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Reading Ability of Third Grade Southern Dialect

Katelynn Gibson
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READING ABILITY OF THIRD GRADE SOUTHERN DIALECT

by

Katelynn Gibson

A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences

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Approved by

_____
Jennifer Salgo, Ph.D., Assistant
Professor Department of Speech
and Hearing Sciences

_____
Steven Cloud, Ph.D., Chair
Department of Speech and Hearing
Sciences

_____
David R. Davies, Ph.D., Dean
Honors College

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Abstract

Fourth grade is a critical time period because the reading style changes from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. Studies have shown that if a student does not have proficient reading skills, they will struggle throughout the rest of school and have a higher risk of high school dropout ("Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters, 2010). The Southern dialect can have an effect on reading. Goodman and Buck (1997) have stated that "the speakers of the low-status dialects of English have much higher rates of reading failure than high status dialect readers" (p. 455). This undergraduate thesis examined the reading ability of five third-grade students in the South. Students were asked to read a text of approximately 300 words, while the researcher performed a miscue analysis. The results yielded a few patterns. Some of the students had issues with the words "griped" and "banzai." The students all had trouble with words containing double consonants. Future studies on the Southern dialect and reading are warranted.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Literacy is an important skill (National Assessment Governing Board, 2008; Tannenbaum, Torgesen, and Wagner, 2006). Literacy is crucial for successful participation in our culture. It is essential for children so that they can learn and be able to grasp and use the concepts that are presented in school. Research has made speech-language pathologists aware of how closely reading is tied to speech. The ability to repeat sounds, arrange them in patterns to form nonsense words, and ultimately say words that have meaning attached to them, are all part of learning how to speak.

According to Wise et al. (2010), "oral reading fluency can be defined as translating written text into an oral output with speech and accuracy" (p. 341). Learning how to read and pronounce sounds and words does not come naturally to everyone. It involves many processes that occur simultaneously. First, sounds are attached to letters, then letters and sounds are arranged together, and lastly, words are formed and read as an entity with meaning rather than as individual sounds. Without this fundamental knowledge of these basic steps, a person would be unable to read and understand sentences.

According to Tannenbaum, Torgesen, and Wagner (2006), third grade is a transitional period for children in the school setting. Third grade is the end of the period in which children develop the preliminary skills necessary for reading. Fourth graders are expected to begin the transition from learning to read to reading to acquire knowledge (Fiester, 2010; Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne, 2010). This transformation is difficult because not only does the style of reading change but the topics which children

in the fourth grade read about are more abstract. Children read stories and learn things that are tangible at first, but as time progresses the subjects that they read about and discuss become more conceptual and theoretical. Therefore, it is imperative that during the span of third grade, children develop their vocabularies, and the ability to read accurately and fluently so that they can interpret the meaning of written text. This adjustment can be confusing and challenging.

Every country has different dialects, or a particular variety of language used by people in a certain area (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2010). Furthermore, the term dialect encompasses the grammatical, phonetic, and lexical characteristics of a variety of a language (Carver, 1987). The South is a well known region in the United States, not only for its food and cultural aspects but also for its dialect. Only in this region do the inhabitants use expressions such as "y'all." Carver (1987) stated, "The South, of course, has its own unique set of phonetic rules that affect the way its vocabulary is pronounced" (p. 106). It is this difference in pronunciation and grammar that make the area so distinct from others in the nation. Carver (1987) also noted that the people in this area seem to like to ignore the "standard" grammar rules that govern verb conjugation. This noticeable dialect has not always represented the South very well. Often, the South is perceived to consist of people who are not very educated based on the dialect that they speak (Goodman and Buck, 1997). Goodman and Buck (1997) have wondered if dialect has an effect on reading and writing abilities.

This thesis examined the literacy skills of third grade students who live in a rural setting in the Southeastern United States and speak Southern American English.

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Although the reading skills of children have been examined, few have looked closely at the reading abilities of third graders who live in the Southeastern region of the United States. A study by Jarmulowicz, Taran, and Hay (2007) examined third graders because the third grade is a vital year in reading and vocabulary development; they also suggested further research to investigate if dialect would influence the results that they found if the study were to be repeated in a different area (Jarmulowicz, Taran, & Hay, 2007).

To accomplish the goals of this study, third graders from a rural southeastern elementary school were asked to read aloud and the researcher conducted a miscue analysis (Goodman, Watson, and Burke, 2005). A miscue analysis was completed by having a student read loud a short, meaningful text between 150 to 300 words in length. During this time, the examiner listened closely and recorded any miscues made by the student (Goodman, 1969). Goodman (1969) describes a miscue as when what an individual reads (the observed response) does not match what is written in the text (the expected response). These miscues may consist of—but are not limited to—many different combinations, such as: (a) inserting a word that is not in the text, (b) substituting a word of similar meaning, or (c) omitting a word. The data collected from these samples was then compared to literature on reading and southern dialect.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literacy

Definition

The field of literacy has come to include many different terms and definitions. Experts continue to heatedly debate over what literacy actually includes. According to Roberts (1995), "Literacy is the ability to read and write" (p. 413). This is an ambiguous statement, Roberts (1995) continues, because the "Questions regarding what one reads and writes, and 'how much' ability in reading and/or writing is required in order to be considered literate, are left unanswered" (p. 413). Also, literacy is sometimes used interchangeably with the term *reading*. Borko, Davinroy, Bliem, and Cumbo (2000) used the term reading to mean "making meaning from text and all the language arts—reading, writing, listening, and speaking," which includes the ability to "make meaning from what they read and perform higher levels of comprehension such as interpretation and evaluation" (p. 274).

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) discussed yet another aspect of literacy known as emergent literacy. The term emergent literacy can be defined as the awareness and development of the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to read and write. By using this term, emergent literacy, Whitehurst and Lonigan wanted to convey that literacy and the skills required to achieve literacy are part of an ongoing process that begins before formal schooling even starts.

Development

Cassidy, Valadez, and Garrett (2010) examined the "pillars of literacy": (a)

phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary and (e) comprehension.

