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Parent Responses to Children's Oral Reading Miscues During At-Home Reading Experiences

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PARENT RESPONSES TO CHILDREN'S
ORAL READING MISCUES
DURING AT- HOME READING EXPERIENCES

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Education and Human Development
State University of New York
College at Brockport
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education

by

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Abstract

Two hundred twenty-five miscues made by fifteen children reading to their parents were categorized according to miscue type and parent response. Results indicate a strong parental reliance upon supplying words or providing decoding instruction when their children miscue while reading orally. This is in response to a large number of miscues made by the children in sounding out a word or hesitating when approaching a word. Miscue-response pairings were also considered according to the response's emphasis on decoding or obtaining meaning from the story. One third of the 212 miscue-response pairs that could be used toward answering this question emphasized accurate decoding. The remaining two-thirds emphasized obtaining meaning from the text. Several factors could have biased these results, including lack of training by parents in the strategies of teaching reading.

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses a parent makes when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience.

Questions To Be Answered

What responses does a parent make when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience?

Do parental responses to miscues emphasize discussion of text meaning or accurate decoding of words in text?

Need for the Study

The importance of the parent in a child's life must not be overlooked in the development of that child as a learner. Whereas a child may have from twelve to more than thirty formal teachers throughout his school years, the parent is the only person to remain constant throughout his entire lifetime.

The parent who is listening and responding while a child reads has many responsibilities as she helps the child grow

and mature as a reader. Researcher Ken Goodman proposes that, during oral reading, the active reader is constantly sampling information from surrounding sources (grapho-
phonic, syntactic, and semantic) and using this information to make predictions about upcoming text (Goodman, 1967). The parent, through questioning and commenting, is able to control the emphasis placed on each of these sources.

It would seem beneficial, therefore, to examine the response of the parent during an oral-reading situation to determine if she regards this experience as an opportunity for the child to practice decoding skills, improve comprehension, or something else. Further, a parent who is emphasizing decoding skills or comprehension may encourage the use of a number of different strategies. What are these strategies? Are these strategies appropriate? States Kemp (1992)

In the case of children with learning difficulties in reading, it is likely that the difficulties are already compounded by generalized, inappropriate listener behaviours that teachers might have taught parents, or that parents have learned from other parents, including their own because "that is the way it is done". (p. 202)
Knowing these answers would help teachers and other professionals to develop programs to enhance the at-

home reading experiences between a parent and child with proper advice, training, and assistance.

It is important to note that a child will naturally use different strategies for decoding based on the stage of development he is in (Chall, 1983; Strong, 1984). At Chall's second stage, covering grades two and three, the child uses his newly acquired decoding skills and enlarged sight vocabulary together with the skill of using contextual information to decode text (Strong, 1984). It would be appropriate, therefore, to focus on the behaviors of parents working with children of this age since there is the greatest variety of strategies naturally used by the child and, thus, the options available for parents in offering responses the most numerous.

Definition of Terms

In this study the following terms will be defined:

- Oral Reading - a reading activity which requires one of the participants to read, out loud, the printed material
- Decoding - the way that the reader uses grapho-phonetic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information to understand the written code of the text (its meaning)
- Decoding skills - the strategies a reader uses to determine unknown words or phrases in text
- Miscue - a word (or group of words) a reader says while reading orally that differs from the printed text.
- Feedback - the response a listener makes to a miscue made by a reader

Limitations

This study was limited to twenty second-grade children in a suburban elementary school. The researcher could not control for varying reading levels among subjects within this grade level, and amount of instruction and practice each child or parent has previously had in oral reading experiences. Efforts to exclude parents with teaching backgrounds were made, however. Further, the inclusion of a tape recorder during an observation may limit the naturalness of the experience.

Summary

This study examined the responses a parent made when a second grade child miscued while reading orally during an at-home reading experience. Also, this study examined whether parental comments emphasized comprehension or accurate decoding of words in text, and what strategies the parent encouraged a child to use.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses a parent makes when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience.

