

Reading Experiences and Strategies of Reluctant Grade 6 and 7 Students

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Faculty of Education

We accept this thesis as conforming  
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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the ways in which reluctant sixth and seventh grade readers experience reading. Five participants included three sixth and two seventh grade students. I observed and collaborated with participants in thirty minute sessions four times per week. The research lasted for three months, from April to June.

My focus was in the experiences and habits of reluctant readers, regarding their knowledge of reading strategies. Research questions were as follows: (1) How do reluctant readers approach reading and understand what they read? (2) What strategies are reluctant readers knowledgeable of, and apply before, during and after reading? (3) What strategies can they be taught to extend upon their own? (4) Will participants adopt these strategies during independent reading?

My chosen methodology is a qualitative descriptive case study. Research was conducted in a school with the intent of describing reader behaviours. Data were gathered using multiple instruments such as: interviews, audio and video recordings, group discussions, teacher journal, reader responses, attitude questionnaire and reader self-perception survey.

General findings included the following: (1) Reluctant readers entered the study lacking the skills and knowledge required to effectively read various texts and complete reading tasks, (2) Reluctant readers possess a simplistic understanding of some reading strategies, (3) Reading environment and materials are significant factors in the reading experiences of reluctant readers, (4) Teacher-modelled strategies combined with group dialogue about texts can be effective in prompting reluctant readers to incorporate various strategic reading practices in their independent reading, (5) Reluctant readers can increase their knowledge and use of before, during and after reading strategies as a result of intervention.

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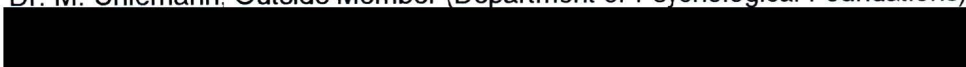
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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

I recently visited a friend's home, and observed something that resonated with my experience as a teacher. My friend's eleven year old sixth grade daughter "Brenda" is an active, curious individual who dislikes reading and doing homework. I was suddenly reminded of several former students that I had taught.

Brenda's playmate was over, and this was distracting her from what her father knew was best for her. Thoughtful and loving, he firmly insisted that Brenda retreat to her room and complete that whale comparison chart, and read *Bridge to Terabithia* for forty-five minutes. With painful reluctance, Brenda gathered her materials and trudged off to her room.

After thirty minutes of silence her father went in to check on her progress. Apparently, she accomplished little more than catching a few winks. Shortly thereafter, several motivating prompts from her dad resulted in Brenda sitting at the kitchen table displaying the disgruntled semblance of a person "doing" schoolwork.

In the most sensitive way I knew of, I suggested to Brenda's father that he might wish to provide her with some guidance and support in her reading and writing. His spouse quickly retorted, "She's eleven years old now Gregg! She has to learn to do these things on her own." I said nothing. Again, it brought to mind images of frustrating discussions I had had with parents of students in my previous classes.

In that moment I understood this to be a common problem for many young learners: Parents consistently mistaking the appearance of their child studying for them being actively engaged in an academic task. For Brenda, the academic tasks were both monotonous and confusing. For her parents, school work is something that must be "done" so as not to be handed in late. A gradual dissonance emerges between the child's intent and motivation to read and write, and the parent's and teacher's goals in educating the child.

Herein lies the problem: The child has no motivation to complete the school assignments other than to please her parents, and ultimately, her teacher. I would venture stating that Brenda's teacher would echo similar judgements on Brenda's attitude and effort during classroom instruction. For instance, the fact that she is likely to demonstrate avoidance behaviors when asked to read from a novel.

Brenda clearly has no "inner control" (Clay, 1992) with respect to reading and processing information. She clearly lacks the skills and strategies necessary to use cues and process information accurately. Perhaps she has begun the downward spiral in reading and learning of which Stanovich (1986) writes. Stanovich has asserted that phonological awareness, or spelling-to-sound knowledge, is the determinant of good and poor readers. Poor readers that I have taught have demonstrated low word recognition and a low vocabulary for their grade level. In the past they have been considered "learning disabled" and sent to learning assistance for the remainder of the year.

These and other teaching experiences have inspired my continual reflections on pedagogy in general and reading instruction in particular. I have been concerned by the apparent disinterest and/or apathy some students held towards reading either narrative or expository texts in classroom settings. I have felt powerless in terms of teaching these individuals to decode and comprehend print. Moreover, I have had no notion for assessing where the students were in terms of reading ability. As a result of my experiences I find myself asking a pointed question: Should I teach to the group of students in the center of the standard normal curve or do I have a moral and ethical obligation to actively pursue each student's reading and learning potential?

#### Purpose of the Study

My main concern as a teacher is in helping enable children to become engaged, self-motivated readers and learners. I wish to help change the behavior patterns of reluctant and "slow learners" in my classroom. The rationale for my proposed study lies in the reality faced by students every day. Poor readers have considerable obstacles to overcome if they are to

*Introduction*

function in a competent and meaningful way in society. With the rate of high school graduation only 72.2% in British Columbia, it is clear that thousands of young people are lacking the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve fundamental literacy. I am interested in investigating the strategies (or lack thereof) of a small group of these potential non-graduates. The Southam News report on literacy (1987) suggests that 2.5 million Canadians are functionally illiterate. Some of the participants in my research are at present unable to effectively read menus, newspapers, or roadmaps. During this study I was able to tap into the participants' strategies for reading and enhance and extend those strategies through practice and repeated modelling of reading skills and processes.

As an elementary teacher of reading I have a conviction: I must actively promote growth in the reading knowledge and ability of all of my students. In my daily classroom experience, no other facet of school life carries the importance of reading. I teach students for ten months of their lives. My sincere belief is that this study may provide insight into the daily reading experiences of reluctant readers. In doing so, perhaps these poor reading students might leave grade six and seven with effective reading strategies. Individual interest and motivation for reading are separate but related variables in terms of reluctant readers. This research is concerned with these two aspects of reading: modelling of strategic reading practices and understanding the experiences of reluctant readers.

### Research Questions

The questions focused on in this study are: How do the reluctant readers approach reading and understand what they read? What strategies are reluctant readers knowledgeable of before, during, and after reading? What strategies do reluctant readers apply before, during, and after reading? How do these students experience reading? What strategies can they be taught to extend on their own? Will they adopt these strategies during independent reading?

## Definitions

Various key terms are used in my study. Each term is defined with reference to the particular situation and context of my research. Here are the meanings I wish the reader to apply to each of these terms.

Reading. Marie M. Clay (1991) defines reading as "...a message-getting, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised" (p.3.). For my purposes reading can be defined as the reader's processes of recognizing words and phrases in a fluent manner, leading to comprehension.

Reluctant readers. Reluctant readers are those students who fail to decode words rapidly enough for fluency in reading, and/or comprehend what they have read. Sandra McCormick (1994) refers to non-readers as those learners who " have not acquired minimal reading ability despite normal intelligence, adequate instruction, and absence of gross neurological or sensory defects" (p.157). In my classroom reluctant readers are students who do not read, or read poorly due to a lack of knowledge of possible skills and strategies, and/or a low motivation to read.

Strategies. Garner (1992) defines strategies as sequences of activities undertaken to reach goals effectively. Clay (1985) discusses strategies as "the mental activities that a learner initiates to construct meaning from text; in the head problem-solving processes" (p.114). Strategies in the context of my study are the purposeful actions of an individual with the goal of decoding and comprehending text. For instance, skim reading a science textbook in order to locate important headings and facts is a possible strategy.

Experience. Experience is defined in Funk and Wagnalls (1982) as "actual participation in or direct contact with something; the totality of one's judgments or reactions with regard to something directly met or engaged in" (p.468). In this study experience refers to a person's perceived reality after having participated in an activity. For instance, each participant experiences my instruction and his or her reading in terms of personal reactions and responses.

### Assumptions and Limitations

Erickson (1983) writes that as a researcher "my fundamental assumptions and prejudices are part of me." Furthermore, he asserts that objectivity is not the ultimate goal in naturalistic research, but one of "clarity in communicating the point of view as a subject, both to myself and to my audience" (p.60). As a human I experience the world from a certain perspective. The postpositivistic paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that I have chosen for inquiry into the phenomenon of the unmotivated reader reflects my views and biases.

My teaching experiences suggest that some elementary students do not possess the coping strategies needed to succeed in daily literacy activities in school. My bias also includes the belief that fluent reading is the hallmark of a productive and successful learner. I assume that certain unfortunate individuals have failed to learn basic decoding and comprehension skills in reading earlier in their educational lives. I further assume that with intervention, these learners may be capable of achieving reading results comparable to their higher achieving classmates. What has been lacking for these learners in their reading experiences is: (1) the opportunity for social interaction among peers in a meaningful dialogue about various texts, and (2) modelled before, during, and after reading strategies, that research has demonstrated, helps poor readers.

There are several limitations inherent within my chosen research methodology. For instance, I am impeded as a researcher in the classroom due to the tasks involved with my role as an elementary school teacher. The necessities of instructing 23 students clearly impedes upon my ability to observe five individuals. Further, I have relied upon subjective field notes, without the benefit of interrater reliability. Observer bias is therefore a possibility since I can only record, interpret and analyze data on the basis of my own lived experience. Because naturalistic research is value-bound, the results that I reach are further limited by my own values, theories chosen, and methodological implementation (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Another constraint of this study is the absence of evidence that demonstrates the behavior and experiences of subjects within it are typical of other reluctant readers. Participants possess

their own unique interpretations of reading and learning coming into this study. Other reluctant readers in other areas may respond differently to similar interventions. Perhaps students of different cultural background, such as aboriginal, would yield incongruous results. Similarly, the students selected for my inquiry necessarily exclude other possible participants from my school and classroom. The results of this inquiry are not intended to be generalizable. This has been a study of the experiences of low-achieving 11 and 12 year old readers. The situations and contexts are specific to the time and place in which they occurred. While readers under study exhibit habits and behaviors related to reluctant readers, these traits are not intended to be generalizable.

My classroom is rich in print. I teach a literacy-based Language Arts program in which students are encouraged to write and read regularly. Our class-based library composed of expository and narrative books contains over 100 titles. Examples include: several Raold Dahl books, "The Encyclopedia Brown" series, several Judy Blume books, numerous Choose Your Own Adventure soft covers, Time-Life books on animals, volcanoes, books on arts and crafts, and many others. There are twenty recent issues of Macleans magazines available to students, local weekly newspapers as well as the Saturday Sun are in the classroom. Routine literacy activities that occur in our class include the completion of storyboards, rating scales, incident summary charts, and story maps. Students select books and complete these and other activities on them twice monthly. I often read orally to the class for pleasure, with no academic tasks involved. Silent reading and reading for pleasure are regular daily occurrences in my classes.

It is my contention that each individual experiences reading from his or her own unique perspective based on motivation, beliefs, interest, ability, and prior experience with printed text. The way a child has been taught to engage in literacy activities, and the values placed upon reading have strong impacts on him or her. Each participant arrives at this research with the sum total of his or her daily literary experiences and personal knowledge. Likewise, each student will be at a particular place in her literacy experience at the end of the study. What

occurs between the beginning and end of my collaboration with these individuals is fascinating for me as a teacher and researcher.

### Significance

The significance of this study lies in the overwhelmingly poor results of provincial assessments on the reading skills and proficiencies of learners from kindergarten to graduation. This study into the strategies and experiences of reluctant eleven and twelve year old readers is meaningful because it addresses a concrete problem in our schools, and society in general. Young people that read reluctantly require specific knowledge and skills in reading in order for them to succeed in an increasingly literate world. Beneficial in the classroom and in the homes of students, this study aims to enable students to get more out of the reading experience.

Moreover, the 1993/94 Provincial Assessment Of Communication Skills (1995) paints a bleak picture for the reading skills and knowledge of many elementary students in British Columbia: " By grade 7 most students showed basic understanding of more difficult materials...However, teacher review panels rated performance on many selections to be marginal or weak" (p. 10). The report continues to state that although most students in grade four to seven report that they like reading, and 60 to 70% said they look over material before reading "...they do not often use strategies such as reflecting, reviewing, rereading, or making notes" (p.10). As one moves through the levels of education similar results emerge from grade eleven and twelve. These results demonstrably show that many students in this province are simply not learning effective methods in reading:

Overall, students showed little awareness or commitment to using effective reading strategies or study skills. Senior secondary students approach reading almost the same way as elementary students. Most of them preview materials and visualize as they read; approximately half do some predicting, reviewing, and re-reading. (p.18)

Clearly, there are many students leaving elementary school lacking a fundamental understanding of how to effectively approach and process text. What are the reasons for these

less than satisfactory results? Can reluctant readers be taught to improve their skills in reading through repeated directed practice in comprehension and decoding strategies? Is it possible to modify a reluctant reader's attitude, interest and motivation toward reading?

### Chapter Summary

This research is founded upon a personal conviction. I believe that too many elementary students are floating through the early and middle years of their education with little understanding of and therefore, minimal motivation for reading. Parents and teachers alike often misinterpret youngsters looking busy as being actively engaged in meaningful reading. My experience as an educator has led me to this investigation of the reading experiences of five such readers in my class in a descriptive case study research format.

In the following chapters I will focus on the following topics in an attempt at forming a coherent descriptive study. Chapter two includes a comprehensive review of pertinent literature on reading including instruction, motivation, reading theory, context, and strategies. Chapter three is comprised of an introduction to research methodology, an introduction to research design, instruments, subjects, procedures, data analysis, and a summary of the above. In Chapter four I describe and interpret data, and analyze results within the context of the research questions. Chapter five provides a summary of my research findings, an identification of the limitations inherent within the study, a discussion of possible teaching implications arising from the study, and finally, a suggestion for further studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

The literature review begins with some seminal research in reading theories and models. Next, I present studies on reading motivation and attitudes, including attribution theory and learning disabilities. These are followed by research in metacognition and instructional strategies in reading. The aim of my literature review is to provide the reader with a background of prominent reading research, while situating my research interests within it.

Models and Theories of Reading. Reading models and theories invariably fall within the parameters of one of the following perspectives: top-down or hypothesis driven reading, bottom-up or data-driven reading, or an interactive view of the reading process. In the following paragraphs I provide a coherent overview of the prominent models and theories of reading.

Frank Smith (1974) has maintained that each reader's predictions are essential during reading. A reader's prior knowledge is the key to eliminating misinformation. Accurate guessing is therefore a fundamental way to identify words according to this model. For instance, if a reader comes across an unknown word she should look at the contextual cues in which it is found, and then predict what it could be. Similarly, Goodman (1980) wrote that reading is the sum total of life experience, language, and thought development. Reading is a "psycholinguistic guessing game" in which the young reader develops the skill of accurately guessing about print through repeated exposure to it. For Smith and Goodman, reading develops as naturally as oral language in children. Reading cannot be taught by fragmenting printed text into isolated, decontextualized lists and phonics charts. Rather, teachers should encourage learners to make increasingly accurate first guesses by motivating students to take risks while experiencing print in meaningful contexts. This top-down, or hypothesis-driven model of reading suggests that the reader's experiences are central to the act of reading.

In contrast to the top-down model, the bottom-up perspective of reading suggests that specific skills such as decoding text must be explicitly taught at an early age. For instance, LaBerge and Samuels' (1974) theory of automatic information processing asserts that reading puts great constraints upon a reader's visual, phonological, semantic, and episodic memories. The sequence of learning to read begins with attending to distinctive features, and then progresses to letters, to letter clusters, and ultimately to words.

For these reasons readers can attend to only one thing at a time according to LaBerge and Samuels (1974). Readers must funnel through their sensory store of information for an understanding of all memories. Good readers are unencumbered with having to attend to single letters during reading. The result is more time to attend to comprehension, leading to fluency in reading. This fluency or "automaticity" in reading ultimately depends on the selective attention of the reader. Reading and understanding print becomes automatic after repeated practice and success.

Another bottom-up reading model is that of Samuels and Schachter (1978), who have presented a hierarchical model of reading in which a sequential, linear mode of instruction is seen as critical for the successful acquisition of reading skills. Readers must be taught numerous lower-order skills, such as phoneme-grapheme connections, and gradually be taught higher level skills such as words and phrases. The key in this reading model is the gradual integration of each subskill, which eventually results in increased reading fluency and comprehension.

A leading view of reading is Rumelhart's interactive model of reading (1976). He asserted that reading is simultaneously a perceptual and cognitive process. Rumelhart maintains that during reading a parallel processing occurs. There are mutual constraints at work as we read. For example, syntactic knowledge, language knowledge, and the context of the text all converge in creating mutual constraints upon the reader. Rumelhart concluded that our perceptions are the product of simultaneous interactions among all of our knowledge sources.

Similarly, Lesgold and Perfetti (1979) stated that word coding and sentence comprehension processes must occur quickly enough to be stored in short term memory. Memory deactivation can occur due to lapses in coding and comprehension. The result is varying individual skills in reading comprehension. According to this model of reading, the child who fixates on the pronunciation of a word rather than quickly processing it becomes bogged down and forgets the meaning of the text because his short term memory has reached its capacity.

Just and Carpenter's "immediacy assumption" (1980) is a theory asserting that readers process information as they read. The speed of processing combined with a large working memory accounts for differences in reading. Just and Carpenter maintain that word encoding theories omit the importance of contextual effects during reading. Individual reading time on each word and clause accounts for the moment-to-moment processes in reading, according to this theory. The result is that individual differences in reading are largely due to the operational limits of each reader's working memory.

Interconnected with the interactive model of reading is schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Essentially, schema theory describes a reader's ability at analogy drawing and inferencing. According to this theory, our knowledge of the world is represented by various schemas. Further, as readers we activate or construct schemas that provide us with coherent explanations of objects and events within the texts we read. As such, reading is an interactive process which involves simultaneous analysis at various levels- graphophonemic, morphemic, semantic, and pragmatic. A reader might not understand a passage due to using an inappropriate schema, or a lack of the necessary knowledge needed to fit the present schemata into a matching node.

As thorough and coherent as these models of reading are, a void exists. The majority of theories or models have been formulated by cognitive psychologists, who emphasize the cognitive factors in reading. The affective domain as it relates to the act of reading needs to be considered. This component of reading includes the reader's attitude, interest, and beliefs about

reading. Mathewson's (1985; 1994) and Ruddell and Speaker's (1985) two affective models of reading merit inclusion in the reading literature.