These pillars came about after a group, known as the National Reading Panel, was

established in response to Congress' wish in 1997 to assess the ability of reading methods

taught to children in schools. These findings impacted the next few decades of reading

strategies. The abovementioned authors closely examined the changing thought process

throughout the decades as to which pillar was the most important or essential to teaching

reading. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) was also influenced by the pillars as it

incorporated the same five essential components that came from the National Reading

Panel survey (National Assessment Governing Board, 2008, p. 5).

Each of these pillars deals with a different aspect of reading. Cassidy, Valadez,

and Garrett (2010) defined each of these in turn. Before *phonemic awareness* can be

defined, one must understand what a phoneme entails. Phonemes are the "smallest units

of sound which make up spoken language" (p. 647). The term phonemic awareness is

defined as "the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words" (p. 647).

The next pillar, *phonics*, references that each letter or group of letters in the alphabet has

a certain sound that it produces. Cassidy, Valadez, and Garrett (2010) defined fluency as

"efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning

of text" (p. 651). *Vocabulary*, another integral part of literacy, has been linked to

comprehension because without the knowledge of what a word means, it would be

impossible to understand a text. *Comprehension*, or understanding what one has read, is

the final pillar in literacy. It has been well documented in research that vocabulary

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knowledge and comprehension are closely related (National Assessment Governing Board, 2008; Tannenbaum, Torgesen, & Wagner, 2006).

According to Raban (1988), oral language development has also been cited as necessary for literacy to develop (p. 251). Although there is no direct correlation of oral language to reading, the importance of having a well developed oral language repertoire is certainly a factor.

Importance

Literacy is a worldwide skill that is deemed necessary for success (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Although there may not be a set language, the ability to read in a native language is assessed in all the developed nations around the world. The acquisition of the skills necessary to be literate commence at a very young age. The Pearson Foundation (2009) conducted a poll about the perception of early education. This poll examined the topic of early childhood literacy, which in general refers to "the pre-reading skills children under the age of 5 need to learn before they attend kindergarten" (Pearson Foundation, 2009, p. 1). In the assessment, the "pre-reading skills" examined were "alphabet and print knowledge, recognizing letter sounds, rhyming, developing a vocabulary, etc." (Pearson Foundation, 2009, p. 1).

The Pearson Foundation (2009) revealed that 95% of Americans agree that literacy is an important issue (with 74% saying it is very important) and receives too little attention. Yet, they are also unaware as of when literacy starts and how severely the lack of literacy skills by a certain age in a child's development can impact a child's future (Pearson Foundation, 2009). For instance, "seventy-three percent of Americans wrongly

believe that if children enter kindergarten unprepared, they will catch up in elementary school" ("Survey Reveals Americans Unaware", p. 1).

Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) under the U.S. Department of Education recently released data examining the fourth grade reading achievement levels in 2009. These levels are in percentages and compare each state to the overall United States. Last year, the United States had fourth graders that ranked in various levels: (a) 34% are below basic, (b) 66% are at or above basic, (c) 68% are below proficient, and (d) only 32% are at or above proficient. In comparison, Mississippi has 45% of fourth grade students below basic, 55% at or above basic, 78% below proficient, and only 22% at or above proficient (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The disheartening part is that Mississippi is not alone. Roughly half of the states lack a majority of the student population that has reached the level of basic (Fiester, 2010, p. 13).

The term "basic" refers to the following skills:

> Being able to locate relevant information, make simple inferences, and use their understanding of the text to identify details that support a given interpretation or conclusion; students should also be able to interpret the meaning of a word as it is used in the text. ("The NAEP Reading Achievement Levels by Grade," 2010, para. 4)

The description for "proficient" includes: "the ability to integrate and interpret texts and apply their understanding of the text to draw conclusions and make evaluations" ("The NAEP Reading Achievement Levels by Grade," 2010, para. 4). Lastly, the term

"advanced" is defined to include: "the ability to make complex inferences and construct and support their inferential understanding of the text; students should be able to apply their understanding of a text to make and support a judgment" ("The NAEP Reading Achievement Levels by Grade," 2010, para. 4).

Third Grade

A Critical Time for Learning

Third grade has many different skills and concepts that are taught and introduced. An article written by Rathbun and West (2004) discussed the skills that a third grader should have acquired at the end of the school year. Among the skills they list "identifying ending sounds, sight words, and words in context" (p. 17). They continue to list other skills that some children were able to perform: "mak[ing] literal inferences based on clues stated in text, us[ing] identifying clues to derive meaning in text, and demonstrate[ing] the ability to make interpretations beyond text" (p. 17).

Third grade is a time of transition because the way that material is presented in fourth grade and thereafter changes (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). The Final Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York's Council (2010) on Advancing Adolescent Literacy introduced an agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success, titled "Time to Act." The plan discussed how "literacy demands change and intensify quickly for young learners after fourth grade" (p. 10). Fiester (2010) agreed with the change in literacy style:

Up until the end of third grade, most children are *learning to read*.

Beginning in the fourth grade, however, they are *reading to learn*, using

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their skills to gain more information in subjects such as math and science, to solve problems, think critically about what they are learning, and to act upon and share that knowledge in the world around them. (p. 9)

This change comes about quickly, but the outcomes are ever lasting.

Importance of Reading Well

Third grade is such an important time for children as readers. Tannenbaum, Torgesen, and Wagner (2006) reported that "the end of third grade is widely regarded as the end point for the development of early reading skills" (p. 384). If a child is missing out on the basics, then their reading skills will not improve. Fiester (2010), states

Millions of American children reach 4th grade without learning to read proficiently. The shortfall is especially pronounced among low-income children: of the 4th graders who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test in 2009, 83% of children from low-income families –and 85% of low-income students who attend high-poverty schools—failed to reach the "proficient" level in reading. (p. 27)

 Third grade is an important time in a child's life. If they do not read well in third grade, it is a bad indicator for the future, namely in the areas of graduation and college attendance (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Education Digest (2010) summed up the importance of third grade in their article "Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters," by stating that "reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school dropout…" (p. 27). This increased rate of

high school dropout also has an effect on the economy and that nation at large. Fiester (2010) further expounds on this statement, stating, "Every student who does not complete high school costs our society an estimated $260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, and productivity" (p. 5).

Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne (2010) added that "students who are not reading at grade level by third grade begin having difficulty comprehending the written material that is a central part of the educational process in the grades that follow" (p. 1). They also reported that 75% of students that had problems with reading in the third grade will still have an issue with reading in the ninth grade, which indicates how vital learning to read at the appropriate time is so that problems will not arise later. Furthermore, third graders with poor word identification skills probably will not improve by the end of eighth grade (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, & Gwynne, 2010). Problems that start in the third grade will follow a student for the rest of their educational path if not corrected.

Dialect

Definition

The United States is a large place and as the country developed, people spread across the nation away from the metropolitan areas on the east coast in different waves (Carver, 1987). The most prominent wave was the westward expansion movement. Carver (1987) stated that immigrants settled in areas that had roughly the same climate as their native homeland. Each of these immigrants brought their dialect and language to the area. These dialects define each region as we know them today and give them the unique characteristics for which they have become known.

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Before dialect can even be discussed, one must understand the term "register".

According to Purnell, Raimy, and Salmons (2009), register means "language used in a

particular situation for a particular purpose and often associated with formality" (p. 333).

Dialect is a reflection of the region from which one originates, the history behind the

family and the region in which one grew up, how one is perceived from an educational

standpoint, and social perceptions (Purnell, Raimy, & Salmons, 2009).

The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2010) defined dialect in the following

way:

> *Dialect*, variety of a language used by a group of speakers within a
>
> particular speech community; every individual speaks a variety of his
>
> language, termed an idiolect. *Dialects* are groups of idiolects with a
>
> common core of similarities in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.
>
> ("Dialect section")

Southern Dialect

The Southern dialect is the most studied regional dialect of the United States

(Kretzschmar, 2003). This dialect has been studied as far back as 1896 by a man named

Hempl, followed by a man identified as Hans Kurath, and lastly a more recent scholar,

William Labov, all of whom have been considered to be notable researchers in the field

of dialects (Kretzschmar, 2003). Wolfram (2003) explained what present-day states are

included in the southern region:

> Geographically, the South includes from 11 to 17 states, including the
>
> confederate states of the "Old South"—Virginia, North Carolina, South

Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana,

Arkansas, and Texas—as well as parts of Kentucky, West Virginia,

Oklahoma, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. (p. 123)

Different authors include some of these states in other regions in the United States.

Often, it has been said among the general public that there is something different about the way that Southerners speak. Jacewicz, Fox, and Salmons (2006) gave some proof to this statement. In the article "Vowel Duration in Three American English Dialects," the authors stated that other studies have "suggest[ed] a durational difference between Northern and Southern varieties of English, usually supporting the view that Southern speech is slower" (p. 369). Carver (1987) wrote in his book, *American Regional Dialects*, that the South is predominantly a rural area, and because of this, it is less prone to rapid change. This means that the dialects already present are less likely to change and are more likely to be highly concentrated in some areas compared to others. Carver (1987) also noted that the influence of African American English must be considered when looking at Southern speech.

Relation to Reading

Goodman and Buck (1997) alluded to the "indisputable fact that speakers of low-status dialects of English have much higher rates of reading failure than high status dialect readers" (p. 455). This statement was followed with, "Analyses of contrasts between high and low status dialects suggest that the problem in reading acquisition *could* be due to mismatches between the dialect of the learner and that of the writer" (p. 455). Carver (1987) also noted that "the South, of course, has its own unique set of

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phonetic rules that affect the way its vocabulary is pronounced" (p. 106). This unique

pronunciation could affect the way a child in the South reads.

Conclusion

Third grade may not be the year that the style of reading changes, but if the

necessary skills are not present at this level the effects follow children through the rest of

their lives. Good reading skills are important at every level and it is important that

educators and citizens alike realize the impact that these skills have on a child's life. As

previously mentioned, dialect may also influence how a child reads. Through this

research, the investigator hoped to gain some insight into the reading abilities of third

graders in a rural setting in the south. Research in this area is critical given the

importance of reading and the knowledge that Mississippi is second to last in the nation

in the overall reading scores for fourth graders.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview and Predictions

This research project hopes to gain some insight into the world of education as it pertains to reading. The researcher examined the reading skills of third grade students at an elementary school in a rural area of Southeastern Mississippi. As the research has shown, fourth grade is a time of great change for students (Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne, 2010). During this time, the reading style changes from *learning to read* to *reading to learn* (Fiester, 2010). Due to this change occurring in fourth grade, third grade is a critical period for acquiring necessary literacy skills.

The dialect in the South is different than most other dialects in the United States in that sometimes the spoken pronunciation is different than the written pronunciation (Carver, 1987). The participants in this study were native to a rural area of Southeastern Mississippi, and thus speakers of a rural Southern dialect. This project described the reading abilities of third grade rural dialect speakers, in terms of their miscues. The data collected from these samples was then compared to literature about reading and southern dialect.

Participants

The participants in this research project consisted of five third graders at a rural, public elementary school. Various schools, along with the necessary school administration, were contacted once Institutional Review Board approval was given to the researcher. Rural schools were contacted because this study sought to investigate the literacy ability of Southern dialect speakers; participants were selected from the first

school that responded. The third grade students were given a letter to take home to their parents or legal guardians asking for their permission to allow their child's participation in the research project along with a permission form for the student to sign consenting to participate in the study. A survey about the student's reading habits was also included for parents of participating students to complete. The first five students who gave their assent to participate in this research project and returned their parental consent forms were selected as participants. The scope of the study was limited to five students because the scope of this project and time constraints. It was difficult to coordinate when the researcher could visit the school since school is not in session year round. Also, this study incorporated a qualitative methodology and five participants is a sufficient number in order to yield patterns of behavior. The selected participants met the following criteria:

1. The individual was a third grade student in regular education.
2. The individual was native to a Southeastern rural area of the United States.
3. The individual was willing to participate in the study.

