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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF
THIRD AND FIFTH GRADE READERS'
COMPREHENSION OF FOUR TYPES OF TOURNURE IDIOMS

A Thesis Presented to The
Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Susan Margaret Koloski

(1989)

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SUSAN MARGARET KOLOSKI

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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MASTER OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain information about third and fifth grade readers' comprehension of four types of tournure idioms: those with the compulsory "it", those with the indefinite article "a", those in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object and those in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. In addition, to gain some insight into possible factors affecting the miscomprehension of tournure idioms, a follow-up interview of randomly selected students was conducted. Thus, the two main questions and a related question were:

1. Do third and fifth grade readers comprehend the four types of tournure idioms selected for investigation?
2. Is there a relationship between reading ability and ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms?
3. What possible factors underlie the miscomprehension of tournure idioms?

The Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) was specifically developed and piloted for this study and administered in the fall of 1988 by this researcher. Ability levels were assessed using the reading subtests of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS). The sample used in this study consisted of 89 subjects in grades three and five in one urban school division.

Following a descriptive analysis of the data, an analysis of variance was used to determine whether TCTI scores varied across grade levels and ability levels and for the type of idiom. The three-way interaction of grade levels, reading ability, and type of tournure idioms was analyzed to identify significantly different means using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison Test. Follow-up interviews were conducted on a random sample of twenty students to ascertain possible factors for miscomprehending the four types of tournure idioms.

On the basis of the findings and limitations imposed by the study, the following main conclusions were drawn:

1. A reader's ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms appears to be related to developmental maturity, reading ability and type of tournure idioms.
2. There is hierarchy of difficulty in comprehending tournure idioms for all grade and ability levels with "it" and "a" idioms the easiest, followed by idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object, and idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.
3. The interviews support TCTI findings that reading ability and developmental maturity influence the comprehension of tournure idioms.
4. Serendipitously, the interview questions promoted the individual's comprehension of tournure idioms.

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Chapter I

NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Reading comprehension is an area of concern for all teachers at all levels. It is an area which is widely researched in order that all teachers gain a better understanding of their students' performance at various developmental levels and in various reading tasks. As a result of research it has been found that difficulties in comprehension occur when the reader cannot "establish logical connections among the ideas to construct the meaning intended by the writer" (Johnson, 1983, p.7). This relationship between text structure and reading comprehension has been receiving much current attention (Pearson, 1981, Meyer and Rice, 1984); with more recent attention being directed towards the comprehension of idioms.

Idioms are referred to as expressions that do not mean what they literally say (Harris and Hodges, 1981). For example, in a Grade Three reader Unicorn, the idiom "It's raining cats and dogs" has nothing to do with cats and dogs falling from the sky, rather it means "raining heavily". In an intermediate level reader Pingo, the idiom "to put your foot down" means to assert one's authority rather than lowering one's foot. Such idiom phrases must either be identified as a known unit or deduced from the context.

Edwards (1974) suggests that "an adequate knowledge of vocabulary depends on an understanding of"... metaphor, similes and idioms. If the child has had little or no experiences in identifying and understanding the complexities of idiomatic language, he will be at a disadvantage when confronted with idioms in his reading material" (p.288).

Until recently, readability formulae have been used by authors of children's reading material to indicate the approximate level of difficulty of a text. Readability formulae may misguage the level of difficulty of a passage containing idioms because they are based on sentence length and vocabulary, and consider only the surface structure rather than the deep structure meaning which demands more complex levels of encoding. In comprehending idioms, Holdaway (1979) states that the reader must "apperceive the deep structure of the syntax (and) evaluate the surface structure as impossible of interpretation in terms of that deep structure" (p.159). The reader must be able to decode well enough to additionally realize that although he has decoded accurately, his disbelief at what is literally said, does not overwhelm his determination to make sense of the passage.

For example:

Usually by the time we got to "Silent Night" I was fed up with the whole thing. But I didn't feel that way this time. Maybe the Wise Men would tell Mary about their problems with Herod and she would tell them to go back and lie their heads off". . . .

