

An Investigation of Reading Intervention Programs in a Junior Secondary School Setting

Submitted by
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Statement of Sources

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates key factors contributing to literacy development of underachieving readers in a junior secondary school. Two intervention programs designed to enhance the reading skills of eight underachieving readers in a junior secondary school were used. These eight individuals, of normal intelligence, had in common a history of reading difficulties. In the first of these programs eight students participated in a one-on-one reading intervention program using an adaptation of the program *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992). In the second program four students from the above-mentioned cohort participated in a one-to-four intervention program involving the use of a Meta Language Awareness Program involving, among other things, Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar and Brown 1985) procedures. The underlying premise to this study is that underachieving readers are characteristically non-strategic and that through two explicit methods of instruction used they can improve their reading. A key to helping the participants break the cycle of failure in reading is to help them make the connection between effort in the use of particular reading strategies and success in the reading process.

This study reveals that struggling adolescent readers have many reasons for their difficulties with reading and require different approaches to the process of reading. However, with teacher persistence in appropriate conditions, and tailoring reading experiences to meet student needs, such individuals can become successful, engaged readers who enjoy reading.

A detailed analysis of one case, 'Sarah,' is presented since "it can provide insight into the class of events from which the case has been drawn" (Burns, 1995, p. 320). Evidence measured in tests and anecdotal records illustrate general findings about Sarah and the other seven participants.

Themes related to the participants' ultimate success in reading are elaborated in this thesis, not because they are thought to be unique but because they will most likely be recognisable to other teachers of struggling adolescent readers.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.....	1
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
<i>Context</i>	1
<i>Summary</i>	21
CHAPTER 2.....	23
LITERATURE REVIEW	23
<i>Introduction</i>	23
<i>Section 1: The Nature of Reading</i>	25
<i>Summary of the nature of reading and the “great debate” on the reading process</i>	49
<i>Section 2: The Characteristics of Successful Readers; the Characteristics of Unsuccessful Readers</i>	49
<i>Characteristics of Unsuccessful Readers</i>	57
<i>Summary of successful and unsuccessful readers</i>	72
<i>Section 3: Reading Intervention Programs</i>	72
<i>Section 4: The Adolescent Reader and Metacognition</i>	97
<i>Section 5: Patterns of Support for Struggling Adolescent Readers</i>	104
<i>Summary of Literature Review</i>	108
<i>Conclusion</i>	110
CHAPTER 3.....	111
RESEARCH METHOD	111
<i>Introduction</i>	111
<i>Summary</i>	157
CHAPTER 4.....	158
DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTIONS	158
<i>Introduction</i>	158
CHAPTER 5.....	183
DATA ANALYSIS FOR ONE CASE STUDY AND CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS	183
<i>Introduction</i>	183
CHAPTER 6.....	191
A PORTRAIT OF SARAH	191
<i>Introduction</i>	191
CHAPTER 7.....	239
SUMMARY OF CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS	239
<i>Introduction</i>	239
<i>General Findings</i>	243
CHAPTER 8.....	264
FACTORS LEADING TO CHANGE.....	264
<i>Introduction</i>	264
CHAPTER 9.....	307
CONCLUSION	307
<i>Conclusion and Implications</i>	307
<i>Characteristics of Reading Intervention Programs that Contributed to Change</i>	311
<i>Recommendations for Meeting the Needs of Struggling Readers</i>	315
<i>Future Research</i>	323
<i>Conclusion</i>	326
<i>In Closing</i>	327

<i>Some Final Comments</i>	329
LIST OF TEXTS USED IN INTERVENTION PROGRAMS	330
BIBLIOGRAPHY	332
APPENDIX 1	380
<i>TORCH (1984) Test Results Collected at the Beginning of the Project, Stage A</i>	380
APPENDIX 2	381
<i>Researcher Made Test of Phonological Knowledge</i>	381
APPENDIX 3	383
<i>T. C. Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension</i>	383
APPENDIX 4	384
<i>Reading Interview Schedule</i>	384
APPENDIX 5	387
<i>Questionnaire</i>	387
APPENDIX 6	388
<i>The Boy Who Kept His Finger in the Dike</i>	388
APPENDIX 7	390
<i>Barrett Scale</i>	390
APPENDIX 8	391
<i>Background to So Much To Tell You</i>	391
APPENDIX 9	392
<i>Character Profile of Cathy from So Much To Tell You</i>	392
APPENDIX 10	393
<i>Character Profile of Sophie from So Much To Tell You</i>	393
APPENDIX 11	394
<i>Table Illustrating Stages of Gathering Data</i>	394
APPENDIX 12	395
<i>Table Illustrating Stages of Gathering Data</i>	395

List of Tables

TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL READERS	50
TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF STAGES IN THE STUDY	125
TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT AND INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES USED TO MONITOR PARTICIPANTS' STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES IN READING AND ATTITUDES TO READING	132
TABLE 4: REVISED VERSION OF RMA RECORD SHEET	140
TABLE 5: OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTION PROCEDURES	166
TABLE 6: ROLES IN META LANGUAGE AWARENESS PROGRAM, ADAPTED FROM RECIPROCAL TEACHING	181
TABLE 7: REPLICA OF PART OF MATRIX OF DESCRIPTIVE DATA	187
TABLE 8: TORCH (1984) TEST RESULTS FOR SARAH	193
TABLE 9: SUMMARY OF SARAH'S RECOGNITION OF COMMON CONSONANT BLENDS, THREE LETTER BLENDS, COMPOUND WORDS AND AFFIXES DURING THE PROJECT	194
TABLE 10: CHANGES IN SARAH'S READING SKILLS THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT: SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS	194
TABLE 11: SARAH'S RMA OF TEXT THE MILLER, THE SON, AND THE DONKEY (AUTHOR UNKNOWN)	200
TABLE 12: SARAH'S RMA OF TEXT: THE WHIPPING BOY (1986) BY SID FLEISHMAN, PASSAGE 2, CHAPTER 18	203
TABLE 13: SARAH'S RESPONSES: SELF MONITORING PORTFOLIO ADAPTED FROM WEAVER (1994, P. 236)	207
TABLE 14: SARAH'S RESPONSES: FORTNIGHTLY "FIX UP" SKILLS DURING STAGE B AND THE BEGINNING OF STAGE C	209
TABLE 15: SARAH'S RMA OF TEXT: THE NEW BOOTS (AUTHOR UNKNOWN)	214
TABLE 16: EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONING AND SUMMARISING WITH SARAH IN WEEKS 3 AND 7	219
TABLE 17: SARAH'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE ON SELF-EFFICACY OF READING SKILLS DURING STAGE C	221
TABLE 18: EXAMPLE OF SARAH'S RMA: A MODIFIED VERSION OF WE LOOK AFTER OUR OWN (KATH WALKER)	223
TABLE 19: EXAMPLE OF SARAH'S FURTHER RMA OF PASSAGE: A MODIFIED VERSION OF A SENSE OF BELONGING (WITI IHIMAERA)	228
TABLE 20: SARAH'S RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED AT THE END OF STAGE C AND AGAIN POST-INTERVENTION FOUR WEEKS AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF STAGE C.	234
TABLE 21: TORCH (1984) TEST RESULTS COLLECTED FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS	239
TABLE 23: READING TEXT: EXCERPT FROM HEIDI (SPYRI, 1995)	269
TABLE 24: AN EXAMPLE OF STORY MAPPING, WHERE THE STORY IS REDUCED TO PREDICTABLE FRAMES	273
TABLE 25: AN EXAMPLE OF SARAH'S EMAIL	273
TABLE 26: READING TEST: TRAVELERS AND THE PLANE-TREE (AUTHOR UNKNOWN)	274
TABLE 27: READING TEXT: THE VILLAGE WASHER (SELVON, 1984)	302
TABLE 28: READING TEXT: THE NEW BOOTS (GRACE FOAKES)	305

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Context

A question frequently posed by the public and the media is: How can a student proceed through all the years of primary school and still barely be able to read? It is a puzzling question and a financially valid question considering the budgets devoted to providing reading intervention programs and special services in our schools.

Reading is a complex skill and for this reason it is not surprising to find that some children encounter difficulties in learning to read.

Most children who rely on schooling to learn to read and who receive good reading instruction do, in fact, become successful, lifelong readers. However, there are some children for whom good instruction is necessary – but not enough (Burns, Griffin & Snow, 1999, p. 127).

What causes some children to experience difficulty in learning to read? The answer is that there are many different factors that contribute to reading difficulties.

Some factors are located within the learner or learner's background, some within the teaching approach, some within the learning environment, and some are possibly related to the working relationship between the teacher and student (Westwood, 2001, p. 26).

The precise prevalence of children with significant learning difficulties in reading is open to debate. In Australia it is estimated that at least 16 per cent of the school population shows such problems (Prior, 1996). Using a broader category, children with learning difficulties, as a criterion for identification, most estimates tend to range from a low of 10 per cent to a high of 20 per cent (Rivalland & House, 2000), with some sources putting the figure even higher at 25 per cent to 30 per cent (House

of Representatives Standing Committee, 1993; Nicholson, 1994; Westwood & Graham, 2000).

Students with reading difficulties obviously lag behind their classmates in how much they have learned about reading. Whereas some of these students may be progressing through reading stages in the expected way, albeit at a slower rate, others show patterns that are qualitatively different from those of even younger typical learners (Roth-Smith, 1998). For example, for some the normal interplay between visual and phonological processes has not been established. For others, the reading difficulties relate primarily to problems focussing and sustaining attention. Because reading translates language into another symbol system, the better a child's language skills, the more rapid reading progress is likely to be (Reid & Hresko, 1980; Vellutino, 1991).

Reasons for Reading Difficulties

The majority of students intuitively discover the relationship between spoken and written words and learn to read regardless of the specific teaching method. This is especially true of students who begin school with good phonemic awareness (Griffith & Olson, 1992).

Several information-processing weaknesses may underlie reading difficulties. These include: peripheral visual factors, such as poor acuity and inefficient eye movements; visual-perceptual factors; and the most frequent and powerful contributors, poor language and phonological processing skills as well as poor attention abilities (Roth-Smith, 1998). All are closely interrelated and greatly influence how information is organised for storage, rehearsed and recalled. Reading difficulties may also be related to a lack of skill in metacognition. Metacognition involves processes such as self-questioning, prediction and monitoring the information in a text while reading (Nolan, 1991).

Reading Interventions

Reading intervention in schools is a priority because difficulties in this area inevitably lead to problems in other academic areas as well.

Some general approaches to reading instruction emphasise the meaning of the language that is being read (whole-word, whole-language, and language experience approaches), while others stress the ability to break the phonetic code (phonics and linguistic approaches) (Roth-Smith, 1998, p. 369).

An approach that integrates both meaning and phonics based methods is advocated by many experts because fluent reading necessitates the recognition of words at a glance, the automatic analysis, sequencing and retrieval of sounds, and the ability to gain meaning from words. Therefore, no one process can be concentrated on to the exclusion of the other (Vellutino & Scanlon, 1986).

While developing these phonic competencies, code-oriented enthusiasts emphasise that students also should benefit from immersion in excellent literature that encourages vocabulary enrichment, reading for comprehension, and use of context to monitor the story line and make predictions (Chall, 1983a; Vellutino, 1991; Mather, 1992; Pressley & Rankin, 1994).

Interventions for students who struggle with reading begin in the early years and often continue beyond the primary school and secondary school. Materials and approaches are chosen on the basis of what students need to learn and how they learn best. Exactly which material and approaches will best assist which students to learn is the focus of much current research. Some students require moderate task modification to be successful whereas others require intense remedial and compensatory efforts.

Historical Preface to Reading Interventions

During the 1950s in a typical Australian school we would encounter vocabulary-controlled basal reading textbooks implementing the “look-say” (whole word approach), in which direct instruction in phonics was delayed until children had acquired a basic sight word vocabulary. In that setting educators were faced with the unavoidable facts that: (a) the “graded” classroom still had a wide range of reading competencies, even when classes are formed homogeneously, and (b) some children had difficulty learning to read.

In 1955, Rudolph Flesch attacked the basal reader look-say approach to teaching reading in the popular bestseller, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. By 1967 Jeannie Chall of Harvard began work on another landmark project, later published as *Learning To Read: The Great Debate*. While Chall was quite clear about her findings, that teachers should make learning vocabulary an integral part of every subject throughout the entire day, many people, for several years, found her conclusion unsettling. She continued to voice what she found through later research and publications, including a second edition of *The Great Debate* (1983a). Here, Chall claimed that meaning-emphasis approaches result in more children having more severe reading difficulty than do code-emphasis approaches. The *First-Grade Studies* were more circumspect in reporting their findings, concluding that no approach is “best,” and that a combination of approaches is superior to basal-only.

As a practical application to the conclusions of the *First-Grade Studies*, educators coined the term “eclectic approach” (Manzo, Manzo & Albee, 2004). Meanwhile, teachers began to turn, individually and then en masse, towards the voice of Goodman (1973) and his whole language philosophy: “Teach them to read for meaning and the words will fall into place” (p. 13). Some of the hallmarks of a whole language classroom included:

- replacing basal readers with quality children’s literature;
- replacing direct instruction in phonetic word elements with a literacy rich environment, including print and authentic experiences with print;
- minimising emphasis on accuracy of children’s oral reading and emphasising meaning;
- referring to oral “misreadings” as “miscues” – indicators that the child has misread the cues for making meaning from print;
- replacing formal testing with more “kid watching” (Manzo et al. 2004, p. 197).

The assumption in the whole language approach is that children will learn rules naturally, without systematic instruction, by being immersed in a print-rich environment that invites guessing at words from context and from one’s own experiential and conceptual knowledge. However, the student who does not crack

the code with exposure to print requires systematic, explicit skill-by-skill phonic instruction to become proficient readers (Westwood, 2001). This does not preclude whole language instruction, as long as supplemental phonics is offered and the literature being read is appropriate to the student's language comprehension.

Reading, Self-Esteem and Self-Concepts

When children struggle as readers, factors such as their general knowledge, their knowledge of oral language, spelling and writing abilities and their vocabulary development also suffer. Because of its importance and visibility, especially in the primary classes, difficulty with the reading process limits the love for learning with which many other children enter school. It is embarrassing and even devastating to read slowly and laboriously and to demonstrate this weakness in front of peers on a daily basis. The results from longitudinal studies presented by Lyons (1998) suggest that substantial decreases in self-esteem, self-concept and motivation for reading are observed in children at the conclusion of Grade 1, if they have not been able to master reading skills and keep up with their like-age peers.

Students' feeling of incompetence in the reading situation in the very early grades often become so entrenched that it persists into the secondary school. Some students encounter difficulty with reading because they do not derive meaning from the texts being read. During the junior secondary years higher order comprehension skills become critical for learning. Reading comprehension places significant demands on language comprehension and general verbal abilities. The key to helping such students break this cycle of passive failure in reading is to help them to make the connection between effort and outcome. Encouraging struggling readers to put an effort into reading is important (Lyons, 2003). Teachers can promote motivation and effort if they consider the degree of challenge and offer specific supportive feedback. Providing students with ongoing opportunities to expand their understanding and skills will increase motivation and confidence and help students take constructive risks when reading (Lyons, 2003). Less successful readers who have become helpless or passive often do not understand the relationship between effort and success. They need intervention directed towards them taking responsibility for their own actions in reading. They need expert teachers who persist in helping these

struggling readers achieve. For example, intervention programs in metacognition help students to be aware that when their understanding breaks down there is a variety of techniques that can be used to reduce their confusion (Brozo & Simpson, 1999).

Indeed this view has been echoed by authors in the domain of models of metacognition who acknowledge the necessity of explicitly including affective and motivational variables in order to understand both the development of metacognition and the circumstances under which a person is likely to act metacognitively (Pressley, 1999; Magliano, Trabasso & Graesser, 1999; Hoffman & McCarthey, 2000).

The act of monitoring one's own thinking, or metacognition, is based on factors such as self-knowledge, task knowledge and self monitoring (Manzo, Manzo & Albee, 2004). In other words it is about keeping track of when you are understanding, what you are understanding, when you are not understanding, and knowing what to do to improve some aspect of faltering learning. The ability to use metacognitive skills is a solid indicator of both personal responsibility and social-emotional adjustment (Manzo & Manzo, 1990a; Sanacore, 1984; Wagoner, 1983).

Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983) contend that simply having knowledge about effective learning strategies is not sufficient to guarantee their actual use in a given situation. The way in which students become self-regulated, that is how they come to actively use cognitive and motivational resources in school, is a key issue.

It is widely recognised that to understand why and how a student develops metacognition and engages in self-regulation, one must consider the growing sense of self as an active cognitive agent (Flavell, 1978; Raphael, 1986; Herrmann, 1992). The self-system is seen as instrumental for academic achievement and for metacognitive development in that it functions both as an agent of motivation and as a regulator of the behaviours in which a person engages (Ediger, 1991; Hewett, 1991). Among the key components usually included within a positive self-system are self-esteem, perceived competence (both general as a cognitive agent and in

specific domains), personal sense of self-efficacy and perceived control about success and failure.

The development of these key components within a positive self-system is related to a variety of factors listed below:

1. Individual characteristics such as:
 - Temperament (Hattie, Biggs & Purdie, 1996);
 - Age (Torgesen, 2000);
 - Learning disabilities (Westwood & Graham, 2000);
 - Gender (Mellor & Patterson, 1996).
2. School environment, teacher behaviour and feedback (Hill & Crevola, 1997).
3. A whole school approach to authentic assessment of reading (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992; Lankshear, Gee, Knobel & Searle, 1997).

Some authors argue that it is only around the mid-primary school grades one should expect to find moderate correlations between components of the self-system, on the one hand, and between these components and school achievement on the other hand. They also contend that one should not expect to find substantial relations between self-appraisal of competence and performance before the late primary years (Harter & Pike, 1984; Harter, 1986; Nicholls, 1979). Bandura (1982) suggests that young children's self-appraisals tend to be unstable because they are to a great extent dependent on immediate outcomes. For older children, however, the numerous empirical studies of Connell and Ryan (1984) suggest that the self-system is an important determinant of achievement motivation, cognitive engagement in tasks and school performance. Some authors (Tunmer, Herriman & Nesdale, 1988; Tunmer & Chapman, 1999) maintain that with age and experience, children bring their self-perception into line with their actual performance. Therefore initial perceptions become more positive for those who experience success, whereas they become more negative for those who experience failure or poor performance. There is evidence that the transition from primary to secondary school is a period marked by a general

decline in students' self-perceptions. The writers see this decline as usually attributed to changes in the school and classroom environment which lead to an emphasis on the importance of evaluation and provide more opportunities for social comparison among students (Galda & Cullinan, 2002). Reading development does not occur in a vacuum. It mixes with the ways adolescents identify their roles as learners. Adolescents with a history of reading difficulties often generate identities that interfere with their future success as readers. Students who see themselves as poor readers or academic failures need special conditions to shape new productive identities.

Justification for the Study

The prime justification for this project is the growing evidence that a considerable number of secondary school students have poorly developed literacy skills (Christie, Devlin, Freebody, Luke, Martin, Threadgold & Walton 1991; Penington & Speagle, 1991; McNamara, 1995) and that more research is required with regard to the adolescent underachieving reader.

The literacy ability and academic achievement of children continues to be an issue concerning parents, teachers and the greater community. Any educator wishing to keep abreast of this field is faced with a daunting task. For example, Hoffman, Baumann and Afflerbach (2000) quote the statistic that since 1963 over 25,000 research studies in the field of reading have been carried out and published. However, it seems that only a few of these have had any real impact on teachers' beliefs and practices. Indeed as Westwood (2001) suggests, many teachers remain unaware of the important findings from reading research since such findings are not published in journals that are easily accessible to teachers. Whilst a number of interventions at the primary level are making gains, invariably many students who underachieve as readers reach secondary school feeling dispirited and lacking in the ability to learn effectively. These students struggle mightily with basic reading tasks and, because they are forced to read at frustration level most of the day, their reading competency may improve little from year to year (Foreman, 2001). In effect they fall further behind their peers. Some of these students are labelled learning disabled

and some slow learners. The inescapable fact remains that they have the potential to learn if they receive appropriate instruction.

It appears that the emphasis in many approaches to remedial reading instruction addresses chiefly the cognitive domain, and to a lesser extent, the affective domain (Ceprano, 1981; Manzo & Manzo, 1990a). Gorrell (1990) suggests that the cornerstone to all reading activities with struggling readers should include having students experience greater success and less anxiety in reading so that they will be able to persist in mastering reading. A key factor in mastering reading appears to be building students' metacognitive awareness and sense of personal responsibility. As Brown, Campione and Day (1981) suggest, readers need to consider what they may need to do more effectively and more frequently when engaged in reading. For example, the role of self in self-questioning and in self-appraisal and the level of effort required to do a task are critical elements in achieving this goal (Good, 1987).

There are two major factors underpinning the significance of this study. The first is that reading problems in junior secondary school students are widespread. The second is that for most of these students there would have been no discernible improvement in reading between Year 4 and Year 10 (Hill & Crevola, 1997). Each of these factors is discussed in more detail below.

Widespread reading problems exist in junior secondary school students.

A recent review of the literature suggests that problems with reading in the secondary school are widespread. For example, in 1992 an Australian government enquiry into literacy, containing surveys from most states, found that between 10 and 20 per cent of students finish primary school with literacy problems (Foreman, 2001). The report from the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) (2000), looking at policies, practices and patterns of support in schools across the board in Australia makes a relevant comment about the focus of support for literacy development. "Compared with the priority given by schools to first and second wave teaching, there has been less emphasis on third wave teaching of children still having difficulties in the middle and upper years of primary school" (DETYA, 2000). The suggestion is that in Australia, despite high quality, intensive early intervention programs provided by first wave (early literacy programs) and second wave (early

intervention programs) initiatives there were still some children in upper primary school having severe difficulty in coping with the literacy demands of the regular classroom. Even with the best of instruction in the early years of schooling, differences in reading abilities widen as students develop from year to year. Indeed, with each passing year into secondary school, they were falling further and further behind their peers, becoming adolescents who perennially struggle with reading.

It seems that there is a dearth of research in Australia on underachieving readers, in the early years of secondary school. Recognition needs to be given to the fact that reading underachievement for adolescents is debilitating. Without help, these individuals are destined to suffer throughout their lives. As a primary cause of school failure, poor reading ability leads to lowered self-esteem and emotional overlays. For secondary students the self-system is an important determinant of achievement motivation and cognitive engagement in tasks and school performance (Connell & Ryan, 1984). For example, an inability to recognise and use skills in self-questioning, predicting, verifying and self-monitoring detracts from overall skill development in reading.

There is no discernible improvement in reading between Year 4 and Year 10.

Many underachieving readers are not detected until secondary school. During the middle years of school there is a generally unacknowledged explosion of new and complex words to which students are exposed. During Year 4 to Year 6, for example, the visual memory of a reader is faced with an “orthographic avalanche” (Share, 1995, p. 17). Whereas a word recognition capacity of 400 words is adequate between Prep. and Grade 3, the demand increases dramatically to about 4,000 words in Grade 4 and 7,000 words by Grade 6 (Hempenstall, 2000).

There is no significant change in the relative reading achievements of males and females between Year 3 and Year 5 (ACER, 1996, p. 121).

The student who cannot access routes such as phonology, word analysis, vocabulary and comprehension to identify the escalating array of new words will struggle. In fact, his progress may halt. However, his difficulties may be disguised since the

mechanisms for the careful and continuous assessment of word attack skills is not emphasised in the middle years of school.

In the middle years students are required to move beyond the processing demands of simple stories, which comprise nearly all the reading texts in the early years. They are expected to cope with the processing demands of expository texts across the curriculum.

The consequences of reading problems upon an individual can be devastating. Emotionally, the strain of being unable to read successfully in school may cause the individual to feel lost and frightened and to experience rejection and defeat. In the classroom situation such individuals are forced to face their inadequacies daily and be subjected to degradation or grudging tolerance by others (Richek, List & Lerner, 1994).

Some underachieving readers “give up,” convinced that they are not capable of reading. They develop a response of “learned helplessness.”

The present study is clearly needed to help identify:

- (i) how reading intervention programs can help junior secondary school students in terms of their self perception, self efficacy as readers and skills in reading; and
- (ii) the characteristics of these reading intervention programs that have contributed to that change.

The Present Study

The present study sets out to investigate the effects of two intervention programs on students who at Year 7 level (aged 13 years) were demonstrating major problems with reading from both a cognitive and an affective point of view.

The eight participants who agreed to be involved in the present study shared a history of difficulties in their primary school days. These individuals were not classified as having an intellectual disability. In other words, they were individuals with

academic potential. In most cases, however, at the beginning of the project they revealed that they had had unhappy experiences with reading and were reluctant readers. In some cases they doubted their ability as learners and even appeared to equate their reading problems with personal deficits.

The reasons for their difficulties with reading and, consequently with many key learning areas, were many and various. Background information of these participants indicated earlier attempts to enhance their reading through pull-out programs in their primary school years. One can only assume that the contexts, relationships, learning styles and timing were not appropriate for these particular individuals during their primary school days.

In our initial one-on-one meeting at Stage A the participants appeared apprehensive. However, by the end of that session they left relaxed and keen to participate in the intervention of Stage B.

Without exception their own self-assessment of their reading skills was accurate, and this was confirmed by the initial testing procedures. They were well aware of their weaknesses in reading. They knew and seemed almost relieved to discuss in confidence that they were, for example, fearful of the embarrassment of doing round robin reading; unable to keep up with reading tasks; unable to understand complex texts; unable to use reading effectively in the key learning areas. From this initial session the researcher highlighted to the participants that the challenge was for them to work with her to tackle their reading problems.

Summary and Purpose of the Present Study

As mentioned earlier, the first purpose of the present study was to investigate how the participants changed during the project in terms of their self-perception, self efficacy as readers and their skills in reading. This was predicated on the assumption that by teaching reading strategies, enhancing metacognitive awareness and strengthening self-belief, these students would exhibit observable improvement in their reading.

Although many experimental strategy-based programs have been successful in improving students' reading, one problem remains that is pertinent to this study. For example, with the exception of Palincsar and Brown (1984), much of the existing research has failed to document, firstly, improvement that has been enduring (over a five year period) and, secondly, the transfer of treatment effects to authentic reading materials, authentic reading contexts and materials for different purposes. In other words, students do well on intervention materials, but when posed with real books and real reading assignments, the transfer of skills from practice to reality has been disappointing.

The second goal of the present study was to investigate the characteristics of the intervention programs that contribute to that change. For example, authorities in the field of education (Coles, 1998; Cohen, 2001) emphasise the social and emotional dimensions of learning. They highlight that students' "social emotional capacities powerfully influence their ability to listen and communicate, to understand, to modulate their emotional states and to become self-motivating" (Cohen, 2001, p. 4).

The focus of the two intervention programs in the present study was a relentless effort directed toward reading success for each participant (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1991; Lyons, 2003). There was an emphasis on well-defined goals, constantly assessing progress towards these goals and never giving up until success was achieved. The distinctive aspects of the intervention programs were a coordinated and proactive plan for translating positive expectation into concrete success for each participant. An essential condition for enhancing the participants' confidence and competence in reading was to lead them towards being "... active participants in reading experiences ..." (Lyons, 2003, p. 75). This involves encouraging the participants to use skills such as self-monitoring, self-questioning and self-appraisal to enhance their reading performance.

Context of the Study

During the 1990s a newer perspective known as the socio-cultural perspective has emerged in the study of learning disabilities. Proponents of this perspective such as Vygotsky, 1978 have argued for shifting the focus from the individual nature of the

learning disability to the embedded nature of an individual's actions within social contexts. Vygotsky emphasises the importance of analysing the whole range of experiences students encounter in the school with particular emphasis on two factors linked with the social contexts. The first factor was concerned with the classroom. The second factor was concerned with the teacher or peer group contexts and how these dimensions may have contributed to students' learning problems. The educational framework in which this study is contextualised is socio-cultural.

There are two sociocultural theories of learning relevant to intervention program in reading. These are discussed further below. The first Vygotsky's (1962) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990; Moll, 1992; Cole, 1996). The second is the theory of metacognition developed from the early work of Vygotsky (1962) and related to Bruner's (1966) notion of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

The ZPD is defined as mindful thinking (Rhoder, 2002) or the distance between what children can do by themselves and what they can do with others (Krause, Bochner & Duchesne, 2003). Assisting a learner in his ZPD involves cooperative dialogue. It is in the interactions with more capable partners that children learn to think. As children engage in cooperative dialogues with more capable partners they take on their language and begin to organise their independent application to work tasks. Rhoder (2002) describes a model of strategy instruction designed to promote *mindful reading* during which students understand, select and monitor reading strategies. This model involves instruction within the ZPD, that is, the area of skills they are capable of learning with the help of an expert. The emphasis is on a cycle of activities including explicit modeling, practice and opportunities to transfer their use of metacognitive strategies into new situations. One approach in assisting children's reading involves a cycle of modelled reading (teacher reading to children), guided reading (teacher reading with children) and independent reading (children reading on their own) (Luke, 1993). To start such a cycle the teacher largely controls the situation, demonstrating aspects of texts and reading. In time however, the teacher assistance is reduced and the children assume a greater amount of control as they read.

The cycle of modelled reading is used in an adaptation of *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992), a reading intervention program designed to help secondary students. At the commencement of the shared reading stage, the teacher reads a new section of text aloud to the student emphasising appropriate expression and intonation. The teacher and student then together read the same section of text. During this re-reading process the teacher focuses especially on slowing the reading pace and reading fluently and expressively. The student then attempts to read alone. Interactions such as those described above provide templates for children to utilise in other situations. These interactions ideally embrace code-breaking, text participation, text user and text analysis practices (Freebody, 1992; Luke, 1993; Luke & Freebody, 1999).

The second theory related to the intervention is metacognition. Metacognition involves directing one's own reading, making decisions about how to approach particular passages. Scaffolding is a sub-skill of metacognition. A teacher provides scaffolding, offering support that is gradually withdrawn as learners become capable of doing for themselves. In the context of the present study this refers to providing and adjusting assistance according to a reader's performance. This adjustment may occur within a session (such as within a guided reading session) as well as across a session (such as from modelled to guided independent reading) (Graves & Graves, 1994). According to the research in this area, teacher assistance with a reader's learning can be successful only when a shared understanding or "intersubjectivity" is established between the teacher and student (Fournier & Graves, 2003). To find a common ground for communication, a teacher needs to discover what the reader understands and then decide what assistance will work best in each case (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). It seems that intersubjectivity is a valuable precursor to internalisation of language. Once intersubjectivity is established, a teacher can gradually reduce control of the reading act and children may become more able to function independently as readers (Barchers, 1998).

The intervention to be used should be linked with Vygotsky's (1962) theory on the social interaction in promoting cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, social interaction in various forms is vital. For example, the one-on-one activities

used in an adaptation of *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) ensure that struggling readers will learn the appropriate skills from their interventions with the teacher.

In a similar way the Reciprocal Teaching approach, Palincsar & Brown (1984), (1985) allows students to use language as a tool for learning and for scaffolding the learning of others. Social interaction allows students to experience ‘cognitive apprenticeship’ (Roth & Bowen, 1995), a related application of group work that recognises the value of social interaction in the use of experts to scaffold novices’ learning.

Metacognitive Approaches

Reading strategies provide “an overall plan to gain meaning from text. Often termed ‘metacognition,’ these strategies include scanning the text, sampling, predicting, confirming, understanding and correcting errors as they occur” (Winch et al. 2001, p. 44). Strategies develop with age and experience, are important for effective reading and must be taught. Research indicates that comprehension monitoring is a developmental skill that is not fully mastered until adolescence. For example, Brown and Day (1983) and Brown, Day and Jones (1983) found that low-ability students did not always benefit from instruction in monitoring strategies. These strategies may be beneficial only if students have the background and understanding to use them effectively. However, with attention to students’ level of maturity, aspects of comprehension monitoring can be taught. It is important that teachers model actually using these strategies rather than teaching *about* the strategies (Meir, 1984).

As mentioned earlier, Rhoder (2002) describes a model of strategy instruction designed to promote mindful reading so that students understand, select and monitor strategies as they read. This model involves instruction within the students ZPD (the area of skill they are capable of learning with the help of an expert), explicit modeling, practice and opportunities to transfer their use of metacognitive strategies into new situations.

To help students develop metacognitive strategies, teachers must encourage them to become *active* learners. For example, students need to set goals for their reading tasks, to plan how they will meet their goals, to monitor their success in meeting their goals, and to remedy the situation when they do not meet their goals. This involves knowing certain techniques, such as relating new information to their background knowledge, previewing material to be read, paraphrasing ideas presented, and identifying the organisational pattern or patterns of text. Students need to learn the value of periodically questioning themselves about their ideas in a text to see if they are meeting their goals (Babbs & Moe, 1983).

The philosophy underlying the intervention approaches utilised in this study is that children should be actively involved in reading authentic materials while monitoring and evaluating their use of reading strategies. The principles of whole language teaching, with explicit instruction in decoding skills and comprehension strategies were the foci of the selected intervention programs. This was in keeping with the current view by “most educators who have come to advocate a balanced approach to reading instruction, giving attention to phonics skills and exposure to rich literature” (Manzo et al. 2004, p. 199). A phonics approach was applied when relevant or when highlighting the strategy to decode a particular word in context. For example, when introducing a student to an unfamiliar section of text, emphasis was given to word attack skills which involved breaking words into syllables or using the structural analysis of a difficult word. Similarly, when the researcher reviewed the students’ running record of reading, she could draw the participants’ attention to the areas which needed work, for example, omission of word endings. Running records (Clay, 1991) are a modification of Miscue Analysis and Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman & Burke, 1972). In essence, a teacher takes a running record of the actual reading by a student of a particular piece of text. The selection of text is important because the reading material, normally, should be sufficiently difficult for the reader to make oral reading errors (miscues), but not so difficult that the reader loses meaning. Miscues may be of graphological, phonological, grammatical, or semantic nature, and an experienced teacher can gain important information from the results on the reading achievement and skills of the reader concerned. Interpretation of the results is of major importance; just counting errors is to short-circuit a complex

process (Goodman, 1997). In other words, this technique allows teachers to analyse the types of mistakes or errors made by each student.

In summary, the emphasis with each of two interventions was to have the students become mindful of the specific reading strategies they can use to achieve success in reading. The underlying premise however is that unsuccessful readers are characteristically non-strategic and that through explicit metacognitive methods of instruction they can improve their reading.

Researcher Role as “Tutor” in Interventions

When describing the researcher’s role and interactions when implementing these interventions, the researcher will be described as the “tutor.”

Making A Difference (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992)

Making A Difference (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) is a professional development program for secondary teachers which enables them to help junior secondary students who struggle with reading. The program provides teachers with a model for the daily intensive instruction of struggling readers in a one-on-one teaching/learning situation. This approach focuses on improving students’ oral reading skills and silent reading skills by introducing them to a sequence of texts which incrementally become more challenging in terms of vocabulary, content and genres. There is an emphasis on the *whole language* philosophy of providing reading instruction. Whole language is a philosophy about learning to read and use language that emphasises the wholeness of the integrated language forms (oral language, reading and writing). Characteristics of the whole language view of learning to read are described by Kenneth Goodman (1986, 1989, 1990), who is a pioneer of the whole language movement:

- The whole language philosophy builds around whole learners, learning whole language in whole situations.
- Whole language learning encourages respect for language and for learners.
- Whole language instruction emphasises the meaning and not the language itself, in authentic speech and literacy events (Lerner, 1997, p. 401).

In summary, the model described above is based on the premise that difficulties in literacy will be overcome when an appropriate partnership develops between the researcher and the participant and when the participant assumes responsibility for her part in the learning process.

Adaptation of Making A Difference (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) Model for Present Study

For the duration of the intervention program in the present study a sequence of one-on-one instruction sessions based on the model outlined above was seen to be essential.

Five principles underpinned the adaptation of *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) program. Firstly there was a regular, predictable routine to the sessions. Secondly there was an emphasis on explicit instruction to support reading for meaning. Thirdly there was emphasis on word identification skills and spelling skills. Fourthly there was a clear connection between reading and writing in the text summary. Fifthly where a participant struggled with a particular aspect of word identification, there was a two minute focussed word study session to remedy that situation.

The student who does not naturally crack the code with exposure to print requires systematic, explicit skill by skill phonics instruction to become a fluent, proficient reader. This does not preclude whole-language instruction, as long as supplemental phonics instruction is offered and the literature being read is appropriate to the students (Lerner, 1997, p. 63).

At the beginning of the project where a participant struggled with the blending of three consonants at the beginning of a word, for instance, 'strip,' in the focus session, she was drilled on identifying a particular word from the following sequence.

strange	stranger	strain	street
strike	strip	string	strife

This type of procedure was repeated so that the particular participant could build up her ability to focus on the specific aspect of word identification, for example, medial sounds in words or word endings.

Metacognitive Skills Associated with Meta Language Awareness Program

Current research identifies characteristics which differentiate skilled readers from unskilled readers. For example, unskilled readers focus on decoding single words, and fail to adjust their reading for different texts and purposes (Paris, Wasik & Turner, 1990). Similarly, poor readers tend to be non-strategic and are unable to ameliorate comprehension failure (Mercer, 1992). Skilled readers on the other hand are engaged in active learning strategies. They use good monitoring strategies whereby they establish goals for an instructional activity, determine the degree to which they are being met, and, if necessary, change the strategies being used to attain the goal (Rubin, 1997). The suggestion is that skilled readers know what to do, as well as how and when to do it. They have the metacognitive abilities that make them active consumers of information.

Three clusters of metacognitive skills are identified in the literature (Foreman, 2001). These include:

- being aware of a level of understanding by identifying inconsistencies and inaccuracies while reading;
- monitoring that the goals for reading are being achieved and that effective strategies are being used to achieve these goals;
- regulating the use of strategies to ensure that they assist faltering comprehension (for example, re-reading, self-questioning) (p. 204).

The underlying assumption behind metacognitive instruction is that students with learning difficulties are characteristically non-strategic in their approach to learning and are generally lacking in metacognitive ability (Mercer, 1992). More importantly however, metacognitive approaches maintain that through appropriate instruction a learner can become “an active rather than a passive participant in one’s own thinking” (Kulieke & Fly-Jones, 1993). In other words, the poor reader can learn to become metacognitive. Indeed, it is acknowledged that students with learning

difficulties need more direct teaching in the form of metacognitive training, especially if they are going to achieve results comparable to those of their average peers (Turner, 1992).

Meta Language Awareness Program

A Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) is one metacognitive instructional approach designed to enhance the reading comprehension skills of poor readers in upper-primary and junior secondary classes. In Reciprocal Teaching (1985) a dialogue between researcher and participant is developed for the purpose of jointly constructing the meaning of a text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies that represent the kind of engagement experienced by successful readers: (1) question generating; (2) summarising; (3) clarifying; and (4) predicting (Bruce & Chan, 1991).

When using a Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) there are four distinct stages which are described below:

1. The researcher and participants read an assigned paragraph silently.
2. The researcher modelled strategies of formulating questions, constructing a summary, clarifying difficult information and making a prediction.
3. Each participant took on the teacher's role, while the researcher provided scaffolding only when necessary.
4. As each participant became more competent the researcher's input was gradually withdrawn.

Summary

In summary, the present study was intended to investigate the effectiveness of two intervention programs designed to enhance the reading skills of junior secondary school students. The focus was firstly to investigate how the participants changed as a consequence of the interventions in terms of their self-perception, self-efficacy as readers and their skills in reading. The second focus was to investigate the

characteristics of the intervention programs that contribute to change in the participants.

Chapter two of this thesis addresses the review of relevant literature, while the research method is covered in Chapter three. In Chapter four a description of the interventions will be provided. Chapter five is devoted to data analysis for one case study and cross-case analysis. A portrait of Sarah, one of the participants, appears in Chapter six, while a summary of cross-case analysis is presented in Chapter seven. In Chapter eight a detailed coverage of the factors leading to the change in the reading of the participants is presented. Chapter nine focuses on the conclusion and implications for the present study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Reading is a complex process. It is a process that is indispensable for adequate functioning in most societies. Successful reading requires many basic processes, such as the identification of letters, the mapping of letters onto sounds and the recognition of words and syntax. The ultimate goal, however, is for readers to learn from text: to recognise the facts or events depicted; to connect them to each other and to background knowledge; to remember the results so they can be used later (Taylor, Graves & Van Den Broek, 2000). This goal requires additional higher-order processes, such as inference making and reasoning. A central aim of education is to provide students with the skills to perform these requisite basic and higher-order processes, and to assist readers who have difficulty with them.

This thesis addresses a perpetual problem that exists in all systems of education. The problem is that there are some individuals in the middle and secondary school who are caught in a state of reading failure. Every child is entitled to be given

the tools they need to succeed in later education, and sometimes that means giving individual instruction. And effective individual instruction of children with diverse needs can never stem from a set of instructions for everyone to follow (Clay, 2003, p.x).

In light of this statement, the questions that guide this research and the purpose of this thesis, the literature falls into five main sections. The first section is concerned with the nature of reading and the reading process. The second section revolves around the characteristics of successful readers, characteristics of unsuccessful readers and problems facing underachieving readers. The third section addresses the socio-cultural theories of learning and a number of issues related to reading intervention programs. The fourth section looks at the adolescent reader and

metacognition, and the patterns of support for struggling adolescent readers. The fifth section examines the patterns of support for struggling adolescent readers.

The area of literacy has received a great deal of attention because difficulties with reading and writing tasks will influence all areas of school achievement. Most school tasks require the finding and presenting of information, and reading is the main way this is accomplished and learnt. Indeed, Doyle (1993) cited in Foreman (2001) maintains that 83 per cent of the school day is directed toward pen and paper activities which involve reading.

Not only are literacy skills important, but large numbers of people appear to have problems in reading and writing. While the 1992 enquiry into literacy in Australia found that between 10-20 per cent of students had literacy problems at the end of primary school, in the National Schools English Literacy Survey (1997), approximately 30 per cent of children in Years 3 and 5 did not meet acceptable standards of reading and writing (Masters & Forster, 1997). Masters and Forster (1997) reporting on a survey of adult Australian's perceptions of their literacy skills, found that 14 to 20 per cent rated their reading and writing skills as moderate to poor, with help required for reading information from government or business, for filling out forms and writing letters. In addition, the mainstream population in schools has changed with the government 1990s policy of inclusion of children with special needs. This has meant that there are students with other disabilities who are mainstreamed and are likely to have difficulty learning basic literacy skills.

These estimates mean that literacy difficulties are a large area of learning difficulty and that they extend into adulthood. The implication is that all teachers during their career are likely to be involved with students with literacy problems. Hence all teachers need to understand how children with problems in literacy feel and how to support them.

Literacy

Literacy, as is generally accepted, is about reading and writing (and sometimes listening and speaking). It is a meaning-making and meaning-using process.

Meaning is constructed through the interaction between the learner (in all his complexity), the text (in all its complexity), and the instructional variables within the context of the learning situation (Brozo & Simpson, 1999). When literacy is discussed in the print and visual media it is invariably presented as problematic (falling standards) and to do with reading or writing (students can't write, read, spell) (Anstey & Bull, 2000). Traditionally Ministries of Education have described literacy in their curriculum documents as listening, speaking, reading and writing. For other educational researchers there has been a move towards collapsing listening and speaking into a single category – talk – and adding critical thinking, viewing and non-verbal communication (Gee, 1998).

Governments in the western world are inclined to approach literacy from a functional viewpoint. Literacy is then presented as successfully taking part in everyday life. As suggested earlier, UNESCO (cited in Anstey & Bull, 1996, p. 39) states that 'a person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his everyday life.'

Others see the process of becoming 'literate' as something which is relative. For example, as Luke (1993) suggests, it becomes a question of what kind of literacy practices children are exposed to in their particular culture, rather than a question of 'more' or 'less' literacy.

Section 1: The Nature of Reading

The first section of the literature review deals with the following areas which relate to the topic of this thesis. First the nature of reading in general. Second, the importance of literacy in the middle and secondary school. Third, the factors associated with success in the reading process. These three areas are of particular importance to this study. The evidence shows quite clearly that for some middle and secondary school students a cycle of reading failure began very early in their school careers. They do not get off to a smooth start and they typically fall behind more and more each year, as their problems become compounded (Strickland, 2000).

Reading

Reading is one of the uniquely human and complex cognitive processes. Success in reading requires many basic processes, such as identification of letters, mapping of letters onto sounds and the recognition of words and syntax. Reading, as defined by Nicholson (2000), is a multi-component process. It involves decoding printed words into their linguistic forms, accessing the meanings of those words, parsing of groups of words, in phrases and sentences, semantically analysing those sentences, and finally putting together the overall meaning of those sentences and paragraphs to make up a text.

According to a model of reading developed by Luke and Freebody (1999), reading involves a repertoire of four roles that effective readers need to learn to use. The four roles are: code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 5-8). As code-breaker the reader gives attention to letter-sound correspondences, whole words, sentences, paragraphs, semantic information, punctuation and word meaning. In the role of text-participant the reader is concerned with what the text is saying in the context of the reader's own knowledge about the topic. Text-user practices refer to the way we use texts to achieve our particular social purposes. Text-analyst practices refer to the ways readers critique the underlying and unstated assumptions in a text and the way a text attempts to position them as a reader.

Burns, Griffin and Snow (1999, cited in Westwood, 2001, p. 13) contend that:

For a child to read fluently, he or she must recognise words at a glance, and use the conventions of letter-sound correspondences automatically. Without these word recognition skills, children will never be able to read or understand text comfortably and competently.

Pressley (1998) agrees, and suggests that to become competent readers, children need to learn two things: word identification strategies and comprehension strategies. These strategies are interdependent, with comprehension being closely linked with a reader's swift and efficient identification of the words in a text. Rayner, Rayner and

Pollatsek (1995) maintain that word identification and comprehension have a reciprocal relationship. Rapid word identification obviously facilitates and supports understanding, and reading with understanding promotes speed and fluency in processing print. At the core of reading is meaning; meaning is what we search for as we read (our goal) and it is also part of what we use to reach the goal (our guide) (Winch, Johnston, March, Ljundahl & Holliday, 2004). In making meaning from text, readers combine their knowledge of the world, the topic of the text and their knowledge of spoken language. Higher-order processes are essential to achieving this goal; for example inference making and reasoning. To provide students with the skills to perform these required basic and higher-order processes is a central aim of education.

Literacy in the Middle and Secondary School

To be literate in the middle and secondary school means many things. It means using literacy to bring pleasure and to expand one's sense of self. It means using literacy to become a more fully realised and participatory citizen in a democratic society such as ours (Brozo & Simpson, 1999).

In the middle and secondary school students are not only assigned readings which are more complex but they are expected to read more and to rely more on reading to gain a wide range of information. By the time they reach Years 7 and 8 students generally have gained insight into the way the text's structure can facilitate their comprehension (Roth-Smith, 1998). Such insights include differentiating main idea sentences from supporting detailed sentences, identifying different levels of importance of ideas and using text organisation to aid comprehension (Taylor & Samuels, 1983).

Factors Associated with Success in the Reading Process

The most obvious problem that all children with reading difficulties exhibit is a serious deficit in swift and accurate word identification (Manis, Custodio & Szeszulski, 1993; Pressley, 1998; Torgesen, 2000). The problem is due to several contributory factors including difficulties in word recognition, poor knowledge of

vocabulary, poor phonic knowledge, poor phonological awareness and phonemic awareness and weaknesses in the use of sight vocabulary. Each of these is discussed below.

Word Recognition

Word recognition has been defined as “the process of extracting enough information from word units so that a location in the mental lexicon is activated, thus resulting in semantic information becoming available to consciousness (Stanovich, 1982a, p. 486). In other words, in order for a reader to retrieve the meaning of a word from long-term memory, the written form of the word must first be ‘decoded’ into its spoken equivalent.

Share and Stanovich (1995) continue that children with learning disabilities are both slower and less accurate in identifying unfamiliar words both in text and in isolation. The suggestion is that there may be a number of factors contributing to difficulties in the skills of acquisition of fluent and accurate word recognition. These include cognitive sub-processes underlying word recognition skills, including visual perceptual deficits and reliance on context. Hoffman and McCarthy (2000) suggest that children with learning disabilities may also have deficits in the metacognitive abilities involved in word identification.

Skilled readers are adept at sounding out words, sometimes on a letter-by-letter basis but also through recognition of common letter sequences (for example, prefixes, suffixes, base words; Ehri, 1991, 1992). Once it is sounded out, the child often recognises the word just pronounced because many words in the text encountered by beginning readers are words that have been in their speaking vocabulary for several years. Within the constraints of the working memory system, the logical conclusion is that if children can recognise words in the text they are reading, they will understand them (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Experimental psychologists interested in reading have provided a great deal of data consistent with the conclusion that word recognition skills can be improved in ways that promote understanding of what is read. Words cannot be understood or their meanings combined with those of other

words if they are not first recognised. Also, often words cannot be identified unless the context is understood.

The work of Lovett, Lacerenza, Borden, Frijters, Steinbach and de Palma (2000) on under-achieving readers suggests that success in improving the decoding skills of very weak readers ages 9 – 14 years can be achieved by teaching skills in (1) letter/sound association, (2) use of letter/sound associations to analyse words into component sounds, and (3) blending component sounds to produce words. These studies were especially impressive since the degree of experimental control in them included controls to eliminate the possibility that treatment effects were not in fact placebo effects. Similarly the work of Westwood (2001) suggests the potency of systematic word-recognition instruction in promoting reading skills in students experiencing difficulties in reading.

Samuels (1988) sees word recognition skills as “a necessary prerequisite for comprehension and skilled reading” pointing out that “we need a balanced reading program, one which combines decoding skills and the skills of reading in context” (pp. 757, 758). He has long emphasised that accurate and automatic word recognition is needed for fluency in reading. This automaticity (application without conscious thought) in word recognition is achieved through extended practice. Repeated readings of the same passages can help move students from accuracy to automaticity in word recognition (Roe et al. 2004).

Knowledge of Vocabulary

One essential component of automaticity in reading is an extensive vocabulary of words recognised instantly by sight (Westwood, 2001). Experimental psychologists suggest that there is a causal connection – that having a more extensive vocabulary promotes comprehension skill (Beck & McKeown, 1991a; Beck & McKeown, 1991b). The study of Beck, Perfetti and McKeown (1982) is a well known example.

The ability to recognise or decode words is critical to mastering the reading of print. Fluency in word recognition enables readers to concentrate on the meaning of a text. Without these so-called lower-level reading skills, the higher cognitive skills cannot function (Chall, 1991). For example, readers who struggle to decode individual

words frequently have little processing capacity for comprehending a text since they are caught up in the mechanics of word by word print recognition. As Kletzien (1991, p. 82) says, they use mental effort in deciphering print at the expense of comprehending the author's thoughts. Strategies for recognising words include phonics, sight words, context clues, structural analysis and combined word-recognition strategies.

Reading volume, especially the amount of time students spend reading independently "is still a very powerful predictor of vocabulary and knowledge differences between students, even when performance is statistically equated for reading comprehension and general ability" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998, p. 11). Students who read more in and out of school develop much larger vocabularies than those who don't. With larger vocabularies, students' ability to acquire knowledge becomes a much easier task. The more knowledge students acquire and the more fluent readers they become, the more new vocabulary words they add to their lexicon. The range of differences between students who read and those who don't, magnifies as they move through the grades.

Alphabetic Knowledge

Alphabetic knowledge is important in the process of fluent reading. It is critical that readers understand that letters represent speech sounds (Pikulski, 1989). Some readers learn this intuitively, but most need help. Holdaway (1979) suggests introducing two contrasting letter-sound combinations, such as *m* and *f*, and having readers find these letters in familiar stories that the teacher has read to them. After they find many examples, which they can readily identify because of their familiarity with the stories, they work with other letter-sound relationships, including *b*, *g*, *s* and *t*. Because of the insights they have gained, many readers are then able to learn the remaining initial consonants and consonant blends on their own.

Phonic Knowledge

Phonics is the set of relationships between phonology and the letter symbols or graphemes (Barchers, 1998). In extensive research regarding the efficacy of teaching phonics, Chall (1967) recommends early phonic instruction, particularly using words

that could be readily decoded using a knowledge of phonics. At some point the reader must acquire the skill of breaking the letter-to-sound code (Stanovich, 1993). This is a complex task for teachers. Teachers usually spend several weeks ensuring that all students understand the relationship between letters and their sounds. They begin with the consonants that are easy to articulate and identify, adding a few short vowel sounds next. The students practise using these sounds until they identify the letters and related sounds easily. After practising short words with a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) pattern, such as *cat*, they proceed to pre-primers, small illustrated books that have just a few words or a short sentence on each page (Barchers, 1998). Phonic skill particularly when phonics are taught in the context of texts is claimed to be a powerful tool to help children become independent readers (Juel & Roper-Schneider, 1985 in Nicholson, 2000). Learning the coding system of phonics allows children to sound out letters and letter combinations and arrive at the pronunciation of words. The acquisition of phonic skill is especially important in the beginning stages of learning to read and write. Phonic decoding strategies are also used by mature readers and writers when they encounter difficult or unfamiliar words.

Many teachers seem to equate phonic knowledge and skills simply with knowing the common sound units associated with the single letters of the alphabet. Phonic knowledge includes this very basic level but also extends to include an understanding that some sound units in speech can be represented by a group of letters (for example: *bl*, *str*) and also that the same unit may be represented by more than one letter group (for example: *ite* and *ight*). Once this principle is understood by a reader, a much higher proportion of English words become decodable (Dombey, 1999).

Once students know some letter-sound sequences, the focus of phonics instruction should be on using phonic analysis to decode and spell words. In other words, this approach capitalises on the experience and knowledge that a child brings to the process, coupled with the child's purpose. Below are the steps students should follow in decoding an unfamiliar one-syllable word:

1. Determine the vowel sound in that word, and isolate that sound.

2. Blend all of the consonant sounds in front of the vowel sound with the vowel sound.
3. Isolate the consonant sound(s) after the vowel sound.
4. Blend the two parts of the word together so the word can be identified (Eldredge, 2005, p. 134).

In English many words defy phonic analysis and must be learned by sight. Since many of these words are the commonly used ones, a beginning reader needs to meet them frequently in well planned, carefully structured graded reading books (Nicholson, 2000, p. 104). Contemporary experts in teaching methodology recommend that children be taught almost from the beginning how to recognise letter groups, rather than spending too long practising decoding from individual letters (Cunningham, 2000; Gaskins, 1998; Graves, Juel & Graves, 1998; Gunning, 2000; 2001). The suggestion is that the teaching of rimes (phonograms), prefixes and suffixes can be helpful. Gunning (2001) maintains that teaching letter groups as pronounceable word-parts is very effective because that is the manner in which children naturally try to decode words, for example, from onsets and rimes. Moustafa (2000) suggests that this recognition of letter groups facilitates a child's future ability to make analogies between familiar and unfamiliar words.

Most of the criticism of phonics teaching in the past stemmed from the fact that it was often done in a decontextualised manner, frequently through the medium of rather boring workbooks and routine exercises. However, current practice is to teach phonics and word study from the vocabulary encountered in meaningful reading and writing activities. Westwood (2001) emphasises that phonic decoding skills must extend beyond in letter-to-sound correspondences. Children need abundant opportunities to apply phonic knowledge to the decoding of many different words to build confidence in the decoding strategy. At the beginning stage, when a child needs to acquire the decoding skill, some experts recommend the use of reading material specifically designed to contain a high proportion of words which are easily decodable (Kameenui & Simmons, 1999). A consensus opinion among advocates for the teaching of phonic skills is that this approach be an integrated part of a

meaningful literacy program, rather than something attempted in isolation (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton & Johnson, 2000; Cunningham, 2000; Ehri, 1997; Gunning, 2001). The teaching of word recognition skills and spelling through the use of word families should be applied immediately to authentic literacy activities.

Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Awareness: Precursor to Learning Phonics

Success in beginning reading is highly correlated with a child's level of phonological awareness (Torgesen, 2000; Tunmer & Chapman, 1999). The term phonological awareness is used to describe an individual's understanding of the sound features of language. It includes an awareness that language is made up of individual words and that words are made up of one or more syllables and that a syllable is made up of separate units of sound or phonemes. Adams, Treiman and Pressley (1998) suggest that an important aspect of a child's development in phonological awareness is the acquisition of the 'word concept'. In other words, until a child realises that each word is a unit of speech there is little relevance in attempting to talk about 'sounds within a word' or to teach basic letter sound correspondence. Children do not seem to benefit from instruction in letter-sound correspondences until they possess an adequate level of phonological awareness (Castle, 1999).

Phonemic awareness refers to that aspect of phonological awareness involving the recognition that each spoken word is made up of a sequence of individual sounds. Phonemic awareness has nothing to do directly with print. Rather it is a metalinguistic ability enabling an individual to hear sounds within words. Without phonemic awareness children will not be able to identify and discriminate among the various speech sounds – an essential first step in learning phonics (Rubin, 2000). Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998, p. 52) describe the importance of phonemic awareness as follows:-

Because phonemes are the units of sound that are represented by the letters of the alphabet, an awareness of phonemes is the key to understanding the logic of the alphabetic principle and thus the learnability of phonics and spelling.

Pressley (1998) suggests that a lack of phonemic awareness is in fact the beginning of a vicious cycle. Poor phonemic awareness undermines a child's ability to learn

how to decode words, which in turn leads to slow and frustrating encounters with print and therefore limited encounters with a wide range of text. The result is children who have little pleasure in, or perseverance with, the activity of reading, compared with their peers.

Children who are relatively strong in phonological awareness before reading instruction begin typically to learn to read more easily than those with delayed or impaired development in the area (Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley, 1991). Phonological awareness leads to the attachment of the sounds of oral language to letter combinations during early experiences with literacy. In this way reading becomes a reasonably systematic representation of a child's familiar spoken language (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998).

Deficits in phonological awareness can be both a cause and a consequence of reading difficulties. Stanovich (1986b) also details the cumulative effects of early phonological awareness deficits:

If there is a specific cause of reading disability at all, it resides in the area of phonological awareness. Slow development in this area delays the early code-breaking progress and initiates the cascade of interacting achievement failures and motivational problems (p. 393).

As suggested earlier for most children phonemic awareness develops naturally from exposure to varied oral and aural language interaction in family, pre-school and school settings. However, some children, for example, those from restricted language backgrounds, will have failed to discover the phonological characteristics of their language (Westwood, 2001). They will require direct teaching in order to establish the core concept of phonemic awareness (Nicholson, 1999).

Use of Sight Words

Sight words are those words we recognise instantly without being sounded out or analysed structurally. Examples of sight words include *said*, *was*, *through* (Westwood, 2001). Many words challenge early readers because they have no concrete meaning. They are usually noun determiners (*the*, *that*), verb auxiliaries

(*were, had*), prepositions (*by, of*), and conjunctions (*and, or*). These structural or function words are difficult to define and often have similar configurations: *when, what, then, this* (Barchers, 1998).

Many of these words are also high-frequency words – words which we use repeatedly. Fry (1972) compiled a list of “instant words” also referred to as “sight words” which are found most frequently in the English language. These words are often considered particularly pesky because they are easily misread and difficult to analyse phonetically, or by their configuration, yet they are important to comprehension.

For fluent reading to occur most words in a passage must be sight words. According to Konza (2003), words are first recognised on the basis of some distinctive visual feature, for example, general shape. Further, Konza (2003) suggests that emergent readers gradually develop a bank of sight vocabulary on the basis of the visual features of words. Ehri (1997) suggests that automatic recognition of words contributes greatly to fluent reading. It is seen as the most efficient way to unlock the meaning of any text. However, reading a word by sight does not necessarily mean that the whole word is stored as a complete image, merely that important clusters of letters characteristic of that word are stored and can lead to its instant recognition.

The term ‘basic sight vocabulary’ is often used, with reference to a child’s knowledge of the most commonly occurring or high-frequency words. Many of these words are not ‘regular’ in their sound-to-letter translations so must be acquired by a visual memory approach (Morris, Blanton, Blanton & Nowacek, 1995; Dombey, 1999). Frequent exposures to high-frequency words results in children storing in long-term memory the key components of each word’s orthographic pattern. Consequently when the words are encountered again in connected text they are instantly identified.

When discussing students with limited sight vocabulary, Nicholson (1998, p. 188) explains: If these students “... were able to read quickly and accurately then the extra mental energy saved by not having to struggle with each word could be applied

to comprehending what they read, which is what reading is all about.” There is a need to give high priority to building the sight vocabulary of children who have reading difficulties. This should aid in their development of overall automaticity in print processing. Sight vocabulary grows with increasing reading experience. The more experience a reader has in reading the sooner he will develop speed and automaticity in reading. This fact provides validation for the important role of regular, sustained reading practice.

Cunningham (2000) also suggests that children who have a strong knowledge of phonics appear to learn sight vocabulary more rapidly than their peers who use only a ‘look-and-say’ approach. It seems that letter knowledge enhances the storage of orthographic patterns. On this issue Gunning (2000, p. xii) posits:

The time honoured practice of having students memorise a store of high-frequency words wasn’t working. Without a systematic way to attach sounds to letters, the students quickly forgot the words they memorised. Once they were taught phonics to help them remember the words their performance improved significantly.

For many children, sight vocabulary can be enhanced as a direct result of engaging in regular reading practice. The more frequently a child encounters a word in print the more likely it is that the word will be retained in long-term memory (Westwood, 2001). Advocates of the purest form of the whole language approach would argue that all words should be learnt in this way and never introduced in isolation. However, students who have had limited experience in sustained reading may need to have sight words taught to them more systematically and directly (Fields & Spangler, 2000).

