

**The Cognitive Clarity of
Children Learning to Read**

Wendy Ma
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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard


Terry D. Johnson, Ed.D.


Norma Mickelson, Ph.D.


Ron Tinney, Ph.D.


John H. Esling, Ph.D.

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UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

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Supervisor: Dr. Terry D. Johnson

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to examine the concept of cognitive clarity in children learning to read. In order to trace the development of the child's cognitive clarity regarding the purpose and technical characteristics of reading and to ascertain how this affects the child's progress in learning to read, a case study approach was used. An intensive study which incorporated observation, in depth interview and testing was adopted.

Subjects were three grade one boys, all selected by the classroom teacher on the basis of informal observation as being average in ability.

The study found that children who started with cognitive clarity about reading were able to make use of the classroom instruction to learn to read. The classroom instruction provided a pool of useful sight vocabulary from which these children developed their own rules regarding the spelling patterns of words. Children who were confused about the purposes of reading and writing from the start were able to overcome this cognitive confusion by being exposed to purposeful reading and writing activities.

Examiners:

[REDACTED]

Terry D. Johnson, Ed.D.

[REDACTED]

Norma Mickelson, Ph.D.

[REDACTED]

Ron Tinney, Ph.D.

[REDACTED]

John H. Esling, Ph.D.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are two-fold. First the study examines how a child thinks through and uses the information provided by the method of reading instruction in learning to read. Second the study traces the development of the child's cognitive clarity regarding the purpose and technical characteristics of reading and ascertains how this affects the child's progress in learning to read. The main focus is to gain insight into the child's thought patterns by analyzing his/her observed behaviour.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Four models of proficient reading dominate the area of reading research. These models include a "bottom-up" approach in which lower-level or perceptual processes precede higher-level processes during the act of reading, a "top-down" focus which emphasizes the importance of higher cognitive processes, with lower-level processes used only when needed, and an "interactive" model which proposes that both processes interact with each other in the understanding of a text. More recently Louise Rosenblatt has added a "transactive" model which emphasizes not only the interaction between the reader and the print but also the significance of the social context in which the reading occurs.

In his "bottom-up" model, Gough (1972) states that a reader perceives individual letters and words and then transforms these into a phonemic code. From this code, meanings of individual words are processed, then syntactic and semantic rules are applied and finally the text ends up in the "Place Where Sentences Go When They Are Understood". LaBerge and Samuels (1976) support this model but emphasize the roles of attention and automaticity. They also give greater importance to prior knowledge which allows the reader to omit some of the lower processes. Downing (1979) writes that Laberge and Samuels feel that the difference between a beginning reader and one who has developed automaticity is that when a beginning reader reads, his/her full attention is on decoding therefore little attention is paid to comprehension, while the proficient reader directs all his attention to comprehension of the print.

One criticism of the "bottom-up" model is that it provides only a partial understanding of the total reading process (Cohen, 1974-1975). The bottom-up

approach does not relate print to meaningful units in the child's speech. Barr's (1974-1975) study shows that children taught by the phonics method substitute words with nonsense words which have no reference to sentence meaning. In the same study she found that children taught by the phonics approach tend to use a sight word strategy in the initial stage of reading "because sight-word strategies seem to depend on the application of familiar operations (that is, those involved in the discrimination of faces, objects, and pictures)" (p.579) whereas making letter-sound associations are new operations. Also the "bottom-up" model gives no reference to prediction which both Goodman and Smith believe to be so vital to the reading process.

Goodman (1967, 1976) and Smith (1971, 1978) in discussing the "top-down" model emphasize the importance of higher processes such as the reader's prior knowledge in controlling the reading process. The reader is not merely a perceiver of text but a questioner, making hypotheses about the meaning of the text based on his/her prior knowledge, making predictions about meaning and word form, and sampling the text to confirm or deny these hypotheses and predictions. Comprehension of meaning comes before perception of individual words which may not be encoded fully if not needed for comprehension. Reading involves looking for significant differences in the written configuration. Both Goodman and Smith agree with Chomsky (1965) that children are born with a language competence and an ability to learn language. Smith and Goodman see the role of the teacher as providing information, feedback and encouragement, not working through programs that begin with abstractions from language which make little sense to the reader. The teacher should provide rich experiences of spoken lan-

guage. The child learns to read by being exposed to print materials and s/he gradually picks up the parallelism of listening and reading.

Smith (1971) says that skilled readers sample letters selectively and predict what comes next by contextual and graphic clues. Goodman (1970) writes that being able to anticipate what comes next is important in reading. Understanding the grammatical structure of a sentence also facilitates fluency in reading because it helps the child anticipate what has not been seen.

One criticism of the "top-down" model seems to be that although it focuses on the communication function of the reading act which is an integral part of reading behaviour it does not distinguish between beginning readers and fluent readers. Samuels, Begy, and Chen (1975-1976) found that beginning and fluent readers differed in word-processing strategies. Fluent readers were able to decode with little attention to specific detail and thus focused their attention mainly on comprehension. Farnham-Diggory and Greg (1975) also found that poor readers focused so much of their attention on decoding that they forget words read earlier.

Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model sees reading not as a linear progression from the reader's previous knowledge to understanding of the text, but as an interaction of both ways operating in parallel. Perceptual information, orthographic knowledge, word knowledge, syntactic and semantic knowledge interact in the reader's mind enabling him/her to interpret the text. Rumelhart has based his reading model on language processing by computer and he feels his model still needs to be tested.

Stanovich (1980) has taken the interactive model one step further. He agrees that a reader uses several knowledge sources to get meaning from the print but he

also states that deficiency in one area will result in a greater dependence on others. Thus, for example, in the interactive-compensatory model, a reader who has difficulty using word analysis skills may rely heavily on contextual factors.

Louise Rosenblatt's definition of "transactive" is the coming-together of a reader and a text. She explains that reading is an active process in which the reader must use past experience and present personality to reflect upon a text. Therefore the printed marks on a page could form a different transaction with a different reader. The text after being assimilated becomes a part of the reader's experience. In Rosenblatt's model, the social context in which the reading occurs is of critical significance.

For teachers of reading it is always a concern that every child learn to read. The research on the different methods of teaching reading have come to the general conclusion that "each major method has been successful for about the same proportion of children, while at the same time producing its own crop of failures." (Holdaway, 1979, p.25). Holdaway feels that the great debate (Chall, 1967) on the different methods needs "new direction", one that is "guided by more realistic research of a developmental kind, embodying a deeper and more sensitive awareness of what language, and how its acquisition may be nurtured and sustained" (p.37). Therefore, in response to this kind of outlook on research, it is the intention of the writer to observe the progress of individual children in learning to read in light of the previous research findings.

For this purpose, it is important to have a clear understanding of what reading is. Ronald Wardhaugh's (1969) explanation is that when a person reads:

he is attempting to discover the meaning of what he is reading by using the visual clues of spelling, his knowledge of probabilities of occurrence, his contextual-pragmatic knowledge, and his syntactic

and semantic competence to give a meaningful interpretation to the text. Reading is not a passive process in which a reader takes something out of the text without any effort or merely recognizes what is in the text. Nor does it appear to be a process in which he first recognizes what is on the page and then interprets it, a process in which a stage of decoding precedes a stage of involvement with meaning...Reading is instead an active process, in which the reader must make an active contribution by drawing upon and using concurrently various abilities that he has acquired" (p.133).

Since reading is an active process in which the reader must draw upon all his previous experiences in order to make sense of what is being read, it is important that s/he understands how to go about it.

Piaget (1959) concluded that children between the ages of six and eight are not able to reflect on the nature of language communication. The child is egocentric in that s/he assumes that the hearer knows as much as s/he does. In contrast an adult tries to make others understand his/her view. Other researchers have found that a poor understanding of language communication also affects learning to read. Vernon (1957), for example, concluded in her research on reading disability that cognitive confusion or lack of system was the major factor in not being able to read. Vernon also points out in her work on reasoning processes in learning to read that understanding the purposes and the technical characteristics of the reading tasks are key factors in the acquisition of reading. Vygotsky (1962) also commented on young beginners having only a vague idea of the usefulness of writing. Reid (1966) in her study describes how five-year-old children lack an understanding of the purpose and use of written language.

Downing (1979) has incorporated the ideas of Piaget, Vernon, Vygotsky and Reid in his concept of cognitive clarity. He explains that both the "bottom-up" model and "top-down" model have only uncovered one part of the total picture.

He feels that cognitive clarity gives "equal weight to both meaning and code" (Downing, 1979, p.36). In Downing's terms, cognitive clarity means having clear thinking or understanding when reasoning about the purpose of reading and the technical characteristics of reading. He has adapted this concept from a more general theory of skill development by Fitts & Posner (Downing, 1979). However, the idea of cognitive clarity emphasizes only one phase of reading behaviour--the cognitive phase, the phase "in which the learner gropes for understanding of the tasks to be accomplished in the acquisition of reading skill" (p.37). Downing has listed eight postulates with respect to cognitive clarity. Of the eight, seven are specifically applicable to this study.

1. "Writing or print in any language is a visible code for those aspects of speech that were accessible to the linguistic awareness of the creators of that code or writing system." (p. 111)

It may be concluded from this that print is just a visible code for speech.

2. "This linguistic awareness of the creators of a writing system included simultaneous awareness of the communicative function of language and certain features of spoken language that are accessible to the speaker-hearer for logical analysis." (p. 111)

It may be concluded from this that both print and speech are two-way communication systems in which the sender and receiver understand how the systems work.

3. "The learning-to-read process consists in the rediscovery of (a) the functions and (b) the coding rules of the writing system." (p. 111)

It may be concluded from this that a beginning reader must learn why and how the visual code works.

4. "Their rediscovery depends on the learner's linguistic awareness of the same features of communication and language as were accessible to the creators of the writing system." (p. 111)

It may be concluded from this that in order to learn why and how the visual code works, the learner must know how the two-way communication system works.

5. "Children approach the tasks of reading instruction with only partially developed concepts of the functions and features of speech and writing." (p. 111)

It may be concluded from this that beginning readers have only partial understanding about the why and how of language.

6. "Under reasonably good conditions, children develop increasing cognitive clarity about the functions and features of language." (p. 111)

It may be concluded from this that if the learning environment makes sense to the child, s/he can figure the why and how of language on his/her own.

7. "Although the initial stage of literacy acquisition is the most vital one, conceptual challenges continue to arise and thus broaden the range of clarity throughout the later stages of education as new subskills are added to the student's repertory." (p. 112)

It may be concluded from this that understanding the why and how of language is important in the beginning but the process continues to be clearer as new skills are learned.

In light of the assumption that the child's cognitive clarity is a major factor in reading acquisition it is hoped that this study will contribute to the knowledge of how the child makes sense of reading instruction in order to discover the functions and coding system of print.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Cognitive clarity in reading refers to an understanding of what print is used for, what the technical terms used for explaining the process of reading mean, and how the visual code of print works. If cognitive clarity is fundamental in the process of learning to read, then there is a need for long term studies on what children understand and do in their earliest steps toward reading.

2.1 Learning to Read in the Home

Soderbergh (1971) in her book, Reading in Early Childhood, writes how her child at the age of two years and four months acquired the code using a sight-word approach. Reading for the child at first meant little more than a game with her mother but as reading progressed from words and sentences to books, the child realized the communicative intent behind writing.

In the beginning the child did not understand the purpose of words. This seemed evident when she treated the words written down on cards as if they had been persons or things. She read the phrase "pushing a pram" not only as meaning the act of pushing a baby-carriage but also meaning the act of pushing the card with the word "pram". Another incident which indicated a problem in understanding the kind of things words say was when she insisted on the truth of what was written. The sentence could not possibly say something if, in actuality, the facts

were not true. Soderbergh concludes that understanding came only through the process of learning to read and handling words meaningfully in the context of communicating with and about them.

After six months Soderbergh found indications that the child was using strategies in decoding new words. For example, even though the child had never received any instruction on sounding the letters, she compared words on the basis of initial-letter similarity and common letter patterns such as length of word, order of lettering and grouping of letters. What is fascinating is the way this ability was linked with the ability to read new words aloud without an explicit phonic approach. Further observation made Soderbergh conclude that the words presented were mentally stored not only by graphic patterning but in meaningful contexts. The Soderbergh child was able to remember exactly in which of the three books the words were found and also to remember the sentence in the book with the words.

2.2 Learning to Read in the Classroom

Hazel Francis (1979) in her book, Learning to Read, did an intensive case study on ten children from a disadvantaged area of a large city. Following the experiences of children in the classroom from ages five to seven, Francis examined the understanding of the purposes and technical concepts of reading and understanding the orthographic spelling of words. Of her sample of ten children, six had no exposure to written material at home. Understanding of authorship and readership was poor and as a result there appeared to be no real urge to learn to read. These children were in a state of bewilderment when asked about technical

concepts such as recognizing a written word or sentence, manipulating word cards to form sentences and labelling things in the classroom. The children's comments indicated that they had no practical experience in reading bus numbers and destinations, advertisements, shop names and other written signs. Their lack of understanding of these technical concepts made it difficult to perform the tasks needed in learning to read. Their only strategy was to imitate others without understanding either the importance of reading for themselves or the link between their pre-reading activities and adult reading.