Oral Reading

Reading, as proposed by researcher Kenneth Goodman, is a complex process by which the reader must reconstruct, to some degree, a message encoded by a writer in graphic language (Goodman, 1970). It is an active process where both the reader and the author must work to construct a meaning (Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987). There would be no purpose for reading if it did not serve to communicate a message, idea, thought, or belief. During reading, all four language cueing systems (graphophonemic, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic) must be intact and interacting whenever reading occurs (Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987). In the English language a relationship exists between the graphic system of the written language and the phonological system of the oral language.

Oral reading, therefore, serves a very important purpose to a developing reader, as well as for adults tackling difficult text. For skillful readers, phonological translations provide a backup system for recognizing less familiar words in text as well as for enhancing comprehension of a complex or lengthy passage (Adams, 1991). Many times adults can be found reading or rereading a portion of text out loud to themselves as they concentrate on its meaning and purpose.

In a more basic sense, beginning readers are also using these phonological translations to aid themselves. A young child will naturally gain competence in his oral language skills before attempting the task of reading text. When trying to develop control over the written language he will first recode the graphic input he receives from the text as speech to decode it as he would in listening. This assists him both in sounding out unfamiliar words as well as stringing together a group of these words to create meaning from the print (Goodman, 1970). It is no surprise, then, that primary level readiness and beginner books emphasize graphophonic cues (McGary, 1990).

Listening to a beginning reader as he reads out loud can be valuable in assisting him in developing his skills. Miscues, or deviations from expected responses to the text, are an opportunity for an observer to make inferences about the

strategies being used relative to the cueing systems available. The term “miscue” was proposed by Kenneth Goodman in an attempt to distinguish an unexpected response made by a reader from an error or mistake since reading is cued by language and personal experience. A reader is therefore not demonstrating random behavior when responding differently from the text (Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987).

A miscue’s importance, or weight, is usually considered according to its emphasis on syntactic or semantic changes in the text. Miscue types can include substitutions, insertions, repetitions, omissions, and hesitations (Y. Goodman, Burke, & Watson, 1987). More specifically, an observer may look for miscues that indicate a wild guess, emphasis on letter clues with no consideration of context, using context clues with letter clues, or a refusal to attempt a word (Lass, 1984).

Although each researcher or educator may develop his or her own categories or method of observation, several commercial tools are available to assist in recording and categorizing miscues. These include Reading Miscue Inventory, Classroom Reading Miscue Inventory, and Running Reading Records.

Providing Feedback to Miscues

Studying a reader's miscues can be beneficial in assisting the reader in making adaptations. Feedback, or a response to a miscue, can provide for the reader information about how accurately he is reading and also what corrective strategy he should attempt when encountering a miscue.

A number of studies in recent years have focused on the role of oral reading in the elementary classroom, and the feedback a teacher provides for the child. Hoffman (1979) proposes that teacher verbal feedback to miscues can be understood as a complex decision-making process in which three dimensions are in operation: the teacher selects which miscues should be responded to, when these miscues should be responded to, and how these miscues should be responded to.

Focusing on these dimensions of feedback has given experts and researchers the opportunity to examine the role of oral reading and its purpose. If the purpose of reading, as discussed earlier, is to gain meaning then meaning-altering miscues should receive feedback with teacher responses primarily focusing on using semantic cues to decode difficult words or passages. If used as a tool for developing reading fluency, however, feedback would be provided for miscues of word identification, with feedback focusing on decoding, print

accuracy, or supplying words. According to Kemp (1992), oral reading should be conducted with materials which offer little or no conceptual barriers to understanding to avoid disruptions with extensive questioning over the content while the reader concentrates on the task of decoding.

Selecting Miscues for Response

A teacher has the ability to determine for the reader which miscues should be attended to, and which should be overlooked. Some deviations from the text are simply more acceptable than others. States Hoffman (1979), "When one adopts an undimensional mechanism of...if deviation then response...one reflects a notion that reading is an all or nothing mastery task rather than a progressive movement toward proficiency." (p. 344).