Nicholson and Tan (1999) contend that the use of sight word practice on flashcards can improve students’ overall reading rate and comprehension of text. They also suggest that as poor readers become faster in reading texts, they become more motivated to engage in reading.

There are two stages in learning to store and retrieve a word from long-term memory. Stage one is accomplished when a reader can discriminate visually among the different words presented in a list. Stage two is more demanding. It requires the retrieval of a word and its pronunciation from memory.

So important is sight vocabulary to progress in reading that several specialists in the field of language have produced lists of frequently used words, for example, Fry (1977), Gunning (2001) and Talbot (1997).

To summarise, skills in word recognition help readers identify words while reading. One skill is sight word recognition, the development of a store of words an individual can recognise immediately on sight. Alphabetic knowledge is a knowledge that letters are symbols for phonemes or sounds. Phonics, the association of speech sounds (phonemes) with printed symbols (graphemes), is helpful in identifying unfamiliar words, even though the sound-symbol associations in English are not completely consistent. Word identification, whether it be by sight recognition or by the application of phonic skills, improves only as a result of engaging in a great deal of meaningful reading of continuous text. To become a skilled reader an individual will use both sight word recognition and phonics. Because they will need different skills for different situations, they must also learn to use each strategy appropriately.

Use of Context Clues

To make sense of print a reader needs more than skills in word recognition, vocabulary, phonic knowledge, phonological awareness, phoneme awareness and sight vocabulary. Readers can also use context to identify words. Knowledge of semantics and syntax helps readers make educated guesses about the unknown words. According to Goodman (1993), all readers use phonics but they also use meaning and grammar cues (p. 60).

Semantic cues provide meaning to the text, and efficient readers use these cues to facilitate comprehension. Background knowledge, prior experiences, and skills in the use of semantic cues represent only a portion of what a reader uses to understand a text (Barchers, 1998).

Readers also use their knowledge of syntax (the structure of the text) as they determine meaning. Ceprano's (1981) research indicates that most learners need directed experiences with written context while learning words in order to perceive that reading is a language process and a meaning-getting process (p. 321). The research of Jones (1982) found that the use of syntactic contexts influences a reader's identification of words.

Syntactic clues are provided by the grammar or syntax of our language. Certain types of words appear in certain positions in spoken English sentences. Therefore, word order can give readers clues to the identity of an unfamiliar word (Barchers, 1998). Using semantic and syntax, many readers quickly learn that not every word is necessary to understand the text. They have discovered or have been told that they can read for the gist of the passage and, unless they become totally lost, they can continue reading without total recognition.

In the 1960s, Goodman (1993) and his colleagues addressed what occurs when students read unfamiliar text aloud. They categorised each response to word as *expected* (when the word is read correctly) or *observed* (what the reader said instead of the correct word). The observed responses, referred to as *miscues*, were analysed for logic or the degree to which they supported comprehension. When teachers address the meaning behind miscues, they often find that the student's choice of a word makes perfect sense. Word-by-word accuracy becomes less important than reading for meaning.

Goodman's (1993) most complete miscue analysis, the Goodman Taxonomy of Reading Miscues, contains 18 questions that analyse the complex relationships between expected responses to the text and the observed responses (Marek & Goodman, 1996, p. 21). The Classroom Reading Miscue Assessment (CRMA) takes about 10-15 minutes per student to administer and can be given during silent reading or other quiet times (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1990, p. 252).

Context clues are clues which help a student to identify a word through the meaning or context of the sentence in which it occurs. Since the goal is to recognise words as quickly and efficiently as possible, the less the child has to do, the better. Thus

instantaneous recognition of the whole word is quickest and most satisfactory. When the first look does not result in word recognition, the combination of an intelligent prediction based on identifying a word through the meaning or context of the sentence in which it occurs and whatever familiar part(s) of the unknown word are immediately discernible is often sufficient.

While it has been found that the use of context facilitates text-level comprehension for good readers, it is an over-generalisation to assume that this relationship also holds for word recognition (Unrau, 2004). A review of a number of studies by Perfetti (1985) and his colleagues suggest that both high and low-ability readers are able to read words in context faster than words in isolation. Moreover, low ability readers were helped more by context than were high-ability readers. However, while good readers pay as much attention to visual cues as poor readers, the more efficient word recognition processes of the good readers allows them to do a ‘sampling’ of context more quickly than poor readers. Both Perfetti (1985) and Stanovich (1986a) contend that the more efficient word recognition skills of good readers lead to less reliance on context and that it is the poor readers’ deficient word recognition skills which cause them to be more reliant on contextual cues.

As a consequence of his review of the literature on context effects, Stanovich (1982a cited in Chan and Dally, 2000, p. 194) concludes that there is not a great deal of evidence to support the proposal that good readers are less dependent on the processing of visual information and more dependent on contextual information than poor readers. Indeed, the majority of studies showed the opposite to be true. The rapid word recognition abilities of good readers appear to be a direct cause of their reading skills and not the result of a greater reliance on contextual information. While poor readers use context to assist decoding words, this process results in a more limited capacity for the interactive processes of text comprehension. Developing automatisisation of lower level processes such as word recognition will allow adequate resources available for higher level text-processing.

Harris (1986) contends that both emergent readers and students with reading difficulties can learn to use context clues through consistent practice in the reading of

stories and books. When reading, children should be encouraged to monitor their decoding efforts by asking three questions:

1. Does it sound like a word I know?
2. Does the sentence sound right with this word in it?
3. Does it make sense in this sentence? (Harris, 1986, p. 79).

Structural Analysis

Structural analysis is the process by which longer words are broken up into pronounceable units. Using this approach readers are encouraged to recognise words through the analysis of meaningful word units, such as prefixes, suffixes, derivations and compound words. These word parts are usually taught as clues for determining meanings for words, rather than as clues for pronouncing unfamiliar-in-print words (Wood & Dickinson, 2000). Often, the word parts emphasised are parts with low utility. *Intra*, for example, would be taught as a prefix meaning “within” with the example of *intraschool*. A reader may recognise structural elements of a word, for example, the prefix ‘re’ in the word *remark*. This clue, along with the context of the sentence, may be enough to recognise the word. Instruction using the structural analysis approach means that students are taught structural-analysis generalisations that should help them to reliably predict structural elements within a word.

Promoting readiness for structural analysis instruction involves helping students hear segments or syllables in longer words. For example, simply clapping the syllables to a new longer word is an easy way to begin structural analysis.

Process of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension has been described as “a complex intellectual process involving a number of abilities” (Rubin, 2000, p. 171). When looking at a text, readers must use information already acquired to filter, interpret, organise, reflect upon and establish relationships (Westwood, 2001).

According to Winch et al. (2001), in constructing meaning from text, readers combine what they know about the world, the topic of the text, the grammatical structure of the language in which the text is written, and the way spoken language relates to the letters, words, visual elements and symbols on the page (p. 7).

However, from an educational perspective, the cognitive processes by which readers arrive at this product are more interesting since that is where failures to comprehend originate. These processes are what teachers hope to affect by instruction. How, then, does comprehension occur? At each point during the reading process, the reader attempts to make sense of the information explicitly stated in the current sentences by making connections between its two sources of information: associated concepts in background knowledge and a subset of concepts from preceding sentences (Van den Broek, 1997). The success of the process of comprehension then is dependent on factors such as the importance of the information within the text, the reader's background knowledge and the reader's attentional capacities (Van den Broek, Young, Tzeng & Lindholm, 1998).

Rhoder (2002) and her colleagues have studied comprehension strategy instruction. Practice with the strategies in the context of real-world tasks is especially important. Strategy use should be practised until it becomes automatic (Pressley, 1995; Rhoder, 2002). Allington (2002, p. 743) states that the exemplary teachers in his study "routinely gave direct explicit demonstrations of the cognitive strategies that good readers use when they read."

Villaume and Brabham (2002) remind us "that strategies do not exist in neat boxes and the boundaries between them are blurred (p. 647). Comprehension strategies may be isolated for the purposes of discussion in a particular text. However, generally speaking the strategies are used in combination during reading. Pressley (1995) and Rhoder (2002) contend that strategies are more durable when they are initially learned individually.

Higher-order reading comprehension goes beyond literal understanding of a text. It is based on the higher-order thinking processes of interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of information. Efficient readers employ a variety of higher-order

strategies, evaluating the material that they read. They adjust the way they read to the type of text being read. They paraphrase ideas accurately, relate the ideas to their background knowledge, draw conclusions about the ideas, consider the author's purpose, and consider the accuracy of the material. They monitor their understanding as they read and they adjust their reading strategies accordingly. They predict as they read. They are very active readers (Pressley, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Successful comprehension also depends on the reader's standards for coherence. These standards dictate when readers feel that they have achieved adequate understanding of the text and can therefore go on to the next sentence. They also dictate when a reader feels that additional steps should be taken to make sense of the current sentence, such as accessing further information from memory (Van den Broek, Risden & Husebye-Hartman, 1995).

Similarly, Stanovich (1982a cited in Chan & Dally, 2000) reviews a number of studies which show that poor readers consistently display deficits in comprehension of spoken language as well as deficits in reading comprehension, independent of difficulties due to decoding deficiencies. Poor readers often struggle with the extra processing demands required to analyse longer and more complex texts.

Standards for coherence differ widely as a function of the skill level of the reader. A good reader, in particular, relies on two kinds of standards: referential and causal/logical coherence. In contrast, the less skilled reader sets lower standards for comprehension by, for example, relaxing or even totally abandoning their need for these kinds of coherence. The standards that the reader adopts also differ by factors including metacognitive skills, motivation, reading goals and pragmatic concerns. Indeed, Sweet and Snow (2003) suggest a given individual may apply different standards of coherence from one reading context to the next, such as school-related versus leisure reading.

In summary, the impact of early failure in reading has far reaching consequences for middle and secondary school students. The most obvious problem for struggling readers is a serious deficiency in automatic word identification. This problem is

associated with a number of contributing factors including: difficulties in word recognition, poor knowledge of vocabulary, poor phonic knowledge, poor phonological awareness and phonemic awareness and weaknesses in the use of sight vocabulary.

Other skills necessary for success in reading include: use of context clues; use of certain reading roles which include coddle-breaker role, text-participant role, text-user role and text-analyst role; use of skills in reading comprehension which go beyond the literal understanding of a text and include the higher order processes of interpretation, analysis and synthesis of information.

“The Great Debate” on the Reading Process

The classic form of “The Great Debate” asks the question: “Is reading instruction more effective if it emphasises phonics or if it emphasises whole language?” There are two main approaches to reading instruction: the code or alphabet approach or the meaning or whole language approach. Each approach represents different beliefs about the processes involved in reading and the way in which children acquire reading skills.

Within the two broad approaches several different methods exist. At different times particular methods or materials have been popular for a while, only to fall out of favour. For example, enthusiasm has been shown over the past few decades for a variety of methods such as the phonic word method, initial alphabet teaching, language experience, literature based reading and whole language approach. A principal factor on which teachers tend to differ however, is the extent to which they believe phonic skills should be taught directly and systematically rather than acquired informally (Barchers, 1998).

The term “phonics” is an educational term that refers to the myriad of methods used to teach the reader about correspondences between letters and sounds. However, by far the two most common ways of teaching phonics are (1) to teach the beginner to segment and blend the letter sounds in a word (synthetic phonics) or (2) to teach the beginner to recognise common spelling patterns in words (analytic phonics).

Critics of the phonics approach, for example, Kemp (1993), maintain that teachers take a dominant role being ‘outside’ the learner and in control of what is learned. The claim is that with this approach readers are made too print-dependent by the phonics analysis strategy. Another criticism is that this approach runs counter to the manner in which children acquire and practise their oral language. The rule systems about language forms and functions can only be acquired through usage and practice and that books emphasising phonics provide a gross distortion of the purposes and processes of reading, leading some children to believe that print is a code-breaking exercise and not a natural print-language form (Kemp, 1993, p. 9).

Whole language theories are said to explain reading behaviour as something which must be allowed to grow within a child’s already established, internalised rule system about oral language. According to Kemp (1993), by school age children have a given body of functional language, including a comprehensive rule system about the order words take (syntax). The meaning that words have in relation to each other as well as on their own (semantics) and some knowledge that printed symbols (graphemes) can convey sounds (phonemes) as well as message (p. 10). Whole language theorists detail an immense array of evidence on how children process print, gained mainly through the analysis of the structure of texts (Chapman, 1994; Freebody, 1985) and the ways in which readers deal with them. According to Freebody’s (1985) research, much of the processing at a visual level, comes after readers have read the text in their mind. The research provides clearly established evidence that the more readers concentrate on processing visual information the less readers are able to process the meaning which enables the visual information to take on sense. The critics of the whole language approach suggest that such arguments may be sound enough but only in describing the competent reader (Kemp, 1993, p. 11). Kemp (1993) suggests that in responding to the above mentioned approaches, teachers need to take into account the nature of individual children. Factors such as their cognitive styles or differences in the way that information is received, stored, recalled, generalised about and then utilised must be considered. Other factors for consideration are an interest in learning and motivation to learn.

The emergence in the 1980s of the whole language approach as a reading approach emphasised that children learn to read as they learn to speak, through exposure to a literate environment and that they learn best when asked to read and write for authentic purposes (Foorman, Francis, Shaywitz, Shaywitz & Fletcher, 1997). Therefore one of the basic premises of the whole language approach is that reading is a natural extension of oral language competencies. Enthusiasts for the whole language approach believe that explicit instruction in the alphabetic code is unnecessary because oral language competencies allow the skillful use of meaningful context. With this approach the belief is that children will acquire the component skills and strategies necessary for reading mainly through incidental learning (Foorman et al. 1997).

The Promise and Limitations of Whole Language

Much of the literature on whole language (Weaver, 1994; Shapiro and White, 1991) suggests the promise of whole language is developing more competent, confident and joyful readers. The belief is also that students' approaches to reading typically reflect the way they were taught (Dahl & Freppon, 1995). However, some students' approaches seem to reflect their own learning styles and strategies, sometimes in spite of the instructional approach. And so students have difficulty learning, especially when the approach does not match well with their learning styles and strategies (Carbo, 1984a, 1987a, Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1986). For example, miscue analysis indicates that students in meaning-oriented classrooms make miscues that often reflect more attention to meaning than to grapho/phonemic cues. On the other hand students in skills-oriented classrooms with phonics emphasis make miscues that often reflect an over-reliance on grapho/phonemic cues and less on meaning.

These reflections on research illustrate what whole language teachers know from both experience and research: that though there often is a correlation between what is taught and what is learned, it is true that learners construct knowledge for themselves. Therefore, what is taught is not necessarily what is learnt. And despite the best teaching, there will be students from every kind of classroom who will fall short of what we might want them to learn. This is especially the case when

instructional approaches do not give consideration to the preferred learning styles and strategies of individual students.

Compared with the meaning emphasis of whole language the phonics or skills-based approach is founded on the belief that a learner needs to be taught explicitly the component skills and strategies necessary for processing print. These skills include phonemic awareness, letter recognition, all levels of phonic decoding, sound blending, and the identification of unknown words by analogy with known words (Westwood, 2001).

Swings of the Phonics Pendulum

Cunningham (1999) points out that since the 1950s educators' views on the value of the skill of phonics has been a recurring theme. Indeed swings in popularity have occurred roughly every decade since 1950.

A salient study by Chall (1967) indicated that the systematic teaching of phonics in the early years can provide a powerful aid for students in getting meaning from print. The advantages were evident in terms of word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension and spelling for children in the beginning stages of reading (Westwood, 2001). During the 1970s the influence of the psycholinguistic school of thought caused the skills approach to be out of favour. The psycholinguistic approach is based on the premise that from the very earliest of stages of reading the learner makes meaning from print by using experience of language to predict words and phrases; indeed it has been termed a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' by Goodman (1967). By the end of the 1970s the psycholinguistic school of thought caused a reaction against the phonics approach. Subsequently during the 1980s and into the early 1990s the whole language approach again gained popularity.

The emphasis was on the reader constructing meaning from a sentence or paragraph using all available cues to assist with the process. The three main cueing systems emphasised were:

- the semantic (the meaning of what is being read);
- the syntactic (the logical grammatical structure of the sentences or phrases);

- the grapho-phonetic (the correspondence between the symbols in print and the speech – sound values they represent) (Westwood, 1997a).

During the 1990s there was a swing back toward the use of phonics as an essential aspect of a balanced literacy approach. This swing was due firstly to a better understanding of how readers process print and secondly to research evidence which indicated that all readers need to be skilled in rapid decoding to become proficient and independent as readers (Adams, 1990).

Contemporary View on Phonics

The current position on the teaching of phonics are reflected to a great extent in the Position Statement on the Role of Phonics in Reading Instruction published in 1997 by the International Reading Association (IRA). In it the IRA supports the explicit instruction of phonics skills in the early years but recommends that such instruction should be imbedded in the meaningful content of reading and writing (Westwood, 2001). Phonics instruction should not be carried out in the form of decontextualised, drilled exercises. Simple phonic exercises are of limited value in helping children develop functional phonic skills. “When phonics instruction is linked to children’s reading and writing, they are more likely to become strategic and independent in their use of phonics than when phonics instruction is drilled and practised in isolation” (IRA, 1997, p. 2).

Hoffman and McCarthey (2000) have translated the principles of phonics instruction espoused by the IRA into the following operational terms. Phonics instruction should be:

- explicit - not incidental;
- pervasive - presented with a variety of contextualised reading and writing tasks;
- systematic-building from simple skills in phonics to more complex letter clusters;
- strategic - identifying when and how to use phonic decoding;
- diagnostic - revealing what children already know and what they need to know.

The current beliefs are that reading skills, including phonic decoding, should be taught early and thoroughly, both within and alongside reading for meaning. These beliefs are likely to guide reading instruction during the 21st century (Westwood, 2001, p. 47).

A Balanced Approach

It is recognised that both the phonics approach and the whole language approach have important contributions to fostering literacy skills in children. Westwood (2001) refers to numerous calls for the adoption of a balanced approach which combines attributes of each approach (Clay, 1993a; Hoffman, Baumann & Afflerback, 2000; McIntyre & Pressley, 1996; Searfoss, Readence & Mallette, 2001). Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham and Moore (2000) posit that a balanced literacy program is vital if children are to develop independence in reading and writing.

“The concept of balance within literacy curriculum applies not only to what is taught (skills, concepts, strategies) but also to how it is taught (through explicit instruction, child-centred discovery, guided practice, structured materials)” (Westwood, 2001, p. 49). Balance involves the optimum mix of structured versus unstructured use of learning time, of graded versus ungraded materials, of student choices versus teacher choices of themes, of individualised versus group programming (Blair-Larsen & Williams, 1999).

Doubtless debates about curriculum approaches to support literacy learning for underachieving readers will continue in the future. Perhaps the position of a balanced approach as advocated by Blair-Larsen and Williams (1999), and Searfoss et al. (2001) needs further investigation.

It is recognised in the current literature on reading that a balance of both the phonics approach and the whole language approach will have a favourable outcome in fostering literacy skills in students. It is also recognised that we should not expect whole language classrooms to immediately succeed in producing an entire classroom of students who can read perfectly; but we can and do expect that whole language classrooms will generate learning and enhanced pleasure in learning to read. “And if

some learners still need more support or more time than one classroom teacher can provide, we should not be surprised” (Weaver, 1992, p. 325).

Summary of the nature of reading and the “great debate” on the reading process

In summary, reading is one of the uniquely human and complex cognitive processes. Success in reading requires a number of processes including identification of letters, mapping letters onto sounds and the recognition of words and syntax. To become a skilled reader an individual will use both sight word recognition and phonics. In constructing meaning from text, readers combine their knowledge of the world, the text topic, the semantics of the text and the way spoken language relates to the visual elements of the text.

It is recognised that both the phonics and the whole language approach have important contributions to fostering literacy skills in children. It is also recognised the value of schools adopting a balanced approach to literacy with the combined attributes of each approach. A balanced approach requires careful consideration being given to a blend of explicit instruction and student centred learning so that individual learning needs are met.

Section 2: The Characteristics of Successful Readers; the Characteristics of Unsuccessful Readers

Those children in Australian schools who have been identified by their teachers as facing difficulties with literacy are an extremely varied group (DETYA, 2000). For some, poor school performance may be linked to differences between home and school language or to other social circumstances such as poverty or family disruption. Some children identified by their teachers at school entry as being immature in their oral language and general behaviour are slow to make a start in formal learning. Many of their children’s difficulties may be transitory in that given appropriate early learning experiences, they are able to catch up with their peers. However, some of these children will need regular ongoing support to cope with the literacy demands of their classroom.

Many students continue to struggle with basic reading processes beyond third grade, and even those who have mastered basic processes by the time they reach secondary school still have a great deal to learn about the different reading practices associated with texts.

Most educators would agree that productively engaging low-achieving adolescents in lively print-rich classrooms is complicated (O'Brien, 1998; Rossi & Pace, 1998). These individuals, in many cases, will have experienced stress and anxiety and will have doubted their potential effectiveness in general. "Literacy failures can hurt adolescents deeply" (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps & Waff, 1998, p. 71).

A great deal is written about successful and unsuccessful readers in the current literature. A summary of the characteristics of successful readers and that of unsuccessful readers is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Readers

Characteristics of Successful Readers	Characteristics of Unsuccessful Readers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of context clues (Kahmi, 1989). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to use context.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word recognition through knowledge of sound, common letter sequences (Ehri, 1992). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficient in rapid word identification (Torgesen, 2000).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of vocabulary; good readers have extensive vocabularies (Taylor et al. 2000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak language and metalanguage skills – vocabulary, verbal memory, semantic and syntactic cues (Torgesen, 2000).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonic knowledge; phonic skill represents the most powerful tool to help children become independent readers (Rubin, 2000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak phonic skills.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonological awareness – ability to understand sound features of language helps children develop ‘word concept’ (Adams, Treiman & Pressley, 1998). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor phonological awareness – therefore limited functional sight vocabulary (Gunning, 2001). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonemic awareness – recognition that each spoken word is made up of sounds, is vital first step to learning sounds (Rubin, 2000). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak phonic skills as a consequence of poor phonological awareness (Tunmer & Chapman, 1999). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic use of sight words contributes to fluent reading (Ehri, 1997). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text processing problems because of struggle with mechanics of word by word reading (Chan & Dally, 2000). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural analysis generalisations help readers predict structural elements in words (Westwood, 2001). | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining word-recognition strategies helps readers achieve independence to gain fluency (Westwood, 2001). | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of reading comprehension is enhanced by the readers background knowledge and attentional capacities (Van Den Broek, Young, Tzeng & Lindenholm, 1998). | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metacognitive skills – knowledge of when to engage cognitive abilities in reading (Taylor, Graves & Van Den Broek, 2000). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor metacognitive skills so fail to check purpose for reading, make predictions about text, self-question as they read (Barchers, 1998). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inferential skills – ability to make coherent mental representation of text (Taylor et al. 2000). | |

- Knowledge of content area which is used with inferential skills (Barchers, 1998).

In this section the following three areas will be elaborated upon.

- Characteristics of Successful Readers
- Characteristics of Underachieving Readers
- Problems for Underachieving Readers

Characteristics Required in Order to Become Successful Readers

Skilled reading is a highly complex capability involving numerous component processes. There are a number of characteristics exhibited by successful readers that have been identified in the literature. These include: attention, basic skills, metacognitive skills, inferential and reading skills, knowledge of content areas and the ability to use reading comprehension skills as interactive. Each of these characteristics is discussed in more detail below.

(a) Attention

Attention and short-term memory play crucial roles in reading. As children mature they improve at attending selectively and systematically to relevant information while blocking out distractions of their environment (Miller & Seier, 1994). The amount of information they can keep in short-term memory and their speed of processing also improve steadily (Taylor et al. 2000). However, individual differences in processing capacities partially account for difficulties in reading comprehension. Similarly, students with low academic motivation may readily shift their focus of attention to other activities or objects in the environment. By eliminating such distractions, by developing attention focussing skills and by ensuring that reading is rewarding and motivating, teachers can improve this situation.

(b) Basic skills of letter identification, word decoding and knowledge of syntax

As suggested earlier higher-order cognitive skills are vital to reading comprehension. However, the basic skills such as letter identification, word decoding and knowledge of syntax are just as essential to the reading process because they provide the initial input from which mental representations of the text are constructed. In addition, well developed basic skills decrease the demands on readers' cognitive resources. With instruction and experience, readers can automatise these basic components of reading, thereby freeing energy for more advanced components, such as establishing referential and causal/logical connections (Perfetti, 1994; Torgeson & Hecht, 1996). Basic skills are necessary but not sufficient for reading comprehension. Consequently, instructional techniques that focus on basic skills are not a substitute for the fostering of higher-order cognitive skills needed to create coherent mental representations of texts. In fact, even the need to teach certain basic skills remains controversial, as evidenced by the ongoing debate among educators over the phonics approach versus whole-language instruction programs (Goodman, 1989; Stahl & Miller, 1989). However, current research suggests that although some children can develop various basic skills without formal instruction, others depend on such training (Adams, 1990; Adams & Bruck, 1995).

(c) Metacognitive skills

A significant body of research indicates that students benefit from learning about and using metacognitive strategies. Manzo, Manzo and Albee (2002) found that within the regular classroom direct instruction in metacognitive word-identification strategies and metacognitive awareness-raising, contributes to improved word identification and reading-comprehension skills in poor readers. Studies of under-achieving students have also found that metacognitive strategy instruction enhances such learners' thinking and social skills (Vacca, Vacca & Grove, 2000).

While research has found some evidence of metacognition in the early years of school (Fang, 1999) this skill is most evident in adolescents. It develops over time as cognitive skills increase (Kuhl, 1998).

Metacognition refers to introspective awareness of the factors that influence our ability to monitor and fix internal problems that arise in effective reading, language

use and thinking. The “goal of metacognitive instruction is to make students aware of the mental processes that will help them become more active readers” (Loxterman, Beck & McKeown, 1994, p. 354).

Reading strategies are mental and behavioural activities that people use to increase their likelihood of comprehending text. Metacognition is the knowledge of when to apply such strategies as a function of text difficulty, situational constraints, and the reader’s own cognitive abilities (Taylor et al. 2000). Both reading strategies and metacognition play important roles in the reading process. For example, simply teaching children a reading strategy often does not result in their being able to use it in a context other than that in which they first learned it. For transfer to occur across time and contexts, readers must also acquire a metacognitive awareness of what conditions warrant the use of the strategy as well as the ability to monitor comprehension and the environment to detect when these conditions are met. Comprehension monitoring, in turn, depends on the readers’ standards for coherence. These subjective standards determine when readers believe steps are needed to achieve it, such as the application of reading strategies.

Skilled readers maintain standards of causal/logical coherence, whereas underachieving readers do so less consistently. Skilled readers adjust their standards of coherence for different situations. For example they slow down and engage in more extensive coherence-building activities when reading for a test than when reading for general comprehension (Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Van den Broek, Lorch, Linderholm & Gustafson, 1998).

In practical terms, Palincsar and Ransom (1988) suggest that metacognitive instruction is important for struggling readers since they especially need to be made aware of, and participate in, efforts to take control of their learning. Students who do not actively think while reading can be taught this process through metacognitive monitoring and fix-up strategies.

(d) Inferential and reasoning skills

Although the effective allocation of cognitive resources is a prerequisite for reading, it is not sufficient. To be successful, readers must also have the inferential and reasoning skills to establish meaningful connections between information in the text and relevant background information. In other words, the ability to understand what is implied but not directly stated in a text. Central to these skills is knowing what constitutes a referential or causal/logical relation and being able to recognise or construct one when needed in order to form a coherent mental representation of the text (Taylor et al. 2000).

Inferential and reasoning skills develop gradually and systematically as children become older and gain experience (Siegler, 1995; Thompson & Myers, 1985). Through the primary school most children increasingly remember these internal events and come to judge them as being of central importance, resulting in an improved understanding of the general causal story structure.

(e) Knowledge of content area

The background knowledge the reader has of a particular text is another factor that influences the chances of comprehending. Ericsson and Kintsch (1995) suggest that the reading process is supported in two ways. First as people accumulate information about a topic, their internal representation of that area becomes richer and more densely interconnected. Second, the more extensively interconnected readers' background knowledge is, the more rapidly and easily each piece of information can be accessed from memory.

Efficiency of retrieval frees cognitive resources that can then be devoted to other processes needed for comprehension. As suggested by Patel, Arocha and Kaufman (1994), inferential and reasoning skills tend to improve in conjunction with gaining expertise in a content area. Consequently the subject matter of the text can greatly influence assessments of readers' competencies. Underachieving readers may seem more skilled when given a text to read in their area of expertise. Similarly, proficient readers may seem less capable when presented with complex material on a topic in

which they have little prior experience. In addition reading difficulties may occur when the author and reader come from very different cultural and social backgrounds (Zwaan & Brown, 1996).

(f) Ability to use reading comprehension as interactive skills

Reading comprehension is described as a complex intellectual process involving a number of abilities (Rubin, 2000). For example, readers must use information already acquired to make sense of and established with new incoming information in a text. The understanding of text results from an interaction between factors such as word identification, prior knowledge and the effective use of cognitive strategies (Lyon, 1998; Scarborough, 1998). Torgesen (2000) contends that for skilled readers' reading comprehension is a cognitive, motivational and affective activity. It is a cognitive activity in the sense that effective readers must use the following specific cognitive skills as they read:

- generate mental questions and seek answers in the text;
- create mental images as they read;
- continually summarise the main points in each paragraph;
- consider the relevance of what they have read.

Cunningham et al. (2000) maintain that skilled readers are *active* readers in the sense of becoming involved emotionally in what they read. Consequently they are keen and interested in using text as a means of obtaining information, solving problems and as a means of having an enjoyable experience. From a motivational and affective perspective, Lerner (1998) contends that the key to teaching effective reading comprehension is to guide the student to set up their own purposes for reading a particular text. Reading comprehension is dependent on factors including the reader's background information on the text, the reader's experience, knowledge of language and recognition of syntactic structure (Lipson & Wixson, 1991). If a reader has a limited knowledge about the topic of a text, no amount of re-reading will increase his/her comprehension.

The successful reader is adept at the higher-order processes needed to identify relations within a text. Their processes have become so automatic that frequently

they are not even aware of the individual steps they have taken to achieve comprehension. However, for individuals such as the underachieving reader and the advanced reader confronting novel and complicated materials, the application and the outcome of these cognitive processes are much less certain. If one or more components of the cognitive process fails the result is an incomplete or erroneous mental representation of the text.

Summary of characteristics of successful readers

In summary, a number of characteristics are exhibited by successful readers. For instance, the ability to attend systematically to relevant information plays a crucial role in reading. Basic skills such as letter identification, word decoding and the knowledge of syntax provide the initial input from which mental representations of the text are constructed. Skills in metacognition include an awareness of, and ability to, select, control and apply appropriately, cognitive strategies in order to complete a given task. To be successful, readers must also have the inferential and reasoning skills to establish meaningful connections between information in the text and relevant background information. Background knowledge the reader has of a particular text is another factor that influences the chance of comprehending a text read. Successful readers are *active* readers in the sense of becoming involved emotionally in what they read. They are also adept at the higher-order processes needed to identify relations within a text.

Characteristics of Unsuccessful Readers

A continuing debate exists on the prevalence of students with learning difficulties in literacy. The research of Prior (1992) suggests that at least 16 per cent of the school population exhibit such problems. Other research estimates a range somewhere between 10 per cent to 20 per cent (Rivalland & House, 2000), but some sources put the figure at between 25 per cent and 30 per cent (Rivalland, 2000; Westwood & Graham, 2000). It seems that the number of students exhibiting reading problems differs considerably from school to school. It appears that a disproportion of poor readers exists within populations of low income groups and from groups where English is not the first language.

A number of characteristics exhibited by unsuccessful readers have been identified. These include a limited vocabulary, a deficiency in rapid word identification language, metalinguistic problems, phonological processing problems, weak phonic skills, text processing problems and poor metacognitive skills. Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

Limited Vocabulary

Children with limited vocabulary will have difficulty with comprehension. Obviously they may know very few words on a page, unless the text is very simple (Westwood, 2001). Studies have long suggested that most of a literate adult's vocabulary has been acquired through reading (Snow et al. 1998; Smith, 1994). It is recommended that teachers can help expand and refine students' vocabularies through both direct and indirect methods. Children develop and refine their vocabulary through listening to stories being read and through the process of actually reading (Yatvin, Weaver & Garan, 2003).

Deficiency in Rapid Word Identification

The most obvious problem for underachieving readers is a marked deficiency in rapid word identification (Burns et al. 1999; Pressley, 1998; Torgesen, 2000). This deficiency relates to factors such as poor skills in phonics, limited sight vocabulary and ineffectual use of contextual cues to support word recognition. Slow and inaccurate word identification leads directly to the second most obvious weakness, poor comprehension (Westwood, 2001). For these students the comprehension of what is read is often weakened by the amount of cognitive effort given to the task of saying the words.

Language and Metalinguistic Problems

The general category of language and metalinguistic problems include characteristics such as:

- restricted vocabulary
- poor syntactical awareness
- limited memory span for verbal material

- difficulty in mental ‘word-finding’
- weak listening comprehension (Westwood, 2001, p. 29).

Though all of these factors have a negative impact on both the fluency of reading and understanding what has been read, there are some generalisations that should be noted. Firstly, weakness in syntactical awareness, vocabulary and verbal memory reduces the reader’s chances of utilising both semantic and syntactical cues when reading (Torgesen, 2000). Secondly, general language delay almost always impairs the acquisition of important metalinguistic skills, including the knowledge of ‘word concept’ and the ability to segment words in sound components (Hoien & Lundberg, 2000). Thirdly, oral language is widely recognised as a precursor to early reading development. Early intervention programs for literacy include a high emphasis on listening and speaking activities (Flynn & Rahbav, 1998; Scarborough, 1998).

Phonological Processing Problems

As stated earlier, a well-developed phonemic awareness provides a basis for children’s understanding of the alphabetic code and the learning of phonic skills. Numerous studies have outlined the link between literacy learning problems and poorly developed phonological skills (Castle, 1999; Tunmer & Chapman, 1999; Wolf, Pfeil, Lotz & Biddle, 1994). Children with such problems have difficulty in acquiring and applying sound-symbol information to aid in identifying words. Gunning (2001) maintains that such difficulty results in limited functional sight vocabulary. There is a reciprocal link between phonemic awareness and reading skills. Children who are poor readers, frequently read very little and thus have limited opportunities to gain additional phonemic knowledge from extensive reading experience.

Early intervention involving the teaching of phonemic awareness and the blending of sounds has proved effective in reducing the number of children who experience difficulty in the first two years of school (Clay, 1997).

Weak Phonic Skills

Advocates of a phonics approach believe teachers can help children become independent readers by teaching letter/sound correspondences. With this skill children can learn to sound out or decode words (Weaver, 1994). Phonics is the set of relationships between phonology and the letter symbols or graphemes (Barchers, 1998). The suggestion is that students are ready for phonics instruction once they have demonstrated auditory discriminations, visual discrimination of letters, and phonemic awareness. Phonics instruction is complex. It may include both synthetic phonics, with sounds isolated, and analytic phonics, which occurs when a teacher points out words that start with a particular letter, avoiding the isolation or distortion of sounds. Phonics instruction should also include aspects such as teaching syllabication, teaching affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and teaching compound words (Barchers, 1998). With regard to phonics there is no evidence to conclude that teaching phonics in isolation is better than teaching it in context (Yatvin et al. 2003).

Students who possess phonic knowledge appear to learn sight words much more easily than those students who use only a *look-and-say* strategy (Cunningham, 2000). As highlighted earlier, letter knowledge clearly helps storage of orthographic patterns as Gunning (2001, p. xii) comments: “Without any systematic way to attach sounds to letters, students quickly forget the words they have memorised. Once they were taught phonics to help them remember the words their performance improved significantly.”

Conversely, many underachieving readers also display poor phonic decoding skills. Such a deficiency, prevents swift and confident word identification. Underachieving readers with poor phonemic awareness are less likely to discover letter-sound relationship for themselves simply from exposure to books (Chapman, 1994). These children require the direct teaching of phonics and follow up practice of reading. Though such children may know the common letter-sound correspondences, they do not seem to use this knowledge in a systematic way when faced with an unfamiliar word. They may not have had sufficient successful experience in decoding or they may not possess the confidence to apply their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences when faced with an unfamiliar word. The teaching of phonic

decoding skills must therefore extend well beyond instruction in basic letter-to-sound correspondences. It must provide opportunities for a child to apply phonic knowledge successfully to the decoding of many different words in order to build confidence in the decoding strategy. Some experts go so far as to recommend the use of reading materials specifically designed to contain a high proportion of decodable words (for example, Kameenui & Simmons, 1999).

Fluency Problems

The struggling reader often stumbles along a page, making many errors. The comprehension of what is read is likely to be weakened by the amount of cognitive effort being diverted to the task of saying the words. Lack of fluency also “... makes reading a less-than-enjoyable activity” (Westwood, 2001, p. 37). According to Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp and Jenkins (2001), Chittenden and Salinger (2001) and Nicholson (1999), if such individuals were able to read quickly and accurately, the mental energy they would save by not having to struggle with each word could be applied to comprehending what they read.

As Ehri (1997) explains, good readers are skilled at building up sight word knowledge. They easily make connections between the sounds in a word, and the spelling patterns that represent those sounds. They look at the spelling of a new word and quickly break it up into sounds or phonemes. They store these letter-sound patterns in memory. Poor readers do not use these strategies naturally. They need to be taught to engage in these strategies.

At the same time, when reading orally, some individuals may sound completely fluent, yet when asked, they cannot retell what they have read. These readers understand the translation of print to sound, but their concept of reading does not include the need to construct meaning as they read (Chittenden & Salinger, 2001).

Poor readers sometimes having difficulty fully comprehending the text being read because they struggle with the mechanics of lower level skills such as word-by-word reading. Chan and Dally (2000, p. 165) describe this situation as follows:

When the lower level skills of word recognition are not automatic, less attention is available for comprehending the meaning of text. The problems of lack of reading fluency (demands on working memory to hold words of a sentence long enough to derive its meaning) and effortful recognition of unfamiliar words, compromise higher order processes such as comprehension and learning from texts.

Walker (2000) maintains that poor readers tend not to self-monitor for understanding. They lose sight of the fact that a text they are reading should make sense. Many of them comprehend at the literal or the lower order level of thinking only. They struggle to comprehend material which requires the higher order level of thinking such as inferring, predicting, questioning, reflecting and evaluating. The research of Kavale and Forness (2000), and Swanson (1999) however, suggest that with training in effective comprehension strategies such problems can be overcome.

Poor Metacognitive Skills

Metacognitive strategies are vital in reading for meaning and in reading for retention. Strategic readers use metacognition to monitor their own level of understanding as they read (Westwood, 2001). Students with learning difficulties are often described as inactive learners (Torgesen, 1999). Such students neither actively involve themselves in the learning situation nor routinely engage in appropriate cognitive processes which facilitate the performance of certain tasks.

According to research and teacher observations, poor readers lack knowledge about themselves as learners and lack metacognitive awareness of their reading strategies (Wong, 1988). The research studies of Perkins-Gough (2002) indicate that poor readers do not routinely engage in the constructive activities required for success in reading. For example such students neglect to focus on factors such as:

- clarifying the purpose of reading;
- self-questioning when breakdowns in comprehension occur;
- making predictions about a text;
- verifying;
- self-monitoring.

Helping poor readers to verbalise their thoughts while reading can lead to a level of self-awareness necessary for recognising the demands of the reading task, for example, to use the most appropriate reading strategies; to recognise when comprehension is breaking down; to use fix-up strategies (Dana, 1989; Gentile & McMillan, 1992; Reyes & Molner, 1991; Young & Bastianelli, 1990).

Poor readers need to link strategic learning with metacognition, that is, the knowledge individuals have of their own thinking processes and strategies, and their ability to monitor and regulate these processes (Chan & Dally, 2000). This requires learners to analyse, reflect on and monitor their own learning.

For example, when a reader notices that they are not understanding a text they take action to solve the problem. They may reread to clarify their confusion. Students are being metacognitive when they are alert to the possibility that they might get confused, and they know several ways to solve the problem (Pressley, 2002b).

A consensus view (Munro, 1991; Simpson & Nist, 1997; Wray, 1994) is that when readers' expectations have not been confirmed by a text, the readers probably will revise their reading. When readers detect failure in comprehension they must decide what remediation is required. This depends to a great extent on their purpose for reading. For example, is the reader reading to locate a specific piece of information? Is he reading to get a feel for a text?

If readers decide that remedial action is required they may do one or more of the following:

- activate prior knowledge,
- read ahead,
- slow down and re-read,
- carefully sound out letters and sounds,
- make an inference from the context, (Munro, 1991; Wray, 1994).

In summary then the ability to monitor comprehension is crucial to successful reading. It involves two key factors:

1. an awareness of whether comprehension is occurring

2. the conscious application of means to remediate problems in comprehension (Wray, 1994).

Poor readers need to be made aware of the value of using particular strategies while reading. They need to recognise that when comprehension is breaking down there are particular fix-up strategies that can be utilised (Dana, 1989; Gentile & McMillan, 1992; Reyes & Molner, 1991; Young & Bastianelli, 1990).

Summary of characteristics of unsuccessful readers

In summary, it appears that numerous factors contribute to literacy problems. Some of these factors are associated with a predisposition of the learner or are associated with the learner's background. A number of characteristics are exhibited by unsuccessful readers. The most prominent of these is the deficiency in rapid word identification. Problems with language and metalinguistics problems have a negative impact on both the fluency of reading and understanding what has been read. Students who have phonological processing problems have difficulty in acquiring and applying sound-symbol information to aid in identifying words. Though some unsuccessful readers may know the common letter-sound correspondences they do not use this knowledge in a systematic way when faced with an unfamiliar word. Some unsuccessful readers have text processing problems. The comprehension of what is read is often weakened by the amount of cognitive effort diverted to the task of saying the words. Unsuccessful readers have poor metacognitive skills. The work of Perkins-Gough (2002) suggests that unsuccessful readers do not routinely engage in constructive activities vital to success in reading. Some of these skills include: clarifying the purpose of reading; self-questioning when comprehension breaks down; making predictions about text and self-monitoring.

Teaching students to mentally imagine the material they are studying has been very useful in aiding reading comprehension (Lewin, 1992; Ferro & Pressley, 1991; Rose, Cundick & Higbee, 1983). Since children below the age of eight have difficulty creating images to mirror what they have read, imagery becomes a helpful technique only for slightly older children (Pressley, Symons, McDaniel, Snyder & Turner, 1998).

It has been found that picture cues assist learning for some students more than do verbal instructional approaches (Ferro & Pressley, 1991; Pressley, 1977). Picture clues apparently help students generate inferences, which later serve as useful retrieval cues (Pressley, Wharton-McDonald & Mistretta, 1998). Teacher prepared visual aids that simplify text into images also facilitate attention, comprehension and learning (Horton, Lovitt & Christensen, 1991).

Problems for Unsuccessful Readers

The research of Rasinski and Padak (2000) indicates that children who repeatedly fail in their early attempts at reading may begin to believe they are incapable of success. Consequently they may lose confidence and motivation in the reading process. Graves, Juel and Graves (1998) further suggest that such readers often become passive and dependent learners, unwilling to take risks and needing assistance with every step.

The studies of Kavale and Forness (2000) indicate that as many as 70 per cent of underachieving children believe they have little control over their success. They are no longer intrinsically motivated to be competent and are defeated even before they begin a task because they believe their ‘stupidity’ preclude success.

In the case of underachieving readers there may be no perceptual or cognitive problems. They may simply not have grasped the connection between spoken language and how this relates to the written code of letters. Their confidence and motivation to read is therefore undermined by early failure. In many cases such children develop effective reading avoidance strategies. They also resist assistance with their reading.

Coping Strategies for Unsuccessful Readers

Many poor readers have developed a complex repertoire of coping strategies designed to avoid reading or being accountable for reading. Johnston and Winograd (1985) suggest that poor readers, painfully aware of their inadequacies often resort to hiding out and bluffing behaviours. Bloom (1983) identified a phenomenon of *mock participation* – behaviours exhibited by students that on the surface appear to be task

orientated but may in fact be totally unrelated to the task. Because teachers base their inferences about students' attention on observable clues such as eye gaze, head nod, body orientation, students can easily deceive the teacher by creating the impression of academic engagement (Rist, 1980). Such behaviours fit into a cycle of reading failure that ensures the individual will have few if any opportunities to practice and expand upon the reading skills he/she does possess. With little practice, skills further decline, leading to more hiding out and more bluffing.

Short Term Survival

Brozo and Simpson (1995) suggest that poor adolescent readers have two choices for dealing with their problem. They can try to improve or they can continue to use and refine their coping strategies.

Further Brozo and Simpson (1995) identify certain behaviours such students adapt as coping strategies. Such behaviours include:

1. Apple polishing – manipulating the teacher by creating positive perceptions outside the classroom.
2. Sitting up the front, giving the appearance of attentiveness.
3. Exploiting alternatives to reading: using non-print sources, listening well and talking with others (Brozo, 1990, p. 52).

Five other coping strategies were identified by Brozo (1990) through interviews with struggling readers:

1. Become a good listener.
2. Rely on a “with it” classmate or a good reader.
3. Seek help from friends.
4. Forget to bring the text for oral reading.

5. Use manipulative techniques in and out of the class to gain teachers' positive perceptions (Brozo, 1990, p. 54).

The behaviours described above are self-defeating. They are effective for attaining short-term survival goals but are self-defeating in terms of the long-term goal of learning to read. The danger is that the survival strategies poor high school readers employ will systematically exclude print from their lives.

Social and Emotional Development of Students

Even if a child had been able to maintain a positive self-concept and get along socially throughout the primary years, by adolescence there is a high probability that the indirect effects of underachievement will impact negatively on self-perception and motivation. The needs of the adolescent raises issues for the secondary educator that are far broader than those of the primary school child. These include the adolescent's physical changes, social role redefinitions, school transitions and future expectations. Roth-Smith (1994) maintains that the development of social skills is an especially important priority at this point because social skills are so highly related to one's degree of satisfaction with all aspects of life. Adolescents with learning disabilities who were socially able as children, tend to continue to function satisfactorily at the adolescent stage. However, for those who never developed effective social skills and for those who continue to be slow to adapt, adolescence can be difficult. Such students are tackling important personal issues without the tools to either facilitate their learning or ease the transition (Roth-Smith, 1994).

Maglen (1995) contends that there are factors other than intelligence and ability which also influence the beginning stages in literacy including:

- the level of emotional maturity
- teaching methods and reading materials used
- limited teacher attention to individual students within the classroom
- interrupted schooling through illness/family disruption
- a mismatch between the values and expectations of home and school
- native language other than English
- parents not literate in English (Maglen, 1995, pp. 28-29).

A difficulty or delay in the early stages of literacy acquisition can be the first negative indication to a student that he is different from his peers. Furthermore, if he becomes aware of the anxious reaction of teachers and parents, confidence and expectations of success can be replaced by fear of failure and thus a reticence to engage in language learning.

Self-Esteem of Students

There is a strong indication of links between self-esteem and achievement (Pintrich & Garcia, 1994; Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Though self-esteem and achievement are probably interactive, successful school experiences appear to be positively correlated with self-esteem. Students who do well in school tend to rate themselves higher on tests of self-esteem than do those who do not perform well (Black, 1974; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Next to the home, Pintrich and Garcia (1994) suggest, school is the most important force in shaping and maintaining a child's self-esteem.

An understanding of this interdependence enables teachers to better realise that for many underachieving students their education is often a downward spiral of low levels of self-esteem leading to low levels of effort producing low levels of performance, which leads to even lower levels of self-esteem (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000).

The Impact of Self-Efficacy Beliefs on Academic Functioning

One characteristic shared by most less proficient readers is an eroding set of beliefs about their own abilities to achieve success in school (Shell, Colvin & Bruning, 1995). Bandura (1986), a social learning theorist, has said that the element of success is the greatest single predictor for engagement in school tasks.

Students' beliefs in their efficacy to regulate their own learning activities and to master difficult, challenging skills affect their academic motivation, interest and scholastic achievement (Bandura, 1993; Schunk, 1989). Students who are prepared to take on academic assistance from knowledgeable adults or peers or from specific intervention programs are likely to achieve higher levels in specific skill

development (Dornbusch, 1994). Their aspirations in such situations are influenced by a more positive self-appraisal of their capabilities.

Self Efficacy

The construct of self-efficacy has received much attention. Bandura (1986) suggests that self-efficacy is a common cognitive mechanism for mediating behavioural responses. Self-efficacy is described by Bandura (1982) as the strength of an individual's conviction that they can successfully execute a behaviour required to produce a certain outcome. Self-efficacy is "peoples' judgements of the capabilities to organise and execute a course of action required to attain designated types of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Self-efficacy is a situation specific form of self confidence in which individuals believe they can do whatever needs to be done in that specific situation (Miller & George, 1992). The expectations of personal efficacy are derived from four principal sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and physiological states. Of the four principal sources of information, the performance accomplishments provide the most influential source of efficacy information because they are based on actual mastery experiences.

Bandura (1986) found that self-percepts of efficacy determine factors such as choice of activities, effort expenditure and persistence, as well as the thought patterns and emotional reactions during actual and anticipated encounters with the environment. Zimmerman (1995) claims that an individual's knowledge and evaluation of past performance will govern estimates about efficacy to perform the behaviour in the future.

According to Bandura (1986) self-efficacy and outcome expectancies affect performance, by providing mechanisms through which individuals organise and apply existing rules. In the case of reading ability, beliefs about reading ability become increasingly important in predicting reading skill development, as children age (Bandura (1982, 1986, 1993); Schunk (1989)). Essentially to become effective readers, children must develop the positive self-efficacy and outcome expectancies necessary to organise and apply the cognitive skills related to reading. The basic

premise of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is that one's confidence to perform a given task is likely to influence actual performance.

Murphy (1989) emphasises that as skill levels in reading improve, differences in performance are more dependent on organisational and application abilities. Thus, as sub-skills are mastered, efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs exert greater influence on terminal performance.

For persons to develop positive self-efficacy, they must experience performance success. For persons to develop positive outcome expectancies, they must receive positive outcomes and they must believe that outcomes result from personal (internal) actions. Therefore, to develop positive self-efficacy and outcome expectancies for reading, students must have positive experiences with reading activities and must understand that they can be successful in reading through their own efforts.

Attribution Theory

Explanations of motivation based on attribution theory are concerned with the way in which an individual's explanation of success and failure influence that individual's subsequent motivation and behaviour.

Attribution researchers (e.g. Frieze & Snyder, 1980; Weiner, 1972a, 1984, 1994) have suggested that individuals' beliefs about causes of success and failure may be of major importance in understanding achievement-related behaviour. To explain achievement behaviour they proposed an attributional model that is based on the assumption that beliefs about the causes of success and failure mediate between the perceptions of an achievement task and the final performance. Individuals have been shown to view the causes of their successes and failures as principally being due to their ability, their effort, the difficulty of the task, and/or good or bad luck (Abrami, Chambers, d'Apollonia, Farrell & De Simone, 1992).

Classroom studies have suggested that teachers' expectations can, in turn, have a profound effect on student behaviour, as demonstrated in classroom studies of self-fulfilling prophecies (Gruthrie & Wigfield, 1997). A key feature of the attribution

model is its recognition of both cognitive and emotional influences on motivation. In particular, the attribution model links the impact of emotions with internal perceptions of causality, such as when students feel pride when they think a success is due to their own efforts.

Low Self-Efficacy and Learned Helplessness

Roth-Smith (2001) posits that “... the greater dependence and questioning of one’s own intelligence seem to be one characteristic that often differentiate the adolescent who is learning disabled from others (p. 266). In adolescence the individual develops a perception of himself amongst his peers. Such a perception generally evolves from his sense of competence or otherwise. However, the adolescent with an unsuccessful history has few positive experiences to draw on to construct a positive self-perception. In many cases they hold attributions for success and failure that differ from those of their peers. They attribute their failure to basic inability. They fail to credit themselves with successes actually achieved, instead attributing the successes to luck or other external factors beyond their control (Paris & Winograd, 1990).

A perception of low self-efficacy in a student can undermine students’ use of metacognitive control processes and can inhibit setting long-term goals. Similarly, many students who are underachievers as readers have an attributional profile that is often characterised by learned helplessness. They believe that their failures are due to low ability and attribute their successes to ease of the task (Paris & Winograd, 1990). Students who have learned to be helpless devalue any successes they do have by attributing successes to luck or help from the teacher, and attribute their failures to the uncontrollable causes of low ability, task difficulty or teacher bias (Decker-Collins, 2002).

The suggestion is that the systematic use of these strategies by underachieving readers is probably modulated not only by cognitive variables but also by affective variables such as the self-system. There is evidence to suggest that attributional training which focuses only on effort attributions may be particularly destructive for students experiencing difficulties in learning (Chan, 1993; Clifford, Ahyoung &

McDonald, 1988; Borich & Tombari, 1997). In other words, to try harder and still fail may only serve to heighten perceptions of low ability and thus increase feelings of helplessness.

Chan (1994) suggests that one way to break this destructive cycle is to provide metacognitive instruction at the student's level of ability which simultaneously includes both specific strategy training leading to success experiences and motivational/attributional retraining whereby students can learn to attribute their success and failure to factors within their personal control.

Summary of successful and unsuccessful readers

In summary, skilled readers are strategic readers. Characteristics of their reading include attention, basic decoding skills, skills in metacognition and reasoning skills. Skilled readers monitor their own comprehension by making decisions at all stages of their reading. They understand the processes needed for comprehending in order to reach a particular comprehension goal. Metacognitive readers not only monitor their reading, but also regulate their reading when necessary. For example, such individuals pause during the reading process, checking that the text makes sense. In other words, for metacognitive readers active reading cycles are repeated for each section of the text read as they self-monitor and interact with text. Struggling readers on the other hand are non-strategic. They tend to focus less on meaning when reading. They become stuck on unknown words and too much decoding. They are sometimes unaware of the need to decode. One characteristic shared by most struggling readers is an eroding set of beliefs about their own reading.

Section 3: Reading Intervention Programs

Sociocultural Theories of Learning

There are two sociocultural theories of learning relevant to intervention programs in reading which are discussed in this review. The first is Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (Moll, 1990, 1992; Rogoff, 1990). The second is the theory of metacognition developed from the early work of Vygotsky (1962) and related to

Bruner's (1966) notion of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976 cited in Bruner, 1966).

Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory has brought researchers to the realisation that children live in rich social contexts that affect the way their cognitive world is structured (Rogoff, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) believed that complex mental activities such as reading/comprehension have their origins in social interactions. Through joint activities with more mature members of their society, children come to master activities and think in ways that have meaning in their culture. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development explains how this happens. It refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot yet handle alone, but can do with the help of more skilled partners. Such a task is especially suited for fostering development, for example, in reading/comprehension. The adult provides support, breaking tasks into manageable units and calling the child's attention to specific features. By joining in the interaction, the child picks up mental strategies and their competence increases. As this happens, the adult steps back, allowing the child to take over more responsibility for the task.

For students to reach this stage however, a certain pattern of interaction between the students and teacher has probably occurred. "When students receive concrete specific praise for their accomplishments, they begin to see connections between their actions and adults responses. Their past memories of failure are replaced with memories of success because they were taught how to change their behaviours and given credit for their accomplishments" (Lyons, 2003, p. 70). The pattern of positive interaction between student and teacher is utilised in an adaptation of the reading intervention program designed for secondary students, for example *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992).

The cycle of modelled reading described earlier is also utilised in an adaptation of the intervention program, *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992). For example, at the beginning of the shared reading stage, the teacher reads a new section of text aloud to the student demonstrating appropriate

expression and intonation. Immediately after this, the teacher and student read the same section of text together. During this re-reading process the teacher focuses especially on slowing the reading pace and reading fluently and expressively. The student then attempts to read alone.

Towards a Model of Reading

Interactions described above in modelled reading, guided reading and independent reading create templates for children to utilise in other situations. An important aspect of this approach is to lead struggling readers to interact with print so that their attitude to the task of reading and their attitude to themselves as readers alters. These interactions ideally embrace code-breaking, text participation, text user and text analyst practices (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1999). The process by which a reader accesses the cues of a text can be described in theoretical terms and applied to a model of reading. For example, readers operate with the three cueing systems (phonological-graphological, grammatical, semantic) when reading fluently and, it is argued, simultaneously (Goodman, 1967; Kemp, 1987; Stanovich, 1980). Good readers also read selectively: they do not attempt, for example, to laboriously decode every word or read every phrase or sentence if they are skimming for the general meaning of a text. Reading is an active process during which readers take on various roles as they read. Firstly, in the role of *code-breaker*, the reader focuses on the basic decoding of the visual information of the text, using phonological-graphological, grammatical and semantic information to decode the text. Secondly, when taking the role of *text-participant*, emphasis is on accessing the literal and inferential meaning of the text, and understanding how the text structure helps to find that meaning. Thirdly, in the role of *text-user* the reader may use the text for a range of purposes such as enjoyment or finding information. Fourthly, in the role of *text-analyst*, the reader detects propaganda and bias and weighs arguments – in essence the reader thinks critically (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Luke & Freebody, 1999).

These global strategies suggest that reading is a thinking process. Good readers are effective and flexible thinkers who use an array of available information to arrive at meaning.

Reading, then, is essentially an interactive cognitive task in which the reader constructs meaning. In essence, good readers have the correct bases to read well. These include the use of the cue systems, which rely on graphological and phonological, grammatical and semantic information.

“Scaffolding”: a Sub-Skill of Metacognition

The second theory pertains to scaffolding, a sub-skill that metacognition refers to providing and adjusting assistance according to a reader’s performance. This provision of assistance may occur within a session (such as within a guided reading session) as well as across a session (such as from modelled to guided independent reading (Winch et al. 2004).

According to the research in this area, teacher assistance with a reader’s learning can be successful only when a shared understanding or “intersubjectivity” is established between the teacher and student (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1994). To find a common ground for communication, a teacher needs to discover what the reader understands and then decide what assistance will work best in each case (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Intersubjectivity is a valuable precursor to internalisation of language. Once intersubjectivity is established, a teacher can gradually reduce control of the reading act and children may become more able to function independently as readers (Lyons, 2003).

When students struggle to learn to read their teachers face a difficult task. In some cases these students are the victims of an approach to reading instruction which did not suit them. In other cases they have been passed over by teachers who were waiting for them to mature (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000).

Engelmann (1997 in Searfoss et al. 2001, p. 354) contends that struggling readers:

- differ from their peers in some very important ways;
- often suffer from declining self-confidence because of their reading failure;
- may apply some faulty reading strategies from previous instruction; and
- must learn to read at an accelerated rate if they are to catch up.

Issues Related to Reading Intervention

Factors contributing to best outcome

For more than a decade, the efficacy of reading intervention programs has been the focus of much educational research. Studies have yielded clear evidence of the general factors contributing to the best outcomes. For example, Westwood (1998), Chan (1997), Montague (1997) and Stronge (2002) have emphasised the importance of giving due consideration to four domains: firstly, giving consideration to each learner's existing knowledge skills and reading strategies; secondly, focussing on establishing a rapport between a teacher and learners; thirdly, working towards developing fluency in readers and fourthly, providing quality instruction.

There is an extensive research base that identifies the most effective approaches to teaching reading to children with difficulties. Such children will benefit from reading programs that include many diverse elements including direct instruction, skills in structural analysis, a highly structured phonics program, combined reading and writing programs, strategies to enhance comprehension and metacognitive approach. Each of these is elaborated below.

Direct instruction - specific skills should be explicitly taught to the child through intensive instruction intervention (Pressley, Goodchild, Fleet, Zajchowski & Evans, 1989; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick & Kurita, 1990; Pressley & Miller, 1987). For these children the process of reading is not an intuitive process.

Skills in structural analysis - children need to be taught structural analysis of words. They need to realise that words can be broken into in phonemes, syllables, prefixes and suffixes (Beck & Juel, 1992).

Phonics instruction

The National Reading Panel in the U.S.A. and Great Britain (April, 2000) is the largest, most comprehensive evidence-based review ever conducted on how children learn reading. This report has determined that effective reading instruction includes teaching students to break apart and manipulate sounds in words (phonemic awareness). This process teaches them that these sounds are represented by letters of

the alphabet which can then be blended together to form words (phonics). Having them practice what they've learned by reading aloud with guidance and feedback (guided oral reading), and applying reading comprehension strategies can improve reading comprehension.

The panel found that the researched conducted to date strongly supports the concept that explicitly and systematically teaching children to manipulate phonemes, significantly improves children's reading and spelling abilities (Hempenstall, 2000, p. 3).

The panel also suggested that there is solid evidence that phonics instruction is beneficial for individuals in the primary school who are having difficulties with reading. The greatest improvements in reading were seen from systematic phonics instruction. This type of instruction consists of teaching a planned sequence of phonic elements rather than highlighting elements as they happen to appear in a text .

Furthermore the specific strategies suggested by the U.K. Government are summarised as follows:

- Structured instruction in phonics is the most effective way to teach reading.
- The inclusion of the structured teaching of phonics at the primary school level is critical for later success in reading.
- The incidental teaching of phonics is insufficient.
- Schools should schedule daily, hour-long English lessons:
 - where two-thirds of the class have activities including choral reading, vocabulary, punctuation, grammar and spelling;
 - while one-third of the class work in small groups matched for skill level.Such a schedule would mean that the teacher could give direct instruction with one group while the remainder work independently (Hempenstall, 2000, p. 5).

