

What is the relationship between strategies emergent readers say they use and the strategies they actually use when they encounter an unknown word in instructional or independent texts?

By

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August 2007

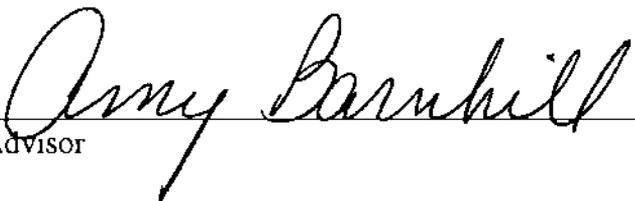
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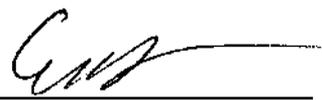
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## Abstract

The research done in this study is looking at emergent readers' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. This study was largely influenced by Catherine Compton-Lilly's study, "*Sounding out*": *A pervasive cultural model of reading*. This study brought to my attention that emergent readers tend to say that they just sound out words when the word is unknown. However, emergent readers are implementing a variety of strategies when reading. The students involved in the research all received extra reading support outside of their regular classroom. The research was conducted in the small reading groups that took place during their extra reading support time. The participating students were asked individually before reading, what reading strategies they used when they come to a word that they do not know when reading. After the students were asked this question they read a book at their independent or instructional reading level. While the student was reading aloud the researcher conducted a running record and took anecdotal notes on the students' behaviors. The running record and anecdotal notes allowed the researcher to note the strategies that the students were implementing while reading. When the student had finished reading and used a strategy different from the strategies stated prior to reading the researcher brought the student to that point in the reading and asked, what did you do here to figure out this word? The students were brought back to this point to show them that they are using different strategies when reading. The results show that students' awareness of the reading strategies they use is not equivalent to the strategies they actually use. The participants in the study used more strategies than

they said they use. All most all of the participants named one of the strategies that they use while reading during the prior to reading question.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

Can you imagine having to stop every so often when reading to think about what you were going to do next to get you through the text? Well, for an emergent reader (a reader learning how to read) that is what it's like. A proficient reader (a reader who can successfully use strategies while reading) can get through a text without having to stop and think about what to do when they come to a word or statement that doesn't make sense. We have the knowledge and strategies to make natural decisions that require automatic thinking. An emergent reader does not have the knowledge or strategies to do this. When they come to an unknown word they need to stop and think about how to figure it out.

“As elementary students progress from *learning to read to reading to learn*, it is vital that they become strategic readers,” (Jones & Leahy, 2006, p. 30). All too often young readers are not aware of the strategies that are available to use to become strategic readers. If they do not know decoding strategies, how can they apply them? They can't! These young readers need to be told, taught, and demonstrated strategies that can help them when they get stuck reading. By showing emergent readers decoding strategies through modeling and direct teaching and having them practice them; these strategies will soon become natural for these readers. They will no longer have to stop and think about what to do; the strategies will become automatic to them. This process will help emergent readers become proficient readers.

## **Significance of Problem**

The basis of this research comes from a research study done by Catherine Compton-Lilly. In her research article, “‘Sounding Out’: A Pervasive Cultural Model of Reading” (2005) she discusses how children and their parents view reading as just sounding out words. Compton-Lilly focused on sounding out as a cultural issue while doing her research in an urban first grade classroom. In her research she discovers her students were using strategies besides just “sounding out”. She explains, although children and parents state the importance of “sounding out’, it is more verbalized than actually used as a strategy. The students said they used sounding out, but her research discovered that most of the time they didn’t use sounding out; they were implementing other strategies. Students need to be aware of strategies that they are using and others that are available for use when they come to an unknown word.

“For some students, misperceptions of reading and a limited repertoire of strategies to use when reading cause difficulty,” (Optitz & Rasinski, 1998, p.47). It is important for children to be aware of decoding strategies they use because it can lead them to see that there are additional strategies that they can be using. When students are aware of decoding strategies, they can determine which ones they can use to help with the reading of the text. They become strategic and independent readers. Children need to be aware that “sounding out” is not the only strategy that is available to them and that there are many other strategies out there that can help to figure out an unknown word.

