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The Effects of Guided Reading on Independent Reading and Reading Fluency in Primary

Grades

By

Yasmine Chamli

A thesis

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THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: Yasmine Chamlil I.D. #: 201303095

Thesis Title: The effect of guided reading on independent reading and reading fluency in primary grade

Program: Masters of Arts

Department: Department of Social and Education Sciences

School: School of Arts and Sciences

The undersigned certify that they have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis and approved it in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts In Education in the major of TESOL

Thesis Advisor's Name: Dr. Rima Bahous

Signature:  Date: 30 / 03 / 2022
Day Month Year

Committee Member's Name: Dr. Rula Diab

Signature:  Date: 30 / 03 / 2022
Day Month Year

Committee Member's Name: Dr. Mona Nabhan

Signature:  Date: 30 / 03 / 2022
Day Month Year



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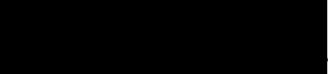


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ABSTRACT

Multiple changes have been implemented in reading instructions in schools and educators and researchers constantly look for teaching strategies that would optimize their students' reading. According to the International Literacy Association (2020), the greatest challenges in literacy include supporting English learners, supporting students reading below grade level, and teaching students how to read (ILA, 2020). The following study examines the effect of guided reading, a popular instructional reading approach that encompasses several teaching strategies used together to enhance learning in the classroom, on the two dependent variables: independent reading and reading fluency. This research follows a retrospective cohort study design over the course of three consecutive years on the same cohort from grades one to three and the research question "How does guided reading promote reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades?" guides this study. Data has been already collected for purposes other than research. The data instruments are running records and anecdotal records; the quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed to check for a causalational correlation between guided reading and independent reading, and guided reading and reading fluency. Findings reveal that guided reading positively affects reading fluency and independent reading. Guided reading promotes guided reading for different reasons including scaffolding, modeling of reading strategies, and consistency in the execution of the program. Ethical considerations were taken in consideration throughout this research to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the sample involved.

Keywords: Guided Reading, anecdotal records, running records, reading fluency, independent reading

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Chapter One

Introduction

Reading is woven into all facets of life, and it is fundamental to lead students to become lifelong learners and ultimately fulfill their dreams of becoming what they want to be in their future communities (O'Rourke, 2017). Over the years, there has been multiple changes to reading instruction in schools, and educators and researchers constantly look for teaching strategies and tools that would optimize their reading instruction. Guided reading is a popular instructional reading approach that encompasses several teaching strategies used together to enhance learning in the classroom. The teacher's role in guided reading revolves around supporting students build a system of strategic actions by facilitating, prompting, and reinforcing effective problem-solving actions to process texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008). Some of these strategies include 'activating prior knowledge', 'making predictions', 'retelling', and 'using picture cues' (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Guided reading instructional focuses include teaching 'searching for and using information', 'solving words', 'monitoring and correcting errors', and 'maintaining fluency' (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008). Each instructional focus point provides learners with skills and strategies to process and synthesize the text. The rationale behind 'searching for and using information' allow readers to read with an intention to understand and with an attempt to problem-solve to make optimal meaning of the text. As for teaching 'solving words' strategies, learners would first be able to make letter-sound relationships so they would then read the text more efficiently and make deeper inferences about the text. Other reading approaches adopted in different schools may encompass various reading teaching strategies, some of which are used in guided reading. However, the main

purpose in guided reading is catering to the learner's individual needs and having learners build 'a network of strategic actions for processing texts' (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Previous research regarding guided reading and its effect on different reading components has been conducted by educators who wonder if guided reading is the best instructional tool for reading. Most studies have been contextual in which the research was executed in classrooms of the teachers who are doing the study for personal purposes which include assessing their own instructional reading practices. However, this may be biased, as researchers know the learners and they are the ones teaching. I, also being a teacher, reflect on reading teaching practices and what may best accommodate for learners of different reading levels and capabilities. Therefore, the effects of guided reading on two dependent variables, independent reading and reading fluency, in primary grades are tested through a retrospective cohort study design. The following introductory section tackles the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, a hypothesis to the study, the rationale, and the significance of the study both in terms of research and practice.

1.1 Research Problem, Purpose of Study, Research Question

The research problem at the core of this study is clearly reflected in a survey conducted by The International Literacy Association (2020). The survey was conducted amongst teachers, higher education professionals, literacy consultants, and Pre-K-12 administrators from 65 countries and territories with a total of 1,443 respondents and their findings accelerate the need for research on effective reading instructional strategies. The report showed many revelations related to problems and issues faced in schools regarding literacy and reading instruction. The findings revealed that the most important literacy outcome to the participants in the next decade is "determining effective instructional strategies for struggling readers" with a percentage of

66% (ILA, 2020). In addition, two of the greatest challenges in literacy reported by respondents are “addressing disconnects between school curriculum and students’ actual needs in terms of literacy support and instruction” with a percentage of 58%; followed by 48% for “supporting students reading below grade level”. Research has also shown the importance of reading achievement and that learners who do not have strong literacy instruction in their early years, rarely catch up in reading later (Iaquinta, 2006).

The main research problem in literacy is teaching students how to read and, at the same time catering to their individual literacy needs and levels. Issues related to reading instruction are among the greatest challenges in reading. According to the International Literacy Association (2020), the greatest challenges in literacy include supporting English learners, supporting students reading below grade level, and teaching students how to read (ILA, 2020). The report also revealed that the participants highly value the role of research and that 93% of them believe that research is the backbone of effective literacy instruction as it is constantly evolving. Also, 33% of respondents believe that guided reading is the best program for reading instruction (ILA, 2020). Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe the effects of quality guided reading on students’ reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades, specifically through grade levels one to three. Reading fluency as defined by the National Reading Panel is the ability to read text with accuracy, speed, and proper expression (NRP, 2005). As for independent reading, it is defined as the reader’s ability to read accurately and comprehend autonomously (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). This study will serve as additional research on the effects of ‘guided reading’ teaching strategies on students’ fluency and independent reading.

It will attempt to answer the following research question

“How does guided reading promote reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades?”.

1.2 Hypothesis

I hypothesize that guided reading will have a positive impact on learners' reading fluency and independent reading for several reasons. Guided reading is based on the understanding that reading is a complex process which involves learners in making meaning by using various strategies. There are 12 identified strategies in guided reading that help readers process the text in order to make meaning out of it. These strategies include solving words, self-correcting, searching for specific information and applying information, summarizing, sustaining fluency, adjusting strategies to solve challenges in the text, predicting, forming connections, synthesizing information, inferring meaning, analyzing, thinking critically about the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). While guided reading is based on the understanding that reading is a highly complex process, it also adheres to Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist view of learning. First, Biddulph (2003) describes guided reading as a 'carefully managed social occurrence' (Biddulph, 2003). Guided reading provides learners with opportunities that engage them in interacting, talking, and making meaning. In addition, guided reading works within a learner's zone of proximal development, defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving skills under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). Which means enabling students to do more and expanding the range of what they can do through teaching to develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviors (Golding & Wass, 2014). In addition, learning opportunities in guided reading are backed up by the inclusion of texts that offer both support and challenge according to each reader's capabilities and reading level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Thus, theoretically speaking these identified strategies and program guidelines would allow readers to read fluently and proficiently to make meaning out of what they read independently.

1.3 Rationale

Guided reading, a reading instruction program founded and developed by Fountas and Pinnell (1996; 2017), has become widely used internationally within a comprehensive framework for literacy instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; 2017). Guided reading encompasses a small group reading instruction designed to provide differentiated teaching to optimize reading instruction. Working with learners in small groups allows low-achieving readers to take more pride in their reading, while average and high-achieving readers are challenged enough, in addition to giving diverse learners the opportunity to participate more (Good, Guastello, & Lenz, 2005). Differentiated teaching, also known as differentiation, and differentiated learning, is a systematic approach to planning curriculum and instruction for academically diverse learners, honoring each student's needs and maximizing their learning capabilities (Osuafor & Okigbo, 2013). The literature has examined the effects of guided reading on students' reading achievement as reading standards vary and evolve from one school of thought to another. One definition state that reading achievement is the development of literacy skills and the motivation to read (Ecklund & Lamon, 2008). Researchers found that poor reading achievement issues range from national level and not just student level. For example, after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the United States held schools accountable for student achievement, research regarding reading achievement revealed that students with poor reading skills, special needs, and language barriers consistently failed to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (Hawkins, 2007). Also, schools labeled as "underperforming" based on No Child Left Behind, consistently remained "underperforming" (Chrisman, 2005). The high standards in response to the inclusion movement of the No Child Left Behind has pushed educators to proactively deal with behavioral and reading deficits (Miller et al., 2010). Thus, research related to guided reading over the past years has been mostly executed by teachers and educators themselves looking for answers on how to support

struggling readers and provide an instructional reading program that genuinely works. In addition to research done by teachers and educators themselves, a federally funded study conducted in 2008 on the effectiveness of the guided reading program when implemented by well-trained teachers proved that “the average student learning increased by 16% over the course of the first year, 28% in the second year, and 32% in the third year” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Also, previous literature includes studies and research examining guided reading teaching strategies in relation to different variables which include reading comprehension, differentiated learning, and reading achievement in general. No correlation has been yet established in the research between guided reading and independent reading, and guided reading and reading fluency.

