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THE YOUNG CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF COMMONLY USED INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS IN LANGUAGE ARTS

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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Date August 15, 1983

Dedicated to MARIUS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the child's understanding of twelve commonly used instructional terms. Its main focus was to examine the high reader versus the low reader's understanding of instructional terms. Twelve instructional terms were taken from the Ginn Educational Publishers, Level I workbooks and the Teacher's Guide, and used as the terms for investigation. The terms were: word, letter, name, begin, beginning sound, rhyme, make sense, print, trace, capital letter, period and stands for. Two assessment tasks, the verbal and the situational were used as the instrument for collecting data.

The sample consisted of thirty grade one children, (twenty girls and ten boys) selected by a stratified random sampling from two schools in the Fort McMurray Public School District #32, Fort McMurray, Alberta. On the basis of their respective teacher's judgements, fifteen children were classified as high readers and fifteen were identified as low readers.

The analysis of the data proceeded as follows: (a) a summary of a two-way analysis of variance presented the results from the situational task and the responses to the "b" and "c" questions in the verbal task; and (b) a descriptive analysis of the children's responses to the "a" question in the verbal task was analyzed according to seven

different features identified.

The results demonstrated that there are significant differences between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of twelve commonly used instructional terms. Between the two assessment tasks no significant differences were noted, in the overall summary of results. There were also no interaction effects across tasks and reader groups.

Analysis of the specific terms showed significant differences on all terms except trace. Between tasks, five of the terms, name, begin, print, make sense and stands for, showed significant main effects, while seven terms showed no significant differences. Significant interactional effects were noted for three terms, name, period and stands for.

The descriptive analysis revealed that the high readers employ functional, exemplar, descriptive and synonym features to describe their own meaning for the twelve instructional terms. The majority of the low readers had difficulty expressing their understanding of the terms, as indicated by their number of don't know/no response answers.

Implications for the classroom and suggestions for further research were also incorporated in this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

> I begin with two assumptions. The first is that a child arrives at school ready and willing to learn; and the second is that he arrives expecting that the noise [language, in particular] he encounters at school will eventually make sense.
> (Smith, 1975, p. 226)

For some children, unfortunately, Smith's assumptions have no chance of becoming a reality. Indeed some children come to school and are not able to make sense of the noise in the school environment. Often they fail to make sense and to understand the language used for instruction.

The nature of the instruction that pervades the classroom activities and interaction often demands the young child's understanding of various technical terms. Research studies indicate that young children experience difficulty in understanding several "school-ish terms" (Lindfors, 1980) which are often used by teachers and occur in textbooks. Findings reveal that the child's meanings for these instructional terms do not necessarily correspond with that of adult meaning. Consequently the child's ability to accomplish certain learning tasks may be greatly affected by his understanding of the language used for instruction.

"Language may be an important medium for instruction

but its use with children is limited to the aspects of the language the child can understand" (Di-Vesta, 1979, p. 41). While most children upon entry into school have a fairly good grasp of the structure of their language, some children may discover that familiar terms take on different meanings within the instructional context. The child's success in school depends on his ability to make sense of these new and varied meanings. Thus it is of advantage for teachers and schools "to know what the child says and know how he understands what he hears" (Clark, 1973, p. 10).

It has been pointed out by Mason (1967) in his article "Preschooler's Concepts of Reading" that quite often where issues about the child's learning, such as learning to read, are concerned, "consultants from one outstanding group have been notable by their absence. These are the children concerned" (p. 20). This present study hopes to get at the child's own understandings or meaning associations for instructional terms as described and indicated by the child himself.

This study focusses its major concern on the young child's understanding of instructional terms in language arts. More specifically, it will examine the high reader's versus the low reader's understanding of instructional terms. It attempts to find out if there are any differences in the child's understanding of these terms as compared to an adult standard when assessed in a situational task as opposed to a verbal task.

The study also investigates the type of meaning which the child possesses for different concepts regardless of adult standards. The focus in this aspect of the study is to look at the nature of the child's own meaning for the various instructional terms.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Are there any significant differences between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of commonly used instructional terms?

2. Are there any significant differences in the child's understanding of these terms when assessed within a verbal versus situational task?

3. Will there be any interactional effects between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the instructional terms and their performance on the assessment tasks?

4. What is the nature of the meaning that high and low readers possess for various instructional terms?

HYPOTHESES

The first three research questions will be answered on the basis of a statistical analysis of the data and are presented below as hypotheses.

1. There will be significant differences between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of commonly used instructional terms.

2. There will be significant differences in the understanding of commonly used instructional terms when assessed within a situational versus a verbal task.

3. There will be interaction effects between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the instructional terms and their performance on the assessment tasks.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Instructional terms -- refers to the terms or labels which are used during the course of a lesson, exercise or activity and tend to occur in two types of teacher-pupil interaction.
   (a) requiring pupils to answer question orally (verbal*)
   (b) directing pupils to complete a task (situational)

*In this study, this term is used specifically to refer to this task and does not have its general meaning.

2. High readers -- are those children who according to their teacher's judgement will in January be reading at or above their level of expectancy in reading.

3. Low readers -- are those children who according to their teacher's judgement will in January be at least two months below their level of expectancy in reading.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As teachers, we are aware that the child comes to school with a fairly good grasp of the language of his community. Past research proposes that we re-examine some assumptions that teachers may have in assuming that children do understand the language used in instruction.

This present study hopes to determine whether instructional terms used in a Language Arts program present any degree of difficulty to young children. It hopes to draw tentative conclusions as to whether young children differ in their ability to understand such terms when answering questions (in a verbal task) or when completing a task as directed by the teacher (in a situational task).

This study will also provide information on whether the ability to deal with instructional terms differs for high and low readers. If this is the case, then there is a need for differential instruction of language with these groups.

An awareness of the children's own understanding of

the language of instruction is therefore important to us, because it gives us a good premise for providing experiences for children which are "meaning-full" (not simply word-full) for them" (Lindfors, 1980, p. 13).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A number of limitations characterize the study. These are:

a) The small number of participants, selected on the basis of a stratified random sampling from two schools, limits the generalizability of the findings in the study to that of a wider population.

b) The study took place over a short period of time and the data collected were limited to the pupils responses to the two tasks required of them.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents a brief overview of the nature and purpose of the present study. The remainder of the study is organized in the following manner:

a) Chapter II provides the theoretical framework for the present investigation. It outlines the various theories of meanings, and the development of meanings within the child. This chapter also reviews the related research

and literature which has dealt with the child's meaning associations for specific terms.

b) Chapter III describes the design of the study which incorporates the selection of specific instructional terms based on their frequency of occurence in the Ginn Level I workbooks. Data collection procedures are also described in this chapter.

c) Chapter IV outlines the statistical analysis of the data collected and devotes a portion to describing the findings of the study based on the verbal task interviews.

d) Chapter V concludes the study wherein the entire investigation is summarized and conclusions and suggestions for further research are made.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter falls into two divisions. The first section deals with the literature that serves as a theoretical background on the development of meaning in the young child. It presents various theories of meaning including a subsection citing selected studies that have examined the child's developmental understanding of certain relational and non-technical terms.

The second part discusses research studies pertinent to the present study on the child's understanding of instructional terms.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEANING

> "There's glory for you!
> "I don't know what you mean by glory!" Alice said.
> Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously.
> "Of course you don't -- till I tell you. I meant there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"
> "But glory doesn't mean a nice-knock down argument." Alice objected.
> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I

> choose it to mean -- neither more nor less."
> "The question is" said Alice, "whether you
> can make words mean so many different things."
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which
> is to be master -- that's all."
>
> (Lewis Carroll)

To consider the development of meaning in the child is to be confronted with two basic concerns. One "What is meaning?" and two "What is the role of meaning in lanquage processing?" Both questions however are intricately interrelated because to be concerned with "What is meaning?" is to worry about "How is it used?" (Clark, 1977, p. 407).

Specific Meaning Development Theories

Over the years, theorists have attempted to formulate standards or rules for what a theory of meaning is and should be able to do. For instance, Bierwisch (1970) set up the following aspects a theory should account for: (a) anomaly, (b) self-contradiction, (c) ambiguity and (d) entailment.

For other semanticists there are other specifics attached to a theory of meaning. Alston (1964) describes meaning by way of the "referential theory". This theory proposes that words or expressions carry some sort of meaning. Dale's (1972) simple definition for this theory is that the "meaning of a word is its referent" (p. 132). Although this theory possesses a simple proposition, its

generalizability does not adequately extend to a broader scope of applicability. Dale (1972) when commenting on the referential theory cites the example given by Bertrand Russell. Consider the expressions "Sir Walter Scott" and "the author of Waverly". Both expressions have the same referent -- but do not share a common meaning.

Conversely, some words may have the same meaning but not the same referent. Terms like the pairs "here and there", and "you and I", retain a common meaning but alter their referents as in the case when "I" is used to refer to oneself (the speaker). But the hearer can use "I" to refer to himself when he assumes the role of the speaker. Even though the term "I" changes its referent from time to time (depending on who takes the role of speaker) its meaning remains the same.

Other problems that beset the "referential theory" crop up in situations where certain terms do not have a referent. Articles belong to this category.

The "behavioural theory" suggests that the meaning of a word or an expression is dependent on the responses it evokes from the hearer. One of the exponents of this theory is Bloomfield (1933). He defines this view by saying that the "meaning of a linguistic term ... is (the) situation in the hearer" (p. 139). This theory is quite similar to the "image theory" (Paivio, 1971) which states that "the meaning of a word is the image it evokes" (Clark, 1977, p. 409). One difficulty encountered with these

theories is that they do not account for synonymy and although a word or term does evoke an image, the image is not the meaning in itself.

Osgood's (1964 & 1971) theory of meaning also stems from the behavioural theory. He reiterates the assumption that the "cognitive content or meaning of perceived objects or events and words is defined in terms of patterns of behaviour elicited by a given stimulus" (p. 158). Rader & Dent (1979) counter Osgood's views. They present a number of problematical issues attached to this behavioural perspective of meaning. In the first place, they claim that categorizing or "cognitive groupings" will be difficult to achieve if meaning is dependent on behavioural reactions or features. They argue that there are certain aspects of experience and objects in the environment that do not produce reflexive patterns of behaviour. In addition to this, Rader & Dent (1979) believe that children learn a great deal about their world simply by observing how others react to it.

Rader & Dent (1979) propose an alternative theory of meaning that is "defined in terms of relationships discovered in the world through perceptual processes, not behaviour" (p. 160). These researchers put forward the thesis that language is an information system which gradually develops in order to make meaning. This information system is processed in the same manner as non-linguistic information systems. The child needs to be aware

of specific linguistic information to be able to make sense of a word or utterance.

To Rader and Dent (1979) the meaning of a word is derived by knowing which type of relationship accompanies the reference. In a sense, Rader and Dent's (1979) theory assumes characteristics similar to the referential theory. Their perception of referentiality however, is a type of "going together". The child must see that "X (linguistic information) goes with Y (non-linguistic information) in that X stands for Y. ... X refers to an aspect of the environment while Y specifies that aspect" (p. 157). On the whole, Rader and Dent (1979) subscribe strongly to the notion that a "perceptual-cognitive" system is that which allows the child to process meanings.

A major study in the development of meaning was done by Clark (1973). In her theory the "Semantic Features Hypothesis", Clark (1973) states that when the child first begins to use identifiable words he does not know their full (adult) meaning. The child possesses only partial entries in his lexicon and these entries are related in some ways to the adult's meanings. Clark (1973) assumes that the child starts by identifying the word with one or two features until the child's combination of features in the entry for that word corresponds to the adults. Clark's hypothesis also proposes that:

1. the first semantic features that the child uses are liable to be derived from the encoding of his percepts,

2. at a later stage as the child learns more about the structure of his language as a whole, he will learn which percept-derived feature play a particular linguistic role and which are relatively redundant within a set of combination of features (p. 76).

Clark, therefore sees the child as assuming an active part in the acquisition of meaning. The child structures various interpretations for words and utterances based on his schema of knowledge and from contextual cues. Clark maintains that the child builds his hypothesis on both a functional and a contextual premise: "(first) that language is for communication, and (second) that language makes sense in context" (p. 488).

Essentially, Clark's "Semantic Features Hypothesis" describes the process of a child's acquisition of meaning wherein he utilizes his prior knowledge along with contextual cues to form hypotheses about the meaning of new words. From these hypotheses, the child derives strategies for production and interpretation of these words within novel situations. Frequently the initial hypotheses may overlap with the adult meaning, sometimes over-extending or under-extending compared to the adults'. There are also occasions

when the child does not have any characteristic of the adult meaning -- but because of the absence of overlap, the child eventually ceases to include such words in his mental lexicon entry. As the child's experience with words increases, he continues to formulate hypotheses, recreate strategies, make plausible interpretations and eventually his meanings approximate that of the adult's meanings.

Along similar lines to that of Clark's theory, McNeill (1970) attempts to speculate on the development of meaning by proposing that the very young child has some form of sentence meaning dictionary. The lexical items enter this sentence-meaning dictionary with all the grammatical relations (i.e. object or agent) used by a child at a one-word stage. Later the child proceeds to a stage where he is able to employ rules for sentence building, (i.e. the two word utterances appear) "he reorganizes his dictionary on a word-meaning basis rather than on a sentence meaning one" (McNeill, 1970, p. 116). What follows then are two possible routes a child might take as he increases his lexicon. McNeill suggests the "horizontal" and the "vertical" growth. In the "horizontal" growth "only some of the semantic features associated with the word need enter the dictionary when the word itself does" (McNeill, 1970, p. 67). The process continues "horizontally" with the child acquiring features for the lexical item gradually.

McNeill's alternative proposal to the "horizontal" growth of the child's sentence-meaning dictionary is the

"vertical" growth. This "vertical" process seems to suggest that when a word enters the child's dictionary all the semantic features of that particular word likewise enter the dictionary. What McNeill's vertical hypothesis appears to suggest is that when a word enters the child's lexical dictionary that particular word has the same semantic features as that of an adults'. It would then imply that as each word is acquired by the child in his lexicon, the child would then possess the full (adult) meaning for that word. This proposal however presents a number of difficulties one of which is the lack of data to support this viewpoint. Further to this Clark (1977) asserts that "although McNeill cites some data in support ... the weakness of both [propositions] lies in the fact that all of the evidence discussed in their favor comes from children older than 6 or 7 years of age" (p. 68).

Contrary to McNeill's theory, Bowerman (1973) draws attention to the fact that there is no adequate evidence that children have the basic information about grammatical relations. Rather, she suggests that children are able to structure syntactic sense in their language performance through the process of learning simple order rules and trying out various semantic combinations as word relationships trigger off meanings in their cognitive world. Through the child's broadening language experience he recognizes similarities in word meanings and gradually the child restructures his knowledge to more appropriate grammatical

relationships.

Up to this point, this discussion has examined theories of meanings, some of which are based on the "perceptual-cognitive" perspective and others on the reaction elicited from the hearer. A shift in theoretical orientation is espoused by researchers such as Nelson (1974) and Holzman (1977).

Nelson (1974) postulates that children do not have the ability to detect "perceptual similarity" among objects and events in their experience. Rather, she believes that children see "functional similarity". Nelson (1974) argues that children at the start are not capable of classifying word meanings into perceptual components. She maintains that children view objects as "unanalyzable wholes" and then classify "wholes" by associating certain actions and relationshps that are connected with that particular "whole". The child categorizes his word meanings based on accompanying relationships, objects and events that function or are acted upon in a similar manner.

Further to this, Nelson (1974) identifies two types of children in the early stages of word meaning acquisition. She calls them the "referential and expressive" children. Referential children refers to those children who first use words to name objects. Expressive children are those whose early vocabulary consists of affective and social type words. Examples mentioned by Nelson (1974) are: "bye-bye, want, need and naughty" (p. 124). Although referential children

acquire more words by age 2 years as compared to expressive children their mean utterance length, is not significantly higher. Referential children employ their language to label and point out objects. The majority of their words have adjectives with nouns in their speech and their focus of concern seems to be with objects and characteristics.

The "expressive children" tend to utilize language to facilitate their social interrelationships with other people. Nelson (1974) points out that both labels "referential" and "expressive" are extreme characteristics on a continuum. Thus some children may be found at varying points between the two extremes.

Holzman (1977), a proponent of the pragmatic theory (similar in a way to Nelson's beliefs on the importance of functionality) sees the development of meaning in the young child as evolving from pragmatic meanings to semantic meanings. She makes the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, referring to the latter as "the relationship of signs [words] to personal relations, physical environment, action and behaviour context" and the former as "the relations of signs [words] to meaning" (p. 3).

It is Holzman's (1977) contention that the child's meaning emerges from the experience within which he encounters a particular utterance or expression. When a child hears an utterance, he notes the accompanying action, setting and personal relationships and then attaches a pragmatic meaning to that particular utterance. For a while,

the child is only aware of the word or utterance as part of that pragmatic encounter. His meaning for that utterance is limited to that experiential encounter and other similar situational contexts. For instance, a child may comprehend the expressions "under the chair" and "under the table" but may not be able to understand "under the tree". Such a child may have meanings for the word "under" only with reference to the particular pragmatic encounter he has with the word. His meaning for "under" is thus limited to those particular situations associated with "table" and "chair". At this point, the child does not possess a meaning for the term "under" as a single word apart from the content in which he sees its use. Because a child generates his meanings from pragmatic encounters it is more likely that his initial semantic meanings do not correspond with the adults' semantic meanings.

To restate Holzman's (1977) pragmatic-then-semantic hypothesis is to imply three stages of development:

1. Pure pragmatic stage. The child's meaning for a word or utterance at this level is bound to specific pragmatic situations.

