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## A comparative study of three techniques to improve readers' comprehension

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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE TECHNIQUES  
TO IMPROVE PROBLEM READERS' COMPREHENSION**

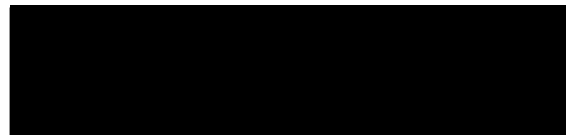
**MASTER'S PROJECT**

**Submitted to the School of Education  
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education**

by

**Corinne Sue Blackford  
School of Education  
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON  
Dayton, Ohio  
July 1991**

Approved by:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the official advisor.

Official Advisor

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to the official advisor.

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents, Jack and Shirley Robinette, who have been the greatest influence on my life. As my first teachers, they instilled in me a love for reading and a curiosity for learning. Their continuous support, belief in me, and love will never be forgotten.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Paul Lutz for his patience and guidance throughout this project. Special thanks to Delores Swan for her cooperation and typing skills and to Kevin Ballard for his computer expertise. Also, I would like to thank L'Tanya Lemon for encouraging me to attend graduate school and for her continual support throughout my studies. I would also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to my family for their support, suggestions, and generous help.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### Justification of the Problem

To read is to comprehend. Thus, all things that are done to teach children to read must lead to comprehension. However, poor readers are unable to comprehend what they are attempting to read; their remedial reading instruction does not result in meaningful experience that focuses on comprehension. These students are often deeply frustrated by their inability to understand what they are endeavoring to read. Their remedial reading instruction consists primarily of drill work and does not emphasize comprehension. Consequently, poor readers actually read about half as many words in a daily lesson as skilled readers. Because they don't read well, they are not likely to practice reading on their own, either.

According to Dick Snide, Supervisor of Federal and State Educational Programs, approximately 10,000 (15%) Columbus Public School students in grades K-8 currently receive remedial instruction through the Chapter 1 program. Snide stated that although the school system's enrollment has declined, the need has stayed the same, and this program now serves more students than ever before.

As a reading tutor in the Supplemental Reading Program (SRP) (11 years), the researcher has experienced firsthand the problem reader's poor comprehension leading to frustration, low self-esteem, and failure in school. Since its inception in 1979, the SRP has provided one to one tutoring for approximately 450 problem readers in grades K-12. These students are one and one half to two years below grade level in their reading skills. Currently, this program serves 58 students and has a waiting list of approximately 150 students.



### Setting.

The eight students resided in Franklinton (near westside of Columbus) and attended elementary schools that are part of the Columbus Public School System. According to the 1980 Census, 45% of Franklinton's 14,652 residents are on fixed incomes and the median income is \$7,925 per year. The Metropolitan Human Services Commission (1987) reported that the Franklinton area has a 67% dropout rate. In addition, the average grade completed in this area is the ninth grade.

### Data Collection.

The students were given the Wide Range Achievement Test (Level 1 Spelling and Reading) and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test ( Level 2 Forms K and L) as pre-tests and post-tests.

### Design.

Using the I Love Reading Homework Booklet ( Level 2 Book 1 and Level 2 Book 2), the students participated in three reading comprehension activities: listening (reading aloud), oral reading, and silent reading. During each one-to-one reading lesson (1/2 hour lesson twice a week), the students completed three stories using each of these reading methods. Each student 1) listened as the researcher read one story and the questions to him/her, 2) read one story and the questions orally, and 3) read one story and the questions silently. At the end of each story, the students answered four comprehension questions and scored their own answers.

This three month study began in February, 1991 and was completed in May, 1991.

The researcher chose the topic of reading comprehension because of the impact a student's reading ability has on his/her success in school and in later life. Also, she wanted to determine the most effective technique to help improve her own students' comprehension skills. The researcher's pilot study conducted in 1989 indicated it is vital that a student's reading instruction result in meaningful experience and focus on comprehension. If that happens, students may then enjoy reading, gain self esteem, spend more time reading, and not become part of the 40% of freshmen who fail or the 38% of dropouts in the Columbus Public Schools (as reported by the Columbus Public Schools 1988-89 academic year). This Master's Project was a follow up of that 1989 pilot study.

### Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine which of three techniques (silent reading, oral reading, or listening) was the most effective in improving problem readers' comprehension.

### Hypothesis

There is no difference between silent reading, oral reading, or listening on problem readers' comprehension.

### Procedure

#### Subjects.

There were eight students in the study - four boys (ages 9-11) and four girls (ages 9-11). All of the students were identified as poor readers and participated in remedial reading programs. They were in the third, fourth, or fifth grade and read on a second grade level.

## Definition of Terms

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (3rd edition 1989) is a standardized reading test for Reading Readiness through the twelfth grade level. It is a timed test that provides stanines, percentiles, and grade equivalents in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension.

Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-R 1984 edition) - consists of three subtests - Reading, Spelling, and Arithmetic. It is normed by age and provides standard scores, percentiles, and grade levels. Level 1 is used for ages five years up to eleven years, eleven months, and Level 2 is for ages twelve years up to seventy-five years.

## Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumed that three months was sufficient time to do the study. The findings were limited to the setting in which this study took place, and no attempt was made to generalize beyond the confines of the experiment. In addition, the students may have benefited from a combination of the three procedures.

## Results

The individual student's scores were graphed to determine which of the three techniques: listening, silent reading, or oral reading, was the most effective for that particular student. Also, the total group's scores were graphed to determine the overall effectiveness of listening comprehension, oral reading comprehension, and silent reading comprehension.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Characteristics of the Problem Reader

According to Irene Schultz (1987), a teacher for twenty-five years and author of The Woodland Gang Series, by the time a typical poor reader has reached the sixth grade, he has already experienced years of failure. Although he may check out books from the library on a weekly basis, he may never read them. He can read "baby" books but is embarrassed to be seen with them. However, he can't read well enough to comprehend his science and social studies textbooks or his math story problems. He has observed his classmates read flawlessly and succeed where he has failed miserably. Often, by sixth grade, he has already become an emotional dropout.

In addition, Beck (1988) found that a poor reader has difficulty initiating or completing written and oral directions, and staying in his seat. He may also rush through his work, have a poor self concept, and be unwilling to attempt new tasks.

Why can't he read well? Schultz concluded that he may experience slow physical development, perceptual problems, limited vocabulary, physical problems such as hearing loss or color blindness, passivity from watching extended periods of television, anxiety from past school failures, or family problems including child abuse, drug or alcohol abuse, and limited finances resulting in hunger or even eviction.

Schultz suggested that this child will benefit from being read to. He needs to be exposed to books with themes of good triumphing over evil, not the realities and failures of life. Also, he needs large type, short sentences, simple words, the visual relief of pictures, and boy and girl pictures. Most importantly, he needs books in which any child, even himself, can be triumphant.

How can classroom teachers who may feel overwhelmed or experience negative attitudes toward working with poor readers, help these children experience success in reading? What methods have been proven effective in improving poor readers' comprehension? Research indicates that oral reading, silent reading, and reading aloud to children are successful techniques to improve poor readers' comprehension.

### Comprehension

Prior to a discussion of the three aforementioned techniques, it is vital to obtain an understanding of what is involved in the comprehension process.

Comprehending, according to Dolores Durkin, author of Teaching Them to Read (1989), has three basic requirements: 1) the ability to identify an author's words and to understand their meanings in a given text (literal comprehension), 2) the ability to go beyond an author's words by inferring what they imply (text-based inferential comprehension), and 3) the readers' ability to use what they know that is relevant in order to add more to the message than an author's words communicate (knowledge-based inferential comprehension). In other words, comprehending requires readers to construct meaning. This is accomplished by using the direct and indirect meanings of the author's words, in addition to what the reader knows that is relevant. Comprehending is an interactive process; the reader's knowledge of the world interacts with the message conveyed directly and indirectly by the text. This results in communication between the author and the reader.

Durkin (1989, p. 14) identified nine basic requirements for comprehending and they are as follows:

1. An understanding of what is meant by word and how empty space separates one written word from others.

2. An understanding that English words are read in a left-to-right order and that lines of text are read from top to bottom.

3. The ability to identify written words automatically and to understand their meaning in a given context.

4. The ability to work out the pronunciation of unknown root words with the help of their spelling.

5. The ability to work out the pronunciation and meaning of unknown derived and inflected words with the help of their structure.

6. The ability to arrive at the identity and meaning of a word with the help of known words that are in the same context.

7. The ability to make both text-based and knowledge-based inferences.

8. The ability to use the context in which a given set of words is embedded in order to assign to these words either a literal or a figurative meaning.

9. The ability to make semantic connections between the parts of a sentence and across separate sentences.

In addition, Durkin identified three contributors to comprehension which are a) experiences, b) oral language, and c) knowledge of the world. These variables are interrelated and vital aspects of comprehension.

Thus, comprehension is a multi-faceted process. In order to become successful readers, students must comprehend well; reading and comprehending are indeed synonymous terms.