Mathewson has proposed a model of reading which describes the central role played by a reader's attitude. Attitude toward reading is composed of the reader's prevailing feeling about reading, action readiness for reading, and his or her evaluative beliefs about reading. Secondary factors include both external and internal motivations, such as incentives, purposes, norms and the setting, as well as the internal emotional state of the reader at the time before and during reading. The importance of Mathewson's model is its definition of a reader's attitude and beliefs as they relate to the act of reading. Ruddell and Speaker present a model with four interacting components during reading: reader environment, declarative and procedural knowledge, and knowledge utilization and control. Reader environment refers to the text, task, source of authority, and sociocultural meanings of the text and classroom environment. This is basically the learning environment as presented by the teacher. Declarative and procedural knowledge describe the reader's knowledge of word analysis and text-processing strategies, among others.

Affective and cognitive conditions make up the reader's stance. Knowledge utilization and control relates to a reader's meaning-construction process. Reader prior knowledge and beliefs are the fundamental components in this model. The sociocultural values of the reader include the following; attitude toward reading and content; motivation; and beliefs and values of the reader. It is in the affective state that the reader sets the goal direction, expectations for product, and expectation for the time needed to reach the product. Ruddell and Unrau (1994) maintain that the social context of the classroom is important in the reader's success. This "intertextuality" largely depends upon the reader creating a goal for the act of reading, meaningful dialogue, negotiated meaning and understanding of the text.

Similarly, the reader response model identifies the importance of the relationship between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1994). A transaction between reader and text occurs in a reciprocal

process each time a reading experience occurs. Rosenblatt maintains that there is no single correct interpretation of any text, but rather that each experience a reader has with a text results in a poem in which the reader creates a unique meaning. The interaction between reader and text leads to an evocation, where the reader's feelings become integrated into the literary work. This is followed by a response, which is generated both during and after the aesthetic transaction. In this model of reading the reader's stance is dependent upon the context of the text and reading situation. A text can be read from an aesthetic or an efferent stance. Aesthetic refers to the reader's feelings and sensations during the reading event. Narrative stories and poetry are examples of aesthetic texts. Efferent refers to commonly understood information in the public domain. For instance, if a person swallowed several pills from the wrong bottle, she would read the label from an efferent stance.

According to the leading research, the act of reading has primarily been viewed from a text processing and decoding skill perspective. Attention span, short and long term memory and cognitive ability all play important roles in the way in which a person reads print. Although it has received much less focus, reader attitude toward reading, and reader motivation for reading are powerful components in the reading process. Reader response to texts emphasizes the unique interpretation the reader brings to each reading experience.

Reading Motivation and Attribution Theory. M.M. Clay has done extensive work in research on reading processes and appropriate instructional strategies. Her work in reading recovery (1982) in which poor first grade readers are intensively tutored by specially trained instructors 30 minutes daily for up to 15 weeks, has been widely documented in reading literature ( Deford, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991). Clay (1982, p.xiv) asserts the importance of reading research that captures the ways that children change over time in their reading processes- the notion of change in reading . The ultimate goal of reading recovery, according to Clay is to enhance the spontaneous reading behaviors that occur in good readers. Moreover, she states that the key

point at the end of a reading recovery session with a child is: "Did the program foster dependence on the remedial teacher or did it foster independence?" (Clay, 1979, p.191).

The method of instruction in this program is premised on systematic observation of the reading behaviors of seven to eight year olds reading passages of text. Observers look for all observable reading behavior that provides clues to the reader's semantic or decoding difficulties. For example, teachers look for: the number of words read correctly/incorrectly, pausing, omitting, lip-movement, finger-pointing, and most significant, self-correcting (Clay, 1982, p.49). Without question, the most prevalent strategy used by successful readers is self-correction of errors. Clay (1991) maintains that this separates poor and good readers at an early age:

High progress readers are gathering cues from meaning, grammar, letter-sound relationships and cross-relating these in an active process of search and check. The average and low progress readers use fewer types of cue, make less effort to relate these, and do this processing less accurately and more slowly (p.310).

Through observation and appropriate intervention by specially trained teachers, this reading program is clearly a highly structured, systematic, successful method of developing reading behaviors in children which occur "spontaneously in most children."

Clay asserts that this and other intervention programs must be implemented at an early age if the reader is to behave spontaneously while reading. She cites Stanovich's (1986) "Matthew Effect" in which the contrast between good and poor readers becomes more sharply defined in the first year of schooling. Stanovich (1986) theorizes that early reading success depends on phonological awareness. Normal achieving readers master letter-sound associations and develop strong comprehension. In turn this leads to vocabulary growth. This reciprocal relationship ensures the "rich-get-richer": the more these readers read, the better they become. In contrast, children frustrated in decoding the phonological system develop a negative feeling for reading. Thus beginning the progressive "downward spiral." The result is poor readers who

find reading a labor due to a lack of skills. They choose not to read, practice much less than good readers, and gradually fall further behind good readers. Stanovich asserts that early in each child's development the decoding skills must be tapped before a more general cognitive and/or motivational deficiency develops.

Learning Disabilities. The learning disabled literature (LD) includes a significant amount of reading strategies and metacognitive research that is apt for any reading strategy instruction. Students on the verge of losing interest in reading and those capable but not in possession of the appropriate skills or strategies to succeed, are common themes in this literature. A leading researcher in the field is Bernice Wong. She has written of the ambiguous nature of the term learning disabled and states that " except for academic underachievement, one's notions about LD children run into serious problems because they are difficult to assess" (1986, p. 4). The variables of home environment, motivation, and past educational experiences are key components in a student's perceived abilities or disabilities. Three issues are central in the assessment of LD students according to Wong: 1) different diagnostic criteria and instruments, 2) the validity and reliability of assessment tools, and 3) human biases. Wong cites student processing problems as being fundamental in separating LD students from other underachieving students (Wong, 1991).

In her research into LD students and metacognition, Wong (1986) found that explicit knowledge of a criterion task (the end product of learning) enhances the use of appropriate strategies in children. In other words, if students are given precise information on the expected outcome of a task, they will apply strategies that are focused upon that particular task. Wong was determined to disprove widely held assumptions concerning LD readers including the assumptions that they: 1) have cognitive deficits, and 2) have a metacognitive deficiency in reading. Evidence in support of LD students' capabilities shows that LD readers do possess metacognitive awareness that are similar to those of above-average readers. Furthermore, LD readers appear to have decoding difficulties (Wong, 1986). This is a significant finding. If LD

readers demonstrate similar metacognitive awareness to good readers, then there is clearly hope in instructional techniques that enhance the knowledge and skills that accompany this awareness.

This brings to mind Stanovich's (1986) theory of "the assumption of specificity." Essentially, this view rejects the common presupposition held by LD professionals which maintains LD students have a brain/cognitive deficit that is specific (i.e., reading) to one domain and not to others. This deficiency, the assumption goes, can then be identified and treated accordingly by the instructor. Wong (1991) notes the importance for the LD professional to classify certain students as LD in one domain. In this way, the student will not be labelled a slow learner or mentally retarded (p.241). This concern is one of funding and administration that affects all educational programs.

In finding that LD readers lack self-regulation, Wong (1991) recommends the adoption of MAPS (Borkowski et al., 1989). Continual academic failures lead to three primary negative consequences: 1) erosion of self-confidence, 2) results in nonbeliefs of the value of effortful strategic learning because applications of their own faulty strategies inevitably result in poor learning outcomes, and 3) produce low self-concept ("I am dumb") (Wong, 1991, p.249). Wong urges the use of the metacognitive model presented by Borkowski et al. in order to "depersonalize" failure through one facet of the model which includes reattribution training. The ultimate goal, she asserts, is to transform LD students into active learners (contrasted to passive) by restoring the responsibility of learning to them.

Similarly, Wong (1994) discusses the problematic nature of students transferring learned reading strategies. She asserts the importance of "mediating mindfulness" and transfer-promoting instruction in heightening strategy transfer in students. Strategy transfer is clearly the ultimate end for any instruction. Wong (1994) defines it as the "students' spontaneous, unprompted, appropriate use of previously learned tasks/situations that differ from those in

which the strategies were originally learned" (p.110). Moreover, near transfer is the appropriate strategy use in tasks similar to when the strategy was learned.

According to Wong, transfer of learned strategies in LD students has been poor. She further maintains that transfer is a highly complex instructional and motivational problem. In response to the problem of students failing to generalize learned strategies Wong argues that students need time to reflect and retrack for the principles of the strategy learned.

For similar reasons, Solomon and Globerson (1987) propose that instructors must induce a mindfulness while instructing strategies. Mindfulness is defined as " a state of mind involving volitional, metacognitively guided employment of non-automatic, usually effort demanding processes" (Solomon & Globerson,1987, p.625). Solomon and Globerson referred to transfer as "dig out transfer", which reflects the proactive process that a student must go through in order to recall and use a strategy. This mindfulness can be facilitated through mediated learning, which was initially formulated by Feuerstein, Rand, and Hoffman (1979). Essentially, this refers to a teacher or parent consciously structuring a learning environment and shaping a child's attention and behavior through continual feedback and interpretation. Hence, Wong's model of strategy instruction includes guided discovery, self-regulation, and increasing degrees of student control.

Motivation Theory and Research. Studies on the motivational components of learning reveal some pertinent knowledge about how and why a child perceives and approaches certain learning situations. Research demonstrates that as children get older than six to seven years, their performance expectancies, self-perceptions of confidence, and perceptions for the causes for outcomes of effort change - they gradually become less optimistic and increasingly more negative (Weiner,1979). From kindergarten to the first grade children do not discern between ability and effort (Nicholls,1978; Stipek,1984). Nicholls (1984) maintains that an individual's conception of ability is crucial to understanding achievement motivation.

Nicholls further states that ability attributions are the main mediators of achievement affect. In a reading task, a student who has experienced previous failure, and also perceives him or

herself as being a poor reader, will often show negative affect. Contrasted to these individuals are those with high perceived ability and high motivation. They are more task involved. Because they have no doubts as to their academic competence, they do not ask "Am I smart enough?" as children with low self-perceptions of ability often do. Instead, these students may focus on strategies for task mastery (Diener & Dweck, 1978). This seems to be a critical point in teaching reading strategies. Students with low perceptions of their ability are predisposed to have no motivation to learn, understand and reuse learning strategies.

Nicholls (1979) offers a telling suggestion in regards to students and the teachers who teach them:

If teachers maintain optimum motivation for intellectual development in all their students, they will achieve a legitimate form of educational equality.

This would not mean equal attainment. It would mean that all students would develop their intellectual potential equally: to the fullest possible extent. (p.64)

Further evidence demonstrating the complex nature involved in improving student reading through the purposive teaching of strategies is provided by Covington (1984). His research has shown that success-oriented students attribute their successes to effort and skill. Students who accept failure will tend to attribute failure to a lack of ability and skill, and their rare successes to luck, or task ease. Covington and Omelich (1979) consider effort a "double edged sword." For instance, high effort can be threatening if it demonstrates low ability (failure), which can lead to no effort. Adolescents progressively conceive of ability and performance as being parallel with self-worth. In fact, by the sixth grade students have developed a notion of ability as being static, thus limiting their effort (Stipek, 1984).

In summary, the research into motivation and achievement motivation clearly demonstrates that children are highly sensitive to their educational environment, which in turn affects their perceptions of self-worth and ability. Children who read well will continue to be motivated to

work hard in achieving similar results in the future. Juxtaposed to highly motivated, successful readers are those with low skills and poor self-image as far as reading is concerned. Predictable difficulty and probable failure with a reading task alienates many reluctant readers before they choose to read. The result is often a poorly motivated individual who senses no palpable reason to try to improve in his reading.

Metacognition and Motivation. The majority of identified learning disabled students have mild to severe reading difficulties (Paris & Oka, 1989). Moreover, the two most difficult areas for LD readers are text-processing, and metacognition. According to Paris and Oka (1987), traditional views of reading instruction are lacking and misguided. Such instruction is premised on a hierarchical model that seeks to initially remediate decoding problems, then work on higher levels of comprehension, and lastly address metacognitive skills. What is needed is a "multidimensional perspective" of student learning problems with an emphasis on motivation and attribution (p.33). Paris and Oka further assert that motivational and coping strategies are important because they connect student affect with strategy learning.

For the same reason they suggest that causal attributions and motivational training are necessary in insuring that strategies are persistently used, and generalized across domains. The way in which students perceive success and failure (causal attributions) seems critical in how to teach and model reading strategies. A good illustration of the interconnection of strategy use and motivational and coping strategies can be seen in Cullen's (1985) study of different students' reaction to failure situations. Strategy-oriented children used appropriate strategies in monitoring and correcting failure. Action-oriented children sought help from the teacher or persisted on task. Paris and Oka note that both of these groups coped well with failure. These students have a positive view of their abilities and, more important, realize when and how to implement strategies that help to achieve an academic goal.

In contrast, anxiety-oriented children exhibited guilt, embarrassment, and other negative affects. Anger-oriented children reacted to failure with aggression, frustration, and/or withdrawal

(Paris & Oka, p.35). Clearly, these students require some additional instruction/training that empowers them in such a way that personal worth does not equate with a lack of knowledge. Moreover, they need more detailed information about cognitive strategies, specifically metacognitive training, according to Paris and Oka.

Paris and Oka continue to list some innovative and effective methods of reading instruction that help students regulate their learning, enhance self-worth, and fit their individual learning styles and needs. Here is a concise summary of those strategies that attend to the motivational and attributional setbacks that so often accompany reading problems. Cognitive coaching is evident in each effective instructional program, according to Paris and Oka. This entails fostering better understanding of cognitive strategies and enhancing student motivation. Similar to coaching sports, this instruction: models and explains useful strategies, identifies performance objectives, measures student progress at appropriate levels, shifts responsibility of learning to students, personal standards are viewed as more important than competition. Paris and Oka cite three effective reading strategy instruction methods which include the following:

- 1) Improving Teacher Explanations- teachers are trained to provide detailed explanations of cognitive strategies during regular reading lessons; student understanding of strategies increases as a result (Duffey et al., 1987).
- 2) Reciprocal Teaching- Palinscar and Brown (1984) developed this method in which trained students pose questions to each other, make predictions, clarify information, and form summaries of text while reading. Seventh-grade LD students were trained for 20 days in the use of the above strategies. Results were improved error detection and better summarizing. More significantly, the strategies were generalized across other subjects (Palinscar, Brown, & Martin, 1987).
- 3) Direct Explanation- Metaphors were used to explain the value of various text-processing strategies. For example, "Be a reading detective" was used in order to show students skills such as comprehension monitoring, summarizing, and finding the main idea.

Borkowski et al. (1989) have presented a metacognitive model for strategic processing in reading. This model connects metacognition and problem-solving skills in children with generalized learning impairments. They define generalized learning impairments as including children demonstrating broadly-based learning impairments across multiple domains ( e.g., comprehension, math, problem-solving), and whose IQ's are at the lower end of the normal range of 80-95.

Therefore, according to this model of instruction and learning strategy knowledge, two aspects of metacognition underlie general learning disabilities: 1) metacognitive acquisition procedures, and 2) attributional beliefs. Instruction of strategies must be "specific, prolonged, and characterized by frequent feedback" according to the authors (p. 50). In designing this model, Borkowski states the ultimate goal is the training of LD students to " become spontaneous, strategic, and planful learners" in applying generalized learning and problem-solving across various domains (p.67). Because LD learners rarely transfer learned skills to unrelated, difficult tasks, the need exists for a new approach of instruction, according to Borkowski et al. They maintain that the reason strategy training does not transfer is due to methodological limitations: a) training sessions too brief (in duration and length) and narrowly focussed, and b) no instruction of spontaneity processes. One such example is an intervention program by Gelzheiser (1984) that provided LD children in an experimental group with strategy training plus feedback. No difference was found in the recall of information when compared to the control group receiving only strategy training. Borkowski states the essential ideas in his model for the teaching of strategies for transfer:

...no matter how extensively specific strategy knowledge is engrained, generalization of strategies to new stimuli and novel situations is difficult for LD students. While extensive training of strategy use seem necessary, it is not sufficient for strategy generalization. (p.61)

Students are taught about how to access various kinds of strategy knowledge during a particular academic task (i.e., reading) including: 1) Specific Strategy Knowledge- the attributes of a certain strategy, 2) Relational Strategy Knowledge- how different tasks require different, related strategies, 3) General Strategy Knowledge- the general utility of being strategic ( LD students have greatest difficulty here). This instruction is reinforced with Metacognitive Acquisition Procedures (MAP), in which the child is taught to select and monitor strategies; to fill in the voids left by a teacher's omissions (pp.58-59). These combined methods are aimed at enhancing the development of the student's executive processes.

Essentially, these refer to the selection of appropriate strategy and the monitoring of learning. Interrelated to these processes is self-instructional training. This entails teaching the student to demonstrate successful transfer by: analyzing task demands, selecting appropriate strategy, accommodating the strategy to a new task, monitor effectiveness, possibly choose a more efficient method, perhaps decide if the problem has been solved (p.61).

Along with these knowledge domains students are retrained in their attributional beliefs. Borkowski et al. note the critical factor of self-esteem and self-efficacy in the successful transference of strategies. They cite Paris and Oka (1989) in their identification of four motivational determinants that account for the use of a strategy (or not): a) a sense of control, b) significant goals and values, c) self-management skills, d) interpretations of success and failure (p.64). In the pursuit of developing an independent, self-confident reader, motivational variables are clearly pivotal.

Some evidence of this can be seen in a study that assessed the effects on memorization of instructional training (Borkowski et al, 1989). Three groups that received specific training comprised the study. Groups were divided into: self-control, self-control plus attributions, and a control condition. Results in the self-control plus attribution training group showed lasting strategy generalization use ten months later. Borkowski et al. note the significance of these

results: "In the metacognitively complex condition, attributional beliefs, metamemory and, to some degree, impulsive behavior were permanently altered" (p.67).

A recent study of classroom reading context and motivation (Turner, 1995) suggests that the reading task and context are critical to reader motivation. Turner cites literature in intrinsic motivation as being based on the following: (a) challenge and self-improvement, (b) student autonomy, (c) pursuing personal interests, and (d) social collaboration. She makes the rare connection between motivation theory and reading in stating that a child's motivation to read is premised upon choices- deciding on which book to read, interest, how students select and process information, goal setting, and peer modelling and collaboration which increases content and process knowledge. Finally, she found that motivation to read begins with intrinsic interest premised on: (1) effective strategy use, (2) persistence on the task, and (3) volitional control, in which readers use their own intentions and purposes while learning. Turner found that the motivation to read occurs within the realm of the task and the context for reading.

