# Children's emergent reading of favorite storybooks:

# A developmental study

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CHILDREN IN literate societies have been found to have knowledge about written language long before reading conventionally from print. It is suggested that they are sorting out oral and written language relationships in activities like storybook reading with parents and that what they are learning can be detected by asking them to "read" to an adult from familiar, or "favorite" books. In Study I, the emergent reading attempts of 24 children at the beginning and end of their kindergarten year (during which there was no formal instruction in reading or writing) were content-analyzed in light of theoretical considerations about general and language development. The reading attempts appeared to fall into a classification scheme with developmental properties. This scheme documented significant improvement in children's emergent reading over the kindergarten year. Study II examined reading attempts of two-, three-, and four-year-olds; each child read two books per session for four sessions spaced over a year. Children's storybook reading attempts were stable over different storybooks read in the same session. A comparison with data from Study I revealed a developmental progression across age-levels. Results are discussed in light of the need for future research in emergent literacy and of implications for parents, schools, and instructional/assessment design.

## La lecture naissante chez les enfants de leurs histoires préférées: Une étude de développement

ON A TROUVÉ que les enfants dans les sociétés lettrées ont des connaissances concernant le langage écrit bien avant la lecture conventionnelle de matériel imprimé. On suggère qu 'ils trient les rapports de langage oral et écrit dans des activités telles que la lecture d'histoires avec les parents et que ce qu'ils apprennent peut être détecté en leur demandant de "lire" à un adulte des livres familiers ou "favoris." Dans l'Etude I, les essais de lecture naissante de 24 enfants au début et à la fin de leur année de maternelle (au cours de laquelle il n'y avait pas d'instruction formelle en lecture et en écriture) ont été analysés dans leur contenu afin d'éclaircir des considérations théoriques au sujet du développement général et de la langue. Les essais de lecture semblaient s'intégrer dans un schéma de classification avec des propriétés de développement. Ce schéma documentait une amélioration significative dans la lecture naissante des enfants au cours de l'année de maternelle. L'Etude II a examiné les essais de lecture des enfants de deux, trois et quatre ans, chaque enfant a lu deux livres par session à raison de quatre sessions espacées au cours d'une année. Les essais de lecture d'histoires chez les enfants étaient stables à travers différentes histoires lues dans la même session. Une comparaison avec les données de l'étude I a révélé une progression de développement à travers les niveaux d'âge. Les résultats sont en cours de discussion afin d'éclaircir le besoin pour la recherche future du niveau lettré naissant et les implications pour les parents, les écoles et le projet instruction/évaluation.

## El surgimiento de la lectura de libros de cuentos favoritos en los niños: Un estudio evolutivo

SE HA ENCONTRADO que los niños de sociedades alfabetizadas tienen conocimientos sobre el lenguaje escrito mucho antes de leer material impreso de la manera convencional. Se ha

sugerido que los niños están estableciendo la relación entre el lenguaje oral y el escrito mediante actividades como la lectura de libros de cuentos con los padres y que lo que ellos están aprendiendo se puede detectar pidiéndoles que le "lean" a un adulto de un libro conocido o de un libro "favorito." En el Estudio I se analizó el contenido del surgimiento de los intentos de 24 niños por leer durante los inicios y finales de su año en el jardín infantil (*kindergarten*) según consideraciones teóricas de la evolución en general y la del lenguaje. Los intentos por leer aparentaron caer en un esquema de clasificación con propiedades evolutivas. El esquema documentó adelantos significativos en el surgimiento de la lectura en los niños durante su año en el jardín infantil. El Estudio II examinó los intentos por leer de niños de dos, tres, y cuatro años; cada niño leyó dos libros por sesión durante cuatro sesiones distribuidas durante un año. Los intentos de los niños por leer libros de cuentos fueron estables durante diferentes libros de cuentos en una misma sesión. Al comparar estos resultados con los datos del Estudio I se encontró un progreso evolutivo a través de las edades. Los resultados se discuten a la luz de la necesidad de hacer investigaciones futuras sobre el surgimiento de la alfabetización y de lo que implica para los padres, la escuela, y el diseño instrucción/evaluación.

When she had just passed her fifth birthday, Kimberley explained to a researcher how she had learned to read:

> Well, my sister, um my mom read me *Sherman and Herman* and then I started knowing it 'cause she—sh—she reads a good line (pause) a lots of times. And *The Hungry Caterpillar,* she read it lots of times, too.

Another child, Betsy (age 5-8) explained the process of learning to read this way:

> Umm, because—when my mother reads me stories I learn how to read. I can even, like I remember one of the books—I have—one of—one of the books at home I know how to read and I can read it. I can read most of the pages without even having the book with me.

These quotes characterize a phenomenon that researchers in early literacy (see Teale & Sulzby, in press) are devoting increasing attention to—storybook[1] "reading" by children who are not yet reading from print. Previous research has reported that children who began to read conventionally before formal instruction were read to often by their parents or others (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; Tobin, 1981); children who score high on such measures as print awareness and are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were read to frequently by their parents (McCormick & Mason, in press); and children who were read to often tended to score higher on traditional academic measures like "readiness" tests or reading achievement tests (Almy 1949; Durkin, 1974-1975; Moon & Wells, 1979; Wells & Raban, 1978; also see Shanahan & Hogan, 1983; Sulzby & Teale, 1983; Teale, 1981, 1982).

Children who learned to read (and write) before formal instruction have often been described as "teaching themselves to read" from favorite storybooks. Parents recalled that their children often favored a particular book—asking for it to be read over and over; correcting parents when the deviated from the text; or attempting to "read" the book to themselves, to siblings, to dolls, or pets. Such reports were typically rendered by parents in retrospect (Bissex, 1980; Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; Tobin, 1981).

Until recently, few researchers have actually studied the behaviors that can be observed during storybook reading itself; even fewer researchers have tracked children's reading development over time prior to formal instruction. Now, however, researchers are addressing the question of how storybook reading develops over time prior to conventional reading and are attempting to explain this development (Snow & Ninio, in press; Sulzby, 1983b; Sulzby & Teale, 1983; Teale, 1984).

The more recent research on the *how* and *why* of storybook reading development falls into two major categories. The first category is interactional research focusing on parent-child interactions or teacher-children interactions with storybook readings. The second type investi-

gates children's independent functioning, that is, children's "reading attempts," "re-enactments," or, simply, readings of books, usually books with which the child is quite familiar or has treated as a "favorite."

Parent-child interactional research focuses on the linguistic and non-linguistic interactions between individuals when reading storybooks together, starting with simple labeling behaviors (see Ninio, 1980, 1983; Ninio & Bruner, 1978) and moving to interactions in which large chunks of text are read verbatim (Harkness & Miller, 1982; Heath, 1982; Snow & Ninio, in press). Teacher-children interaction research (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Green & Harker, 1982; Schieffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984; Sulzby & Anderson, 1982; see also Sulzby, 1983a) examines how teachers read books aloud to young children and how children participate in such readings. Both categories of interactional research produced evidence that children increase their abilities to produce speech that parents and teachers treat as congruent with the activity of reading from print; this speech also maintains features of the wording and content of books that have been read to the children. The interactional research, however, does not focus specifically on what children retain from what they do in interaction.

The second tradition of research addresses this issue. A few studies (Doake, 1981; Haussler, 1982; Holdaway, 1979; Rossman, 1980; Schiekedanz, 1981; Sulzby, 1981) have examined children's independent functioning as they attempt to read books to an adult. Some of these studies indicated that when children attempt to read the same book over time their re-enactments sound more and more like the actual book being attempted. Even though the sample size has usually been quite small and the methods of analysis primarily limited to narrative descriptions, with examples, the researchers suggest various kinds of developmental ordering of these behaviors.

Both lines of research contribute evidence that young children's emergent storybook reading is an important part of literacy development and that it can fruitfully be studied by direct investigation. Now we turn to theoretical consid-

erations about the nature of language and development that appear relevant to such an investigation.

Learning to read and to write involves a re-conceptualization by the child of his/her language which had its beginnings in oral contexts and functions. In other words, the acquisition of literacy can be said to involve a transition from oral language to written language, albeit a complex transition in modern literacy cultures (see Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1981; Sulzby, 1983a, in press-c, in press-d).