2. Pragmatic extension stage. At this stage the child recognizes the word or utterance in other situational contexts and is able to extend his meanings to other pragmatic encounters which contain similar features.

3. Semantic stage. The child can now understand the word in its abstract sense, although he may not readily verbalize it. The particular utterance or word is now recognized by the child as applicable to other similar abstractions.

Reich's (1975) assumptions bear some similarities to Holzman's theory. Reich studied the development of the meaning "shoe" in one pre-lingual child. In this study Reich considers the following developmental stages: "mismatch", "overlap", "identity" and "underextension". For "mismatch", Reich uses the example of the time when his son Adam called the television set a T.V. guide. Reich speculates that this was a result of a remark such as "I wonder what's on. Let's look at the T.V. guide." On "identity", Reich notes the experiments of Katz, Boher & MacNamara (1972) where children prior to 13 months of age give objects (like people and dolls) proper names. There is no data that Reich can present to support "overlap" although Reich believes such data can be found. "Underextension", is dealt with at length in Reich's study. Reich played the game "Where" with Adam saying "Where's Mommy?" and the child would go to his mommy, "Where's the bed?" and Adam would crawl to the bed and so on, signifying that Adam knew the word. Then Reich and Adam played the game with "shoes" in the bedroom. Adam was placed at point Y and asked "Where's the shoes?" Adam would crawl to his mother's closet and

play with the shoes in the closet. The same response occurred for a while with Adam limiting his response to "shoes" by playing with his mommy's shoes in the closet. The pattern of Adam's subsequent responses extended gradually to include (a) Daddy's shoes in the closet, (b) (after two weeks) shoes on the bedroom floor, and (c) eventually shoes worn on feet).

Reich (1975) concludes that "the very first word meanings are formed by associating a sequence of sounds with essentially everything that is perceptually and functionally salient about the objects or actions in the environment that co-occur with the word" (p. 120). When a child hears a similar phonological sequence in a different context, reinforcement of meaning occurs in the child's mind.

Theorists such as Downing (1971) and Smith (1975) have focussed more on the cognitive framework in which meaning develops, rather than the environment from which meaning derives.

Downing (1971) delineates the focus on his hypothesis regarding the cognitive aspects of meaning within the framework of the "Cognitive Clarity Theory". Five dimensions of this theory are specified:

1. Understanding of the communication purposes of the written form of language.

2. Concept of visual symbols.

3. Concept of abstract parts of spoken language.

4. Technical vocabulary of language learning.

5. Understanding the decoding process.

(Downing, 1971, p. 117)

One component of Downing's (1971) theory which bears import to the present study concerns that of the child's understanding of the technical terminology of language learning. Downing maintains that the child will have difficulty in beginning reading if he does not understand the technical terminology used for instruction. He believes that a great deal of the terminology used in reading instruction confuses the child as with such terms as: "sound", "letter" and "word". It is Downing's opinion that this "confusion" which a child exhibits, is a state of "cognitive confusion" where word meanings are not clear to him. Then, according to Downing the child eventually proceeds to a state where his meanings are refined, gradually corresponding with that of an adults'. This later stage, Downing calls the "state of cognitive clarity".

While the "cognitive-perceptual" system is inherent in the meaning process, Downing's theory may not be a tenable one. For instance, when a child displays "confused and vague" notions about certain words and their meanings, it may not necessarily imply a "state of 'cognitive confusion'". Rather, the child's notions (vague or confused) for certain

words are basically his own meanings at that particular level of development. What Downing describes as progress from "cognitive confusion to cognitive clarity" is the child's gradual acquisition of semantic features for words, until the meanings eventually coincide with the full (adult) meanings. What seems to be a more viable description of the child's apparent "confusion" with terminology is that of the child's own interpretations in the process of acquiring meaning. These interpretations are derived from his own experience with the particular word or utterance. Thus the meanings may be expressed in varying degrees of featural knowledge, such as function, description, etc. This present study intends to look further into the child's own meanings (that is, featural knowledge) for twelve instructional terms in language arts.

According to Smith (1975), interpretation of the meaning process is linked to the child's cognitive structure. Smith suggests that the child's ability to make sense of the world is derived from his "theory of the world". The child comes to school with prior knowledge and attempts to understand or "make sense" of school within the context of this knowledge. Diagrammatically, this is how Smith describes this process of "making sense".

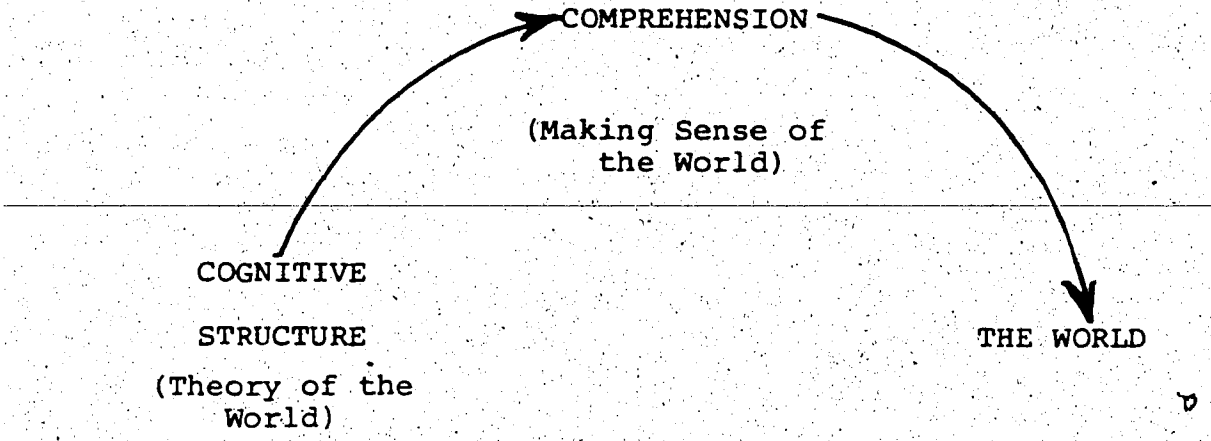

FIGURE 2-1

Model for Comprehension
(Smith, 1975)

Essentially, the "theory of the world" constitutes the child's schema upon which he will base his interpretation of the noise, events, objects and relations which he perceives in school. Smith (1975) goes on to state that:

> there is another link between language and perception that has particular relevance. We perceive what we attend to, and language is frequently used to attract or direct attention. ... children in school are constantly told to look at this or listen to that. But telling a child to look at something is no guarantee that he will see it. ... (p. 116)

Furthermore, if a child can not relate what he sees with what he already knows (based on his cognitive structure)

then the task or object at hand will not make sense to the child. Basic to the child's understanding of the tasks in language arts is an understanding of the language employed for instruction. While Smith's (1975) point that a child's present cognitive structure (prior knowledge and its organization) is significant in the acquisition of meaning, is well taken, the interaction of cognitive structure and "the world" can not be overlooked. That is, the environment is also a crucial factor in concept learning (e.g. Clark, 1973; Rader & Dent, 1979; Nelson, 1974; and Bowerman, 1973). Thus Smith's (1975) diagram would more adequately represent the meaning acquisition process if it were redrawn as:

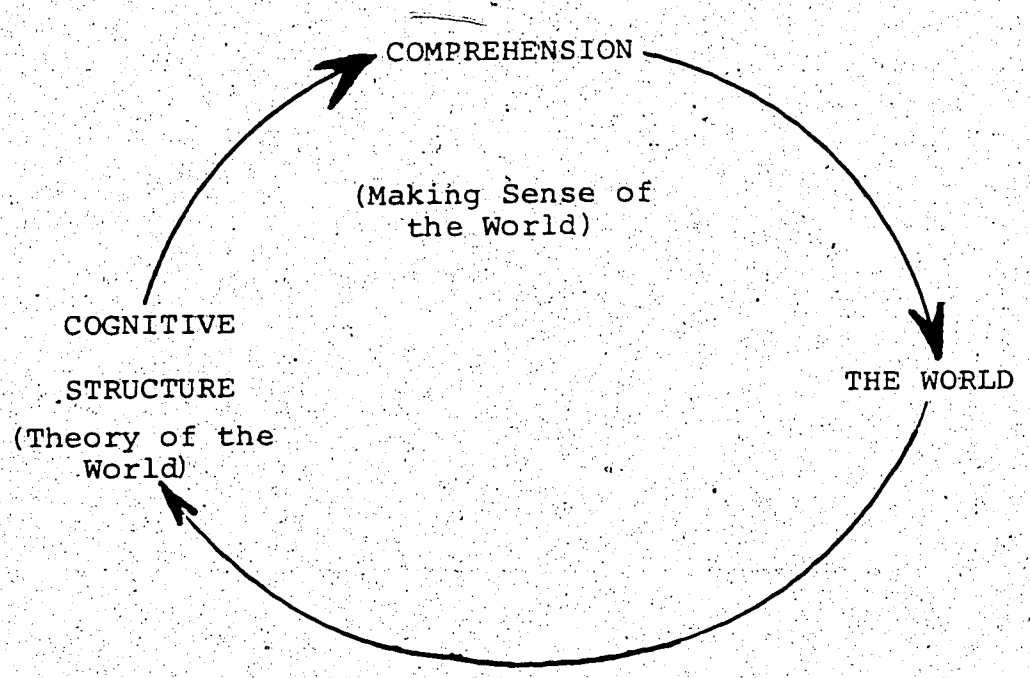

FIGURE 2-2

Model Representing the Meaning Acquisition Process (adapted from Smith, 1975)

Researchers and theorists mentioned in this portion of the related literature have advanced diverse hypotheses and assumptions about meaning or concept learning. Within all this diversity, Bowerman (1978) expresses quite appropriately an element of commonality shared by these researchers and theorists and advocates:

> an appeal for breadth and for the integration of theories that by themselves account for only a portion of the data. An adequate theory of the acquisition of word meaning must be sufficiently broad and flexible to handle many disparate phenomena with equal ease within a common framework. (p. 283)

As part of a broad and flexible theory, a number of principles may be abstracted from the diversity of theories reviewed.

1. Children do not possess the same repertoire of meaning as adults but with increasing age advance along this continuum.

2. Meaning may be acquired in many ways rather than through a single medium.

3. Meaning seems to involve perceiving or abstracting relationships of some sort whether a relation of a word to a referent or function, or a concept to the features that describe it.

4. Meaning is intricately related to the child's cognitive processes. It is a part of the child's cognitive

structure -- the base upon which he tries to make sense of his world.

Research Studies in Meaning Development

Studies are now cited to illustrate some aspects of the child's acquisition of meaning from a language development perspective.

One of the earlier studies conducted on the developmental nature of the child's concept of word was Karpova's investigation in 1955. He interviewed children from 3-7 years of age asking them to identify the number of words in a sentence, to give the first word, second word, etc. From the interviews, Karpova found three stages of development in the child's awareness of language:

1. The three year olds regarded sentences as a unified semantic while, thus segmenting it on the basis of meaning units.

2. The older children (4-5 year olds) when questioned further were able to divide the sentences into actions and nouns, then between subject and predicate.

3. Only a few of the 7-year olds were still able to separate words as lexical units; the majority of the children in all ages found difficulty identifying the prepositions as a separate lexical unit.

Karpova's study indicates a developmental trend in

the child's ability to identify a word in a sentence. He concludes that this trend proceeds from a child regarding sentences as a semantic whole to a level where he is able to identify words as a separate lexical semantic unit.

Papondropoulou and Sinclair (1973) examined children's knowledge about words. They interviewed 102 French children from 4-10 years of age. The interviewer asked the children to:

(a) respond to the question "Is _____ a word?" (Each child was required to elaborate on his judgement.)

(b) respond to "What is a word, really?"

(c) give an examplar of a long word, a short word, a difficult word and a word that they made up themselves.

From their findings Papandropoulou and Sinclair (1973) identified four levels of awareness of word.

(a) First level: (4 years old) With this age group there was no distinction between words and things:

(b) Second level: (5-7 years) Two varying concepts of words appear almost simultaneously. Words are "what you say about something" or "what you use to name something".

(c) Third level: (6-8 years) Words are now viewed within a broader context of meaning (e.g. "bits of a story").

(d) Fourth level: (8-10 years) Two new complementary aspects of signifiers begin to appear: (1) Words acquire a clear autonomy, they become meaningful units, (2) words are integrated into a system of relationships between signifiers." (p. 244-247)

The development of the concept word appeared to involve a "long and slow elaboration" process (Papandropoulou and Sinclair, 1973, p. 249). The children's responses frequently labelled objects and actions or pointed out units of meaning and function as exemplars for the concept. The results of this study however, could have been affected by the terms which the reaserchers used in their directions: short, long, difficult. In the present study, the only technical term used in the directions was the term under investigation.

A replication of the Papandropoulou and Sinclair (1974) study was conducted by Templeton and Spivey (1980). However they classified their stages of development on the basis of Piaget's stages rather than on the developmental levels identified by Papandropoulou and Sinclair. They administered two Piagetian assessment tasks elaborating on the developmental aspects of metalinguistic awareness and level of cognitive functioning. They interviewed twenty-four children and later classified them into three groups based on their responses. Eight children were classified as preoperational, twelve transitional, and four concrete operational. The responses of the children based on the

three levels of cognitive functioning were described as follows:

Pre-Operational Subjects

(a) The children could not talk about language in abstract terms. Most responses were "no response" and "don't know" replies.

(b) Most metalinguistic responses referred to words as having to do with speech (e.g. "a word is like you say something).

Transitional Subjects

(a) At this level, the children could more likely respond to questions than the preoperational children.

(b) They cited "letters" and "spelling" in their responses.

Concrete Operational

(a) The children at this stage possessed more refined notions of the nature of a word. They also had a better perception of print.

Lundberg and Torneus (1978) approached the topic of developmental meaning of word in the young child, by testing the child's ability to identify target "words" in a test. They interviewed 100 Swedish children ranging in age from 3 to 7 years. The researchers designed the instrument for their study based on a test developed by

Rozin, Bressman and Taft (1974). They modified certain parts related to the stimulus conditions (e.g. number of graphemes, length of words, etc.). None of the participants in the study was a reader. Seventy two pairs of words (each with one short and long word) were read to the children requesting them to identify a target word and explain their choice. Their findings revealed that:

(a) The majority of the 3 year olds could not respond adequately and gave non-linguistic explanations for their choices.

(b) The 4-5 year olds based their answers on the semantic content of the word pairs.

(c) The 7 year olds were aware of the spoken word-print relationships. However, a good number of this age group still held inadequate concepts about the "basic principles of our own writing system" (p. 412). Lundberg and Torneus' (1978) major finding confirmed previous studies that the child's concept of word changed with age.

Thus in summary it appears that the acquisition of concepts for various labels is age related.

Studies on Non-Technical Terms

In addition to the studies mentioned above, a couple of studies which demonstrate the developmental nature of the meaning process with words of a non-technical nature are

by Elkind (1962) and Bradshaw and Anderson (1968).

Elkind did a series of systematic replications of Piaget's experiments. In the fifth series of experiments Elkind found three stages of conceptions of the terms "brother" and "sister" in 210 Jewish children in Massachusetts. The children ranged in age from 5-11 years. Elkind grouped the conceptions of the children as the patterns emerged in their age groups.

Stage 1: Five to six year olds. Had a general concept of brother. Identified himself as brother. Stated that brothers were boys. Confused when asked whether all boys were brothers. Stated that some boys/men were cousins and fathers.

Stage 2: Seven to eight year olds. The child knew that not all boys were brothers. Aware that fathers, cousins, could be brothers.

Stage 3: Nine to eleven years old. Able to define brother as a relative. Brothers identified as having the same mother. Knew that there has to be another sibling in the family to be a brother.

(Elkind, 1962, pp. 129-136)

Reiterating the importance of understanding vocabulary in the reading process, Bradshaw and Anderson (1968) demonstrated in their study the problem which besets a reader due to an unfamiliarity with the text vocabulary used and the underlying concepts.

By means of a "paired-comparison" procedure Bradshaw and Anderson (1968) wished to determine the child's nuances of meanings for adverbial modifiers:

"slightly, somewhat, rather, pretty, quite, decidely, unusually, very and extremely" (p. 24). A summary of their findings showed that:

1. for youngest children the meanings of "slightly" and "somewhat" were neutral perhaps empty.

2. not until fourth grade [for "slightly"] and eighth grade [for "somewhat"] was the minimizing impact of these modifiers realized.

3. ... "extremely" was not regularly interpreted as signifying more than "very" until fifth grade.

(Bradshaw and Anderson, 1968, p. 25-26)

These results seem to suggest that the child's ability to comprehend these words are a direct result of his experience. It also emphasizes what problems the child will have while attempting to make sense of the text in reading. Lack of semantic meanings at this point will deter the child from understanding what he reads.

The above studies suggest that concept learning whether of general or technical terms is related to the stage of chronological development. In this present research the children who participated were at the stage of beginning reading. Their understanding of technical vocabulary was the main focus of this investigation which this researcher believes to be crucial to their reading and language learning.

NON-DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES RELATED TO THE CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS

One of the widely quoted studies that assessed children's knowledge of linguistic terminology was done by Reid (1966) in Edinburgh with 12 children (7 boys and 5 girls) in their first year of school. Reid's (1966) findings indicated that the children expressed "vague notions" about reading and the language used about reading. They displayed difficulty in discussing the printed words some calling them "words", "marks" and others "letters" (Reid, 1966, pp. 211 & 212).

A consideration which influenced the present study is that when children think about reading they experience some difficulty with abstract terminology. While difficulty in using terms may not necessarily indicate that the child does not understand the term, there is a need to look into what the child's understanding of these terms are in order to know where he is in terms of his control of the language and consequently to facilitate his performance in learning tasks that may require his understanding of certain instructional terms.

