Improving Children’s Reading through the Fleming Effective Teaching Model

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Ethics Approval

The research for this thesis received the approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans 18 August, 2011. The project reference number is CF11/1457 – 2011000810.
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Abstract

This study explored the outcomes of children’s reading development when taught using the Fleming Effective Teaching Model at an independent school in Melbourne, Australia. Reading has been identified as a major difficulty facing children in Australian schools. Several attempts have been made by educators to find a better way of teaching reading to young readers and this study contributes to this endeavor. A mixed-method approach has been used to collect data including qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, it looks at the explicit instruction of letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make as well as exploring the explicit instruction of reading decoding skills such as the blending, segmenting and chunking of letters, graphs and digraphs to decipher their meaning. There is also a focus on learning about the perceptions parents have on their child’s reading abilities. Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory has been used as the theoretical framework to analyse and interpret the findings of this study.

The outcomes of this research indicate that the Fleming Effective Teaching model has a significantly positive influence on young children when they are emergent readers. A steep improvement was noticed in children’s ability to recognize letters and then furthermore apply these skills into the context of a text appropriately. The parents who were interviewed in this study expressed a strong indication in their personal beliefs that the relationships and interactions between children and families as well as children and teachers were key contributing factors to children’s reading outcomes. Based on these findings recommendations for future research have been made as we work towards unravelling the phenomena that is learning to read.
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Chapter One: Background

1.1 Overview

This chapter briefly introduces the study. It begins by outlining the background of ‘The Fleming Effective Teaching Model’ and the way it is used to deliver the literacy curriculum. The next part of this chapter discusses my personal motivations for undertaking this research with a brief outline of the current literature. Following this are the research questions and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the key terms that were used in the research.

1.2 Background

This research study investigates the effects of The Fleming Effective Teaching Model on the reading outcomes of children in Preparatory at an independent school located in the South Eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The Fleming Effective Teaching Model is a teaching model that uses explicit instruction with teacher directed learning (Fleming, 2010). Further explanations of the model are documented in later parts of this chapter. The impetus for this research is the result of persistent reading difficulties many students in Preparatory face despite using different approaches to teaching reading, such as reading recovery programs as developed by Marie Clay (Nelley & Smith, 2000) and whole-language based pedagogical strategies (Berk, 2004), to help students become confident and fluent readers. Research indicated clearly that one of the most persistent issues facing educators is that many children in the early years of school lacked the understanding of the fundamentals of reading and are therefore progressing throughout their school life without these essential skills.
(Westwood, 2008; Talay-Ongan, 2004; Galletly, Knight, Dekkers & Galletly, 2009). 'It is surprising – given what we know about effective methods for teaching reading … and yet so many students slip through … and do not achieve full literacy’ (Westwood, 2008, p. 1). It is therefore important that research is conducted into effective ways of teaching reading to children so as to maximize the number of children who become proficient readers with the ability to demonstrate comprehension and meaning of what they have read, and then apply this knowledge outside the classroom. This study is concerned with Sandwood College (pseudonym for the research school), which is committed to school curriculum revitalization in order to improve literacy outcomes in the school. During 2007, Sandwood College embarked on a review of their Junior School curriculum with the goal of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes of children from Preparatory to Year 4. The Fleming Effective Teaching Model was introduced as part of this review. This teaching model was developed by the Deputy Head of Sandwood College, Mr John Fleming, and is built upon ‘Four Pillars of learning, which include teacher-directed learning, explicit instruction, effective relationships and moving students' learning from short to long-term memory (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007).

Part of the schools literacy goal was to ensure all children were to become competent readers as reading and comprehension is important for learning in other subject areas as well as being an important life skill. The Fleming Effective Model outlines six givens for teachers to implement - positive relationships, high expectations, presentation and handwriting, correction, display and classroom tone (Fleming, 2009). Lessons are structured in the format ‘I Do’, ‘We Do’ and ‘You Do’. During the ‘I do’ part of lessons the teacher explicitly demonstrates a skill, followed by the ‘We do’ stage, where the skill is practiced as a class with teacher guidance and
concludes with ‘You do’ in which the children are expected to independently complete an activity.

1.3 Personal Motivations

Prior to the commencement of my post-graduate education I examined a plethora of literature, which led to a flood of ideas that triggered my interests on what specific area of education I wanted to narrow my research down to. As I teach children in their first year of school, this seemed like an ideal place to start. The school where I am currently working has introduced explicit teaching into its curriculum over the last five years. The founder of ‘The Fleming Effective Teaching Model’, John Fleming (2005) defines explicit teaching as “teacher direct learning [and the] explicit instruction of core skills” (p. 1). Thus, being a part of a team which has implemented this model of teaching has been highly interesting for me and has led me to want to focus my research on it. There have been a number of motivations that have driven me to undertake this research on the teaching of reading in the early years of schooling. Some of which date back to my childhood experiences and others have been formed since I have embarked on my teaching career.

It is important to have personal inspirations when conducting research (O‘Toole & Beckett, 2010) and this is something I possess. Part of my motivations for this research have also stemmed from personal experiences when I was a student in my early years of school. Louise (pseudonym), a person close to me during our early school years was diagnosed and labeled as a child with learning difficulties. She had difficulty with a range of literacy skills including reading, comprehension, writing and spelling as well as mathematics skills in comparison to the abilities of her peers.
Although she was diagnosed with a learning difficulty, the appropriate intervention, support and teaching strategies were not applied during those crucial years and consequently, she encountered many barriers in the classroom. Some of these barriers included feeling like a social outcast and low self-esteem as she was not able to keep up with her peers academically. Eventually, intervention began for Louise in secondary school. This intervention, coupled with countless hours of home support over a period of years and her dedication to learning appears to have contributed towards Louise achieving success in her chosen vocation and life today as a young adult. This example had been a personal motivation for me to learn more about difficulties children encounter with their learning and the potentially positive effects explicit teaching in the early years of primary school can have on the reading outcomes of children such as Louise.

As mentioned earlier I have also been motivated by reasons that have developed since I began my teaching career. I began teaching at Sandwood College in 2008, the year after the model was implemented. Some of my colleagues teaching in other year levels who have been at the College prior to the introduction of the model have brought to my attention that they believe the standard of the children’s overall work has improved significantly. It is apparent that older year levels have evidence to support this such as NAPLAN data for Year 3, which is the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy. In Preparatory, however, there is no such formal evidence to support an improvement, if any, in the standard of literacy skills apart and from only teacher observations. I believe it is important that we have evidence to learn what sort of impact is being made on emergent readers in Preparatory. I believe it is important to have empirical evidence to support what many teachers already believe has been happening.
1.4 Current Research on Reading

There are many different ways to teach reading in the classroom, some ways have evolved over time and others are cyclical. Explicit teaching at Sandwood College is achieved through flash cards, chanting and repetition. This includes chanting flash cards of graphs, digraphs, blends and words and nonsense words, which is repeated daily. This is a ‘bottom-up view of reading’ (Winch, Ross Johnston, March, Ljungdahl & Holliday, 2004, p. 4). This is the basic-skills approach to teaching reading that places emphasis on the teaching of ‘translating written symbols into sounds’ (Berk, 2004, p. 299) meaning the emergent reader learns individual sounds and builds up towards learning words. On the contrary is the top-down approach. This is when words are the first thing taught and they are later broken into segments and single sounds. This approach to teaching reading focuses on the whole word and specifically the comprehension of what is being read (Winch et al., 2004). A different approach that is used is inquiry-based learning. This is used in many international schools through the International Baccalaureate Program. This model takes on the approach that learning is directed by the children and they are able to inquire and learn reading skills at their pace (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2010). This is an approach used at Sandwood College to teach general life skills (Fleming, 2010). The whole-language approach to teaching reading includes “instruction that parallels children’s natural learning and keeps reading materials whole and meaningful” to the child and their level of development at that point in time (Berk, 2004, p. 299). There are other approaches and models that are commonly used in schools today such as the British National Literacy Program, which focuses on the relationships between word recognition and context (Miller,
Teachers play an important role in modeling good literacy behaviors to children before formally teaching reading (Berk, 2004; Miller, 2004). Good behaviors to model may include reading books with varying genres to the students, keeping books on your desk to show that you read or modeling fluency, tracking and blending of words when you read a story.

It is clear that in current literature there are a number of recurrent themes and theories related to explicit teaching. One noticeable theme in the literature was that explicit teaching appears to have a positive effect on the results of older children in mainstream schools (Schubert, 2009). Many studies also found that explicit teaching significantly improves children’s results across different areas of the curriculum including Science and Mathematics (Graham, Pegg & Alder, 2007; Schubert, 2009). When looking into explicitly teaching Science to low and high-achieving students some studies show that there are similar gains for the low and the high-achieving students (Hartnett, 2008; Lorch, Lorch, Calderhead, Dunlap & Hodell, 2010). Some studies chose one or only a few components of reading to focus their study on such as phonics, blending, phonemes or segmenting, however, there is limited data available for whether the child’s overall reading skills improved and whether the children were able to apply these skills when reading a text independently (Pullen, Lane, Lloyd, Nowak & Ryals, 2005). Another reoccurring theme was that the populations tested were often children in upper primary school and secondary school. Some recently conducted research on explicitly teaching children with learning difficulties later in their school life and found explicit teaching had a positive effect on children’s academic outcomes in the areas of literacy and numeracy (Schubert, 2009; Zohar & Peled, 2007). Explicitly teaching reading to children in later primary and early high school years who displayed poor reading and comprehension skills for
their age revealed that their literal and inferential comprehension as well as reading skills showed improvements (Schubert, 2009). Likewise, explicit instruction of reading to children in the middle years of school has been shown to have a positive effect on reading outcomes (Graham et al., 2007). It must be noted that the participants were children who only encountered explicit teaching of reading after a minimum of five years schooling and not in the first formal year of education. This leaves a gap in the literature to study children in Preparatory.

There has been recent research conducted on the effects of explicitly teaching mental computations of mathematical problems in primary school aged children (Hartnett, 2008). The children were explicitly taught mental computations including counting strategies, doubles and halves, adjusting numbers to compensate and place value. When comparing the pre and post-tests, it was clear that the students showed a positive improvement in their mental computation skills (Harnett, 2008). From this research it is unclear whether we can generalize the results to reading skills.

It is evident that the proposed research would fit in well to the current literature. As we can see, there is a clear lack of research on explicitly teaching reading to children in Preparatory as well as Preparatory children who have learning difficulties. Much of the current literature I came across found that explicit teaching had positive outcomes for the participants in each study. I want to find out if this applies to children exposed to The Fleming Effective Teaching Model. This could be a highly valuable resource to many Preparatory teachers across Victoria and Australia for teaching the fundamental of reading.
Recapping what was mentioned earlier is that current research focuses on explicitly teaching reading skills to middle school students with learning difficulties (Graham, Pegg & Alder, 2007). Outcomes were promising and showed there is potential to make a positive difference to students’ academic outcomes through effective teaching of reading. Similarly, research on explicitly teaching comprehension skills to middle school students in a class of mixed abilities showed that explicit instruction improved comprehension outcomes (Schubert, 2009). Investigations into explicitly teaching skills to children in secondary school have found similar outcomes (Zohar & Peled, 2007). This leaves a gap for teaching reading to a mixed ability group of children in Preparatory.

As a Preparatory teacher, I believe it is important that there is evidence to support effective ways of teaching reading to a group of children who have mixed abilities. Although there are many different ways and models of teaching reading to children with different abilities my main interest focuses on the effectiveness of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model. The research is not aimed at testing this model against other models but its effectiveness in its own right.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

This study explores the effectiveness of “The Fleming Effective Teaching Model” for teaching children reading in Preparatory. The model has been implemented and developed at Sandwood College since 2007. The problem is whether The Fleming Effective Teaching Model is effective in teaching Preparatory children to read. It is also to find out whether The Fleming Effective Teaching Model is effective in teaching Preparatory children with learning difficulties to read.
My research would fit in well to the current literature because of the lack of research on explicitly teaching reading to children in Preparatory. Current literature, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, indicates that explicit teaching had positive outcomes for the participants. The question is: To what extent does the Fleming Effective Model contribute to improved reading in Preparatory children?

1.6 Purpose of the Research

The children in my study have been taught reading explicitly during their Preparatory year. The purpose of this study is to find out whether the explicit teaching of reading using The Fleming Effective Model has positive or other influences on the children’s reading skills and with a specific focus on children with learning difficulties. On the broad spectrum I am looking at the possibility of finding out whether the Fleming Effective Teaching Model is an effective teaching model and which aspects of the model needs improvement in order to be effective in teaching reading. The results are useful for classroom teachers with children of a range of abilities, remedial teachers of children with learning difficulties and any professionals who teach reading to children in Preparatory. This strengthens the purpose and makes the results relevant to a wider group of professionals in the education community, which is an important part of research (O’Toole & Beckett, 2010).

One aim of the study is to find out the effects of explicitly teaching components of reading such as segmenting, blending, phonics, phonemes and comprehension to Preparatory children and whether explicitly teaching these skills has a positive outcome on their reading outcomes. It will look into the improvement in their reading skills over the time explicit teaching has been implemented.
Another aim is to find out what parents believe the introduction of The Fleming Effective Teaching Model has on the reading development of their children learning to read. Teachers can learn about what other factors parents perceive do have a positive influence on reading skills. Working collaboratively with parents is important (Polloway & Patton, 1997), and finding other positive influences on children’s reading abilities is important as strategies can then be applied collaboratively by the classroom teacher and parents at home. If we find any factors to have a negative influence on children with learning difficulties, teachers and parents can work together towards eliminating them.

1.7 Research Questions and Hypothesis

Through a review of previous research and reading of the literature I have identified the following research questions, which led the investigation.

1. In what ways, if any, does the Fleming Effective Teaching Model result in improved reading related performances for students in Preparatory?

2. What decoding strategies does the Fleming Effective Teaching Model help students develop and if they are developed is this associated with improved reading performance?

3. What factors do parents believe have a positive influence on children’s reading performance in Preparatory other than those related to the Fleming Effective Teaching Model?
This thesis has three hypothesis. My hypothesis for the main research questions is that children in the study will show improvement in their reading skills. That is, they will be able to effectively demonstrate an understanding of phonics and recognition of high frequency words through reading familiar and unfamiliar texts. Children will be able to read phonics, blend sounds, read with increasing fluency and segment chunks of words as they work towards decoding them. Children will be able to demonstrate their understanding and comprehension of simple texts by retelling stories and answering questions about the texts.