Previous literature also shed light on challenges and limitations faced while doing research related to guided reading in schools. These challenges and limitations affect the credibility and validity of results in previous research, however, play a significant role in aiding in future research such as the following one. The first limitation shown in some studies is the teacher knowledge and trainings. Teacher perceptions were investigated, and findings showed contributing factors to inconsistency in implementing the guided reading program in their classrooms. Teachers lacked clear guidelines in national literacy policies, professional development, and resources. This affected the implementation of guided reading in classrooms and thus in the reading development in learners. Other challenges include time constraints and resource availability. A study conducted by Ferguson and Wilson (2009) showed that teachers found difficulty implementing guided reading on a regular basis due to time constraints and pressure to adhere to curriculum demands and expectations, in addition to a lack of resources such as quality instructional texts (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). More specifically and as shown in Ford and Optiz’s (2008) study, three arising concerns related to the implementation of guided reading through the perceptions of three thousand teachers including 91% of who self-reported

that they are well-informed and knowledgeable when it comes to guided reading instruction and practices. Results of that study revealed that one of the concerns revolved around curricular integration where teachers separated the curriculum from guided reading instruction and vice versa, which is concerning because this affects learners in transferring their learning and forming connections in integration with other subject matter (Ford & Optiz, 2008). Another problematic revelation from the study showed that teachers' grouping techniques for small-group instruction varied, showing that support and professional development was needed for all teachers to understand and align their instructions with the guided reading guidelines (Ford & Optiz, 2008). In addition to that, professional development was shown to be needed to support teachers in administering assessment tools and analyzing them to plan better instruction for learners before and during guided reading sessions (Ford & Optiz, 2008). Lastly, the third common concern was derived from teachers who reported a shortage of materials and lack of access to resources such as textbooks, a variety of leveled books and texts for readers, and reading running records (Ford & Optiz, 2008). In addition, in a contextual study done in three Western Cape primary schools in South Africa, researchers explored how teachers understood and implemented guided reading in grades one and two to investigate how well the guided reading program has been conceptualized and executed. Findings revealed that conceptions were individualistic and classroom implementation of the program was disjointed due to poorly resourced schools (Kruizinga & Nathanson, 2011). Another study done by Makumbila and Rowland (2016) on guided reading and reading skills in South African third grade classes revealed issues related to the implementation of the guided reading program. Based on the findings, the authors found out that different factors limited the enhancement of students' reading skills. These factors included insufficient amount of levelled reading resources, inappropriate levelled reading materials, large classroom size, limited time, and unclear guidelines and policies from the school (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016). One more study done

by Hanke (2013) investigated young pupils' perspectives on different guided reading practices in the classroom. Data was collected through co-authored drawings and graphic elicitations, and results revealed insights on the 4- to 7-year-old students' perceptions on guided reading literacy practices in the classroom, the role of their peers during small-group instruction, and the teachers' challenges (Hanke, 2013). Findings showed that students were trying to follow the norm of the social context of small-group instructional practices by the understanding that reading during a small-group guided reading session differs from reading at home (Hanke, 2013). In addition, readers viewed their peers as resources for learning where they can resort to them for help when they are grouped (Hanke, 2013). However, the issue of having time constraints, as shown in the other contextual studies, was reflected in the findings as the teachers' time constraint challenge transferred onto the readers where pupils felt the need to read and finish the task quickly because their teachers 'are dealing with multiple demands' (Hanke, 2013). These limitations and challenges faced in previous studies led to a limitation in credibility of the results of these studies due to the inconsistency in implementation of guided reading in schools and the lack of professionalism of their teachers. Therefore, the following study was done in a reputable school whose teachers believe in the guided reading program and are consistently trained by the school's literacy coach, in addition to being supported with the needed resources to execute the program properly. The rationale of the following study is to add on to previous literature by specifically investigating and establishing a correlation, if any, between the independent variable (guided reading) on the two dependent variables (independent reading and reading fluency).

1.4 Significance in Terms of Research

This study contributes to previous literature aiding researchers in the field of literacy and reading instruction. It serves in determining whether guided reading, when implemented properly and consistently, is a sufficient and effective reading program for learners in primary grades. Unlike other studies, this study aims to explore a causalational correlation between guided reading and independent reading and reading fluency. Considering previous studies' challenges and limitations, this study adds on to previous literature with credible results as the research was done in a school that has been implementing guided reading for years, have well-trained teachers and literacy coaches, and have the funding for the resources needed. Literacy coaches work closely with teachers to make sure they are well-trained and knowledgeable. The roles of the literacy coaches include program and unit unpacking with the teachers, goal setting, collaborating with the coordinator and administration to instill guided reading in the curriculum, attending the latest trainings and workshops to coach teachers, and supporting teachers when they need. More specifically, literacy coaches aid teachers in conducting student assessments and analyzing student work to reflect on their own practices. In addition to having guided reading as part of the curriculum and daily schedule, struggling readers receive extra guided reading sessions with ELL specialists. Having time constraints is not a limitation in this study since guided reading sessions are instilled in the curriculum and the daily schedule of students.

1.5 Significance in Terms of Practice

The study also benefits practitioners in the field such as teachers and educators, where the study may reveal new knowledge on how to implement guided reading to get optimum results. The guided reading program encompasses various guided reading sessions and practitioners, and teachers must carefully investigate the planning and application of guided reading. Research regarding guided reading and its effectiveness may reveal new knowledge on different steps of a guided reading session. In a guided reading session, many instructional

steps must be contemplated. For example, a supportive teaching context for the explicit teaching, modelling, demonstration, and application of a range of effective reading behaviors must be provided through carefully constructed guided reading groups. Common key elements include establishing a teaching objective and selecting suitable guided reading texts. Another key element is introducing the text prior to reading and then after reading, it is important to discuss and respond to the text. And finally, it is crucial to reflect on each student's learning. To establish the teaching objective, the teacher would look at the common needs of the learners. The teaching objective must either introduce an unfamiliar text and its structure or the reading strategies needed to help readers with challenges they are facing. The next stage of a successful guided reading session is selecting the appropriate texts in terms of learners' reading levels. The leveled guided reading text must match the learner's reading ability. In addition, the reading level is of importance since it must provide a balanced combination of support and challenge to enable learners to read most of the text independently and apply familiar reading processing strategies (Hornsby, 2000). Introducing the text is another key element in a guided reading session for the purpose of engaging students and arousing their interest. More specifically, it is also important for activating learners' background knowledge for them to make links and connections in order to deepen their understanding. Founding a supportive book introduction allows learners to engage in conversation to develop their oral language skills, strengthen their understanding of the text, and sets students up for a successful read (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). For teachers to transfer a solid introduction to their students, it is important for them to grasp the reader's attention by helping link the text to their own interests and how the story would add to their knowledge. Also asking questions provides readers with opportunities to predict, think beyond the text, and feel excited to see what happens next. The next part of the guided reading process is having the learners read the text individually and independently. This provides the learners with an opportunity to process a text and make meaning of it

autonomously. After reading, comes a critical stage in guided reading and it is the after-reading discussions which is also determined by the learners' individual reading levels and needs. Teachers in that stage would be engaging learners and creating opportunities for them to synthesize and summarize content, make connections between the text and their personal experiences, draw links between other familiar texts, and build vocabulary knowledge to continue building their network of processing strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2012). Responding to the text is the next step and Fountas and Pinnell (2001) argue that tasks in this stage allow readers to further develop their understanding of the text from a different perspective and point of view. Finally, the learner and the teacher revisit the purpose of the session and reflect on the learning process together. Therefore, all key elements of guided reading sessions must be thought out and planned. This research reveals new knowledge on guided reading practices and the effects on readers' developments to teachers in the school where the study took place at and other practitioners in similar contexts.

The research question "How does guided reading promote reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades?" drives the following study to explore the guided reading program as a reading instructional tool that best fit readers of different reading levels and capabilities. In addition, this study investigates the effects of guided reading to check for optimum reading instruction and learning in the classrooms. As reading achievement centers learning objectives and goals at schools; educators and researchers look for legitimate reading instruction in their schools to strengthen students' reading skills and find ways to deal with challenges related to reading and reading instruction. The following study takes into account previous literature; thus, the significance of this contextual study includes adding information to the literature and benefitting schools to understand the effects of guided reading more. The next chapter examines the literature to deepen the understanding of the significance of this study and the effectiveness of guided reading as a reading instruction in schools so far.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Previous literature included studies and research examining guided reading teaching strategies in relation to reading achievement. The themes found in the literature in relation to guided reading are five. These themes include reading comprehension, differentiated learning, independent reading, reading fluency, and students' reading motivation. Even though only two of the themes will be tested in this study, these themes are interrelated and bring insight to the effectiveness of guided reading on different reading components. For example, reading comprehension is accentuated by a fluent reader's ability to attune mental attention to obtaining meaning from text and as measured by a curriculum-based passage reading test, is an accurate measure of general reading ability, including comprehension (Madelaine & Wheldall, 2002).

Researchers conducted studies in search of the best reading instructions to help struggling readers and to increase reading achievement rates in schools and nationwide. Over the years, different studies were conducted to investigate the effectiveness of guided reading on different reading variables. These reading variables include reading comprehension, differentiation, independent reading, reading fluency, and students' reading motivation; all of which are guided reading goals. The literature mostly explores the impact and effectiveness of guided reading on reading comprehension and studies have shown that guided reading strategies enhance students' reading skills and comprehending strategies (Frey, 2010). Studies have also shown that guided reading's use of differentiated instruction improves reading performance and modelling enhances students' problem-solving skills (Shang, 2015). Reading fluency is another factor that plays a vital role in reading achievement and researchers found that guided reading

explicitly demonstrates prompts for fluency instruction through word-solving strategies and phonemic awareness (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). As for student's motivation and attitudes towards reading, not enough research has been done regarding guided reading and student's motivation. However, Fountas and Pinnell (2010) suggested that the leveled texts and various genres and styles of stories positively impact student's attitudes and motivation towards reading.

The following section will examine the literature regarding guided reading practices and its effectiveness on students' reading.

Guided reading, a popular instructional reading program, encompasses several teaching strategies used together to optimize reading instruction in the classroom. The program was founded by Fountas and Pinnell (1996; 2017) where every instructional focus point provides readers with skills and strategies to process and synthesize the text independently.

2.1 Guided Reading and Reading Comprehension

A large proportion of the literature explores the link between guided reading and reading comprehension. Reading comprehension definitions vary in the literature and researchers' understandings of reading comprehension influence the framework of their research. According to the National Assessment Government Board (2002), reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction with written language (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). However, The Programme for Student Assessment defined reading as "understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts to develop one's knowledge, achieve one's goals, and participate in society" (OECD, 2000). Guided reading developers, Fountas and Pinnell (2012) suggest that guided reading implementation provides a setting in which explicit teaching of comprehending strategies is ideal through different strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). The explicit teaching of comprehending

strategies happens before, during, and after reading in which teachers introduce the text and provide background information to assure a deeper understanding, ask questions to reinforce thinking and model comprehending strategies, and finally guide a discussion after reading to talk about students' inferences, predictions, and synthesis of new learning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Guided reading supports reading comprehension as teachers specifically demonstrate and model strategies such as inferring, synthesizing, analyzing, and critiquing. According to Goldenberg (1992), discussion-based guided reading lessons are "geared toward creating richly textured opportunities for students' conceptual and linguistic development" and it can extend learners' language abilities. The effect of guided reading on comprehension was the most researched topic related to guided reading practices and studies have shown benefits of guided reading on students' comprehending skills and reading comprehension. One research study conducted by Ferguson and Wilson (2009) on upper elementary students in 63 schools in Texas investigated the impact of guided reading on learners and results showed improvement in students' reading comprehending skills, text comprehension levels, fluency rates, and in reading levels (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). Another study by Fisher and Frey (2010) revealed that during guided reading, students were successfully engaging in comprehending and reading strategies that enhanced their reading comprehension (Fisher & Frey, 2010). In a UK study by Hoffmann and Maine (2016), one of the findings noted that students' use of comprehension strategies from guided reading practice allowed learners to easily make meaning of a text (Hoffmann & Maine, 2016). In another study conducted in southwestern United States by Denton et al. (2014), the effects of guided reading, explicit instruction, and typical school instruction on reading comprehension and other skills were compared. Findings revealed that guided reading and explicit instruction were superior to typical school instruction and showed improved reading comprehension (Denton et al., 2014). In addition, a study conducted by Fisher (2008) showed that teachers listening to readers read in a guided reading session is

particularly beneficial to struggling readers and also useful to successful readers where teachers can analyze children's reading behaviors, yet it is not a way of instruction. Rather, teaching learners how to use suitable reading strategies to make meaning of the text enhances children's critical and analytical comprehension responses (Fisher, 2008).