It may be that when teachers verbalize students' decoding strategies it helps those students to become aware of what they can do. In addition, it may be that when students become aware of their abilities to use strategies they will use them more often and soon enough they will do these strategies without having to think about it. Decoding strategies should be taught to students so they can be aware of all the options they have when they come to an unknown word.

This research should affect the way reading strategies are taught and communicated to students. If students are given the right tools to be successful at reading they will become successful readers. Teachers and parents need to work together to make their students and children aware of reading strategies to use. If a child's teacher is giving them many different strategies to use while reading but at home parents resort to "sound it out", the child will become confused on what to do and what is available to use when coming to an unknown word. Parents may resort to sound it out because that is how they were taught in school and they are not aware of all the different reading strategies that are available for their emergent reader to use. Teachers need to take the time to educate not only their students but the parents of their students on the importance of using different reading strategies.

I hope that my research will prove that students who are taught different strategies and how to implement them while reading are more successful when coming to an unknown word. My research will affect my teaching with future students and the students that I am working with during the research. It could also have an influence on how teachers introduce reading strategies to their students. If

there is a change in the way strategies are being taught professional development at schools will be an effective way to introduce ways to teach strategies.

### **Purpose**

At my internship for graduate school I was introduced to the concept of teaching students strategies to use while reading. Early on in my placement, before instruction began and assessments were still going on, I conducted a mini-inquiry project with a small group of graduate students from my program. We decided to take a look at what strategies students say they use when they come to an unknown word. We each asked about five to six students from our own internships and brought the data back. The data that we collected went along with what Catherine-Compton Lilly found in her research, most students responded with “I sound it out” and then went on to use different strategies while reading. It was after this mini-inquiry project that I realized why the school that I was interning at takes the time to teach students different and more successful reading strategies. From this research, I want to see if that extra instruction gives students more elaborate responses to what strategies they use besides just, “I sound it out”.

### **Rationale**

My research will start by trying to get students’ perceptions of what strategies they use to decode. I will then observe as they read to see the strategies that are actually used. Based on the data from this study I hope to be able to make recommendations for helping these particular students improve their repertoire of decoding strategies. Also, I hope to inform myself and other teachers about what the

child knows and doesn't know about decoding, therefore, impacting future instruction. When teachers are able to understand what approaches a student used when miscuing or self correcting will help the teacher to improve future instruction with that child. The teacher will know what strategies that child can use proficiently and what strategies they need more instruction on. Teachers will be able to build off the known and work into the unknown.

This research will also help the students become aware of the strategies they use. This research could aid the students in becoming more strategic, independent readers. It will also influence other educators about the importance of directly teaching decoding strategies and verbalizing the strategies they themselves use.

## Definitions of Terms

**Chunking-** looking for a smaller part(s) or known word(s) with in a word that is unknown.

**Decoding-** a definition of word recognition and analysis that indicates it (word-recognition and analysis) starts with the symbols and involves getting the intended meaning of words by identifying and analyzing symbols of familiar language (Flippo, 2003)

**Guided Reading-** flexible reading groups in which the teacher guided students through the reading of the text or story for meaningful reading experience and provides necessary support and modeling along the way. (Flippo, 2003)

**Independent Level-** the reading level at which the child is able to function independently in reading (Flippo, 2003).

**Instructional Level-** the reading level at which the child can profit from teacher-directed reading instruction (Flippo, 2003).

**Metacognitive Awareness-** an advanced cognitive process that involves the reader's awareness of his/her own comprehension (Flippo, 2003).

**Miscues-** deviations from the actual wording of the text that a child makes when reading orally (Flippo, 2003).

**One to one match-** the student's finger points to match the word in the text as they say it.

**Reading Strategies-** self-initiated strategies that help readers comprehend what they wish to read and understand (Flippo, 2003)

**Running Record-** an assessment procedure used to closely observe a student's reading behavior as the student reads a text. The teacher keeps a record of the student's miscues as the student reads orally.