For the second research question I hypothesise that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model will help students develop their decoding skills. Some of these skills include development in fluency, comprehension skills, segmenting, blending and decoding of words. I think this will lead to an overall improvement with their reading skills and the level of texts they are able to read and comprehend.

For the third research question related to parents’ beliefs about the Fleming Effective Teaching Model I hypothesize that parents will discuss positive attitudes towards the model. Also, I think they will discuss the importance of a positive learning environment within the classroom and regular support and reinforcement of schoolwork at home when teaching children to read.

1.8 Significance of the Study

1.8.1 Pedagogical contributions.

The results of this research would make a contribution to reading development in children. They illustrate a teaching model for pedagogical contributors to support
children’s reading in the early years of school. This research highlights explicit teaching, as used in The Fleming Effective Teaching Model, as a way of teaching reading and the related components effectively. Learning about the effects of explicitly teaching children to read in Preparatory is important as this research findings can be used to train teachers in ways of supporting the development of reading skills. There has been a rise in the number educators who are teaching children to read without any formal structured framework of continuity (Farrell, 1997). This research highlights explicit teaching as a positive way to professionally develop teachers and educate them in effective strategies for teaching children how to read.

1.8.2 Practical contributions.

Practical contributors such as parents can now learn strategies from their child’s teacher and support classroom learning at home. It is important that as educators we work together in partnership with parents (Farrell, 1997). This may require meeting with parents to discuss strategies used in the classroom to teach reading so that an after school program at home becomes a continuation of what happens at school. Not only would this reinforce learning to read to children but would also model a positive relationship.

1.8.3 Theoretical contributions.

The ideas and results of this research can be used to theorize effective teaching models in different contexts. Although the research will take place at Sandwood College, theorizing the results can be transferred to other independent and
government schools across Melbourne. The results could lead to The Fleming Effective Teaching Model being implemented in these schools for students in Preparatory and even for older children who are also learning to read. It is important to make research useful to a wide range of people (O’Toole and Beckett, 2010) and theory is an important way to do this. Clearly this research on the explicit teaching of reading is beneficial in different contexts and its theoretical and practical nature makes it more useful.

1.9 Explanation of Terms

**Preparatory** refers to the first formal year of education in Victoria, Australia. The children are five and six years old.

**Sandwood College** refers to the pseudonym for school the participants attend. It is located in Melbourne, Australia and is a coeducational day school.

**The Fleming Effective Teaching Model** refers to the curriculum that is implemented at Sandwood College. This model adopts explicit teaching of literacy skills.

**Explicit Teaching** refers to the researchers definition of explicit teaching and will follow that of Fleming (2005, p. 1), which is ‘teacher directed learning [and the] explicit instruction of core skills’.

**Reading** refers to the “process of literate thinking during which a reader brings meaning to and takes meaning from a text” (Winch et al., 2004, p. 4).
**Fitzroy Readers** are the take home readers that children take home for a week at a time. They must demonstrate the ability to read the story with fluency and comprehend it by paraphrasing the story and answering simple related questions. After this they can be moved onto the next book.

**Components of Reading** refers to the components of reading. They include the following:

**Phonics** refers to the relationship between written letters and their spoken sounds (Winch et al., 2004). They are the sounds (phonics) letters make. For example the letter name is Aa and the sound is /a/.

**Blending** is the ‘combination of two or three letter sounds so that each sound can be identified’ (Winch et al., 2004, p. 488). Some examples are bl, fr, sw and gr.

**Segmenting** is the analysis and breaking up of speech into segments of ‘discrete units of sound such as vowels or consonants’ (Winch et al., 2004, p. 493). This can be achieved by clapping words, phrases or sentences as you say them.

**Tracking (Directionality)** is the ability to follow from ‘left to right and return sweep at the end of a line’ (Winch et al., 2004, p. 489). When children are emergent readers they are often encouraged to track using their finger to help them keep their place.

**Comprehension** refers to one’s ability to interpret the meaning of words and pictures to form an understanding of what message is being conveyed (Winch et al., 2004).
**Nonsense words** are words that are made up and used to teach children how to apply reading strategies and rules to unfamiliar or new words.

**Learning difficulties** refers to the children who their teacher considers at risk of falling behind their class. My definition will be similar to that of Farrell (1997, p. 4) who describes children with learning difficulties as those who attend ‘a mainstream school … and are referred to as having ‘mild’ learning difficulties’. It will be a child who has lower reading outcomes in comparison to their peers. The participants will have no obvious disabilities such as emotional or physical disabilities.

### 1.10 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter has been an introduction and background to the thesis. The second chapter is the literature review of research in this field. It is divided into two parts, the first is about the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and the second is the literature on literacy, reading and explicit teaching. Chapter Three is the research methodology where I discussed the research approaches and methods used. Chapter Four is the analysis of the data using graphs and tables to illustrate findings. This is followed by the presentation of the results and findings in Chapter Five. The sixth chapter is the conclusions. Within this chapter there is a summary of the key findings, recommendations and conclusions. A Reference List and Appendices is added on at the end of the paper.

### 1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a brief background to the research. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and literature review.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part A examines the contemporary issues that children face when they are emergent readers. It covers the importance of reading in child development as well as the facilitators and barriers that can be influential on children’s reading development. Part B uses Lev Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theoretical framework to illustrate children’s reading development. It explores and analyses the interactions and activities that play a role in children’s reading development.

Part A: The Issues Facing Early Readers

2.2 The Concept of Reading in Early Childhood Education

There are many different ways in which we can define literacy as seen in the current literature. The term literacy refers to the ability to read and write as well as solve simple mathematical problems in context (UNESCO, 2006). These skills are acquired through learning both in and outside of schools. Literacy is not limited to reading and writing but goes far beyond this. It is also the ability to make calculations and put these skills into practice (Fransman, 2006). It is worth noting that other interpretations of literacy build upon this basic understanding and may include visual, oral and information skills. It is important for children to demonstrate their reading and writing in a range of different contexts (The Australian Language and Literacy Policy, 1991). Similar to this conceptualization is the notion that to be
literate a person must be able to use reading, writing and verbal skills to make and share meaning with other people (Winch et al., 2004). It is clear that literacy is not simply the ability to read, write and speak, but to also conceptualize the message that is being conveyed in the correct context. A contemporary view on literacy is one that includes different forms of literacy such as library literacy, media literacy and computer literacy skills, which we need to understand and communicate with other people in the world today (Lau & Cortés, 2008). From the various conceptualizations of literacy in current literature it is clear that there is no one definition of literacy and that often for a child to be literate they need to acquire a set of skills.

To be literate involves the integration of a set of skills (Winch et al., 2004). These include but are not exclusive to reading, writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking. This research will have a strong focus on the skill of reading. Reading has been perceived as a challenging skill that requires the reader to interpret written symbols and decode them to make meaning from them (Roe, Burns & Smith, 2009, p. 24). Some researchers summarise reading as children making an association between the auditory information, which is verbal speech sounds with visual information that includes reading letters (Blau, Reitherler, van Atteveldt, Seitz, Gerretsen, Gobel & Blomert, 2009). Furthermore, is the importance of decoding the written letters that we see visually. Adding to this we must also note that the comprehension of written text is a crucial skill for humans to possess as it can influence the contributions that we make to society as well as the interactions that we have with others (Lokan, Greenwood & Cresswell, 2008). This is relevant to my study as it highlights that the skills children acquire in the classroom are of great importance to be functioning members of society in and outside the classroom. It
can be noted that to be literate not only does one need to read but to also comprehend text and communicate effectively with others in the community. To be a competent reader involves the acquisition of multiple skills, including phonemic awareness, recognition of phonics, reading with fluency, and understanding of a wide vocabulary and comprehension of texts (Roe, Burns & Smith, 2009). In addition, the ability to amalgamate these five key areas demonstrates what skills the child should acquire to be able to read effectively.

Literacy skills are used in society frequently as we go about our daily tasks (Winch et al., 2004). It appears that there is a new paradigm evolving, which takes the view that the ability to communicate though verbal and written means gives one the opportunity to function in our social and cultural world (Talay-Ongan, 2004). Literacy skills are important beyond the classroom walls and are a key part of social communications and interactions with people in society (MacNaughton, 2003; Miller, 2004; Talay-Ongan, 2004). It is important for children to observe adults modeling good social literacy behaviors from a young age through watching adults communicate orally, as well as present children with the opportunity to be part of these activities (Neuman & Roskos, 1992). Children with exposure to good social literacy behaviors were more likely to incorporate speaking and listening into their play based activities as well as pretend reading and scribbling supported by positive feelings about literacy upon starting school. It can be argued that literacy is not only for the purpose of schoolwork but also to be an active part of a community where one makes valuable contributions (MacNaughton, 2003). As adults, we must set a positive example for children as they learn literacy skills.
2.3 The Importance of Reading in Child Development

Reading is a crucial skill for children to learn, as it can be influential on their social development and place in society (Winch et al., 2004). In one study it was found that high level of maternal and teacher communications with children was a good predictor of higher achievement in children’s language and early reading. Reading is also important for children’s social development in the early years of school (Calderon, 2011). Children who have difficulties learning to read can find themselves struggling to participate in all facets of their schooling and unable to keep up with their more competent peers. This can be a stressful and upsetting time for a child and can even have long lasting effects on a child’s self-esteem leaving them with a feeling of social isolation (Calderon, 2011). A child’s reading ability can, however, have a positive effect on their social skills, as expressive and receptive language can be improved which in turn can lead to a more encouraging social encounters (Moeller, 2000). As reading difficulties can have a lasting effect on social development for preschool children it is essential to have early intervention programs available to children with reading difficulties to support long-term social development (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

Reading is important for child development as it can have an influence on academic success in both the short and long term (Koenig, 2006). Children with reading related learning difficulties can have difficulty with academic success later in their school life and beyond. It can potentially hinder their academic future including acceptance into university courses or even employment (Koenig, 2006). Our early experiences with reading can have an effect on the development of cognitive and academic skills later in life (Katz, 2003; Thomas & Collier, 2002). To achieve
success in the understanding of mathematical concepts a child must demonstrate the ability to use appropriate mathematical terminology to make progress as they work towards understanding more complicated concepts at a later time (Kirova & Bhargava, 2002).

Early intervention in children with learning difficulties can improve long term academic goals. The greater the amount of time set aside for intervention the greater the improvement in the child’s learning outcomes (Campbell & Ramey, 2006). This supports the notation that improved reading outcomes can have a positive influence on academic outcomes. Academic achievement can be a result of a collection of factors such as family, community and importantly school experiences such as reading (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005).

The growth of language is very important in childhood and the success that children have in this area can partially be attributed to reading skills (Katz, 2003). Furthermore, speech and language development and reading go together and if there is a difficulty with either one it can have a significant impact on the other (Nathan, 2006), thus, making reading success important in the development in a child’s speech and language. Language impairments in young children can have an effect on their reading outcomes (Barwock, Menna, Horodezky & Isaacson, 2000). It is therefore important for teachers to practice verbal interactions in the classroom with their students so as students can develop their reading skills.
2.4 Facilitators of Reading Development

Teachers play an important role in the development of reading in young children during their critical periods of development (Schunk, 2003). Children’s perceived self-efficacy postulates that a child’s achievements are dependent on their social interactions and that the relationships children have with the people around them can have a strong influence on their academic achievements, including reading. There are social dimensions of learning that can provide a relevant framework for student learning (Hiebert, 1983). It is crucial that teachers have strong and positive relationships with the children they teach as this can be associated with their emotional development which has a role in the development of school success (Rolfe, 2004). Language can be learnt through the social process and interactions with other more knowledgeable people (Emmitt & Pollock, 1991). As the teacher has a significant role in the child’s life it is important that there is social engagement occurring between the two. For a classroom to function as an effective learning environment the teacher must forge positive relationships between themselves and their students (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007).

2.4.1. Classroom environment.

The classroom environment and tone can also be a key facilitator in the development of reading skills in children. An ideal classroom for student learning is one that is positive and nurturing (Catherwood, 1999). This type of classroom is ideal for healthy brain growth in young children. A stressful environment, however, can reduce the growth of brain cells and have an adverse effect on students’ learning (Dockett, 2000). It is the role of the educator to provide a classroom where the
environment and tone is one that nurtures the learning of the students as they endeavor to learn. A suggestion is to outline a set of ‘givens’ for the classroom that the children and teacher agree upon (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007). This means making the learning environment safe and orderly with strong educational management for all children. When setting classroom tone, an important feature that contributes to effective learning is a quiet working area for children to learn, strengthened by consistently positive interactions between the teacher and children (Fleming, 2005). The physical environment of the classroom is of significance to children’s reading acquisition (Winch et al., 2004). This may include, but is not limited to, areas for independent reading, an easel where children can come together for shared reading, a rich array of books and texts available for children to read and computers with reading activities readily available for use.

2.4.2 Professional development of teachers.

As professionals it is important that teachers take accountability for their students’ learning and as student expectations are rising it is becoming more important for teachers to take accountability (Guskey, 2000). Partaking in professional development for self-improvement with their students’ best interest in mind is one way teachers can improve their ability to instruct reading skills and achieve higher student reading outcomes (Podhajski et al., 2009). Studies over the past few years have shown a correlation between school improvement and teacher professional development (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez, 2005; Moats, 2004). Schools that promote professional development and continuous school improvement typically operate as united learning communities (Taylor et al., 2005). It is important that teachers work together to share and discuss what they know as they work towards
forming new concepts and strategies for educating young children (Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Professional development that relates to the understanding of assessment is of great importance (Stiggins, 2000). In addition, it is important that teachers keep up with contemporary practices on assessment when striving towards achievement of reading competency for their students.

2.4.3 Quality assessment.

Through ongoing professional development it is possible for teachers to learn about quality assessment and raise the quality of their professional practice (Stiggins, 2000). The methods that we use to assess student learning can contribute positively or hinder the development of literacy skills (Johnston, 2005). Assessment practices help teachers to produce resilient learners who prioritise literacy learning. There are five key approaches to assessing reading comprehension including cloze tasks, true/false sentences tasks, sentences verification tasks, multiple choice questions and open-ended questions (Cain & Oakhill, 2006). These key approaches help teachers to learn about children’s understanding of texts they have read and from here plan what areas of reading comprehension need to be focused on with each child. There are two categories of assessment tools important to student learning – formal and informal, which collectively can guide a teacher towards identifying persistent reading difficulties in a child and ultimately work towards supporting them (Talay-Ogan, 2004). Assessment is necessary and one key factor is that reading is a multifaceted process that requires ongoing assessment to model to children that the acquisition of reading skills is ongoing and never complete (Valencia, 1990). Reading and assessment is a cycle and “good assessment should grow out of authentic reading instruction” (p. 338). It is an important point as it relates to the
cycle of using effective assessment tools to teach reading, which is being focused on in this study. Finally, as teachers the use of assessment enables us to evaluate the effectiveness of our quality teaching and how much information is being transferred to the children (Valencia, 1990).