Four of the children showed some understanding of reading and were making progress in learning the cues in the text to help them remember words and try new ones. Although they did not learn all the alphabet, they knew some letters and could name them phonically and identify them in print. By the beginning of the second year the children could see similarities and differences between words and patterns of letters. Even though there was an early introduction to sound cues, the children relied only on visual and context cues. Errors in reading were frequently visually similar to the word in the text, showed the influence of sense and were restricted to words they had encountered before.

During the first year, only one of these four children used phonic cues in trying to read. The other three children were reluctant to use phonic cues in their actual reading until after mastery of visual and contextual cues. Overall results showed that the use of phonic cues did not help the children to read more widely but slowed down the process of reading and made the reading less fluent.

The most fluent reader of the group showed a well-integrated cuing system that did not attend to visual, context or phonic cues entirely or consciously. He

revealed a dislike for using phonic cues because it appeared to slow him down. He needed phonic cues when faced with a new word, however, and when he encountered insufficient visual and context cues. He did not sound out the whole word, but only enough to associate with a limited range of possible words from which to select one that would fit the context. In this way, he collected new vocabulary for future use.

Conclusions from Francis' study indicate that it is necessary to attend to children's understanding of what reading is before and during the school years in order to help them receive full benefit from reading instruction. She also found that when equipped with a pool of meaningful sight vocabulary, children are able to develop their own strategies in attacking new words and carry on the task of learning to read.

Francis' study showed what effect understanding of the acts of reading and writing had on the beginning reader's discovery of the spelling system. For the purpose of study it is also necessary to find out whether classroom instruction has any effect on pupils' reading strategies. Rebecca Barr (1974-1975) studied 32 children, 16 taught by a phonics method and 16 with a sight word approach. In the group instructed by a phonic method, six of the children used a sight-word strategy at the beginning, suggesting that children have difficulty forming a strategy from phonics instruction. However, as the words increased and more words were similar in length, pattern discrimination became impossible. The children were forced to use phonics strategy. This switch from using a sight-word approach on phonics materials occurred probably because of the confusion caused by the incompatibility between their strategy and the instructional materials. Barr's

study also shows that pupils using a phonic strategy came up with nonsense words which did not fit the sentence meaning when decoding new words.

In contrast, of the 16 children taught by the sight-word approach, only one deviated from the sight-word approach and used a phonics approach. Barr speculates that children learning to read prefer the sight-word strategy because memorizing a whole word involves familiar operations such as discriminating faces, objects and pictures and because the sight-word strategy relates print to a meaningful unit in the child's speech. The unit selected by the phonics method does not correspond to a meaningful referent and a child finds the operation unfamiliar to any s/he has had before. Even though children employing a sight-word strategy substituted words that fitted the context of the sentence, the selection was restricted to words they had learned. Conclusions from Barr's study support the fact that classroom instruction does affect children's reading strategies.

2.3 Conclusion

A review of the literature regarding the nature of the learning-to-read process leads one to conclude that reading is a complex process that requires an understanding of what print is. Print is a visual code that can be read like speech and has meaning for both the reader and the writer. This understanding can be gained by hearing someone reading and seeing the print at the same time. The beginning reader forms the phonemic relationship between print and speech. The visual code consists of technical concepts which need to be understood in order to think about the relationship between speech and writing. When sufficient understanding of these two aspects of reading is acquired and attention is focused on

the code, reading occurs. Research also shows the importance of classroom instruction on the understanding of reading and writing and on reading strategy development.

In the light of the research on learning to read reviewed above, it is hoped that this present study will answer the following questions which probe three features of cognitive clarity.

2.4 Questions

1. Understanding Literacy Behaviour

- a). Does the child begin his/her initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

2. Understanding of the Technical Concepts

- a). Does the child begin his/her initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

3. Decoding and Comprehension

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?
- b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?
- c). Do strategies for decoding change as understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

Chapter III

METHOD AND INSTRUMENTATION

3.1 Method

The questions this study attempts to answer indicate that an intensive study which incorporates observation and in depth interview is needed. From previous research done (Francis, 1982; Soderbergh, 1971) the case study approach seems to be most appropriate.

The Sample

Since the case study approach requires intensive observation and interview on the part of the observer only three subjects were chosen. Only boys were chosen to avoid confounding variables through any possible differences which might occur in reading acquisition between the two sexes. The classroom teacher selected the subjects on the basis of informal observation as being average students.

The School

The study was undertaken at Brentwood Elementary in Brentwood Bay, a small community outside Victoria. The community consists of middle class Caucasian and native Indian families.

The Classroom

The grade one classroom from which the subjects were taken comprised 25 children, 19 boys and 6 girls.

Method of Instruction

The program of instruction was one of integrated language arts, combining phonics, sight-word instruction, reading in several texts and writing. The teacher used mainly the Ginn 720 Reading Series to teach reading. This series used the sight-word approach in which the learner masters a list of new vocabulary before beginning a reader. However, the teacher supplemented this program with instruction in phonics. Generally there was a feeling of warmth in the classroom and the children were given ample opportunity to interact with the teacher and their peers.

The Observer

The observer is a member of the teaching staff in the school but is not the classroom teacher of the sample.

3.2 Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection are listed under the three headings, Understanding Literacy Behaviour, Understanding of the Technical Concepts and Decoding and Comprehension and under each of the questions the study was designed to answer. Each instrument is explained and discussed from the perspective of what it intended to find out about the child.

3.2.1 Understanding Literacy Behaviour

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

Interview With the Parents: September 22, 1983

The questions that needed to be asked were whether the child was read to frequently or not and did the child show any interest in print. Also it was important to find out if there were many children's books in the home and whether the child saw samples of reading and writing done by the other members of the family.

The Interview With the Kindergarten Teacher: September 29, 1983

The questions directed at the teacher sought information about the child's attitude toward the kindergarten environment, his pre-reading experiences and his family background.

The Interview With the Classroom Teacher: September 27, 1983

The questions directed at the teacher attempted to find out if the child showed any interest in print. Did he enjoy and understand stories read to him? Was he familiar with the activities in the classroom environment, such as cutting, pasting, colouring and holding a pencil?

The Interviews With the Child: Sept. 22, 1983, Feb. 17, 1984, June 1, 1984

The interviews with the child were to assess the child's progress in the understanding of literacy behaviour. The questions for the interviews were adapted from Francis (1982).

Why do you come to school?
 Do you ever see people reading?
 What do they read?
 Why do they read?
 Do you read?
 If yes, what do you read?
 Why do you read?
 If no, do you want to learn to read?
 What would you like to read?
 Do your Mom and Dad read?
 If yes, what do they read?
 Is reading useful to you? Why?
 Is reading useful to grown-ups? Why?

The interviews proved valuable in that the observer got to know the child better and the child had the opportunity of expanding the questions because it was in a non-threatening situation without any time limits. Even though this study did not deal specifically with spoken language, nevertheless it is an important factor in reading readiness.

Canadian Readiness Test: September 7, 1983

The Canadian Readiness Test (Evanechko, Ollila, Downing and Braun, 1970) was administered to all students entering grade one to assess their readiness to beginning reading instruction. The test was first introduced to the school as a pilot project in 1973 and has been used every year. A copy of the test is filed in Appendix A.

Classroom Observations

The classroom observations were conducted during three terms, September-December, December-March and March-June. The classroom was visited every Thursday morning during reading instruction and Fridays in the afternoon when the class was engaged in other language arts related activities such as storywriting, games and discussions. Notes were taken of the children engaged in reading group sessions, teacher-directed class sessions, oral and written exercises and class projects. Reactions, comments, behaviours and answers were recorded on paper.

Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

These tests administered at the completion of levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 readers were important to the study because they showed what skills the reading program stressed in the process of learning to read. Copies of the level tests are filed in Appendix B.

The Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness

The LARR Test (Downing, Ayers and Schaefer, 1983) was administered three times during the year to assess the child's understanding of literacy behaviour, literacy functions and technical language of literacy. A copy of the test is filed in Appendix C.

3.2.2 Understanding of the Technical Concepts

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?
- b). Does the classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

The Sand Test: Sept. 23, 1983, Mar. 2, 1984, June 15, 1984

Marie Clay's "Concepts About Print" test entitled "Sand" (1972) was administered three times during the year to assess the child's understanding of the technical concepts. A copy of the test is filed in Appendix D.

Interviews With the Child: Sept. 17, 1983, Feb. 24, 1984, June 8, 1984

Interviews were designed to find out the child's understanding of "letters", "sounds", "words" and "sentences". For the first part of the interview, a test from the study by Francis (1982) which she names, Discrimination of Terms "Letter", "Word" and "Sentence" was used to probe the child's recognition of the technical concepts.

The next part of the interview tested the child's ability to use the technical concepts in discussion. The task was to find out if the child really did understand the concepts "letter", "word" and "sentence". The questions used were only regarded as starters and on a few occasions with some children, it was necessary

to probe or to ask supplementary questions to check the child's understanding. The following questions were adapted from Hazel Francis' book, Learning To Read.

Can you write your name?
Can you write anything else?
Tell me what you have written?
Can you write me a letter? What is it?
Can you give me a word?
Is this a sentence (I am at school)? Why or why not ?
Is this a sentence (am I at school)? Why or why not?
Is this a sentence (at am school I)? Why or why not?

Classroom Observations

The classroom observations discussed under the three terms September-December, December-March and March-June were to obtain information on the child's understanding of the technical concepts. Observations were recorded of the child's use of the technical concepts either orally or in written form and also of the teacher's use and the child's response to the technical concepts.

3.2.3 Decoding and Comprehension

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?
- b). What effect does the classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?
- c). Do the child's strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purposes of reading and writing increases?

The Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

The Informal Reading Inventory, administered after the completion of levels 3, 4 and 5 readers, was used to assess the child's silent and oral reading accuracy and comprehension. The Ginn 720 Inventory is included in Appendix E.

Classroom Observations

The classroom observations, discussed under the three terms September-December, December-March and March-June, were to find out what methods of decoding the beginning reader used. Focus was on words that are easy or difficult to decode and on the child's misreadings. Through an analysis of the misreadings, it was hoped to reveal the child's decoding strategies.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

4.1 Gerald

4.1.1 Understanding Literacy Behaviour

The purpose of data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the two research questions.

Interview With Parents: September 22, 1983

In the course of an interview with the father, it was learned that Gerald lived with his father, a younger brother and sister. His mother had left when he was four years old. A babysitter was hired to look after the children. When the father came home the children were in bed and therefore little time was spent with them. There are no children's books in the house. Gerald enjoys playing by himself with his cars.

Interview With Kindergarten Teacher: September 29, 1983

The teacher said that Gerald attended a K-1 classroom of eighteen children, twelve grade ones and six kindergarten children who attended in the afternoons. He had never been to playschool and therefore all the activities such as cutting, pasting and colouring appeared new. He learned quickly by copying others. His teacher reported that he appeared very shy, quiet and did not, in her opinion, participate to a satisfactory degree in discussions. His academic progress was satisfactory as he learned all the letters of the alphabet by name and sound and could print his name. After the kindergarten year, he moved and attended another school for grade one.

Gerald's kindergarten report indicated that no progress was made in the areas of self-confidence, expressing thoughts clearly or contributing to group discussions.

Interview With Classroom Teacher: September 27, 1983

At the start of grade one, Gerald was faced again with unfamiliar surroundings because he transferred to a new school. The teacher reported that he was very quiet in the classroom, particularly during discussions. His assignments were done very slowly and judging from the many times he had to ask the teacher what to do, it would seem justified to conclude that he was unable to understand the purpose of the required tasks. However, Gerald seemed to enjoy being read to but was not always able to answer questions about the stories. According to the classroom teacher, Gerald had not yet shown any interest in looking at books on his own .

Interview With Child: September 22, 1983 (first term)

In the first interview Gerald answered all questions with "yeah", "no" or a shrug of his shoulders but did not offer to elaborate on any of his answers. He answered "no" to the questions, "Do you have any books at home?" and "Does anyone read to you?". Gerald answered "yeah" to the question, "Do you like to look at books?" but was not able to point to the specific part that was for reading. Gerald shrugged his shoulders to both the questions, "Why do you come to school?" and "Do you want to learn to read?". He could not tell whether or not his mother and father read nor why or what people read. Because of his inability to elaborate on his answers it appeared that his spoken language was not well developed.

Interview With Child: February 17, 1984 (second term)

Gerald said that he could read and he was now reading Helicopters and Gingerbread. He also said that he had received two storybooks, one about Noddy and the other a Star Wars book for Christmas. He brought both books to school for the teacher to read to the class. He liked Star Wars best because he went to see the movie with his mother. Gerald said he liked listening to stories.

When presented with a book, The Story About Ping, Gerald looked at the cover and wanted to know the name of the story. He was able to point to the exact words as they were read and called out words that he knew.

When asked what things people read, Gerald answered, "storybooks, letters and the newspaper". When asked why each of the items were read he was able to say, "to read stories, to get letters from Santa" but was not able to answer why people read the newspaper.