## Listening

If we would get our parents to read to their preschool children fifteen minutes a day, we would revolutionize the schools.

-Superintendent of Chicago  
Public Schools (1981)  
(cited in Trelease, 1989)

According to Jim Trelease, author of The New Read-Aloud Handbook (1989), a large part of the educational research and practice of the last twenty years confirms conclusively that the best way to raise a reader is to read to that child, both in the home and in the classroom. In 1983, the National Academy of Education and the National Institute of Education created a Commission on Reading. Its 1985 findings indicate that the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children (Trelease, 1989, p.2). The Commission concluded that this practice should continue not only in the home, but also in the classroom, throughout the grades. What makes "reading-aloud" so important? Trelease stated that it creates a positive attitude toward reading by reassuring, entertaining, informing, arousing curiosity, and inspiring children. Also, "reading-aloud" strengthens children's reading, writing, and speaking skills. This is accomplished by improving children's listening comprehension. According to Trelease, listening comprehension must come before reading comprehension.

Trelease estimated that only twenty percent of parents and thirty percent of teachers regularly read aloud to children. Teachers often view reading-aloud as a waste of their instructional time. Workbooks and skill sheets are used to take the place of real stories. Richard Allington (cited in Trelease, 1989) found that remedial reading classes spent a remarkably small amount of time reading in context without interruption: the average student read only forty-three consecutive words before being interrupted for corrections or questions. The poorest readers received the heaviest doses of skill

instruction and spent the least amount of time on actual reading. These students must be read to, according to Trelease, before they close the door on reading for the rest of their lives.

In 1987, Maryellen S. Cosgrove, a University of Connecticut doctoral candidate, conducted research on the impact of reading-aloud on students' attitudes about books, reading, and their reading scores. She singled out six diverse Connecticut communities and hired six independent teachers/readers who visited the schools three times a week for twelve weeks. They read for twenty minutes to a cross section of 212 fourth and sixth grade students (separate classes). There were also six control groups in each community; they were not read to. The students were permitted to choose their selection from the areas of fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Cosgrove's findings indicated the students improved significantly in their reading attitudes, independent reading, and comprehension skills. The teachers in the classrooms also demonstrated a positive attitude toward reading-aloud.

Durkin (cited in Huck, Hepler, and Hickman, 1987) found that children who learned to read before entering school were members of families who respected reading. All of these early readers had been read to from the age of three or younger. Robert Thorndike's study (cited in Huck, Hepler, and Hickman, 1987) of reading in fifteen different countries, found that books in the home and reading-aloud were powerful factors in children's learning to read.

Dorothy Cohen (cited in Huck, Hepler, and Hickman, 1987) conducted a study to determine if reading-aloud to seven year olds, who had not previously been exposed to literature, would make a difference in their ability to read. Over a one year period, books were read aloud to children in ten experimental classrooms in New York. After the twenty minute story time, the children were asked to do something with the book to make it memorable. These activities included acting out the story, drawing a picture of their favorite characters, or comparing it with a similar book. At the end of the year, the experimental group was significantly ahead of the control group on reading vocabulary and reading comprehension.



Cohen concluded that reading to the children helped them learn to read.

Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1987) stated that hearing stories read aloud is a powerful motivation for a child to begin to learn to read. Children learn that reading is enjoyable and they want to learn themselves. Also, they see someone important in their lives valuing books. Listening to stories also introduces children to pattern of language and extends vocabulary and meaning (p.13).

Furthermore, Wells' (cited by Huck, Hepler, and Hickman, 1987) longitudinal study of children in Bristol, England, found that the most important indicator of reading comprehension at age seven was the frequency of listening to stories.

### Oral Reading

Beebe, 1980; Guthrie and Tyler, 1976; Juel and Holmes, 1981; Mosenthal, 1976-1977, and Swolm, 1976 (cited by Miller and Smith, 1985) have conducted studies concerning the differences in comprehension comparing oral and silent reading formats. Their findings indicate that differences do exist in poor readers but not in competent readers. As a result of these findings, writers of reading texts have agreed that oral reading is more demanding than silent reading and that expectations should be lowered accordingly when students read orally (Cheek and Cheek, 1980; Otto, McMenamy, and Smith, 1973; Spache, 1981; cited by Miller and Smith, 1985, p. 341).

Miller and Smith (1985) questioned whether or not that recommendation was warranted under all conditions. They suggested that the aspect of comprehension being measured, literal or inferential, may be a limiting factor on the validity of that conclusion. Subsequently, they conducted a study to determine whether or not there were differences in reading comprehension related to oral or silent reading, and if differences did occur did they occur equally for good and poor readers.

In their study, ninety-four children in grades two through five were asked to read, orally and silently, grade-appropriate passages from the Analytic Reading Inventory (Woods and Moe, 1977). Following the passages, the students answered questions which were classified as literal or inferential. Each child was asked to read one passage orally and another one silently at his/her grade level and to give appropriate oral answers. The children read an equal number of silent and oral passages. Each child was tested individually and all testing was completed within two weeks. The children's total scores were ranked and divided into three levels of competency: Level L (Low), 0-66%; Level M (Medium), 67-81%; Level H (High), 82-100% (p. 342).

Their findings indicated that the Level L readers had higher scores on inferential questions than they did on literal questions. They also had higher comprehension scores after reading orally than they did when reading silently. Level M readers had higher comprehension after reading silently than they did when reading orally, and there was no difference between their scores on literal and inferential questions. Level H readers scored higher on literal questions than on inferential, and there was no difference between their oral and silent reading scores (p. 344)

Miller and Smith suggested that oral reading might improve the performance of poor readers because of its demand for attention to individual words. Also, although the poor readers (Level L) had difficulty reading for details, they were able to discern the text's larger meanings.

Another researcher, (Ross 1986) found that good oral reading can strengthen the relationship between the spoken and printed word and improve comprehension.

According to Regie Routman, author of Transitions: From Literature to Literacy, the value of oral reading is in being able to guide the child in helping himself/herself in the predicting, confirming, self-correcting process (p.51.) By hearing him/her read and questioning him/her, the teacher can model ways for the child to monitor his/her own reading. She also recommended considerable

practice in oral reading to enable students to gain confidence in the reading process and to firm up their strategies.

### Silent Reading

According to Charlotte S. Huck, Susan Hepler, and Janet Hickman, authors of Children's Literature in the Elementary School, sustained silent reading (SSR) time provides a quiet time for children to read books of their own choosing and also develops fluent readers. During SSR, everyone in the class reads, including the teacher. SSR times have been successfully established in kindergarten through middle schools. The reading periods may vary from ten minutes a day to forty-five minutes a day in some fifth and sixth grade classes. In order for SSR to be successful, it is essential to have a classroom collection of books supplemented by library books.

Poor readers, however, often do not have opportunities to practice the skills of reading by actually reading books they enjoy. Allington, Stuetzel, Shake, and Lamarche (cited by Koenke 1988) reported on the nature of remedial reading instruction after observing twenty-seven students in their regular classrooms and during Chapter 1 reading instruction in four school districts for seventy-three hours. Their remedial instruction ranged from eighteen minutes twice a week to thirty minutes daily. They found that one-third of the time was spent in direct reading, one-third in indirect instruction (writing, listening, or discussing, without reading orally or silently), and one-third in non-academic activities. During direct instruction, two-thirds of the time was spent in sentence and word level activities. Only one-fourth of the time as spent in silent reading of paragraphs and stories for comprehension. The remaining ten percent of the time as allocated to oral reading of paragraphs focusing on comprehension. Management of student behavior consumed the largest amount of time not allocated to instruction (Koenke, 1988 p. 708).

As a result of the study, Allington advocated allocating more time to instruction of poor readers by adding more sessions and focusing on silent reading. The silent reading would need to be highly structured at first because poor readers have so little practice and would tend to be off task. Also, he suggested the daily reading of easy material to make poor readers fluent in their reading skills.

Durkin (cited by Holmes, 1985) endorsed the viewpoint that silent reading leads to better comprehension because the attention paid to articulation in oral reading inhibits understanding. Holmes (1985) conducted a study to determine which of four modes of reading (oral reading to an audience, oral reading to oneself, silent reading, or silent reading while listening) best facilitated the answering of four different types of questions. The comprehension questions included getting the gist or recalling main ideas, recalling literal details, drawing inferences, and making scriptal comparisons (p. 577). A total of forty-eight undergraduate students participated in the study. They read an expository passage in each of the four modes and answered the questions. The results indicated that there were significant differences in comprehension among the four modes of reading. No significant differences occurred between reading orally to oneself and reading silently when little attention was demanded for the vocal output. However, when greater attention to performance standards was demanded during oral reading (reading to someone), comprehension was hindered and silent reading was superior (p.584)

Researchers and educators have never before seemed as interested in reading comprehension as they are at the present time. Although listening, oral reading, and silent reading have been deemed by researchers as effective methods for improving poor readers' comprehension skills, considerable controversy still exists as to which method is the superior mode for understanding or remembering.