Oral language is designed for face-to-face and highly interactive situations; written language is designed to have the composer and receiver removed in time and place from each other. Certain kinds of language behaviors have become conventional in oral and in written contexts, depending upon the culture (also see Gumperz, 1982; Ong, 1982; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Sulzby, in press-a). Olson (1977) suggests that the issue of contextualization is particularly important in Western literate cultures. Oral language is conceived as being highly contextualized or dependent upon a present context; written language requires de-contextualization—or the providing of sufficient specification so that the reader can infer the context from within the text itself.

Fortunately, young children who are read to before formal schooling are ushered into an understanding of the relationships between oral and written language within a social context in which written language is used in hybridized fashion at first and then gradually takes on its more conventional nature. This hybridized form is evident particularly in parent-child storybook interactions in which characteristics of oral language enter into the parents' rendering of the "written text."

Such hybridization is also evident in more general adult speech which is rendered orally but contains characteristics more suited to written language (lectures, speeches, newscasts). As will be illustrated, long before the child is examining the print while reading, the child's orally-produced "reading attempts" often contain features of written language which are not in the written text itself.

When reading a book to young children, parents typically use highly interactive language, particularly when the book is new to the child (Bruner, 1978b; Harkness & Miller, 1982). Similarly, teachers use interactive language when reading a new book to children, usually stopping during the oral reading to talk to the students about their real-life knowledge that might be relevant to understanding the text (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Green & Harker, 1982). Gradually, as children become more advanced in literacy expectations (see Snow & Ninio, in press) and/or more familiar with a repeatedly-read book, the parent or teacher reads more of the book at a stretch with the child/children listening without interruption.

In addition to allowing adults to read larger sections of a text to them verbatim without interruption, children also begin to read larger segments of books independently (Doake, 1981; Harkness & Miller, 1982; Taylor, 1983). Before these children are reading conventionally from print, they recite language that sounds like reading and like book language. Some children produce language that is almost verbatim from the book and/or that sounds like reading in terms of prosodic features. In attempts of these sorts, when the child is "reading" to an adult, the child's language becomes less dependent upon verbal interaction with the adult and becomes more consistent with specific conventions of written language. When verbal interactions are initiated by the children, they tend to be clearly signaled as "asides" (see Sulzby & Otto, 1982), indicating a distinction between the "text," comments about it or other topics.

Also related to oral/written language characteristics is the distinction between dialogue and monologue. Dialogue is found more often in oral situations when participants carry on conversation although a speaker can give an oral monologue. Written language is typified as being monologic in Western literate cultures although writers may differ in their skill in creating an interpretable monologue. Re-creating a dialogue within the text that the reader can interpret requires additional resources like dialogue carriers and narrative bridges. When

parents read long stretches of text to a child, they are modeling the conventional monologic characteristics of written language; whereas, some of the interactive storybook readings described above are carried out through extra text dialogue between the adult and child. During such readings, when the parent encounters embedded dialogue between characters in the text he or she often omits dialogue carriers, points to characters' pictures, and asks the child about what the characters "say."

In early 20th century Russia, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) studied how young children internalize speech from interactions with adults. When considering the origins of written language, he also contended that children move from interaction, not just in speech, but also from interaction with the environment and real objects, toward the non-interactive forms of written language. He claimed that written language has its roots in the child's action; that the child moves from action to symbolic play with abstract objects, to gesture, to drawing and thence to written language. Vygotsky was referring specifically to writing. As current research increasingly addresses the relationship between reading and writing as parts of literacy, it is important to note that writing also involves reading what one is composing. In either case, written language as an act of reading or of writing involves a re-conceptualization of the relationship between human participants and the environment, moving from participants being physically present and interacting directly with the environment toward situations in which the reader/writer participants are not directly present and the interaction is recreated internally though thinking.

Vygotsky's theory and its extensions by later theorists address symbolism embedded in social interaction. Thus far, only a little is known about how these theories actually fit early reading development. However, one part of applying such a theory would require study of the physical environment of reading, including the environment of storybook reading situations.

Recently, Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982), working within Piagetian traditions, have begun

to address the issue of what aspects of the physical environment are relevant for the development of reading and writing. They primarily studied the nature of alphabetic writing systems and demonstrated that (a) children's reactions to these systems are conceptual and developmental, and (b) children abstract different aspects of the writing system at different developmental points (also see Ferreiro, in press). Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) also conducted preliminary explorations of children's understandings of texts as conceptual objects; they "read" stereotypical storybooks texts, oral conversation, and newspaper articles to Argentinian children, varying the physical form the examiner was reading from—for example, "reading" a newspaper article from a children's storybook.

Storybooks furnish a particularly useful context for exploring children's understandings of symbolism because they contain both pictures and written language. For the child, storybooks may also seem to contain oral texts for that is what the child hears during reading. The oral text can vary from interactive conversation with the parents to an orally-read monologue, depending upon the form of the parent's reading. Additionally, the pictures often allow for the use of gestures to indicate activity; parents often accompany reading with such gestures. Thus, Vygotsky's (1978) scheme of abstraction from real-life activity, to gestures, to drawing, to written language is expanded to include oral language in the environment of children's experiences in being read to from storybooks.

The following findings summarized from parent-child interaction appear to support this view, at least tentatively, in middle-class American families. First, early storybook reading by parents includes aspects of both oral and written language. Second, as children gain experience, storybook reading becomes more like conventional conceptualizations of written language. Third, children's earliest interactions with storybooks are mediated by an interactive adult and gradually become the performance of a text-as-monologue by the adult for the listening and observing child. Finally, storybook reading becomes a task which the child performs for another person or for himself/herself alone. As

the child becomes a more independent "reader" (long before s/he is reading conventionally from print), the language s/he produces for the storybook becomes more truly "written language."

The research reported herein explores how children interact with storybooks. Similar to the Piagetian stance, it is based on the belief that children's notions are conceptual, but, following Vygotsky, it is also assumed that the form of the physical environment—here, the storybook—is shaped by the social environment in which it is experienced, including the language used. While this final point is not addressed directly in the current studies, it underlies the discussion of parent-child interactions with storybooks and is being explored in follow-up work (Sulzby & Teale, 1983).

The two studies reported herein present the patterns of young children's emergent storybook reading behaviors when asked to read to an adult—an extension of the research in children's independent functioning. Vestiges of the earlier kinds of parent-child interactions summarized above were expected in these attempts. Centrally, however, features of oral and written language relationships from within the culture were expected in a framework of general development. The literature discussed above suggested broad categories for a classification scheme, as follows: Attempts governed by pictures, stories not formed; attempts governed by pictures, stories formed (oral language-like); attempts governed by pictures, stories formed (written language-like); and attempts governed by print.

In applying this kind of scheme to preliminary data, we found a better fit than the categories previously reported (Sulzby, 1981), and also found substantiation for treating these categories as ordered from low to high with middle-class American children who have been read to.

While these four broad categories appear to comprise a developmental ordering for such children the claim is not made that they comprise abstract structural stages. Indeed, it may be expected to find wide cultural differences based upon oral/written language relationships within the culture, as well as individual differ-

ences related to literacy background. Some sub-categories were suggested with some indication that they might also be ordered.

Specifically, the issues addressed in the current research include the following: Is the proposed classification scheme detailed enough to describe children's storybook reading attempts? Can the scheme be used to described children's progress over time? Does it describe the same child's storybook reading with some consistency? Does it distinguish between children of different ages in such a way as to indicate a developmental progression? Study I investigates further the existence of the categories and sub-categories of the classification scheme and whether change can be detected over time with kindergarten-aged children. Study II addresses the issue of consistency of individual children's storybook reading behavior and of age-related differences.

## STUDY I

### Method

#### Subjects

Subjects were 24 children who took part in a longitudinal study of emergent literacy reported elsewhere (Sulzby, 1983a, in press-b). During this study a beginning- and end-of-the-year interview[2] titled, "General Knowledge About Written Language" was administered to all of the children in a middle-class kindergarten classroom in a suburb of a large midwestern city. There were 11 girls and 13 boys. Three of the children, one girl and two boys, aged 6-1, 6-3, and 6-4 in October, had been kept at home by their parents past the typical age for kindergarten entry. The ages of the remaining 21 children in October ranged from 4-11 to 5-11 with a median of 5-5 and mean of 5-8. Five were from other language backgrounds: three from western and eastern Asiatic countries and two from European countries. In October all were taking part in storybook reading sessions and were able to respond to the interview.