**Self-correction-** the miscues that a child notices and fixes or self-corrects on his or her own (Flippo, 2003).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### “Sound it out”

Since the basis of my research was greatly influenced by Catherine Compton-Lilly’s research, *“Sounding Out”: A pervasive Cultural Model of Reading* (2005), I am going to take the reader into a deeper look at her study. As mentioned earlier, her study was done in an urban first grade classroom. She collected her data by interviewing students and their parents regarding their view of reading and the role it played in their lives. The students and families were interviewed again when the students were in fourth and fifth grade. Compton-Lilly found that her students would respond with sound it out when asked what they did when reading but she saw her students using other strategies. The parents of her students would encourage their children to sound out words when they became “stuck” while reading. She looked at “sounding out” as a cultural model. Compton-Lilly quotes Gee (1999) on the topic of cultural models, “They are simplifications about the world, simplifications that leave out many complexities” (pg.442). A cultural model is learned through out time. A culture accepts it and goes with it even if it isn’t what is being done or being used. In this study, the parents and children were saying they were sounding out but they were also using other strategies while reading but felt as though they were just sounding out the words. The participants were not aware of the other strategies that were being used.

In her study she found that when emergent readers attempt to sound out a word they often produce each individual sound in isolation and they do not blend

them together. Another interesting thing that she found in her study during a parent interview is that even when parents are telling their child to sound out a word they are also, perhaps unknowingly, guiding the child to do other strategies. During a parent interview, a parent told their child to sound out a word when they became stuck but the prompted the child to look at the picture.

Catherine Compton-Lilly (2005) made suggestions on how to help move children and their parents away from sounding out. “We must help parents to understand the limitations of “sounding out words” without degrading their genuine efforts to help their children; and we must help them to develop additional strategies for supporting their children with reading”, (p. 450). She believes that expanding parents’ understanding of reading would be a solution, but changing a cultural model doesn’t change over night. It would take years to make a difference. In her research article she mentions that since children are implementing other strategies while reading this is a start in the right direction. She also mentions that changes need to start in schools with teachers finding out what strategies work best for their students. Compton-Lilly (2005) states, “Sounding out is not being used as a technique, but an excuse when teachers do not have any other strategy up their sleeve to help the struggling reader” (p. 451). Teachers need to provide their students with a range of useful strategies.

‘Sounding out words while reading may not seem like the worst thing to do but it relies heavily on phonetic decoding when looking past other strategies that are more efficient. Compton-Lilly quotes Smith (2003), “People who ascribe to “sounding

out” as their primary reading strategy must be shown that 1.) sounding out is a handicap, not a help to reading; and 2.) there is a better alternative” (p. 450). When reading, readers are reading to make sense of the text not to read for total accuracy. Reading for total accuracy will allow the reader to get every word correct but if most of those words are being sounded out, how much meaning of the text is the reader actually making? Sounding out only reinforces the notion that reading is simply decoding. There are other strategies that good readers use that emphasize the meaning-building process of reading.

### **Thinking about our Thinking – Metacognition**

What exactly is metacognition? Alvermann, Swafford, & Montero (2004) cited *The Literacy Dictionary* (Harris & Hodges, 1995) for an exact definition. That definition reads, “metacognition is the awareness and knowledge of one’s mental processes such that one can monitor, regulate, and direct them” (pg.36). Martinez (2006), broke down metacognition to simply state that it is the monitoring and control of thought.

When students are first being introduced to strategies they need to figure out what strategies work best for them. It is important to have students verbalize the strategic work they do while reading, by asking students questions about their reading they will visualize their thinking and it will help them become strategic readers in the future, (Routman, 2000). When students are able to look back on their reading and be aware of what strategy they used they will be able to know what worked for them at that time. Students can also look back at their reading to see what strategy they tried

that may not have been successful at that time. According to Opitz and Rasinski (1998), “Becoming conscious of the strategies that they presently use in reading may, with teacher guidance, lead students to see that there are additional reading strategies they can learn,” (pg. 61).

When students are actively thinking about what strategies they are using and which strategies they can use their reading will improve. Students cannot actively think about what strategies are available for use if they are not aware of the strategies that they can use. This concept brings me to my next section, why should strategies be taught to emergent readers?