2.2 Guided Reading and Differentiated Learning

Another component investigated in the guided reading program is the differentiated learning, also known as differentiation, differentiated instruction, or differentiated teaching. As mentioned before, differentiated instruction is a systematic approach to planning curriculum and instruction for academically diverse learners, respecting each student's needs and pace, in addition to maximizing their learning capabilities (Osuafor & Okigbo, 2013). The teaching philosophy behind differentiation is based on accepting, tolerating, and accommodating for learners in different aspects. Various factors affect the need for differentiation, which include the learner's experiences, background knowledge, readiness level, interests, learning styles, interests, socioeconomic status, social skills, and capabilities and needs (Valiandes, 2015). Due to the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each learner, differentiated instruction means that schools and educators mediate and modify teaching and learning modes to optimize learning experiences for each child. Teachers play a crucial role in providing equity and quality instruction to their students. By differentiating instruction, teachers must delve into each learner's needs, strengths, challenges, and characteristics to accommodate and plan lessons and teaching styles accordingly (Valiandes, 2015).

Differentiated instruction is firstly applied in guided reading through text selection following a text gradient (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; 2006), which started in the 1990s and has been redefined and developed over the years. This gradient is a defined continuum of characteristics relative to the level of challenge the reader experiences in a text and it is a

teacher tool that assists teachers in matching texts to students' reading level, also known as the level challenging enough for the reader and that would allow mastery of guided reading strategies. When teachers match 'the right book' with 'the right reader', then readers would be able to develop their fluency, vocabulary, decoding skills, and reading comprehension (Pitcher & Fang, 2007). Teachers following a 26-leveled continuum from easiest to hardest organized along a gradient of difficulty from A-Z (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Selecting appropriate texts is crucial and different characteristics play a role in determining the gradient of difficulty of a book. These characteristics include the length of the text, the layout including the font and spaces, the structure and organization, the type of phrases or sentences, the kind of words used, the set of illustrations, and the content and theme (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). In a study that examined the effect of textual scaffolds on beginning readers' fluencies showed that reading fluency enhanced within instructional levelled texts which contained high-frequency words (Mesmer, 2010). Teachers also use running record reading assessments, a standardized process for coding, scoring, and assessing student's accuracy level, fluency, and comprehension of the text, in addition to oral reading observation to learn more about the student (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). According to Fountas and Pinnell, the text should not be too easy nor too hard, each text should offer a variety of challenges to help readers become flexible problem solvers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Leveled text selection provides struggling readers with opportunities to grow at their own pace, contrary to continuing to struggle with reading at later grade levels (Kempe, 2011). Also, the use of the gradient of difficulty and leveled texts allows texts to be organized in an appropriate sequence and for concepts to be paced and repeated, assisting children in learning to read successfully (Zrna, 2012). According to Hampton and Resnick (2009), some additional benefits to using leveled texts are monitoring student's progress, tracking milestones, and flagging problems in time to intervene with extra time and instruction (Hampton & Resnick, 2009). Levelled books and texts are not only for struggling and

beginning readers, rather they are used to monitor children's reading growth, scaffold readers' behaviors, and plan grouping decisions (Pitcher & Fang, 2007). In conclusion, exposure to a wide variety of leveled texts would allow the learner to adjust their reading (Pressley, 2000).

Differentiation is also applied in guided reading through scaffolding. Scaffolding instruction dates to Vygotsky (1978) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the figurative space between learner's actual learning and development level and their potential level of development and learning (Hansen, 2016). Scaffolding is defined as an instructional technique where the teacher provides individualized support that would enable the student to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would go beyond his/her unassisted efforts (Wood et al., 1976). Scaffolding requires interaction with a more knowledgeable other and a learner for it to be an effective instructional tool (Frey & Fisher, 2010). Scaffolding instruction is applied in guided reading before, during, and after reading through different strategies. In a study conducted by Frey and Fisher (2010) in eighteen classrooms with English language learners (ELLs) in the United States of America, results showed that scaffolding instruction such as asking questions to check for understanding, using prompts for cognitive and metacognitive work, applying cues to focus the learner's attention, and utilizing direct explanations or modeling to help students master reading skills easily and more rapidly (Frey and Fisher, 2010). One of the most important instructional decisions is how readers will be prompted during guided reading sessions to support their strategic processing systems. The teacher's role while prompting includes knowing what prompts to use and how to use them because if prompts are not implemented properly, readers would learn to depend on facilitators as their one and only source of information during times of difficulty (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). A study done by Parker and Hurry (2007) proved that questioning and prompting are crucial strategies to teach comprehension, enhance student's propositional and inferential thinking skills, and evaluate learner's understanding (Parker & Hurry, 2007). Before reading,

scaffolding is when the teacher introduces the text and provides background information to stimulate their thinking and prior knowledge. During reading, the teacher intervenes to ask questions, to prompt, and to reinforce learner's thinking. Scaffolding in guided reading is also when the teacher works one-on-one or in small groups, depending on the learners' needs, to observe their comprehending skills and model reading strategies for them. After reading, discussions provoke reader's higher thinking skills as they inference, predict, and analyze. Shang (2015) further supported the use of scaffolding stating that "a number of studies proves the benefits of applying scaffolding strategies in reading to improve the ability of inquiry, reading comprehension performance, and problem solving". Classes nowadays are filled with mixed abilities and differentiation is necessary for students at low, average, and high levels. Nes-Ferarra (2005), in her study, observed one struggling reader through a paired reading instructional intervention over the course of 11 weeks, whose reading fluency progressed substantially (Nes-Ferarra, 2005). Through guided reading, teachers prompt for, demonstrate, and reinforce strategies so that readers can predict, summarize, make connections, analyze, synthesize, and critique for optimal reading behavior (Fountas & Pinnel, 2009). A study conducted by Frey and Fisher (2010) suggested that the adults' roles in scaffolding children include structuring and planning the tasks' difficulty levels, modeling, participating in problem solving, grasping the learners' focus and attention to the task, shedding light on strategies, and motivating the readers (Frey & Fisher, 2010). A quasi-experimental study conducted by Valiandes (2015) investigated the impact of quality differentiated instruction by well-knowledgeable teachers on the student achievement of 479 students in 24 mixed-ability classrooms at 13 different primary schools in Cyprus. Through observations, questionnaires, and tests to evaluate students' performance before and after the research, findings revealed the effectiveness of differentiated instruction on students' growth in mixed-ability classrooms (Valiandes, 2015). In addition, in a study that examined social skills instruction through the

context of small group guided reading sessions showed that social skills instruction are already embedded in guided reading routines which improve student's behaviors during independent reading times (Miller et al., 2010).

2.3 Guided Reading and Independent Reading

Reaching independent reading is another reading goal in schools as it is the path to life-long learners and readers. Students who read independently become better and more proficient readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject-areas, and have more content knowledge than those who do not (Krashen, 1993; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1993). The independent reading level refers to the reader's ability to read accurately, fluently, and comprehend the text independently. Guided reading is designed to provide opportunities to read texts continuously and independently. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), the quantity of reading matters and guided reading assures independent reading time as it is set in the program and provides take-home books. Guided reading provides daily exposure to leveled texts that support accuracy and comprehension, in addition to encouragement to read independently at their independent reading level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). This would ensure that students are reading daily, experiencing a variety of texts, and talking and writing about texts. With time, learners' acquired comprehending strategies from guided reading sessions would equip them to become independent and skillful readers. According to a study conducted by Frey, Lee, Tollefson, Pass, and Massengill (2005), guided reading is necessary for students' knowledge, skills, and strategies that help them become independent readers. However, some students lack the ability to be able to work independently, because they simply do not know how to be independent (Ford & Opitz, 2002). According to the International Literacy Association report (2020), independent reading is hindered at schools for different reasons. Through the survey conducted in the study, participants were able to choose more than one reason why independent reading is hindered in their schools, keeping in mind that 33% of

participants are guided reading users. 70% of participants reported that there is not enough time in the day to schedule for independent reading. 40% reported that independent reading is not being valued by Pre-K-12 administrators. 32% responded that their students cannot stay focused on their reading in an independent reading session. 30% of teachers did not value it, and 30% as well reported that their school's literacy curriculum does not include independent reading. And finally, 27% reported that there are not enough books and resources for independent reading in their schools. In conclusion, guided reading in theory positively affects learners' independent reading. Yet, research has not shown a direct link between guided reading and students' independent reading and the effectiveness of guided reading strategies on independent reading is not yet fully understood.

2.4 Guided Reading and Reading Fluency

Reading fluency as defined by the National Reading Panel (2005) is the ability to read text with accuracy, speed, and proper expression (NRP, 2005). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2012), oral language fluency is an essential purpose of guided reading as it helps learners process the text and allows the language to be controlled (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Guided reading provides explicit teaching in fluency as the fluency of readers of different levels changes over time. A six-dimension rubric has been formed to measure fluency and its several dimensions include: pausing, phrasing, intonation, word stress, and rate (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Therefore, fluency in guided reading is not synonymous with fast and rapid. Becoming a fast reader does not mean becoming a fluent reader since rushing through a text may lead to omission of key words in the story that would affect learners' understanding of the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Through guided reading, teachers explicitly demonstrate prompts for reinforcing fluency and the teacher's support and guidance allows learners to work for better fluency. Guided reading practices also offer selected books that are within the student's level and control and the opportunity to use word recognition while reading orally or silently.

