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THE EFFECT OF GUIDED READING
ON READING ABILITY AND MOTIVATION

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

Emphasis: TESOL

Department of Education

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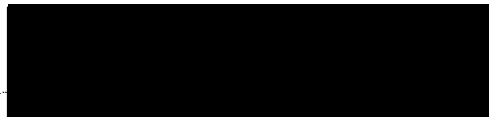
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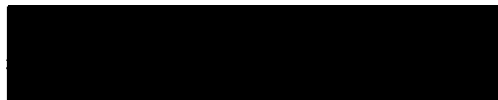
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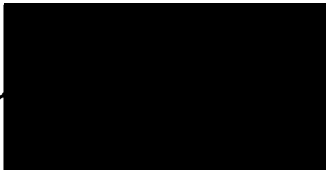
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Dedication

To my two guardian angels,

Mom and Dad;

I can't thank you enough.

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Abstract

This small-scale case study was conducted to investigate the effects of the guided reading approach on struggling students' reading abilities and their motivation to read. Four struggling readers from grade three were purposively chosen to participate in the study. The Scholastic Reading Inventory in its two forms, students' documents, teacher observations, running records, individual student reading conferences, and interviews with the students' parents or tutors were used to assess progress in the participants' reading abilities and determine the effect of guided reading on them. Similarly, teacher observations, conferences, interviews, and the Reading Survey from The Motivation to Read Profile were employed to provide data about students' reading motivation after their participation in the guided reading program. Findings showed that the implementation of guided reading helped struggling students improve their decoding skills, built up their fluency, and increased their motivation to read. It also improved the struggling readers' vocabulary and comprehension skills, albeit to a lesser extent. However, had the program been implemented in grades one and two, it might have yielded better results. Further research is needed to track the effect of guided reading on students' reading abilities along different grade levels and to explore its effect on the reading abilities and motivation of students of different genders.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

Guided reading is an instructional approach that helps students become independent readers through tailoring reading instruction to their needs. By matching books to diverse individual students, every child has the opportunity to read at his or her rate of development with a similar ability group and with the guidance and support of the teacher. This approach “provides the supportive framework for the systematic yet flexible instruction readers need to develop their skills” (Schulman & Payne, 2000, p.7).

The Purpose of the Study

This case study describes how a guided reading program was implemented in two third-grade classrooms at A+ School. It tracks the changes in struggling readers’ abilities in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension during and after the implementation of the program. It also explores the relation between guided reading and struggling readers’ motivation to read. Thus, the purpose of this study is to find out how guided reading influences the reading abilities of struggling readers and their motivation to read.

Research Problem, Key Questions, and Proposition

My research investigates whether or not the guided reading approach increases third grade struggling readers’ motivation and reading abilities. Two research questions that emerge are the following:

- 1- How does guided reading affect struggling readers' reading abilities?
- 2- How does guided reading affect struggling readers' motivation to read?

What I expect is an improvement in students' reading abilities and motivation after the implementation of the program. This proposition is based on previous research done in this field (Anderson, O'Leary, Schuler, & Wright, 2002; Conklin & Wilkins, 2002; Gabl, Kaiser, Long, & Roemer, 2007; Klingbeil, 2003) which showed that the guided reading approach had a positive effect on students' reading achievement and their motivation to read.

Variables and Operational Definitions

In this study, there is one independent categorical variable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), which is the guided reading approach, and two dependent quantitative variables, which are the reading abilities of struggling readers and their motivation to read.

Guided reading is a teaching approach for small group reading instruction for students with similar needs. Students are grouped for daily reading instruction in small achievement level groups of 5-7 students (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Reading abilities are acquired skills including decoding (analyzing the word according to the sound of component letters), fluency (reading like everyday speech), comprehension (constructing meaning), and vocabulary (making sense of text) necessary for student success in reading (Klingbeil, 2003).

Motivation is the ability to remain focused on task and reading motivation is the value one places on reading and his/ her beliefs regarding reading topics and outcomes (Dörnyei, 2001a; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Rationale

During my years of teaching third grade at A+ School, struggling readers, who scored low on vocabulary and comprehension tests and who read basal texts with less than 50% accuracy, were pulled out to get special remedial instruction. However, as studies predicted, ‘remedial classes keep remedial learners remedial’ (Tomlinson, 1999), and this kind of intervention was ineffective in most cases. The students who were pulled out were still struggling and unmotivated when they came back to the regular classroom. They fell behind and became frustrated as texts from the basal became harder. Since guided reading offers an opportunity for students to read texts at their own level in a socially supported learning environment (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), I decided to implement it in my classroom to find out whether or not it is an effective strategy for improving struggling readers’ abilities and enhancing their motivation to read.

Significance

Guided reading is hailed as one of the best practices related to balanced reading instruction. A considerable body of research demonstrated the positive effects of this approach on students’ reading abilities (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

In Lebanon, research on effective reading programs is limited. Chaaya (2006) investigated the effects of guided reading on second grade students. Her subjects were of mixed reading abilities, and her study did not tackle the issue of whether or not the program increased the students’ motivation to read.

My study, however, focuses on how guided reading influences struggling readers, as they are the ones in a dire need of an effective intervention to help them improve and meet grade level

expectations. Moreover, in this study, the effect of guided reading on struggling readers' motivation to read is also highlighted, since an increased motivation plays a major role in promoting achievement (Alderman, 2004).

This study sheds light on a viable instructional approach that may improve the performance and motivation of struggling readers. Although the results from this study cannot be generalized, they may support previous research done in this field and contribute to the field of education in Lebanon.

Brief Overview of the Study

This paper includes five main chapters. In the introduction, the purpose of the study was explained as well as its significance and the rationale behind conducting the research. The research problem and questions were stated and a proposition was formulated. The variables were identified and clearly defined. The following chapter will review the literature by presenting research directly related to this study. Chapter three will describe the research design, the sampling method, and the instruments used. It will further explain the procedure followed and data analysis procedures, and discuss validity, reliability, and ethics. In chapter four, data collected from the instruments will be listed, along with the findings significant to the research questions. Finally, the fifth chapter will summarize the results, discuss their implications and significance, list the limitations of the study, and make suggestions for future research.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the purpose, rationale, and significance of the study. It poses the research problem with its two key questions and defines the variables. It further gives a brief overview of this research paper.

The following chapter discusses the characteristics of struggling readers and the instructional strategies to help them improve. It describes the guided reading approach and reviews the literature on its effects on students' reading abilities and on their motivation to read.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

Children who experience difficulties in reading are a great concern for educators. As the struggling child moves up from grade level to another without possessing the basic reading proficiencies, the gap between the child and his or her peers widens. While it is easy to cross this gap in the early years of schooling, it becomes harder and harder to bridge it later on. It has been shown that if by fourth grade a child has difficulty reading age-appropriate materials, he or she will not likely be able to develop the reading skills necessary for him or her to progress successfully through school (Helman, 2005; Wren, 2002).

Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, and Fletcher (1996) conducted a longitudinal study of children from kindergarten to ninth grade and reported that seventy-four percent of the students who had difficulties in reading in third grade did not draw level with their peers and were still suffering from the same reading problems in grade nine.

Wren (2002) suggested that with extensive and intensive remedial instruction bridging the gap is possible, but by then the struggling child would be suffering from low self-concept as a reader and his or her motivation to learn would become the major impediment for success.

Differentiating instruction enables teachers to address the needs of struggling readers (Boutelle, 2008; Tobin & McInnes, 2008). This responsive teaching is more likely to result in higher student achievement than the 'one-size-fits-all' teaching since struggling readers need more focused instruction beyond what a whole-class setting can provide (Cox, 2008; Tomlinson, 1999).

Guided reading is one popular form of differentiated instruction that starts at the student's reading level and building up on it to achieve improved student learning, using leveled texts and small homogeneous yet flexible groups (Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

This chapter describes struggling readers and the instructional and motivational strategies used to improve their comprehension and motivation. It further reviews the literature on the effect of differentiated quality -instruction, like the guided reading approach, on their reading comprehension and motivation to read.

Who Are the Struggling Readers?

Carlisle (2004) and Tobin and McInnes (2008) defined struggling readers as those who have difficulty reading, who view the reading task as a highly challenging one, and who fall behind their peers in developing the standard language skills. Moreover, Balajthy and Lipa-Wade (2003) differentiated between three kinds of struggling readers:

- the catch-on readers who are students in the primary-grade experiencing difficulties in vocabulary building, word recognition, and comprehension,
- the catch-up readers who are elementary-grade students reading below their grade level and having difficulty recognizing words, developing sight vocabulary, and comprehending texts, and
- the stalled readers who are elementary or secondary grade students making no or little progress in reading and having unsatisfactory word recognition and comprehension skills. Some stalled readers are known as 'dyslexics.'

“Dyslexia is a language-based information processing difficulty” (Townend, 2005, p.10).

Dyslexic students have difficulty learning how to read and write, thus they are subject to educational failure.

Struggling readers have problems in recognizing words. They depend on context clues to identify new words and on pictures to guess at word meaning. They are also slow decoders and have difficulty segmenting words into syllables and sounds and blending sounds to produce words. Since they cannot recognize words automatically, they need a great deal of short-term cognitive capacity to decode, and thus relatively little is left for comprehension. It is very hard for a slow decoder to comprehend long sentences and to maintain the development of meaning in long texts. Moreover, struggling readers face difficulties in making inferences, linking ideas in a text, and monitoring their comprehension (Pressley, 2006).

What Do Struggling Readers Need to Comprehend Texts?

The main aim of reading is to comprehend and make sense of what is read. Effective reading comprehension instruction focuses on teaching strategies that address the different basic reading skills. Since reading is a hierarchy of skills, comprehension instruction requires a coherent flexible association of all reading processes to ensure and increase students' understanding (Gill, 2008; Learning First Alliance, 2000; Pressley, 2000, 2006).

Applegate, Applegate, & Modla (2009), Coles (1998), Learning First Alliance (2000), Pressley (2000), and Pressley (2006) identified five major reading proficiencies that students should master to understand texts and become independent strategic readers. These proficiencies are decoding, fluency, vocabulary, world or background knowledge, and active comprehension strategies.

Decoding

Decoding is analyzing the sounds in unfamiliar words and blending them to arrive at their correct pronunciation (Walpole & McKenna, 2007). Children cannot comprehend texts unless they know how to decode and read the words. They have to know how to associate letters to sounds and blend sounds to read words. However, sounding out words in a text correctly does not mean that a child understands the text, if he or she does not recognize words automatically. Thus, struggling readers should be given explicit instruction in decoding and word-recognition skills, and these “skills must be developed to the point of fluency if comprehension benefits are to be maximized” (Pressley, 2000, p.2).

Fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read connected text *accurately* at a conversational *rate* and with appropriate *prosody* or expression (Grabe, 2004; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

Reading accuracy is the ability to decode correctly. Struggling readers should be taught automatic word identification strategies, like identifying letters and letter combinations, blending phonemes and phonograms, and using decoding by analogy (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

Speed of reading, or reading rate, is also related to automaticity. The more automatic word-recognition is, the more effortless and rapid one moves through text. Appropriate reading rate approximates conversational rate or rate of oral speech. Struggling readers often read slowly and laboriously. Since slow reading results in deficient comprehension, they often fall short of completing their work and lose interest in what they are reading (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

Repeated readings of text and having struggling readers read under time pressure tend to increase reading rate, and facilitate and improve comprehension (Grabe, 2004; Montgomery & Hayes, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2007). Rereading allows readers to become familiar with the text and to concentrate on understanding it (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2007).

Prosody is the expressive phrasing of connected text (Walpole & McKenna, 2007). It involves intonation or variations in pitch and stress patterns. Reading with appropriate prosody means that the reader comprehends what he or she is reading. Struggling readers read monotonously and without expression or appropriate phrasing, and they miss the morphemic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic cues that help organize what they are reading into meaningful phrases. Repeated readings and modeling of prosodic reading give the struggling child opportunities to practice accurate and fluent reading and provide him or her with a fluent example, thus positively affecting prosody (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary, or word knowledge, is critical to comprehension (Grabe, 2004; Learning First Alliance, 2000). Vocabulary can be acquired in two ways: either by instruction or incidentally. Research shows that reading comprehension improved as a result of vocabulary instruction. Students who received vocabulary instruction outperformed others who did not on comprehension tests (Pressley, 2000).