A highly structured phonics program - the alphabetic code should be taught directly and systematically. Such a program should focus on moving from simple to complex activities and the teaching of regularity before irregularity (Simmons, 2000).

A combined reading and writing program

Children need to write the words they learn to read (Bos & Vaughn, 1994). Writing lends another dimension to an otherwise one-dimensional activity, and it promotes generalisation of skills by students. Searfoss et al. (2001) emphasise the merit of writing in a variety of genre.

A program of strategy instruction to increase comprehension and metacognition

This is often referred to as ‘reciprocal teaching.’ It involves teaching students four key strategies of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting (Nicholson, 2000). In the first instance the student will read the first paragraph of a passage, checking themselves that they understood the material. The second strategy is to clarify understanding. For example, students may check the meanings of some new words in the paragraph by looking them up in a dictionary. The third strategy is to summarise what the text is about. For example, students may look for the topic sentence in the paragraph. The fourth strategy is to predict. For example, students might anticipate (to themselves) what the next paragraph will be about. The student then reads the next paragraph and applies the four strategies all over again, and so on until the text is fully read (Nicholson, 2000, p. 241).

Metacognitive Instruction

As stated earlier, research in reading has identified several characteristics that differentiate skilled readers from unskilled readers. For example, unskilled readers “focus on decoding single words, fail to adjust their reading for different texts and purposes and seldom look ahead or back to monitor and improve their comprehension” (Paris et al. 1990, p. 609). Similarly, poor readers tend to be non-strategic. For example, poor readers focus energy on looking busy and following directions, but remain unaware of comprehension difficulties or strategies for ameliorating comprehension failure (Duffy & Roehler, 1989; Paris et al. 1990). Many unskilled readers believe that the purpose of reading is to pronounce words correctly. When asked to summarise a passage, they often recite sentences from the text verbatim without conveying an understanding of the material (Baker & Brown, 1984; Paris & Jacobs, 1984).

The aim of metacognitive instruction is to

... develop the sensitivity of students to learning situations, to heighten students' awareness of their own cognitive repertoire and the factors that affect the learning process and contribute to successful learning, to teach strategies for learning, and to develop students' capacity to regulate and monitor their activities (Ariel, 1992, p. 82).

Therefore the aim is to have students become self-regulated learners, learners who can monitor, evaluate and control their own learning (Harris & Pressley, 1991). Research studies have demonstrated that poor readers do not routinely engage in constructive activities required for good comprehension during reading. These activities include clarifying the purpose of reading, focusing attention on important parts of the text, constantly checking for understanding and taking appropriate actions when breakdowns in comprehension occur, asking oneself questions during reading to enhance recall and making predictions (Chan, 1991). Metacognitive models of instruction emphasise that successful readers are "good strategy users" (Duffy & Roehler, 1989). In particular, metacognitive models endeavour to teach students how to adapt and apply strategies to multiple settings, that is to generalise their use of strategies across time and setting (Hay, 1995).

Students must learn to adopt task-appropriate goals; to generate, select and/or adapt strategies appropriately based on tasks and relevant content knowledge; and to monitor progress and adjust approaches as necessary. They must also construct knowledge (about tasks, strategies and specific domains) and beliefs (perceptions of self efficacy and attributions) that support self regulation (Butler, 1995, p. 171).

As mentioned earlier, whilst some students appear to develop metacognitive skills without explicit instruction, students with learning difficulties appear unable to spontaneously generate metacognitive skills themselves.

Moreover,

... it is now believed that some students experience learning problems due to a lack of direct and explicit teaching of essential skills and knowledge. [It appears] not all students can cope with teaching which requires them to learn independently without teacher direction (Westwood, 1995, p. 20).

Indeed, it is now acknowledged that students with learning difficulties need more direct teaching and guidance, specifically in the form of metacognitive and cognitive strategy training (McGrath & Noble, 1995) especially if they are ever going to achieve results comparable to those of their average peers.

Metacognitive Methods for Underachieving Readers

According to Baker and Brown (1984), metacognition is the “knowledge and control we have over thinking and learning activities” (p. 2). Students who can self-monitor their reading or listening can detect errors or contradictions in a text. They can identify topics or ideas they do not understand, and use a variety of task-appropriate reading and learning strategies to “fix up” or alleviate their difficulties in understanding. Active learners as described by Freebody and Luke (1990) use a variety of self monitoring strategies such as self-questioning, paraphrasing, comparing key ideas and using prior knowledge.

To demonstrate comprehension processes for students who struggle with reading, it is necessary for teachers to describe their own mental activity in terms that students will understand and will eventually be able to model.

Brozo and Simpson (1999) suggest that when reading, a reader engages in the use of *content statements* and *metacomments* as texts are encountered. Content statements, essentially, paraphrases text and metacomments, describe how the reader thinks about, and makes meaning of, the texts (p. 425). Examples of the use of Brozo and Simpson (1999) approach are outlined below.

- **Making and Checking Prediction**

Content Statement: Based on the title and first subheading what do I think the text is about.

Metacomment: What I am doing now is predicting what the text is about.

- **Using Contextual Strategies for Word Learning**

Content Statement: There is a word I don't know.

Metacomment: I'll try to figure out that word in the context of the sentence.

- **Imaging**

Content Statement: I can picture the characters/scene.

Metacomment: By creating an image in my mind, the story is more understandable.

- **Linking Prior Knowledge to Text**

Content Statement: The story so far reminds me of something in my life or something I've seen on TV.

Metacomment: I'm thinking about my prior knowledge and experience..

- **Verbalising Points of Confusion**

Content Statement: This makes no sense to me.

Metacomment: I need to think about this.

- **Demonstrating Fix-Up Strategies**

Content Statement: This makes no sense to me.

Metacomment: Maybe I was not concentrating enough.

(Brozo & Simpson, 1999, p. 426)

In summary, successful intervention programs for struggling readers are those which focus on individuals becoming metacognitive or developing knowledge and control over their thinking and learning. Struggling readers benefit from explicit training in the skills of metacognition. This can initially be achieved through teacher student interactions where the teacher models the necessary metacognitive skills.

Whole Language Approach

Because the philosophy is broad, reading experts have struggled with finding a common definition for a whole language approach. Smith (1998) states that whole language “is the instructional philosophy that reflects most consistently the view that meaning and natural language are the basis of literacy learning” (p. 301). Watson (1989) emphasises keeping language whole during instruction and avoiding fragmentation through isolated drill. Goodman (1986) writes that whole language “is not a dogma to be narrowly practised. It’s a way of bringing together a view of language, a view of learning, and a view of people, in particular two special groups of people: kids and teachers” (p. 5).

Though definitions may vary, there are general principles which characterise whole language. The following is a list built from the works of Goodman (1992), Watson (1989), Cambourne (1988), Smith (1988) and Weaver (1994):

- Readers construct meaning for themselves by drawing on clues, prior experience and personal purposes as they read. As they interact with print, readers predict, hypothesise, confirm and self-correct. Comprehension is the primary goal of readers.
- Learning is enhanced when learners actively interact with other learners, books, materials and the world.
- Learning is a social act. It supports exploration and taking risks.
- Learning that is purposeful for the learner is more effective and enduring than that which is imposed by outside forces. When learners are interested in a topic, they are more likely to take risks and to achieve success.
- Literacy develops from whole to part and from known to unknown.

The majority of students intuitively discover the relationship between spoken and written words and learn to read regardless of the specific reading method. Griffith and Olson (1992) maintain that this is especially true of students who in the early years of school have good phonemic awareness (awareness of the smallest units of English language). Good readers use syntactic and semantic (meaning-based) as well as graphophonic (code-based) cues to aid word recognition, and thus access

meaning. Whereas good readers have both the above mentioned avenues available to them when they fail to recognise a word, the poor reader does not.

In many cases the poor reader has not been able to master the alphabetic code without explicit instruction. For phonics instruction to be effective, students need to be ready to learn phonics, and teachers need to provide context and reinforcement – a reason to learn phonics. Teachers also need to target key phonics generalisations and decide how to communicate them. For example, children must be able to hear sounds within words, or they will be unable to form mental connections between sounds and letters (Adams, 1990; Ball & Blachman, 1991; Beck & Juel, 1995).

Whilst whole language may suit the ‘regular’ student, struggling students need different instruction if they are going to learn to read (Griffith & Olson, 1992; Kulieke & Fly-Jones, 1993). This is because unlike successful readers who may discover effective reading strategies on their own, poor readers appear to require the clear teacher explanation of what it is they are doing and how they need to go about it (Pearson & Dole, 1987).

Metacognitive approaches to the teaching of reading through explicit instruction endeavour to have students become more aware of the reading strategies they can use when reading, more skilled at monitoring and evaluating their success in strategy use and their use of comprehension (Lewin, 1992). Furthermore, metacognitive models of instruction aim to have students develop a repertoire of strategies from which they can select appropriately to meet their needs (Spiegel, 1992).

The objective of any metacognitive instructional program is not so much the teaching and learning of specific content, but rather teaching students how to learn and how to demonstrate strategic knowledge in the performance of academic tasks (Ariel, 1992). The underlying premise however is that reading underachievers are characteristically non-strategic and that through explicit metacognitive methods of instruction they can improve their reading ability.

Reading Strategy Instruction According to Metacognitive Model

Reading strategy instruction according to the metacognitive model described by Ariel (1992) is concerned with:

- a) the development of the students' sensitivity to reading (the purpose and function of reading, students' sensitivity to their own capacity to succeed in learning how to read);
- b) the development of students' awareness of what is involved in the reading process and what skills are necessary for successful word recognition and comprehension;
- c) the development of selected sets of strategies for specific areas of reading; and
- d) the monitoring of strategy acquisition, strategy implementation, and progress" (p. 407).

Metacognitive instruction understands that reading is a construction process wherein readers choose from a repertoire of reading strategies which they then apply appropriately to make meaning from a text. The strategies successful readers use can be summarised into Twelve Reading Strategies.

Teaching Reading Strategies

Metacognitive instruction as it pertains to the teaching of reading involves the explicit teaching of the reading strategies expert readers use, with the aim of students becoming more strategic and metacognitive in their approach to reading (Ariel, 1992). Metacognitive methods assume

that students can be taught to become more aware of the reading process and of the factors that impede or facilitate their progress in reading, and that they can be taught various strategies to master the skills in reading, including monitoring of their reading activities (Ariel, 1992, p. 407).

Kletzien (1991) suggests that metacomprehension is a particular type of metacognition. Metacomprehension in Kletzien's (1991) terms is defined as a reader's awareness and control over his reading strategies, a strategy being an action or series of actions necessary for constructing meaning from text. The process involves the reader monitoring the use of strategies that support his understanding of what is being read. It involves recognising when a text is not making sense and knowing what to do to remediate this situation.

Teaching Metacomprehension Strategies

Teaching metacomprehension strategies to students whose reading is not meaning-driven will help them to become text participants. Metacomprehension strategies will help underachieving readers see themselves as more successful readers.

Gee (1998) contends that metacognitive strategies taught can be divided into four groups according to when they are used, that is:

- before reading
- while reading
- after reading
- at the word level.

These are described below.

Before reading strategies

The suggestion is that the teacher should activate within readers relevant prior knowledge. The student would be encouraged to predict factors such as what the story might be about, what possible vocabulary, people and places might be in the story.

While reading strategies

When at this stage the students would be encouraged to engage in activities such as:

- checking whether story line predictions were correct
- checking to see whether the story is making sense

- re-reading or reading ahead if things are not making sense
- visualising what the story describes.

After reading strategies

At this stage the students would be urged to pursue factors such as:

- checking that the purpose for reading was met
- silently retelling the whole story to check that it was understood
- contemplating the cause of accurate or inaccurate predictions
- thinking how the story linked with prior knowledge.

At the word level

Students would adapt the following particular strategies when they encounter an unknown word or if what was read does not make sense:

- guessing a word and seeing if it fits the text
- re-reading or reading ahead and guessing a word that makes sense
- analysing the word, for example is it a compound word, made up of two smaller, known words or does it have a prefix or suffix, which when cut off will leave a word that the reader knows (Gee 1998, p.2)

Reading, Comprehension and Schema Theory

A student's ability to understand and remember, whether through reading or through listening, is dependent on the expectations, cultural background, vocabulary and prior knowledge which s/he bring to the reading or listening task. This knowledge is referred to as the student's schema (Roth-Smith, 1998, p. 171). The richer the student's background schema, the more readily new information will be linked with existing information and comprehended. This comprehension in turn, further enriches and expands the student's schema.

The schema theory as described by Rumelhart (1985) and Carpenter and Johnson (1991) suggests that a reader needs to interact with the text and the context of individual words. Rumelhart (1985) in particular focuses on the complex interaction

of perceptual, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information that occurs in the mind of the skilled reader.

Successful readers “constantly assess the match between their own concepts and purpose and the details of the text. They monitor the extent of this congruence. They test their hypotheses and revise these when the situation demands” (Applegate et al. 1994, p.32).

Schema or prior knowledge helps readers in the following areas:

1. assimilating text information;
2. making inferences about the content;
3. focusing on important parts of a text;
4. making a summary of information (Matthews, 1991; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Gee, 1998).

Recht and Leslie (1988), looked at the impact that prior knowledge has on reading performance. Their findings suggest that readers’ background knowledge significantly facilitates comprehension and the quantity and quality of recall. Indeed some of this research indicates that having superior ability in reading is not as valuable as prior knowledge of the topic. Recht and Leslie’s (1988) study indicates that prior knowledge of poor readers compensated for their low ability in reading.

Activating Prior Knowledge

One way to increase comprehension is to activate students’ background knowledge. Activating background knowledge is especially helpful to inferential comprehension because the information is not stated literally in the text. The student’s prior knowledge will help in inferring what is meant (Bos & Vaughn, 1994).

Bos and Vaughn (1994) cited in Roth-Smith, (1998) suggest three ways in which background knowledge can be activated before a student reads a text: brainstorming, pre-reading plan and schema activation. Brainstorming may be conducted orally or

in writing. Oral forms invite students to contribute what they recall of topic facts and concepts to form group catalogues of ideas (Bull & Anstey, 1996). Pooled lists are then categorised into related ideas to serve as a resource for linking them with ideas to be met in the new learning context. Following an oral brainstorm the ideas may then be placed directly onto a graphic organiser, for example, a word map or a semantic web which sort and label associated ideas in forms radiating from a central topic. The pre-reading plan develops brainstorming by asking students to reflect on what triggered their associations. Such discussion generates further insights and associations. The schema activation strategy encourages students to discuss the events in the story and to hypothesise what they anticipate will happen in the story.

Comprehension Breakdown

The monitoring of comprehension is an essential reading skill which includes the ability to know when comprehension has failed. Skilled readers generally read in an automatic way until a triggering event alerts them to a need for closer attention to detail (Brown, 1980). This ‘triggering event’ usually happens when a reader’s prediction or expectations are not met (Wray, 1994), which is why predicting and activating prior knowledge are important comprehending strategies.

Realising one has failed to understand is but one part of comprehension monitoring, knowing what to do about such comprehension breakdown is another (Munro, 1991; Simpson et al. 1994; Wade, 1990; Wray, 1994). When a reader detects comprehension failure they must first decide if any remedial action is necessary, and this will depend on their purpose for reading. For example, if a reader’s purpose is to locate a specific piece of information, a lack of understanding of the surrounding text will not usually require any remedial action (Wray, 1994, p. 108). If the reader does not decide that remedial action is needed he/she may do one or more of the following:

- store the confusion memory as an unanswered question, hoping for more information later which will clarify the problem,
- read ahead,
- slow down and check the print, that is re-read,

- consult a teacher/dictionary,
- sound out the letters carefully,
- infer from the text (Munro, 1991; Wray, 1994).

The reading strategies suggested above are some of the repertoire of reading and comprehension competent readers use to monitor and evaluate their comprehension as they read (Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991). This ability to monitor comprehension is critical to successful reading (Bauman, Jones & Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Wray, 1994). This involves the following:

- (a) the awareness of whether or not comprehension is occurring, and
- (b) the conscious application of strategies to rectify comprehension difficulties.

Successful readers use strategies such as self questioning, predicting, verifying, modifying, re-telling/paraphrasing, reading ahead and re-reading to remove comprehension blockages (Munro, 1991; Bauman et al. 1993).

Thus metacognitive processes in reading can be divided into two categories. The first is knowledge about cognition. This involves knowledge of reading strategies which tend to remain constant, irrespective of the reading situation. The second is regulation of cognition. This encompasses the purpose for reading, the ease or difficulty of the text, and the perceived need for particular strategies (Kletzien, 1991). Good readers are aware of, and in control of, a repertoire of reading strategies and they have mastery over their 'control executive functions' (Ariel, 1992), so they can select and apply them suitably to a specific reading task. How successful a reader is will depend on their 'abilities, their knowledge and understanding of themselves as readers, their purposes and assessment of the reading task, and their knowledge of when and how to use reading strategies' (Kletzien, 1991, p. 69).

Shared Reading

Some students are more fluent than others. Some need help in order to read fluently. Pairing up a fluent reader with a struggling reader for a reading task can be a supportive context in which a struggling reader can practice reading. While the good

reader is reading slightly louder in shared reading, the struggling reader profits from hearing fluent reading. Often poor readers who struggle to decode on their own can comprehend quite well because of the fluent reading of their reading partner. This means that even struggling readers can engage in conversation about texts that they might not be able to read on their own (Strickland, Galda & Cullinan, 2004).

Alerting Readers to Text's Organisational Structure

Comprehension can be increased by alerting students to the text's organisational structure. Basically these strategies teach story grammar, the essential elements of typical narratives and how these components interrelate (Griffey, Zigmond & Leinhart, 1988). Carnine and Kinder (1985) in Roth-Smith (1998) for example, found that when students were taught to ask themselves a series of text organisational questions as they read, they approached new material with a greater ability to gain information. Questions included:

1. Who or what is the story about?
2. What is he or she trying to do?
3. What happens when he or she tries to do it?
4. What happens in the end?

Survey Technique

Another way in which to encourage more active involvement in the comprehension process is through the use of the survey technique. While survey techniques promote active comprehension by having children initiate questions rather than just respond to them, the teacher acts as a facilitator as students move to analyse text on their own. The survey technique (Dole, 2000) attempts to complete the cycle of active comprehension and indeed epitomises this notion. As students preview text material to be read they are encouraged to formulate independent purposes for reading.

The survey technique is designed to encourage students to systematically analyse the various aids present in the text material, in an attempt to formulate their own purposes for reading. These include:

1. Analysing the title;
2. Analysing the subtitles;
3. Analysing other visual aids;
4. Reading the introductory paragraph;
5. Reading the conclusion (Searfoss et al. 2001, p. 225).

Specifically, the students are asked to speculate on the contents of the text on the basis of the title and subtitles. The introductory and concluding paragraphs are then read. At this point, a general discussion should occur, so that the students will have a fairly good idea of the content of the text.

Instructional Methods for Improving Comprehension in Narrative Texts and Expository Texts

A substantial body of research literature exists on methods of teaching comprehension skills to adolescents who struggle in this area (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathis & Simmons, 1997; Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes & Lipsey, 2000; Englert & Tarrant, 1995). Strickland et al. (2004) contend that a knowledge of different text structures helps students become better readers. This literature describes how certain characteristics of text contribute to comprehension difficulties. For example, generally narrative text is seen to be easier to comprehend and remember than expository texts (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams & Baker, 2001). The two primary reasons for this are: (a) the content of a narrative is usually more familiar than the content of an exposition; and (b) the structure of most narrative text is simpler than that of an exposition.

A narrative depicts sequences of events involving characters and their actions, goals and feelings. Such event sequences correspond in many ways to the sequences of events that students themselves experience. For example, John Marsden's (1987) *So*

Much To Tell You depicts the events involving adolescent female characters. In this way, through the reading of a narrative an individual can vicariously gain knowledge about the world. The early ability to use knowledge of story structure to aid comprehension continues to improve with age (Trabasso & Stein, 1997). Gersten et al. (2001) report on the usefulness of teaching students to ask themselves two generic questions (*who?* and *what's happening?*) as comprehension strategies for reading narrative texts.

In the early years teachers rely to a great extent on narrative texts for reading instruction (Nichols, 1995; Wilson & Rupley, 1997). However, in the middle years and secondary years students are increasingly expected to work with expository material, for example, in history, science, geography and in other disciplines (Wilson & Rupley, 1997). However, expository text is often so dense with information and unfamiliar technical vocabulary that students must perform fairly complex cognitive tasks to extract, summarise and synthesise its content (Lapp, Flood, Ranck-Buhr, 1995).

The comprehension of expository texts more often than not, poses greater challenges for readers than narrative texts (Hidi & Hildyard, 1983; McCutchen & Perfetti, 1982). There are characteristics of expository texts that make them more challenging. Firstly, expository texts involve long passages without the prompts of dialogue (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Secondly, the logical-causal arguments typical of expository text structure are more abstract than are the events that characterise narratives (Stein & Trabasso, 1981). Thirdly, expository texts use more complicated and varied structures than do narratives (Kucan & Beck, 1997).

Wong and Wilson (1984) suggest that struggling readers have particular difficulty with text structures such as compare-contrast and cause-effect, which are typically found in expository texts. However when provided with appropriate opportunities, struggling readers can learn to sort disorganised sentences into coherent clusters around selected sub-topics.

Attributional Training Programs

Past attributional training programs tend to emphasise effort attributions (Covington, 1992). Chan (1994) suggests that a more fruitful approach may be to train these students to attribute failures to ineffective task strategy rather than to insufficient effort so as to avoid increasing feelings of helplessness. Students need to be metacognitively aware of the mechanisms by which particular strategies achieve their effects. This can be achieved by attributional training with regard to strategy use.

The Strategies Intervention Model (SIM) (Ariel, 1992).

Direct Instruction of Summarisation Skills

Direct instruction of summarisation skills (DISS) is typically described in terms of specific academic focus, academically engaged time and controlled practice, all of which have been linked to academic achievement (Moore et al. 2000). DISS involves teaching summarisation using the following particular prompts and steps:

- a. ask: “What is the main idea?”
- b. re-read and check that everything is understood;
- c. ask: “What is the topic sentence?” and use this sentence in a summary;
- d. collapse all lists and make a general statement about lists;
- e. eliminate trivia and redundancies;
- f. combine related ideas across paragraphs; and
- g. revise the summary, a process which includes polishing the text (Nicaise & Gettinger, 1995, p. 290).

Each of the above steps is taught to students in a lesson format whereby teachers explain and describe the process, model task behaviours and provide direct instruction on how to use these steps with other types of tasks.

Brown and Day (1983) and Hare (1984) have proposed a comprehensive theory of text comprehension and production which incorporates summarisation. Their theory, which is based on the work of Kintsch (1988; 1994), begins with macrostructure (gist comprehension) formation.

According to Clay (1998), schemata knowledge may affect judgements of importance for a variety of comprehension tasks, including summarisation.

Summarisation proficiency is not necessarily acquired by secondary students (Brown et al. 1983). Younger and/or poorer readers are more inclined to make decisions about summary inclusions and deletions on a sentence by sentence basis, whereas older and/or good readers make their judgements based on the meaning of the entire text.

Evidence of students' lack of summarisation prowess has been gathered in a number of studies employing a formalised set of summarisation rules based on the macro rules described by Kintsch (1994). In order of predicted increasing difficulty, the rules are: (a) delete trivia; (b) delete redundancies; (c) substitute a superordinate for a list of items; (d) substitute a superordinate for a list of actions; and (e) invent a topic sentence, if none is available.

Reciprocal Teaching of Reading

Reciprocal Teaching of Reading (RTR) was one of the first strategy based reading programs to exemplify an information-processing view of comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). It is a group questioning technique where the teacher and students take turns leading group or class discussion, regarding the content of texts they are reading or listening to. Initially the teacher models and labels different comprehension strategies to help guide the leader's discussion: questioning, summarising, clarifying and predicting (Roth-Smith, 2000, p. 394). The ensuing discussion is directed towards text content, inferences, disagreements in interpretation, arriving at a general summary of the segment read and a prediction of what will come next.

In developing the RTR technique Palincsar and Brown (1984) identified six information processing prerequisites for good reading comprehension: (a) understanding the purpose for reading; (b) activating relevant background knowledge; (c) discerning essential from unessential information; (d) evaluating reading material for consistency; (e) monitoring comprehension; and (f) drawing and testing inferences from text. However, as Nicaise and Gettinger (1995) report Palincsar and Brown's (1985) focus was on modeling and coaching in four reading strategies: question-formulation, text summarisation, text clarification and prediction.

RTR consists of a number of distinct steps. To begin with both the teacher and the students read an assigned paragraph silently. Following this, the teacher models the strategies of formulating questions, constructing a summary, clarifying difficult information and making a prediction. Each student then takes on the role of "teacher," while the actual teacher offers coaching on how to perform the strategy. The teacher's input fades as the students become increasingly competent.

This approach is heavily dependent on the students' ability to model the teacher's cognitive activities. A Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) focuses on student-to-student and teacher-to-student interaction, critical aspects of effective comprehension and content instruction. "It is through discussion that the teacher learns what is in the students' minds, and thereby can restructure the situation to aid the student in understanding (Flood & Lapp, 1990, p. 493).

Palincsar and Brown in Nicaise and Gettinger (1995) documented significant benefits when they implemented RTR with middle years students working in small groups. They found that RTR led to significant improvement in students' ability to perform the four strategies from baseline to post-intervention. Indeed on daily reading comprehension measures, students who used RTR increased their scores from 30% accuracy at baseline to 80% accuracy at post-intervention. On standardised measures of reading comprehension, the majority of children increased their grade-equivalent scores by an average of 15 months (Nicaise & Gettinger, 1995, p. 289).

The research of Palincsar and Klenk (1992) found that recall of text, summarising the gist of the material and the application of this knowledge to a novel situation, increased with the use of a Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985). These gains were maintained for six months to a year. According to Roth-Smith (2000), RTR has particular merit in that it sharpens a students' ability to engage in intentional learning from text, to use higher level thinking and to self-monitor one's own comprehension processes.

Reciprocal Questioning Procedure

Reciprocal questioning procedure and its effectiveness as a comprehension strategy has strong experimental support (Manzo, 1969a; Feldman, 1986; Lysynchuk, Pressley & Vye, 1990; Dao, 1993; Lijerion, 1993). This procedure engages the teacher and students in a reciprocal, instructional dialogue, in which effective thinking via questioning and answering, is modelled and taught. The procedure focusses on "the development of independent reading, comprehension and metacognition strategies that promote learning" (Manzo et al. 2004, p. 73).

Students involved in reciprocal questioning begin to monitor the questions they bring to a text. They also begin to expand their own thinking as they hear the questions posed by the teacher and other students. This increases the variety of questions available to students for future use. Indeed, the key element of the procedure appears to be the built-in rotation of teacher and student dialogue.

In summary, good readers have strategies which allow them to read effectively. A major difference between good and struggling readers is that good readers have efficient strategies and struggling readers do not. Metacognitive strategies provide an overall plan to gain meaning from text. Metacognitive strategies include scanning the text, sampling, predicting, confirming, understanding, and correcting errors as they occur. For many individuals these strategies develop with experience. However for other individuals such strategies must be taught.

Section 4: The Adolescent Reader and Metacognition

General Themes Regarding Struggling Adolescent Readers

Some adolescents perennially struggle with reading. However, far fewer reading intervention programs are available for secondary students than are available for primary school students (Moore et al. 2000). The traditional assumption among educators has been that once students typically master basic reading skills during the first few years of schooling, no further instruction in this area is needed because comprehension will inevitably follow. Yet as discussed earlier many students enter secondary school with serious deficits in the higher-order cognitive skills and background knowledge needed to understand texts (Taylor et al. 2000).

This section of the literature review will address two general areas. Firstly, general themes which are found in the literature related to struggling adolescent readers. These themes include: enhancing the reading skills of struggling adolescent readers; creating supportive links with students; ensuring the availability of ample texts on varied levels and genre; teaching students how to become strategic readers; helping struggling readers to become active and metacognitive, and engaging reluctant readers in the reading task.

Secondly a general outline of the categories of adolescent readers which relate to Unrau's (2004) diagnostic-prescriptive practices. The diagnostic-prescriptive model of reading instruction is based on informed observation and informal and formal assessment as needed, for the purpose of precision teaching which targets adolescent learners' particular needs in reading skills (Manzo et al. 2004).

While this did not guide the intervention program used in this thesis it summarises the approach used in the present study.

An encompassing set of categories of adolescent readers which relates to an analysis of the data which emerged includes the following categories:

1. Weak decoders: poor letter-sound or phonological knowledge.

2. compensatory readers: use sight words and sentence context to compensate for lack of phonological knowledge.
3. Non-automatic readers: accurate but non-automatic, effortful word recognition.
4. Readers with monitoring difficulties: comprehension and/or monitoring demands too much of reader's memory and other resources.
5. Readers who lack specific topic knowledge; able to decode but trouble making meaning because of weak topic knowledge in particular domain.
6. Disengaged or inactive readers: have adequate to advanced knowledge bases, skills and strategies but lack motivation or sufficient degree of connection with schooling to read.

Reading intervention initiatives linked with diagnostic prescriptive practices are based on the premise that struggling readers tend to need both strategy instruction – independent means of learning how to learn, and ongoing scaffolding – help in learning from text. Pearson and Fielding (1991) refer to such scaffolding as most anything that allows the teacher to provide cueing, questioning, coaching, collaboration and prompts where necessary to allow a student to complete a task before he or she achieves independence.

Enhancing the Reading Skills of the Struggling Adolescent Readers

Indeed children who fall behind in first grade reading have a one in eight chance of ever catching up to grade level. Of children struggling in Year 3, approximately 74% will still struggle in Year 9 (Hempenstall, 2000, p. 5).

For many struggling adolescent readers, the middle years of Years 7 and 8 may represent their last chance to catch up in their reading skills. Little consideration is given to helping learn how these individuals become proficient readers. This lack of information is somewhat unsettling because long-term follow-up studies of children struggling with reading in the early years reveal that they struggle academically and socially throughout elementary and secondary school (Allington & Walmsley, 1995;

Juel, 1988). Providing appropriate reading opportunities for struggling adolescent readers continues to be a challenge for teachers and schools. In order to support teachers and schools, the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) commissioned a research project to provide a national picture of how struggling readers can be supported in regular primary schools. The DETYA (2000) project report, *Mapping The Territory* was based at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

In this section of the literature review the focus is on generalisation regarding enhancing the reading skills of the struggling adolescent reader. The topics elaborated include: creating supportive links with students; ensuring the availability of ample texts on varied levels; teaching students how to become strategic readers; helping students become active and metacognitive; engaging reluctant readers in the reading task.

Creating Supportive Links with Students

The emotional side of learning to read is rarely mentioned in educational research. According to Athey (1985), diagrams of the reading process may identify affective factors, but beyond this acknowledgement, affective factors “receive little additional elaboration” (p. 527). This practice continues in spite of an extensive body of research that suggests that children with low reading skills experience loss of self-esteem, confidence, and initiative; suffer diminished self-worth; and have emotional traumas that may last for a lifetime (Paris et al. 1990).

Although beliefs about one’s self efficacy, for example in reading, can affect performance throughout life, the particular impact of these beliefs during adolescence is widely recognised (Garcia, Stephens, Koenke, Harris, Pearson, Jimenez & Janisch, 1995). For the adolescent, competency beliefs are already undergoing dramatic changes (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997, 1998). Upon entering the secondary school, students leave predominantly self-contained environments for multiple classrooms with different teachers. In the junior secondary school they have to “face increasingly complex reading challenges” to keep up in a variety of key learning areas (Hosking & Teberg, 1998, p. 332).

Positive interaction with teachers is an important starting point for any initiative designed to help struggling adolescent readers. Coles' (1998) research suggests that the social and emotional aspects of learning have a powerful influence on students' ability to improve skills in reading. Cohen (2001), who emphasises the importance of social and emotional aspects of learning, notes: "social emotional capacities powerfully affect, and even determine, their ability to listen and communicate; to concentrate, to recognise, understand and solve problems ... to become self-motivating" (p. 4).

The adolescent students' interactions with teachers help to form the context within which their sense of self is fostered (Bandura, 1986; Brantlinger, 1993). The attitudes adolescents have about their own competence are strongly influenced by teachers' messages (Kramer-Schlosser, 1992).

Colvin and Schlosser (1997/1998) found that students responded positively to learning tasks where teacher encouragement challenged them and required them to make an investment of time and effort. They suggested that teachers think in terms of Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development and provide students with reading texts that are slightly beyond their level to complete when working alone, but that they can successfully read when they receive teacher assistance. In general, research suggests that feelings of competence and increased motivation result from completing tasks that require effort and investment of time and energy, rather than completing tasks which are easily and quickly completed (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997/1998; Gambrell, 1996; Oldfather, 1993).

Obviously the feelings of competence increase when students experience success at reading tasks that are challenging and require effort on their part. Such experiences reinforce a positive self-concept as a reader and increase the likelihood that the student will be intrinsically motivated to engage in subsequent reading tasks. The suggestion is that teachers employ reading tasks that promote deep cognitive engagement, such as the high-level questioning required in tasks such as Reciprocal Teaching (1985) (Pintrich, Roeser & De Groote, 1994).

In summary, most struggling adolescent readers have a history of failure in reading. This factor is sometimes further complicated by the impact of the adolescent stage in itself. As Wilson (1995) points out, adolescence is a stage which is characterised by rapid and varied physical, cognitive and emotional growth that can cause students to be unsure of themselves in general. However, warm teacher-student interactions can lead struggling readers to a broader self awareness so that these students can make genuine attempts to improve their reading.

Ensuring the Availability of Ample Texts on Varied Levels and Genre

Finding reading texts that appeal to struggling adolescent readers is sometimes difficult. Literacy texts written for younger children can seem offensive, even though they might be easier to understand. The appearance of a chapter book may be daunting even though it may contain interesting stories that might encourage reading. The research of The Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development (1995) suggests that in the junior secondary school setting, many students are expected to read texts that are too difficult for them to handle. Consequently these individuals feel frustration when their school day consists of assignments from texts that they can neither read fluently nor understand.

Teachers need to have texts available that are written at varied levels of difficulty with an interest level appropriate to adolescent learners. This is not to say that struggling readers should receive different content; instead, struggling readers should have an opportunity to receive the content through a means appropriate to their instructional level.

A great deal has been written about the struggling reader and his response to various genres. Indeed, promising research literature abounds on the merit of highlighting for struggling readers the distinct characteristics of various genres. For both narrative and expository texts, strategy instructions seems to consistently improve comprehension performance (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams & Baker, 2001).

A narrative text is easier to comprehend and remember. According to Gersten et al. (2001), the primary reasons for this are: the content of a narrative, which is usually

more familiar than that of an expository text; the structure of the narrative is usually simpler than that of the expository text.

Students can usually relate to events and characters depicted in a narrative text. Events described in narrative “correspond in many ways to the sequences of events that children experience directly and that constitute the core content of their world knowledge” (Gersten et al. 2001, p. 288). Through narratives students vicariously gain knowledge that is more wide ranging than could be gained from personal experiences alone.

According to Englert and Thomas (1987), struggling readers require careful guidance when learning how to extract relevant information from expository texts. Conventional instruction rarely provides such guidance. “Rather than circumvent, modify, or supplement text, the focus of strategy instruction is to improve how readers attack expository material, to become more deliberate and active in processing it” (Gersten et al. 2001, p. 298).

Teaching Students How to Become Strategic Readers

Skilled readers construct mental representations of the texts by using their existing knowledge along with the application of flexible strategies (Rupley & Willson, 1997).

Struggling readers often do not employ strategies to aid reading comprehension and need assistance to use strategies (Jetton, Rupley & Willson, 1995). As argued earlier, one reason that the lack of strategy use may occur among struggling readers is that they are unaware of how to use the strategy or they fail to see the importance of it. For a strategy to be selected, it must be perceived as a valuable means towards accomplishing a task (Paris, Newman & McVey, 1982). Teachers can enhance instructional strategy training by modeling. For example, teachers could model *activating prior knowledge* by looking at the topic and suggesting what a text might be about.

Helping Struggling Adolescent Readers to Become Active and Metacognitive

Metacognitive approaches which include self-questioning strategies, modelling, scaffolded support, expert guidance, extended application practice, feedback to students about their progress and monitoring of student progress, have been shown to be particularly successful in helping struggling readers (DETYA, 2000, p. 95).

Struggling readers are usually passive. In some cases they do not understand the interactive nature of the reading process. In other cases they are unwilling to exert the effort to improve their reading because of a history of critical and abundant failure (Brozo & Simpson, 1999).

Self-monitoring plays a vital role in determining whether or not students have successful reading experience. Research indicates major differences between the metacognitive abilities of struggling and expert readers (Garner & Alexander, 1989; Simpson & Nist, 1997). There also appears to be developmental differences in students' ability to self-monitor. Researchers have found that older students seem better able to regulate and control their understanding processes than younger students (Brown, Armbruster & Baker, 1986a; Pressley, 2000).

Engaging Reluctant Readers in the Reading Task

Research about reading attitudes and voluntary reading suggests that, in general, both show a steady decline as students progress through school. Furthermore, negative attitudes becomes especially prevalent in the early years of secondary school (Shapiro & White, 1991; McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Through interviews with junior secondary school students, Bintz (1993) concluded that some "lose interest in school reading as they progress through school but do not lose interest in reading per se" (p. 612). Further, he commented that one major reason for resistance to school reading is that students "are forced to read materials that they have no voice in selecting" (p. 612). Worthy (1996) emphasises the importance of making available texts that *hook* reluctant readers.

Students' choice and control in reading material plays an important role in involvement with, and enjoyment of, reading and in fostering voluntary reading

(Bintz, 1993; Turner, 1995). When students are not given some choice about what they read, they may avoid teacher-selected books as a matter of principle. Thomson (1987) concluded from surveys of the reading habits of British teenagers that “as students progress through secondary school, the gap between what they choose to read and what the school provides becomes increasingly wider” (pp. 32-33).

Because study-preferred reading materials often include texts that have been traditionally seen as inappropriate for school (for example, light fiction, magazines and satire), there is ample potential for disapproval of student choice from parents and school administrators. However a consensus opinion (Parrish & Atwood, 1985; Mathabane, 1986; Carlsen & Sherrill, 1988) is that frequently student-chosen materials are more complex than teacher-chosen materials. Moreover, even light materials promote fluent reading and vocabulary development and help to develop linguistic competence, confidence, and motivation necessary for reading more sophisticated materials.

In summary, the generalisations above on teaching struggling adolescent readers are not intended to over-simplify the complexity of their problems. Clearly reaching this cohort who lack basic reading skills, confidence and motivation is a serious problem. A number of themes have been identified regarding enhancing the reading skills of struggling adolescent readers. These themes are: enhancing the reading skills of the struggling adolescent readers; creating supporting links with students; ensuring the availability of ample texts on varied levels; teaching students how to become strategic readers; helping students become active and metacognitive; engaging readers in tasks which require frequent practice in reading.

Section 5: Patterns of Support for Struggling Adolescent Readers

There is a strong indication that despite participation in high quality, intensive early intervention programs there is always a cohort of students who have great difficulties coping with the reading demands required when they reach the junior secondary school (DETYA Report). Indeed, with each passing year these students fall further and further behind their peers. Schools need to recognise that there will always be some students who need ongoing and regular support with reading.

Support programs need to include the following:

- An emphasis on self-regulation, metacognition and self-esteem, with the goal of increasing independence in learning.
 - A focus on reading for learning and learning to read, which means:
 - (a) developing reading fluency and vocabulary;
 - (b) teaching metacognitive strategies such as self-questioning, and
 - (c) adapting texts to help students cope with classroom literacy demands.
- (DETYA Report, 2000, p. 106).

Effective support for individuals who struggle with reading begins at the whole school level. This involves whole school decision making ensuring that staff are committed to the support of those who struggle. Some important whole school features for supporting these individuals included:

- Developing and using specific policies.
- Systematic procedures for identification, planning, teaching and monitoring progress.
- Systematic records that are regularly updated.
- Experienced or well qualified staff member to coordinate whole school support.
- Professional development for teachers.
- Involvement of other professionals for referrals, teaching and the professional development of teachers.
- Creative use of resources in terms of flexible use of staff to provide a range of regular classroom and withdrawal teaching contexts that are appropriate for individual student needs.
- Appropriate teaching materials that motivate children to learn (DETYA Report, 2000, p. 13).

Studies reported by ACER (2000) and by Westwood (2001) indicate that successful intervention programs share a number of characteristics. Characteristics highlighted by Westwood (2001) include:

- School literacy coordinators with experience and knowledge of literacy, who provide leadership, professional support and coordination.

- Organisational structuring and timetabling that allows for flexible and varied groupings of students.
- Recognising the importance of fostering confidence and self-esteem.
- Linking the support provided in withdrawal class settings with the work of the regular classroom (Westwood, 2001, p. 98).

Types of instruction provided in intervention research are:

- Structured;
- Goal-oriented;
- Practice-oriented;
- Strategic, so students are taught how to attempt task;
- Independence oriented (Lloyd, 1988).

The teacher's role in the intervention process is seen as one who provides 'scaffolded guidance' (Marzano & Paynter, 1994; Pressley, 1998). The student needs encouragement but must ultimately take responsibility for his or her own learning. Choosing appropriate resources to use with such individuals can be daunting. However the literature (DETYA Report, Loudon et al. 2000) suggests that there are particular issues school administrators and teachers should consider when deciding on programs and materials.

First, it seems that many effective teachers prefer not to use a particular intervention program. Alternatively they choose to develop their own programs based on needs of their students and the teachers own knowledge base of pedagogy. Second, research indicates that there is no one program or method that can meet the needs of all individuals who struggle with reading. Reading is a multi-faceted endeavour. All students are individuals as learners. Third, it is imperative that the content of a reading program relates directly to the skills, knowledge and behaviours that need to be learnt.

For many years schools have attempted to provide remedial assistance for students who were failing in academic areas such as reading. One effective approach for delivering an intervention to students within regular schools has been a part-time withdrawal model. This approach is elaborated below.

Part-time Withdrawal Models

In part-time withdrawal models students who are enrolled in a regular class are withdrawn from this class for some portion of their school day. During the withdrawal session they receive more intensive reading intervention in a resource room setting.

The effective components of part-time withdrawal models include the following:

- the employment of highly trained professionals who are capable of diagnosing problems and the planning and implementation of appropriate programs;
- programs which teach students the skills they need to cope with the requirements of the mainstream; and
- effective teaching techniques which allow students to acquire a significant number of skills and strategies in a short period of time (Chan & Dally, 2001, p. 18).

The purpose of part-time withdrawal programs is to enhance the students' skills so that they can ultimately function more independently on their full-time return to the mainstream classroom. There have been some positive findings from some researchers who indicate that part-time withdrawal programs have been useful in terms of struggling students achieving their intended outcomes (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980). However, other researchers (Jenkins & Heinen, 1989; Moody, Vaughn, Hughes & Fischer, 2000; Sewell, 1982) have criticised this model for a number of reasons including: disrupting classroom instruction and attaching a stigma to students who are withdrawn. There is evidence to suggest that under the withdrawal model, some struggling readers often find themselves provided with what amounts to be a markedly inferior curriculum (Chard & Kameenui, 2000; May, 2001). Rather than receiving the highly structured, success-oriented, fast-paced, practice-laden approach they require, these students tend to receive simply 'more of the same' delivered at a slower pace (Lloyd, 1988 cited in Westwood, 2000).

However there can be no doubt that some struggling readers do require high-quality direct instruction, every day in an environment free from distractions. It is obviously

impractical for the regular class teacher to provide this, given his or her responsibilities to the rest of the class.

It is unlikely that these requirements can be met through mainstream teaching alone. A support system which combines in-class support, with some degree of individual or small-group teaching, and parental support at home is the best possible option (DETYA, 1998). While researchers investigating interventions for struggling readers may define the effectiveness of a particular approach in terms of student outcomes, it seems critical to consider the practical context in which the intervention will occur at a particular school. The design of such an intervention program must address the practical constraints of a 'real' school context. The intervention program must be accompanied by the professional development of school literacy coordinators and teachers to ensure that the effectiveness of intervention programs can be established and maintained.

Summary of Literature Review

Given the questions that relate to this thesis, the literature reviewed has been devoted to five main sections. The first section was concerned with the nature of reading. Reading is a complex process, which is indispensable for adequate functioning in most societies. It is a process which involves reading words on a page and it involves understanding them. Reading comprehension is also thinking beyond the text. It is recognised in the current literature on reading, that a balance of both the phonics approach and the whole language approach will have a favourable outcome in fostering literacy skills in students. The concept of balance applies not only to what is taught (for example, strategies), but how it is taught (for example, explicit instruction). The implication is that texts which are developmentally appropriate are vital for success in reading.

The second section addressed issues including: the characteristics of successful readers, the characteristics of unsuccessful readers and problems experienced by underachieving readers. Successful readers are strategic readers. Characteristics of their reading include: attention, skills in basic decoding and skills in metacognition and reasoning. Unsuccessful readers, on the other hand, are non-strategic. They

devote too much time to decoding and fail to grasp the author's intended meaning. A characteristic shared by most unsuccessful readers appears to be an eroding set of beliefs about their own reading.

The third section of the literature review addressed the sociocultural theories of learning and a number of issues related to reading intervention programs. The first theory is the zone of proximal development. The second is the theory of metacognition, developed from the early work of Vygotsky (1962) and related to Bruner's (1990) notion of scaffolding. According to Vygotsky (1978) the purpose of instruction is to provide students with experiences in their *zone* – activities that are challenging but that can be successfully completed with sensitive adult guidance. The zone of proximal development therefore depends on the teacher's potential to create opportunities to further students' development rather than on the students' potential. Bruner (1998) emphasises the importance of *scaffolding*, that is, building an instructional structure that assists in the learning process. In other words, expert teachers should create environments that scaffold students' learning and maximise students' opportunities to learn.

The adolescent reader and the use of metacognition is the focus of the fourth section of the literature review. The discussion highlights that engaging low-achieving adolescents in print-rich classrooms is difficult. Strategies for enhancing the reading skills of these individuals are crucial.

The fifth section of the literature review addressed patterns of support for struggling adolescent readers. Clearly schools need to recognise that however good teaching has been in the primary years, there will always be some students who struggle with reading in the middle years. Some general principles that appear to support such students include:

- a whole school policy to support struggling readers;
- one-on-one and small group teaching strategies which include explicit instruction, modeling, scaffolded support and extended practice.
- explicit teaching towards self regulation and metacognition to increase independence in reading.

Conclusion

As indicated earlier, there appears to be a greater emphasis in the literature on reading interventions in the primary school rather than reading interventions in the junior secondary school. Among educators the enduring assumption has been that once students master initial reading skills in the early years, no further instruction in this area is needed since comprehension will inevitably follow (Taylor et al. 2000).

It is clear that a great deal more needs to be known about how struggling readers benefit from developmentally appropriate reading instruction that is difficult to accomplish in a whole-class, heterogeneous format. Clarification is needed on the following issues. Firstly, how particular reading intervention programs can help struggling readers. Secondly, what characteristics of particular reading interventions contribute to enhanced skills and attitudes in students.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

This chapter addresses key aspects linked to the method of research: the general theoretical approach, the theoretical underpinnings of a case study approach, the contribution of other traditions, the outline of the present study, the outline of the data collection, the detailed description of data collection and issues associated with reliability and validity.

As indicated in earlier chapters, this study addresses the research questions which were to understand:

- How reading intervention programs can help struggling readers in terms of their skills in reading, self efficacy as readers and general self perception;
- The characteristics of the intervention programs that contribute to change in students.

Rationale of Study

The research questions arose from a number of issues which are highlighted in the literature review. Firstly, it appears that reading problems in junior secondary school students are widespread. Secondly, for most of these students there would have been no discernible improvement in reading between Year 4 and Year 10. Thirdly, many struggling readers are not detected until secondary school. In some cases such individuals have been unable to cope with the massive increase in word knowledge required as they reach the middle school. Fourthly, for students who have struggled with reading in Year 4, little improvement would have occurred as they progress into the secondary school since most students at this stage do not have access to appropriate intervention.

As mentioned earlier, since 1963 over 25,000 research studies in the field of reading have been conducted and published. However, it seems that only a few of these have

had any real impact on teachers' beliefs and practices. Whilst some interventions at the primary level are making gains, invariably numerous struggling readers in secondary schools feel dispirited and lack the reading skills required for them to learn effectively.

General Theoretical Approach

The study looks at the effects of two specific reading intervention programs designed to improve the reading level of eight participants. The participants, at Year 8 level (aged 13 years) were demonstrating major difficulties with reading from both a cognitive and an affective point of view. There were three stages in the project. The first was a baseline stage, Stage A. The second stage, Stage B was the period during which the first intervention occurred. The third stage, Stage C was the period when the second intervention took place.

The first research question addresses change in the participants' reading skills. Clearly this means that reading skills needed to be measured through the use of selected techniques. In this study, it was considered important to monitor the participants' progress with the systematic use of techniques to measure whether exposure to the interventions influenced their reading performance over time. Consequently the participants were tested (as outlined in the section entitled detailed description of data collection), prior to the first intervention at Stage A, at the conclusion of the first intervention in Stage B and again at the conclusion of the second intervention in Stage C. This approach however, while it enabled change in reading skills to be investigated, did not provide answers to the other aspects of the first question, that is, changes in self efficacy in reading and general self perception. These aspects, along with the second research question, the investigation of the characteristics contributing to change, required more qualitative approaches.

In order to gain insight into change in the participants from an affective viewpoint, an ethnographic approach was used. Data collection in this context consisted of items such as miscue analysis records, the tutor's diary entries along with data from questionnaires and interviews administered to the participants.

These instruments were useful in suggesting possible relationship(s), causes, effects and even dynamic processes in school settings (Burns, 1995). For example, they enabled the researcher to capture what the participants in a study "... say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world, to understand events from the viewpoints of the participants" (Burns, 1995, p. 9).

The research was conceived as a set of case studies. Case studies were used on the assumption that "... there can be substantial individual differences in experience and in important dimension of behaviour (both overt and covert) which are as critical as the commonalities between individuals" (Johnson, 1985, p. 153).

The project was not to be the study of a collective but "... an instrumental study extended to several cases. Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest common characteristics. They may be similar or dissimilar ..." (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 237). Stake (1978) suggests that case studies are valuable in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisability.

Eight case studies were used to gain insight into eight participants who are low achievers. The research focuses on the manner in which these participants responded to intensive reading intervention. This research design is a combination of description and interpretation of a phenomenon in educational research. In other words, it describes the real-life context in which intensive reading intervention occurs. It provides interpretation of the data gathered regarding the intervention.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Case Study Approach Used

Educational investigations according to Barton and Lazarsfield (1969) are "like the nets of deep-sea explorers who may pull up unexpected and striking things for us to gaze on" (p. 166). A case study approach is recognised as a way of reporting research and can cut across other types of research (Wiersma, 1995). Essentially, a case study involves a detailed examination of a single group, individual, situation or site. The case study approach can include quantifiable data, for example, incremental test results where a participants' ability pre-intervention and post-

intervention can be compared and analytical descriptions of specific learning contexts can be described.

Methodical descriptions can play the important role of suggesting possible relationships, causes, effects and even dynamic processes in school settings (Burns, 1995). Case study method involves the collection of extensive data to produce an understanding of the entities being studied. The techniques used for data gathering in case studies include observation, interviewing, questionnaires and document analysis. These techniques focused on the following:

- understanding social phenomena;
- employing narrative descriptions;
- including participant observation;
- emphasising holistic interpretation;
- showing sensitivity to context;
- focussing on individual variables and factors (Wiersma, 1995, p. 14).

The process of performing a case study has been depicted using the metaphor of a funnel (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The case typically starts out with a wide view spectrum of data collection. The case study moves from an open-ended, discovery-orientated stage to a deep analysis of interactions between the factors that explain the present status or that influence observed change or growth (Parsons & Brown, 2002). Yin (1984) posits that “case studies are the preferred strategy when how and why questions are being posed ... and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 13). Since an important aspect of the research involved the participants’ perceptions of the events in their lives that were related to literacy, the development of richly detailed case studies in which the voices of these participants emerged, was the most appropriate research method.

Individual cases in the collection may or may not manifest common characteristics. “They may be similar or they may be dissimilar ...” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 237). The eight participants were chosen because the researcher believed that an understanding of these participants would lead to a better knowledge base and perhaps better theorising about a still larger collection of cases. Stake (1994)

contends that case studies are valuable in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisability. The study met the key elements of case study research as stated by Stake (1994): "... the object of study [was] a specific, unique, bounded system" (p. 237).

Merriam (1988) in a literature review on case studies contends that they are particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive. The present study was particularistic since it focuses on the intensive investigation of a particular object of social inquiry such as learning reading as perceived by a cohort of Year 8 secondary students. The major advantage of the case study is that "by immersing oneself in the dynamics of a single social entity one is able to uncover events and processes that one might miss with more superficial methods" (Biddle & Anderson, 1986, p. 238).

The study was descriptive. It focused on the factual accuracy of an account emphasising that researchers are "... not making up or distorting the things they saw and heard" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 285). It drew on the rich literal descriptions of the tutor, drawing details from a range of data collection resources.

The study was heuristic in that it provided insight into the phenomena being investigated (Merriam, 1988). The study generated new insights and suggested explanation for events and marshalled evidence for those insights in the form of supportive narrative (Biddle & Anderson, 1986, p. 238). The depth of data presented may activate teachers' understandings about the emotional and cognitive dimension associated with reading. It may provide examples to guide teachers' thinking and expand their appreciation of these essential dimensions of learning, so that teachers are better prepared to teach every child skills in literacy (Lyons, 2003).

The study was inductive since it relied on reasoning and generalisations that emerged from the data. It was not characterised by verification of a pre-determined hypothesis but by "... the discovery of new relationships concepts and understandings" (Merriam, 1988, p. 13). The inductive analysis approach has five phases which are used "... to describe and explain the essence of experience and meaning in participants' lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 391). First, immersion in the setting starts the inductive process. Second, the incubation process allows for

thinking, capturing intuitive insights to achieve understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In the present study these phases occurred in the initial meetings with staff and the participants at the site of the project. Third, there is a phase of illumination that allows for expanding awareness. In the present study this occurred when the researcher gained initial insight into the nature of each individual's attitudes to and skill in reading, at Stage A of the project. Fourth, is the phase of "... explication which includes description and explanation to capture the experience of individuals in the study" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In the present study this occurred during the intervention Stages B and C. Finally, "... synthesis enables the researcher to synthesise and bring together as a whole the individual's story" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In the present study this occurred when the researcher analysed the data gathered on each participant.

Denzin (1989) elaborates by suggesting that rich descriptions, from the data gathered, make thick interpretation possible. This, Denzin (1989) contends, is linked to the researcher's ability to formulate a meaningful textured question or statement.

To summarise, the present study took the form of a case study approach. The research included the use of quantifiable data rendered from incremental text. It also included analytical descriptions of specific learning contexts. The research was particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive, using qualitative methods of data collection.

The Contribution of Other Traditions in the Investigation of the Improvement in Reading Skills

Two traditions of data collection are outlined in this chapter. In the first tradition data was collected through the instruments used to monitor skill development in reading. The second tradition of data collection consisted of the researcher's diary entries along with questionnaires and interviews administered to the participants. These approaches to data collection are elaborated later in this chapter.

Bernard (1994) contends that the use of two approaches to data collection allows the researcher to advance the research questions with an arsenal of methods that have non-overlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths. They

suggest that the use of two approaches provides grounds for data triangulation. Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. Basically, triangulation is the comparison of information to determine whether or not there is corroboration. It is a search for convergence of the information on a common finding or concept. To a large extent, “the triangulation process assesses the sufficiency of the data. If the data are inconsistent or do not converge, they are insufficient. The researcher is then faced with a dilemma regarding what to believe” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 264).

The Use of Instruments to Measure Reading Skills

The instruments used were adapted to measure, through a series of refining filters, the change in the participants’ skills in reading. As part of the refining process the design incorporated staged analyses of test data measurements at three stages:

- (i) Stage A - the baseline;
- (ii) Stage B - after the first intervention;
- (iii) Stage C - after the second intervention.

Yin (1984) suggests it is essential to take repeated measurements of the students. Repeated measurements across time will establish a pattern, or trend, which is relatively stable and can be used to compare with a new pattern following an intervention. In the present study it was this stable pattern that provided the baseline, which was used to compare changes in behaviour following the implementation of each of the interventions.

Since the intervention was replicated across eight participants, treatment evaluation both within individual students and across different readers was possible (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Treatment effectiveness was evaluated according to scores achieved at Stages A, B and C, using the instruments listed below:

- TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984);
- Researcher Made Test;
- Reading Miscue Analysis (RMA) (Kemp, 1993);

The details of these instruments are provided later in this chapter.

The techniques used to explore changes in the participants from an affective viewpoint included the “three kinds of data collection: in-depth, open-ended interviews; direct observation; and written documents,” as referred to by Patton (1990, p. 10).

This research borrows aspects from qualitative methods including phenomenology and ethnography. As such it is interpretative research. The fields of phenomenology, ethnography and interpretative research are discussed below.

Links with Phenomenology

Phenomenology has a focus on deriving meaning about a phenomenon through understanding the context in which it occurs. Researchers in phenomenology describe phenomena in words instead of numbers or measures (Krathwohl, 1993). It has its origins in descriptive analysis, and is essentially an inductive process, reasoning from a specific situation to a general conclusion. As Lancy (1993) points out, this type of research is typically thought of as a method with a set of procedures for conducting research. The research follows the naturalist paradigm. It is conducted in the natural setting. The meanings derived from the research are specific to that setting and its conditions.

In contrast to the scientific paradigm, this type of research assumes that there are multiple realities. In other words, the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception (Merriam, 1988, p. 17). The present research assumed multiple realities. The research sought to investigate the realities of the individual participants over the period of data collection. The research did “not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths” (Patton, 1990, p. 55).

Researchers examining a phenomenon at the scene are collecting descriptive data therefore descriptive instruments are appropriate. The information to be gathered was not objective but attitudinal or subjective. Therefore, the appropriate method included techniques such as questionnaires and interviews. As Sproull (1988) states,

“Questionnaires and interview schedules should be used ... when people’s attitudes, values, beliefs or self-reports are desired” (p. 190).

Burns (1990) describes the questionnaire as “an efficient way of collecting data in large amounts” (p. 287). In the present study, while there was not a large number of participants, the use of a questionnaire was deemed appropriate. Questionnaires are conducted to establish “what exists” (Travers, 1969, p. 191). Simple data gathering however is not, in itself, research although “well-conceived surveys of a broad field ... are, at times, useful starting points” (Hoy & Miskell, 1991, p. 5).

The tutor’s diary entries melded with the questionnaires and interviews with the participants to provide validation of data. The interview however could not be merely an interview schedule (Burns, 1990). Owens (1991) recommends that the researcher should “talk to individuals in order to understand” (p. 21). The interview “adds richness to the questionnaire by evoking extensive, naturally expressed information” (Stenhouse, 1982, p. 54), given that people are generally more willing to provide information in a face-to-face situation (Bernard, 1988).

The interview allows the researcher to know much more about the subjective attitudes and expectations of the participants to the questionnaire “by employing a notion of *verstehen* – a sympathetic understanding – focussing on the meaning behind the facts” (Bantock, 1973, p. 39). Entwistle (1973) adds that the combination of the two instruments allows the researcher to test whether the reported attitudes (questionnaire) bear any relationship to observed behaviour (interview), thus introducing a form of triangulation into the research design (p. 21).

Phenomenology stresses the careful description of phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomena (Wiersma, 1995). If behaviour is being observed the researcher notes not only the behaviour but attempts to understand what the behaviour means to the person being studied. Less emphasis is placed on what the researcher thinks is going on; the importance is on understanding what the participants are experiencing from their perspectives. In the present study the participants’ perception of the process of reading and their responses to the reading intervention programs were relevant.

A basic feature of phenomenology is the concept of a shared experience of a particular phenomena. Descriptions involve a shared perspective. They are developed as a consequence of “experiences of different people [that] are grouped, analysed and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990, p. 70). In the present study the essence of experiences of individual participants was relevant. For example, some comparisons of individual participants’ views of the reading process and of themselves as readers, was made. However, the comparisons were not made to the same extent as those made by some phenomenologists (e.g. van Manen, 1990).

An account of the parallels between the theoretical basis of the present study and with phenomenology as described by Patton (1990) and van Manen (1990) is detailed below. These relate to the purpose of the study in the sense of gaining insight into the participants’ attitudes to reading and self efficacy in reading. Phenomenology is a means of investigating the meaning of experience or phenomena. In the present study these phenomena were reading and reading intervention programs that enhanced the process of reading. They also relate to the purpose of the research in terms of investigating the characteristics of the interventions that contributed to the change in the participants’ skills in reading and self efficacy in reading. Phenomenology is a means of gaining insights from an individual’s description of experiences. In the present study, descriptions were of the process of reading in the context of reading intervention programs.

As alluded to earlier, though commonalities exist between the present study and a phenomenological research perspective, the current research is not labelled phenomenological since differences exist also. For example, in phenomenological enquiry as described by van Manen (1990), descriptions of shared experiences are said to be compelling and insightful. However, the writing in the present report portrays responses of individual participants from an analytical viewpoint, taking into consideration firstly how the participants changed during the project in terms of self-perception and self-esteem as readers and skills in reading, and secondly the characteristics of the intervention programs that contributed to that change.

In summary, the present study is not described as phenomenological. However, it does have some common features. These include firstly the study of the meaning or essence of experience or phenomena and secondly the gathering of perceptions from individuals' descriptions of experiences.