Students who are skilled readers read words rapidly, accurately, and efficiently. Reaching reading fluency is a process and variable that develop fluency are word recognition and phonemic awareness. According to the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), word recognition is “the reader’s ability to recognize written words correctly a virtually effortlessly” (LINCS, 2009). As for phonemic awareness, it is the understanding that words consist of a series of individual sounds (Ball & Blachman, 1991). Guided reading provides learners with word solving strategies that would lead to word recognition and better fluency. In a study conducted by Kaye (2008), she analyzed second graders’ reading behaviors across a year in a class where word solving strategies were explicitly taught and results showed that students did not appeal to the teacher for help without first initiating an attempt to read the word independently (Kaye, 2008). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2012), guided reading offers the opportunity to teach word-solving strategies using phonics by pointing out first letters, plurals, word endings, consonant clusters, vowel pairs, or syllables while introducing the text. Then, as students read, the teacher prompts for and reinforces the student’s ability to take words apart. After reading, the teacher may make an explicit teaching point that shows students how to take words apart rapidly and efficiently. The teacher may also preplan some specific word work that would show students phonics elements that they need to know how to solve at a particular level of text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Both fluency and accuracy can impact comprehension in reading. Facilitating fluent reading is an integral part of the guided reading program. To encourage fluent reading, it is recommended to provide learners with opportunities for familiar reading where they are not exerting too much effort on word solving and decoding (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). Scaffolding and modelling smooth reading facilitates fluent reading. Modelling fluent reading during whole group or small-group instruction includes teacher read alouds, partner reading, and group choral reading where readers match the reading pace with their teacher and/or their peers (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). Moreover,

encouraging and allowing flexible use of finger pointing where learners can add and remove their finger whenever needed would prevent the habit of choppy reading, as sometimes the finger can cause the reader's eyes to unnecessarily slow down the reading pace (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). In a study conducted by Fountas and Pinnell (1996) on over one thousand fourth graders' oral reading fluency found that both fluency and accuracy can impact comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). When a student's reading is not fluent and accurate, it is more difficult for the student to comprehend what he/she has read due to the amount of time taken to decode words and complete the reading selection.

2.5 Guided Reading and Student's Motivation

The literature also touched upon students' attitudes and motivation towards reading and how it affects their reading achievement. Students' attitudes towards reading affects readers' abilities to comprehend what they read and read at an appropriate pace (Dean & Trent, 2002). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), selected texts are introduced in a way that aims at students' interests, curiosities about a topic, and thus motivating students to keep on reading as a way of satisfying their need to know (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). According to the National Reading Panel (2000), the importance of motivation in the effectiveness of any reading program cannot be overestimated (NICHD, 2000). Fountas and Pinnell (2010) suggest that guided reading influences students' motivation to read through the selection of books that are from a broad range of genres, styles, and levels of difficulty and texts are introduced in a way that are specifically aimed at engaging interest, encouraging curiosity about a topic, and motivating students to pursue reading as a way of satisfying their need to know (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010) Also, students experience success at processing texts because they are reading from a level that is challenging enough and they have the opportunity to engage and talk with other about texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). In a study done by Makumbila and Rowland (2016) on guided reading and its effect on students' reading skills in South African third grade

classrooms, findings showed that students engagement levels, participation, and motivation increased due to guided reading group activities and levelled books (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016).

In conclusion, the literature showed positive effects of guided reading on reading comprehension, differentiation, independent reading, reading fluency, and student's motivation. Recommendations for future research regarding guided reading included teacher trainings to ensure quality instruction and consistency, as well as scheduled times for guided reading and resource availability to ensure proper execution of the program for credible results of studies conducted (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009).

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this section is to describe the methods and the research design that were used to collect and analyze the necessary data for the following study. The research question “How does guided reading promote reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades?” guided the selection of this methodology.

3.1 Research Design and Methods

This retrospective cohort study design was used to examine students’ reading fluency and independent reading through the implementation of guided reading over the period of three years on a mixed-ability cohort of 20 students. In a retrospective cohort study, also known as a historical cohort study, the study is done after the occurrence of both the exposure and the outcome to investigate possible relationships between them (Salkind, 2010). A retrospective cohort study requires a cohort group, a group of individuals who have shared a common characteristic or experience within a particular time span (Kalidindi, 2015). This type of research also requires the analysis of data that has originally been collected for reasons other than research (Hess, 2004; Janson et. al, 2005), such as administrative data, documentation, and reports. Retrospective research has been underutilized and underestimated; however it provides researchers with valuable research opportunities due to the wealth of relevant historical data available (Gearing et al., 2006). In this study, I investigated the relationship between guided reading instruction and students’ reading outcomes, specifically their reading fluency and independent reading, through the collection of previously taken data of students who were exposed to guided reading instruction over the course of three years. Data from the academic years 2016-2017 till 2018-2019 was taken from the school’s database and analyzed

to check for a possible relation between guided reading and reading fluency and independent reading. The cohort group of the study is a group of students who attended grades 1, 2, and 3 together in the same school and who have been exposed to the guided reading program implemented within their school's curriculum; newcomers and dropouts will not be part of the sample. The retrospective cohort design features a single sample which enables the same individuals to be compared over time (Cohen et al., 2018). This research design enabled me to compare students' reading fluency and independent reading throughout grades one to three where guided reading practices were implemented. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data. Quantitative data was collected and calculated from the reading running records. As for the qualitative data, it was analyzed and collected from anecdotal records. More information on the research instruments are explained below.

3.2 Assessment/Instruments

The instruments for this study are running record assessments and anecdotal records. When implementing the guided reading program, teachers assess the student's accuracy level, fluency, and comprehension of the text using a running record assessment, which also determines which reading level the reader is at depending on the Fountas & Pinnel (2012) gradient scale from A-Z (Fountas & Pinnel, 2012). Reading records are formative types of assessment which are administered to provide insight on learners' reading behaviors and their level of reading. The frequency of assessment depends on student's reading level. Early emergent readers (levels A-C) are assessed with a running record every 2 to 4 weeks. Emergent readers (levels D-J) are assessed every 4 to 6 weeks, early fluent readers (levels K-P) are assessed every 6 to 8 weeks, and fluent readers (level Q-Z) are assessed every 8 to 10 weeks. (Fountas & Pinnel, 2012). The running records assessments are found in Fountas and Pinnel's Benchmark Assessment Kits (check link in Appendix below), and teachers must be trained on how to administer this form of reading assessment. Symbols and marking conventions are used

to record the student's reading behavior as he or she reads. The running record symbols and marking conventions are explained in Table 1 in the Appendix below. As the child reads, the teacher codes each word, reporting the percentage of words correctly read, the self-correction ratio (the ratio of errors + self-corrections divided by the number of self-corrections), and the categories of errors made (meaning, visual, or structure) (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). After the running record is administered, the teacher scores the error rate, accuracy rate, and self-correction rate. A running record is successfully completed when the student has read at 90-94% accuracy (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). The score of the accuracy rate determines whether the student is at the frustrational, instructional, or independent reading level and whether he or she can go up a reading level. In addition to running records, anecdotal records would enable a qualitative analysis of students' reading behaviors. Pausing and reflecting on students' reading running records plays a crucial role in supporting guided reading instruction for several reasons. Through processing running records, teachers will be able to understand the strengths and needs of their readers. They will also be able to use the analyzed information to support their instructional decisions. Lastly, teachers will be able to group students and plan adequate prompts to support their small-group instruction (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). While reflecting on practices, teachers must think 'Am I jumping in right away to rescue my students?', 'Am I allowing students time to process the text on their own?', and 'Am I prompting properly to support students' reading accountability?' (Helfich & Lipp, 2016). Anecdotal records are brief notes grounded in the close observations of children (Clay, 2001). Anecdotal records serve as the foundation of instructional planning and helps teachers think more deeply about their students' growth and learning, making this type of assessment "ongoing, purposeful, and strategic" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Anecdotal records are also found in the database as comments to observations on students' reading behaviors in addition to the running records. Using teacher anecdotal records as a tool for data collection, a better understanding of the

students' reading behaviors and patterns will be formulated, which would help answer how effective guided reading is to promote students' reading fluency and independent reading. Statistics derived from reading running records reflect readers' behaviors and progress. Yet, observing and analyzing reading behavior through anecdotal records allows teachers to be more mindful of their students' learning and reading growth. As observing and analyzing student's behaviors could be a more complex task for educators, observing and listening intently to readers eases this part of the assessment process. While taking the time to observe readers during guided reading sessions, teachers must think of how the student is interacting with and responding to the text. Questions to wonder about while observing include: is the reader spending too much time decoding or word-solving? Is the reading pace inconsistent? Does the reader read for meaning? Does the reader confirm his/her self-correction attempts? (Helfich & Lipp, 2016).

3.3 Setting and Participants

The study took place in a private school in Lebanon, Beirut. The school is an accredited and secular school which serves an international and multi-cultural student body which encompasses 66 nationalities to date. Students are prepared for either the International Baccalaureate, the Lebanese Baccalaureate, or the American College Preparatory Diplomas through the school's internationally enriched standard-based curricula. Literacy instruction aligns with the AERO (American Education Reaches Out) standards and those of the Common Core in the United States of America. The language of instruction is English in all courses except for world language courses. The guided reading program was first introduced during the academic year 2005-2006. Through KG2, grade 1 and up to grade 5, learners are exposed to the guided reading program and read from leveled texts and books. Implemented within their curriculum and schedule, students read every single day at school with a designated time for

independent reading. Running record assessments are frequently administered starting from KG2 up to grade 5.

Participants of this study are 20 students who are currently in grade 6, and who have been attending the school since the academic year 2016-2017. Participants are of different backgrounds, yet English is the second language for all participants. 18 participants are Lebanese, and their mother tongue is Arabic. One participant is from Germany (Student F), and one is from Pakistan (Student Q) , their mother tongues are German and Urdu, respectively. Reading levels differ and reading growth is individualized. Participants have been exposed to guided reading instruction and practices since the academic year 2016-2017 by well-trained teachers who regularly attend professional development workshops regarding reading instruction with the school's literacy coaches. Two of the participants (Student D and Student J) were considered struggling readers and they received fifteen extra minutes of guided reading everyday in grades one and two. Additional guided reading sessions were given by English Language Learner specialists, not by their homeroom teachers. Even though participants are of different reading levels and cultural backgrounds, generalization of results is limited due to sample size and the context of study. Reading levels of each participant are presented in the findings section.

3.4 Procedure of Data Collection

Data collection has already been administered in this retrospective cohort study. Implemented within the school's curriculum and time schedule, teachers have already administered running record assessments and taken anecdotal records for purposes of reporting and planning reading instruction and sessions accordingly. Running record samples used are found in the Appendix below. Each student's running record which was administered at the end of every academic year are found in the school's database. In addition, the school's

database includes anecdotal records from the end of each academic year used for reporting on student's reading level and reading behavior, and for recommending next steps. Data from the academic year 2019-2020 was omitted due to the instable modes of learning (such as virtual learning and hybrid modes), and its effect on the credibility of the results.

