightings used in tabulating the data and a table of the semantic scales measuring the semantic factors.

The fourth page of the booklet contained questions asking the subject's name, age, grade level in school, and home address. In addition subjects were asked to give the name of the selection of poetry or the author. If a student correctly identified the material, his scoring sheets were to have been eliminated in order to hold constant the variable of past experience with the literature; however, none of the subjects identified the ode. One of the subjects recognized the material as Greek. His scores were not eliminated as it was felt the identification was not specific enough to indicate any prior knowledge of the material.

Before the data from the booklets were processed, the scales rough-smooth, long-short, and black-white, included to offset possible interpretation of the measuring instrument, were eliminated. The factor scores for each subject were then determined by averaging the individual scale ratings and calculating the mean score for each of the treatments. Table 11 shows the mean scores of audience response for the two treatments, and the four response factors of the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts.

The mean score for Factor I, Manner (action) was found to be 3.1562 for silent reading and 3.4864 for oral group reading. Oral group reading showed a stronger response in terms of Manner (action), but not a significantly strong differential response.

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TABLE II

THE MEAN SCORES OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE FOR THE TWO TREATMENTS
AND THE FOUR RESPONSE FACTORS OF THE
SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR THEATRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Silent Reading</th>
<th>Oral Group Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner (action)</td>
<td>3.1562</td>
<td>3.4864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness</td>
<td>4.6425</td>
<td>5.1324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Value</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>5.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esthetic Value</td>
<td>5.4025</td>
<td>4.7175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean score for Factor II, Seriousness, was found to be 4.6425 for silent reading and 5.1324 for oral group reading. Oral group reading showed a somewhat stronger response in terms of "Seriousness" than silent reading, but not a significantly different response.

The mean score for Factor III, Ethical Value, was 5.57 for silent reading and 5.421 for oral group reading. Silent reading showed a slightly stronger response in terms of Ethical Value than oral group reading, but not a differential response.

The mean score for Factor IV, Esthetic Value, was found to be 5.4025 for silent reading and 4.7175 for oral group reading. Silent reading showed a greater response in terms of Esthetic Value than oral group reading. It was a significantly different response.

Table II shows the results of audience response on the semantic differential scales as revealed by the t test. For Factor I, Manner, the silent reading and oral group treatments resulted in a t ratio of 1.274. Since a t ratio greater than 1.994 is required for significance at the five per cent level and 1.274 is less than 1.994, there was no significant difference between the two treatments for Factor I.

For Factor II, Seriousness, the silent reading and oral group reading treatments resulted in a t ratio of 1.9249. Since a t ratio greater than 1.994 is required for significance at the five per cent level and 1.9249 is less than 1.994, there was no significance between the two treatments for Factor II.
### TABLE III

**RESULTS OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>t ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Manner (action)</td>
<td>Silent Reading</td>
<td>1.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Group Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Seriousness</td>
<td>Silent Reading</td>
<td>1.9249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Group Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Ethical Value</td>
<td>Silent Reading</td>
<td>.4099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Group Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Esthetic Value</td>
<td>Silent Reading</td>
<td>2.6183*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Group Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A value of t 1.994 is required for significance at the 5 per cent level for a two-tailed test.
For Factor II, Ethical Value, the silent reading and oral group reading treatments resulted in a t score of 0.4099. Since a t ratio greater than 1.994 is required for significance at the five per cent level and 0.4099 is less than 1.994, there is no significant difference between the two treatments for Factor II.

For Factor IV, Esthetic Value, the silent reading and oral group reading treatments resulted in a t score of 2.6183. Since a t ratio greater than 1.994 is required for significance and 2.6183 is greater than 1.994, there is a significant difference between the two treatments for Factor IV.

Summary

The data from this study indicates that:

1) At the five per cent level of confidence there is no significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Manner (action) when the literature is perceived by oral group reading and silent reading.

2) At the five per cent level of confidence there is no significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Seriousness when the literature is perceived by oral group reading and silent reading.

3) At the five per cent level of confidence there is no significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Ethical Value when the literature is perceived by oral group reading and silent reading.
4) At the five per cent level of confidence there is a significant differential effect in audience response to dramatic poetic literature for the factor of Esthetic Value when the literature is perceived by oral group reading and silent reading. Silent reading was found to have stronger responses for Esthetic Value than oral group reading.