Interview With Child: June 1, 1984 (third term)

Gerald said that he could read but wished that he could read as well as some of his friends in the first reading group. However, he said his father was helping him at home and Mark's mom was listening to him read at school. He said his problem was that he "couldn't remember the words fast enough." Sometimes it took him a long time to think of what the word said. But after he read the story once to his father, he could read it faster the second time. When asked if he reads at home he said that he takes his library books home and reads them by himself and sometimes reads to his younger brother. He said both the librarian and the teacher read to them and in class everybody including the teacher must read by themselves after lunch. Also they have grade three partners who read to them and sometimes listen to them read. When it's wet outside, students go to the library to read. Gerald said that people read when they need to find out about something like what frogs eat or how to bake cookies. Sometimes people read when they haven't anything else to do. The things that are read are sometimes funny. He thinks that all grown-ups can read and that it's important for him to read so he'll be like his dad.

Canadian Readiness Test: September 7, 1983

Gerald's reading readiness score indicated that he was ready to begin reading instruction. On the basis of this, Gerald was placed in an average reading group where a normal pace as determined by the Ginn 720 reading program was kept.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

Gerald's first reading experience involved reading names of the children in his class. Because Gerald was new to the school, many faces were unfamiliar to him. The names he was able to read first were the children he knew. This indicated that Gerald learned most easily what he understood. When reading a chalkboard message, Gerald was able to read the words after hearing them a few times but he read them hesitantly as if unsure of what he was reading. Gerald was able to recall the new words in his reader but sometimes mixed them up. He did not appear attentive during group discussions. During seatwork, Gerald, familiar with the routine of the classroom, opened his reading notebook and copied the date at the top of the page. He took a long time copying work from the chalkboard. He looked at every letter before copying it into his book rather than focusing on a whole word. He constantly lost his place on the chalkboard. At every opportunity he went over to the teacher asking for the answer to each of the sentences. It appeared that he was not able to choose any of the words on his own because he also copied work from his neighbours. The only exercise he was able to do independently was the worksheet on colouring pictures of words that began or ended with a common sound because the teacher had discussed the pictures during the reading session. The chalkboard exercise and the worksheet took so much time that generally he was unable to do any writing in his journal. On some days the journal was completed but his printing was always a copy of the experience chart done as a class effort. Towards the end of the term, Gerald was beginning to write his own sentences but did not vary from the sentence starters provided by the teacher. Most of his sentences began with "I am...", "I like..." or "I got...".

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

Chalkboard exercises were still done very slowly but there appeared to be more entries in his journal and some attempts at writing his own sentences using a very simple sentence structure.

When the children made Christmas cards, Gerald made one with a simple verse for his mother because he said he missed her sometimes. Gerald was able to read the verse all by himself. The class then wrote letters to Santa. Gerald wrote in his best handwriting and was careful with the spelling of words, asking the teacher's help when he needed a word. He had no difficulty knowing what to write and did not exhibit any of the slowness at completing work or inattentive behaviours observed when he was doing exercises in his notebook. The part Gerald liked the most was receiving a reply back from Santa. There were a few words he needed help with but his reading was fluent and full of expression. He said he was going to read the letter to his father.

At this time, publishers and children's writers were invited to the school library to give book talks and read stories to the children. Gerald sat very still with his eyes staring at the pictures in the books read at each session and was able to tell the story in his own words when he came back to the classroom.

Each week the class also visited the library to listen to a story read by the librarian and to borrow books. Gerald was observed taking the biggest and thickest books. The books were always left in his desk and never taken home. During silent reading time, Gerald flipped through his books quickly, apparently without paying any attention to the print.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

In the classroom, Gerald was observed attempting chalkboard exercises on his own whereas in the previous two terms, he had relied heavily on his neighbours. He was seen following each of the words with his eyes and mouthing the words with his lips. He seemed to be working an answer out mentally before attempting to copy it into his notebook. Gerald made fewer errors in his written work as indicated by the decreasing number of red marks made by the teacher. Gerald continued to ask the teacher to repeat directions or read words. When answering "who", "when", "what" and "where" questions, Gerald was seen using his reader to look for the answers. It appeared that Gerald had learned two things about sentences. First, he had learned that words in each sentence contribute to the sense of the sentence and second, that there was a connection between the questions he had to answer and the stories that he read from the reader.

In the reading group when Gerald was slow at reading a word, another child offered the word in order to help him read sentences smoothly. When another child read, Gerald followed with his finger and mouthed the words of the text. Gerald also read to a parent helper who came daily to listen to him read the same story as in the reading group. In this way, Gerald learned new words by repetition and stopped his unsuccessful attempts at sounding the letters which seemed to interrupt his comprehension of the sentence.

In the level five Ginn 720 reader, Gerald was exposed to many types of reading: stories for entertainment, reading for information, direction and instruction, poetry, jokes and riddles. As a result, by the end of the final term Gerald understood enough of the purpose of reading to seek on his own, things to read.

Since Gerald was able to read a little on his own at this time, on occasion it was observed that he was reading things around the room. When the teacher put up a new bulletin board display he was able to read the title, "Our Family". One day a child brought a new game to school and it was noticed that Gerald and his friend were reading the instructions. Gerald was also seen reading a newspaper clipping someone had brought from home. It appeared that Gerald, at this time, was taking an interest in things in his environment that could be read.

In his journal writing, Gerald showed evidence of seeing associations between letter combinations and sounds. For example, he wrote "prdees"(parties), "wig-lee"(wiggly) and "Dizzneeland"(Disneyland).

Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

The Ginn 720 Mastery Tests were administered at the completion of each level of the Ginn 720 Reading Program. Scores in the Ginn 720 Mastery Tests showed that Gerald had no difficulty mastering the vocabulary, comprehension of the texts and decoding words in level 2 and 3. But as the number and difficulty of the texts increased in levels 4 and 5, he was not able to pass the mastery test suggested by the reading program in both comprehension and decoding.

Table 1: Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

	<u>Comprehension</u>		<u>Vocabulary</u>		<u>Decoding</u>	
	<u>Mastery</u> <u>Level</u>	<u>Child</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Mastery</u> <u>Level</u>	<u>Child</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Mastery</u> <u>Level</u>	<u>Child</u> <u>Score</u>
Level 2 Oct. 28/83	16	20	16	20	14	17
Level 3 Dec. 13/83	18	18	10	12	20	21
Level 4 Jan. 27/84	22	25	10	12	18	16
Level 5 May 1/84	22	20	16	18	21	19

Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness

The LARR Test was administered three times during the year to assess the child's understanding of literacy.

In the first term, Gerald was not able to identify the parts in a storybook and a newspaper that people read. He said a food package was not for reading. Gerald knew that a pen and pencil but not a ruler or eraser were used for writing.

Gerald was able to identify the act of reading applied to books and newspapers but not to various forms of functional reading such as record sleeves, pill bottles or shopping lists. A similar pattern was observed in writing.

In the second term Gerald's answers did not vary much from the first term. Gerald was still confused about when and what situations required reading.

In the third term Gerald improved in his understanding of the acts of reading and writing. Gerald seemed to be clear in his mind as to what constituted reading although he lacked personal experiences with which to identify some of the photo-

graphs. It was also observed that Gerald was better able to carry on a conversation with the interviewer whereas in the previous two terms, he only answered what was asked.

Table 2: Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness

	<u>Recognizing Literacy Behaviour</u> (max. 22)	<u>Understanding Literacy Functions</u> (max. 28)	<u>Technical Language of Literacy</u> (max. 30)
Sept. 30/83	10	7	7
Mar. 9/84	15	17	25
June 22/84	19	20	28

Summary: Gerald-Understanding Literacy Behaviour

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the two questions previously stated by the study:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?

In the initial stages of learning to read, Gerald appeared to be unfamiliar with the acts of reading and writing. Interviews with his father, the kindergarten teacher, the classroom teacher and Gerald and the LARR Test all supported the fact that Gerald did not begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print.

- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

Observation in the classroom showed that there was no concern for the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing in the initial stages of reading instruction. The children were thrown into formal reading instruction without

first determining their understanding of the purposes of reading and writing. Even though there seemed an interest by the school to identify the children who were ready to begin reading instruction, as shown by accepting the Canadian Readiness Test as a pilot project, there was no attempt made to find out what constituted readiness in reading. As the study showed, the Canadian Readiness Test was not accurate in assessing Gerald's reading readiness.

The classroom observations and the Ginn 720 Mastery Tests emphasized the learning of isolated skills such as rhyming words and spelling of words without the initial understanding of where these skills fitted in the process of reading. This helped to detract from an understanding of the purposes of reading and writing.

However the LARR Test indicated that by the end of the year, there was substantial increase in Gerald's understanding of the purpose of reading and writing. This progress may be attributed to the classroom activities such as journal and letter writing and listening and writing stories which promoted a purposeful use of reading and writing.

4.1.2 Understanding of the Technical Concepts

The purpose of the following data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the two research questions.

Sand Test

The Sand Test was administered three times during the year to assess the child's understanding of the technical concepts of print. The stanine score in the first term suggested that Gerald did not understand the technical concepts. By the second term he had learned a great deal about the conventions of print. His errors were in the use of commas and quotation marks and sequencing sentences. His inability to understand the order of sentences in a story suggested a weakness in the comprehension of the text. In the third term his errors continued only in punctuation showing a good understanding of the technical concepts.

Table 3: Sand Test (max. 24)

	<u>Child's Score</u>	<u>Stanine</u>
Sept. 23/83	8	4
Mar. 2/84	20	7
Jun. 15/84	23	9

Interview With Child: September 17, 1983 (first term)

In Hazel Francis' test, Discrimination of Terms "Letter", "Word" and "Sentence", Gerald was able to identify three letters and give their names but when asked to point to a word or a sentence, he became confused. Gerald was able to print his name but said he could not think of anything else to print. He was unable to give a word or a sentence but was able to print letters mixing unsystematically upper and lower case. He also reversed some letters.

Interview With Child: February 24, 1984 (second term)

In this term he was able to say a sentence had many words without any reference to a sentence being a complete thought. He could also print some words he had learned from his reader. He was also able to give a sentence for each of the words he wrote. In the sample sentences he was able to say sentences began with a capital and ended with a period.

Interview With Child: June 8, 1984 (third term)

Gerald was able to say that a word was one thing and a sentence was many words. A sentence also told about something and began with a capital letter and ended with a period. He also said sentences made sense because they told about something or they asked a question.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

Observation of Gerald in the reading session showed that he was attentive during only the first few minutes while the teacher talked. He then directed his attention to looking at the pictures in the middle of the book. He was unable to follow the group in reading the title of the book, the table of contents and the first story. Other children had to assist him. He was also unable to keep pace. It was observed that when a word was more than one syllable, he moved to the next word after the first syllable therefore finishing long before the teacher did.

Observation of seatwork activities also showed his lack of attentiveness to the tasks. During fifteen minutes of observation, Gerald played with his pencil, searched for an eraser and chatted to a neighbour. He was observed frequently copying others' work. Every time the teacher was free, he asked for help. On

many occasions he asked by saying he didn't know how to do the exercise and when the teacher explained he said, "What you mean?".

Gerald generally spent all his time struggling with the chalkboard exercise therefore having little time to write in his journal. A few entries in September showed that he had copied the experience chart instead of writing about his own experiences. However entries in November showed sentences that related to his personal life. On November 3, 1983, he wrote, "Shawn [his brother] is sick". He frequently reversed letters. His written work showed that he understood that words were separated by spaces and he was able to use words to write sentences. However, his choice of verb forms was not always correct. For example, it appeared correct to him to write "I am go to mom" for he read it exactly the way he had written it. Gerald did not always begin his sentences with a capital but always ended with a period. In most cases the writing stood alone as a complete thought.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

In the second term Gerald appeared still inattentive, unable to comprehend what was going on. Observation of Gerald's behaviour during seatwork showed that he was disorganized. He was only able to print one letter before having to check the chart for the next letter and often could not find where he had left off from the chart. Seatwork activities in his reading notebook included filling-in-the-blanks, putting words in order to make a sentence, making compound words, making contractions and answering comprehension questions beginning with "who" and "what". On many occasions he looked to see what answers his neighbour used. The teacher seeing that he took too long to do these written exercises excused

him from copying the whole sentences. By printing in one word answers he had time to write in his journal.

In his journal writing, Gerald did not reverse letters as frequently as the first term. There was still evidence of using capital letters at the end of a word as seen in previous work. Lower case letters were still used to begin sentences even though he was able to repeat this rule and could distinguish the capital letters from the lower case letters. However his sentences appeared more interesting because they related to his personal life and no errors were seen in grammar as in the previous term. A February 6, 1984 entry read, "We had a magician come. We made applesauce".

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

The second term report to his parents said that Gerald had difficulty learning new vocabulary quickly and in remembering the sounds of the short vowel words which tended to impede his reading progress. As a result of the teacher's evaluation, Gerald was transferred to a slower paced reading group in the third term. The teacher took more time in the reading group drilling the new vocabulary in each story.