3.5 Procedure of Data Analysis

The data was thoroughly examined to uncover the findings of the research. The sources of data in this study are the running record assessments and the anecdotal records. Each participant has 3 running record assessments from the end of each academic year. As for the anecdotal records, each participant has 3 from the end of year reports. First, I gathered and organized the data in tables and charts so it would be clear to analyze. I organized the data for each participant, checking for individual reading growth and for a relationship between guided reading and reading fluency and independent reading. I specifically looked at the change in error rates, accuracy rates, and self-correction rates over the 3 years. To calculate error rates, I used the formula total words/total errors= error rate. To calculate accuracy rates, I used the formula $(\text{Total words read} - \text{Total errors}) / \text{Total words read} \times 100 = \text{accuracy rate}$. As for calculating self-correction rates, I used the formula $(\text{Number of errors} + \text{Number of self-corrections}) / \text{Number of self-corrections} = \text{Self-correction rate}$. If the error rates ratios are high, self-correction rates are low, and the accuracy rates are high, then the reader is fluent. Next, to check for independent reading, I derived the average of reading levels each student enhanced every year with guided reading exposure in classrooms. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Percentages, the mean, and range were used for error rates, accuracy rates, and self-correction rates. The data is organized in a tabular form in the findings section below. This part of the analysis is quantitative and serves as results that directly prove the type of correlation between guided reading and reading fluency and independent reading. Participants whose data were analyzed in this study were only the 20 students who

have been attending the school from grades 1 to 3 consecutively during academic years 2016-2017 till 2018-2019, excluding newcomers and drop-outs. These participants have been exposed to guided reading instruction and the leveled reading process. Therefore, this study's results depend on quantitative methods, however the use of qualitative methods served as added data and information for increasing validity and reliability of results. Anecdotal records, which are found in the comment section of the running records which are also found in the school's database were used to reveal more findings related to students' reading behaviors, such as strategies and skills they use that would also indicate that a student is an independent reader. After collecting the anecdotal record data and reading them more than once, I used color codes while analyzing the information checking for patterns and themes related to learners' reading fluency and independent reading. Observations of participants' reading behaviors gave more meaning to the quantitative data, revealing how reading behaviors evolved during the three years and what teaching target teachers focused on as learners grew. Reading behavior described in anecdotal records varied from 'reads with expression' to 'stops at unfamiliar words' and 'uses finger'. As for the next steps teachers mentioned in anecdotal records, patterns of what readers must work on showed the change of teaching targets throughout the three years.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The strengths for adopting such a design to answer the research question outweigh the weaknesses. First, the retrospective cohort design is useful for establishing relationships and for making reliable inferences (Cohen, et al., 2018), which would determine whether guided reading promotes reading fluency and independent reading or not. Second, the retrospective cohort design brings the benefits of extended time frames and sampling error reduction, as the study remains with the same sample over time (Cohen, et al., 2018). In addition, this study's design was useful for charting growth and development which enables the analysis and the comprehensive coverage of individual's reading development and outcomes which include

reading fluency and independent reading (Cohen, et al., 2018). Results of this study are not generalizable as the study is contextualized, yet results may be transferrable to schools with similar contexts and to participants who learn English as a second language.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

To start with, a preliminary approval from the IRB and the school administrators was given before moving forward with this study. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality has been maintained, as their names are not shown in any way through out this study. In addition, I have gained consent from the school principals in charge of the database in the school, and since there was no interaction with the participants there was no need for parents' consents. There is no danger or harm to participants of this study; data collection and analysis was done solely for the purpose of research.

Chapter Four

Findings

4.1 Guided Reading and Reading Fluency Findings

Error rates, accuracy rates, and self-correction rates were calculated to check for a relation between guided reading and readers' fluencies. Each participant's running records from the end of grades one, two, and three were analyzed. The findings of this study are presented in the section below.

4.1.1 Error Rates Findings

Error rates of a reader play an important role in determining the reading fluency of each student, the less errors a reader makes the more fluent he/she is. Error rates were calculated by dividing the total number of words read by the total number of errors made and they are expressed as ratios. For example, a ratio of 1:30 means that for every error made, 30 words were read correctly. Omitting a word, inserting a word, substituting another word for a word, and telling the reader a word are all considered errors. The findings of error rates are found in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant's Error Rates in Grades 1, 2, and 3

Student	Grade 1 Error Rate	Grade 2 Error Rate	Grade 3 Error Rate
A	1:207	1:132	1:143
B	1:74	1:104	1:49

C	1:123	1:195	1:220
D	1:62	1:195	1:80
E	1:123	1:138	1:151
F	1:50	1:284	1:412
G	1:41	1:95	1:206
H	1:246	1:284	1:95
I	1:88	1:212	1:292
J	1:18	1:17	1:43
K	1:61	1:62	1:148
L	1:153	1:138	1:97
M	1:63	1:212	1:100
N	1:40	1:212	1:73
O	1:38	1:52	1:58
P	1:41	1:69	1:100
Q	1:25	1:71	1:113
R	1:50	1:74	1:292
S	1:33	1:50	1:50
T	1:123	1:103	1:100

Findings show that the average error rate for participants in grade one was 1:83, 1:134 in grade two, and 1:141 in grade three. The average error rate increased by 61% from grade one to grade two and 5% from grade two to grade three, leading in a 66% increase in total. This increase in error rates means that learners were making less errors over the three years, making them more fluent readers gradually. Looking closely at individual student growth related to the error rate ratio showed that reading fluency growth varied for each participant. A linear increase

in error rates applied to 60% of participants only. The other 40% of participants' error rates fluctuated throughout the years, meaning that reading growth does not always look linear. The variation between participants' rates was revealed also by the standard deviation and the range. The standard deviation increased from 1:62 to 1:79 and then to 1:98 from grades one, two, and three respectively, showing that the gap between participants' error rates was increasing and spreading out. The range of error rates also increased from 227 in grade one, to 267 in grade two, and then 369 in grade three. This range and gap may be analyzed negatively, however in the context of the guided reading program, these findings are explained by the differentiation and variation of texts selected for the students in order to respect each child's readiness, pace, and individual needs. Error rate findings show that there is a positive correlation between guided reading and reading fluency.

4.1.2 Self-correction Rates Findings

To make further revelations on the relationship between guided reading and reading fluency, the self-correction rates of each participant were calculated from the end of year running records of grade 1, 2, and 3. Self-correction is when the reader realizes an error and corrects it; self-correction is not considered as an error. Self-correction ratios were calculated by dividing the total number of error and self-correction by the number of self-corrections made. The self-correction rates are expressed as ratios. For example, 1:4 means that the reader corrects 1 out of every 4 errors. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), as long as the readers self-correct as a rate of 1:3 or below, then they are self-monitoring their reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). The self-correction ratios for the following study are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Participant's Self-correction Rates in Grades 1, 2, and 3

Student	Grade 1 Self-correction Rate	Grade 2 Self-correction Rate	Grade 3 Self-correction Rate
A	1:0	1:2	1:0
B	1:2	1:2	1:2
C	1:1	1:1	1:1
D	1:3	1:1	1:7
E	1:0	1:3	1:2
F	1:1	1:1	1:1
G	1:2	1:3	1:0
H	1:0	1:1	1:3
I	1:3	1:2	1:1
J	1:3	1:8	1:2
K	1:2	1:4	1:2
L	1:3	1:2	1:2
M	1:4	1:2	1:0
N	1:2	1:1	1:4
O	1:2	1:2	1:5
P	1:0	1:3	1:0
Q	1:0	1:4	1:3
R	1:2	1:4	1:1
S	1:3	1:1	1:0
T	1:0	1:4	1:3

Findings reveal that the average self-correction ratio was 1:2 in grade one, 1:3 in grade two, and 1:2 in grade three. There was an increase in the average self-correction rate from grade one

to two, but a decrease from grade two to three. From grades one to three, 25% of participants' self-correction ratios remained the same, 40% of participants' self-correction ratios increased, and 35% of participants' self-correction ratios decreased. The average self-correction ratio remained less than 1:3 by grade three revealing that the majority of participants were self-monitoring their reading which impacts students' reading growth process that shapes them into fluent readers. During the year in which participants were in grade two, self-correction rates exceeded 1:3 for 25% of participants. By looking at the context of the guided reading program, this finding reveals that guided reading impacts students' reading strategies which are an integral part of the guided reading process for learners to become fluent and independent readers. Using guided reading strategies allows learners to self-monitor their reading and decode unfamiliar words to support readers in becoming more fluent. The two struggling readers, who received more guided reading sessions compared to their friends, had the highest self-correction rates with a 1:7 ratio for Student D in grade three and 1:8 ratio for Student J in grade two. The high self-correction rates of the two struggling readers show that their exposure to guided reading enhanced their use of reading strategies and led to self-corrections rather than errors. This process of them practicing the guided reading strategies will help them solve and decode unfamiliar words and read more fluently. In conclusion, the self-correction rates findings of participants in this study showed a positive correlation between guided reading and reading fluency.

4.1.3 Accuracy Rates Findings

Accuracy rates were calculated as part of finding a correlation between guided reading and reading fluency. These rates were calculated by subtracting the number of total errors from the total words read, then dividing it by the number of total words read and then multiplied by a hundred to get the rate as a percentage. Accuracy rates reveal whether the text is easy enough,

too difficult, or challenging enough yet not frustrating for the reader. The findings of participants' accuracy rates are found in table 3 below.

Table 3

Participant's Accuracy Rates in Grades 1, 2, and 3

Student	Grade 1 Accuracy Rate	Grade 2 Accuracy Rate	Grade 3 Accuracy Rate
A	98%	100%	98%
B	98%	98%	97%
C	100%	99%	100%
D	98%	99%	99%
E	100%	98%	98%
F	100%	99%	99%
G	97%	98%	100%
H	100%	100%	100%
I	97%	99%	99%
J	99%	94%	97%
K	98%	97%	97%
L	96%	99%	99%
M	96%	99%	100%

N	96%	100%	97%
O	98%	96%	96%
P	97%	96%	100%
Q	96%	97%	100%
R	97%	96%	100%
S	96%	100%	98%
T	100%	97%	97%

Findings show that the average accuracy rate for participants in grade 1 was 97.8%, 98% in grade two, and 98.5% in grade three. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), accuracy rates ranging from 95% to 100% show that the text was good enough for independent reading; instructional leveled reading accuracy rates range from 90% to 94%, and difficult reading is revealed through an 89% or below accuracy rate (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). All accuracy rates in this study ranged from 96% to 100%, except for one of the struggling reader's accuracy rate, Student J with a 94% in grade two. This shows that Student J still needed instructional reading assistance and scaffolding by the end of grade two. Even though accuracy rates are calculated to reveal more about readers' fluencies, the accuracy rates in the context of this study played no significant role in proving that guided reading positively correlates to reading fluency through reading accuracy. Teachers who administer reading records look at the accuracy rate to make sure that the text selection given aligns with the student's needs and reading capabilities. However, in this study, accuracy rates reflected the right selection of running record administered, increasing the credibility and validity of this study's findings rather than proving a correlation between guided reading and reading fluency.