In a study of nineteen second-grade teachers, Lass (1984) examined teacher responses to miscues during instruction. The teachers, not specifically informed that their responses were to be examined, disregarded certain types of miscues more frequently than others and used instruction more often for others. More specifically, miscues were categorized as wild guess, letter only, context and letter, and meaning based (including context only, self-correct, omission/ insertion/ inversion, and word refusal or hesitation.)

Sixty-nine percent of those miscues not responded to were meaning-based mistakes (miscues that did not alter the author's intent). Further, teachers seemed more likely to ignore letter-plus context than letter only miscues, although statistical significance was not quite reached. Those miscues most frequently responded to were hesitations and refusals. These results lead the researcher to conclude that reading is a meaning-getting process. In a similar study by Hoffman, O'Neal, Kastler, Clements, Segel, & Nash (1984), miscues which caused or resulted in a high degree of meaning change were more likely to be responded to than those associated with little meaning change.

In a study by Allington (1980) students were identified by their teachers as being either of the best or worst readers of their class. Reading lessons, performed as they would usually, were tape recorded for analysis. These tapes were examined in terms of teacher interruption, frequency, and type.

Results indicated that teachers would more often interrupt poor readers than good readers, regardless of the semantic appropriateness of the error. However, Allington further concluded that seventy-six percent of the errors made by poorer readers were semantically unacceptable as compared to fifty-four percent made by the better readers. Hoffman et al.

(1984) also found less-skilled readers to make more meaning change miscues than their higher-skilled peers.

Pflaum, Pascarella, Boswick, and Aver (1980) obtained similar results; however, they were able to determine that teacher differences in response were primarily due to actual student performance rather than teacher perceived differences. Kemp (1992) found low performance readers to be preoccupied with error avoidance and correction by concentrating on print accuracy. High ability children, however, focused on text meaning and often ignored errors unless they affected understanding. This situation is explained by Matz (1985) with the argument that a child who is reading unfamiliar content material in the presence of peers is more concerned about getting through the passage than in constructing meaning. He therefore advocates rehearsed reading.

How Miscues Receive Responses

The way in which a teacher responds to a miscue can range from mere “try again” to an initiation of a corrective lesson, an indication of teacher variations in using oral reading as a tool for assisting the child in his development of reading. Hoffman et al. (1984) propose that feedback can be classified in two main categories: sustaining and terminal. Sustaining

feedback can be described as feedback in which a teacher attempts to have the student correct his or her own miscue by calling attention to the miscue, the sound or letter characteristics of the text word, or surrounding words or meanings. Terminal feedback refers to instances where the teacher either supplies the word for the student or calls on another student to identify the word.

In studying twenty-two second grade teachers over a ten week period, Hoffman et al. (1984) found that teachers who offered the highest level of terminal feedback did so in response to students exhibiting the highest levels of hesitations. This finding is not comforting to the researchers as they question if this leads the student to become more likely to wait for the teacher to give the word the next time he encounters a little frustration. This miscue-response pattern may further be a part of an adaptation process where the participants adapt to one another to achieve task completion as efficiently as possible.

Providing terminal feedback to miscues supports the view that the purpose of reading is to increase fluency rather than to construct meaning. Spiegel and Rogers (1980) examined 181 responses to sixteen second grade teachers using the categories of tell, visual, visual context, sound, spell,

meaning, structural analysis, and reference to prior use. The teachers told the children the correct word in 50.2% of their responses. Further, an additional 29.7% of the responses focused on syntactic cues (visual, visual context, or spell). The use of meaning as a response cue occurred only 5% of the time. Not only did the researchers conclude that reading, for these teachers, means accurate word identification, they were able to see that miscues made by students were interpreted as being caused by inaccurate visual perception based on teacher responses which required the reader to focus on the visual characteristics of the word more carefully.

Studies have shown that a teacher will respond differently to errors made by low versus high achieving students. (Hoffman et al., 1984; Kemp, 1992; Pflaum, Pascarella, Boswick & Aver, 1980). For pupils perceived as low-performing readers, teachers provided a greater number of grapho-phonemic cues and more prereading cues (Pflaum et al., 1980). Text difficulty can affect a teacher's interruption behaviors. After observing teacher-child interactions over a two month period, McNaughton (1981) found that when students were tutored outside of the classroom setting the teachers attended to a smaller percentage of errors as the student's reading accuracy improved. Further, as reading

accuracy improved, the teachers responded with a greater number of telling responses and less praise.