Links with Ethnography

Another theoretical position linked to this study is ethnography. Though this study is not described as ethnographic, it shares some common features with ethnography.

The mainstay of data collection in ethnographic research is observation conducted by the researcher and a basic form of data is field notes. Interviews may be conducted with key individuals, and data may be collected through a survey that may support or refute information collected through observation. Written resources such as records may provide data. Ethnographic researchers prefer primary sources over secondary sources.

Ethnography refers both to a research process and the product of that process. The product is a written account, that is, the ethnography that was studied (Wiersma, 1995). In the context of educational research, ethnographic research is the process of placing educational phenomena within their specific contexts (Wiersma, 1995) and it identifies meanings held by research participants (Eisenhart, 1988). The present study had these features also.

One feature the present study had in common with ethnographic data collection methods and analysis, as presented by Eisenhart (1988) was the use of participant observation. In the present study observation occurred during the initial interview during guided reading task for the eight weeks of the first intervention and during the reading task during the eight weeks of the second intervention.

While common features existed between ethnography and the present study, differences also existed. Traditionally ethnographic research is associated with anthropology and is the study of communities (Wiersma, 1995). As such, the result of ethnographic research is a description or case study of the life or culture of a group (Patton, 1990). However, the present study, rather than being a study of a

group or community, endeavoured to provide descriptions of the key elements of reading as identified by individual participants; how reading intervention programs can help struggling adolescent readers in terms of their self-perception, self-efficacy as readers and skill in reading; the characteristics of the reading intervention program that contribute to change.

The organisation for data collection was a second difference. In ethnographic research the researcher becomes closely associated with an entire group and therefore experiences partial acculturation (Taft, 1988). In the present study at Stages A and B, the data was collected in a one-on-one situation where the participants were withdrawn from the classroom. Consequently acculturation occurred to a lesser extent.

To summarise, this summary had links with ethnography. Firstly it investigated educational phenomena within a specific context. It entailed identifying meanings held by the research participants. It involved participant observation. Secondly the goals of the present study were similar to those of ethnography, in that they might be better described as theoretical rather than descriptive or prescriptive.

Interpretive Research

The present study is possibly best described as a form of interpretive research since this broader description permits characteristics of interpretive theoretical basis. Research approaches including “ethnographic, qualitative, participant observational, case study, symbolic interactionist, phenomenological or interpretive are slightly different. However, they bear strong resemblance to one another” (Erickson, 1986, p. 119).

Since the purpose of the research was to investigate how the participants understood their reading skills, interpretive methods were required (Eisenhart, 1988). However, as discussed earlier, ethnographic approaches to the collection of data and researcher reflections (Taft, 1988) were not utilised; nor could this research be described as characteristically phenomenological.

A form of interpretative research is perhaps the most appropriate term to describe the present research. This term allows for commonality, with a variety of interpretive or qualitative theoretical frameworks, for example, as demonstrated above from the perspectives of phenomenology and ethnography.

The term ‘interpretive’ refers to the whole family of approaches to participant observational research (Erickson, 1986). It is more inclusive than for example, ethnography case study; it is non-quantitative; it points to the key features of family resemblance among the various approaches (Erickson, 1986, p. 119).

Interpretive, participant observation recorded in continuous narrative description involves three factors. Firstly, intensive long-term participation in a field setting. Secondly, the use of documentary evidence (e.g. records, student work samples) to source careful recording of what happened in the field. Thirdly, subsequent analytic reflection on the documentary data obtained in the field (Erickson, 1986, p. 119). This criteria fitted best with the present study in terms of responding to the research questions. Using the interpretive method the researcher was able to learn about the specific structure of occurrence for each individual participant. Specific understanding of the participants’ perceptions and understandings of “what was happening” for each participant during all stages of the project through documentation of concrete details of practice. In the present study such documentation was achieved through the tutor’s journal entries on each participant, during Stages A, B and C. Interpretive participant-observation research on teaching as described above is labour intensive. It enables the researcher to become more specific in their understanding of inherent variation between individual participants.

According to Erickson (1986, p. 145) the written report from interpretive participant-observation research is of great value to the reader. It allows a reader to do three things. First, it allows the reader to experience vicariously the setting that is described. Second, it allows the reader to survey the full range of evidence on which the author’s interpretive analysis is based. Third, it allows the reader to consider the theoretical and personal grounds of the author’s perspective as it changed during the research project. Access to all these elements allows the reader to function as a co-analyst of the case reported.

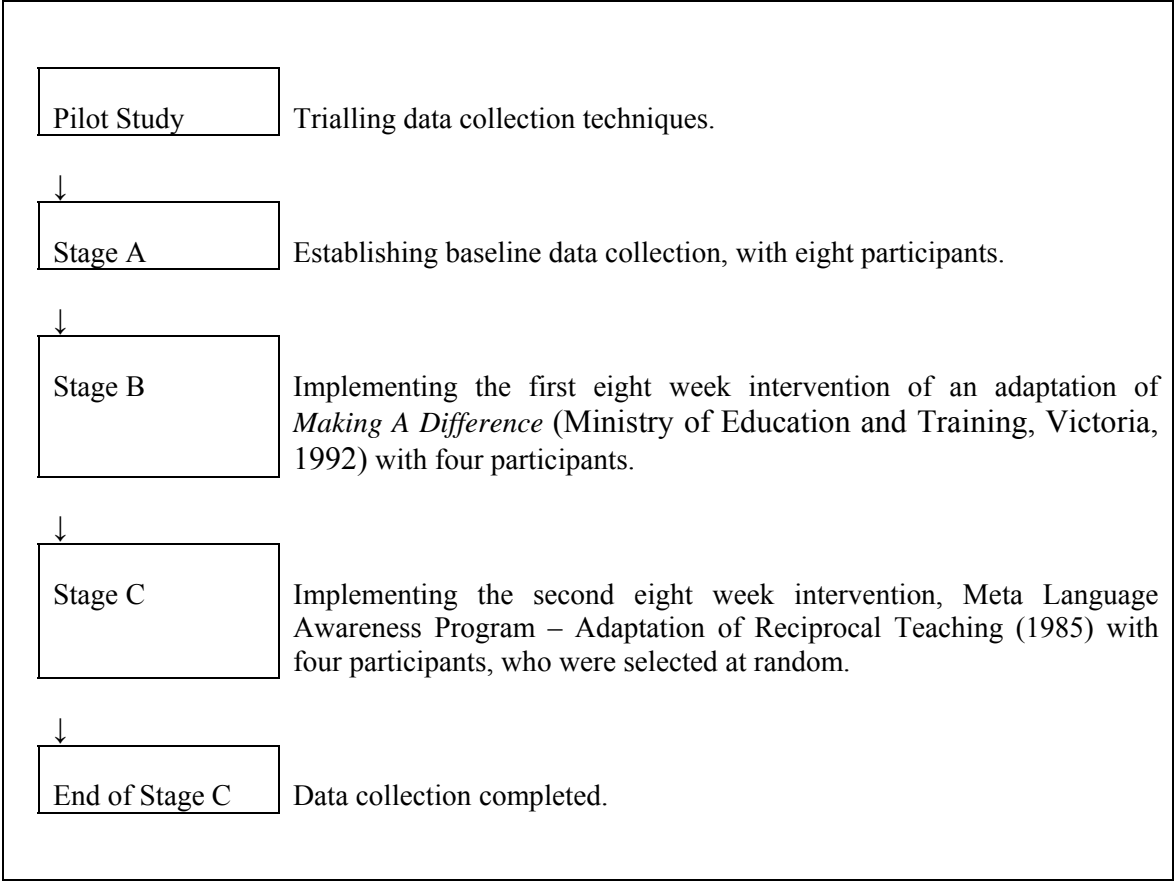
To summarise, the present research was based on a range of theoretical perspectives. It deployed systematic techniques to measure whether exposure to interventions influence reading performance over time. It used an ethnographic approach to gain insights into change in the participants from an affective viewpoint. The systematic use of measurements allowed for an “unfolding [of] multiple realities (Owens, 1991, p. 293), so that there were “successive approximations towards an accurate description and interpretation” of the situation (Wiersma, 1995, p. 85).

Although we can identify specific procedures in ethnographic research, the procedures tend to run together or overlap throughout the process. For example, observations of a miscue analysis may be considered with questionnaire data. Therefore the ethnographic researcher is little concerned with sequencing specific procedures. However “there is a starting point and an ending point. The identification of the phenomena to be studied is the starting point and the study terminates when the final conclusions are drawn” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 258).

Overview of Stages in the Study

As shown in Table 2 at Stage A, baselines of the participants’ skills in reading and attitudes in terms of self-efficacy as readers and general self-perception were established.

Table 2: Overview of Stages in the Study



During Stage B the change in the participants’ reading skills were measured through the use of selected techniques. Ethnographic techniques including the tutor’s diary entries and participants’ responses to questionnaires and interviews to be used to monitor firstly changes in the participants’ reading skills, reading self-efficacy and general self-perception and secondly the characteristics of the intervention programs that contributed to change. During Stage C the second intervention period the change in the participants’ reading skills were again measured using the techniques that were used at Stage B. Again ethnographic techniques were used to monitor the participants’ reading skills, self efficacy in reading and general self perception and secondly the characteristics of the intervention programs that contributed to change.

These components are expanded later in this chapter.

Outline of Data Collection

The data collection techniques and instruments fell into two distinct categories which are listed below.

Category 1 consisted of the quantitative measures or formal measures, which looked at the reading skills. These measures included:

- TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984);
- Researcher Designed Test on Phonology, which provided a systematic way to measure whether exposure to the interventions influenced the participants' reading performance over time;
- Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993).

Category 2 consisted of qualitative data, about the participants' beliefs, attitudes and response to the interventions. This data included:

- Transcripts of interviews on reading;
- Questionnaire sheets on reading;
- Self-monitoring portfolios of "fix up" strategies;
- Further Miscue Analysis records on proficiency in prediction;
- Transcripts of structured interviews on metacognition;
- Questionnaire sheets on self efficacy;
- Tutor's diary entries.

The Pilot Study

Six months prior to the present study, the researcher conducted a pilot study. This was designed to trial and later make any necessary adjustments to data gathering techniques and intervention tools. This was followed by an initial visit by the researcher to the school selected for the study.

The pilot study of five months duration was developed and implemented. Louise, the participant who agreed to participate in the pilot study had had a history of reading difficulties in the primary and secondary years. Her parents, who gave written permission for her participation in the pilot study, informed the researcher that Louise had a stanine score of 2 on the TORCH (ACER, 1984) test.

The purpose of the pilot study included the following:

- trialling of interview and questionnaire;
- trialling of tools, materials and teacher approach used in the first intervention;
- trialling of materials and program planned for the second intervention;
- adjusting other data gathering techniques and reviewing the intervention programs.

Tools Used in Pilot Study

The details of the interview and questionnaire are recorded later in this chapter under the heading: *Summary of Informal Assessment*. The details of instruments appear in Chapter 4.

Following the Pilot Study

Louise, after five months participation in the pilot study had moved from a stanine score of 2 to a stanine score of 6 in the TORCH (ACER, 1984) test. This confirmed for the researcher that the planned interventions were appropriate. Not only did her reading improve, but her self confidence was markedly enhanced. Louise continued to do well at school and is currently completing a second university degree. As a result of this there was no need to adjust either the data collection techniques or the intervention program.

The Main Study – Initial Visit of Researcher to School Selected for Study

Twelve months before Stage A on the present study an initial visit by the researcher was made to the school selected for the present study. During this visit discussion between the Principal and Special Education Coordinator and the researcher outlined the research to be carried out. To establish a rapport with the Principal and Special Education Coordinator was the general purpose of this discussion.

Other objectives were as follows:-

- To establish the willingness of the Principal to be involved with the research.
- To establish the willingness of the relevant Year 8 teachers to be involved.
- To outline for the Principal and Special Education Coordinator the following relevant protocols to be used: procedures regarding permission by the

participants and their parents for the participants to be involved in the project; assurance of the anonymity and confidentiality of the school and the participants; to describe to the Principal and Special Education Coordinator the method of data collection and the reading intervention strategies to be utilised.

- For the researcher to gain a picture of aspects relevant to the study, for example, the organisational structure of the school and the curriculum design for the English classes for the Year 8 cohort.

The Participants

The participants for the research were selected from one school. This school was a long established girls secondary school in the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The campus is divided into two sections: middle school – Years 7 – 9 and senior school – Years 10-12. There were between 170 – 180 students in each year level. Confining the study to Year 8 students produced a sample of 177 students from whom eight students were selected as participants in the project.

Literacy has been given high priority at the site of the research since a curriculum review in 1995. It has been the practice since this time to focus particularly on the literacy skills of the Year 8 students. To this end, at the start of each year 40 students are selected from the total Year 8 cohort of 200 as students who would benefit from “Extra English classes.” In such classes students have the opportunity to focus on reading skills, rather than on learning a Language Other Than English (LOTE). These 40 students are given four 40 minute periods per week of special English classes designed to improve their literacy levels. The eight participants selected by the school staff to be involved in the present study were selected from this cohort of 40 students.

Details of Participant Selection

Eight participants from the site of the research were chosen to participate in the first intervention in the present study. For the purpose of the study these participants were given the pseudonyms: Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena and Emily. A sub-set of four participants were selected to participate in the second

intervention. These participants were Sarah, Toni, Thea and Fleur. These eight individuals of normal intelligence shared a history of reading difficulties. These difficulties appeared to arise from a variety of factors associated with the process of reading. Eight participants were selected so that even with the possibility of, for example, the attrition of two participants, sufficient data would be gathered to make the present study worthwhile.

Three sources of information were used in determining the eight participants in this project. These sources included:

- (a) Test data of the Year 7 students in 1998 (the year prior to the present study);
- (b) School files of participants' records from their primary schooling;
- (c) Nomination by Year 8 coordinator at the site of the project.

Each of these sources is discussed below.

- (a) *Objective test data of the year 7 students in 1998.*

The annual problem facing secondary schools is to gain a degree of insight into the ability and achievement levels of a Year 7 cohort which is being drawn from a variety of feeder primary schools.

At the site of the research the most reliable means of gaining this information was deemed to be by group testing. For the purpose of this study the most important tests were a Reading Comprehension measure and a word knowledge measure. At the research site the particular tests at the mid-year stage of Year 7 for the participants in 1998 were as follows:

- Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) : Reading/Comprehension (ACER, 1986);
- Word Knowledge Test (ACER, 1986).

The tests were selected by the school to meet the following requirements:

- (i) they were to be group tests which were readily available for use by teachers;
- (ii) they needed to cover the range of abilities appropriate for the age of the participants;
- (iii) they provided a means of comparing the score of an individual with that of a norm group or reference group.

The literature (Pickering, 1996) suggests that students scoring at stanine 1 have a definite reading problem, those scoring at stanine 2 will also require assistance. Students scoring at stanines 3 and 4 have learned to read but have difficulty understanding what they read because of the concepts involved or the language in which the concepts are expressed. The stanine score on these tests for each of the participants at the beginning of the project was between 3 and 4.

(b) *School files of participants' records from their primary schooling*

Each participant had been identified in their respective primary schools as being an underachiever in reading or one who was weak at reading. Since the participants were from a variety of feeder schools a range of different instruments had been used in these schools to ascertain factors which could have been linked to their reading difficulties.

(c) *Nomination by year 8 coordinator at the site of the project*

The Year 8 coordinator at the site of the project nominated the eight participants on the basis of the following factors:

- (i) The results of a Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Revised (Wechsler, 1974) administered by the Special Education staff at the site of the project. For each participant the above mentioned results indicated average intellectual functioning. In other words, in each case there was a discrepancy between achievement levels (in reading/comprehension) and intellectual ability as measured by an intelligence test. The informal data

from the school Year 8 subject teachers in 1999 suggested that the participants were experiencing difficulty in meeting the demands of the curriculum.

- (ii) Survey data provided by the subject teachers of the Year 8 students in 1999.

For these participants there appeared to be a disparity between their general ability as indicated by factors such as their interests, vocabulary, participation in oral activities and their performance in those curriculum areas which relate to the written word. In general terms, according to their teachers, their application to tasks at school seemed to be impeded by two factors. The first of these was their difficulty to gain access to information which is usually in written form. The second factor related to their written work which was marked by essay structure problems and poor spelling.

Brief Summary of the Participants

For the purpose of this project the researcher has focused investigations on a relatively homogeneous group of participants who were underachieving in reading and who struggled with literacy based curriculum.

These participants shared the following characteristics:

- (a) classified as having a reading difficulty based on a discrepancy between achievement and IQ;
- (b) nominated by staff at the site of the research as having literacy problems.

Overview of Participant Involvement and Instruments Used to Monitor the Participants' Strengths and Weaknesses in Reading of Each Stage of the Project

As previously indicated, the study was conducted over three distinct stages: Stages A, B and C. At the baseline, Stage A, formal and informal instruments were used to establish the reading strengths and weaknesses in each of the eight participants. These same instruments were used again at the conclusion of Stage B, that is after the first intervention. These instruments were also used at the conclusion of Stage C, that is after the second intervention. These data were to provide the continuing progress or otherwise of the participants at three distinct stages of the project. A

summary of these instruments, the stage at which they were used and participants with whom they were used is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of Participant Involvement and Instruments and Data Collection Techniques Used to Monitor Participants’ Strengths/Weaknesses in Reading and Attitudes to Reading

Assessment	Stage when used	Participants involved
TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984)	A, B, C	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Researcher Made Test on Phonological Awareness	A, B, C	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993)	A, B, C	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Interviews on Reading	A, B, C	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Questionnaires	A, B, C	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Self-monitoring Portfolio of “Fix Up” Strategies	B	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Observation of a further Miscue Analysis Task and Retelling Task (Barret’s Comprehension Scale, Kemp, 1993)	Weeks 7 & 8 of C	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily
Proficiency in Prediction		Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured interview on metacognition; Questionnaire on self-efficacy of skills in reading (Nicaise & Gettinger, 1995); 	Weeks 3 & 7 of (1) C (2) 8 weeks after completion of intervention	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur

Detailed Description of Data Collection Instruments Used at Stages A, B and C

As indicated in Table 3, a number of assessment instruments were used during the three stages of the present study. Each of these is outlined in more detail below.

TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984)

Description

The formal test administered was the TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984), which is a test of reading/comprehension. This is a step-by-step test presented by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER). It has the ability to provide some indication of an individual's overall skills in reading/comprehension. It also provides an indication of an individual's skill in reading/comprehension compared to the Australian reference group. The test reveals a raw score for individual students. The raw score can be converted to a stanine. Such tests are particularly useful in reporting results in broad general terms as outlined in Mossenson, Hill and Masters (1987).

Administration

When the participants were seated comfortably they were called to attention and told the purpose of the test, that is how well they understand what they read.

They were then asked to read a passage given to them. Following that they were asked to fill in a missing word. The participants were given a practice exercise to do first. They were given the following hints to follow:

- Use a pencil and eraser to change an answer if necessary;
- Look at the passage as often as necessary;
- Often the word/s is not in the passage so use your own word/s;
- You can write a one-word answer or as many words as you want in the space given;
- It does not matter if you spell the word incorrectly;
- If you get stuck on an answer, leave it and come back later;
- When you have finished, read through the exercise and check that it makes sense.

Researcher Designed Test on Phonological Knowledge

Description

This test, seen in Appendix 2, was made up of sections. Each section was designed to provide a tentative instruction level for each of the participants. As can be seen in Appendix 2, section one was designed to render an informal grade of word recognition. Section two was administered to render the participants' knowledge of common consonant blends and three letter blends, while section three was directed towards the participants' recognition of compound words. Section four was administered to test the participants' knowledge of affixes within words. Because it tests the recognition of words in isolation it does not measure comprehension or the use of context. This limitation reduces the applicability of the results to normal reading. Since a high correlation exists between the identification of isolated words and reading words in connected text (Barchers, 1998), it is a valuable tool for screening students. This type of test is an especially valuable method to determine a student's basic word analysis technique. It involves the following skills: knowledge of sounds in words, knowledge of blends in words, knowledge of syllables in words and knowledge of structure in words. These skills are described in more detail below.

Word Analysis Technique

Word analysis involves the knowledge of sounds in words. This deals with analysing words by individual letter-sound units and blending the various sounds together to pronounce the unknown word. Readiness for mediating unknown words involves the prerequisite skills of auditory memory, auditory discrimination, sound-symbol connection, and sound-symbol-meaning. Only when these prerequisites are mastered is the reader able to proceed to analysing unknown words by using letter-sound correspondence skills with consonants and phonogram units and by using what he/she knows of phonetic generalisations in the English sounding system.

Syllabication

Syllabication also involves phonetic generalisations. The reader must learn to look for patterns in the way big words are broken into syllables or manageable sound units.

Barchers (1998) identifies a number of principles which govern syllabication. The first is that every syllable contains a sounded vowel. At times, a vowel itself constitutes a syllable, for example, *a-corn*. Therefore a syllable is defined as a unit of pronunciation consisting of a vowel sound alone or with one or more consonant sounds. Secondly, a syllable may contain more than one vowel letter. The number of syllables a word has is dependent on the number of vowels heard, not on the number of vowel letters seen.

A word of one syllable is called a monosyllable, and a word of two or more syllables is called a polysyllabic word (Barchers, 1998). As is illustrated, syllabication is extremely complex. To accurately pronounce polysyllable words, the reader must be able to isolate each syllable, decide on the correct vowel sound for each, determine where the primary, secondary and tertiary accent falls and finally pronounce the word.

Structural Analysis

The final word analysis skill is structural analysis in which the learner identifies unknown words by looking at word parts or word structures. Structural analysis is possible with three kinds of words. A word may have an inflectional ending such as *s*, *es*, *ed* or *ing*; it may be a derived word, being constructed from a root, a suffix and/or a prefix; or it may be a compound word (Barchers, 1998). A student who can use these skills to identify an unknown word is well on the way to mature reading skills (Barchers, 1998).

Administration

The participant was required to read from the given word lists, starting with the easiest list. Words were exposed one at a time by covering the list with a blank sheet

of paper and moving the paper down as the participant read. Meanwhile, the researcher recorded the responses on the teacher's copy of the word list using the headings flash response or untimed response.

Recording Procedures

The protocol for recording procedures were as follows:

1. If the participants knew the word correctly on either a flash or untimed response, no mark was made on the scoring sheet.
2. If the participants substituted a word, it was recorded in the appropriate column. All words the participants called out were recorded. If the response was a pseudo word, it was recorded as best as possible.
3. If the participants did not respond to a word, a line was drawn through the flash or untimed column.
4. If the participants self-corrected a word on the flash response (i.e., read the word incorrectly and then immediately said the word correctly), the initial incorrect response was recorded and then placed on the untimed section alongside the word on the score sheet. This check would be used to tally the final word identification score (Rude & Oehlkers, 1984, p. 79).

Scoring and Interpreting

Each list was scored by comparing the correct words with the number of words on the list. If, for example, a participant knew on flash 18 of the 20 words she would be given credit for 90 percent.

A comparison of scores in the flash and untimed columns then provided some information about the participant's word identification skills or word attack ability. If a 20 percent or more difference existed between flash and untimed scores, it could be concluded that the participant may be able to decode words which she is unable to ready by sight (Barchers, 1998). This was especially true if the participant's flash score was relatively low (in the 40 to 50 percent range). In this case it was

concluded that the student possessed relatively good identification skills despite a deficient sight vocabulary.

The informal graded word recognition test was useful in determining a participant's peculiar strategies. For example, while one participant may have attempted to sound out virtually every word, another may be unwilling to read words that could not be identified at sight. Yet another participant may respond impulsively to words failing to attend sufficiently to graphophonic information. A close look at the score sheet of participant responses after testing sessions could suggest the level of word identification skills each participant possesses.

Reading Miscue Analysis (RMA) (Kemp, 1993)

Description

RMA is an assessment procedure which focuses on the student's miscues during reading in order to determine the underlying language processes that the reader is using (Goodman, 1965). One of the most effective ways of determining how a person goes about the task of reading is to examine his reading miscues (Weaver, 1994). RMA provides the observer with a "remarkable amount of information about the central part played in effective oral reading by the reader's processing of meaning before, or simultaneously with, the perception of the print" (Kemp, 1993, p. 131). As an assessment system, miscue analysis demonstrates that a reader's cognitive process is in reading continuous text (Goodman, 1965). In other words, miscues can be analysed for semantic and syntactic appropriateness in content, and for the use of phonics and sight vocabulary, as the reader makes sense of print.

With this assessment device, the student is required to read a story of considerable length, for example, 500 words. To encourage the production of miscues, the story should be at a level that is sufficiently difficult to produce some reading deviations. As the student reads aloud, the observing teacher marks all the miscues on a duplicate copy of the passage using a coding system provided in the Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI).

As discussed in the literature review, the term “miscue” was coined by Goodman in the 1960s to describe any departure the reader makes from the actual words in a text. For example, if a reader substitutes one word for another, add or omits a word, or reorganises a sequence of words, he has made a miscue (Goodman, 1976). After reading the selection the student is asked to retell the story. The story is then scored for accuracy and completeness. An essential part of the reading miscue procedure is the analysis of oral reading miscues. The following six questions are asked about each miscue:

1. Is the miscue syntactically acceptable?
2. Is the miscue semantically acceptable?
3. Does the miscue result in a change of meaning?
4. Is the miscue corrected?
5. Does the miscue have graphic similarity?
6. Does the miscue have sound similarity? (Richek, et al. 1997, p. 109)

The above-mentioned questions assisted the researcher’s assessment of the student’s reading strategies. In other words, if the response to questions 1 and 2 are positive, the student is most likely utilising context and meaning clues in reading. Conversely, if the response to questions 5 and 6 are positive, the student is mostly likely utilising phonic clues. The RMA is a useful tool for teachers in developing a profile of a student’s reading strategies on a long, difficult passage.

Goodman’s purpose in coining the term “miscue” was twofold. Firstly he wanted to move away from the notion that every departure from the words of a text was necessarily bad or something to be considered erroneous. Secondly, he wanted to point out that when there is a departure from the text, the reader may be using different language cueing systems and it is important to determine which system. For example is the reader using semantic, syntactic or graphophonic cueing?

Weaver (1994) elaborates on the above-mentioned statements when she highlights the intentions of miscue analysis. The reading miscue inventory (RMI) considers both the quantity and the quality of miscues, or unexpected responses. Instead of simply considering the number of errors and giving equal weight to each, the teacher analyses the RMI for the significance of each mistake. Knowing the type of miscue and what might have caused it provides more information about reading difficulties than knowing only the number of miscues.

Administration

The following procedures should be followed when using RMA.

- Select a variety of stories, taking account of different levels of performance and different interest amongst children.
- Present the stories in easy-to-read form. These should be no pictures representing any part of the text.
- Prepare your own transcripts of the stories on RMA sheets, using double spacing.
- Number the lines on the left side of the transcripts.
- Find a quiet spot where the reading is unlikely to be interrupted.
- Prepare a table with materials and have a working tape recorder available.
- Have prepared a variety of questions at selected levels of the Barrett Taxonomy (see Appendix 3) on each of the stories and draw up a sheet on which the child's responses to questions can be recorded.
- Be proficient in using the miscue symbols.
- Read the RMA record sheets so that you will know what to look for in the child's reading behaviour and as well, in retelling and responding to questions.

(Kemp, 1993, p. 146)

Scoring RMA

The allocation of errors to a single classification is often an over-simplification of a complex cognitive behaviour. Often, one error may justifiably be placed into three categories: semantic, syntactic and graphophonic (Kemp, 1993). When making

judgements about errors altering meaning, however, we must realise that this may be at sentence level only but not at the level of the entire story. In many instances, the reader brings the error under control at a later stage in the text. Consideration must be given, not to the incidence of particular errors, but their relationships to the momentary and long-term meaning.

Close scrutiny on the miscue analysis transcript reveals the losses and recoveries, the analysis and synthesis and the continuous self-monitoring occurring for the reader. In other words, it is the quality of meaning the reader gains from the text not the number of errors that the teacher should monitor. Kemp (1993) contends that there are two important counts which teachers should make. These are the unrecovered word errors which generally speaking should not be greater than 10 per cent of the total words; and the number of self corrections, which should be somewhere near 25 per cent of the total errors. The suggestion is that these are not hard and fast indices of meaning retention against errors, but are helpful guides.

Utilisation of a Simple Record-Keeping Sheet

For ease of administration the researcher decided to use a revised version of RMA record sheet (Brown, Goodman & Marek, 1996) shown in Table 4. The researcher was required to examine a taped complete oral reading experience. The participant read unfamiliar, but interesting and manageable, text of approximately 500 words. The researcher had a triple-spaced typescript for marking the miscues, such as text substitutions, omissions, or insertions, during the reading. At a later date the researcher replayed a taped recording of the reading session, responding to the following questions about miscues using the following schedule:

Table 4: Revised Version of RMA Record Sheet

	No. of Occasions	Examples
Occasions when the miscue occur in a structure that is syntactically acceptable in the reader's dialect.		
Occasions when the miscue occur in a structure that is semantically acceptable in the reader's dialect.		

No. of Occasions	Examples
Occasions when the miscue result in a change of meaning.	
Occasions when the miscue corrected.	
Occasions when the two words look alike.	
Occasions when the two words sound alike.	

Other Observations

Observation of students or “kid watching” (Goodman & Burke, 1972) is a means by which a teacher can find patterns of success and difficulty and thus record progress or otherwise in reading.

Generally there is a direct link between a reader’s processing level and the level of understanding of a text that is reached. However there are occasional discrepancies. For example, fluency of oral reading, especially when the reader is concentrating on performance may not bring about equivalent understanding. Similarly, poor oral reading where there are frequent repetitions and hesitations, misleads the listener in some cases into the belief that comprehending must also be poor (Kemp, 1993, p. 31).

Kemp (1993) contends that there are three processing levels which may be linked directly to the type of comprehension occurring (p. 32). These Kemp (1993) describes as:

- a decoding level,
- a recoding level,
- an encoding level (p. 32).

In the present study, observations were made of the participants in a further RMA task with the purpose of examining the processing level being utilised. Reading behaviours linked with a particular processing level were used in the present study to describe the participants as they read at Stages B and C.

Administration

This tool was used in weeks seven and eight of Stage C. Texts of 600 to 700 words in length and written at a seventh grade readability level (according to the Fry formula – Barchers, 1998, p. 380) were utilised. Each of these texts had in common the theme of racial prejudice. The participant read the text aloud while the researcher marked miscues on the RMA record sheet. The record sheet was at a later time analysed by the researcher in the light of the participant's response to questions based on Barrett's (1987) taxonomy of reading comprehension seen in Appendix 3.

Interviews

Description

The interviews designed to last for about 20 minutes and conducted on a face-to-face basis occurred in baseline Stage A and the first week of Stage B and Stage C.

The use of the interview at the beginning of data collection was based on the belief that the participants might at this stage "lack the motivation to respond to a questionnaire" (Wiersma, 1995), and that they would be more willing to provide information in a face-to-face situation (Burns, 1990).

In the present research the purpose of the interview was to gather data from the participants on their perceptions about the task of reading, their attitudes to reading and their perception of the skills they use when reading. The reading interview schedule found in Appendix 4 was adapted from Weaver (1994).

Administration

Thirty minutes was allowed for an interview with each participant. Though the interviews were based on a set schedule of questions the focus was to develop questions in a conversational style. In this way extra time was given when either questions or responses required more detailed explanation. The interviews were recorded on a cassette tape.

Questionnaire

Description

The questionnaires were designed to meld with the interview and therefore improve the research design. According to Biddle and Anderson (1986) “questionnaires present a predetermined set of stimuli to the participants which, unlike interview questions, cannot be varied in the light of responses” (p. 232). Burns (1990) describes the questionnaire as “an efficient way of collecting data” (p. 287). The underlying assumption of course is that “the respondent will be both willing and able to give truthful answers” (Burns, 1990, p. 289). In the case of the present study the questionnaire was deemed to be an efficient means of gathering data on three distinct occasions of the project, that is, at Stages A, B and C. Travers (1969) contends that questionnaires are useful in establishing “what exists” (p. 191). In the case of the present research the questionnaire was deemed to be a suitable technique since it allowed the participants time to think about their responses.

Administration

Biddle and Anderson (1986) state that questionnaires demand literacy on the part of the participants, which means that the use of questionnaires is limited to individuals who are literate (p. 232). In the present research the researcher sat with each participant as she completed the questionnaire so as to be on hand in the event that the content was unclear. The questionnaire schedule was adapted from Weaver (1994) and is found in Appendix 5.

Self-Monitoring of “Fix Up” Strategies

Description

The self monitoring portfolio of “fix up” strategies was an instrument which the researcher developed in response to reading the literature on the importance of helping struggling readers to become more strategic when reading.

A major premise of Vygotsky’s (1962) theory of the zone of proximal development is that higher psychological functions such as reasoning and decision making that are

required by the strategic reader occur when an individual is self-regulated and self-monitoring (Lyons, 2003, p. 70). For some individuals the skill of self monitoring in reading does not emerge easily because they have had few early childhood experiences to develop a repertoire of literacy skills.

At Stage A, in order to involve each participant more directly in setting reading skills to achieve and thus broaden their repertoire of literacy skills the researcher sat with each participant and used two samples of Reading Miscue Analysis to discuss areas she needed to focus on. Based on this information and paraphrasing the data from the reading interview, the researcher designed a list of eight reading “fix up” skills. These skills were along the following lines: chunk words or skim heading for main words.

Administration

At the beginning of Stage B, each participant was asked to indicate two skills from her list which she would especially focus on for the next fortnight. It was decided that she would be required to add two more skills to adopt every fortnight over a period of eight weeks (the start of Stage C of the project), so that eventually all eight skills would be adopted. During Stage B, however, a daily reminder of an individual’s goals for that week was reinforced by having them noted on a ‘post it’ note attached to all reading materials (both in the intervention session and in the regular classroom sessions) for a given fortnight.

Dialogues recorded during Stage C

Description

As discussed in the literature review, reciprocal teaching (1985) is a method of metacognitive instruction developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984) which is designed to teach students the cognitive strategies used by readers in comprehending text. It teaches students specific and concrete comprehension fostering/reading strategies. During Stage C a number of the reading strategies including summarisation, question generation, clarification and prediction (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994) were used. The researcher modelled the use of these strategies, while

leading a dialogue. The process involved the researcher's gradual withdrawal. These dialogues were recorded and became part of the data.

Description of Questionnaire on Self-Efficacy of Reading Skills

Research suggests that students who experience reading difficulty often develop problems with motivation and self-efficacy. Such individuals are more likely to attribute failure to a lack of personal ability and hold inaccurate perceptions of their skills (Paris et al. 1990; Nicaise & Gettinger, 1995). Problems with self-efficacy, for example in reading, can be particularly salient for secondary school students who have a history of repeated underachievement in school (Nicaise & Gettinger, 1995). Borkowski, Weyhing and Carr (1988) contend that such students need to be made aware of the role of personal effort in academic success (as opposed to innate ability). They need to change existing beliefs about their reading ability and practise more effective reading strategies while engaged in reading activities.

Issues Associated with Reliability and Validity

Issues of reliability and validity remain concerns related to the use of ethnographic approaches in research. These issues have become more prominent as ethnographers increase their involvement with research teams that include social scientists who approach their work from a more quantitative perspective. However, such experiences have contributed to an increased sophistication on the part of many ethnographers with regard to being better able to articulate measure of reliability and validity within the more qualitative aspects of their inquiries (Bernard, 1994; Kirk & Miller, 1986). The present discussion looks at the application of reliability and validity, from the perspective of qualitative research.

Reliability is concerned with the ability to replicate scientific findings, validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings.

Qualitative researchers have correctly offered alternative ways to think about descriptive validity and the unique qualities of case study work (Wiersma, 1995). Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation

credible? (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 393). In qualitative research measures are taken to ensure that results are both plausible and meaningful; the results should be as trustworthy as possible (Merriam, 1988), and findings should be authentic (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

Reliability

Reliability is concerned with replicability and consistency of methods, conditions and results (Wiersma, (1955)). It addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomenon or generate the same construct in the same or similar setting (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

The present study occurred in a natural setting and was to a great extent undertaken to record the process of change in attitudes to, and skills in, reading. Since this situation was unique it could not be reconstructed precisely, even the most exact replication of research methods may fail to produce identical results. However, given very similar cases some similarities might be expected.

External Reliability

Because of factors such as the uniqueness or complexity of phenomena and the individualistic nature of the ethnographic process, ethnographic research may approach rather than attain external reliability (Hansen, 1979). However, according to Le Compte and Goetz (1982), the researcher “can enhance the external reliability of their data” (p. 37) by recognising and handling the following five major problems:

- researcher status position;
- informant choices;
- social situations and conditions;
- analytic constructs and premises;
- methods of data collection and analysis.

In the present study measures were taken to reduce obstacles to external reliability. The discussion below outlines these measures.

Researcher status position.

This issue can be phrased: "... to what extent are researchers members of the study groups and what positions do they hold?" (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). In some way no researcher can "... replicate the findings of another because the flow of information is dependent on the social role held within the studied group and the knowledge deemed appropriate for incumbents of that role to possess" (Wax, 1971).

One of the goals of the researcher was to be accepted by the participants and for them to feel at ease with her gathering data and conducting the intervention(s). For the duration of the two interventions the researcher was the tutor, working with the participants three times per week over an eight week period. In the first intervention the researcher worked as tutor with the participant on an individual basis for approximately 30 minutes. In the second intervention the researcher worked as tutor with the four participants as a group for approximately 60 minutes. Although immersion and participation in the situation did not occur to the degree recommended for ethnographic research (e.g. Taft, 1988), some degree of relationship did emerge between the researcher and the eight participants in the present study because of the number of interactions between the researcher and each of the participants.

As is the case with other qualitative studies, this relationship with the participants was a feature that cannot necessarily be replicated by others since it had a personal and social dimension. It is important that this is recognised as a feature of the study and a possible threat to reliability. However it is a possible strengthening factor for internal validity as discussed later.

The social role of the researcher also plays an important part in determining whether external replicability of research is possible (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). In the present study the researcher's background influenced, for example, the way in which the interviews were conducted. If the homeroom teacher were to pose the same questions in an interview she would not conduct a replicative study, as her role or relationship with the participant would be different; theirs would be a supplemental study (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). The present study rendered for the researcher

what could be called “... slices of data which, taken together, contribute to the total picture of group life” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982), giving insights into the participants’ perception of themselves as readers and perceptions of the reading process, at various stages throughout the project.

Informant choices.

Closely related to the role the researcher plays is the problem of identifying the participants who provide data. Different participants represent different groups or constituents; they provide researchers with access to some people, but preclude access to others. As “knowledge gathered is a function of who gives it” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38) it is important that the types of people participant in the research and the decision process in their choice, are delineated. As is elaborated later in this chapter, the participants were selected in relation to key characteristics, that is otherwise healthy persons with average I.Q. scores who were struggling with reading.

Social situations and conditions.

The context in which they are gathered is another element influencing the content of qualitative research. What informants “... feel to be appropriate to reveal in some contexts and circumstances may be inappropriate under other conditions” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss (1961) differentiate between data gathered alone with the researchers and information acquired from participants in group contexts. Their study indicates that what people say and do varies according to others present at the time.

Delineation of the “... physical, social, and interpersonal contexts within which data are gathered enhances the replicability of studies” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Unlike many qualitative studies, the data gathered across the various stages of the project was done on an individual basis. For example, when interviews were conducted and questionnaires completed, the social interaction took place only between two persons, the researcher and a participant.

Analytic constructs and premises.

Le Compte and Goetz (1982) contend that even if a researcher reconstructs the relationships and duplicates the social contexts of a prior study, replication may remain impossible if the constructs, definitions, or units of analysis which informed the original research are idiosyncratic or poorly delineated. “Replication requires explicit identification of the assumptions and metatheories that underlie the choice of terminology and methods of analysis” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 39).

Analytic constructs must be addressed to enhance reliability. The development of data categories is a low level construct that has the potential to create problems for external and internal reliability (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Units of analysis need to be clearly identified and an analytic framework adds to the possibility of replication.

In the present study the individual participants were the units of analysis, as stated above. Beliefs about reading and the participants’ perceptions of themselves as readers are identified as major categories. However, the researcher broke down these categories even further in response to reactions of each individual participant. This approach did not trivialise the rich findings. This is evident in the interview excerpts found in, for example, the portrait of Sarah. However it allows the reader to see how themes emerged from the data rather than being predetermined.

Methods of data collection and analysis.

Ideally, ethnographers strive to present their methods of data collection and analysis with great clarity in order to assure reliability. As Le Compte and Goetz (1982) point out, replicability, an essential feature of reliability in qualitative research is impossible without precise identification and thorough description of strategies used to collect data.

A difficulty for both external and internal reliability is the identification of general strategies for analysing ethnographic data. The “... analytic processes from which ethnographies are constructed often are vague, intuitive and personalistic” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Efforts to codify the technique for data analysis include

Pelto and Pelto's (1978) system of codifying several segments of data. In the light of the research of Boulton and Hammersley (1996) the researcher grouped together segments of data which arose as recurrent themes.

Through coding the researcher began to define and categorise data. Codes were created as the data was studied. Initial coding proceeded through the researcher examining each line of data and then "defining actions or events within it [using] line-by-line coding (Glaser, 1978, p. 78). This coding kept the researcher studying the data. Using this approach the researcher was ... deterred from imposing extant theories or [her] own beliefs on the data" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 515).

This form of coding helped the researcher remain attuned to the participants' views of their realities. Themes from the data allowed other individuals, such as readers of this thesis to gain insight into the perceptions of the participants. It is important to emphasise that approach described above strengthened any threat to the reliability of this study.

In summary, the above discussion outlines that the five potential difficulties for reliability identified by Le Compte and Goetz (1982), that is, for whether the same phenomena would be identified by other researchers and the same construct generated, were addressed in the present study. The next section describes how issues related to internal reliability were addressed.

Internal Reliability

Internal reliability "refers to the degree to which other researchers, given the same set of previously generated constructs, would match them with the same data, in the same way as did the original researcher" (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 32).

The underlying issues here are whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods. Goetz and Le Compte (1982) and Smith and Robbins (1984) speak of "quality control." Le Compte and Goetz (1982) identify five strategies to reduce threats to internal reliability:

- low-inference descriptors;

- multiple researchers;
- participant researchers;
- peer examination;
- mechanically recorded data.

In the present study, where possible, measures were taken to implement these strategies. These are described below.

Low-inference descriptors.

In the present study data for individual participants such as observation, reading records and questionnaire results were summarised firstly in tables and later in narrative. Similarly, data from interviews was recorded on audio tape. Initially narratives and interview excerpts were low inference. However, later the researcher added higher inference interpretive comments. The inclusion of numerous interview excerpts, for example, in the portrait of Sarah substantiates inferred categories of analysis and increases the credibility of the research.

Multiple researchers.

The optimum guard against threats to internal reliability in ethnographic studies may be the presence of multiple researchers. In some cases, investigations occur within a team whose members discuss the meaning of what, for example, has been observed until agreement is achieved (Spindler, 1973). In the present study data was collected only by the researcher. This process did not involve multiple researchers to discuss, corroborate and confirm the meaning of particular phenomena. However, discussion of the meaning of particular phenomena did occur through peer review and through discussion with supervisors. Internal reliability of the research was also enhanced by low inference descriptors.

Participant researchers.

Some researchers enlist the help of local informants to confirm that what the observer has seen and recorded is being viewed consistently by both the participants and the researcher (Spindler, 1973). In some cases, participants serve as arbiters

(Spradley, 1980). In the present study participation by all eight participants as arbiters during the entire research project was desirable in theory but not in practice. During the second intervention on metacognitive skills however it was possible for four participants to act as researchers. This occurred through the use of reading “fix up” strategies nominated by each of these participants for the purpose of them monitoring their use of particular strategies to enhance their reading. This involvement by the participants strengthened both the reliability and validity of the project (Merriam, 1988).

Peer examination.

Spindler (1973) contends that the reliability of various categories of so-called subjective material rests, to an extent, on the researcher’s established reputation for accuracy and truthfulness. However in the present study peer examination and support was provided by a colleague who examined the data and discussed the researcher’s findings and by two supervisors.

Mechanically recorded data.

Ethnographers use a variety of mechanical devices to record and preserve data (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Johnson (1975) argued for the use of observational techniques that record as much as possible and preserve to the greatest extent, the raw data. In this way the veracity of conclusion may be confirmed by other researchers. As previously stated much of the data was recorded on audio tape or in narrative, thus enhancing reliability.

Validity in the Case Study

Using a case study approach does not demand the researcher abandon concerns for drawing valid conclusions. As one author clearly articulates, even though the case study is not experimental research, under several circumstances it can provide very meaningful and valid information (Jorgensen, 1989).

Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which data accurately records the behaviour in which the researcher is interested. The major concern of research design according to Sapsford and Jupp (1996) is validity; it is their view that validity is preserved when the evidence offered in a research project can bear the weight of the interpretation that is put on it (p. 1). In other words the structure of a piece of research determines the conclusion that can be drawn from it, and, more importantly, the conclusions that should not be drawn from it. The process of data analysis produces the main claims that form the basis of a research report (Boulton & Hammersley, 1996). For example, in qualitative research the evidence that the researcher presents in support of claims will be a selection from the segments of data collected together as relevant to the themes that form part of that claim. The description of persons, places and events has been the cornerstone to qualitative research. Validity in qualitative research has to do with "... description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible?" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 393). In the present study measures are examined in terms of internal validity and external validity. These are discussed below.

Internal Validity

While internal validity refers to the extent to which scientific observations and measurements are authentic, representations of some reality, external validity addresses the degree to which such representations may be compared legitimately across groups (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

Le Compte and Goetz (1982) contend that internal validity is closely linked to whether conceptual categories are understood to have mutual meanings in the minds of both the researcher and the participants. Le Compte and Goetz (1982) emphasise that there are five threats to internal validity:

- history and maturation;
- observer effects;
- selection and regression;
- mortality;

- spurious conclusions (p. 44).

History and maturation.

Ethnographers assume that history affects the nature of the data collected and that the phenomena rarely remain constant. The ethnographer's task is to establish which baseline data remain stable over time and which data change (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). This is achieved through systematic replication and comparison of baseline data, analogous to the pretest data collected by researchers (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). The present study was qualitative but as discussed earlier, is not claimed to be entirely ethnographic since its principal focus was not the culture of a group. Changes may have occurred in the experiences of the participants over the six month period of data collection. These are not seen as data contaminants. Rather, these changes are acknowledged where participants' responses indicated they occurred. Since the research did not seek to identify cause and effect, such occurrences have less significance than they might in another study. The collection of data over a six month period gave some insight into the participants in terms of their range of views on reading and their perceptions of themselves as readers.

Maturation refers to the "genetically determined biological changes associated with growth over time" (Krause, Bochner, Duchesne, 2003, p. 55). In experimental research "maturation refers to people growing old or becoming more experienced" (Bernard, 1988, p. 69). However the ethnographic view is that maturation varies according to cultural norms and researchers' control of its effects "by identifying explicitly what behaviours and norms are expected of different sociocultural contexts" (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 45). In the present study, maturation of the participant was of relevance as the individual was the unit of analysis. Since data were collected over a six month period changes in maturation were likely to have occurred. These were acceptable as a descriptive account was built up during Stages A, B and C of data collection. This account portrayed the individuals' beliefs about reading per se and their perceptions of themselves as readers. Where maturation changes were apparent, they are reported within the discussion.

Observer effects.

A factor related to observer effect is reactivity. Le Compte and Goetz (1982) particularly focus on the relationship between the researcher and the participants. In the present study the equal status given to each of the eight participants through equal time and the use of the same tasks during the two intervention processes, minimised the possibility of special relationships that would distort data or change the researcher role.

Selection and regression.

Le Compte and Goetz (1982) maintain that because most ethnographers study characteristics and behaviour of human groups rather than the effects of specific treatments, ethnographic participants are chosen for relevance to specific interests. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest the use of theoretical sampling – collecting data chosen for relevance to emerging theoretical constructs, as one purposive strategy for implementing this process systematically. Such sampling may take the form of cross-informant interviewing, for example, for confirmation and validation of interviews. In the present study, accurate data were used for cross-group comparisons, to ensure internal validity.

Mortality.

Mortality refers to individuals who for any reason may not complete their participation in a research project. Mortality was not a threat to the internal validity in the present study since the participants were eight adolescents whose participation was required for a period of only six months, and who all did remain in the project.

Spurious conclusions.

However thoroughly a researcher may have accounted for influences such as history and maturation, observer impact, selection and regression and mortality, relationships posited among observed phenomena nevertheless may be spurious (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, 49). In other words, data needs to be examined so that all possible explanations are delineated. This process requires “effective and efficient

retrieval systems ... and the scrupulous use of corroboratory and alternative sources of data” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 50). Negative instances and disconfirming evidence for emerging constructs should be sought (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

In the present study the researcher used a variety of procedures repeatedly to gather data at Stages A, B and C of the project. This process served the purpose of providing “different ways the phenomenon [was] being seen” (Flick, 1998; Silverman, 1993) and thus preserve internal validity.

In summary, the above discussion outlined measures taken in the present study to enhance internal validity. Referencing to strategies outlined by Merriam (1988), internal validity was strengthened through techniques including multiple methods of data collection and peer comment on the researcher’s findings.

External Validity

Threats to the external validity of ethnographic findings are those effects that obstruct or reduce a study’s comparability and translatability (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). For example, in ethnographic research procedures are not prestructured and the course of the research is to a great extent the “product of the personal idiosyncrasies of the researcher and the way he or she interacts with the subjects” (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996, p. 90).

External validity relates to qualitative research differently from experimental research. For example, in the present study the purpose was not to investigate a representative random population, rather a specific population to gain an understanding of their beliefs and perceptions. In this context, statistical sampling as used in experimental studies was not appropriate. In the present study the “purpose of a case report was not to represent the world, but to represent the case” (Stake, 2000, p. 448). Insights gained facilitated a depth of understanding (Patton, 1990) about a particular group of participants.

Since “comparability and translatability of findings, rather than outright transference to group not investigated” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 34) are relevant to qualitative research, measures were taken in the present study to reduce obstacles to

these. It was recognised that the search for particularity competes with the search for generalisability. Each case has “important atypical features, happenings, relationships, and situations” (Stake, 2000, p. 239). The report therefore includes a careful “description of settings and people, conditions and constructs” to give other researchers the opportunity to use “appropriate comparison groups and translation issues (Eisenhart, 1988, p. 109). For example research methods and participant characteristics are outlined in this chapter. The method of data analysis is described in Chapter Five.

To summarise the discussion of reliability and validity issues, it is emphasised that the present qualitative study had different theoretical bases, different purposes and different methods from quantitative research. While the issues of validity and reliability are relevant to qualitative research, they are managed in different ways from quantitative research. However, the intention is to ensure credibility and authenticity of the study so that the research is of value (Patton, 1990).

Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented an overview of the research underpinning, theoretical design, the participants and the data collection used in the present study. A qualitative approach was used since qualitative description can be useful in suggesting possible relationships between, for example, reading intervention program(s) and enhanced reading skills. As discussed earlier, the study was inductive since it relied on reasoning and generalisations that emerged from the data. A detailed description is given of the participants involved in the study. Included also is a summary of the instruments used to monitor the participants’ strengths and weaknesses in reading at the various stages of the study. Validity and reliability issues have been discussed. In the next chapter a description of the two intervention programs will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTIONS

Introduction

According to Carnine (1997), “one of the main reasons for learning failure in school is a mismatch between a student’s characteristics and the instructional practices used with that student” (p. 130).

The implication of this viewpoint must be that if we can better match our instruction to important features of each learner, we are more likely to generate success in a reading intervention program which would ultimately result in success in future activities involving reading. However, looking at different types of reading interventions for different students may not be the best route to take in terms of feasibility.

In the present study the intention was to provide reading interventions for eight individuals who shared a history of difficulties with reading. Despite the fact that each of these individuals had also had some form of reading intervention program, early in their schooling, they still struggled as readers.

As discussed in the literature review, the answer to assisting any student with reading difficulties seems to be not in particular method of intervention but chiefly in four domains. Firstly, being aware of each learner’s existing knowledge, skills and reading strategies. Secondly, having an appropriate rapport and working relationship between a teacher and learners. Thirdly, developing fluency in readers. The fourth domain is the quality of the instruction provided. Research in the field of intervention emphasises the importance of these four domains (Westwood, 1998; Chan, 1997; Montague, 1997; Stronge, 2002). These four domains are discussed below in the context of the present study. The two interventions used in the present study are described later in this chapter.

Build on Existing Knowledge Skill and Reading Strategies

Intervention that helps students build on what they know about reading and helps them in learning new skills is more successful than repetition of instructional practices that are appropriate for earlier grades (Salinger, 2003). In other words, rather than repeating instruction there needs to be a focus on building on what is already known about reading and learning new skills.

Prior to the first intervention due consideration was given to the learner's existing knowledge skills and strategies. The principle that guided the reading activities were in keeping with works of Morris, Ervin and Conrad (1996). In other words, throughout the interventions, the researcher focused firstly on determining each participants "... reading instructional level – the level where she is challenged but not frustrated – and presented instruction accordingly" (p. 370). Secondly, the emphasis was on assessing each participants' skills in word recognition along a continuum of written word knowledge. As described in the previous chapter, in the present study every effort was made to assess each participant's aptitude prior to the intervention. For example, prior to the intervention the researcher could answer each of the following relevant questions suggested by Westwood (1998) regarding each participant:

- What can the student already do without assistance?
- What can the student do if given a little prompting?
- What gaps exist in the student's prior learning?
- What does the student need to be taught next? (p. 180).

This approach was in line with Vygotsky's (1962) zone of proximal development, applied to the classroom setting. In interpreting Vygotsky's ideas in the classroom situation, teachers need to do the following:

- In assessment, take into account what students can do independently and also what they can do with social support (Beasley & Shayer, 1990).
- Centre instruction at the point between what the student can do without support and what can be achieved with assistance from an adult (Renshaw, 1998).

- Take advantage of existing strengths, amplifying these while also working with behaviours that are just beginning to emerge (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

Appropriate Rapport with Each Participant

Authorities in the field of education (Coles, 1998; Gardner, 1999) suggest the success or otherwise of any reading intervention procedures is linked with how the recipients of such an intervention feel about themselves and their teachers. Cohen (2001) agrees with this view saying that students' "social emotional capacities powerfully affect, and even determine, their ability to listen and communicate; to concentrate, to recognise, to understand to cooperate, to modulate their emotional states, to become self-motivating ..." (p. 4).

With these views in mind, certain underlying principles applied to the way in which the interventions involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) were implemented. These principles related particularly to the researcher's interactions with the participants. For the researcher as tutor, tuning into the emotional/social and the cognitive needs of the participants was a priority.

Throughout the research project the tutor endeavoured to establish and maintain the emotional social needs of the participants by establishing a supportive rapport. A concerted effort was made to convey to each participant the following beliefs:

- That the diversity of students is valued. An effort was made to personalise the interactions with each participant taking into consideration their particular interests and perceived difficulties with the process of reading.
- That taking responsibility for one's own learning is essential to becoming more proficient. The participants were encouraged to engage in self-monitoring, reflection and conversations with the researcher as a means to expanding their own expertise in reading (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).
- That each individual has the potential to succeed in reading. The focus was on conveying the message that each individual is important and worthy of the tutor's time and effort. This was reflected in the following ways. Firstly, by seeking out reading texts which matched the interests of each participant. Secondly, by providing praise for a participant when warranted. It is hardly

surprising that many low-progress students lack self-esteem. However “their self-perceptions are strengthened in environments where priority is placed on personalised experiences, respect and involvement” (Lyons, 2003, p. 150).

Developing Fluency in Each Reader

Many struggling readers have an approach to the reading task that is characteristically overly slow and choppy. Because of a history of reading difficulty their only logical approach to the task of reading is to read slowly.

Reading slowly interferes with comprehension, the slower one reads, the harder it is to think of the text as conveying meaning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

An objective of the first intervention was to develop in each participant the ability to read with a rhythm, flow and meter that sounded like everyday speech. A basic guide to promoting participant fluency at this point was the selection of texts that were within the control of each individual. Care was taken that most words within a given text were within the reader’s reading vocabulary.

The use of shared reading tasks between the tutor and participant was also valuable at this stage. During these activities the tutor both modelled a fluent style of reading and highlighted prompts to enhance fluency while reading. These prompts adapted from Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough and Beatly (1995) included the following:

- Read the punctuation;
- Make your voice go up at a question mark;
- Take a short breath at a comma;
- Use emphasis at an exclamation mark;
- Make your voice sound like characters talking.

During the second intervention there was an emphasis on enhancing fluency by engaging the participants in rich conversations about the different text patterning that exist between different genre. In other words, the participants learned that genres are organised in different ways. Their knowledge of text organisation appeared to enhance both their fluency and comprehension.

Quality of Instruction

By far the greatest advance in the reading intervention field during the last decade has come from the domain of strategy training. There now exists unequivocal research data indicating that students can be helped to achieve and become more independent as readers (Fisher, Schumaker & Deshler, 1995; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; McIntosh & Draper, 1995; Montague, 1997; De La Paz & Graham, 1997; Chan, 1997; Corral & Antia, 1997; Vallecorsa & de Bettencourt, 1997; Stronge, 2002).

In meeting the participants' cognitive needs in the present study, there was a need to provide some vital conditions during the reading interventions. These included:

- Having available ample texts on varied levels of difficulty, topics and genre;
- Introducing the participants to different text structures;
- Emphasising active reading and task persistence;
- Enhancing reading fluency;
- Providing explicit instruction in specific strategies.

Each of these conditions is elaborated below.

Ensure the Availability of Varied Texts

Struggling adolescent readers are often reluctant readers. The texts they are expected to read in the middle years are often too difficult for them to handle (The Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development, 1995). In many instances, struggling readers possess limited knowledge of the different types of textual organisation and structure. For example, in some cases they have little knowledge of the differences between narrative text structure (stories) and expository text structure (designed to inform or explain) (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams & Baker, 2001). In the present study time was taken to find text which were varied in terms of levels, topics and genre so that each participant would have an opportunity to read texts which were appropriate to their interests and instructional level.

Introducing Different Text Structures

As suggested in the literature review, students' reading skills can be enhanced by their knowledge of text structures (Strickland et al. 2004). For example, skills in reading a narrative text can be enhanced by instruction which prepares students to expect the text features which are characteristic of narrative text; that is, a text describing sequences of events involving characters and their actions and feelings. During the second intervention the focus was especially on leading the participants to become more insightful about the subtleties of the writing used in narrative texts. For instance, the dialogues written in John Marsden's (1987) *So Much To Tell You* were highlighted as a particular technique to elaborate on character analyses.

The Importance of Active Reading and Task Persistence

As emphasised in the literature review, reading is a complex activity. Reading requires the successful completion, application and monitoring of multiple strategies (Lipson & Wixson, 1991; Lipson, Valencia, Wixson & Peters, 1993). During 1977 Torgesen identified some students as "inactive learners." It appears that for some students, comprehension strategies are capacity demanding and indeed may appear daunting. The suggestion is that some students must be taught, coaxed and encouraged to use particular strategies (De Witz, 1997; Pressley & McCormick, 1995; Stronge, 2002).

The works of McKeown (1993) and De Witz (1997) have made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of enhancing comprehension. They focus on actively encouraging students to persist in figuring out what a text is saying. They particularly emphasise the group reading activities used in the second intervention. Furthermore, according to De Witz (1997), task persistence is enhanced by "peer interaction and socially mediated instruction" (p. 79), both of which were paramount in the second intervention.

Enhancing Reading Fluency

Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) eloquently articulate the link between reading fluency and comprehension:

Slow, capacity-draining word recognition processes require cognition resources that should be allocated to comprehension. Thus reading for meaning is hindered; unrewarding reading experiences multiply; and practice is avoided or merely tolerated without real cognitive involvement (p. 8).

The rationale for developing reading fluency skills is that when too much attention is given to low-level processes such as word recognition, not enough attentional resources are available to accomplish the higher-order processing involved in comprehension. This position is supported by Deno, Mirkin and Chiang (1982); Fuch, Fuch and Maxwell (1988); and Jenkins and Jewell (1993).

The notion of *repeated readings* of a text, first introduced by Samuels (1979), is still recognised in more recent research (Gersten et al. 2001) as a valuable technique to build fluent reading. According to Gersten et al. (2001), "... repeated readings results in a virtually automatic decoding of a passage, and the improved accuracy and fluency lead to improved comprehension" (p. 285). Repeated reading was a feature of the first intervention and is described in more detail later in this chapter.

Providing Explicit Instruction in Specific Strategies

As stated in the literature review, a major difference between effective readers and struggling readers is that effective readers have efficient strategies and struggling readers do not. During Stage C the participants spent four, 40 minute sessions per week working in a small group with the tutor. The emphasis was on explicit instruction, with confidence building tasks. A number of explicit instruction techniques encapsulated in reading intervention programs are supported by the research literature (Chan & Dally, 2000; Nicholson, 2000; Butler, 1995). These include:

- a Reciprocal Teaching (1985) approach used in the Meta Language Awareness Program, designed to increase comprehension, which involves modeling and scaffolding support in four key strategies of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting.
- emphasising participant self-regulation while reading and the use of metacognition with the goal of increasing independence in learning.

Metacognitive strategies provide an overall plan to gain meaning from text. Metacognitive strategies include scanning the text, sampling, predicting, confirming, understanding, and correcting errors as they occur.