In an effort to fill a void in the literature concerning individual differences in reading and predicting these differences, Ehrlich, Kurtz-Costes, and Loidant (1993) measured two hundred seventh graders' reading comprehension. They were particularly interested in the factors of cognition, metacognition, and motivation as predictors of individual differences(p.367). Good and poor readers were determined by being in the top 30 % or bottom 30% of the reading comprehension results respectively. Ehrlich et al. tested junior high children from the Paris suburbs with a mean age of 12 years 11 months. Children were measured in metacognitive knowledge, word recognition and reading comprehension. Furthermore, each child was measured on his or her academic self-concept and attributional beliefs.

Ehrlich et al. completed correlational analyses and regression analyses of the factors being studied. Their results suggest that poor readers are basically a heterogeneous group. The major predictors of poor readers were cognitive factors: word recognition skill, speed of decoding, and as a result, a lack of automaticity during processing. By contrast, good readers

possess motivational attributes such as a positive self-concept seemed to be a main predictor. Erlich et al concluded by stating that effective instruction must take into account the cognitive and motivational factors of reading.

One focus of research seems especially pertinent to the context of my study. Attribution theory is based on the assumption that people search their physical and social world for causal explanations of why certain events occur. For example, an individual's perceived causes of failure or success in achievement leading to goal attainment (Weiner, 1985). Wong and Weiner (1981) have found that causal attribution is strongly related to emotion. They created a series of hypothetical situations asking subjects to verbalize their causal thinking after perceived success or failure. Results indicated extensive attributional activity, leading to causal searches most often after failure or unexpected outcomes. I think the importance of this research to reading could be in providing poor readers with metacognitive strategies that enable them to access ways of locating where they were making errors in reading, and correcting them while completing a causal search. According to Weiner, methodology limitations of this study includes the questions being elicited, which results in a reactive method of inquiry.

Dweck and Leggett (1988) observed students to test the hypothesis that an individual's goals generate either helpless or mastery-oriented responses. This model contends that two things are critical in a student acquiring strategies: 1) their implicit theories of intelligence, and 2) the related specific goals they seek. For example, students who display a helpless pattern often avoid challenge. The result is decreasing performance in the face of obstacles. Such individuals have an implicit theory of intelligence that Dweck calls entity. The child's notion of intelligence is that of a fixed and uncontrollable trait. These students will tend to only set goals that will gain favorable judgment from a teacher or parent (performance goals). In contrast, students showing a mastery-oriented pattern exhibit effective striving when failure occurs. According to Dweck and Leggett, many of these children favour an incremental implicit theory of intelligence, and consequently they tend to set learning goals,

Another related study on attributions, emotions and appraisals is concerned with hot cognitions (Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993). Smith et al. tested the status of appraisals and attributions as antecedents to emotion. With 120 undergraduate subjects, the authors studied the emotions of happiness, hope-challenge, anger, guilt, fear-anxiety, and sadness. Subjects reported their attributions, appraisals, and emotions in various situations. Results demonstrated that, when comparing the effects of appraisals and attributions, only appraisals directly result in emotion. Moreover, there is a strong relationship between specific cognitions and specific emotions. As noted by Smith et al., research in the area of roles of attributions and other knowledge forms as antecedents of appraisal is crucial in understanding why certain students react in particular situations (e.g., reading) with particular emotions. Some conceded problems in methodology were the scales that measured appraisal components and relational themes that simply reflected alternative ways of assessing the same emotion. Nevertheless, I think that this type of research reveals more accurately the connection between emotion and cognition. What is lacking in the literature are studies that isolate attribution and the reading process.

Goetz et al (1992) investigated the imagery and emotional responses used by readers when encountering a literary text. Clearly, the "relationship between emotion words and the emotions they signify is complex " (p.370). Their intent was to rectify the limitations inherent in using imposed , restricted polar opposites to measure the reader's affect in response to literature (e.g., tragic-happy, expressive-emotionless, p.362). Their method included subjects sorting from 69 affect terms in free-protocol reports after reading texts.

Results indicated that " free reports can provide a rich source of information about reader's emotional experiences that can be reliably coded and meaningfully interpreted" (p.369). Goetz et al concluded that the constructive processes involved in a reader's affective responses are important in understanding the literary experience. More importantly, this particular study may

help in " providing more specific analytic approaches to complement some of the more global, qualitative work being done " (p.371).

Reading Instruction. The teaching of specific metacognitive strategies in reading has gained prominence in recent research (e.g., Pressley, Goodchild, Zajchowski, & Evans,1989; Pressley et al.,1991, 1992; Duffy & Roehler,1989). Pressley et al. (1992) state that skilled reading is a combination of good information processing and prior knowledge. Furthermore, they assert that skilled readers interpret while reading and react affectively to the text (p.121). But another researcher concluded that, for poor readers, prior knowledge can actually obstruct comprehension, and moreover, that reliance upon incorrect or incomplete semantic and/or syntactic knowledge can cause "cognitive confusion" during reading (Downing, 1979).

Pressley et al. (1992) maintain that, due to the influence of experimental psychology on reading in the 1980's, most studies dealt with the analyses of single strategies or components of reading (e.g., monitoring). Because expert readers utilize a plethora of strategies, he claims that teaching a single strategy method would be unsuccessful. Pressley cited the method of reciprocal teaching in which students and teachers took turns leading discussions about the text being read (Palinscar & Brown,1984). The primary strategies instructed in this method are questioning, predicting, summarizing, and clarifying. Students indicated knowledge of each cognitive activity by demonstrating: probing, insightful questions; motivation to engage in comprehension of future text; overtly stating what was understood from a reading; clarifying when an interpretation of text is unclear or the text itself is unclear. Reciprocal teaching seems to be a highly effective instructional method, as well as an accurate way of monitoring student comprehension. Limitations with this method include rigid, sequence strategy instruction. Results of one month of reciprocal teaching revealed moderate effects in reading comprehension, in the Palinscar and Brown (1984) study.

Paris and Oka (1989) present an effective instructional program entitled "cognitive coaching" (p.37). This entails fostering a better understanding of cognitive strategies and enhancing

student motivation. Similar to the notion of coaching sports, this instruction: 1) models and explains useful strategies, 2) identifies performance objectives, 3) measures student progress at appropriate levels, 4) shifts responsibility of learning to students, and, 5) views personal standards as being more important than competition.

Brownlie, Close and Wingren (1990) have written of the importance of teaching children the strategic thinking skills that are required for creating active, independent readers. Instruction involves modeling and the direct instruction of strategies, guided practice, and encouragement of independent application of various thinking strategies. Collaboration in small groups with a focus on predicting, clarifying and responding to texts is aimed at the ultimate goal of developing an “expert reader” (p.50). Reciprocal reflection and collaborative group work are the hallmarks of this instruction:

“...in the pre-reading phase, activating prior knowledge, predicting, questioning, writing to learn, and building from oral language and images. The focus of the ‘pre’ and the ‘during’ reading phase is on strategies which develop thinking. In ‘post’ reading, students frequently learn to write or explore various ways of representing thinking as we move toward strategies which shape thought to form.” (p.17)

Reading is not a passive, enjoyable activity that occurs naturally for many elementary students. Rather, it is often a frustrating and arduous task that can be a negative experience for some individuals. Responsibility for providing each learner with at least a small repertoire of skills for understanding the meaning of text clearly rests with the teacher. Tierney (1982) suggested some critical guidelines for enhancing reading instruction. To be effective, the instructional strategy should: 1) be clearly beneficial to improving task-relevant performance, 2) be adaptable to a variety of learning needs and styles, 3) encourage independence and self-reliance. Moreover, Tierney maintained that students must know why, when, where, and how to use the strategies, and that they be given numerous opportunities to implement their use.

A direct instruction paradigm as a method of teaching students to recognize and produce explicit and implicit main ideas of short paragraphs, has been shown to be superior to other methods (Baumann, 1984). Baumann asserted the central importance of the teacher in instruction:

In direct instruction, the teacher, in a face-to-face, reasonably formal manner, tells, shows, models, demonstrates, teaches the skills to be learned. The key word here is teacher, for it is the teacher who is in command of the learning situation and leads the lesson, as opposed to having instruction "directed" by a worksheet, kit, learning center, workbook.  
(p.287)

Further evidence of the pivotal role held by the teacher in reading instruction can be seen in a study by Alexander et al. (1994). Teachers who fail to emphasize the structural importance of texts, and are unclear as to the difference between interest and importance of text, confuse and mislead students as they read it, according to Alexander et al. Hermann (1990) writes that many middle school students lack metacognitive control in reading due to instruction that is focussed on isolated reading skills. Therefore, teachers must clarify to students the important parts of material to be read, and also, discuss thinking skills relevant to each reading task.

Studies in the learning disabled (LD) field (Scuggs & Wong, 1990; Wong, 1992) suggest that transfer-promoting instruction is necessary for LD (and other students) to engage in reflective, active learning. Another observation by researchers (Borkowski, Estrada, Milstead, & Hale, 1989) is that instruction at the cognitive and motivational levels is needed to enable learners to become spontaneous and strategic. The literature further reveals that motivational and attributional training provides some readers with specific enabling skills, motivational empowerment, and ultimately, increased academic achievement (Paris & Oka, 1989).

Again, research shows ( Paris & Oka, 1989; Wong, 1991, 1992, 1994) that simply demonstrating and directing reading strategies to students does not guarantee strategic,

independent readers. Teachers need to inform students of the declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge about each strategy taught (Paris et al., 1983). Declarative knowledge refers to beliefs about the task, i.e., "reading is boring." Setting goals and adjusting actions applies to a reader's declarative knowledge. Procedural knowledge is the "how to." For instance, knowing how to scan, skim read, and summarize passages. Conditional knowledge is the "when and why." This refers to the rationale for executing various actions. Showing students various ways of going about reading helps them internalize plans and goals for reading.

Vygotskian Connections. An expressly stated common thread that runs through the majority of strategies and methods presently under discussion is their linkage to the theoretical views of Vygotsky (1987) (e.g., Paris & Oka, 1987, 1989; Wong, 1991, 1994; Baumann et al., 1992, 1993). Concepts such as learning through apprenticeship, and learning in the "zone of proximal development" are clearly evident. Furthermore, mental engagement is unobservable; this makes it necessary for readers to talk about texts. The assumption that knowledge is accumulated through social interaction is present in all of the studies mentioned here. Of utmost importance, I believe, is Vygotsky's (1987) theorization that the process of internalization is the reconstruction of an external operation (p.57). This social construction of text and learning appears to have a resonance among the reading strategies presented. It seems to me that the goal of developing independent, critically-thinking learners clearly follows from the reading instructional strategies that promote detailed modeling and guidance, followed by the gradual withdrawal of teacher direction. Purposeful and well-modeled strategy instruction (scaffolding), combined with meaningful discussion in a classroom context, is the start of the empowerment of readers. This notion of mediated learning, in which an adult assists a child in interpreting new knowledge, gradually withdrawing, is important in understanding how children internalize their learning.

## Summary

In this section I have presented a summary of relevant research in the following areas of reading: models and theories, motivation, attribution, metacognition, instruction, strategies, and the reluctant reader. In short, here are the principal points in the literature.

Smith (1974) and Goodman (1980) asserted that the development of reading is as natural as the ability to learn to talk. Moreover, they suggest that meaning is everything in the reading act. In order to gain meaning, a young reader must be encouraged to make accurate guesses as to the context and meaning of print.

LaBerge and Samuels (1974) maintained that specific decoding and comprehension skills must be taught to readers if they are to make sense of the vast cognitive constraints placed on them during reading. In this theory of automatic information processing, readers need instruction starting with letters, then the words and phrases. With repeated practice, much like a tennis player masters the backhand, the reader gradually becomes fluent and processes text automatically.

Rumelhart (1976) has written that during reading a parallel processing occurs. Our life experiences and world knowledge are comprised of schemata (Anderson & Pearson 1984). As readers we need to understand how to fit each node of this schematic information into our existing schema in order to comprehend what is read. M.M. Clay (1991) contends that poor readers are unable to use cues in text, and cannot use problem-solving strategies independently and spontaneously, as good readers do.

As children get older they become increasingly cynical about a lack of academic ability whether actual or perceived (Nicholls, 1978; Stipeck, 1982). A child's sense of self-worth and ability is clearly related to his self-perceived achievement.

One method of instructing low-achieving readers is that of cognitive coaching (Paris & Oka, 1989). This involves continual feedback and guided modelling with readers. Borkowski et al. (1989) have successfully taught learning impaired readers using metacognitive acquisition

techniques and improving attributional beliefs. Turner (1995) maintains that motivation to read is intrinsic in nature and based on these components: strategy use, persistence on each task, and the volitional control of the reader.

Students will set goals that generate helpless or mastery-oriented responses (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). A child will avoid a challenge or charge into it depending on her implicit theory of intelligence, and the goals she wishes to attain. If she shows a helpless trait, she will only set goals in order to receive teacher or parent approval. In contrast, a mastery-oriented student will set learning goals in order to achieve success.

The above research shows that effective reading instruction includes reciprocal teaching where students alternate with teachers in dialogues of text (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Direct instruction in reading has been shown to be essential in demonstrating the specific skills required to understand and fluently decode different kinds of text (Baumann, 1984). Moreover, Wong (1994) maintains that poorer readers need more than basic showing of various reading strategies. Instead, they require specific transfer-promoting instruction to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become engaged with text.

In short, literature on reading suggests several implications for teachers and readers. First, that learners either successfully acquire the knowledge and skills to read at an early age or they struggle with the act of reading. A second implication is that self-perception of ability and self-motivation are critical factors in the developing reader. Thirdly, the habit of predicting and estimating the meaning of texts are commonly observed attributes of good readers. Finally, research has demonstrated that children learn best in a direct instructional mode. Successful strategy instruction is largely dependent upon the direct modeling and guidance of a skilled instructor.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Research Design

#### Introduction To Research Method

I will articulate my chosen methodology through a review of formal and substantive theory, which will be constrained by my tacit knowledge (practice), and personal experience and assumptions (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). I shall begin with a rationale for the paradigm and methodology chosen. Next, I will clarify my decision for a descriptive case study research. Finally, I will summarize the instruments used and their purpose in this research. The result should be the coherent articulation of how my research is grounded in the literature, and its context within it.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) write that naturalistic inquiry is not defined by method, but by paradigm. They further discuss a paradigm as being a world view, or general perspective, and a way of understanding our world. Lincoln and Guba proceed to clarify three paradigms in research: prepositivist, positivist, and postpositivist. They continue that the logical and empirical sides of positivist paradigm suggests an objective, detached research design that often excludes the perspective of the subject. In contrast to the positivist goal of generalizing human traits and experiences for the purpose of predicting future behavior, postpositivistic paradigms seek an intensive, in-depth examination of a phenomenon. Similarly, my study is an effort to try to gain a better understanding of the complexities of reluctant readers (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). I assume that there are multiple realities in the experiences of humans.

My goal has been to identify and describe the nature of the experiences of a small number of individuals in my classroom. I have observed and become pedagogically involved with a group of reluctant readers. I have tried to understand their self-perceived roles as students, learners, and readers. I worked with them in an effort to extend their tacit knowledge of the above. How do they approach reading and understanding what they read? What strategies do/don't they use

in their reading experiences? My interest lies in research that has the goal of better understanding and changing the reading habits of learners in my class.


I observed and interacted with learners that I knew by completing research in my classroom and in a nearby conference room. My goal was the description of their behavior (reading ability, attitude, and comprehension). My inquiry occurred within an authentic setting (the student's classroom and a conference room), and was intended to explain participant reading behavior.

Matthewson (1994) describes the qualitative case study method as being appropriate for studying various aspects of individual and group reading behavior in relation to influences of affective factors such as attitude and interest toward reading: "...the new model provides a basis for hypotheses to be tested and questions to be answered through qualitative case studies in classrooms, with small groups of students, or with individual students" (p.1153).

### Instruments

As the sole researcher in this investigation I am the primary instrument in the collection of data. Instruments I used to record, collect, and analyze data included the following: structured and open-ended interviews, video and audio-taping student non-verbal reading behaviors during reading tasks, questionnaires on subjects' reading attitudes and perceptions, reader response journals and researcher journals. My objective was to observe, interact with and instruct five reluctant readers for three months. I intended viewing the participants from the perspective of an objective teacher and researcher. What follows is a detailed description of instruments that were used, the context in which they were employed, and the purpose for which they were intended.

I completed a pilot-type study with two students prior to beginning the main study. In it I structured and formulated the interview questions. My objective in completing structured and semi-structured interviews with participants was two-fold: I wanted to record and classify each reader's notions of, and experiences with, reading in general; second, I wanted to describe and interpret participant responses as they related to my research questions.



Opening statements, questions and concluding remarks were identical in order to keep consistency of data. Questions were short, and included clear language aimed at each student's level. Each interview was video taped and transcribed. My purpose here was to probe their understanding of the knowledge of reading strategies. My basic objective throughout the research was to identify and describe both what the reader's did as they read and any behaviour patterns that evolved out of my observations.

I interviewed participants both separately and in small groups. My intention was to gather information on how they experienced the act of reading, as well as their individual and collective perceptions as different reading contexts and materials were encountered. For instance, how might an individual feel about reading leisurely at home in his bedroom as compared with a teacher assigned reading task in class?

Interviews occurred outside regular classroom work. Instruction and interviews took place in mornings, and lunch time, in my classroom or in a nearby conference room. Students had the option of choosing times and days during each week for interviews and instruction sessions. Participants took part in several individual and group interviews during the study. All interviews were recorded either with a videocamera or an audiotape recorder. They were transcribed and analyzed for signs of knowledge, understanding, and usage of the numerous reading strategies that I modelled and discussed during the research.

Moreover, I wished to understand participant views on the habits of good readers. General reader beliefs and attitudes were also prominent concerns in my interview questions. Sample interview questions and responses can be seen below.

- 1) What is reading?      Participant response:      It's when you pick up a book that you might  
and you read it.
- 2) What does it mean to be a reader?              Well, a reader is someone who likes reading  
a lot, and well, can read books fairly fast.
- 3) Do you know anyone who is a good reader?      Yes, my mom. She reads lots.