## CHAPTER III PILOT STUDY

This chapter contains the researcher's two week pilot study conducted in April 1989. It was an initial study to determine effective techniques to improve a poor reader's comprehension level. Also, it examined the effects of improved reading comprehension on the student's self esteem and interest in reading.

### Questions to Answer (Hypotheses):

1. Which of the following three techniques is the most effective in improving a poor reader's comprehension?
  - a. listening
  - b. oral reading
  - c. silent reading
2. Does improved reading comprehension affect a poor reader's self esteem, enjoyment of reading, or amount of time spent in reading?

### Procedure

The students were given the Wide Range Achievement Test (Level 1 Spelling and Reading) and the Metropolitan Achievement Test - Test 3 Reading Comprehension.

Using Barnell Loft's Specific Skill Series, Getting the Facts (Level A), the students participated in three reading comprehension activities: listening, oral reading, and silent reading. During each one to one reading lesson, the students completed three units using

each of these reading methods. A unit consisted of a five-paragraph story and five comprehension questions. Each student: 1) listened as the researcher read one story and the questions to him/her, 2) read one story and the questions orally, and 3) read one story and the questions silently. At the end of each unit, the students answered the comprehension questions. They were not allowed to turn back to the story to help them answer the questions. The students were permitted to score their own answers at the end of each unit. The individual student's scores were graphed to determine the effectiveness of listening comprehension, oral reading comprehension, and silent reading comprehension. Changes in the student's self-esteem, attitude toward reading, and concentration were observed. Stickers were given for perfect papers and/or excellent concentration.

### Subjects.

There were four second grade students in the study - two boys (ages 9 and 10) and two girls (ages 7 and 8). All of the students had been identified as poor readers and participated in remedial reading programs.

Student A was nine years old and was repeating the second grade. He had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 6/12/87. On the Pre-Test - Wide Range Achievement Test Level 1, he scored 45 (1E) in Reading and 30 (2B) in Spelling. Initial results indicated he scored 14 out of 27 on the Metropolitan Achievement Test - Test 3 Reading Comprehension.

Student B was a ten year old second grade student who repeated the first grade. He had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 3/16/88. Student B was eligible for the SLD program and had an SLD tutor. On the Wide Range Achievement Test, he scored 39 (1M) in Reading and 27 (1E) in Spelling. Initial results indicated he scored 18 out of 27 on the Metropolitan Achievement Test - Test 3 Reading Comprehension.

Student C was an eight year old second grade student. She had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 6/20/88. She had recently completed working with the Speech Therapist at her school. Student C scored 41 (1M-1E) in Reading and 30 (2B) in Spelling on the Wide Range Achievement Test Level 1. Initial results indicated she scored 23 out of 27 on the Metropolitan Achievement Test - Test 3 Reading Comprehension. Her teacher stated that her reading skills had greatly improved during the grading period.

Student D was a seven year old second grade student. She had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 6/24/88. She scored 43 (1E) in Reading and 28 (1E) in spelling on the Wide Range Achievement Test Level 1. Initial results indicated she scored 11 out of 27 on the Metropolitan Achievement Test-Test 3 Reading Comprehension.

### Setting

Over a two week period, the students participated in two one-half hour lessons per week. The study was not completed by the end of the term; a minimum of three months would be needed to accurately measure the effectiveness of the three reading techniques and the student's improvement in reading comprehension.

### Analysis of Results

#### Summary, Conclusions, Implications.

The pre-test results indicated all four of the students were reading on a first grade level and three out of four had a great deal of difficulty comprehending what they read. During the Metropolitan Achievement Test-Test 3 Reading Comprehension (silent reading), Student A and Student B rushed through the test and did not concentrate well.

All of the students appeared to enjoy reading from Getting the Facts (Level A- 1st grade level) because they contained factual but unusual stories. They also liked grading their own answer sheets. The

Specific Skill Series has proven to be an effective method to develop comprehension.

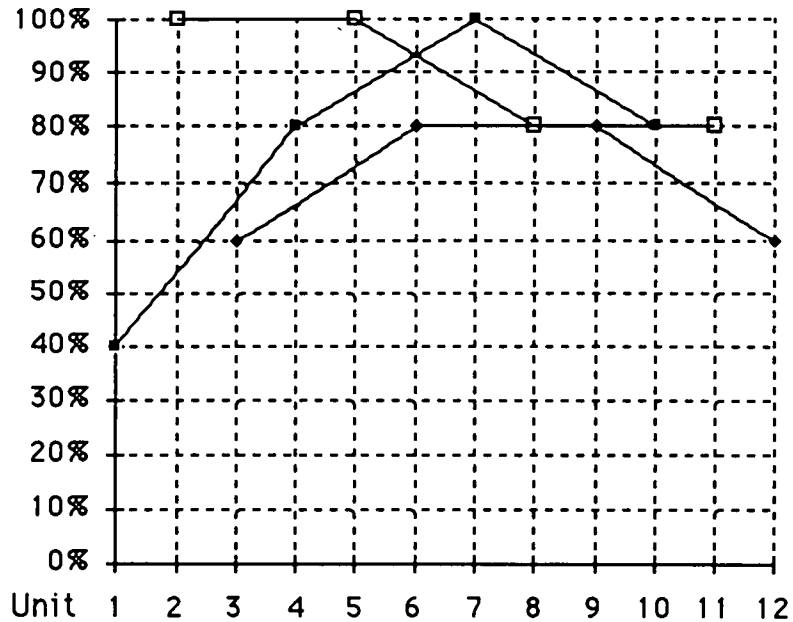
Although at least three months would be needed to accurately evaluate the three methods of improving comprehension, several conclusions can be drawn from this study. The students appeared to benefit most from oral reading and least from silent reading. Listening ranked a close second to oral reading. All of the students seemed to need to hear themselves read to be confident in their reading. They needed more practice to develop their listening skills and gain confidence in their ability to read silently.

Stickers were an effective and positive reinforcement for excellent comprehension and concentration. The children were pleased when they scored well and appeared to enjoy reading a variety of stories. Throughout the study, the students experienced frequent successes resulting in an increase in their self esteem and a willingness to participate in a variety of reading activities.