Observation of seatwork assignments showed that Gerald was not able to copy his neighbour's answers because those around him had different exercises. Gerald had to rely on his own strategies to get the job done. It was observed that Gerald read the sentence he copied out loud substituting each of the choice words, shaking his head when one didn't make sense until he came to the correct one. Comprehension questions about the story were limited to questions beginning with "what", "who" and "where" so Gerald had no difficulty supplying one word to

answer the question. On one occasion it was noted that Gerald had his reader open to the story and was flipping the pages and reading sentences. When he came upon what he was looking for, he immediately copied it into his book.

In his journal writing, on days which he said he had nothing exciting to report, he reverted back to following the sample sentences, "I like Mark". But in most cases, Gerald had been able to organize his thoughts and write very coherent and detailed sentences. An example from a page in his journal on April 26, 1984 read:

I losT a TooTh. I like Daniel. I puT My TooTh under My piloe and in
The morning I Found a QuarTer.

This example showed that some conventions of print were followed such as capitalizing names such as "Daniel" and "I" and putting in periods at the end of a sentence but the consistent capitalization of the letter "T" indicated that he was probably following his own rules.

Summary: Gerald-Understanding of the Technical Concepts

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the two questions previously stated by the study:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?

Gerald was able to discriminate between letters, words and numbers but not sentences. However he was not familiar enough with words and sentences to have samples stored in his head for recall as in the case of the letters. The ease he showed in recalling the letters, but not in putting them together to form words during the interview indicated the extent of his learning. This showed he had committed to memory such information as letter names and sounds which were meaningless to him because he did not know how they related to reading for

meaning. The Sand Test and interviews with the child revealed that he had very little knowledge of the technical features of books such as the location of the print, word and line order, and the use of upper and lower case letters or punctuation. These observations lead to the conclusion that Gerald did not begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts.

- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

Gerald began his formal reading instruction with very little understanding of the technical concepts about print as indicated by the Sand Test. The data collection clearly showed the frustration felt by Gerald in the first and second terms in his efforts to make sense of classroom instruction. However evidence from the interviews with the child, the classroom observations and the Sand Test confirmed his progress in the second and third terms in this area. Analysis of the data showed this progress may have been brought about by watching and imitating his peers and also through the process of talking about, listening to directions and working on written assignments. Also the greatest contribution to understanding of the features and functions of print perhaps came from using the readers and storybooks. From the readers and storybooks, Gerald learned by observation, assistance from peers and experience in handling books. He recognized such features as the sequence of the print and mapping of words to oral language. Therefore in conclusion, the classroom instruction did not achieve the goal of developing an understanding of the technical concepts but it did contribute to Gerald's understanding by the third term by providing experiences and giving him an opportunity to interact with print.

4.1.3 Decoding and Comprehension

The purpose of the following data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?
- b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?
- c). Do his strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the three research questions.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

The familiarity with initial and final letter sounds of words as seen in Gerald's responses to the teacher's questions showed that he had previous instruction on letter sounds. These letter sounds were frequently referred to in class instruction and in seatwork activities. Whenever Gerald was required to vocalize a written word, the sound of the initial letter could be heard first followed by the rest of the word. When he read a word incorrectly, his choice generally began with the same letter sound. Samples of his misreadings in class lessons were "hide" for "here", "run" for "ride" and "this" for "the". However there was no indication that final letter sounds were used as cues even though they were part of the classroom instruction.

New words were introduced by presenting words with pictures. The first words introduced were names of children and pets followed by action words or verbs. There were workbook pages in which names had to be matched with pictures and verbs to the actions demonstrated by the pictures. The children also

made sentences about themselves using the action words. Gerald had no difficulty learning these words. However, the words which gave him difficulty were connecting words such as "but" and "will". Other words which presented problems were words with similar letter combinations such as "who", "what's" and "want". When he came across these words he always made several guesses before reading the word correctly. By the end of December, Gerald had learned seventy-two sight words, some of which he knew better than others.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

In the second term new sight words were taken from the reader story and were introduced on cards before the reading of the story. The easiest words for Gerald to learn were words that were easily depicted by pictures such as "helicopters", "airport", "elephant" and "mouse" and words that appeared in the stories of great interest and repeated often like "gingerbread", "away", "woman", "dog" and "fox".

The classroom instruction also concentrated on the phonetic sounding of words. Instruction began with the reading of the short vowel "a" words followed by the short "o", short "u", short "e" and short "i". Gerald was shown how to sound each letter in words such as "cat", "mat", "map", "rat" and "sap" and blend them together. Gerald was able to sound out the individual letters but frequently asked the teacher if he was right when he blended them together. The teacher praised him for trying thus encouraging him to continue using this strategy. When Gerald asked about a word, he was told frequently to "sound it out". Subsequent to instruction in phonics, Gerald began sounding words he had previously known.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Assessment of Gerald's progress in reading as indicated by a report to the parents noted that he had difficulty in learning new vocabulary quickly and in remembering the sounds of the short vowels. Gerald was moved to a slower paced reading group where the teacher spent more time drilling the new vocabulary and reviewing the sounds of the short vowels in the third term. Also a parent helper came to read and listen to him read the stories from his reader. In an interview with the father, a reader was sent home to be read to the father each night. After hearing the story read to him fluently by an adult, Gerald became familiar with the flow of the written language and he was able to concentrate on the comprehension of the story.

The move to a new reading group also meant he could not copy answers from his neighbours because their seatwork exercises were different. He had to rely on his own strategies and therefore he was observed frequently asking the teacher for help. Comprehension questions about the story were limited to questions beginning with "what", "who" and "where" so Gerald had no difficulty supplying one word answers to the questions.

Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

The Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory was administered for levels 3, 4 and 5 to test the child's reading accuracy and comprehension in both silent and oral reading. The tests were administered at the completion of each of the Ginn 720 readers.

In the level 3 oral selection, Gerald seemed to know most of the words by sight but appeared very tense and read word-by-word slowly pointing to each word

with his finger. He tended to ignore the punctuation and showed no indication of proper phrasing. When he did not know a word, he stopped and waited for someone else to supply the word. Because his comprehension score in both silent and oral selections fell within the criterion score it was assumed that he seemed to comprehend what he was reading.

In level 4 silent reading selection, Gerald read with his lips moving, sliding his fingers along as if concentrating on each letter. According to the success criterion of the test, Gerald's score of 75 per cent indicated comprehension of the passage.

In the oral selection Gerald read word-by-word with very little attention to proper phrasing or punctuation. He seemed to hesitate after sounding the initial letter even with the words he learned as sight words. He tried to sound out phonetically the words "old" and "airport" but was unsuccessful in coming up with a word that was not a nonsense word. Gerald did not achieve the criterion scores for either word recognition or comprehension.

In level 5, Gerald read silently with his lips moving and his fingers pointing to each word. He was not able to make the criterion score in comprehension. In the oral selection Gerald read with little expression but with attention to proper phrasing and punctuation. There was less concentration than in the previous level in sounding the individual letters and more stress placed on content and the flow of the language. In his misreadings of the word "saw" for "was" which he was able to correct on his own and in the omission of the word "it" Gerald showed that he was not reading word-by-word. He made five errors, two of which were in the tense of the verb and one which was an omission. Although he did not make 95 per

cent (4 errors) in the oral reading, there was a great improvement over the previous levels. In comprehension his score fell within the criterion score indicating comprehension of the passage.

In conclusion, an analysis of Gerald's progress showed that in level 3 he used the sight-word approach in decoding and was able to comprehend what was being read. Level 4 showed a tendency to sound words phonetically and comprehension seemed to suffer. By level 5, strategies for decoding seemed to stress the content and flow of language. It was assumed there was comprehension of the passage read.

Table 4: Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

		<u>Accuracy</u>		<u>Comprehension</u>	
		<u>Mastery</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Mastery</u>	<u>Child</u>
		<u>Level</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Score</u>
Level 3 Nov. 10/83	silent	-	-	75%	75%
	oral	92%	92%	75%	75%
Level 4 Apr. 6/84	silent	-	-	75%	75%
	oral	92%	88%	75%	25%
Level 5 Jun. 6/84	silent	-	-	75%	50%
	oral	92%	90%	75%	75%

Summary: Gerald-Decoding and Comprehension

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the three questions previously stated by the study:

a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?

The methods of decoding at the initial stages of reading were predominantly whole-word supplemented by the initial letter sound of words when needed. High interest words that were easily depicted seemed to be learned first. Picture associations and reading the words in the context of a story were important to word memory. The methods described seemed to be sufficient for Gerald since the pool of sight vocabulary was kept to a minimum and repetition was stressed from story to story in the reader. Words were used frequently in class written assignments.

b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?

Gerald's oral reading showed that his decoding strategies reflected the method of instruction in the classroom. At first the use of a whole-word approach supplemented by the initial letter sounds was predominant in discriminating words. This followed from the concentration of instruction on initial and final letter sounds of words in both kindergarten and early grade one. However when the sight words introduced increased, discrimination using only the initial letter sounds was not enough because many of words began with the same letter. Therefore, when the phonic method was introduced in the second term, Gerald adapted to this strategy readily probably hoping to solve the problem he was already experiencing discriminating words beginning with the same letter or similar in shape. The incompatibility of the phonics approach on sight-word reading material made it extremely confusing for Gerald. This incompatibility hindered his reading fluency and com-

prehension. By the third term, Gerald's frustration in oral reading and comprehension led the teacher to approach the father to read orally with Gerald every evening. She also enlisted the aid of a parent to read with him in school time. By reading orally, Gerald had to respond quickly to the written words. He was offered the word whenever he tried to attend to the individual letters. Once again, Gerald used the whole-word approach. He learned to identify features of the printed words in the instructional set. Gerald's experience in learning to read seemed to suggest that the classroom instruction did have an effect on the child's decoding strategies.

- c). Do his strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

In the first term the LARR Test indicated that Gerald recognized reading as appearing only on a page such as on a piece of newspaper or in a storybook. He was unable to say that writing appearing on labels, signs or lists could be read. This showed that his understanding of reading was restricted to reading in the instructional sense as seen in school but not reading in a functional sense such as for the purpose of getting information. It seemed that Gerald did not have a good understanding of the purposes of reading and writing.

This poor understanding of the purposes of reading and writing was reflected in his oral reading. He read very nervously, word-by-word without any attention to the flow of the language or meaning. He showed no use of any strategies to attack unknown words and he did not make any corrections to his misreadings.

In the second term there was no substantial progress shown in the LARR Test. His oral reading continued to be jerky with no attention to phrasing or punctuation. He concentrated his efforts on sounding out the individual letters of words and therefore meaning was lost.

By the third term the nature of reading had become clear to him. The emphasis on reading fluency through oral reading with a competent reader helped him to understand the relationship between speech and print. He was also eager to talk about his personal experiences as similar to stories in his reader showing that he had finally understood how his personal experiences affect his reading. His oral reading began to be characterized by proper phrasing and punctuation. There was evidence of using his knowledge of grammar and of the world as strategies of prediction for unknown words and correction of his misreadings.

From these data it can be concluded that Gerald made many changes in his decoding strategies as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increased.

4.1.4 Final Conclusions: Gerald

From the data collection, some general conclusions about Gerald's progress in learning to read during his first year of formal reading instruction were made. It was found that without the understanding of literacy behaviour and technical concepts of print Gerald was unable to make sense of the classroom instruction. Although he had this cognitive confusion at the initial stages of reading, he was able to progress. Once he developed cognitive clarity about the nature of reading his oral reading became fluent and his comprehension improved. Gerald understood classroom assignments, such as reading and writing for a purpose. This perhaps contributed to his achieving cognitive clarity. However the classroom instruction in phonics and assignments dealing with isolated words tended to confuse and detract from the purposes of reading and writing. The phonetic approach to decoding words taught in the second term was not appropriate when using a

sight-word reading program. Before purposeful reading and writing could take place Gerald had to become familiar with a pool of useful vocabulary. From this sight vocabulary he was able to generalize his own rules about the relationship of sounds to symbols. These rules helped him to develop strategies decoding new words.

4.2 Morris

4.2.1 Understanding Literacy Behaviour

The purpose of the data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the two research questions.

Interview With Parents: September 22, 1983

In an interview, the step-mother said that to her knowledge no one had ever read to Morris. None of the adults or the boys in the family were great readers. She and her husband read the newspaper when all the boys were in bed. She had observed the boys reading comic books, comics in the newspaper and the television guide to see when their favorite programs were on but there were not many books in the house because they were more into sports. She said the two older boys were average in their reading at school but the oldest was having difficulty and she was listening to him read every night.

In an interview, the father explained that Morris had a lot of attention in his pre-school years from the employees of his restaurant. The restaurant employees brought newspapers, magazines and books to read during coffee breaks. Often they brought storybooks to read to Morris. Morris also showed interest in looking at the restaurant menu and with the help of the waitresses, he became proficient at ordering his own meals.

Interview With Kindergarten Teacher: September 29, 1983

In an interview, the kindergarten teacher said that Morris was the youngest of three boys. His parents were divorced when he was four years old and his father was left with the children. The father remarried, adding to the family a step-mother and her son the same age as Morris. A year later, a baby boy was born making Morris the second youngest in the family. Morris and his two brothers visited their own mother every Wednesday night and on holidays.

The kindergarten teacher also said that Morris had learned all the letters of the alphabet by name and by sound but had poor concentration on tasks. Even though she felt that he was a bit lazy at doing things, he was always able to answer questions when asked.