2.4.4 Neuroscience Research.

Neuroscience research has shown that neurons and genetic composition of our brains can act as facilitator for reading development (Talay-Ongan, 2004). Additionally, the neurons may enhance children’s ability to comprehend language. Research related to neuroscience gives us a comprehensive understanding of the varying ways that children learn and how environmental factors facilitate young children’s cognition. Earlier research has shown that language skills are mediated by the brain and could possibly act as a facilitator in children’s reading achievements, however, one limitation is that the research data were mostly collected from children with a history of neurological assessments (Talay-Ongan, 2000; McCormick Davis, 2000). There are issues surrounding the developing brain and how important it is for young children to have rich experiences to enable their brain the greatest opportunity possible so that children could be the best they can be at reading (Nash, 1997).

2.4.5 Parent involvement.

Parents who regularly take time to read with their child, whether it be them reading or their child, are likely to see greater improvements in their child’s reading ability than if they do not (Tizard, Schofield & Hewison, 1982). Something as simple as a young child observing their parents reading a book or writing a shopping list at home
is directly related to reading development in young children (Sénéchal, 2006). This is an important facilitator as it has a direct correlation to their reading success past the early years of school and into the middle years. These indicated that there is a direct link between exposure to reading at home and an increased level of reading for pleasure once children reached middle school. There has also been a linkage found between time spent reading at home and the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills in young children (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). There is a correlation between time spent reading and reading growth in primary school children (Taylor, Frye & Maruyama, 1990). The more time spent reading with children the more likely they are to have higher levels of reading achievement than otherwise. A key factor listed to this outcome was children reading with their parents at home.

2.5 Barriers to Reading Development

Whilst there are a number of facilitations for young children when they are learning to read, there are also barriers to their reading.

2.5.1 Learning difficulties.

A major barrier when learning to read is having a learning difficulty (Will, 1985; Foorman, Fletcher, Francis, Schatschneider & Mehta, 1998; The Parent Institute, 2000; Carroll & Snowling, 2004). These research studies that were conducted over a period of time agree that we must understand children’s ways of learning and support those with difficulties by being involved in their learning. Some reading difficulties stem back to children’s difficulty with their phonemic awareness, which is the ability
to hear the individual sounds that make up words in spoken language (Abraham & Gram, 2009). Furthermore, children with phonological awareness difficulties can display a delay in acquiring the basic reading skills. Children’s speech skills can be influential on the development of overall literacy skills such as reading and spelling (Fairweather, Nix, Oblinger, Adams & Laffra, 2007; Lieberman & Shankweiler, 1987). Learning to read depends on a child’s phonological awareness (Carroll & Snowling, 2004). Teachers must be aware of their students’ phonological awareness as well as their expressive speech when they are learning to read as they work towards breaking down the barriers that can affect children’s learning. Sometimes children with learning difficulties have a specific problem called dyslexia. Research emphasises that teachers need to work collaboratively with families and other professionals to provide the appropriate support for these emergent readers (Carroll & Snowling, 2004; Will, 1985).

Learning difficulties can be a limitation in children’s acquisition of language (Will, 1985). Children with learning difficulties who are poor readers often display poor phonological awareness, poor understanding of phonics and poor decoding skills (Juel, 1988; McLean & Hitch, 1999). Children who have difficulties with reading comprehension difficulties have historically displayed lower achievements with reading compared to their peers who have acquired reading comprehension skills (Nation & Snowling, 1998). In addition trends have shown that these children also have a problematic time with their understanding of semantics. Reading difficulties can be explained by working memory impairments as children who displayed difficulties with arithmetic and reading had a working memory that did not function in the same way as higher achieving children (McLean & Hitch, 1999).
2.5.2 Lack of teacher training.

The lack of teacher training and teacher understanding can be a barrier in the reading development in young children (Pivik, McComas & LaFlamme, 2002). The lack of knowledge and understanding teachers have of children with learning difficulties or efforts from the educational system can act as an unintentional barrier. Teachers may give children ‘time filler’ activities when they could be adapting the curriculum to suit the different needs of the children in their class and supporting their learning. At times, this can be due to a lack of teacher training and knowledge about how to do this.

It is a fundamental basic given that schools must have strategies in place for early intervention with the goal of preventing the escalation of reading and general academic disabilities in young children (Torgesen, 2002). This is possible through teacher education on how to identify difficulties early in collaboration with other professional colleagues. Ongoing teacher education, coupled with experience in the classroom can enhance teacher knowledge of sighting children with learning disabilities (Harris & Sass, 2007). Additionally, effective teacher education has the greatest influence in children’s reading success in the first year of schooling.

2.5.3 Regular reading.

Reading is a skill that is imperative and must be done on a regular basis (The Parent Institute, 2000). It is vital that families fit regular reading with their child into their schedule so as not to hinder their child’s reading development, however, in day-to-day life this is not always possible and hence the lack of time can be a barrier to
emergent readers. Some ways that families can overcome this reading barrier and achieve regular reading include scheduling reading into the daily routine, being flexible with reading time, eliminating distractions and surrounding your child with books (The Parent Institute, 2000). Teachers can also have a lack of time (Pivik, McComas & LaFlamme, 2002). One way this can be a barrier for children learning to read is when teachers do not have enough time to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum, and therefore focus their teaching of reading skills at a level beyond the comprehension of children with learning difficulties without providing appropriate support. Teachers must remember that even though these children take longer to acquire the basic skills required to become proficient readers they can still achieve this result (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). It is essential that teachers take the time necessary to help them achieve this through explicit and comprehensive instruction over a period of time (Torgesen, 2002).

2.5.4 Socio-economic status.

It is documented that a “significant group of poor readers … [are] largely … children from families of lower-socioeconomic status” (Torgesen, 2002, p. 12). Many children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter school with delayed pre-reading skills, oral language skills and reading comprehension skills. It is believed that by kindergarten age an average middle class child has been exposed to half a million words, where as a child from a low socioeconomic family would be lucky to have been exposed to even half as many words (Reid-Lyon, 2003). Evidence has shown an association between low-socioeconomic status and children with learning difficulties and poor attention levels (O’Keeffe, O’Callaghan, Williams, Najman & Bor, 2003). Children from low-socioeconomic statuses often achieve less academic
success compared to children from higher-socioeconomic statuses who are more likely to achieve greater academic success at school (Currie & Thomas, 1999; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Low-socioeconomic status can affect the cognitive development of children due to a lack of maternal knowledge about child development and ways mothers can support their children (Wacharasin, Barnard & Spieker, 2003). The lack of material support like books can also hinder reading in low socioeconomic status families.

From the current literature on reading development in children coupled with the facilitators and barriers that children may face when learning to read, a cultural-historical theoretical approach to reading has been chosen as the theoretical framework for this research.
Part B: The Theoretical Framework

2.6 Cultural-Historical Approach to Reading Development

This study is based upon Vygotsky’s (1978) Cultural-historical theoretical framework. Vygotsky was a pioneer in the development of the cultural-historical theory in the 1920’s and 1930’s, which is still applied in teaching models today (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). This theory is based on the idea that the activities we participate in are all part of a social, cultural context where learning is based on the acquisition of language through symbols through historical training (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). There is a strong emphasis on language as the key factor in cognitive growth in young children (Talay-Ongan, 2004). Language is important in the cognitive growth in young children, which is directly related to literacy and reading skills (MacNaughton, 2003). The cultural-historical theory can be summarised as children learning from their social interactions with the people around them including adults and peers together with instruction (Talay-Ongan, 2004). It is important that children interact with adults as this can influence and improve the level of cognitive skills a child acquires. Vygotsky (1978) believed that the social dialect, which occurs between children and those around them, was essential to their cognitive development and understanding of the cultural world around them. Hence, it is crucial that teachers have interactions with children that are enriching and positive to enable them to maximize their cognitive development.

From a cultural-historical perspective, it is important that adults, including teachers or more competent peers mediate children’s learning experiences so they are more likely to be enhanced and enriched (Kirova & Bhargava, 2002).
In the cultural-historical theory, learning can be described “through our own actions of taking in information, working with that information and turning that information into a new understanding or linking it with what we [already] know” (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 41). Consequently teachers will need to find an effective way for children to take in information by relating new information with previously learnt information and then help children to turn that information into new understandings. This study explored whether explicit teaching is an effective way of supporting learning development by focusing on the cultural dynamics at the school, within the classroom and in the home environment as well as the interactions that take place between the teachers and children. These are all important parts of the cultural-historical theory (Kirova & Bhargava, 2002). This theory is relevant to my research as it supports the development of language, which is what this study is focusing on, and consequently the findings will provide teachers with effective strategies for teaching reading. It is also relevant as I am looking to find out about social interactions and the influence they have on learning development, which the cultural-historical theory supports.

2.7 Teacher-Child Interaction in Cultural-Historical Theory

2.7.1 Zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Vygotsky (1978) wrote about a continuum of learning called the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the gap between a child’s ability to solve cognitive skills independently and the maximum level of what a child could achieve under the guidance of another person who is more skilled (Kirova & Bhargava, 2002; Bodrova & Leong, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) believed that children were capable of completing
processes that require higher cognitive skills than what they were able to achieve independently at any point in time through social interactions with other more knowledgeable people (Berk, 2004). For my study, the quality of the interactions between teachers and children when a child is learning to read are critical in our understanding of how they move throughout the learning continuum from their potential without guidance to their maximum with guidance. Teachers must be aware of where their children are on this learning continuum so that they can best support their reading development (Kirova & Bhargava, 2002).

It is paramount for teachers to be aware of where a child’s independent cognitive ability lies so they can set tasks further along the learning continuum, stretching the child further and allowing them to achieve greater results with their guidance. This knowledge of where a child’s ability is can help the adult to support the child’s development in areas such as reading (Berk, 2004). Some ways a teacher can support children’s reading skills and allow them to reach their maximum potential include a rich literacy environment, space to explore and manipulate materials, and the use of language and social interactions to support development, which relates to the cultural-historical theory (Kirova & Bhargava, 2002).

### 2.7.2 Scaffolding.

When a child is attempting a task with the support of a more knowledgeable peer, Vygotsky’s (1978) theory believes they will be able to surpass the cognitive level they would achieve independently, enter their ZPD and reach their maximum. This support provided to a child is the concept of scaffolding (Rodgers, 2004). Scaffolding enables the child to achieve their maximum potential, which they would
not be able to achieve otherwise. Scaffolding gives the child the chance to experience success, helps them maintain their focus as they work towards achieving a goal and minimizes the occurrence of frustration giving them the chance to see the skills demonstrated before they attempt it (Rodgers, 2004).

In the classroom, scaffolding plays an important role when teaching children critical reading skills (Rodgers, 2004). When a teacher scaffolds reading they do not make reading itself easier, instead they make it possible for the child to achieve their unique maximum potential (Bodrova & Leong, 1998). Initially the teacher will need to provide a lot of support and demonstration of the reading skills. As the child’s skill level improves, the need for teacher scaffolding gradually diminishes. Eventually the child should be able to complete the skill that is at their maximum potential without the support they previously needed (Bodrova & Leong, 1998). It is highly important that teachers give children strategies. An example of scaffolding when teaching reading is when a child comes to an unfamiliar word, rather than tell the child the word, the teacher may scaffold their learning through prompting the use of decoding strategies such as pictorial cues, initial letter cues or meaning cues.

Scaffolding can be beneficial for children who are emergent readers (Bodrova & Leong, 1998). It is important to highlight that there must be continuity of scaffolding between the home and school for the children to achieve their maximum potential with their reading (Henderson, Many, Wellborn & Ward, 2002). Scaffolding is relevant to this research as I am looking at the social interactions of a range of people in a child’s life such as their parents, family, teachers who are more knowledgeable peers. This will follow with an investigation of how these social interactions support children’s learning and reading outcomes.
2.8 Teacher-Child Activities to Develop Reading

2.8.1 Play and social interactions in reading development.

There are many different ways of defining the term play (Cook, 1997). Play can be referred to as common activities that people engage in, which motivates them to develop learning through sustained social relationships. By interacting in play based activities people can increase their knowledge and skills (Cook, 1997). Vygotsky’s (1966) belief is that play is a part of human development that becomes a socially based way of learning as of preschool age. During this time children can make advances across their whole development by expressing themselves through their play and social interactions (Vygotsky, 1966). Adding to this is the idea that communication including verbal speech can be developed through children’s play (Salen & Zimmerman, 2006). This can occur through the exchange of simple sentences whereby children can start to comprehend literal as well as abstract speech and sounds. It is difficult to write what play is, but it can be summarised as an activity that the engager knows is not reality or serious but absorbs the child’s attention (Caillois, 2006). The significance of play on children’s understanding of the social and cultural world around them is important, which cultural-historical theory believes is linked to improved reading development (Caillois, 2006).

It is claimed that “play enhances learning and development for children of all ages, cultures and domains” (Packer Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002, p. 1). This statement is similar to the theory of Vygotsky’s (1978) cultural-historical theory, to which this study is closely related. The cultural-historical theory follows the beliefs that play and social interactions with adults or peers who were specialized in an area is the key
to children’s cognitive development (Talay-Ongan, 2004). This includes the use of social dialogue between the child and other more knowledgeable people to guide them towards understanding culturally significant activities. Much of the literature agrees that play is essential for the positive development of cognitive skills including reading (Talay-Ongan, 2002; Packer Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002; Berk, 2004; MacNaughton, 2003; Kirova & Bhargava, 2002). There are different ways that teachers can support children’s reading development through activities including shared and oral reading, storytelling, acting and dramatization, music and rhythm (Branscombe & Taylor, 2000; Craig, Hull, Haggart & Crowder, 2001; Morrow, O’Connor & Smith, 1990).

Storytelling is the concept of reading stories aloud to children (Morrow, O’Connor & Smith, 1990) and play through storytelling and dramatisation can have a positive impact on children’s reading development (Craig et al., 2001). It is highlighted that storytelling advances comprehension skills and also has an association with academic success (Craig et al., 2001). There is an emphasis that students with language and learning difficulties in particular can show significant improvements in their reading skills through storytelling (Craig et al., 2001). Storytelling is important to children’s reading success as it provides the child with support during their period of transition towards independent reading (Morrow, O’Connor and Smith, 1990).