#### Procedures

The interviewers had visited the kindergarten classroom from the beginning of the school year for observations in the classroom. The beginning-of-the-year interview was conducted as individual sessions in October and November and the end-of-the-year interview, in April and May. As each child was taken from the classroom individually, s/he was asked to select a favorite book from the classroom collection. When the interview site was reached, the examiner casually placed the book face down and at a sideways angle under the interview table. Near the end of the interview, the examiner asked, in a casual tone, "Where's that book you brought with you?" and observed how the child picked up and oriented the book.

The examiner elicited a reading attempt by saying to the child: "Read me your book." If the child said that s/he could not read, the examiner encouraged with, "Well, pretend you can. Pretend-read it to me." Subsequent encouragements were offered: "What can I do to help? What do you want me to do? How will that help?"

The entire sessions were audiotaped and the transcript was augmented with the examiner's notes taken during the session. Each reading attempt was transcribed by the examiner and checked against the tape by at least two other persons.

#### Analysis

*Content analysis.* First, all transcripts were content-analyzed using the tentative classification scheme developed from previous research (Sulzby, 1981; see also in press-c) and theoretical considerations from related literature. Second, this content-analysis was turned into narrative descriptions of the categories of reading attempts. Finally, these descriptions were given to a second researcher who independently re-classified the original transcripts. Disagreements led to clarification of categories, to suggestions of possible orderings, and to considerations of possible new categories.

*Classification.* The re-written descriptions were used to train two raters to re-classify the transcripts. These raters were able to classify

the transcripts with a high level of agreement and disagreements were easily resolved by re-examination of the transcripts and descriptions.
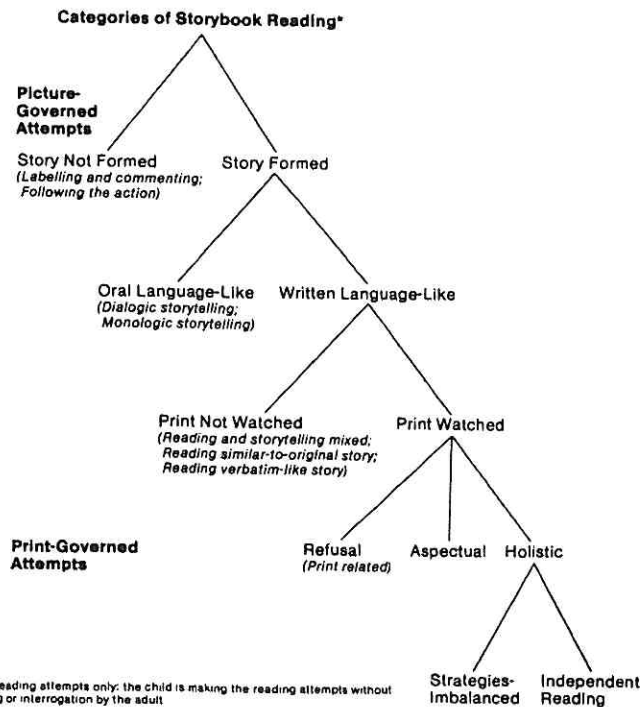
## Results and Discussion

### Patterns in Children's Emergent Reading Attempts With Favorite Storybooks

This section presents the patterns of behavior observed in children's storybook reading attempts, or re-enactments, beginning with the least mature re-enactments and moving to independent reading from print. The descriptions include children's language and relevant nonverbal behaviors when attempting to read a storybook that a child treats as a favorite (see Robinson & Sulzby, in press, for an investigation of the term "favorite book"). All the following examples come from the kindergarten children in Study I. Since Study II (below; also

Sulzby, 1983b) did not reveal any new categories or sub-categories and substantiated the presence of some sub-categories seen infrequently with kindergarteners, some comments about younger children are also included in the discussion. Figure 1 presents the categories as a successively branching tree structure.

Within this framework, each reading attempt is characterized in accordance with what the child seems to be treating as the source of the message: print or picture. In the lower categories, the child acts as if the picture is what is "read." This does not mean that the child is ignoring the text which has been read to him, but that during the activity of reading the child looks at pictures. Within attempts governed by pictures, the child may produce discrete spurts of speech which appear to be tied only to the picture in view or the child may produce speech that can be characterized as a "story" that applies to the entire book. This sub-division is in-

*Figure 1*

Tree structure of categories of classification scheme for emergent reading of favorite storybooks



**Categories of Storybook Reading***

**Picture-Governed Attempts**

Story Not Formed
*(Labelling and commenting; Following the action)*

Story Formed

Oral Language-Like
*(Dialogic storytelling; Monologic storytelling)*

Written Language-Like

Print Not Watched
*(Reading and storytelling mixed; Reading similar-to-original story; Reading verbatim-like story)*

Print Watched

**Print-Governed Attempts**

Refusal
*(Print related)*

Aspectual

Holistic

Strategies-Imbalanced

Independent Reading

* This figure includes independent reading attempts only: the child is making the reading attempts without dependence upon turn-taking reading or interrogation by the adult

dicated by the sub-titles, "stories not formed" and "stories formed." The issue here is not a judgment abut how well-formed the story is, but simply the presence of a storylike unit, with some indication of past, present, and future.

Within the categories governed by pictures where a story is formed, there are two additional divisions. The speech used by the child is judged either to be oral language-like or written language-like. That is, the child uses wording and/or intonation more appropriate in either oral or written situations. Sub-categories are included within each of these divisions.

In addition to the major categories diagrammed in Figure 1, there is another category that remains to be investigated. This is the "low-level refusal," in which children refuse to read with little or no explanation (in contrast to a high-level, print-governed refusal, described below). Children refusing to read in our studies have, nevertheless, reacted to the storybook reading of the adult. (See Otto, 1984, for a discussion of such re-enactments which she called "dependent" or "assisted" attempts.)

## Attempts Governed by Pictures, Stories Not Formed

This is the least mature category found with 5-year-olds. It is found infrequently with them and more frequently with younger children. The language behavior and physical behavior of the child are closely tied in these attempts. There are two sub-categories: (a) labelling and commenting, and (b) following the action. In each case if one listens to the speech of the child alone, one would not be able to infer a story; rather, the speech that accompanies each page appears to be a response to the discrete page. The language is not tied together sufficiently for a naive audience to understand.

*Labelling and commenting.* When a child reads or re-enacts a book through labelling, the child will turn to a page, point to a pictured object, and then give its name or descriptor: "Doggie," "Horse," "Snort," "Dog and cat." Commenting refers to giving information about the labelled or highlighted item: "Brush him teefs," "Go to bed," or even a fuller sentence: "He's a monster." With younger children, the

speech is often accompanied by large slaps or gestures at the page. With five-year-olds the movements are more controlled, but they typically include indicating motions or pointings.

The language used has been distinctive with all of the children whom we have observed. Rather than being typical of conversational speech for a given child, when the child gives a "labelling and commenting" re-enactment, his or her speech is markedly less mature than normal usage.

The speech sounds like a routine devised for storybook reading, perhaps prompted initially by the manner of parents reading to young children (Bruner, 1978a, 1978b; Ninio, 1980; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Snow & Ninio, in press). In Example (1), Daniel B. uses labelling and commenting behavior to read *Professor Wormbug in Search for the Zipperump-A-Zoo* (Mayer, 1976). Daniel attended only to the pictures and pointed to the items in the pictures as he gave their names or comments about them. (His use of *the* in front of *Zipperump-A-Zoo* sounds more advanced since this is the character's name but other children giving re-enactments at this level have referred to a character in sight as *the bunny* even though the context indicates that they are using a general rather than a specific label.)

(1) Child:  The Zipperump-A-Zoo. (Labelling)
And that's a _____ (indicipherable)
(Labelling)
(Turns page and points)
The Zipperump-A-Zoo. (Labelling,
...                        continued)
He took it out.       (Commenting)

Daniel's full re-enactment includes other labelling and commenting statements, along with a few "meta-statements," giving his reactions to the book: "Oh, yeah—I like this!" Sometimes sections of this type of attempt are included in re-enactments that overall are classified as weaving together a story. In Example (2), Noreen gave a section of labelling and commenting in her end-of-kindergarten reading attempt (from Kahl's, 1956, *Plum Pudding for Christmas*). Notice that she inserted a framing ques-

tion herself, seemingly addressed to the examiner, which she subsequently answered herself.

(2) Child: A cooker. (Pause) The children. The mother. (Turns page) The king. What's that?
    Adult: I don't know. What does it look like?
    Child: (laughs) Boys. Lots of boys. Girls. Cooker.