Determining When to Respond to Miscues

To determine when to respond to miscues, McNaughton and Glynn (1981) traced the responses of six children in second grade to prompts given by their teacher during oral reading. They found that the teacher's immediate attention to an error, when compared with "wait time" attention, adversely affected the reader's subsequent accuracy and self-corrective behavior. When an adult does not interfere while a child is reading, the child then becomes aware that the print yet to come is of help to them (Hill, 1989). The study by Hoffman et al. (1984) used their tape recordings of twenty two second-grade teachers to determine that there were high levels of immediate self-correction, but repeated attempts at a word when the teacher delayed overt feedback to the next sentence break. The highest level of hesitations occurred when teachers offered immediate terminal feedback (supplying the word).

The Value of Reading at Home

The home-based literacy activity teachers most often recommend to parents is reading with their children- either reading aloud to them or listening to them read (Ollila &

Mayfield, 1992). It would make sense that children who participate in reading more often would become better readers. Further, reading at home provides a child with many opportunities not available at school. Kemp (1992) comments that teachers, unlike parents at home:

- a) cannot always register what they hear the child speak (or read) to them
- b) sometimes allow expectations and preconceptions rule what they hear children saying (or reading)
- c) may have difficulty in resisting the urge to teach what might already be known
- d) may use a “blind” alley questioning technique that, in the child’s perception, confuses both the purpose of and meaning within the dialogue

A child who is reading at home will find himself in a one-on-one situation with an adult, allowing him the freedom to pursue a line of questioning without having to compete with the demands of other children (Tizard & Hughes, 1984). States Larrick (1982):

More than anything else, the beginning reader needs practice with a partner who will listen, encourage, and help with puzzling words. With twenty to thirty children in a class, the teacher can be a one-on-one partner with

each child only a few minutes a day. Children need more than that, and they can get it at home (p. 43).

This attention a child receives, in itself, is one reason to support at-home reading.

Important At-Home Factors

Parent behaviors and background are important factors to the child. Results of data collection by DeBaryshe (1992) indicate that the quality and frequency of home reading interactions between parents and preschool children in low income homes are related to maternal education, literacy interest and skill, and beliefs about reading aloud. Further, homes which contain a wide range of reading materials and where parents themselves read and model reading contribute to more positive attitudes and achievement levels (Silvern, 1985).

A study by Hart (1989) sought to determine the effects of parental influence on eighth grade students' reading achievement. After surveying parents about their outlook on reading and interpretation of their child's involvement in the reading process, Hart compared these results to each student's CAT tests. Results showed that parental knowledge of a child's reading skills and school programs were even more beneficial to the child than parental involvement in reading

activities.

Programs Which Support At-Home Reading

Several programs in which parents participate in the guidance of their children in oral reading have been reviewed by Kemp (1992) and by Ollila and Mayfield (1992). A program at the University of Canberra was funded by the Australian federal government Commonwealth Schools Commission in 1984. Its goal was, and continues to be, to further develop a program linking teacher education with parental participation to teach children with reading needs. Catering to 130 families each year, one important service they provide is to record and analyze adult responses to children's oral reading. Parents are then given training and supervised practice in how to question, instruct, listen, and respond to the child as a reader (Kemp, 1992).

In a separate program reviewed by Kemp (1992), parents were trained in a pause-prompt-praise procedure to assist a child when encountering a difficult word. However, despite improvement in accuracy, fluency, and self correction, the emphasis on mechanics resulted in some behaviors that appeared to be maladaptive, particularly parents' judgements about the purpose of reading. The purpose of reading, to them,

no longer meant to gain understanding from text but rather proper word identification.

The Haringey Reading Project of London compared the reading achievement of children who took books home three or four times a week to read to their parents to children who received extra assistance from a reading teacher at school. Results of a standardized test showed that children who received extra practice at home showed significantly greater improvement in reading levels than a control group receiving no intervention. The home-trained children also improved more than those who received extra help at school. These gains were reportedly still apparent after several years (Hewison, 1985, as cited in Ollila & Mayfield, 1989).