Meltzer and Herse (1969) investigated a concern similar to that of the Reid (1968) study. Their emphasis however, focussed on the Grade One children's ability to give a definition of a written word, to identify the boundaries of a written word, to discriminate between numbers, letters and/or words and to ascertain the children's

concept of a whole as made up of parts. Just as in the Reid (1968) study, Meltzer and Herse (1969) found that the children were confused regarding the term "word". From their observation and analysis of the children's performance, Meltzer and Herse (1969) extended their generalizations by formulating tentative conclusions regarding a developmental sequence involved in the child's concept of a written word. Their conclusions were as follows:

(a) Initially, children regard letters as words.

(b) Next, they indicate a word as consisting of more than one letter.

(c) In the third stage, children identify space as a word boundary. Exceptions in this stage were instances with short words which were combined to indicate a word.

(d) In the next stage, the short words were regarded as wholes and long words were divided.

(e) In the final stage, space signals the word boundaries, however ascending or descending letters may be the more dominant cue for identifying the word boundary.

Further to these tentative conclusions, Meltzer and Herse (1969) presented a cautious observation. They explained that perhaps because their sample (the children) had worked with a particular reading series with a sound-

spelling correspondence emphasis, the responses of these children may be the direct result of their experience with their reading series. It was also reported that there existed an apparent relationship between the type of errors made and the child's reading group placement.

The above observations are pertinent to this present study. One of these researcher's concerns is to determine whether there is a difference between high and low reader groups' understanding of instructional terms. Both groups' performance will also be assessed with two word meaning tasks.

Following Meltzer and Herse's (1969) study, came Downing's replication of the Reid (1966) investigation. Downing (1970) wanted to determine whether children did understand the terminology often used by teachers even though they may not be able to use the terms appropriately. Five types of stimuli were used, including a sound, a phoneme, a word, a phrase and a sentence. Results yielded support for Downing's hypothesis. The children were not able to identify the concepts "word" and "sound" among the five types of stimuli presented.

Reid's (1966), Meltzer and Herse's (1969) and Downing's (1970) studies are of vital significance to research in reading and language instruction. They have generated studies of similar nature attempting to describe other aspects of essential consideration. Kingston, Weaver and Figa (1972) replicated the Meltzer and Herse (1969)

study. They added three experimental conditions: the basal reader condition, the second order approximation to English condition (nonsense words) and the adult novel condition. Using the Meltzer and Herse (1969) criteria for scoring, plus a category for "other combinations" they found that there was no difference in the response to the basal reader material. There was also evidence that suggested a distinct relationship between "the length of words and the ability to perceive a word as a meaningful unit ... the longer the word the more difficult the comprehension" (Kingston et al., 1972, p. 95).

Francis' (1973) study emanates from Downing's (1970) investigation. Her study presents new insights by tracing the children's difficulty with terms to the possibility that they do not know how to analyze words into units and sub-units.

Pursuing this new information, Wilson (1973) sought to explore the nature and extent of kindergarten children's ability to categorize words, syllables and phonemes and to determine the children's perception of the terms "word" and "sound". Wilson (1973) found that there was a significant difference in the child's understanding from that of adult's meaning. Downing and Oliver's (1973-1974) study showed that even at eight years of age, the child's concept of what constitutes a spoken word is not adequate in terms of adult meaning.

Mireau's (1978) and Lysakowski's (1981) are among

the more recent studies on the understanding by the child of instructional terms. Mireau's (1978) study was designed to investigate if there were any differences between good and poor reader's comprehension of the concepts "word", "letter" and "sentence", at the grade two level. He also wished to determine whether the children could identify the suffixes ed, ing, and s visually and recognize suffixes t, n, and s, auditorily. Based on an instrument developed by Francis (1973), Mireau (1978) administered five tasks to sixty grade two children grouped as "good" and "poor" readers. The five tasks required the children:

(a) to give an example of the terms "letter, "word" and "sentence".

(b) to point out written examples of "letter", "word" and "sentence".

(c) to cite a specific function for each of the terms.

(d) to recognize suffixes t, s and /n/ auditorily from a set of 3 words.

(e) to identify the suffixes ed, ing, and s.

Mireau (1978) did not find any significant differences between the performance of the "good" and "poor" readers, as indicated by the statistical analysis of the data. The descriptive analysis however, revealed qualitative differences between the groups. The majority of the "poor"

readers and "good" readers were still confused about the meaning of the terms "letter", "word" and "sentence". They could not adequately explain their responses.

While Mireau's (1978) work had focussed its concerns on the understanding of several instructional and instructional related terms, Lysakowski aimed to ascertain the child's concept of "word", in terms of "spoken word consciousness, awareness of visual word boundaries, and written word boundaries". His sample consisted of fifty-seven children who completed part of the "Concept of a Word" test, and nine "highly verbal" children who completed the entire test and elaborated on their responses.

Both statistical and descriptive analysis of the data showed that the majority of the children regard word as having to do with "saying something", with an object or an action, and most children did not consider the word as an "abstract entity". Function words were more readily recognized than were verbs; most children did not understand the spoken word-print relationship.

Repeatedly therefore, many studies reveal the difficulty which children encounter when talking about the concept of word and other instructional terms.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented theories of meaning which endeavour to describe the processes involved in the

development of meaning in the young child. These theories contain divergent views. Some postulate the "behavioural" focus, others a "functional similarity system" and a number adhere to a "perceptual-cognitive" perspective. However, various theories do possess commonalities. Specific studies on developmental processes involved in meaning acquisition were outlined.

The second portion of this chapter dealt with studies which investigated the child's understanding of selected instructional terms (e.g. "letter", "word" and "sound"). These studies showed evidence of the young child's difficulty and at times inability to understand certain terms. Some indicate that although the child's concept of word increases with age many children at school age still exhibit inadequate and vague notions regarding the meaning of word and other instructional terms. A number of studies have shown a relationship between the understanding by a child of the term and his reading group.

The emphasis in this chapter has been on the theoretical underpinnings of meaning acquisition as it occurs in the young child. Salient studies relevant to the present research have also been presented.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

This chapter is concerned with the design of the study which is based on the statistical model of a two-way analysis of variance with readers (high and low) and tasks (verbal and situational) being the two factors.

The chapter begins with a description of the sample, followed by the procedures involved in the selection of the instructional terms. A discussion of the two tasks -- the verbal and situational -- follows and includes a presentation of the models which form the theoretical base for distinguishing the two tasks. Each task is described in detail and includes a treatment on the nature of the tasks, the constructing of the tasks, administering of the tasks and the process involved in finalizing the tasks for the actual data-gathering period.

SELECTING THE SAMPLE

From the Fort McMurray Public School District #32, of Fort McMurray, Alberta, two schools were selected which were considered to be representative of the wider city population. Prior to the actual date for collecting data, the researcher met separately with the four Grade One teachers in the two schools in order to procure a list of

their respective classes. The teachers were made aware of the researcher's definition of high and low readers and they were requested to identify the children in their class in terms of the two reader groups. In order to have a representative group of high and low readers from each school, fifteen pupils were chosen randomly from school no. 1. The complement for the high and low reader groups were chosen from school no. 2.

Data on the sample are provided in Table 3-1.

TABLE 3-1

Description of Sample

	High Reader Group	Low Reader Group
Boys	6	4
Girls	9	11
School no. 1	7	8
School no. 2	8	7
Mean C.A.	6.9	6.9

SELECTING INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS

The terms selected for investigation in this study were chosen from the "Starting Points in Language Arts, Level I". Ginn Educational Publishers. Both schools in

this study utilized this program in their Grade One Language Arts curriculum. The manner in which the terms were selected from the different materials of this series is presented below.

Mr. Mug's Book I and Self-Help Activities Level I

In these books the directions for the pupils are directly stated. Those terms that were considered general and usually applicable to situations other than Language Arts exercises were discarded. For example, the underlined words in the following were chosen. "With your pencil trace the solid letters following the arrows. Join the dots to make the letters. Using the starting points print the letters." Two or more terms were considered as representing a single concept if it were unlikely that at least one of the terms would be used independently of the other in a Language Arts lesson. From the example above, the terms "trace" and "letters" could occur independently in different concepts. On the other hand, the term "arrows" would be unlikely to be used independently of the terms "follow", thus "following the arrows" was considered as one of the instructional terms representing a single concept.

Teacher's Guide

In this book the terms are stated indirectly as suggestions to the teacher. Consequently each suggestion was evaluated as to which labels or terms might be used

directly for instructional purposes which were then chosen for analysis.

Any instructional terms identified in Mr. Mug's Book and Self Help Activities were automatically chosen from the Teacher's Guide. Terms from the sections Integrative Opinions and Alternate Strategies were omitted. The terms from these sections were not included because they represented a lesser possibility of being actually utilized by teachers in their Language Arts instruction program since their use was optional. An example of the terms chosen from the Teacher's Guide is as follows: "'Now that you've heard the story who can tell what the problem was?' Let various children tell their versions of what problems the train had. 'How was the problem solved in the story?' Again let the children respond.'"

The terms "problem" and "solved" might possibly be used by the teacher in this instructional activity. Understanding these terms and the underlying concept would influence the nature of the child's response. The term "story", although a general instructional term is not crucial to following directions as the teacher might ask how the problem was solved without using the word "story".

Based on these guidelines, the researcher tabulated the frequency of occurrence of the instructional terms. Twelve of the most frequently used terms were chosen for the study. The terms "ask/tell" were among the twelve most frequently used terms, but were not chosen for this study

because of the difficulty in assessing these within the situational worksheet type task.

The following instructional terms were chosen for investigation in this study:

TABLE 3-2

List of Twelve Commonly Used Instructional Terms

Terms	Frequency
Word	280
Begin	198
Letter	169
Name	161
Make sense	95
Beginning sound	90
Print	61
Trace	60
Capital letter	46
Rhyme	29
Period	28
Stands for	25

A complete listing of the terms may be found in Appendix A.

NATURE OF THE TASKS

The instrument in this study consists of two assessment tasks identified as the verbal task and the situational task. Both tasks incorporate the question-answering process designed to get at the children's meaning associations for the twelve instructional terms.

The verbal task requires the pupils to answer questions verbally, and the situational task directs the pupils to complete exercise sheets.

Two models loosely based on Fisher's Functional Literacy Model (Fisher, 1981) serve as the theoretical framework for distinguishing the verbal and situational tasks. These models facilitate a vivid illustration of the processes entailed within the assessment tasks.

Diagramatically, the steps the child supposedly goes through in the verbal task is shown in Figure 3-1.

As Figure 3-1 indicates, the child may go through nine steps in the question-answering process when a question is presented orally. In the verbal assessment task, first the child encodes the directions, then he identifies the question part (e.g. "What does _____ mean to you?") and the action part (e.g. "Tell me") as stated in the directions. The child then identifies the target propositions (the specific terms). The next step requires the child to scan his long-term memory in order to utilize search cues that have relevant memory content, thus allowing

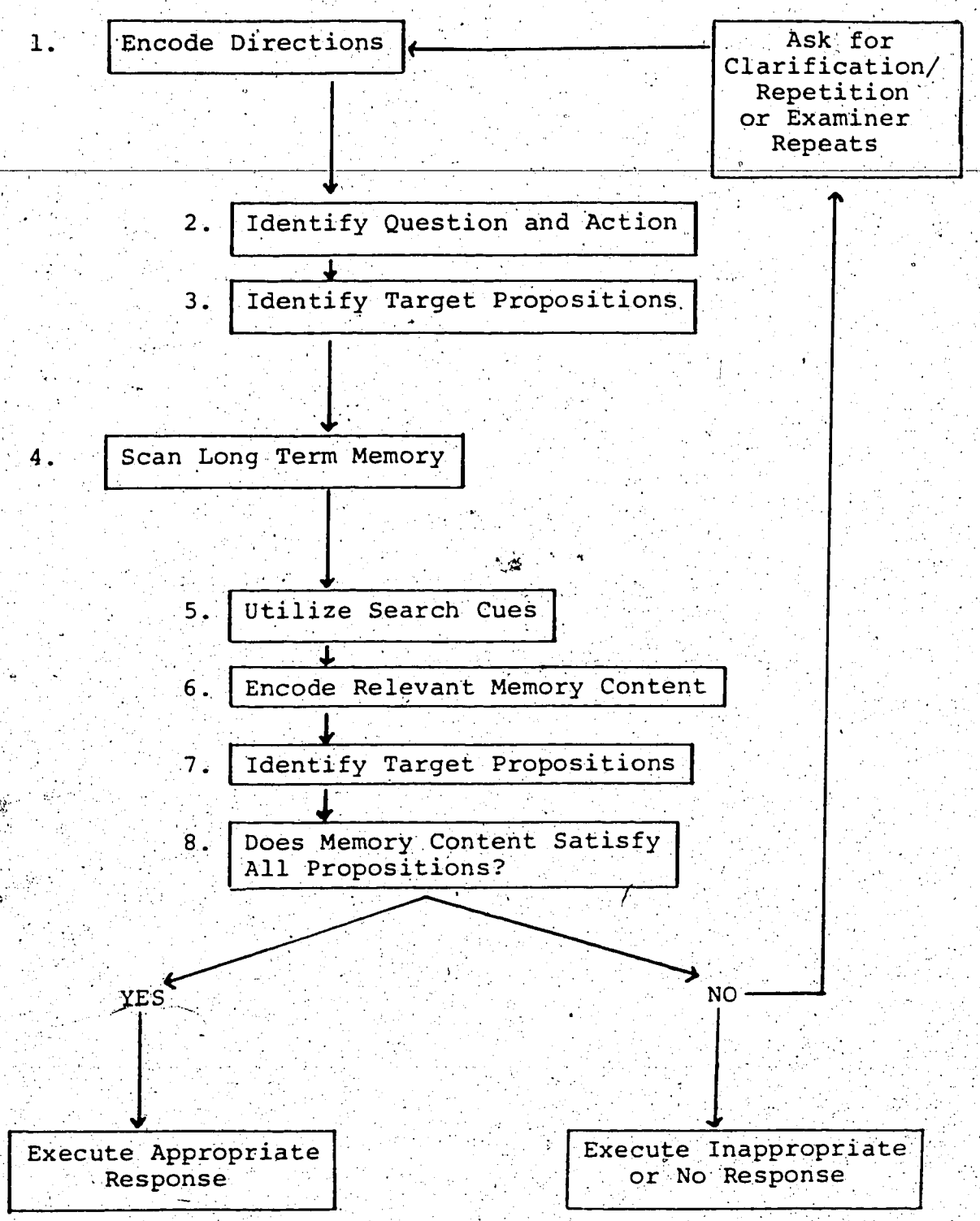

FIGURE 3-1

A Model of Question-Answering for the Verbal Task

him to identify the target proposition. If the child decides that his memory content satisfies the target proposition he executes the appropriate responses; otherwise he executes an inappropriate response which may be a non-response. In instances wherein the child feels he needs further clarification on the directions, the researcher repeats the questions and the entire process takes place once more.

The situational task focusses on the receptive aspect of the child's understanding of the language. It requires the pupil to complete the task without verbalizing his responses. The exercise sheets are similar to those found in the workbooks Mr. Mug's Book I and the Self-Help Activities Book I.

Figure 3-2 illustrates the steps involved.

This second model (shown in Figure 3-2) shows some similarity to that of the first model for the verbal task. However, a number of steps involved (specifically steps 4, 6 & 8) differentiates the situational task from the verbal task quite clearly.

For the situational task as illustrated in the second model (Figure 3-2) the child first encodes the directions, then he identifies the question part (e.g. what is a word?) and the action part (Put an X on _____). The child then identifies the target proposition which is the instructional

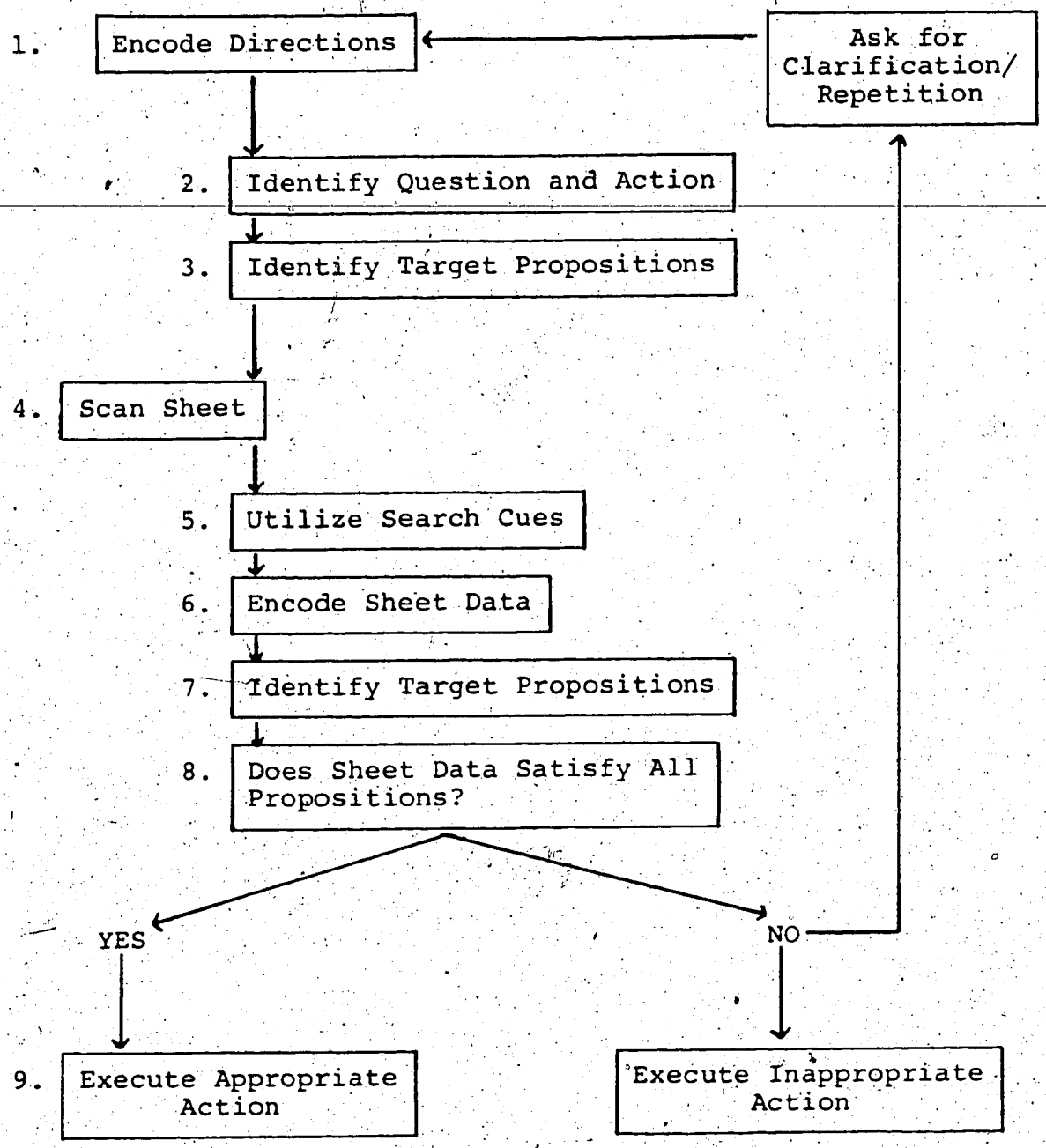

FIGURE 3-2

A Model of Question-Answering for the Situational Task

term and then he scans the sheet for exemplars of this proposition. This step distinguishes the situational task from the verbal task. Then the child utilizes search cues and encodes the sheet data. If an exemplar is found that satisfies the target proposition then the child executes the appropriate response. If the child believes that the sheet data does not provide exemplars for the propositions, he executes an inappropriate response. Once again, as in the verbal task, if the child needs any clarification, the researcher repeats the directions and the entire process is repeated.