As Noreen continued with her book, she created a story-like sequence which resulted in her overall attempt being classified higher. At the beginning of kindergarten, she had given an entire attempt consisting of labelling and commenting, similar to those of many younger children.

It is possible that these kinds of attempts are remnants from parent-child storybook readings. Ninio and Bruner (1978) classified the questions parents asked children during storybook reading. Most of these questions would lead appropriately to labelling and commenting responses, with the exception of one question type: "What are they doing? They are Xing" (where X is a verb). This type of question would be appropriate to the "following the action" sub-category which follows.

*Following the action.* The second sub-category of "stories not formed" reading attempts focuses upon the pictured action. Children who give this kind of re-enactment act as if the action in the picture is now occurring. Their speech is distinctive and paired with an indicating finger that often seems to trace action in the pictures: "See, there he goes. He's gonna catch him. But he don't see him." The verbs used are typically present tense, present progressive, or odd uses like "gonna" which appears to characterize the presently-pictured action instead of future action in pictures not presently in view.

When young children give "following the action" readings, they often stand up and gesture from the pictures off the book into some seemingly imaginary space, sometimes making motions for the story characters. These re-en-

actments are often accompanied by "sound effects" by the child either made verbally, "Pow!" or "Krrr," or physically, with banging or rubbing. One five-year-old in a case study (Sulzby, 1983b) occasionally picked up the book as if to make the characters perform the actions. It is possible that the notions of past, present, and future in stories are beginning to be dealt with in these re-enactments but that these notions are in conflict with the previously-held treatment of the page-picture unit as an entity.

Mike gives a "following the action" reading in Example (3), after conducting a long interactive conversation with the adult. The adult reinstated the request for Mike to read, leading to his speech below. In this excerpt, much of Mike's speech was indecipherable, but the majority was about the picture in current view and was worded as if the action were presently going on. Notice the adult's mimicking of Mike's "look at that" usage. The book is *Professor Wormbug in Search for the Zipperump-A-Zoo* (Mayer, 1976).

(3) Child: Lookit, lookit.
    Adult: Uh-huh! What's that? (Pause) What's happening there?
    Child: (Pointing)
    Adult: Ooeww—look at that.
    Child: (Interrupting)—a (indecipherable) tree—(pause with intonation as if to continue)
    Adult: Uh-huh.
    Child: —and grass—
    Adult: —Uh-huh. Look at that.
    Child: Watch. This thing is still following him, watch.

In this excerpt and the parts that followed, Mike used the intonation of conversation and used wording contextualized to the picture and to the adult's ability to see the pictures in view. The transcript reads as if the participants both agree that something is going to happen, yet the wording fails to form a story-like entity. In all of the categories that follow, the children produce speech that can be considered to contain story-like language.

## Attempts Governed by Pictures, Stories Formed (Oral Language-Like)

Oral language-like attempts can be divided into two sub-categories, although it is possible that more or fewer would exist depending upon the relationships between oral and written language within a culture. The present data indicate these two types: (a) dialogic storytelling and (b) monologic storytelling.

*Dialogic storytelling.* A listener can infer a story "of sorts" from the child's speech in a "dialogic storytelling" reading attempt, even though the story may seem disjointed. This sub-category of oral language-like attempt appears to have two major options, which may be mixed. It may or may not also contain identifiable remnants from "labelling and commenting" and "following the action."

In the first option, the child may give dialogue for the characters in pictures but the dialogue will rarely have dialogue carriers or narrative ties (see Cox & Sulzby, 1984, for a discussion of dialogue carriers in basal reader preprimers). Instead, the child will tend to depend upon techniques appropriate to oral language, particularly the creation of "voices" for the dialogue. In the second option, the child may use dialogic comments that appear to be directed to the listener. These comments are often unclearly signalled, so the listener may have difficulty knowing if the child intends the speech to be reading or conversation.

In the "no story formed" re-enactments, the child typically would turn directly to the adult, often using eye contact and gestures oriented to the adult's line of gaze. In contrast, in "dialogic storytelling," the child may use the same or similar kinds of speech but continue to look at the book. The speech thus sounds out of place as a piece of a supposedly autonomous written story, yet it lacks clear signals to differentiate it from other parts of the speech. In more mature re-enactments, children use prosodic and wording cues to signal clearly the difference between "asides" and "text," even while using pictures rather than print (Sulzby & Otto, 1982). In both options (and re-enactments in which both are used), the language is contextualized to the pictures.

In spite of all these failings, the re-enactments at this level do show some awareness of audience needs. While the mixture of present, present progressive, and past tense verb forms add to the impression that the attempt is disjointed, there is some indication of past and future, and overall a story-like sequence can be inferred. Example (4) illustrates this level of re-enactment.

This re-enactment began with the "labelling and commenting" section shown in Example (2). As Noreen continued re-enacting *Plum Pudding for Christmas* (Kahl, 1956), she turned the pages in reverse order. In Example (4), her speech became more rapid, then it dissipated into contextualized comments to the examiner about the pictures.

(4) Child: The (pause) children are looking for—for the other children—(turns page) for one more children.
And (pause) they looked all over the place (pause) for that little children. (turns page)
And—wait—(turns page)
He went off to the (indecipherable word).
(turns page)
He writted a note to—to the king—and they, uh—(long pause)

Adult: They wrote a note to the king and then—

Child: Then—they would.
Then the, um, boy bring the note to the king then he said to bring it back to her.

Adult: Hmmm. OK.

Child: (turns page) (pause)
And then the little girl got peanuts and threw it at everybody—

Adult: —Oh, oh—

Child: —And then they're making stuff. And that, and that—

Adult: —Oh—

Child: —pushed her into the peanuts.
And so (turns page) he said take that to your mommy. (turns page)

Adult: Oh.

Child: Look at him, look in the book, look under the book. In the boy. And

they looked everywhere for them. That's all I can read. (She continued to finish the story after the adult encouraged her.)

*Monologic storytelling.* From a child's "monologic storytelling," a listener can understand a complete story. The child delivers the story in a storytelling intonation (in contrast with a reading intonation).[3] The story is context-dependent, assuming that both the child "reader" and the adult can see the pictures in the book. Syntax and phrases used are appropriate to a story told face-to-face even though the child tells it as a monologue. (See Chalfe, 1982, for a recent replication of earlier research on the surface characteristics of oral informal speech.) It is plausible that children who are read to often from an early age may "skip" this level, but our data are not yet sufficient to answer that question. Similarly, children who have stories told to them may use less contextualization to the pictures although they would maintain the storytelling intonation. The child makes continued reference to the pictured content. The book is *Henry Explores the Mountains* by Taylor (1975). The protagonist, Henry, is never introduced and his dog, Angus, is only identified in a direct quotation which the child creates for the story and about which the child later makes an interactive remark to the adult: "...cause that's his name. I know."

(5) Child: This is his house and he is going to sleep. He was reading a book. And he was going to bed and then after he was reading the book he saw pictures of the mountains up here. Here (pause) there's some pictures, here, and then he thought he going exploring the mountains, he's going to, oh yeah, about the mountains and he thought I'm going to explore the mountains tomorrow. And then he asked his daddy, I think I missed some pages here (turns pages back). No. Then he was asking his daddy, exploring, then he got in again, he ate his breakfast and then after he

was finished he maked his bed. Then he got out of his gate and he saw the mailman coming on the street. And then he went, (pause) and then he went _____ (indecipherable) and then he said to him (pause), Angus, Angus, (referring to the dog) cause that's his name. I know. After this we're gonna come to the mountains (pause) and then he got one of his, and then he stuck one flag in there and then this is gonna be his tree. (Middle portion deleted)

Child: ...And here comes a man up with him on his shoulders and he's coming up the rope. And then (pause) they got in the helicopter and they are going in the helicopter home. And first he was watching (pause) and there they go! Home. And there the forest fire's finished. And then when they come out, there were _____ (indecipherable) walking first, they come to meet the helicopter and then he comes home and he eats some cake and they have coffee. And then it's finished.

Note that Don makes meta-statements about the book and pictures. Most of these are contextualized to the object, the book, and to the activity, reading, without clear signals syntactically to separate them from the "reading/storytelling" speech. Children end many oral language-like attempts with: "I'm done," or "And that's all," but Don's, "And then it's finished," appears to be one step closer to distinguishing reading a book from telling a story. In the categories that follow, children make clear use of conventions of written language.