4.2 Guided Reading and Independent Reading Findings

Independent reading is the second dependent variable in this study and the reading levels of participants were collected from the end of each academic year of grades one, two, and three. Participants' reading levels from grades one, two, and three are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Participant's Reading Levels in Grades 1, 2, and 3

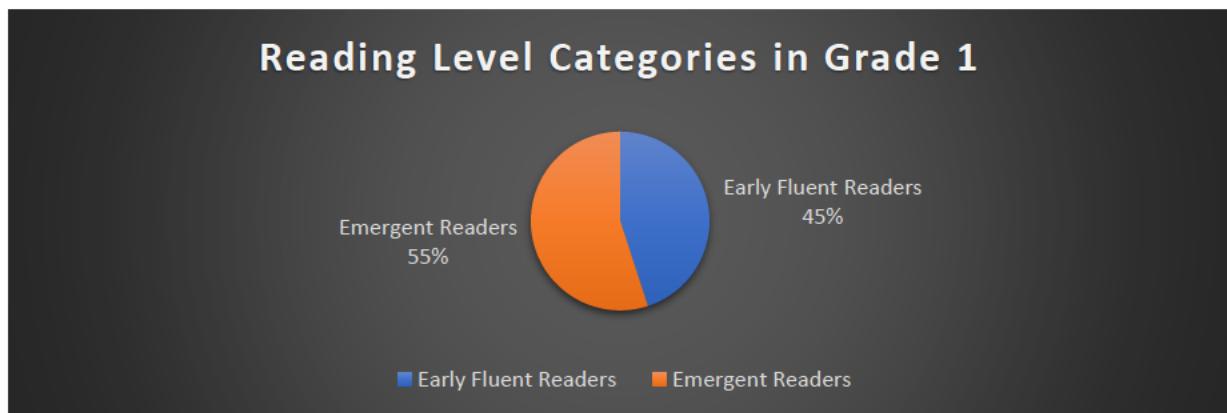
Student	Grade 1 Reading Level	Grade 2 Reading Level	Grade 3 Reading Level
A	M	N	R
B	J	M	Q
C	I	L	P
D	F	L	Q
E	I	M	O
F	L	N	R
G	L	N	R
H	L	N	R
I	J	M	Q
J	E	K	O
K	I	L	P
L	K	M	Q

M	J	M	P
N	J	M	Q
O	K	L	Q
P	I	M	Q
Q	L	N	R
R	L	N	Q
S	L	N	R
T	I	M	R

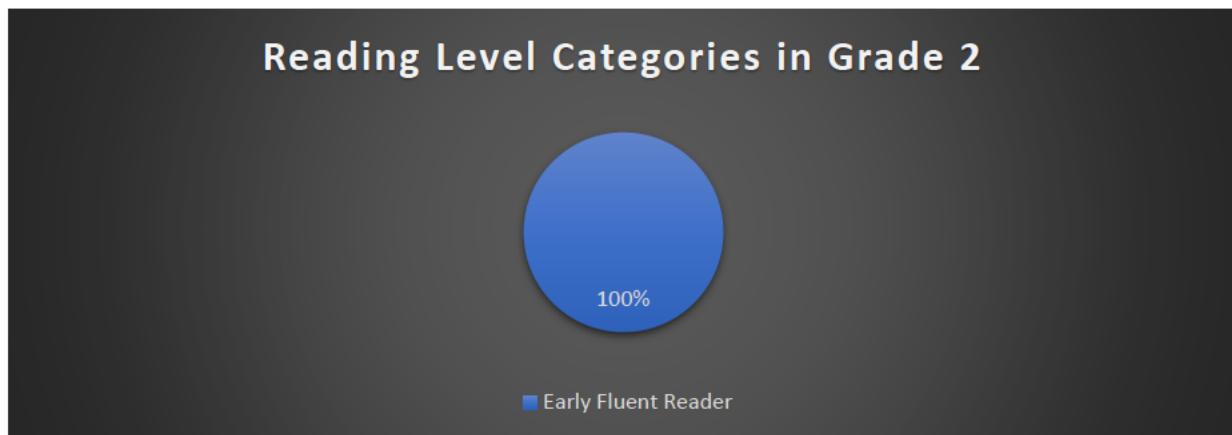
Participants' reading levels varied each year, yet findings show that there is a positive correlation between guided reading and independent reading. All participants' reading levels increased throughout the years with an average of 1.5 level increase from grades one to two and 2.5 levels from grades two to three. More specifically, 45% of participants enhanced 6 reading levels in total, 25% of participants enhanced 7 reading levels in total, 10 % of participants enhanced 5 reading levels in total, 5 % of participants enhanced 8 reading levels in total, 5% of participants enhanced 9 reading levels in total, 5% of participants enhanced 10 reading levels in total, and 5% of participants enhanced 11 reading levels in total. Student D and Student J, the struggling readers who received extra guided reading sessions, were the readers who enhanced 11 and 10 reading levels, respectively. Fountas and Pinnell (2017) categorized the reading levels in four categories: reading levels A to C fall under the 'Early Emergent Reader' category, reading levels D to J fall under the "Emergent Reader" category, reading levels K to P fall under the "Early Fluent Reader" category, and reading levels Q to Z fall under the "Fluent Reader" category (Fountas & Pinnell,2017). Findings of participants'

categories through grades one to three are presented in Pie Chart 1, Pie Chart 2, and Pie Chart 3 below.

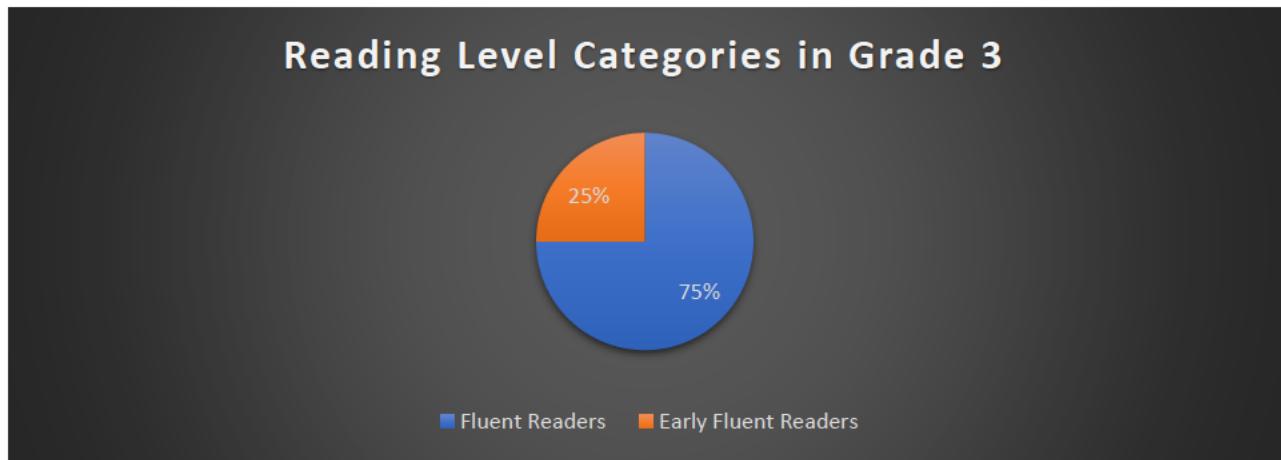
Pie Chart 1



Pie Chart 2

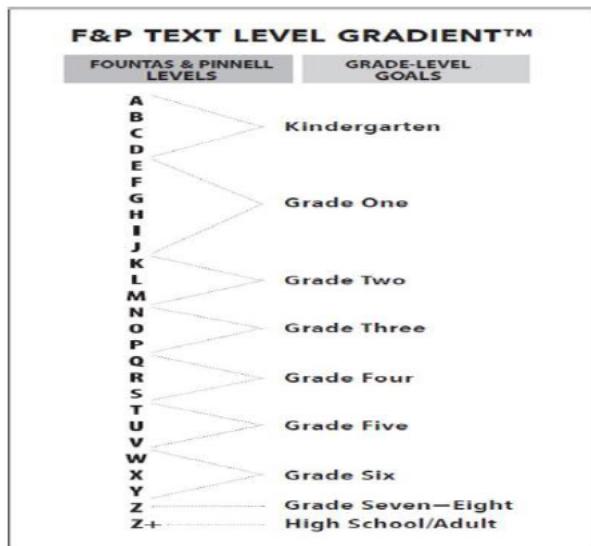


Pie Chart 3



Findings show that in grade one, 45% of participants were early fluent readers and 55% of participants were emergent readers. In grade two, all participants fell under the ‘early fluent reader’ category with a 100% as shown in the graph. Lastly, in grade three, 25% of participants’ reading levels enhanced in the same category which is the ‘early fluent reader’; and 75% of participants were fluent readers by then end of grade three. More specifically, Fountas and Pinnell’s (2012) text level gradient shows which grade level it must align with, as presented in Picture 1 below.

Picture 1



The grade-level goals on the F&P Text Level Gradient™ are intended to provide general guidelines, which should be adjusted based on school/district requirements and professional teacher judgement.

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9/9/16

(Fountas & Pinnell,2012)

According to Fountas and Pinnel's text level gradient (2012), 55% of participants read at a grade 1 level and 45% read at a grade two level by the end of grade one. By the end of grade two, 65% of participants read at a grade two level and 35% read at a grade three level. Finally, by the end of grade three, 25% of participants read at a grade three level and 75% read at a grade four level. These findings show an enhancement of reading levels and alignment with grade level goals, hence proving a positive correlation between guided reading and independent reading.

4.3 Anecdotal Records Findings

Findings from the qualitative part of this study are presented in the following section. The data analysis of anecdotal records in this study plays a role in making further revelations on the correlation between guided reading and reading fluency, and guided reading and independent reading. Anecdotal records revealed the challenges participants faced as readers throughout the three years. The data consisted of two parts which included the observations of teachers and the recommended next steps for participants to reach their reading goals. Three main themes were derived through analysis of data which included reading fluency, reading comprehension, and independent reading. In grade one, the anecdotal records portrayed the behavior of participants' reading fluencies with comments such as 'uses finger', 'stops at unfamiliar words', and 'pauses'. This shows that the biggest challenge for participants in grade one was reading fluently and solving unfamiliar words. However, this challenge was a work-in-progress for participants as 60% of first grade anecdotal records stated that the reader stops at unfamiliar words and uses strategies to solve them. Another challenge in grade one was retelling; 35% of participants' anecdotal records showed that this area related to reading comprehension needed work. In grade two, challenges and goals shifted in which readers were now working on reading with expression (shown in 35% of participants' anecdotal records) and focusing on a detailed and sequential retell (shown in 40% of participants' anecdotal records). Next, grade three

anecdotal records findings showed that 25% of readers needed prompts to answer inferential questions related to the text. The analysis of anecdotal records shed a light on the reading challenges and instructional focuses which changed throughout the years. When it comes to reading fluency, learners' fluencies were still emerging in grade one and they were experimenting with various strategies to solve unfamiliar words. In grade two, the focus shifted towards not just reading fluency, but also reading with expression. As for readers' fluencies in grade three, anecdotal records showed no pattern of struggle in that area. As for the next theme, reading comprehension, participants in grade one were expected to retell the main events in the text and then work on a more detailed retell in grade two. In grade three, anecdotal records reflected the focus on reading comprehension and using higher order thinking skills, rather than reading fluency and independent reading. Finally, patterns related to independent reading were only shown in the first-grade anecdotal records of the two struggling readers who needed more scaffolding and extra teacher prompts.