CONSTRUCTING THE TASKS

The verbal task and the situational task were both structured with specific criteria in mind. For the verbal task the criteria are delineated in the following items:

1. The children will be required to generate information from long-term memory.

2. Three questions will be devised for each instructional term.

3. The first question will be a general question asking for the meaning of the term.

4. The second question will access the child's knowledge of a functional use for the term.

5. The third question will require the child to demonstrate an illustration for the term. (Unlike the situational task, responses are not constrained within a single sheet.)

6. Each question will necessitate an oral response.

In terms of the [illegible] task the following criteria have been [illegible]

1. The request given to the child will include a question part and an action part.

2. The action part of the request will be made as simple as possible as: "Put an X on _____".

3. In order to complete the request the child will have to select at least two instances of the target population.

4. Each situational task will contain a number of non-exemplars of the target proposition.

5. If a term other than the target term is used in a request, then a referent for that term will be provided. In the following example "begins" is the target term, so a referent is provided for "lines":

"These are lines. (The researcher points to lines).

"Put an X where each line begins."

"Put an X where each begins."

6. The directions will not appear on the sheet but will be given orally by the examiner. (This will reduce the high reader's advantage over the low readers.)

FINALIZING THE TASKS

Pre-Pilot Study Input

After the tasks had been constructed according to the specified criteria, feedback was generated from three graduate students on their reactions to the questions which the researcher had formulated. The suggestions from the three graduate students were helpful in making changes in the b and c questions of the verbal task particularly for the terms rhyme, beginning sound and stands for.

Before conducting the pilot study, the questions for both tasks were tested with a six-year old child. This pre-testing with the single child suggested an approximate time frame to allot each child during the pilot study.

Pilot Studies

A pilot study was conducted with three high readers and three low readers in an Edmonton Public School. The pilot study showed that some questions needed revision based on the child's manner of responding to the instructions. In the situational task the content item for the term begin was revised. Instructions for the terms print and trace were

revised. A few other minor changes were made on the other situational task content based on the children's reaction during the pilot.

An analysis of the data of the pilot study raised the possibility of an alternate form for question "a" of the verbal task. Consequently a second pilot with the same composition of subjects as the first was conducted. In addition to a question in the verbal task (What does _____ mean to you?) another question variation was asked. This time the pupils were asked "What is _____ ?" where applicable. The second pilot showed that the children felt rather inhibited and cautious in their response to this question "What is _____". It seemed to place a certain degree of pressure on the child to consider a more formal, technical response. On the other hand when the first question form was asked of the children, there seemed to be a more spontaneous and free-flowing response because it had been indicated in the question itself that the required response was one that meant something to the child rather than expecting a "correct" response.

Thus the researcher made the decision that although the first question seemed to demand more from the child by asking what the term meant, in a way it was the best way to ascertain the child's own meaning and understanding. Thus the question utilized in the final form for data gathering was "What does _____ mean to you?" It was by asking this question with emphasis on the last three words that allowed

the child to open up, and each in his own way revealed his meaning associations.

The second pilot also allowed the researcher to devise a tentative time scheme or schedule for the data gathering period.

Finally the two pilot studies revealed the need to incorporate a descriptive analysis of the verbal task data in order to complement the statistical analysis presentation.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity may be claimed for the Analysis of Instructional Terms from a number of perspectives. (1) The terms assessed were those which commonly occurred in a language arts program at the primary level (Starting Points in Language Arts, Level I -- Ginn). (2) Six criteria or guidelines for each task (verbal and situational) were developed and followed in the construction of the instrument. (3) Three graduate students evaluated the tasks in terms of the guidelines developed. (4) Two pilot studies were conducted in order to finalize the task questions.

Construct validity may be claimed for the instrument in the sense that Fisher's Functional Literacy Model (Fisher, 1981) served as the theoretical framework for elicitating the steps necessary to complete the task and which assisted with the formation of the guidelines. Finally ecological validity is based on the results of the study which showed that the instrument was able to differentiate the knowledge of a high and low reader group at the grade one level.

Interrater reliability was established on ten per cent of the protocols of the situational task and questions 2 and 3 of the verbal part (used for statistical analysis) and on twenty per cent of the protocols for question 1 of the verbal part (analysed descriptively). The level of agreement between two independent raters for all analyses was one hundred per cent.

ADMINISTERING THE TASKS

The researcher was introduced to the pupils selected to participate in the study. Before the actual administering of tasks each pupil was given a name tag to facilitate the establishment of rapport between the researcher and the child.

It was assumed that since the exercises used in the situational task were similar to worksheets the students were used to completing, there would be less attention drawn to the terms than if the verbal task had been given first. Consequently it was expected that there would be less chance of practice effort from this order of administration than if the verbal tasks had been given first in which the questions focus directly on the terms.

The situational assessment task began with an introductory comment stating the researcher's desire to know about things Grade One's do in Language Arts.

Two demonstration items utilizing the terms "book" and "pencil" as the target propositions were presented to each child, before giving them the actual sheets with the twelve instructional terms being investigated. (A copy of the specific situational task instructions and data sheets are included in Appendix B and C).

The administration of the verbal task followed. This time the students were required to give their responses verbally. The children were encouraged to state what the term meant to them and not be concerned about the rightness or wrongness of their response.

The verbal task was administered according to the question scheme outlined in the verbal instructions which appears in Appendix B.

SCORING THE TASKS

In the construction of the verbal and situational tasks, the investigator endeavoured to ascertain the child's meaning within the context of the "adult-author's" meanings as conveyed in the Ginn Book's Mr. Mug's Book I, Self Help Activities Level I and the Teacher's Guide Level I. In addition to this, the researcher designed the verbal task in order to reveal the child's own meaning associations of the terms. These meanings will be viewed apart from that of adult meaning criterion.

To effect a comprehensive presentation of the data

two modes are employed. The first mode involves the statistical analysis of the data. The second mode is a descriptive analysis of the data from the verbal task.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

A two way analysis of variance with repeated measures was employed to analyse the data statistically.

A subject's correct response (adult criterion meaning) for each term was allocated two points. The comparability for assigning equal weighting for terms across both tasks was based on the premise that the two tasks require similar responses. In the verbal task the accepted responses to (b) and (c) questions, analysed for statistical purposes are "functional" and "demonstrative" in nature. Similarly in the situational task, the task itself is of a "functional" nature, since it is similar to worksheets completed in Language Arts and requires the child to "demonstrate" his meaning by choosing exemplars for the terms.

Descriptive Analysis

This portion addresses itself basically to what the child knows or rather to his meaning associations for the instructional terms. It gives a descriptive account of the features of the child's meaning associations. The objective of this portion therefore is to present an overview of the child's making sense of the terms within the context of the

interaction that took place during the verbal interviews. The criteria to be used for this part of the analysis were developed from the response data and are indicated with the descriptive results in Chapter IV.

SUMMARY

Thirty grade one children, with fifteen in each of the two reader groups (high and low) were randomly selected from two schools to participate in this study. Two types of assessment tasks (the verbal and the situational tasks) were administered to the thirty children individually. The purpose of the task was to ascertain the children's meaning for twelve instructional terms. The terms were chosen from the Ginn Educational Publishers Starting Points in Language Arts Level I.

Pre-pilot input and two pilot studies were conducted prior to the actual study in order to establish content validity and reliability of both assessment tasks.

The data was analyzed using two methods of reporting: First, was a two-way analysis of variance of the data from the situational task and the (b) and (c) responses in the verbal task. Second, a descriptive analysis of the verbal task responses presented the children's meanings without comparison to that of adult's meanings.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSES: FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part I, the statistical analysis of the results will be presented. The data in this part will be organized as follows:

Each Research Hypothesis is restated from Chapter I, next is a statement of rejection or acceptance, followed by a table which serves as the basis upon which the research hypothesis was accepted or rejected, and finally a discussion of the results of the analyses.

In Part II, the analysis of the verbal task is reported descriptively.

Part I: Statistical Analysis

> Hypothesis 1. There will be significant differences between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the commonly used instructional terms.

Statement of Acceptance

Data shown in Table 4-1 provide a summary of the results of a two-way analysis of variance with Factor A independent variable denoting the high and low reader groups. A significant Factor A main effect was obtained indicating that the performance of the high readers was

significantly better than that of the low readers' across both verbal and situational tasks beyond the .05 level of significance. Thus Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

TABLE 4-1

Summary of Analysis of Variance For Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers Understanding of Twelve Commonly Used Instructional Terms

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	1844.60	29			
'A' Main Effects	1480.06	1	1480.06	113.68	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	364.53	28	13.01		
Within Subjects	346.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	0.59	1	0.59	0.04	0.82
'A & B' Interaction	8.07	1	8.07	0.67	0.41
'B' x Subj. Within Groups	337.33	28	12.04		

Discussion

The findings indicate that as expected there are significant differences between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the twelve instructional terms. The high reader group scored significantly better than the

low reader group with a group mean of 20.26. This is compared to the low reader group which had a group mean of 10.33. The total possible score is 24.

These findings are supported by studies such as those by Francis, (1973); Hall, (1976); Evans, et al. (1979); Morris, (1980); Johns, (1980); Kingston, et al. (1972); Holden and MacGinitie, (1972); and Allan, (1978). These studies have demonstrated a close relationship between the child's understanding of technical linguistic concepts and reading ability. For instance, Francis (1973) interviewed fifty English boys and girls to ascertain their understanding of technical vocabulary and linguistic concepts. Her findings revealed that there was a high correlation between the child's level of reading ability and his understanding of the technical vocabulary. She asserts in her conclusion that factors involved in learning technical vocabulary bear an integral relationship to the reading process.

Evans, et al. (1979) who analyzed the scores from seven tests which they administered to fifty three first graders found evidence which was highly predictive of reading achievement. In addition to this, they indicated that the results of the interview was the best indicator of the child's reading achievement. Morris' (1980) study also showed the predictive value of children's knowledge of linguistic terms. Morris' (1980) results showed a significant relationship between the children's concepts of

a word in October and their reading achievement in December.

John's (1980) study was able to differentiate among three reading achievement groups based on their knowledge of linguistic terms. The high readers displayed a more adequate awareness of print-direction concepts, letter-word concepts, and advanced print concepts (Johns, 1980).

Thus the high achievers in reading may tend to score significantly greater than the low readers, owing perhaps to a more mature experience with linguistic concepts through the reading process. More precisely, the tasks, both verbal and the situational, necessitated the child's having to formulate hypotheses about the terms, in order to interpret and derive some kind of meaning. With the high readers' experience in reading, they may have acquired more refined strategies for deriving and formulating hypotheses for word meanings. Francis (1973) has observed that the reading experience creates the need for the child to focus on linguistic units and subdivisions. Consequently the better reader may possess a higher degree of linguistic awareness beneficial for an understanding of the technical vocabulary in language learning. The importance of experience as a factor in concept development has been argued in several theories of conceptual development (i.e. Nelson, 1974; Holzman, 1977; and Smith, 1975).

Hypothesis 2. There will be significant differences in the child's understanding of commonly used instructional terms when assessed within a verbal versus a situational task.

Statement of Rejection

In the overall summary of results, there were no significant differences noted in the child's understanding of the terms when assessed within a verbal versus a situational task. A significant Factor B was not obtained within the two tasks, indicating only a P .82 level of significance. Hypothesis 2 was rejected. These results shown in Table 4-1 indicate that the child's overall understanding of the instructional terms was not affected by the type of task in which they were assessed. In this respect both high and low readers' performance was independent of the type of task within which it was assessed.

Discussion

Because of the pragmatic nature of the situational task; (i.e. structured similar to that of worksheets in Language Arts) it was expected that the child's performance would be significantly better than within the verbal task. Results as shown in Table 4-1 did not confirm this expectation. Contrary to studies by Francis (1973) and Mireau (1978) where children performed significantly better on a written task as opposed to a verbal task, the results of the present research seem to suggest that the understanding

of the terms by the child was independent of the task in which it was assessed. The results tend to adhere to the notion that the child's possessing the concept is more basic than the manner in which the concept is tested.

That the nature of the assessment tasks did not differentiate children's performance may in fact be explained by a number of reasons. One, is in the scoring of the tasks. This researcher sought to ensure that both tasks could be equated in terms of providing equal weighting for the scoring procedure which in both the situational task and the verbal task was based on the child's ability to give a functional and exemplar feature of the term.

Another explanation for the results is the strong indication that the acquisition of the concept is more fundamental than the manner in which it is assessed. Thus the children who did not possess the concept of the term could not respond adequately even within a more pragmatic context. For the children who performed well it was obvious that their grasp of the concept was well established and the type of assessment task had no significant effect on it.

A further contributing factor to no overall significant differences between tasks is that the subjects scored significantly higher on two of the terms in the situational task, and on three of the terms in the verbal task. These individual means would have an "averaging" effect on the overall means. (These results are reported later).

Hypothesis 3. There will be interactional effects between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the instructional terms and their performance on the assessment tasks.

Statement of Rejection

There was no interactional effects between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the instructional terms and their performance on the assessment tasks. Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

As shown in Table 4-1, the Factors A & B interaction was not significant. These results indicate that the child's understanding of these terms across assessment tasks and across reader groups would indicate a parallel. (i.e. the scores of the high readers would be significantly higher in both tasks and the scores of the low readers would be significantly lower in both tasks while scores across tasks did not differ).

Discussion

The results did not confirm the expectation that there would be interactional effects across tasks and across reader groups. It was believed that the tasks might effectively differentiate the low readers -- that they would score significantly higher on the situational task (a more familiar type experience) than on a task requiring them to express themselves verbally (the verbal task). Rather, the findings suggest that there are no interactional effects among the four

factors (two reader groups and two assessment tasks). What is revealed is the consistent performance of both groups with the high readers scoring significantly better and the low readers scoring significantly lower in both tasks. The means for the high reader group on the situational and verbal tasks, were 20.00 and 20.53, respectively. The corresponding means for the low reader group were 10.80 and 9.86.

Studies have shown a relationship between the development of linguistic skills and logical concepts (Nelson, 1973; Smith, 1975; Rader and Dent, 1968). Other studies such as Allan (1979) and Mireau (1978) have shown that children who were low readers performed significantly better on a written task as opposed to a verbal task. It was expected that the low reader who experienced difficulty with the various instructional terms would find it more difficult to communicate their concepts in an oral manner. However, results showed that the low readers performed poorly across tasks. Thus it appears that the low readers are lacking the basic concepts rather than being restricted by their linguistic skills. This point is made by Nelson (1974) who states that "... some vocabulary difficulties may be rooted in conceptual deficiencies inasmuch as the meaningful acquisition of a word presumes an understanding of the concept to which it refers" (p. 25).

Differences and Interaction Effects for Specific Instructional Terms

Since research (i.e. Bradshaw and Anderson, 1968) has shown that some words in a category such as adverbs, are better understood than others, it is possible that certain terms within the twelve commonly used instructional terms were better understood than others. Consequently, this researcher decided to look at the specific terms to determine if there were differences or interactional effects for any of the children's responses.

Data from the two-way analysis of variance for each term are given in Appendix D, Tables 1 - 12. The means are reported in Tables 4-2 and 4-3 and graphed in Figures 4-1 and 4-2.

Table 4-2 and Figure 4-1 show the summary of group means for the high and low readers on each instructional term. According to the analysis of variance (Appendix D) there were significant main effects between the high readers' and the low readers' performance on each term except on the term trace. The high readers generally performed consistently better than low readers on most of the terms under investigation.