Pressley (2000) argued that incidental vocabulary learning has latent drawbacks since children may get wrong word meanings. However, vocabulary knowledge increases when students read richly contextualized texts. Extensive reading is encouraged as a means to learn

new words. The more words a child knows, the easier for him or her to acquire yet more new words.

Struggling readers do not have a rich vocabulary repertoire and are less engaged in rich and extended language interactions than good readers are. Hence, explicit teaching of vocabulary through concept or word maps before and after read-alouds is beneficial to struggling readers and leads to greater vocabulary gains (Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

World or Background Knowledge

Background knowledge helps students make inferences and provides a strong support for understanding. Thus, it has a great effect on reading comprehension. Students who have rich background knowledge about the subject of a text tend to understand the text better than others with limited prior knowledge (Grabe, 2004; Miller, 2005). Anderson and Pearson's (1984) schema theory suggests that readers make a better sense of texts when they use their background knowledge. The readers must possess adequate prior knowledge to comprehend what they are reading.

Struggling readers, however, do not often relate their prior knowledge to the text they are reading, even if they possess adequate prior knowledge. Therefore, they need to be oriented and encouraged to ask questions about the text and relate it to what they know. Pressley (2000) stressed on the importance of the "why" questions as they help students make sense of the reading. Text previewing also helps struggling readers with low prior knowledge better comprehend a text since in this way their general background knowledge is activated (Grabe, 2004).

Active Comprehension Strategies

Students' comprehension is enhanced by teaching them several reading comprehension strategies. These are techniques readers use to make certain they comprehend adequately. Comprehension strategies involve activating background knowledge, setting a purpose for reading, previewing and predicting, summarizing, retelling, generating questions, making inferences, employing compensatory skills like rereading, and monitoring comprehension among others (Connor, Jakobsons, Crowe, & Meadows, 2009; Grabe, 2004; Snow, 2001; Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

Struggling readers have very few of these techniques at their command. They fail to make inferences, associate ideas, or answer questions about a text. They are often not aware of their own comprehension; i.e. why they are reading, when they comprehend, and when they do not (Pressley, 2006; Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

Teacher scaffolding and modeling to use these strategies is essential first until students learn to employ the strategies independently (Grabe, 2004; Pressley, 2000). Gill (2008) proposed dividing comprehension instruction into pre-reading, during reading, and post reading stages as this division improves students' comprehension "and provides opportunities for teachers to demonstrate strategies that readers can use at each stage" (p.109).

Pre-reading activities include readers with a purpose for reading, activating prior knowledge, using graphic organizers, previewing, and predicting. During reading discussions, using different types of questions (Right-there, Think and Search, and On Your Own), think-alouds, drawing story maps, and rereading are strategies that help students understand better and monitor their comprehension. Finally, students extend their understanding after reading by

writing in response to texts, summarizing, retelling, and engaging in creative activities such as composing poems, letters, or visual representations of texts (Gill, 2008; Miller, 2005).

Motivating Struggling Readers

“For students to become effective, life-long readers, they must have both the *skill* and the *will* to read” (Johns & Lenski, 2005, p.2).

Literacy learning is as much influenced by students’ abilities as by their motivation. Teachers view motivation as a key factor in improving students’ achievement in reading, and it is “an integral component of reading instruction” (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1995, p.9). Students’ motivation to read is responsible for why they decide to read, how much time they are willing to spend reading, and how intensely and enthusiastically they are going to pursue reading (Dörnyei, 2001a). Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) defined reading motivation as “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (p.405).

Motivation plays a mediating role between frequent reading and achievement in reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Research studies revealed a reciprocal relation between high motivation and increased reading achievement. Success in reading can increase students’ motivation to read and hence a higher reading success (Gambrell et al., 1995; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Pressley, Dolezal, Raphael, Mohan, Roehrig & Bogner, 2003). Therefore, students with higher motivation spend a longer time reading, increase their reading comprehension, and experience higher reading achievement than do less motivated students (Grabe, 2004; Renninger & Hidi, 2002).

Motivation theorists considered 'expectancy of success' and 'task value' as two major elements of motivation. Eccles (1983) proposed an 'expectancy-value' theory which became one of the most well-known contemporary theories in motivational psychology. It suggests that students' motivation is influenced by their anticipation for accomplishing a task successfully and the value they attach to the task. In other words, students are motivated to read if they believe they are going to perform well in a certain reading activity - based on their previous performance in reading - and if they consider the reading material as worth learning. Conversely, students will not invest their effort in a reading task if they are convinced they cannot succeed in it or if it does not yield valued outcomes (Dörnyei, 2001a; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) and Pressley (2006) reported a decline in children's motivation to read as they advance in school years. This is especially true of struggling readers. Students who have difficulty in reading in the primary grades are vulnerable to deterioration in their motivation to read. They believe that they can do nothing to achieve, and so they have no motivation to try (Gambrell et al., 1995; Pressley et al., 2003). Moreover, struggling readers tend not to exert any effort for reading and are not dedicated to fully understand what is being read. They also develop negative attitudes toward reading (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer, 1996).

Some instructional practices are shown to positively affect struggling readers' motivation and enhance their learning outcomes. To be engaging, tasks and activities given to students should be meaningful, interesting, appropriately challenging, and require a high level of thinking (Alderman, 2004). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) defined interesting texts as single-authored texts that match the reader's topic interest and his or her cognitive competency. Students understand better when provided with topics relevant to their interest since such topics arouse their curiosity and promote more attention and effort (Alderman, 2004; Dörnyei, 2001b; Stipek, 2002). Pressley

(2006) maintained that books about cars or animals and funny stories are good examples of books that early grade students are interested in reading.

In addition to their attractiveness, and for texts and activities to be motivating, they should be a little beyond the student's current reading competency level; i.e. within the student's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Alderman, 2004; Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003; Pressley, 2006). The ZPD is the distance between what a student is able to do on his or her own and what he or she can do with expert adult assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers should start instruction at the students' reading level, assist the students and teach them strategies for comprehension and problem solving at their level, and gradually lessen the amount and type of help as students assume responsibility for their own work (Alderman, 2004).

Furthermore, Pressley (2006) and Pressley et al. (2003) identified some teaching practices that proved to have a positive impact on increased students' engagement and motivation to read. Teachers who are highly motivating

- fill their classrooms with interesting books of varying levels,
- set challenging yet attainable goals for learning,
- use different types of grouping for instruction,
- scaffold instruction and offer assistance and guidance to students,
- have positive individual and group interactions,
- model and teach comprehension and high-order thinking skills,
- make relevant connections across texts and activities, and
- provide opportunistic mini-lessons to extend students' learning.

Differentiated Instruction: The Guided Reading Approach

Students come to class with diverse backgrounds and varied abilities. They learn in different ways and at different levels and rates. Teachers have to modify and differentiate instruction if they want to accommodate the learning needs of all students and maximize their potentials. (Boutelle, 2008; Cox, 2008; Tobin & McInnes, 2008).

Tomlinson (1999) defined differentiation as instruction with the students' differences in mind. "Differentiation is an organized yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning to meet kids where they are and help them to achieve maximum growth as learners" (p.12).

Recent research supported differentiated instruction and revealed that children in differentiated classrooms were more inclined to be on task, showed greater growth in reading comprehension skills, and attained higher reading comprehension scores than children in other classrooms (Connor et al., 2009).

Differentiation in the language classroom mainly include (1) using authentic reading materials that match the varying competency levels of students and (2) meeting in small homogeneous yet flexible groups to scaffold instruction and attend to the students' individual needs (Tobin & McInnes, 2008). Matching books and texts to readers is critical for struggling readers and it "is the foundation for helping students build and expend reading strategies across the grades" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p.83). Effective teaching involves a good match between readers and the books they read. This match enables readers to successfully engage in processing the network of understandings, develop their reading competencies, and expand their reading powers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999, 2006).

Struggling readers do not improve by struggling through reading material they don't understand. If a struggling reader is forced to read texts that are too difficult, reading becomes a tedious pronunciation of separate words; the reader loses both the meaning and the enjoyment of reading. He or she becomes frustrated with the process and his or her motivation to read is greatly undermined (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Tomlinson, 1999). Hence, over-challenging struggling readers with texts that are beyond their reach reduces their self-confidence and stunts their growth as readers (Stenner, 1996).

Conversely, reading too-easy texts does not give struggling students the opportunity to learn and apply comprehension and problem-solving strategies that are critical in accessing more complex texts over time (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Given a simple text or task suppresses the struggling readers' thinking and weakens their motivation (Tomlinson, 1999).

Using 'just-right' books is one necessary factor in the success of a differentiated reading program (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). To improve students' reading progress, teachers should expose them to properly targeted texts; texts that play on their 'edge.' Stenner (1996) claimed that there are no struggling readers, but rather "mistargeted readers who are being challenged inappropriately" (p.23). Using 'just-right' books nudges the readers beyond their current stage of reading development and helps them increase their processing systems. A 'just-right' book provides the context for developing an effective reading process by presenting the right amount of challenge and expanding the readers' abilities (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

"A reader's comprehension of text is a function of the difference between reader ability and text readability" (Stenner & Stone, 2004, p.1). Thus, comprehension is achieved when the reader's ability is appropriately matched with the text readability. For reading to be successful, there should be a balance between the difficulty of text and the student's reading skill

represented by 75% comprehension rate or higher (Stenner & Stone, 2004). Stenner (1996) reported that reading at this rate makes readers comfortable and confident with the text.

Furthermore, it was shown that the enjoyment of reading and the motivation to read increased as a result of offering kids materials that matched their respective reading levels (Wolfe, 2005).

Placing students in small, homogeneous, yet flexible groups based on their readiness, needs, and reading skills is another effective way to differentiate instruction (Connor et al., 2009; Cox, 2008; Pressley, 2006). The small-groupings create additional instructional time so teachers can better address the students' learning needs (Boutelle, 2008).

Tomlinson (1999) argued against both heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings of students and proposed a 'flexible-grouping' setting to provide equity and excellence for all learners. In heterogeneous one-size-fits-all classrooms struggling readers do not enjoy success. They are left to catch up with more competent readers. Such classrooms swallow them and do not contribute to their development as readers. Along the same lines, placing struggling readers in homogeneous classes results in a slackened pace of learning and little growth for these students; since in such classes teachers' expectations are low, the reading materials are simplified, and there are no genuine learning experiences.

In contrast, students in a differentiated classroom are not force-fitted into a standard mold. Homogeneous groups that change often according to the learners' needs help struggling readers develop their reading skills and help teachers maximize their students' progress. Such groupings give struggling readers opportunities to learn at their level of readiness and they shift as the learners' needs change. Learning in such groups is adjusted to each learner's appropriate

“zone”, and it escalates in challenge and complexity for learners to develop continually (Tobin & McInnes, 2008; Tomlinson, 1999; Schulman & Payne, 2000).

One of the most well-known models of differentiated and balanced instruction that uses leveled texts and homogeneous, flexible groups is guided reading. Guided reading was first practiced in New-Zealand’s balanced reading programs and was later developed by Fountas and Pinnell (1996) (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

Guided reading is an instructional approach that matches diverse individual students to appropriate reading material. The goal of this approach is to help learners become independent and strategic readers. Teachers bring together small, homogeneous, yet flexible groups of four to six students who have similar needs and are at a similar stage of reading development. With the support and the continuous observations of the teacher, students read, discuss, and respond to leveled books that are within their control but that present a few challenges. The guided reading approach is designed to expand individual students’ abilities to process texts with accuracy, fluency, and understanding, and to broaden their repertoires as readers. Regrouping students and changing text levels over time are essential elements in a guided reading program: Students are regrouped based on their needs and texts are gradually advanced to increase the challenge to students (Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez & Rascón, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 1999, 2006).

The first step in planning for a guided reading program is to identify students with similar needs and assign them to groups. The teacher selects reading texts that match students’ instructional reading level and meets with each group two or three times per week. There, the teacher introduces the text, models reading strategies and concepts, engages students in a general discussion about it to expand their background knowledge, and explains basic key words. Second, students read the text silently under the teacher’s supervision and guidance. The teacher

observes and scaffolds each student's application of reading strategies, and provides help when needed. The teacher also takes anecdotal records to assess students' performance and determine the next instructional focus. During the third and final step, after reading, the students in each group and the teacher discuss the text, and students may work on follow-up activities, like answering different kinds of questions (literal, inferential, evaluative) or extending the meaning through response to the book and through word study (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Schulman & Payne, 2000; Reid, 2005). Guided reading should occur daily for 20 or 30-minute sessions for students to get consistent optimal reading gains (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Shulman & Payne, 2000).