In conclusion, anecdotal record findings backed up the quantitative data findings as it revealed how guided reading affected learners' reading. While the numbers showed a positive correlation between guided reading and reading fluency, as well as guided reading and independent reading, the analysis of the anecdotal records revealed different patterns each year. These patterns reflected participants' reading behaviors, shedding a light on their strengths and the challenges they were facing at different reading levels throughout the years. In addition, these findings reflected instructional and learning targets of the cohort in grades one, two, and three as reading levels increased and reading objectives advanced. For example, in grade one, reading fluency was the main instructional target as readers were still pausing and trying to solve unfamiliar words. The target changed in grades two and three as learners became more fluent; teachers focused on scaffolding 'reading with expression' and 'reading for meaning'.

More explanation on the effects of guided reading on reading fluency and independent reading revealed from the quantitative and qualitative data are found in the discussion section below.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The results of the present study proved positive correlations between guided reading and reading fluency, and guided reading and independent reading. The quantitative data analysis clearly shows the positive effects of guided reading on both dependent variables, reading fluency and independent reading, as results signified participants' reading growth. With the purpose of determining whether guided reading is an effective instructional tool to support students' reading, limitations of previous research has been taken into consideration to answer this study's research question: "How does guided reading promote reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades?". While guided reading has been theoretically shown to promote reading achievement, the present study's findings rely on the results of guided reading in practice for the course of three years on a mixed-ability cohort of 20 participants. Hence adhering to the significance of this study and in order to describe how guided reading promotes reading fluency and independent reading, the quality of execution of the program must be taken into context for transferability of results and for aiding educators in bettering their instructional practices. Quality guided reading instruction is executed by teachers who are well-knowledgeable of the program, well-trained in administering running records, and who consistently follow various aspects of guided reading sessions (such as one-on-one sessions, focused group sessions, and whole group sessions). Quality guided reading also means that there are enough resources, such as different leveled texts and books, in addition to having no time constraints due to curriculum demands. All of which applied to the school in which the study took place.

Reading fluency, the first dependent variable explored in this study, is promoted through guided reading in the primary grades. According to the National Reading Panel (2005), reading with accuracy, speed, and proper expression makes a reader fluent (NRP, 2005). The increase in the average of error rate ratios prove that participants' reading fluencies enhanced as they were making less errors while reading. Making less errors allows readers to read with more accuracy and speed. As for reading with expression, the analysis of the anecdotal records reveals that reading with expression was a focus in grade two. However, in grade three, anecdotal records did not include patterns of working on reading with expression as part of participants' next steps. Hence, participants worked on reading expression in grade two and reached reading fluency by grade three. Moreover, self-correction rate findings serve as proof to the positive correlations between guided reading and reading fluency and guided reading and independent reading, in which the average self-correction rates by grade three remained below the ratio of 1:3. This means that participants were self-conscious enough to self-monitor their reading independently and read more fluently autonomously. An important revelation on how guided reading promotes reading fluency and independent reading was shown through the findings of the self-correction rates and is backed up by anecdotal record analysis. The following study proves that scaffolding and modeling of reading strategies to solve unfamiliar words is an essential part in the effectiveness of guided reading as a instructional tool. This goes to show that guided reading enhances that through scaffolding and modelling. The increase of the average self-correction rate ratio from grade one to grade two reflected the increased use of reading strategies taught through guided reading for readers to self-correct their errors. The average self-correction rate ratio decreased from grade two to three, reaching a ratio of 1:2, reflecting readers' autonomy in self-monitoring their reading and hence enhancing their reading fluency. Anecdotal record results increased the validity of this finding since 60% of participants during grade one stopped at unfamiliar words and used strategies to

solve them. A significant objective of teachers during guided instruction phase is not mastery, yet it is supporting and guiding learners through scaffolding in order to later assess what readers do with the scaffolds (Frey & Fisher, 2010). As for accuracy rates, findings came full circle in proving a positive correlation between guided reading and reading fluency in which accuracy rates were sustained within a high percentage range. However, in this study the accuracy rates data revealed more on the credibility and reliability of the running record findings, rather than directly proving the positive correlation between guided reading, and reading fluency. More specifically, accuracy rates proved that teachers selected texts that match participants' reading fluencies and independent reading levels.

The second dependent variable in this study which is independent reading also correlates positively to guided reading through the findings. The enhancement of reading levels throughout the three years clearly proves the effectiveness of guided reading on readers' individual independent reading. Even though progress was individualized, all participants showed reading growth through the progression of reading levels. Findings of reading levels prove again the positive correlation between guided reading and reading fluency since independent reading and reading fluency are interrelated. The more fluent a reader is, the more autonomous he/she will be, and vice versa. Data analysis according to Fountas and Pinnell's reading level categories (2017) showed that by the end of grade three, 75% of participants were fluent readers and 25% of participants were early fluent readers.

Additional significant findings from this study were derived from the results of the two struggling readers. Research has shown the importance of reading achievement and that learners who do not have strong literacy instruction in their early rudimentary years, rarely catch up in reading during later years (Iaquinta, 2006). The two participants who were categorized as struggling readers in grade one showed otherwise in this study. Student D and Student J were categorized as low emergent readers in grade one with the lowest reading levels

amongst all participants. Their error rates and self-correction rates also reflected their behavior of being beginning readers. Yet, their reading levels reflected their reading achievement more precisely and clearly. These two students were receiving extra guided reading sessions daily for fifteen minutes in grade one and the additional exposure and early intervention allowed them to catch up with their peers and reach grade level reading expectations in grades two and three. Student D leveled up eleven reading levels in total and Student J leveled up ten reading levels in total. The average reading levels participants enhanced is an estimate of seven levels, meaning that the struggling readers enhanced more reading levels due to the exposure of more guided reading sessions and small-group instructional scaffolding.

Moreover, findings of this study link the interrelation of reading comprehension to reading fluency and independent reading. Even though reading comprehension was not a tested variable in this study, findings of this study show that when readers struggle with their reading fluency, they take more time to use strategies to read than to comprehend the text. Anecdotal records portrayed that when reading fluency challenges decrease, reading comprehension learning targets become the main reading instruction focus.

Chapter Six

Limitations

Limitations of this study were minimized as much as possible to maintain credibility, validity, and reliability of results. Disadvantages to the retrospective cohort studies include social behavioral ways of data collection, such as interviews. The distortion of memories or the inability for participants to recall information from the past highly affects the reliability of data in retrospective cohort studies (Cohen, et al., 2018). However, in this study, no contact was issued with the participants as the study relied solely on previously collected data and information. One limitation in this study was that the data instruments have been administered by different teachers. Even though these teachers have been trained by the same literacy coaches and use the same resources, each teacher may assess differently. Therefore, quantitative data from the running records were taken from the end of each year throughout the three years and were compared with one another. As for the limitations regarding the qualitative data, teachers may be biased and perceive behaviors differently; therefore, the use of anecdotal record analysis relied on description of reading behaviors rather than labels to remain objective as much as possible. Finally, the sample size is also a limitation for generalizability, however since this study is a contextual study, results may be transferrable to similar contexts to help educators in the field of reading instruction to second language learners.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion and Further Recommendations

In conclusion, this retrospective cohort study examined the research question “How does guided reading promote reading fluency and independent reading in primary grades?” through data research. Data has already been collected for purposes other than research in a reputable school that has been implementing guided reading for the past ten years. Data of a cohort group (the same group of students through grades one to three) were collected and analyzed from the academic years 2016-2017 till 2018-2019. The research instruments used were reading running records and anecdotal records, which measured the growth of reading fluency and independent reading in those three years that the cohort group were exposed to guided reading instruction and leveled books. Three running records were analyzed for each participant, one from the beginning of each academic year. Data related to reading fluency was collected through the calculations of error rates, accuracy rates, and self-correction rates derived from the running reading records. Independent reading data was also collected from the running reading records which indicated the reading level of learners according to a gradient scale from A-Z. Qualitative data collected from anecdotal records reflected three main themes which included reading fluency, reading comprehension, and independent reading. The research and the quantitative part of the study proved a positive correlation between guided reading and both variables, reading fluency and independent reading. The qualitative part of the research backed up results of the quantitative data and revealed that guided reading promotes reading fluency and independent reading through the scaffolding of learners individually and the modelling of reading strategies where readers would use their acquired set of strategies to read successfully. Limitations from previous research were taken into consideration and the research took place in a school where quality guided reading was executed; meaning teachers were well-trained

and knowledgeable, time constraints were eliminated as guided reading was part of the school's curriculum and daily schedule, and resources were available. Recommendations for further literature starts with making sure the setting of research provides quality guided reading consistently for validity of results. Next, a bigger sample would provide more generalizable and transferrable results as this study's findings may only be transferrable to similar schools, students, and teacher contexts. In addition, future research on the correlation of guided reading and student motivation will give insight on how guided reading promotes life-long readers, which is an area of research that has not been investigated yet even though different reading components and variable in studies are interrelated. Ethical considerations were taken throughout this whole research to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the sample involved.

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Appendix

Table 1

Running Record Symbols and Marking Conventions

Reading behavior	Marking convention	Example
Accurate word reading	✓ above each correctly read word.	✓ ✓ ✓ The brown fox.....
Substitution (one error if not self- corrected; record one error regardless of the number of incorrect substitutions)	Write each word attempted above the actual word.	✓ brave ✓ The brown fox.....
Omission (one error)	— (long dash)	✓ — ✓ The brown fox.....
Insertion (one error)	Λ at point of insertion with the inserted word above it	✓ Λ little ✓ The brown fox.....
Repetition of one word (no error)	R (one repetition) R2 (two repetitions) R3 (three repetitions)	R The brown fox.....
Repetition of phrase (no error)	R with line and arrow to the point of where the reader returned to repeat.	↑————R The brown fox.....
Self-correction (no error)	SC after the error to indicate child has corrected error.	brave/SC The brown fox.....
Intervention / student confused and unwilling to try again (one error)	Write TA if you need to tell student to "try again" and point to where he or she needs to try again. Place brackets around part of the text that the child had to try again.	TA [The brown fox].....
Intervention / unable to read a word (one error)	Write T above word if you tell the child the word after a 5–10 second wait.	T The brown fox.....
Beginning sound (no error)	Mark the beginning sound above the word if the child says it first, then a (check) if he or she follows with the correct word.	b/✓ The brown fox.....