4) What do like/dislike about reading?

I like the suspense in mystery novels and stuff.

Um, words that are hard to read, like long words.

5) Describe any before, during and after reading strategies you use?

Before reading I would read the back of the book...or you can just skim read over the first page. You just read it and imagine what something looks like...After I finish reading it I usually go back and look at the little details and stuff or pictures, or things I need to know. Important things that I didn't have time to look at while I was reading it.

Teacher Journal. Each day I recorded my thoughts and observations relating to reading and the five subjects. In particular, I noted the motivations, attitudes, and observable strategies demonstrated by each student. Some journal entries were in short, point form. Others were more detailed descriptions of an observation, experience or interpretation of a reader interaction among the group.

My goal in keeping a daily written record of the occurrences involving participants was that of comparing and contrasting reader interest and knowledge early in the research with later in the study. What follows is an excerpt of my journal entries during the study.

On March 24 while observing the class during uninterrupted sustained silent reading a student under consideration for the project made a shocking comment to me. While reading his grade seven Social Studies text book, he abruptly stopped, looked up at me and said: "Mr. Halfyard, how come when I read I don't remember the sentences that went before?" When prompted to explain his observation he pointed to a short paragraph about ancient Greek

soldiers he replied: "Well, I just read this paragraph here and I forget what the first part of the paragraph says. It's like I forget it as I read it."

Here is an example of an experience that happened while students were reading silently in the class during school time. The reader in this case made an unsolicited comment to me regarding his difficulties with remembering what he had read, and hence, understanding text. Numerous other journal entries which I recorded describe my observations of participants as they read or how they explained what they did while reading materials.

This instrument was used in the context of the classroom and conference room while participants discussed their strategies and reading experiences with texts. The purpose for using a research journal was to maintain a record of daily events with the group. I wanted to document my perspective of what was happening with the students before, during and after reading.

Reader Response. This instrument had the subjects write their reactions to various reading materials and reading tasks. The format included students being given 3 1/2 x 5 inch index cards with places for them to respond to texts that had been read. In reader response data collection students brought home a template paper on which they wrote responses and strategies used to read self-selected materials. Participants and the teacher chose reading materials and students then wrote how they read it, and how they felt about it.

The objective in using reader response journals was to assess the depth and breadth of the level of written communication to a given reading task. Moreover, this method of collecting information on participants provided a written record of their meaning-making abilities with texts, and also gauged their ability to write what they were thinking and doing before, during, and after reading. Although responses were varied and did not always measure reader strategy use. For example, one participant wrote this referring to a short story that was read: "My experiences were that I was being chased by the crooks and a mad magician. My strategies were to confront the magic master in public to ask for help. My response is that this book is boring and stupid and very hard to understand." The same reader wrote this after reading short novel: " My

strategies were to think very carefully before making decisions. My responses were that the author could have used more exciting words and beefed up the story a little."

Here are other samples of individually completed reader response cards after modeling sessions in which the group shared in oral reading of the myth, *How Thor Found His Hammer* (1989). Jenn wrote, as did each respondent, that the text was narrative; her before reading strategy was that she, "thought about what was happening." During reading she "thought out loud," and after reading she "discussed the meaning" of the story with the group. Nathan wrote that before reading, "I looked at the pictures." During reading, "I read out loud and reread the hard words." After reading, "I put the book away." A third response was given by Susan who replied that before reading "I predicted and we looked at the title and thought what it was about." During reading she "sounded out words", and after having read she "discussed the meaning of the story" with the group. Participants completed ten such response cards during the research.

Teacher Modelled Reading Strategies. A major component of this research was the regular, explicit demonstration of specific reading strategies to the participants. My method was a modified think-aloud approach in which I verbalized my thoughts as they pertained to reading. I began our session by modelling a strategy for about fifteen minutes. This instrument provided recorded data in the form of audio and video tapes. Further, it was collected within the context of a teacher instructing students in various reading strategies. Finally, the purpose in using think-aloud type modelling was to demonstrate the importance of explicit teacher-modelled skills and knowledge with a small group of readers.

This activity usually took place with two or three students at a time in a conference room near our classroom. Sessions lasted approximately thirty five minutes. A typical session included the following: (1) an introduction and description of a reading strategy, (2) an explanation of when to apply a certain strategy, and why the strategy might aid a reader in understanding text, and (3) an explicit demonstration of how to apply and monitor that strategy. Following my instruction, I asked participants to discuss their understanding of the experience in their own words, and

when it would and would not be appropriate to use. Next, I asked students to show me and the group example of how to use the strategy. A selected sample of a teacher modelled strategy session is provided below.

The task for this session is a modified teacher think aloud while reading to the group. The text used is an article on Ben Johnson titled, Starting Blocks: Where It All Began For Ben Johnson by P. Hunter (1989). The context is in the conference room during lunch. I am sitting at a table and the group is sitting facing me across the table.

Teacher: I'm going to show you some strategies that expert readers use before they read. I'm going to think out loud as I read. I am going to model strategies that would be valuable to you in your reading. But I'll say things I would normally be thinking in my head.

So I'm opening up this book. I'm going to read a story that the teacher has asked me to read. I look at the title: Let's see, starting blocks. I know that starting blocks are used for running, so I can assume that it is going to be about somebody who runs. The subtitle reads: Where it all began for Ben Johnson. Well, that tells me something about his life history. Something about the past, where he came from. That's a clue to the story. So you see what I have done there? I have used my knowledge of the title and running to set the stage for what I am going to read.

Why am I reading this? Let's see, my teacher asked me to read this and I'm going to do an assignment on it so I want to read with a purpose. My purpose is to finish story and to understand what is being written. Then I'm going to work on it. I want to learn about Ben Johnson. Where he came from and what he did.

Those are before reading strategies- I haven't read a word yet. But you can hear all of the things that were in my mind. This plan is used each time before I begin to read: I ask myself why I am reading, I set personal goals, and I predict what it is about. Now I am ready to start.

In the above example, as with each modeling session in the research, I integrated each knowledge type (Paris et al, 1983) into think alouds. That is, as each particular reading strategy was explicitly presented, I discussed a corresponding declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge for its application. I overtly described my thinking in terms of what I did, when I did it, and how I applied various strategic plans in each reading task.

Similarly, in this next example I model prediction and use of prior experience with the group.

Teacher: "The Command Centre. This is going to be a factual text. I look at the pictures and I see that there are several pictures of the brain, and a map of the brain. Command centre...that

makes me think of somebody in control: somebody running the show. Something concerned with the brain. I am predicting that this will be about the brain. I also predict that I am going to learn something about how the brain works, and how it will affect me." (I begin to read) "Let's see, that is telling me about how we talk. It's probably going to explain to me how my brain works in helping me to talk. I'll bet that's what it's going to say next..."

After explaining my reading strategies out loud to the participants I paused to ask them to model what I had done and why. Next, students would be asked to take turns modelling my think aloud behavior as they read three or four paragraphs from the story. Then we would have a discussion of what took place; what were successful strategies; the meaning of the text; and whether this was helpful for each reader.

Strategies Presented. During the course of the research the following reading strategies were introduced to participants: 1) Predicting content, 2) Using context clues: surrounding words and phrases as indicators of the meaning of new words, 3) Setting specific reading goals for each task, 4) Thinking aloud before and during reading, 5) Inference: using text to guess intended meanings, 6) Summarizing: after reading a text, checking for meaning and putting texts into short summaries, 7) Sounding out difficult to decode vocabulary, 8) Utilizing prior knowledge: integrating the reader's previous experiences with new texts in order to better comprehend meaning.

Participant Discussion. Interrelated with teacher modelled reading strategies are the dialogues and interactions among the participants as they responded to instruction, texts, tasks, and each other. Most of the information was centered around how individuals felt about reading certain materials in a given context. Affective factors in reading such as attitude, motivation, interest level, comprised the bulk of discussions. As well, knowledge and use of reading strategies was discussed. Here, the social climate was crucial in the acceptance of ideas, and the mutual understanding of meanings from reading different materials.

Typically, participant interaction followed group reading excerpts from teacher-selected texts, which were usually ten minutes in duration. I recorded these conversations using video and audiotape. Subjects routinely negotiated meanings of texts and exchanged comments on the difficulty or ease of various reading materials. Students often discussed their attitudes or lack of attention for certain reading tasks. This excerpt of a discussion illustrates this notion of how dialogue can start with a structured question about two distinct writing forms, and then begin to change into preference and taste:

Teacher: What is non-fiction writing?

Susan: True. True stuff. True stuff, like animal books.

Teacher: What about fiction. What are fictional books?

Nathan: A fairy tale, like Rikki-Tikki-Tavi.

Teacher: Good. Let's compare these two types of writing, fiction and non-fiction. Do you read them differently? (All participants shake their heads)

Susan: Yeah. Fiction words are sometimes easier to read.

Bobby: Little two year olds (group laughs). Because well...they're not really easier, but like, non-fiction books are sometimes like, boring.

Nathan: Ah, the only books I like to read are comic books because it's gory, it's gory. There's violence instead of those non-fiction books where there's these little elephants running around.

My intent in encouraging reading dialogues was to obtain an account of the different levels of understanding that these readers brought to specific texts and tasks. Furthermore, I wanted to learn more about the group and individual experiences in reading. This was the meaningful dialogue and negotiated meaning and understanding that Ruddell and Unrau (1994) have described. According to Ruddell and Unrau, the most important aspect of reading in the "sociocognitive interactive" model, is that of the social context in general, and reader dialogue

about text particularly. Similar discussions following shared and oral readings took place regularly during the research period.

Further sample dialogues among participants following reading provide clear examples of how reluctant readers are able to make meaning and negotiate understanding from reading tasks using varying texts. In this example readers discuss the meaning of the words choreograph and mediocre from the article, Lori Fung: Synchronized Motion (1989):

Clark: She wants people to enjoy the performance.

Bobby: That, when the people enjoy watching her she gets good support from the audience.

Nathan: She goes out there to have fun.

Teacher: What about any words that are difficult to read or understand in that paragraph?

Clark: Choreo...graph, whatever.

Teacher: Did you reread it?

Clark: Yes.

Nathan: And then you just try to do it for one last time. And then you just skip it.

Teacher: Alright. Now, what do you think the word means?

Clark: Having a lot of fun?

Bobby: Talented?

Clark: I've heard the word before.

Teacher: What are some strategies you can use to help understand this word?

Jenn: Sound out the word.

Susan: Look at the words and sentences around it.

Bobby: Look it up in the dictionary or ask my mom.

Attitude scales. I administered scales measuring attitude toward reading before and after the three months of research. Participants were instructed to use pencils to circle the answer that most accurately described their feelings regarding a specific reading behavior or attitude. I

explained both the purpose and substance of each attitude question to the group prior to administering it. The students took about five minutes to complete each survey.

I had two objectives in mind when I gave the participants these scales: First, I wanted to try to understand the relation between attitude and performance. Second, I was interested in finding out if reluctant readers' attitudes are fixed, or flexible. Finally, I was curious as to the effect, if any, of regular reading strategy instruction on individual attitudes toward reading in general.

Survey of Reader Self-Perception. This instrument was intended to assess the way in which lower level readers viewed themselves as learners and readers. A Likert-type scale was administered at the beginning and end of the study. Here the aim was to assess each participant's self-perception in terms of reading skill and ability. Because self-perception is an important variable in a reader's volition and motivation to read, I felt that this instrument was a valuable collector of data in terms of the larger context of reluctant readers.

Reading Tasks. In an effort to observe and analyze non-verbal habits and behaviors during silent reading, participants were regularly videotaped during silent reading in class. At other times, participants were filmed or audiotaped during individual interviews, group interviews, and strategy modelling sessions. Recorded data includes any changes over time in the reading behaviors before, during, and after reading; frequency of utterances of specific reading strategies throughout the study; and the individual reading experiences of each participant as the research progressed.

Academic reading tasks during the inquiry included: (a) students reading teacher-selected books, (b) shared reading of self-selected and teacher-selected stories, (c) silent reading of self-selected books, (d) turn taking while reading orally, and discussion of teacher-selected books. I shall provide examples of each task in the following paragraphs.

Students reading teacher-selected texts includes short stories and excerpts from poems and novels. The readers read both silently and orally, depending on the situation. Oral reading

happens when I prompt readers to read a shared text to the group. This academic task relates to students reading teacher chosen texts and then responding to its meaning.

Silent reading of self-selected books is a daily part of the curriculum in my classroom. Each day after lunch hour my students spend 20 minutes doing uninterrupted sustained silent reading (U.S.S.R.). Their reading materials are chosen by them, and they were often videotaped for non-verbal reading behaviors during silent reading.

Turn-taking while reading refers to the subjects sitting in a group and reading orally for a limited amount of time (often 3-4 minutes). An example of turn-taking reading is a student reading from a textbook and then another student picking up where the other student left off. Readers continue until all readers have read and then begin the cycle over again.

### Participants

Five participants were chosen for the study. My criteria for inclusion of prospective subjects were based on the following: (1) individuals demonstrating a clear aversion for reading in school, (2) a relatively equal gender balance, (3) children from both grade six and grade seven (11 and 12 year olds), (4) students whose parents reported their child disliking reading, (5) children who often struggle with reading tasks in the classroom. In meeting each of these criteria it was felt that subjects were clearly reluctant readers.

Subject attributes, traits and characteristics were complex and varied. Four subjects came from home cultures in which little value is placed on literacy and reading. My intent was to observe and interact with youngsters in a meaningful way that was centered round the act of reading.

### Procedure

All participants remained in the research group throughout the three months of the study. I informed parents of the scope and intent of the research by sending home letters. Parents were asked to review the study outline, and complete an informed consent form. Out of eight returned permission slips I selected five subjects.

Data collection in this research occurred in the school in which I taught a grade 6/7 class. The grade 4-7 elementary school is located in a small rural town with a population of approximately 20,000 in northwestern British Columbia. Student enrollment was approximately 285. My class had 24 students: 14 in grade six and 10 in grade seven. One participant is a first nations child. There were no students who spoke English as a second language in the study.

This study was based on the continuous recording of observational data on five readers over a three month period. Initial data gathering included semi-structured individual interviews. These were followed with the group readings and dialogues about texts read. Next, a reading attitude survey was administered to each student. All interviews and dialogues were videotaped, transcribed and analyzed for information relating to each student's reading experiences, and strategy use and knowledge..

Questioning participants about their reading behaviours and experiences before, during and after reading enabled me to investigate their specific approaches to reading. Moreover, subjects were videotaped for 40 minutes each week while reading, discussing reading experiences, and exhibiting non-verbal reading behaviours. I reviewed the video data several times in attempting to interpret reader behaviours and strategy application.

During silent and oral reading I focussed on observing and recording individual reading behaviours. I kept an investigative journal to record these data and also to supplement video recordings. The fundamental behavioural unit here is defined as those participant actions and utterances that demonstrate reading strategies. Each instance of a student referring to a decoding or comprehending strategy was my basic unit of observation in interview data. For example, I rated and compared the frequency that each subject uttered phrases referring to before, during or after reading strategies prior to and following teacher intervention. It is important to note that unsuccessful strategies were also recorded and compiled within the data. Examples of these include avoidance behaviours such as looking around the room, playing with

a book cover, flipping through pages in a book, and similar actions by students aimed at prolonging the onset of active reading.

### Data Analyses

Data for this study were collected from several sources. Since this was a qualitative study I wanted to gather as much observable data as possible in a three month period. Moreover, I wanted to ensure a triangulation of data through the collection of self-reports, surveys, discussion, and also audio and videotaping of reading and teacher and peer-led dialogue. Data in this study are both reliable and comprehensive. I analyzed data in the context of my original research questions.

Interviews were conducted at the beginning and the end of the research. Questions were intended to prompt participants to explain their knowledge of reading. After experiencing several hours of dialogue, and modelling of reading strategies, and practice reading sessions, I asked the same questions again. Subjects responded both individually and as a group on both occasions. By looking at words and phrases that demonstrate knowledge of a) strategic processes, b) positive attitudes, c) content knowledge, and d) decoding and comprehension strategies I can assess any changes over time in the participants' awareness of these skills. Similarly, reader experiences can be observed and recorded by categorizing the reader responses to questions, as well as observing and recording non-verbal reading behavior.

Coding. Coding of interviews was based on the frequency of utterances of words and phrases that are related to 1) reading strategies, 2) affect towards reading. Each instance of a participant mentioning a specific reading strategy was recorded and tabulated for indications of knowledge of that strategy. By comparing and contrasting these utterances before and after reading practice sessions I was able to determine changes in reader knowledge and use of reading strategies over time.

The following is an example of my method of corresponding my research questions with data collection, interpretation and analysis.

Table 1

## Reading Data Sources

Research Question:	Data Source:	Analysis
1. How do participants approach reading and understanding what they read?	<p>Transcripts of videotaped discussions</p> <p>Semistructured interviews</p> <p>Observed reading behavior</p> <p>Reader response to texts</p>	<p>Signs of knowledge of reading strategies</p> <p>Signs of use of reading strategies</p>
2. What strategies do/don't they use in their experience as readers?	<p>Transcripts of audiotaped teacher-modelled reading strategies</p> <p>Self-assessment survey</p> <p>Observed reading behavior</p>	<p>Look for indicators of (a) decoding, and (b) comprehension strat.</p>

The reading tasks for this research included the following activities:

- (a) Participants reading teacher-selected books;
- (b) Shared oral reading of short stories;
- (c) Silent reading of self-selected texts;
- (d) Oral reading of self-selected texts

Analysis of protocols was completed for the transcribed reading data. I completed a content analysis by rereading and classifying observed reading behaviors into these categories.

In order to collect data on each participant I wanted to watch participants read both orally and silently. Non-verbal reader behavior was categorized using the following criteria: (1) facial expressions, and (2) body movements such as: head and arm movements, finger pointing, posture, and the method of holding the book.

An example of facial expressions was a student smiling or grimacing while reading silently. Raised and/or furled eyebrows suggest an affective reaction to the material being read. This

would seem to indicate engagement with the text as the reader experiences the meaning of the print. A further example is a reader who looks disinterested. His face appears bored or expressionless. Eyes might wander- the face shows disinterest or lack of focus. Each reader's face provides the observer clues as to how she feels about reading at that specific moment.