Avalos et al. (2007) modified the guided reading lesson to cater to the needs of English-Language Learners (ELLs). In Modified Guided Reading (MGR), the teacher presents culturally relevant texts, and after reading, students are required to keep vocabulary journals and write assignments that connect to the texts. An MGR lesson differs from the typical guided reading one in the analysis and discussion of text. The teacher in the MGR lesson has not only to model strategy instruction, but also to note and explain vocabulary words, figurative language, homophones, homographs, and complex syntax which may be confusing or new to ELLs.

Effects of Guided Reading on Students' Reading Abilities

The use of guided reading produces positive results with respect to students' reading abilities. Research (Anderson, O'Leary, Schuler, & Wright, 2002; Avalós et al, 2007; Chaaya, 2006; Chevalier, Del Santo, Scheiner, Skok, & Tucci, 2002; Conklin & Wilkins, 2002; Gabl, Kaiser, Long, & Roemer, 2007; Klingbeil, 2003) indicates that students show improvement in reading abilities as a result of participating in a guided reading program.

Klingbeil (2003) noted that third grade students engaged in the guided reading program scored higher in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension tests than students in the literature-based classrooms. However, the students in the literature-based classes demonstrated greater gains in these skill areas over the nine-week span of the study. The researcher concluded that the guided reading approach is a viable one, especially for the struggling third grade readers, as it helped them reach grade level expectations.

An action research conducted by Anderson et al. (2002) targeted primary grade students in four schools in the United States' Midwest, and revealed that students' fluency improved as well as their independent working habits after the completion of the program. They were able to organize information, sequence events, compare and contrast, predict, elaborate, and visualize major literary elements in a story. Students also showed significant progress in decoding and comprehension skills, and their comprehension test scores improved. Students' scores on comprehension tests ranged from 33% to 75% before the implementation of guide reading. Correct responses increased to range from 50% to 100% after the intervention with guided reading.

Moreover, second and fourth grade students developed their fluency and comprehension skills through the intervention with leveled books and flexible grouping (Gabl et al., 2007). The results of the study demonstrated a positive growth of 25% in fluency and 34.1% in comprehension scores for 2nd graders, and 26.2% in fluency and 21.4% in comprehension scores for 4th graders.

Similarly, Chavelier et al. (2002) reported that guided reading enabled growth in elementary students' reading comprehension. Almost half of the participants in the study

(48.2%) showed positive gains in comprehension, and 61% of the students were reading at or above their grade level after the intervention with guided reading, compared to only 41.2% at the beginning of the study. Along similar lines, 95% of fourth graders in Conklin and Wilkins' study (2002) improved their overall reading skills and demonstrated an increase in the standardized test scores by an average of 71% after the implementation of a four blocks framework, which included guided reading.

In the Lebanese context, a case study by Chaaya (2006) examined the effects of guided reading on the reading abilities of six second-grade students. The researcher concluded that the guided reading approach helped all six students, who were below, at, and above grade level successfully apply the reading strategies they were taught. Furthermore, the children made unexpected progress in reading albeit at different rates. The 'low' readers were reading at grade level, while the 'average' and 'high' readers gained up to three grade levels after the implementation of the program.

Effects of Guided Reading on Students' Motivation

Although the research studies mentioned above focused on studying the effect of guided reading on students' reading abilities, a few of them showed that guided reading also had a positive influence on students' motivation.

Conklin and Wilkins (2002) observed that students displayed an increase in motivation and an appreciation for reading. They gained self-confidence and were engaged in enjoyable reading experiences. They also showed enthusiasm and interest in reading.

Even though Klingbeil (2003) reported a general decline in students' attitudes toward reading by the end of third grade, she contended that children in the guided reading classrooms showed declines toward academic reading than did their peers in the literature-based classrooms.

Chaaya (2006) did not touch upon students' motivation, but noted that the students' perceptions of themselves as readers positively changed. They asserted that reading became easier for them and that they enjoyed reading better after participating in the guided reading experience.

Furthermore, the leveled texts used in guided reading strengthens the struggling readers' confidence in their abilities (Stenner, 1996) and makes reading a satisfying, desirable activity (Johns & VanLeirsburg, 1994). The small flexible grouping maintains students' engagement and facilitates learning in a socially supported environment (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Conclusion

Literature on struggling readers, differentiated instruction, and the effects of the guided reading approach on students' reading abilities and motivation was reviewed in this chapter.

The next chapter discusses the methodology used to conduct this research study. It identifies the participants and describes the instruments used to collect data. It also presents the procedures for data analysis and the measures of validity, reliability, and ethics.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter sheds light on the methodology used in this research study. It gives detailed description of the context, the participants, the instruments, and the data analysis procedures used, in addition to evidence of validity and reliability measures.

Method

By definition, a case study is a research design that observes an individual unit. It focuses on the particular and involves using a variety of methods to collect extensive data to provide understanding of the unit being studied (Burns, 2000; Wisker, 2001). To serve the purpose of this research, a qualitative small-scale observational case study was conducted, as this kind of research method provides an in-depth investigation of a certain situation (Burns, 2000; Wisker, 2001); in this case, the effect of guided reading on the reading achievement of selected struggling students and on their motivation to read.

Context

The study was conducted in A+ School, a school in the mountains that includes around 450 students coming from medium socio-economic status families. The classrooms observed were two sections of grade three, with each section containing 17 students.

Consent

I was the researcher and the third grade English teacher at the same time. I was given the permission from the school principal to conduct the research in my classes. Informed consent of parents was also obtained: A consent form (Appendix A) was sent to parents to let them know the nature, the purpose, and the duration of the study. The parents were assured that the data concerning their children would be private and confidential. All parents signed the consent form. Moreover, permission was granted for me to use the Reading Survey of The Motivation to Read Profile for research purposes (see Appendix F).

Sampling and Participants

The usual method of sampling in qualitative research, and especially in a case study, is the purposive sampling. The sample is selected based on prior information about the participants and on the researcher's judgment as he/she believes it will yield the data needed and the best insight and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The definition of the unit to be studied is crucial as it separates it from the general population (Burns, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Thus, in this case study, a homogeneous purposive sample was chosen whose members had a certain trait in common: They were third-grade struggling readers. They were behind their peers in developing the standard language skills (Carlisle, 2004). They do not meet grade level expectations, have low scores on comprehension tests, and read basal material with less than 50% accuracy.

Although all the students in third grade at A+ School were engaged in guided reading activities, only the struggling readers who performed poorly on tests in the first half of the first

quarter were selected for participating in the study. To make the selection more accurate, the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) Form A was administered and the selected students also did poorly. They were reading way below their grade level. These students were four: two twin sisters, a boy, and a girl (They will be referred to as TS1, TS2, B, and G respectively).

TS1 and TS2 were nine years old and repeating third grade. They had deficient comprehension skills as shown by their results on reading comprehension tests and the SRI pre-test. They had difficulty decoding and sounding out words, and they often mispronounce words, such as /kilford/ for Clifford. They also wrote 'gril' for 'girl.' The sisters were not diagnosed for dyslexia or for any other disorders, like memory disturbances, mental retardation, or low IQ. However, Carreker (2008) suggested that children who have difficulty in learning to read, mispronounce words, have difficulty developing vocabulary, stumble over long words, show poor reading comprehension, reverse letters when reading, make many spelling mistakes, and read slowly and laboriously may be dyslexic. While TS1 was lively, shared her experiences with her group members (although in poor English), and seemed to enjoy reading and to be excited when a new book was introduced to her group, TS2 was shy and withdrawn. She seldom shared in book discussions, and even when prompted her response would be brief and barely audible.

B was an energetic eight-year-old. He's the only son of divorced parents and lives with his aunt. Like TS1, he contributed to book discussions when asked to, but he didn't share TS1's enthusiasm for reading new books. He complained about reading-response assignments, and said he hated writing in response to texts. His results in comprehension tests and performance on SRI pre-test were way below grade level. He was a slow decoder and a poor reader and writer.

G was cheerful but very talkative. She would fight for her turn to read, and wouldn't wait to share her opinions and experiences during book discussions. She seemed to enjoy reading, but like the other participants, she had low scores on comprehension tests and the SRI pre-test. She read at a good rate, but had lots of mispronounced words. Sometimes, her answers to questions related to the books she read were incomprehensible and didn't make sense.

Procedure

In this research study, the guided reading lessons were closer to MGR than the typical guided reading lesson. Guided reading sessions were held almost everyday for 20 minutes, and the remaining time was allocated for reading from the 3rd grade basal, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary instruction, in addition to writing workshops. Guided reading lessons took the following format:

After students' levels were identified using the SRI, the students were grouped according to the results of the pre-test and their previous performances on comprehension tests. There were four groups in each section of third grade, with each group consisting of four or five students. TS1 and G belonged to one group in one section, while TS2 and B were in another group in the other section.

Texts from Scholastic Guided Reading kits were given to students. These texts are leveled according to the Lexile Framework, which takes into account both the semantic and syntactic components of the text. The Lexile Framework is a tool that measures text readability and reader ability using a common unit called Lexiles (Stenner, 1996). "A Lexile measure on a text is the number representing the difficulty of that text based on sentence length and word frequency" (Scholastic, 1999, p.2). A student's reading comprehension is calculated based on the

difference between reader and text measures. Thus, the framework offers an easy way for matching the measure of a reading text with the student's reading ability to foster comprehension (Scholastic, 1999).

The groups met daily for 20-minute sessions as recommended by Fountas & Pinnell (1996) and Schulman & Payne (2000). However, guided reading sessions did not take place a few days before major school celebrations, like Independence Day, Christmas, Science and Humanities' Fairs. While a group was working with the teacher, the other groups were engaged in silent reading or word study. The teacher met with the participants' groups once or twice per week. She observed the struggling readers' behaviors and the strategies they were using and filled out an observation checklist (Appendix B). One struggling reader was focused on during a meeting and a running record (Appendix C) for that student was taken.

After reading, the students had to answer some questions about the text individually, and then the text was discussed. The questions included finding word meanings, making predictions, analyzing characters, identifying cause and effect, and summarizing among other reading skills. In addition to the questions, students had to respond to the text through a writing activity as suggested by Avalos et al. (2007).

Instruments

Seven instruments were used in this study to collect data about students' reading abilities and their motivation to read. The SRI, student documents, observation checklist, individual student conference, running records, and the parent interview yielded data about students' reading abilities of decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in addition to students' reading habits at home. The survey questionnaire, parent interviews, and the conferences with students provide information about students' reading motivation.

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)

SRI is a series of tests used to measure the students' reading abilities using Lexile units. An SRI -level 13- test, which approximates third grade, has two forms A and B. Each consists of 45 items sequenced from easiest to most difficult. Each item contains a text passage and a sentence-completion blank which can be filled with four possible choices of which only one is correct. After taking the test, the students' scores are converted to Lexile measures using a correspondence table.

In this study, SRI Form A was used as a pre-test to identify struggling readers who were reading below their grade level and to match the students to appropriate texts from the Scholastic Guided Reading kits. Form B was used as a post-test to assess students' reading comprehension after their participation in the guided reading program. Students' scores on both forms were compared to measure their reading gains.

Running Records

A running record is a tool proposed by Clay (2002) to record what students do while they are reading. It allows teachers to get an idea about the reading strategies students are using, and help them identify gaps in these students' reading process. A student's accuracy rate helps the teacher determine if the text is easy, just-right, or difficult for students. Just-right books are those read with 90-94% accuracy (Shulman & Payne, 2000).

In this study, a running record was taken for the struggling readers on their second reading of every book given to them during guided reading lessons to assess their reading fluency and to gain insight into their reading strategies, like self-correction, rereading for comprehension, and using context or picture cues to identify new words.

Individual Student Conferences

An individual student reading conference (Appendix D) is an instrument that provides the student with methods of reflection and self-evaluative thinking. The teacher and the student sit together to discuss what the student's strengths, weaknesses, and needs in reading are. They try to find solutions, make plans, and set goals for reading development. They also schedule a later meeting to discuss changes and progress (Robb, 1998).

The teacher met with each struggling reader three times: before, during, and after their participation in the guided reading program. During each conference, a "Conference Form for Students" adapted from Robb's *Easy-to Manage Reading & Writing Conferences* (1998) was filled, where the student and the teacher listed the student's needs and discussed ways to help him/her improve.