### Attempts Governed by Pictures, Stories Formed (Written Language-Like)

Children's written language-like reading attempts fall into three sub-categories: (a) Reading and Storytelling Mixed; (b) Reading Similar-to-Original Story; and (c) Reading Verbatim-Like Story.

*Reading and storytelling mixed.* This category is a kind of transition between oral language and written language. In this type of re-enactment, previously called "created story, written influence," (Sulzby, 1983a, 1983b), the child inserts parts that sound like written language, either in intonation or in wording or both, into parts that continue to sound like oral language. The story created may depart from the actual story but it shows a clear sense of audience and contains major portions that are decontextualized, or sufficiently specified to be understood without the pictures.

Example (6) shows part of such an attempt, with the oral and written sections labelled, along with the behavior on which the judgments were based. Howie is re-enacting *Henry Explores the Mountains* (Taylor, 1975), the same book Don re-enacted as a monologic storytelling in Example (5). Howie uses speech that varies between being oral language-like and being written language-like. While he "read" looking at pictures, occasionally he skipped a page because, as he put it, he didn't know what it "said."

| | | *Behavior-type* | *Classification* |
|---|---|---|---|
| (6) Child: | Called the explorer goes to the jungle. | Giving a "title" (Child's speech unclear) | Written language |
| Adult: | Who? | | |
| Child: | The explorer. | | |
| Adult: | OK. | | |
| Child: | (pause) Um. (pause) He's playin — he's painting his *h*'s. | Reference to picture | Oral language |
| | (pause) He, uh, he likes jungles, and he, and so does the dog. | Present and present progressive tenses | Oral language |
| | And (pause) uh, he's going into the jungle. | "And, uh" conjunctions | Oral language |
| | And the mom said, "Don't run into any tigers. (pause) And here's your lunch." | Dialogue carrier and quotation intonation (child's speech unclear) | Written language in part |
| Adult: | And he what? | | |
| Child: | And here's your lunch *the mom said.* | Inversion of dialogue carrier | Written language re-wording |
| Adult: | OK — | | |
| Child: | And, he, he was walking out, *seeing the mailman coming by.* | Postposed participle | Written language |
| Child: | Um (pause) um, I don't know what that says. | Reference to print | Awareness of print; written language |

Adult: OK.
Child: Um. (turns page)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| He was pretending he was shooting them. | Reference to pictured cows | Oral language |

The remaining two sub-categories differ in how close they are to the actual story and its wording in the book itself. In each, the child sounds as if s/he is reading even though the child is looking at the pictures. This judgment is made on both book-like wording and reading-like intonation.[4]

*Reading similar-to-original story.* In this sub-category, the child often creates patterns that are like those in the chosen book or even that of similar books. For example, the child may insert "patterns of three" or repetitive language into a story that lends itself to such wording even though the book does not contain these elements. The child's language is decontextualized and the intonation is reading-like. If the child does not actually create such patterns, s/he departs from the actual wording without showing the self-correction strategies seen in "verbatim-like" attempts.

In Example (7), Doug reads *The Carrot Seed* (Krauss, 1945) as if he is reading from print. He matches the story closely, page by page, even though his wording is not verbatim. He is looking at the pictures but his intonation is like an expressive oral reading, with slowed prosody and much use of expressive stress. The text is provided for ease of comparison.

| (7) *Text:* | *Child:* |
|---|---|
| page 1 A little boy planted a carrot seed. | Once a little boy planted a carrot seed. |
| page 2 His mother said, I'm afraid it won't come up" | And his mom said, said to him, "That will never grow. Needs water." So one day he watered it. |
| page 4 His father said, "I'm afraid it won't come up." | Then his dad said, "Nothing's gonna gro — ow." |
| page 6 And his big brother said, "It won't come up." | And then his brother came and said "Nothing's gonna grow." |
| page 16 But he still pulled up the weeds around it every day and sprinkled the ground | Then he, but he didn't give up. He kept on watering it — and taking care of it. |

| page 18 | | |
| And then, one day, | Then one day | |
| page 20 | | |
| a carrot came up | he saw something come up | |
| page 22 | | |
| just as the little boy | And he, then he saw | |
| had known it would | a big sprout? | |
| | with ___ on it—and it's a big giant | |
| | carrot. The end. | |

*Reading verbatim-like story.* In the highest sub-category of the written language-like story, the child shows an awareness and partial memory for stretches of the text. Some children recite whole stories almost verbatim. Whether or not the child is successful at verbatim reciting for all or parts of the story, at this level the child shows self-correction behaviors that indicate s/he is trying to retrieve the actual story. This type of behavior has often been dismissed as "just memorized." The current research indicates that the child is not delivering a rote memorization; rather, the child is using strategic, effortful, conceptually-driven behaviors, as can be seen in Example (8).

In this re-enactment, Daniel's words are close to verbatim and he attempts to retrieve the verbatim wording by asking the adult for help. Evidence of his attempts to retrieve the exact wording are his hesitations, his verbal fillers (*umm*'s and *uh*'s), his questions asking for the adult's confirmation ("Is that...?"), and his requests for the adult to "help me" "read this." Even though he was not attending to print he indicated that the adult should read the print, to give him the help he wants. It also appears that "memory for text" (even when it is almost verbatim) is an intellectually high-level process and not the running off of a rote "tape." The child seems to treat the text as a stable, memorable unit of discourse and then to try to retrieve or reconstruct the exact text.

Since Daniel's re-enactment is so close to verbatim, the basic format of the book, *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* (Sutton, 1974), is presented first. The reader will be able to understand the added patterns from Daniel's re-enactment, only part of which is included here. (See also Sulzby & Otto, 1982, for discussion of this example.)

The cat from France
liked to sing and dance
But MY cat likes to hide in boxes.

The cat from Spain
Flew an aeroplane
The cat from France
liked to sing and dance.
But MY cat likes to hide in boxes.

(8) Child: But my cat likes to hide boxes. (Said rapidly.)

Child: Is that—cat—cat'n—pain—cat in—(indecipherable) pain!

Child: Cat—in Norway got stuck in the doorway—(said rapidly).

Adult: (Chuckled)

Child: —and—and, um (pause), the cat from Spain like to drive an airplane (pause) and (pause) the cat from (pause) Nor! (Child said "Nor!" emphatically and skipped "way.")
—but my cat likes to hide in boxes!
The cat from Greece joined the police.
And the cat in Norway—got stuck in the doorway.
And, um, uh, the cat, oh, and the cat in/Spain-liked-to/drive an airplane.
But my cat likes to hide in boxes. (Rapidly, words running together.)
Forget this one!

Adult: Can I help?

Child: Yeah.

Adult: What do you (rapidly, run together) want me to do?

Child: (Dropped book forward.) Help me with this one—I forget this one.

Adult: What am I s'posed to do?

Child: And read this page—cause I forget that.

Adult: Read the page—OK.
The cat from Brazil caught a very bad chill.

Child: Oh—and the cat from Greece joined the police.
Umm, um, and the cat from Norway (said rapidly) got stuck in the doorway

and, um, and the cat from Spain, umm, umm, drives an airplane. (Adult chuckled.)
My cat likes to hide in boxes.

In both of the latter two written language-like sub-categories, the child's speech is worded like written language and is specified, or decontextualized sufficiently to be understood without looking at the pictures. In the sub-categories in which stories are not formed, the child uses speech that is less mature than his or her ordinary usage. In contrast, in these two written language-like sub-categories, the child's speech sounds more complex and more formal than ordinary conversation or storytelling. These are the final sub-categories in which the child is acting *as if* it is the pictures which are read. (Note that this does not mean that the child is not aware that the print is also used, as is evident in Example (8) when Daniel B. asks the adult to read the print. In the category that follows, the child is attending specifically and primarily to print during his/her reading attempt.

In the final four sub-categories in the classification scheme for children's emergent storybook reading, children are attending to print. The sub-categories appear to be ordered thus: (a) Refusing to read based on print awareness; (b) Reading aspectually; (c) Reading with strategies imbalanced; and (d) Reading independently.