Interview With Teachers: September 27, 1983

The grade one teacher said it seemed that Morris was left to look after himself. He was often late for school and occasionally came to school crying because he could not find his shoes. His lunch, which he said he made himself, was the same every day--jam and peanut butter between two pieces of thick sliced bread. The teacher also said that he always wanted a hug and had written notes to her wishing she was his mother. The teacher said that Morris had settled into the class routines very well. He seemed to enjoy class discussions, oral lessons and looking at pictures in books but did not like printing probably because his hands were so large, making his coordination poor.

Teachers of his older brother, David, said that his step-mother seemed to be very concerned about David who was having difficulty in reading. At home she spent time helping David read. The teachers also felt that there was too much

pressure by the parents for him to do better. Perhaps seeing this pressure from his parents on his brother to read made Morris realize that it was important for him to learn to read too.

Interview With Child: September 22, 1983 (first term)

In an interview Morris said he liked school because he liked his teacher but didn't like the work. He said he came to school to learn to read and do Math. His step-mother, dad and brothers did not read much and he did not have any books at home but he liked to look at pictures in the books in the classroom. He said he would like to learn to read so he could get a job when he grew up. He was not sure what he would read when he is older. However he was sure reading was important to grown-ups.

Interview With Child: February 17, 1984 (second term)

Morris said that he could read in his reader very well but that he could not read other books as well. He liked to read books at school but said that he never had time to read at home. At the library he takes out two books each week and leaves them in his desk to read at school so he won't forget to bring them back. His favorite books are books about monsters and cars.

He said he liked reading because he didn't have to do anything and he could find out about things like the different kinds of cars. He said his father and step-mother read the newspapers and magazines and his brothers read comics. When he grows up he'll probably read the newspaper and big books with no pictures.

Interview With Child: June 1, 1984 (third term)

Morris said he could read all the stories in his reader but some books were still hard for him. He said he read his library books at school because he never took his books home. At home he reads his brothers' comic books and his mom and dad read the newspaper and magazines. He said people read to find out about things like how to fix cars or to cook things or for fun. Sometimes stories are funny and they can make people laugh. He said he doesn't like to read out loud because sometimes he doesn't know a word and it takes too long to sound it out. If he reads by himself he just leaves it out.

Canadian Readiness Test: September 7, 1983

In comparison with the other members of his class, Morris' score in this test showed that his reading readiness skills were sufficient to begin reading instruction. On basis of this score, Morris was placed in an average reading group where a normal pace as determined by the Ginn 720 reading program was kept.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

Morris was able to read all the names of his classmates by the first week. During teacher-directed lessons, Morris appeared very attentive. He had his hand up to answer all the teacher's questions and when asked, always had the correct answers. He seemed to learn new words quickly.

Observation of Morris doing his written work showed him often absorbed in staring around the room or at the pictures in his reader. The teacher tried to get him to attend to his work, calling his name and asking him the sentence he was working on. Brought back to task, he spent five minutes looking for his notebook

and pencil, printing a few words and searching for his eraser. When he couldn't find it, he sat there till the recess bell went without completing his work. He rarely had time to print sentences into his journal. After a month of school the teacher told him to print the answer for the blank rather than copying the whole sentence. Morris still did not always complete his journal but it seemed that on days he had something special to write about it was done quickly. After reading his journal it was obvious that he never simply copied sentences from the sample sentences but wrote about his own ideas. His pictures were related to what he had written. He was observed bringing his journal to read to his teacher and showing her his work. He seemed to enjoy receiving the teacher's encouragement.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

Morris continued to be very slow at getting started and finishing his board-work and worksheet assignments. However he was able to explain the directions. When asked why he wasn't doing his work, he said he didn't like doing it. The kinds of exercises he seemed to take a long time to do included filling-in-the blanks, rhyming words, contractions and verb forms. These exercises dealt with isolated words or sentences.

In journal writing Morris did an entry every other day, an improvement over the first term. Judging from the sentences it appeared that he made a real effort to write about everything that happened. An example of his writing, dated February 9, 1984, showing the complexity and maturity in his sentences follows:

Winu a blind man gos for a walk he tackes his gui bog. Bline peepl can't See. bline peepl uowee put thising wer thay fad them. I saw a blineman.

Morris' oral reading of his work.

When a blind man goes for a walk he takes his guide dog. Blind people can't see. Blind people only put things where they find them. I saw a blind man.

In activities he enjoyed Morris seemed to work harder. In writing a letter to Santa, his printing was very neat and followed the teacher's format for letter writing very closely. Many of the words were spelled phonetically on his own. He was very excited when he brought his letter back from Santa to school to read to the class.

Often Morris was observed visiting centres with Christmas activities. He frequently took books from the table and was observed reading a book the teacher had read to the class previously. He was also seen making Christmas cards and dropping them in the box to be delivered.

During this term, a visitor from a publishing company of children's books came to give a book talk. Morris appeared very interested and raised his hand to ask many questions. When he was leaving the library he thanked the speaker for showing him the books. In class he wrote and illustrated his own story to be bound into a book to go into the library.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Morris showed no change in completing his written assignments. He continued to sit, fidget and daydream at his desk. On many occasions Morris was observed reading a book when he should have been printing.

In his journal he worked quickly and never seemed to have difficulty finding things of interest to write about. An example of his writing follows:

we got new graups. I got my reepoert Cuerd. spring time is coming soon.

There were still no capital letters at the beginning of the sentences but each sentence ended with a period. He seemed to rely less on phonetic spelling and showed signs of using familiar spelling patterns from words that he knew.

Observation in the classroom also indicated that he was producing good work on seasonal activities such as writing and copying St. Patrick's Day and Easter stories and poems, making holiday cards and writing letters.

Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

Scores in the Ginn 720 Mastery Tests indicated that Morris had successfully learned all the vocabulary and comprehended what he was expected to read in all four levels of the Ginn 720 reading program.

Table 5: Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

	<u>Comprehension</u>		<u>Vocabulary</u>		<u>Decoding</u>	
	<u>Mastery</u> <u>Level</u>	<u>Child</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Mastery</u> <u>Level</u>	<u>Child</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Mastery</u> <u>Level</u>	<u>Child</u> <u>Score</u>
Level 2 Oct. 28/83	16	20	16	20	14	17
Level 3 Dec. 13/83	18	21	10	12	20	20
Level 4 Jan. 27/84	22	26	10	12	18	20
Level 5 May 1/84	22	27	16	19	21	24

Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness

The LARR Test was administered to Morris only in the first two terms to assess his understanding of literacy behaviour, literacy functions and technical language of literacy. As indicated by the table below, Morris was able to score more than 50 per cent on Parts 1 and 2 and more than 30 per cent on Part 3 in the first term. According to the test, he was above average and was ready to begin formal reading instruction.

In the second term, his score, as indicated by the table below, was more than 75 per cent on Part 1 and more than 60 per cent on Parts 2 and 3. According to the test, he was above average and had a good understanding of literacy.

Table 6: Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness

	<u>Recognizing Literacy Behaviour</u> (max. 22)	<u>Understanding Literacy Functions</u> (max. 28)	<u>Technical Language of Literacy</u> (max. 30)
Sept. 30/83	19	21	15
Mar. 9/84	22	27	29

Summary: Morris-Understanding of Literacy Behaviour

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered the two questions previously stated by the study:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?

In the initial stages of learning to read, Morris seemed to be familiar with the acts of reading and writing. His observation of people at his father's restaurant engaged in free-time reading, using the menu for ordering meals and watching his

older brothers using reading for a purpose at home probably helped him to develop an understanding of the communicative intent of print.

- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

Not all the activities in the classroom were directed towards reading and writing for a purpose but Morris' understanding of literacy behaviour at the beginning helped him to select and do the exercises that dealt with purposeful reading and writing. He refused to do seatwork that dealt with isolated skills. Instead he used his time to read books. Activities which he enjoyed were writing about his own experiences, stories, letters and class discussions. In conclusion, the classroom instruction appeared to help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing by providing opportunities to interact with print.

4.2.2 Understanding of the Technical Concepts

The purpose of the data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the two research questions.

Sand Test

Morris was administered the Sand Test only in the first two terms. In the first term, Morris was able to find the front of the book, show the printing and its movement and point to the words as they were read. However he was not able to notice differences in line order, word order or letter order. Other areas of difficulty were punctuation and locating capital letters. His stanine score showed that it was similar to other children of his age group and that his understanding of the concepts of print were adequate.

In the second term, Morris was able to answer all the items correctly showing that he had mastered the technical concepts. The test was not administered again in the third term because he had demonstrated his understanding of the technical concepts in the second term.

Table 7: Sand Test (max. 24)

	<u>Child's Score</u>	<u>Stanine</u>
Sept. 23/83	12	5
Mar. 2/84	24	9

Interview With Child: September 17, 1983 (first term)

In the Discrimination of Terms "Letter", "Word" and "Sentence" test by Hazel Francis, Morris was able to identify correctly the cards with letters, words and sentences.

In testing the child's ability to use the technical concepts in discussion, Morris was able to print his first name and some words. For a letter, he wrote the capital "I" saying it was also a word. For sentence, he wrote "I can run" adding that he

was a fast runner. He was able to identify the sentences from the non-sentences given.

Interview With Child: February 24, 1984 (second term)

Morris said that letters were put together to make words and that each letter has a sound. These sounds "helped you to say the word". Morris said "phrases are made of a few words while sentences are made of more words and tell about a person or a thing doing something". He also said that sentences began with capital letters and ended with periods.

Interview With Child: June 8, 1984 (third term)

Morris said that "words are put together to make sentences". The sample (at am school I) was not a sentence because it didn't begin with a capital letter and end with a period. Also the words were scrambled and did not make sense.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

Morris did not appear to have any problems using or understanding oral language. In the classroom, the terms "letters", "sounds", "words" and "sentences" were used frequently. Morris was able to do exercises that required an understanding of these terms orally but had difficulty doing written assignments. These written assignments included naming sounds and letter names for the beginning and ending letters of words, supplying words with a given sound, and also making sentences with sight vocabulary.

During reading sessions, Morris was always sitting closest to the teacher and was therefore called upon often to answer questions. He appeared to be able to follow the lessons closely.

In his seat, Morris frequently spent his time looking for his notebook, pencil and eraser. Often times he played with his writing tools. However when asked the directions for his written exercise he was able to explain accurately and supply the correct answers.

In his journal writing, Morris wrote sentences that referred to him personally and drew pictures that were related to his sentences. An October 21, 1983 entry said, "I am going to play Soccer tomorrow". The accuracy of his spelling showed that he probably asked for help in spelling the words. However this sentence that he wrote by himself showed that he understood the conventions of putting speech into print and that sentences had to be meaningful.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

In class discussions, Morris always had his hands up to answer questions. During an observation they were talking about a trip to the museum. He also listened intently when the teacher explained directions for an Easter activity. It appeared there was no lack of understanding when an activity was about something he wanted to do.

During seatwork, Morris continued to be as unorganized and frustrated as in the first term. On one occasion it was observed that he turned his notebook over and threw it down with a thud on his desk. He muttered, "I don't know why I have to do this anyways". The fact that everyone chose to ignore his behaviour showed that it was not the first time he had done this. Even when the teacher lightened his load by exempting him from copying sentences to just printing one word answers Morris did not work faster. This suggests that he was not only opposed to the amount of handwriting but the lack of purpose in the exercises.

On two separate occasions he was observed reading a library book at his desk, ignoring the written exercises he had to finish. He seemed completely absorbed and was enjoying his book.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Observation of Morris doing his seatwork showed him reading the words and sentences in a quiet voice but still reluctant to do them in written form.

The relatively few entries in his journal compared to others in his class showed that there was no improvement in his attitude toward other written assignments. However, his understanding of how the components such as letters, words, sentences and phrases were put together to produce print was demonstrated in his journal writing. An example was recorded on April 24, 1984:

I had an Easter choclate banny. today is my T-baql practice. my
Grandma is at my house.

This example showed an adoption of the conventional spelling and less reliance on phonetic spelling. The sentences still did not begin with capital letters even though Morris was able to recite this rule earlier.

Summary: Morris-Understanding of Technical Concepts

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the two questions previously stated by the study:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?

Morris demonstrated that he was able to recognize and distinguish the terms "letter" and "words" which were used extensively in classroom instruction. The

Sand Test indicated that he was familiar with the format of books and sequence of print. The interview session also showed that he understood how words were put together to make meaningful sentences. The results of these measurements showed that he began his initial reading experience with an adequate understanding of the technical concepts needed to understand instruction and reason about print.

- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

Morris was familiar with technical concepts such as the direction of the printing, letter names and sounds and words at the initial stages of formal reading instruction. The Sand Test showed that by the second term, Morris had successfully mastered all the features of print such as punctuation, sequence of words in a sentence, sequence of sentences in a story and use of upper and lower case letters. These features of print were probably learned through experience in reading the readers and storybooks. Therefore the classroom instruction appeared to help the child understand the technical concepts by providing the experiences and giving him opportunity to interact with print.