Observations

The usual method of data collection in a group case study is the participant observation, as it is a rich source of real-life data (Wisker, 2001). Being the classroom teacher and the researcher at the same time, I assumed the role of an 'overt participant observer' or 'participant-as-observer' where I "[participated] fully in the activities in the group being studied, but also [made] it clear that [I am] doing research" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p.450).

I pre-categorized my observations and developed a schedule where I closely observed one struggling student at a time during a guided reading session. I recorded my observations in a checklist I developed to note certain reading processes and comprehension strategies the student was using.

The parents/tutors of the four struggling readers were interviewed at the end of the guided reading program to gain an understanding about their children's reading motivation and reading habits at home. TS1 and TS2's father refused that the interview be taped, so quick notes of his responses were taken. The interview with B's aunt (who was responsible for him because his father was abroad) was taped using a cassette recorder that is battery-operated and has a built-in microphone. G's parents did not involve themselves in their child's work at home, so the G's tutor was interviewed instead. The interview with the tutor was done over the phone and brief notes were taken.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires seem to be an easy and logical method of collecting data from a large number of participants (Wisker, 2001). The Reading Survey from the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) was administered to all students in third grade after the implementation of the guided reading program to assess the students' reading motivation.

The MRP was designed by Gambrell et al (1995), and it is based on Eccles' (1983) expectancy-value theory. The Reading Survey (Appendix F) is a Likert-type instrument that assesses two dimensions of students' motivation to read, namely the students' self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading. It consists of twenty questions, each with a four-point scale (Gambrell et al, 1995).

Dörney (2001a) questioned the accuracy of using a single questionnaire at one point in time for measuring motivation. He argued that such measurement would not truthfully represent the students' motivation of a lengthy behavioral sequence like reading. That's why interviews,

observations, and conferences were considered as other instruments to track students' motivation to read over time.

Validity and Reliability Measures

The adequacy of the instruments used in this study was determined by a competent judge (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The instruments had content validity since they represented the contents they were designed to measure, and they yielded valid findings about the issues under study. Comparison between observation notes, running records, tests, documents, conferences, and interviews that measured students' reading abilities obtained criterion-related evidence of validity. Similarly, results from the questionnaire, interviews, and conferences were compared to get valid data that measured students' motivation to read. Moreover, the variables in the study were clearly defined, and the proposition was formed and tested to get construct-related evidence of validity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Wisker, 2001).

Burns (2001) noted that when the different methods of investigation to collect data produce similar results, then the researcher is likely to have legitimate findings. In this study, the results obtained from the seven instruments were analyzed and compared to guarantee that the research findings are reliable through triangulation which, Burns (2001) attested, is the best way to know what is reliable in qualitative research.

Ethics

This study is exempt from all threats to ethics in research. It did not put the participants under any risk, since testing, observation, and student conferences are normal school procedures. All names used (school, parents, tutors, and students) were removed from data collection forms, such as tests and conference reports. Participants were given pseudonyms to ensure

confidentiality. Moreover, no deception as to the purpose of the study was necessary. Approval to conduct the study was sought and was granted by the school administration. The parents of participating students were informed about the study, and they signed consent forms (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Data Analysis Procedures

In qualitative research, the researcher describes what happens, categorizes, and analyzes the data collected (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In this study, and to test the first proposition that guided reading will improve students' reading abilities, results from running records, observations, documents, conferences, interviews, and the SRI were compared. To test the second proposition that guided reading will increase students' motivation to read, results from the questionnaire, interviews, observations, and conferences were compared.

Data collected from the running records, that yielded information about students' reading strategies, were coded into four categories 1) accurate pronunciation 2) correct phrasing 3) self-correction and 4) rereading to improve phrasing. Similarly, the data from the teacher observations were divided into four categories to note students' progress in fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation, with each further divided into more subcategories (see Appendix B). The categories were determined before analysis began and were based on the purpose of the study. Content analysis was the technique used to study students' documents and to compare their progress over time. It is particularly valuable in analyzing and supporting interview and observation data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Moreover, the researcher quoted selections of transcripts or notes to support points she wanted to make (Swann, 2001). SRI results came to corroborate evidence about students' abilities derived from the afore-mentioned

instruments. All data were organized in chronological order to note the students' achievement in reading harder texts over time.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the research method used in the study was described, as well as the sampling method. The chapter also gave a detailed description of the four participants and the instruments used in the study. It further explains the procedures used in data analysis and discussed validity, reliability, and ethical measures.

The chapter that follows reports the results gleaned from the various instruments to show the effect of the guided reading approach on the struggling readers' reading abilities and on their motivation to read.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

This chapter describes the results gained from the seven instruments used in this study. Data from the teacher observations, running records, and individual student conferences are presented that show students' reading skills and comprehension strategies used during guided reading lessons. Data from the first part of the interviews revealed students' reading habits at home, and those from students' documents and SRI results showed students' reading gains after participation in the guided reading program. Moreover, results of the second part of the interviews, observations, and questionnaires are listed to show students' motivation to read and the value they placed on reading.

Results of Teacher Observations, Running Records, and Students' Conferences

After the struggling readers were identified and grouped together, they were given books that matched their reading levels. During the course of the study from mid November to mid April, the struggling readers read nine books, *Clifford the Big Red Dog* by Norman Bridwell, *The Bremen-town Musicians* by Ruth Belov Gross, *Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare* by Hans de Beer, *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* by Peter and Connie Roop, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* by Karen Backstein, *Bedtime for Frances* by Russell Hoban, *Frog and Toad Are Friends* by Arnold Lobel, *Katy and the Big Snow* by Virginia Lee Burton, and *How Much Is That Guinea Pig in the Window?* by Joanne Rocklin. These books increased in difficulty from 200 Lexiles which approximates first grade to 420 Lexiles which approximates second grade level.

Case 1: TS1

TS1 read the first book (220L) with 90% accuracy rate. She had 10 errors in the first 101 running words of the book as shown by the running record. She read very slowly, but with correct phrasing. She seldom self-corrected, and when she encountered an unfamiliar word she stopped and waited for the teacher's help. She tried sometimes to decode new words, but stopped at the first letter or syllable. However, she showed understanding of most events in the book and answered most questions about the book correctly. The second book was at 200L, and TS1 had read it before in grade two. She read the first 108 running words with only 4 errors, i.e. with 96% accuracy rate. She understood all events and could retell them with accuracy. She also read with correct phrasing at an appropriate rate. TS1 proved to have acquired new vocabulary through reading, for she could use the target words, like robbers, coals, and stabbed in sentences of her own. She also answered almost all questions correctly and could analyze the characters and the plot. A conference was set after TS1 had read the first two books to discuss her reading accuracy and comprehension. Checking the first letter and dividing a long word into parts were two strategies TS1 and the teacher negotiated to help TS1 in decoding. Rereading to check if the word makes sense and rereading for meaning were ways suggested to help her read better and understand what she read.

TS1's reading rate was still the same in the third book which was at 270L. She read slowly and stumbled over new words, like usually, quite, research, and embarrassed. However, the running record showed that she read the book with 96% accuracy rate making only 4 errors in the first 104 running words. She didn't read punctuation, and didn't know how to use the selected vocabulary words in sentences. She also couldn't make predictions nor remember most events in the book and answered only some comprehension questions about the characters and

the setting correctly. The fourth book at 260L was read with 95% accuracy rate. TS1 made only 5 errors in the first 108 running words, but read very slowly and didn't read punctuation. She couldn't use target words, like trimmed, supper, and waded in proper sentences, and answered only some comprehension questions correctly. Although she remembered most events, she couldn't retell them in order.

TS1 read the fifth book, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* (280L) at a faster rate and with 90% accuracy, making 9 errors in the first 101 running words. She read punctuation sometimes and tried to decode using the strategies discussed in the conference, but she still waited for the teacher's help when faced with new words like completely and realized. She was asked to reread to be able to answer questions. She remembered most events in order when she did, but she couldn't answer comprehension questions correctly. For example, when asked about the prince's character, she answered that he was sleepy and annoyed when the blind men raised their voices in his garden and disturbed him, instead of talking about his traits.

The second conference with TS1 took place in mid February after reading the above-mentioned three books. It was noted that TS1 was using the 'check-first-letter' strategy and her decoding skills improved although she still stumbled over long words. She also reread for meaning, but that didn't always help in improving her understanding of text. However, TS1 had a problem with acquiring new vocabulary words and using them in her writing, and sometimes she couldn't analyze character and plot. Using picture and/or context clues to figure out new words was the strategy agreed on by TS1 and the teacher to help TS1 understand the words she read. Asking questions like the 5W's and How (Who, Where, When, What, Why, and How) and taking notes while reading were suggested to gain understanding of the plot. Asking about what

the character did, what s/he said, and what the other characters said about him/her was a strategy recommended to aid TS1 in understanding and analyzing character.

TS1 showed improvement in reading the sixth book at 360L. She read most of the book correctly, making 4 errors in the first 98 running words, i.e. reading with 95% accuracy rate. She used the questioning strategies discussed in the second conference to make predictions, and analyze characters and plot. That also helped her in answering almost all questions correctly, except for those related to vocabulary. For example, she couldn't guess the meaning of skinny, moth, or spanking from picture and context clues, and couldn't use them in writing even after they were explained. The seventh book (400L) showed TS1's ability to read at a good reading rate with appropriate phrasing and very few mistakes, like replacing 'form' for 'from'. She read at a 96% accuracy rate, making 4 errors in the first 105 running words, and she self-corrected most of the time. This book was made up of five different anecdotes, and TS1 was able to sustain the development of meaning through all of them although they were read over several days. She remembered all events and showed the ability to retell them. She answered all questions correctly and was also able to guess words' meanings from context and using them in sentences. For example, she learned the new word 'meadow' and wrote, "I'm going to pick flowers with my friends in the meadow beside my house."

Katy and the Big Snow (420L) was the eighth book read by TS1 at 89% accuracy rate, with 11 mistakes in the first 105 running words. It proved to be a challenging book for her because she couldn't answer comprehension questions without many prompts and help from the teacher. Although she read at a good rate, she had many errors like saying 'soft' for 'south' and sounding out 'plow' like 'snow.' She also couldn't pronounce long words like department, railroad, and superintendent, which showed that she wasn't using the 'divide-word-into-parts'

strategy discussed in the first conference. Moreover, TS1 couldn't use target vocabulary words like drizzle and repaired in sentences although they were explained, and she only answered some questions correctly. She could analyze the main character, though, by describing her as helpful, brave, and well-liked, giving evidence from text to support her answer. The last book read was also at 420L and TS1 was able to read it with fewer mistakes. She made 7 errors in the first 103 running words, thus reading at a 93% accuracy rate. She learned some target words like grinned, vote, and iguana and used them correctly in her writing. However, she relied over much on pictures to figure out words especially the names of the pets, for she replaced 'iguana' with 'lizard' and 'tarantula' with 'spider' because she was reading the pictures instead of the words. Moreover, TS1 was asked to reread for meaning because she didn't understand the plot and couldn't remember most events without help. The last conference with TS1 was held by the end of April after all nine books were read. TS1's reading gains were discussed. She was using context or picture clues to figure out word meanings and used them in her writing. Her reading rate improved, but although she used questioning and note-taking while reading, she still had problems with understanding text depending on its level.

Table 4.1 TS1's running record scores

Book Title	Clifford the Bib Red Dog	The Bremen-town Musicians	<i>Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare</i>	<i>Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie</i>	<i>The Blind Men and the Elephant</i>	<i>Bedtime for Frances</i>	Frog and Toad Are Friends	Katy and the Big Snow	How Much Is That Guinea Pig in the Window?
Lexile level	220L	200L	270L	260L	280L	360L	400L	420L	420L
TS1's error rate	1:10	1:27	1:26	1:22	1:11	1:24	1:26	1:9	1:15
TS1's accuracy rate	90%	96%	96%	95%	90%	95%	96%	89%	93%

Furthermore, TS1 often showed great enthusiasm for reading and was always excited about starting a new book as noted by the teacher during observations. She said that the books were easy for her and that she understood everything, even though her responses to the comprehension questions were not always accurate. The last two books, however, were hard and TS1 didn't show the same enthusiasm for reading them as she used to do with reading books below 400L. She also said that they were not exciting mainly because she couldn't understand them.