This study has determined that for the Factor of Esthetic Value there is a significant difference in audience response to silent reading and oral group reading. Silent reading was found to be significantly more Esthetic than oral group reading. For the Factors of Manner (action), Seriousness and Esthetic Value there was found to be no significant difference in audience response, although the Factors of Manner and Seriousness received stronger scores for oral reading and that of Ethical Value stronger scores for silent reading. These results appear to follow the general distribution of results reported by Witt and Svore.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the entire study, discuss the implications of the results and provide suggestions for further study.

This study was conducted to investigate audience response to dramatic poetic literature when perceived by oral group reading and by silent reading. Smith's Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts was employed as a measuring instrument.

Sixty-nine members of the High School Speech Camp sponsored by the University of Montana participated in the experiment. A table of random numbers was used to divide the group into two sections. One group experienced a silent reading treatment and the second group experienced an oral group reading treatment. The significance of difference between the responses of the two groups for each of four factors: Manner (action), Seriousness, Ethical Value, and Esthetic Value was determined by the use of a t-test. The results are summarized below:

1) The method of presentation and perception of poetic literature significantly influenced audience response to the "meaning" of poetic literature in terms of Esthetic Value. Dramatic poetic literature was rated more esthetic when read silently than when perceived by oral group reading.
2) The methods of presentation and perception of poetic literature do not significantly influence audience response to the "meaning" of poetic literature in terms of Manner (action), Seriousness, or Ethical Value.

3) The Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts can be employed to measure similarities and differences in audience response to dramatic poetic literature.

Comparison of Results

Both Witt and Svore in their studies using the Semantic Differential for Theatre Concepts to measure audience response found audience response to be significantly different for the factor of Seriousness. Readers Theatre was found by both researchers to be significantly more serious than silent reading.\(^{45, 46}\)

As Readers Theatre resembles oral group reading in certain aspects, the investigator of the present study was interested in observing if oral group reading would produce a significantly differential response than silent reading for the aspect of Seriousness. While the response for oral group reading in the present study was stronger than for silent reading, this difference was not found to be significant at the five per cent level; however, the strength of the serious factor combined with the findings of Witt and Svore would indicate that students consider oral group reading and Readers Theatre as a more "serious" method of presentation than silent reading. If a more serious response to prose, dramatic literature or poetry is desirable, Readers

\(^{45}\) Witt, op. cit., p. 88.

\(^{46}\) Svore, op. cit., p. 58.
Theatre and oral group reading would arouse a more serious response than silent reading. In accepting this claim, however, it should be considered that students used in the experimental study had been trained in silent reading in the public schools and they may have a tendency to regard Readers Theatre and oral group reading as a less familiar and consequently a more formal presentation. In the present study the antiphonal reading of the ode resembled the oral group reading practices of the liturgical churches. Formal presentations and church worship might be considered by many of the students as related to "Seriousness."

The Witt study, using dramatic literature, found the factor Ethical received significantly higher scores when Readers Theatre or acting were compared with silent reading. The Svore study, on the other hand, showed no significantly higher mean scores when Readers Theatre was compared with silent reading. The present study obtained results similar to the Svore study. No significantly different response was recorded between the oral presentation and the silent presentation. It may be generalized that in the classroom, if Ethical factors are of importance in the literature, silent reading is equally as effective as other more active methods of presentation such as Readers Theatre and oral group reading for both prose and dramatic poetic literature.

47 Witt, op. cit., p. 89.

48 Svore, op. cit., p. 64.
The results obtained by Witt and Svore indicate that the factor of Manner (action) is not significantly affected by the method of presentation. \(^{49, 50}\) These results are supported by the present study. It may be generalized that silent reading is as equally acceptable a presentation method as Readers theatre or oral group reading for the factor of Manner (action).

The results obtained by Witt and Svore indicate that the factor of Esthetic was not significantly affected by the method of presentation. \(^{51, 52}\) The present study found Esthetic Value to be the only factor showing a significant differential effect. The method of perception, silent reading, was found to be significantly more esthetic than oral group reading.

The correlation for this factor in the three studies could be observed. While the differential effect between methods, found to be present between oral and silent methods, changed from a significant to a less than significant difference on this factor in the Witt and Svore studies, the present study, which had shown a parallel response although of less strength throughout the experiment, now indicated silent reading as significantly more "esthetic" than oral group reading. This would suggest that the Esthetic factor in a presentation of dramatic or prose literature will have an equally "esthetic" response if presented by silent

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\(^{49}\)Witt, op.cit., p. 89.