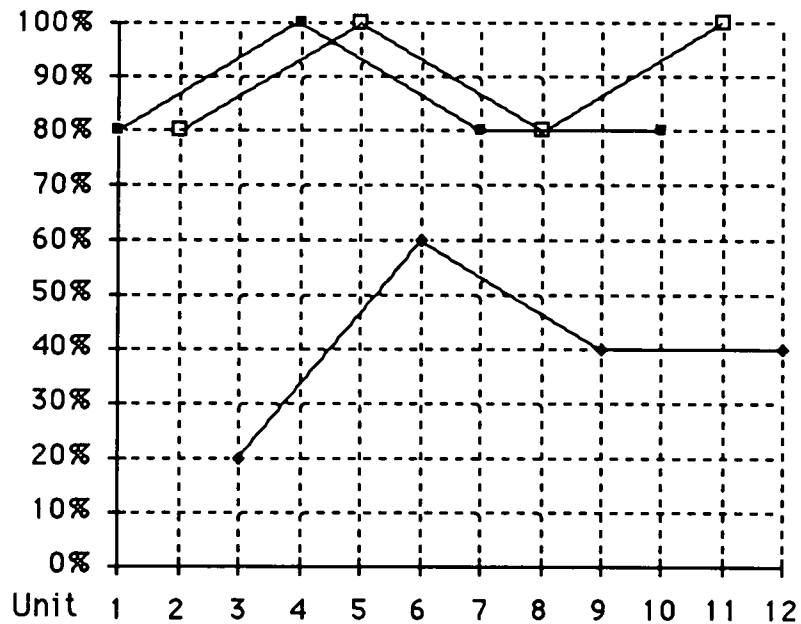


# Pilot Study: Comprehension Graphs

## GETTING THE FACTS: STUDENT A



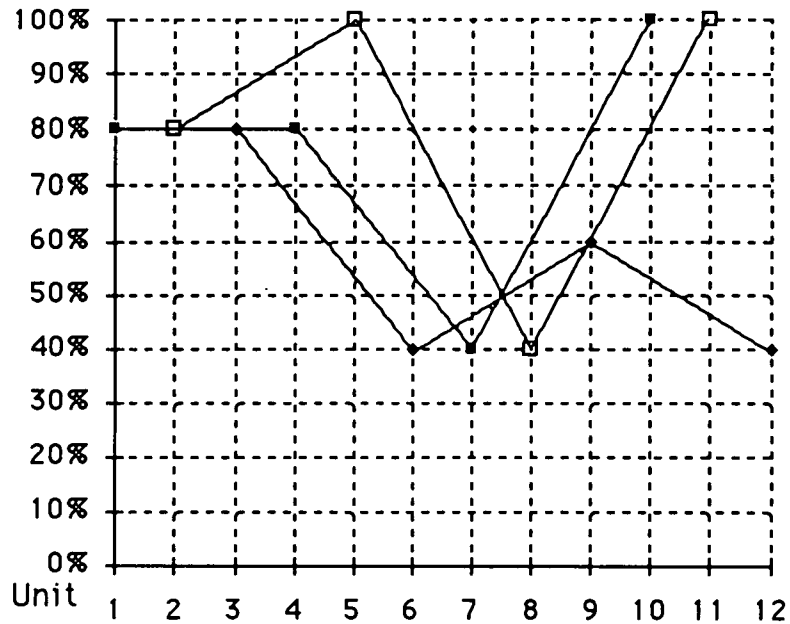
## GETTING THE FACTS: STUDENT B



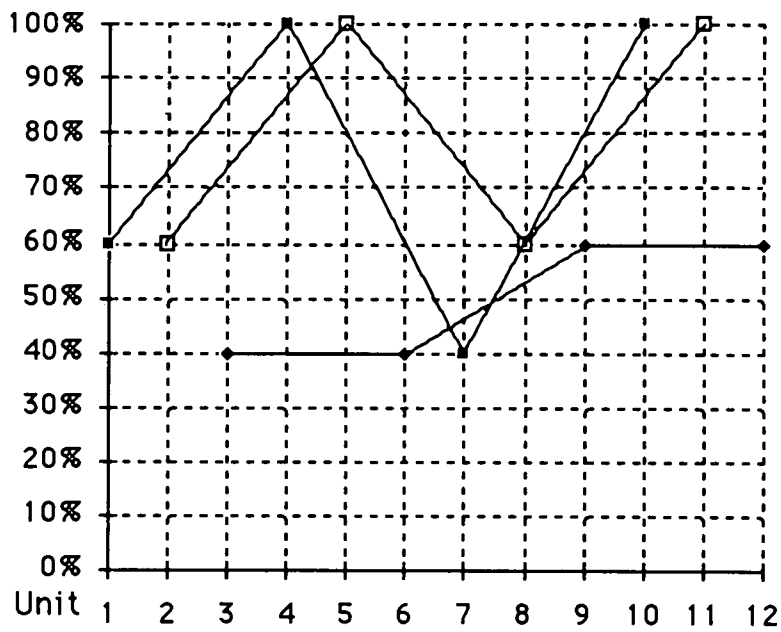
■ LISTENING TO THE STORY    □ ORAL READING    ◆ SILENT READING

# **Pilot Study: Comprehension Graphs**

## **GETTING THE FACTS: STUDENT C**



## **GETTING THE FACTS: STUDENT D**



■ LISTENING TO THE STORY    □ ORAL READING    ● SILENT READING

## CHAPTER IV METHODOLOGY

The three month comprehension project began in February, 1991 and was completed in May, 1991. The eight students involved in the study (four girls ages 9-11 and four boys ages 9-11) had been identified as problem readers; they were participants in the Supplemental Reading Program (SRP) at Gladden Community House, and several students also received special reading instruction in their individual schools (Chapter 1, resource room, etc.). Although these students were in different grades (third-fifth), they were selected because they read on the same grade level (second grade level).

### Procedure

At the beginning of the study, each student was given two pre-tests: the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K.

Using the I Love Reading Homework Booklet (Level 2 Book 1 and Level 2 Book 2), the students then participated in a three month study to determine which of three techniques: listening, oral reading, or silent reading was the most effective in improving problem readers' comprehension skills. The researcher wanted to discover which method was the most effective for each individual student, as well as the group as a whole.

During each one-to-one reading lesson (1/2 hour lesson twice a week), the students completed three stories using each of these reading methods. There were a total of seventy-eight high-interest low vocabulary stories included in the project. The students 1) listened as the researcher read one story and the questions to him/her, 2) read one story and the questions orally, and 3) read one story and the questions silently. At the end of each story, the

students answered four questions and scored their own answers. The questions were designed to sharpen skills in identifying the main idea, recalling facts and details, drawing conclusions, and using imaginative thinking. Each booklet contained a crossword comprehension review and a word search vocabulary review to provide additional application of skills. In addition, an answer section was included in the center of each booklet.

The individual student's scores were graphed to determine which of the three techniques: listening, oral reading, or silent reading was the most effective for that particular student. In addition, the group's total scores were also graphed to determine which method was the most effective overall.

### Subjects.

Student A was a nine year old third grade student who had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 9/26/90. On the pre-test - Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1, she scored 59 (2E-3B). Also, she scored 25 (1.7 grade level) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. At the conclusion of the study, Student A scored 58 (2E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1 and 30 (2.0) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student B was a ten year old third grade student. She had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 10/25/90. Student B scored 45 (1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 25 (1.7) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. Her post-test results indicated she scored 45 (1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1 and 24 (1.7) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student C was a ten year old third grade student. He had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 9/18/90. Student C scored 41 (1M-1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1 and 19 (1.6) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. At the conclusion of the study, he demonstrated improvement on both of the post-tests. He scored 44 (1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 30 (2.0) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student D was a nine year old third grade student who had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 9/12/90. Initial testing indicated he scored 39 (1M) on the Wide Range Achievement Test Reading, Level 1 and 24 (1.6) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. On the post-tests, he scored 42 (1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1 and 20 (1.6) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student E was an eleven year old fourth grade student who had been retained in second grade. He had participated in the Supplemental Reading program since 6/29/90. Student E scored 53 (2M) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 28 (1.8) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. On the post-tests, he scored 52 (2M) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 23 (1.6) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student F was an eleven year old fifth grade student who had participated in the Supplemental Reading Program since 11/21/90. She was eligible for the Specific Learning Disability (SLD) program and had an SLD tutor. On the pre-test, she scored 44 (1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1 and 25 (1.7) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. She demonstrated improvement on the post-tests and her scores were as follows: 47 (2B) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 30 (2.0) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student G was an eleven year old fourth grade student and she had been a participant in the Supplemental Reading Program since 6/14/90. She scored 45 (1E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 31 (2.1) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. Her improved scores on the post-tests were 50 (2M) on the Wide Range Achievement Test - Reading, Level 1 and 34 (2.3) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

Student H was a ten year old fifth grade student who had participated in the Supplemental Reading program since 6/19/90. He was also a student in the SLD program. Student H scored 57 (2E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test-Reading, Level 1 and 26 (1.7) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K. His post-test scores were 56 (2E) on the Wide Range Achievement Test- Reading Level 1 and 27 (1.8) on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS

The content of this chapter is the findings of the three month comprehension study to determine which of three methods (listening, oral reading, and silent reading) was the most effective in improving a poor reader's comprehension level. In comparing these three methods, the results are as follows: 1) listening, 2) oral reading, and 3) silent reading. Out of a possible 104 points (average total scores), listening received 85 points, oral reading ranked a close second with 82 points, and silent reading was a distant third with 75 points. According to the individual graphs, silent reading was the least effective method for all of the eight students. However, listening was the most effective method for five of the students while oral reading was the most effective method for three of the students. This is demonstrated by the following scores.

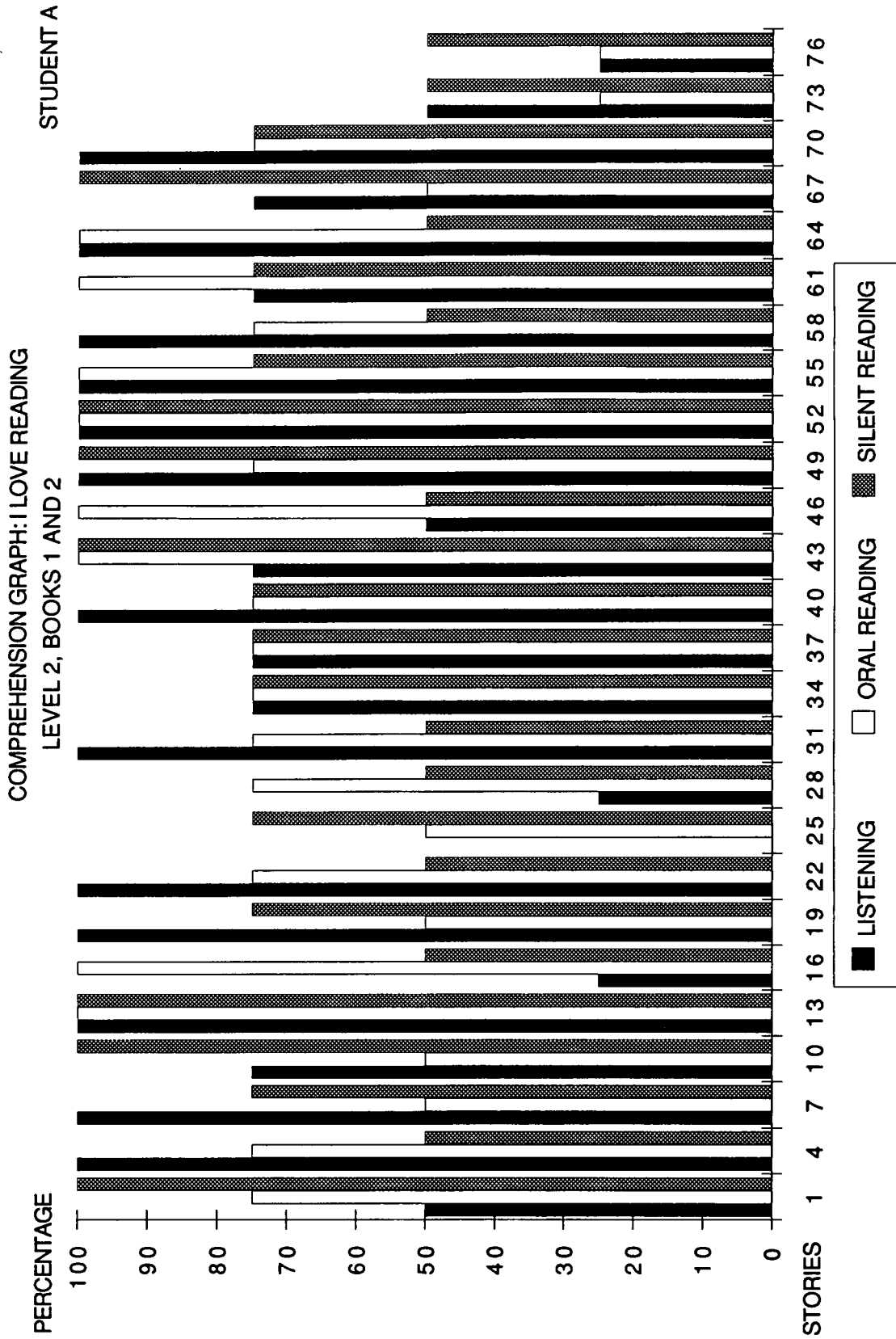
|           | Listening | Oral Reading | Silent Reading |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| Student A | 79        | 77           | 75             |
| " B       | 78        | 70           | 59             |
| " C       | 82        | 81           | 64             |
| " D       | 89        | 79           | 66             |
| " E       | 89        | 90           | 78             |
| " F       | 85        | 88           | 74             |
| " G       | 89        | 85           | 80             |
| " H       | 87        | 88           | 84             |