### **Why Teach Strategies?**

Good readers read accurately but not necessarily perfectly, when miscues are made they have awareness of reading strategies that allow them to detect and correct them (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). How do emergent readers get to this point? Emergent readers need to become aware of how to effectively use strategies to determine an unknown word or correct their miscue. Rasinski (2003), quotes Baker and Brown (1980), “If the child is aware of what is needed to perform effectively, then it is possible for him to take the steps to meet the demands of a learning situation more effectively,” (p.165 ). If teachers take the time to teach, model and give students a chance to use different reading strategies then they will be able to effectively use these strategies in their own reading.

Teaching strategies can be looked at in two separate ways, they can be explicitly taught or the fact that it is impossible to directly teach students strategies,

meaning they cannot be explicitly taught. According to Blair, Rupley, and Nichols (2007), effective teachers explicitly teach students what they need to know. To get students to become independent readers, teachers need to teach them the strategies to use because it doesn't occur through maturation alone. Explicit instruction includes explanations, modeling, and guided practice. "Modeling learning is an important component of explicit instruction and one that effective teachers use to help students understand reading skills and strategies and how to apply them," (Blair, Rupley & Nichols, 2007, p.435). On the other hand, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) believe that teachers cannot directly teach strategies but that they teach for strategies. This is done by teachers' use of questions and prompts that will help the student put together their own flexible system of strategies. The goal is to have children asking themselves these questions independently.

I believe that students need a combination of both types of teaching to increase strategy awareness. Students need to know what strategies are available and see them being modeled before implementing them into reading. To keep those strategies successful students need prompts and questioning. The prompts and questions will keep students aware of what they are using and what is being successful for them and give them other options to use when they are having difficulty with a text.

"We must observe children reading and note which strategies are useful and which are discarded", (Compton-Lilly, 2005, p. 451). To learn about strategies that are being used by children, teachers can take a closer look at the miscues that are

being made during oral reading. This concept takes me to my next section, the importance of miscues.

### **The Importance of Miscues**

Reading is a constant interaction between our thoughts and our language, we anticipate what will come next in the text using what we know about how language works and what we have read so far, (Davenport, 2002). Think about your own reading for a minute, do you ever read word for word exactly what the text says? Or do you sometimes read *a* for *the*? As long as the text holds the intended meaning those miscues aren't terrifying ones to make. Total accuracy during oral reading is rarely ever possible, which opens up ways into the reader's thinking and language cueing systems (Davenport, 2002). When students make miscues this means that their oral reading does not match that of the text. If students are aware of their miscues they can self correct. "Once students become aware of the kinds of errors they're making, and why they're making them, they can make conscious strides to overcome them," (Rasinski, 2003, p.165). If their miscue holds the meaning of the text it is not necessary for students to make self corrections to comprehend the text. According to Davenport (2002), if a miscue does change the meaning or disrupt the process of making sense, then it should be corrected.

To learn from a student's miscue the teacher needs to analyze their miscues. As stated by Schwartz (1997), "Our best window into the child's processing comes from analyzing errors or miscues" (pg. 43). Teachers can take running records to record the oral reading of a text done by a student. During a running record the

teacher is sitting by the student and watching the student read as they mark down the child's oral reading. By observing the child the teacher can become aware of the strategies that the student is implementing or trying to implement. Once the running record is completed the running record is analyzed by the teacher. The teacher looks at the student's miscues and self corrections to determine which of three cues the child used or neglected. The three cueing systems consist of analyzing the meaning, structure, and visual (graphophonic) cues that the child used while making the miscue or self correction. A miscue that holds meaning is a miscue that is made by the student that holds the meaning of the sentence or passage. For example, if the student said *pony* for *horse*. A student who uses the structure cue for a miscue is when the miscue holds the structure of the sentence or passage, for example saying *cried* instead of *called*. For a student to use the visual or graphophonic cue the student's miscue would look similar to the word in the text. For example, if the student said horse for house.

The miscues and self corrections that students make while reading help teachers guide their teaching to meet the needs of their students. Through teacher feedback, teachers should instruct emergent readers in how to use the meaning, structure, and visual cueing systems to help support their reading, (McKenna & Picard, 2006).

### **Strategies**

There are a few different strategies that can be used while reading. The strategies that will be discussed are searching, self-monitoring, and cross-checking.