*Refusing to read based on print awareness.* Often children begin to refuse to try to read as they learn more about the process of reading, in particular as they learn that it is the print rather than the pictures that people read. Elsewhere these refusals have been called "high-level" or "print-governed" refusals (Sulzby, 1983a, 1983b; Sulzby & Otto, 1982). As mentioned previously, other children also refuse to try to read but their refusals do not give evidence that they conceive of needing to know more about print in order to be able to read, thus they are judged to be less proficient in emergent reading than the children in the "no stories formed" category. With the more mature children, however, there appears to be a transition from a very complete written language-like re-enactment rendered while looking at the pictures (as described above) to a sudden refusal to try, with the child explaining why he or she cannot read: "I don't know the words," "I can't read yet—I need you to help me sound-out the words," "I can't really read—I was just pretending." Haussler (personal communication, July 19, 1981) has also noted at least the two levels of refusal with young children's emergent storybook readings.

Children seem to make high-level refusals before they show the other print governed total re-enactments but this order has not been tested sufficiently. Some children pay sporadic attention to print during this point in development and it is not clear whether all children reach a period of total refusal. Rossman (1980), for example, claims that there are refusals throughout the child's development; however, her claim is based on data from a very small number of children. Besides documenting the existence of the category and its relation to other categories, we also need more information about the nature of supported or dependent readings from children who refuse at first but later are induced to try reading alone.

*Reading aspectually.* The second sub-category of behavior after children begin to attend to print as what is read is called "aspectual." Before the child becomes an independent reader, s/he often starts to focus upon one or two aspects about print to the exclusion of other aspects. These aspects may be new or may be old items of attention. Now they are tied to print. This seems to be a period during which the child begins to be specifically aware of things that he or she can use as aids or clues in figuring out print. Now the child may focus upon a few known words, or a few letters and associated sounds, or upon the remembered text—whichever aspect or combination of aspects the child focuses on, s/he attempts to use with print.

Here, as with the high-level refusal, the child's "reading" may seem to regress. The child who was reciting entire texts with reading intonation may stop attending to meaning and just recite words s/he can recognize on the page. One of our children recited: "*Grandma, the,*

*and, the a, and,*" for page after page while at this print-governed, "aspectual" level of emergent reading. Other children focus attention on sounding-out words; others upon memory for text; others upon combinations of these. The child who is focusing on memory for text will recite the text while pointing vaguely to print, or while running the finger along the text, sometimes in peculiar patterns, like top to bottom. The important identifying characteristic of this level is that the child "doesn't have it all together," as s/he will a little later on, in the final two sub-categories. Here the child seems to be practicing parts of the repertoire that will be put back together later on. I speculate that this is a very important period for a child, both in "natural development" and in interaction with instructional strategies—a period in which the child is growing in awareness of conventional reading and is particularly vulnerable to mismatches with instruction.

In Example (9), Richard is concentrating on letter-sound relationships and words that he knows, and is ignoring his memory for the text. The book is *Henry Explores the Mountains* (Taylor, 1975), the same book used in Examples (5) and (6). This attempt, like many of the aspectual attempts to read from print, does not cover much of the text. Richard began laboriously trying to read from the print and then was encouraged to "pretend." Instead, he continued trying to decipher the print, depending upon cues about letter-sound relationships and occasional enquiries and guesses at the word level. He made some predictions that are syntactically and semantically relevant but he seemed to abandon his memory for the story as a whole. Some of his word-level predictions aided him to predict *Henry* (the boy's name) for *Henry* and *Angus* (the dog's name) as a self-correction to his erroneous prediction of *fox* for *dog* (not shown in this segment).

The re-enactment is presented from page 7, the third page of text the child attempted. He stopped at the end of the first clause and, after a brief discussion with the adult, turned to pages 8-9, ignored the text on page 8 and began to try to read page 9, using similar strategies. In all he attempted to read six pages using the same strat-

egy, in spite of the adult's attempts to get him to abandon the strategy and use a different one.

Text (page 7): "It was a bright autumn morning as they started out."
(9) Child: (pause) *It* | (pause) *it→*um, this is—
   Adult: What?
   Child: *A—it—was—A—big—*uh, *in?*
   Adult: *Autumn.*↓
   Child: *Autumn→*(pause) /m/, /m/? /max/! /max/?
   Adult: No. *Morning.*
   Child: Um—*morning.*
   Both: (laugh)
   Child: A—is *A?*
*Child's tracking of print\*:*

                     ④autumn (AS)
Child: ✓It was ✓a✓big   ①in
Text:  It was a bright ✓autumn

       ③morning (AS)
       ②max! max?
Child:⓪/m/  /m/ /ey/? ◯  ◯  ◯
Text: ✓morning  ✓as  they  started  out.

---

\*Coding:
  ✓ = finger-point
  ◯ = word omitted
 / / = phonetic transcription of attempt
(AS) = adult supplied
 | | = pronounced falling and rising intonation
 → = pronounced continuation of final phoneme
Circled numbers indicate order of attempts. (Repetition is not marked.)

The final two sub-categories have previously been called "holistic attempts" (Sulzby, 1983a, 1983b) in contrast to the unintegrated nature of "reading aspectually." Holistic attempts are those print-governed attempts in which the child seems to have it all together and be reading from print. In the highest level, "reading independently," the child has integrated all of the aspects of reading (comprehension, letter-sound knowledge, and known words) into the ability to read from print flexibly and with self-regulation. The holistic attempts also in-

clude a lower level "reading with strategies imbalanced."

*Reading with strategies imbalanced.* This type of attempt seems to be more like independent reading than aspectual reading but it is still not sufficiently integrated nor strategically flexible. The "strategy-imbalanced" reader may tend to omit unknown words excessively, to substitute other "know words" from his or her reading repertoire, to sound-out words excessively, often leaving "nonsense" words not corrected; or the strategy-imbalanced reader may over depend upon the predicted or remembered text rather than the written text. In using any of these aspects, the child will have some control over the neglected aspects but may show this control only sporadically.

Tanya's reading of *No Roses for Harry* (Zion, 1958) shows this sporadic lack of control (Example 10). In this re-enactment Tanya is reading from print.

In the section below, she read the first page silently and then complained that it was too difficult. When encouraged to read just a little bit, she began with the second page. On the next two pages shown here, she was highly dependent upon asking the examiner for words or upon a mix of sound-letter cues and "nonsense" attempts which she rejected through asking the examiner, "What does this say?" On the fourth page, however, she held the attempt together to re-enact without asking for aid. She allowed her only miscue (*dark* for *big*) to stand without correction or adult help, a wise choice since it is syntactically and semantically appropriate. In spite of her disclaimer that she could only read a little bit, she read the entire book, using similar strategies throughout.

(10)    *Child's Reading:*    *Actual Text:*

Child: When he, what's this they say?
Adult: Tried.
Child: When he tried it on, he flat? Flat kersey, what's this say?
Adult: Cosy.
Child: Cosy and snug.
Adult: Uh-hmm.
Child: But he still didn't like the roses. He—he, what's that? (whispered)
Adult: Thought.

*Actual Text:*
When he tried it on, he felt cosy and snug, But he still didn't like the roses. He thought it was the silliest sweater he'd ever seen

Child: Thought it was the slast, (pause)
Adult: Silliest.
Child: Silliest sweater he, he did, he'd ever seen.
Child: The next day when Harry went downtown with the children, he wore, wear hi, his new sweater. When purple?
Adult: People.
Child: People saw it, they liked?
Adult: They laughed.
Child: Laughed. When dogs saw it, they braked? Harry met?
Adult: Made.
Child: Made up his mend then and there to lo-lost Grandma's present.
Adult: (laughs)
Child: When they went into a dark store to shop, the children took off his sweater and let him carry it. Thi, this was just what Harry (pause) wanted.

The next day when Harry went downtown with the children; he wore his new sweater. When people saw it, they laughed. When dogs saw it, they barked. Harry made up his mind then and there to to lose Grandma's present.

When they went into a store to shop, the children took off his sweater and let him carry it. This was just what Harry wanted.

*Reading independently.* The two types of holistic attempts, "reading with strategies imbalanced" and "reading independently," are distinguished from each other by the amount of self-regulation that the child exhibits and the flexibility with which s/he can make self-corrections. The child who is reading with strategies imbalanced seems to know about all of the parts of reading but to be over-dependent upon a preferred strategy and less likely to try other strategies. The child who is reading independently may read "word-perfectly" at times or may make numerous miscues. When s/he miscues, however, s/he makes more adequate self-corrections that show evidence of a wider range of knowledges. S/he may substitute a phrase like, "or whatever," for a word that isn't immediately recognized and that the child decides not to bother with; later discussion will show that a meaning for the skipped word was inferred. The independent reader can be described as being both less text-bound and yet more accurate in reproducing both the wording and the author's intended meaning; there is, in other words, clear evidence of predicting and confirming strategies.

