Teaching has two principal aspects: the motivational and informational. The motivational aspect is concerned, for example, with promoting the learner's security and commitment to learning. The informational aspect is concerned with fostering the learner's knowledge and skill. This review of the teaching of reading considers the second aspect and offers historical and international perspectives on selected current research. The emphasis is on teaching normal progress children during the initial years of primary schooling. The influences of the family and society are considered elsewhere in this volume, as also are children's reading difficulties.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

The Alphabetic Method was the standard method of teaching reading for alphabetic orthographies (see Burnaby, this volume) for at least 3,000 years until the nineteenth century. In this method, the names of the individual letters of the alphabet were first taught to the child, then two-letter syllables such as ab, eb, ib, ob, ub; ba, be, bi, bo, bu; ac, ... These were spelt orally by naming the component letters and then pronouncing the syllable. The child later graduated to a similar procedure for short words, followed by brief texts which were selected for their significance to the educational aims of the times, for example, the Lord's prayer or the Creed. If children did not know a word, they spelt it orally before attempting to pronounce it (Davies, 1973).

By the second half of the nineteenth century the Alphabetic Method was losing its dominance (Smith, 1965). In the last decade of that century, in New Zealand, a country remote from the main centres of literate population, a book on teaching method was published (Farnie, 1895) which set out three alternatives to the Alphabetic Method. The first was a Phonic Method in which children were taught the most common sound for each letter, e.g. /buh/ for b. When they did not know a print word they were taught to pronounce the sound for each letter sequentially and then, by approximation, to blend these sounds into a recognisable word. The second alternative was the Look and Say Method. The children were taught to look at the word as a whole and respond to it without making any response to the individual letters. The third alternative, which Farnie recommended to teachers, was a combination of the 'best points' of the three Methods.
In this alternative the alphabet was taught first, then the Look and Say Method, followed by teaching of the sounds of letters (Phonic Method) when this was considered necessary (Farnie, 1895).

Since the nineteenth century, there have been shifts to and fro between the more analytic Phonic Methods and the more global Look and Say. A Phonic Method had been advocated in the sixteenth century by Ickelsamer as more natural than the Alphabetic method for learning to read German, and by Hart for reading English. However, Phonic Methods were not widely adopted until the nineteenth century. This was also the case with Look and Say which had been advocated in Germany by Lubinus early in the seventeenth century and later carried out by Comenius (Davies, 1973; Hladczuk & Eller, 1992, Chapter 24).

Late in the nineteenth century, the Sentence Method, which was more global than Look and Say was advocated in the United States. The rationale of this method was that language is recognised in whole units that express thought. Hence the teaching of reading commenced with the meaningful reading of these whole units that are sentences rather than letters or words (Smith, 1965).

**MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS AND WORK IN PROGRESS**

*The integrity of literacy activities*

From the turn of the century until the 1920s, the Story Method was a quite popular more global successor to the Sentence Method in the United States. The child commenced reading instruction by listening to complete stories, often from authentic literature, and did not attempt to read the print until familiar with the oral form (Smith, 1965). Subsequently, in the 1960s and 1970s the Language Experience Approach to teaching reading had some influence in several English-speaking countries. In this approach, reading was considered an extension of the language skills which a child had already acquired and the emphasis in teaching was on the purpose of reading as meaningful communication.

The current Whole Language Approach has evolved, in part, from Language Experience. Whole Language, however, has a stronger emphasis on wholeness and integrity of the literacy activities in which children engage, as well as on meaningful communication (see also reviews by Kenneth Goodman, and Gretchen Owocki and Yetta Goodman, this volume). Authentic literature for learners, including beginner readers, is advocated (Goodman, 1989). In fact, the emphasis on literature is such that ‘Whole Literature’ would seem a better label for the approach. Versions of the approach are currently influential in the United Kingdom, the United States,