(For Imogene) Christmas just came over her all at once. . . . It was the best Christmas pageant we ever had. . . . There was something special, everyone said - they couldn't put their finger on it.

"The Best Christmas Pageant Ever"
Impressions, p.227-228. Grade Four

The readability level is 2.91 (according to Spache) yet the passage contains four idioms which the reader must translate. The reader has to infer that (to be) "fed up" is a reference to the narrator's mood of irritation. Within the same passage, the idiom "to lie their heads off" requires the reader to pay particular attention to the meaning of "heads off"; in this context, the narrator is describing the voracity of the liars. Furthermore, the reader is confronted with the phrases "Christmas came over her", and "they couldn't put their finger on it", which cannot be understood at the surface level since the idiomatic meanings refer to the narrator's intuition about how the spirituality of Christmas affected Imogene and the audience. Thus, application of readability formulae is not a sufficient or adequate determinant of the level of reading difficulty of materials containing idiomatic expressions.

Surveys of students' reading materials have uncovered numerous and varied examples of idioms (Edwards, 1974,

Kane, 1985). A recent survey of three Manitoba reading series produced evidence of over one hundred idioms of twelve different types in each of the series, with frequencies and types increasing by grade level.

In spite of instructional reading materials having idioms throughout the grade levels and types of material, the instructional programs give idiom comprehension very little attention. Nippold (1985) reports that "no training studies have been conducted (on idioms) in the area of reading comprehension" (p.13) and she is concerned that "idioms can vary greatly in their ease of understanding possibly because of frequency of exposure, or relevancy to the individual's own experience" (p.13). Edwards (1974) believes that the problem is even greater, "if the child does not have a satisfactory home environment where he can be exposed to a wide variety of language and reading experiences (because) familiarity with idioms will also enable a young person to cope more effectively with the changing nature of the English language" (p.288).

An examination of the research into comprehending idioms revealed that much of the investigations of idioms has been concerned with idiom processing by adult subjects. A few researchers studied the developmental processing of idioms, however, they used idioms in isolation or minimal context, resulting in conflicting findings. Nippold (1985) expresses concern that "children may respond differently to idioms that occur in context, than they will to idioms

that are presented in contrived testing situations" (p.11).

On the other hand, Ackerman (1982) has made a significant contribution to the understanding of idioms presented in context and the linkage of developmental studies with comprehension processes. As well, Makkai's (1969) categorization of idioms according to a structural hierarchy resulted in two studies considering the phrasal and semantic idioms in relation to level of difficulty and comprehension.

There has been, however, no research to date which considers the nine specific subcategories of tournure idioms which are present in elementary students' texts. In view of the current interest in idioms, the limited amount of related research, and the knowledge that idioms represent a common and important linguistic structure in elementary instructional reading materials, research in this area is warranted. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge of idioms by examining the reading comprehension of selected tournure idioms comprehended by grades three and five students. These findings may also contribute to the development of better instructional procedures and reading materials.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to investigate children's comprehension of idioms presented in basal readers at grades three and five. This study will address four of the tournure idioms identified by Makkai (1969, p. 57) within the following general questions:

1. Do third and fifth grade readers comprehend the following types of tournure idioms:

- a) the compulstory "it".
- b) the indefinite article "a".
- c) leading verb followed by a direct object.
- d) leading verb followed by a preposition and a

noun or nothing?

2. Is there a relationship between reading ability and ability to comprehend the four different types of tournure phrases?

The two main questions are translated into research hypotheses.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis #1: There are significant differences between grade three and five readers in the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) for all combined reading ability groups. Reading comprehension of tournure idioms will increase as a function of grade level or maturity.

Hypothesis #2: There are significant differences between reading ability groups within each grade level. Good readers in grade three will perform better than weak readers in grade three on the TCTI; good readers in grade five will perform better than weak readers in grade five on the TCTI.