There has been a clear correlation between early readers – those who read prior to commencing school – and children who have been exposed to frequent storytelling (Morrow, O’Connor & Smith, 1990). Storytelling and dialogue are social and cultural ways of teaching children (Huffaker, 2004). This said, children’s independent reading skills could flourish through exposure to storytelling. Children who are read to from a young age can become rich storytellers followed with
improved reading and speaking skills in middle childhood. As children engage with adults during storytelling this is also an opportunity for their social and emotional skills to develop and mature (Craig et al., 2001).

Reading stories together with a child is an activity that can lead to positive outcomes in children’s reading (Aram & Biron, 2004). This can be achieved through joint reading or shared book reading. Aram and Biron (2004) looked into promoting reading in children through the introduction of a joint reading program where children would participate in joint reading activities with a teacher on a regular basis. There were other related activities such as card matching games, drawing, making clay models and verbal conversations that the children were allowed to play throughout the implementation of the program. The results showed that joint reading and the social and cultural interactions that took place between the adults and children improved children’s results. There is a connection between joint reading with mothers and children and children’s reading success (Ninio, 1983). Through the social interaction and scaffolding from the adults, there was a specific increase in children’s comprehension. Shared reading is another strategy that has been seen to have pleasing influences on children’s reading outcomes (Berk, 2004). Shared reading is an opportunity for the child to imitate the adults reading and learn from them through their expression and tone for instance (Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar & Harris, 2000). It is also an excellent opportunity for parents or teachers to interact with the child and for them to practice their reading skills through the social interactions (Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar & Harris, 2000). Furthermore, this explicit attention provides children with an opportunity to improve their phonemic awareness. Shared reading is important in the development of reading in children as the modelling of reading by an adult followed by the opportunity for the child to
practice reading aloud can improve oral fluency in the long term (Shinn, Good, Knutson, Tilly & Collins, 1992).

Once children have graduated to become independent readers the next step is to become skillful readers and regular oral reading is important in this stage of reading development (Fuchs, Fuchs & Hosp, 2001). This includes the child reading aloud to an adult or other more knowledgeable person. By engaging in oral reading with an adult, the child is able to refine their oral reading fluency and expression (Fuchs, Fuchs & Hosp, 2001). Consistent oral reading with a child can have a lasting positive effect on their reading achievements (Shinn et al., 1992). Oral reading can be a social activity through verbal communications between the adult and child. This fits in with Vygotsky’s theory and can lead to the child reaching their maximum potential through social scaffolding from the guidance of the adult (Shinn et al., 1992). Engaging children in regular oral reading practice is essential to the development of children’s fluency (Rasinski, 2006). Fluency is crucial to successful reading development as it can influence the emergent reader’s comprehension of texts and their overall reading skills (Rasinski, 2006).

The creative arts such as acting, music and rhythm can be beneficial towards children’s reading development (Weinberger, 1998; Schellenberg, 2011; Cutler, 1994; Fleming, 2009). Incorporating drama into literacy can be a positive way of enriching the language that children use as well as being enjoyable at the same time (Royka, 2002). Drama is a strategy for supporting children who are learning to read (McMaster, 1998). It is believed to encourage growth in children’s decoding, fluency, vocabulary and syntactic knowledge. It is an opportunity for children to speak and listen with peers. Dramatisation leads to social interactions and the
development of many skills that contribute to a child’s reading outcomes (McMaster, 1998). Regular music exposure and instruction in music listening has a link to higher reading scores in emergent readers than those who do not receive musical exposure (Weinberger, 1998). Furthermore, music can have a positive effect on a child’s cognitive system and learning memory, which both have a direct connection with reading skills. Children who attend regular musical lessons including voice and keyboard lessons have shown improvements in their IQ scores over time (Schellenberg, 2011). Children who are taught to listen for musical sound discrimination have demonstrated a superior ability to differentiate phonemic sounds and pitch in their first year of school and have higher reading outcomes (Lamb & Gregory, 2006). Rhythm can also be influential in reading development (Cutler, 1994). Some of the ways rhythm can facilitate reading development includes segmenting an unfamiliar word by breaking it up into syllables to decode it through clapping the syllables in a rhythmic pattern. Another is listening to the rhythm of the way that someone reads and then giving a child the opportunity to copy this. Chanting the spelling of words, syllables, blends and sounds in words including graphs and digraphs in a rhythmic way can help children develop their reading and decoding skills (Fleming, 2009). As a result of the interactions children have with those around them including teachers, parents, family members and peers this will influence the methodology as I am looking at play, ZPD, scaffolding and social interactions that influence reading development in children. The methodology will look into how children are supported to move to a higher zone with their reading skills.
2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the importance of reading for young children, looking into the facilitators and barriers that can influence their reading development. There has been a focus on Vygotsky’s cultural-historical approach to reading development. There has been a highlight on the ZPD, scaffolding and the influence play and related activities have on children’s reading development. The next chapter covers the methodology that was used for the research.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the methodology that was followed in the research process. It explores the paradigm of a mixed-method research and the approaches used in participant recruitment, data collection and analyses processes. The chapter concluded with information on ethical considerations that were followed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants during the times they were involved in the research.

3.2 Mixed-Method Research Approach

A research paradigm is “a perspective based on a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that are held by a community of researchers” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 29). This study was approached through two research paradigms – positivist and interpretivist paradigms. A positivist paradigm relies on quantitative data (Howe, 1992). Moreover, this paradigm is premised on the idea that there is knowledge to be objectively discovered. In this perspective the ontology is that there is one true answer for a question. The second approach that was used in this research is qualitative research, which is based on interpretivism and constructivism (Walsham, 1995). The ontology of this paradigm is that there can be multiple answers for a question by conceptualizing the problem from different angles. An interpretive research approach to data collection seeks to discover the perspectives of human thoughts through the use of instruments such as open-ended questionnaires, observations and interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This
connects with the cultural-historical theory as it focuses on social interactions between people as well as their perspectives (Sawyer, 2009). Similarly this study seeks to discover how parents perceive The Fleming Effective Teaching Model through the use of open-ended questionnaires. The interpretivist paradigm is also useful in analysing children’s reading performance through observations of children’s reading. As this study seeks multiple answers to the research questions a mixed method design was used.

A mixed-method research design is the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods in a study that seeks to find answers from a number of different perspectives (Johnson, Onwuebuzie & Turner, 2007). A misleading dichotomy is sometimes created between quantitative and qualitative data when in fact there can be overlap and the use of both approaches in a study, which can strengthen and enhance a study (Wellington, 2000). Each of these research approaches has their own place in research; however, the use of two different approaches combines to broaden our understanding of a particular topic or issue (Johnson, Onwuebuzie & Turner, 2007). In this study, reading and parents’ perspectives about reading is being focused on.

This study used a mixed-method research design for various reasons. Using a mixed-method paradigm enables the researcher to explore complex questions. Reading development, for example can be best understood by looking at it from different perspectives (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997). Furthermore, using qualitative and quantitative research approaches can strengthen the validity of findings. In this regard, combining these two methods deepens our understanding of whether the Fleming Effective Teaching Model has a positive influence on children’s reading.
outcomes and how parents perceive this approach to the teaching of reading (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997).

3.3 Research Setting

This study took place at an independent school in the Southeastern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. The school is one of the largest in Australia and includes students from kindergarten to secondary school. Sandwood College has a student population of nine hundred and fifty and a teaching staff of one hundred. The school was established in 1892 with the school motto being ‘Lift up your Hearts’. The study was conducted across the three Prep classes as this is where fundamental reading skills are taught.

3.4 Participants

There were a total of 36 participants in this study. Of these 26 were Prep children and 10 were their parents.

3.4.1 Selection of participants.

The participant selection process began by seeking written permission from the principal of Sandwood College to conduct the research with the Prep students and their parents. Once permission from the school was granted, the next step was to introduce the study at the Prep Parent Information Evening in the hall at the school where the research was conducted. During the evening parents were briefed about the nature of the study. They were informed that participation was voluntary with no disadvantages to the child if they and their child did not participate. At the
information night the three Prep classroom teachers, the school principal and the parents of the pupils in the 2011 Prep group were present. After the briefing, parents interested in participating were invited to collect an Explanatory Statement and Consent form. The Explanatory Statement included detailed information about the study. The Consent form provided information on what participants were consenting to, as well as the contact details of the researcher for any parents wishing to make contact. Parents and students who wished to participate in the study then returned their completed forms to their classroom teacher.

The school where the research has been undertaken is an independent school where all teachers are required to have a four-year bachelor degree to teach at the school. Teaching staff must also have teaching accreditation from the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) to teach at the school. All teachers are required to undertake regular professional development both internally and externally to the school. The school is where the researcher is a member of staff.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

A mixed-method research approach requires data collection that is a combination of quantitative data, which is numerical and qualitative data that includes subjective views of the participants (Kervin et al., 2006). For this research the quantitative data were collected using the letter identification, which was collected four times, reading levels, which were collected eight times and reading the high frequency Magic 100 Words assessments which were collected weekly, all over a twelve month period. The qualitative data were collected using observations of the participants throughout the year and the questionnaire was sent home at the conclusion of the year.
3.5.1 Tools for gathering quantitative - reading data.

The reading skills of the children participating in this study were recorded using three types of reading tools to gather quantitative data. A supporting researcher collected the data. The first tool was Nelley and Smith’s (2000) PM Benchmark Reading Kit. This kit is a bound folder that has books to assess reading in emergent readers. Each book has a piece of paper with the same words as in the book for the teacher to record the child’s progress as they are reading. During this data collection method, the child was provided with one of the books that they must read independently. Whilst they were reading, the teacher used the piece of paper to record correct reading, errors and self-corrections the child made as they read. The books are ranked on a scale level of 1-30 starting at easy and moving to more challenging books. To master a level the child must also answer between three and five questions related to the book to demonstrate their comprehension of the text. The Victorian state benchmark is Level 5 for the end of Prep. This tool has been validated by the state government of Victorian and is widely used across primary schools in Victoria (Cengage, 2012).

The second quantitative tool for measuring reading skills was the Magic 100 Words. This is a Victorian program; developed by Reiter (2002) where children learn to read the one hundred most commonly used words. The words are on sheets of coloured paper and were used as an assessment tool to measure whether the child could read these high frequency words out of the context of a book. Each time the child read all of one coloured words they were given a matching coloured certificate and a new list of coloured words. This program has been advocated for use by a number of professional associations such as MacMillan Professional Learning, Harcourt
Professional Development Team, Australian Distance Education Centre, and Australian Council for Educational Research and Quality Schools Program (Reiter, 2002).

The third tool for gathering quantitative data was Letter Identification assessment as set out by Clay (2002). The teacher pointed to each letter in the alphabet on one piece of paper and the child was tested on whether they knew the name of the letter, the sound it makes and a word that has that sound in it. The results were recorded on a separate piece of paper.

3.5.2 Tools for gathering qualitative data – observations.

Observations were one of the qualitative ways that data were collected for analysis in this study. Observations were used as a process to identify participants in their learning environment and record their behaviours (Kervin et al., 2006). In this study I used naturalistic observations as the observations took part in the natural context (Berk, 2004) where reading is taught, which is the children’s Prep classroom. It was important that the observations were conducted in the classroom so the observations could reflect the participants’ everyday behaviours. The observations were recorded using a checklist filled in by the classroom teacher after the end of their children’s first year of school. The observational checklist was used as a means of learning what the teachers saw as the children’s strengths and areas for improvement.
3.5.3 Tools for gathering qualitative data – open-ended questionnaires.

There are a number of different ways questionnaires can be designed and administered such as one-shot designs, longitudinal studies or cross sectional designs (Kervin et al., 2006). The questionnaires used in this study were one-shot design as they were only administered on one occasion. The questionnaires were two pages long and consisted of seven questions. Under each question space was provided for participants to record their answers. At the top of the page were the research questions and a brief piece of information about myself. Open-ended questionnaires are an ideal way of collecting data that seeks the opinions, views and thoughts of people on a particular topic and was therefore used as a method of collecting qualitative data from the parents in this study (O’Toole and Beckett, 2010). Open-ended questionnaires are a way of asking for written information from a group of people (Kervin et al. 2006). The aim here was to seek parents’ views on the Fleming Effective Teaching Model and the influence it had on their children’s reading outcomes. The questionnaires also looked at what parents perceived as other influences on children’s reading outcomes during their first year of school.

3.5.4 Data collection procedures.

The data collection process was undertaken over a nine-month period and included the 27 Prep children participating. The children were given three reading pretests, which included a letter identification checklist (see Appendix 4), a reading level assessment (see Appendix 6) and the Magic 100 Words assessment (see Appendix 8). These assessments tools were already in use by the school at the commencement
of their schooling in Prep. Each child spent time with another teacher who completed the three assessments on them during the first two weeks of school. After this, Fleming’s (2009) Fleming Effective Teaching Model, which uses explicit teaching, was implemented. Letters of the alphabet and the Magic 100 Words were taught explicitly and this was supported by intensive daily flash card sessions. Children read letters, graphs, digraphs and blends with teacher guidance. Each day as a class the children would read through the Magic 100 Words and practiced sounding them out, segmenting and blending them.

The class also participated in daily literacy activities, which included blending, segmenting and chunking nonsense and unfamiliar words. This is to teach children to apply reading rules into unfamiliar words (Fleming, 2009). Each week the children spent 10 minutes reading one-on-one with their teacher. This included reading through a weekly reader complete with a set of high frequency words that appear in the book and reading through a list of words taken from the Magic 100 Words. This continued throughout the year. During the teaching times and one-on-one reading sessions, the teachers observed the children’s reading behaviours and filled in an observation checklist. The children also borrowed readers from the class set. These books have various levels ranging from 0 to 30 and could be changed over at any time.

Assessments were taken on a regular basis throughout the year to monitor children’s progress. This included letter identification assessments four times throughout the year, reading level assessments eight times throughout the year and Magic 100 Words reading assessments weekly on their individual reading day.
After the assessment data were collected the results were shown and explained to the parents during the final parent teacher interview of the year. The next step in the research involved giving parents the open-ended questionnaires to take home and complete (see Appendix 8). The questionnaire asked parents to reflect on their child’s reading skills and the effects the Fleming Effective Teaching Model had upon their child throughout the year. These were returned to the researcher during the following week.

### 3.5.5 Triangulation.

To increase the validity and improve the reliability of the results in this study the phenomena known as triangulation was used. This was achieved through the use of multiple methods to explore the same issue and cross-referencing the results (Jick, 1979). Furthermore, it is to minimise the possibility of bias by collecting the same information data but in multiple different ways. In this study there were three methods, which included questionnaire interviews of parents, observations of the children reading and the reading assessment tools including letter identification, Magic 100 Words and reading levels.