Summary

The teacher-student interactions during an oral reading situation have been very carefully examined by numerous researchers, with a variety of emphases and results. Teacher responses to a student's miscue while reading have been found to vary according to students' achievement level and error type. Also, when teachers do not immediately correct an error the student will use more self-corrective strategies.

Parent involvement in education is consistently considered

a positive influence upon the child, and a number of home factors have been found to improve reading. However, although listening to a child read is recommended and has proven to be effective, little information has been obtained about what occurs during this interaction and how the parent works to help the child with this task. Programs which emphasize parent training have been found to be highly successful for the child.

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses a parent makes when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience.

Questions to be Answered

What responses does a parent make when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience?

Do parental responses to miscue emphasize discussion of text meaning or accurate decoding of words in text?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this study were fifteen children enrolled in the second grade of a suburban elementary school, along with one of their parents. Participation in this study was voluntary and subjects were selected based upon parental completion of a request form.

Materials

The materials used in this study included a letter to parents soliciting participants. This letter briefly explained that the purpose of the study was to observe children as they read in a setting other than at school.

A variety of trade books was used as the reading material in this study. The DRP levels of these books ranged from 2.5 RL to 4.0 RL, and experience by the researcher showed them to be enjoyable to second graders and also to be considered good literature. A tape recorder with microphone recorded each reading session for later analysis by the researcher.

Procedure

Informational letters were sent home with all children in several second grade classrooms. The researcher met at the homes of all who expressed an interest in participating.

At this meeting, the parent and child were briefly told that the researcher was interested in hearing the child and parent read just as they would every night. The parent and child were asked to select a book from those offered that would be neither too difficult nor too easy for the child to read. The child was then asked to read to his/her parent as he/she normally would for approximately five to ten minutes. The parent was asked to interact as naturally as possible. If

necessary, the researcher would position herself so as not to be seen by the child or parent in order to place participants at ease. The experience was tape recorded for later analysis.

After completing the reading, the parent was asked about the family's reading habits and background. Parents with teaching experience were later excluded in the analysis of data.

Analysis

Each child's oral reading was transcribed from the recording until the first fifteen miscues were noted. Children who did not make a minimum of fifteen miscues were excluded from analysis. The first fifteen tapes which met the proper criteria were reported in the data. The fifteen miscues made by each child were placed into the following categories: meaning based, letter plus context, letter only, wild guess, hesitation/sounding out, or other. For each of these miscues, parent responses were categorized as one of six types: supply word, disregards miscue, provides decoding instruction, acknowledges/requests rereading, refers to story meaning, or other. Both miscue and response categories are defined in Appendixes A and B respectively.

The answer to the first research question was obtained by comparing the number of miscue-response pairs in each

category to the total number of miscues made. The second research question was addressed by dividing the miscue-response choices into a decoding or meaning-based category and totals obtained.

Summary

Parents and children were tape recorded during an at-home reading experience by each child. Fifteen recordings which met the criteria of a minimum of fifteen miscues and participating parent not having a teaching background were transcribed. Analysis of the recordings focused on categorizing parental responses to the first fifteen miscues by the children. General tendencies and percentages of each parental response type for every type of miscue was reported.

Chapter IV

Findings

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the responses a parent makes when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience.

Questions To Be Answered

What responses does a parent make when a child miscues while reading orally during an at-home reading experience?

Do parental responses to miscues emphasize discussion of text meaning or accurate decoding of words in text?

Answers to Research Questions

Responses to Miscues

The total number of miscues recorded in this study was two hundred twenty five. Of these, 107 miscues were made in the category of hesitation/sounding out, 28 meaning based, 29 letter only, 17 wild guess, 17 letter plus context and 27 “other”. This final category included omissions, insertions, and obvious ignorance of punctuation rules.