\(^{50}\)Svore, op.cit., p. 58.

\(^{51}\)Witt, op.cit., p. 90.

\(^{52}\)Svore, loc.cit.
reading reading rather than oral group reading. It may be generalized that in the classroom silent reading is an equally or more effective method of presentation than Readers Theatre or oral group reading if the esthetic values are to be stressed.

In accepting the correlation in the findings of the three studies, the differences between the methods of oral presentations used in these experimental studies should be considered. Although Readers Theatre resembles oral group reading in certain aspects, such as groups of readers reading aloud from prepared manuscripts without acting, there are significant differences:

1) The Readers Theatre performances were staged, carefully rehearsed productions by trained actors. The oral group reading was an unrehearsed audience participation event in a classroom.

2) The Readers Theatre performances were much longer than the oral reading period. The plays performed in the Witt study were thirty minutes in length, \(^{53}\) Svore's arrangement of the prose material was fifteen minutes in length; \(^{54}\) while the reading time of the Greek ode was one minute and fifty seconds. The wide variation in time may have had an influence on the results.

3) A wide variety of material was used in the three studies. Witt chose two short plays, The Zoo Story and The American Dream by Edward Albee. \(^{55}\) Svore made a cutting from the short story, A Perfect Day...
The present study was made using Ode I from Antigone by Sophocles.

Implications

The results of this study may have a number of implications that extend beyond the immediate concern of the researcher. Silent reading has been stressed in elementary education for the past fifty years. Speed, comprehension, and retention have been the aspects of reading that have been examined in the testing programs. In the teaching of silent reading skills, lingual, laryngeal, and laryngeal activities during reading have been discouraged. The training in silent reading techniques may have contributed to difficulties in producing voiced sounds by the subjects during the oral reading treatment. There is little evidence to support the idea that we are training students to read aloud with any degree of satisfaction, to themselves or to those who hear them.

The present study gives little credence to the ideas expressed by the proponents of oral interpretation and choral reading. Silent reading was found to be no less effective a method of presenting dramatic poetic literature than oral group reading and, in the aspect of Esthetic Value, silent reading was found to be more effective. That these results were found in this study may be attributed in part to the following reasons:

1) Oral group reading necessitates following a director and reading at the same speed as other readers, while silent reading affords the reader freedom.

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56 Svore, *op. cit.*., p. 59.
to read the material at an individual rate as well as time to contemplate the
meaning of one idea before moving on to the next.

2) The effort of the subjects to read orally, their concern with articulating
and phonation of words, may have distracted them from concentrating on the
"meaning" of the literature.

3) The sight reading of poetry afforded no chance to examine and
determine the way the material should be read. The reader might have felt that
he did not have the "right" interpretation on the initial reading. This dissatisfac-
tion with the quality of the reading effort would probably have been identified
by the measuring instrument.

4) The emphasis our schools have placed on silent reading and the lack
of training the subjects may have had in the skills of oral reading may have resulted
in the subjects experiencing a feeling of inadequacy. They may also have experi-
enced a feeling of annoyance at the stumbling and unexpressive reading going on
about them.

Poetry by its very nature is concerned with enjoyment, appreciation,
and intrinsic aesthetic merit rather than speed of reading, word comprehension
and retention. Many words in poetry are onomatopoetic in nature. The attributes
of rhythm, pitch, melody, assonance, nuances of tone, dynamics and tempo can
not be readily experienced in the silent reading of dramatic poetry. It would
seem that only an aural presentation could display these qualities. Further
experimentation should be done to determine how best this aural presentation
can be made.
Several methods of presenting dramatic poetry could be studied. These methods might include a combination of oral group reading and silent reading to allow critical analysis of the meaning, style, and aural components of the literature. Further studies may show advantages to be derived from a careful analysis and rehearsal of poetic literature for a performance of choral reading. Oral interpretation by a trained reader, listening to tapes while silently reading, dramatization, and Readers Theatre are methods that could be studied.