Data on the understanding of each term by task are given in Table 4-3 and Figure 4-2. The data from the analysis of variance indicated significant main effects for five of the terms and no significant differences for seven

TABLE 4-2

Mean Scores for High and Low Readers on Specific Instructional Terms

Terms	Means	
	High Reader	Low Reader
Word	1.53	0.46
Letter	1.66	1.26
Name	1.86	1.46
Begin	1.73	0.66
Beginning sound	1.40	0.60
Rhyme	1.79	0.46
Make sense	1.53	0.33
Print	1.33	0.80
Trace	1.86	1.46
Capital letter	1.93	1.20
Period	1.73	1.80
Stands for	1.59	1.00

TABLE 4-3

Mean Scores in Situational and Verbal Tasks for Specific Instructional Terms

Terms	Mean	
	Situational Task	Verbal Task
Word	1.00	1.00
Letter	1.66	1.[illegible]
Name	1.33	
Begin	0.66	
Beginning sound	1.06	
Rhyme	1.26	
Make sense	1.26	
Print	0.66	0.[illegible]
Trace	1.[illegible]	1.66
Capital letter	1.53	1.59
Period	1.53	1.[illegible]
Stands for	1.86	1.86

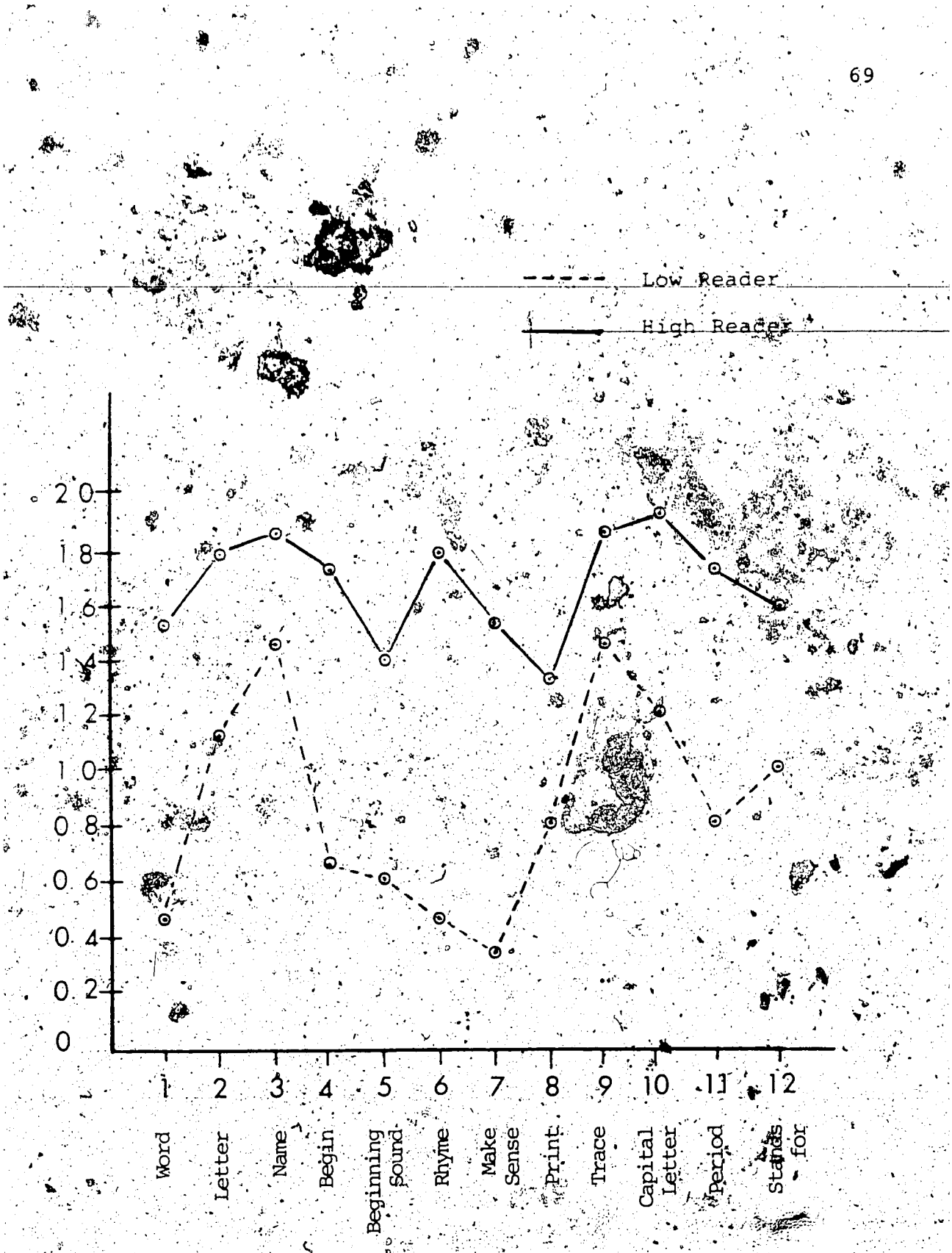

FIGURE 4-1

Means for High and Low Readers on Specific Terms

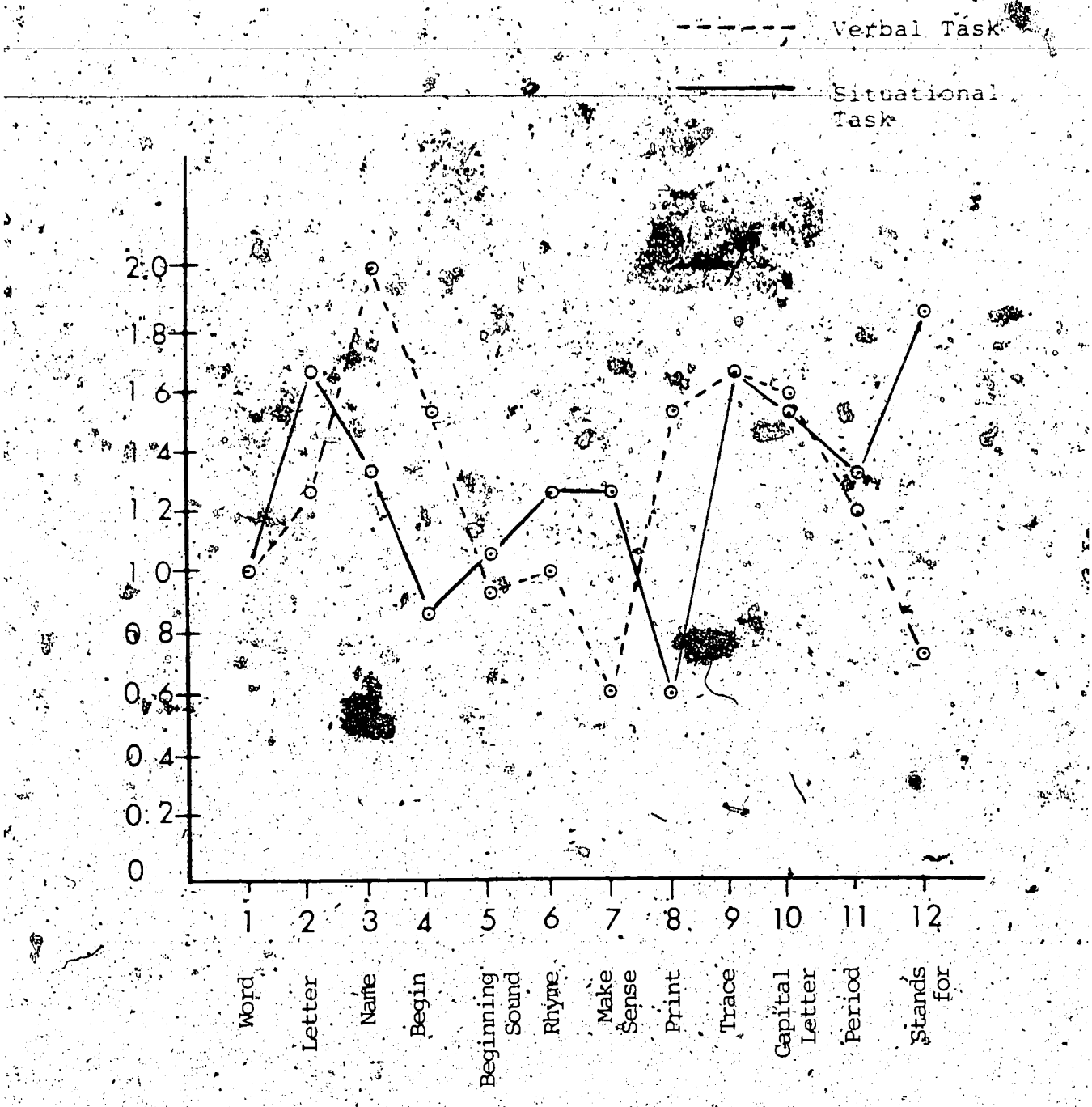

FIGURE 4-2

Means for Situational Versus Verbal Tasks on Specific Terms

of the terms. The seven terms for which no significant differences were noted were word, letter, beginning sound, rhyme, trace, capital letter and period. With these seven terms, the child's understanding did not appear to be affected by the task within which it was assessed. These findings subscribe to the notion that possessing the concept was the more basic factor in the understanding of the term, rather that the mode of assessment. With the five terms name, begin, print, make sense and stands for, the results showed significant differences, suggesting that the manner of assessment influenced the child's understanding of these terms. The terms name, begin and print, were easier for the child to understand in the verbal task. Two factors may be considered as the best possible explanations for these results. First, the general nature of these three terms may have allowed for greater ease of understanding in the verbal task, that is, these three terms are often heard by children outside of school situations. Second, the verbal task may have given the child lesser constraints within which he could describe his meanings. The child was able to draw upon his own experience with the terms to specify his meanings, based on the more open-ended context of the verbal task question. A common example for name was the child's own name. On the other hand, the situational task in a way limited the child's choice of exemplars and manner of indicating his meanings, to that which was

contained on the data sheet.

The terms make sense and stands for on the other hand, do not convey much meaning unless a referent is presented. The verbal task therefore may have demanded more from the children, in terms of having to describe their meanings by including the needed referents. In the situational task, a referent was present on the data sheet, which may have facilitated the ease with which the child was able to indicate his meanings. Refer to Appendix C for data sheets in the situational task.

Significant interactional effects were noted for the terms name, period and stands for. All the high readers performed better on these terms, in both tasks, however the low readers scored higher in the situational task as opposed to the verbal task. These may lend support to the hypothesis that at least in some instances low readers are less verbal than high readers. Perhaps the experience with reading which the high reader possesses, makes available to him a broader range of linguistic concepts gained from literature. The low reader, on the other hand may not be as fluent in oral expression because of his minimal experience with linguistic concepts. This idea is supported by research (i.e. Bradshaw and Anderson, 1968) whose study on nine adverbial modifiers illustrates that the young readers' lack of vocabulary (by adult standards) may simply be a reflection of the readers limited linguistic experience.

In summary, significant differences were revealed between the high and low readers on each term except trace. These findings seem to suggest that the high readers have a good grasp of the meaning of all the twelve instructional terms while all the low readers appear to have difficulty expressing their meanings for terms.

Responses to five terms differed across tasks, with three being easier on the verbal task and two on the situational task. For three of the terms, the low readers scored higher on the situational than on the verbal task.

Part II: Descriptive Analysis

In Part I the focus was on evaluating the child's response in terms of adult criteria, more specifically, the presence of two particular features -- "functional" and "exemplar". Since concept development is related to age it was assumed that the children may have various meanings for the particular terms which did not correspond to adult meaning. The open ended question "What does _____ mean to you?" allowed for a variety of responses. An analysis is made of these responses in this section.

In order to provide a description of the children's responses, a number of features for classifying the responses needed to be identified. The final list arrived at were derived from past research (Fagan and Hayden, 1983) and from an initial analysis of the experimental data. The

list of features used for classifying responses are:

1. Descriptive
2. Functional
3. Exemplar
4. Synonym
5. Antonym
6. Circular
7. Don't know/no response

[redacted]tures are defined in Appendix F.

[redacted]e number of different features are reported in Ta[redacted] 4-4. In order to highlight the different features used to provide a meaning for instructional terms, the data are presented for high and low readers in Figure 4-3.

Data were tabulated on the basis of the features each response contained. Thus one response may have included one or more features. For example, the response to the term trace "when you give the kids something like paper ... to trace over something, like you get to copy the lines over ... on another piece of paper ..." was analyzed as containing both descriptive and synonym. Another example which revealed two features was the response from a high reader to the term word, "... a kind of group of some letters ... a kind of ... string of letters, ... to make sentences and stories". This particular response was analyzed as both descriptive and functional.

TABLE 4-4

Summary of Scores for High and Low Readers' Responses Classified According to Features for Meaning

Feature	High	Low
Descriptive	23	6
Functional	33	23
Exemplar	60	21
Synonym	35	12
Antonym	3	0
Circular	5	8
Don't know/no response	14	73
Total	173	129

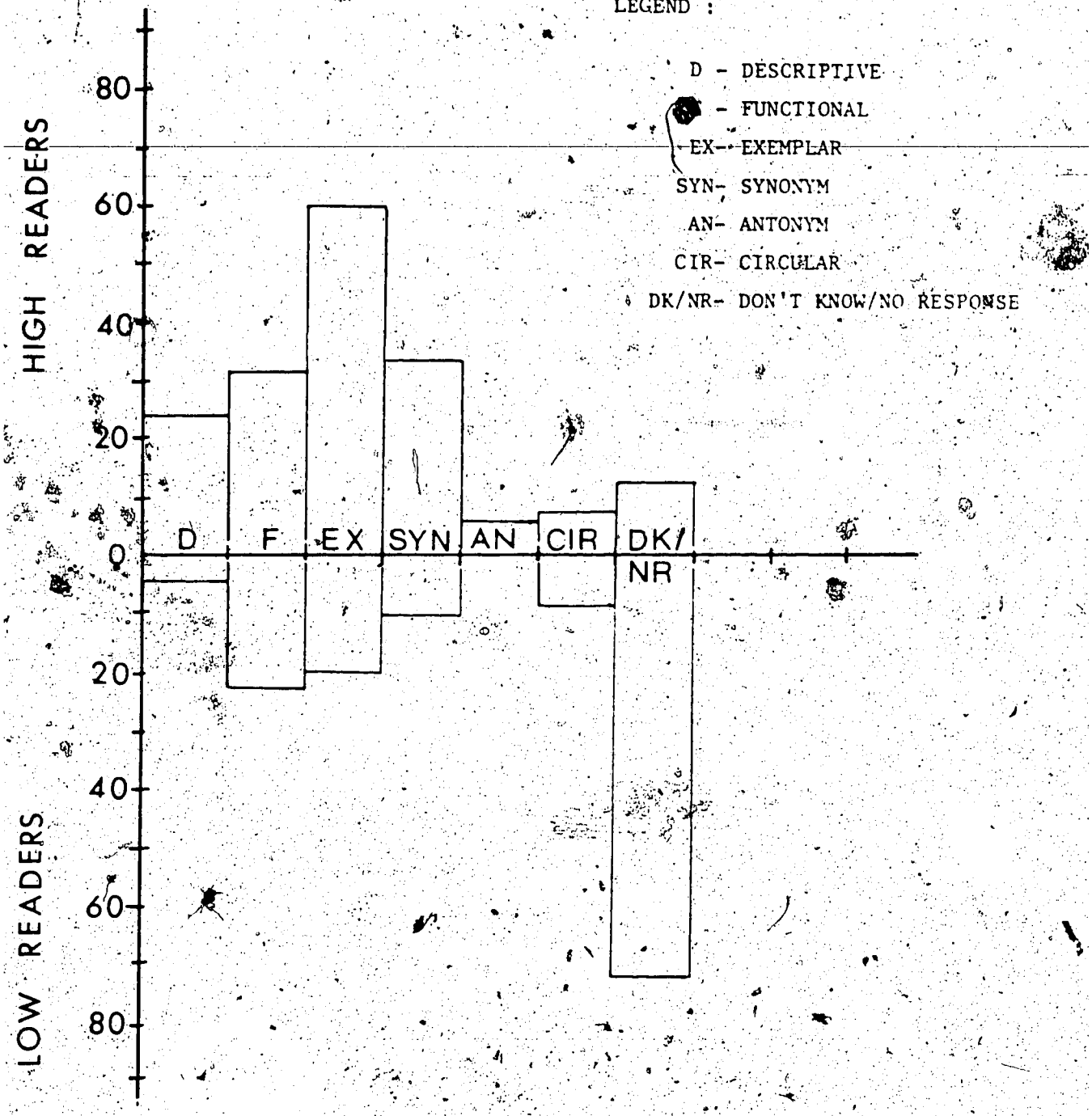

FIGURE 4-3

Summary of Scores for High and Low Readers' Responses Classified According to Features for Meaning

When the child responded "I forget" this response was entered in the Don't know feature category.

An analysis of the data in Table 4-4 show that the high readers gave many more responses than did the low readers, 173 versus 129. Of the responses given by the low readers, seventy three or 56.6 per cent were in the Don't know/no response category. This compares to eight per cent in this category for the high readers. The dominant features given by the high readers to provide meaning for the twelve instructional terms were: descriptive, functional, exemplar, and synonym. The low readers employed function and exemplar as their dominant meaning features. A study by Fagan and Hayden (1983) with preschool children found that they also used function and exemplar features most often in providing meaning for words. The findings of the present study and of the Fagan and Hayden (1983) study might suggest that providing features mainly of a function and exemplar is indicative of a lower level of cognitive development.

To illustrate the exemplar features, the following are quoted from the high readers:

1. For the term begin -- "like beginning a story 'once upon a time'", "like when you begin to read a book".

2. For the term word -- "it's kind of hard to describe ... it's like a question ... no ... it's like Hi! ... Hi!

... is a word ... you use them in stories ... in sentences".