Of the two hundred twenty -five parent responses obtained in this study, 89 (or 40%) of all parent responses were to supply the word. Of these 89 responses 50 of the words supplied occurred when the child hesitated or was attempting to decode the word. Eleven words were supplied when the child used letter clues only, and ten words were supplied in each of the categories of wild guess or meaning based miscues. When a child miscued using the first letter plus context clues of a word, parents supplied the word six times. The “other” category accounted for two supplied words.

Instruction in decoding was provided for 46 miscues (or 20%). Thirty-nine of these responses occurred when a child hesitated or was attempting to decode the word. Four letter-only miscues received instruction . Instruction was provided only once each for meaning-based miscues, wild guesses, and letter plus context miscues, and not at all for any “other” miscues.

Miscues that were disregarded totalled 43, or 19%. Of these miscues made, 12 did not interrupt the meaning of the story, and 16 fell into the “other” category. Miscues were disregarded 5 times for wild guesses and letter plus context miscues, 4 times for letter-only miscues and once for a hesitation/sounding out miscue.

Parents acknowledged miscues and/or requested rereadings a total of twenty four times. Of these, 7 were for hesitations/sounding out, 5 for meaning based miscues, 4 each for letter only or “other” miscues, 3 for letter plus context and only once for a wild guess.

References to story meaning were supplied only thirteen times (6%), 6 times each for hesitations/sounding out or letter only miscues, and only once for letter plus context miscues.

Parents offered responses that did not fit any category a total of ten times. In 4 instances parents used a combination of inaudible sounds and pointing for hesitations/sounding out miscues, and offered instruction for punctuation errors (listed in the “other” miscue category) five times. A parent once used elaborate gestures in response to a letter plus context miscue.

A summary of all miscue-response pairings is offered in Appendix C.

Emphasis of Parent Responses

In order to answer the second research question, it was necessary to first determine if each miscue-response category emphasized decoding or text meaning. For example, if a parent disregards a meaning based miscue, it is probably because he/she realizes it does not alter the author’s intent. However, a parent who corrects a meaning based miscue is looking more

carefully at word accuracy rather than the overall story meaning.

Three miscue-response categories were not included in this analysis due to the researcher's inability to determine the parent's intent by the response (or lack of). These included letter only-disregard miscue, will guess-disregard miscue, hesitation-other. A list of remaining categories and their determination is offered in Appendix D.

Of the remaining 212 miscue-response pairs, nearly one-third emphasized accurate decoding. The remaining two-thirds of the pairings focused on obtaining meaning from the text being read.

Interpretation of Results

With forty-eight percent of all miscues occurring in the hesitation/sounding out category, it is important to consider contributing factors. First, no effort was made by the researcher to control for any standard "wait time" when a child approached a difficult word. Many parents may have responded before the child completed a thought process or made a genuine attempt at a word.

Further, although 50 of these responses were to supply the word, 15 of these 50 were from one parent who responded to

all miscues by supplying the word and a second who did so for 12 of the 15 miscues recorded. Together these two parents account for more than half of this category's total. It is also interesting to note that, during informal interviews, neither of these two parents are the primary adult with whom the child reads regularly. However, even if these parents were excluded in the analysis, the remaining twenty three responses in this category are still among the highest of all categories used.

The high number of parents supplying words and assisting their children with decoding unknown words may indicate the reluctance on the part of the parents to work past the unknown to assist in their efforts. Unfortunately, the category of acknowledges/requests rereading does not indicate at which point in the text that the child's miscue was acknowledged and/or returned to for a closer examination.

In at least two other instances parent responses may have biased a category's total. One parent disregarded all but five miscues, regardless of miscue type. another parent responded to 11 of 15 miscues with instruction in decoding.

The answer to the second research question is also not as simple as it appears to be on the surface. Determining a parent's intention when responding to a child's miscue seems to be easy when interpreted by a researcher trained in reading

techniques and strategies. However, the parents chosen for this study were purposely selected based on their absence of such training. Therefore, a parent's actions may not have been consistent with his/her intentions.

It was very apparent to this researcher on which occasions a parent was emphasizing the proper decoding of a word. In fact, at times a child was assisted in sounding out words that were very difficult to do so (e.g. sighed). However, parents who used techniques such as acknowledge/requests rereading for many errors may have done so merely to correct the miscued word and not to enhance the text meaning as the results of this study would imply. Further, two of the categories eliminated from this analysis showed no regard in response for meaning or decoding since the words chosen made no sense and yet were disregarded. This would not be consistent with either a decoding or text meaning emphasis.