Body movements are the definite motions made by the reader that demonstrate high interest and motivation, or conversely, inattentiveness and poor reading behaviors. Examples of body movements in an engaged reader include a child sitting in her desk with a book held with both hands, sitting straight in her desk. One hand might be on his chin as he remains attentive and interested in the print. The reader's eyes scan left to right on the page as she processes the text. Body movements such as posture and eye motion are indicators of attention, interest and motivation in reading.

As the study progressed I looked for changes in observable reader behaviors based on the standards above. By observing the non-verbal reading behavior of participants I aimed at identifying physical actions that might indicate whether participants were motivated and engaged in the reading task, or if they were demonstrating typical avoidance behaviors during reading.

For the same reasons I collected data through interviews, non-verbal reading behaviors, attitude surveys and self-perception questionnaires. These data gathering methods were used before and after practice reading sessions in an effort to search for similarities and differences among individuals in their reading behaviors, and also to find changes over time in the reading behaviors of participants.

### Chapter Summary

The goal of this research was to increase my awareness and understanding of reluctant readers. Moreover, this study was aimed at identifying strategies that such readers have, and will adopt and use independently. A qualitative research methodology seems appropriate given the questions I have asked such as: What is the experience of reading like for you? What strategies do you use before, during, and after reading?

In short, my research method of a qualitative paradigm allows for an indepth study into both individuals and group processes during reading in a school setting. Second, a case study aims at looking at the behaviors of a small group of individuals and looking for patterns in their reading behaviors. I inquire into my own instructional knowledge and skills, while simultaneously observing and describing the responses and actions of participants. Third, a descriptive, narrative format seems congruent with the intent of the study, which is to explain what participants think and do before, during and after reading. The contextual framework of the study is placed within the reading experiences of the teacher, and each student, while collaborating on various reading tasks. For these reasons I believe that my chosen research method is valid in collecting and interpreting data on the differences and similarities between individuals in a group that is considered to be of lower ability and motivation with regards to reading.

Instrumentation in this research was varied and wide-ranging with the intention of triangulating data. Participants were recorded both as they read and verbally communicated. Audio recordings of oral reading provided ease of repeated observations and transcription. Likewise, videotaping interviews and non-verbal reading behaviours enabled me to scrutinize the precise nature of what participants did before, during and after reading. Surveys and questionnaires dealing with self-perception and attitude toward reading helped me to identify affective aspects and traits presented by each student before and after reading sessions. This multiplicity of instruments ensured the collection of thorough, broad and accurate data as I took a "snapshot" of the reading behaviours of reluctant readers. All of the above enabled me to search for similarities and differences in participants' patterns of reading habits.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

The research questions in this study were: (1) How do reluctant readers approach reading and understand what they read? (2) What strategies are reluctant readers knowledgeable of a) before, b) during, and c) after reading? (3) What strategies can they be taught to extend upon their own? (4) Will they adopt these strategies during independent reading?

I will address each question separately in an effort to answer them in the context of data I have collected. First, I will summarize each participant in a detailed description that identifies their unique approach to, and understanding of, reading. Second, I explore the realm and depth of reading strategy knowledge within each participant's mental storage. Third, I describe results from my attempts at teaching the reluctant readers new and "successful" ways of interacting with text. Next I discuss results of any noticeable observable changes in subjects' reading behaviors over time, as a result of my intervention: are participants able to overtly demonstrate the integration and transfer of reading strategies taught? Finally, I seek to explain both the uniqueness and the commonalities among elementary readers with seemingly similar dispositions.

Descriptive case studies have as their goal the search for commonalities among individuals, while trying to find general behavior patterns. Similarly, it is equally important in this study to analyze the five participants in terms of their idiosyncrasies and individualities as they relate to reading habits and behaviors. With that in mind I will describe each child from the context of both my research questions and the gathered data. Further, I shall discuss all observable changes in reading behaviors. In conclusion, I will summarize the results within the frame of reference of each research question.

#### How Do The Reluctant Readers Approach Reading And Understand What They Read?

Bobby. Bobby is a questioning, intelligent and enthusiastic grade seven boy. He is inherently interested in the activities occurring in the classroom. Based on classroom observations his

reading skills seems to be grade appropriate. Bobby both demonstrated and reported certain reading habits and behaviors which showed his creative approach to reading and to his understanding of what he reads. Reading environment and materials have are important variables in Bobby's decision to read.

Bobby entered this project as a selective reader who seldom chose to read outside the classroom. His approach to reading is serious and complex. He views reading as something that should be fairly easy, requiring minimal effort, and preferably is self-selected. Reading in school is an act that tends to be boring and takes too long to accomplish, according to Bobby. The following transcript provides a sample of Bobby's perceptions toward reading:

Teacher: What is reading?

Bobby: Um, when you look at your book and it has words and you understand them, and you put them together in a book and then you read it.

Teacher: What does it mean to be a reader?

Bobby: You really like reading books.

Teacher: So you have to like reading books to be considered a reader?

Bobby: No. Well, like, you can read.

Teacher: Do you know anyone who is a good reader?

Bobby: Yeah, both my grandmas.

Teacher: What makes them good readers?

Bobby: Because they're old and they don't get around and stuff. They read instead of watching television. They must have read lots of books and know lots of things about reading.

Teacher: So to be a good reader you have to read a lot then?

Bobby: Yeah.

Bobby alludes here to two fundamental aspects of reading: understanding the ideas and words read, and being capable of reading large amounts. He further approaches reading from a

perspective of pleasure. He reports to enjoying the experience of becoming lost in the adventures found in narrative texts, although he states that the main character in a story is an important factor in determining his level of engagement and enjoyable while reading.

Teacher: What is it about reading that you like?

Bobby: Uh, (pause) it takes you places and stuff. Like a Choose Your Own Adventure, The Abominable Snowman. You get to go up to the Himalayas and track down a Yeti because he stole your friend. And you get to make your own choices.

Teacher: When you say it takes you places do you imagine that you are at those places?

Bobby: If you're reading a book, a Choose Your Own Adventure, you can sort of picture it out in your mind or make it up in your mind, what it will look like.

Teacher: What are some things about reading that you don't like?

Bobby: Mmm...very long books. And when you're a girl in a book.

Teacher: Why?

Bobby: Because...I don't know. I just don't like being a girl in a book because, say if you were...I read this one book and if you're a girl and you go to this island to visit your aunt and you're exploring for treasure and you put yourself in her position, like if you were her. And then you think: What would you do? That's why.

Bobby seems to have a complex constructionist understanding of what reading is. His response to what he likes about reading provides evidence of his use of visualization and imagery in his approach and understanding of what he reads. For Bobby, reading involves perceiving the author's meaning through the imagination. To read is to fantasize and place yourself inside the mind of the main character of a novel or story. So dominant is his

predisposition to visualize and empathize, that Bobby becomes annoyed when the primary character becomes a female. This actually interferes with his experience, and detracts from his reading enjoyment.

Another data source that illustrates Bobby's approach to reading are the video taped observed non-verbal behaviors. The setting was in the classroom at 1:00 pm during regular silent reading time in March. The narrative description that follows reveals his ways of approaching, and acting while reading.

Bobby selects a National Geographic. He fidgets slightly, subtly moving his hands and feet. He seems to be scanning the pages for words and pictures of interest. Every twenty seconds his left hand flips over a page, and briefly glances at the top of each page. Bobby appears to ignore vocal distractions in the room (an autistic student periodically calls out and another child reads orally). Bobby's random body movements and focus on text indicate random effort: a reader who sometimes focuses, sometimes loses concentration in what he is doing.

Alternatively, on another occasion Bobby presents himself as a relaxed and competent reader: While reading a picture book Bobby holds the book with one hand and places the other on his face. He looks comfortable as he leans forward on both elbows on the desk top, each hand grasping a book cover. Every minute or two he puts his right hand on his forehead. As he turns each page his eyes scan from left to right, top to bottom. His actions remain consistent during the twenty minutes of silent reading.

Bobby's self-perceptions regarding reading reflect his view of himself of a learner and reader. When asked, he agreed to these statements: Reading does not take much effort from me; I really enjoy reading; (Bobby's agreements indicate that he enjoys reading and that it is not difficult ). He disagreed with these statements: I am one of the best readers in my class; I think that I won't be a very good reader in high school. Although he fails to see himself as one of the best readers in his class, he is optimistic about his performance potential in the future.

When asked "What is reading?" Bobby mentioned three specific strategies and one affective response. His approach to reading and understanding what he reads could be summarized as that of a child who believes that reading is pleasurable and relatively easy, provided that the text is short, characters and settings are favorable, and the content is of interest. Moreover, Bobby understands text through the consistent application of visualization and imaging techniques. For Bobby, reading material below his ability level is both desirable and pleasurable. The context in which reading occurs is an important factor for Bobby choosing to read, and his subsequent effort. Self-selected texts are preferable to teacher-selected materials assigned in class for Bobby.

Summary. In short, Bobby's approach to reading is largely dependent upon the ease of reading level, who selects the text, and the goal of the task. He reports to enjoying reading simple books with easy vocabulary during pleasure reading. Bobby also likes to choose the materials he reads, both at home and at school. His underachievement in school reading assignments, he states, is the result of being told to read long, boring novels or textbooks that he does not care about or enjoy. This student exhibits a strong knowledge of plans and objectives for meaningful reading. However, his dislike of assigned materials, his negative attitude towards long texts, and his interest in personal selections of easy-to-read children's books, detract from his academic reading experiences in the classroom: for him, reading means to escape into a fantasy world created in part, by his own imagination. He is often unable to modify his plans and goals for reading different texts and tasks.

Clark. Clark is the second of two grade seven boys. He presents himself as a curious student possessing low writing skills and poor self-esteem. Academic attributes reveal a boy whose writing is scarcely legible, who regularly fails to complete or hand in assignments, and who sometimes appears lethargic during instruction. As such, he is an underachieving, reluctant learner who requires persistent prompting in order to perform routine tasks such as: opening books, staying on task, and finishing and turning in work. In spite of these characteristics Clark

is content in the classroom, and usually positive behaviorally. He appears to be a competent, yet unmotivated reader.

It is clear that his attitude toward reading has been impacted by his family background. Clark's parents are confessed non-readers. His father left school with negligible reading skills in the eighth grade. In learning about Clark's understanding and approach to reading it was important to see him in terms of his home environment. Interacting with printed material is not a regular occurrence in Clark's home. Interestingly, he asserted that he liked reading privately, in the confines of his own personal space.

For this reason I observed that Clark's view of reading includes the notion of personal choice: he reported to preferring reading only self-selected materials in his room at home, or during silent reading in class. When confronted with academic reading tasks such as textbook chapters, Clark reports to losing interest, and becoming bored. Clark's unique perspective on reading is further clarified through an analysis of his responses to interview questions.

Teacher:       What is reading?

Clark:           It's when you pick up a book that you think you might like and you just read it. See what it's all about.

Teacher:       What does it mean to be a reader?

Clark:           Well, a reader is someone who likes reading a lot. And, well, can read books fairly fast.

Teacher:       Do you know anyone who is a good reader?

Clark:           Yeah. I have a friend. He reads a series of about three books, four hundred pages long in about two months.

Teacher:       What does he do that makes him a good reader?

Clark:           He doesn't give up on a book. He reads it until it's done.

Clark's notions of reading are connected with the desire to read and persevere through the task until completion. For him reading is dependent upon the degree of personal interest as it

relates to the material. For instance he enjoys a specific genre of writing: "Well I just like the suspense mystery novels." In contrast, he reported to disliking longer texts: "Sometimes I don't like how long the book takes to read." Clark shows very little intrinsic motivation for actively reading and understanding class assigned materials. Rather, he is content to read his own books in his own way in his own time. In his experience, pleasure reading in his room is clearly more desirable than teacher assigned academic materials in the class: " Sometimes I like to just lay on my bed at home and read chapter books, or my Archie comics...It's too noisy in class. I get bored reading Science books and stuff."

Observed non-verbal reading behaviours were relatively consistent throughout the research. The following excerpts from observational data illustrate a person who seems to immerse himself in the action of reading. Clark appears engaged with his reading act; the book is tilted slightly, held in front of his face, left palm is open and resting on desk; right hand is formed in a fist, supporting his chin; his eyes are scanning the print from left to right. Clark remains involved in his reading during silent reading periods in class. He rarely looks up to attend to outside sounds, or takes his eyes off the page. While his posture altered at different times, Clark's basic display of concentrated effort while reading did not.

Excerpts from Clark's responses to the attitude toward reading survey further illustrates his background and beliefs. He agreed with the following statements: During reading class I'm usually interested; Reading is interesting to me and I enjoy it; Reading is fascinating and fun; and, I don't like writing tests in reading. Conversely, Clark disagreed with these statements: I do not like reading and it bothers me to read; Reading makes me feel uncomfortable; The worst school subject is reading; and, I don't like special projects or assignments in reading. Clark's responses indicate that he both enjoys reading, and that it requires little effort from him.

Summary. Clark's reading habits and self-reports indicate a child who is preferential about what he likes to read, and where he enjoys reading. As well, Clark reported to having little knowledge of before, during and after reading strategies, although he repeatedly emphasized the

use of imagery in his reading. He is not unmotivated to read, yet he finds teacher-selected materials boring, and his resulting effort is often decreased. Clark exhibited similar ways of approaching reading during the research: he remained engaged with his material for up to thirty minutes of silent reading. Reading materials and environment is an important factor in Clark's enjoyment of a reading experience. He is much more interested in leisure reading at home than in academic reading in school. Clark's approach to reading is straightforward: on his own terms and in his own place and time.

Jenn. Jenn is an eleven year old grade six student. She can be characterized as an unmotivated underachiever who is often disinterested in classroom literary activities. Although Jenn shows interest in topics she enjoys, too often she disengages from academic tasks, resulting in uncompleted and disjointed assignments. Similarly, Jenn's reading actions and habits appear to reveal low skills and knowledge. She presents as a student who struggles with the act of reading. Fluency and comprehension seem ancillary to her primarily attending to decoding and pronouncing words as she encounters them. In describing Jenn's approach to reading and her understanding of what she reads, it is of interest to keep in mind that she both reads poorly and she dislikes reading.

Typical of Jenn's approach to reading is her confusion of intent regarding goals and purposes. She reports to disliking reading because of a multitude of words that are too long, which results in her not understanding them. Further, Jenn reports to being troubled by hyphenated words at the end of the right -hand side of a page: They are problematic during reading because they interfere with fluency and comprehension. In sum, Jenn's reading experiences are interfered with as a result of the physical layout of print on a page. Her reading speed and understanding of what she reads are adversely affected by the presentation of text. Where others might persevere through small or difficult to see print, Jenn has a self-justification to slow her effort and eventually quit reading in these instances.

Jenn reported that for her, academic reading tasks in class were hard, and made her worry about keeping up with other kids. Instead she chose to relax at home with a soft cover novel or comic book. In the privacy of her room, she said that there were no deadlines, no teacher to pressure her to finish a book or story in time, and understand it the way it should be understood: "I like reading at home where it's quiet, and there is no teacher or other kids to bug you".

Jenn's non-verbal reading behavior is illustrative of a reader who is inattentive, focussed and unmotivated to the task. She regularly silently reads in class with her head tilted, her left hand supporting her head, the right hand holding the book flat on her desk. While chewing gum she often glances across the room at her classmates, or other sounds or happenings that might distract her. At thirty second intervals her eyes track letters and words from her novel. Her consistent peeking up and gazing at me or someone else indicate that she struggled to remain on task. There constantly seemed to be something more important, or more interesting than the book in front of her.

Again, with oral reading, Jenn's avoidance behaviors become more pronounced. Every few minutes she alters her method of holding the book. Her eyes follow the tracked guidance of her right index finger. Suddenly she stops, puts down the book on the desk and places both palms on the sides of her face. Next, she begins rubbing her face with her hands. Her vocalizing is choppy, slow and difficult to understand. This inconsistency in reading is further evidenced in Jenn's responses to the question "What is reading?":

Jenn: (pause) It's hard to explain. It's like reading a book. Looking at a book.  
Reading the words and you're understanding them.

Jenn bases her likes of reading on appropriate level materials, and accompanying pictures:

Jenn: Like if the book is interesting. And sometimes even the pictures. If the words aren't too hard but they're not too easy.

Again, her dislike of reading relates to the length and perceived difficulty of material:

Jenn: Well if the author goes on and on forever. Like about one scene. My interest level goes down.

It becomes apparent that Jenn approaches longer texts correspondingly in terms of decreasing motivation and interest in the reading task. This reluctant reader is not a risk-taker. She lacks any clear ideas, goals, or purposes or strategies for encountering and making meaning from text. Her responses to how she feels about reading in various contexts clarifies her uncertainty and lack of confidence for reading in school.

Jenn's responses to the attitude questionnaire reveal a student who perceives school generally, and reading particularly, as being difficult and boring. Jenn agreed with these statements: Reading makes me feel uncomfortable; I don't like writing tests in reading; I don't like projects or special assignments in reading. She disagreed with these reading related statements: Reading is fun; Reading is interesting to me and I enjoy it; When I read it helps me cope with my world; The worst subject in school is reading, and, Reading is fascinating and fun. One interpretation could be that her lack of strategic concepts or methods in reading have resulted in her negative affective responses.

A summary of Jenn's answers in the reading self-perception survey were as follows. She strongly disagreed with these statements: I am one of the best readers in my class; My teacher does not help me learn to become a better reader; I really enjoy reading, and, I think that I won't be a very good reader in high school. She disagreed with these statements: Reading does not take much effort from me. Conversely, Jenn agreed that, If you are a good reader it helps you learn lots of other things.

Summary. Therefore, it becomes apparent that Jenn is a grade six student who struggles with engaging in the act of reading, and as a result, understanding text. She attributes herself as being a poor reader who does not enjoy academic reading tasks. Instead, she chooses to read for pleasure at home, on her own terms. For her, the physical layout of printed text (i.e., hyphenated words) creates fluency impediments. Jenn's self-perceptions and attitudes toward

reading indicate both a reluctant and confused reader. Observations of her reading silently and orally reveal an individual who is easily distracted and employs numerous avoidance strategies. Jenn's approach to reading is largely disjointed and haphazard. Her understanding of what she reads is often dependent upon variables such as: the reading task, content, materials, environment and who selected the text.