Case 2: TS2

TS2 was less fluent than her sister. She read the first book with only 85% accuracy rate, making 15 mistakes in the first 101 running words, although the book was at 220L. She had lots of mistakes in long and short vowels, for she pronounced 'seek' as 'sick' and 'hides' as 'hids.' She also said /kilford/ for Clifford, and stopped at long words like Elizabeth and sometimes. Her reading was very slow, laborious, and monotonous, and she never reread to improve her phrasing. However, she was able to remember all events in the book and showed understanding of character and plot by answering all questions correctly. TS2's very slow reading rate and reading without expression led the teacher to conduct the first interview directly after TS2 read the first book in mid November. Repeated readings of familiar texts were recommended to improve TS2's reading rate. Decoding strategies like checking the first letter and reading by analogy were also suggested for a better reading accuracy.

Still, when reading the second book at 200L, TS2 showed a slow reading rate with many pauses and no expression. Her accuracy rate slightly improved to 88%, for she made 13 errors in the first 108 running words. TS2 could guess the meaning of target words, like robbers and coals,

and used them in sentences, like “The horrible robbers stole the money.” She also made accurate predictions and answered most comprehension questions correctly. The third book (270L) was read at 89% accuracy rate. TS2 had 11 errors in the first 104 running words. Her reading was still slow, and she stopped when encountering unknown words and waited for the teacher’s help. She wasn’t using the decoding strategies agreed on in the conference, for she still confused long and short vowels: She said ‘dip’ for ‘deep,’ ‘peel’ for ‘pile,’ and ‘slide’ for ‘slid.’ She didn’t know the meanings of the target words, like shivered, steep, and embarrassed, and couldn’t remember most events. She answered most questions incorrectly. A second conference was called for and it took place in mid January. The decoding strategies in the first conference were again modeled and reinforced. Moreover, rereading to improve phrasing was suggested because TS2’s reading was monotonous.

It seemed that the second conference was effective, because TS2 read the fourth book (260L) with better rate and accuracy than before. She was faster and had 9 errors in the first 108 running words, i.e. she read with a 91% accuracy rate. TS2 also read some punctuation especially questions, and she sometimes attempted to decode using the recommended strategies. She gained some new target words by using context clues and was able to answer most questions correctly. Better reading rate, accuracy, and phrasing were observed in TS2’s reading of the fifth book at 280L. She read with a 92% accuracy rate, making 8 mistakes in the first 101 running words. She showed understanding of plot, could analyze characters, and answered most questions properly. She also used target words in sentences, like “I like the scent of my mom’s perfume.” In the sixth book (360L), TS2 recorded the highest accuracy rate of 95%, making only 4 errors in the first 98 running words. Repeated readings of familiar texts paid off, for TS2 was reading at a good rate and with expression most of the time. She also self-corrected and didn’t

wait for the teacher's assistance when she met with unfamiliar words. She also gained new vocabulary words and could retell the book's events in some detail. TS2's reading progress continued, and she was able to read the seventh book (400L) with 93% accuracy rate. She made 7 errors in the first 105 running words. She read faster approximating conversational rate, and with better expression than before. She showed understanding of new words, answered almost all questions about plot and characters accurately, and could remember all events although the book had five chapters.

The eighth book, although only 20L levels higher than the one before it, was noted to be hard and challenging for this sister as well. TS2 made 12 errors in the first 105 running words, thus reading at an 88% accuracy rate. Her reading rate also dropped as she encountered many new and long words which she couldn't pronounce without help. She also couldn't decode multisyllabic words like highway department, railroad, and superintendent. She revealed a lack of understanding because she couldn't answer most questions about the book and could only give a brief description of the plot. The ninth and last book, also at 420L, was read by TS2 at a better rate and with better accuracy and prosody, but with little comprehension. TS2 registered a 93% accuracy rate, reading the first 103 running words with only 7 mistakes. However, she didn't understand the plot and had only one correct answer.

The third conference discussed TS2's improvement in reading. She was reading at a better speed than before, and she learned to read with better expression. She learned to use the decoding skills suggested in the first two conferences and was able to read most new words without help. She also developed the skills of analyzing plot and retelling, but like her sister, she still had comprehension problems with texts of high Lexile levels.

Table 4.2 TS2's running record scores

Book Title	Clifford the Big Red Dog	The Bremen-town Musicians	<i>Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare</i>	<i>Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie</i>	<i>The Blind Men and the Elephant</i>	<i>Bedtime for Frances</i>	Frog and Toad Are Friends	Katy and the Big Snow	How Much Is That Guinea Pig in the Window?
Lexile level	220L	200L	270L	260L	280L	360L	400L	420L	420L
TS2's error rate	1:7	1:8	1:9	1:12	1:13	1:24	1:15	1:8	1:15
TS2's accuracy rate	85%	88%	89%	91%	92%	95%	93%	88%	93%

TS2 reported in the first conference that she liked reading the books chosen for the guided reading lessons. However, this claim was not evident during teacher's observations. TS2 seldom shared in book discussions of her own accord. Unless a question was directed to her, she wouldn't answer, share her opinions, or relate events to her experiences. She was often a passive listener in her group, and seldom showed any enthusiasm for reading. Later, however, she started to show signs of motivation to read as she was focused on the reading tasks most of the time, but she was still reluctant to engage in group discussions because of her shyness.

Case 3: G

G was a fluent and enthusiastic reader. She registered the highest reading rate among the four participants. G read the first book (220L) with conversational speed and a high accuracy rate of 96%, having only 3 errors in the first 101 running words. Her rapid reading rate, however, resulted in her omitting or substituting words. G showed understanding of the plot by her ability to answer most questions correctly, but she couldn't remember or retell all events without the teacher's prompts. The second book was also read with good rate and phrasing, but G's problem

of skipping or substituting words persisted. She made 8 mistakes in the first 108 running words and registered an accuracy rate of 93%. G omitted and substituted words as she read the text:

Instead of reading “There was *once* a donkey...” G said, “There was a donkey...” She also read “If he won’t feed me, I will run away,” *said* the donkey instead of *thought* the donkey. When asked to reread the sentences with less speed, she was able to detect and correct her mistakes. G answered only some questions about this book correctly, but was able to predict and retell, and used target words in correct sentences.

G read the third book at a slower rate and that allowed her to make fewer mistakes. She had only 4 errors in the first 104 words of running text, thus reading at a 96% accuracy rate. She reread to self-correct without being asked to and answered some questions correctly. Similarly, G read the fourth book fluently, accurately, and with appropriate prosody, making only 3 errors in the first 108 running words, i.e. reading at a high accuracy rate of 97%. She was also able to make predictions, and answer some questions correctly. A conference to discuss strategies to improve G’s comprehension skills took place in mid February after she read the first four books. G had no problems with fluency, but her comprehension suffered. Rereading the text for meaning, questioning about plot and characters, and taking notes while reading were ways suggested to help G better understand what she read.

Observing G reading the fifth book showed that she was using the strategies suggested in the first conference. She took notes and used them to answer questions. Hence, she was able to answer most questions about plot correctly, and she could retell with accuracy and detail. She also used some target words in sentences, but she still couldn’t analyze characters. G read this book with 96% accuracy rate with 4 mistakes in the first 101 running words. Amazingly, she

read the sixth book with 99% accuracy rate, reading the first 98 running words with only 1 mistake. However, the running records only showed students' reading the first few pages of the books. G had more than one mistake in the following pages which contained harder words. Here too, she showed better understanding of text by answering most comprehension questions properly.

The seventh book (400L) was read well, but with less understanding than the two preceding it due to its length. Although G read it with 95% accuracy rate, making 5 errors in the first 105 running words, she couldn't sustain the development of meaning because the book was made up of five chapters and G had difficulty remembering all the events. Taking notes didn't help much because G still confused them. She also had difficulty in using the target words in sentences. For example, she used 'pleased' incorrectly in "I pleased my mom to go to my friend's house," meaning she begged her mom to let her go there.

As with TS1 and TS2, G found the eighth book (420L) hard to read. She made 11 errors in the first 105 running words, reading at her lowest accuracy rate, 89%. Because she didn't know some of the words, G ended reading statements as questions. She read the sentence, "Katy was a crawler tractor" as "Katy was a crawl crawler? tractor?" She also pronounced 'plow' like 'snow' and mispronounced 'tougher.' However, she understood the plot, answered most questions correctly, and was able to analyze Katy's character. She also used target words in good sentences. The last book was read at a better rate and accuracy. G made 8 mistakes in the first 103 running words, thus reading at a 93% accuracy rate. She was noted to rely on picture clues to know the names of the pets in the book. She was able to make predictions about whose team would win supporting her predictions with evidence from the book. Moreover, she showed a great ability to analyze character and plot, retell, and maintain development of meaning over

several days although the book was longer than the previous ones. The conference after G finished reading all nine books discussed her reading progress and noted her appropriate implementation of the strategies she learned to improve her reading comprehension skills.

Table 4.3 G's running record scores

Book Title	Clifford the Big Red Dog	The Bremen-town Musicians	<i>Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare</i>	<i>Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie</i>	<i>The Blind Men and the Elephant</i>	<i>Bedtime for Frances</i>	Frog and Toad Are Friends	Katy and the Big Snow	How Much Is That Guinea Pig in the Window?
Lexile level	220L	200L	270L	260L	280L	360L	400L	420L	420L
G's error rate	1:34	1:14	1:26	1:36	1:26	1:98	1:21	1:9	1:13
G's accuracy rate	96%	93%	96%	97%	96%	99%	95%	89%	93%

Concerning G's motivation to read, it was clearly evident during the observations that G was extremely motivated to read. She liked books and showed great eagerness to start a new book. She even requested to take some of her favorite titles home to reread them. G also shared her experiences and opinions about the books during group meetings and during the conferences. She was an active participant in book discussions, and she was so imaginative as to invent a story about herself stuck in the snow after she read *The Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare*.

Case 4: B

B was a very slow reader. He read the first book very slowly, but with very few mistakes, i.e. 4 errors in the first 101 running words and 96% accuracy rate. He read monotonously most of the time, and he struggled to decode words. He showed understanding of a few events only and needed a lot of assistance and prompting to remember and retell the story. He only answered

some questions correctly but briefly. The first conference was set after B read the first book because he had many problems in reading rate, prosody, and comprehension. It was recommended that B reread familiar texts to help him read faster. Reading with appropriate phrasing was modeled and rereading to correct phrasing was advised. Text previewing before reading and using different questions were two strategies suggested to aid B in comprehending text.

B still had the same problem of slow reading rate in reading the second book. He read it very slowly with no expression, but with a 98% accuracy rate, making only 2 mistakes in the first 108 words of running text. His comprehension didn't improve since he wasn't able to retell the events of the book, use target words in sentences, or answer questions correctly. The third book was also read at 98% accuracy rate with 2 mistakes in 104 running words. Here, B was observed to be reading at a slightly faster rate, self-correcting most of the time, and rereading to improve phrasing. He showed more understanding of plot by answering questions about major events properly, but he couldn't remember details. The fourth book at 260L was read in a similar manner. B read at a slow rate and with monotony, but he made only 2 mistakes in the first 108 running words, thus reading at a 98% accuracy rate. He also answered some questions about plot correctly, but couldn't figure out the meanings of target words, like trimmed, waded, and supper.

B read the fifth book (280L) at a slightly faster rate and with better phrasing. He registered an accuracy rate of 96%, having 3 errors in the first 101 words of running text. He showed understanding by answering most questions correctly. He remembered all the events in the book after rereading for meaning as was suggested in the conference, but he still couldn't use the words he learned in sentences. For example, he wrote, "I put a *flavor* on my food." Moreover, he was noted to show more enthusiasm for reading. Since B still had weak

comprehension skills, a second conference was scheduled by mid February. The positive point was that B was reading faster although he hadn't approximated conversational rate. It was recommended that B take notes while reading and use questions about characters and plot, like the 5W's and How to understand the text better and to remember more events and details.

B showed a significant improvement in reading the sixth book although it was 80L higher than the fifth. He read the first 98 running words with 99% accuracy rate, making only one mistake. He could also retell with great detail, extend text by relating it to his own experiences when prompted, and answer most questions accurately. Similarly, he read the seventh book at 400L with 98% accuracy rate, making 2 errors in the first 105 running words. Although he read at a slower rate than before and with no expression, he used the comprehension strategies taught to gain understanding of text. He reread for meaning and self-corrected most of the time, and he was able to answer most questions correctly. He could also retell all five chapters in some detail. B answered simple questions easily, but couldn't get analytical ones. For example, he knew that Toad was swimming slowly, but didn't know why because the answer was not there in the text. Moreover, B gained some target words like meadow, terrible, and sparrow and could use them in a sentence, like "I found a dead sparrow in the meadow. A terrible hunter shoot it."