When questioned informally about their actions after participating in this study, several parents indicated that they felt their role in this activity was to help their child "get through" the reading task with very little stress or complication. Anything related to using new skills for decoding or understanding the text was the job of the teacher during the day. Enjoyment was their main purpose for reading

at home. The understanding of the text appears to have been assumed as it was rarely discussed directly.

Summary

The findings in this study indicate a strong parental reliance upon supplying words or providing decoding instruction when their children miscue while reading orally. This is in response to a large number of miscues made by the children in sounding out a word or hesitating when approaching a word. Several parents relied almost exclusively on the use of one response type; however, even with this taken into consideration the results do not vary considerably.

Nearly two-thirds of all parent responses emphasized the purpose of the activity to be to gain meaning from the text rather than decoding of words. However, this finding acknowledges only the parents' actions and does not examine their intentions. Thus, it is possible that many responses were made without thought to their purpose and simply as an attempt to complete the task.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusion

Two conclusions can be drawn from these data. First, the children as readers at this age rely heavily upon sounding out unknown words or pausing when encountering an unknown or difficult word. What the child is thinking during this process cannot be determined. However, a parent who is attempting to help a child at this point will generally supply the word or provide the child with instruction in decoding the word. The focus of the parent's effort is on the child's accurate knowledge of that word.

The second conclusion is that it is not possible to tell by parents' actions what they determine the purpose of the reading activity to be, although their actions would initially cause a person to believe that they were seeking the child to obtain meaning from what was being read.

Implications for Research

This study concentrated on second graders as readers, specifically at the end of their second grade year. Further

research should attempt to explore the parent/child reading relationship at an earlier age for the following reasons. First, by this time the children have had at least two years of formal reading instruction in which they have practiced a variety of strategies to use in decoding text. Many of these strategies are then applied by a child faced with an unknown word while reading at home with no further encouragement by a parent.

Second, a rapport has been established between the child and parent by this age and, whether they read together regularly or not, certain habits exist. In fact, many children at this stage of development are reading more often on their own without parent involvement or encouragement. The end of a child's first grade year or beginning of the second grade year may therefore be a more appropriate time to view this interactive reading activity.

The design of this study specifically used parent responses as a way to measure the emphasis of a reading activity. However, since a parent's actions may not always be consistent with his/her intentions, it may be necessary in future studies to include a way by which to examine parent perceptions about reading at home, its purpose, goals, and how those goals are attempted to be accomplished. Also, since only two fathers participated in this study, neither of whom being

the parent his children read with regularly, it would be interesting to study the role of the father to the developing reader.

The importance of “wait time” presented itself as a possible factor in this present study. A closer examination of the tape recorded sessions could provide more insight as to the amount of time allowed each child to decode or self-correct errors. Previous studies have focused on this in the classroom (Hill, 1989; Hoffman et al., 1984; McNaughton & Glynn, 1981), yet little is known about the interactions between the parent and child.

Implications for Home and School

Teachers almost always encourage parents to read at home with their children. With practice, children improve at almost everything they do, reading being no exception. Parents help their children improve their reading by drawing upon what they remember working for themselves when they were young or what they “feel” to be the right way to help. Parents are given very little direction.

To maximize the benefits of reading at home it is essential that teachers begin to guide parents in their efforts. Merely requesting that parents read regularly with their children is

not sufficient. More programs such as the one presently existing at the University of Canberra (Kemp, 1992) should provide training and supervised practice for parents who wish to help their children become better readers. Other options, simpler but perhaps effective, would include parent information evenings focusing on various aspects of reading and how to assist a child or including tips on reading during parent-teacher conferences for each child.

Regardless of how it is accomplished, the most important thing to remember is that parents are a vital part of a child's development as a reader and should be made aware of all the strategies available to use during at-home reading experiences. Together, parents and teachers can create a whole new generation of successful, strategic readers.