While this study did not concern itself with groups in other areas than the classroom, the findings have some implications for churches and clubs using the oral group reading methods. Many churches employ oral group reading of The Psalms, formal prayers, and invocations. It would appear that an audience evaluation of the oral group reading experience should be conducted. This study might reveal advantages that silent reading or the oral reading by the minister or priest, without the congregation reading along with him, might have over present practices. Civic groups and service clubs use oral group readings. Women's Clubs recite collects, boy and girl scouts their oaths, and in civil ceremonies the pledge to the flag is recited together to show fealty to country. Should we examine these practices?
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APPENDIX A

THE DRAMATIC POETIC LITERATURE:

ODE I FROM ANTIGONE BY SOPHOCLES

ENGLISH VERSION BY DUDLEY FITTS AND ROBERT FITZGERALD
ODE I

STROPHE 1
Numberless are the world's wonders, but none
More wonderful than man; the storm gray sea
Yields to his prows, the huge crests bear him high;
Earth, holy and inexhaustable, is graven:
With shining furrows where his plows have gone
Year after year, the timeless labor of stallions.

ANTISTROPHE 1
The light-boned birds and beasts that cling to cover,
The lithe fish lighting their reaches of dim water,
All are taken, tamed in the net of his mind;
The lion on the hill, the wild horse windy-maned,
Resign to him; and his blunt yoke has broken
The sultry shoulders of the mountain bull.

STROPHE 2
Words also, and thoughts as rapid as air,
He fashions to his good use; statecraft is his,
And his the skill that deflects the arrows of the snow,
The spears of winter rain: from every wind
He has made himself secure -- from all but one:
In the late wind of death he cannot stand.

ANTISTROPHE 2
O clear intelligence, force beyond all measure!
O fate of man, working both good and evil!
When the laws are kept, how proudly his city stands!
When the laws are broken, what of his city then?
Never may the anarchic man find rest at my hearth,
Never be it said that my thoughts are his thoughts.
APPENDIX B

THE DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENT

THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL BOOKLET
THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL BOOKLET

Instructions

The purpose of this experiment is to study audience response. We would like to know your over-all impression of the event you have just experienced. It is important, in marking the following scales, that your choices be made solely on the basis of your feelings about the event. There are no "correct" or "incorrect ratings." We are only interested in how students like yourselves respond in this situation.

On the next page you will find a set of scales. You are to respond to the event on each of these scales in order. If you feel the event is EXTREMELY UGLY or EXTREMELY BEAUTIFUL, you should place a mark as follows:


or


If you feel the event is QUITE UGLY or QUITE BEAUTIFUL, you should place your mark as follows:


or


If you feel the event is only SLIGHTLY UGLY or SLIGHTLY BEAUTIFUL, then your indication should be as follows:


or


If you feel NEUTRAL about the event on the UGLY-BEAUTIFUL scale, then you should place your mark in the middle space:

IMPORTANT: (1) Place your marks in the middle of the spaces, not on the boundaries:

\[
\text{(this)} \quad \text{(not this)}
\]


(2) Be sure to check every scale.

(3) Do not check more than one space on each scale.

Here is a short example to work using a different concept to be judged:

AMERICAN HISTORY


(Make your X mark according to the way you feel the concept of American History is related to the scale. Is it EXTREMELY SIMPLE or EXTREMELY COMPLEX, QUITE SIMPLE or QUITE COMPLEX, SLIGHTLY SIMPLE or SLIGHTLY COMPLEX, or NEUTRAL on this scale?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Form</th>
<th>OVER-ALL IMPRESSION OF THE EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
DATA SHEET

Name ____________________________________________

Home address ____________________________________________
   (City) (State)

High School ____________________________________________
Freshman ____ Sophomore ____ Junior ____ Senior ____ Other ____

Age ____________

Male _______ Female _______

Have you read the material presented to you before today?

Yes _______ No _______

If yes, indicate the author: ______________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Comments ________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

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APPENDIX C

SCALE WEIGHTING FOR

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR THEATRE CONCEPT
SCALE WEIGHTING FOR THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR THEATRE CONCEPTS AND SEMANTIC SCALES

MEASURING THE SEMANTIC FACTORS

## Semantic Scales Measuring Semantic Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calm - Excitable</td>
<td>Factor I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot - Cold</td>
<td>Manner (action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light - Heavy</td>
<td>Factor II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious - Humorous</td>
<td>Seriousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense - Relaxed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest - Dishonest</td>
<td>Factor III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuable - Worthless</td>
<td>Ethical Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True - False</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful - Ugly</td>
<td>Factor IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasurable - Painful</td>
<td>Esthetic Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing - Annoying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>