Unlike the girls, B showed a great interest in reading the eighth book *Katy and the Big Snow* (420L). He said that he liked the story a lot because he liked bulldozers and trucks. He read it at a 96% accuracy rate, making 4 errors in the first 105 running words. He also read with better prosody. He remembered all events and answered almost all questions correctly. The last book was read at the same accuracy rate of 96% with 3 errors in the first 103 words of running text. B could make predictions, and he knew the answers to some questions, but he skipped some important details in retelling. He could use most target vocabulary words in correct sentences. In

the last conference in mid April, B agreed with the teacher that using the strategies discussed in the previous meetings led to better fluency and comprehension. Yet, B still needed a lot of practice in order to keep progressing.

Table 4.4 B's running record scores

Book Title	Clifford the Bib Red Dog	The Bremen-town Musicians	<i>Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare</i>	<i>Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie</i>	<i>The Blind Men and the Elephant</i>	<i>Bedtime for Frances</i>	Frog and Toad Are Friends	Katy and the Big Snow	How Much Is That Guinea Pig in the Window?
Lexile level	220L	200L	270L	260L	280L	360L	400L	420L	420L
B's error rate	1:25	1:54	1:52	1:54	1:34	1:98	1:52	1:26	1:34
B's accuracy rate	96%	98%	98%	98%	96%	99%	98%	96%	96%

In general, B wasn't interested in reading. He complained when he was asked to reread, share in book discussions, or extend text through writing. Later, his interest peaked while reading the seventh book because it was about cars, an interesting topic for boys. During the first two conferences, B admitted that he didn't like reading or writing, but he read because he had to. He said that he liked to listen to the teacher reading, but hated reading on his own. Later, he reported that he was enjoying the books given to him, and he was especially interested in books with a lot of illustrations, since, he said, they made him understand stories better.

Results of the Interviews

The first part of the interviews dealt with parents' or tutors' perceptions about the children's reading abilities. It consisted of five questions about the children's fluency, decoding,

vocabulary, and comprehension. The second part also included five questions that asked about the parents' or tutors' opinions of the children's motivation to read.

Cases 1 & 2: TS1 and TS2's Father

The interview with TS1 and TS2's father took place at the school's parent-teacher conference room in early May, but the father didn't agree about taping the interview, so brief notes were taken. The father said he believed that both his daughters were good in English. They read a lot and they read well, too. The books they took from school and the ones they had at home were easy for them. They didn't encounter any difficulties in reading these books. However, he noted that sometimes because the reading lessons from the basal were hard, TS1 and TS2 didn't know some of the words and read slowly, but they practiced reading the hard text until they read better. He added that both girls understood what they read, especially TS2 who usually told him about everything in a book. He alleged that she was very clever and sometimes she explained to him something in a book that even he couldn't understand. He didn't believe that they were weak or struggling readers although he knew that they were not doing well at school. At home, he said, they read and studied a lot and they liked it. TS1 and TS2's father was aware that his daughters participated in a reading program, but he said that he didn't detect any changes in their reading ability. They still had ups and downs.

Concerning his daughters' motivation to read, the father said that both TS1 and TS2 enjoyed reading. They read for each other, and when they were younger they used to enjoy being read to. They sometimes told him about the books they read at school if they were really interested in them. The father added that TS1 and TS2 spent a lot of time studying at home and they read every day. When asked about the time the girls spent reading at home, he said that it

depended on how much homework they had. When they had a lot to study, they didn't read much. The father also said that his daughters liked receiving books as gifts, and they had a lot of books at home. They always brought books from the classroom library to read, and they liked reading them.

Case 3: G's Tutor

Since G's tutor couldn't come to school, the interview was conducted over the phone in mid May. G's tutor said that G was a quick reader, but she read incorrectly. She invented as she read, and if she didn't know how to read a word, she usually replaced it with another with the same first letter even if it didn't make sense. If she made a mistake, she wouldn't stop, and the tutor would stop her and tell her to reread. She didn't try to decode or correct herself. The tutor felt that G read fast to finish work quickly.

Concerning G's vocabulary, the tutor said that G guessed at word meanings using pictures, and she didn't use a dictionary. Most of the time, the tutor stated, G's guessing was wrong; she didn't know how to express herself or explain what she read.

When she was asked about G's ability to comprehend, the tutor claimed that G always seemed to understand what she read, and she nodded through explanations. She usually got the general idea of a book, but if asked about details, she wouldn't be able to give right answers which showed a lack of understanding. The tutor perceived G's fast reading as a strength and weakness at the same time. Because G skipped or mispronounced words, she lost the text's meaning. She also didn't know a lot of vocabulary, and that too stood in her way to understanding. The tutor maintained that she didn't know about the guided reading program G participated in, and she wasn't sure whether G's progress was due to the program or not.

G's tutor declared that G took pleasure in reading, but she read quickly to finish the book. She liked the tutor to read to her, but they didn't always have time for that. Sometimes, the tutor said, G told her about the books read at school, and she read the books sent home with the tutor's help. The tutor said that she couldn't tell about how much time G read at home because she only had her for a couple of hours everyday to help her with her studies. She stated that G loved books, and was always excited about getting more. She read with enthusiasm, especially easy books or her favorite ones, and she liked rereading books she had from past years.

Case 4: B's Aunt

B's aunt talked extensively about him during the interview that took place at the school's parent-teacher conference room in early May. She asserted that B became better in reading and read faster than he did at the beginning of the year. He learned how to decode, could read hard words, and his pronunciation improved. When he read, B sometimes knew the word meanings from context. He knew a lot of vocabulary. Sometimes, the aunt would think that B didn't understand a new word, but he would surprise her with knowing it. He had an electronic dictionary that he liked to use, and he gained a lot of vocabulary words from using it. The aunt would make sure that B comprehended text by asking him questions about what he read, and he usually answered correctly. About B's strengths and weaknesses in reading, the aunt said that B understood the language although he didn't read fluently. Finally, the aunt believed that B's reading improved after the participation in guided reading, because he had to practice reading more books: His comprehension improved as well as his fluency.

Concerning B's interest in reading, the aunt declared that B liked being read to. When he got books from the classroom library, he usually gave them to his aunt to read them to him. He

enjoyed listening to any kind of stories. However, he didn't like to read by himself. Even if the story interested him, he read a little part of it. He couldn't concentrate on reading for more than half an hour, and he seldom read anything if it was not required of him. The aunt added that B was indifferent about getting a book as a gift. He liked buying books from Scholastic Book Clubs, but he only sometimes completed reading them. B would briefly tell his aunt about some books read at school or borrowed from the classroom library only if he was asked to and if he liked them.

Results of Students' Documents

Students' documents included monthly comprehension tests and students' writings in response to the books they read during guided reading lessons. The comprehension tests included passages that the students had to read and questions about the skills students learned during guided reading, like identifying cause and effect, analyzing character, comparing and contrasting, summarizing and retelling, and making inferences. They assess the students' mastery of the skills taught and their ability to transfer them to new texts. Along similar lines, the students' writings comprised of passages that students wrote related to the theme of every book they read. They show whether or not the students had understood the plot and the theme of the book and could relate the book events to their own experiences.

Case 1: TS1

As shown in the line graph below, TS1's grades on comprehension tests were very low at the beginning of the school year. She scored only 8 and 6 points out of 20 in the first two months of October and November. However, she showed a very slight improvement in comprehension

after that, for her grades rose to approximate the passing average of 12 and reached 13 and 12 out of 20 in April and May, at the end of the guided reading program.

Figure 4.1 Reading comprehension grades of TS1



TS1's writing responses also showed similar improvement in her comprehension skills.

In her writing about her favorite pets in response to the first book *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, TS1 was able to emulate some parts of the story and write about some activities that she'd like to do with her pets:

My favorite pet is dog and cats because I loves dogs and cats and I likes to take him to the school. and I likes to take the cat with me when we are going. And when they are doing bath they skratsh itch other I likes cats and dogs. I like to them to eat with me at the morining. When we are liveing I like to brsh there hair. I love dogs soso much.

After the completion of the guided reading program, TS1 showed some improvement in her writing. For example, she was able to use the vocabulary words she learned, although she used some incorrectly. She wrote about helping others after reading *Katy and the Big Snow*.

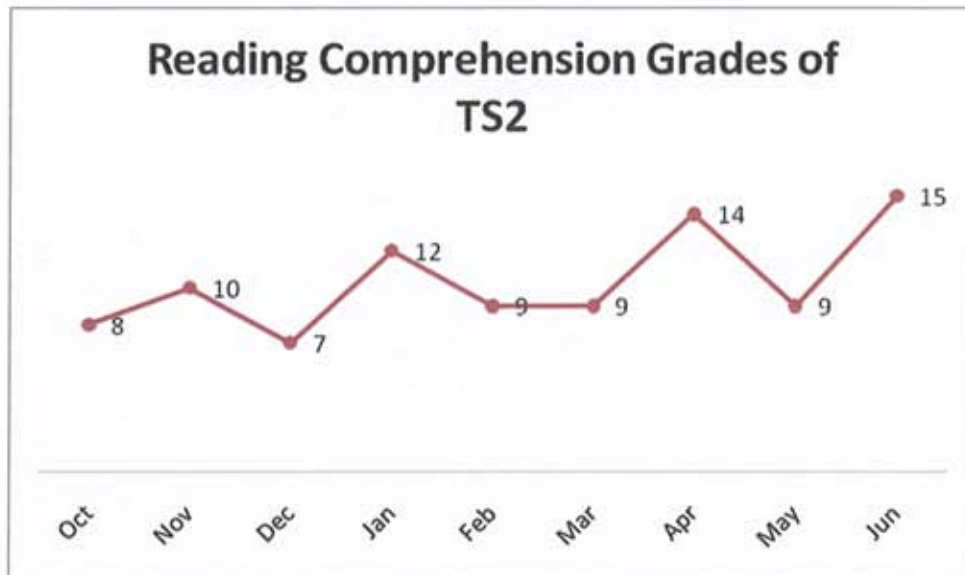
One day, I took my cat to the park. My cats name is foush.
It is white and she is big. When we were at the parking
foush saw a bog She run to the tree and she was stuck and
she was quiver and I was upset. The people came promptly
on time. I was yanking it. The people gasped because she
was stuck. She was in the entire tree.

She described her cat as Katy was described and used the words gasped, promptly, upset, and yanking appropriately, which showed her understanding of these words in the book, although she didn't read it well and couldn't answer comprehension questions about it as noted in the teacher's observation.

Case 2: TS2

TS2's scores on comprehension tests fluctuated above and below the passing average. In October and November her comprehension grades were below average. She scored 8 and 10 out of 20. Even after her participation in the guided reading lessons, her scores were still low. She only had two scores above the average of 12 in April and June, where she got 14 and 15 respectively.

Figure 4.2 Reading comprehension grades of TS2



In responding to the first three books, TS2's writings were very brief. She showed that she could relate the events in the books to her experiences, although she didn't elaborate her ideas. For example, after reading the first book about Clifford, she wrote

I have a pet name Clifford. it is a nice dog. we play all the time. we have fun. and go to shoping and buy nice thing. and we play in the playgrond.

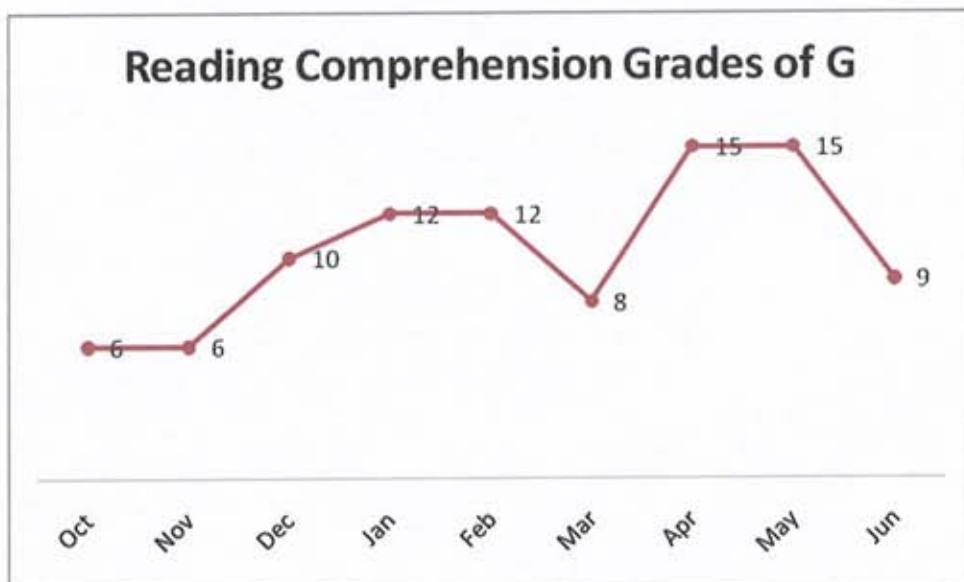
By the end of the guided reading program, TS2 didn't show a lot of improvement although her writing responses were a little bit longer. After reading *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, she could adopt some ideas from the story, but she didn't use any of the target words in her writing. She also didn't write about helping a friend in trouble - the theme of the book - as she was supposed to do.