4.2.3 Decoding and Comprehension

The purpose of the data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?
- b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?
- c). Do his strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the three research questions.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

During an observation of a lesson on attacking short "e" words, Morris was able to read the list of short vowel words (get, met, set, hem, lend) without having to sound each letter as taught by the teacher. However, when the word "hem" was read, he stopped to ask the meaning of the word, as if checking his decoding because the word was not meaningful to him.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

During the February 12, 1984 observation lesson Morris was looking at a book from the shelf. The observer asked if Morris could read to her. In all the words in which he had to stop and decode, never once did he try to sound each letter. On several occasions he substituted a word with another having the same beginning and final letter. Sometimes he seemed very impatient when he could not come up with a correct word after sounding out a few of the consonants. His strategy seemed to be focusing on a few of the consonants in order to produce a word that fitted the context of the sentence.

In a reading session, Morris got excited about the pictures and often wanted to offer his own ideas about what was happening in the pictures. In his oral reading, Morris remembered his sight vocabulary well but frequently skipped or substituted other words. His voice generally expressed meaning.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Observation in the reading session confirmed Morris' ability to read the reader fluently. In the lists of words with common letter patterns, Morris was able to read the words quickly without attention to each letter. However when he came to the word "shrill" his voice went up as if questioning the accuracy of his decoding. The teacher asked if he knew what the word meant and he said he didn't. This showed that Morris checked his oral reading with his understanding of the meaning.

Observation of his journal writing showed that there were few spelling errors except for a few words in which he had left out one letter. This appeared to indicate that he did not need to rely on phonetic spelling because he remembered the conventional spelling for most words he needed.

Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

In each of the levels of the Ginn 720 reading inventory Morris was able to read the passages with the proper phrasing and intonation. His misreadings generally reflected the way he spoke but rarely altering the meaning of the passages. An example was shown in level 4 oral reading when he substituted the word "odd" for "old". The word "odd" resembled the word to be read and also fitted the context of the sentence. In all the silent and oral readings, Morris showed no difficulty in comprehending what he was reading.

Table 8: Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

		<u>Accuracy</u>		<u>Comprehension</u>	
		<u>Mastery</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Mastery</u>	<u>Child</u>
		<u>Level</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Score</u>
Level 3 Nov. 10/83	silent	-	-	75%	100%
	oral	92%	98%	75%	100%
Level 4 Apr. 6/84	silent	-	-	75%	100%
	oral	92%	98%	75%	100%
Level 5 Jun. 6/84	silent	-	-	75%	100%
	oral	92%	96%	75%	100%

Summary: Morris-Decoding and Comprehension

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the three questions previously stated by the study:

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?

Morris' decoding strategies at the initial stages of reading took the form of an accomplished reader. His most significant strategy seemed to be getting meaning from the print. An example of this is when he stopped to ask the meaning of words. To get meaning from the print, Morris did not attend to all the letters of a word. Observation showed that he focused on enough of the letters in order to

produce a word that fitted the context of the sentence. Never once did he try to sound each letter. Often he substituted words that had the same initial and final letter sound as the word. The position of the word in the sentence and the gist of the reading served as cues to his prediction. His excitement over the pictures and his eagerness to share ideas on what he read demonstrated that he used his personal experiences to bring meaning to his reading. His goal in reading seemed to be to strive for fluency and comprehension.

- b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?

Morris' decoding strategies from the start took the form of an accomplished reader, making his priority getting meaning from the print. He was already making use of beginning letter sounds, context cues and prediction in attacking new words. Therefore classroom instruction did not affect Morris' decoding strategies. However the increased difficulty of the reading material forced him to develop new strategies for decoding. Also the repetition of the sight vocabulary helped to make his reading automatic. In the beginning, his words were spelled phonetically with many vowels omitted but by the third term, Morris had found that the conventional spelling of words became clearer because spelling patterns were seen in other words.

- c). Do his strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

In the first term, Morris had shown that he already had a good understanding of the communicative intent behind print. Therefore he knew that reading was to get meaning from the print. He had no difficulty distinguishing the small pool of sight words. However as the sight words increased, new strategies had to be add-

ed. Since he was striving for fluency and comprehension. Morris only had time to sample the print. In conclusion, Morris had to increase and refine his decoding strategies to meet the increasing complexity of the reading material.

4.2.4 Final Conclusions: Morris

From the data collection some general conclusions about Morris' progress in learning to read were made. From the start he understood that reading was to get meaning from the print. Therefore his task was to break the printed code. Classroom instruction helped him to recognize a pool of useful vocabulary. From this pool of sight vocabulary he was able to generate his own rules regarding the spelling patterns of words. He used these rules in decoding and spelling new words. As his interest in reading books increased, so did his reading fluency and comprehension. The process outlined above seemed to indicate that Morris did not require the skills used in classroom instruction to learn to read. With the understanding of the purposes of reading and writing from the start, all he needed was a pool of useful vocabulary to develop his own rules about the spelling patterns of words. His interest in knowing what books have to say forced him to develop his own strategies for decoding the new words.

4.3 Mitchell

4.3.1 Understanding Literacy Behaviour

The purpose of the data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the two research questions.

Interview With Parents: September 22, 1983

In an interview, Mitchell's mother said that Mitchell has three sisters who are much older than he is. His father is in the construction business and his mother is a full time housewife with time to do things with Mitchell. Everybody in the family loves to read, so naturally there were many books in the house. Reading materials, including children's stories, were in abundance. His mother read to Mitchell regularly, at least once a day and sometimes his older sisters read to him. Mitchell was so familiar with many of the storybooks that he could recite the words as he looked at the pictures. Everyone in the family thought Mitchell's "reading" was so cute that they encouraged him to "read" to them. Letters were frequently written by the grandparents and often included a section to read to Mitchell. The family usually asked Mitchell to sign his name to cards and letters to be sent away. His mother also said that he was always curious about signs and numbers he saw when out shopping with her.

Interview With Kindergarten Teacher: September 29, 1983

In an interview, the kindergarten teacher said that Mitchell enjoyed sitting quietly looking at storybooks or listening to stories. He seemed to have knowledge about many topics and therefore could participate well in group discussions. In kindergarten, Mitchell had learned all the letters of the alphabet by sight and sound and could name the beginning letter of words. Mitchell showed that he had a good command of language when dictating stories for the teacher to print.

Interview With Classroom Teacher: September 27, 1983

In an interview, the teacher said that Mitchell had settled into the routines of the classroom very quickly. He seemed to enjoy participating in discussions and the other children were interested in hearing what he had to say because he was knowledgeable about all topics. His written work was always finished first and was accurate. When his seatwork was done, he spent his time at the reading corner looking at the storybooks and laughing at the pictures. His teacher also said that he was quick at learning skills. He was able to read the names of the children in his class the first day.

Interview With Child: September 22, 1983 (first term)

In an interview, Mitchell said he liked school because all his friends were here and there were a lot of neat books in his classroom and the library. At home he had a lot of books, too, but his mom had read them to him already. He said he did not know how to read yet but his teacher was teaching him now. The reason he came to school was to learn to read as well as the rest of his family did. Reading was to find out about things and give him something to do when he was tired of

moving about. He said his father read many books with drawings of houses and his mother looked in her books about cooking and sewing. His sisters read, too, but he did not know what they read. They all read the newspaper, including him because there were comics in them.

What he said he didn't like about school was writing in his notebooks because his hands hurt. He said he would rather read books. However he didn't mind writing in his journal because he was allowed to write anything he wanted and the teacher always gave him neat stickers.

Interview With Child: February 17, 1984 (second term)

Mitchell said that he could read a little but not as well as adults. He liked to read when his work was done and before going to sleep. At the school library he took out four books, two for his desk and two to read at home. His favorite books were about dinosaurs, monsters and cars. His mother read to him at home from the storybooks that came in the mail. Once a month he received books from a book club ordered at school.

He said reading is a lot of fun and everyone should read because they can learn about things. His mother, dad and sisters read and when he grows up he'll read newspapers, magazines and books without pictures. He mentioned a bookcase with big books (encyclopedias) which his sisters used to do their homework. Sometimes he looked at the pictures in them.

Interview With Child: June 1, 1984 (third term)

Mitchell said he could read very well now. His teacher told him he was the best reader in the group. He read whenever he had nothing else to do because he liked reading. When his mom took him to the big library he saw many adults and children reading. In school everybody read including the teacher. At the store people read magazines. He said people read when they had nothing to do and when they needed to find out what things are on sale, what movies are on and when television shows begin. He thought reading was very useful and everybody should learn to read or else other people will have to read for them. He also thought that every adult knew how to read.

Canadian Readiness Test: September 7, 1983

Mitchell's reading readiness score indicated that he was ready to begin reading instruction. On the basis of these scores, Mitchell was placed in an average reading group where a normal pace as determined by the Ginn 720 reading program was kept.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

New vocabulary was introduced by pictures and sentences. Mitchell seemed to enjoy making his own sentences with new words and illustrating the words with detailed pictures. He shared the pictures and laughed at the sentences he thought were funny. Exercises which involved choosing the correct words to fit the context of the sentence presented no problems for Mitchell. In response to the remark that "he was sure quick at doing these sentences", he said that this was really easy work. They were the same sentences as in the reader.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

Mitchell seemed to know the routines of the classroom well. Even though he said the work was easy, his favorite activity was playing games with his friends or reading a book.

Mitchell spent his time reading books or making cards to drop in the Christmas box. During another lesson, Mitchell was observed writing a letter to Santa. There were many words suggested by the children to use in their letters. Mitchell had no difficulty getting started.

A visitor from a publishing company came to give a book talk and read to the children. Mitchell appeared very attentive and had questions to ask. In class he wrote and illustrated his own story to be bound into a book so that it could be circulated in the library.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Mitchell completed his work without hesitation, understanding how to go about his assignments with little help from the teacher. When finished, he walked to the bookshelf and read a book. On occasion he was seen reading the words on the display boards or sometimes explaining the directions of an exercise to another child.

In the reading session Mitchell was able to follow the print when another child read. Mitchell was always able to answer the teacher's questions accurately.

In his journal, there seemed to be an increase in the number of sentences as the year progressed. Another difference in his writing was that he began with a simple sentence structure at the beginning of the year but ended the year with complicated sentences. By the third term, he had shown an awareness of an audience. An example was seen in the March 26, 1984 journal entry:

I'm going back to school agan., Well here I am. I'm going in school.
bi bi.

Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

Scores in the Ginn 720 Mastery Tests indicated that Mitchell had successfully learned all the vocabulary and comprehended what he was expected to read in all four levels of the Ginn 720 reading program.

Table 9: Ginn 720 Mastery Tests

	<u>Comprehension</u>		<u>Vocabulary</u>		<u>Decoding</u>	
	<u>Mastery Level</u>	<u>Child Score</u>	<u>Mastery Level</u>	<u>Child Score</u>	<u>Mastery Level</u>	<u>Child Score</u>
Level 2 Oct. 28/83	16	20	16	20	14	17
Level 3 Dec. 13/83	18	22	10	12	20	24
Level 4 Jan. 27/84	22	28	10	12	18	20
Level 5 May 1/84	22	28	16	20	21	25

Linguistic Awareness in Reading Awareness

The LARR Test was administered to Mitchell only in the first two terms to assess his understanding of literacy behaviour, literacy functions and technical language of literacy. As indicated by the table below, Mitchell had more than 50 per cent on Parts 1 and 2 and more than 30 per cent on Part 3 in the first term. Therefore according to the test, he was above average and was ready to begin formal reading instruction.

In the second term, he had a perfect score in all three parts of the test, indicating that he had an excellent understanding of literacy. Therefore, the test was not administered again in the third term.

Table 10: Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness

	<u>Recognizing Literacy Behaviour</u> (max. 22)	<u>Understanding Literacy Functions</u> (max. 28)	<u>Technical Language of Literacy</u> (max. 30)
Sept. 30/83	21	28	28
Mar. 9/84	22	28	30

Summary: Mitchell-Understanding Literacy Behaviour

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the two questions previously stated by the study:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the communicative intent of print?

Mitchell's family helped to set up an environment conducive to the understanding of the communicative intent of print. By reading in front of Mitchell, each member of the family set an example that reading was purposeful and important. Mitchell was shown how reading and writing were important to him by drawing his attention to print in letters, card, signs and by reading to him. By hearing print read, Mitchell was able to understand how speech was written down and was also able to appreciate print. The LARR Test confirmed Mitchell's understanding of the communicative intent of print in the initial stages of reading.

- b). Does classroom instruction help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing?

The classroom observation and testing showed an emphasis in mastering isolated skills rather than ensuring an understanding of the purposes of reading and writing. However the LARR Test showed that Mitchell understood literacy behaviour in the initial stages of formal reading instruction. Therefore, he kept the main purpose of reading, getting meaning from the print, in mind. Many activities such as book talks, letter and story writing, journal entries and reading stories helped to enhance his understanding of the purposes of reading and writing. On the basis of these observations, classroom instruction appeared to help the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing by giving him opportunity to interact with print.

4.3.2 Understanding of the Technical Concepts

The purpose of the following data collection is to address the following research question:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?
- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported and reviewed as they address the two research questions.