Hypothesis #3: There are significant differences between reading ability groups across grade levels on the overall results of the TCTI. Good grade three readers will perform as well or better than weak grade five readers in the comprehension of tournure idioms.

Hypothesis #4: There is a significant interaction between grade level or maturity and the four types of tournure idioms.

Hypothesis #5: There is a significant interaction between the two reading ability groups and the four types of tournure idioms at each grade level.

A secondary but related issue is to investigate the possible causes for misunderstanding the four types of tournure idioms. This is to be done through individual follow-up interviews with a random sampling of students who met the predetermined criteria and a random sampling of individuals who failed to meet the predetermined criteria.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Idiom "An idiom is a string of two or more words for which meaning is not derived from the meaning of the individual words comprising that string" (Swinney and Cutler, 1979, p.523). It is an expression that does not mean what it literally says.
- 2 Tournure Idiom "Tournure idioms... are... complex verbs, built on an underlying structure that may be symbolized 'to X the Y', but they actually come in subclasses according to their internal make-up" (Makkai, 1969, p.52).

3. Semenic Idiom Semenics idioms are linguistic constructions that have additional meanings not expressed by the sum total of the constituent meanings, which have become part of universal English usage. The class of semenic idioms includes culture bound expressions (to have two strikes against one); institutionalized politeness (May I ask who's calling?); indirectness (it seems that...); proposals (how about a...?); greetings (how do you do?); proverbial idioms with a moral (curiosity killed the cat); familiar quotations (brevity is the soul of wit); understatement; and hyperbole.
4. Reading Ability: Reading ability is defined by the student's reading score on the standardized test, the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) Level 8 Form 5 and Level 10, Form 6.

5. Good Reader: A good reader is defined as a student whose reading score falls at/or beyond five months of his grade placement.
6. Weak Reader: A weak reader is defined as a student whose reading score falls at/or below five months of his grade placement.
7. Reading Comprehension of Idioms: The results of the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms - (TCTI) is defined as the ability to explain the idiomatic meaning of a phrase or sentence embedded within a passage by means of a written response.

ASSUMPTIONS:

Two assumptions underlie the study:

1. The TCTI contains passages that are representative of the students' typical language patterns.
2. Satisfactory performance on the TCTI is assumed to indicate reading comprehension of the particular tournure idioms.

LIMITATIONS:

There are several limitations in the study:

- 1 The findings should not be generalized beyond the populations in this study.
2. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the comprehension of other types of idioms.
3. As the study was under the direct control of the investigator it may be unconsciously biased.
4. Perhaps the most important limitation is that there were no third grade students who reached or exceeded the predetermined 80% mark on the TCTI which delineated "good readers". This severely limited the comparisons between the types of interviewees.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A review of the research on idioms indicates that more information is needed about children's ability to comprehend idioms in their reading. This study provides further information about students' reading comprehension of various types of tournure idiom phrases as a function of grade or developmental growth and reading ability.

Moreover, the study presents tentative findings about readers' insights into some of their comprehension strategies of these idioms and how adroit questioning may lead some readers into comprehension of idioms previously unknown to them. It may support conclusions that providing an extended context and opportunities for reflecting may improve comprehension of idiom phrases.

Finally, the results of this study may have direct application to classroom instruction. By increasing teacher's awareness of the frequent occurrence of idioms in oral language and written literature, the sensitive teacher would provide extended practice within contexts that demonstrate the meaning of idiomatic expressions.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to investigate the reading comprehension of four types of tournure idioms by grade three and five readers. To gain some insight into possible factors for misunderstanding the four types of tournure idioms, the study also examined the readers' responses through an interview format.

To investigate the hypotheses, the data was analyzed using a three way 2 x 2 x 4 analysis of variance with three grouping factors: grade, ability, type of idioms.

To investigate the miscomprehension of the four types of tournure idioms, open-ended interviews were conducted on random samples of students who failed to meet the required criteria and random samples of students who met or exceeded the criteria.