Struggling Adolescent Readers

As highlighted in Chapter 2, even when primary school reading programs offer explicit instruction that includes, for example, familiarity with various genres, task persistence and explicit instruction in specific reading strategies, some students reach secondary school unable to demonstrate the higher levels of reading comprehension that mark active, engaged readers. Thinking of the components of reading as pieces of a cognitive puzzle may be helpful in understanding these individuals. They have received instruction at the various stages in the primary years. However, the pieces have simply not fitted tightly into place to create a smooth, dependable array of strategies and skills for gaining meaning from text. Students may not be able to see and understand the relationships among these various components of reading behaviour, may not have acquired dependable task-appropriate strategies for different reading needs, and may be so unaware of their own reading behaviours that they cannot fully monitor their comprehension.

However, in the present study the endeavour was to help the participants learn to overcome their difficulties in reading. This involved rethinking what was to be taught and how to challenge these participants to practise and use their literacy skills. The specific details of the rationale for each intervention and the descriptions of each intervention appear in the section below.

Overview of Reading Intervention Procedures

As discussed earlier, the intervention procedure was divided into two distinct periods: Stages B and C. During Stage B eight weeks of intervention occurred using an adaptation of the *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria) (1992) model. As can be seen on Table 5 below, the researcher worked as tutor on a one-on-one basis with each participant for approximately 40 minutes four days per week. During Stage C eight weeks of intervention occurred using a Meta

Language Awareness Program which was adapted from a Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1985) approach. The tutor worked with a group of four students at a time, again for approximately 40 minutes four days per week. More details of each approach is given below.

Intervention Procedures

Table 5: Overview of Intervention Procedures

Stage	Number of Weeks	Number of Days per Week	Names of Participants	Function of Stage
B	8	4	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena, Emily	Implementation of intervention, an adaptation of <i>Making A Difference</i> (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) with eight participants working one-on-one with researcher.
C	8	4	Sarah, Toni, Thea, Fleur	Implementation of the intervention a Meta Language Awareness Program, an adaptation of Reciprocal Teaching (1985) with four participants working in a group with researcher.

The two interventions programs used, an adaptation of *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) and a Meta Language Awareness Program involving the Reciprocal Teaching (1985) approach, are described in detail below.

Rationale for the Use of the Adaptation of Making A Difference (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) Intervention Used at Stage B

Various factors are involved when considering reading difficulties. A student's previous learning experiences, probable misconception about the reading process, poor self-esteem and anxiety, all combine to produce reading failure. It is possible to overcome these difficulties through an informed and consistent approach (Ministry of Education and Training, 1991, 1.9).

Much of the emphasis in research on reading instruction focuses on students in the early years of schooling. But many students – even some who seemed to do well in

the early years, begin to fall behind in reading when they are required to process increasing amounts of material present in text books. In Grade 4 for example, students are supposed to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” (Salinger, 2003). But some students do not make this transition successfully (Marcon, 1995) because they cannot orchestrate the skills and strategies needed for independent learning.

Research-Based Reading Instruction

The National Reading Panel Report (2000) states that reading intervention programs should be based on scientific research. Such programs emphasise five major components of reading acquisition: phonemic awareness (Share & Stanovich, 1995), phonics (The National Reading Panel, 2000), fluency (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp & Jenkins, 2001), vocabulary and text comprehension (Chittenden & Salinger, 2001).

Older Struggling Readers

Even when initial reading programs offer instruction that includes these components, some students cannot adapt the higher levels of reading comprehension that mark active, engaged readers. For example, “they have probably had instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics; they have also had opportunities to read orally and perhaps have heard fluent oral reading; they have probably participated in vocabulary instruction. But the pieces have simply not fitted tightly into place to create a smooth, dependable array of strategies and skills for gaining meaning from text” (Salinger, 2003, p. 81).

Students may not be able to see and understand the relationships among these various components of reading behaviour, may not have acquired dependable task-appropriate strategies for different reading needs, and maybe so unaware of their own reading behaviours that they cannot fully monitor their comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Torgesen, 1982).

Poor readers in the secondary school can begin to compensate for earlier deficiencies if the given instruction helps them to modify reading strategies which are not productive. Such specific instruction can assist students to develop or strengthen the

metacognitive strategies that will help them monitor their comprehension, realise when they are not comprehending and adjust their approaches to text to achieve comprehension. This instruction can help students to become active participants in their learning, to be goal-oriented and intentional as they read (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

Adaptation of Making a Difference (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) at Stage B

The *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) approach is in keeping with some general principles that facilitate ongoing support for struggling readers in junior secondary schools.

The instructional emphasis of *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) does not preclude the acknowledgement that causes of reading difficulties can reside within the individual. It allows for the possibility of resolving problems by providing one-on-one instruction regardless of the source of the difficulty. This instruction occurs in sessions where the following characteristics are evident:

- the teacher uses a well developed system of observation;
- the teacher identifies for the student difficulties in their reading as they occur;
- continuous progress evaluation and feedback takes place;
- appropriate and immediate responses to student difficulties are addressed.

The *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) manual describes secondary school literacy in these terms:

Unsuccessful students and ... their subject area teachers, all need to take responsibility for learning about literacy in secondary schools. Students need to negotiate realistic literacy goals. This can happen when they learn how to recognise their own achievements, and know when they have actually read or written successfully (p. 9).

In the present study a prime focus in the adaptation of this approach was an expectation by the researcher that each participant would assume responsibility for

their part in the learning experience. Within this context, the researcher needed to raise the expectations of what the participant must do in terms of reading and writing. The tutor worked with the participant on specific literacy tasks which were purposeful and relevant yet achievable by the unsuccessful reader. This meant that the tutor was actively engaged in describing what the participant could actually do, giving effective feedback on the participant's attempts at reading and writing.

For the duration of the intervention period the tutor and the participant worked together on a one-on-one basis for four intensive instructional sessions a week. These sessions of 30 minutes in duration had four stages which were based on an adaptation of the *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) model. A brief outline of the suggested sessions in such a model is given below:

1. *Familiar reading*

The student reads aloud a familiar text while the teacher keeps a running record of words miscued.

2. *Shared reading*

The teacher and the student together read aloud a text which although has a related theme, is new to the student. The theory is that the student learns to read by paired reading with the teacher. The teacher gradually allows the student to assume increasing amounts of responsibility for the process of reading.

3. *Guided silent reading*

Guided silent reading "is a metacognitive strategy for teaching students how to draw upon their intrinsic ability to increase comprehension by a simple act of will" (Manzo et al. 2004, p. 375). This approach addresses the most frequent problem identified in weak comprehension. Poor readers tend to view reading as something that one should be able to do effortlessly; when they attempt to read, they do not make plans or vary their strategies as they

read (Walker, 2000), nor do they dig in and intensify their effort as needed, probably so as not to signal that they are struggling where others may appear to be cruising. The guided silent reading procedure was developed to demonstrate to such “trapped” low-achieving readers that they could increase their reading comprehension by fortifying themselves with confidence – building self-determination (Manzo, 1975a). It does this by having students experience a reading activity in which, by self-monitoring their level of attention, concentration and commitment, they actually do comprehend and remember more information than they typically seem able to handle.

Guided silent reading teaches an aspect of metacognition that has been called “executive control” (Paris, Cross & Lipson, 1984). Here the reader takes conscious control of the learning process. This approach empowers struggling readers to master reconstructive-level comprehension, an important step on the road to constructive concept-formation and analysis (Dempster, 1991).

4. *Writing*

The student summarises the shared reading text above.

In the present study, however, another component of instruction which could be described as focused word study, was added to the adaptation of the *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) model. The focused word study was directed towards giving students insight into how words are constructed at the macro- and micro-levels. Researchers have found that readers look for meaningful clusters of letters as they decode words (Treiman, 1992), so it makes sense to teach older students to attend to units of sounds that are larger than phonemes but smaller than words. Instruction that focuses on identifying syllables as important clues to word meaning gives students a valuable tool for decoding unfamiliar words.

There are many high frequency “roots” that can be the basis of instruction and practice activities that encourage students to use pronounceable word parts to help them read (Fry, Kress & Fountoukidis, 1993; Gunning, 1995). Providing reading instruction which focuses on subtle but important similarities and differences in words were used during Stage B of the present study.

Intervention Used at Stage B

Description

This program is designed to provide support for Year 8 students who are struggling with reading. It provides teachers with a framework for one-on-one intensive instruction in reading.

The intensive instruction focuses on the following aspects:

- individual sessions, where planned and purposeful reading occurs at a level where success is inevitable;
- having students review their reading so that they know when they have succeeded;
- having teachers use their knowledge about skill development in reading, as well as useful resources and feedback on teaching effectiveness, to respond effectively to student work.

Components

The individual session had six components. These included:

1. Familiar reading;
2. Miscue Analysis/running record;
3. Guided silent reading;
4. Shared reading;
5. Reciprocal questioning;

6. The session concluded each day with a five minute period of focused word study.

1. **Familiar reading. (for approximately 10 minutes)**

The participant reads aloud from a familiar self-selected short story. The aims of the familiar reading segment included the following:

- To develop fluent reading. The literature (Kemp, 1993) suggests that poor readers often read word by word. They frequently struggle with the mechanics of word recognition and thus lose word meaning. However, in this section of the intervention, the students were encouraged to use the skill of prediction along with the knowledge of the story line.
- To encourage the use of punctuation and voice intonation to aid understanding.
- To develop the integration of meaning, structure and visual cues. The researcher frequently demonstrated fluent, expressive reading during this segment, encouraging the participant to re-read a short passage practising these skills.

2. **Miscue analysis/running record. (for approximately five minutes)**

The participant read aloud a passage of about 100 – 150 words from the previous day's shared reading text, while the tutor took a running record. As suggested above this was not a teaching time but rather a time where the tutor could observe and analyse the participant's unaided reading.

The miscue analysis procedure was explained to the participants so that they too could analyse their reading and recognise and use effectively strategies such as:

- re-reading to regenerate meaning;
- self-correcting
- to ensure that reading responses sounded right and made sense.

3. Guided silent reading. (for approximately three minutes)

As discussed in the literature review, guided silent reading is a metacognitive strategy. It addresses the most frequent problem identified in weak comprehension. In other words, poor readers tend to view reading as something that one should be able to do without effort. Poor readers do not make plans or vary their strategies as they read (Walker, 2000). Poor readers do not vary or intensify effort when reading. Guided silent reading activities require students to self-monitor their level of attention, concentration and commitment, so that they actually do comprehend and remember more information than they typically seem able to handle.

The guided silent reading segment was designed to give a focus for reading. In this segment the participant was given a question about the text content prior to silently reading the text. The purpose of this segment was:

- to give the participant the opportunity to read without being concerned about how it sounds to an audience;
- to encourage the participant to concentrate on understanding the author's message and also to practise independently the strategies discussed in (2) above, that is:
 - re-reading to regenerate meaning;
 - self-correcting.

For each of these segments a suitable passage and a question which focused on the main idea was planned prior to the lesson. Over the eight week period of the implementation of the program the questions gradually changed from requiring literal to interpretive comprehension. The tutor focused on highlighting for the participants the difference between 'know' (literal) and 'think' (interpretive) questions. It was thought that this would also assist the participants to generate their own questions in the reciprocal questioning segment.

4. Shared reading. (for approximately 10 minutes)

The tutor together with the participants read a section of a new text aloud. The tutor focused especially on the following factors:

- reading at a slightly slower pace;
- reading fluently;
- reading with an emphasis on expression and intonation.

Shared reading is a powerful strategy to use with weaker readers (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998; Barchers, 1998) because:

- it provides support for the student in the first attempt at reading a passage;
- it sets the student up for success in reading alone;
- it is non-threatening;
- it models fluent, expressive reading;
- it encourages the student to read competently and to finish a piece;
- it ensures that the student comes into contact with a lot of print.

During this segment the tutor frequently stopped to chat about the story, to clarify difficult words and concepts and to share feelings about characters and plot development.

5. Reciprocal questioning. (for approximately two minutes)

The tutor and the participant took turns asking each other questions about the text read in shared reading. According to the literature (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998; Barchers, 1998) competent readers mentally question themselves as they read, to monitor their comprehension. The purpose of this segment was:

- to give poor readers practice in questioning the text as they read it.

6. Focused word study. (for approximately five minutes)

To conclude the session the tutor and participant played a quick word recognition game. Word recognition is an essential component in the mastery of reading (Strickland, 2000) and considerable evidence suggests that the

poor reader has difficulty in the development of rapid, automatic word recognition. Indeed it is the rapid visual processing of word units that seems to evade these students, reducing their motivation to continue to read (Stanovich, 1986a; Samuels & Farstrup, 1992).

To facilitate the process of developing a student's word bank, the tutor focused on core lists of high frequency words collated by Barchers (1998) and derived from a range of countries, collection times and text sources. Included on this list were nouns, verb, pronouns and contractions which were considered pivotal to the reader's comprehension of a text. An alternative activity was to ask students to use roots or compound words to construct new words, essentially to use them as building blocks to make new words. For example, the word *comfort* could be changed to *discomfort* or *uncomfortable* by the addition of a prefix or a prefix and a suffix.

The skill of word recognition is developmental, with Gillet and Temple (1990) and Marsh, Friedman, Welsh and Desberg (1980) describing five stages of development. These stages are:

- Glance and guess;
- Sophisticated guessing;
- Simple phoneme-to-grapheme correspondences (e.g. letter sounding out);
- Recognition of analogy (recognition of word patterns within a word such as '*and*' in '*sand*');
- Later word recognition, involving compound words and syllabification.

When the student was confronted with an unfamiliar word, she was encouraged to look into the word for familiar letter and spelling patterns, and then to use context as back-up support to confirm hypotheses as to what that word might be.

Rationale for the Meta Language Awareness Program Involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) used at Stage C

Reciprocal Teaching (1985) begins with the teacher explaining the use and importance of a particular strategy (Bruce & Chan, 1996). This initial explanation includes "... what strategies the student will be learning, why they are learning these particular strategies, in what situation such strategies will be helpful, and how they will go about learning such strategies" (Palincsar & Brown, 1986, p. 773).

After this initial explanation, students are given instruction on the four strategies. "This instruction is for the purpose of defining each of the strategies, [and] teaching the students rules that will help them learn the strategies" (Palincsar & Brown, 1986, p. 773). At this point students practise the strategy with the guidance of the teacher ensuring that they have minimal competency before instruction continues (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994, p. 487). During the next stage of instruction the teacher models the use of the strategy while leading a dialogue about a section of text. At first students and teachers talk together and gradually, after students have observed the teacher, students then assume the role of teacher. In fact adults and students take turns as teacher. This verbal exchange is described as "a dialogue between teachers and students for the purpose of jointly constructing text" (Bruce & Chan, 1996, p. 45) and is the defining feature of a Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985). Palincsar and Brown (1986) describe the interactive interplay between students and teacher as they work together towards understanding the text, as the 'hallmark' of Reciprocal Teaching (1985).

A Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) embodies the concepts of (1) scaffolded instruction, (2) gradual release of responsibility, and (3) the social construction of meaning and learning. The dialogue between students and teacher, and indeed the discussions between students and peers in the primary support during practice. As the student gains greater competency the teacher withdraws her support, allowing the student more responsibility for strategy execution (Bruce & Chan, 1996). The dialogue itself acts as a scaffold to support students' learning of the strategies, the teacher modifying instruction, coaching and providing feedback as necessary (Bruce & Chan, 1996).

The Meta Language Awareness Program in the present study involved not only the use of reciprocal teaching, but the adaption of specific knowledge of genre, to enhance comprehension skills. In other words, the participants were encouraged to monitor their knowledge of the characteristics of narrative text compared with that of expository text in their endeavours to become better readers.

Much available research evidence suggests that students who have reading difficulties do not necessarily lack the ability to learn, they are simply inefficient in the manner in which they go about the process of learning (Durkin, 1978-1979; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Such students neither actively involve themselves in the learning situation nor routinely engage in appropriate cognitive processes which facilitate the performance of certain tasks.

The research studies of Baker and Brown (1984) indicate that poor readers do not routinely engage in constructive activities required for success in reading. For example, such students neglect to focus on factors such as:

- clarifying the purpose of reading;
- checking constantly for understanding and taking appropriate action when breakdowns in comprehension occur;
- making predictions about a text;
- self questioning while reading a text.

Recent research reports such as *Preventing Reading Difficulties* (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) its companion *Starting Out Right* (Burns, Griffin & Snow, 1999) and the report of the National Reading Panel (2000) have highlighted the vast body of information gleaned from carefully controlled, scientific studies of students' reading acquisition. As longitudinal studies funded by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development are completed, the professional literature continues to deepen an understanding of what is necessary for students to succeed as readers.

It is clear that some struggling adolescent readers need systematic, explicit instruction on diverse skills as much as students in earlier grades. Skills relevant to the present study are the skills of comprehension and comprehension monitoring which can be developed through training in metacognitive techniques. Baker and

Brown (1984) distinguish two dimensions of metacognition: the knowledge of one's own cognitive resources in relation to the demands of the reading task, and self-monitoring – in the case of reading, comprehension monitoring. Effective readers who are metacognitively aware constantly assess the match between their own concepts and purpose and the details of the text, monitor the extent of this congruence, test the hypotheses, and revise these when the situation demands.

Insights from information processing theory suggest that both retention and retrieval are promoted by the frameworks used to organise that detail (Gagne, 1985). Readers who judge the relative importance of details in texts, seek out relationships among ideas, and use the text's structure to arrange details are more likely to be able to retrieve that information for long-term memory.

It is possible to teach students to monitor for an entire spectrum of processes, ranging from accurate pronunciation of words to the retrieval of specific information in a text (Garner, 1987). Readers can become successful reflective learners when provided with interventions which focus on an expansion of their knowledge base which includes not only content, but also techniques for monitoring the interaction between themselves and a text.

As mentioned earlier, once students reach Year 4 they often receive very little direct instruction in how to make sense of what they read. It is therefore essential that in any reading intervention program in the early secondary years that teachers provide direct, explicit instruction on the skills and strategies that good readers use to comprehend. There are numerous ways in which teachers can help students develop comprehension strategies. In Stage C of the present study, the researcher structured instruction to mirror the approach students should take to their own, independent reading. This involved the adaptation of Palincsar and Brown's (1984) reciprocal teaching (1985) model as a way to promote comprehension and comprehension monitoring. Ultimately this technique involved the tutor and the participants taking turns being the "teacher." The "teacher" lead the discussion of the material the others in the group were reading. The participants had four common goals: "predicting, question generating, summarising and clarifying" (p. 772).

Overview of the Meta Language Awareness Program Involving Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal Teaching was developed into its most widely known form by Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar and Ann Brown (1984). Reciprocal Teaching, which *Time* magazine (circa 1988) called the most important breakthrough in pedagogy in the 20th century, actively engages students in constructing meaning through summarising, questioning, clarifying and predicting (Brozo & Simpson, 1999).

Use of Dialogues in a Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985)

Passages upon which these dialogues were based ranged between 400 and 475 words. These passages were expository genre and were at a seventh grade readability level, according to the Fry formula (Barchers, 1998, p. 380). Each day the tutor would introduce the passages with a brief discussion intended to activate prior knowledge. This was followed by drawing attention to the title on the basis of which the participants were asked to predict the content.

The tutor then asked one of the participants to be “the teacher” for the first segment (of a paragraph) and the other three participants read the segment silently. “The teacher” for that segment proceeded first to ask a question, then to summarise and to offer a prediction. When necessary, the tutor provided guidance for “the teacher” with a variety of techniques: prompting – “What question did you think a teacher might ask?” Instruction – “Remember a summary is a shortened version and does not have detail.” The tutor also provided feedback to particular participants; for example, “Your question was effective. It was clear what response you wanted.” “Excellent prediction. Let’s see if you are correct.” Interactive activities such as this lasted around 30 minutes and all dialogues were tape recorded so that qualitative changes could be assessed.

Throughout this intervention the students were explicitly told that these activities were general strategies to help them understand better as they read, and that they should try to do something like this when they read silently.

Description of Activities Linked to Proficiency in Prediction

Research in reading has identified several characteristics that differentiate skilled readers from unskilled readers (Paris et al. 1990). For example, some unskilled readers remain unaware of using strategies such as prediction to ameliorate comprehension failure (Paris et al. 1990; Barchers, 1998). Weaver (1994) discusses the value of combining the reading with prediction activities by encouraging poor readers to utilise aspects such as prior knowledge of a topic, schema and picture cues.

Administering Activities Linked to Proficiency in Prediction

The activity of predicting what a text may be about, then later reading the story and checking the predictions, was demonstrated by the tutor. The activity was then practised by the participants in the following manner. The participants were given a passage to read with these guidelines: “Given what you have just surveyed, what do you think are likely topics that will or could occur in this chapter? What do you think are likely names that will or could occur? What do you think are likely concepts that will or could occur? What conclusions could be made?” After the participants made predictions, they were allowed to re-survey the text to confirm and/or make additional predictions. Prediction scores were based on the percentage of correct responses, using a scoring system devised for the study: if a participant accurately predicted 80% or more of the likely text topics, three points were earned; two points were earned for 60% to 79% accuracy; one point for 40% to 59% accuracy. The same point system was used when participants predicted and confirmed likely names, as well as concepts. If participants generated at least one plausible conclusion based on their reading, they were also awarded one point. In this way it was possible for students to earn a maximum of 10 points on the prediction task. The final number of points was multiplied by 10 to yield a total percentage correct score.

Utilising a paragraph from a content area textbook, the tutor modelled each of these four distinct comprehension strategies. This was followed by each of the participants practising these strategies, by taking their turn as dialogue leader. The steps used in

this Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) are elaborated below.

Preparation

Step 1 Having selected a text, four stopping points in that text were determined.

Step 2 Each of the four participants was given a different card (see Table 6 below) outlining her role.

Table 6: Roles in Meta Language Awareness Program, Adapted from Reciprocal Teaching

1. Summarise Summarise in a simple sentence the paragraph that was read. (What was the main idea?)	2. Question Think of a question about the paragraph that was read to ask another student.
3. Clarify Clarify anything in the text that was unclear. You may ask someone in the group to help you.	4. Predict Make a prediction about what will happen next in the text.

During Reading Time

Step 3 Request that the participants read slowly to the first stopping point. When all participants have finished reading begin the group discussion with each participant fulfilling the task on the card.

Step 4 After each participant had completed their role and the group had discussed the paragraph, the participants switch cards.

Step 5 Each participant read to the next stopping point and performed the role on the new role card.

Step 6 This procedure continued until all four sections had been read and each participant had fulfilled all four roles.

After the group of participants had finished their sequence, the tutor or an individual participant took turns leading a discussion of what had been read during the session.

The sessions in meta language awareness described above focused both on teacher-to-student and student-to-student discussion, which have been described in the literature as critical components of effective comprehension and content instruction. “It is through discussion that the teacher learns what is in the students’ mind, and thereby can restructure the situation to aid the student in understanding (Flood & Lapp, 1990, p. 493).

In summary, although teachers and researchers have considerable knowledge about how to prevent reading difficulties in the early years of school, some students still reach the early secondary school years with weak reading skills. Just as they should be moving to self-guided, independent reading, these individuals struggle with the simplest comprehension demands. Repeating the kinds of instruction they have had in earlier grades will not provide these students with the skills and strategies they need to reverse their pattern of failure. However, through appropriate interventions teachers can help struggling readers learn to compensate for their initial difficulties by both supporting and challenging students to build on, practice and use their literacy skills. In the next chapter general descriptions are given firstly of the data analysis for one case, Sarah, and secondly of the approach to cross-case analysis.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS FOR ONE CASE STUDY AND CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the general description of data analysis appropriate for qualitative research and thus relevant to the present study. Qualitative forms of investigation tend to be based upon the recognition of the importance of the subjective, experiential “life world” of human beings (Burns, 1990). In other words the task of the qualitative researcher is to capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world. It is the life world of the participants that constitutes the investigative field (Burns, 1990).

Eisner (1979) emphasises that qualitative methods are concerned with processes rather than consequences, with meanings rather than with behavioural statistics. Interest is directed towards context-bound conclusions that could potentially influence educational decisions.

Quantitative researchers place great value on outcomes and products. They rely on results represented with numbers.

In the present study a detailed analysis of one case, Sarah, and the subsequent preparation for, and implementation of cross-case analysis of, the other seven participants, is described. The technique used to record the data was the use of matrices of categories of emerging themes.

In this chapter a description is given of the steps leading toward the detailed analysis of one case, Sarah, and the subsequent preparation for and implementation of cross-case analysis of the other seven participants. Topics addressed in this chapter include:

- Putting data into words;
- Reading narrative summary of Sarah’s data;

- Creating the display format for each case;
- Strategies for cross-case analysis;
- Partially ordered meta-matrix;
- Use of “Constant comparative method” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
- Noting themes

These are elaborated below.

Putting Data into Words

The general nature of qualitative data as described by Wolcott (1992) is “watching, asking or examining.” (p. 92). He emphasises the use of appropriate words to describe observations, interviews or documents, carried out in close proximity to the participant and for a sustained period of time. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that putting data into words is not simple: “The words a researcher attaches to fieldwork experiences are inevitably framed in [the researcher’s] implicit concepts.” (p. 42). The complex process of recording through written data the central idea of the events happening at each stage of the research “requires plenty of care and self-awareness on the part of the researcher” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8). Initially however, the goal is to get a general descriptive sense of the content of the data and how the analysis of it might be pursued. In the present study this involved reviewing all the data on Sarah collected at each stage of the study: assessment results, field notes, questionnaire and interview materials. This was first summarised into a narrative form.

Reading Narrative Summary of Sarah’s Data

The next stage was reading the narrative summary. This involved noting “... topics or categories to which the data related and which were relevant to the research focus, or were in some other way interesting or surprising” (Boulton & Hammersley, 1996, p. 290). In the present study annotations were made in the margins of the narrative data, specifying emerging themes. However, the merit of several readings of the data was recognised. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that a “single interim analysis of data is rarely enough.” (p. 86). If we listen carefully our cases will say to us, as Norman Mailer once said to his readers: “Do not understand me too quickly” (p.

178). In other words, it is easy for a researcher to fall into the trap of premature closure of themes. Early data collection may be “partial, flawed and simplistic in some respects” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178). Subsequent reading, however, in the present study, led to fuller waves of analysis. The additional use of memos led to a more detailed cognitive map on this first case, providing richer and more powerful data.

Creating the Display Format for Each Case

As discussed earlier, in the present study the researcher was “jointly studying a number of cases in order to investigate” the phenomenon of the struggling reader (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Cross-case analysis was deemed to be the most suitable method of data analysis. “Cross-case analysis depends on coherent within case information” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178). In the present study the researcher began by displaying the data of one participant, Sarah, stage by stage in a matrix form. This involved the stacking up of key quotes or descriptions, for each stage of the project on one very large sheet of paper. This matrix format provided a succinct summary of the data required by the researcher in writing the narrative, ‘A Portrait of Sarah,’ which is presented in Chapter Six of this thesis. Following this the qualitative data of all of the other seven participants was added to the matrix to facilitate the cross-case analysis which is elaborated below.

Strategies for Cross-Case Analysis

A question relevant to the present study is how does a qualitative researcher proceed with data analysis where multiple cases are involved? Yin (1984) advocates a replication strategy, where one case is studied in depth, and then successive cases are examined to see whether the pattern found matches that in the other cases. As mentioned above, in the present study the data on the participant Sarah for Stages A, B and C was examined in depth and emerging themes regarding this data were recorded using the matrix previously described. Later the data was studied and emerging themes recorded for the other seven participants: Tony, Thea, Fleur, Fiona, Sintra, Sevena and Emily in Stages A and B, using what had now become a meta-matrix (adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following this, the data was studied and emerging themes were recorded for the four individuals who participated

in intervention C. As mentioned previously these participants were Sarah, Toni, Thea and Fleur.

Partially Ordered Meta-Matrix

Cross-case analysis depends upon coherent within-case information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the present study the meta-matrices provided master charts for assembling the descriptive data on the participants. The basic principle was the inclusion of all relevant (condensed) data. Utilising the meta-matrices, data could be partitioned and clustered so that contrasts between cases became clear for each variable. As data from each case were more closely examined the “... partitioned and clustered meta-matrices were progressively refined” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178) requiring the transformation of case level data into short quotes and summarising phrases.

As discussed earlier, meta-matrixes enable the researcher to enter descriptive data from each of several cases in a standard format (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The simplest form which was used in the present study was a stacking-up of all of the single-case displays on one very large sheet of paper. The basic principle was inclusion of all relevant data in a condensed form. For example, at baseline Stage A the researcher sorted the relevant case data into eight analytic categories, in separate but commonly formatted matrices, one per case. The initial data for each participant at that stage was entered on a matrix, a replica of which has been provided on Table 7 below.

Table 7: Replica of Part of Matrix of Descriptive Data

Cells →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Participant ↓	Presence of phonological awareness	Level of skill in informal graded word recognition	Skill in phonemic awareness	Weaknesses obvious in Miscue Analysis	Background – family pre + primary school	Attitude to reading as an activity	Perception of self as a reader	Perception of what the skill of reading involves
Sarah	Non-strategic with sound application	Little knowledge of 3 x con blends	Can't apply affixes	Not fluent because of ← 1, 2, 3	Family do not read for pleasure English spoken at home Hearing problems Weak reading Gr. 3+	Hates it	Not very good	Narrow view "saying words"
Toni	As above	As above	As above	As above	Family do read for pleasure English spoken at home Weakness in reading reported in middle years	As above	As above	"saying words; sounding out words"
Thea	As above	As above	As above	As above	As above	As above	As above	"saying words;" rememb-ering words."
Fleur	Efficient in sound application in word beginnings	Efficient in 3 x con. blends in word beginning	Efficient in prefixes but poor in suffixes	Not fluent because of 3 and 5 ← →	Not N.E.S.L. but weak in pragmatics of English spoken in Australia	Quite likes it	Okay	"remembering words; getting ideas from print"

As can be seen on this meta-matrix, "... cell entries [were] telegraphic-style phrases, boiling down coded chunks" from the relevant case data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178).

Data were entered in the same manner for each of the eight participants during Stage B and again at the end of Stage B using meta-matrices. Content analysis was noted at Stage A, during Stage B and the end of Stage B. The researcher now looked at each of the cell entries analysing the telegraphic phrases, developing a coding system to represent exemplar concepts. For example, Fleur's home background (Sri Lankan) meant that though she had spoken English all of her life and had mixed with

a broad population at school, she had by her own reporting, mixed only with Sri Lankan families and friends out of school hours. She seemed, therefore, to be less aware of the nuances of English spoken by Australians. In other words, she took much of what she read, or was said by others at school, in a literal sense. An example of this was when Fleur was retelling a story about a tortoise walking around a pond with “fish on his mind.” Fleur interpreted this as meaning that the tortoise had a fish literally strapped to its head. She had no idea of the implied meaning that the tortoise was thinking about his next meal. With the above anecdote in mind, the researcher marked on the meta-matrix cell 5, at Stage A for Fleur with a ‘post-it’ note “CD” for cultural difference.

The next step was to partition the data further. In other words, data that fell together were clustered together. For example, with regard to Sarah, at Stage A, the item in cell 5 seemed to suggest that some of Sarah’s difficulties arose from, or were compounded by, her family’s apparent lack of interest in reading for pleasure.

Making partitions in the data as described above meant that comparisons and contrasts could be made about sets of cases. For example, both Sarah’s and Fleur’s difficulties in reading seemed to be somewhat connected with the family/culture. For this reason Fleur’s cell 5 was also marked with a ‘post-it’ note “CD.”

The remaining data gathered for all eight participants during each of the stages of the project was processed in a manner along the lines of that described above. The main focus across these three time frames was to code the data so that “... all of the information from all the cases [was] gradually refined, summarised and reduced through partitioning and clustering so that it [became] more ordered” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), cross-case analysis depends on coherent with-in case information.

Use of Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

The next step in the data analysis in the present study was a step discussed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). At this stage the researcher began to compare and contrast all the items of data that had been assigned to the same theme. Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to this stage as the ‘constant comparative method.’ The aim was to clarify what

the themes that had emerged meant, as well as to identify sub-themes among themes. In this process, some themes were developed and some data segments were re-assigned.

Subsequent re-reading of individuals' data sets in some cases produced new developments in the themes, making it necessary to re-code previously coded data. What was involved here, then, was an iterative process of analysis that generated themes and interpretations of the data in terms of these themes (Boulton & Martyn, 1996, p. 292). The suggestion by Boulton and Martyn is that over time, at least some of these themes are integrated into a network of links. In the present study, some of the themes ultimately made up a substantial proportion of the final report of the project.

In the present study, once the data for all eight cases with their case level display were entered into a very large meta-matrix, an immediate step towards further condensation was required so that more succinct summaries would be apparent. This process was made easier by the fact that for the entries in each cell of the meta-matrix for each of the cases, there were several paragraphs of analytic text clarifying such entries.

It was important during this task to avoid bias in making entries. It required that the researcher "... took time" and "looked only at part of the data, not at the full set (all relevant data from all the cases)" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 180).

At the end of the process described above the meta-matrix had pruned down multiple tables to a considerably condensed meta-matrix. However, it allowed the researcher to see all the relevant data in one (still large) place, and to facilitate cross-case analysis. At this point the researcher had a global look at sections of matrix, taking notice of "... where it was dense, where it was empty;" "looking down particular columns, comparing/contrasting what things looked like" for different cases, "looking at more than one column at a time to note relations between variables" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 193).

Noting Themes

Looking at the columns it was possible for the researcher to see recurring themes, “which pulled together many separate pieces of data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 246). However as Miles and Huberman (1994) point out, patterns need to be subjected to scepticism and to conceptual and empirical testing before they represent useful knowledge. For example, does this pattern make conceptual sense? Do we find it elsewhere in the data where it was expected? Are there any counter examples?

To counter such problems Denzin (1989) suggests that all notational records (for example, of an observation) should contain explicit reference to “... participants, interactions, routines, rituals, temporal elements, interpretations and social organisations ...” (p. 380). Similarly, Glaser and Strauss (1967) contend that observation data gathering, for example, should continue until a researcher has achieved theoretical saturation; that is, when the generic features of a new finding consistently replicate earlier findings.

In summary, it is possible that the process of looking at the data of a number of cases can deepen a researcher’s understanding of a phenomenon and increase generalisability. However, as indicated above, cross-case analysis is a complex process. Simply summarising at a superficial level across some themes by itself reveals little. It is necessary to “look carefully at the complex configuration of processes within each case, understanding local dynamics, before we can begin to see patterning of variables that transcends particular cases” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 206). It is possible to sort cases into explanatory “families” sharing common scenarios. However, “it is important to look carefully at deviant cases and not to force cross-case explanations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 238). In the next chapter a detailed analysis of one case, Sarah, is presented.

CHAPTER 6

A PORTRAIT OF SARAH

Introduction

This chapter, *A Portrait of Sarah*, aims to “probe deeply, analysing intensively the multifarious” (Burns, 1990, p. 320) reading of one *case*, *Sarah*. This case is presented in detail since “it can provide insights into the class of events from which the case has been drawn” (Burns, 1995, p. 320). In other words, one such case can provide both evidence measured in tests and anecdotal evidence that illustrates more general findings about the outcome of the intervention programs.

At the beginning of the project Sarah achieved a poor score on the TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984) reading/comprehension test. On stanine scale, 1 – 9, which is normed against the wider community of her age group, Sarah achieved a score of 3. Observation of Sarah’s reading at this stage indicated that she was to a great extent word calling. Despite the fact that she had automatic recall of sight vocabulary words such as *one day*, such recall only masked the fact that she had difficulty in reading to the end of the sentence. Her reading style lacked fluency as she struggled with the mechanics of decoding unknown words.

By the conclusion of the project Sarah achieved a score of stanine 6 and it was obvious that Sarah had begun to compensate for earlier deficiencies in her reading by monitoring her own comprehension. Observation of Sarah reading a text showed her reading was considered and fluid. She made comments on a text title or a topic sentence before reading, indicating that she was tuning in to the possible topic of the text. In the retelling of stories read Sarah indicated a sound knowledge of an author’s intended meaning of a text, both explicit and implicit.

Indeed, for Sarah, being the recipient of systematic, explicit instruction meant that in a period of just over four months her reading skills were enhanced markedly. In other words, at the beginning of the project Sarah’s reading skills put her below the 23rd percentile in the lowest quarter of her peer group. By the conclusion of the

project she had moved up above the 60th percentile, demonstrating a significant improvement in her skills. It was apparent by her response in the sessions as well as through the interviews that her self esteem had markedly improved.

The characteristics of the selected reading intervention programs that contributed to the change, the second research question, will emerge through the study of Sarah.

A detailed description of Sarah in terms of relevant background information, educational history and changes in literacy performance over the duration of the project will be given in this chapter of the thesis. This portrait is presented in sections with the purpose of firstly highlighting how particular reading intervention programs can help junior secondary school students and secondly understanding the characteristics of these reading intervention programs that contribute to change in students. The sections include:

- Changes in Sarah's reading skills;
- Background information on Sarah and Sarah at the beginning of the project Stage A;
- Working with Sarah during Stage B;
- Sarah at the conclusion of Stage B;
- Working with Sarah during Stage C;
- Sarah at the conclusion of Stage C.

These sections are broken into subsections, structured and titled according to themes that arose prior to and during the data collection period or as a consequence of post-collection review of the data.

Change in Sarah's Reading Skills

Numerous changes in Sarah's reading skills and approach to reading are noticeable when a comparison is made of the data collected at Stage A, B and C of the project. Two particular research traditions, measurement and observation provided data to enable changes in Sarah's reading to be discussed. Examples are given to highlight the changes that did occur in Sarah.

Changes Highlighted by Measurement

Evidence of a substantial gain in overall reading/comprehension was provided by the TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984).

As mentioned earlier, a student whose score is on stanine 3 or below on the TORCH test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters 1984) is deemed to be “at risk” in terms of reading/comprehension (Pickering, 1996). At Stage A Sarah’s result on the TORCH test of stanine 3 clearly placed Sarah in the at risk group. However, as indicated on Table 8 the TORCH test results revealed that Sarah’s reading/comprehension score improved markedly during the project. By the end of Stage B this score was stanine 4 and at the conclusion of Stage C it was stanine 6.

Table 8: TORCH (1984) Test Results for Sarah

Stage A	Stage B	Stage C
3	4	6

The TORCH Test did not produce diagnostic information about Sarah’s obvious weaknesses in word recognition. However using the researcher designed test on phonology, specific weaknesses in phonology, for example lack of knowledge of consonant blends, compound words and affixes, were identified. This test, administered at Stage A, B and C, provided evidence of Sarah’s improved knowledge of phonology during the project. As indicated in Table 9, at the start of the project Sarah’s phonological knowledge was weak. Her recognition of the 21 common consonant blends, three letter blends, compound words and affixes improved moderately by the end of Stage B. However, by the end of Stage C her improvement in these areas was marked with perfect scores in all but the recognition of compound words on the flash word recognition test and perfect scores in the untimed test.

Table 9: Summary of Sarah's Recognition of Common Consonant Blends, Three Letter Blends, Compound Words and Affixes During the Project

	Stage A		Stage B		Stage C	
	Flash	Untimed	Flash	Untimed	Flash	Untimed
Common consonant blends	7/21	14/21	14/21	21/21	21/21	21/21
Three letter blends	1/7	3/7	7/7	7/7	7/7	7/7
Compound words	7/42	14/42	21/42	42/42	37/42	42/42
Prefixes	10/30	20/30	20/30	30/30	30/30	30/30
Suffixes	3/15	8/15	10/15	15/15	15/15	15/15

Changes Highlighted in Observations

The consistent observation of Sarah's reading behaviours provided valuable data about Sarah's strengths and weaknesses and attitudes to reading. As indicated in Table 10 below, changes in Sarah's reading behaviour were linked to the different stages in the project and the different reading related tasks in which Sarah was involved.

Table 10: Changes in Sarah's Reading Skills Throughout the Project: Summary of Observations

End of Period A (3 days)	End of Period B (8 weeks)	End of Period C (8 weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiar reading overly slow and choppy; characterised by meaning altering miscues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiar reading slow and monotonous. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads with fluency and intonation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy to do shared reading but in this context voice is laboured and imprecise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident in shared reading session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibits growing confidence in reading texts of diverse genre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to retell storyline of shared reading texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy to be involved in tasks demonstrating comprehension, e.g. reciprocal questions with narrative genre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies main idea of story rapidly.

End of Period A (3 days)	End of Period B (8 weeks)	End of Period C (8 weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy to do guided silent reading. However seems unable to retell story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to write in own words simple summary of story read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can identify moral in a fable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to ask lower order questions of shared texts or guided silent reading texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to ask lower order questions demonstrating knowledge of storyline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can make a timeline demonstrating refined knowledge of storyline.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to formulate lower/higher order questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to answer higher order questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can explain the reason for a person's behaviour in a story.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot make links between ideas/events in texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes links between ideas/events in text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehends a variety of genres.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to pick up schema suggested by title or topic sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activates schema. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses critical understanding and prediction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When reading simple texts unable to pick up storyline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When reading simple texts can provide appropriate interpretation of author's feelings/theme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes thoughtful comments on texts or varied genre.

In summary, the analysis of data revealed that at the beginning of the project Sarah's word recognition and oral reading fluency were rudimentary. Sarah demonstrated a reticence to read aloud. Her reading style was often overly slow and choppy. It was characterised by meaning-altering miscues. As Table 10 indicates, Sarah exhibited comprehension difficulties. Her knowledge of phonology was weak. Her knowledge and implementation of strategic reading processes were very limited and her body language showed discomfort and anxiety. Sarah's poor reading skills put her in the lowest one-quarter of her peer group.

By the end of Stage C it was obvious that Sarah had responded favourably to the interventions which focussed on the provision of opportunities to build reading fluency comprehension enhancing strategies and ultimately skills in metacognition.

Encouraging changes were evident in Sarah's statements about reading, attitudes to reading effective use of reading processes and skills in metacognition. Sarah's enhanced skills in reading put her above the 60th percentile of her peer group.

Background information on Sarah

Sarah furnishes a useful example of the role played by family and educational history in interpreting a participant's literacy performance. Nomination by the Special Education Coordinator at the site selected for the research was the reason for the inclusion of Sarah in the study.

Sarah in her Family

As gleaned from data gathered at the initial interview with Sarah (in baseline Stage A), in the context of her family, rather than the school, Sarah had a "normal" attitude to reading. For example, Sarah stated that both she and her mother did not enjoy reading. We are "not good at reading," Sarah said. "I can't keep track of the words when I'm reading because I keep thinking about the mistakes I've probably made." Sarah indicated that her limited skills in reading were having a negative impact on her schooling. For example, she said: "I often cannot even start difficult reading and my homework record is bad." Regarding her parents, Sarah said her mother is "a slow reader" and one who "hardly ever reads for pleasure." Of her father, Sarah said "he does not especially enjoy reading but reads the sports section of the paper because he likes that."

However, once in the secondary school both Sarah and her parents were aware of her reading problems. Sarah's parents reported that for Sarah doing homework assignments was a nightmare. They shared concern for Sarah's limited skills in comprehension. They were worried that they had let Sarah's problems with print be swept under the rug for too long.

Sarah in the Pre-School Years and Primary School Years

School records of Sarah in the early years and at Primary School indicate that Sarah:

- had been a full-term baby, with no complications at birth;
- had achieved all milestones from 0-4 years that were age appropriate;

- at between 4-9 years had the condition otitis media (middle ear problems or gluey ears), which is thought to be linked with difficulties in auditory processing and comprehension in the primary school (Barchers, 1998).
- during the primary school grades had obvious weaknesses in sight vocabulary, sound symbol relationships and the recognition of single letters.
- generally speaking she struggled at school during the middle primary school years, because of her weakness in reading. She had participated in pull-out programs to develop: skills in the areas of sight vocabulary, sound symbol relationships and single letter skills. No details about the length of time these took place were available.

Sarah at the Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Despite the auditory problems described above and the obvious difficulties in reading, the records from her primary school prior to her transition from primary to secondary school indicated that Sarah was:

- well adjusted with her peers;
- effervescent;
- one who functioned in small groups;
- one who was reticent to give an opinion in a whole class discussion, even though there were no obvious difficulties in the areas of oral articulation, voice fluency and language development.

Sarah's Ability According to Year 7 Entrance Examinations at Site of Study

School records indicated that upon entry to Year 7, the group IQ test had put Sarah into the average range of intelligence. However, norm referenced reading/comprehension tests revealed that Sarah's performance in reading/comprehension was two to three years below that of students of the same year level. This was confirmed by her low score on the TORCH test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters 1984). Commenting on these results the Special Education Coordinator said that: "Besides difficulties with reading, Sarah's written language was limited." There appeared to be gaps in Sarah's learning because of her limited

skills in reading and written expression. It was gleaned that in general terms Sarah needed urgent assistance with strategies associated with:

- reading skills;
- comprehension skills;
- initiating written tasks.

During Year 7 Sarah had not been involved in a reading intervention program of any kind. In keeping with the school policy however, plans were made for Sarah to undertake daily small group extra English classes in Year 8 rather than attempt a Language Other Than English in Year 8.

Sarah at the Beginning of Project

Introduction

Discussion on Sarah at the beginning of the project is presented in two sub-sections: background information from the school, and information gathered by the researcher.

1. Background information from school.

As previously indicated, nomination by the Special Education Coordinator at the research site led to Sarah's inclusion in the study. Discussions with both the Special Education Coordinator and Sarah's home room teacher revealed more specific information regarding Sarah's academic strengths and weaknesses. Sarah's strengths included her ability to perform well in mathematics and her ability to acquire information with accuracy when listening to others. However, her home room teacher commented that Sarah: "Had average ability, except when required to cope with print" (reading and writing). She also commented that Sarah struggled with making a start on and completing written tasks which required independent reading. Sarah's home room teacher, who also taught her in English and SOSE, maintained that in class Sarah exhibited behaviours and characteristics which were probably indicative of severe difficulties with reading and comprehension. These included:

- great difficulty in beginning and completing whole class activities which involved reading/comprehension;
- problems with independent tasks which involved reading/comprehension;

- an inability to complete read-and-answer sheets.

2. Information gathered by researcher.

As mentioned earlier, data were gathered by the researcher at baseline Stage A, the three day period at the beginning of the project. A variety of instruments were used to gather data on Sarah in terms of the reading skills associated with success in reading. These instruments included Sarah's scores on formal and informal assessment tasks and the researcher's observational notes of Sarah in the Reading Miscue Analysis situations. Data were also gathered from interviews and questionnaires (see Chapter 3 for details of the data collection techniques).

Sarah's score of stanine 3 on the TORCH (ACER, 1984) test deemed that Sarah was "at risk" in terms of reading/comprehension (Pickering, 1996). More diagnostic details on Sarah's reading problems were revealed in the data yielded from the informal measures.

The informal measures used were the Researcher Designed Test on Phonology, observational notes of researcher in Miscue Analysis Tasks, Interview, Self Monitoring Portfolio and Questionnaire. The data gathered from these informal measures is summarised under the headings of limited knowledge of phonology, misconceptions about reading, and anxiety/ print avoidance as it was the researcher's contention that Sarah's reading problems related to a great extent to these areas.

Limited Knowledge of Phonology

The Researcher Made Test on Phonological Knowledge rendered specific information about Sarah's difficulties in reading, from a diagnostic viewpoint. The analysis of this data suggested a problem with Sarah's knowledge of phonology.

Some students with reading difficulties may have phonics, but they do not seem to use this knowledge in a systematic way when faced with unfamiliar words (Tunmer & Chapman, 1999; Westwood, 2001). They may not have had sufficient successful experience in using the decoding strategy to have confidence in its value.

The data on the Researcher Made Test on Phonology suggests that Sarah was unskilled in terms of phonemic awareness. At the beginning of the project Sarah demonstrated an inability to recognise easily and quickly, language structures such as common consonant blends, three letter blends, compound words and affixes. However, as is seen in Table 9, when untimed her recognition of these same language structures improved markedly.

A reader's poor use of phonemic awareness and thus inability to instantly recognise the language structure mentioned above detracts from their ability "to make sense of text and to gain momentum while reading the text" (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998, p. 10). Examples of this are seen in the RMA, passage 1, *The Miller, the Son and the Donkey* (shown below in Table 11). The researcher's observational notes when Sarah was reading this passage suggested that Sarah was to a great extent, word calling. Her reading style lacked fluency for a number of reasons. Firstly, she could rely on the automatic recall of a limited number of words as anchors for her reading to the end of each sentence. For example, Sarah had no difficulty in reading line two but miscued a simple word in line two, *broke*, because she had limited ability with two consonant blends at the beginning of a word. Secondly, she struggled with the mechanics of decoding unknown words. For example in line six, the word *contentedly* was read as *contly*, which obviously did not make sense to Sarah, and for this reason this section of the story was read with inappropriate intonation.

Table 11: Sarah's RMA of Text *The Miller, the Son, and the Donkey* (Author Unknown)

1	One day a Miller and his Son were driving their Donkey to market. They had not (bok)
2	gone far when some girls saw them and <u>broke</u> out laughing. "Look!" cried one. (tugin)
3	"Look at those fools! How silly they are to be <u>trudging</u> along on foot when the (carry)
4	Donkey might be <u>carrying</u> one of them on his back." (seem)
5	This <u>seemed</u> to make sense, so the Father lifted his Son on the Donkey and walked (contly)
6	along <u>contentedly</u> by his side. They trod on for a while until they met an old Man

	(srng)	(asamd)
7	who spoke to the Son <u>scornfully</u> . “You should be <u>ashamed</u> of yourself, you lazy rascal.	
		(walked)
8	What do you mean by riding when your poor old Father has to <u>walk</u> . It shows that	
9	no one respects age any more. The least you can do is get down and let your Father	
10	rest his old bones.”	
	(disted)	
11	Red with shame, the Son <u>dismounted</u> and made his Father get on the Donkey’s back.	
12	They had gone only a little further when they met a group of young fellows who	
	(muck)	
13	<u>mocked</u> them. “What a cruel old Man!” jeered one of the fellows. “There he sits,	
	(confat)	(sumble)
14	selfish and <u>comfortable</u> , while the poor Boy has to <u>stumble</u> along the dusty road to	
15	keep up with him.” So the Father lifted the Son up, and the two of them rode along.	
	(towson)	
16	However, before they reached the market place, a <u>townsman</u> stopped them.	
	(crates)	
17	“Have you no feeling for dumb <u>creatures</u> ?” he shouted. “The way that you load that	
18	little animal is a crime. You two men are better able to carry the poor little beast than	
19	he you!”	
20	Wanting to do the right thing the Miller and his Son got off the Donkey, tied his	
21	legs together, slung him on a pole, and carried him on their shoulders. When the	
	(secle)	(fitted)
22	crowd saw this <u>spectacle</u> the people laughed so loudly that the Donkey was <u>frightened</u> ;	
23	kicked through the cords that bound him and, falling off the pole, fell into the	
	(down)	
24	river and was <u>drowned</u> .	

Thirdly, words that began with a two letter consonant blend (for example, *broke*, in line two; *trudging*, in line three), and words made up of more than two syllables (for example, *comfortable* in line 14) frequently appeared to be problematical. Fourthly, Sarah had difficulty with word endings. In some cases word endings were ignored, so *seemed* in line four was read as *seem*. There were instances where word endings were changed, so that *walk* in line eight was read as *walked*. At times there appeared

to be an over-reliance on the visual information in initial word positions, so that in line five *seemed* was read as *seem*.

Sarah's poor phonemic awareness meant her reading was "word calling." In "word calling" she was relying too much on one cueing system, the graphophonic. This was problematical since her knowledge of graphic phonics was limited. Sarah did not monitor the story line as she read. Consequently her comprehension was basic and she was unable to predict what an unfamiliar word might be.

Misconceptions About Reading

Much of the data in Stage A of the project suggested that some of Sarah's difficulties arose from, or were compounded by, her misconceptions about various aspects of reading. In other words, Sarah seemed to have developed an erroneous idea of the reading process. Indeed, there appeared to be a fundamental deficit in her knowledge of what success in reading required.

Current writers have noted that for some individuals, difficulties with reading are associated with their misconception of what the reading process involves. Some writers contend that such misconceptions represent developmental discontinuities (Clay, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Westwood, 2001).

For example, a close look at the researcher's observational notes of the RMA passage on Table 11, *The Miller, the Son and the Donkey* (above), revealed that Sarah's reading of the passage resembled an attempt to process the surface text features: the letters, sounds, the known blends and known words without becoming involved with the breadth of the author's ideas. This observation of Sarah reflected her somewhat limited view of reading expressed in the first interview, that is, "reading is saying words."

In retelling the story of the passage referred to above, Sarah was, with some prompting, able to recall in correct sequential order, what each character had said and done. However, Sarah had missed the deeper implied meaning of the story (that you cannot please all of the people all of the time). The final miscue, that is, *drowned* read as *down*, led Sarah to believe that the donkey fell "down" into the river, rather

than the accurate conclusion that the donkey drowned. This was in line with the work of Nicaise & Gettinger, (1995) who contend that when asked to summarise a text, non-strategic readers often recite sentences from the text without conveying the full meaning of the writer. Again, these observations reflect Sarah's view of reading expressed in the first interview (see Appendix 4), that reading is saying or pronouncing words.

A close look at a second example of RMA, Stage A, Passage 2, of approximately 150 words, from Chapter 8, of Sid Fleishman's (1986) *The Whipping Boy* indicated Sarah's numerous miscues despite the fact that the researcher had given some background information, as described below.

Prior to reading the opening paragraph of Chapter 18 of *The Whipping Boy* (seen below), the researcher provided the background context by giving a synopsis of this story, Chapters 1 to 17. Observation of the RMA record sheet shown in Table 12, indicated that this book, recommended as appropriate for fifth grade, was obviously quite difficult for Sarah to read. The pattern of miscues recorded below illustrated the difficulty of this passage for Sarah. In 50 percent of the miscues the preceding context was used to predict words.

Table 12: Sarah's RMA of Text: The Whipping Boy (1986) by Sid Fleishman, Passage 2, Chapter 18

	(n, cobd) enormous
1	As soon as the wheels rattled on <u>cobbled</u> streets, Jemmy felt an <u>immense</u> sense of
2	relief. This was his turf, the city, and he knew more places to hide than a rat.
	s/c (n, about)
3	Coming close to the grounds of the fair, he saw <u>pri/son/ers</u> in chains going <u>aboard</u>
	(n, const)
4	a ship. It was a <u>contrast</u> to the festive stalls and fun of the fair.

<u>cobbled</u>	immense	<u>aboard</u>	<u>contrast</u>
seller	<u>fowl</u>	<u>juggler</u>	along
<u>copper</u>	crowd	<u>battered</u>	<u>hauling</u>
out	listening	stomach	<u>pump</u>

Only six (fowl, juggler, hauling, battered, aboard, contrast) were new to Sarah. The words: cobbled, copper and pump would have been familiar since they were introduced in the reading of a previous passage on colonial settlement. The remaining seven words were familiar to Sarah since they were on the list of most frequently used words. Therefore, it seems that in the reading of this passage the retrieval of meanings for orally recognised words was present, but seemed less important than retrieval of words from partial phonetic information.

Summary of Sarah's Skills Based on RMA

Sarah was able to read narrative material intended for third graders with 95 percent accuracy and she exhibited good comprehension. However, she could not successfully read materials intended for use in the early secondary years, it seemed due to difficulties described in this chapter, for example, the lack of factors such as: instantaneous word recognition, context-facilitated automatic decoding, and strategies to integrate vocabulary knowledge.

Since Sarah could read with comprehension when she recognised more than 90 percent of the words, we can assume her comprehension difficulty derived more from the lack of available attention to comprehension than a lack of comprehension skills.

For Sarah, reading was a word-by-word process. The strain that visual processing of print placed on her attention made it impossible for her to sound out words while concentrating on meaning. She needed to develop skills both in blending of sounds so that words could be recognised instantaneously, and in the use of the context of a particular text. She also needed to learn how to integrate vocabulary knowledge so

that the recognition of words would be transferred from one situation to another. She needed practice in the skill of chunking print into larger units. In summary, Sarah needed the ability to recognise more words immediately (without conscious attention). She needed the ability to utilise flexible fix up strategies (for example, context clues), when a strategy such as sounding out proved to be unsuccessful.

Another of Sarah's misconceptions was that reading is a matter of saying words without using the meaning or structure of the text or structural analysis of words. This misconception was obvious when the interview seen in Appendix 4 was administered. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, when asked what is reading?, Sarah replied: "saying words, pronouncing words." No mention was made to factors such as getting meaning, thinking about meaning, focusing on sounding out words or on finding new words.

Secondly, again in the interview situation when asked, "What do you do when you come to a word you don't know?", Sarah replied: "Sound it out." No mention was made, for example, of thinking about that word in the context of the text or sentence, or on making an educated guess or thinking about its meaning.

Affective Factors – Impact of Reading Failure

Children who repeatedly fail as readers may begin to believe they are incapable of success, so they lose confidence and motivation (Rasinski & Padak, 2000). In Sarah's case, for example, as is indicated in the interview schedule (Appendix 4), her perception of reading at Stage A was limited to "saying words, pronouncing words." As mentioned earlier, she did not fully understand what the process of reading involves. It was clear that she needed to learn and practise more effective reading strategies.

Poor readers become reluctant readers, since reading entails a great deal of mental effort and gives so little satisfaction in return (Critchley, 1981; Høien & Lundberg, 2000). Such attitudes to reading were made clear by Sarah in the interview where she says: "[I] hate it," "[I'm] not very good [at it]" and "[I] never read for pleasure." In saying that "[I'm] not very good [at it]" Sarah's comments seemed to be

suggesting a faulty attribution with regard to reading. She needed to realise her role of personal effort (as opposed to innate ability) could enhance her reading.

Poor readers fail to try to make use of context. They fail to ask for help (Nicaise & Gettinger, 1995). Evidence of Sarah's non-strategic behaviour is seen in Table 13, on her Self Monitoring Portfolio presented below where there is no indication at Stage A of her, for example, reading the topic sentence for a main idea or attempting to use contextual clues.

Table 13: Sarah's Responses: Self Monitoring Portfolio adapted from Weaver (1994, p. 236)

Put a tick beside the sentence that is most like you.		
1.	When I read:	
	.....	I like to question why characters do what they do.
	..✓..	I never question why characters do what they do.
2.	When I read:	
	.....	It is easy for me to repeat in words what I have read.
	..✓..	It is hard for me to repeat in words what I have read.
3.	When I read:	
	..✓..	I like to have pictures in stories I read.
	.....	I don't care if I have pictures in stories I read.
4.	When I read:	
	.....	I look at the topic sentence in each paragraph
	..✓..	I don't look at the topic sentence in each paragraph.
5.	When I read:	
	.....	I think about how the story line might go.
	..✓..	I don't think about how the story line might go.

Observational notes recorded during the RMA session suggested Sarah experienced a high level of anxiety associated with her reading difficulty. Differences were noted in Sarah's general attitude and body language when she read without an audience in

guided silent reading and when she read with an audience in shared reading. For example, Sarah appeared to be at ease and happily agreed to do silent reading. However, when engaged in shared reading tasks her posture tensed, her face flushed and she was wringing her hands under the table.

Working with Sarah during Stage B

Introduction.

As mentioned earlier, this project had two foci. Firstly it investigated how particular reading intervention programs help junior secondary school students. Secondly it highlighted the characteristics of these reading intervention programs that contribute to change in students.

This section is a summary of constructive feedback given to support Sarah's ongoing analysis and reflection on her reading. Included are transcripts of examples of effective problem-solving strategies, used by Sarah in authentic reading situations. The tutor endeavoured to connect reading materials to Sarah's personal learning needs, through ongoing dialogue with Sarah about texts and Sarah's developing reading skills in this context. The focus was on joining Sarah in her word problem-solving activities. "We can do this part together, Sarah," was said frequently, especially in the early sessions. The tutor provided lots of praise specifically for the approach she used when Sarah initiated any word problem-solving.

It was obvious at the beginning of this first intervention that Sarah needed reassurance that the tutor and she would work together to help Sarah succeed as a reader. Reassuring comments and specific reference to helping Sarah learn word problem-solving skills appeared to bolster Sarah's confidence, keep her attentive and prevent her from giving up on reading.

The notion of affirming Sarah with specific feedback about the strategies that she was using and could be using was in line with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning which emphasises that an effective context for facilitating the development of reading skills involves socially patterned interaction and feedback (Johnston, 1998; Wertsch, 1998). From a Vygotskian perspective, reading has its social basis not only

in the conventions of its symbols, but in the scaffolding (Bruner, 1966) to readers in the form of feedback which focus on strategies. The individual's mental functioning in reading, for example, develops through experience with cultural tools (language, materials) in joint problem-solving with more skilled partners working in the zone of proximal development (Lyons, 2003). During the intervention at Stage B, the tutor was the more skilled partner who provided the framework in which the participant could analyse and reflect on her own reading. The examples are representative anecdotal, observational notes on Sarah's developing reading skills, her changing attitude to reading as a skill and her changing attitude to herself as a reader.

As mentioned earlier, any reading texts utilised during this stage were tagged with a 'post it' note to remind Sarah of focus skills for a given fortnight (see Table 14).

Table 14: Sarah's Responses: Fortnightly "Fix Up" Skills During Stage B and the Beginning of Stage C

"Fortnightly Fix Up Skills"	Start of Stage B	+ 2 weeks	+ 2 weeks	+ 2 weeks	Start of Stage C
Skim heading, main words	✓				✓
Sound out word beginning		✓			✓
Chunk words			✓		✓
Self correct for punctuation		✓			✓
Read ahead if it helps				✓	✓
Think and visualise as you read			✓		✓
Look back if it helps					
Predict what you think comes next				✓	✓
Read smoothly	✓				✓
See small words within bigger words				✓	✓

Included here are four examples of transcripts which were collected in week 3 of Stage B, during the recording of a Running Record where 'post it' notes were used to remind Sarah of particular strategies to use.