Sand Test

Mitchell was able to find the front of the book, show the printing and its movement and point to the words as they were read. However, he was not able to notice differences in line order, word order or letter order. Other areas of difficulty were punctuation and locating capital letters. His stanine score was similar

to those of other children of his age group and his understanding of the concepts of print was adequate. In the second term, Mitchell was able to answer all the items correctly showing that he had mastered the technical concepts. The test was not administered again in the third term because he had demonstrated his understanding in the second term.

Table 11: Sand Test (max. 24)

	<u>Child's Score</u>	<u>Stanine</u>
Sept. 23/83	12	5
Mar. 2/84	24	9

Interview With Child: September 17, 1983 (first term)

In the Discrimination of Terms "Letter", "Word" and "Sentence" test by Francis, Mitchell was able to identify the letters, words and sentences from the samples.

Mitchell was able to print his first and last name. He was also able to print samples of words. In the samples of sentences and non-sentences, he was able to discriminate between them. He was able to say that the non-sentence was not a sentence because the words were mixed up.

Interview With Child: February 24, 1984 (second term)

In the interview, Mitchell seemed to have a good understanding of the terms "letters", "sounds" and "words" but was confused between "phrases" and "sentences". However he was able to say that a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

Interview With Child: June 8, 1984 (third term)

Mitchell was able to make sentences using his own samples of words. In the sample (at am school I) Mitchell was able to say that this was not a sentence because there was no capital letter at the first word and no period at the end. He also said the sample was not a sentence because it didn't make sense.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

In oral lessons, Mitchell was able to answer questions about beginning and ending letter sounds. He was also able to make sentences about special events of the day such as, "Today the grade ones get to play on the tire swings".

In the reading session, Mitchell learned the new words introduced on cards quickly and was able to make sentences using the new words. When the teacher or another child read, he was able to follow the print in his reader. When the teacher explained the seatwork assignments, Mitchell showed that he understood what she was saying by asking questions.

During seatwork, Mitchell proceeded very methodically showing that he understood the routines well. Observation of his written work showed that it was accurate and legible. In his journal writing, progress was seen in his ability to use words to produce meaningful sentences. An October 24, 1983 entry read, "I went to me friends house."

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

In the reading session, Mitchell was able to find the table of contents, the page number and the title of the story. Mitchell followed the reader very carefully as other children were reading and often helped them with difficult words.

During seatwork, Mitchell was able to follow the teacher's directions carefully. Often the teacher called upon Mitchell to explain the directions for an exercise to another child who was experiencing difficulty. It was noted that Mitchell was able to read the directions on the worksheets independently.

In his journal writing the structure of his sentences remained the same but the number of sentences increased. A December 1, 1983 entry read:

we got new readers. my NAME is Mitchell G. the bok is caiLd A
Duck is Duck.

There seemed to be no reason perceptible to the observer regarding his use of upper case letters but each sentence stood alone as a complete thought and was separated by a period. His perception that he had a name and the book had a name was interesting showing perhaps that he was noticing relationships among things.

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Observation of Mitchell doing his seatwork showed that he continued to understand the directions well enough to help other children. His journal writing also demonstrated his ability to use print to record his thoughts. An entry on March 26, 1984 was recorded as follows:

I went to Disneyland. I went on Matter horn. I went in the hontid-
house. I Got a Micky mouse Doll. I went to nos Bery frm. It was
hot ther. Ho I went on for jets. I'm going back to school a gen. wel
here I am. I'm going I in school. bi bi.

Although there were many misspellings his journal entry was easy to read showing that he was concerned with getting his ideas across. Many of his spelling errors showed a use of spelling patterns adapted from other words. It was interesting to note his sense of an audience in his writing.

Summary: Mitchell-Understanding of Technical Concepts

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered, the two questions previously stated by the study:

- a). Does the child begin his initial reading experience with an understanding of the technical concepts?

Mitchell showed that he was able to recognize and distinguish the terms "letters" and "words" by using the terms extensively in classroom discussions and written assignments. He had no difficulty understanding the teacher's directions. The Sand Test also indicated that he was familiar with the format of books and sequence of print. In the interview session, he demonstrated his understanding of how words were put together to make meaningful sentences. The results of these measurements indicated that he began his initial reading experience with an adequate understanding of the technical concepts needed to understand instruction and reason about print.

- b). Does classroom instruction help the child to understand the technical concepts?

Mitchell was familiar with the technical concepts such as the parts for reading, the direction of the printing, letter names and sounds and words at the initial stages of formal reading instruction. The Sand Test showed that by the second term, Mitchell had successfully mastered all the features of print such as punctuation, sequence of words in a sentence, sequence of sentences in a story and use of upper and lower case letters. These features of print were probably learned through experience in reading the readers and storybooks. Therefore the classroom instruction appeared to help the child understand the technical concepts by providing the experience and giving him opportunity to interact with print.

4.3.3 Decoding and Comprehension

The purpose of the following data collection is to address the following research questions:

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?
- b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?
- c). Do his strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

Data from each of the following instruments is reported then reviewed as they address the three research questions.

Classroom Observation: September-December (first term)

Mitchell knew most of the written names of the children on the first day of school. Mitchell was also quick at learning new words and was able to recall the words after several days.

The observation of a group lesson showed that Mitchell did not sound out the individual letters in the words "bet", "get", "met", and "set" as taught by the teacher but read the words quickly with no particular attention to the letters.

Observation of Mitchell's reading notebook showed that he was very careful at printing the correct spelling of words. Also in his journal writing the words were spelled correctly indicating that he took time to copy the words or to ask the teacher the correct spelling.

Classroom Observation: December-March (second term)

During an observation the class was trying to read the sentence, "The apples were stored in the cooler". Mitchell was able to read the sentence accurately but hesitated on the "st" sound in the word "stored". After a moment he was able to finish the word on his own. The teacher asked him how he got the word. He said he heard the man at the apple orchard talk about storing the apples in the cooler. The word "cooler" was not from his pool of sight vocabulary but his ability to read this word showed that he was using context cues to help him with unknown words. The word "cooler" was probably triggered by the word "stored".

Observation of his journal writing showed that his spelling of words was phonetic (thot-thought, gos-goes, uowe-only, wer-where).

Classroom Observation: March-June (third term)

Mitchell read the stories in his reader, May I Come In, fluently without any difficulty with the words.

During an oral reading of a library book to the observer, it was noted that Mitchell sounded only the consonants of an unknown word and was able to decode the word after scanning the rest of the sentence. This indicated that he used sounding but only enough to cue him with a word that fit the context of the sentence.

During a group lesson, Mitchell was observed decoding words grouped by similar letter patterns such as words ending in "ipe", "ide", "ike" and "ite". Lessons were also conducted to decode vowel-consonant sequences such as "ar", "er", "ir", "or" and "ur" words. Mitchell had no difficulty reading these during the lessons and from observation, he was able to recall these words when they appeared in written exercises or during oral reading.

Mitchell was still spelling words phonetically (omost-almost, Jrnul-Journal, stuft-stuffed) but in some words he showed a transfer of letter combinations which he may have seen in known words such as the "ck" in "tackes" (takes), "ch" in "richrd" (Richard), "y" in "tiyres" (tires). He had misspelled many words in the second term such as "friend", "play", and "they" but later spelled them correctly showing an adaption to conventional spelling.

Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

Mitchell was able to read all the oral passages accurately with the proper phrasing and intonation. His errors did not change the meaning of the sentences but the misreadings generally reflected the way he spoke. He was able to answer all the comprehension questions in both the silent and oral readings.

Table 12: Ginn 720 Informal Reading Inventory

		<u>Accuracy</u>		<u>Comprehension</u>	
		<u>Mastery</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Mastery</u>	<u>Child</u>
		<u>Level</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Score</u>
Level 3 Nov. 10/83	silent	-	-	75%	100%
	oral	92%	98%	75%	100%
Level 4 Apr. 6/84	silent	-	-	75%	100%
	oral	92%	100%	75%	100%
Level 5 Jun. 6/84	silent	-	-	75%	100%
	oral	92%	100%	75%	100%

Summary: Mitchell-Decoding and Comprehension

This section attempts to answer, using the data gathered the three questions previously stated by the study:

- a). What methods of decoding does the beginning reader use?

Mitchell's decoding strategies like those of Morris, followed the strategies of an accomplished reader. In all his decoding strategies, his main goal seemed to be getting meaning from the print. In doing this, he was able to sample the words enough to get the meaning of the sentences. Never once did he try to sound individual letters. It was observed that he used the strategy of prediction when triggered by a preceding word. His experience about life itself was invaluable in

helping him focus on meaning in his reading. He was also able to make use of class instruction to help him in decoding words with similar spelling patterns. His goal in reading seemed to be striving for fluency and comprehension.

- b). What effect does classroom instruction have on the child's decoding strategies?

Mitchell's decoding strategies from the start were to get meaning from the print. Therefore his decoding strategies appeared to be unchanged by the classroom instruction. However the increasing difficulty of the reading material forced him to use classroom instruction to develop new strategies for decoding to meet new demands. Another difference was noted in his spelling of words in his journal writing. In the second term, his words were spelled phonetically in keeping with classroom instruction with many vowels left out but by the third term, there was an increase in transferring common spelling patterns from known words in his misspellings. This showed his ability in developing his own rules and applying them to spelling new words. Therefore by providing new reading material, the teacher enabled the child to build up and refine his decoding strategies in order to read with fluency and comprehension.

- c). Do his strategies for decoding change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increases?

As his understanding of the purposes of reading and writing increased, new strategies of decoding were needed to meet the demands of the large number of new words. In the first term, it was easy to discriminate the sight words because of the small number of words to decode. By the third term, Mitchell was reading long sentences with many words he had never seen before. Since he was striving for fluency and comprehension, Mitchell had only time to sample the print in order

to make his predictions. Therefore his strategies for decoding appeared to change as his understanding of the purpose of reading and writing increased.

4.3.4 Final Conclusions: Mitchell

In the first term, Mitchell had shown that he had a good understanding of the purpose of reading and writing. This helped him to understand that reading was to get meaning from the print. All he needed from reading instruction was to learn the code. Attention to the code first appeared in the teaching of the beginning and ending letter sounds of words. This was followed by the recognition of a pool of sight words which he used frequently in his reading and writing. From these words he was able to deduce that new words with the same letter patterns must have the same sounds enabling him to read unfamiliar words. All through the year, Mitchell had shown an interest in reading books. This helped to develop the automaticity in his oral reading.

The process outlined above showed that understanding the purposes of reading and writing at the beginning helped Mitchell to use the classroom instruction to develop his own rules about the spelling patterns of words. From these rules he was able to generate strategies for decoding new words.

The data collection showed that Mitchell had understood from the start that reading was to get meaning from the print. Therefore, as his need for reading and writing increased new strategies were added to decode and spell new words.

Chapter V

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The main purposes of this study were to examine how children think through and use the information provided by the method of reading instruction in learning to read and to explore how children's cognitive clarity regarding the purpose and technical concepts of reading affects reading progress. Within the limitations of the study, with regards to three areas of concern for children learning to read, Understanding Literacy Behaviour, Understanding of the Technical Concepts and Decoding and Comprehension, the following conclusions seem justified:

Understanding Literacy Behaviour

1. Evidence from the study suggests that the two children with an understanding of the purposes of reading and writing before beginning formal reading instruction are more successful in learning to read than are those without such understanding.

In comparison with Gerald, both Morris and Mitchell's reading achievements were better possibly because they started with an understanding of the purposes of reading and writing.

2. Evidence from the study suggests that the two children with an understanding of the communicative intent of print are better able to make use of classroom instruction for learning to read than are those without such understanding.

Both Morris and Mitchell were able to apply the classroom instruction when the need arose in learning to read. However Gerald found classroom instruction frustrating possibly because he could not see how instruction related to the process of learning to read.

3. Evidence from the study suggests that the three children learned to understand the communicative intent behind print by being involved in purposeful reading and writing activities.

Gerald had developed an understanding of the purposes of reading and writing by the end of the year by being involved in classroom activities such as listening and reading good literature and writing letters and stories. Being involved in purposeful reading and writing activities appeared to help strengthen Morris and Mitchell's understanding of the communicative intent of print. This helped them to understand the relationship between classroom activities and learning to read.

Understanding Technical Concepts

1. Evidence from the study suggests that one child experienced difficulty in understanding formal reading instruction because he had not developed an understanding of the technical concepts needed for reasoning about the relationships between speech and print. The other two children had a good understanding of the technical concepts therefore they had no difficulty using the classroom instruction to learn to read.

The reason for both Morris and Mitchell's reading success seems to be their understanding of the technical concepts before formal reading instruction. Gerald did not demonstrate the same level of understanding of technical concepts. Therefore he appeared to have difficulty writing about his own ideas in his journal and reading with fluency and comprehension.

2. Evidence from the study suggests that the two children who understand technical concepts about print are better able to use reading instruction for learning to read than are those without such understanding.

Both Morris and Mitchell had no difficulty understanding the teacher's directions and doing the classroom activities probably because they understood the technical concepts involved. Gerald did not demonstrate the same level of understanding of technical concepts. He had difficulty following the teacher's directions and doing class assignments.

Decoding and Comprehension

1. Evidence from the study suggests that the two children learned and retained words that were introduced in the context of a sentence.

