

Limitations

The study is limited in terms of the number of informants involved; however, it serves as a baseline study to which subsequent reading research may add.

The length of the text (55 running words) is an issue because miscue analysis generally works with texts that are longer than 250 words in length. Research (Menosky, 1987) has shown that the quality of miscues changes substantially after the first 250 words; however, I intentionally chose a short text because I wanted to achieve a match with the kind of text commonly used in the classroom. While this text is generally used for instruction, it does not come from basals, which are more frequently used in classrooms than the kind of material that *I Saw a Dinosaur* represents. A contrastive study, therefore, involving trade books and instructional texts might prove informative and beneficial.

The study is also limited by the small number of miscues produced by readers in this study. Miscue analysis researchers generally agree that at least 25 miscues are needed in order to be able to gain insight into the reader's miscue patterns and reading strategies. Across all readers in this study, a total of 53 miscues were analyzed, and a total of 2,347 eye fixations were examined and analyzed. Although there were 55 running words in the text, not all words were fixated with equal frequency. At times words were not fixated at all; at other times, words were multiply fixated, resulting in more than one fixation per word.

Finally, analyses within this study involved the use of traditional eye movement research in which eye fixations were ascribed to words and within word boundaries. Technically speaking, eye fixations do not always fall neatly within word boundaries. At times the graphic information that falls within the foveal field (the area of greatest visual acuity) falls across word boundaries or across boundaries of lines of print. Therefore, the traditional use of word boundaries in ascribing the location of fixations is an additional limitation of this study. The phenomenon of ascribing fixations to words and ignoring beyond word boundary or multiple word boundary fixations has not been challenged within eye movement research. The idea of arbitrarily forcing eye movements to fit within word boundaries distorts the data—to what degree, eye movement researchers will not know until we begin to examine and compare fixations based on foveal boundaries and fixations arbitrarily ascribed at word boundaries.