Running Record Sample 1

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)								Level A
Reader's Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____			Independent Level: Yes No					
I See Sammy by Kathleen Urmston Level A 21 words								
Book Introduction: Show the cover of the book to the student and say this to the reader before he or she begins reading: <i>"I See Sammy</i> is a story about a puppy named Sammy. A man, who is Sammy's owner, is looking for him everywhere in the house. He finds other things, like his bone and his leash, but he can't find Sammy. Read to find out if he finds Sammy. I'll read the first two pages. Then you read the rest." Read pages 2 and 4 aloud to the child, pointing under each word.								
Check the reading behaviors you notice the child using. These notes may not determine the reader's independent reading level, but will inform your teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the reader match spoken words to printed words? (For example, if the text says, "I see the leash," and the child reads, "I see the rope," matching words correctly, she has met the criteria at this level. The mismatch of letter-sound will be addressed in C and D books). <input type="checkbox"/> Does the reader point under the words? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the reader move from left to right when reading? 	Running Record: Record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words as he or she reads. Although we are not assessing accuracy at this level, you can still gain valuable information from analyzing and coding the miscues with MSV.							
	E SC M S V M S V							
	2: (Teacher reads and points under each word.) I see the bed.							
	4: (Teacher reads and points under each word.) I see the bowl.							
	6: I see the bone.							
	8: I see the ball.							

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Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)

Level A

	10: I see the leash. 12: I see the dog.			E		SC		
		E	SC	M	S	V	M	S
<input type="checkbox"/> Does the reader use illustrations as a source of information?								

Scoring Note: Since Level A readers **are not** expected to use letter/sound support to read words correctly, your reader may substitute another word for "leash" – like "rope" (Page 10). This substitution is acceptable and **should not** be viewed as an error. You should only be checking for matching words one-to-one, pointing under words and moving from left to right.

Retell:

Say, "Please retell this story." Be sure to retell the important parts, and to tell them in order." Write notes regarding the student's retelling on the back of this page.

If the student has trouble getting started or says very little, you may use non-leading prompting. Examples of non-leading prompting include: What happened next? Can you say more? Did anything else happen? Make a note that you needed to prompt the student, as you will want to teach this student how to self-initiate more elaborated retells. The child may also refer back to the book as needed.

Use the Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retelling and responses to the comprehension questions are acceptable. See scoring guidance for specifics regarding how to account for the retell and the responses to questions in determining a student's independent reading level.

Sample retell may sound like this:

"The man (or boy or Dad) didn't see the dog. But he saw the dog at the end." or
"The man looks for the dog and finds other things. Then at the end he finds the dog."

Comprehension Questions: If the student's retell did not include answers to the following questions, please ask any/all of the questions that were not addressed. There are many acceptable responses to each question, some of which are listed below. The reader's response is acceptable as long as it demonstrates an accurate understanding of the text. As the reader answers each question, be sure to record the response carefully. The child may also refer back to the book as needed.

Question	Sample Acceptable Responses
1. Literal: What are some things the man sees when he is looking for Sammy?	At least two of the following: "His bed, his bowl, his bone, his ball, or his leash."
2. Literal: Where can Sammy sleep?	"In his dog bed." "Near the laundry." "On the couch."
3. Inferential: How do you think the man feels while he is looking for Sammy?	"He is not happy that he can't find Sammy." "He hopes that Sammy didn't get out of the house." "Mad because he is looking everywhere." "Sad because Sammy is gone."
4. Inferential: How does Sammy feel at the end of the story?	"Happy." "He is excited because he is going outside." "Happy because he found his Daddy." "Happy because he is going on a walk."

Notes on retelling (this may be a transcription or comments on students' ability to retell
in order and prioritize the key story elements):

**Student's replies to comprehension questions (if necessary because not addressed in
retell):**

1)

2)

3)

4)

Final Score

Evaluate the reader's use of Level A reading behaviors by referring to the side panels and the statements below.

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| Yes | No | The reader matches spoken words to printed words. |
| Yes | No | The reader moves from left to right when reading. |
| Yes | No | The reader uses the illustrations as a source of information. |
| Yes | No | Did the reader demonstrate literal and inferential comprehension through one of the following combinations of retell and responses: |
- A clear, accurate retell that incorporates answers to three out of four comprehension questions. (This may be with or without non-leading prompting. See directions for retell for more about non-leading prompting).
 - A mostly accurate retell PLUS acceptable responses to three out of four of the comprehension questions (or addressed in the retell). The retell need not be well-crafted or completely comprehensive, but if it indicates mostly inaccurate comprehension, try the next level down.

Is this the student's independent reading level?

- If you did NOT answer "yes" to all questions in this **Final Score** box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all questions in the **Final Score** box.
- If you answered "yes" to all questions in this **Final Score** box, the student is reading independently at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read independently at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all questions. The highest level for which you can answer "yes" for all questions is the student's independent reading level.

(Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Kit, 2014)

Running Record Sample 2

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels Levels L-Z+ (Fiction/Narrative)		
Reader's Name _____	Grade _____	Date _____
Excerpt from <i>Things Fall Apart</i> by Chinua Achebe pp. 3-5		
Level Z+ 660 words		
Independent Level: Yes No		
Accuracy Rate _____ %		
<p>Book Introduction: Say this to the reader before he or she begins reading the student copy of the text: "In this excerpt from <i>Things Fall Apart</i>, by Chinua Achebe, you will read about Okonkwo, a villager in Nigeria in the 1890's, and how he rose to fame and power." Please read aloud the first section. (Point to the line on the student copy to show the child where the first section ends.) After this part, you may read the rest silently. If you need to, you can reread the first part. When you are finished reading, I will ask you to retell what you have just read."</p>		
<p>During and after the Running Record, you may make these observations and notes to inform instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Self-corrects;<input type="checkbox"/> Pauses while reading to think;<input type="checkbox"/> Uses more than one strategy to figure out unfamiliar words;<input type="checkbox"/> Miscues make sense;<input type="checkbox"/> Miscues fit the syntax or structure of the sentence;<input type="checkbox"/> Miscues look similar to words in the text;<input type="checkbox"/> Figures out the meaning of unfamiliar words—if the child mispronounces a word during the running record, ask the child if they know the meaning of the word when they finish reading the excerpt.	<p>Running Record: Note: For this level of text complexity, the running record is not required for scoring. However, if you would like to conduct the full assessment, you may of course do so and consider the student's oral reading in addition to his or her comprehension. When scoring for this text, if the student misreads more than one of the names, count it as only one miscue, as the names will be tricky for most English-speaking readers and do not represent common challenges for this level of text.</p> <p>Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. (102 words)</p> <p>***** (Reader may read silently from this point on.) *****</p> <p>The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat.</p>	

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That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan. He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father.

Unoka, for that was his father's name, had died ten years ago. In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. If any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbors and made merry. He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime. Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbor some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts.

***** (*See Student Copy for the rest of this text.*) *****

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z+ (Fiction/Narrative)

Level Z+

Scoring the Running Record for Accuracy and Oral Reading Fluency

Total miscues including self-corrected: _____

Self-corrections: _____

Miscues reader did not self-correct: _____

Accuracy Rate: Circle the number of miscues per 100 words the reader did not self-correct.

100 Words	100%	99%	98%	97%	96%
	0 miscues	1 miscue	2 miscues	3 miscues	4 miscues
95%	94%	93%	92%	91%	90%

- 96%-100% = independent reading level of accuracy
- 90%-95% = instructional reading level of accuracy

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – Circle the Level that Best Describes the Student’s Oral Reading *Note: Oral Reading Fluency is not taken into account until Level K for determining reading level, though it should of course be considered and taught into at earlier levels.

Fluent	Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the text. Preservation of the author’s syntax is consistent. Most of the text is read with expressive interpretation. Pace is consistently conversational.
	Level 3	Reads primarily in three or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Some expressive interpretation is present; this may be inconsistent across the reading of the text. The pace is mixed: there is some faster and some slower reading.
Non fluent	Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage. Beginning a little expressive interpretation, frequently first seen when reading dialogue. The pace is somewhat slow.
	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur—but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax. No expressive interpretation. The pace is noticeably very slow.

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study and Zutell and Rasinski’s Multidimensional Fluency Scales (Zutell, J., & Rasinski, T. V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students’ oral reading fluency. *Theory Into Practice*, 30, 211–217. Please refer to the Benchmarks for Student Progress for details regarding Oral Reading Rate.

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Retell:

Say, "Please retell this story." Be sure to retell the important parts, and to tell them in order." Write notes regarding the student's retelling on the back of this page.

If the student has trouble getting started or says very little, you may use non-leading prompting. Examples of non-leading prompting include: What happened next? Can you say more? Did anything else happen? Make a note that you needed to prompt the student, as you will want to teach this student how to self-initiate more elaborated retells.

Use the Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retelling and responses to the comprehension questions are acceptable. See scoring guidance for specifics regarding how to account for the retell and the responses to questions in determining a student's independent reading level.

Comprehension: Questions: If the student's retell did not include answers to the following questions, please ask any/all of the questions that were not addressed. There are many acceptable responses to each question, some of which are listed below. The reader's response is acceptable as long as it demonstrates an accurate understanding of the text. As the reader answers each question, be sure to record the response carefully.

Question	Sample Acceptable Responses
1. Literal: Why is Okonkwo famous?	"He won a big fight; he's done a lot of important things; he's known for not having patience."
2. Inferential: Does this passage present Okonkwo's father in a positive or a negative way? What makes you think this?	"It's negative because Okonkwo thinks his father is lazy – and Okonkwo can't stand laziness; Negative because he borrows so much money; It's positive because we see how Okonkwo's father loved music and was able to be happy;"
3. Inferential: How does Okonkwo feel about his father and why?	"He's embarrassed by him because the father is so unsuccessful; he is annoyed and upset by him because the father is the kind of person Okonkwo can't stand; frustrated because Okonkwo himself is so respected but his dad isn't."
4. Inferential: What do you think life is like in the villages? What makes you think this?	"Pretty hard because there is a cold and dry wind that blows making everything hazy and so dry; There are many kinds of people – some people are like Okonkwo and really responsible and others are like his dad, irresponsible, but they still live there."

Notes on retelling (this may be a transcription or comments on students' ability to retell in order and prioritize the key story elements):

Student's replies to comprehension questions (if necessary because not addressed in retell):

- 1) Why is Okonkwo famous?

- 2) Does this passage present Okonkwo's father in a positive or a negative way? What makes you think this?

- 3) How does Okonkwo feel about his father and why?

- 4) What do you think life is like in the villages? What makes you think this?

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z+ (Fiction/Narrative)

Level Z+

Final Score

- | | | |
|-----|----|---|
| Yes | No | Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%? |
| Yes | No | Did the student read with fluency? (a score of 3 or 4 on the Oral Reading Fluency Scale)* |
| Yes | No | Did the reader demonstrate literal and inferential comprehension through one of the following combinations of retell and responses: |
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*Note: Oral Reading Fluency is not taken into account until Level K for determining reading level, though it should of course be considered and taught at earlier levels.

(Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Kit, 2014)