3. For the term stands for -- "love stands for heart".

The synonyms which the high readers cited include varied lexical items to express their own meanings. For instance, in response to the term capital letter, answers ranged from "a big letter", "a father letter", to "it's the big letters ... the upper case not the lower case". The term print elicited synonyms such as "to write it down", "draw" and "copy", and for the term letter there were responses like "mail" and "alphabet". A number of other interesting synonyms were for the term make sense, "if you want to make a word sound right", "makes sense means it's true" and "something what's real".

Some high readers described their meanings by revealing their classroom experience. For instance, one high reader had this to say about the term print, "an example to that possibility ... I do printing ... it means to me ... that when ... let's say I print 'run' in school, then I leave a space ... then I print 'run' three times ... and I keep going, if there's space ... you keep printing 'run' three times ... if there's a li'l bit more space ... when there's no more space you stop printing". Others used synonyms and exemplars within their descriptive responses. Example: on letter, "a kind ... that can be big or small ...

in different ways ... you use lines and writes ... to make some slanted ... some straight," "to make a letter that you ... put in it ... it's a paper marked with telling about ... how other people feel ... like your cousins can write a letter", letter", for name, "a word that you have for yourself ... to make people understand you better" and for beginning sound, "you can sound the first letter ... and it gives you a hint ... what the word is. Sometimes you don't know there's a silent 'o' in the word or a 'w'".

The high readers' don't know/no response features occurred more particularly with the terms make sense and stands for.

Word and letter were described by many low readers and a few high readers to mean the same thing. One low reader for instance, pointed to "h", "g" and "horse" from materials nearby, to indicate all three items as word.

On the whole, the high readers expressed some very clear notions of their meanings for the twelve terms, mainly employing four types of features. The majority of the low readers were not able to verbalize their meanings, giving many don't know/no response features in their answers. The low readers utilized exemplar and functional features when expressing their own understandings of instructional terms.

Lindfors (1981) has articulated a need for teachers to "know where the child is" in terms of his language, to

facilitate a learning environment which will build upon the child's rich experience and provide new meanings for those whose meanings are not yet fully developed. Nelson (1974) notes that the child's acquisition of meanings for a word is not just an indicator of the extent of his vocabulary but provides a basic sketch of his "conceptual sophistication". What seems to be emerging from this descriptive analysis, is the need to reiterate that teachers be aware of the differences between high and low readers. There is a strong indication that suggests the distinct relationship between the child's level of reading achievement and his ability to understand linguistic terminology. It is a factor that warrants attention and intellectual concern by teachers and educators.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the results of the analyses of this study. In Part I, the statistical analysis of the data was reported in relation to the three Research Hypotheses restated from Chapter I, and Part II gave a descriptive analysis of the results.

Relevant to Research Hypothesis One, significant differences were noted between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the twelve commonly used instructional terms. The high readers scored significantly better than the low readers on both assessment tasks.

Relevant to Research Hypothesis Two, no significant differences were noted in the child's understanding of the terms when assessed within the verbal versus the situational task. The child's overall understanding of the terms did not seem to be influenced by the type of assessment task. The results seem to suggest that possessing the concept is more basic to the child's understanding of the term than the type of task in which the concept is assessed.

Relevant to Research Hypothesis Three, there were no interactional effects noted between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the terms and their performance on the assessment tasks. The findings suggest that the high readers performed consistently better on both tasks and the low readers scored poorly across the verbal and situational tasks.

The analysis of data examining the differences and interaction effects for specific terms were also presented in Part I. Significant differences were indicated between the high and low readers on each term except trace. Across both tasks, significant main effects were noted on five terms and no significant differences on seven of the terms. Three terms showed higher scores on the verbal task and two terms on the situational task.

Part II provided a descriptive analysis of the child's own meanings of the terms independent of adult criteria. The findings were reported within the light of

seven features which identified the responses of the children to question "a" in the verbal task. The seven features used for classifying responses were: descriptive, functional, exemplar, synonym, antonym, circular and don't know/no response. The findings showed that the high readers employed descriptive, functional, exemplar and synonym features in order to describe their meaning for the twelve instructional terms. The low readers utilized the functional and exemplar as their dominant meaning features.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Fundamental to a child's success in school is his ability to understand the language used for instruction. Although the child may have a fairly good mastery of his language by school age, he inevitably encounters both unfamiliar terms and familiar terms in an unfamiliar context. Within the school context familiar words like name, begin, sound, and letter are employed in utterances which may be new to the child. The child needs to make sense out of all these instances where his language is used, in order to understand the language in learning situations.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the understandings by Grade One children of twelve selected instructional terms commonly used in a language arts program. In particular, the main purpose of this study was to examine the performance of high readers versus low readers to ascertain their meanings for terms as compared to adult standards. Two assessment tasks -- the verbal and the situational were utilized as the instruments for data collection. A secondary purpose of the study was to describe the meanings of these terms from the children's level of understanding.

Thirty children from two schools were selected by stratified random sampling. Fifteen high readers and fifteen low readers, as identified by their teachers, were administered two tasks -- the verbal and situational -- in order to determine their understandings for twelve instructional terms. In the verbal task the children were asked three types of questions for each term: a general question asking for the meaning of the term, a functional type question and a question requiring the child to demonstrate an illustration of the term. The situational task required the children to complete worksheets similar to the exercises contained in the Ginn Workbook Level I. The directions in the situational task were kept as simple as possible to ensure that the target proposition served as the focal term crucial to the child's response.

Data collected from both tasks were analyzed statistically by means of a two-way analysis of variance with repeated measures. A descriptive analysis of the child's responses to the verbal task was also carried out.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are drawn from this present study, taking into account the limitations stated previously in Chapter I. The conclusions which reflect the Grade One children's understanding of twelve instructional terms are presented in terms of each Research Question stipulated in Chapter I.

Research Question 1

Are there any significant differences between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the commonly used instructional terms?

Analysis of the data revealed that there was a significant difference between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of twelve instructional terms. Based on this analysis it can be concluded that high readers have a good grasp of the concepts of twelve instructional terms under investigation. The mean scores were close to the ceiling. It can also be inferred that for the majority of low readers their understanding of the twelve terms by adult standards is not yet fully developed. Most of the low readers definitely lack an understanding of technical vocabulary used in language arts.

Research Question 2

Are there any significant differences in the child's understanding of these terms when assessed within a verbal versus a situational task?

The data analysis indicate that there are no significant overall differences in the child's understanding of these terms across the two assessment tasks. It might be concluded that the nature of both tasks did not have a significant effect on the performance of the readers.

However, a detailed analysis of each term did indicate some difference in the children's performance when assessed between tasks. This was the case with three terms name, begin and print which revealed higher scores in the verbal task and two terms on which there were higher scores in the situational task: make sense and stands for.

Differences between overall scores were affected by differences in the scores for these individual terms in the sense that high scores on the different tasks "averaged out" within the overall mean. However, no significant differences occured on seven terms which would indicate that acquisition of a concept is independent of the measure by which it is assessed.

Research Question 3

Will there be any interactional effects between the high readers' and the low readers' understanding of the instructional terms and performance on the assessment tasks?

No interactional effects were noted in the two reader groups and the two assessment tasks. It can be concluded that the overall performance of both groups run along parallel lines if illustrated on a graph.

The findings did not confirm expectations by this researcher that the low readers may differ in their performance and score higher in the situational task as opposed to the verbal task. However the results of the analysis clearly indicate that regardless of the more

pragmatic nature of the situational task, the low readers simply did not seem to have the basic concepts of the technical terms which they needed in order to express their understanding of the terms. This finding agrees with hypotheses endorsed by Nelson (1974) and other researchers that the low reader lacks the basic concepts for understanding of the terms. Thus his linguistic skills are restricted by his immature level of conceptual sophistication.

Summary of Findings on Specific Terms

A detailed analysis on each specific term revealed that there were significant differences between the high and low readers, on all terms except on the term trace. There were five terms which showed significant differences between tasks. Three terms scored higher in the verbal task and two terms scored higher in the situational task. There were three terms wherein the low readers indicated a better understanding of the situational task.

THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

From the descriptive analysis, it can be concluded that the high readers are able to talk about their own meanings for the instructional terms in a more fluent manner than are the low readers. The high readers' responses also reveal they use a wide variety of features in expressing meanings, such as descriptive, synonym, functional and

exemplar types.

The low readers indicated great difficulty in responding to the verbal task. It shows that the low readers' ability to express their own understandings of the twelve instructional terms is limited. Based on the numerous don't know/no response type answers it can be inferred that the low readers' understanding of technical terms in language arts is rather limited.

Conclusions

In summary, this present study yielded the following conclusions:

1. High readers perform better than low readers in their understanding of instructional terms assessed within adult criteria.

2. High readers indicate a better understanding of terms, when expressing their meanings in a verbal task.

3. High readers express their meanings more readily than low readers.

4. For the low readers some terms are better understood in the situational task.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Results have been revealed in this study which suggest certain implications for the teaching-learning process

within the classroom.

1. The present study indicated that there is a significant difference in the understanding of instructional terms between high and low reader groups. This suggests a need to differentiate reading and language instruction for comparable populations taking into careful consideration the various levels of reading achievement in the classroom. For children in the low reading group, there appears to be a need to clarify meanings of instructional terms used in reading and language instruction.

2. The high readers who scored consistently higher in the situational task also did well in the verbal task. The low readers, however, did poorly on both tasks.

The implications herein are two-fold. One is that the child's experience in reading may play a vital role in his process of acquiring meaning. Thus the child with the limited reading experience is at a disadvantage. On the other hand, the high reader has a wider repertoire of meanings enriched by his reading experience. This suggests to the teacher that they continue to provide broad and meaningful reading experiences for the high readers, presenting them with the adequate challenge to increase their level of maturity in the reading process. Deliberate attention should be given to creating opportunities for the low reader to develop their

reading skills and gain more reading experience. This will enhance their acquisition of new meanings and allow them to become more familiar with the language used in texts, stories, poems and other forms of literature. Activities and strategies for instruction should emphasize the low reader's opportunity to acquire the concepts for linguistic terms by way of more concrete tasks.

3. The descriptive analysis revealed the child's own meanings for the terms without comparison to that of adult criteria. Such information can be helpful to teachers, to know where the child is in terms of his understanding of the language used by texts and teachers. It may provide insights to the teacher in their planning of activities which can build on old meanings and not simply replace them. It is important too that consideration and respect be given to what children have to say about their language learning experience. Rather than the child trying to "make sense" of teacher desired responses, he may be concentrating his energies on "making sense" of the classroom instruction for himself and his own growth in language.

Taking all these implications into consideration the teacher in the classroom, may be better able to respond to the challenge "Take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves" (Lewis Carroll).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The main concern of this present study was the child's (Grade One) understanding of twelve most commonly used instructional terms in a language arts program. The results of the study suggest there are considerable differences between the high and low readers' understanding of instructional terms. The overall summary indicated no assessment task effect on the child's understanding of the terms or no interaction effects. Differences occurred for a few terms, depending on the nature of the task in which they were assessed. To further encourage scholarly concerns related to acquisition of meaning in the young child, a number of suggestions for further research are proposed:

1. The present study investigated the Grade One children's meanings for instructional terms. Additional insights may be gained through a longitudinal study of a group of children from pre-school, kindergarten and Grade One. Such a study could examine the child's understanding of terms at different stages in each grade level. Such a study would describe more accurately the developmental patterns of meaning. It will help teachers to be more aware of the appropriate stages to introduce certain linguistic concepts.

2. An apparent relationship to the child's ability to understand technical terms is the reading achievement

level of the child. There can be an attempt to look in greater detail at the behaviour of high readers and low readers and how this behaviour may relate to their ability to understand linguistic terms.

3. Another area which can be investigated is the child's oral language ability and its relationship to his understanding of linguistic terminology. The high readers in this study used more exemplars, functional, synonym and descriptive features to express their meanings for terms verbally. To find out the relationship between the child's verbal expressive ability and their understandings of linguistic terminology may be a profitable study.

4. Finally, this present study investigated terms which are crucial to the child's completing instructional tasks in a language arts program. Often a child is required to complete exercises in workbooks and worksheets which contain numerous technical vocabulary. One study could look at the strategies children employ in the attempting to "make sense" of seat work assigned to them.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This study was concerned with the child's understandings of commonly used instructional terms in a language arts program. The rationale for this study maintained that the understanding by the child of technical terms is basic to his success at school, in his ability to "make sense" of the language used for instruction.

Related literature and the findings of this study attest to the child's (specifically low readers') inability to understand instructional terms. The majority of the low readers were unable to describe their own meanings for the terms (in the verbal task) or to indicate their understandings (in the situational task). Such children in the low reading level category will certainly encounter a great deal of difficulty in accomplishing instructional tasks within the classroom. How may the child perform effectively within the classroom, if he is unable to understand the language used for instruction?

To recall the introductory statement of this present study, this researcher had referred to Smith's (1975) two assumptions about the child's initial experience in school. This present study seems to identify the low reader as the unfortunate child hypothesized by Smith (1975), who may not be able to "make sense" of the "noise" [language] in school. In view of this, the present study hopes to have reiterated a challenge to teachers in the language arts. This challenge

is to become constantly aware of the child's own meanings for language when he enters school. To note that children vary in their meanings and understandings of terms from that of adults. Hopefully, when teachers are aware of this differentiation of meanings, greater care will be devoted to appropriate strategies for instruction geared to meet the needs of the child. Perhaps it will create a better atmosphere, facilitating the child's "making sense" of the language in the classroom. Rather than the child constantly restructuring his schema to fit the teacher's meanings, the child is guided and encouraged to use his own meanings as a base for refining and structuring new ones. But this must be complemented with the effort to provide extensive opportunities to acquire the basic concepts crucial to their understandings of the language used in the classroom.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS TABULATED FOR FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE TABLES I, II AND III

APPENDIX A

TABLE I

Instructional Terms Tabulated for Frequency of Occurrence From Mr. Mug's Book I and Self-Help Activities Book I

TERMS	FREQUENCY	TERMS	FREQUENCY
Letter	118	Beginning sound	25
Name	71	Stands for	25
Word	64	Circle	22
Object	55	Phrase	17
Print	54	Sentence	10
Trace	50	Read	9
Same letter	49	Match	5
Join the dots	49	Column	5
Same sound	47	Same words	3
Begin	47	Capital letters	3
Starting points	45	Small letters	3
Color	31	Following the arrows	3

APPENDIX A

TABLE II

Instructional Terms Tabulated for Frequency of Occurrence from Teacher's Guide I

Term	Frequency	Term	Frequency
Word	216	Notice	20
Begins	151	Rhyme	19
Tell	137	Top	15
Makes sense	95	Next	15
Name	90	Draw	15
Ask	87	Look alike	15
Beginning	65	Rest of the word	14
Letter	51	Part	12
First	49	Story	11
Left	48	Different	10
Capital letter	43	Trace	10
Write	41	Alphabet	9
Right	36	Special	8
Start	36	Space	7
Sound	35	Print	7
Read	34	Problem	6
Rhyming	29	More	6
Period	28	Bottom	6
Poem	23	Important	5

... continued

APPENDIX A

TABLE II (continued)

Instructional Terms Tabulated for Frequency of Occurrence from Teacher's Guide I

Term	Frequency	Term	Frequency
Same sound	5	Into	1
Less	5	Through	1
Middle	5	Beside	1
Exactly the same	5	Few	1
Question mark	5	Some	1
Lower	4	Fat	1
Higher	4	Thin	1
Underline	3	Second	1
Last	2	Third	1
Circle	2	Fourth	1
Around	1		

APPENDIX A

TABLE III

Instructional Terms Tabulated for Frequency of Occurrence — Composite List

Term	Frequency	Term	Frequency
Word	280	Read	43
Begin	198	Write	41
Letter	169	Right	36
Name	161	Sound	35
Tell	137	Color	31
Makes sense	95	Rhyming	29
Beginning sound	90	Period	28
Ask	87	Stands for	25
Print	61	Circle	24
Trace	60	Poem	23
Object	55	Notice	20
Same sound	52	Rhymes	19
Same letters	49	Top	15
First	49	Next	15
Join the dots	49	Draw	15
Left	48	Look alike	15
Capital letter	46	Rest of the word	14
Starting points	45	Part of the word/ sentence	12
		Phrase	17

... continued

APPENDIX A

TABLE III (continued)

Instructional Terms Tabulated for Frequency of Occurrence —— Composite List

Term	Frequency	Term	Frequency
Different	10	Underline	3
Alphabet	9	Last	2
Special	8	Around	1
Space	7	Into	1
Problem	6	Through	1
More	6	Beside	1
Bottom	6	Few	1
Important	5	Some	1
Less	5	Fat	1
Middle	5	Thin	1
Exactly the same	5	Second	1
Question mark	5	Third	1
Lower	4	Fourth	1
Higher	4		

APPENDIX B

VERBAL TASK INSTRUCTIONS AND SITUATIONAL TASK INSTRUCTIONS

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VERBAL TASK

Instructions:

I'm interested in finding out how Grade One's think about things they do in Language Arts. I'm hoping you can help me. I'm going to say a number of things to you and I want you to tell me what they mean. "Let's try one."

Terms:

Book

(a) If I say book, what does book mean to you? What is a book?

(b) What would you do with a book?

(c) Can you show me a book?

Pencil

(a) What does pencil mean to you? Tell me what a pencil is.

(b) What would you do with a pencil?

(c) Can you show me a pencil?

Word

(a) What does word mean to you?

(b) What are words used for?

(c)$_1$ Can you show me a word? (This third question allows for the ambiguous aspect of its meaning.)

(c)$_2$ Tell me a word.

Begin

(a) What does begin mean to you?

(b) What's your favorite game? How do you begin it? Is that the very beginning?