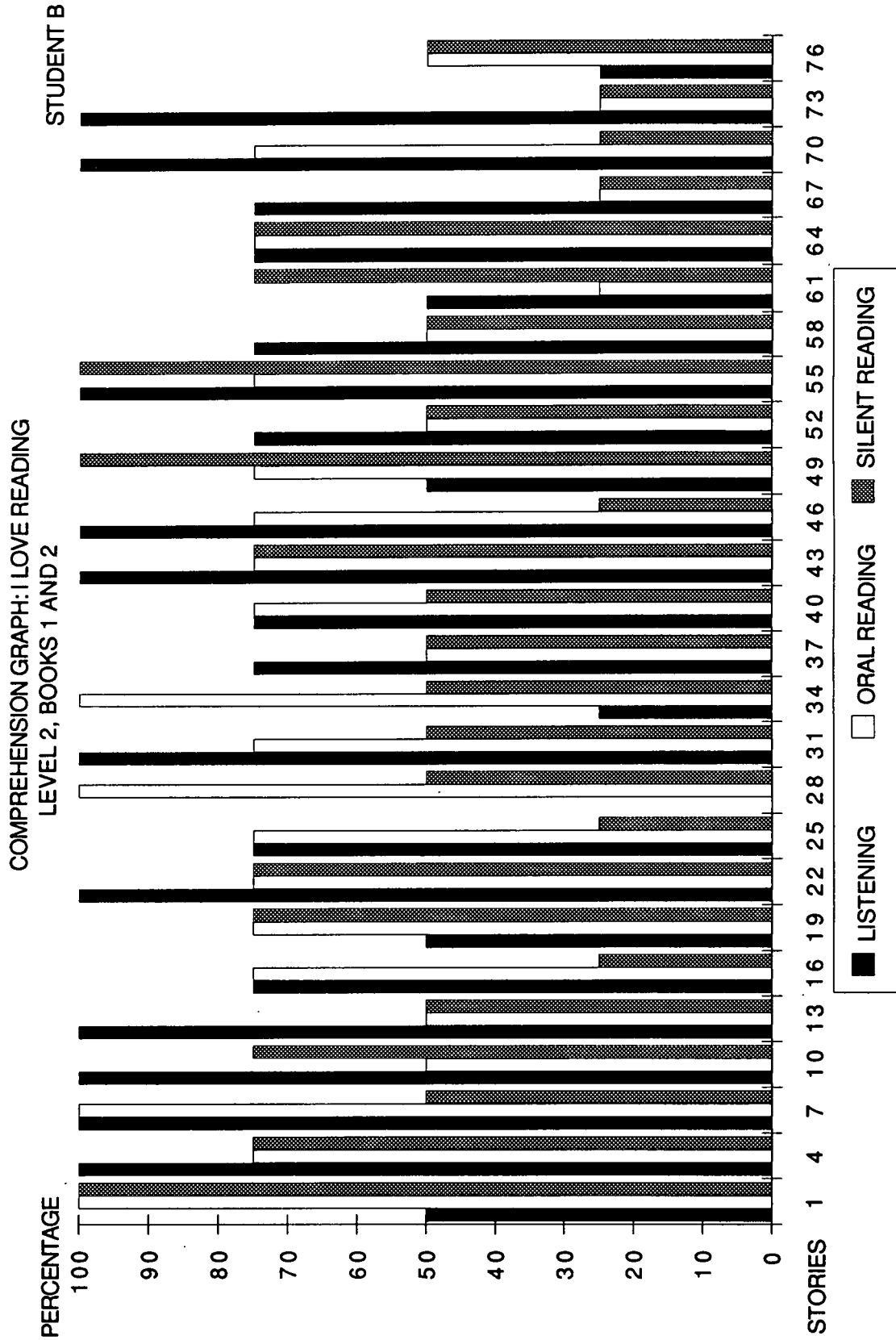
The students' individual scores appeared to fluctuate due to differing levels of concentration, changes in interest levels in the subject matter of the stories, changes in motivation levels, and distractibility. All of the students lacked confidence in their silent reading skills due to their limited sight vocabularies. They often missed questions due to their inability to decode key words

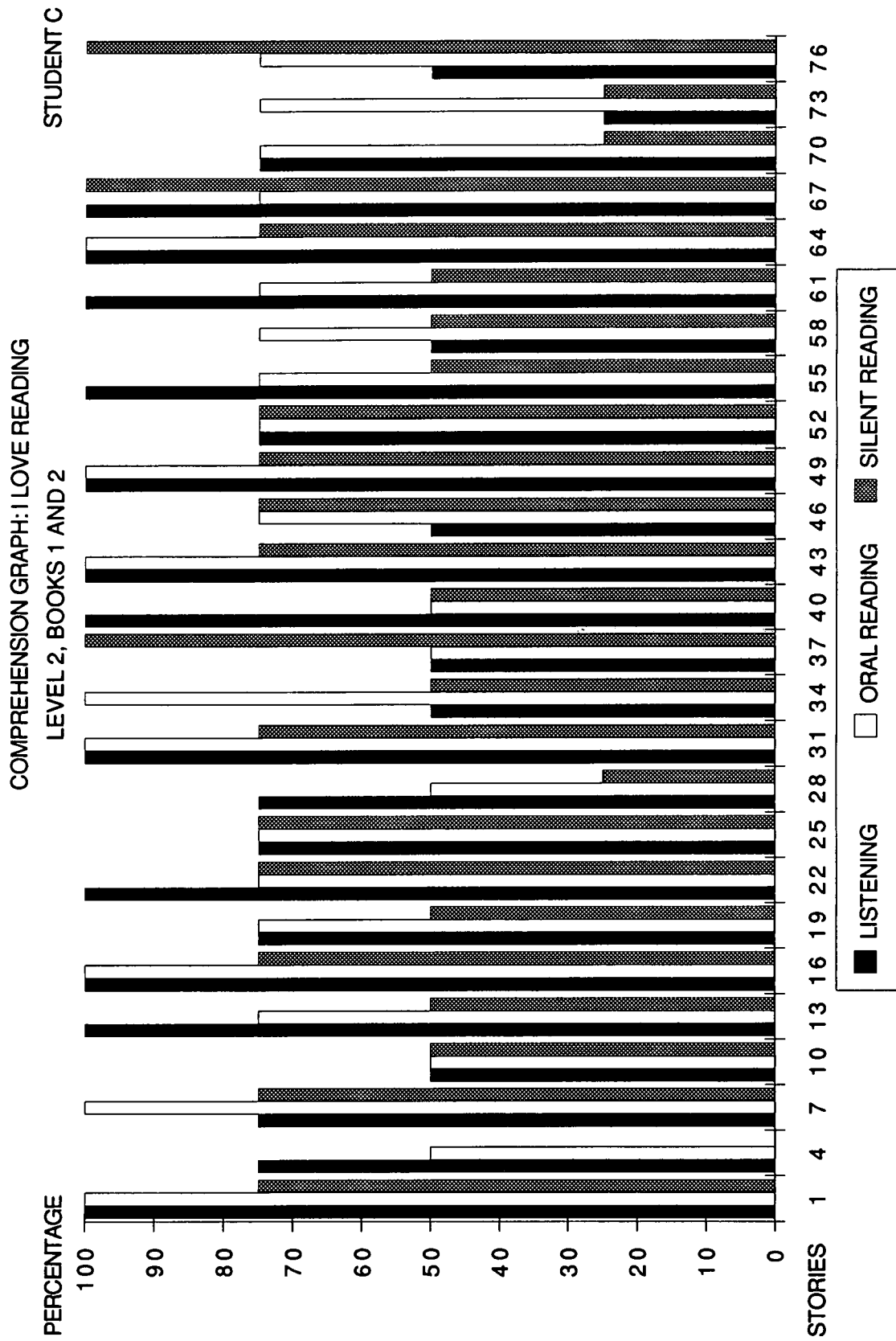
independently. They were also unable to make use of context clues to help identify those words. Overall, they were not comfortable or confident in their silent reading abilities. These findings are consistent with those of the researcher's pilot study concerning the effectiveness of silent reading upon a poor reader's comprehension level.