The survey that was attached to the consent forms asked general questions about the student's reading abilities and the parent's involvement with reading at home. The questionnaire was not pilot tested before it was distributed because the survey was intended to help the researcher get an informed view of the student's reading habits and the parent's view on reading that served as secondary data to the primary miscue analysis data.

Instruments

The students that choose to participate were asked to read a text aloud while the researcher performed a miscue analysis. The miscue analysis consisted of a text of roughly 150 to 300 words in length. The books were chosen from the de Grummond Children's library at the University of Southern Mississippi based upon their reading levels. Keeping with miscue analysis procedures (Goodman, 1996), the students were offered a choice between two different books at a reading level. The researcher started with texts that were one reading level above the student's grade level (i.e. a fourth grade reading level) in order to challenge the student enough to yield a significant number of miscues to examine. If the text was too challenging for the student (i.e., they were unable to read the text independently), then the student was given a different text to read that was a grade level lower. If the text was too simple for the student (i.e., there were barely any miscues made), then the student was given a different text to read that was a grade level higher. Any miscues made can be compared to one another because they are providing insight into the student's reading ability when faced with a challenging text. The texts could not be standardized because of the varying reading levels that students possess. The student read the text aloud and the researcher marked any miscues that the student made on a text guide (see Appendix A). Gunther (n.d.) stated that, "a miscue is any unexpected calling of a word or section of text" ("What is a Miscue?"). The researcher subsequently reviewed these text guides and analyzed them regarding type of miscues, number of miscues, etc. The researcher noted the salient findings and interpreted them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methodology employed for this research project was presented. The participants were also described. The administered survey questions were briefly discussed and a copy can be seen in Appendix A. Finally, the instruments that will be used during the data collection were also presented, along with a brief description of the process to analyze the data. The results will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results of the study and their implications. The participants included five third grade students from a rural elementary school in the South. The students were asked to read a short excerpt from a children's book, and a miscue analysis was performed. The parents of the students were also asked to fill out a survey with several questions pertaining to reading and the student's reading habits (see Appendix B). The students' results are discussed in terms of their fluency while reading, their low quality and high quality miscues, dialectical differences, and the survey answers given by their parents.

Fluency

Definition and Affect on Reading

Cassidy, Valadez, and Garrett (2010) defined reading fluency as "efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text" (p. 651). According to Wise et al. (2010), fluency has been defined as having three parts: accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Accuracy means that the word is identified correctly. Automaticity is "the immediate recognition of words that bypass the decoding process" (Wise et al., 2010, p. 341). Prosody entails the correct expression (intonation, timing, stress, etc.) while reading the text out loud. Of these three parts, accuracy and automaticity are most important for oral reading skills because they can indicate a student's reading comprehension skills.

Participants' Fluency

There was a wide variety of reading abilities in the participants of this study. Student A's reading prosody was very choppy with lots of pauses in between words in the beginning; her fluency improved as the text continued. Based on the student's intonation, it seemed as though each word was read as an individual part rather than as words in a complete sentence or thought. Student B read very quickly, occasionally stumbling over words in haste, but overall the student's reading was very fluid. Student C maintained an even pace while reading. Student C struggled to decode some words but read several other parts of the text fluently. Student C also produced appropriate rising and falling intonation in some of her reading which indicated comprehension of the sentence that was being read. Student D read the text in a monotone voice with very little intonation. Student D did not take inappropriately long pauses between words but struggled with the pronunciation of a lot of the words. Often, he read through the punctuation that was used to mark the ending of a sentence. Student E's reading was similar to Student B but she struggled with more words than did Student B. Student E did indicate that she was reading for meaning by reading with an appropriately animated voice.

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Miscues

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Definition

As previously mentioned, Gunther (n.d.) stated that, "a miscue is any unexpected calling of a word or section of text." Goodman (1996) explained that there are also further sub-categories of a miscue: low quality miscues and high quality miscues. Low

quality miscues are semantically unacceptable. An example of a low quality miscue would be "can" for "car." A high quality miscue is semantically acceptable. An example of this would be "bunny" for "rabbit." High quality miscues are typically not corrected; if they are, then it means that the reader is less efficient. Low quality miscues are often corrected immediately and therefore become partial miscues; if the readers do not correct them, then it means that they are less efficient readers. The number of each type of miscue and corrections made by the participants can be seen in Figure 1.
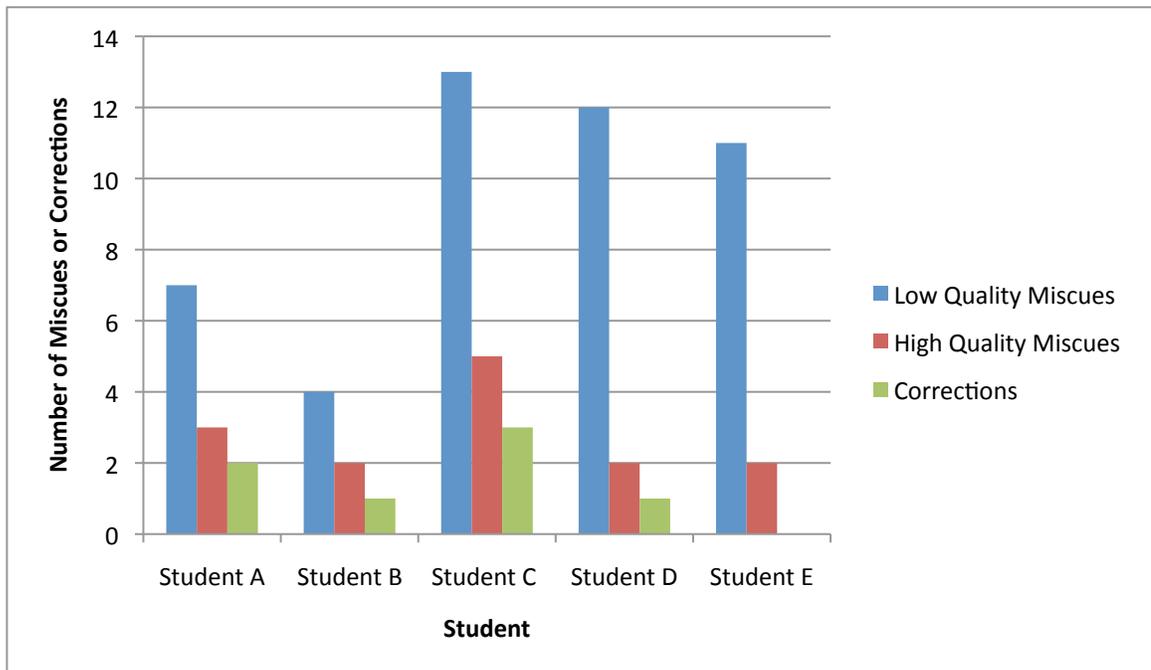