Nathan. From both a researcher's and an educator's perspective, Nathan is somewhat of an enigma. He is bright and inquiring and generally a very successful grade six student. Yet he states emphatically that he strongly dislikes reading of any kind. He shows himself as an 11 year old with a mature disposition in and out of the classroom. Moreover, Nathan is a proficient writer who demonstrates fluency in his oral reading skills. Nevertheless, his resistance to reading and literature in general is at once peculiar and authentic. For Nathan, reading serves absolutely no purpose, excepting grades and passing. It is in this light of avoidance of, and resistance to reading, by a bright and academically successful child that I will analyze his approach to reading and understanding what he reads.

At school Nathan's approach to reading can be described in one word-necessity. He reports to reading only for the purpose of receiving good grades. Further entrenching this disposition is his belief that his interest in and motivation for reading will not change as he gets older. Nathan's view of himself as a reader appears static. His responses to interview questions further illustrates his approach to and experiences with reading.

Teacher: What is reading?

Nathan: (30 second pause no response)

Teacher: What do you like about reading?

Nathan: Nothing.

Teacher: What do you dislike about reading?

Nathan: It's boring. Well...all you do is look at words. I just don't see any point in it. It's boring.

Nathan demonstrates a distinctly cynical reaction toward reading. His approach to reading is premised on his lack of satisfaction in past experiences. Since reading in school has always been a predictable and unrewarding experience in the past, Nathan sees no reason to adjust his approach to new reading assignments and experiences. For him, reading is something that has to be tolerated in order to earn good grades in an educational environment. The reason for reading in Nathan's view is solely functional and pragmatic: to achieve extrinsic rewards in the form of letter grades.

Similarly, results from Nathan's answers to the reading attitude questionnaire exhibit his negative outlook. He strongly agreed with these statements: The worst school subject is reading, and, I don't like special assignments or projects in reading. Nathan agreed with these statements: I do not like reading and it bothers me to read; We have a better world to live in because of reading; I don't like writing tests in reading. He strongly disagreed with these statements: Reading is fun; Reading is interesting to me and I enjoy it; and, Reading is fascinating and fun.

Again, responses to the Reading Self-Perception Survey are indicative of a child who sees reading as a necessary action required for academic success. Nathan strongly disagreed with: I am one of the best readers in my class; and, My teacher does not help me learn to be a better reader. He also disagreed with these ideas: I think reading is very difficult for me; Reading does not take much effort from me; and, I really enjoy reading. Nathan answered neutrally to these statements: If you are a good reader it helps you learn lots of other things; and, I think that I won't be a very good reader in high school. Nathan's affective responses toward reading are evident—he feels boredom and unhappiness during reading. Further, he is predisposed to avoiding reading unless external rewards are attached. Although he apparently understands what he reads, he approaches reading from the standpoint of disinterest, low motivation and distaste.

Observed non-verbal reading behavior provides further evidence of Nathan's peculiar approach to reading. Typical silent reading behaviors include Nathan glancing for five to ten seconds at a page of print and then flipping forward or back in a book. Sometimes he will appear engaged with the text for longer periods of three or four minutes. This tendency to skip, scan, stop, scan again is representative of Nathan's habits while reading: random and seemingly without purpose, excepting a fleeting moment of interest or the extrinsic motivations of grades and passing.

Summary. This reluctant elementary reader apparently approaches reading paradoxically: with a negative affective disposition, yet with an apparent repertoire of knowledge related to proficient reading. Nathan readily admits to reading only for the necessary rewards of resulting letter grades. Cognitively, he appears capable of reading any genre of materials successfully in a classroom context. He verbalized numerous efficient ways of reading and understanding the written word. However, Nathan's approach to reading is based on his previous negative experiences of teacher-selected texts and low interest materials. Affectively, Nathan is unmotivated to read; his attitude is generally negative, his overall feelings regarding reading reflect a predisposition of dislike, boredom and indifference. Yet at home he reported to regularly reading bedtime stories to his three younger siblings. Moreover, Nathan stated that he sometimes reads comic books at night to relax. He apparently selectively applies his personal reading knowledge and strategies to suit his needs.

Susan. Susan is a bright and engaging 11 year old in grade six. She presents herself as a highly skilled mathematician, possessing excellent problem-solving knowledge. Susan's spelling is at the fourth or fifth grade level, and she generally achieves average results in other subjects.

Susan admits to having a strong dislike for literacy activities such as reading and writing. She reads slowly and claims that her biggest difficulty occurs when encountering complex vocabulary and lengthy texts. It would seem somewhat of a dichotomy from an educator's perspective: This is a child who shows a strong aptitude for mathematical processes and

numerical knowledge, yet reads poorly and uses minimal strategic processes for reading. In illustrating Susan's approach to reading and understanding what she reads it is important to be mindful of the above attributes.

Initial answers to interview questions are helpful in gaining an understanding of Susan's conceptualizations relating to reading. Her explanations are brief and unsophisticated, which parallels both her approach to and understanding of reading.

Teacher: What is reading?

Susan: Looking at words on a page.

Teacher: Can you give examples?

Susan: Like, when you read, you, like look at the words on a piece of paper and you say them out loud.

Teacher: What does it mean to be a reader?

Susan: They like to read books. They read lots and stuff.

Teacher: What do you like about reading?

Susan: I don't know. They're funny and stuff.

Teacher: Can you be more specific?

Susan: Like the characters doing things that are funny and stuff.

Teacher: What don't you like about reading?

Susan: Um...words that are hard to read. Like long words.

Teacher: Examples?

Susan: Like if they're kinds of dinosaurs, their names. Because you can't read it. You don't know what kinds of things it's about. You stop because you don't know what the rest of the sentence is about.

As shown in these excerpts, Susan approaches reading in a seemingly aimless, or hit and miss, fashion. Vocabulary which she perceives as complex clearly has a negative impact on her processing and decoding ability. Moreover, Susan reports that, upon coming across hard to

understand words while reading, she frequently pauses and skips them due to her lack of any efficient means of understanding them. For her, negative affect corresponds with the difficulty of vocabulary. When encountering a perplexing word during reading, Susan hits an obstacle. Gradually, her interest level decreases, attention becomes diminished, and she ultimately disengages from reading.

As with other participants Susan's place to read is a major factor on her reading experiences. She reported that she often sat on her couch or on her bed at home to read her favorite chapter books. The determining factor seems to be the quiet atmosphere of her surroundings. Susan read for pleasure independently regularly at home. She stated that: "It's much quieter for reading in your own house, unless someone bothers you or something." The school versus home location for reading in this case is clear: Susan likes the safety and comfort of her personal surroundings in which to engage with a self-selected text.

Susan's observed non-verbal reading behavior shows her to be consistent in her physical approach to reading. Unlike Jenn and Nathan, Susan frequently appeared relaxed and engaged with the text. Repeated observations reveal her to frequently hold a book in front of her, arms extended, one hand on either side of the cover. The book is tilted at a slight angle during her reading. Another typical reading behavior is Susan's use of her index finger: she tracks the print, cueing for her eyes to follow. She often drags her finger across the page from left to right, in order that her eyes can focus and process text. From a physical standpoint then, Susan approaches reading methodically and with her own particular strategies.

For the same reasons Susan's answers to the Reading Attitude Questionnaire reveals a reader purporting to enjoying reading-provided that the task and vocabulary are appropriate for her functioning level. Susan strongly agreed with this reading-related statement: When I read it helps me cope with my world. She agreed with these statements: Reading is fun; and, Reading is interesting to me and I enjoy it. In contrast, Susan strongly disagreed with the following:

Reading makes me feel uncomfortable; and, The worst school subject is reading. Interestingly, she disagreed with the statement: There is too much to memorize when I read.

Summary. While she presents herself as a competent classroom reader, Susan's approach to reading and understanding what she reads is apparently limited. She seems to lack sufficient knowledge of problem-solving techniques that might better enable her to gain a more coherent meaning from her interactions with text. Equally significant, Susan exhibited characteristics typical of reluctant readers: She frequently had no purpose for reading; rarely used self-monitoring strategies to assess comprehension; and was unsure of how to go about decoding new and difficult vocabulary. The result was her regularly skipping any words or phrases she required extended effort to understand. Nevertheless, she reads her own materials for pleasure at home regularly. Her general approach to reading is one of a kind of passive participation. With few skills and a dearth of personal reading strategy knowledge, Susan managed to try to read assigned texts in class. Although she reports to often being unsure of her understanding of things she was asked to read.

#### Summary of the five subjects

It becomes apparent that the poor readers in this study were complicated and unique people who did not share clearly definable general traits that indicated a typical reluctant reader's approach to reading. Clearly, there is no blanket behaviour that signals a person to be a poorly motivated reluctant reader. Instead, participants revealed multiple realities and reasons for both liking and disliking reading. Often, a participant's attitude toward a particular aspect of reading corresponded with a confusion or lack of effort because of a dearth of personal knowledge of what to do under changing tasks and contexts. One notion seemed common throughout - that hard to decode vocabulary was routinely passed over, resulting in fragmented understanding of what was read.

Examples of divergent responses of approaches to reading reveal the multitude of ways in which reluctant readers approach reading. Jenn finds the physical layout of print a hindrance to

her fluency and understanding what she reads. Similarly, Susan overtly shows that she is intimidated with long texts and difficult vocabulary. She comes to the task of reading with a predisposition to skip hard words, and the goal of finishing. Both students admit to shutting down, or losing interest in continuing to engage in the reading task when confronted with these variables. Both Clark and Bobby use an active imagination in interpreting narrative texts. Nathan approaches reading with a dissonance: he possesses scant knowledge of strategies, and performs the task strictly for extrinsic rewards. As a group, participants approached reading in many ways. Each student brings a set of perceptions, attitudes and idiosyncratic behaviours to the act of reading. However, a common pattern arises from a close look at these participants and their approaches to reading: these children appear to prefer reading at home, yet often choose to avoid reading in academic contexts.

#### What Strategies Are Reluctant Readers Knowledgeable Of, And Apply Before, During And After Reading?

My interest here was in discovering the ways in which reluctant readers go about the task of reading. What can these students demonstrate and express as to how they experience this activity called reading? Interview data reveal varied and unique response and actions regarding strategy knowledge and use. For instance, three participants use imaging and visualization during reading. One reader alluded to a complex metacognitive understanding of text processing. Another participant struggled to communicate any knowledge of strategies used during reading. The following excerpts from individual interviews further illustrates participant knowledge of strategies during reading.

Teacher:       What are the strategies you use during reading?

Nathan:        I usually imagine what's ah, happening. Like in some books we've read in class. There aren't many pictures, so you have to imagine what the picture would be like.

Clark: Well, I can see the characters and what they're doing. Sometimes if there is guns or something in it, I imagine they're different kinds of guns.

Bobby: You just read it and imagine what it looks like or what it's...what you're doing. Or say you're running across a field, and then you read a book and it says there's grass and stuff. You make out this picture running along the pasture or something. Then you see a big house in the background.

Susan: You're looking at words telling yourself what they are. It's like when you read it, your brain kind of tells you what they are.

Jenn: Well it's hard. Usually, what the story is about. It's hard to say.

Apparently, some participants' knowledge of strategic reading practices includes visualizing and imaging characters, events and settings from the words read. Bobby and Clark articulate their use of vivid imaginations to integrate content and comprehend words. One reader described her thinking about text as she was processing it. Another reader appeared confused and could not explain her actions and thoughts as she read. Three of five participants in this group demonstrated knowledge of, and applied thought processes such as, prior experience, and imaging for the purpose of understanding text. This is important in terms of reading meaningfully. This pattern of visualizing and imagery while reading indicates that these individuals are actively searching for meaning by thinking about the words and what they represent to them. Retrieving previous experiences and matching them with material being read further demonstrates engaged, purposeful reading.

Repeated observations of these readers non-verbal habits provided information on common physical actions during reading. Two readers regularly guided eye movements with their index fingers. They tracked print from left to right in an attempt to follow and process words. A common trait in four of five participants was that of facial movements while reading. I observed all but one participant exhibiting frowning, smirking, and smiling during reading. One interpretation is that these reluctant readers are showing an active engagement with text. That

is to say that as they process new chunks of text they respond affectively with a smile or a furled brow that might match the text. Similarly, they could be seen as overtly displaying unique responses as they interact with reading material. The majority of participants exhibited changing facial gestures and expressions during silent reading. This pattern of behaviour, in which affective reactions to print were displayed, remained consistent throughout the research.

In short, participants demonstrated limited knowledge of during reading strategies. However, most of them did indicate specific knowledge of thinking about content through imaging and visualizing while reading, in an effort to increase understanding. Non-verbal reading behaviours that slowed and impeded reading fluency were regularly used by Susan, Nathan and Jenn. These actions included finger tracking the print as words were processed, flipping pages before processing information, and vocalizing complete phrases during reading.

Another aspect of this question are the strategies that reluctant readers have knowledge of and apply after reading. Prior to teacher-modelling of strategies, here are the data revealing the extent of participant knowledge and use of after reading strategies. Individual responses from interviews are indicative of readers reasoning about text content, and considering what was read. All but one participant reported to having thought about material that was read.

Teacher: What are the strategies you use after reading?

Nathan: I just go put the book down and go do something else.

Teacher: Do you think about what you have read?

Nathan: Not really. As soon as I'm done reading the book it's like out, out.

Susan: You think bout the book.

Teacher: Can you give an example?

Susan: If you read something and then you have to do a report on it, you think about what they do and stuff in it.

Clark: Well, I think about what I read and judge if it was a really good book or just a normal book, or really boring.

Bobby: After I finish reading it I usually go back and look at little details and stuff, or pictures or things I need to know-important things that I didn't have time to look at while I was reading.

Teacher: Anything else?

Bobby: Well, if you're going along and you're studying for a test and you don't understand a word, you can go back and look at the index or look it up in the dictionary to find out what the word means, so you hope you understand it better.

Jenn: I think about what I've read. If anyone asks my opinion of the book I tell them. I like to read in my head sort of.

Numerous responses were related to metacognition and conceptualizing the information that was read. Bobby plainly articulated his methods of checking his understanding through the use of outside references. Along with indexes and dictionaries as sources of information, he also said, "I ask my mom" when he finds a new word that is difficult to understand. This seems to be both practical and functional in terms of increasing one's personal word knowledge: using his mother as a source of knowledge is a quick and easy way in building vocabulary.

As a group these low-ability readers apparently reasoned about what they read. Nathan however, distinguished himself by insisting that he spent no time pondering what he had read. Furthermore, he professes to immediately moving to another task once he finishes reading something, leaving no mental energy for transition or the pondering of what was recently read: "After I finish reading something it's out, it's out." Still, four of five reluctant readers reported to using a mental review of material read. Significantly, two participants asserted that they judged reading material after they had read it.

An additional method of exploring how reluctant readers feel about various reading contexts was evidenced through the administering of an attitude questionnaire. Group means for attitude toward reading was based on a likert-type scale with a range from 1-5. Using this instrument, I

constructed a comparison of reader attitudes before and after three months of teacher modelled reading sessions.

One way of investigating each student's knowledge of reading strategies and affective ideas regarding reading is by coding and categorizing references to each. Using this technique I collected data from each participant early in the research, prior to any intervention. Specifically, the data was identified on the basis of how frequently each participant mentioned a reference to either a particular reading strategy or an affective response. The data were compiled from interview questions that asked students such things as: What is reading? What do you do before, during and after you read? What do good readers do?

Of interest here was an apparent dearth of references to emotions, or the affective domain, as related to the reading act. Students primarily mentioned these affective factors: the need to want to read, liking or disliking reading, and the corresponding boredom attached to reading.

Also of note is that those readers who reported to using active strategies during reading such as imaging and visualization, reported a higher rate of affective responses. Paradoxically, Jenn, arguably one of the poorer readers in the group, referred to 9 specific reading strategies in interviews and group dialogues. Yet, she seldom demonstrated a working use or practical knowledge of more than inspecting the title, cover and text of a book, and sounding out new or long words for decoding. Clearly, she had listened and learned the strategic reading methods I had taught. The question seemed to be: was she simply rote memorizing reading strategies without truly transferring them into her reading experiences? In sum, participant reference to reading strategies reveals a wide range of frequency. More important, a relatively high number of strategy mentioning is not necessarily indicative of the useful transferral and application of them during a reading activity. On the other hand, readers not uttering several references to reading strategies were sometimes able to demonstrate a complex array of methods to decode and comprehend, and make meaning from difficult text.

## Summary

After analyzing the data it becomes apparent that identifying participant strategy knowledge is considerably easier than observing strategy application. On one hand two participants struggled in their efforts to communicate their knowledge of reading strategies. On the other, two students provided a plethora of detailed descriptions in well articulated accounts of what they did while reading. Some interpretations can be drawn from the data.

Students in this group possess a wide range of knowledge and understanding of strategic reading. All participants exhibited the mannerism of inspecting a book before reading. A majority of participants reported to using mental imagery and visualization as a means to understanding text. Similarly, four out of five subjects demonstrated an awareness of, and use of, after reading strategies such as thinking about, and evaluating what was read in order to better comprehend content.

Reluctant readers also differed in their abilities to express their knowledge and in their awareness of those strategies. Jenn and Susan displayed significantly less strategic information than the other three readers. One explanation could be that they were less confident in their verbal acuties, and as a result less able to communicate their personal reading plans in an articulate fashion. Another possibility could be a reflection of the less extensive and varied reading experiences between these students and their counterparts.

With my main purpose being that of determining the impact of reading sessions on participant reading behavior, this question is essential to the research. Specifically, I was concerned with two things: first, the extent of knowledge shown by individuals, as related to particular before, during and after reading strategies, and second, the search for concrete examples of participants demonstrating application of these strategies.

Participant knowledge of before reading strategies, although not complex, began as both basic and functional. Each participant reported to looking at the front and rear cover of a book before reading. Two participants said that reading the summative paragraph on the back cover

was a regular pre-reading habit. One reluctant reader stated that a reader must desire to read before anything is read. Two participants also said that skimming through the material was important prior to reading. This sums up all reported reading strategies as seen in interview transcripts from early in the study. These readers apparently have a common notion of what to do before reading: to inspect the cover; to want to read; and to skim read material.