### 3.6 Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected for this study are illustrated in the diagram below.
Data collection

Data analysis of qualitative data can begin before the final collection of all data, whereas data analysis for quantitative data must commence only after results are all collected (O’Toole and Beckett, 2010). The results of the PM Benchmarks kits are quantitative and I have used an interval scale as my means of measurement. The results of the Letter Identification test and the Magic 100 Words also fit into this type of analysis as their scales start at zero and the results go up in equal increments (Kervin et al., 2006). I calculated the mean and standard deviation from the data. With quantitative data it is important to summarise data, to show the relationships between the variables, what the similarities and differences are whilst also testing for significance (Kervin et al., 2006).
For my anecdotal observations, I have looked over them during the course of the research (Kervin et al, 2006). Next, I categorized them and once I became familiar with the sort of data I was collecting I made some preliminary interpretations to seek reoccurring themes and began to categorize my findings. The final stage was the synthesis of data and during this stage I noted the relationships and how they match with my quantitative data.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues can arise in studies where humans are involved and especially vulnerable humans such as young children, hence it was important that the children’s rights were protected and no one was exploited (Flewitt, 2005). It is imperative to show respect for participants at all times when collecting data and follow correct ethical protocol (Fisher, 1993). During this study ethical conduct as well as the safety and wellbeing of the participants was paramount at all times. There were a number of ethical guidelines that were followed to ensure this.

Prior to the commencement of the research and data collection process, an application was submitted to the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) seeking permission for the research. After answering all of the questions to fulfill the MUHREC’s requirements approval to conduct research with children was granted (see Appendix 1). It is important for researchers to ensure participants’ anonymity has been respected (Flewitt, 2005). In this study measures were taken to do this by using pseudonyms for the names of the school and the participants. Ethical standards also recognize that participants’ confidentiality is protected by the researcher (Flewitt, 2005) and that the data collected is kept in a
confidential location (Faulkner, 2004; Fisher, 1993). The data collected in this research is stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office and for a period of five years before it will be destroyed. Participants, including parents and children, were informed about the nature of the research and they gave their consent to indicate their involvement before the research began.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the mixed-method approach using quantitative and qualitative data collection processes. These approaches were used to collect data through reading results, observations and questionnaires. Information about participants and the ways they were selected was also discussed, including the methods of data analysis. This was followed by the ethical considerations that were taken into account during this study. The next chapter is a comprehensive presentation and analysis of the results.
Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative analysis of the Letter Identification, Magic 100 Words, Reading Levels and observation checklist is presented first followed by the qualitative analysis of the interview responses. The data analysis is informed by Vygotsky’s cultural-historical framework. All results have been organized, classified and summarized in a deidentified form.

4.2 Background Information

4.2.1 Background information on participants.

Table 4.1 provides background information about the participants. There were 36 participants altogether and of these 26 were children and 10 were parents. At the time of data collection for this study, the children were in Prep, which is the first year of school in Victoria, Australia and their mean age was 5.8 years. There were 13
male and 13 female child participants. The 26 children have been coded Child A to Child Z. Child B, Child C, Child D and Child N have been diagnosed with speech and language difficulties. Each of them attended weekly speech therapy and language support with a Speech Therapist. Child D and Child N had extra support of an Integration Aid for 8 hours per week during literacy and numeracy time. Child A missed out on 6 weeks of school time throughout the year due to their family circumstances. Eight of the children were ESL (English as a Second Language) students and spoke a range of other languages at home including Vietnamese, Chinese and Hindi. These participants were Child B, Child D, Child E, Child F, Child H, Child J, Child V and Child W.

In this study there were ten parents who participated. At the collection of the questionnaire data the parents’ average age was 37 years. There were seven male and three female parent participants. Of the parent participants, the highest level of education held by two parents were postgraduate university qualifications, four held undergraduate university qualifications, a further three held a school leavers’ certificate and ran family businesses, and one was a stay at home parent having completed Year 10. The ten parents were all coded from Parent A to Parent J. Two of the parents spoke English as a second language; these were Parent A and Parent B.

4.2.2 Literacy timetable.

At the start of the year the Prep children undertake an intensive three week program called The Jolly Phonics to learn the letters and sounds in the alphabet. This is revised regularly throughout the year. At the conclusion of this program the children move into the regular literacy plan.
Table 4.2

The Fleming Effective Teaching Model daily literacy plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (am)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:50 – 9:15</td>
<td>Spelling Mastery Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 – 9:30</td>
<td>Intensive Flash Card Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 – 10:00</td>
<td>Explicit Teaching (I do, We do)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:30</td>
<td>Independent Work (You do)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 outlines the daily literacy plan that occurs in Prep. It begins with the Spelling Mastery program where the teacher reads from a scripted book and children record answers in a workbook. Next, is the intensive flash card session. Here the children chant letters of the alphabet, graphs, digraphs, blends and the Magic 100 Words. This is followed by reading exercises including revision of segmenting, blending and chunking that are taught explicitly and revised daily. During these sessions, there is also a focus on reading nonsense words. Nonsense words are pseudo words that “obey the phonetic, prosodic, and phonotactic rules of a given language … but do not act as potential referents for meaning” (Friedrich & Freiderici, 2005, p. 1786). All flash card work is delivered using an interactive whiteboard. Following the intensive flash card sessions is the daily focus and this may include grammar, handwriting, spelling or reading. Each concept is taught explicitly using the Fleming Effective Teaching Model’s I do, We do, You do approach. ‘I do’ includes the teacher modeling the concept and giving examples of how to use it in context. ‘We do’ includes the children having a turn with teacher scaffolding. It can involve small group work with extra support. ‘You do’ involves
the children completing a related activity independently as they model their understanding. The children are also given daily reading homework. This includes Fitzroy readers and level daily take home reader books to assist with their reading development. The Magic 100 Words are completed as part of the daily literacy routine and they are also taken home to revise for homework.

4.3 Analysis of Quantitative Data

4.3.1 Letter identification.

These are the results from the Letter Identification assessments including a table, two figures and a comprehensive analysis of the data. They illustrate the development the children showed throughout the year in their recognition of letters and ability to match the letters to the sounds they make.
Outline in Table 4.3 are the raw scores that the children achieved on the Letter Identification assessment. The table shows the scores each child achieved out of a possible total of 52 at different points throughout the year in February, May, August and finally in November. These data were analyzed using a spreadsheet.
Illustrated in Figure 4.1 are the graphed results that the children achieved on the Letter Identification assessment taken from the spreadsheet. The February data were collected before the Fleming Effective Teaching Model, had been implemented and the other data was progressively collected throughout the children’s Prep year. The blue column indicates their scores in February, the red extended column indicates the improvement made from February to May, the green extended column indicates the improvement from May to August and the purple extended column indicates the improvement from August to November. The highest point of each column on the graph indicates the total number of letters and their corresponding sounds that the children were able to recognize at the end of the year.
Figure 4.2

Average Letter Identification results

Figure 4.2 shows the average results the children achieved from February to November on the Letter Identification assessment.

The initial pieces of data that I collected were from the Letter Identification assessment. First, the data was put into a spreadsheet and each child’s results were organized chronologically from February and finishing in November. These data can be seen in Table 4.3. Looking at the progress of the scores from February to November it can be seen that by November most children, with the exception of four, were able to name all twenty-six letters of the alphabet and identify the sound each letter makes.

This data were then put into a column graph, which is Figure 4.1. This enables us to view the numerical data easier. It can be seen that at each interval when the assessments took place the children made progress with their phonics recognition.
From this graph it is clear that most children made significant progress with their identification of letters early in the year in February and consolidation of the remaining letters occurred steadily throughout the remainder of the year. As the year progressed and the children knew most of the letters their progress with letter appears to plateau and gradually fill in the remaining gaps. Child A, Child C, Child G and Child N were the only four participants out of the twenty-six who were not able to recognize all letters and sounds by the conclusion of their first year at school. Child B, Child C and Child N underwent extensive language and speech assessments throughout the year and were diagnosed with ‘severe language disorders’. The average of the results was then calculated and can be viewed in Figure 4.2. It appears that the ESL students were not disadvantaged as these eight students were all able to recognize every letter of the alphabet and their sounds by the end of the year.
4.3.2 Magic 100 Words.

Table 4.4

Magic 100 Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>November</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child D</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child E</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child G</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child H</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child I</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child J</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child K</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child L</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>November</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child O</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child P</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Q</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child R</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child T</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child U</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child V</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child W</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child X</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Y</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Z</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 shows the numerical results of how many words each child was able to read out of a possible of 200 words from Magic 100 Words program. This data was compiled and analyzed using a spreadsheet.
Figure 4.3 illustrates the data from Table 4.4 into a graph. It represents two columns per child that gives the pre and post data collected to allow for comparisons to be made.

Magic 100 Words results from February to November
Figure 4.4

Average number of the Magic 100 Words read

Figure 4.4 illustrates the average number of Magic 100 Words the children were able to read at the eight times throughout the year when reading levels were collected.

The next piece of data that were collected was the results of the Magic 100 Words assessment. These data were collected at eight different intervals throughout the children’s Prep year. The February data were collected prior to the commencement of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model. The data collected from March to October was done throughout the year when the Fleming Effective Teaching Model was implemented and the November data was collected at the end of the year at the conclusion of the explicit teaching model in Prep.

Looking at Table 4.4 we can see that prior to the implementation of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model six of the children were about to read between zero and
two of the words. A further nine children were about to read between three and twelve. The remaining eight other children were able to read a varying number of words which range from between 32 and 70 with one outlier, Child D, who was able to read 140 of the words. Looking to the next column, November, we can see that 26 of the children had demonstrated that they were able to read all of the 200 words both in and out of context. Child N and Child Z, however, were not able to read the words and were significantly behind their peers reading 86 and 120 words respectively.

The data in this table was graphed and can be viewed in Figure 4.3. This table enables us to view each child’s results side by side to make comparisons between their pre and posttest. It highlights the difference and growth that the children made from February to November in their ability to apply their understanding of phonics and phonemes to words in and out of context. The pretest results indicate that most children only knew around fifty or fewer words at the start of the year. Throughout the year progress was clearly made, as many of these children were able to read many of the high frequency words. This graph emphasizes the gap between the children who were able to read all the words and the two children who were unable to read all of the words at the end of the year.

Figure 4.4 is a graph of the average number of the Magic 100 Words recognized. It highlights the average growth of all of the children from February to November. The graph represents the steady increase in the average level achieved between data collection. At the start of the year we can see the increase in the average number of words read between February and March tripled. As the year progressed the number of words each child was able to read increased at a gradually steadier rate.
4.3.3 Reading levels.

The children’s reading levels were taken at four intervals throughout the year. These data were compiled and ordered into a table and then graphed. The results were then compared and the average calculated.

Table 4.5

Reading level results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>November</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child E</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child G</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child H</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child J</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child K</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child L</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child O</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Q</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child R</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child T</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child V</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child W</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child X</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Y</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Z</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 is a table that shows the results of the reading level assessments at various points throughout the year. The February data were collected as pretest, the May and August data were collected progressively throughout the year and the November data were collected after the conclusion of the delivery of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model in Prep.

Figure 4.5

Reading level results

Figure 4.5 is a progress graph that represents the data collected as seen in Table 4.5. It is the results of the reading level assessments taken at different points throughout the Prep year.
Figure 4.6

Ordered reading level results

Figure 4.6 is a graph that illustrates the reading levels throughout the year ordered from the last children to achieve a reading level to the first children who achieved a reading level. The pink arrow shows the state benchmark reading level for Prep children, the yellow illustrates the Sandwood College benchmark reading level for Prep children and the green arrow highlights the Sandwood College benchmark reading level for Year 1’s.
Figure 4.7

Average reading level results

Figure 4.7 is a graph that shows the average reading levels of the Prep children throughout the year.
Figure 4.8

Benchmarks and average reading level results of Prep children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State School Prep Benchmark</th>
<th>State School Year 1 Benchmark</th>
<th>Sandwood College Prep Benchmark</th>
<th>Prep Average Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first column shows the Victorian state schools benchmark reading level for the end of Prep. This is followed by the Victorian state schools benchmark reading level for the end of Year 1, which is the same as Sandwood College’s end of Prep benchmark. The final column shows the average results for Sandwood College’s Prep class of 2011.

When I first began collecting the reading level data I entered the values into a spreadsheet, which can be seen in Table 4.5. At the conclusion of the data collection process the completed table was made into a graph, which is Figure 4.5. This graph has set out children’s improvement in their reading skills as the year progressed. Each child has a bar that represents the progress they made. The blue column shows the level the children were at prior to the commencement of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model. It can be noted that some children were not yet able to read and were therefore marked at zero. The red part of each column represents progress from
February to May, the green part of each column represents the progress made from May to October and the purple part of each column represents the progress from August to November. Looking at these results we can see that most children made progress between each time reading levels were assessed. There were some exceptions to this, which included Child C who made no progress and Child B and Child H, Child L and Child N who made minimal progress during the first interval. Some children made consistent progress throughout the year including Child A, Child I, Child P and Child Q. Some children made only slight progress in the first half of the year; however, as the year went on they appeared to have made progress at a more rapid pace. This is evident in the results of Child D, Child T and Child Y. Other children made more significant progress early on in the year and have evened out as the year went on. Examples of this can be seen in the results of Child O and Child V.

Figure 4.6 is the same data as in Figure 4.5, however, it has been arranged in a different order starting from the children who were the last to achieve a reading level to the ones who achieved a reading level first. It is interesting to note that the pink line that goes through level 5 indicates the state benchmark for reading levels for the end of Prep. In this particular cohort, six children had already achieved this level or higher in February. By May, eighteen children had reached the end of year benchmark, by August, twenty five children had reached the end of year benchmark. One hundred percent of the children achieved this level by November. Furthermore, the orange line indicates the reading level children are expected to achieve by the end of Prep at Sandwood College and Year 1 in state schools, which is level 15. In this cohort of children, twenty-two of the children had equaled or surpassed the expected level for children a year older than what they were in November. The green line
indicates the expected reading level of children at the end of Year 2 in state schools and the end of Year 1 at Sandwood College. It can be noted from Figure 4.6 that four children in this Prep group have already achieved this level of reading and comprehension.

Figure 4.8 is a graph that shows the Victorian state schools benchmarks for Prep, which is 5 and for Year 1, which is 15. The state schools benchmark for the end of Year 1 is the same as Sandwood College’s benchmark for the end of Prep. The graph illustrates how far above all of these benchmarks the Prep children in 2011 were as the average for them was 22. Looking back to Figure 4.5 and comparing the results to Figure 4.8 we can tell that twenty-three children equaled or surpassed the state school’s end of Year 1 benchmark and Sandwood College’s end of Prep benchmark. Four children, however, did not make this benchmark, these being Child B, Child C Child N and Child U. All of the children surpassed the state school Prep benchmark.
4.3.4 Reading levels compared to Magic 100 Words.