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Appendix A

Categories of Child Miscues

meaning based	The miscue, although semantically and syntactically incorrect, did not alter the meaning of the text (Omissions and insertions were considered in a separate category).
hesitation/sounding out	The parent response was given as the child was either pausing or actively using a decoding process to determine an unknown word.
letter only	The only similarity between the actual word and child's miscue is the first letter. Only real word miscues were included in this category.
wild guess	The child's miscue did not make sense semantically or syntactically. In many instances the child would respond with a nonsense word.
letter plus context	The child's miscue employed the use of the first letter(s) of the word and knowledge of text.
other	This category included all other possibilities.

Appendix B

Categories of Parental Responses

supplies word	The parent either corrected a child's miscue or supplied the word when the child hesitated.
disregards miscue	The parent made no response to the miscue made.
provides "phonetic" instruction	The parent gave hints directed at proper decoding rules or various sounds found within the word.
acknowledges/ requests rereading	The parent would ask the child to reread a word or phrase, or simply point to a miscalled word or phrase and say "uh-huh" or "What was that word?"
refers to story meaning	The parent would ask the child, "Does this make sense?" or comment in some way that the miscue does not match the context of the story.
other	This category included all inaudible sounds made by the parent, or comments that did not fit any of the above categories.

Appendix C

Total Number of Miscues
and Responses Obtained

miscues made by child

	meaning based	hesitation/ sounding out (no real word)	letter only	wild guess	letter plus context	other	total
supplies word	10	50	11	10	6	2	89(40%)
disregards miscue	12	1	4	5	5	16	43(19%)
parent response provides "phonetic" instruction	1	39	4	1	1	0	46(20%)
acknowledges/ request rereading	5	7	4	1	3	4	24(11%)
refers to story meaning	0	6	6	0	1	0	13(6%)
other	0	4	0	0	1	5	10(4%)
total	28 (12%)	107 (48%)	29 (13%)	17 (8%)	17 (8%)	27 (11%)	

Appendix D

Emphasis of Responses to Miscues:
Decoding or Meaning of Text

		miscues made by child					
		meaning based	hesitation/ sounding out (no real word)	letter only	wild guess	letter plus context	other
	supplies word	D	M	M	M	D	D
parent response	disregards miscue	M	M	NI	NI	M	M
	provides "phonetic" instruction	D	D	D	D	D	D
	acknowledges/ requests rereading	D	M	M	M	M	M
	refers to story meaning	D	M	M	M	M	M
	other	NI	NI	NI	NI	D	M

D = Decoding emphasis
M = Meaning of text emphasis
NI = Not included in analysis

APPENDIX D

Letter to Parents
Soliciting Participants

April 26, 1994

Dear Parent:

You may be familiar with my name, as I am a teacher in the Barclay School. I am also pursuing my masters degree in Reading at SUNY Brockport. For my final requirement at SUNY Brockport I am conducting a study of children's oral reading habits, with a focus on observing children as they interact with others. This research is not associated with Brockport Central Schools other than to allow me to give you this informational letter through your child's classroom teacher.

I am seeking volunteers for this study from parents of children in second grade. Participation would involve one meeting with myself in which I will tape record ten minutes of your child reading to you as he or she would during a readingtime with you. In return, I will offer you information and suggestions for improving and enhancing your at-home reading experiences as well as answer questions you may have.

My professional background includes bachelors degrees in Special Education and Elementary Education, three years of teaching experience in Special Education at the third grade level at this district, additional teaching experience at the preschool level, and individual and small group tutoring in reading. My research is being conducted under the advisement of Dr. Arthur Smith, graduate professor of Reading at SUNY Brockport.

If you would be willing to be a part of this study, or would like more information, please complete the form below and return to the address listed. Your child's classroom teacher has also agreed to forward it to me if you so choose.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.


Sincerely,

Sandy Hise

Sandy Hise
Masters candidate
SUNY Brockport

Yes, my child and I are willing to participate in this study. Please contact me to arrange for an acceptable meeting time and place.

Please return to:

Sandy Hise


Your name

Child's name boy/girl?

Phone number