These are the main strategies used by readers when reading. According to Schwartz (1997), searching strategies enable the reader to gather cues for an initial attempt to read a text, make multiple attempts at difficult words, and self correct some miscues. When stuck at an unknown word the reader will use clues around that word to help them figure it out. They may use the content of the sentence to solve the unknown word. Self-monitoring strategies enable the reader to evaluate his/her attempts and decide if further searching is needed. When self-monitoring the reader will ask themselves, did that make sense? When monitoring the reader may reread to help them determine if his/her attempt did in fact make sense. Self-corrections are observable behaviors displayed by the reader that demonstrates that the reader had engaged in monitoring and searching strategies (Schwartz, 1997). “The process of checking, searching, and self-correcting builds the reader’s network of strategies,” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 153). Cross-checking is when a reader begins bringing together sources of information by checking one kind of information against another.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **Objectives**

The objective of my research is to see if the teaching of decoding strategies affects students' metacognitive awareness of the strategies that they actually use. I want to know if students actually use the strategies they say they use or if they use different ones. By being aware of strategies students will be able to know what to do when coming to an unknown word while reading.

### **Participants**

The students that participated in this research attended a suburban school in a midsize city in upstate New York. The participants all received extra reading support outside the classroom. The extra reading support was conducted Monday through Thursday for a half an hour each meeting and was done in the morning. There are six students that were a part of this study. There are five boys and one girl who are all in first grade. Their ages ranged from 6-7 years. All of the participants are of a Caucasian background.

### **Measures**

#### **Text**

During the study, the researcher asked the students to read text at their independent or instructional level. An independent level text is read at or above 95% word recognition accuracy. An instructional level text is read by a student at 90-94% word recognition accuracy. The accuracy rate on a running record is calculated by subtracting the number of miscues by the total number of running words (RW) then

dividing the difference by the number of total running words (RW-total # of Miscues / RW). I chose the texts that were used in the research from the selection at my internship. The books I chose from are leveled by the Fountas and Pinnell system using alphabetical levels. The levels that the students read at were determined by Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and continuous work with these students. Most of the books used were by Rigby Publisher Company.

The reading of the text was originally going to be done on a previous read, meaning using a text that was read at the previous meeting time. After getting into the research I decided to do my research on the first read of a text. I changed my procedure because the students were scoring at an independent level on their running records which didn't allow for many miscues. Without miscues the students were not using their strategies because they did not come across many unknown words.

### **Running Records and Anecdotal Notes**

The students' progress will be assessed using daily running records. I will also be using anecdotal notes taken during the student's oral reading. In this setting with these students this way of measuring was valid and reliable. The face validity of running records is quite high since in running records the researcher is simply recording the miscues made by the student while reading. This is exactly what this study is trying to measure – what types of miscues a student makes and what strategies did he/she use to attempt to decode those words. Running records will give the researcher that information. Since the running records were done by only me, at the same time, in the same setting during administration the results were reliable.

Anecdotal notes also recorded strategies that the students used. The notes helped to increase the validity of the running records as the researcher match the running record with the anecdotal notes to determine whether these two assessments were recording the same type of information. The prior to reading and post reading questions that were asked were also valid questions because they were straightforward and consistent for all of the participants. There were however external factors that affected my research such as tiredness of the participants and their emotional state which changes daily.

### **Analysis of Running Records**

During the process of looking at the strategies used by the students the researcher analyzed their Running Records to get a better look at how the students approached strategy use. The three cueing system that was discussed in the section *The Importance of Miscues* is used to analyze miscues and self corrections. To analyze the strategies used, the researcher looked at miscues, self-corrections, and other markings made on the Running Record. An example of an additional marking would be when a student re-reads, the administrator of the Running Record can either underline the words re-read or by draw an arrow back to where the student re-read. An additional marking like a re-read would not be analyzed using the three cues. The miscues on the Running Records guided the researcher to see what strategies the students attempted to use. The self-corrections allowed the researcher to see when the students were successful with their strategy use. When analyzing a self correction on a running record the administrator, analyzes the miscue made before the self

correction was said along with the self correction. For this study, this helped show the researcher the strategy used by the student when going from the miscue to the self correction.