Example 1 (Week 4, Stage B)

SARAH: (reading) “Holding her beach bag, she walked along the sand til her shoes were skod.”

TUTOR: “I’m glad you stopped; why did you stop?”

SARAH: “Because ... her shoes were skod ... does not make sense.”

TUTOR: “What would make sense?”

SARAH: “... her shoes were sod; no, that’s wrong.”

TUTOR: “Look at the fix up tag!”

SARAH: “... sound out the beginning of the word.” So... so... soaked. Yes, that fits.”

SARAH: (reading) “Holding her beach bag, she walked along the sand til her shoes were soaked.”

In the preceding conversation, the tutor’s feedback and the use of the ‘post it’ notes enabled Sarah to think differently and act. The tutor did not tell Sarah the word *soaked* but suggested looking at the fix up tag as a way of thinking about alternative ways to solve the word problem.

Example 2 (Week 5, Stage B)

SARAH: (reading) “Eric was jolted abrtly from his dream.”

TUTOR: “Why did you stop?”

SARAH: “Because the sentence is mixed up. There’s a word I need to ... chunk.”

TUTOR: “Have a go!”

SARAH: “ab rupt ly; abruptly.”

TUTOR: “Look at the fix up tag!”

SARAH: “Think and visualise as you read. Yes ... abruptly ... that makes sense.”

TUTOR: “Well done! Read the whole sentence now!”

SARAH: “Eric was jolted abruptly from his dream ... makes sense.”

The feedback Sarah received during the preceding problem-solving task appeared to strengthen her resolve and motivated her to continue using both the *chunking* approach and the technique of visualising while she continued to read. This is apparent in the following transcript:

Example 3 (Week 6, Stage B)

SARAH: (reading) “As his hand reach-ed out to shut off the in-trusive sound of the al-arm, Adam bang-ed the clock on to the floor.”

In this reading activity Sarah’s chunking of the words *reached*, *intrusive*, *alarm*, *banged*, though slow and deliberate, enabled Sarah to reach the end of the sentence, without any input from the tutor. Further encouragement from the tutor, seemed to empower Sarah to read on with success.

TUTOR: “Great Sarah! Now, look at the other skill on the fix up tag, and read on.”

SARAH:
(looking at fix up tag) “Think ... vis ...ualise as you read.”

SARAH: (reading) “He picked up the clock and stum...bled to the bath...room. After a shower he head...ed to the kitch...en for toast and Vege...mite.”

The extract above is in line with the following quote: “If feedback reinforces progress, learning gains are forward thrusting. When gains are made by systematic

reinforcement, teachers can observe the processes of movement through the zone of proximal development” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 72).

In the present study the tutor continually reminded Sarah of the positive word problem-solving activities in reading that she had already achieved. Blanket statements of praise such as “well done,” were avoided. Instead the tutor conveyed the message that success is contingent on a certain adherence to the problem-solving abilities that matched the fix up tags relevant to the particular stage of the intervention program.

Example 4 (Week 7, Stage B)

In discussion with Sarah the tutor at this point emphasised that there were now nine fix up skills to be used. The tutor reassured Sarah of her growth in skills so far, using examples of transcripts of text Sarah had successfully read in the past seven weeks and her effective use of the nine skills. At this stage of the intervention program it was obvious from Sarah’s body language that her confidence in reading had been bolstered. She sat upright when reading and initiated discussion about the content of material read. She frequently smiled when she struggled with a word and then self-corrected. These behaviours were in direct contrast to behaviours evident at the beginning of the study. Sarah’s reading of the passage below created an opportunity for her to have a successful experience in terms of interaction with a text.

The text used was entitled: *Introduction to Tourist Brochure Brisbane* and read as follows:

Example 5 (Text on Tourism)

Visualise a city of two *million* people. An *unusual* city, with a *personality* of its own. A major city with a *relaxed lifestyle* and a *subtropical climate*.

Brisbane is a city by a bay, a city of hills, and its *skyline* from the river is *amazing*. It has cool *outdoor* bistros which are *famous* for *seafood* and *tropical* fruits. The old *Queenslander houses* on stilts are as *charming* as they look on *postcards*.

Sarah's comments before reading this text indicated that her use of most of the fix up skills was now second nature. Looking at the text above the tutor began a discussion as follows:

TUTOR: "What should you do when you first look at this text, ... before you actually begin reading it."

SARAH: "Look at the heading ... scan for key words."

TUTOR: "What is the text about?"

SARAH: "It's a tourist brochure ... it will have good things to say ... weather that's good ... things to do."

TUTOR: "Great Sarah. You have now just used some of the skills we've practised lately."

SARAH: "Mm... looking at the heading and main words ... predicting how the text will be set out ... what it probably says."

TUTOR: "Would you like to underline where you see small words within bigger words?"

At this point Sarah underlined all the words which are presented in italics in the above passage. This indicated that Sarah was now much more aware of word analysis. She was able to see small words in bigger words.

Sarah at the Conclusion of Stage B

As noted earlier at the conclusion of Stage B, Sarah's stanine score on the TORCH Test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984) was 4 compared with 3 at Stage A. However, other measures used revealed a great deal more information regarding Sarah's attitude to reading and to herself as a reader, and information on Sarah's development and use of reading related skills. The sample of RMA on Table 15 and follow-up retelling of the story revealed rich data on Sarah's comprehension skills. In reading a passage of 28 lines, Sarah's fluency had improved markedly. There

were five words which presented a problem. However, with three of these five words Sarah appeared to pause and use context before decoding correctly.

Table 15: Sarah's RMA of Text: The New Boots (Author Unknown)

1	I recall a most unhappy time when my father came
2	to the conclusion that I needed a lesson. Now you
	P (5 sec.)
3	may <u>understand</u> , as I do now, how hard it must have
4	been to keep a family of five children neat and tidy.
5	We all wore boots, shoes being only for the well-to-do.
6	It happened that I wore mine out much too quickly
7	for my father's liking. True, I would slide behind
8	the carts as they went along, and kick and dance as
9	any child would, but the fact was I wore my boots out
	P (5 sec.)
10	more <u>quickly</u> than did my sister and brothers.
11	One Saturday Father took me to get a new pair.
12	How pleased I was to be getting a new pair before
	\$ entd
13	the others! We <u>entered</u> the shop and my father asked
	\$ van
14	for a pair of <i>boy's</i> boots to fit me. In <u>vain</u> I cried,
15	telling him I would be more careful if only I could
16	have girl's boots, but my tears had no effect on him
17	and boy's boots I had, fitted with tips and blakeys.
18	As soon as we got home he put studs in the soles.
19	Oh! the noise they made. I felt terrible. The other
20	children laughed, and I cried myself to sleep for many

21	nights.
22	Those boots would <i>not</i> wear out. I kicked with
	P (10 sec.)
23	them and I slid with them. In fact I did my <u>utmost</u>
24	to make them wear out, but they would not. At last
25	I grew out of them and they were handed down to
26	one of my brothers. I need not tell you that this
27	lesson taught me to be more careful with my next
28	pair of girl's boots!

Key to Miscues

P	indicates reader paused for a number of seconds
\$	indicates a non-word
—	indicates words where there was a problem

Sarah had developed a positive attitude to reading, saying in the interview: “I like it [reading] more now.” “I am getting better [at reading].” Sarah commented that she had especially liked the folk literature read during the sessions. She had evidently appreciated the familiarity and relative comfort in reading the favourite texts of folk literature. This occurred in the paired reading of a particular text and the follow-up familiar reading of the same text the following day. Sarah’s enthusiasm for reading this genre was evident by her eager approach to the reading of texts and her follow-up chatter about, for example, the various characters and the moral message that this literature delivers. For example, in the interview Sarah commented: “I enjoy stories like Aesop’s, *The Tortoise and Hare*, where animals play the parts of humans.” Further, Sarah said she “enjoyed fables from different countries.” “You often see in these stories that people all round the world think the same things.”

Secondly, Sarah alluded to her own improved reading skills. She indicated that her reading skills had been enhanced by the predictable patterns of story lines in folk literature. For example, Sarah said when reading such texts that one can predict and hypothesise that certain “characters will act a certain way.” At the start of a story “the goodies are bossed around by the baddies, but in the end, the goodies have the best things happen to them.” Certainly by the end of Stage B, Sarah’s reading-related skills had improved.

Similarly, an examination of an example of a RMA passage of approximately 200 words, *The Boy Who Kept His Finger In The Dyke* (see Appendix 6) suggested an improvement in Sarah's reading and comprehension skills. Sarah was no longer word calling and she frequently read sentences which were syntactically and semantically correct. Despite some miscues, sentences as finally produced, carried the correct meaning. On the occasions where non words were read, these bore graphic similarities (for example, 'histrrians' for 'historians'). Such non words fitted the text semantically and syntactically. The RMA records at this stage of the study suggested that Sarah was now using valuable word attack skills. One example of this was her ability to break words into syllables and therefore to correctly pronounce such words (e.g. sus/pect/ed). In this passage Sarah was not only blending consonants at the beginning of a word (e.g. strengthened), she was blending a consonant digraph in the medial section of a word (e.g. cherished). However, she was still experiencing difficulty blending two consonants in the medial section of a word (e.g. 'reclaimed' was pronounced 'recamed').

In retelling the story Sarah was able to recall with accuracy the details of the various characters and their links with the chain of events. For example, she gave clear descriptions of the man-made dykes and the purpose that dykes served. It seemed that Sarah was able to engage in higher order thinking about the story line. For example, she talked not only about the protagonist, Hendrik, and his bravery, but also the deeper meaning of the story, i.e. that Hendrik was an important person in the history of Holland.

Working with Sarah During Stage C

During Stage C Sarah moved well beyond the folk literature used during Stage B. Time was spent reading descriptive texts applicable to a variety of curriculum areas. Time was also spent reading rich narrative texts which focussed on human relations associated with a theme on racial prejudice. For example Sarah encountered texts which threw open differing viewpoints and provoked open discussion on issues that students would recognise such as lived experiences of bullying and prejudice. It was evident that Sarah identified with the life experiences of the characters in the texts, empathising with their hardships.

From the observation notes recorded during the first two weeks of Stage C, clearly Sarah's use of the nine "fix up" strategies incrementally introduced in Stage B were now second nature. Sarah's confidence in her competence as a reader was evident in her enthusiastic approach to reading tasks. She commented that she now "... liked solving word problems ..." as she read. It was clear that she had taken the responsibility for the improvement in her reading skills.

Sarah's progress in two distinct areas was monitored. (Feedback was given to her each week of this stage of the project.) Firstly, through the audio taped dialogues of sessions in the Meta Language Awareness Program, Sarah was monitored in her ability to formulate "teacher type" questions, her ability to answer questions and her ability to summarise. These were assessed and scored according to criteria for questions asked (Barrett Scale: 3 Inferential Comprehension, adapted from Kemp, 1993); that is, questions which required explicit information, prior knowledge or implicit information (Appendix 7). Secondly, again during each week at this stage of the intervention, Sarah's performance and attitudes in the following areas were investigated:

- proficiency in applying the strategy of prediction, using a variety of texts;
- self-reported use of reading strategies gathered in an interview;
- responses to questionnaire on self-efficacy of skills in reading.

These data were recorded according to the procedures described in Chapter 3 under the heading, Measurements Taken During Stage C. Each of these components of data collection is elaborated below.

Dialogues of sessions in the Meta Language Awareness Program

During Week 1 and 2 of this intervention the tutor needed to provide prompts, models and feedback to Sarah on her use of cognitive strategies during the dialogues. The tutor took the role of a "sympathetic coach" (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), as is demonstrated in the examples of dialogues associated with expository texts, in both questioning and summarising given below:

Questioning (Week 3, Stage C).

TUTOR: “What would be a good question about the snake charmer that starts with the word ‘why’?”

SARAH: (No response.)

TUTOR: “How about, Why is the snake charmer not afraid to handle the snake? Now your turn.”

SARAH: “The snake charmer hold its middle of back, ah, why? That doesn’t sound right!”

TUTOR: “Take your time with it. You want to ask about how the snake charmer should hold the snake; start with the word ‘how’.”

SARAH: “How should the snake charmer hold the snake?”

TUTOR: “Excellent Sarah.”

It was evident in this excerpt that when Sarah gave no response, she needed the additional prompting from the tutor.

Summarising (Week 4, Stage C).

In the following excerpt the tutor’s prompts encouraged Sarah to elaborate on a response given to the request to summarise an expository text.

SARAH: “It’s about Sri Lanka, ah ... the people there and crops they grow.

TUTOR: “Well done, Sarah. But I think there might be more we could add to the summary. There is more information that I think we should include. This paragraph includes information ...”

SARAH: “Yes, on tourism and the natural resources ... gems, used in jewellery.”

TUTOR: “Excellent ... you’ve included the main points now.”

This interaction in the Meta Language Awareness Program is in line with Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development. Vygotsky believed that one does not have to wait for a child to be developmentally ready before commencing instruction. Rather, emphasis is on the role of instruction in fostering development. Vygotsky (1962) wrote: “In the child’s development, imitation and instruction play a major role ... Therefore, the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions” (p. 104). Brown and Palincsar (1989) have built on Vygotsky’s view saying, “... experts begin by modeling the task for the child. They then assist the child and gradually cede more and more responsibility until the child can do the task independently” (p. 410).

Unclear questions and summaries which were too detailed, predominated the sessions in Week 3, while main ideas questions and summaries were most common by Week 7. Main ideas questions increased from 50% to 70% of the total. The quality of the summary statements also improved, with incorrect and incomplete statements declining from 20% to 10% and detail summaries from 30% to 5%. These declines in inadequate summaries were accompanied by an increase in main ideas summaries from 50% to 80% of the total. An example of inadequate questioning and summarising occurring in the early sessions, and improved versions occurring in the later sessions, can be found on Table 16 below.

Table 16: Examples of Questioning and Summarising with Sarah in Weeks 3 and 7

Week 3 of Intervention	Week 3 of Intervention
Question requiring clarification (ideal question)	Incomplete summaries (suggested appropriate summaries)
In Sri Lanka ah, the best literacy ah, of Asia? (Why does Sri Lanka have the highest literacy rates of Asia?) What are some of things ah people ah do in Kandy? (Why is Kandy a popular city to visit?)	It talks about it being rich but, ah it does not have everything. It does not have something. (Though Sri Lanka rich natural resources and a well educated population there are economic ills.)

Week 3 of Intervention	Week 3 of Intervention
Week 7 of Intervention Main idea questions Why is Sri Lanka successful in farming of rice? Why are Sri Lankan grasslands ideal for growing tea?	Week 7 of Intervention Main idea summaries It is about Sri Lanka, a former colony in Asia which today is working toward freedom for all. This paragraph tells us about the two main crops, rice and tea, how and where in Sri Lanka they grow.

Close inspection of the dialogues revealed examples of guided learning, where the tutor provided modeling, feedback and practice at a level which matched Sarah's current need. As Sarah became better able "... to perform some aspects of the task," the tutor "... increased her demands accordingly," ... until Sarah's "behaviour became increasingly like that of the adult model, who in turn decreased her level of participation and acted as a supportive audience" (Palincsar & Brown, 1984, p. 141).

By Week 7 Sarah averaged a score of 80% accuracy with tasks involving summarising.

Self-Reported Use of Reading Strategies

The interview data were subjected to a qualitative analysis to monitor change in strategy use and metacognitive awareness in Week 3 of Stage C and again in Week 7 of Stage C. For example, when asked question 1, what reading strategies did she mostly use in Week 3 of Stage C, Sarah responded: "I look back over what I've just read," or "I look ahead," or "I try to predict what should make sense." However in Week 7 of Stage C, Sarah's response was much broader: "It depends why I am reading the text ... sometimes I need to get the gist, then I skim for important words. Sometimes I need to read carefully because I need details ... Sometimes I even read aloud ... to really make sense of the text." When asked question 2, which words would she read if she had to read a text very fast, in Week 3 of Stage C, Sarah responded: "I'd look for key words and proper nouns. Again in Week 7 her response was broader; she added to these abovementioned strategies: "I'd look at heading,

sub-headings and topic sentences and I'd try to predict what the text is about. I don't read it word for word."

In response to question 3, what do you do after you finish reading, in Week 3 of Stage C, Sarah said she tried to visualise a story after she had read it. However, by Week 7, Sarah said that if the text is something I need to read over or think about later, I usually go back and underline key words or a topic sentence or number important points in the text.

In response to question 4, what did she do when she didn't comprehend a paragraph, in Week 1 of Stage C, Sarah's response was: "I re-read the paragraph." However by Week 8 of Stage C, it was apparent that Sarah employed a number of active strategies as she re-read the text, including clarifying problems as she went, linking ideas, identifying key information by underlining and sometimes diagramming important ideas.

Response to Questionnaire on Self-Efficacy of Reading Skills

As indicated on Table 17 below, Sarah's responses to the questionnaire in Week 2 of Stage C varied markedly to her responses given in Week 7, for example, by Week 7 Sarah expressed positive views about her use of specific reading strategies: "I try to work out words for myself," and "I read headings before I read." She also expressed more positive views about herself as a reader by Week 7, for example, "I feel I understand what I read;" "I am good at reading;" "I can retell lots of information;" and "I can remember the main ideas." The suggestion is that Sarah reported a higher level of self-efficacy in reading as a consequence of the intervention that occurred during Stage C of the project.

Table 17: Sarah's Response to Questionnaire on Self-Efficacy of Reading Skills During Stage C

	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom	
	Week 2	Week 7	Week 2	Week 7	Week 2	Week 7
I feel I understand what I read		✓	✓			
I notice when I make a mistake		✓	✓			

	Usually		Sometimes	Seldom
I can fix (self correct) a mistake	✓	✓		
I re-read when I get stuck	✓	✓		
I read on when text does not make sense	✓	✓		
I try to work out words for myself		✓	✓	
I read headings before I read		✓		✓
I am good at reading		✓	✓	
I can retell lots of information		✓	✓	
I can remember the main ideas		✓	✓	

Sarah at the End of Stage C

As noted earlier, by the conclusion of Stage C, Sarah's stanine score on the TORCH test (Mossenson, Hill and Masters, 1984) was 6 compared with a score of 3 at Stage A and a score of 4 at the end of Stage B. In a similar way Sarah's score on the Researcher Made Test on Phonemic Awareness improved. Progress was apparent in learning words, learning about words, and word recognition (flash and untimed) over the periods of intervention. Her recognition of words, both flash and untimed improved threefold between Stages A and B. This improvement was marked between Stages B and C.

Other informal measures used highlighted specific development in Sarah's reading skills and her attitudes to both the notion of reading and her perception of herself as a reader. Sarah's improved skills in reading and retelling a story are elaborated below.

A close look at the first example of a RMA passage of a narrative text of approximately 960 words *We Look After Our Own* (Table 18) conducted in week 4 of Stage C revealed that Sarah was not word calling; she was producing sentences which were correct in terms of syntax and semantics and she was reading primarily in meaningful phrases. Though in Part 1 there were self-corrections (e.g. in lines 3,

4, 8, 16, 19 and 24) and one occasion where a word was decoded after a 10 second delay (e.g. in line 34), this did not detract from the overall structure of the story. Similarly, in Part 2, though there were self-corrections (for example in lines 58, 64) and on three occasions where words were decoded after a five second delay (e.g. in lines 41, 47, 55), the author's syntax was preserved.

Table 18: Example of Sarah's RMA: A Modified Version of We Look After Our Own (Kath Walker)

Part 1		
	1	The old man sat, against the wall.
	2	His mind slipped away and back to his youth. Riding the hills.
		(s/c)
	3	smelling again the <u>sweat</u> of horse,
		(s/c)
	4	saddle and blanket, <u>mingling</u> again with his own human sweat.
	5	He smiled as he saw himself, much bigger then, not wasted away to
	6	skin and bones like now. They were hard days but good. He thought
	7	of his woman and how she stayed with him and the dust and flies and
		(s/c)
	8	droughts. <u>Rearing</u> the children, more often alone as he rode the track
	9	stockdriving.
	10	Always there to comfort him when he returned, until that day the
	11	spirit of death kindly but firmly touched her shoulder and stilled her
	12	heart and left him lonely and alone.
	13	Now he lived with his daughter. The drought was taking its toll. the
	14	farmer up the road had, that morning, shot six of his cows. stock food
	15	was too scarce and too dear to buy.
		(s/c)

	16	He shifted his <u>position</u> towards the right, to ease his aching back, as
	17	he watched his daughter carry two buckets of water up from the water
	18	bins. He wished he could help her. She looked older than she was.
		(s/c)
	19	His daughter <u>interrupted</u> his dreamings. 'Time for a bath, Dad', she said.
	20	His daughter came, put her strong arms
	21	around his waist and half carried, half dragged him to the bathroom.
	22	He had developed
	23	bed sores which, no matter what she did, would not clear up. She had
		(s/c)
	24	to carry him often now and it made her tired and bad- <u>tempered</u> .
	25	She knew her man was worried for her health and the thought of
	26	putting the old man into a nursing home, she knew, horrified him as
	27	much as it did her.
	28	Without telling her, he went to see their local member of Parliament,
	29	who promised to call and talk to his wife.
	30	A week later she woke with a splitting headache.
	31	She knew her father was
	32	dying. She spoke. He didn't answer, didn't seem to even hear her.
	33	She fled from the room and flung herself onto the sofa in the lounge
		(P – 10 secs.)
	34	and gave way to a sudden burst of <u>uncontrollable</u> crying.

Key to Miscues

(s/c) indicates words self corrected

(P) indicates reader paused for a number of seconds

Part 2		
	35	She never heard the man come up the path nor did she see him stand
	36	undecided at the open doorway.
	37	Mr. Knight entered the room and sat down on a chair and waited for
	38	her to calm herself. ‘I’m here to see about your dad,’ he said.
	39	‘We always look after our own’, she cried again, ‘but I can’t bear to
	40	watch my father die’. (P – 5 secs.)
	41	He calmed her as he talked of a <u>religious</u> nursing home in town.
	42	He talked of her own failing health and her husband’s worry about her and
	43	her father
	44	Shortly Mr. Knight returned to tell her that the nursing home was
	45	prepared to take her father.
	46	‘Take him to the front entrance, they will be waiting for you’, he said.
		(P – 5 secs.)
	47	He carried the old man out to the van, <u>surprised</u> at how light and
	48	thin he was. He placed him gently on the mattress and covered him
	49	with the sheet. ‘Will you be alright or should I come with you?’ he
	50	asked. ‘Do you feel up to driving the car?’
	51	She told him she could manage and thanked him for all his trouble.
	52	Her face wet with her falling tears, she pulled up at the front
	53	entrance of the nursing home. She took a look at her sleeping father,
	54	walked into the waiting room and rang the bell.
		(P – 5 secs.)
	55	She heard the rustle of the nun’s habit as she came down the <u>corridor</u>
	56	‘Yes dear, what can I do to help you?’ the nun asked with a smile.
	57	‘Sister, my name is Mrs Edwards. I have come about my father.
		(s/c)
	58	The sister’s smile <u>vanished</u> . ‘My dear there must be some mistake,
	59	we thought, that is we didn’t realise, I mean. Look dear, is your father
	60	lighter or darker than you?’ the sister asked.
	61	‘Why do you ask that sister?’ Mrs Edwards asked. ‘Are you
	62	prejudiced? Are you racist?’
	63	‘No, no, not me my dear,’ replied the sister. ‘You don’t understand.
		(s/c)
	64	It’s the other <u>patients</u> . They may say terrible things to your father and
	65	he may get hurt’.
	66	‘Sister, my father is dying and I can’t bear to watch him die. I can’t
	67	bear to do that,’ Mrs Edwards replied.
	68	‘I am sorry my dear but he might hear other patients saying terrible
	69	things and ‘
	70	‘Sister,’ Mrs Edwards broke in, ‘my father does not even know me
	71	and I don’t think he can hear what anyone is saying. We always look
	72	after our own but my father is dying sister, dying’.

Key to Miscues

(s/c) indicates words self corrected

(P) indicates reader paused for a number of seconds

Sarah's retelling of this same story revealed that Sarah was making use of metacognitive skills. She had a clear understanding of the deeper meaning of the essential human dilemmas described in the story. Sarah took her time composing herself and preparing to retell the story. It seemed that she was visualising the characters and their actions in the story before she began. She re-told the story with accuracy, giving appropriate detail and the correct sequence of events. When questioned about the characters and theme, again Sarah took her time before she responded. She gave accurate detail, describing each of the characters, particularly highlighting the difficulties of Mrs. Edwards, whose father was dying. Sarah made it clear that the theme of the story was racial prejudice. She clearly articulated the difficulty of Mrs. Edwards' plight in the context of the story.

Summary of Interview Data

The interview data at the end of Stage C indicated a change in Sarah's views on reading and her views on herself as a reader; for example Sarah said, when reading, "I am thinking about what the text says, like ... how this story fits the theme we've been talking about ... bullying and um ... racial prejudice." In other words, by her own admission Sarah suggested that when reading examples of narrative texts associated with *minority literature* such as Kath Walker's *We Look After Our Own*, one could expect to encounter the universality of human experiences such as racial prejudice.

As the following excerpt illustrates, Sarah also expressed the view that reading gave her an opportunity to understand more about herself and others.

SARAH: "The stories we've read lately have people in them like real people in life ... You know, some girls I know are really like the characters in *So Much To Tell You*."

TUTOR: "Tell me more."

SARAH: “The characters seem real, like people I’ve met. You can almost see the faces of the mean people. The way they treat others [in the story] makes me nearly cry ... you know that poor Aboriginal woman, Mrs. Edwards, and her dying father and the girl ... Marina, in *So Much To Tell You*.”

From this excerpt it appears that the teenage fictional characters encountered in the various texts described, mirror the reader’s experiences and provide helpful insights about herself (having empathy) for a protagonist who is having difficulty.

In summary, Sarah’s improved confidence in herself as a reader was evident in the following comments:

SARAH: “I’m better [at reading] now, especially when I’m reading with the small group and talking about the characters we’ve read about.”

Sarah’s perception of herself as a better reader was obviously linked to her enthusiasm for the themes in texts read. For example:

SARAH: “It’s been good doing short stories on the same topic, you know, bullying and racial prejudice and stuff. You can kind of guess where the story is going.”

The Self Monitoring Portfolio

The self monitoring portfolio revealed that Sarah was much more strategic as a reader at the end of Stage C. For example, when she read she used headings and subheadings to predict possible story content and used visualisation of the story and characters. It was obvious from her comments that she looked for the topic sentence of a paragraph to gain the main gist, and tried to predict what would happen next in a passage/story.

Sarah was “metacognitive” (Barchers, 1998) as she “thoughtfully tackled challenges in reading” (p. 57). For example, when encountering an unknown word, she would make comments such as: “what would make sense here;” “would this word sound

correct;” “does this word have structural parts I do know;” as she underlined part of a word (for example, the bowl in the word bowling); “I should try re-reading the entire sentence.”

Observation of a Further RMA

A review of the second RMA record sheet and researcher notes (seen in Table 19) implemented at the end of Stage C revealed substantial gains in Sarah’s reading/comprehension skills and that the text was at the right level with accuracy (taking into account self corrections in lines 3, 5, 11, 23, 32, 37, 48, 52, 63) at over 90% (Kemp, 1994).

Table 19: Example of Sarah’s Further RMA of Passage: A Modified Version of A Sense Of Belonging (Witi Ihimaera)

Part 1	
1	Although Pari had been working at the bank for over seven months, there were times
2	when she felt she didn’t really belong there. The feeling did not come often but when it did,
	(s/c)
3	it was enough to make her <u>uncomfortable</u> about being the only Maori in the bank, about
4	being somehow different. She would begin to feel sad. In a way it was all so silly because
	(s/c)
5	she got on very well with her <u>workmates</u> . But every now and then, that feeling would
6	suddenly grip her tightly.
7	Most of the time, she guessed, she was simply Pari to them, a girl who worked in the
	(P – secs.)
8	Bank. But sometimes she <u>suspected</u> she was regarded as the Maori girl who worked with
9	Them. She would see the small change in their eyes as they realised what she was and, for a
10	while, the usual ease between them would be strained.
	(P – 5 secs.) (s/c)
11	For <u>instance</u> , she had heard a customer comment to the <u>accountant</u> about how surprising it
12	was to see a Maori girl serving as a teller. The remark had been intended as a compliment.

13 But Pari had noticed how shocked the accountant had been and how he had looked at her as if
14 worried he had to watch the accuracy of her work.

15 Mr. Morley, despite all his fine talk about his 'team,' was the worse of the lot when it
16 came to making her feel different. He had been away on holiday when Mr Salter, the
17 accountant, interviewed her for a job and offered her a position in the bank. When Mr
18 Morley had returned, relaxed after his boating trip, Pari felt he did not see her as fitting into
19 his 'team' at all. He'd called her into his glass box of an office and, although his lips smiled,
20 his words didn't. We'll put you on trial for, say, three months. Then we'll see if you have
21 fitted in, all right?

22 On trial. Boy, he hadn't been kidding. For every day of those three months Pari had felt
(s/c)

23 his beady eyes behind her, from where he sat in his glass box. She used to feel afraid, shy,
24 angry and belittled in turn. She felt that he was just waiting for her to make one wrong move.
25 She felt that he didn't like her because she was Maori.

26 One day, she'd just finished serving a customer who wanted to withdraw money from his
27 Bank account. Pari turned to see Mr Morley standing behind her.

(P – 10 secs.)

28 Did you check that gentleman's account, Miss Wharepapa? Yes, I know with most of
29 our regular customers we do not need to check. Perhaps you do happen to know the
30 Gentleman concerned, and the state of his account but, in future, I would expect you to check
31 all the same . . .

(s/c)

32 Over afternoon tea, Pari discovered from Sharon that it was usual to check those accounts
33 held by certain customers. The customer in question had been Maori. Pari had put two and
34 two together, and hadn't liked the answer she'd come up with.

Key to Miscues

(s/c) indicates words self corrected

(P) indicates reader paused for a number of seconds

Part 2

35 One afternoon Pari saw a woman hasten into the bank and join the queue at Sharon's
36 booth. She was in her fifties and Pari could see she was in a hurry. She kept tapping her feet

(s/c)

37 on the floor, shifting from one foot to the other and looking round, as if irritated that no other
38 tellers were on duty.

39 At the time, Pari was helping Beth with some computer sheets. She saw Mr Salter had
40 noticed another teller was needed to serve the customers so she nodded to him and went to
41 open her booth. The woman did not notice her, so Pari called:

42 -May I help you, Madam?

43 The woman gave a sigh of relief. She stepped quickly from Sharon's queue to where Pari
44 was waiting. In her hand was her savings bankbook and slip. As she went to place them on
45 the bench she suddenly looked up and saw Pari and . . .

46 -Oh, she said loudly, and she pulled back from the bench.

47 -Madam? Pari asked.

(s/c)

48 Pari blushed with pain. She saw Sharon's shock as the woman walked back to her queue.

49 Numb with sadness, Pari closed down her till. She felt the eyes of her workmates on her as
50 she

50 went back to Beth.

51 -What on earth happened? Beth asked.

(s/c)

52 Pari did not answer her. She bent her head over the computer printouts. We've got work
53 to do, she muttered.

54 Then she heard something slam near her. She looked up. The queue at Sharon's booth
55 had diminished and the woman was standing there in front of the till. Sharon was staring
56 angrily at the woman. She had already slammed her till shut and now she slammed the
57 'closed' sign on the booth and walked away.

58 -If Pari isn't good enough for her, Sharon said to Beth, then I'm not either. Old bag.

59 Who does she think she is?

60 -You can't just leave her standing there, Beth answered.

61 -Why not? Sharon said.

62 Pari felt Sharon's arms squeezing her shoulders and heard how quiet the office had

(s/c)

63 become. Her lips began to quiver.

64 -Are you all right, Pari? Sharon asked.

65 Pari nodded. Then she saw Mr Morley come to the woman at the bench where she had

66 stayed. His face was stern.

67 -Would Madam care to step this way? He asked. (P – 5 secs.)

68 He pointed to his office. The woman nodded her head in a satisfied manner. She

(P – 10 secs.)

69 followed him into the glass box. A few seconds later, Mr Morley came out. He motioned to

70 Sharon.

71 -Miss Williams? He called.

72 Sharon folded her arms and turned her back to him.

73 -Bloody Morley, she swore. All he cares about is keeping the old bag's account.

74 -Miss Williams, please, he called again.

75 -You better go, you'll get the sack, Pari said.

76 -See if I care, Sharon answered.

77 She gave a dirty look Mr Morley's way. He began walking over to her.

78 Would you please bring me a customer's account. Here is the number.

79 -Why should I, Sharon answered. You didn't see what she did to Pari.

80 Just do as I say, he said as he turned back to the office.

81 Pari suddenly could not take it any longer. She stood up and walked to the washroom and

82 began to wash her face. Damn them all. Damn them for making her feel so different.

83 A few moments later, Beth opened the door.

84 -Here you are Pari, she said. Mr Morley wants to see you in his office.

85 -I'll just get my coat, Pari said crossly.

(P – 5 secs.)

86 Beth's eyes twinkled

87 -Don't be silly, she said. Now come on.

88 On the way out, Sharon suddenly hugged Pari.

89 -Guess what! She screamed. Mr Morley closed that old bag's account! He made out a

90 cheque for her and he said to her: We don't need your custom here, Madam. You should

91 have seen her, Pari. Her face went as red as anything! And she stormed out.

92 -You mean Mr Morley did that? Pari asked.

93 -Yes, Pari! Sharon answered.

94 She saw Mr Salter give her a wink and the others in the bank smile encouragingly at her.

95 -Miss Wharepapa? Mr Morley was standing at the door to his office. He ushered her in.

96 -Well, Miss Wharepapa, he began. Just a few words to say how upset we all feel about

97 what has happened. But we will not dwell on it. Has this sort of thing happened to you

98 before? No? Well if it does, you just come and see me about it. No person is going to treat

99 any of my girls as you have been and get away with it. Go now, those computer printouts

100 must be finished today.

101 Pari walked out of the office.

102 Sharon, Beth and others of her workmates crowded round her, grinning and comforting

103 her. She did belong, after all. Although there would still continue to be times when they

104 might feel different, she knew she belonged.

105 -Everyone *please*, Mr Morley said, let's get back to work shall we? Miss Wharepapa, I

106 will need those sheets by half-past three at the very latest.

107 The crowd dispersed. Beth and Pari hurried back to the computer printouts.

108 -That Mr Morley, Sharon grumbled.

109 -He's all right, Pari answered.

110 -All right? Huh. At least he could have given you the rest of the day off.

111	Pari smiled.
112	-But I don't want to be treated different, she said.

Key to Miscues

(s/c) indicates words self corrected

(P) indicates reader paused for a number of seconds

Sarah's reading was reasonably fluid despite the self corrections and the pauses in lines 8, 11, 28, 68, 69, 86. The self corrections appeared to have minimal effect upon meaning. The words which were self corrected or on which there was a pause were multisyllabic. It appeared that Sarah was able to chunk or syllabify words but took her time in doing so.

A different approach from the "retelling" procedure was used to check Sarah's comprehension, see questions for inferential comprehension (Appendix 7). Sarah's answers to these questions demonstrated that she was able to use information not explicitly stated in the story, her own intuition, her knowledge of the topic on prejudice and her personal experiences to make the underlying inferences about the characters in the text. For example, she clearly articulated events in the story where Pari did not feel part of the team of workers at the bank. Similarly, she quickly identified the woman in the text as being racially biased. She was able to articulate with clarity the obvious differences in Mr. Morley's actions in Part 1 compared with his actions in Part 2 when he showed empathy towards Pari and the situation of being the victim of racial prejudice.

Self-Efficacy of Skills in Reading

As indicated earlier, this questionnaire on self-efficacy shown in Table 20 was administered at the end of Stage C and again later at a post intervention stage which was four weeks after the conclusion of Stage C. This instrument served the purpose of providing a description of how the participants felt about their ability to direct their own strategies as readers at those two stages. Because the questionnaire was administered by means of the tutor asking the questions, probes for more information could be made. The data on the table above suggests that there was no change in Sarah's view of her skills between the end of Stage C and at the post-intervention stage.

Table 20: Sarah's Responses to the Questionnaire Administered at the End of Stage C and Again Post-Intervention Four Weeks After the Conclusion of Stage C.

	Most of the time		Sometimes		Not often	
	End of Stage C	Post-intervention	End of Stage C	Post-intervention	End of Stage C	Post-intervention
1 I feel confident about my reading	✓	✓				
2 I'm able to concentrate on making sense of the text	✓	✓				
3 I'm able to use before reading skills (predicting what text will be out)	✓	✓				
4 I'm able to use a few different cues to make sense of the text	✓	✓				
5 I'm able to use during reading skills (predicting; visualising; finding main idea)	✓	✓				
6 I'm able to use after reading skills (summarising text; evaluating predictions)	✓	✓				
7 I'm able to pick up implied meanings in texts			✓	✓		

An analysis of the tutor's notes, recorded when administering the questionnaire however, revealed that Sarah engaged in more positive talk about her skills post-intervention. In other words, when responding to the questions Sarah gave examples

of their applicability to her. With probing Sarah volunteered that her knowledge of genre was useful, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

SARAH: “I’m good now at picking up how the text works.”

TUTOR: “In what way?”

SARAH: “I can tell straight away if it’s a narrative or an expository text. In any case, I use headings well to predict.”

TUTOR: “Tell me more!”

SARAH: “If it’s a narrative there will be a heading which will give me an idea of what the story will be about. If it’s expository, I look for subheadings to see how details are divided up.”

TUTOR: “Excellent, Sarah!”

Summary

In summary, most educators would agree that productively “engaging struggling adolescent readers in lively print-rich class rooms is complicated” (Moore et al. 2000, p. 2). It is clear that reading development does not occur in a vacuum. It mixes with the ways adolescents identify the process of reading, their role as learners and contexts of the learning situation. An adolescent with a history of literacy difficulties often generates an identity that interferes with future literacy learning. Such an individual needs particular conditions in which to shape a new productive identity and to achieve success in reading.

The first focus of this project was to understand conditions associated with particular reading intervention programs designed to help struggling readers.

In the present study these conditions included one-on-one interaction between the tutor and participant during Stage B. This was followed by small group interaction with the tutor during Stage C. The instructional techniques rested to a great extent on the needs of individual participants.

At Stage A of the study Sarah had a limited knowledge of sight vocabulary, word recognition strategies and the systematic use of letter-sound patterns. She achieved a poor result on reading/comprehension measures and measures designed to access her knowledge of phonology. Not only was Sarah non-strategic in reading but she exhibited high levels of anxiety associated with her reading difficulty.

During intervention at Stage B, Sarah had an opportunity to develop specific skills and strategies in reading. All reading activities associated with the intervention were embedded within an overall context of meaningful and relevant texts. The instruction was designed to promote fluency and comprehension. By Stage C encouraging changes in Sarah's statements about reading were apparent. Instruction which focussed on metacognition resulted in Sarah's increased self-monitoring strategies, and ultimately enhanced comprehension of texts.

By the end of Stage C Sarah's reading/comprehension skills and her knowledge of phonology had improved markedly. Sarah had developed the particular skills required to search for meaning in texts. She was strategic in the reading process, confident in her approach and was making effective use of skills such as predicting, summarising and finding the main idea of a text.

The second focus of this project was to understand the characteristics of particular reading intervention programs that contribute to change in students. The one-on-one intervention sessions of the adaptation of the *Making A Difference* (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) program used during Stage B provided an ideal opportunity to focus on Sarah's weaknesses in reading. In these sessions Sarah received constructive feedback on authentic reading situations. There was an emphasis on the utilisation of ongoing dialogue with Sarah about texts and Sarah's developing reading related skills in this context.

The one-on-one interaction sessions at Stage B provided the appropriate context in which Sarah began to realise the need to pause and think as she read and make use of two particular strategies. Firstly, rather than attempting to process one word at a time, Sarah began to chunk print into larger units. In this way she was able to

recognise words immediately without conscious effort. Secondly, she began to use metacognitive strategies.

The first component was the incremental introduction of the nine ‘fix up’ strategies. For example, in the interview situation Sarah indicated that she had learned to adjust her approach to different text structures. In other words, when looking at text written in report genre she had to learn to focus first on text features such as headings, sub-heading and topic sentences in order to predict what the text was about.

The Meta Language Awareness Program at Stage C was directed toward developing in Sarah skills associated with metacognition. Key characteristics of this intervention contributed to observable change in Sarah’s reading. Characteristics such as tutor-participant interactions and explicit instruction in metacognition resulted in Sarah’s heightened self awareness as a reader as she made genuine attempts to improve her reading.

The second component was that the small group interaction provided Sarah with ideal opportunities to learn and refine specific strategies of questioning and summarising, which in turn enhanced her metacognitive skills.

The data gathered from tools such as Sarah’s self monitoring portfolio and interview transcripts at the end of Stage C revealed changes in both Sarah’s views of reading and views of herself as a reader. She made comments which highlighted her new perception that the process of reading required her to maximise her interaction with a text. For example, when encountering a difficult word she would make comments associated with metacognitive skills such as “what would make sense here?”

In conclusion, this project has provided insights into the efficacy of intensive reading intervention programs. A struggling adolescent reader such as Sarah can become a competent reader when specific conditions prevail. They need appropriate reading instruction in an environment that fosters opportunities for improvement through skills development. They need instruction characterised by skills which enhance fluency. A struggling adolescent reader also needs instruction in skills associated with comprehension. These skills include: using prior knowledge of content and

genre to predict; self questioning; creating mental images; summarising while reading. A struggling adolescent reader needs instruction in self-monitoring while reading so that they begin to pause and think as they read, ultimately making use of metacognitive skills. Metacognitive readers become active learners who build independence as they interact with text. They monitor their own thinking on the basis of self-knowledge and task knowledge. In the next chapter the summary of cross-case analysis is presented.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY OF CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter focusses on the reactions and responses to reading of eight female participants from a Year 8 cohort at the same school. It demonstrates that reading intervention programs can make a difference to the reading skills of the participants in a relatively short period of time.

At the beginning of the present research project one characteristic shared by many of the eight participants was an eroding set of beliefs about their abilities ever to achieve success as readers. As described in the last chapter, Sarah, for example, had come to believe that success in reading was beyond her reach. However in the six month duration of the project, and in an instructional environment that fostered both optimism for improvement and a self regulating approach to reading, Sarah gained reading self efficacy. Her TORCH test results collected at the three stages of the project revealed that her reading/comprehension scores had improved markedly.

Impact of Intervention at Stage B

As seen on Table 21 the intervention at Stage B had a favourable impact for all eight participants. All improved by at least one stanine from Stage A to the conclusion of Stage B while three, Thea, Fleur and Sevena, improved by two stanines for the same period.

Table 21: TORCH (1984) Test Results Collected for all Participants

Participants in Intervention B			
	Stage A	Stage B	Stage C
Fiona	3	4	4
Sintra	4	5	5
Sevena	3	5	5
Emily	3	4	4

Participants in Interventions B and C			
	Stage A	Stage B	Stage C
Sarah	3	4	6
Toni	4	5	7
Thea	3	5	7
Fleur	3	5	5

Impact of Intervention at Stage C

For three of the four girls, Sarah, Toni and Thea, who had participated in the interventions at both Stages B and C, there was a marked improvement in their reading between the Stages. Their TORCH (1984) stanine scores increased by two over this period. However, for Fleur, who had been involved in both interventions, the TORCH (1984) stanine score did not change between Stages B and C. Fleur was only able to attend two thirds of the sessions of the intervention at Stage C because of an ongoing medical condition and this appears to have restricted the impact of the intervention on her.

Even though Fiona, Sintra, Sevena and Emily were not involved with the intervention at Stage C, their TORCH (1984) stanine scores remained constant between Stage B and C, a period of twelve weeks, suggesting that the systematic, explicit instruction at Stage B had resulted in an enduring, though moderate, improvement in their reading skills.

Setting the Scene of the Participants' Reading

At the end of their respective introductory sessions, Sevena and Sintra told the tutor that they were interested in reading the recipe books brought in. Sintra said she liked looking at the pictures in the *Leggo Italian Cooking* book because she saw recipes that her “Nona” makes.

The tutor did the shared reading of *The Tin Soldier* (Andersen, 1975) first with Sarah then Fiona and later with Emily. Despite the fact that the tutor was “choral” reading with each individual, on each occasion the tutor was able to monitor to a great extent

their skills or lack thereof, in reading. In that context a great difference was obvious in the way these three girls read.

Sarah's reading was slow, breathy, laboured and barely audible. It appeared that she was very aware of making a mistake. Fiona read audibly, keeping up with the tutor in terms of accuracy and fluency. Emily, on the other hand, stumbled her way through the story. It was obvious that each girl enjoyed re-visiting the folk literature of Andersen (1975) which probably reminded them of their early childhood years.

At the end of the first session with Toni, she said that she was looking forward to coming to the forthcoming sessions. She said she was glad to be getting help with reading. She apparently dreaded the stress and embarrassment associated with grade-level texts when asked to read in round robin sessions in the whole class group of 30 students and in her Special English group of 15 students (which they had been attending prior to the present intervention).

In contrast to Toni, Thea and Fleur did not exhibit enthusiasm for the intervention. They appeared to be going with the flow; they were reticent to engage with the tutor; their body language indicated that they were pessimistic towards reading maybe caused by feelings of "learned helplessness, "... being entirely dependent on others for direction" (Lyons, 2003, p. 150) rather than by a general dislike of reading (Kos, 1991).

These excerpts from the research journal were recorded at the end of the first official day of working with the eight participants. The tutor had gone to the school with a box of books representing a wide range of genres. There were collections of recipes, myths, legends, fairy tales, science books. The idea was to help the participants see that reading is not just about set school texts. It was important to provide a chance for these individuals to see that reading happens in a variety of contexts; that reading texts are varied and are often accompanied by beautiful illustrations. These excerpts presented above represent interactions with the participants in the context of simply looking at a variety of texts.

These separate incidents exemplify the complex nature of what was learned about struggling readers in Year 8, who in every other way were socially adept and intellectually able. Sintra, for example, showed that a struggling adolescent reader could have an immediate connection with a text of a particular genre, the recipe book because of its link with her heritage. Sarah, Fiona and Emily demonstrated a wide range of differences in terms of reading fluency. They had been nominated by their school as being “at risk” of not reaching their potential because of under-achievement in reading. Thea and Fleur had obviously reached a stage in their lives where they were both frustrated and embarrassed by their poor skills in reading. To begin with they seemed to be not particularly enthusiastic about the intervention, probably due to feelings of helplessness when reading.

The excerpts shared above about the eight participants, serve as a fitting introduction to the recurring themes that have led me to form some generalisations about struggling adolescent readers. Although the history of each participant differs, there appear to be commonalities running through their school experiences that may have inadvertently acted to keep them at low reading achievement levels.

This study reveals that struggling readers in the early years of secondary school are complex. This was not surprising, given my previous experience working in English education programs in primary schools, in junior secondary schools and with under-graduate and post-graduate teachers at University. I had discovered that many struggling readers are indeed lacking in strategies and purpose when reading. In the light of the present study, and reading relevant literature I had become increasingly aware of two reflections. The first is that in their role in the University, lecturers must highlight for our future teachers that there are particular skills which expert teachers of reading must have. These skills are probably best summarised in the excerpt from Lyons (2003) as follows:

Expert teachers need

- The ability to assess students’ progress and identify roadblocks to learning;
- The ability to provide a dynamic, flexible scaffold that assist students in mastering new competencies;

- The ability to reflect before, during and after lessons on the effect that their teaching has had on enhancing student progress;
- The ability to make student experiences positive and rewarding (p. 168).

The second reflection is that certain conditions must exist for adolescent students with persistent reading difficulties to become successful engaged readers. Throughout these reflections are recurring themes that have led to the formation of some working generalisations about teaching adolescent students who struggle as readers.

General Findings

Prior to the commencement of this project either the school and in some cases, the parents of the participants were concerned about these participants' poor progress in reading. The participants had, in the primary school years, been variously examined by clinical psychologists, educational consultants, school psychologists and speech and language pathologists. These professionals had, by all accounts, administered over 30 different tests, some three times with a given child. Clinical psychologists tended to use word fluency or automatic word naming tasks, whereas educational consultants had administered tests including: Progressive Achievement Test (Comprehension) and Otis-Lennon School Ability Test Intermediate (1982) Form R. In the course of developing the eight case studies, it became clear that multiple factors had impinged on each student's reading under-achievement.

While some factors were apparent in varying degrees for more than one case, each case was unique in the way the factors intermeshed. Recurring themes have emerged from the individual cases. These themes are listed below under two headings. Firstly, themes that emerged early in the project and secondly, themes that relate to participants and the researcher during the interventions.

Themes that Emerged Early in the Project

1. Struggling adolescent readers have difficulties with reading because of their misconception of what reading involves.

2. Being a struggling adolescent reader for some individuals is related “to having a problem in a specific area of reading.”
3. Struggling adolescent readers endure reading-related anxiety.
4. Some struggling adolescent readers are caught in a cycle of passive failure and learned helplessness.
5. Struggling adolescent readers like to read when they have access to texts that initially motivate them to read because such texts are in keeping with their range of interests and levels of difficulty.

Themes that Relate to Participants and the Researcher During the Interventions

1. Adolescents who are developing as readers like to read when they have opportunities to develop a critical opinion of texts.
2. Adolescent individuals who have struggled as readers because of an ongoing “problem in a specific area of reading” can recover as readers.
3. It is possible for a teacher in a one-on-one or small group setting to provide learning opportunities that enable a struggling reader to become a proficient reader, in a relatively short period of time.
4. Struggling adolescent readers enjoy opportunities to share reading experiences with their teacher.

These themes are discussed in detail below.

Themes that Emerged Early in the Project

The above themes are elaborated below, not because they are thought to be unique but because they will most likely be recognisable to other teachers of struggling adolescent readers. Although adolescent readers do represent a wide range of abilities and habits, those of us who have worked closely with them may be beginning to solve the puzzle of who they are as a group by identifying some important commonalities across such students. Excerpts of individual’s reading

behaviour are included to exemplify the complex nature of the participants and their limited reading skills early in the project.

Struggling adolescent readers have difficulties with reading because of their misconception of what the reading process involves.

It is the contention of some writers that such misconceptions represent developmental discontinuities (Clay, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Westwood, 2001). In the present study there were four examples of such misconceptions evident in the participants' attempts at reading. These are elaborated below.

Firstly it seems that four of the eight participants (Sarah, Toni, Thea and Sevena) had an erroneous idea of reading. The data suggests that for them reading was "an attempt to process the surface features of text: the letters, sounds, blends and words without becoming involved with the author's ideas" (Ministry of Education and Training, 1991, p. 3). Such a misconception was evident in the interview transcripts in Stage A in the present study. For these four participants, reading was defined as "sounding out words" or "saying words." This particular misconception was also evident in the RMA transcripts. In many instances the dependence on converting visual information to sounds sometimes led the participants to reading non-words or reading a word which was graphophonically similar but still a miscue. For example, Sarah's reading of the passage in Table 11, demonstrates that she, like the other three participants mentioned above, sometimes was able to decode words to reach the end of a story but at the same time her miscues meant that she missed the author's deeper, implied meaning. This was especially evident when she summarised a text. Her miscues meant that she would often recite sentences from the text without conveying the full meaning of the writer.

Secondly, while reading was described by Toni and Thea as "remembering words;" little or no attention by these participants was given to remembering these words within the context of understanding the author's meaning of a text; little or no attention was given to word analysis. "Remembering words in isolation may be successful in the first few years of schooling, when books contain only a few words and words are supported by illustrations. However this technique grows increasingly

inadequate as texts become more complex ...” (Ministry of Education and Training, 1991, p. 3).

Thirdly several participants were unaware of the importance of the use of phonemic awareness as they read. In other words, they failed to either make use of or realise the merit of “... stretching out and slowly saying words so that each sound in a word can be heard ...” (Westwood, 2001, p. 2). In Stage A of the present study, both the data on word knowledge and the RMA record sheets indicated that participants such as Sarah, Toni and Thea had great difficulty in decoding new words because of their lack of application of phonemic segmentation of words. This is seen in the data summary for these three participants where their inability to blend, for example, three consonants at the beginnings of words and their lack of application of affixes is apparent. It is obvious in the RMA record sheets of Sarah, Toni and Thea that they struggled when they encountered multi-syllable words. Such individuals “need to learn how to hear the syllables break, so that words become easier to analyse and read” (Fountas & Pinnel, 2003, p. 373).

Fourthly, some struggling adolescent readers have letter/sound correspondences that they call on both appropriately and inappropriately when reading. Fiona and Emily were to a great extent, negatively affected by their reliance on sounding out. Sevena, on the other hand, used letter/sound correspondences efficiently to decode unfamiliar words, however, all three of these participants exhibited a lack of proficiency in self-monitoring their reading and independently making corrections.

Emily’s over-reliance on letter/sound correspondences meant that she often lacked automaticity in word recognition. Though there were a limited number of words she could recognise on sight, Emily relied almost entirely on her understanding of letter/sound correspondences when attempting to read. She sometimes distorted the sounds of words so they were unrecognisable to her. For example, she would attempt to read the word ‘devilish’ in the following manner: “da-e-v-i-l-i-sh.” In other words, each letter was sounded out as a single entity and so slowly that any blending of sounds was distorted. Moreover, she was inconsistent in her recognition of many sight words. She cued on the first letter correctly, but might substitute other words beginning with that letter and having similar length (e.g. yellow, yelling),

taking no notice of what word might fit contextually. Emily expressed concern that her reading did not make sense. This was related to the fact that decoding was so slow and often disfluent that “making sense” of a text was not possible.

Sintra tended to rely inappropriately on letter/sound correspondences. As a young child Sintra had apparently suffered multiple inner ear infections which resulted in transient hearing loss and delayed language development. Though her hearing was now normal she read at approximately the fourth grade level. Sintra was able to recognise a large number of sight words. However, she did not read for meaning. She tended to rely on structural analysis and, to a lesser extent, on grapheme/phoneme correspondences when she encountered unknown words. She frequently made guesses based on the initial letters of words. This sometimes resulted in substitutions of graphically similar words which then led to distorted meanings. Sintra stopped reading when she realised the text did not sound right. However, she quickly continued to read without attempting a correction. Her focus appeared to be getting to the end of a sentence as quickly as possible. Retelling tasks revealed not surprisingly, that Sintra had difficulty in comprehending what she had read.

Sevena relied on grapheme/phoneme correspondences, structural analysis and to some extent, use of context when she encountered new or difficult words. Though she had some code-cracking ability, her lexical knowledge was weak. Frequently when reading Sevena could pronounce a word, but did not know the meaning of the word. This was demonstrated when Sevena was reading a passage about a squirrel. Under an illustration of a squirrel holding a nut to its mouth was the caption, “*The squirrel uses its incisors to crack open the nuts.*” Sevena read the caption with only a slight hesitation on the word *incisors*. Later, when retelling the story of the squirrel Sevena said that the squirrel has hands that can open nuts. Sevena did not self-monitor when reading. Her goal appeared to be to reach the end of the passage as soon as possible. The interview data revealed that her perception of reading was “saying words.” No mention was made of getting meaning. However, Sevena rated herself as an “OK” reader and volunteered that she quite enjoyed reading both at school and at home.

Being a struggling adolescent reader for some individuals is related “to having a problem in a specific area of reading”

Emily had a very specific problem associated with a lack of automaticity in word recognition. For Toni the very specific problem was to do with faulty eye movements as described by Westwood (2001). Observations of Toni reading revealed that she frequently engaged in regressive sweeps of words encountered earlier in a sentence.

The background information on Emily suggested that though she was an individual of normal intelligence she had history of poor reading which was linked to a difficulty with automatic word recognition. The results of the Researcher Made Test on Phonology confirmed Emily’s difficulties with automaticity of word recognition. She was inordinately slow in both the flash recognition and the untimed recognition of words. The RMA records indicated that although a lack of rapid word recognition slowed Emily’s reading speed, word analysis skills were not a problem. Her ability to retell a story after it had been read indicated that Emily did not have difficulty in comprehending a story line and in giving a detailed description of characteristic of the people and events described in a story. However, Emily decoded words consciously and frequently too slowly so that ultimately she read at a slow rate. That was obviously a problem in mainstream secondary classes as Emily volunteered in the reading interview at Stage A.

TUTOR: How do you feel about reading? [School reading.]

EMILY: I hate it. I’m too slow. I never get finished.

The observation notes at the start of the project revealed that for Toni, difficulty with reading was associated with faulty eye movements. In some instances when reading a paragraph, Toni’s eyes would habitually move back again to early words in the paragraph to check that it was correct. These regressive sweeps are used to some extent by all readers when a text is difficult (Westwood, 2001). However, in Toni’s case the frequent regressive eye movement and much longer time spent on each fixation when the text was simple (Grade Two level text) meant that her attempts at

reading were slow and tiring for Toni as she was expending more mental effort than necessary. On other occasions Toni's eyes would move forward to scan ahead to a difficult word further along in a sentence.

In the interview at Stage A Toni made it clear that she was aware of her problems with eye fixation, although she did not use that term, as the following excerpt outlines:

TONI: "I sometimes look back to a word I've already read to check that I'm right or I look ahead to where I'm going to have trouble with something. Sometimes while I'm reading, I'm thinking about a word before I get to it or I'm trying to figure out that word."

Toni's description of herself reading clarified that when in the process of reading Toni's attention was divided. She was looking back to past words or looking ahead to a difficult word, well before her voice arrived at that word. The suggestion was that the emphasis Toni placed on past or impending words resulted in increasing pauses and false starts between known words. This habit of re-reading and reading ahead for Toni was also an expensive strategy, since it disrupted the flow of thought, as Westwood (2001) also describes. This was evident in her attempts to retell the story of texts which had been read in shared reading tasks and re-read in running record tasks. The RMA records showed a high incidence of false starts, repetitions and self corrections. The follow-up retelling of the story indicated that Toni's reading had been "barking at print" (Pickering, 1996) rather than an activity which resulted in comprehension of the story line and story details.

Struggling adolescent readers endure reading-related anxiety

Recurrent under-achievement in reading undermines confidence and encourages feelings of worthlessness and anxiety (Westwood, 2001). At Stage A of the present study not only were some participants aware of their struggle with reading they also suffered anxiety due to their reading difficulties. For some, the anxiety was described as being an issue during class when individuals were required to read

aloud, for others anxiety was associated with silent reading tasks. Excerpts of reading-related anxiety are outlined below under the headings of reading aloud and silent reading.

When Toni was asked how she felt about herself as a reader, her response was as follows:

TONI: "Not very good; I hate it when I stutter when I read ... I feel stupid in front of other people."

It was apparent however, after listening to Toni read, that "stuttering" was her way of describing her disfluent reading.

She was especially concerned about other people's perception of her because she could not read well.

TONI: "I'm no good at it. I hate it [reading] with others listening to me ... I feel dumb."

Anxiety in Toni's case seemed to impair her ability to make progress in oral reading activities as the following excerpt suggests:

TONI: "When I have to read out loud, I feel so scared, even though there are words I normally know in reading ... I just go blank."

Thea was open in elaborating on the problems of anxiety associated with poor reading:

THEA: "I hate it when we have to take turns reading aloud in the classroom. I worry about my turn coming up and sometimes when I do have to read I lose my place."

It seemed that for Thea the anxiety associated with having to read aloud was as frustrating as her lack of functional reading skills.

For Fiona the anxiety associated with reading aloud resulted in attempts to “escape” the situation where she had to read aloud.

FIONA: “When it’s my turn to read I’m scared in front of others, so I pretend to lose my place [in the book].”

For these individuals the general level of anxiety associated with reading aloud seems to be exacerbated by a fear or perception that other more capable readers around them would have pleasure in tormenting them. It appeared that for both Sarah and Sintra the anxiety associated with reading aloud caused a physical response, which can be seen in the observational notes during the miscue analysis sessions as well as from the interview data:

SINTRA: “I hate having round robin reading. I feel sick ‘cos I think I’ll be called on to read. Sometimes I shake and when I have to do it [read aloud]. My mouth is so dry I can’t speak properly.”

The debilitating nature of such anxiety can also be identified in the self reports where Fiona finally works out a word during a miscue analysis session in the first intervention:

TUTOR: “That was a fairly hard word.”

FIONA: “Yes it was.”

TUTOR: “It’s not a really long word. Why do you think you had trouble with it?”

FIONA: “I was feeling ... you know ... really blank ... kind of scared and I couldn’t think properly ... I had to make myself concentrate.”

TUTOR: “Then how did you eventually get the word right?”

FIONA: “I had to calm down so I could concentrate.”

Changes in both body language and a fluent style of reading were observed in Sarah and Thea in the period from Stage A of the project to the conclusion of Stage B.

Observational notes at Stage A indicated that both Sarah and Thea were flushed and wringing their hands when asked to read aloud at the beginning of the project. At this stage also their reading lacked fluency. It would be best described as choppy and breathy as they each struggled to reach the conclusion of a sentence. However through the regular shared reading sessions between each individual participant and the tutor, they were able to pick up the tutor's modeling of regular breathing and smoother reading style during the normal reading process. By the conclusion of Stage B, they approached the task of reading aloud with poise, achieving a fluent reading style.

This anxiety was also evident in silent reading tasks. The ability to do everyday reading tasks associated with written assignments seemed to be a concern for some participants. For example, at Stage A of the project, Sevena related the following when asked how she felt about reading:

SEVENA: "I find it difficult sometimes doing assignments."