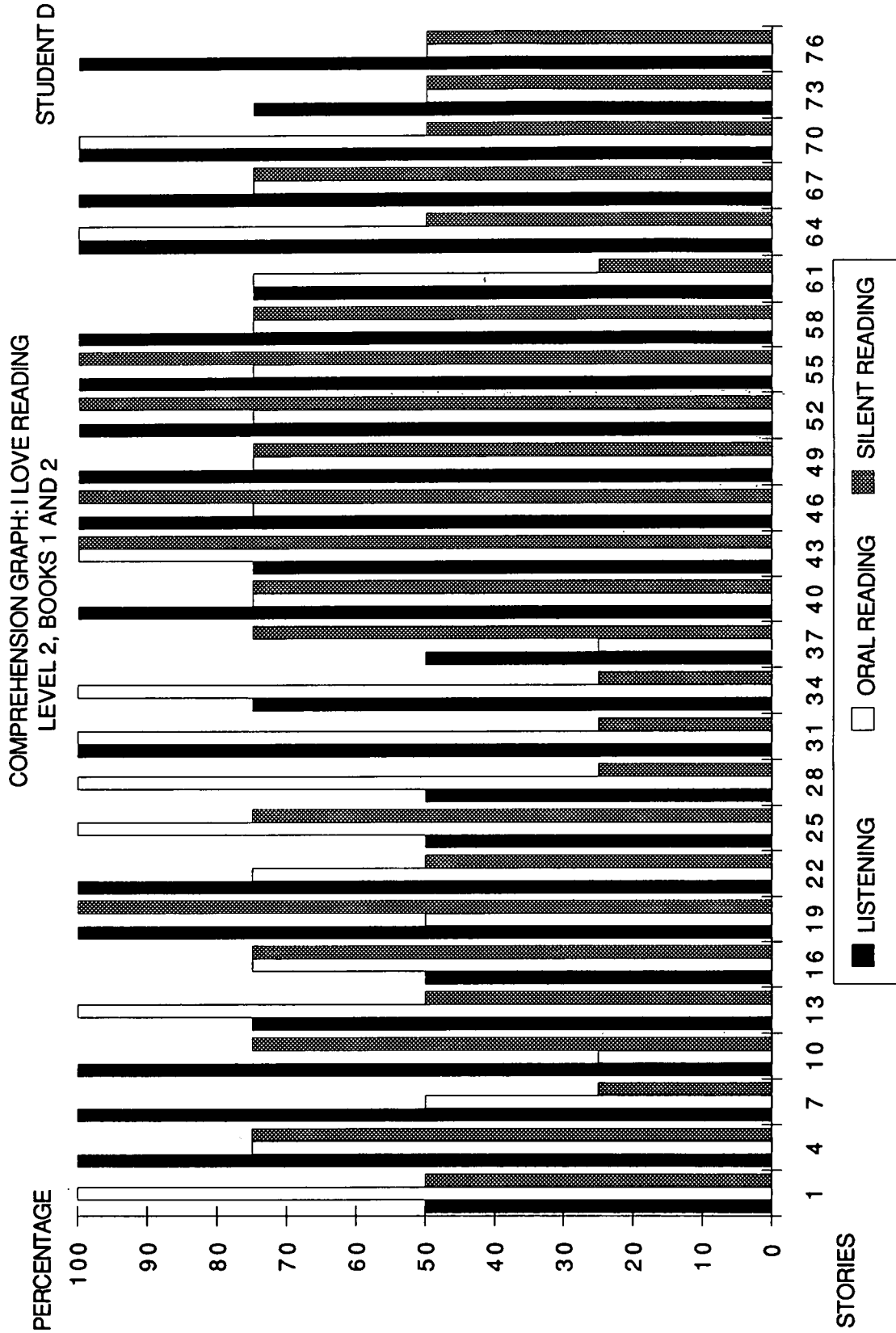
Also, the students seemed to need to hear themselves read to be confident in their reading skills. However, the student's limited sight vocabularies also affected their oral reading scores as it did their listening comprehension scores. As a result, the students benefited the most from listening to the researcher read the stories to them. In the pilot study, the students appeared to benefit the most from oral reading and listening ranked a close second. In the three month study, those findings were reversed; the students benefited the most from listening and oral reading ranked second.