Figure 4.9

Reading levels compared to Magic 100 Words results

Figure 4.9 is a scatter graph illustrating the relationship between the reading level results and Magic 100 Words results that each child achieved at the end of their Prep year. This graph highlights that most children, with the exception of two, were able to read all two hundred of the Magic 100 Words. It is interesting to note that it also shows there were a varying degree of reading levels achieved by students who were able to read the same words out of context on the Magic 100 Words sheets. There was even one student who had a reading level equal to or higher than eight other children, however, this child was not able to read all of the Magic 100 Words and read approximately only one hundred of the words. There was a clear outlier child
who had the lowest reading level and number of Magic 100 Words they were able to read.

### 4.3.5 Observation checklist.

Table 4.6

Observation checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shows increased willingness to read</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates an increased phonological awareness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognises taught phonics in unfamiliar words</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognises taught digraphs in unfamiliar words</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decodes unfamiliar words using knowledge of taught digraphs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognises taught high frequency words in unfamiliar texts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows an increased ability to blend unfamiliar words</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates directionality by tracking from left to right and top to bottom of the page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows increased fluency when reading familiar and unfamiliar texts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 is the observation checklist as filled out by the Prep teachers based upon their observations of their students throughout their Prep year.
Figure 4.10

Observation checklist

Figure 4.10 is a bar graph created from spreadsheet data as seen in Table 4.6. The Prep teachers filled out an observation checklist for each child after the collection of the Letter Identification, Magic 100 Words and Reading Levels data. The observation checklists were tallied and analysed using a spreadsheet. They were then sorted into a bar graph. The total number of results for each observation criteria was calculated. All of the observation checklist results have a strong skew towards ‘Always’, which are the positive reading behaviours. This can be seen, for example, in the following points ‘Recognizes taught phonics in unfamiliar words’, ‘Recognizes taught digraphs in unfamiliar words’ and ‘Shows an increase ability to
blend unfamiliar words.’ The high number of ‘Always’ responses to these three observations also indicate that children are showing the ability to apply the skills they have learnt to unfamiliar words. The teachers observed that all of the children were able to ‘Demonstrate[s] directionality by tracking from left to right and top to bottom of the page.’ The teachers observed that one child for each of the following observation criteria’s ‘Never’ showed the ability to ‘Decode[s] unfamiliar words using knowledge of taught digraphs’ and ‘Recognise[s] taught high frequency words in unfamiliar texts.’ Between zero and two children were observed ‘Sometimes’ completing the reading behaviours. Between zero and six children were observed ‘Usually’ engaging in various reading behaviour.

4.4 Analysis of Qualitative Data

4.4.1 Interview questions.

The interview questions were distributed to the parents of the Prep children who participated in the study and were asked to provide qualitative responses to seven questions. The first of these was seeking to find out how parents thought their child had progressed with their reading skills throughout Prep. There were an overwhelming number of parents who expressed pleasing perceptions of their child’s reading skills.

“He has made a big progress with his reading skills throughout Prep.” (Parent A)

“Very well, great improvement” (Parent B)
“I’m very happy with it. It’s undeniable that he’s made significant progress from where he was at the start of the year.” (Parent E)

Some parents were able to give some specific areas of reading that they perceived their child had made improvements in.

“…he is more able to work out challenging words” (Parent G)

“A nervous starter who is now displaying confidence in his reading” (Parent C)

The next question asked parents to give their thoughts on the Fleming Effective Teaching Model’s explicit approach to teaching. Similar to the previous question the parents expressed positive responses towards the teaching model.

“His reading has improved greatly since he participated in this” (Parent B)

“It seems to have provided our daughter with a progressive improvement…” (Parent C)

“It appears to be highly effective” (Parent G)

“It seems to have provided our daughter with a progressive improvement in confidence” (Parent J)

Other parents, however, noted that they were insufficiently knowledgeable about this style of teaching to make a valid comment.

“I don’t know much about this method” (Parent F)

“I feel I don’t know enough about it or other models to say or compare them (Parent H)
Following this question I wanted to find out if the parents thought there was a positive influence on their child’s reading and if so, on what skills was there a positive influence and improvement. All responses indicated that parents thought the Fleming Effective Teaching Model had a positive impact on their child’s reading ability.

“Yes, when he reads books and there are words he is not familiar with, he sounds out letters to work out the words.” (Parent A)

“He is more confident and able to read on his own and wants to read more often now.” (Parent B)

“Definitely, he has developed much more confidence through the repetition of the teaching model.” (Parent I)

Parents were then asked to highlight what components of reading they feel their child has excelled. They were asked to give specific areas of reading that they thought their child was able to apply. There were a high number of responses that indicated blending and segmenting as the main areas parents thought their children had improved in.

“...blending letters...” (Parents C – D and Parents G – I)

“...segmenting words...” (Parents A – E and Parents G – I)

As well as these, some parents suggested other components of reading they thought their children to have improved. These areas included visual decoding skills, sounding out words and fluency all in familiar and unfamiliar texts.
In contrast to what components of reading parents thought their children had excelled, they were then asked what components of reading they felt their children needed to improve. There were a large number of responses that indicated parents thought comprehension was an area their child needed to improve and that it was an area of worry for some parents.

“Without doubt the biggest area of concern is his comprehension.” (Parent E)

“Comprehension as he needs to look at the corresponding pictures to make meaning of a story” (Parent G)

“Sentences – understanding how to paraphrase a sentence” (Parent C)

“...comprehension of stories...” (Parent I and J)

Another component of reading that parents perceived to be an area their child needed to improve in was fluency. A number of parents recorded this as an area they would like their child to work on and improve upon.

“Fluency has improved but could probably be faster and smoother.” (Parent D)

“He could work on his fluency as he does tend to stop and start.” (Parent H)

Penultimately, the parents were asked to record factors other than the Fleming Effective Teaching Models that they thought had a positive influence in their child’s reading development throughout their Prep year. Parents gave a variety of different explanations. Some parents responded by writing of the support that children were given from home, school and other professionals as well as confidence.
“Continuous support and encouragement from his family and the his teacher at school.” (Parent B)

“Patience and positive reinforcement from his family and teacher” (Parent C)

“The teachers are very positive and encouraging to the students, which helps with the children wanting to succeed with their reading.” (Parent D)

“The invaluable support from his teacher and the school… Assistance from a teacher’s aid and ongoing speech therapy” (Parent E)

“I believe my child’s confidence has played an important role in his reading development” (Parent F)

Other parents recorded answers related to extra academic work.

“Homework and take home readers.” (Parent A)

“Rewards and routine reading.” (Parent C)

Finally parent participants were asked to record externals influence in their child’s life that they believed may have been detrimental to their child’s reading achievements. There were a high number of families that recorded ‘None’. Only one parent gave an answer other than this.

“His issues with speech development… Specifically his difficulty with auditory processing” (Parent E)
The qualitative data has presented the perspective parents of children in Prep who are being taught reading using the explicit approach of The Fleming Effective Teaching Model.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented, summarised and analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data. The next chapter is a discussion about the results and links of the key findings to the research questions.
Chapter Five: Discussion of Results

5.1 Overview

This thesis began with three questions, which are revisited throughout this chapter. The discussion aims to answer these three questions in light of the research that has been conducted. Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theoretical framework and other previous research are used to discuss and support the findings of this study.

5.2 Discussion of Results

5.2.1 The effectiveness of The Fleming Effective Teaching Model.

The first research question that was investigated, which was also the main research question was: *In what ways, if any, does the Fleming Effective Teaching Model result in improved reading related performances for students in Preparatory?* In relation to this question there were a number of ways that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model was found to improve reading related performances for students in Preparatory. One way it was found to have contributed to an improvement in reading related performances was through recognition of letters and their corresponding sounds. All of the children who participated in this study showed an improvement in their ability to recognize letters and their corresponding sounds. On the pretest no children could name all letters of the alphabet, however, on the posttest 24 out of 26 could name them all, see Table 4.3 on page 56. Child C showed considerable growth in this area starting off knowing two and finishing off knowing 49 letters and sounds.
Similarly, Child H scored nine on the pretest and was able to name all letters and sounds at the end of the year. This data appears to be largely a result of the explicit instruction of phonics that takes place as part of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model. Similar to my findings, previous studies have also found explicit teaching to be an effective way of teaching phonics to children learning to read (Pullen, Lane, Lloyd, Nowak & Ryals, 2005). The children were encouraged to relate letters of the alphabet to pictures that started with the same letter. This is supported by Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory that children learn by taking in new information and linking it to something that they already know (MacNaughton, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

When comparing the children’s results on the pretest to the results at the end of Prep it was noticeable that all children had made significant advances. This included the children with and without language and learning difficulties. Of the 26 children, 22 were able to recognize all letters and sounds of the alphabet, see Figure 4.1, page 58. Of the four other children, three presented with severe learning difficulties and one spent a significant amount of time absent from school. The results of the teachers’ observation checklist are skewed and agreed that the children were making improvements and learning to recognize phonics, graphs and digraphs in unfamiliar words, see Table 4.6, page 73. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from the parents on their perspectives about the influence the Fleming Effective Teaching Model had upon their child’s phonological awareness including recognition of letters and sounds (see pages 75-79). One parent noted: ‘my child was now able to sound out words to reach the correct word’ whilst another informed us: ‘when my child reads books, the words he is not familiar with, he sounds out each letter to work it out and that’s great’ (Parent Comments). Collectively the parents were supportive of
the model and their children’s accolades speak louder than their words. These improvements were achieved in part as a result of the explicit teaching approach that the Fleming Effective Model adopts. Previous research have also shown that the explicit teaching of letters and sounds as well as blends, segmenting and tracking of words contribute to improved reading results in young emergent readers (Podhajski, Mather, Nathan & Sammons, 2009; Pullen et al., 2005).

It is further argued that the ability to apply the knowledge of letters and phonics when reading texts is the next important step for developing readers (Graham, Pegg & Alder 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2009). It was of great importance in this study to show whether knowledge of phonics and letters transferred into an improvement in reading. This teaching model appeared to reveal its importance towards improved reading with regards to the recognition of individual, high frequency words. This can be seen in section 4.3.2 Magic 100 Words, from page 61-64. For example, at the start of the year none of the children were able to read all of the words, however, by the end of their Prep year 24 of the 26 children could read all of the words. Of the two children who did not, they were still able to read eighty-six and one hundred and twenty words each and these were children who had other language and learning difficulties (see Table 4.4, page 61). The achievements that these children made were pleasing and encouraging considering their extra challenges. These children did, however, achieve reading results that were above the Victorian state school’s expected benchmark for all Preps which is level five. The results show that in the first six months of the year the children made the biggest gains in their ability to read high frequency words (see Figure 4.4, page 63). This could be linked to the children’s similar gains over this period of time with their letter identification and phonic recognition. The children were assessed on regular intervals so that the
teachers were clear as to where each child sat in relation to the continuum of learning also known as the ZPD. This way, during learning and assessments times, the teachers were able to help scaffold the children’s learning so they were able to reach their maximum potential with this supportive social interaction (Berk, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). This is also supported by teachers’ observations that strongly indicated the Prep children were increasingly recognizing more high frequency words (see Table 4.6, page 73). As children start to recognize more letters and high frequency words it is a natural progression that their overall reading will improve including comprehension skills (Schubert, 2009: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy, 1991).

The data points out that this teaching model is efficient in contributing to an improvement in children’s overall word recognition when they read such words in the context of a book. Teachers commented through their observations that this was something they noticed occurring all of the time for most of the children by the end of the year (see Table 4.6, page 73). One teacher wrote that many of their students ‘always recognize high frequency words in unfamiliar texts’ and that they are increasingly able to ‘blend unfamiliar words’ (see Table 4.6, page 73). The explicit instruction of word recognition has been noted as an effective way for children to learn and retain high frequency words (Fleming, 2009). Of the remaining children most of them usually demonstrated this skill, however, they were still consolidating using this skill all of the time. There is a trend in the reading level results that skew towards a strong improvement in reading levels over the period of a year (see Figure 4.6 on page 67). This supports the idea that the Prep children’s word recognition in context is improving as to pass each reading level, children must be able to demonstrate their comprehension of the text before progressing to the following
level. It was also noticed in the reading level results that all of the children exceeded the Victorian state benchmark for reading levels at the end of Prep, which is five. With the exception of two children all other children reached and excelled past the Sandwood College end of Prep benchmark and the State School end of Year 1 benchmark. Those who failed to meet the standard were the children with language and learning difficulties who had the benchmark amended to cater to their needs. It was also found that five children achieved or surpassed the end of year benchmark for Year 1 children at Sandwood College (see Figure 4.6, page 67). Some parents agreed that their child was able to recognize many high frequency words when reading them in a book (Parent Comments). Parent G discussed that their child’s ‘reading had improved dramatically throughout Prep, he is more able to work out challenging words as well as read high frequency words in books’ (Parent Comments). Parent A has similar thoughts and communicated that the model was ‘excellent at assisting children to read high frequency words’ (Parent Comments).

Some parents, however, noted that even though their child was able to recognize high frequency words in context they were not able to demonstrate a level of comprehension that the parents thought matched the level of comprehension they should be demonstrating. Parent E shared that ‘without doubt the biggest area of concern is his comprehension, which stems back to his issues with speech development’ (Parent Comments). Similarly, Parent C said ‘their use of meaning ... [and] understanding of how to phrase a sentence’ (Parent Comments) was an area of focus.

It was interesting when making a comparison between the final reading level results and the final Magic 100 Words results that there appeared to be little correlation between the two. Of the children who were able to read all of the Magic 100 Words
they had a wide range of reading levels starting from fifteen ranging up to thirty. There was even one child who achieved level twenty-one, however, he was not able to proficiently read all of the Magic 100 Words by the conclusion of the year (see Figure 4.9, page 72). This suggests that even though the children were able to read many high frequency words on sheets they were not necessarily able to read them in the context of a book. Reading isolated words as oppose to reading them in a text are two different skills and do not always develop at the same time (Kress Schatz & Baldwin, 1986; Perfetti, Goldman & Hogaboam, 1979). Observations made by teachers supported this as they pointed out that in many instances children were able to recognize and read high frequency words when learnt through the Magic 100 Words program, however, they were not necessarily able to read them in an unfamiliar text (see Figure 4.9, page 72). The development of transferring reading of high frequency words into context is a skill that could still be mastered by children.