When time, my friend and I were sleeping and I waked up my frend she told me wake me up in "May" . and May came and now we can play oky comeon to siwm oky and we sawm a lot. Then the nakest Day we went to my friend brithday and we have fun togather and she came to my houes and we sawm and eat. and know we are best friends.

Case 3: G

G's scores on comprehension tests before the guided reading lessons started were very low. She had the score of 6 out of 20 twice in October and November. Her comprehension scores started to increase slightly after the beginning of the program, and she was able to reach the passing average. She even got 15 out of 20 twice toward the end of the program in April and May. However, she still had the low scores of 8 and 9 in March and June, as shown in the graph.

Figure 4.3 Reading comprehension grades of G



Just like G was excited about reading, she wrote enthusiastically and extensively, too. Her second writing, after reading *The Bremen-town Musicians*, showed her understanding of the book plot and theme, for she wrote about a group of animals working with each other to solve a problem.

One day there was a pig going to the beach soon he met a cow and he said I want to go to the beach Do you want to go with me? yes said the cow les go to the beach sadi the cow so off they went to the beach. Soon they met a mouse They said we wont to go to the beach. Do you want to go to the beach? yes said the mouse so off they go to the beach.

After writing about the animals meeting a horse and a cat in the same pattern, she continued,

When they go to the beach they siwiwm and they have a problem. The cat go to the dip and the cat senik so all the group go to the dip to get her and they said were is the cat? and they surch and surch and the cat was down down so they foet her she bie but she didn't bie she was souting help help so the group get down and get her and they was happy.

At the end of the program, her writing responses still showed her understanding of theme and plot although she didn't write at length. After reading *Katy and the Big Snow*, she was required to write about a machine that helped people, like *Katy the crawler tractor* helped the people of Geoppolis. She wrote,

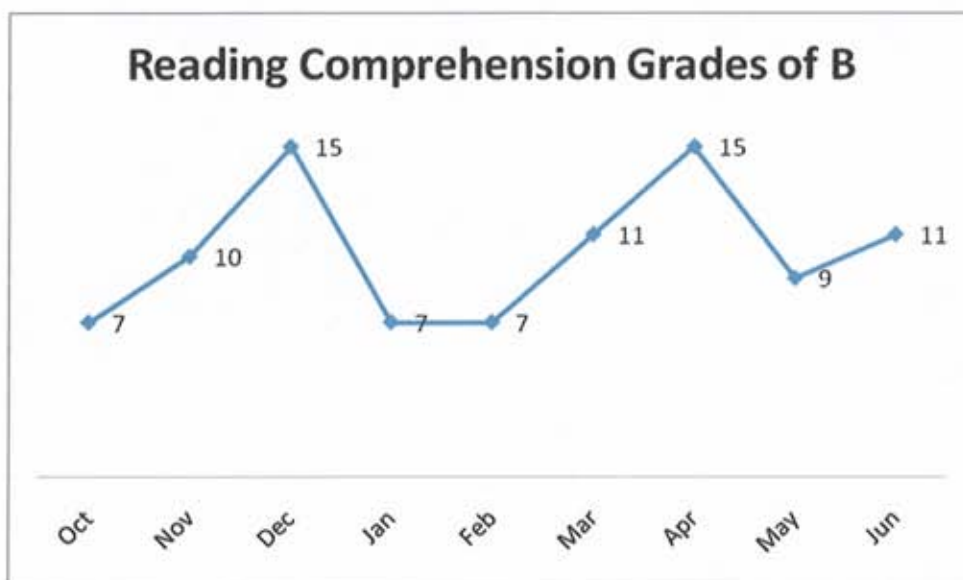
The computer is nice and helpfull because it has games and you can know everything in it and you can print some things and it is big and nice if you do some thing wrong it can check for you and it never get ruwend and I love it very very much.

Although G could relate the events of the books she read to things in her real life and used her imagination to imitate some of these books, she didn't use as many vocabulary words in her writings as TS1 did. In the response above she only used the word 'ruined' and she didn't write in detail.

Case 4: B

Like TS2, B's scores on comprehension tests had ups and downs. Directly after the beginning of the guided reading program, his score rose from 7 and 10 to 15 out of 20 in December to fall considerably right after that and reach 7 twice in January and February. At the end of the program, B's grades were still low, for although he got 15 again in April, his scores dropped below passing average toward the end of the school year.

Figure 4.4 Reading comprehension grades of B



As he was a weak reader, B was also a weak writer, and his writings were very short. The first time he wrote about his favorite pet in response to Clifford the Big Red Dog, he wrote,

My feavert pete is big and he see well. He is so stronging.

After he was asked to write more and to take the book as a model, he was able to check some of his mistakes and his response was a little bit longer and more descriptive.

My favorite animal is strong and so fast. His teeth is so sharp. He eat animal's and it is the lion. He is so toll and clows are so sharp and toll. He is faster than all the animals and people in Jungle.

B's responses remained brief at the end of the guided reading program. For example, to write a story about how he and his classmates got money to buy something for class, he wrote,

The class was needing to buy a football. We start to get money from our perets and work. Evry one get \$500.

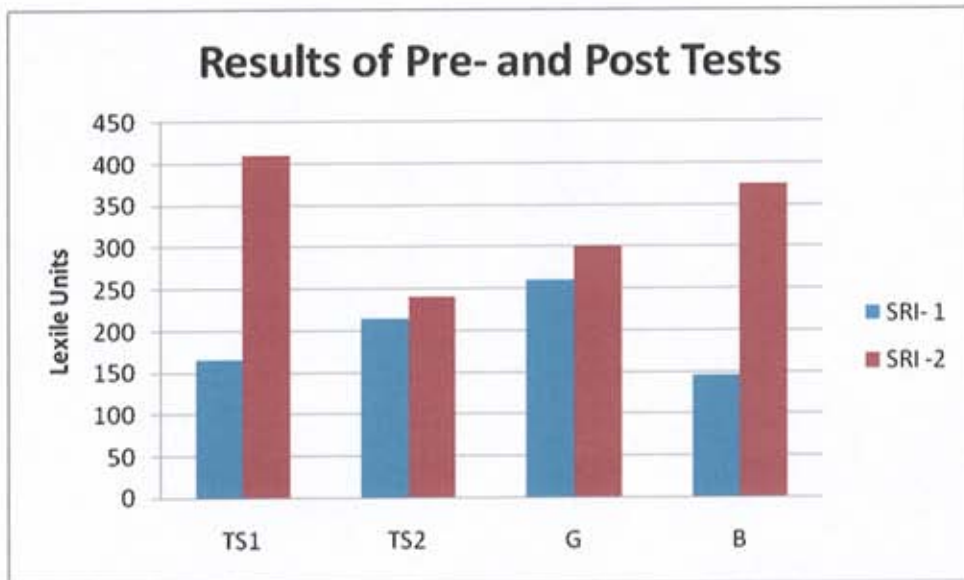
B didn't use the ideas in the books he read, nor any vocabulary word he learned. His writings didn't show his understanding of the books' plots or themes, and they lacked details.

Results of the Scholastic Reading Inventory

All grade three students took the SRI Form A in November. The class average was 412L, with a minimum score of 145L and a maximum score of 690L. TS1 answered 10 items out of 40 correctly, thus scoring 165 Lexile measures. TS2 had 13 correct answers and a score of 215 Lexiles. G scored 260L answering 15 items correctly, and B had only 9 correct answers and a score of 145 Lexiles. The four students were among those having the lowest scores.

In April, Form B of the SRI was administered. The class average rose to reach 540 Lexile measures. The minimum score was 240L and the maximum 880L. TS1's score increased by 245L to reach 410L. She got 22 correct answers out of 40. TS2 had 13 correct responses, and her score increased only 25L and reached 240L. G answered 16 items correctly, thus scoring 300L, which was 40L more than her first score. B's score rose from 145L to 375L, with an increase of 230L. He had 20 items answered correctly. The figure below shows the four students gains in reading ability after their participation in the guided reading program.

Figure 4.5 Results of pre- and post tests



Results of the Questionnaires

The reading survey of the Motivation to Read Profile was administered to all third grade students in March, i.e. toward the end of the guided reading program. The results showed that almost all students (33 out of 34) had high concepts of themselves as readers, including the four struggling readers – the subjects of this study. Moreover, reading was viewed as an important activity of great value by most students (30 out of 34). The four participants under study were among those who valued reading.

The four participants believe that their friends think of them as very good readers and they considered themselves as very good readers, too. They also believe that reading is very easy for them. All four of them think that they read a lot better than their friends, except for G who believes she reads about the same as her friends.

When they come to a word they don't know, they all said they can almost always figure it out, except TS1 who reported that she can only do that sometimes. Moreover, all stated that they understand everything they read and can always think of answers when the teacher asks them questions about what they read.

The girls TS1, TS2, and G said that they share their ideas about what they read among their groups, while B didn't answer the question. TS2 and B reported that they are never worried about what others think about their reading, G said she worries once in a while, and TS1 stated that she worries a lot.

Concerning the value they place on reading, the girls reported that they like to read books often, but B likes reading only sometimes. B and TS2 believe that their friends think of reading as fun. Conversely, G and TS1 said that their friends think that reading is no fun at all. They all consider people who like to read as very interesting, knowing how to read well as very important, and reading as a great way to spend time. Moreover, they all think libraries as great places, except TS2 who thinks of libraries as boring places. TS1, TS2, and B also reported that they always tell their friends about good books they read, while G said only does that some of the time. They all plan to spend a lot of time reading when they grow up.

Furthermore, the four participants said they like to listen to their teacher reading books out loud to them everyday, and they feel very happy when receiving books as gifts.

Conclusion

The results about the participants' reading abilities and motivation obtained from the seven instruments were stated in this chapter. The next chapter discusses and analyzes these results.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter discusses and analyses the findings obtained from the various instruments to answer the research questions about the effect of the guided reading approach on the reading abilities of struggling students and on their motivation to read. It summarizes the study and provides implications for classroom use. It finally states the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for further research.

Discussion

1. Had the guided reading approach improved the struggling readers reading abilities?

All four participants in this study were reading far below their grade level at the beginning of the year before the implementation of the guided reading program. They displayed one or more of the following reading problems: slow rate, monotonous reading, mispronunciation of words, weak vocabulary repertoire, and deficient comprehension skills.

Proponents of guided reading argued that this approach improved the readers' reading abilities as it enabled the teachers to tackle the problems of students of similar needs through the small homogenous groupings. The approach would also allow modeling and explicit teaching of reading and comprehension strategies that struggling readers need to acquire the skills necessary for them to become independent and strategic readers. Moreover, the leveled books given to students during guided reading lessons would provide them with opportunities to read authentic material that match their own reading levels, thus allowing them to comprehend better (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Schulman & Payne, 2000).

As shown in the previous chapter, the struggling readers' decoding skills significantly improved as they read texts that are slightly higher than their reading levels with fewer errors. However, they still stumbled over long words in longer and more difficult texts.

The struggling readers' fluency also improved as a result of repeated readings of familiar text, and this is in concord with Pressley's (2006) view. The girls TS1, TS2, and G showed more improvement in fluency than B; however, they all were able to read punctuation. At the end of the program, they all read with appropriate expression. The small group settings helped the teacher pinpoint each struggling reader's weakness in this regard and provide modeling, assistance, and feedback when needed.

Along similar lines, the struggling readers made gains, however little, in vocabulary. They were able to figure out some new words and use them appropriately in their writings. Their comprehension skills varied according to the level of texts they read. At the beginning of the program, all four struggling readers showed deficient comprehension skills. They were not able to make predictions, interpret characters, analyze plot, reread for meaning, connect events to others, relate texts to their own life experiences, or answer inferential questions.