## **Procedures**

First, I asked students the pre-reading questions. This was done after I conducted a new book orientation with the text that the students were reading. A new book orientation includes an introduction of the story line, a picture walk, and picking out words that may be unknown to some of the students. Then I had the student read the text while conducting a running record on his/her reading. The running record was taken on at least one hundred words. A running record calculation does not have to be done on an entire text. Using one hundred words is a valid way of deciding the level of that text for a student. Clay (2005) mentions selecting a text or passage with 100-200 words to get an accurate read on the child. At times I went over the one hundredth word in the text on the running record. The participant continued to read the story to the end but I did not conduct a running record or anecdotal notes on the entire story. The students continued to read the story for practice reading, to work on their strategy use, and comprehension skills. After the participant had completed the text I asked the post reading questions if applicable. The post reading questions were asked to students who used different strategies than stated not all students fell into this category.

The plan of this study was based upon triangulation of the data. I used three different forms of data collection to guide my study and results. These three forms

included reviewing literature of familiar studies and topics relating to my study, conducting running records, and writing anecdotal notes while observing the participant read orally.

### **Instructions**

Before the participants read the text I asked them the pre-reading questions. These questions consisted of possibly two questions depending on the students' initial response. The first question asked was "What strategies do you use when reading; when you come to a word you do not know?" If the participant did not give me a response or asked me to clarify I followed up with, "When reading and you come to a word you do not know how do you figure it out, what do you do?" If the participant responded to the first question with at least one strategy I did not follow up with the second question. When the students responded with strategies I followed up with, "Is that all?"

Once the participant had completed the text I used post-reading questions if they used a strategy while reading that they did not say. The post reading questions may have differed with each student depending on the strategies they implemented while reading, but they followed the same format. I called the participant back to the part in the text where they successfully used a strategy that they did not mention in the response to the pre-reading question. Once there I said to the student, "Before reading you told me that you (insert their response) but here you didn't use that you (insert strategy used)." If the student had responded to the pre-reading question with sounding out and they attempted it while reading and it failed I brought the student to

that word and said. “Here you tried to sound out the word (insert word) it didn’t work, what could you have done to help figure out that word?” If the student didn’t respond to this question I set in front of them a page with a list of the different strategies they could have used. If the student still didn’t respond I would say, “How about this one (while pointing to a strategy on the list)?”

### **Data Analysis**

The data in this research study was analyzed in a qualitative way instead of quantitatively. If I used quantitative assessments I would have used assessments that focused on the number of correct versus incorrect answers. My study was formatted to qualitatively look at the assessment data. Qualitative assessment focuses on the quality of the response or strategies used by the participant. To analyze my data I carefully studied the running records to determine what strategies I saw the participant implement while reading. The anecdotal notes played a large role in looking at the data because it allowed me to note what the child was physically doing during the running records. I also looked closely at the responses given to the questions that were asked to the student. Their responses to the first question helped me determine if the teaching of reading strategies gave students an awareness of the reading strategies that are available to use when reading. I based my study on a review of the literature on this topic that related to my research. The literature supported my use of assessments such as running records and miscue analysis as well as the types of strategies good readers use to decode text.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

When the six first grade students were asked what reading strategies they use when reading, an array of answers were given. Three students responded with sounding out. One student responded with using re-reading. The response of two students were that they skip the word and then go back to fill it in. One student said that they use picture cues to help them figure out an unknown word. One student responded with using the first letter of the unknown word. One student said that they look for smaller words with in a bigger word. One student response was that they just skip the word.

When the researcher observed the students reading to find out what was actually used the students' use of strategies was much larger than their response. The student strategy usage was observed over 3-5 running records. The students who were observed used more than one strategy when reading. Three students stretched unknown words, used picture cues, used the first letter of an unknown word, and skipped the unknown word and went back to fill it in. All six students re-read and used multiple attempts when trying to decode an unknown word. One student used chunking. One student appealed for help when coming to an unknown word.