Participant strategy knowledge and use were not always successful, or efficient from a teaching standpoint. I observed two readers guiding eye movements with their index fingers. Three participants displayed avoidance behaviors such as daydreaming and glancing throughout the class while supposedly reading. Further, a repeating pattern of observed reading behaviors was that of wasting time: shuffling around in a chair; frequently altering the method of holding a book; talking to a neighbor; and fidgeting with an object. Data reveal that reluctant readers in this research often shared common before reading strategies. While these strategies are unsuccessful by educators' standards, they nonetheless serve these students well: The more time wasted means less energy directed at problem-solving potentially difficult text. The tradeoff is proportionate. The greater the amount of time that elapses; the lower the requirement for active concentration on the part of a reluctant reader.

On the positive, or successful side of before reading strategies, participants revealed a broad range of use and knowledge. All participants inspected the cover of the book that they were about to read. Three readers were observed flipping through books and previewing a summary. One participant scanned the pages of a book to gauge its length and complexity of vocabulary before choosing to read. In short, common patterns of prereading behaviors in these reluctant readers can be classified as follows: inspecting the title and cover of a book, previewing the back of a novel for information, and skimming a book's contents to evaluate the level of difficulty and time requirements. Participant activity knowledge of during reading strategies included the following: sounding out words, skipping words, thinking about what the content might be about, using imagery and visualization to think of settings and characters in narrative texts. The extent

of after reading strategies exhibited and reported by these students were: thinking about the value of the material in terms of good or bad, possible rereading, putting the book away and moving on to another task.

### What Strategies Can They Be Taught To Extend Upon Their Own?

This question is concerned with which directly instructed strategies reluctant readers are capable of and willing to add to their existing knowledge. Each participant possesses his or her own repertoire of methods and ways of interacting with text. While not all of these plans are "successful," they nonetheless have been learned and developed by each reader as a means of processing information. My interest here is in the possibility of extending and elaborating upon some of the basic skills used by these students. Will these reluctant readers integrate certain strategies that have been repeatedly modelled, discussed and explicitly demonstrated?

Explicit demonstration of reading strategies in the form of teacher modeling was a fundamental component of this research. After several weeks of overt think-aloud type demonstrations, I observed some indications of transferral of knowledge of reading strategies. Students began regularly talking about different ways to problem-solve before, during and after reading. As well, the non-verbal reading behaviour indicated subtle modifications such as slightly less off-task behaviours, and fewer habits that interfered with fluency such as finger tracking. Reluctant readers exhibited a marked increase in knowledge, understanding and application of before, during and after reading strategies: an expansion of personal knowledge of what it means to read more effectively and meaningfully.

Setting goals for various types of writing became an important part of the sessions. For example I modelled the comparing and contrasting narrative and expository writing, and the ability to modify reading goals and the way in which one approaches each particular text differently. Nathan responded this way to the difference in the two styles: "Narrative is like a fairy tale. Expository is true and narrative isn't." Susan asserted, "Because it's a myth." I asked if Thor was a narrative or expository text. All students replied expository...real, and then

discussed the content and said, "Narrative." Susan, said "It's not real, it's narrative and it's ...[fiction]." The group learned that knowing the difference between fiction and non-fictional writing was one way of changing how one enters into the reading task: fiction means more creativity and inferring, non-fiction means a greater factual detail of actual information.

Reading behaviours and interview transcripts reveal common patterns in basic pre-reading strategies. Participants completed and handed in reader response cards after silently reading self-selected texts. I recorded strategies such as inspecting text prior to reading, predicting the outcome of events before reading, and using personal knowledge to aid in the understanding of new material. Moreover, most participants learned the importance of goal-setting prior to reading a text in their independent reading. The following interview examples demonstrate participant patterns of reading behaviours:

Clark: I skim read through the paragraphs to see what it's about.

Nathan: Just to see how big the words are.

Clark: In a Science book I just read the important stuff. Any other book I read the whole thing.

Bobby: Say in a Social Studies textbook. You're doing a test. And then you know an important part of a certain page that might help you on a test. Then you go back there and reread that and get some information.

Nathan: Yes, like in the Nigeria unit. For a question. If you need that question for the answer.

Setting goals and purposeful reading were significantly increased patterns of reading habits among the group as the sessions progressed. Whereas some participants may have performed these in the head activities before the research, they appeared to be consciously applying them each time they read orally, in shared reading, and silently reading self-selected texts. For example, reader response cards reveal independent application of strategic reading. After reading the myth How Thor Found His Hammer Susan wrote: Before reading: "I predicted what it

was about...and figured out why I was reading", During reading: "Sounded out words and used sentences to figure out new words...I stopped to reread," After reading: "We discussed it...I compared my guesses to what really happened." When juxtaposed with her approach to reading and knowledge of reading strategies at the start of the research, this example clearly demonstrates a reader who has adopted and integrated strategies previously not apparent.

Teacher think alouds demonstrating the importance of expressive reading in comprehension helped students to further their strategic reading knowledge. Using punctuation as indicators of changes in speakers, and hence, the reader's tone, is a method that I instructed participants in several times. Here are samples from teacher journal of what participants were doing in oral reading: Jenn continues to struggle with longer, more difficult words in her oral reading, pausing at hyphenated words, and complex vocabulary. Although I have noticed that she is reading with more emotion, more emphasis on the author's voice and the character's voice. She did not attend to this aspect of reading verbally before, at this point she has learned that it aids her own understanding of the text. Nathan reads from Thor: He is pausing at the commas and periods while showing excellent expression when any character is speaking. Nathan is using quotation marks as signals for a change in his intonation while reading. He is doing this regularly now as a means of oral reading with the group. I continued to routinely model and prompt the group on this aspect of oral reading with expression: "That is called reading with expression. This is really important. If you do that silently inside your head, if you carefully watch for signals such as question marks, quotation marks and commas as you read, and think about how someone might say it, it will help your understanding." Nathan replied that "my mom says I do that." Clearly, most of the students seemed to acquire a gradual increase in knowledge and understanding for the importance of creative, expressive oral reading as the research progressed.

Summary. The better reluctant readers started to indicate more structured action plans prior to reading by asking questions that focused on the aim for each task: Is it expository or narrative

text? Did the teacher select this or did I? Am I reading for pleasure or an academic assignment? Some individuals were more proactive than others in their reading plans, although each student exhibited a growth of knowledge and understanding of ways to read effectively. Poorer reluctant readers were less consistent in their self-questioning. While they demonstrated a developed knowledge of ways to begin and maintain successful reading, they did not always apply it, reading randomly and omitting or ignoring strategies taught.

Similarly, during reading, the majority of participants demonstrated that they had learned some important ways of gaining meaning from print: integrating their personal experiences with new information, using context and graphic clues regularly, referring to outside sources such as the index, glossary or dictionary for difficult words, understanding that changes in print such as italics, bold print or underlined words, as meaning emphasis and requiring extra attention, and finally, orally reading using expression and emotion. After reading strategies that participants generally acquired knowledge of included: checking for understanding by asking questions, skim reading content that was problematic the first time around, evaluating material read in terms of the author's intended meaning and its interest level.

#### Will Participants Adopt These Strategies During Independent Reading?

A key concern in this research was whether the reluctant readers would use the strategies discussed and demonstrated. Through collaborative dialogues after and before reading, shared oral reading, modified read-loud sessions, and reader response cards, I gathered data in an attempt at finding patterns of behaviors that would indicate either independent adoption of some of the taught strategies, or a change in reading habits that might indicate an acquired use of certain proven reading strategies.

For the purpose of comparing any possible impact of before and after teacher modelled reading sessions I also coded and categorized strategy references after three months of intervention. Of note here was the decrease in references to reading strategies by Bobby. This could be the result of a coding error, or simply that he believed that he had already mentioned all

the strategies in his repertoire. Of the four other participants, each uttered more references of reading strategies after three months of reading sessions. Large increases in utterances of strategic reading practices were evidenced in three subjects: Jenn (+3), Susan (+5) and Nathan (+8). Moreover, cumulative references to the affective domain showed an increase, from 7 to 11 utterances by all participants. Teacher modelled reading sessions clearly influenced the way in which participants discussed what they did and how they responded to reading various texts. Examples of increases in participant utterances of affective responses include Susan (+2) and Bobby (+1). Both students reported slightly more emotional terms in relation to reading.

Following three months of teacher-modelled reading sessions, reluctant readers demonstrated transfer of some positive, proactive reading behaviors. Readers began to set goals in order to specify what and how much was to be learned and any strategies to be employed (Simonsen & Singer, 1992). It becomes clear that participants expressed a greater number of statements referring to both affective and cognitive concepts after the reading sessions. Clearly, students were capable of communicating a greater understanding of ways of reading.

Another commonality shown was that of the manner in which participants acted during reading, when confronted with confounding words. Prior to reading sessions, Nathan, Jenn and Susan all spoke of skipping any difficult vocabulary during reading. Nathan described his reading habit best when coming across a hard to read word: "I just skip it, that's what I always do." After intervention, participants exhibited and reported to, applying decoding and comprehending strategies such as: (1) sounding out the syllables, "I try to sound out the words to myself," (2) looking at words and phrases around the harder word: "I read sentences around them to see if I can understand more about them." And (3) reviewing and rereading the sentence and paragraph in order to gain meaning before reading more: "I usually go back and look at little details and stuff...important things I didn't have time to look at while I was reading it." And finally, (4) guessing at a possible meaning of an unknown term: "I've heard that word

before... kind of like you're working but trying to have fun." Participants changed their behaviour when encountering difficult words from that of passivity and resignation to proactivity and intensity.

A common pattern of adopted strategy use by all participants to varying degrees, was that of using context clues. Nathan, for example, read with expression as he paused at commas and periods, and altered his tone when reading a character's lines: "If I dress like a woman, you will jeer at me..." Initially Susan and Nathan, followed by the agreement of all participants, said that jeered meant "laughed" or "made fun of." Their reasoning was that "They look funny when wearing women's clothing, so everyone would make fun of them and laugh at them." Hence, the context clue here was the way a man might look and feel while wearing women's clothing. A significant result in this and other instances was that the strategy of using context clues was regularly modelled through think-alouds, during shared reading one or two learners would apply it to their reading, and group discussion would enable all participants to realize when, how and why that strategy worked.

Another example of the pattern of subjects using context clues was problem-solving in learning the word retort. When asked what retorted meant Nathan responded by referring to the text: It means, "He said back", because it says, "Don't talk of jeers," retorted Loke." "He is saying it back." This is illustrative of a reluctant reader using contextual clues around a new term as a means of processing its meaning. Other group members figured out new or difficult words using a similar method of focusing on the words and phrases around the problem word.

Further examples of readers applying context clues independently can be seen in Bobby's reading from Lori Fung: *Synchronized motion* (1989):

Lori puts everything she can into her practice time. "What I have learned to do is, if I was going to take...and go on the floor to do a routine, it's got to count. And so I'd better go off (pause) go out and do four routines than to (What!) do twenty that are just mediocre..." (p.200)

Bobby was confused with the last sentence referring to contrasting several average performances with one strong one. A revealing group dialogue dealing with the strategy of context clues ensued. I asked the group if they might guess the meaning of mediocre, based on the paragraph. Here is the discussion that took place:

Nathan: Crummy (laughter from group).

Bobby: She's not working and giving as much effort as she does on the four.

Clark: She doesn't want to do these routines much.

Teacher: Which routines?

Clark: Than like, twenty routines.

Teacher: Yes, you are all right in your own way. How did you guess that? How did you figure out the meaning of mediocre?

Nathan: Because she said she would rather do four perfect ones than twenty crummy ones.

Teacher: How did you figure out what mediocre meant?

Bobby: Well, I heard what Nathan said, then I figured it out: She said four good ones instead of twenty bad ones.

This is but one of multiple instances of participants doing shared reading, and encountering a difficult to decode and understand word. Negotiated meaning and social interaction around the text was clearly helpful in the resulting comprehension. Early in the research, most participants reported that they would have skipped the hard words and proceed to read the passage. However, applying context clues from nearby words and phrases gradually developed into a frequently used method of problem-solving for the group during reading. Shared oral reading and group dialogue clearly helped individuals gain a better meaning from texts in these circumstances. Students seemed to build upon one another's thinking in figuring out the meaning of various texts.

## Summary

Reluctant readers in this study revealed both unique and common traits regarding reading habits and behaviours: Bobby's desire for pleasure reading and reliance on imagery, Clark's similar use of visualization of characters and settings, Jenn's narrow knowledge of reading, Susan's lack of divergent goals for reading tasks, Nathan's straightforward dislike for reading in any context. Common patterns among the group included the avoidance of academic reading tasks, lack of motivation to read teacher-selected materials, and a general dearth of various reading strategies for different texts. In other words, students displayed a general reliance upon a single approach to different types of writing, and different reading tasks.

Results from three months of reading interventions included a variety of observable reading behaviours and reported knowledge. First, all participants expressed increased knowledge of before, during and after reading strategies. Secondly, each reader demonstrated adoption and application of particular problem-solving activities that were modelled and discussed. Thirdly, each child's attitude toward reading remained constant throughout the research. Fourthly, participants continued their unique physical actions during reading such as finger tracking, page flipping, impulsive fidgeting, and periodic daydreaming. Finally, reluctant readers acquired a greater understanding of gaining meaning from text by simple social interaction-shared reading and discussing and negotiating various ways of interpreting words and phrases.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Findings

This inquiry into the reading experiences of reluctant grade six and seven students has revealed some notable findings. I began the study in an attempt to answer questions about poorly motivated reluctant readers in elementary school. Reading skill is a crucial component for all academic pursuits. Without the knowledge and ability to apply various strategies to different reading tasks and contexts, students are often doomed to failure. Patterns of reluctant reading behaviours include a lack of skills and knowledge needed to successfully decode and comprehend many school related reading tasks independently. Moreover, interest and motivation clearly play large roles in terms of reluctant readers' choices of what, when and where to read. Nevertheless, the following results of this research indicate that reluctant 11 and 12 year olds are positively influenced by the explicit demonstration of modelled strategies, shared group discussion over their use, and various reading tasks interrelated to both.

Reading and motivation are problematic by definition. Mathewson (1994) defines motivation to read as "the development of conditions promoting intention to read" (p.1138). Is it simply a question of a student intending to read based on a like or dislike of the act of reading? Or, are there extrinsic factors that affect an individual's motivation to read? Factors such as reading materials, the task, and classroom context clearly are related to how participants responded to reading as an academic activity. A student's intrinsic motivation is not simply a matter of the desire to read, but the attitude and belief that the act will be meaningful in some way. Some participants in this research revealed that, for them, reading is an arduous and often aimless task. Not surprisingly, these same students are intrinsically unmotivated to read.

Motivation to read seems to be interconnected with the attention, knowledge and cognitive ability of the reader. In the case of reluctant readers in this study, volition and attention are factors that relate to how a reader enters into, and goes about reading text. A minority of participants lack the concentration and attention span necessary to engage in the act of reading

over a period of more than fifteen or twenty minutes. Even after having discussed and observed numerous reading strategies, modelled over three months, some youngsters showed little or no increase in their desires and attitudes for reading. Their motivation appears to have remained static and was unaffected by the goings on in the research. On the other hand, no participants either showed or reported a decrease in the motivation to read.

However, individual knowledge of reading skills and strategies; knowing when and in which instance to apply them, is also a primary component of increased text processing. Examples include Bobby and Clark each reporting the application of prior knowledge and visualization and imagery as methods for increased comprehension of material read. Moreover, they contrasted and compared narrative and expository texts and articulated differing goals for the purpose of reading each writing form. The pattern of knowing the difference between narrative and expository texts, and more important, how to approach and understand each, was demonstrated in this research.

Reluctant 11 and 12 year old readers have a simplistic, fundamental knowledge of before, during, and after reading strategies. Examples of their basic acquisition of strategies include: (1) looking at the back of a novel for information, (2) inspecting the title and cover of a book for context clues, (3) judging the value of the material read after having read it, (4) if reading a textbook, looking for important information. Since these are the bulk of the reading strategies communicated by the readers in this study, it is evident that they lack more specific and complex methods of interpreting and deciphering different texts. These learners become frustrated or bored when encountering vocabulary beyond their comprehension level, or when the material seems long, demanding greater time and concentration. The result is often decreased motivation leading to the decision to not read. A dearth of concrete cognitive reading skills for various texts detracts from their interest, motivation, and persistence in reading.

Materials are a critical component in the reading experiences of less proficient readers. Self-selected texts such as magazines, comics, and short stories are more interesting than many

teacher-chosen texts. Participants reported that student-relevant materials keep them more interested, and they demonstrate greater motivation, volitional control, and persistence to read as a result. In contrast participants reported that teacher-selected texts are boring, difficult, and often too long. Reluctant readers sometimes get lost in memory-taxing assignments related to textbooks and other forms of expository print. Reluctant readers in this study preferred reading materials well below their age level. I interpret this as an example of non-risk takers who become threatened and unmotivated by challenging reading materials. Reluctant readers are more likely to read shorter texts with easy to read large print than longer texts with smaller print.

The reading environment is a crucial factor in the reading experience of poorer readers. School, and in particular the classroom, is not the primary choice for reading for low-achieving readers in grades six and seven. Rather, they prefer the solitude of a bedroom or living room as a place to relax and experience reading. These reluctant readers would rather read for pleasure in a quiet, private location than read a teacher-chosen text in a classroom. Their decision to read, their persistence and control, is dependent in part on where the reading activity takes place, and the context of the activity.

Teacher-modelled reading strategies followed by peer-led dialogue about strategic reading practices can encourage students to integrate them into their reading actions. Poor readers' reading habits can be changed through regular open-ended discussions about text genres, decoding and comprehension strategies such as: (1) context/picture clues, (2) sounding out words aloud, (3) predicting, (4) inferring and analyzing, (5) stopping and rereading, (6) using prior knowledge, and (7) summarizing and checking for understanding. During and after reading, students can benefit from both teacher and peer-led discussions of reading strategies. After three or four weeks students seemed to internalize and integrate their "favorite" strategies. For example, Jenn consistently applied sounding out syllables in difficult vocabulary, and apply context clues to new words; Susan increasingly employed prediction of events and content as well as context clues in decoding new words; Nathan acquired a tendency to self-monitor his

understanding by frequently stopping, going back, and rereading phrases and passages to better understand material; both Clark and Bobby increased their use of imagery and visualizing in order to make meaning of what they had read. Each participant seemed to grab hold of, and master one or two strategies that were introduced. A further pattern here is individual choice: There was no universal acquisition of skills and knowledge; each reluctant reader selected and adapted reading strategies that suited his or her style of learning, particular level of reading development -they adopted those problem-solving reading actions that fit into their existing methods of, and experiences with reading.