Explicit comprehension strategies taught during the guided reading lessons helped the students slightly in improving their comprehension skills. Sometimes, they were able to use these strategies, such as using the 5W's and How to understand plot, asking what the characters said and did, and what others said about them to analyze characters, and using 'Right-there,' 'Think and Search,' and 'On Your Own' questions to answer inferential and personal questions about texts.

However, these students were unable to answer all types of questions when the texts became harder or when given unfamiliar texts that they had to read without help, as was the case with monthly comprehension tests. They were barely reading and understanding books at third-grade level.

Thus, the guided reading approach aided struggling readers in developing decoding strategies and building fluency that made them better readers. It had less impact, however, on their vocabulary and comprehension. This finding contrasts with those of previous studies (Anderson et.al, 2002; Chevalier et.al, 2002; & Gabl et.al, 2007) that attributed significant gains in comprehension to the use of guided reading.

2. Had the guided reading approach increased the struggling readers' motivation to read?

At the beginning of the guided reading program, the struggling readers showed enthusiasm for reading and persistence on completing reading tasks except B, who was not interested in reading and read books only because it was a requirement.

Fountas & Pinnell (2006) and Schulman & Payne (2000) contended that that students gained confidence and their motivation to read increased because they were reading books that matched their ability levels. They were neither frustrated nor bored; instead, they were appropriately challenged. The findings in this study showed that guided reading had improved the struggling readers' motivation to read as expected.

The struggling girls were already motivated to read, especially when the books were easy or just-right for them, as shown in the observations and students' conferences. They also showed determination to work on reading tasks even when the books became harder. Moreover, the

interviews with the girls' father and tutor, in addition to the questionnaires, revealed that the girls displayed a high level of motivation to read and the characteristics of motivated readers. They practiced reading independently at home and liked receiving and reading different kinds of books. They also perceived themselves as very good readers and placed high value on reading as noted by the survey conducted toward the end of the guided reading program.

In B's case, the effect of guided reading on his motivation was more pronounced. Little by little, B started to display some eagerness for reading activities, and by the end of the program, his motivation to read showed a significant increase. He didn't complain when asked to reread; he was more focused on tasks; and he reported in both the last conference and the survey that he liked the books given to him during guided reading lessons. He also considered himself as a very good reader and reading as an activity of great value.

Although the participants did not show the characteristics of proficient readers, yet they perceived themselves as good readers. This may be due to what Pressley (2006) stated, that elementary students often misinterpret the academic difficulties they face and do not consider them as signs of their low abilities.

Conclusion

This case study examined the relationship between the use of guided reading and the reading abilities of struggling readers as well as their motivation to read. Guided reading is an approach that includes using explicit strategy instruction and leveled books in small groups of students of similar abilities and needs. It is designed to nudge readers beyond their current stage of development and expand their abilities to process reading texts with fluency and understanding (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

Four third graders, who were identified as struggling readers, were the subjects of this study. Seven instruments (SRI, running records, observations, conferences, documents, interviews, and questionnaires) were used to obtain data and answer the two research questions.

Findings revealed that the guided reading approach significantly improved some of the struggling readers' reading abilities, like decoding and fluency. Thus, the approach accomplished what it was intended to do in this respect. However, fluency affects but doesn't always lead to comprehension as Applegate et.al. (2009) argued. The use of guided reading had only a slight positive effect on the struggling readers' vocabulary and their comprehension skills, but this improvement, albeit slight, was better than nothing. Had the students been given grade-level material to read in a whole-class setting, they wouldn't have benefitted from the strategy instruction and their individual needs wouldn't have been met as well. Moreover, the implementation of the guided reading approach showed a great positive impact on the students' motivation to read. They were excited about reading just-right books, had high self-concepts of themselves as readers, and placed a great value on reading. The struggling readers were not frustrated or inappropriately challenged by reading texts above their ability levels, as would have been the case if they were given third grade texts from the basal. Their increased motivation was demonstrated through their effort and persistence in completing reading tasks, although it didn't always lead to greater achievement (Dörnyei, 2001b).

Implications for Classroom Use

The findings of this case study suggest that guided reading is a viable approach that helps struggling readers develop strategies to decode, read fluently, and develop ways to comprehend texts better. Dividing students into groups for specific strategy instruction would assist the teacher in differentiating instruction to address the needs of individual learners. Moreover, the

use of leveled books in the classroom would enable students to apply the strategies they learned to texts that matches their reading levels.

However, for struggling readers to benefit more from this approach and their comprehension skills to improve at a faster rate, guided reading should start as early as grade one. Because the students in this study had many gaps in their reading abilities prior to the implementation of the guided reading program, it took them a long time to approximate third grade level.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the issue of generalization. As in most qualitative studies, the findings seldom have a methodological justification to be generalized. However, other researchers may find the results useful if they are studying cases similar to this one. They can judge whether or not the findings are applicable to the situation they are studying (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Another limitation includes interviewer effect. During the interview with parents and tutors, the presence of the researcher, who was the children's teacher at the same time, might have had an effect on the answers of the interviewees. Moreover, being the teacher and knowing the characteristics of the students under study may have influenced the researcher's expectations of the students' behaviors.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research would have been more comprehensive had it continued to study the effect of guided reading on the struggling readers' reading abilities and motivation beyond third grade.

A longitudinal study would more accurately determine how guided reading affects the students' reading abilities and motivation. Moreover, further research is needed to investigate the effects of this approach on the reading abilities and motivation of students of different genders.

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Appendix A: Parent consent form**Parent Consent Form**

Between November 2007 and April 2008, your child's classroom will be participating in a reading project, which investigates the effectiveness of the Guided Reading approach. In order to check progress, students will be pre/post tested in the fall 2007 and spring 2008 to measure their skill areas. The data gathered will provide information in the improvement of reading instruction. We will need your permission for your child to participate. Please sign and return to the English teacher. Thank you.

Director's signature _____

Teacher's signature _____

I consent for my 3rd grade child _____, to participate in pre/post testing as a part of the reading improvement research.

I further understand that there will be complete confidentiality and that no names will be used. Research results will be available at the end of the study, upon request.

Parent's signature

Date

Appendix B: Observation checklist

Name: _____

Date: _____

Book title: _____

Lexile level: _____

Skill		never	seldom	sometimes	Often	always
FLUENCY	1. reads at appropriate rate					
	2. reads with accuracy					
	3. reads with correct phrasing					
	4. self-corrects					
	5. rereads to improve phrasing					
VOCABULARY	6. acquires new vocabulary through reading					
	7. uses context or picture cues to figure out new words					
COMPREHENSION	8. rereads for meaning					
	9. relates events to own experiences or to other texts read previously					
	10. makes predictions					
	11. analyzes characters					
	12. analyzes plot					
	13. summarizes or retells					
MOTIVATION	14. sustains development of meaning through long text read over several days					
	15. demonstrates interest in reading					

Comments:

Appendix C: Running record sheet

Running Record Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Book title: Lexile level: Author:	Number of Errors	Number of Self- Corrections
100 (\pm 10) words of running text		
Total		

Error rate:

Comments:

Appendix D: Reading conference form for students**Reading Conference Form for Students**

Name: _____

Date: _____

- Topic of discussion:

- List of points discussed:

- Teacher suggestions for improvement:

- Suggested time for a follow-up conference (if needed):

Appendix E: Questions for the Interview with Parents/Tutors**Questions for the Interview with Parents/Tutors****A- Parent's/ Tutor's perception of the child's reading ability (decoding, vocabulary and comprehension, fluency, strengths and weaknesses in reading)**

- 1- What do you think of your child's reading fluency/rate?
- 2- How does your child deal with hard words s/he encounters while reading?
- 3- Does your child understand what s/he reads? How do you know?
- 4- What are the strengths and weaknesses that you see in your child's reading?
- 5- Do you think that the guided reading program that was implemented this year helped improve your child's reading? If yes, how? If no, why?

B- Parent's/ Tutor's perception of the child's motivation to read and his/her attitude toward reading

- 1- Does your child enjoy being read to? Does s/he enjoy reading to you at home?
- 2- Does your child tell you about books s/he read at school?
- 3- How much time does your child spend reading at home?
- 4- How does your child feel about receiving a book as a gift?
- 5- How does your child feel about the books borrowed from the classroom library?

Appendix F: Permission from IRA / Motivation to read profile: reading survey

RE: Permission Request

From: **Janet Parrack** (jparrack@reading.org) on behalf of **Permissions** (Permissions@reading.org)

Sent: Thu 11/08/07 4:53 PM

To: mooly17@hotmail.com

Dear Amal AbuShakra:

The International Reading Association permits you to use the following assessment without fee for the purposes of research.

Please use the following credit line on each copy of the instrument:

From Gambrell, L B, Palmer, BM, Codling, R M, & Mazzoni, S A. (1996, April). Assessing motivation to read. *The Reading Teacher*, 49(7), 518-533. Copyright 1996 by the International Reading Association
www.reading.org

Any further use will require further written permission.

Thank you for your request.

Janet S. Parrack
Rights, Contracts, & Permissions Manager
International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
PO Box 8139
Newark DE 19714-8139 USA

MMOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE: READING SURVEY

Name _____

Sample 1: I am in _____.

- Second grade Fifth grade
 Third grade Sixth grade
 Fourth grade

Sample 2: I am a _____.

- boy
 girl

1. My friends think I am _____.
 a very good reader
 a good reader
 an OK reader
 a poor reader
2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
 Never
 Not very often
 Sometimes
 Often
3. I read _____.
 not as well as my friends
 about the same as my friends
 a little better than my friends
 a lot better than my friends
4. My best friends think reading is _____.
 really fun
 fun
 OK to do
 no fun at all
5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____.
 almost always figure it out
 sometimes figure it out
 almost never figure it out
 never figure it out
6. I tell friends about good books I read.
 I never do this.
 I almost never do this.
 I do this some of the time.
 I do this a lot.

(continued)

MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE: READING SURVEY (continued)

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.
- almost everything I read
 - some of what I read
 - almost none of what I read
 - none of what I read
8. People who read a lot are _____.
- very interesting
 - interesting
 - not very interesting
 - boring
9. I am _____.
- a poor reader
 - an OK reader
 - a good reader
 - a very good reader
10. I think libraries are _____.
- a great place to spend time
 - an interesting place to spend time
 - an OK place to spend time
 - a boring place to spend time
11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
- every day
 - almost every day
 - once in a while
 - never
12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
- not very important
 - sort of important
 - important
 - very important
13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
- can never think of an answer
 - have trouble thinking of an answer
 - sometimes think of an answer
 - always think of an answer
- (continued)

MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE: READING SURVEY (continued)

14. I think reading is _____.
- a boring way to spend time
 - an OK way to spend time
 - an interesting way to spend time
 - a great way to spend time
15. Reading is _____.
- very easy for me
 - kind of easy for me
 - kind of hard for me
 - very hard for me
16. When I grow up I will spend _____.
- none of my time reading
 - very little of my time reading
 - some of my time reading
 - a lot of my time reading
17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I _____.
- almost never talk about my ideas
 - sometimes talk about my ideas
 - almost always talk about my ideas
 - always talk about my ideas
18. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class _____.
- every day
 - almost every day
 - once in a while
 - never
19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
- poor reader
 - fair reader
 - good reader
 - very good reader
20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
- very happy
 - sort of happy
 - sort of unhappy
 - unhappy

MRP READING SURVEY SCORING SHEET

Student's Name _____

Grade _____ Teacher _____

Administration Date _____

Recoding Scale

1 = 4

2 = 3

3 = 2

4 = 1

Self-Concept as a Reader

- *recode 1. _____
- 3. _____
- *recode 5. _____
- *recode 7. _____
- 9. _____
- *recode 11. _____
- 13. _____
- *recode 15. _____
- 17. _____
- 19. _____

Value of Reading

- 2. _____
- *recode 4. _____
- 6. _____
- *recode 8. _____
- *recode 10. _____
- 12. _____
- 14. _____
- 16. _____
- *recode 18. _____
- *recode 20. _____

SC raw score: _____/40 V raw score: _____/40

Full survey raw score (Self-Concept & Value): _____/80

Percentage scores	Self-Concept	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	Value	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	Full Survey	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

Comments: _____

Gambrell, L.B., Palmer, B.M., Codling, R.M., & Mazzone, S.A.(1996). Assessing reading motivation. *The Reading Teacher*, 49, 518-533.