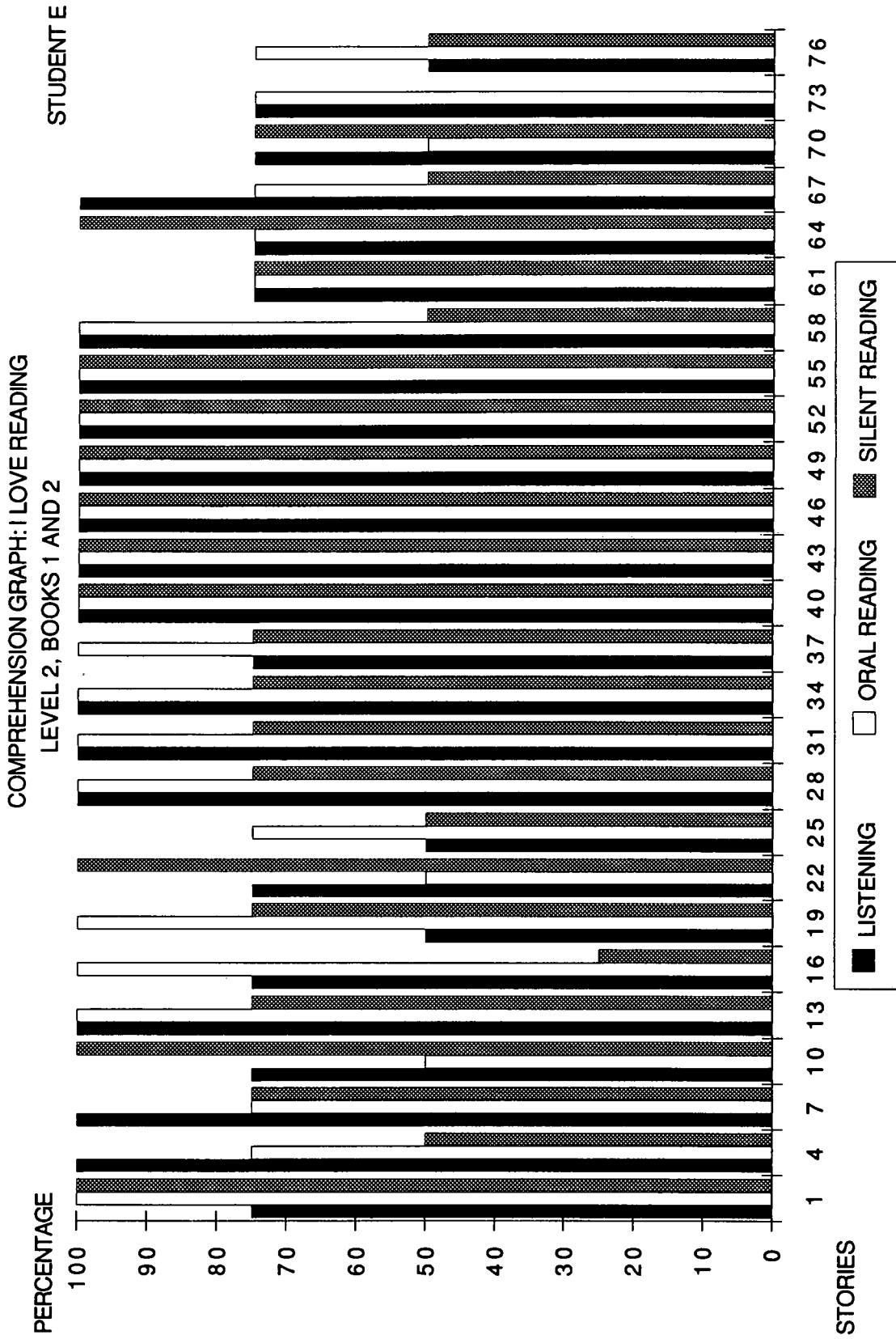


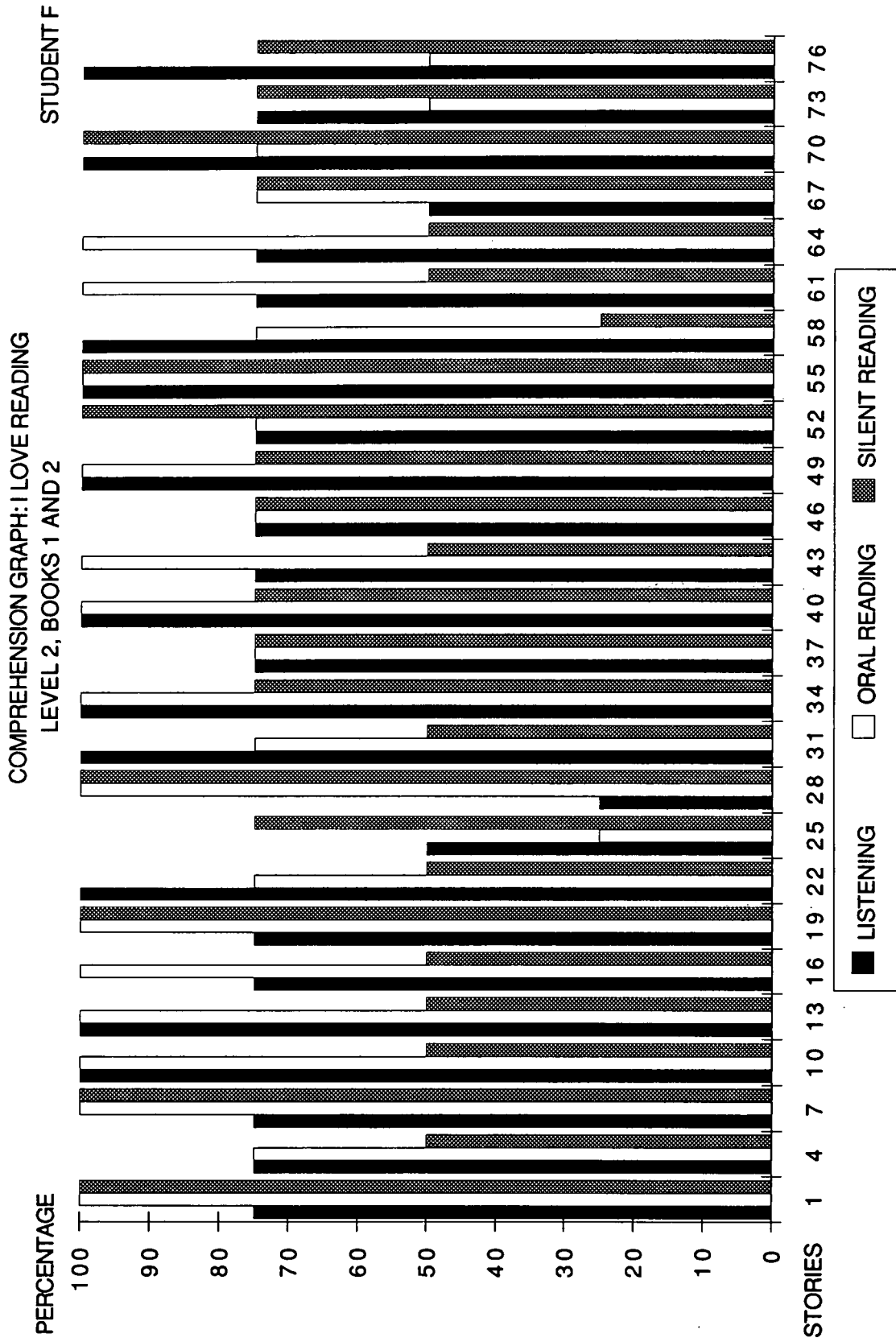


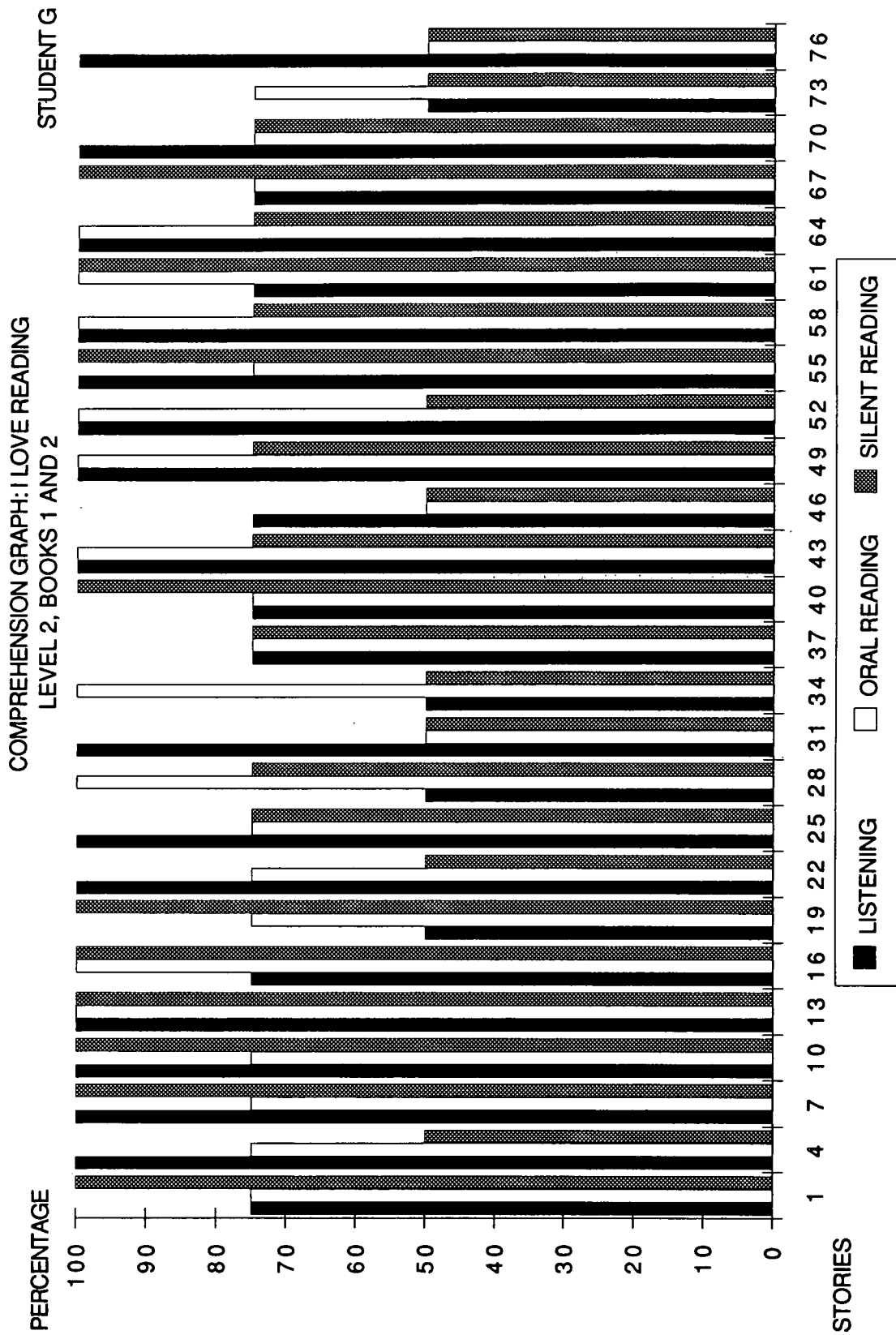


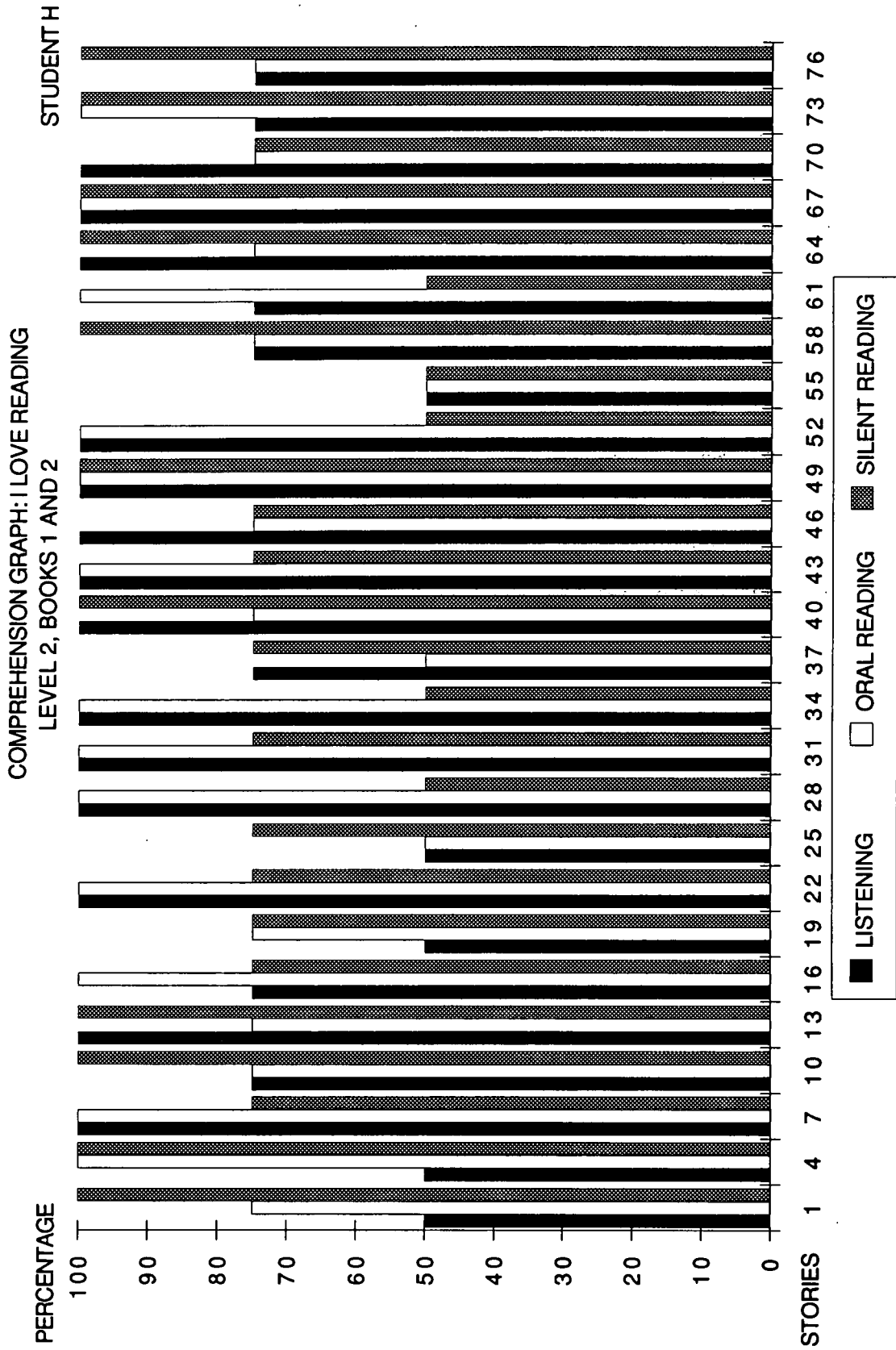






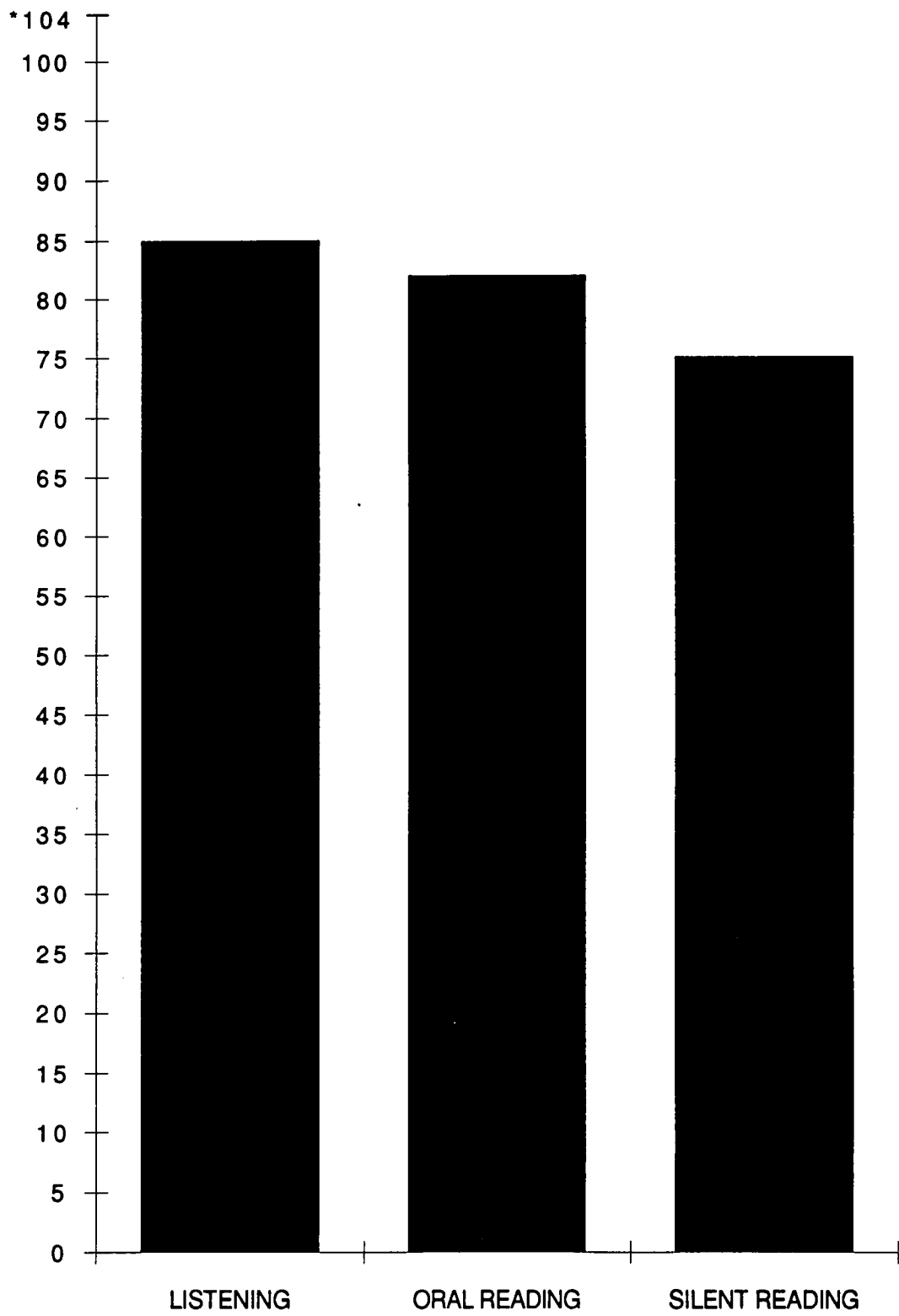








COMPREHENSION GRAPH: AVERAGE TOTAL SCORES



\* TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a brief review of the problem, procedures, and findings of the researcher's three month comprehension study comparing the effectiveness of listening, oral reading, and silent reading on poor readers' comprehension skills.

Prior to the study, the students' reading skills were evaluated through the use of the Wide Range Achievement Test Level 1 Reading and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form K Comprehension. The pre-test scores indicated the students were comprehending on a first-second grade level. During the Gates-MacGinitie Comprehension Test (silent reading), several of the students appeared to have difficulty understanding the questions.

Throughout the study, the students appeared to enjoy reading the stories from I Love Reading Level 2 Books 1 and 2. The high-interest low vocabulary format added to the appeal of this series. The students liked scoring their own answers and were pleased to receive stickers for perfect scores and accomplishing their goals (completing two books - seventy-eight stories).

At the conclusion of the project, the students were given two post-test (Wide Range Achievement Test Level 1 Reading and the Gates - MacGinitie Reading Test Level 2 Form L Comprehension). These test results indicate that five out of eight of the students' comprehension scores improved when compared with their performance on the pre-test.