Reluctant 11 and 12 year olds are capable of improving both their particular knowledge and use of before, during, and after reading strategies. Once given the opportunity to observe modelled strategies, and more important, to talk about them in an open and non-threatening environment, some reluctant readers seemed to improve in their reading fluency and comprehension. After reading passages of texts, participants engaged in meaningful dialogue about what they had read i.e., the type of text, author's intended message, and the meaning of the text. Self-monitoring strategies such as sounding out new words and rereading words and phrases improved student interest in reading, and understanding of what was read- a pattern of success building upon success evolved that saw students increase their desire for reading. Participants stated and demonstrated both that they learned and applied certain favorite strategies that were introduced during the research.

Some reluctant readers expressed a predisposition to resist the interest and enjoyment of reading regardless of strategy modelling and discussion. Such individuals often read only when assigned texts by the teacher. And when they did read they routinely misunderstood the meaning of the text. Fear of failure often motivates these learners. Extrinsic motivators such as passing grades and pleasing the teacher further motivated some of the students. Nevertheless, the skills and methods learned for decoding and understanding various reading contexts can become internalized. For instance, one stubborn participant who persistently communicated his

dislike for reading reported that he acquired several new ways of understanding difficult words and sentences, and gaining meaning from text. Here the difference involved a student who refused to alter his stance on reading. Affectively he remained entrenched in his attitude, intent and motivation regarding reading.

The Reading Experiences of Reluctant Readers. The readers in this study experience reading from their own unique perspectives. Each reader brings his past experiences and knowledge and skills (or lack of) reading to each reading task. Through this investigation I have learned that students in grade six and seven who are not motivated to read and have little interest in reading, are often untrained in the strategies and knowledge required to understand and decode words and phrases accurately. Their resulting low motivation and low interest for reading during academic tasks is due in part to possessing little or no knowledge of reading strategies: for them, reading is often a random, predictable task regardless of the type of text, or context of the reading circumstance. One notable exception is that of the contrast between personal leisure reading and teacher assigned, academic reading tasks. The reading experience for these individuals is clearly impacted by where they read and what they choose to read.

My inquiry has led me to 11 and 12 year old reluctant readers drawn from one classroom. This study has informed me of the importance of printed text in the lives of young intermediate students. This research has further informed me of the critical influences of historical, political, social, and cultural forces that are embedded within my notions of teaching and education. Biases, presuppositions, and assumptions that result from these forces arise when I design and implement a program of reading instruction.

I have become aware of the need to understand the crucial role of story, and my part in creating an environment in which children can reveal and discover the "storiness" (Polakow, 1986) within them. Margaret Hunsberger (1983) draws on the metaphor of reading as an encounter between people, a dialogue between partners. She writes of the special dialogue and "self-discovery", and "intimacy" (p.94) that results from interacting with novels, stories, and

poetry. This kind of grounded knowledge based on reading is a driving force behind my curricular inquiry into the reading ways of certain elementary students. I think that all students have stories to tell and share in an educational environment. The key is in finding a delicate balance between each "storied" life, and teaching what the authorities perceive to be important curriculum. The answer, I think, lies slightly to the child's side of the scale. Without a personal attachment to the reading curriculum, and a powerful relationship between self and other, student stories are often ignored by authoritative, technical knowledge that rarely values a child's storiness.

Ultimately, when it comes to knowing, and learning, teachers must "provide for, watch for, allow for, a kind of learning and knowing that springs from a presence: those moments when nature and self come together and construct their own lesson, their own moment of shared understanding" (p.69). What other kind of knowledge can there be but personal? We are constantly acquiring new ideas and different ways of looking at the world. But we must make a personal connection with it or it will fail to be learned.

Again, Hunsberger (1989) has written on the nature of the relationship between student and text whereby the text can often "gain dominance" over the passive, disengaged student. Too often, I have observed students who have no relationship with the texts in class. Novels and textbooks are things "out there" that bear no reflections upon the experiences of the child. The result tends to be a student that is silenced. Texts can be terribly threatening technical things. Teachers are responsible in enabling students to form a relationship with text that does not silence and frighten them. Their personal knowledge must find a place that is seen as important.

Reading centered upon dialogue in which the text is revealed for what it is—someone's ideas, situates the student in a more dominant position. When children are assigned textbooks in class, they need to be empowered to the extent that they can enter into a dialogue with the text, and each other. To me, this is a central notion in engaging students in their experiences at school. The ultimate goal of education in my mind is the gradual independence gained by the

student from the teacher. As Hunsberger (1989) suggests, one way of beginning this self-monitoring is through an interpretive community within the class. Enlightened class discussion and debate that situates the student as reader/interpreter of text is a fundamental idea in my curriculum inquiry: Self awareness versus passive listener; grounded knowledge versus technical knowledge, inclusive learning versus exclusive teaching, multiple meanings versus a single interpretation (Oliver, 1990).

But for students in the elementary grades to have an opportunity to use this knowledge, they must first be informed of what they are experiencing as reluctant readers. Cognitive and affective factors influence each readers' ability and intent. On the cognitive side, readers require decoding and comprehending strategies in order to read efficiently. In turn, these strategies lead to individual speed and accuracy in each reading task. Equally important is the capacity of the reader's working memory: he or she must be able to remember what was read, store it, and relate its meaning to the larger context of the material. The attitudinal and emotional variables in reading are as unique as the processing aspects. Structured dialogue concerning ways in which to read, and negotiate interpretation of texts, is central in allowing reluctant readers to share knowledge, feelings, and general experiences in the creation of meanings based on mutual discussion and understanding.

Implications for Teachers. Elementary teachers in the intermediate grades can clearly use some of the practices done in this study in an effort to increase reader performance. Teachers need to spend time explicitly demonstrating individual reading strategies that students can identify and practice on a regular basis. Students need specific set times to share in a dialogue on the texts that they are reading in class. Simply talking about the content, and orally answering comprehension questions are not sufficient methods of improving reluctant readers' success. Rather, teachers should build a strategic reading curriculum into their daily instruction. Perhaps thirty to forty-five minutes daily of concentrated strategy modelling as part of a regular

reading program would enable those reluctant readers who might not otherwise be aware of such concepts.

Increasingly, a growing number of identified students have special services assistants or teacher aids helping them with their school work. In my experience many peripheral educators lack a focused, purposeful method in which to facilitate basic reading skills and knowledge so badly needed by the low achieving students that they work with. Practice reading and modelled reading strategies such as imaging, setting goals, activating prior knowledge, using context clues is done in many primary and some elementary schools. Perhaps teachers and assistants could select three or four essential reading strategies for a specific age or year of schooling, and repeat and practice them until automaticity is achieved. Clearly, educators can improve their reading instruction by learning and implementing proven reading strategies to struggling readers in elementary schools. As Matthewson (1994) describes: "...If students have difficulty eliciting meaning from text, dissatisfaction and ultimately negative attitudes toward reading will result" (p.1155). A logical starting place for intervention seems to be the person working closely with the child.

Moreover, teachers and teaching assistants need to educate themselves in effective strategy instruction if they are to enable those students in their classes who struggle with gaining meaning from print. Numerous resources on reading strategy instruction are available to administrators and teachers. Universities offer excellent courses on teaching a knowledge and use of effective strategies in reading. Personal upgrading of primary and elementary teachers should be a fundamental objective in our educational system. School districts should encourage the professional development of teachers and teaching assistants through funding for courses and workshops on relevant reading strategy instruction. In classrooms a curricular focus needs to be placed on the improvement of how to read with meaning, proficiency and motivation.

Perhaps most important is the influence of teacher affect in terms of instructing the reluctant reader. Teachers must demonstrate an overt joy of reading throughout interaction with students.

Teachers need to model positive and passionate attitudes and interests toward reading and responding to texts. Students in general, particularly reluctant learners, are clearly impacted by the dynamic, motivating words and actions of a teacher engaged in the art of good instruction. Teacher affect must be viewed as a vital component in teaching strategic reading practices to reluctant readers.

Future Research. Further research in the area of reluctant readers could be extended to include the following: (1) earlier intervention at the primary level, perhaps at age 7-9, when reading habits and behaviours are in the process of forming, (2) committed parental involvement at home, which connects the student, the parent and the school in a unified effort at strategic reading practices, (3) a longer duration of reading sessions, perhaps 45 minutes each, (4) larger study groups of 15-20 participants, (5) longitudinal studies that track students throughout primary and elementary school. The result I believe would be an improvement in the ability, motivation, interest, and understanding of the lowest readers in each class.

Future research should also delve deeper into the notion of specific strategy instruction by teacher assistants and teachers for all elementary readers with a focus on improving knowledge and application of targeted strategic reading methods.

Limitations. Limitations of the study are related to the context and method in which it was completed. As the sole researcher, I have had to rely on my own observations and data gathering. My biases and assumptions can not be separated from who I am as an instructor, researcher and an individual. Consequently, the results are based on my experiences with the participants, within a structured artificial environment created by me in order to complete the research. Therefore, the study is limited due to the context of time (noon hours) and place (conference room, vacant classroom) in which it occurred.

Within the context of this study participants were not in a regular classroom setting. Each of the practice reading sessions took place outside of regular instructional hours. Only the observed non-verbal reading behaviors occurred during instructional time. The same reluctant

readers might respond differently in a different setting and time than those in this research. Time constraints and the realities of teaching a class of twenty-five students may suggest that results from this inquiry might be in sharp contrast to a study of a large class during regular instructional time.

The methodology used for this inquiry could be viewed as limiting in the sense that it is primarily based on group and individual experiences with reading. I chose to focus on a small sample size of five reluctant readers. My concern was with the interaction and engagement of participants in a contrived, structured setting other than a regular classroom. Moreover, I have focused on four specific research questions, and not relied on a series of reading comprehension test measures, in the search for common patterns of reading habits and behaviours. Rather, I have chosen to inquire into participants' reactions to, and experiences with a relatively short but intense time period in which they were exposed to new and different ways of thinking about the printed word. My lack of reliance upon more quantitative measures might appear as a limitation to some investigators.

### Conclusions

Reluctant readers possess individual cognitive and affective traits and characteristics. The capacity to perceive, process and comprehend text, store it in memory and retrieve it, combined with the attention required to engage in the act- these are all specific cognitive abilities that vary in stages of development and effectiveness from person to person. Each reader's natural level of intelligence is perhaps a finite entity which distinguishes the individual in terms of learning and transferring reading skills and knowledge. While human intelligence is an ambiguous and controversial concept that is often reified, Howard Gardener (1983) best conveys the notion of flexibility in human development:

The principal tension here centers on the extent to which the intellectual potentials or capacities of an individual or a group can be altered by various interventions. From one point of view,

development may be viewed as relatively locked-in, preordained, alterable only in particulars. From an opposing perspective, there is far more malleability or plasticity in development, with appropriate interventions at crucial times yielding an organism with a far different range and depth of capacities (and limitations). Also pertinent to the issue of flexibility, are the related questions of the kinds of intervention that are most effective, their timing, the role of critical periods during which pivotal alterations can be brought about. Only if such issues are resolved will it be possible to determine which educational interventions are most effective in allowing individuals to achieve their full intellectual potentials. (p.32)

The timing and scope of a particular intervention, and the developmental stage of participating individuals, combine to influence the possibility of outcomes. More important perhaps is the notion that not everyone is predestined to read fluently, proficiently and to understand with ease all that is read. The untapped potentiality of each child is the objective for continued reading interventional programs.

Early reading experiences that promote and reinforce a love for, and interest in reading is clearly important in fostering good reading habits. Similarly, affective factors such as desire, motivation, volition, enjoyment and attitude toward reading are equally critical aspects that are unique to each individual. Habitual, learned reading behaviours that have become entrenched within the mind of an 11 year old are not easily altered. These kids tend to be rather rigid in their approach to learning and reading at this age. They develop habits in how they enter into, and go about the task of reading a story or novel which remains unaltered as they near adolescence. Tempering intrinsic variables such as a loss of locus of control, learned helplessness ("I am not good at reading and never will be"), lack of volition, and a general attitude of malaise toward reading, is difficult at best.

In spite of these obstacles concerning human thought capacity and acquired feelings regarding reading, intervention can help improve knowledge and skill in various reading contexts. Through repeated reading strategy modelling and instruction, shared reading, and group dialogue, experienced within the framework of a nurturing and open environment, poor readers can demonstrate more productive and proactive reading habits.

Introducing reluctant readers to the plethora of "in the head" activities that good readers do clearly facilitates their own metacognition towards reading. It provides them with a selection of planned actions from which they may decide to choose one or more strategies or to choose none. If they select a single learned strategy the result will hopefully be the better understanding of text read. On the other hand, the reluctant reader may ignore the skills and knowledge taught, and will then proceed in a random, haphazard manner which may or may not end in comprehension. The former is necessarily superior to the latter outcome in terms of learning in general and reading in particular. The meaningfulness lies in all readers having choices regarding specific reading tasks that is premised on their repeated exposure to before, during and after reading strategies. As a teacher, I have a moral obligation to attempt teach all students effective ways of coping with literacy activities.

Heightening reluctant readers' awareness of their own learned habits, articulating the notion that some of these behaviours interfere with text comprehension and reading fluency, and providing a coherent, concrete set of alternative successful reading actions, necessarily results in a more knowledgeable and proficient reader. Educators, especially those instructing primary and elementary children, must be proactive in providing kids with concrete choices of how to go about the act of reading the printed word. Admittedly, fostering a sincere joy and high motivation to read in children may be an unrealistic ideal. However, we are not doing our best if we simply go through the motions as kids pass through the educational system. In the end, the decision to read and the manner and attitude in which one approaches reading is ultimately in the mind and hands of the person holding the book.

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## APPENDIX A

## Letter of Informed Consent

This letter is called an "informed consent." It is intended for the students and parents of students who will be participating in a research project that I will be completing during this school year. Informed consent of the parent or legal guardian must be given for all individuals under 19 years of age who participate in any research.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the attitudes and experiences of reluctant sixth and seventh grade readers. Specifically, I will observe and record the reading behaviours and experiences of students in the study. I will also teach participants reading strategies designed to have positive effects on reader motivation, attitude and ability. Possible benefits for those taking part in this research include: 1) a better understanding of what reading is, 2) knowledge of strategies that can improve motivation and achievement in reading and learning, and 3) experiencing reading as an enjoyable activity.

The duration of the study will be about three months (March-May 1995). I plan on teaching participants reading strategy lessons four times each week, for 35 minute sessions. There will be three or four participants (grade six and sevens) in the study.

Examples of some of the tasks that participants will perform during the study are : 1) reading response logs, 2) completing attitude questionnaires and surveys on reading, and 3) responding to structured interviews, 4) reading both orally and silently while being observed. Students' actual names will not be revealed in the study, assuring anonymity. Only the researcher will have access to the data during the study.

Participants will be periodically audiotaped and videotaped. All videotapes and audiotapes of participants will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research. Moreover, all data gathered will be secured in a locked file while the research is being completed. This data will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Participation in the study is voluntary and students may withdraw at any time. Furthermore, this research will have no effect on participants' grades in any subject. I would greatly appreciate you considering allowing your son or daughter to take part in my research project. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at the school at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,



Gregg Halfyard  
(teacher and researcher)

I give my consent for my son/daughter to participate  
in the above mentioned project:

Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

## Attitude Towards Reading

Please use this scale to answer the following questions:

SA - Strongly Agree  
 A - Agree  
 N - Neither Agree Nor Disagree  
 D - Disagree  
 SD - Strongly Disagree

(circle one choice)

- |     |    |   |   |   |    |   |
|-----|----|---|---|---|----|---|
| 1)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | Reading is fun.                                       |
| 2)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | I do not like reading and it bothers me to read.      |
| 3)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | During reading class I'm usually interested.          |
| 4)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | Reading makes me feel uncomfortable.                  |
| 5)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | Reading is interesting to me and I enjoy it.          |
| 6)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | When I read it helps me cope with my world.           |
| 7)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | We have a better world to live in because of reading. |
| 8)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | The worst school subject is reading.                  |
| 9)  | SA | A | N | D | SD | Reading is fascinating and fun.                       |
| 10) | SA | A | N | D | SD | There is too much to memorize when I read.            |
| 11) | SA | A | N | D | SD | I don't like writing tests in reading.                |
| 12) | SA | A | N | D | SD | I don't like special assignments in reading.          |

Adapted from a paper entitled "Collaborative evaluation and the use of new technologies in science projects in a middle school setting," by C. Collister, P. Farragher, and N. Buiriski Burger (1994).

## APPENDIX C

## Self-Perceptions Regarding Reading

1. I think reading is very difficult for me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. If you are a good reader it helps you learn lots of other things.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Reading does not take much effort from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am one of the best readers in my class.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My teacher does not help me to learn how to read better.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I really enjoy reading.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I think that I won't be a very good reader in high school.	1	2	3	4	5

Adapted from "Strategies for Comprehending Text and Coping with Reading Difficulties," by S.G. Paris, and E.R. Oka, 1989, Learning Disabilities Quarterly, 12, p.32-42.

## APPENDIX D

## Interview Guide

I questioned each participant using both semistructured and unstructured, conversational interviews. The focus for the semistructured interviews was the combination of objectivity and depth (Borg & Gall, 1989). Conversational interviews were designed to inform me of each participant's reading experiences. I asked questions in order to find and describe how each individual approached and behaved during and after reading.

A pilot study involving one student was completed for the purpose of fine tuning each aspect of questioning for the main study including the following key areas:

1. Wording of questions is in plain language so as to be easily understood.
2. Appropriate level of language that is familiar to 11 and 12 year olds.
3. Clear and organized format.
4. Effective and unimpeding recording procedures (i.e., tape recording and note taking).
5. Positive responses to interviews from respondents.
6. Respondents always treated with tact and respect.

Goals: 1) To remain as concrete as possible, 2) To understand and describe each reader's experiences and habits.

Potential Questions: What does it feel like to read? What do good readers do? What do you do before you read? What do you think about after you read? What do you enjoy about reading?

Probes: In what way? Can you give an example? Can you describe that for me?

Location: Thornhill Elementary School, a) classroom, and b) conference room.

Times: a) lunch break-12:00-12:30 and b) mornings- 8:00-8:25.

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Reading Experiences and Strategies of Reluctant Grade 6 and 7 Students

Author



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January 18, 1998