Figure 1: Number of Miscues and Corrections Made by Participants

Participants' Low Quality Miscues

Student A had ten miscues during the reading of *Jester in the Backcourt.* Of those miscues, seven were low quality miscues. Student A said "shrek" for "shriek," "some"

for "Sam" two times, "let's" for "let," "gripped" for "griped," "apporched" for "approached," and "in" for "on". All of these changed the meaning of the words; some of them were simple mispronunciations, such as "shrek" for "shriek," while others added on a meaning, as in "let's" for "let".

Student B had six overall miscues during the reading of *Jester in the Backcourt*; of those, four were low quality miscues. Student B said "streak" for "shriek," "some" for "Sam," "on" for "in," and "gripped" for "griped." The low quality miscues did not make sense in the context of the sentence and demonstrated less efficient use of reading strategies.

Student C produced 18 miscues during her reading of *Jester in the Backcourt.* Of those miscues, thirteen were low quality miscues. The miscues were: "thumming" for "thumping," "Allen" for "Alden," "Wilkeson" for "Wilkerson," "flunk" for "flung," "warn" for "war," "teams" for "teammates," "rings" for "rigging," "McCally" for "McCaskill," "suck" for "snuck," "gripped" for "griped," "shammed" for "shimmed," "short" for "shorts," and "and" for "picked it." The miscue "and" for "picked it" was quite different from the other low quality miscues. The student was nearing the end of the text and suddenly skipped over the two words "picked it" and decided to substitute in "and." The sentence had a lot of commas and the student must have decided that an "and" should have been placed in the sentence. It still is rather unusual that the student chose to ignore those two words because the sentence does not make sense without them.

Student D had fourteen total miscues while reading *When the Circus Came to Town*. Of these miscues, twelve were low quality miscues. The miscues were: "black"

for "back," "last" for "least," "that" for "that's," "left" for "felt," "backlands" for "badlands," "to" for "and," "is" for "I," "itch" for "ache," "can't" for "couldn't," "hoping" for "hopping," "the" for "a," and "the" for "and." The interchanging of the "the" for "a" and "a" for "the" happened repeatedly.

Student E had thirteen miscues overall while reading from *Duke Ellington.* Of the thirteen miscues, eleven were low quality miscues. The miscues were: "strid" for "stride," "G." for "J." (this miscue was repeated one time), "to play" for "in," "notations" for "notions," "empty" for "umpy," "dumb" for "dump," "now here" for "nowhere," "rosing" for "rousing," "rhyme" for "rhythm," "thinking" for "tinkling," "/dʒɔrdz/" for "chords," and "peer lies" for "pearlies." These miscues do not make sense in the context of the sentence. These miscues and their prevalence indicate that this reader was not reading for meaning or making efficient use of a variety of reading strategies.

Participants' Self Corrections

Student A did make several corrections. Originally, student A said "this" for "his" but corrected to "his." The student also omitted "Mr." and then corrected and included "Mr." back in the sentence. Therefore, these became partial miscues.

Student B made one correction while reading the surname, "McCaskill." The student originally produced a miscue /kɪl/ instead of /məkæskəl/, but then went back and changed it by rereading the word in its entirety. It seemed as though the student was sounding it out at first and then went back and corrected the answer once it was realized that it was incorrect. This became a partial miscue in that case.

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Student C had a few self corrections. At first the student said, "shreck" but quickly changed to "shriek" after sounding it out. The student also said "then" but changed to "they." Student C said "that" for "the" at first, but changed to the correct word soon after. These corrections demonstrate that the student was reading for meaning and making effective use of reading strategies.

Student D had a very interesting correction. At the very beginning of the book the student corrected the word "least" even though that matched the text. The student first said the word and then corrected to "last." This indicates that the student was reading less effectively because the student "corrected" a word that was already correct. Student E had no corrections.

Participants' Omissions and Additions

Student A omitted the last name "Clements" in the text. The student tried to sound it out but when the attempt failed, the student moved on without fully attempting to finish the word. Student B had no omissions during the reading.

Student C had eight omissions. In the text, the following words and/or phrases were omitted completely: "as", "it", "a", "the ball", "other", and "put in the". There were also words such as "teammates" in which the whole second half of the word was omitted and the meaning was changed. The word "shorts" lost its /s/ which changed it from a noun to an adjective. The phrases "picked it," "the ball," and "put in the" were omitted completely from the reading or substituted by the word "and" as was the case with "picked it". Student C also produced two additions. The student added the words "that" and "too" to two of the sentences in the text.

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Student D had omissions such as excluding the "is" in the contraction "that's," the "s" from "gets," the "ed" from "helped," and the "s" in "comes," and excluding the following words from the text completely: "never" and "even". The student even added in a phrase of his own "my pigback"—after the text talked about piggyback rides that the father would give his child. The student also added the word "the" before the word "beyond."

Student E had omissions such as omitting the /z/ in "fingers". The student also omitted the word "ragtime" once. It may have been due to the fact that the word "rhyme" directly after the word gave the student trouble or was not recognized, so the student omitted the word entirely rather than attempt it. The student also added words, especially between "one-and-two"; the student added "/ei/" in between the "and" and the "two." This is more of a rhythm practice for music and is understandable. The student also added "that" into a sentence that was talking about baseball. This is part of an expression in the South – "That _____" - and is usually said with feeling.