After the first running record done on Student 1 the researcher called the student back to three of the places that the students used different strategies than what was stated prior to reading. The next time the researcher asked the student what strategies he/she uses when coming to an unknown word the student responded the same as before, with sound it out. Only students 1 and 2 were called back to a point

were they used a strategy different from what was said. Students 1 and 2 were the only students chosen to be taken back to a point in their reading for a couple of different reasons. Both of these students responded with only one strategy when asked the prior to reading question. It was felt by the researcher that these two students would benefit the most from being called back to a point in their reading where a different strategy was used. Students 4 and 5 were not called back to a point in reading because they were aware of many strategies that can be used when reading. Student 3 was not called back because he/she does not like to read for a long amount of time and by the end of the running record this student could not have handled more questions. Student 6 was not called back into the text to show where he/she used strategies different from what was said because this student is beginning to see him/herself as a reader. The researcher did not want to jeopardize the view that the reader has of him/herself.

There was not much of a change with either of the students after being brought back to a point in the reading where they used a different strategy than what was stated. See Diagram 1 for further clarification.

#### **A closer look at the students.....**

Student 6 is a student who was dropped from getting extra reading support because he/she made so many gains through out the year. When asked what strategies he/she used when coming to an unknown word the response was “I sound it out but it never happens”. This student meant that if he/she does come to an unknown word he/she sounds it out but this student feels that he/she never comes to a

word that it unknown. This statement shows that this student is beginning to look at him/herself as a reader. Student 6 is no longer seen as an emergent reader, when reading he/she uses strategies independently and they are mostly done in the head or with a soft whisper. These are signs that this student is beginning to show signs of becoming a more mature reader. When reading, Student 6 used three different strategies; re-reading, skip and go back, and multiple attempts. Stretching the word out was not one of the strategies used. The texts that were used with Student 6 were at his/her independent level. When Student 6 did come to an unknown word he/she would pause and then attempt different strategies until he/she felt comfortable with his/her word choice to move on.

While conducting the research the researcher noticed that Student 4 and Student 5 had very detailed responses when asked the question what strategies they use when coming to an unknown word. Student 4 responded with skip and go back, using picture cues, and to not just stare at the word or sound it out. Student 4 used all of the strategies that he/she stated plus two others; re-reading and making multiple attempts. Student 5 responded with skip and go back, finding a smaller word within in a bigger word (chunking), and using the first letter of a word. Student 5 used all of the strategies that he/she stated plus two other strategies; stretching out words and re-reading. Both of these students had much more detailed responses than the other students involved in the research. These two students also came from the same classroom. The researcher asked the students how they knew all of these strategies

and they both replied with their teacher taught them what to do when coming to an unknown word when reading.

Student 1 responded with sound it out when asked the prior to reading question. This student used stretching as a strategy but also used four other strategies; re-reading, picture cues, multiple attempts, and using the first letter of the word. When the researcher called this student back to the text to show the student the different strategies that he/she was using it didn't make a change in the response when asked what strategies are used when coming to an unknown word at a different sitting.

The response student 2 gave when asked to the prior to reading question was re-reading. When conducting running records on this student re-reading was used. This student also used two other strategies; multiple attempts and making attempts by using the first letter of a word. Student 2 was called back to the text after the first running record to show that there were more strategies used than just one. When Student 2 was asked the prior to reading question a week later the response was the same as before. Student 2 would benefit from having a constant reminder and teaching of strategies that can be used while reading as would Student 3. Student 3 responded to the prior to reading question with the response "I sound out even though it doesn't always work; I still try to sound it out." This student also said that he/she just skips the word and continues reading. When being observed while reading the student did attempt stretching but also used three other strategies; re-reading, picture

cues, and multiple attempts. Student 3 also appealed for help when coming to an unknown word. This student needed prompting to attempt strategies, at times.

**Table 1**

Student	Stretching out words (using letter sounds)	Re-reading	Skip and go back	Picture cues	Multiple attempts	Chunking (finding a smaller word with in a bigger word)	Using the first letter of a word	Other
1	X O	O		O	O		O	
2		X O			O		O	
3	X O	O		O	O			X O
4		O	X O	X O	O			
5	O	O	X O		O	X O	X O	
6	X	O	O		O			

X-Students said before reading

O-Students used while reading

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

As previously stated there was a difference between the strategies that students said they used compared to what they actually used while reading. There were more strategies used than the students were aware of. Calling students back to a point in the text that they used a strategy different from what was stated did not change students' responses the next time they were asked what strategies they use during reading, this was true for the two students that were called back in this research.