The children in this study demonstrated an improvement in their basic capability of reading a book. From the observations made by the teachers it was noted that all of the children in the study were able to demonstrate their knowledge of directionality by reading the words in a book left to right and top to bottom. This is evident in Figure 4.10 on page 74 of this thesis. In the same figure improvement was also observed in their ability to blend sounds together and from this expand and increase their fluency. These two points were also evident by the children achieving reading levels above one. This indicates that they have mastered directionality and the blending of sounds (Drucker, 2003). Throughout the year there was a noticeable improvement in the children’s confidence in their ability to read. Teachers in the classroom setting as well as parents at home observed this improvement. There was also an improvement in the children’s motivation to read. Similarly, this was also
observed and recorded through observations of parents and teachers in the respective environments. Motivation to read is a positive step for children learning to read and has been linked to improved reading results, which in turn was linked to improved self-efficacy (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

The results achieved by the children who learnt English as a second language (ESL) indicated that this explicit approach to teaching reading was imperative. Children B, D, E, F, H, J, V and W were learning English as their second language. On the pretest of letters and sounds these children were only about to recognize a minimal number of letters and their corresponding sounds. As the year progressed it was noted that all of these ESL students could recognize the letters and say their sounds accurately as seen in Table 4.3, page 57 and Figure 4.1, page 58. Similar to this was the results of the Magic Words. At the start of the year none of these students could spell all of the Magic Words, however, on the final assessment in November all of these children spelt all of these words correctly. These results can be viewed in Table 4.4 on page 61 and Figure 4.3 on page 62. Reading level results are outlined in Figure 4.5 on page 66. They tell us that only one ESL participant Child B did not reach and exceed the Sandwood College end of Prep reading benchmark. Despite this, Child B was near to the benchmark and did surpass the state benchmark by eight levels. Teacher observations noted that this child was rarely demonstrating the ability to decode unfamiliar words using digraph knowledge and blending knowledge. Previous studies have also found that explicit instruction of literacy skills to contribute to improved skills in English (Drucker, 2003; UNESCO, 2006).
5.3 Decoding Strategies

The next research question, and first sub question, that was investigated in this study was: What decoding strategies does the Fleming Effective Teaching Model help students develop and if they are developed is this associated with improved reading performance? There were five decoding strategies that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model helped students develop and subsequently appeared to be associated with improved reading performances. These were recognition of phonics, recognition of high frequency words, blending sounds, segmenting words and the use of graphs and digraphs within words. Explicitly teaching decoding strategies is important when teaching children to read so that they are aware of what cues to use when decoding new, unfamiliar texts (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008).

5.3.1 Strategy 1: Recognition of phonics.

The first decoding strategy, which contributed to children’s reading improvement, was recognition of phonics. As mentioned earlier, the children’s ability to recognize letters and match them to their sounds improved when shown individual letters as seen in the letter identification results (see Figure 4.1 on page 58). Recognition of phonics is a key to reading and decoding (Chard & Osborn, 1999). Moreover the children used this as a way of decoding words in unfamiliar texts. The teacher made observations that the children were able to sound out new words and thereby decipher them. Reading level and Magic 100 Words scores also indicated that children were able to make sense of new words by sounding them out. By transferring the explicitly taught skill of phonic recognition into reading the children are demonstrating that this decoding strategy is in fact associated with improved
reading performances. This is seen in the improvement in all children’s overall reading levels.

5.3.2 Strategy 2: Recognition of high frequency words.

The next decoding strategy that appeared to contribute to the children’s improved reading outcomes was recognition of high frequency words. As the year progressed all of the children showed an increase in their recognition of high frequency words as seen in the Magic 100 Words results (see Figure 4.1 on page 58). Results in overall reading levels rose as the children graduated to the next level of coloured words in the Magic 100 Words program. The ability to recognize high frequency words in unfamiliar texts gives children a great chance of understanding new texts (Davidov & Rappoport, 2006). As the children demonstrated they could recognize more and more high frequency words on the Magic 100 Words lists their ability to read these words in context also appeared to improve. This was noted when their reading levels started to improve after they mastered a new set of the Magic 100 Words (see Figure 4.9 on page 72). The teachers observed that most of the children in this study always demonstrated they could read known high frequency words in unfamiliar texts. There were however some children who only did this sometimes and one child who never did this (see Figure 4.10 on page 74).

5.3.3 Strategy 3: Blending sounds to make words.

Blending sounds to make words was another decoding strategy that contributed to overall improvements in reading. Children practiced blending sounds daily and revised placing them in words and nonsense words. By using flash cards of nonsense
words children learn how to blend sounds together (Fleming, 2009). The outcomes of this study showed that children’s blending skills made pleasing improvements throughout the year. Reading level and Magic 100 Words assessments required the children to blend together unfamiliar words (see Figure 4.9 on page 72). Parents and teachers of the children observed a significant improvement in their ability to blend letters together. The teachers observed a skewed distribution of children who always demonstrated the ability to blend letters in unfamiliar words to decode them correctly (see Figure 4.10 on page 74). A number of parent responses included pleasing observations that their child was able to blend sounds together in words. Parent C revealed that their child had excelled in the areas of ‘blending, segmenting [and] sounding words’ and Parent B disclosed that their child was now ‘able to sound out words to reach the correct word’. This included the ability to blending graphs as well as digraphs. The significant improvement in these results for all of the children indicate that blending was one decoding skills that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model helped to improve along with overall reading outcomes

5.3.4 Strategy 4: Segmenting words.

A fourth decoding skill for which an improvement was noticed in the child participants’ reading results was segmenting words. This activity was practiced daily as a class through regular chanting. In order to read, children need to demonstrate they can break words up into syllables and segment them (Roe, Burns & Smith, 2009). This was seen through the Magic 100 Words results, as children are encouraged to break words into syllables and use this skill to assist with decoding words, this skill improvement greatly throughout the year. The outstanding results from the reading level assessments were consistent with the children’s improved
ability to segment words. Teachers noted through their observations that the children were segmenting unfamiliar, challenging words on a regular basis to decipher them (see Figure 4.6 on page 67).

5.3.5 Strategy 5: The use of graphs and digraphs.

Finally, learning about the use of graphs and digraphs within words was another decoding strategy used in the classroom. The children learnt all the letters of the alphabet also known as graphs and then started to show improvements in their overall reading levels of unfamiliar texts as seen in the reading level results (see Table 4.3 on page 57). This can be noted as most children demonstrated knowledge of most, if not all of the letters and could therefore recognize graphs in words. Teachers noted that children increasingly started to sound out words using digraphs and not simply individual sounds (see Figure 4.6 on page 67). For instance they would say /sh/ when they came across the letters s and h together instead of /s/ and /h/ individually. Teachers also noted this when children were reading high frequency words in the context of a book and individually when reading them in the Magic 100 Words. Segmenting words into their individual sounds to assist with decoding and working out the meaning of words is an important skill for children as the endeavor to become proficient readers (Blau, Reitherler, van Atteveldt, Seitz, Gerretsen, Gobel & Blomert, 2009; Roe, Burns & Smith, 2009).

5.4 Additional Factors on Reading Outcomes

The last research question and second sub question examined in this study was: What additional factors do parents believe have a positive influence on children’s reading
performance in Preparatory besides those related to the Fleming Effective Teaching Model?

5.4.1 Positive relationships.

One theme that appeared to be reoccurring in parents’ responses was that the school and the relationship with classroom teacher was crucial in children’s reading success. Many parents wrote of their belief that the relationship their child had with the teacher had a noticeable influence on their child’s reading and overall academic progress. Parent D believed that ‘the teachers are very positive and encouraging to the students, which helps with the children wanting to succeed with their reading’ (Parent Comments) and Parent E expressed that ‘the invaluable support from his teacher and the school’ (Parent Comments) were paramount to reading success. Moreover it was discussed that positive interactions with their teacher meant the child felt they wanted to make their teacher proud and try harder to learn the skills whereas less than positive interactions meant that parents believed their child would be less successful and driven to attend school and achieve pleasing results. It was highlighted that perhaps children’s academic success was more dependent on relationships with others than on a teaching model. In cultural-historical theoretical perspective positive social interactions with more knowledgeable people are essential when creating an enriched learning environment for children (Vygotsky, 1978). These positive interactions coupled with opportunities for play help children increase their reading knowledge and skills (Caillois, 2006). Although play is not a part of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model it is perhaps an area of focus for the future development of the model. Many parents wrote that the general school environment and learning atmosphere were significant factors in children’s classroom
performance. Additionally it was specified by parents that an environment where
children were happy, relaxed and felt a sense of belonging would lead to an increase
in reading success.

5.4.2 Family support and home environment.

Family support and home environment was another reoccurring theme parents
viewed as playing a key role in the development of each of their own child’s reading.
Parents expressed their belief that a supportive home life with stability was a crucial
contributing factor to superior reading and to overall academic success. This point
coupled with exposure to good literacy behaviours from families are contributing
factors towards improved reading outcomes in young children (Sénéchal, 2006).
One way families were viewed as supporting children was through regular
homework routines. Moreover, joint reading and shared book reading at home are
important activities that have been linked to improved reading success for young
children (Aram & Biron, 2004). Another was providing positive reinforcement of
children’s attempts and patience as they are learning new skills such as reading
(Huffaker, 2004). This is considered an important trait for parents to possess when
they are working with their children on reading skills. Finally parents thought they
could be supportive of children by giving rewards to the child for effort and attitude.
Positive feedback through rewards helps children to learn reading skills and build on
their confidence (DEECD Victoria, 2009). This encouragement, support and
interactions with children from teachers are key factors in Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-
cultural theory.
5.4.3 Building confidence.

A further factor parents believed to have a positive influence upon children’s reading outcomes was their confidence. Parents noted that children’s self-confidence appeared to have significance on their ability to attempt unfamiliar words and work through challenging texts. This can be achieved through scaffolding children’s learning through the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Parents recognized developing self-confidence as a way for children to develop the desire to read more often as they appeared to find it a rewarding and satisfying activity. They noted that this could be scaffold through positive relationships with parents and teachers.

5.5 Limitations

There were three obvious limitations to this study. The first limitation was the number of participants who took part in the study. There were twenty-six children whose reading data WERE used and ten parents who were interviewed for this research. Due to the small sample size this study cannot be generalized to all Prep children in Victoria or Australia. It did not, however, set out to generalize the results, but more so to learn how this teaching model using explicit teaching, is beneficial to children learning to read and if superior results were being achieved and when compared to the State School standards for Preps. The findings can be used as a guide for Prep teachers in schools to support and improve children’s reading outcomes as a supplement to other teaching models. It proved to be difficult to get a larger sample of children at this point in time because too few schools use this model.
Another limitation to this study was that it was only conducted at one school and there was no other concrete data to compare it against. As there were no results from other teaching models, comparisons could not be made. It is difficult for people to make sense of how these results stand in comparison to other schools in Victoria. It can be compared against the state benchmarks, which were significantly lower than the results that were achieved by the children in this study. Despite this limitation, it must be noted that this study’s focus was specifically on the Fleming Effective Teaching Model and how it contributes to an improvement in children’s reading skills when they are emergent readers and not so much on making comparisons to other models.

A third limitation to this study was the minimal background knowledge the parents had on the Fleming Effective Teaching Model. Many parents expressed that they felt they were unable to give educated responses to the questions asked of them, as they did not have the knowledge, training or understanding of this teaching model. The aim of questioning parents’ views was, however, to gain knowledge of their views empirically and find out their intuitive thoughts on each of their own child’s progress and not necessarily to gain a comprehensive detail of the specific details of the teaching model. Whilst a teaching model is very important for children’s academic success, many parents believed that a supportive environment at home and school together with positive relationships with parents and teachers are important influences on children’s academic success.
5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has interpreted and discussed the data collected throughout this study. The next chapter, which is the final chapter, will summarise the key findings of the research, outline future recommendations and draw the study to a close with a conclusion.
Chapter Six: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusion

6.1 Overview

This chapter summarises the key findings of the research based on the results of the study. It provides educators with recommendations for teaching reading to children in their first formal year of school with the support of other literature and past research. It also included directions for future research to improve reading capabilities of young children. The chapter concludes with final remarks regarding the findings of this study.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of The Fleming Effective Teaching Model in teaching reading to children in a co-educational school in the southeastern suburbs of Melbourne. Three main questions led the investigation. These were:

1. In what ways, if any, does the Fleming Effective Teaching Model result in improved reading related performances for students in Preparatory?

2. What decoding strategies does the Fleming Effective Teaching Model help students develop and if they are developed is this associated with improved reading performance?
3. What factors do parents believe have a positive influence on children’s reading performance in Preparatory other than those related to the Fleming Effective Teaching Model?

The opening chapter of this study presented an introduction to the study including background information on the topic of research, my personal motivations for conducting this study, a statement of the problem in this field where I established a gap in the current literature and the purpose of this research. It concluded with information about the significance of the study and an explanation of the terms that have been used. The literature review chapter was divided into two parts. The first part looked at the importance of reading and then funneled down to the facilitators and barriers that children face when they are learning to read. Part B focuses on the theoretical framework, Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory and its approach to reading. This included the zone of proximal development and scaffolding as well as various activities that help children to develop their reading skills were explored. The role of play and social interactions in supporting children’s reading was also examined. This study used qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect data. There were a total of 36 participants in this study. Of these 26 were Prep children and 10 were their parents. The research took place in the three Prep classrooms of an independent school in the southeastern suburbs of Melbourne. The data was collected through observations, questionnaires, and reading data was collected through PM Benchmark reading records, Magic 100 Words and Letter Identification assessments and key findings were made.
6.3 Key Findings

There were a number of key findings that emerged from the data gathered.

1. There were different ways in which this teaching method was found to contribute to an improvement in reading related performances such as increased recognition of letters and their corresponding sounds. This supports the idea that the ability to apply the knowledge of letters and phonics when reading texts is the next important step for developing good readers (Graham, Pegg & Alder 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 2009).

2. The findings point out that this teaching model is efficient in contributing to an improvement in children’s overall word recognition for words in the context of a book which was evident in the way the children in this study demonstrated an improvement in their basic capability of reading a book.

3. There were five decoding strategies that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model helped students develop and subsequently appeared to be associated with improved reading performances. These were recognition of phonics, recognition of high frequency words, blending sounds, segmenting words and the use of graphs and digraphs within words. This was found to corroborate the view that explicitly teaching decoding strategies is important when teaching children to read so they are aware of what cues to use when decoding new, unfamiliar texts (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008).

4. Family support and home environment was another reoccurring theme parents viewed as playing a key role in the development of each of their own child’s reading.
5. A further factor parents believed to have a positive influence upon children’s reading outcomes was their confidence.