TUTOR: "Mmm."

SEVENA: "Sometimes I just can't make a start ... you know because the reading's hard."

TUTOR: "What do you think about that?"

SEVENA: "I feel quite sad 'cos I feel stupid."

Some struggling adolescent readers are caught in a cycle of passive failure and learned helplessness

At Stage A when Thea and Fleur were interviewed regarding their sense of competency as readers, their self reports were found to be revealing because they were aware of their limited abilities in reading. The interview data indicated that despite their participation in Special English classes for the previous six months, they

lacked the repertoire of knowledge about the necessary skills for success in reading as the following examples indicate.

TUTOR: “How do you feel about reading for pleasure?”

THEA: “Well um, I really don’t do it, ‘cos I hate it and I’m no good at it. It’s always about stuff I don’t know about.”

TUTOR: “How do you feel about reading at school?”

FLEUR: “I don’t like it, I’m just not good at it, you know remembering everything; knowing all of that.”

It seemed that Thea and Fleur felt success in reading was beyond their control. They had come to believe that reading success was not within their reach. Bandura (1986), a social learning theorist, has said that the element of success is the greatest single predictor for engagement in school tasks. Bandura (1986) posits that success serves to further develop one’s sense of competence. By her own admission, Fleur’s skills in literacy had been tenuous since Junior Primary school, and was further complicated by the fact that she is not from an Australian background.

FLEUR: “We speak English at home, but we also have Mum’s mummy living with us and caring for us. She speaks a little English.”

The interview transcript from Thea suggests that feelings of incompetence are often rooted in reading experiences in the very early grades. These feelings become so entrenched that they persist into their secondary school.

TUTOR: “How do you feel about yourself as a reader?”

THEA: “Not very good ... I’ve never been any good at it, even at my primary school.”

And later there were indications of no interest in reading and a lack of explicit strategies for success in reading.

TUTOR: “When you are reading and you come to a word you don’t know, what do you do?”

THEA: “Um ... [as she shrugged her shoulders] ... sound out.”

TUTOR: “Anything else?”

THEA: “No ... look at the start of the word ... maybe.”

The construct of passive failure and learned helplessness come from a line of psychological inquiry known as attribution theory (Fenwick, 1995; Singhal & Kanungo, 1996; Brozo & Simpson, 1999). In other words, students who repeatedly fail as readers may begin to believe they are not capable of success, so they lose confidence and motivation. In some cases they rapidly assume that reading is impossible for them. They become non-strategic as readers. They may even display a type of learned helplessness in the face of a task they do not fully understand (Mikulincer & Averill, 1995). Some such students attribute their poor performance in reading “to uncontrollable factors, such as luck, the task, the teacher and are likely to give up in the face of failure” (Brozo & Simpson, 1999, p. 403).

The key to helping individuals break the cycle of passive failure in reading is to lead them to attend to the connection between effort and outcome (Brozo & Simpson, 1999).

Struggling adolescent readers like to read when they have access to texts that are in keeping with their range of interests

In the present study it was apparent that some of the participants did not lose interest so much in reading per se, but were not interested in the texts which were selected on their behalf by their class teachers. For example, in the interview situation Sintra, Sevena and Emily said that they didn’t enjoy reading much at school because “lots of the books are about stuff I’m not interested in” (Sintra); “I don’t really care about that stuff” (Sevena); “I don’t like those type of books” (Emily). Worthy (1996) emphasises the value of having available to reluctant readers, material which “hook” them in terms of interests. One might think that adolescent readers might feel embarrassed to read easy books. However, in the present study, given that the

participants were reading one-on-one with the tutor only, the participants' response to simple texts were consistent with what Worthy, Patterson, Turner, Prater and Salas (1997) said of struggling adolescent readers, they "approached the reading of easy texts with pleasure and a sense of relief," and they read easy books "with gusto and not a hint of embarrassment" (p. 5).

In the present study, having available appropriate texts in terms of level of difficulty, visual layout and content appeared to make a noticeable difference in the participants' inclination to read. For example, the use of folk literature in the first few weeks in the present study, convinced the tutor that having material which was non threatening was especially worthwhile. During the first few weeks of Stage B, the illustrations that accompanied the folk literature seemed to be the key to motivating the participants to attempt and to continue reading.

Themes that Relate to Participants and the Researcher During the Interventions

Adolescents who are developing as readers like to read when they have access to appropriate texts

It was apparent that for a participant like Thea the selection of texts hand picked for her in terms of both level of difficulty and topic were critical in getting her started with achieving some success in and enjoying reading. By her own admission at Stage A Thea said, "I hate reading ... I'm no good at it [reading]. I hate reading; uninteresting stuff." However, by the end of Stage B when asked, how do you feel about reading, her response was as follows: "Good, it was scary before. Now I can read better, and I like to read. I'm much faster now. I'm happier now and I don't need as much help in reading as I did. I've been able to read interesting stuff." The above quotes demonstrate the value of capitalising on Thea's interest in Science Fiction genre at the beginning of Stage B.

Thea quickly became hooked on the Starpol books (Tully, 1987), a series of space adventure books, written for the grade three level of difficulty. Each Starpol book is 24 pages with engaging, colourful illustrations on individual pages. Thea would begin a Starpol story in the tutoring session on most days. Thea would finish the story at home. In fact the text would be read repeatedly, since as mentioned earlier,

it would be read one day in a shared reading task and the next day for the running record. This easy but meaningful reading in a single series served to improve Thea's word recognition, fluency and ultimately her confidence and motivation to continue reading.

In the present study texts which kept the participant interested in reading meet the following criteria described by Erickson (1996):

- “they are of interest to the participants
- they include both male and female protagonists
- they reflected authors from many cultures
- they matched the readers' social and emotional stages” (p. 268).

During weeks five and six of Stage B in the present study, books such as Patricia Reilly Giff's *The Kids of the Polk Street School* series, for example, *The Secret of the Polk Street School* (1987) were especially appealing to all participants since they are short and easy to read and therefore are not overwhelming for readers who have limited experience in reading. Allington (2002) contends that limited experience is often misperceived as limited ability. It may seem hard to believe that individuals who have been at school for as long as say eight or nine years (as the participants in the present study were) are inexperienced in reading. However, they cannot become experienced until they actually engage in reading for sustained periods of time. In the present study, books such as those of Patricia Reilly Giff, provided the participants with texts they were happy and able to read for sustained periods.

During the seventh and eighth week of Stage B the participants were able to move to an even more advanced type of text which related to the set text, *So Much To Tell You* (Marsden, 1994) being read in their mainstream English class. These texts included “Background to *So Much To Tell*” (Appendix 8) and Character Profiles from that book (Appendix 9 and 10) which the tutor had written so as to link the text content of the intervention session with the content of the mainstream English class. These character summaries, all participants read with enthusiasm, since they could relate to the protagonist Marina, and the other characters (all girls the same age as the participants) from both social and emotional perspectives.

By the sixth week of intervention B, Thea moved on to reading the fourth grade chapter books such as *How To Eat Fried Worms* (Rockwell, 1973), *Owls In The Family* (Mowat, 1981) and *Skinnybones* (Park, 1982), all of which she volunteered to take home and continue to read at home each night. Thea's comprehension was measured each session through retelling. By the end of Stage B her comprehension was excellent, her oral reading was accurate, her reading pace adequate and importantly, her interest was high.

It was apparent during this stage that Thea benefited especially from the much needed feedback given by looking at her own RMA sheets, in that she was able to realise that she had contributed herself to the obvious improvement in all areas of contextual reading: word reading accuracy and comprehension.

Adolescent individuals who have struggled as readers because of an ongoing problem in a specific area of reading can recover as readers

As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the present study Emily's history of poor reading was linked to a difficulty with automatic word recognition. Toni's difficulty with heading was associated with faulty eye movements. However, as explained below, these individuals responded well to the interventions provided for the duration of the research project.

The frequent use of paired reading with Emily in Stage B of the project was useful for enhancing Emily's automatic word recognition. As mentioned earlier in the interview at Stage A, Emily volunteered:

"I hate it [reading]. I'm too slow. I never get finished."

However when asked the same question at the end of Stage B Emily responded:

"I like it now [reading]. 'Cos I'm faster, I usually get things finished."

It seemed that Emily's pace in reading had increased as a consequence of the paired reading. During this activity the modelling of reading was at a suitable pace to enable the participant to fluently follow.

For Toni the procedure of paired reading seemed to help her deal with the problem of appropriate eye fixation when reading. The following adjuncts to the procedure seemed especially valuable:

- the tutor placed a finger on each word read;
- the tutor varied the speed of her voice, for example, she slowed her pace when the participant's voice was lagging behind;
- the tutor varied the volume of her voice, for example, she spoke softly when the participant's voice lagged behind.

Apart from the obvious adaptation of appropriate eye fixations when reading by the conclusion of Stage B, there were other positive outcomes from Toni's involvement in the first intervention.

Firstly Toni was enthusiastic about reading aloud. She particularly enjoyed mimicking the intonation styles the tutor had modelled. For example, she enjoyed the notion of using different voices for the various characters in texts which involved dialogues.

Secondly, the RMA records by the conclusion of Stage B indicated that Toni's reading was far more fluent. For example, the incidence of false starts, repetitions and self-corrections were rare.

Thirdly, the follow-up retelling of a story indicated that Toni was no longer barking at print but was engaging with the authors meaning of a particular text.

It is possible for a teacher in a one-on-one or small group setting to provide learning opportunities that enable a struggling reader to become a proficient reader, in a relatively short period of time

Close examination of journal of interactions between the tutor and the participants and the data on the participants led the tutor to conclude that struggling readers can and will learn to become proficient readers when particular conditions exist. These conditions include:

- (i) where the participant motivation is increased by a supportive tutor;

- (ii) where the tutor exhibits an authentic interest in and belief in each participant;
- (iii) where comprehension skills are taught;
- (iv) where participants have the chance to construct their own understandings through sustained conversation with a more capable other.

Each of these conditions is elaborated below.

(i) *Developing a Supportive Relationship with each Individual Participant as a Means of Increasing Motivation*

In the context of this study establishing a supportive relationship meant becoming acquainted with each participant in terms of their individual differences and their specific problems with literacy and endeavouring to continually personalise interactions with them. For example, in Stage B, care was taken to provide each individual with texts which were especially relevant. Thea was motivated and achieved success in reading science fiction genre while Fleur was motivated and successful in reading material connected to her interest in fashion design and modeling and beauty therapy.

(ii) *Demonstrating Authentic Interest in each Participant and a Belief that each Participant will Succeed*

At the beginning of the project a characteristic shared by many of the participants was an eroding set of beliefs about their own abilities to achieve success in reading. It was important that the tutor demonstrated an authentic interest in each participant and responded with positive comments as they began to achieve in reading tasks. As cited earlier, Bandura (1986), a social learning theorist, has said that the element of success is the greatest single predictor for engagement in school tasks.

Adolescents' interactions with teachers help to form the context within which their sense of self is fostered (Bandura, 1986; Brantlinger, 1993). Achieving success in school is closely linked to the extent and depth of interactions with teachers, because young adolescents' attitudes and beliefs about competence are strongly influenced by teachers' messages (Kramer Schlosser, 1992).

(iii) *Comprehension Skills Need to Be and Can Be Taught*

In the early stages of the project it was obvious that many of the participants were non strategic as readers. A close look at the interview data made it clear that most of the participants' reading was a passive process which involved looking at the print and hoping that they had "got it right" only to find that at the end of reading a short story, for example, that little of the author's meaning had been understood. It was apparent by the end of Stage B that the notion of being strategic when a text didn't make sense was alien to the participants. In their view, either you were good at reading because you "got it," or "were lucky" or you "didn't get it" or "you were not lucky."

Indeed, research suggests that poor readers use metacognitive strategies with much lower frequency than skilled readers do (Duffy, Roehler & Herman, 1988; York, 2001).

Through the reciprocal questioning process in Stage C, the participants became actively involved in their own comprehension through contributing their own knowledge of the text and through self-questioning. By the conclusion of Stage C Sarah exhibited an observable growth in terms of comprehension skills (Chapter 6). Not only was she able to recall story lines, she was able to discuss her analysis of themes presented in stories. She discussed with compassion the plight of the characters in Stevens (1997), *A Sense of Belonging*, who suffered the injustice of racial prejudice. This supports the suggestion that comprehension can be taught through such an approach.

There is "little evidence to suggest that teacher questioning alone leads children to develop mature, independent reading abilities. In fact teacher questioning may cause children to become dependent on the teacher for understanding text material" (Searfoss et al. 1999, p. 221). However, engaging readers in reciprocal questioning passes the control of reading onto the reader.

(iv) *Reading Skills are Enhanced when Students have the Chance to Construct their own Understandings through Sustained Conversations with a More Capable Other*

In the present study, the knowledge of the word *prejudice* was understood and generalised through repeated discussion about characters in stories who had been marginalised in their lives. When discussing *A Sense Of Belonging* (Stevens, 1997), a text where the theme of racial prejudice was identified and understood, it was evident from their comments that the participants could empathise with the pain felt by individuals who were marginalised.

This example illustrates how mutual compatibility of individuals' language and use of words appears to be enhanced by social interaction. "The process that leads to such capability is not one of telling, but a process that gradually evolves until it achieves a relative fit and understanding between individuals" (Lyons, 2003, p. 183). Appropriate communication between a teacher and students can facilitate this process.

Struggling adolescent readers enjoy opportunities to share reading experiences with their teachers.

In the present study the shared reading (between the tutor and an individual participant) during intervention Stage B provided "... powerful practice for promoting literacy appreciation and development" (Ivey, 1999, p. 73). For example, participants such as Sintra, Sevena and Emily reported in the interview that they had never had a pleasant experience in reading aloud before. Instead they indicated that they had suffered the humiliation of very poor attempts at reading before an entire class, in a round-robin reading of texts which were mostly too difficult, uninteresting or both. In the paired reading of the shared reading tasks during Stage B participants such as Sintra, Sevena and Emily had the opportunity to work (in a non-threatening setting) on developing fluent, expressive reading as they emulated the type of expression and intonation the tutor had exhibited. In many instances, it seemed that the tutor's zeal for a particular text or genre became contagious, particularly when texts offered to the participants were in keeping with their particular interests. For

example, some participants became engaged in texts they would not necessarily choose for themselves because clues from the text and prior knowledge of the topic (of particular interest to the individual) along with monitoring their hypotheses, gave them the purpose they needed to continue reading. Such observations were made about Thea as she read texts of science fiction, Fleur as she read brochures about modeling, fashion design and beauty therapy and Toni as she read texts related to her particular interest in dressage procedures for horseback riding.

A suitable environment for struggling adolescent readers is one which lends itself to interaction among readers and their teachers during literacy activities (Ivey, 1999). This generalisation was relevant at Stage B for all eight participants and again at Stage C for the four participants.

At Stage B the fact that the shared reading tasks of such texts for one particular day became the running record text for the following day was also a positive factor for these individuals. During the running record session the following day, they were able to build on the skill of intonation in reading a text which was not only familiar but of particular interest to them as an individual.

At the beginning of Stage C all four participants enjoyed being involved in the group literature discussions. For example, the four participants were invited to talk about a series of picture story books which explored the themes of racial prejudice and marginalised groups. Two such texts were *The Bracelet* (Uchida, 1976/1993) set in 1942 America, where a Japanese-American child and her family are sent to an internment camp, and *Grandfather's Journey* (Say, 1993) where Say describes his unique cross-cultural experiences in the United States and Japan. These low key discussions provided suitable precursors to non-illustrated texts on a similar theme used later in Stage C in the Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) activities.

One such text was *A Sense Of Belonging* (Stevens, 1997). The participants appeared to find that the activities in the Meta Language Awareness Program associated with this text provided opportunities for them to season their oral reading. For example,

mimicing the way the tutor read, helped the participants make links between a character described in a text and a persona.

In summary, the current study revealed that adolescents as readers can be complex. Many have not learned to read strategically or purposefully by the time they reach Year 8. However, with teacher persistence and the provision of positive reading experiences such individuals can become successful, engaged readers, who enjoy reading. For this to occur, struggling readers need the help of expert teachers who have skills in the following areas: the ability to assess student progress and identify roadblocks to learning; the ability to provide a dynamic, flexible scaffold that helps students master new competencies; the ability to reflect on their effectiveness in enhancing student progress; the ability to make students' reading experiences positive and rewarding.

Themes that relate to the participants and the researcher during the interventions are as follows: adolescents who are developing as readers like opportunities to develop critical opinions of texts; adolescents who have struggled as readers because of an ongoing problem in a specific area of reading can recover as readers; one-on-one or small group situations provide learning opportunities that enable the struggling reader to become a proficient reader, in a relatively short period of time; struggling adolescent readers enjoy opportunities to share reading experiences with their teacher.

In the next chapter, basic principles leading to the improvement in the reading performance of the participants will be identified. These principles will be discussed in the context of excerpts from interactions between the tutor and the participants.

CHAPTER 8

FACTORS LEADING TO CHANGE

Introduction

Educators agree that productively engaging low-achieving adolescents in reading activities is a complicated process (O'Brien, 1998; Pontecorvo, Orsolini, Zuccheromaglio & Rossi, 1987). In this chapter an attempt is made to describe the teaching-learning situations that engaged eight adolescent readers who at the beginning of the project struggled as readers. At Stage A of the project these individuals had described themselves as less than avid readers. Rather, they were in most cases, passive readers, and in other cases, reluctant readers. Some were passive in that they did not actively seek out opportunities to read. When they did read, their reading lacked fluency and they appeared to gain little information, pleasure or interest from the experience. At school they obviously read to comply with teacher-assigned tasks. They lacked fix-up or feed-forward strategies and had difficulty making intertextual connections and relating texts to personal experiences. The reluctant readers could read but their style of reading was laborious. They had histories of reading difficulties. They often seemed withdrawn, disinterested and unmotivated about tasks at school which required reading. As discussed earlier, by the end of the project these individuals exhibited marked improvement in their reading skills and attitudes to reading.

The analysis of the data gathered in the present study suggests that the factors which led to change in the participants' ability to read had both a cognitive basis and with a social emotional overlay. In other words, the participants developed specific strategies required for the active process of reading in an environment where their social emotional needs were being met. This chapter is devoted to a discussion on what brought about this change. The link between the social emotional needs that underpin the cognitive dimension of learning is acknowledged. The tutor in the present study developed an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the juxtaposition of these aspects of teaching and their impact on learning. The discussion on the factors

leading to change is presented under the headings of basic principles leading to the improvement of reading performance and the importance of the social emotional dimensions of learning.

Basic Principles Leading to Improvement in Reading

Basic principles leading to the improvement in reading performance were identified and used to help the participants to obtain the extra scaffolding needed to improve their reading. These principles included:

1. Providing direct instruction, addressing individual needs;
2. Providing for frequent, regular practice in reading;
3. Teaching participants a knowledge and appreciation of the genre of texts;
4. Acknowledge the participants' knowledge of scheme; strengthen knowledge of schema.

These principles are discussed below in the context of excerpts taken from the researcher's journal regarding the interactions between the tutor and the participants.

Principle One: Providing direct instruction, addressing individual needs.

As mentioned in the literature review, many researchers have found that one-on-one, direct, systematic instruction in skills and strategies benefits students who have a history of struggling with reading (Sears, Carpenter & Burstein, 1994; French, Ellsworth & Amoruso, 1995; Cambourne, 2001). The research of Sears et al. (1994) and Walker (2000) suggests the merit of one-on-one direct or explicit teaching of reading within the context of authentic reading activities.

At Stage B of the present study the tutor implemented one-on-one direct instruction of reading within the context of reading authentic reading texts from a variety of genre. This direct instruction had clearly stated goals that the participants understood, reading texts which were appropriate in terms of interest and level of difficulty. This direct instruction included detailed explanation and extensive

modeling of the reading processes by the tutor. It focused on the monitoring of the participants' skill development and providing immediate feedback to the participants.

Addressing each participant's aptitude at the various stages of the project was the basis for development of the direct instruction. As explained in Chapter 4 the planning for the direct instruction was based on four questions regarding assessing aptitude which are now elaborated.

How Can the Participant Make Better Use of Existing Skills?

With regard to each of the participants the following question was posed: how can better use be made of existing skills? Failure is often caused by a teacher making too many incorrect assumptions about an individual's prior knowledge and skills (Westwood, 1997a). As mentioned earlier, before beginning the intervention at Stage B with Sarah, for example, it was important that the tutor had perceived Sarah's difficulty with phonology. Though Sarah had a knowledge of common letter-sound correspondences, she did not use this knowledge in a systematic way, when faced with unfamiliar words. This meant that Sarah's reading was characterised by the inclusion of non-words (for example, *contly* instead of *contentedly*). Because Sarah did not stop and think when she inserted non-words, she would continue reading to the end of a given text. This meant Sarah often could not pick up the gist of an entire text being read. In such instances, Sarah would be unaware of the storyline or the author's purpose for writing a text. However, the RMA records for Sarah at the end of Stage B revealed that Sarah's skills in reading had been enhanced during eight weeks of one-on-one intervention. For example, Sarah was no longer word calling. She had learnt to stop and think as she used valuable skill of blending sounds at the beginning of a word. She began breaking polysyllabic words into syllables, therefore pronouncing them correctly. Though some words read were non words these bore graphic similarities: 'histrians' for historians, and therefore fitted the text syntactically. In other words by the end of Stage B, Sarah had learned to slow down and think as she used her decoding skills. She had become active in the reading process. This meant that she was picking up the story line of texts being read.

What Can the Student Do if Given a Little Prompting?

The one-on-one direct teaching used during the intervention at Stage B, provided the ideal setting for the tutor to perceive a participant's particular problem and give them the prompting necessary to make use of a "fix-up" strategy when a text did not make sense. The tutor's prompting is demonstrated in an excerpt below from the running record (for RMA) with Emily early in Stage B of the project:

- EMILY: (Reading) "Far out to sea the water is as the bluest c-cflower."
TUTOR: (Prompting) "I'm glad you stopped; why did you stop?"
EMILY: "Because ... this ... does not make sense."
TUTOR: "Look at the fix-up tag!"
EMILY: "... sound out the beginning of the word. Cor ... corn."
TUTOR: "Sound out the rest of the word."
EMILY: "Corn ... cornflower; that fits."
TUTOR: "Great work, Emily."

In the above excerpt the tutor's prompt encouraged Emily to use her knowledge of context or of what would make sense when she encountered a word that was difficult or unknown. In other words, the tutor provided guidance, prompting and feedback, so that Emily could build on the skills she had, that is, using a fix-up tag when the text failed to make sense.

What Gaps Exist in the Student's Prior Knowledge?

In the present study there were two types of gaps. Firstly, there were gaps in the participants' prior knowledge of the schema used in a text. Secondly, there were gaps in the participants' prior knowledge of reading strategies to be used in particular situations. Where there was evidence of gaps in the participants' prior knowledge of

the schema of a text, vicarious experiences were used to build such knowledge. For example, the tutor, together with the participants discussed relevant picture book illustrations and lists of words related to alliteration before introducing Silverstein's (1992) play on words in highly exaggerated situations in "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Who Would Not Take the Garbage Out." In other words, before beginning to read the above mentioned text the participants began to make inferences consistent with words they would come across and type of concepts they would encounter.

Where there was evidence of gaps in the participants' prior knowledge of reading strategies the tutor needed to deal with these strategies prior to introducing a text. For example, some of the participants lacked the ability to adjust their approach and rate of reading to fit the material being read. At the beginning of Stage B, when approaching a text written in report genre, Thea tended to read the entire text, word for word from the beginning to the conclusion. Thea needed to learn the skill of *skimming*, so she could selectively pick up the main ideas and general impressions about the text.

What Does the Student Need to be Taught Next?

This is the link between the student's current aptitude, and the new learning you wish to facilitate. Do you need to fill any existing gaps? Or can you begin to introduce the new content immediately because the student has the necessary prerequisites. For example, some individuals who have a history of struggling with reading need to learn to hear chunks of sounds (syllables) and the sequence of sounds while reading (Lyons, 2003). According to Roe et al. (2004), readiness for learning syllabication includes the ability to hear syllables as pronunciation units. In the present study where at the start of Stage B there was doubt that Sintra was able to hear syllables within words, the tutor addressed this issue prior to introducing a new text, *Heidi* (Spyri, 1995). Before attempting to read the passage presented in Table 23 below, the tutor asked Sintra to join her in pronouncing the words underlined. Emphasis was placed on learning the syllables within those words.

Table 23: Reading Text: Excerpt from Heidi (Spyri, 1995)

Heidi was awakened by the whistle, and as she opened her eyes sunlight came into the room. She listened to her grandfather talking outside. She remembered joyfully that she had come back to live in the mountains.

Principle Two: Planning for frequent, regular practice in reading.

The eight week intervention at Stage B provided for the participants' frequent regular session in which they had opportunities to practice reading. As mentioned earlier in these sessions the tutor worked on a one-on-one basis with each participant for approximately 40 minutes, four days per week. In each session, individual participants were involved in familiar reading, running records tasks, guided reading and shared reading.

These activities were part of a regular schedule to engage the participants in reading. The amount of reading struggling readers engage in, matters. In other words, we learn to do something by doing it, we get better with practice. Children learn to read by reading. For example, guided reading provides an ideal setting for systematic instruction in word solving while reading for meaning. In systematic instruction teachers plan in general terms; the specific of their teaching, however, depends on the precise response of the children at hand. The suggestion is that struggling readers need to "put on miles" as readers – to read thousands of words, embedded in meaningful texts, regularly (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

In summary, during the activities provided in the intervention sessions of Stage B, the participants read a variety of increasingly challenging texts, which required them to use strategies in different ways. In all four activities, support given appeared to help the participants learn more about reading and themselves as readers at the same time. They seemed to learn more about how to read as their time spent in reading increased.

Principle Three: Teaching participants a knowledge and appreciation of the genre of texts.

Proficient text users know that different text structures exist – for example, narrative, information reports, instructional texts and recounts (Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons &

McKenzie, 2001). Struggling readers need to be made aware that different genres exist and that different genres serve different purposes. Using a variety of genres in both Stages B and C of the present study, the participants were taught how to recognise genre structure and story elements. For example, a narrative may begin with an orientation which puts the reader in the picture. This may be followed by events and complications which eventually come to some sort of resolution.

The predictable nature of traditional literature genre, for example, folktales, cumulative tales and *pourquoi* tales were explored with the participants in Stage B. The very nature of these texts appeared to engage the interests of the participants, some of whom at the beginning of the project, had been apathetic and reluctant toward reading. Brown's (1942, rev. 1972) folktale, *The Runaway Bunny*, for example, had appeal from two viewpoints. First, the storyline was predictable. Second, the content was relevant to the adolescent reader who could relate to the frequent tensions that exist between parents and their offspring.

The reading of and comparisons between Cauley's (1983) traditional fairytale, *Jack and the Beanstalk* with Fleischman's (1978) fractured fairytale, *McBroom and the Beanstalk* was again enhanced by the fact that the participants could anticipate a predictable storyline.

During Stage C of the project a particular focus was on introducing the participants to two specific genres – mystery and realistic historical fiction. The use of a brainstorm was seen as a suitable introduction to mystery genre. The four participants were asked to volunteer words which come to mind when we think of the word, *mystery*. As words such as murder, suspense, clues, detectives, robbery, fingerprint were elicited, the participants became mindful of the number of words known collectively. By reflecting on the mystery television programs of stories about, for example, Sherlock Holmes and Jessica Fletcher, the participants discovered that they already knew a deal about the framework of mystery genre.

The reading of a précis segment of Allen Say's (1993) *Grandfather's Journey* was a valuable introduction to realistic historical fiction. The participants were able to empathise with the protagonist's difficulties in belonging to two countries (Japan and

the United States) and to gain an understanding of how immigrants adjust to a new environment. This exploration of *Grandfather's Journey* seemed to provide the necessary background knowledge of both realistic historical fiction genre and the topic of immigration, for the participants to have success in reading précised texts of a similar ilk. In a similar way, Barbara Cohen's *Molly's Pilgrim* (1983) was a text that made a particular impact on the participants because it focussed on a Jewish girl from Russia adjusting to a new country, America. Consequently, they approached this text with both enthusiasm and confidence. Typical of their comments was ... "reading about the Jewish girl's doll dressed in Russian style clothes, made me understand how hard it would be for immigrant Russian girls to wear such strange clothes to an American school.

In summary, the knowledge of genre structure appeared to boost both the participant's interest in reading and confidence in themselves as readers. For example, they began to anticipate and predict the author's intended meaning. Similarly, drawing the participants' attention to headings and subheadings when previewing a text to be read helped increase comprehension skills. For example, when reading factual texts, again on the topic of immigration, they became skilled in their use of headings to find factual information about how immigrants throughout history have travelled to Australia.

The knowledge of genre-related schema helped the participants to anticipate particular text structures before beginning the processing of a text.

Principle Four: Acknowledge the participants' knowledge of schema; strengthen knowledge of schema.

Schema can be defined as the personal organisation of information and experiences related to a topic (Manzo et al. 2004). As mentioned earlier in this thesis, schema theory is based on the assumption that print itself conveys no meaning (Adam & Collins, 1977). Rather it provides the reader with stimuli for reconstructing the author's meaning, extending meaning and thought, and building new schemata. Schemata are an individual's organised clusters of concepts related to objects, places, actions or events (Manzo et al. 2004). Schema is also referenced to the "subtext" of understanding that authors assume readers have available when they read. In other

words, schema connects a reader with the author's message. Vocabulary terms are labels for schemata, or the clusters of concepts an individual develops through experience (Rude & Oehlkers, 1984). This belief is supported by the work of Pearson and Johnson (1979) who hold that reading comprehension involves relating textual information to pre-existing knowledge structures.

For individuals to achieve success in reading, schemata of a wide variety are necessary. For example, individuals need a knowledge of the purpose of various text types (to convey ideas) and relationship of spoken language and written language. They need to be familiar with vocabulary and sentence patterns not generally found in oral language and with the different writing styles linked with various literary genre.

The frequent one-on-one interactions the tutor had with the participants at Stage B of the present study provided insights into firstly, each participant's ability to interact with text and secondly, their knowledge of schema about different topics. At the same time these interactions provided the opportunities to maximise interactions with text and to use schemata. For example, it was obvious that some participants had a more sophisticated knowledge of *story schema* or the set of expectations about the internal structure of stories (Rand, 1984). Having participants re-tell stories during one-on-one interactions was an effective means of discovering their grasp of a story schema.

However, these interactions during Stage B also provided the ideal chance to give direct instruction in schema. For example, teaching story mapping helped participants build prior knowledge of how one could expect that a particular genre would be structured. In other words the tutor demonstrated with a story map how a story can be reduced to a series of predictable frames, detailing factors such as characters setting, problem, action and resolution or outcome, as demonstrated in Table 24 below on Lindgren's (1993) story of *Pippi Longstocking*.

Table 24: An Example of Story Mapping, Where the Story is Reduced to Predictable Frames

Characters: • Pippi, Tom and Annika • Ring Master, Mighty Adolf the Wrestler Place: • The Circus	
Problems	Resolution
1. Pippi “moving in on” horse riding act	Pippi being removed
2. Pippi “moving in on” tight line walking acts	Ring Master loosening mechanism that held line tight
3. Pippi “moving in on” and winning wrestling match with Mighty Adolf	Pippi wins the match
Resolution: Pippi has had her fun. She accepts it’s time for her to rest up and leave the circus management alone.	

By Stage C of the project when the participants were reading more sophisticated material, post reading activities were used to urge the participants to get the “GIST” – Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text (Bean & Steenwyck, 1984), by writing 15 word summaries. The purpose of this task was to develop in the participants the ability to use higher order and critical analysis required for understanding the essence of the author’s meaning.

The participants responded suitably to this suggestion when it was put in terms of writing an *email* message. They were encouraged to briefly state the author’s basic theme, with all unnecessary words removed. For example, the participants learned through the tutor’s modeling how to write a précised story line. An example of Sarah’s ability to write a précised or *email* message, along with the longer version from which it was derived is presented in Tables 25 and 26 respectively, which appear below.

Table 25: An Example of Sarah’s Email

Sarah’s Email: Travellers stop for rest under plane tree. Travellers say tree is useless. Tree tells them he’s angry.

Table 26: Reading Test: Travelers and the Plane-Tree (author unknown)

Two travellers were walking along a bare and dusty road in the heat of a mid-summer's day. Coming upon a large shade tree, they happily stopped to shelter themselves from the burning sun in the shade of its spreading branches. While they rested, looking up into the tree one of them said to his companion, "What a useless tree this is! It makes no flowers and bears no fruit. Of what use is it to anyone?" The tree itself replied indignantly, "You ungrateful people! You take shelter under me from the scorching sun, and then, in the very act of enjoying the cool shade of my leaves, you abuse me and call me good for nothing."

First hand experiences between the tutor and the participants helped the participants associate particular words with real situations. For example making use of captioned pictures, links were made between the importance of a typical Vietnamese plant, the lotus, and the feelings of grief felt by a family as they fled their homeland to escape war in Sherry Garland's, *The Lotus Seed* (1993).

In summary, good readers may bring at least some prior knowledge or schema of the text topic. Teaching and reviewing of key concept words prior to reading helps students activate their background knowledge, relate their knowledge to new concepts, and understand how new words and concepts are linked. Observations of the participants suggested that the more familiar the topic, the easier it was for the reader to understand the text. That is, comprehension is influenced by the extent to which a reader is familiar with the topic, objects and events described in a text.

Themes Related to the Social Emotional Dimensions which Underpin Learning

Social emotional capacities powerfully influence, and even determine, students' ability to listen, concentrate and to become self-motivating. During the 1980s research that examined expert teachers' practice focused on what teachers know, understand and can do to enhance reading skills in students (Brophy & Good 1986; Dill, 1990). However, little attention was given to the social and emotional dimensions of learning, for example, the manner in which expert teachers relate to

students and promote in them an ability to understand, process and manage their own learning. However, Noddings (1995) and Coles (1998) have found that social and emotional aspects of learning have a powerful influence on students' ability to learn how to read, especially those who are struggling.

The social and emotional dimension of learning are at the heart of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning. Brain-based research (Meadows, 1993, Damasio, 2000) provides solid evidence that virtually every individual is capable of learning how to read and write. Under the right circumstances, all but those who have severe neurological problems (no more than 1 to 2 percent of the population) can learn to read and write in the primary school. However an individual's emotion cannot be divorced from the learning process. It is through social interactions with caring adults that children learn how to learn (Lyons, 2003). The research of Meadows (1993) and Damasio (2000) suggest that emotion and thought cannot be separated, and that learning depends on an individual's ability to interpret and respond to emotional signals. For example, according to Mate (1999), individuals who struggle to learn tend to be most sensitive and react more strongly to teachers' nonverbal clues. His suggestion is that teachers must be able to meet the individual learning needs of low achieving students regardless of their literacy history.

Vygotsky (1978) maintained that all higher mental functions originate in social activity, "actual relations between humans" (p. 57). Development, for example, in reading comprehension involves mental processes first occurring on the social level, between people, and then on the individual level, within a student. Vygotsky (1978) saw internalisation as the internal reconstruction of an external operation.

Central to Vygotsky's (1978) theory is his belief that the lifelong development in an individual is dependent on social interaction and that social learning actually leads to cognitive development (Lyons, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) saw learning not as development but as a process that results in development. Each individual, in any domain, has an "actual developmental level" and a potential for development within the domain. The difference between the two levels is what Vygotsky (1978) termed the *zone of proximal development*, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential

development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Learning creates the *zone of proximal development* as, through the individual interacting with people in the environment, a variety of internal developmental processes are awakened. In other words, with the support of another, more experienced person, a struggling reader is able to do more than she could on her own. Whatever the task, the struggling reader is supported as she attempts it with assistance from an expert.

In the present study, the tutor created “a learning zone” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) for each participant where carefully selected texts were introduced. The key to enhancing reading skills in each individual was the social interaction with the tutor which ultimately led to cognitive development.

In the present study five themes emerged which were relevant to the social and emotional dimension of the participants which underpin the cognitive dimensions of learning.

1. Success in reading is dependent upon an individual becoming an active participant who achieves success in the reading process.
2. Not only did the participants lack confidence in reading, they demonstrated a fear of failure which prevented them engaging positively with reading.
3. Their lack of positive experiences with reading frequently meant they were reticent to take the risks required when decoding print.
4. These participants needed to take the responsibility for efficacious behaviour when approaching a reading task.
5. The tutor must provide a supportive communication style, while focussing on teaching specific reading skills. These generalisations are elaborated below, emphasising the dynamics of effective teacher practice. These generalisations focus on teachers understanding the emotional, social and cognitive dimensions of learning.

Theme one: being an active participant in reading

During Stage B of the present study there was a particular emphasis on understanding the fears about reading held by the participants and attempting to provide a social setting which was pleasurable, and texts which were appropriate in terms of level of ability and interests of the participants. For each participant the message was imparted that achieving success in reading was a reality.

It is also important to consider the student's attitude towards reading. Is the attitude positive or negative? One of the main goals in an intervention program frequently must be to change a student's attitude from negative to positive (Foorman et al. 1997). Providing the participants with immediate success, especially in the early stage of an intervention seemed important in the current study. For example, Sevena's confidence and competence in reading and positive attitude toward reading was enhanced by her use of word problem solving activities she was taught to use incrementally during Stage B. In the following excerpt collected during the Running Record (of a RMA) task of week 5, Sevena was encouraged to use the "word chunking" skills she had been taught.

SEVENA: (Reading) "One of the sisters would be fifteen in the foll - - - year."

TUTOR: "Why did you stop?"

SEVENA: "Because I don't know that word. There's a word I need to chunk."

TUTOR: "Have a go!"

SEVENA: "foll – follow - following."

TUTOR: "Read the whole sentence now!"

SARAH: "One of the sisters would be fifteen in the following year."

TUTOR: "Great!"

In this excerpt, it was important to affirm Sevena for stopping after she miscued the word *following*. This affirmation appeared to allow time for Sevena to prompt herself to break the word *following* into syllables, so that it could be pronounced correctly. In the present study it was important that there was a list of “fix up” strategies such as *chunking*, that each student could be taught to use themselves as attempts were made to enhance their reading. It is clear in this excerpt that Sevena had internalised the need to make use of the appropriate “fix up” strategy.

Reassuring comments and specific references to participants’ appropriate use of the activity involved using the appropriate roles of the reader when reading and kept them attentive. With each passing week of Stage B, for example, Toni’s attitude to both the task of reading and to herself as a reader, was enhanced. She sat up straighter and initiated independent reading by finding places in the text where she experienced difficulty, re-reading where necessary until a text made sense for her. She smiled with satisfaction when she struggled and then self-corrected. These behaviours were in direct contrast to previous behaviours at Stage A, that suggested that at that stage Toni was withdrawn and intimidated by most reading tasks.

By the end of Stage B the participants were actively involved with the use of text-participant skills to build meaning from a range of narrative and factual texts. They were making effective use of prior knowledge to understand a new text. By Stage C it was apparent that the participants were beginning to relate the text to their own growing knowledge and experience. For example, when looking at realistic fiction they came to expect that the author made effective use of descriptions, conversations and actions to develop a character in a story, as shown in this excerpt of a conversation between the tutor and Fleur, where Fleur describes how Lisa’s actions made her feel:

TUTOR: “Fleur, I heard you say before that the character Lisa in *So Much to Tell You* made Marina’s life unhappy. What makes you say that?”

FLEUR: “Because of the description of how Marina felt when she realised that the cold and beautiful character Lisa had been spying on Marina, sitting high above her, hidden in the branch of a tree.”

The participants began to understand the literal and inferential meanings of the text. For example, they could identify how John Marsden in *So Much To Tell You* had provided through the techniques of dialogue, narration and actions described, characters who were true to life. An example of this is that the participants could empathise with the feelings of Marina, the protagonist, in the above-mentioned text, as shown in the excerpt of the continuing conversation between the tutor and Fleur:

TUTOR: “How exactly do you think Lisa made Marina feel?”

FLEUR: “Really frightened and cross. She (Marina) said she was shaking when she realised that Lisa had been staring at her (Marina’s) scared face for a long time.”

In summary, an important condition for improving the confidence and competence of struggling readers is to have them active participants in the process of reading. However, helping individuals achieve success in reading is enhanced to a great extent by the reassuring encouragement of a supportive teacher, who models appropriate reading strategies and who provides texts which fit the needs of individual readers.

Theme two: become confident as a reader

The interview data at Stage A suggested that for many of the participants a history of difficulties in reading had resulted in a general lack of confidence in themselves at school. These individuals seemed to be effectively ‘locked out’ from the knowledge, information and ideas which are part of a literate culture (Christie, 1987). If students cannot read effectively at an age appropriate level, they tend to slip further and further behind in many of the Key Learning Areas. In the one-on-one intervention session of Stage B however, the tutor could address the issue of developing confidence in each individual. Opportunities to showcase strengths of individual participants and in turn, address weaknesses in ways that would encourage risk taking and persistence were utilised. For example, before introducing Thea to a short story “Petra’s Move” (author unknown) where her weakness of limited sight vocabulary would be apparent, the tutor capitalised on one of Thea’s strengths, her ability to relate a personal experience to that of the story line, described in a written

piece. In other words, prior to even seeing the said short story, Thea was encouraged to use the role of text participant (or the reader's own knowledge of the topic) when asked to reflect on and discuss her own personal experiences about moving to a new neighbourhood. Providing a feed-forward system about the story content empowered Thea to anticipate the gist of the story line, which was Petra's sadness, uncertainty and anxiety about moving house.

The one-on-one guided reading at Stage B provided opportunities for the tutor to work with the participants in becoming confident as active participants in reading, by building their abilities to take on the four roles of the reader. For example, early in Stage B, Emily had developed the confidence required as a code-breaker (basic decoding of visual information) to solve a text, making effective use of the cue systems: phonological-graphological, grammatical and semantic as seen in the excerpts below from *Samantha Seagull's Sandals* (Winch et al. 2001).

In the following is an example of the highlighting of the effective use of grammatical and phonological-graphological cues as a means of building Emily's confidence when reading:

EMILY: "A long time ago there lived a young, silver gull who wants ... wanted to be different."

TUTOR: "It was good to see you self correct 'wants' to 'wanted.' Why did you do that?"

EMILY: "I looked more closely at the word ending and realised it would sound different with the 'ed' and would sound better."

In the excerpt below is an example of the tutor highlighting the use of a semantic cue, again to enhance Emily's confidence when reading:

EMILY: "So Samantha went to a shoe shop and b."

TUTOR: "What do you think Samantha did at the shoe shop?"

EMILY: "She b _ _ _ t shoes."

TUTOR: “Do you think that word (pointing to the word *bought* in the text) could be bought? Look at the beginning and ending letters of that word.”

EMILY: “b t. Bought a pair of shoes.”

TUTOR: “That’s great Emily!”

Through discussion during the one-on-one sessions, by the end of Stage B Emily had learned to take on the roles of both code breaker and text participant in narrative texts. For example, before introducing the text, *Where The Forest Meets The Sea* (Baker, 1995), the tutor used a series of pictures on wildlife, helping Emily gain relevant semantic knowledge on concepts and terminology to do with sustainability of our environment. In other words, the intention was to have words such as ‘life-cycle’ or ‘habitat’ part of Emily’s working knowledge of text content. The tutor then introduced the text, reading it in a shared way, pausing at suitable times to refer to illustrations and explaining concepts’ and terminology. The tutor’s questioning also led to Emily being able to identify the author’s purpose in writing this text, eliciting from her the environmental issues alluded to.

In summary, individuals who have a history of reading failure often have a general lack of confidence in themselves at school. As a consequence of one-on-one intervention the tutor had the chance to showcase the strengths of each individual and in turn, address reading weaknesses in a manner that would encourage risk taking and persistence. The participants demonstrated a newfound, increasing confidence as their competence in reading was increasing.

Theme three: encourage strategic reading behaviour and provide positive reading experiences

An essential condition of successful learning, as described by Cambourne (1988), is the reasonable expectation of success engendered from the positive outcomes of previous learning experiences. It is in this context that the learner has the competence to engage in further learning. A major problem for struggling readers is that “they do not understand that there are things that one can do before even looking

at a book that will help one to read and understand a book” (Konza, 2003). Many struggling readers are non-strategic as readers, because they have had few positive experiences as readers. For example, they lack the ability to utilise particular skills used in preparation for, during and after reading, which would enhance their decoding and comprehension.

In the present study, the participants were instructed in techniques specifically related to having them think while scanning a text before reading. In other words developing in the participants the role of *text-participant*. This involved involving the participants in activities which included predicting text content on the basis of the title; activating prior knowledge; stimulating interest and generally making sense of the title (Kulieke & Fly-Jones, 1993).

The following excerpt from week 3 of Stage B is included to demonstrate the value of the tutor’s interaction with Fleur in using the necessary tuning in skills before reading a text. The title was introduced as follows:

TUTOR: “Today we are going to begin reading some more folk literature. It’s called *Grasshopper and the Ants*.” (Sunshine, 1965).

FLEUR: “Okay.”

Fleur was invited to reflect on her prior knowledge of this particular genre by commenting:

TUTOR: “You’ll probably guess the story line!”

FLEUR: “There will be a lesson in the story.”

TUTOR: “What do you mean?”

FLEUR: “You know - - - a moral. It will teach us something about how to act.”

Fleur was encouraged to activate prior knowledge on the possible story line in folk genre, through the following statement and question:

TUTOR: “Well done! What usually happens in this type of story?”

FLEUR: “Things will turn out well for those who do the right thing.”

TUTOR: “That’s great Fleur!”

As Fleur’s reading improved she was often heard saying ... “I’m really enjoying reading now.”

During Stage C of the project the modeling, encouragement and positive feedback seemed invaluable to the four participants. For example, during the interview at this stage Sarah commented that the Meta Language Awareness Program sessions had been a valuable chance for her to monitor her own comprehension as the following quote illustrates.

SARAH: “Working in that small group and with one teacher helped me to think better about my reading. You know, I learned how to summarise in my head and predict the way a story would probably turn out.”

To summarise, since many struggling readers are non-strategic as readers, they have had few positive experiences with reading. However, as a consequence of the interactions during direct instruction in this study, the participants learned to utilise particular skills before, during and after their reading, which in turn enhanced their decoding and comprehension, leading to positive reading experiences.

Theme four: encourage learner’s responsibility and ultimately efficacious behaviour when reading

Students who have struggled with reading are generally deprived of self esteem. To change their history of reading failure, teachers must provide and maintain consistent expectations, support and encouragement (Lyons, 2003). Psychologists generally agree that providing struggling readers with a framework within which to work and setting particular expectations is necessary for cognitive growth to occur. In the

present study the interventions at Stage B and Stage C appeared to provide the structure within which to support and improve the participants' efficacious behaviour when reading.

A key element to learning is the learner taking responsibility for his/her own learning. No matter how skilled the teaching or how stimulating the environment, effective learning cannot take place unless the learner takes responsibility for actually doing the learning (Maglen, 1995). By working one-on-one with the tutor at Stage B and in a small group at Stage C the participants needed to become active learners but also take responsibility for their own learning. For example, at Stage B the participants were required to exhibit the principle of activating their prior knowledge of schema suggested by certain characteristics of a text, before beginning reading. These characteristics included concentrating on the title, illustrations and genre of the text. At this stage the tutor clarified the need to utilise other skills such as paraphrasing, visualising and predicting as one reads. This is illustrated in the excerpts below taken from Stage B of the project. Sarah was encouraged to paraphrase as she read:

TUTOR: "Think about the story so far! Can you tell me about Hansel and Gretel's problem so far?"

SINTRA: "They're lost because they couldn't find bread pieces."

The importance of taking the responsibility to visualise during reading was emphasised:

TUTOR: "Try to see in your mind how Hansel and Gretel would be feeling."

SINTRA: "Frightened."

There was a focus on the importance of using prediction.

TUTOR: "Remember that this type of story should have a happy ending. What do you think might happen?"

SINTRA: “There will be some kind of resolution to their problem.”

TUTOR: “Well done Sintra.”

Since Stage B of the project facilitated the one-on-one sessions with each participant it was possible for the participants to develop ownership of strategic behaviour while reading. Interactions between teachers and underachieving students can help to form the context within which a positive sense of self is fostered, as demonstrated in the excerpt following, which was part of a conversation between the tutor and Thea about extracting facts from a text which is descriptive genre:

TUTOR: “Thea, we’ve been talking about descriptive genre this week.”

THEA: “Yes.”

TUTOR: “How can you use your knowledge of descriptive genre to extract specific information, for example, on whales in this text?” (Showing a text and pointing to individual paragraphs).

THEA: “That’s right ... each paragraph looks at particular details about mammals. This one’s about their looks, this one is about their breeding.”

TUTOR: “Thea, you’ve done well, recalling the structure of descriptive genre to help you recall the content.”

Achieving success in school is related, in part, to the extent and depth of interactions with teachers, because adolescents’ attitudes and beliefs about competence are strongly influenced by teachers’ messages (Kramer Schlosser, 1992).

The one-on-one social interaction helped the participants behave with greater efficacy with regard to reading in a number of ways.

First, the tutor was in a situation where she could recognise a participant's literacy beliefs and the behaviours that follow. For individual participants the tutor had the chance to highlight strengths and in turn, address weaknesses in ways that would encourage risk taking and persistence. During Stage B, for example, before introducing Fiona to a text where her weakness of limited sight vocabulary would be apparent, a discussion was instigated for Fiona to use a feed-forward mechanism, to anticipate or predict the gist of the text. In other words, introducing Fiona to Sid Fleischman's *The Whipping Boy*, Fiona was asked to use the text participant role of her own knowledge of the subject matter of a text. She was asked to reflect on and discuss how an individual must feel when he is seen by others as being spoilt. Providing this text participant role and the feed-forward system allowed Fiona to anticipate and predict the story line which was trying to understand how Prince Brat, one of the main characters, was feeling.

Second, the tutor could demonstrate to individual participants that literacy success is within that participant's reach when particular skills are used. For example, at Stage A of the project Sarah reported that her strategy for ameliorating comprehension failure was simply to re-read the text material. Emily's response to that same question was that she simply read to the end of the text material. However, by the end of Stage B Sarah and Emily reported that they had learned to use both text monitoring and comprehension monitoring strategies.

Third, accomplishing a task may require that it be broken down into its component steps and addressed one step at a time. Having the tutor demonstrate the need to use a plan that includes a step-by-step process for success in reading proved to be useful. For example in Stage B, before reading a short story, the participants were asked to give an example of what they were going to do while reading, to keep track of the story. The notion of continuing to self-monitor comprehension was emphasised, for example, having the participants focus at the after reading stage, on recalling the types of characters, main event and how the story concluded.

During Stage B it was possible for the participants to reflect on the text, understand it, and use it as a way of learning more about reading. This occurred because of two factors associated with the implementation of the intervention of Stage B. The first

was to develop in the participants, specific comprehension skills. This entailed tuition in the use of a repertoire of reading skills that strategic readers use in preparation for, during and after, reading.

For example, the participants were taught that successful readers use a number of skills such as prediction, purpose, thinking of questions, which come under the general heading of *before reading strategies*. Emphasis was placed on using these skills prior to engaging in a reading task.

The utilisation of these skills was a particular focus of the intervention during Stage B of the project. Because the participants had enjoyed exploring the nature of fairy tales, they had a clear understanding of the characteristics of stories of this genre. They came to expect that such stories would have particular structures signalling beginning and endings. They were aware that such stories often use animals or fairy folk to explicate an aspect of human behaviour.

The following excerpt from Week 8 of Stage B illustrates the researcher's role in encouraging Sarah to utilise some of the above strategies before she reads *The Little Glass Slipper* (Perrault, 1969).

In the light of prior knowledge of a particular genre, for example, Sarah was encouraged to predict what the text will be about:

TUTOR: "Think about the fairy tales we've been reading."

SARAH: "Yes."

TUTOR: "Scan the pictures and headings. What do you think this story will be about?"

In a similar way the tutor pointed out to the participants that competent readers use a number of skills associated with *during reading strategies* which include asking: "Does this make sense?", predicting, paraphrasing as she read, visualising as she read, repair strategies, for example, re-reading, reading ahead, guessing from context, decoding, and finding the main idea.

The participants were given numerous opportunities to practice *during reading strategies*. The following excerpt also from week 3 of Stage B illustrates the tutor's role in encouraging Sintra to utilise some of these strategies as she reads aloud a familiar text, *Hansel and Gretel*.

In this situation the tutor encourages Sintra to focus on paraphrasing the story to date, making the following statement after the introductory passages have been read:

TUTOR: "Pinocchio is the problem, Pinocchio is being a villain for that fairy."

SINTRA: "Mmm."

The tutor then encourages Sintra to paraphrase as she reads by saying:

TUTOR: "Can you tell me about their problem so far?"

SINTRA: "He's sick, but he won't do as he's told."

The tutor emphasises the importance of visualising as Sintra reads:

TUTOR: "Try to see in your mind how the fairy would be feeling."

SINTRA: "Frustrated."

The tutor highlights the importance of prediction when reading a particular genre.

TUTOR: "Remember, this story should have a happy ending. What do you think might happen?"

SINTRA: "Pinocchio will eventually have the medicine."

TUTOR: "Well done! Let's see how he is persuaded to take the medicine."

The tutor emphasised the value of utilising certain skills associated with *after reading strategies* which include:

- summarising the text;

- evaluating the effectiveness of strategies used;
- evaluating predictions;
- eliciting an emotional response to the text;
- planning how to remember information read (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

The excerpts below relates to Fleur's reading of *Arthur's Mystery Envelope* (Brown, 1997), read in week 8 of Stage B. The tutor's support and questioning reinforce Fleur's understanding of the story. In this excerpt the tutor encourages Fleur to use the observation of the story structure in the initial stages of summarising a story:

TUTOR: "We've talked about the parts of this story. Let's summarise these parts – the start, the middle and the end."

FLEUR: "Okay."

The tutor reinforces Fleur's ability to comprehend and summarise how the story developed, encouraging Fleur to paraphrase the introduction to the text:

TUTOR: "Look at the start of the story! How did the story begin?"

FLEUR: "Arthur's not happy. He has been called to the principal's office."

Later the tutor attempts to elicit from Fleur her emotional response to the text. The researcher encourages Fleur to empathise with Arthur, the main character of the text:

TUTOR: "How do you think you'd feel if you were Arthur?"

The frequent one-on-one sessions in Stage B provided an ideal opportunity to discuss Fleur's improved use of effective reading strategies.

In the following excerpt, for example, note the value of the tutor's recognition of the fact that Toni has taken the responsibility of breaking the word 'delicate' into syllables:

TUTOR: "It's good to see you're not scared of reading longer words now. What's this word?"

TONI: "Del .. i.. cate."

TUTOR: "What is the first part?"

TONI: "Del."

TUTOR: "Try to run the first and second parts together quickly" (Researcher uses white board – del i cate).

TONI: "Deli .. cate."

TUTOR: "Great. Now do the whole word quickly."

TONI: "Delicate."

TUTOR: "Well done!"

To summarise, individuals who have struggled with reading frequently are deprived of self-esteem. In the present study the one-on-one reading experiences seemed to provide the ideal opportunity to alter the participant's history of reading failure. The tutor's consistent expectations, support and encouragement provided a framework within which the participants could engage in the necessary efficacious behaviour when reading, which in turn enhanced their self-esteem.

Theme five: supportive tutor communicative style is vital when teaching specific reading skills

The fifth factor identified as being important to the change in the participants' reading was the supportive communicative style of the tutor in teaching specific reading skills. Authorities in the field of education (Coles, 1998; Gardner, 1999) contend that the social/emotional capacities of a struggling reader can influence his/her ability to concentrate. It seems that supportive communication of teachers can make up some of the support that ultimately modulates the emotional state of the struggling reader (Cohen, 2001).

In the present study the supportive communication by the tutor was useful in the following ways:

- (i) communicating the notion that each participant is capable of learning, and expected to learn, the skills needed for success in reading;
- (ii) establishing a respectful link with each participant.

These are elaborated below.

(i) *Expect Development of Skills*

Why is it that some teachers do not believe a certain percentage of students in the mainstream class will learn to read? Allington and Walmsley (1995) contend that teachers who believe that some individuals will never learn to read interact with these individuals in ways that ensure they fail.

In the present study, the interview data at Stage A revealed that many of the participants had a negative mindset about themselves as readers. It was important that all communication by the tutor to each participant conveyed her belief in each participant's ability to achieve competence in reading. After a few weeks into the project this positive mindset and belief was contagious. By their own admission at the end of Stage B, the participants started to believe in themselves as readers. Typical of their comments was ... "I am so much better at reading now". This appeared to be linked with the daily shared reading activities. The 10 minute shared reading sessions during Stage B where the tutor, together with the participant, read a new text aloud, seemed to assist the reading progress of all participants. For example, the slower, fluent and suitably modulated reading style of the tutor seemed to allow the participants to learn a sustained rhythmic intonation while visually tracking print. This approach also appeared to help particular individuals who exhibited specific decoding problems. For example, Sarah, who at Stage A of the project said in the interview that she did not obtain meaning from reading, benefited from the modeling of expressive reading that occurred during the shared reading session during the intervention of Stage B.

The shared reading approach was particularly useful for Emily whose reading at Stage A was a characteristically slow and laborious word-by-word approach. However, by the end of Stage B Emily had learned to chunk print into larger units. The following comment from Sevena suggested that she also benefited from the shared reading experiences:

SEVENA: [To tutor] “reading along with you has helped me realise that what I was about to read myself sounds correct.”

(ii) *Establish a Trusting Link with Participants while Teaching Specific Skills*

In order to create and promote an environment in which learning optimally takes place, students need to feel recognised, understood, cared for, and supported (Cohen, 2001). The frequent one-on-one session at Stage B in the present study helped the participants form a trusting link with the tutor, in a situation where individual differences were recognised and individuals were supported. Establishing a trusting link with the participants occurred by engaging them in a predictable schedule of intervention sessions, with appropriate texts and giving targeted and positive encouragement. These points are elaborated below.

- A predictable schedule of interactions facilitated by the very nature of the intervention used at Stage B of the project, helped each participant develop an understanding of the skill required for success in reading. For example, the modelling of factors such as reading speed and voice intonation during the shared reading task meant their reading became more fluent.
- The provision of reading texts, which were hand picked for each individual participant in terms of topics and degree of difficulty, was an important component of establishing the trusting link with participants required for teaching specific skills.
- Providing feedback that was targeted to support and scaffold the reading was also important. The following excerpt is included to demonstrate the importance of providing constructive feedback while the participants were reading:

SINTRA: [Reading] “The snowman stood on the hill, his face towards the sun. He had two sticks for eyes, and a stone nose and some wool for a mouth [immediately stops].”

TUTOR: “I’m glad you stopped. Why did you stop?”

SINTRA: “Because saying wool for a mouth doesn’t make sense.”

The tutor targets the notion of Sintra thinking about the context while reading.

TUTOR: “Sintra, think ... what would make sense?”

SINTRA: “Wand for ... no, that’s wrong.”

The tutor this time encourages Sintra to analyse a particular word.

TUTOR: “Look at the word again [pointing to word]. Look closely at the second two letters.”

SINTRA: “Wood ... that fits. ... wood for a mouth.”

In the preceding interaction the tutor’s feedback enabled Sintra to think about her reading. The tutor did not simply tell Sintra that the troublesome word was “wood,” but helped her think about what word would be correct.

Clay (1998) and Cazden (1999) discuss ways in which a teacher can use feedback to support students’ attempts at reading. For example, a teacher can “tell” the student the correct word or they can help the student work out the correct word. If feedback reinforces progress, learning gains are forward thrusting. When gains are made through systematic reinforcement, teachers can see the processes of movement through the *zone of proximal development* (Rogoff, 1990).

Teaching specific skills needed by an effective reader was recognised as being important in the change in the participants’ reading. These skills were taught in context or when the participants were working on reading a text with the tutor. These skills included:

- Word solving strategies;

- Learning to expand vocabulary;
- Monitoring and correcting strategies;
- Use of questioning to expand comprehension;
- Use of information finding strategies.

A description of these skills is outlined below. Excerpts of interactions between the tutor and participants are included to demonstrate the particular skill. As mentioned earlier, during the intervention at Stage B of the current project, each participant had regular one-on-one time with the tutor to learn how to become a more effective reader. In keeping with a Vygotskian perspective each participant had opportunities to strengthen their processing power across increasingly challenging texts.

Teaching word-solving strategies.

Comprehension involves thinking well beyond the word level. However, words are building blocks to meaning. For struggling readers:

“vocabulary is a larger issue than decoding. Readers can apply the general rules they need to pronounce a word, although that pronunciation may be halting or awkward and they have only a vague idea of what the word means” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 349).”

In the present study it was recognised that there was a need to develop in the participants, effective strategies to derive meaning from words. In the context of the one-on-one session this was achieved by reviewing with the participants key concept words prior to reading a specific text. In other words, the tutor helped the participants activate their background knowledge, relate this knowledge to new concepts, and understand how new words and concepts are related.

Excerpts of dialogue appear below to demonstrate the importance of the tutor’s encouragement to activate Sevena’s background knowledge. In this way Sevena gained both new concepts and an understanding of how new words and concepts are related.

TUTOR: “Yesterday we read a text about life in Medieval Times.

SEVENA: “Mmm.”

TUTOR: “Today we are going to look at a text of historical fiction about war between groups in Medieval Times.”

SEVENA: “Mmm.”

TUTOR: “Are there any words that come to mind when we think of war?”

SEVENA: “Troops, soldiers, rifles.”

TUTOR: “Excellent. Now think about the Medieval Times. [Using a pictorial time line the tutor demonstrates AD700-1500.] Do you think there would have been guns and rifles then?”