Both Morris and Mitchell often recalled the sentence and the story in their reader from which words had been introduced. Gerald read sentences word by word probably because he did not understand the communicative intent behind print. He was unable to use context cues as a strategy in decoding.

2. Evidence from the study suggests that the two children who began learning to read with an understanding of the communicative intent behind print were capable of developing their own rules about reading.

Both Morris and Mitchell understood that reading is to get meaning from the print. Therefore their reading strategies developed along the lines of a fluent reader. Gerald did not demonstrate a similar level of understanding of the communicative intent of print and therefore he seemed unable to develop his own strategies in decoding.

3. Evidence from the study suggests that the competent readers did not appear to attend to all the letters of a word but to sample enough of the word to think of a word that fits the meaning of the sentence.

Misreadings by both Morris and Mitchell showed substitution of words that began with the same initial letter as the printed word. Substitutions, however, fitted the meaning of the sentence. Gerald, on the other hand, relied on

someone to supply words he could not read or he sounded out individual letters of words resulting in the production of nonsense words.

4. Evidence from the study suggests that the competent readers did not appear to read word by word but read in sections of meaning.

Misreadings by both Morris and Mitchell showed substitutions, omissions and additions of words when oral reading. However the changes generally fitted the context of the sentence. Gerald, on the other hand, read word by word with little attention to proper phrasing or intonation. Test scores showed that he had difficulty reading fluently with comprehension.

5. Evidence from the study suggests that the method of instruction used in the classroom affected the decoding strategies of the children observed.

Analysis of Gerald's use of decoding strategies showed that he followed the method taught in the classroom very closely. Gerald was confused and frustrated because the methods of decoding taught in the classroom did not fit the approach used in the reading program. The use of a phonetic strategy did not make sense on sight-word printed material. Morris and Mitchell were able to develop their own decoding strategies as well as use methods taught in the classroom because they appeared to understand that reading was to get meaning from the print.

6. Evidence from the study suggests that it was necessary for the children observed to become familiar with a pool of useful words in order to develop their own rules about the spelling patterns of words.

Both Morris and Mitchell were able to recognize the sounds of common letter patterns in sight words and apply them to unfamiliar words. Gerald had difficulty learning a pool of useful vocabulary items. Therefore he did not appear able to develop his own rules about the spelling patterns of words.

7. Evidence from the study suggests that the teaching of specific skills does not appear to help the children observed to become better readers.

Morris refused to do the written exercises on reading skills but tests confirm his reading as being as good as Mitchell's. Gerald found the reading skills taught in the classroom confusing. Therefore taught skills did not help him to be a better reader.

8. Evidence from the study suggests that the two children learned to read by being exposed to many experiences requiring reading.

Both Morris and Mitchell's reading exceeded grade level by the end of the year possibly because they were interested in reading on their own. Gerald did not enjoy reading. Reading word-by-word seemed to be a strenuous task producing little comprehension of print. Without continuous practice in reading, he did not appear able to develop automaticity in his reading.

General Comments

Conclusions from this study support research done on reading acquisition. Firstly, they reinforce Frank Smith's position that reading begins with understanding of "deep structure" or meaning before attention is paid to the "surface structure" or the orthographic features such as letters and sounds. The findings also support John Downing's notion of cognitive clarity which suggests that the beginning reader must be familiar with the acts of reading and writing and have an understanding of the purposes and technical concepts of print before reading instruction can be productive. This study shows that successful readers, such as Morris and Mitchell, have a good understanding of reading before beginning reading instruction and that slower readers, such as Gerald, are deficient in understanding what reading is all about. The slower reader also found reading instruction confusing. This suggests that understanding the nature of reading should form the basis for a readiness program.

In the area of reading instruction, the present study supports Hazel Francis' observations that children are able to derive knowledge of the spelling system of written language through frequent encounters with print. The children in this study were observed using common spelling patterns and applying them to reading new words before their attention was drawn to them in class lessons. The child who had not derived these rules on his own was still unable to apply them to reading when instruction was given. It seems that children do not benefit from direct teaching of phonic rules but that these rules must be deduced by the children on their own from words that they use in order for print to be meaningful.

The observations reported here are based on a limited sample in one setting. Also many of the tests need to be changed to suit the purposes of classroom instruction. (This is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.2). Another limitation of the study is that the Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness Test used to test the children's cognitive clarity may or may not be a valid measure of cognitive clarity. However the correlation between the high score in the test and the successful readers still holds. A further limitation is that the bias of the researcher being a teacher in the school may have influenced the study but within the constraints of the study this was unavoidable. In spite of these limitations, however, the method of inquiry used in the study afforded the researcher the opportunity of observing children in a natural classroom setting. Knowing the children well helped to elicit responses which might not have been obtained in a clinical setting.

The writer hopes that the conclusions drawn from this study on children's cognitive clarity will help teachers and parents realize that it is necessary to attend to the child's understanding of the purposes of reading and writing before beginning formal reading instruction.

5.1 Implications for Instruction

The conclusions of this study indicate that it is necessary for children to demonstrate cognitive clarity about reading before beginning reading instruction. The first step in learning to read then is having an understanding of the purposes and nature of reading and writing. Reading and writing are part of the communication system and as such are meaningful to both the reader and the writer. To ensure that children understand that reading and writing are meaningful, the teacher should make sure that all exercises in the classroom have a purpose. For reading to be purposeful, children must know what they are reading for. Are they reading for information, for directions or for pleasure? After each session of reading, children should be given an opportunity to respond to what has been read. For writing to be purposeful, children need to know the kinds of audiences they are writing for so they know what kind of message to send. In these ways, children can increase their understanding that print is meaningful.

A second step in learning to read is understanding the technical concepts of print. Children need to know the proper way to hold a book, how to turn the pages and how the pictures relate to the words. Understanding of progression of the lines and the sequence of the words are also important. Technical terms such as "letter", "sound", "word", "phrase", "sentence" and "punctuation" need to be understood. Without an understanding of these technical terms it would be difficult for children to derive benefits from instruction that uses these terms for directions.

A third step in learning to read is having a familiarity with the grammar and structure of print. One way this can be accomplished is by hearing good literature

read aloud frequently. Understanding sentence structure seems to help children in later stages of reading when it is necessary to predict unknown words from known words in a sentence.

When there is a clear understanding of reading and writing, children are ready to be introduced to reading instruction. Children should begin reading instruction by first being familiar with a useful pool of sight vocabulary from which purposeful reading and writing can take place. From this pool of words, children seem to be able to formulate their own rules and predictions about reading. Often in the beginning, the children's rules and predictions may be full of inaccuracies but they are able to test and correct their predictions by using the context of the stories, pictures and sentences. Teachers can help, too, by providing feedback. Teachers should realize that children learn to read by being exposed to literary experiences and material. Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to provide suitable reading materials and opportunities to read for a purpose and to respond to what is read.

5.2 Implications for Evaluation

Since the conclusions of this study advocate a change in the approach to teaching reading, it is necessary to consider briefly the tests used to assess children's progress in reading. The approach suggested in this study emphasizes an understanding of reading as part of the communication system and stresses that each child be familiar with the technical concepts used to talk about reading in order to receive full benefit from reading instruction. This approach also maintains trust in children's ability to generate their own rules about reading. The role of the teacher should be to assess and ensure that every child demonstrate cognitive clarity about reading before being introduced to formal instruction. A discussion will follow regarding the tests used in this study to determine which tests were useful and in what areas revised testing might be used.

The Canadian Readiness Test was used by the school to test all grade one students on their readiness to begin reading instruction. However, the researcher found the first two of the subtests had low reliability coefficients probably because of their small number of items. Aware of the low reliability of the Canadian Readiness Test, the observer used the LARR Test for purposes of this study. This test appeared useful in assessing children's ideas about literacy.

Other tests used to assess the children's comprehension of concepts of literacy include Clay's Sand Test and Francis' Discrimination of Terms "Letter", "Word" and "Sentence" test and a Reading Questionnaire. All three tests were found to be beneficial in exploring the children's knowledge of the technical concepts of reading. Unfortunately each test had to be administered individually and this would make it difficult to test large samples.

To test the children's progress in reading, the Ginn 720 reading program was used and the Mastery tests were administered after each reader had been completed. The Mastery tests were useful in evaluating the children's reading comprehension and decoding strategies introduced by the program. The observer also used the Ginn 720 Reading Inventory to test the children's reading accuracy and behaviour. The inventory was useful in keeping an ongoing record of the children's progress in oral and silent reading comprehension and decoding skills in oral reading. The test also helped to gather information about the children's reading strategies. Due to the importance of the information obtained from this test, the writer urges use of the test especially with children with suspected reading problems. Unfortunately, the test is time consuming to administer.

Since one of the roles of the teacher is to provide feedback to the child, testing should generate valuable information. Testing is an essential part of the instructional process and should be conducted on a regular basis. This enables the teacher to find out what stage of reading the student has reached for choosing appropriate reading materials and determining a child's areas of difficulty. When problems are identified, they should be discussed immediately with the student and whenever possible, a solution offered.

5.3 Implications for Parents

Conclusions from this study show that children need to demonstrate cognitive clarity about print and the purposes of reading before being able to benefit from classroom instruction for the purpose of getting meaning from the print. In this study both successful readers began with an understanding of the purposes of reading and writing prior to formal reading instruction. The other child did not have a good understanding of the purpose of reading and writing and lagged behind in reading fluency and comprehension. Through interviews with the children and their parents, it appeared that the successful children developed this awareness through experiences in the home. On the basis of this information, it is important for parents of pre-school age children to know what experiences relate directly to understanding reading.

Firstly, it is necessary for the child to see that reading is important. In order for the child to understand this, parents should expose their children to experiences in which reading and writing take place meaningfully. Instead of waiting for a quiet moment when the children are not around, they should write letters, notes and shopping lists in their presence. They should take time to explain what they are doing and why and be ready to answer questions. Reading newspapers, magazines and books when the children are around will also show how reading can be useful. Sharing ideas or pictures from readings which might be of interest will draw their attention to print. In this way, children see how reading and writing fit into the communication system.

The second attitude the parents should strive to promote in their children is one of cognitive clarity about reading and a desire to learn to read. To do this,

the adult members of the family should show their children in what ways reading and writing can be of benefit. Most children are interested in television and theatre. Therefore a good opportunity to use reading purposefully would be to consult the television guide or newspaper listings for viewing. Advertisement pamphlets and catalogues could be consulted for choosing gifts for family members and friends. The parents could help the child make a list of where and what to buy. They could also point to items of interest from newspapers, magazines, books and cereal boxes.

Finally, but of utmost importance, is reading good literature to children. There are a host of authors writing exclusively for children and thus, there is never a lack of excellent books to read to children. One rationale for reading to children is to develop a love for reading which hopefully transfers to reading on their own. Reading should not be restricted purely to enjoyment but also should include reading for information. Regularly reading to children familiarizes them with the structure of written language as opposed to spoken language and also develops cognitive clarity about what reading is. This understanding of the structure of written language helps the beginning reader realize that certain words tend to follow others. During the process of learning to read, this method of prediction is very important as a strategy for decoding new words. However, the most important outcome of reading to children is the understanding that print is meaningful. It is also helpful to have children talk about what has been read.

5.4 Implications for Further Study

This study in its attempt to relate the concept of cognitive clarity to children as they learn to read, provides evidence that children need to understand the nature of reading in order to develop their own strategies for getting meaning from print. Further study that would enhance our understanding might include the following:

1. The present study should be replicated using a larger sample. Using a larger sample would indicate whether or not the results could be generalized.
2. The present study should be replicated using a wider span of socio-economic groups. Using a wider span of socio-economic groups would indicate whether or not the results could be generalized to include differing socio-economic groups.
3. The present study should be replicated by including subjects of both sexes. This would indicate whether or not the results could be generalized to girls as well as boys.
4. The present study should be replicated with children who are exposed to different methods of instruction. This would indicate whether or not results would be similar even though different methods of instruction were employed.
5. The present study should be replicated using different test materials. This would indicate whether or not the results were the same even though different test materials were employed.

6. A long-term study should be conducted to include the pre-school years and subsequent years. This would provide a clearer understanding of children's cognitive clarity and also show how cognitive clarity affects children's progress in subsequent years.
7. The present study should be replicated with an increase in observation time and the viewing of the classroom through a one-way glass. Increase in observation time could provide a clearer picture of how children think through and use information provided by reading instruction. Viewing the classroom through a one-way mirror might prevent observer influence in the classroom.

While the study was limited by the above factors, its results can by no means be dismissed because of them. The results presented indicate that children who demonstrate cognitive clarity about reading are better able to benefit from classroom instruction in learning to read.

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Weintraub, S. (1968). Research: Some implications for beginning reading. Reading Teacher, 22, 63-67.

VITA

Surname: Ma Given Names: Wendy

Place of Birth: Canton, China

Date of Birth: March 16, 1949

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

University of Victoria, B. C. 1968 to 1971

University of Victoria, B. C. 1973 to 1977

University of Victoria, B. C. 1981 to 1986

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.Ed. 1977 University of Victoria, B. C.

Honors and Awards:

Publications:

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