The interesting examples of independent reading are not the "word-perfect" examples, but examples in which the child's independent control of the process is more clearly evidenced in miscues or in making comments showing understanding of the text. In example (11), Ariadne stops in the middle of reading *The Chalk Box Story* (Freeman, 1976) to discuss the illustration. Her understanding of the story is evidenced in these comments.

*Storybook Text*

(11) Child: One day the li-lid of the box popped open — One day the lid of the box popped open and all eight sticks of chalk began to talk at once.

Adult: Uh-humm.

Child: And all eight sticks of chalk began to talk (pause) at, at once.

Adult: Uh-hmm.

Child: Pretty noisy. (comment about text)

Adult: Yes, pretty unusual, too.

Child: "Let's make a picture," said, they said. — "Let's make a picture," they said.

Child: Blue was the first color to hop out. "I will draw a, the sky," said Blue, "and the ocean" — ocean is high! (Last comment is about the text and picture) — Blue was the first color to hop out. "I will draw the sky," said Blue, "and the ocean too." This is what Blue drew —

Adult: Uh-hmm.

Child: This is what Blue drew — this, this is the sky and when you see these curvy stuff those are the waves of water, the ocean. (comments about picture, drawing examiner's attention to specific features)

Adult: Uh-huh. Sure is. That's —

Child: —Look what *he* drew!

## Classification Scheme Summary

The sections above included discussion and examples of patterns of emergent storybook reading found when middle-class kindergarteners read from "favorite storybooks." These patterns are interpreted as preceding and leading up to independent reading, or reading conventionally from print. The major categories appear to be ordered and it is suggested that the sub-categories within categories are also ordered; however, data from 24 kindergarteners are insufficient to test that hypothesis. One way of determining the characteristics of the behavior tapped by this scheme is to compare the results across multiple assessments. If the scheme systematically records emergent readings levels (if the scheme has an order), we would expected to find consistency in the children's relative ordering across assessments. If there is a developmental trend, we would also expect an upward shift in their classifications. Thus the beginning- and end-of-the-year classifications of these children were compared in order to begin to address the issues of stability and development: Can the classification scheme be used to classify children's performances and is it also sensitive to change over time?

## Beginning and End of Kindergarten Comparison

Table 1 shows the distribution of the children in each category and sub-category of the classification scheme at the beginning and end of the kindergarten year. Of the 24 children, 16 increased their relative position (range 1 to 10 sub-categories, median, 2), four remained in the same sub-category, and four were classified lower (range, 1 to 2, median 1.5). Increases crossed the major category boundaries but decreases did not, with the exception of one of the lowest performers who read in the "following the action" sub-category in the fall and refused to read without explanation in the spring. The other three decreases were within the "written language-like" category. A significant correlation of .61 between the beginning and end of year attempts indicated that children's relative rankings were indeed stable. Additionally, the predicted relative increase was significant (Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed Ranks Test, $T(20) = 22, p < .005$, one-tailed).

The class also included nine children who were the objects of intensive case study during the year. Three each of these had been classified as being high, moderate, or low in "emergent literacy," on the basis of results of a reading and writing interview (see Sulzby, 1983a, for complete procedures). The ranking of these nine children in the sub-categories of storybook reading at the beginning of the year matched the emergent literary rankings. By the end of the year, each of these children had increased from 2 to 3 sub-categories in the classification

*Table 1*  Classification scheme for emergent reading of favorite storybooks, beginning and end of kindergarten year

| Reading Attempt Type | Major Categories (and Sub-categories) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Beginning of Year | End of Year |
| A.  Attempts Governed by Print | 5 | 10 |
|    Reading independently | (1) | (3) |
|    Reading with strategies imbalanced | (1) | (2) |
|    Reading aspectually | (1) | (5) |
|    Refusing to read based on print awareness | (2) | (0) |
| B.  Attempts Governed by Pictures, Stories Formed | | |
|    1. Written language-like | 6 | 7 |
|      Reading verbatim-like story | (1) | (0) |
|      Reading similar-to original story | (3) | (2) |
|      Reading and story-telling mixed | (2) | (5) |
|    2. Oral language-like | 5 | 5 |
|      Monologic story-telling | (2) | (3) |
|      Dialogic story-telling | (3) | (2) |
| C.  Attempts Governed by Picture, Stories Not Formed | 4 | 0 |
|    Following the action | (2) | (0) |
|    Labelling and commenting | (2) | (0) |
| D.  Refusals (low-level) and/or Dependent Reading | 4 | 2 |

*Note.*  $N = 24$

scheme, maintaining the same relative ranking. One of the three children classified as low in emergent literacy and as a low-level refusal in storybook reading was classified as reading aspectually at the end of the year. His behavior in other parts of the study also indicated an accelerated rate of progress at the end of the year.

These findings are, of course, dependent upon how reliable and valid the classification scheme categories are and upon the relationships between the subcategories. In Study I, the books used varied with each child and only one book was read at each session. Data from Study II address the issue of stability of reading behaviors across books and further address the issue of development by examining children as young as 2.

## STUDY II

### Method

#### Subjects

Subjects were all of the children enrolled in a class for 2- to 4-year-old children in a pri-vately operated day care center in a suburb outside a large midwestern city. The data reported here are preliminary findings from a longitudinal study reported elsewhere (Sulzby, 1983b)[5] and comprise a cross-sectional comparison of 2-, 3-, and 4-year-old children. Children entered the center at various times during the year and at different ages, depending upon parent-staff agreements, thus different numbers of children took part in different study sessions. (Only eight took part in all sessions due both to enrollment and family vacations.)

A limited amount of the data are relevant to this article. This includes four separate studies conducted over a year's time, with approximately 3 months between each session. A total of 32 children were included during the year, with 22, 25, 18, and 21 children included for each of the four studies, respectively. Fourteen of the 32 were boys and 18, girls. Eight children were 2-5 to 3-2, 12 were 3-4 to 3-11, and 12 were 4-0 to 4-11 at time of entry into the study.

We currently have inadequate criteria for judging which socioeconomic data are relevant for literacy development (Heath, 1982; Teale,

1984). Thus the following data are only suggestive about generalizability.

Enrollments in day care centers vary across time. Ordinarily, two-thirds of the children in the center used for this study are from middle-income families and one-third from low-income families. In this sample, however, half of the children came from homes in which the parents' educational level was high school or lower; additionally, all but one of those families was classified as being low-income. About half of the 32 children were from one-parent homes, split equally between low- and middle-income levels. Almost one-fourth were from Black, Hispanic, Oriental, Iranian, or East Indian families.

## Procedures

The examiners had visited the classrooms repeatedly before children were interviewed individually. Videotape equipment had been used extensively in the classroom and the children had seen themselves on camera prior to the storybook interviews. A separate quiet room was used for individual sessions, with video and audiotaping equipment arranged to be as unobtrusive as possible.

For each session, children were audiotaped and videotaped reading two storybooks each. The storybooks for the first three studies had been introduced and read repeatedly to the children by their teachers. For the second and third study, one of these storybooks was read by all of the children, having been selected as the one that children asked to be read most frequently at group storytime. For the fourth study, parents sent two of the children's favorite books from home. (See Robinson & Sulzby, 1984, for a description of these books and parents' comments.) Interview techniques were like those of Study 1.

Sessions were transcribed first from audiotape and subsequently expanded from videotape, including descriptions of non-verbal behaviors coded to book pages and activities. Initial transcriptions were checked by a third researcher for completeness and accuracy and were continually checked during various analyses.

## Analysis

Two trained research assistants classified each reading attempt from the typed transcripts. Rater agreements on exactly the same sub-category placement across the four studies were 84%, 96%, 92%, and 92%, respectively. Reconciled scores were used to compare stability of storybook reading behavior across the two storybooks used in each of the four studies over the year.

## Results

### Stability of Reading Behaviors Across Storybooks

In order to examine stability across the two storybooks of each of the four studies, two comparisons were made. The percentage of attempts that were placed in exactly the same sub-category and those in either exactly the same or immediately adjacent sub-categories were calculated. Those results are shown in Table 2.