6.4 Recommendations Based on Key Findings

Based on these key findings from the study, several recommendations have been made for educators to further enhance the reading skills of children in Prep.

6.4.1 Explicit teaching should be incorporated into reading programs.

1. The first recommendation is for teachers of Prep children to engage in the explicit teaching of letters and words to improve their children’s reading skills. The Fleming Effective Teaching Model instructs these skills explicitly through daily flash card sessions of letters, high frequency words, weekly spelling words and nonsense words. Similar to this teaching model, other studies have also found that daily flash cards contribute to an improvement in children’s reading skills (Buckley & Bird, 1993; Fleming, 2009; Neuman & Roskos, 2005). To enhance reading development this study found that it is also important for Prep teachers to employ daily explicit teaching of tracking, blending and segmenting with their class to support their children’s reading. Throughout this study the Prep teachers also went through a daily routine of tracking blending and segmenting activities with the children. The results of this study support these daily tasks as do past studies that agree on the importance for teachers to set aside time each day to partake in these activities (Fleming, 2009; Lorch et al., 2010). Furthermore, these recommendations are
supported by the fact that these results are significantly better than those of state schools, which adopt a different approach to teaching reading.

6.4.2 Explicit teaching and decoding strategies.

2. A second recommendation is to explicitly teach decoding strategies. The first is the explicit instruction of blending sounds together to decode what an unfamiliar words is. This activity was revised and modeled by the teacher daily as part of the teaching model during the flash card chanting sessions. It appears that an influential reason for the improvements in the children’s ability to blend sounds to make words was due to the teaching model, as observations by the teachers inform us that the children showed ‘an increase ability to blend unfamiliar sounds’. Historically, other studies have found similar results about repetitively teaching reading skills regularly when working towards improving children’s reading skills (Farrell, 1997; Fleming, 2009; Graham, Pegg & Adler, 2007, Pheloung & King, 1992). Other reading skills such as the tracking of words, directionality and segmenting words should be taught and revised explicitly on a daily basis. Teacher observations were that some children were ‘always’ demonstrating these skills when reading familiar and unfamiliar texts with some other children ‘usually’ demonstrating these skills.

Reading level data, as seen in Figure 4.6 on page 67 highlight that the children were able to apply these skills into the context of a book and also comprehend texts. Therefore, it is recommended that such skills be taught explicitly and on a regular basis, if not daily. This is because the findings of this study have indicated that children demonstrated the skills of breaking words into graphs and digraphs when decoding them and sounding them out. This skill was revised daily with the weekly
spelling words. This is effective when the teacher highlights the graphs and digraphs in words and models the sounding of words out, based on these. During the ‘We Do’ and ‘You Do’ part of this explicit teaching model the children worked together and then independently found the graphs and digraphs and used them to help decode the weekly spelling words. Teachers wrote of their observations that children were using these skills more often throughout the year. Parents also noted that these skills helped children ‘to figure out more challenging words’.

6.4.3 Supporting children with learning difficulties.

3. From the results of the children in this study who have learning difficulties, it is recommended that teachers use explicit instruction for teaching reading to children with learning and language difficulties. Child B, Child C, Child D and Child N each have speech and language difficulties. The letter identification results and reading level results of these children can be viewed on Table 4.3 on page 57 and Table 4.5 on page 65. These children all started off with pretest results that were generally lower than their peers, however, the results in reading they achieved at the conclusion of the year had dramatically improved and appeared to be similar to that of their peers who did not have such obstacles to overcome. Though two of these children had the extra support of an integration assistant and the others attended weekly support sessions outside the classroom, through the application of explicit teaching they were able to close the reading gap between them and their peers. Other research has concluded that for children with learning difficulties extra support teamed with explicit teaching contributes to pleasing reading outcomes (Farrell, 1997; Graham, Pegg & Adler, 2007, Pheloung & King, 1992).
6.4.4 Forming partnerships.

4. A fourth recommendation is for parents and teachers to forge a partnership between themselves and the children when working towards improving children’s reading skills. This study found that there is a strong belief from parents that when they work in collaboration with their child’s teachers it helps their child to achieve higher reading results than if they were not working together. Parent B shared their belief that ‘continuous support and encouragement from his family and his teacher at school’ have helped improve his reading. Moreover, Parent C communicated that ‘patience and positive reinforcement from his family and teacher’ have been crucial to his reading development. Previous researches have supported these findings and highlight the importance of a strong parent-teacher relationship in terms of the influence on children’s cognitive development and also their social and emotional development (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). This draws our attention to the view that whilst parents believe an effective teaching model is important in children’s learning so too are the rapport with those closest to them. Some suggestions to make this effective include regular meetings between teachers and parents, continual positive encouragement from the teacher towards each child, daily contact between parents and teachers perhaps through the means of a diary as well as reading time between children and teachers (Parent Comments). Vygotsky’s (1968) cultural-historical theory discusses the importance of positive relationships for instance between children and their parents and their teachers. These positive relationships can help children scaffold children’s learning needs and support them through their ZPD.
6.4.5 Supporting ESL students with explicit teaching.

5. A fifth recommendation for future teaching is that teachers look at using explicit teaching for reading skills when teaching children who were learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Eight of the children were ESL (English as a Second Language) students and spoke a range of other language at home including Vietnamese, Chinese and Hindi. These participants were Child B, Child D, Child E, Child F, Child H, Child J, Child V and Child W. They all had limited exposure to English prior to starting Prep and all spoke another language at home with little or no English being spoken. These children’s results can be viewed in Table 4.5 on pages 62-63. The initial results indicated that they had minimal reading skills, however, their final results show they capable, independent readers who have not only demonstrate the skills of decoding words but also of comprehending their meaning. Therefore the explicit teaching model is encouraged to be a part of the reading education of young emergent ESL readers. Explicit teaching of reading and decoding strategies has previously been found to have a positive influence on ESL children’s reading results (Drucker, 2003).

6.4.6 Developing a play-based approach to teaching reading.

6. A final recommendation is for the Fleming Effective Teaching Model to look into incorporating play based activities into its curriculum model. This is a point that other literature on reading has found to be important in the development of emergent readers (Cook, 1997; Branscombe & Taylor, 2000; Neuman & Roskos 1992; Vygotsky, 1966). Although play is not a part of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model it could be a way to further enhance this model that has already shown it plays...
a key role towards exemplary reading results in young children as seen throughout the results in Chapter 5. The social interaction that takes place during episodes of play is something that Vygotsky’s cultural-historical theory stresses as being important in children’s development. This is a suggestion that could be taken into account to ensure that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model stays at the forefront as leaders in educating young children.

**6.5 Directions for Future Research**

Building upon the results of this study there are avenues to explore in future studies. One option is to investigate the teaching of reading through a combination of explicit instruction as well as social, play based activities. As the results of this study have been promising and past studies have shown pleasing reading results through social interactions and play (Branscombe & Taylor, 2000; Vygotsky, 1966), it would be interesting to explore what sort of outcomes occurred if the two teaching models were combined. An additional area to examine is the outcomes of ESL children when taught reading using the Fleming Effective Teaching Model. This is an area that was briefly touched upon in this study as there were children who spoke languages other than English at home, however, it would be interesting to explore this in more depth, as it is an area that specifically the Fleming Effective Teaching Model has not yet focused on. As there are a number of ESL children at Sandwood College it would be a potential platform to begin researching this area with results that are worthwhile.
6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has found that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model’s explicit approach to teaching Prep children how to read has an encouraging influence towards their reading skills. Children demonstrated they were more readily able to recognize letters, read high frequency words and hence an overall improvement in reading levels was observed. As well as overall reading skills improving after being taught explicitly, children’s decoding skills also showed improvement. These skills included blending sounds, segmenting words and the use of graphs and digraphs within words. Explicit instruction and repetition of these skills have been revealed as being an effective way of teaching children how to decoding texts and interpret meaning (Fleming, 2009). It must also be noted that whilst the teaching model plays a significant role in children’s reading skills other factors also come into the picture, most notably an important factor, is the relationships between children, their parents and their teacher with an emphasis on the importance of positive and encouraging interactions (Rodgers, 2004; Yamagata-Lynch, 2007).
Reference List


Harris, & Sass, (2007). Do teacher characteristics such as academic achievement, years of experience, or certification affect student test scores? Retrieved May 2011 from http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_teacher_effectiveness5


Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 18 August 2011
Project Number: CF11/1457 - 2011000810
Project Title: Improving children’s reading through the Fleming Effective Teaching Model
Chief Investigator: Dr Joseph Agbenyega
Approved: From: 18 August 2011 to 18 August 2016

Terms of approval
1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel): Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. Future correspondence: Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. Annual reports: Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. Final report: A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. Monitoring: Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. Retention and storage of data: The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Andrea Wills
Appendix 2: Explanatory Statement

18th April 2011

Explanatory Statement for Participants (Parents)

Title: Improving children’s reading through the Fleming Effective Teaching Model.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Andrea Wills and I am conducting a research project with Dr Joseph Agbenyega a Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a Master of Education at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis of approximately 25,000 words.

Staff research project

My name is Joseph Agbenyega and I am a Lecturer in the Department of Education at Monash University.

Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?
The participants have been chosen as they fit the area of research, that is, Prep students at the school that implements the Fleming Effective Teaching Model.

The aim/purpose of the research

The aim of this study is to find out whether the Fleming Effective Teaching Model results in improved reading related performances for children in Prep. I am conducting this research to find out whether the Fleming Effective Teaching Model results in improved reading related performances for children in Prep and if so how?

Possible benefits
When completed, this research has a significance to enhance our understanding of the possible benefits of an effective way of teaching children to read through the support of the Fleming Effective Teaching Model, which involves the explicit teaching of phonics. Further, it has a potential significance to develop teachers’ capacity and knowledge on the teaching of reading. Parents will also benefit from this study as they can learn strategies to teach their children how to read at home.

What does the research involve?
The study involves participating in reading activities for the children and a questionnaire for the parents.
**How much time will the research take?**
For the children, the reading activity will take approximately 20 minutes to complete followed by a 5 minute interview. This will be repeated eight times during the year. For the parents, responding to the questionnaires will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**Inconvenience/discomfort**
All measures will be taken to conduct the research at a time and place, which is convenient to all participants involved. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this research is voluntary. Not participating in this research will not in any way disadvantage you.

You are not under any obligation to answer all the questions if you do not wish to do so. It is not foreseen that the subject of the research will cause you any psychological distress. If however you do experience any discomfort or stress during the course of the research, you can call upon the following free counselling service whose detail is included in this explanatory statement below:

Tarryn Godfrey  
School Psychologist  
Phone: [redacted]

**Payment**
There will be no payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise.

**Can I withdraw from the research?**
Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to the questionnaire being submitted.

**Confidentiality**
The school where the research will be conducted and the participants will be given pseudonyms to manage confidentiality and anonymity.

**Storage of data**
Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**Results**
If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Andrea Wills on [redacted]. The findings are accessible for 6 months.
If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact me at:

The findings are accessible for 6 months. If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator At:

Dr Joseph Agbenyega, Lecturer (Early Childhood and Inclusive Education)  
Monash University  
Peninsula Campus  
Melbourne, Australia  
Tel:  
Email:

Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Building 3e Room 111  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800  
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052  
Fax: +61 3 9905 3831  
Email: muhrec@adm.monash.edu.au

Thank you.

Andrea Wills
Appendix 3: Consent Form

Consent Form – Parents of Prep Children

Title: Improving children’s reading through the Fleming Effective Teaching Model

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

List all procedures relevant to your data collection – delete those not applicable

I agree to complete the questionnaire about **Improving children’s reading**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

I agree to allow my child’s assessments to be used by the researcher

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

I agree to allow my child to be interviewed by the researcher about their reading

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the questionnaire will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant’s name

Signature

Date

Child’s Name:
Appendix 4: Letter Identification Checklist

**LETTER IDENTIFICATION SCORE SHEET**

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**Confusions:**

**Letters Unknown:**

**Comment:**

**Recording:**
- Alphabet response: tick (check)
- Letter sound response: tick (check)
- Word: Record the word the child gives
- IR: Incorrect response: Record what the child says

**TOTALS**

**TOTAL SCORE**

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126
Appendix 5: Magic 100 Words
# Appendix 6: Reading Level Sheet

## Reading Record

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<th>Page</th>
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| 2    | Look at me.  
     | I am reading. |   |      |            |                     |
| 4    | Look at me.  
     | I am painting. |   |      |            |                     |
| 6    | Look at me.  
     | I am singing. |   |      |            |                     |
| 8    | Look at me.  
     | I am eating. |   |      |            |                     |
| 10   | Look at me.  
     | I am drinking. |   |      |            |                     |
| 12   | Look at me.  
     | I am running. |   |      |            |                     |
| 14   | Look at me.  
     | I am climbing. |   |      |            |                     |
| 16   | Look at me.  
     | I am sliding. |   |      |            |                     |

Total
## Appendix 7: Observation Checklist

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<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shows increased willingness to read</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates an increased phonological awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognises taught phonics in unfamiliar words</td>
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<td>Decodes unfamiliar words using knowledge of taught phonics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognises taught digraphs in unfamiliar words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decodes unfamiliar words using knowledge of taught digraphs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognises taught high frequency words in unfamiliar texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows an increased ability to blend unfamiliar words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates directionality by tracking from left to right and top to bottom of the page</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows increased fluency when reading familiar and unfamiliar texts</td>
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Appendix 8: Questionnaire

Questionnaire
Focus Question: Improving children’s reading through the Fleming Effective Teaching Model.

Researcher: Andrea Wills, Monash University, Masters Student 2011

1. How do you feel your child has progressed with their reading skills throughout Prep?

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

2. What are your thoughts on the Fleming Effective Teaching Model’s explicit approach to teaching reading?

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

3. Do you feel that the Fleming Effective Teaching Model has had a positive influence on your child’s reading skills? If yes, in what ways?

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

4. What components of reading do you feel your child has excelled in? This may include blending, segmenting, use of visual decoding skills, use of meaning decoding skills, use of sound decoding skills, comprehension and fluency.

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

130
5. What components of reading do you feel your child needs to improve in? This may include blending, segmenting, use of visual decoding skills, use of meaning decoding skills, use of sound decoding skills, comprehension and fluency.

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

6. What factors other than the Fleming Effective Teaching Model, if any, do you believe have had a positive influence on your child’s reading development this year?

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

7. What factors, if any, do you believe have had a negative influence on your child’s reading development this year?

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

_____________________________________

Thank you for your time and participation in this part of the study.