SEVENA: “Probably not.”

TUTOR: “What would soldiers use instead?”

SEVENA: “Bows and arrows!”

TUTOR: “Great. If they had those weapons would the soldiers have worn special guards to keep them safe?”

SEVENA: “Yes.”

Using sketches the tutor asks Sarah to name these special guards.

SEVENA: “Armour, shields.”

TUTOR: “Great! So we now have a list of words that would most likely be in a text about war in Medieval Times. [Tutor writes: army, swords, crossbows, armour, shields, helmets.] Now let’s read this text together.”

In the excerpt above the tutor's encouraging style of interaction activated Sevena's prior knowledge which ultimately helped Sevena relate particular concepts to words she would encounter before reading a text.

Expanding vocabulary

As mentioned in the literature review, students in the early secondary years continue to develop a reading vocabulary. The average student's reading vocabulary tends to grow by about three thousand to four thousand words each year (Brabham & Villaume, 2002). Experts recommend that struggling readers need a combination of direct teaching of new words and concepts as well as instruction in learning words independently as they read (Graves & Graves, 1994).

It is important for students to read texts which contain a large number of words they can read easily and derive meaning from. However, they also need to be challenged to attempt new words. In the context of preparation for the shared reading tasks in the present study, the tutor would first highlight for a participant connections between word attributes to larger bodies of information. For example, words such as television, telegraph or telecommunication were discussed in the context of the derivation "tele," meaning far off.

Monitoring and correcting strategies

Part of reading comprehension is learning to notice errors. Students need to learn to monitor their reading so that it is accurate and the meaning is clear (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 353). The one-on-one intervention sessions at Stage B in the present study provided the ideal context in which to teach the participants monitoring and correcting strategies. Before asking a participant to read, the tutor introduced the text. For example, the participants were briefed about the text structure and characters so they had something to "check against" when they read. As the tutor listened to the participant she intervened briefly, prompting and reinforcing the way the participant noticed and repaired errors. An excerpt demonstrating this pattern is detailed below as Sintra struggles with the word 'centennial.'

SINTRA: [Reading] "We went to Sydney for the Cen----tal festival."

TUTOR: [Pointing to the word ‘centennial’] “Let’s look at that word. There’s four parts to it. Let’s break the word up on the white board. Now have a go!”

SINTRA: “We went to Sydney for the Cen-tenn-ial festival.”

TUTOR: “That’s great, Sintra.”

Use of questioning to develop comprehension

One point on which educators might universally agree is that comprehension is the goal of all reading. According to Searfoss et al. (1999) and Fountas and Pinnell (2001), comprehension can be taught. In other words, struggling readers can be prompted to engage in certain effective reading behaviours. In the present study, for example, the tutor hand picked certain texts for each participant so that she could interact with a text and succeed in comprehension. The focus was on asking questions which develop the three distinct comprehension processes suggested by Searfoss et al (1996); a text-explicit process; a text-implicit process and an experience-based process.

The collection of character summaries from *So Much To Tell You* (Marsden, 1994), for example, (seen in Appendix 8 and 9), were valuable texts for the participants’ practice of the text implicit process as the following excerpts illustrate:

TUTOR: [Asking a question] “What kind of person would Cathy be as a friend?”

This question prompted the participant to search the text for evidence to make an inference about Cathy on the basis of a detailed description of her and her behaviour.

The following questioning required the participants to link their own experiences at school with the kind of behaviour exhibited by Sophie.

TUTOR: [Asking a question] “Why is it hard for a reader to like the character, Sophie?”

The question prompted the participants to think about times when they might have been the butt of somebody's joke, just as the character Marina, is the butt of Sophie's joke.

Teaching information finding strategies

Struggling adolescent readers need to be taught how to apply the roles of text user and text analyst.

For example, the tutor modelled being a *text user* by sharing on a white board every day texts printed on chocolate bar wrappers, and posing the following questions:

- (i) Who wrote the text? Why?
- (ii) Who is the text intended for? How do you know?
- (iii) Which words are least prominent in the text?
- (iv) Why do you think this is so?

In this way the idea of being a *text user* for a particular situation was modelled by the tutor.

In a similar way the participants were encouraged to take the role of *text analyst* by locating important information in a text and elaborating on why it is important.

For example, when reading the summaries of the characters in *So Much To Tell You*, Sarah was asked to justify why the character, Lisa, had been described as one who is silent inside. In other words, Sarah was being asked to 'read beyond the lines.'

In summary, by the end of Stage B an important factor associated with the change in the participants' reading appeared to be the supportive communicative style of the tutor in teaching specific reading skills. The supportive style of the tutor appeared to modulate the emotional state of struggling readers so that they could focus on using particular reading skills. These skills included: using word solving strategies, learning to expand vocabulary, using monitoring and correcting strategies, the use of

questioning to expand comprehension and the use of particular strategies to find information.

Basic Principles Leading to Improvement in Reading During Stage C

There were two basic principles leading to the improvement in reading during Stage C. The first was the explicit teaching of skills related to metacognitive self-regulation. The second was teaching the use of self regulation. The explicit teaching of these skills occurred during frequent routines in the Meta Language Awareness Program. These routines, 40 minutes in duration, occurred on three occasions each week for a period of eight weeks.

Principle one: metacognitive self-regulation of reading comprehension.

Self-regulation can be seen as a combination of both cognitive and affective components. As discussed, earlier successful readers need a high level of self-awareness, both of their existing understanding and self-concept. Underpinning these are the processes of self-monitoring and motivation activated and exemplified by volitional and cognitive strategies (McMahon and Oliver, 2001). This “fusion of skill and will” (Garcia & Colon, 1993, p. 39) is the key to students effectively being able to monitor their performance in reading/comprehension and in developing strategies to enhance their reading/comprehension. Within the literature on metacognition two aspects of crucial importance are evident. Firstly, Reciprocal Teaching is a means to promote comprehension and comprehension monitoring. In this technique, the teacher and the students take turns being the “teacher.” The “teacher” leads the discussion of material the students are reading. When using the process of Reciprocal Teaching, Lyons (2003), Collins, Dickson, Simmons and Kameenui (2001) and Boekaerts (1997) emphasise the merit of readers *talking about their thinking* with a more capable other. In other words, to construct their own understanding, readers need to be engaged in a sustained, focused conversation with a more capable other.

Secondly, reciprocal questioning is described as an active during-reading strategy also designed to enhance comprehension and comprehension monitoring (Richards & Gipe, 1992). In reciprocal questioning, the teacher and the students take turns

generating summaries and making predictions about sections of texts. Initially the teacher models these activities. Gradually the students assume the role of dialogue leader. Where necessary the teacher constructs and paraphrases questions for the students to mimic, until such time as individual students assume their role as dialogue leader who is capable of providing paraphrases and questions.

Principle two: the use of self regulation of reading comprehension.

In the present study activities associated with self regulation, such as self-directed summarising, questioning and predicting were used. The activities were embedded in the context of a dialogue between the tutor and the participants. Each activity was linked to the task of reading. The emphasis was twofold. Firstly the participants were to derive meaning from a text. Secondly the participants were to be self-monitoring their use of strategies in deriving meaning from a text. These activities are discussed below, under their relevant headings of summarising, questioning and predicting. The discussion encapsulates excerpts from interactions between the tutor and the participants which occurred at some stage during the frequent routines in the Meta Language Awareness Program during Stage C of the project.

Summarising

The ability to summarise text is perhaps one of the most essential and sophisticated reading skills (Wittrock, 1990; Brozo & Simpson, 1999). Since summarising involves students in many metacognitive processes, a deal of time can be required to develop expertise in summarising. If, however, students can learn how to construct a summary using their own words, their understanding and metacognition will be enhanced (Wittrock, 1990).

In the present study, by asking the participants to summarise a section of text, the tutor was simultaneously requesting that the participants gave attention to the major content and that they checked to see if they understood the text.

At the start of Stage C the tutor modelled summarising as an activity of self review. This activity was engaged in to demonstrate to the four participants how one can both state what had just happened in the text and how one can self-test that the

content had been understood. Each individual participant then had the chance to replicate summarising as an activity of self review. If, for example, an adequate synopsis could not be given by an individual participant, this fact was regarded not as a failure to perform a particular decontextualised skill, but as an important source of information that comprehension was not proceeding as it should, and remedial action (such as re-reading) was necessary.

The approach to summarising was presented as applying four main condensing rules, adapted from Brown and Day (1983). These rules were: deletion of trivia, deletion of redundancy, selection of a topic sentences (to serve as a scaffolding of the summary) and the invention of a topic sentence for a paragraph where one was not explicitly stated.

By Stage C of the project the participants had a clear knowledge of the genres of different texts. They appeared to gain skills in summarising descriptive texts more quickly than they did in, for example, fiction texts. They used their knowledge of genre to advantage. For example, Sarah commented that descriptive texts are made up of individual paragraphs in which a topic sentence foreshadows the content of given paragraphs. When looking at a descriptive text about *Turtles*, Sarah suggested aptly that the summary of paragraphs one, two and three could be summarised as follows:

- (i) Turtles are reptiles (general classification).
- (ii) A turtle's shell is like a protective skeleton (description).
- (iii) Most turtles live in water (general characteristics).

In this excerpt it was evident that Sarah used her prior knowledge of genres to assist in the task of summarising a detailed, three paragraphed descriptive text on turtles.

Questioning

Since texts have predictable structures we can teach students to take advantage of the inherent properties of text to improve their reading (Brozo & Simpson, 1995). In the

present study the tutor capitalised on the predictable rhetorical structure of narratives by having the participants ask and answer questions related to texts of this nature.

In requesting that the participants composed questions on the content, the tutor was asking for individuals to firstly concentrate on being able to articulate main ideas in a text and secondly to check their level of understanding.

The tutor modelled questioning not as an isolated activity, but as a continuing goal linked with the participant being able to formulate questions and answer questions (in their own words) about a section of text. Close inspection of the dialogue revealed examples of guided learning, that is, where the tutor provided modeling, feedback and practice to a participant, to a level that appeared to match that individual's current need. As individuals became better able to perform some aspect of the task, the tutor increased her demands accordingly, until the participants' behaviour became increasingly like that of the adult model. The tutor then decreased her level of participation and acted as a supportive audience.

An example of such an interaction is shown below. At the beginning of Stage C, Fleur was unable to formulate a question. The tutor being mindful of Fleur's difficulty began an interaction where she (the tutor) modelled asking a general question designed to focus on the main idea of a section of text (Table 27) from *The Village Washer* (Selvon, 1984). This was closely followed by the tutor encouraging Fleur to formulate her own general question regarding the main idea of a section of text.

Table 27: Reading Text: The Village Washer (Selvon, 1984)

Ma Lambee ruled supreme as the only washer in the district of San Souci, a sugar cane village near the Port of Spain in Trinidad. With the declaration of war the village washer's work took a turn for the worse. She began to be neglectful of collars and sleeves and the folds at the bottom of trousers. If a button broke or came off as she scrubbed the clothing, she no longer bothered to mend it. If a thin shirt ripped as she kneaded her gnarled hands into the cloth, she swore the tear was there before she got the shirt.

TUTOR: "What would be a good question about Ma Lambee that starts with the word 'why'?"

- FLEUR: No response.
- TUTOR: “How about, ‘Why was Ma Lambee important in the district of San Souci?’”
- FLEUR: “That’s good.”
- TUTOR: “Now think about the rest of the paragraph! In your own words make up questions that will tell us what happened to Ma Lambee once war was declared ... start the question with ‘what’”
- FLEUR: “What ... what change ... changed in Ma Lambee once the war began?”
- TUTOR: “Excellent. Now answer your question in your own words.”
- FLEUR: “Once the war began Ma Lambee’s work in the laundry was not good.”
- TUTOR: “Well done. Add another sentence to develop that idea.”

The tutor’s encouragement (above) seemed to empower Fleur to build on her success. This is evident in the excerpt from Fleur below as she continues to expand on answering her question.”

- FLEUR: “She became careless with the folds in clothes. She no longer fixed up broken buttons.”
- TUTOR: “Excellent.”

Predicting

Making predictions about reading material is an important higher-order reading strategy. A hypothesis-testing process is initiated in which individuals make predictions and then read to confirm or reject them (Roe, Smith & Burns, 2004). By asking the participants to make predictions prior to reading a text, the tutor

encouraged the participants to monitor their own use of the available clues about texts.

In the excerpt below is an example of the tutor asking questions relating to the text, *The New Boots* (Table 28). The questions focused on highlighting for the participant, Thea, the particular clues that would serve to herald details in the forthcoming text.

TUTOR: “Look at the title and illustration and predict what you think the text is about.”

THEA: “Life ... in the olden days.”

TUTOR: “Well done. What made you think that?”

THEA: “The way the children are dressed.”

TUTOR: “Excellent. Give me some words you might expect to see in the text.”

THEA: “Children, different clothes, boots.”

TUTOR: “Well done. Scan the first paragraph and predict how many characters will be mentioned in this text.”

THEA: “Five, no, ... six, the father is in it as well.”

TUTOR: “Great. Which words tell you that?”

THEA: “Five children are mentioned. The word *we* is used.”

TUTOR: “Excellent.”

Table 28: Reading Text: The New Boots (Grace Foakes)

I recall an unhappy time when my father came to the conclusion that I should be taught a lesson. I now realise how hard it must have been to keep a family of five children neat and tidy. We all wore boots. Shoes were only for the well-to-do. I happened that I wore my boots out much more quickly than I should have. True, I would slide behind carts as they went along. I would kick and dance like any other child. But the fact was I wore my boots out more quickly than did my brothers and sisters.

To summarise in the present study the interaction between the tutor and the participants was facilitated by frequent routines firstly in the one-on-one tutoring and later in the Meta Language Awareness Program. The improvement in the participants TORCH TEST results between Stage A and Stage B and later between the end of Stage B and the end of Stage C may be associated with the one-on-one instruction and the small group instruction respectively. In the first intervention the improvement in the reading skills may be attributed to the participant's acquisition of specific skills as well as the enhancement of the social-emotional needs, such as confidence. In the second intervention the improvement may be attributed to the routines in the Meta Language Awareness Program which enhanced the further development of skills in metacognition and the participants' belief in themselves as readers. It seems apparent, however, that the intervention of Stage C was beneficial to the participants from the following points of view.

Firstly, the intervention involved extensive modeling and practice in three strategies that were deemed to be ideal comprehension fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities, that is, summarising, questioning and predicting.

Secondly, the routines associated with the intervention forced individual participants to respond, taking into account their ever developing level of competence.

Thirdly, the tutor did not merely instruct the participants and leave them to work unaided, she entered into an interaction with the participants. As the participant adopted more of the essential skills initially undertaken by the tutor, the tutor's role in the situation changed. The tutor began to act less as a model and more like an

encourager. This involved the tutor being aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of each participant at any stage of the process.

In the next chapter, the conclusion to this thesis, the basic principles associated with the cognitive and affective dimension of enhancing reading skills will be outlined. Recommendations will be made for addressing the needs of the struggling adolescent reader.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Struggling young adolescent readers who have reached secondary school with poor self-efficacy can acquire the strategies and skills to become strong, independent readers.

Many of these underachieving readers are not detected until secondary school and others participated in reading intervention programs in primary school but perhaps due to the timing, duration and the style these had had limited effectiveness. Underachievement for adolescents is debilitating. Usually between Year 4 and Year 10 there is no discernible improvement in reading as access to appropriate intervention is very limited and students at this stage are exposed to an explosion of new and complex words.

There is a dearth of research in Australia on struggling adolescent readers. What research there is generally has had little influence on teacher beliefs and practices (Hoffman et al, 2000). This is probably due to the fact that there is, as Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps and Waff (1998) suggest, a need for the adaptation of whole school initiatives, to support struggling readers. Alvermann et al. (1998) contend that there is a need for a change at the whole school level so that systematic procedures are put into place, for the identification, planning and monitoring of all students, and for the systematic record keeping for all students. Whilst some interventions utilised in primary schools have been successful, there is a need to provide appropriate interventions at secondary school, as has been shown in this study they can make a real and substantial difference.

Conclusion and Implications

The first research question addressed change in the participants' reading skills. The second research question was the investigation of the characteristics of the intervention procedures that contributed to change in the participants.

In relation to the first question the following three main conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. Despite earlier interventions in their primary years, the eight participants continued to struggle with reading.
2. Accompanying their struggle with reading was poor self efficacy.
3. Reading intervention programs at Year 8 can result in both short term and long term enhancement of reading skills.

Each of these conclusions is elaborated below and will be followed by the findings of the second question, characteristics of the reading intervention program that contributed to the change.

Despite Earlier Interventions these Participants Continued to Struggle with Reading

At the beginning of the present research the eight participants shared a number of characteristics. Firstly, though they were of normal intelligence they had in common a history of reading difficulties. On stanine scale, 1-9, which is normed against the wider community of their age group, six of the eight participants achieved a score of 3 and two participants achieved a score of 4. As discussed earlier, these students could be generally described as non-strategic in their reading. Observations revealed a number of characteristic weaknesses in their reading. These included: non-automatic readers, readers with poor phonological awareness, readers with monitoring difficulties, readers who lacked specific topic knowledge, readers who were disengaged or inactive and readers with poor metacognitive skills and in some cases, with an absence of metacognitive skills.

Secondly, despite the fact that they had participated in various intervention programs in their primary grades, they still struggled as readers. One can only assume that perhaps the contexts, relationships, learning styles and timing were not appropriate for these particular individuals during their primary school years. Other assumptions are that such individuals were overwhelmed by the avalanche of vocabulary they

were exposed to between years 5 and 7 or perhaps that they were unable to cope with the change in reading texts they were required to read as they began secondary school.

Accompanying Reading Difficulties was Poor Self Efficacy

The participants had poor self-efficacy about themselves as readers. Indeed many of them believed it was their fault that they struggled with reading. After numerous years of the frustration of struggling with reading they appeared to be convinced of their own worthlessness and lack of ability: in their minds they were ‘dumb.’ Toni, Thea and Fleur, for example, exhibited a lack of enthusiasm for yet another intervention program. They seemed to assume that they would continue to fail and be trapped in what had become a downward spiral of hopelessness.

Reading Intervention – Short Term Effect

In the six months duration of the project and in an instructional environment that fostered both optimism for improvement and a self regulating approach to reading, all participants achieved marked improvement in reading. Indeed, marked improvement in scores was evident for all eight participants with five of the eight participants improving by one stanine during Stage B and the other three improving by two stanines. In other words, during Stage B, the first intervention, three of the participants improved from below the 23rd percentile to above the 40th percentile.

A close look at the RMA records of all participants at the conclusion of Stage B indicated that they were exhibiting many of the characteristics of successful readers mentioned in the literature review of this thesis. For example, they made use of context clues; their word recognition had improved because of newly acquired knowledge of sound and common letter sequences and they were using structural analysis generalisation to predict structural elements in words. Similarly, at the conclusion of Stage C the four participants were exhibiting more sophisticated characteristics of successful readers highlighted in the literature review of this thesis. For example, they were using metacognitive skills. In other words, they

demonstrated a knowledge of when to engage particular cognitive abilities in reading.

Reading Intervention – Long Term Effect

The current study revealed that struggling adolescent readers can become strategic, engaged readers who enjoy reading. Although many other strategy-based intervention programs claim to be successful in improving students' reading, one problem remains that is pertinent to this study. For example, with the exception of Palincsar and Brown (1984), much of the existing research has failed to document firstly improvement that has been enduring over a five year period, and, secondly, the transfer of treatment effects to authentic reading materials. In other words, students do well on intervention materials, but when posed with real books and real reading assignments, the transfer of skills from practice to reality has been disappointing. However in the present study short-term and long-term gains for the eight participants could be monitored.

It seems that the improvement in reading skills was enduring. Though the present study had concluded near the end of their Year 8 year, the researcher was able to keep track of the participants' progress at school via reports from the Special Needs Coordinator at that site. The four participants who were involved in both the interventions had continued to make progress in their reading and education, completing their Year 12 year, Victorian Certificate of Education which is the last year of study before tertiary study, with satisfactory results. One had gained a place at university studying nursing, while the other three were all pursuing other tertiary courses. Of the four participants who were involved in the intervention at Stage B only, all four had begun their Victorian Certificate of Education year. Two had received satisfactory results in the Victorian Certificate of Education and were studying degrees in business at university. Two had dropped out of their Victorian Certificate of Education mid-year. In light of the minimal reading skills and poor self-belief at the beginning of the project these individuals had made encouraging inroads in their reading and in the schooling in general after the conclusion of the study. If these eight case studies are representative of only a minute population of students, then it is of value.

There is strong evidence nationally and internationally that there are many thousands of students who exhibit characteristics similar to these participants prior to the project and who struggle with grade-level reading tasks. Because they are forced to read at frustration level most of the school day, their reading skill may improve little from year to year. The inescapable fact remains that these individuals have the potential to learn if they receive appropriate instruction in a reading intervention program, as has been clearly shown with the eight girls involved in this research.

Characteristics of Reading Intervention Programs that Contributed to Change

The reading intervention programs contributed to change in the participants in two broad areas. The first was associated with cognitive needs. The second was associated with social emotional needs.

Cognitive Needs.

The two reading intervention programs used in this project shared particular characteristics that enhanced the participants' cognitive needs.

1. There was an emphasis on providing direct instruction to address individual needs. Such instruction took into consideration the following:
 - acknowledging what each participant could do without assistance;
 - acknowledging what each participant could do given a little prompting;
 - establishing what gaps exist in each participant's prior knowledge;
 - establishing what each participant needs to be taught next.
2. There was provision for frequent, regular practice in reading. Struggling readers need regular practice in reading. They need to engage in reading for sustained periods of time (Hoffman et al. 2000).
3. There was a focus on teaching each participant a knowledge and appreciation of the genre of texts. An understanding of genre distinctions and conventions helps readers become more comprehending, critical readers (Strickland et al. 2004).

4. A concerted effort was made to improve each participant's knowledge of schema. Effective readers actively construct meaning as they interact with text. Schema theory describes how readers bring unique individual experiences and knowledge to the act of reading. This knowledge and experience profoundly influences the meaning that readers create as they read, influencing both comprehension and response (Strickland et al. 2004).

Social Emotional Needs

Five themes related to the social emotional needs that underpin the cognitive dimension of learning were also recognised.

1. To achieve success in reading, an individual must become active in the process of reading.
2. Struggling adolescent readers need to gain confidence in reading. They frequently demonstrate a fear of failure. Success in reading requires the reader to develop confidence which contributes to enjoyable reading experiences.
3. Struggling adolescent readers need positive experiences with reading. Such experiences help them overcome reticence when reading, and to take the risks required when decoding print.
4. Readers need to take responsibility for efficacious behaviour when approaching reading tasks.
5. A supportive communication style like that of the tutor, while modelling and teaching specific reading skills, is critical.

These themes are elaborated below in the context of the intervention program at Stage B and the intervention program at Stage C.

Theme one: Being an active participant in reading.

An essential ingredient for enhancing students' confidence and competence in reading is to have them active participants in reading experiences (Lyons, 2003). For

each participant during Stage B of the project the tutor imparted a particular message. That message was that for all participants achieving success in reading was a reality.

Facilitating each individual's success in reading occurred to a great extent as a consequence of using reading texts which were both of interest and challenging. Emphasis was placed on the tutor demonstrating 'how to be a reader.' The regular shared reading tasks during Stage B provided the participants with frequent reading sessions where fluency in reading was being supported by the tutor's voice. The tutor modelled specific skills including the prediction of a story line on the basis of title and genre and the use of self-correction while reading. The tutor demonstrated the use of the four reading roles described earlier of code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst.

During Stage C it was evident that the participants were learning to link the content of texts with their own experiences. They learned to expect that authors made effective use of factors such as descriptions, conversations and actions to develop the characters in a story. They began to understand the literal and inferential meanings of the text because they could empathise with characters in this text.

Theme two: Become confident as a reader.

The frequent one-on-one guided reading at Stage B enabled the tutor to work with each participant in becoming confident as active participants in reading. With an emphasis on the skills of code-breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst, the tutor had the opportunity to showcase each individual's strengths and in turn address reading weaknesses. At all times individuals were encouraged to take risks and to be persistent when interacting with texts.

Theme three: Encourage strategic reading behaviour and provide positive reading experiences.

During Stage B of the present study, for example, the participants were instructed in techniques specifically related to tuning in before reading a text. These skills included, looking at the title to predict the text content, activating prior knowledge on the topic. The Meta Language Awareness Program sessions in Stage C provided the

ideal chance for the participants to trial and use with success, skills such as summarising and predicting. This experience enhanced their decoding and comprehension. This was in line with the work of Konza (2003) who suggests that struggling readers often do not understand that there are strategies one can use before reading a text that help with understanding the content of that text.

Theme four: Encourage learner's responsibility and ultimately efficacious behaviour when reading.

By working one-on-one with the tutor at Stage B and in a small group at Stage C, the participants learned to become active learners who took responsibility for their own learning. For example, during Stage B the participants were required to apply the principle of activating their prior knowledge suggested by the schema of a text. In the one-on-one sessions of Stage B the participants were encouraged to develop ownership of strategic behaviour while reading. Since the tutor was working so closely with each participant she was able to monitor and encourage their use of efficacious behaviour when reading.

The small group activities in Stage C provided the ideal framework within which consistent expectations, support and encouragement for efficacious behaviour in reading could occur.

Theme five: Supportive tutor communicative style is vital when teaching specific reading skills.

The supportive communication of a tutor/teacher provide some of the support that ultimately modulates the emotional state of the struggling reader. In the present study the supportive communication by the tutor was useful in the following ways:

- communicating the notion that each participant is capable of learning, and expected to learn, the skills needed for success in reading.
- establishing a respectful link with each participant.

The shared reading sessions during Stage B where the tutor together with the participant read a new text aloud, seemed to assist the reading progress of all participants. For example, the slower, fluent and suitably modulated reading style of

the tutor seemed to allow the participants to learn a sustained rhythmic intonation while visually tracking print.

The frequent one-on-one sessions at Stage B helped the participants form a trusting link with the tutor, in a situation where individual differences were recognised. For example, the tutor hand picked particular texts for each participant so that she could interact with a text and succeed in comprehension.

In the small group sessions in The Meta Language Awareness Program at Stage C, the supportive tutor communicative style was an important foundation for the participants in developing skills in comprehension monitoring.

Recommendations for Meeting the Needs of Struggling Readers

As highlighted earlier, there is a significant problem with the attainment of reading skills in Australian schools. Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) (1996), commenting on policies and practice to support literacy development, emphasises that more support has been given to literacy in the early years than literacy in the middle and upper years of the primary school. This imbalance has meant that with each passing year into secondary school, struggling readers are falling further and further behind their peers, becoming adolescents who perennially struggle with reading. Of the students who struggle with reading in Year 3, approximately 74% will still struggle in Year 9 (Hempenstall, 2000). However, far fewer reading intervention programs are available for secondary school students than are available for primary school students.

Clearly, for struggling readers, school life is extremely arduous. Most class tasks are difficult. Reading requirements are often far too high for their level of development. In order to complete basic tasks, struggling readers need to work much harder than their normally achieving peers. In many cases struggling readers become dispirited and non-receptive to reading per se.

Addressing the needs of the struggling adolescent reader is undoubtedly a challenge. However, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Developing general school policies regarding meeting the needs of struggling readers.
2. Providing one-on-one and small group models of instruction.
3. Following theoretical principles that underpin students becoming active learners in whole class situations, in all subjects.

Each of these recommendations is elaborated below:

1. School policies regarding meeting the needs of struggling readers

Meeting the needs of struggling readers can be achieved by the following: the use of authentic reading assessment procedures, school planning, resources, technology, program evaluation, professional development and whole school commitment.

The Use of Authentic Reading Assessment Procedures

Assessment is a critical part of an instructional program. In order to identify reading difficulties, it is vital that schools look for a discrepancy between cognitive ability and school achievement. Authentic assessment involves the administration of a variety of types of formal tests, informal inventories, and measures as well as the collection of anecdotal notes based on interviews and questionnaires and work samples (Strickland et al. 2004).

The use of authentic assessment procedures in the present study enabled the researcher to collect rich data on each participant. For example, interviews and questionnaires provided insight into the participants' perceptions about reading and perceptions about themselves as readers. A reading questionnaire which included questions such as: "Do you like to read?" "Are you a good reader?" "What do good readers do?" enabled the participants to do self-evaluation, thus providing authentic information for the researcher. Tools like The Researcher Made Test on Phonemic Awareness and the running records of RMA provided more diagnostic information about reading skills as they were developing. Since the tutor and the participants worked collaboratively to determine what was and what was not going well, the participants could then take ownership and responsibility for their own growth.

School Planning and Assessment of Students

When addressing the needs of struggling readers it is necessary to use regular and systematic assessment of students' skills before planning teaching strategies. Because some schools can be characterised by a relatively high transience of teachers, it is important that these assessments and relevant teaching plans are well documented and relatively easy to sustain from year to year. In the site of the current project, diagnostic assessment of student reading skills occurred only in Year 7. The recommendation is that schools consider adopting a diagnostic-prescriptive style of teaching for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 in order to address the reading deficits in entire school populations, of the early secondary years. For example, initially a norm-referenced test such as TORCH (1984) could be administered to the above mentioned groups, to evaluate each student's reading/comprehension performance by comparison with a norm group of students of the same age. The result of such a group-administered reading test could be a useful starting point for lesson planning for mainstream teachers and where severe reading deficits are evident, the starting point for lesson planning for specialist teachers. It is important also that the "whole school" takes responsibility for supporting reading, so that collaborative consultation among teachers is maximised (Dean, 1989; Tiegermann-Barber & Radziewicz, 1998; Walther-Thomas, Bryant & Land, 1996).

Whole School Commitment

- Effective support for struggling readers begins at the whole school level. This involves whole school decision making, ensuring that staff are committed to the support of struggling readers.

In relation to the present study it was evident that only at Year 7 at the research site, were systematic procedures used to identify struggling readers and only in Year 8 was any provision made for them. As mentioned earlier, only those students who were identified as "struggling with reading" were given assistance in reading. For the duration of Year 8 these individuals attended "Special English" classes, which were conducted on a one teacher to 16 students ratio. In the other classes in the middle school at this site in Years 7, 9 and 10, there were no systematic procedures

for identifying reading difficulties. There were no programs in developmental reading instruction.

2. Providing one-on-one instruction followed by small group instruction followed by a return to the mainstream

This study was distinctive in that it provided a relatively short period of one-on-one instruction, followed by again, a relatively short period of small group instruction after which the participants returned to the mainstream classroom.

What needs to be highlighted, however, is the value of this two-pronged approach to intervention. In other words, since the one-on-one intervention focussed on reading skill development specifically designed for each individual, it empowered individuals to become strategic readers who actively constructed meaning as they read. This meant that during the second intervention, behaviours such as monitoring and regulating their reading, in order to aid faltering understanding had become second nature. This also meant that when the participants returned to the mainstream classroom they were able to maintain their enhanced attitudes to and skills in reading.

Various factors are involved when considering the reading difficulties of adolescent students. As discussed earlier, a student's previous learning experiences, probable misconceptions about the reading process, as demonstrated in the present study, poor self-esteem and anxiety, all combine to produce reading difficulties. However, it is possible to overcome these difficulties through an informed and consistent one-on-one intervention approach and small group approaches. Struggling readers have often been denied the chance to read authentic texts. Instead their reading has been restricted to reading texts from reading schemes. Such texts have contained unnatural language, short sentences and a controlled vocabulary of small words (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1991).

A struggling reader may in the past have spent hours in remedial reading classes involved in tasks such as responding to flash cards or reciting words from charts. Tasks such as these are designed to teach isolated reading skills and do not require

the active thinking necessary for reading. These activities also deny students the chance to appreciate the power of a good storyline. In so doing, these activities deny students a major motivation for reading.

The one-on-one and small group interventions tailored to fit individuals and described in this thesis and earlier promoted by Clay (1985) suggest that most students retain the positive effects of such intervention over time. The long-term benefits achieved by the two short-term (eight week) periods in this study are promising.

The results and discussion section of this chapter emphasises that struggling adolescent readers decidedly benefit from high quality and regular direct teaching in a distraction free environment. Meeting the individual student's needs and interests and closely monitoring individual student's achievement in a systematic way can best be achieved by one-on-one and small group intervention initiatives.

In keeping with the claims of Chan and Dally (2000) and ACER (2000) the present study found the following key points:

- skilled teachers are capable of diagnosing difficulties and planning appropriate instructions for struggling readers so that in a short period of time (8 weeks) they can cope with mainstream tasks;
- organisational structuring and timetabling can be developed to allow for flexible groupings of students. This could mean, for example, that during a daily 60 minute language block a given group of struggling readers could have one-on-one or small group intervention with a specialist teacher while the remaining of their class work in whole class groups;
- appropriate links can be utilised between out-of-class intervention sessions and regular class work;
- it is important to identify and match support to students' specific needs;
- providing opportunities for students to read a range of texts silently and aloud leads to enhanced reading skills;
- it is important to acknowledge the links between enhanced reading skills and fostering confidence and self esteem in adolescent students.

3. Schools should adopt theoretical principles that underpin students becoming active learners in whole class situations

This study highlights the importance of active learning and student involvement in learning. The application of this approach in the present study was guided by the works of Brozo and Simpson (1999) who emphasised five principles which should underpin the methodological framework for whole class teaching in all subjects. The way in which these five principles were used in the present study is elaborated below.

Active Learners Use their Prior Knowledge in the Meaning-Making Process

The principle that active learners use prior knowledge in the meaning-making process is concerned with the extent to which readers apply appropriate schemata in meaning-making. Teachers can use many strategies to encourage students to engage and use relevant prior knowledge as they read.

It is theorised that learners comprehend a text when they bring to mind a schema that gives an appropriate account of the objects and events described in a text. Without schemata we could make little sense of a text. In Stage C of the present study many of the stories read were linked with one another through the theme of racial prejudice, for example, *We Look After Our Own* (Kath Walker) and *A Sense Of Belonging* (Witi Ihimaera). The researcher was able to provide unifying ideas to help tie together the participants' prior knowledge and experiences with the concepts and words that would be encountered in a text.

Active Learners Understand and Use Text Structure to Organise their Meaning-Making

Reading skills can be enhanced when a reader is sensitive to the structure and characteristics of a text. Teachers can provide student instruction specifically to help students use a text's structure and organisation to locate key ideas, understand relationships in the texts, and store information in their long-term memory for future recall.

In the present study, for example, the researcher demonstrated that particular genres have predictable text structures. The participants learnt to take advantage of inherent properties of text to improve their reading. For example, in the present study, one way to capitalise on the predictable rhetorical structure of narratives used at Stage B was to ask and answer questions related to story elements.

During the latter sessions the tutor used text books related to content areas to instruct the participants in the effective use of their developing knowledge of genre found in their many text books. It was important, for example, that these participants learnt that each chapter has general features including the following: an introduction, a summary that lists key ideas, bold face headings, subheading and italicised words. A discussion about how to use this information helped the participants as they read in preparation for written work tasks.

Active Learners Think Critically about Text and Create their Own Elaborations

Active learners, as highlighted earlier, think about and focus on key ideas when they read. Researchers (Brown & Day, 1983; Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson, 1991; Pressley, Yokoi, van Meter, Van Ellen & Freeburn, 1997) have found that when less able readers were trained to use the same procedures as those used by experts, their ability to summarise and comprehend expository text improved significantly. Less able readers, for example, can learn through teacher modeling, to construct main ideas for paragraphs and longer texts.

The Meta Language Awareness Program in Stage C of the present study provided the ideal context in which this occurred.

Active Learners are Metacognitively Aware

Unsophisticated readers generally do not monitor their understanding as they read. Furthermore, they generally are unsure about what to do once they have determined that they are lost or confused (Pressley, 1995; Simpson & Nist, 1997). Students can learn to monitor their understanding as they read, gaining more knowledge about themselves as learners. They can learn not only to recognise when their understanding breaks down but what techniques to use to reduce their confusion.

They need to be aware of fix-up strategies that active learners use when they are trying to increase their understanding of a particular content area concept.

Teachers, in their content areas, can assist struggling readers by modeling and demonstrating effective fix-up strategies. If students can see that it is normal to experience comprehension difficulties and that even experts must solve these problems, they are more likely to incorporate fix-up strategies into their behaviours and routines. In addition, teachers can assist students by reiterating before each class the diverse ways in which they can improve their comprehension and learning. In the present study this was achieved with the use of a list of fix-up strategies on a poster board for all the participants to see and ultimately adapt as they read. It was particularly at Stage C of this study that the participants' acquisition and use of metacognitive skills helped them develop independence as learners.

Active Learners Possess and Employ a Wide Range of Reading and Learning Strategies

To be effective, students need strategies to make sense out of their texts, monitor their understanding, and clarify what they do not understand. In addition, to cope with the difficult tasks that demand higher level thinking, secondary school students need strategies to help them elaborate, organise and synthesise information from multiple sources. Such a list of requirements implies that there is no one technique that will work for students in all situations (Simpson, Hynd, Nist & Burrell, 1997). Rather than a generic approach, active learners have a repertoire of techniques and they know when to select the most appropriate technique(s) for the subject area and for the task described by the teacher.

By the conclusion of Stage B in the present study, the participants were active in their use of declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge. For example, a participant using declarative knowledge knew that previewing prior to reading involved such steps as reading the introduction and summary. With declarative and procedural knowledge of the preview strategy they could preview and describe the procedures for previewing in detail. When active learners have conditional knowledge, they know when and why to use various strategies. Therefore, with the

previewing strategy, the participants knew that it may be appropriate to preview only certain texts. They became aware that the time involved in previewing a chapter before they read was time well spent because it allowed them to check the writer's set out of the text, establish what they already knew about the topic, set purposes for reading and divide the reading into meaningful sections. In sum, the participants realised the need of a wide repertoire of strategies to match the various tasks they would encounter across the content areas. In addition, these participants gradually realised where, how and why they should use these strategies.

By the conclusion of Stage C in the present study, the participants had had a great deal of practice in taking turns in assuming the role of the teacher through structured dialogue. In sum, the participants came to realise two key issues. Firstly, that dialogue is a critical component of effective comprehension. Secondly, that reading is a constructive process in which the reader is the meaning maker. Ultimately, it must be the reader who creates meaning, not the text or the teacher.

Future Research

The series of case studies and analyses comprising this thesis provide clear support for the application of reading intervention programs in the early secondary years. Reading intervention programs at Year 8 can result in both short term and long term enhancement of reading skills. Some issues remain to be resolved with respect to the use of the two particular reading intervention programs used in the present study. These issues are now considered.

Firstly, this research considered only female participants in Year 8. This immediately raises the issues of what impact the same interventions would have had on male participants with similarly poor reading skills.

Secondly, 90% of texts used during the interventions at Stages B and C were narrative texts while the remaining 10% were expository texts. This gives rise to the question of what impact the same intervention would have had, had the ratio of text type been quite different; that is, if more of the texts used had been expository and less had been narrative. The later application may have provided quite different results since, as is highlighted in the literature review, in the early years of secondary

school, students are increasingly expected to work with expository material, for example, in science and geography and in other disciplines (Wilson & Rupley, 1997). These two issues are discussed in more detail below.

Thirdly, this research considered only one researcher who acted as the tutor in the implementation of the two interventions. Future research could address the contribution of the persona of the tutor versus the contribution of the particular intervention programs.

Study of Intervention with a Male Cohort

Concerns about boys' literacy performance usually refer specifically to their demonstrated competence in the context of literacy as it is done and evaluated in schools, despite the fact that this represents only one broad set of literacy practices (Fehring, 2002). In other words, boys may underachieve in school-based literacy, but they do not necessarily underachieve in other forms of socially valued and more "desirable" literate practice, for example, the competence in literacy required for surfing the Internet (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997).

Martino's (1995) interviews with secondary school boys demonstrate that homophobia and a general fear of being identified as non-masculine, may feature in regulating boys' engagement with reading per se. However, as highlighted earlier in this thesis, in the mainstream class situation, boys do not suddenly begin to resist school-based reading tasks in secondary school. The process of alienation is identifiable in the primary years (Orlandi, 1996).

While much of a girl's social learning has introduced her to performances of passive activities, such as in reading, much of a boy's learning has been different. His experiences through sport and leisure have introduced him to performances of activity and to masculinities that are embodied in homophobic ways (Gilbert, 1994). The differences between groups of boys in their response to reading tasks needs to be carefully monitored. The complex relationships between class and masculinity, for instance, may mean that privileged groups of boys are more likely to be encouraged to accept forms of school regulation in reading in anticipation of career rewards in

the post-schooling period (Fehring, 2003). In other words, the willingness to take up positions as 'literate' subjects will consequently be dependent on a range of factors associated with socio-economic position and with versions of masculinity boys find desirable.

However, further research about the effects of both one-on-one and small group instruction for Year 8 male participants could generate a broader data base for discussion. For example, an important point to consider is that while boys may underachieve in whole class literacy initiatives, they may not necessarily underachieve in one-on-one and in small group instructional settings with texts of interest to them. As Martino (1995) suggests homophobia and a general fear of being identified as non-masculine, may feature in boys limiting their engagement with English tasks such as reading, in the whole class setting where texts are seen as uninteresting. This may not be the case in one-on-one and in small group situations which would be the style of intervention used were this study replicated with a cohort of only male participants.

Narrative Texts Versus Expository Texts

Promising research literature abounds on the value of highlighting for struggling readers genre distinctions and conventions. Indeed, strategy instruction in both narrative and expository texts seems to consistently improve comprehension performance (Gersten et al. 2001).

However, as mentioned earlier, narrative text according to Gersten et al. (2001) and Goatley et al. (1995) is easier to comprehend and remember. The primary reasons for this are that the content of narrative is usually more familiar than that of expository text and the structure of narrative is usually simpler than that of expository text.

The challenge in future research with another cohort of struggling readers could be to use in at least 50% of the time, expository texts such as biographies, reports, arguments and explanations. As genrists such as Raphael and Au (1998) explain,

such expository texts could be suitably linked with the relevant content areas for the given cohort.

Further research about the effects of focussing explicitly on expository texts in junior secondary contexts could generate a broader data base for discussion. In addition, this could influence innovative changes in how teachers in secondary schools cater for struggling readers.

Contribution of Tutor Persona Versus Contribution of Interventions

Strong forces operate that should modify the character of the response participants have to the intervention(s) in a research project. For example, consideration needs to be given to the persona of an individual implementing the intervention versus the contribution of the particular intervention programs.

As human beings, we meet every new situation armed with expectations derived from past experiences or, more accurately, derived from our interpretation of past experiences (Britton, 1983, p. 90).

In other words, we face the experience with both knowledge drawn from the past but also with developed tendencies to interpret in certain ways. Future research involving a number of researchers implementing the same interventions could generate a broader data base for discussion.

Conclusion

Future studies about the explicit teaching of reading skills using the two interventions used in this study could allow researchers the opportunity to analyse the effects of the gender of the participants and the genre of texts used for the interventions. Such studies may identify similarities and differences that might exist between:

- the response of female and males to intervention programs;
- the use of narrative texts and expository texts in intervention programs;
- the contribution of tutor persona versus contribution of intervention programs.

In Closing

In conclusion, this project has provided insights into the efficacy of two reading intervention programs. Struggling adolescent readers can become efficient readers when certain conditions prevail. These individuals need appropriate reading instruction in an environment that fosters opportunities for improvement through skills development. A number of basic principles associated with the cognitive dimension of enhanced reading were identified. These principles included: providing direct instruction to address individual needs; planning for frequent, regular reading practice; teaching students to use their knowledge of the conventions of genre as a means of improving the comprehension skills; teaching students to use schema knowledge as a means of enhancing their reading skills.

Recognition was made of five themes related to social emotional needs which underpin the cognitive dimensions of learning. Firstly, to achieve success in reading, an individual must become active in the process of reading. Secondly, struggling adolescent readers need to gain confidence in their reading. Thirdly, success in reading requires the reader to have positive, enjoyable reading experiences. Fourthly, readers need to take responsibility for efficacious behaviour when approaching tasks of reading. Fifthly, the supportive communication style of the teacher, while modelling and teaching specific reading skills, is critical.

Meeting the needs of the struggling adolescent reader is undoubtedly a challenge. However, in so doing it is recommended that consideration should be given to the development of appropriate school policies, providing both one-on-one and small group models of instruction and following theoretical principles that underpin students becoming active learners in whole class situation. To have maximum benefit for struggling readers a school needs to develop a policy on meeting individual needs. It is important that the “whole school” takes responsibility for supporting reading within the context of collaborative consultation. Since the funding of programs for struggling readers continues to be a serious challenge for schools, support for such readers needs to be built into regular school resourcing and planning. When schools are making decisions about the implementation of reading intervention programs, it is important to plan when and how, after a full cycle of

implementation, a particular program will be formally evaluated. Though highly committed expert teachers are the key to helping struggling readers, teachers of all subjects should participate in professional development that focuses on the needs of struggling readers. Students who experience both one-on-one and small group intervention programs tailored to fit their individual needs retain the positive effects of such interventions over time. The long-term benefits achieved by a short-term (eight week) period in this study are promising. The results and discussion presented in this thesis emphasise that struggling adolescent readers decidedly benefit from high quality and regular direct teaching, both in one-on-one and small group settings.

Struggling readers also benefit from whole class situations where teachers focus particularly on them becoming active learners. Students can become active learners within supportive environments that teachers create. However, teachers need to focus on promoting independent learning within a classroom context that nurtures students' risk taking.

Some Final Comments

As highlighted in this thesis, widespread reading problems still exist in junior secondary school students. Yet junior high school teachers must deal with both the real and perceived constraints on what they can do in the classroom. It is my belief as a teacher educator that innovative strategies in the teaching of reading are likely to find their way in the classroom of teachers who:

1. Continue to explore their practical knowledge of their best practice in teaching reading in general;
2. Are provided with professional development which focuses on enhancing reading skills of struggling readers;
3. Are provided with the ongoing support of school administrators and teaching colleagues and a whole school commitment to follow through with reading intervention initiatives;
4. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of reading intervention initiatives.

LIST OF TEXTS USED IN INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Aesop's, The Tortoise and Hare.

Andersons, (1975). *The Tin Soldier*.

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APPENDIX 1

TORCH (1984) Test Results Collected at the Beginning of the Project, Stage A

Participant	Stage A
Sarah	3
Toni	4
Thea	3
Fleur	3
Fiona	3
Sintra	4
Sevena	3
Emily	3

APPENDIX 2

Researcher Made Test of Phonological Knowledge

Section (i)

Informal Graded Word Recognition Test			
(Lerner, 1997)			
<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
hungry	arrow	brilliant	career
loud	wrist	credit	cultivate
stones	bottom	examine	essential
trick	castle	grammar	grieve
chair	learned	jingle	jostle
hopped	washed	ruby	obscure
himself	safety	terrify	procession
color	yesterday	wrench	sociable
straight	delight	mayor	triangular
leading	happiness	agent	volcano

Section (ii)

Common Consonant Blends					
(Westwood, 2001)					
1	st	8	sp	15	sc
2	sk	9	sl	16	sw
3	sn	10	sm	17	br
4	bl	11	cr	18	dr
5	pr	12	tr	19	gr
6	fr	13	pl	20	cl
7	fl	14	gl	21	tw
Three Letter Blends					
(Westwood, 2001)					
1	str	4	spl	6	thr
2	scr	5	shr	7	spr
3	squ				

Section (iii)

Compound Words (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998)					
1	airport	15	football	29	skyscraper
2	another	16	forever	30	somehow
3	anybody	17	grapefruit	31	sometime
4	anything	18	haircut	32	sunlight
5	anywhere	19	headache	33	teammate
6	audiotape	20	headset	34	toenail
7	barefoot	21	homesick	35	touchdown
8	bedroom	22	indoor	36	understand
9	breakfast	23	keyboard	37	videotape
10	classmate	24	motorcycle	38	whenever
11	daylight	25	oatmeal	39	windshield
12	doorbell	26	rainbow	40	woodland
13	earthworm	27	rattlesnake	41	woodpecker
14	fireproof	28	sandpaper	42	yourself

Section (iv)

Affixes, i.e. Prefixes and Suffixes which Add Meaning to a Given Word or Change Tense or Part of Speech					
<i>Prefixes</i>					
1	afterward	11	belittle	21	bicycle
2	concrete	12	distrust	22	dislike
3	include	13	incurable	23	interact
4	magnify	14	microscope	24	mistake
5	mislead	15	nonsense	25	overdue
6	preheat	16	protect	26	repeat
7	submarine	17	supernatural	27	telephone
8	television	18	telescope	28	transit
9	tricycle	19	triangle	29	unknown
10	unjust	20	underline	30	uniform
<i>Suffixes</i>					
1	assistant	6	teacher	11	mouthful
2	roofing	7	motherless	12	weekly
3	happily	8	happiness	13	wondrous
4	boxes	9	sunny	14	walked
5	walking	10	carried	15	walks

APPENDIX 3

T. C. Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension

(Kemp, 1993)

There are five levels in T. C. Barrett's taxonomy of reading comprehension. These include:

1. Literal (Recognition and Recall)
2. Reorganisation (Retelling)
3. Inferential
4. Evaluation
5. Appreciation

With the presentation of each ascending level of comprehension, some sample questions are given (Kemp, 1993, p. 138).

Barrett Scale (Kemp, 1993, p. 139)

Literal Comprehension:

1.1 Recognition and Recall

(Note: Questioning takes place with the passage available to the reader).

Recognition requires the student to locate or identify ideas or information explicitly stated in the reading selection itself. Recognition tasks are:

- (a) ***Recognition of details*** – the student is required to locate or identify facts such as the names of the characters, the time of the story, or the place of the story.
- (b) ***Recognition of main ideas*** – the student is asked to locate or identify an explicit statement in or from a selection which is a main idea of a paragraph or a larger portion of the selection.
- (c) ***Recognition of a sequence*** – the student is required to locate or identify the order of incidents or actions explicitly stated in the selection.
- (d) ***Recognition of comparison*** – the student is requested to locate or identify likenesses and differences in characters, times and places that are explicitly stated in the selection.
- (e) ***Recognition of cause and effect relationships*** – the student in this instance may be required to locate or identify the explicitly stated reasons for certain happenings or actions in the selection.
- (f) ***Recognition of character traits*** – the student is required to identify or locate explicit statements about a character which helps to point out the type of person he is.

APPENDIX 4

Reading Interview Schedule

(Adapted from Weaver, C., 1994, *Reading Process and Practice*)

Pre- Post- Interview

Name:

1. What do you think reading is?

Possible responses:

Pronouncing the words

Sounding out words

Saying the words

Learning new words

Saying words/getting meaning

Getting meaning

Thinking about what it says

Other responses

Interviewer's evaluative interpretation.

1	2	3	4	5
Pronouncing words		Saying the words and getting their meaning		Getting meaning
Saying words				(Meaning emphasis)
(Word identification)		(Words to meaning)		

2. How do you feel about reading?

Pleasure reading

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate it				So-so				Love it

School reading

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hate it				So-so				Love it

3. How do you feel about yourself as a reader?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not very good		So-so		Good		Very good		Super

4. Use of reading skills

The following three questions were asked. The response was rated according to the categories below:

(a) When you are reading and come to something (some word) you don't know, what do you do?

(b) What else do you do?

(c) What else might you do, or could you do?

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
Word-based	Assistance-based	Meaning-based/ Independent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sound it out	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask someone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think what it might mean
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look at word parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use dictionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look at other words in sentence
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-read
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look at next word; see what makes sense
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read on; see if this helps

APPENDIX 5

Questionnaire

(Adapted from Weaver, C., 1994)

Name:

Date:

Instructions:

Read each question. Put a tick beside the answer that describes you best.

1. **When I read:**
☐ I like to question why characters do what they do.
☐ I never question why characters do what they do.
2. **When I read:**
☐ It is easy for me to repeat in words what I read.
☐ It is hard for me to repeat in words what I read.
3. **When I read:**
☐ I prefer to have pictures to help me understand the story.
☐ I don't care if I don't have pictures to help me understand the story.
4. **When I read:**
☐ I use my imagination to see the characters/place.
☐ I do not use my imagination to see the characters/place.
5. **When I read:**
☐ I prefer to be in a quiet room.
☐ I don't mind if I'm not in a quiet room.
6. **When I read:**
☐ I find it easy to remember her name.
☐ I find it hard to remember her name.

APPENDIX 6

The Boy Who Kept His Finger in the Dike

Retold by Michael Lewis

Hendrik had not lived much of his life as yet – when asked his age he said he would be ten in about ten months – but, during all the life he had lived so far, he had heard about the dikes. He knew that half of Holland, his homeland, lay below the level of the sea and the only things that protected it from being flooded were the dunes and dikes. The dikes, which were made by man, were the most important. Long ago, long before historians (**histrions**) kept records, Hollanders put up great mounds (muds) of earth and sods to save their land from the tides. It was a cruel war, a constant battling between the rising of the sea and the strength of the dikes, and for many years the sea **thr/eat/en/ed** to be the victor. But the Hollanders were **de/ter/min/ed** not to be driven out of the country they loved. **Stubb/orn/ly** they fought back the waters that roared in from the North Sea; they **pro/ected** the soil with longer and larger dikes, using barriers (**bars**) of clay and stone as well as bricks.

Most Dutch boys were aware of this, but they seldom gave it a thought. Hendrik, however, thought about it all the time, for it was, so to speak, in his family. His grandfather had been a dike-builder; his father looked after dike repairs; his uncle was in charge of a polder, an area of reclaimed (**recamed**) land, surrounded by dikes. On his way to and from school Hendrik walked as close to the dike as possible. It was not only a **protec/tion** but his pride; it was a sort of family **possess/ion** as well as a family **res/ponsibility**. He admired the way the dike was constructed; its tall grassy flanks and the great stone blocks on the sea's side, put there to break the violence of the onrushing waves. He would imagine himself swarming to the top and, standing on the wall as if it were a rampart, hurling cries of defiance (**defance**) and holding off the enemy. He would make **ex/peditions** into the countryside, exploring the turns and twists of the walls, examining the ways in which they were built, trying to guess their age.

One day he roamed further than he had ever gone, much further than he had intended. The sky was darkening when he turned towards home; there was no time to watch anything except the shady, **un/familiar** road. It was a still, chill, stormy evening; the birds had gone to their nests; there was no sound in the air except . . . Hendrik listened **intent/ly**. He did not want to believe what he heard, but he knew only too well what it was. It was the sound of water. Nothing much – only a trickle – but Hendrik knew what it would mean. He knew that the trickle would soon become a gurgle, (**guggle**) then there would be a gush, then a rush, a roar, and the North Sea would sweep in.

For a moment he stood **be/wildered**. It was growing dark, hard to see, harder to locate a small leak in the dike. Finally he found it – a few feet from the ground – he

could just reach it. It was, as he **sus/pect/ed**, a small leak, small enough to be stopped with one finger.

At first he was not **worr/ied**. He even felt a little heroic, elated to see that the finger of one small boy could hold the mighty waters in check. Besides, he thought, it will not be long; someone is sure to pass by, see what is **happ/en/ing**, and get men to repair the damage. But the stillness continued, stillness and loneliness. As the night came on Hendrik grew colder. His hand pained him; there were cramps in his arm; soon his entire side felt numb. He could not tell how long he had hunched there; hours seemed to pass; he called and cried, but there was no answer. No help came.

The pains frightened him, but he could not take his finger from the dike. The air was freezing; he was afraid he would drop from **fat/igue**. He stamped his feet to stamp out the cold. He rubbed his stiff arm with the fingers of his other hand to keep the blood flowing. He was dizzy; shooting nerves **st/abbed** every part of his body. But he would not take his finger from the dike.

When he saw the man with a lantern in his hand, Hendrik fainted. His parents had been searching for him; but it was a **lab/our/er**, returning late from work, who found the boy. The leak was plugged, the dike **str/ength/en/ed**, and a great part of Holland was saved.

Years passed, wars came and went, many things were forgotten. But the country **re/mem/ber/ed**. long after Hendrik became a storied figure, a hero without a name, he **re/main/ed** one of Holland's most **cher/ish/ed** legends: The Boy Who Kept His Finger in the Dike.

APPENDIX 7

Barrett Scale

(Kemp, 1993, p. 142)

Inferential Comprehension:

Use of ideas and information explicitly stated, his intuition, his personal experiences as a basis for conjectures

- 3.1 ***Inferring supporting details*** - the student is asked to conjecture about additional facts the author might have included in the text which would have made it more informative, interesting, or appealing.
- 3.2 ***Inferring main ideas*** – the student is required to provide the main idea, general significance, theme or moral which is not explicitly stated in the text.
- 3.3 ***Inferring sequence*** – the student may be requested to conjecture as to what action or incident might have taken place between two explicitly stated actions or incidents, or he may be asked to hypothesise about what would happen next if the text had not ended as it did but had been extended.
- 3.4 ***Inferring comparisons*** – the student is required to infer likenesses and differences in characters, times or places. Such inferential comparisons revolve around ideas such as: ‘here and there,’ ‘then and now,’ ‘he and he,’ ‘he and she,’ and ‘she and she.’
- 3.5 ***Inferring cause and effect relationships*** – the student is required to hypothesise about the motivations of characters and their interactions with time and place. He may also be required to conjecture as to what caused the author to include certain ideas, words, characterisations and actions in his writing.
- 3.6 ***Inferring character traits*** – the student is asked to hypothesise about the nature of characters on the basis of explicit clues presented in the selection.
- 3.7 ***Predicting outcomes*** – the student is requested to read an initial portion of a text and on the basis of this reading he is required to conjecture about the outcome of this text.
- 3.8 ***Interpreting figurative language*** – the student in this instance, is asked to infer literal meanings from the author’s figurative use of language.

APPENDIX 8

Background to *So Much To Tell You*

So Much To Tell You focuses on a mute girl, Marina, who is sent to a special boarding school rather than a psychiatric hospital.

Marina has been physically and emotionally scarred in an accident.

Readers get to know Marina through her diary entries, where her secrets are gradually revealed: her father scarred her with acid that was meant to injure her mother.

One of the teachers of Marina is able to break into her silent world.

At the end of the novel there is the hope that she will begin coming out of her isolation.

APPENDIX 9

Character Profile of Cathy from *So Much To Tell You*

There are seven other girls sharing the dorm with Marina. These girls are: Cathy, Sophie, Ann, Lisa, Kate, Tracey and Emma.

Cathy is a tall, thin girl, one who likes to write poems. She also loves to read cosmic literature. At one stage in the story Cathy loses her temper with Marina who has left her undies on Cathy's bed while Marina was sorting her laundry. She screamed at Marina about this, saying: "Don't think we are going to keep feeling sorry for you."

Later, Cathy regrets having lost her temper at Marina. She sends Marina a note of apology during Prep. In the note Cathy says she thinks Marina is nice and she would like the two of them to be friends.

Marina finds this note bewildering. She is accustomed to hatred. She can't believe somebody likes her and wants to be friends.

APPENDIX 10

Character Profile of Sophie from *So Much To Tell You*

Sophie is a boyish, yet pretty character. She is a bubbly and lively person who seems to be irritated by Marina's silence. She is a light hearted person. For example, she was not upset about falling through a window. On the contrary, she thought that this event was a huge joke. Sophie loves to read romantic novels such as Mills and Boon.

Sophie has an on-again/off-again friendship with Kate. At one stage Kate and Sophie have a fight. Sophie reacts by trying to discredit Kate in the eyes of others. At another stage the pair get into mischief together, having fun drinking Tequila.

Sophie frequently talks about how much she hates her mother. Sophie also seems to be annoyed by the fact that Lisa acts as "Dorm Leader," one who decides on the fair sharing of "Dorm Jobs."

At one stage Sophie humiliates Marina by putting a hand up the back of her jumper and treating her as a ventriloquist's doll. She moved Marina around as though she were a puppet, speaking for Marina in a funny voice.

APPENDIX 11

Table Illustrating Stages of Gathering Data

Participants 1, 2, 3, 4

Baseline Period A (3 days)	Period B Intervention; in an adaptation of <i>Making A Difference</i> (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) (8 weeks)
Formal Measure • TORCH (ACER, 1987)	Formal Measure • TORCH (ACER, 1987)
Informal Measure • Informal Graded Word Recognition Test (Lerner, 1997) • Curriculum Based Assessment (Lerner, 1997) • Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993)	Informal Measure • Informal Graded Word Recognition Test (Lerner, 1997) • Curriculum Based Assessment (Lerner, 1997) • Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993)
Interview	Interview
Observation	Observation
Questionnaire	Questionnaire

APPENDIX 12

Table Illustrating Stages of Gathering Data

Participants 5, 6, 7, 8

Baseline Period A (3 days)	Period B Intervention; in an adaptation of <i>Making A Difference</i> (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria, 1992) (8 weeks)	Period C Intervention; A Meta Language Awareness Program involving Reciprocal Teaching (1985) (8 weeks)
Formal Measure • TORCH (ACER, 1987)	Formal Measure • TORCH (ACER, 1987)	Formal Measure • TORCH (ACER, 1987)
Informal Measure • Informal Graded Word Recognition Test (Lerner, 1997) • Curriculum Based Assessment (Lerner, 1997) • Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993)	Informal Measure • Informal Graded Word Recognition Test (Lerner, 1997) • Curriculum Based Assessment (Lerner, 1997) • Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993)	Informal Measure • Informal Graded Word Recognition Test (Lerner, 1997) • Curriculum Based Assessment (Lerner, 1997) • Reading Miscue Analysis (Kemp, 1993)
Interview	Interview	
Observation	Observation	
Questionnaire	Questionnaire	Questionnaire