Participants' High Quality Miscues

Student A had three high quality miscues: "/bænzə/" for "/bɔnzai/", "into" for "in", and "dribbling" for "dribbled." The word "banzai" is an exclamation. Student A's pronunciation of this word did not change its meaning, making this a high quality miscue. The miscue, "into" for "in," made sense in the sentence and did not really change the meaning of the word drastically. Lastly, student A produced "dribbling" for "dribbled"; in this case, the verb tense was changed. Although the grammar of the sentence did not

agree, the word still made sense in the sentence. The student did not correct the high quality miscues she made, a characteristic of an efficient reader.

Student B had two high quality miscues. One miscue involved the word "banzai". The student pronounced it many different ways throughout his reading of the text. At first, the word was pronounced correctly but in subsequent pronunciations it was pronounced as /bænzə/ and /bænzai/, rather than /bɔnzai/. The student also read "the" for "one." Although it is a different word all together, the new word did make sense in the context of the sentence; therefore, this is an example of a high quality miscue.

Student C produced five high quality miscues. Student C read "floating" for "floated," "go" for "going," "Nicky's" for "Nick's," "into" for "in," and "/bænzeɪ/ or /bæzzeɪ/" for "/bɔnzai/." The changes to the words did not affect the meaning but did change either the tense or the way it was spoken. In the case of "into" for "in," the miscue still made sense in the sentence even though it is not what the text said. "Banzai" is a word that each participant struggled with, and each student had a different way of saying it. In this case, the student alternately omitted the /n/ as in /bæzeɪ/ and the ending, changing it to /bænzeɪ/.

Student D had two high quality miscues. He said "can't" for "couldn't." This change did not alter the meaning of the sentence. He also said "a" for "the" (this was repeated again in the same sentence), which is considered to be a high quality miscue since it still does make sense in the sentence. It is simply a change in the articles used.

Student E had two high quality miscues. They were "heard" for "hear" and "he" for "his." Neither of these changed the meaning of the word. Substituting "heard" for

"hear" just changed the tense of the word, while "he" for "his" substituted a pronoun for a possessive. Substituting "heard" for "hear" is typical usage in the South. An example of this would be, "Ya'll heard that?"

Similarities and Differences across Students

Students A, B, and C all produced miscues for the words "griped" and "banzai" in the text *Jester in the Backcourt*. In addition, words with double consonants elicited miscues from all of the students. For example, "hopping" was pronounced as though it had only one /p/ (i.e. "hoping"). The word "shriek" also seemed to give Students A and B problems. Several miscues were produced for articles and prepositions.

Student C, D, and E were among the participants with the highest number of low quality miscues, as seen in Figure 1. This is interesting because Student D spends the most time each week reading outside of class, according to the parent survey. Student C's miscues and corrections are higher than any of the other participants in the study.

<center>**Dialectical Differences**</center>

Student A had four dialectical pronunciations: "Alden", "banzai", "rigging", and "whoop". The student read "Alden" as /ældɪn/. According to Carver (1987), Southern dialect speakers typically pronounce vowels in a different way. The student said "banzai" like /bænzə/ changing the two vowel sounds. This word is rather uncommon and so this miscue is unsurprising. The word "rigging" had the /ŋ/ sound at the end of the word replaced with /n/. This is a rather common occurrence in the South because the final sounds of some words, especially those that end in /ɪŋ/ often end up being converted to /ɪn/ instead (e.g. talkin', runnin', walkin', etc.). The student also said "whoop"

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differently than might be expected. The student said /wʊp/, omitting the double "o" sound in favor of a /ʊ/. This is a common pronunciation in the Southern dialect.

Student B only had one dialectical pronunciation in the word Alden. He pronounced Alden with /æ/ (as Student A did).

Student C had small dialectical influences. It seemed as though the vowels and diphthongs, especially /oʊ/, /eɪ/ and /æ/ were affected the most by being said for a longer length of time than other vowels.

The researcher perceived Student D to have a strong southern accent. This was especially evident in the following words: "and", "sugar", "all", "that", and "heaven". The /æ/ sound seemed especially protracted. When the examiner asked questions about the text after the student was finished reading it, the student's answers were not perceived with as strong of a Southern accent. Reading out loud made the student's accent more pronounced, according to the researcher's perception. The student's omissions can also be considered further evidence of the influence of dialect on the student's reading. The student omitted the endings on the words such as the possessive "s" in the contraction "that's," the "s" from "gets," the "ed" from "helped," and the "s" in "comes." The literature states that the South has its own phonetic rules and may thus read or say words differently than people in other parts of the nation (Carver, 1987). In the South, it is common to omit the endings of words. Therefore, Student D's reading of the words mentioned above with the endings omitted can be attributed to dialect.

Student E had some subtle dialect influences while reading. There were two words that stuck out during the student's reading that were said in a Southern way by

lengthening the vowel: "folks" and "melodies". Also, the student's reading of the following words: "jazz-playin' man", "smooth-talkin'", "slick-steppin'", and "piano-playin' kid", was also very natural. The student's insertion of "that" before the word baseball, as mentioned previously, is a common southern exclamation.

Survey Responses

This section will discuss the responses that were given on the parent survey about their child's reading outside of class. The survey had four questions that asked how much time the child spent reading outside of class, what the child read when he/she is not in class, if someone read to the child now, and if someone read to the child when he/she was younger. Each question and the parent responses will be discussed individually.