(c) Can you begin something for me? (Depending on the action ask what/when was the beginning.)

Letter

(a) What does letter mean to you? (If correspondence "Is there something else that letter can mean?")

(b) Where would you use letters?

(c)$_1$ Can you show me a letter? (as in c)

(c)$_2$ Tell me a letter.

Print

(a) What does print mean to you?

(b) When would you print?

(c) Can you print something for me?

Trace

(a) What does trace mean to you?

(b) When would you trace something?

(c) Can you trace something for me? (Have pertinent materials ready.)

Capital letters

(a) What does capital letter mean to you?

(b) Where would you use a capital letter?

(c) Can you show me a capital letter?

Name

(a) What does name mean to you?

(b) When would you use a name?

(c) Can you tell me a name?

Make sense

(a) What does make sense mean to you?

$(b)_1$ Why is it important to make sense?

$(b)_2$ What happens when you don't make sense out of something?

$(c)_1$ Tell me something that makes sense.

$(c)_2$ Tell me something that doesn't make sense.

Beginning sound

(a) What does beginning sound mean to you?

$(b)_1$ What would you do with a beginning sound?

$(b)_2$ Why would you study a beginning sound?

$(b)_3$ How can they help you in Reading?

(c) What is the beginning sound in your name?

Rhyme

(a) What does rhyme mean to you?

(b) Where do you hear rhymes? When do things rhyme?

(c) Can you say two things that rhyme?

Period

(a) What does period mean to you? What is a period?

(b) Where and why would you use a period?

(c) Can you show me a period?

Stands for

(a) What does stands for mean to you?

(b) Why do you need to know that sounds stands for letters? Like /b/ stands for "b".

(c) What stands for /t/.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SITUATIONAL TASK

SAMPLE

TERMS:

Book	Put an X on the book.
Pencil	Put an X on the pencil.

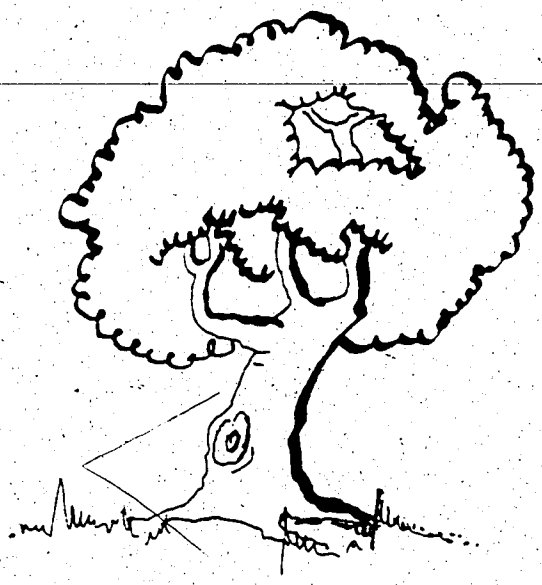
TERMS:

Word	Put an X on the word.
Letter	Put an X on the letters.
Begin	1. These are lines. Put an X where each line begins. 2. Put an X where each begins.
Name	1. Put an X on a name of a dog. 2. Put an X on the children's names.
Make sense	1. Put an X on the ones that make sense. 2. Put an X on the pictures that make sense.
Beginning sound	1. Look at line 1. Put an X if you hear the beginning sound. Look at line 2, etc. 2. Look at line 1. Put an X if you hear the beginning sound. Look at line 2, etc.
Print	1. Print G, d, m. 2. Put an X on the one that is printed.
Rhyme	Look at line one. Put an X if they rhyme.

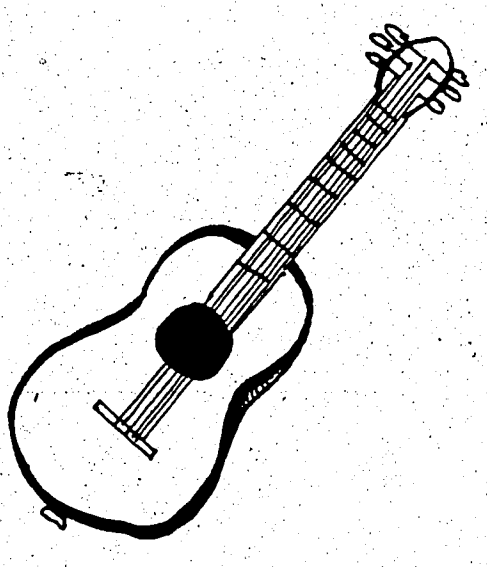
Capital letter	Put an X on the capital letter.
Trace	Trace R, H and the pig.
Period	Put an X on the periods.
Stands for	1. This says "heart". Put an X on the picture that stands for "heart".
	2. Put an X on the one that stands for /s/.

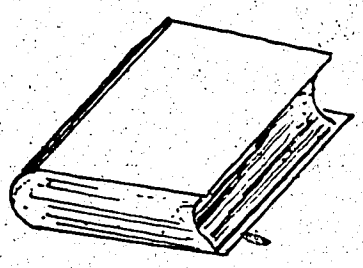
APPENDIX C

DATA SHEETS FOR SITUATIONAL TASK

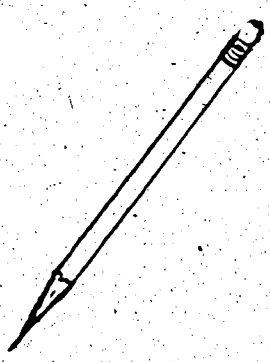


love

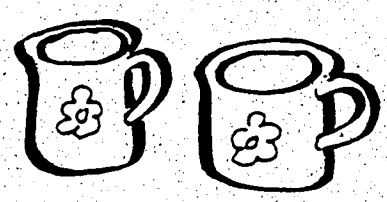




PENCIL



ball

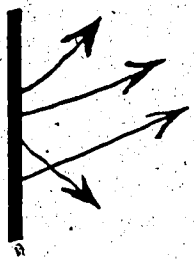


cat m

Gg

dw

p

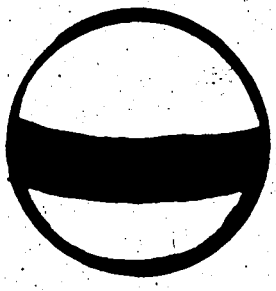


ca

4

NAME

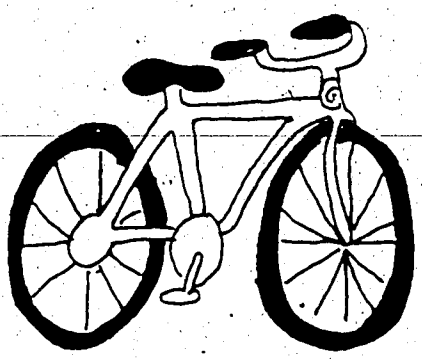
Eat Run

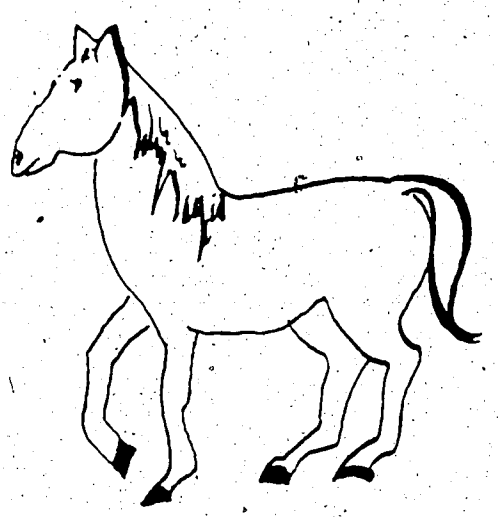


Spot Is

PRINT

Bill





Was

Blue

Sue

BEGIN

[redacted]

BEGIN

Mommy

cat

elephant Sun

BEGINNING SOUND

1. ___ p b m r t

2. ___ fish

3. ___ 

4. ___ m g t e

BEGINNING SOUND

1. ___ sat

2. ___ father

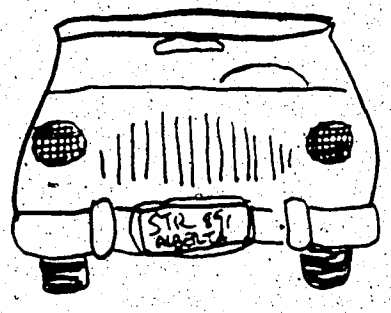
3. ___ dollar

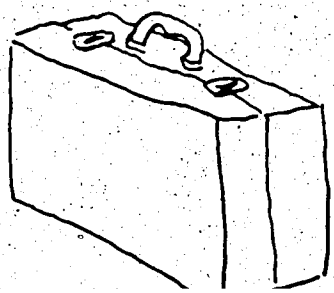
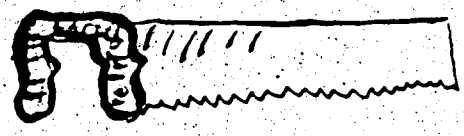
4. ___ mother

RHYME

1. ___ b p

2. ___ cat cot

3. ___  

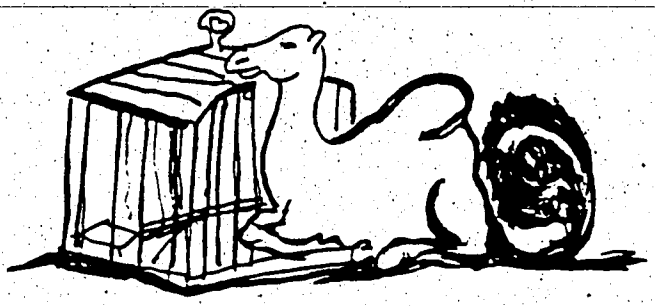
4. ___  

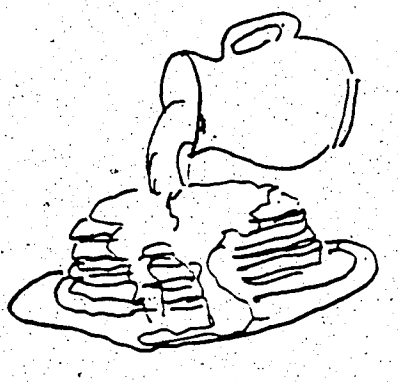
1. The dog barked.

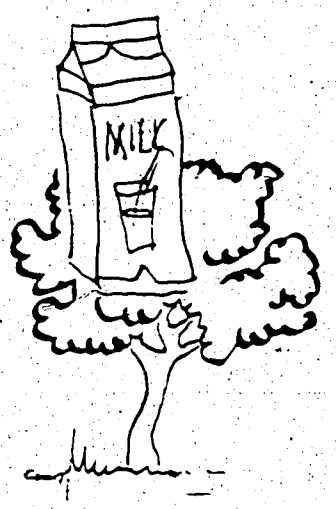
2. The cow is in the field.

3. The school ran away.

MAKE SENSE





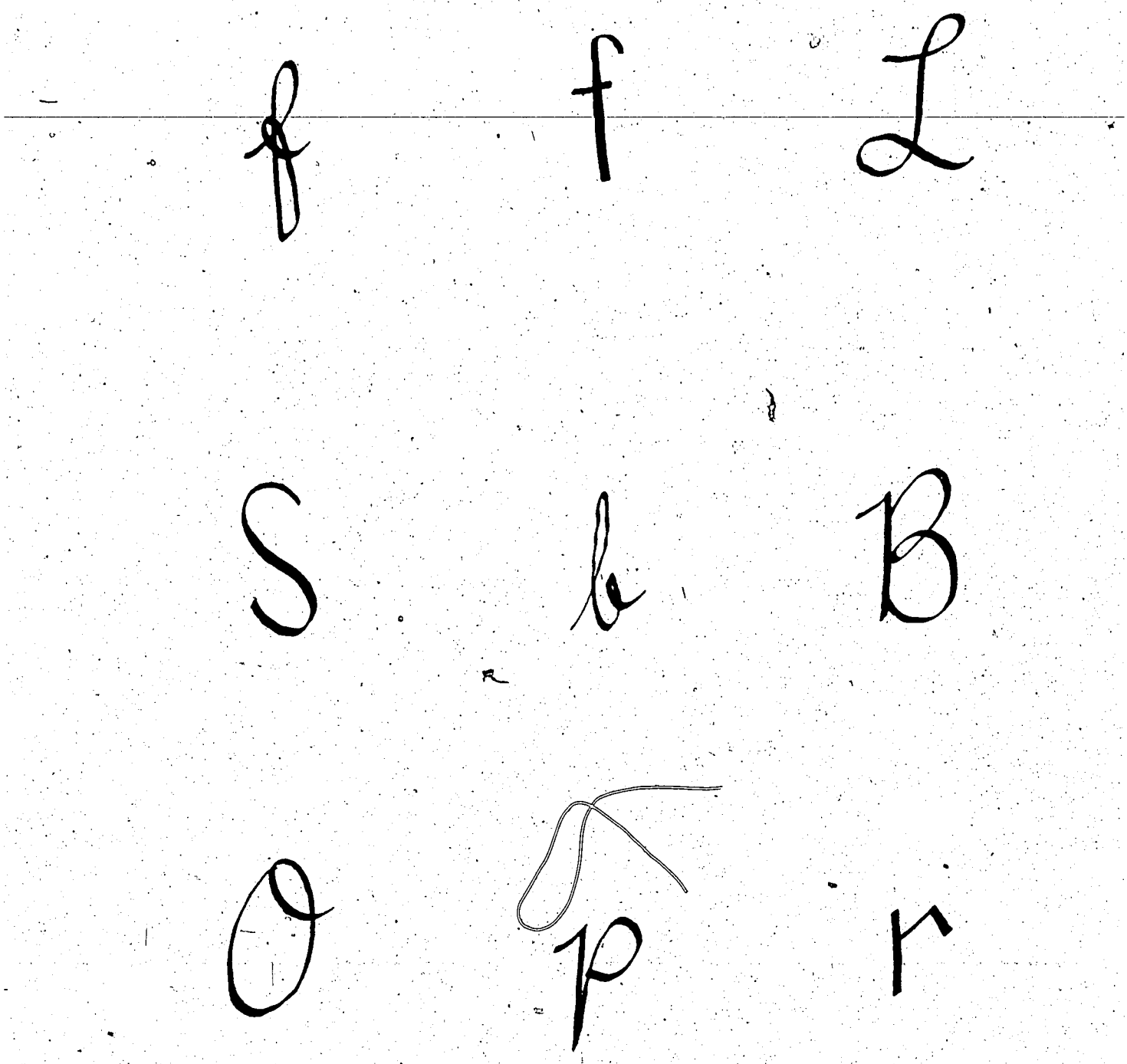


PRINT

1. G G

2. d d

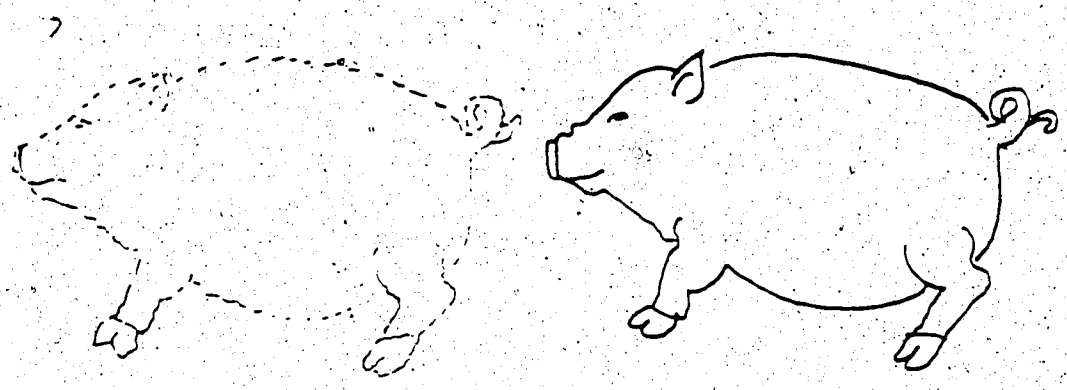
3. m m



TRACE

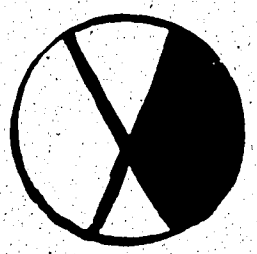
R R

H H



CAPITAL LETTER

see m H

G 42 

27 C R

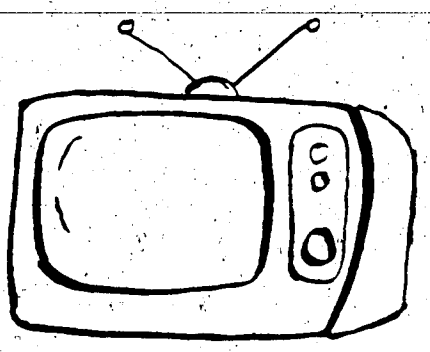
PERIOD

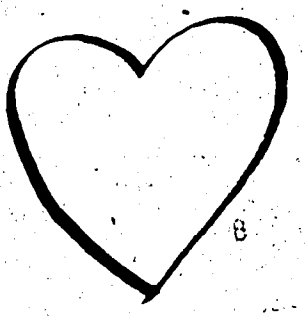
? 3 1

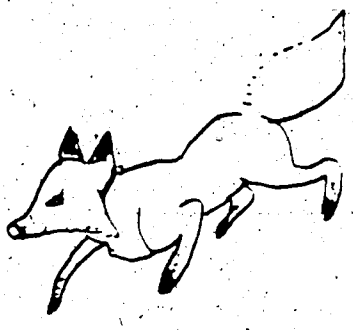
. ' , .