This study indicates there is a definite difference between listening, oral reading, and silent reading on poor readers' comprehension. These eight problem readers benefited the most from listening to stories, secondly from reading orally, and least from reading silently. They lacked confidence in their ability to read silently successfully; they needed to hear themselves read to be confident in their reading skills. This is evidenced by the fact that many of the students resorted to reading out loud softly during their

time of silent reading. The students appeared to comprehend best when they listened to stories because they often lacked the ability to decode key words independently, either by reading orally or silently.

The students responded positively to both verbal praise and the awarding of stickers for excellent comprehension and concentration. All of the students experienced frequent successes throughout the study which increased their self-esteem.

The researcher's recommendations are as follows:

1. A further study be conducted to ensure more in-depth statistics.
2. An increase in listening and oral reading activities to
  - a. improve comprehension skills
  - b. enhance the bond between parent and child
  - c. develop an appreciation for reading
3. Teachers and parents implement modeling techniques.  
(Children will value reading if they observe that those close to them also value reading).
4. Poor readers be given opportunities to read actual stories to improve their reading comprehension, not just drill work.
5. The use of high-interest low vocabulary stories to enable problem readers to experience frequent success. This will aid in making reading both enjoyable and worthwhile.

Thus, all efforts to enable problem readers to become successful lifelong readers must focus on meaningful comprehension instruction. To read successfully certainly is to comprehend successfully.

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