Question 1 asked, "How much time does your child spend reading outside of the classroom?" The responses to the first question can be seen in Figure 2.
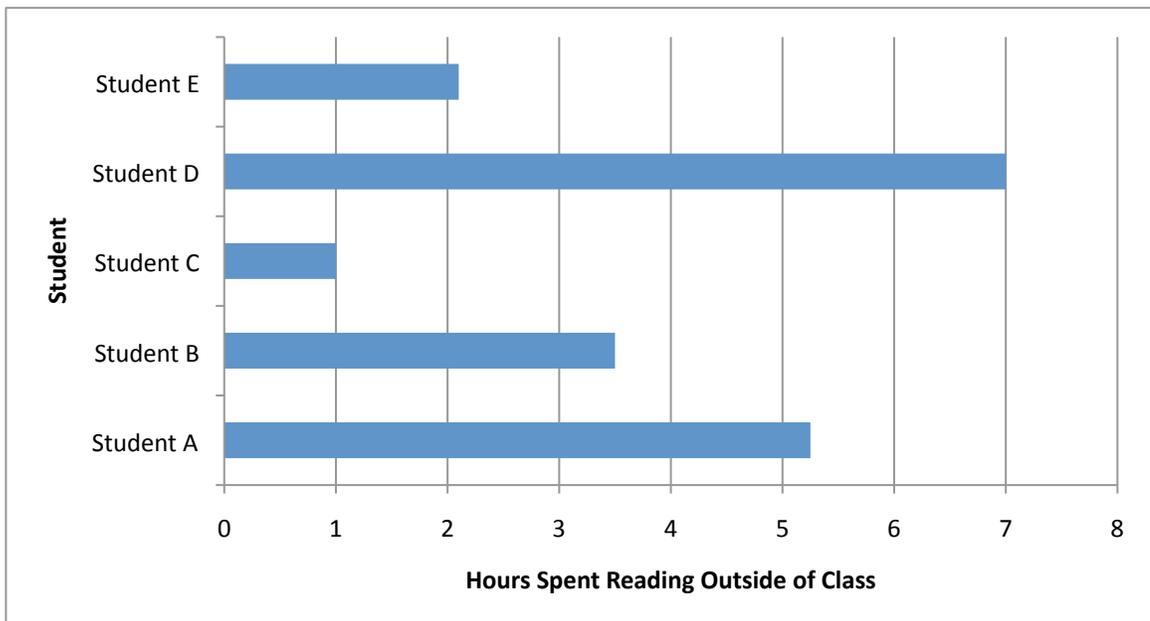

Figure 2: Parent Reported Time Spent Reading Independently

The second question on the survey asked, "What does your child read when he/she is not reading for school?" The parents of Students A and D answered that their children read a variety of books. Student B's parents reported that he reads a lot of chapter books. Student C reads some religious material and age-appropriate books, according to parent reports. Student E's parent reported that her daughter visits the library where different books are checked out.

Question 3 asked, "Do you or someone else read to your child now? How often?". The participants had varying answers on their surveys for this question. Although by this age most children read to themselves, it was still interesting to see which parents still took the time to read with their child (according to the report via survey). The parents of Students A and D answered that they or someone else did not read to their child. The parents of B and E answered that this happened occasionally. Only the parent of Student C responded that this happens perhaps once or twice a week.

Question 4 was, "Did you or someone else read to your child when they were younger? How often?" All of the parents of the participants stated that they read to their child when they were younger. Some stated varying times. Parent A said that she tried to read daily. From this answer, with use of the word "tried," it is possible that this reading did not happen every night. Parent C answered that they read to their child daily/nightly as a baby, toddler and a preschooler. Kindergarten through third grade was not mentioned. Parent D reportedly read to his child every night for two to three hours.

Parent E stated that she read to her daughter daily and that she was also read to by various other adults such as a preschool teacher and other family members.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what type of books that the participants may have been reading and which of those have an impact on their reading skills. Some parents put specific books/series that their child was currently reading but others did not specify at all. Reading aloud is certainly different from talking or reading silently. It does seem as though the amount of hours that a student spends reading outside of class had some impact on their reading performance, as evidenced by Graphs 1 and 2. Student D does not fit this pattern because although he had fourteen total miscues, the estimated amount of time that he spent outside of the classroom reading was the highest amount of all the participants – seven hours a week. The survey did not specifically point out any types of books that Student D read since the answer given was "all types of books." Perhaps the student's reading material was not as varied or not as challenging.

Limitations

The number of participants in this study was limited due to time constraints of the school and the researcher. A bigger participant pool is recommended for future studies. Also, all of the participants were Caucasian. It would be interesting to see how the results would differ with a participant pool with more ethnic variety. In addition, the length of the texts that the participants were asked to read could have also been longer to allow for a fuller picture of the student's reading abilities. Goodman (1996) stated that a reading sample should be at least 500 words or longer with at least 25 miscues to depict a student's reading abilities. The reading length that was used in this study was based upon

the recommendations of Gunther (n.d.), which suggested a minimum of 150 to 300 words (Gunther, n.d.).

The timing of this research was also a factor in this study. The reading samples from the participants were completed late in September. This was approximately two months into the third grade school year. The students may not have developed or mastered all of the reading strategies necessary to prepare for the transition in reading styles that is required of this time period. It would have been interesting to sample the participants again at the end of the school year and compare these results to the beginning of the year.

Implications for Future Research

The results from this study could be used as a basis for future studies in the South that involve reading and dialect. This study is only one small step in understanding how the Southern dialect impacts literacy and it only involved one geographical region. Studies in the future could replicate this study with a bigger pool of participants in varying regions with more ethnic diversity. Longer text samples could help future researchers get a better understanding of a student's reading abilities. Perhaps in the future, research from projects such as this and others could be used to help children in the South.

Clinical Applications

This study has numerous implications for speech-language pathologists working in the Southern region. Clinicians need to be aware of how dialect can influence a client's reading as well as how critical the reading transition from the third and fourth

grade really is. This study and others could influence the way that SLP's teach reading

skills and development. If it is found that dialect does play a part in reading, then

clinicians need to be aware of this. It could change the way that treatment in therapy

sessions are carried out by altering the methods and texts that were previously used to

instruct a client to read. A new way of assessing a client may have to be developed.

Another concern involves how clinicians use standardized assessments. Standardized

reading assessments may be biased towards Southern dialect speakers and alternative

assessment methods would be required. Clinicians must face a well known controversy

of whether to accept these dialect influences or train students to code switch between

their native dialect and Standard English Dialect.