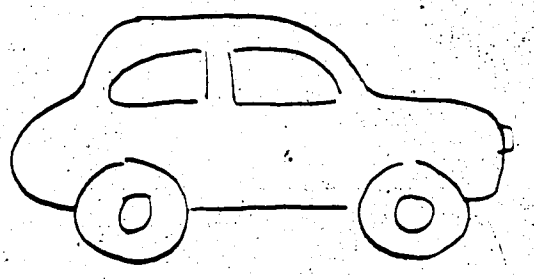
( ) ✓ " L "

STANDS FOR









STANDS FOR

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p s h

v e g

j t a

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR DIFFERENCE IN GRADE ONE HIGH AND LOW READERS' UNDERSTANDING OF TWELVE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL TERMS

TABLE I

Analysis of Variance For Differences In Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Word

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	36.00	29			
'A' Main Effects	17.06	1	17.06	25.23	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	18.93	28	0.67		
Within Subjects	24.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	0.0	1	0.0	0.0	1.00
'A & B' Interaction	0.26	1	0.26	0.31	0.57
'B' x Subj. Within Groups	23.73	28	0.84		

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Letter

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	18.93	29			
'A' Main Effects	6.66	1	6.66	15.21	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	12.26	28	0.43		
Within Subjects	28.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	2.40	1	2.40	2.73	0.10
'A & B' Interaction	1.06	1	1.06	1.21	0.27
'B' x Subj. Within Groups	24.53	28	0.87		

TABLE 3

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Name

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	13.33	29			
'A' Main Effects	2.40	1	2.40	6.14	0.01
Subjects Within Groups	10.93	28	0.39		
Within Subjects	20.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	6.66	1	6.66	17.07	0.00
'A & B' Interaction	2.40	1	2.40	6.14	0.01
'B' x Subj. Within Groups	10.93	28	0.39		

TABLE 4

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Begin

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	29.60	29			
'A' Main Effects	17.06	1	17.06	38.12	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	12.53	28	0.44		
Within Subjects	28.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	6.66	1	6.66	8.86	0.00
'A & B' Interaction	0.26	1	0.26	0.35	0.55
'B' x Subj. Within Groups	21.06	28	0.75		

TABLE 5

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Beginning Sound

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	28.00	29			
'A' Main Effects	9.60	1	9.60	14.60	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	18.40	28	0.65		
Within Subjects	32.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	0.26	1	0.26	0.23	0.63
'A & B' Interaction	0.00	1	0.00	0.00	0.99
'B' x Subject Within Groups	31.73	28	1.13		

TABLE 6

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Rhyme

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	38.93	29			
'A' Main Effects	26.66	1	26.66	60.87	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	12.26	28	0.43		
Within Subjects	20.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	1.06	1	1.06	1.60	0.21
'A & B' Interaction	0.26	1	0.26	0.40	0.53
'B' x Subject Within Groups	18.66	28	0.66		

TABLE 7

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Makes Sense

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	39.73	29			
'A' Main Effects	21.60	1	21.60	33.35	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	18.13	28	0.64		
Within Subjects	20.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	6.66	1	6.66	14.00	0.00
'A & B' Interaction	0.0	1	0.0	0.0	1.00
'B' x Subject Within Groups	13.33	28	0.47		

TABLE 8

Analysis of [illegible] for Differences in Grade One High[illegible]eaders' Understanding [illegible]erm Print

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	27.73	29			
'A' Main Effects	4.26	1	4.26	5.09	0.03
Subjects Within Groups	23.46	28	0.83		
Within Subjects	32.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	13.06	1	13.06	19.60	0.00
'A & B' Interaction	0.26	1	0.26	0.40	0.53
'B' x Subject Within Groups	18.66	28	0.66		

TABLE 9

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Trace

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	25.33	29			
'A' Main Effects	2.40	1	2.40	2.93	0.09
Subjects Within Groups	22.93	28	0.81		
Within Subjects	8.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	0.0	1	0.0	0.0	1.00
'A & B' Interaction	0.00	1	0.00	0.00	0.98
'B' x Subject Within Groups	8.00	28	0.28		

TABLE 10

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Capital Letter

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	26.73	29			
'A' Main Effects	8.06	1	8.06	12.10	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	18.66	28	0.66		
Within Subjects	14.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	0.06	1	0.06	0.13	0.71
'A & B' Interaction	0.67	1	0.06	0.13	0.71
'B' x Subject Within Groups	13.86	28	0.49		

TABLE 11

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Period

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	39.73	29			
'A' Main Effects	13.06	1	13.06	13.72	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	26.66	28	0.95		
Within Subjects	16.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	0.26	1	0.26	0.56	0.46
'A & B' Interaction	2.40	1	2.40	5.04	0.03
'B' x Subject Within Groups	13.33	28	0.47		

TABLE 12

Analysis of Variance for Differences in Grade One High and Low Readers' Understanding of the Term Stands For

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Subjects	20.60	29			
'A' Main Effects	5.40	1	5.40	9.94	0.00
Subjects Within Groups	15.20	28	0.54		
Within Subjects	34.00	30			
'B' Main Effects	19.26	1	19.26	57.80	0.00
'A & B' Interaction	5.40	1	5.40	16.20	0.00
'B' x Subject Within Groups	9.33	28	0.33		

APPENDIX E

CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS IN THE VERBAL ASSESSMENT TASK

APPENDIX E

Responses to:

(a) What does word mean to

(b) What are words used for?

(c) Can you show/tell me a word?

Pupil Number		Response
02(2)	(a)	a kind of group of some letters ... a kind of ... string of letters, to make sentences and stories.
	(b)	(answered in 'a').
	(c)	apostrophe', you don't know what apostrophe' means? It's a kind of symbol ... what you put in words.
08(1)	(a)	letters
	(b)	to write
	(c)	cat
14(2)	(a)	something you read, you say something.
	(b)	in stories
	(c)	"horse", "love"

Pupil Number		Response
13(1)	(b)	people write it to you, like I write a letter to myself
	(c)	(answered in (a))
20(1)	(a)	no response
	(b)	no response
	(c)	love, "a", "b"
25(1)	(a)	no response
	(b)	for names
	(c)	I forget

Responses to:

(a) What does begin mean to you?

(b) What's your favourite game? How do you begin it? Is that the very beginning?

(c) Can you begin something for me? (Option).

Pupil Number		Response
16(1)	(a)	begin at the start
	(b)	"Strawberry shortcake" ... there's this spinner ... strawberry short cake doll ... thing ... and a round at the top ... if you spin it ... it goes on red -- by spinning
	(c)	(Counts 1-10) one
25(1)	(a)	you begin something to do
	(b)	I don't know ... I play in recess ... I don't know
	(c)	no response
24(2)	(a)	it means you're done with a book
	(b)	Atari -- video game -- these things have little white guys, when you get hit ... your other man comes on eh? ... and over on the side .... you sees all you men eh?

... continued

Pupil Number		Response
		and ... and you try to get all the action. ... I know something else ... you can get free men when you gets 15 ... yeah
	(c)	(counts 1-10) one
23(2)	(a)	you can begin a story ... at first ... She (teacher) starts the first word then she reads the story
	(b)	Pac Man -- you give the cards and ... the winner gets most of the cards ... you give the cards ... that's the beginning
	(c)	no response
06(1)	(a)	you do it again ... like when you're writing ... and ... and ... you stop ... then ... then you do it again ... that's the beginning
	(b)	"Heads up 7-up ... the teacher calls all these people ... and they ... they go to the front ... then they put their heads down ... and someone ... touches ... and if he knows who it is ... he gets to say ... "Heads

... continued

Pupil Number		Response
06(1)		up 7-up ... and and if he says ... Heads up 7-up ... all the the time ... he wins ... when the teacher calls the the kids.
13(1)	(a)	... like when you begin to read a book
	(b)	"Snakes and Ladders" ... you've got all these ladders on a board and ... you go up ... and ... you may fall -- first you gotta take your man
	(c)	no response

Responses to:

(a) What does letter mean to you? Is there something else that letter can mean?

(b) Where would you use letters?

(c) Can you tell me a letter, show me a letter?

Pupil Number	Response
17(1)	(a) You get it from Santa or Grandma
	(b) My grandma sense me letters and I send her letters. She's in Ontario. -- like A, B, C's -- alphabet. -- you have "letters" in your report card.
	(c) B
10(1)	(a) a number that you write down when you're printing.
	(b) no response
	(c) "y"
11(1)	(a) "a" & "b" are letters
	(b) you use letters for words -- like the mail
	(c) (answered in (a))
13(1)	(a) you use it to write words -- like "a", "b", "c"

... continued

Pupil Number		Response
18(1)	(a)	the alphabet
	(b)	to learn letters
	(c)	"q", "a"
13(1)	(a)	you write a word with a pencil ... it's got letters in them.
	(b)	for talking ... writing
	(c)	"compound" is a word
21(1)	(a)	something that you read
	(b)	for sentence
	(c)	... points to "H", "g" & "horse"

Responses to:

(a) What does name mean to you?

(b) When would you use a name?

(c) Can you tell me a name?

Pupil Number		Response
12(2)	(a)	"like 'what's your name?'"
	(b)	so somebody probably call you 'hey kid' if you don't have a name
	(c)	Jason
02(2)	(a)	a word that you have for yourself -- to make people understand you better
	(b)	--
	(c)	Mark
28(1)	(a)	like your name ... so someone can call you
	(b)	you write your name
	(c)	Melanie
25(1)	(a)	"thum-body's" name
	(b)	when you call thum-body
	(c)	Karen

... continued

Pupil Number		Response
24(2)	(a)	when teacher asks you to tell something
	(b)	(no response)
	(c)	Jamie
08(1)	(a)	my name
	(b)	everytime -- all the time to call
	(c)	Lou

Response to:

(a) What does make sense mean to you?

(b) Why is it important to make sense?

What happens when you don't make sense out of something?

(c) Tell me something that makes sense.

Tell me something that doesn't make sense.

Pupil Number	Response
12(2)	(a) something that's real
	(b) so people will understand
	(c) Miss Willard is here. (The room where I conducted the interview was in Miss Willard's office).
02(2)	(a) if you want to make a word sound right ... then you ...
	(b) so it sounds right
	(b) it doesn't sound ... I forget
	(c) let's say that when something ... "Jack can jump" that makes sense
05(1)	(a) something that's true
	(b) 'cause then it won't be real
	(c) I like puppies
15(1)	(a) something real
	(b) if you don't make sense ... people won't understand you

... continued

Pupil Number	Response
03(2)	(a) make sense means its true
	(b) you can get mixed up ...if you don't make sense
	(c) "Jan is a boy". She's supposed to be a girl.

Responses to:

(a) What does beginning sound mean to you?

(b) What would you do with a beginning sound?

Why would you study a beginning sound? How can they help you in Reading?

(c) What is the beginning sound in your name?

Pupil Number	Response
06(1)	(a) the front of the word
	(b) so you can read the words ... because if you don't know the ... sounds ... you can't read
	(c) "J"
15(1)	(a) like "m-m-m is the beginning sound in MOKEY --- /K/ is the beginning sound in Kimberly
	(b)$_2$ so you'll know how to read ... how to read the sounds
	(c) (answered in (a))
23(2)	(a) you can begin a name
	(b)$_1$ no response
	(b)$_2$ so you can read a book ... I don't know
	(c) /N/

... continued

Pupil Number	Response
29(2)	(a) no response
	(b) I don't know
	(c) "a"
30(2)	(a) used for letters
	(b) I don't know
	(c) "a"
08(1)	(a) no ... I don't know
	(b) nursery rhyme
	(b) no response
	(c) /a/

Responses to:

(a) What does print mean to you?

(b) When would you print?

(c) Can you print something for me?

Pupil Number	Response
10	(a) to write it (b) you can print "Joe is a" (c) (Prints "LOVE"
21	(a) to print something (b) you write something (c) (Prints "Andrea"
01(1)	(a) like printing a letter (b) Printing time ... she's story word ... and you have to print it and ... you have to choose the right stories to copy ... it's easy (c) (Prints "I love you")
22(2)	(a) to print a word (b) no response (c) (Prints "Aaron")
04(2)	(a) you write it down ... you write your A B C's in your printing book. I'm finished with my printing book.

... continued

Pupil Number	Response
(4-2)	(b) I print sentences, stories.
	(c) (Prints "I can see Mokey"
(4-3)	(a) Both letters look like this demonstrates
	(b) in the classroom you write it in your
	Printing Day book
	(c) Prints name

Responses to:

(a) What does trace mean to you?

(b) When we ... you trace something?

(c) Can yo... trace something for me?

Pupil Number	Response
14(2)	(a) When you give the kids something like paper ... to trace over something ... like you get to copy the lines over ... one the other piece of paper
	(b) in my Day book ... we trace letters dot-to-dot sometimes
	(c) (Traces jet picture)
04(2)	(a) you trace a letter ... an animal ... a word ... with another paper on it ...
	(b) ... in school ... in colouring books ... they have dot-to-dot pictures
	(c) (Traces tree)
18(1)	(a) trace around a paper
	(b) you use a ruler ... and you can trace around it ...
	(c) (Traces small booklet, traces guitar picture)
01(1)	(a) no response
	(b) in school
	(c) (Traces jet)

Responses to:

(a) What does capital letter mean to you?

(b) Where would you use a capital letter?

(c) Can you show me a capital letter?

Pupil Number		Response
29(2)	(a)	Print it big ... big letters
	(b)	in printing books
	(c)	"J", "H" (points)
	(a)	the big letter
	(b)	"R" ... a big letter ... to write words ...
	(c)	"R", "B" not "a" (points)
22(1)	(a)	the big big letter
	(b)	like that thing over there that's, that's a capital letter (points to "L")
07(2)	(a)	a big letter
	(b)	first part of a word ... name
	(c)	"B", "L" (points)
02(2)	(a)	it doesn't mean to be small ... it has be like "T" (points)
	(b)	at the front of a word ... only with ... that's at the beginning

... continued

Pupil Number	Response
26 (1)	(a) first sentence you make ... you have to have a capital letter ... in ... you don't make a small letter
	(b) in your name
	(c) "H", "J"
12 (2)	(a) no response
	(b) letter ... a big letter in your name ... the beginning of your score

Responses to:

(a) What does rhyme mean to you?

(b) Where do you hear rhymes? When do things rhyme?

(c) Can you say two things that rhyme?

Pupil Number		Response
28(1)	(a)	you can make up "rhymes" poems and stuff.
	(b)	"Mary had a little lamb"
	(c)	car, star
(2)	(a)	words can rhyme like pig, big
	(b)	in stories and poems ... they sound together ... they sound the same
12(2)	(a)	a dog is barking ... they're for jokes
	(b)	no response
	$(b)_2$	... somebody ...
	(c)	cat, fat
26(1)	(a)	nursery rhyme -- Humpty Dumpty
	(b)	no response
	(c)	cat, bat
10(1)	(a)	like you rhyme something
	(b)	in Dr. Seuss ... poems ... like ... something that ends with a T or something
	(c)	cat, hat that rhymes

... continued

Pupil Number	Response
15(1)	(a) two things said together like red, ted.
	(b) in poems ... nursery rhymes

Responses to:

(a) What does period mean to you?

(b) Where and why would you use a period?

(c) Can you show me a period?

Pupil Number	Response
06(1)(X)	(a) like a dot ... you make it at the end of a sentence
	(b) you put it at the end 'cause you're done your story
	(c) like this (makes a period)
02(2)(X)	(a) you put a period at the end of a telling sentence ... you don't put a period at the end of a asking sentence ... 'cause ... 'cause if you're asking a question ... you put a question mark
	(b) 'cause it's the end of your sentence
	(c) (makes a period)
09(1)(X)	(a) you put a period at the end of the word ... so they'll know you're done
	(b) (answered in (a))
	(c) (makes a period)

... continued

Pupil Number		Response
23(2)(X)	(a)	at the end of a sentence
	(b)	no response
	(c)	like this (makes a period)
26(1)(X)	(a)	when you finish writing a story ... you put a period
	(b)	--
	(c)	like this (makes a period)

Responses to:

(a) What does stands for mean to you?

(b) Why do you need to know that sounds stands for letters? Like /b/ stands for "b".

(c) What stands for /t/.

Pupil Number		Response
24(2)	(a)	Stand up for "O Canada"
	(b)	so you can learn
	(c)	T
28(1)	(a)	I don't know stands for
	(b)	so you can read
	(c)	t
29(2)	(a)	someone standing for something . like you stand for the bus
	(b)	I don't know
	(c)	T
07(2)	(a)	love stands for heart
	(b)	... because ... 'cause you have to know the sound of a letter . so you can read
	(c)	T

... continued

Pupil Number		Response
26(1)	(a)	like a word stands for ... c ... stands for cookies
	(b)	to read ... so you'll know the words ... the letter
	(c)	t.
16(1)	(a)	no response
	(b)	'cause it teaches you ... how to say them ... like ... like when you read
	(c)	Tom

APPENDIX F

DEFINITIONS OF FEATURES USED IN CLASSIFYING RESPONSES TO QUESTION "A" IN THE VERBAL ASSESSMENT TASK

APPENDIX F

DEFINITIONS OF FEATURES USED IN CLASSIFYING RESPONSES TO QUESTION "A" IN THE VERBAL ASSESSMENT TASK

1. Descriptive -- A feature within a response which includes details and aspects that characterize the target term.

2. Functional -- A feature incorporated in a response showing the "use of" the target term.

3. Exemplar -- A feature which includes an example of the target term.

4. Synonym -- A feature which indicates another word or expression which represents a similar meaning to that of the target term.

5. Antonym -- A feature which indicates another word or expression which represents meaning opposite to that of the target term.

6. Circular -- A feature included within the response which simply gives a meaning for the target term by repeating the term.

7. Don't know/no response -- Features which includes "I don't know", no response, incorrect responses and "I forget" answers.