These results indicate that their is a reasonable stability across storybooks and that sub-categories are related far more frequently than would be expected by chance. The higher percentages for the fourth study are confounded by the fact that these storybooks were sent by the children's parents as being current "favorites" at home. The children's judged performances were more consistent with these books even though the books were idiosyncratic to the specific child.

The exceptions to placement in exactly same, adjacent, or "within two" sub-categories were examined. All except one of these were attempts in which the child refused to attempt the first storybook but then attempted the second. ("Refusals" of this sort then became "assisted" or "dependent" attempts in which the child echo-read or gave brief completions to the adult's reading; Otto, 1984, discusses these dependent behaviors in relation to the classification scheme.) Three were paired with dialogic telling attempts. The remaining four, however, were refusals matched with higher level at-

*Table 2* Percentage of children by sub-categories of storybook classification scheme

| Study | n | Exactly Same Sub-Category | Within one Sub-Category |
|-------|-----|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 22 | 64% | 77% |
| 2 | 25 (21) | 56% (76%) | 68% (81%) |
| 3 | 18 | 72% | 78% |
| 4 | 21 | 81% | 100% |

tempts; all were from Study II in which there was some evidence that the examiner's prompting procedures were too rapidly paced. Each of these occurred with the first storybook of the session. In Table 2, the results with these instances removed are showed in parentheses.

There is thus some evidence that children's emergent reading behaviors are relatively stable across familiar storybooks. When attempts were not in the exact same sub-category they were in related categories, with the exceptions discussed above.

## Comparisons with Kindergarten Children

Table 3 shows the distribution of children in the major categories of the classification scheme for storybook reading attempts, comparing the two kindergarten sessions from Study I with those of the 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds from Study II. To insure comparability, these data are comprised of the initial storybook reading attempt of each of the 32 children in the day care center upon their entry into the study.

The classification scheme appears to differentiate reading attempts over age levels, as shown in Table 3. While there is a range of reading behavior within any age group, the range and distribution changed predictably with increased age, such that the lower levels of the scheme, including "low level" refusals and dependent attempts are represented most frequently with the 2-year-olds and the higher levels are increasingly represented with the older groups. There is a slight overlap between the 4-year-olds, a group which included some children aged 4-11, and the beginning of the year kindergarteners which also included a few 4-11's. This slight age overlap and the difference in how book familiarity was determined may be reflected in the slight discrepancy of placement distribution for those groups. If we only compare separate age cohorts, without overlap, by omitting the beginning of kindergarten session, the distributions with age become even more regular.

*Table 3* Percentage of children reading at increasing levels of sophistication by age

| Categories Reading Attempts | Two's[a] (n=8) | Three's[a] (n=12) | Age Four's[a] (n=12) | Five's November[b] (n=24) | Five's May[b] (n=24) |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Governed by Print | 0%[c] | 17 | 25 | 21 | 42 |
| Written Languge-Like Stories | 13 | 17 | 33 | 25 | 30 |
| Oral Language-Like Stories | 25 | 17 | 17 | 21 | 21 |
| Stories Not Formed | 13 | 17 | 8 | 17 | 0 |
| Refusals (Low-level) and/or Dependent Reading | 50 | 33 | 17 | 17 | 8 |

[a]Data from Study II; counted here is only the first storybook attempt by each child on entry into a longitudinal study (Sulzby, 1983-b)
[b]Data from Study I; reading attempts at the beginning and end of kindergarten by the same subjects.
[c]Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

## Discussion

### Limitations

The theoretical considerations contributing to the research reported in this article involve both issues of general development and also of language development, more specifically. Clearly, the studies reported here represent only a beginning investigation into emergent reading. Much more thought needs to be devoted to both aspects of development and the relationship between them. Additionally, the theoretical considerations need to be separated more clearly from the empirical work. This is particularly important in regard to the classification scheme reported herein. While theoretical considerations led to the a priori specification of some sub-categories, others emerged from the observations. Insofar as the study sample was not randomly selected, these observations are limited to the specific children studied thus far. A clearer delineation between theory and empirical investigation should facilitate a more fruitful movement between the two.

Further research needs to be conducted to probe the nature of the classification scheme and address issues of what sort of ordering is appropriate. In this article I have treated it, cautiously, as ordinal. As evidenced by the data in Table 3, the categories/classifications do not simply represent a nominal level of measurement.

A caution should be given about the studies presented herein. While we were able to gain a respectable level of interjudge agreement, the training required hours of preparation. Judgments about placing children's attempts into sub-categories required both a placement and narrative justification. Working through the justifications required great care. There were often cases in which making the judgments was quite difficult, particularly since, as the classification scheme is currently revised, one judgment is made for the entire attempt. (In work in progress, we expected to begin to divide the attempts into smaller episodes.)

Similarly, caution must be used in interpreting the apparent stability of children's behaviors over storybooks, which was indeed only a relative and not exact stability. It is not clear what the reason is for the lack of complete stability. The children may be operating with a repertoire around some central tendency; different storybooks may be treated slightly differently by a child; elicitation procedures may have varied slightly; or still other reasons may be operating.

### Conclusions

In spite of the limitations noted above, this research has begun to characterize young children's early reading behaviors in a new manner. The research technique involves the use of the natural language and format of commercial books which children have chose as "favorites," and builds upon naturalistic observations within family interactions. In so doing, it has uncovered developmental trends within children's holistic interactions with storybooks during the period preceding and leading up to conventional reading.

First, at least 10 types of reading behavior have been described thus far in great detail. These behaviors and others not yet worked into the classifications scheme indicate that children develop tremendously through interacting with storybooks. We expect to find even more detailed information as we incorporate the interactive readings between parent and child (and the interactive readings between examiner and child included in our work). We also expect to be able to understand such behaviors as young children's "silent reading." A number of children first responded to a "Read to me," request with silently paging through the book. Many seemed to scrutinize the book during this activity and it seems quite likely that this behavior displays an important part of their notions about what reading is like.

The patterns that were found indicate that children progress from treating individual pages of storybooks as if they are discrete units to treating the book as the unit, using speech that builds a story across the book's pages. Once children are weaving stories across the book, this speech can be seen to have characteristics more appropriate either to oral or to written language, with some fluctuation between the two

before becoming highly "written" in nature. Characteristics of "written language" that can be found in children's storybook reading speech include (a) wording that is more appropriate for written rather than oral discourse, and (b) intonation patterns that sound like reading rather than conversing or storytelling. Judges trained in linguistic analysis can make holistic judgments of the sub-categories of emergent storybook reading as defined in this study with a high degree of agreement.

Second, the behaviors described in these studies appear to have some stability across storybooks. This indicates that children have generalized—that the behaviors are indeed conceptual and not just a stimulus-response pattern to a particular book.

Third, the behaviors appear to be developmental in that the patterns differ predictably from 2-, to 3-, to 4-, and to 5-year-old children. Additionally, progress over time was observed with the kindergarten children. This indicates that, prior to formal instruction, important development is going on.

Finally, and most important, the development that was observed in these studies appears to make sense in light of theoretical ideas about general and language development and the findings of other current research (Clay, 1979, 1982; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman & Altwerger, 1981; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Sulzby, 1981, 1983a; Teale, 1984). These discoveries about literacy development appear to challenge traditional assumptions about the nature of young children—assumptions built upon a conventional model.

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## Footnotes

[1]*Storybook* here was intended to cover narrative texts; however, children occasionally selected other kinds of texts, including those with repetitive patterns that did not clearly establish a plot line. The kindergarteners described in Study I typically chose narratives. In Study II, some of the books sent from children's homes for the fourth study were not narratives. Nevertheless, we found that the classification scheme presented in this article appeared to fit those books relatively easily. (We are beginning a study comparing a nonnarrative "pattern book" to a traditional storybook.)

[2]The full results of the "General Knowledges About Written Language" interview are reported in the final report to NIE (Sulzby, 1983a), along with other findings.

[3]The phenomenon of "reading intonation" is being investigated further in Farr & Sulzby (in progress).

[4]This example, and others that follow, have been excerpted because of space limitations. The data base from which the examples come is being entered into the Child Language Data Exchange System (ChilDES).

[5]This project, funded by the Spencer Foundation, is titled *Children's emergent abilities to read favorite storybooks.* In addition to the studies described in this article, two low-income and two middle-income children were seen monthly to provide case study comparisons. Classroom observations, teacher interviews, and parent interviews were also conducted (see Sulzby, 1983b).