This study also has implications for teachers. If reading is truly influenced by

dialect then, like clinicians, teachers need to be aware of this and change their methods of

instruction and testing accordingly. Teachers would also be faced with the same

controversial question regarding reading acceptance of native dialect versus instruction in

Standard Dialect.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Literacy is an important issue in schools today. The transition from third grade's *learning to read* style to fourth grade's *reading to learn* is especially crucial. Reading encompasses so many different aspects in the learning process as it is a way to transmit knowledge and to also provoke student thought. A student needs to be able to read well in order to succeed in school and also to succeed in the world. This research project looked at third graders because of the skills that had to be mastered before moving on to the fourth grade where the reading style would change. Dialect's effect on reading was examined. A miscue analysis was used to assess five students' reading abilities. Miscues

were analyzed in terms of five areas: low quality miscues, high quality miscues, corrections, omissions/additions, and dialect influences. Students produced more low quality miscues than high quality miscues. Most students had few high quality miscues (between 2 and 3), with the exception of Student C, who produced five high quality miscues. This study implies that clinicians and teachers should restructure the way that they teach reading or take into account a person's dialect in order to teach reading. However, more research about reading in the South is needed to get a better understanding of the ramifications that dialect has on reading. Research such as this will hopefully lead to improved reading scores and success for students across the United States of America.

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Appendix A
Text Guides

Duke Ellington: The Piano Prince and His Orchestra
By: Andrea Davis Pinkney

You ever hear of the jazz-playin' man, the man with the cats who could swing with his

band? He was born in 1899, in Washington, D.C. Born Edward Kennedy Ellington. But

wherever young Edward went, he said, "Hey, call me Duke."

Duke's name fit him rightly. He was a smooth-talkin', slick-steppin', piano-playin' kid.

But his piano playing wasn't always as breezy as his stride. When Duke's mother, Daisy,

and his father, J. E., enrolled him in piano lessons, Duke didn't want to go. Baseball was

Duke's idea of fun. But his parents had other notions for their child.

Duke had to start with the piano basics, his fingers playing the same tired tune – one-and-

two-and-one-and-two. Daisy and J. E. made Duke practice day after day. To Duke, one-

and-two wasn't music. He called it an umpy-dump sound that was headed nowhere worth following. He quit his lessons and kissed the piano a fast good-bye.

Years later, on a steamy summer night, Duke heard that umpy-dump played in a whole new way. Folks called the music ragtime – piano that turned umpy-dump into a soul-rousing romp.

The ragtime music set Duke's fingers to wiggling. Soon he was back at the piano, trying to plunk out his own ragtime rhythm. One-and-two-and –one-and-two…At first, this was the only crude tinkling Duke knew.

But with practice, all Duke's fingers rode the piano keys. Duke started to play his own made-up melodies. Whole notes, chords, sharps, and flats. Left-handed hops and right-handed slides.

Believe it, man. Duke taught himself to press on the pearlies like nobody else could. His one-and-two-umpy-dump became a thing of the past. Now, playing the piano was Duke's all-time love.

Jester in the Backcourt
By: Tommy Hallowell

"Banzai!!"

The wild, heart-stopping shriek rose above the thumping sound of basketballs bouncing against the gym's hardwood floor. Alden Junior High School's seventh-grade basketball team was shooting around before practice. Nick Wilkerson had just flung up a crazy half-court shot and let loose his special war whoop to go with it.

All his teammates turned at the scream and watched as the ball floated through the air. Nick was a good shot. They were waiting for the day he made one of these "banzai" shots. Today wasn't the day. The ball passed ten feet over the backboard and then jammed itself between two metal poles that were part of the rigging. Sometimes shots got stuck between the hoop and the backboard, but no one had ever seen a ball get stuck so far up. Everyone laughed and hooted. Sam McCaskill started to throw another ball at it to knock it loose.

"Wait, Sam," Nick said, holding his arm. "Don't hit it. I think it might still go in."

"Let go of my arm, Mr. Banzai. That shot cam e closer to going into outer space than going in the basket."

Sam threw the ball and hit one pole, but didn't loosen Nick's ball. Two other guys tried and missed. Sam's second shot was a direct hit, and the two balls came down together. As Sam caught one, Nick snuck up behind him and whipped Sam's shorts down, then knocked the ball away and dribbled to the other end of the court.

"Oh, grow up," Sam griped, pulling his shorts back up.

"Never!" Nick yelled. As he approached the other basket, Dennis Clements came out to guard him. Nick shimmed left and right, dribbled behind his back, then bounced the ball through Dennis's legs, picked it up on the other side, and put in the lay-up.

When the Circus Came to Town
By: Laurence Yep

I live at the Back of Beyond. At least that's what Pa calls it. Folks who don't know any

better call it Whistle. That's because when someone rides through town, it's gone

between the pucker and the first note of the whistle.

When I was no bigger than a wink, Pa took me piggyback out of Whistle. On his

shoulders I felt a mile high.

His legs seemed so long that he crossed a hill in one stride. And his shadow seemed to

sweep right out of Montana and straight across a thousand miles to the Pacific Ocean.

Finally he stopped. "Look at those hills in the badlands, Sugar. They look just like melted

candy. And the river never forgets its way and gets lost. There's magic all around us

because we live at the Back of Beyond." "The Back of Beyond," I repeated slowly.

"In the winter the snow only comes up to my waist, but it comes all at once. And look at

that sky. There's nothing between us and Heaven."

I wrapped my arms around his forehead and leaned back even more. The sky was so blue that it made me ache inside, and so big and deep that there was no end to it.

You couldn't get me to live anywhere else—not for a thousand dollars. Not even for ten thousand. There was always something to keep me hopping. We ran a stagecoach station, so there were horses to tend. I never gave them names though or got too friendly with them. They could be gone with the next stagecoach.

And when a stagecoach came in, didn't we jump! There were a hundred things for a body to do, and all of them had to be done at once. Sometimes I helped Pa change the horses. Sometimes I helped him load and unload packages. A lot of times I helped Ma serve meals to the passengers.

Appendix B

"Reading Ability of Third Grade Southern Dialect Speakers"
Survey for Parents and/or Guardians

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardians,

In order to get broader background knowledge about the reading abilities of your child, I would like to ask you to fill out this survey about your child and your involvement with your child's reading. Please answer to the best of your abilities and return the form with your child to school. Thank you for your time and consideration.

1. How much time does your child spend reading outside of the classroom?

2. What does your child read when he/she is not reading for school?

3. Do you or someone else read to your child now? How often?

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4. Did you or someone else read to your child when they were younger? How often?