In this study Student 1 and 2 showed that calling students back to a point in reading where they used a strategy different from what was stated did not increase their responses when re-asked the prior to reading question at a different date. Calling the students back at two different times is not enough to make the student aware of all the strategies that he/she is using. These students would need a constant reminder/teaching of what strategies can be used when coming to an unknown word. Student 1 is using many strategies successfully he/she just isn't aware of what is being used. Student 2 is also using many strategies that are unaware to him/her.

This research shows that students are not aware of all the strategies they are using. Students who are explicitly taught strategies, like Students 4 and 5 show more metacognitive awareness of strategies than students who were taught indirectly. The students who were taught strategy use indirectly by their teacher were using different strategies successfully but were not as successful at being aware of the strategies when asked the prior to reading question.

As stated in the previous section in this study in the *Importance of Miscues*, it is very important for a teacher to analyze a running record using the three cueing system to see what the student is using or neglecting. In this study the miscues and self correction made by the students allowed the researcher to see what strategies the students were attempting to use when coming to an unknown word. This study also aligns with the research discussed previously about how to teach strategies; explicitly or indirectly. In this study, Students 4 and 5 really benefited from having strategies explicitly taught to them in their classroom. They were aware of the strategies that they were using and most importantly strategies that are available to use when coming to an unknown word. Student 4 and Student 5 may be a small population but prove that when strategies are taught students become more aware of what strategies they are using and what strategies they can use when coming to an unknown word. These two students align with the purpose of this study, they have shown that when students are explicitly taught strategies they are more aware the strategies that are available to use when coming to an unknown word. The other participants in this study were indirectly taught strategies and for the most part these students were capable of using different strategies; they just were not aware of the different strategies available for use and all of the strategies they were using. This study also correlates with the study done by Catherine Compton-Lilly (2005) it is said in her study that students were not only using the strategy they said they were using. In this research only half of the students responded with sounding out, which means we are slowly moving away from the cultural model of sounding out. The students in this

research who did attempt stretching words were not breaking each individual sound down; they were blending the sounds together. This technique of stretching the word allows students to blend the sounds together and be more successful at figuring out the unknown word. In the study by Catherine Compton-Lilly (2005) her students would break the word down by the individual sound and were not successful.

## **Conclusion**

The results shown in this study lead the way to believe that teaching strategies explicitly to emergent readers will make them aware of strategies to use when coming to an unknown word. For educators, this could mean that teaching students different strategies to use when reading could help them when coming to an unknown word. If students were taught reading strategies they would not get stuck on the word and not know what to do. Instead students could attempt different strategies or have a better idea of which strategies would be successful in a certain part of the text.

This study also shows that even though students say they only use one or two strategies they are using much more than that but just aren't aware of it.

An important strength of this study is that the participants were seen in the same setting at the same time during every meeting. The participants met with the same teacher through out the research and were asked the same questions during the research. Since the research took place in the participants' daily environment there was a sense of comfort that the participants had. This increased the reliability and validity of the study. The study did have its limitations. There were a lack of participants due to the number of students that were seen and the lack of permission

slips returned. Another limitation of the study is that the participants before the study were not all seen by the researcher for extra reading support; some of them saw a different teacher. This is looked at as a limitation because even though the researcher and the other teacher used the same lesson format different things could have been discussed during the lessons. The other teacher may not have discussed strategies with the students like the researcher did. This study also brought with it an aspect that could be a limitation or a strength. The participants were from different classrooms who all received different styles of teaching from their teachers. This aspect of the study really showed during the responses given by the participants. For example Students 4 and 5 who are from the same classroom had very descriptive responses and were explicitly taught reading strategies by their classroom teacher.

This research study could be used to spark more research on this topic in the future. A researcher could compare the difference of a classroom of students who get explicit strategy instruction to a classroom that does not. A study could be done on the difference of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies between emergent readers and proficient readers at the lower elementary level. An interesting study could be looking at tape recording students and having them listen to their reading. While listening to their reading the students could discuss the miscues and self corrections they made. When discussing their miscues and self correction they could discuss the strategies that were used while reading the passage. By listening to their miscues and self corrections they will be able to pin point spots in their reading that

they used different strategies. This study could be guided by Yetta Goodmans look at Retrospective Miscue Analysis.

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