The description of the study presents related research in Chapter 2 while Chapter 3 describes the design of the study. A description of the analysis is contained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 summarizes the conclusions and presents implications for teachers, for classroom practice, for publishers and developers of instructional reading materials and for curriculum developers, followed by recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Swinney and Cutler, (1979) idioms are included in a large class of linguistic items along with metaphors and proverbs commonly occurring in language which have non literal meanings. Idioms create problems in both linguistic and processing models because they do not fit well into the traditional syntactic and semantic analysis which are used to describe the processing and comprehension of language. They are also lexically ambiguous: the meaning is not derived from the meaning of the individual words. In addition, most idioms have an acceptable literal reading as well as an idiomatic reading, such as "to kick the bucket".

On the other hand, research of linguistic structures and language processing provides a foundation for understanding how idioms are comprehended by children and adults.

I. Strata of Idiom Linguistic Structure

Early linguistic studies had focussed on deriving idiomaticity of individual words based on the morphological formation, largely ignoring idiom phrases and whole sentences. In order to define the term "idiom", Makkai (1969) gave consideration to these broader aspects of idiom structure. He proposed categories of idioms which were placed in

a hierarchial structure of complexity, describing two sharply different idiomaticity areas in English: the lexemic and semenic strata.

The lower lexemic strata was comprised of phrasal verb idioms "to put up with"; tournure idioms "to face the music"; irreversible binomial idioms "touch and go"; phrasal compounds "blackmail"; pseudo-idioms "spic and span", "cranberry"; and post-idioms "preoccupation". Makkai stated that pseudo-idioms are not true idioms "because there are no semenes in the language today behind the lexon "spic" or "cran" etc. as viewed outside of the familiar binomials" (p.51). Makkai stated that post-idioms are another type of pseudo-idiom form that may once have been misleading in their language of origin when they were "borrowed into English." They do not consist of morphologically separate words in other environments and thus are not true idioms.

The higher level semenic strata proposed by Makkai included linguistic constructions such as "The handwriting is on the wall." or "Too many cooks spoil the broth." whose meaning is not the sum total of its constituent lexemes but functions additionally as the realization of another combination of meaning units. These proverbs, inherited from Aesop's fables, are structurally the same as idioms in the lower lexemic strata, but require "several lexemes to explicate (their) content" (p.54).

Within the lower lexemic strata, Makkai (1969) described clearly delineated subcategories. In one subcategory of idioms, identified by Makkai as tournure idioms, there are nine subclasses which may be symbolized "to X the Y":

1. idioms that contain the compulsory "it" - "to break it up"
2. idioms that contain the definite article "the" - "to bite the dust"
3. idioms that contain the indefinite article "a" - "to pull a fast one"
4. idioms that contain an irreversible binomial - "to rain cats and dogs"
5. idioms that contain an irreversible binomial introduced by a preposition - "through thick and thin"
6. idioms in which a leading verb is followed by a direct object - "to take a raincheck on something"
7. idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing - "to babysit"
8. the leading verb is "be" - "to be up the creek"
9. the idiom functions as an adverb composed of several words - "in the long run" (Makkai, 1969, p.57)

Makkai's categorization of the various types of idioms has enabled researchers to examine texts and investigate the comprehension of specific types of idioms.

In considering idioms within a linguistic, structural framework, Fraser (1970) divided idioms into two broad categories which he labelled "lexical idioms" and phrasal idioms". He proposed a hierarchial structure which reflected the increasing degree of distortion permitted to the basic idiom shape, and demonstrated the ability of certain idiomatic phrases to undergo transformations without losing their idiomatic meaning . (Fraser, 1970). For example, lexical idioms such as "knucklehead", "turncoat" were described as dominated by a single syntactic constituent, such as verb, adjective, noun, preposition. Phrasal idioms such as "to make up one's mind", had a more complicated structure that was analyzed as an entire sentence and treated as a single lexical unit.

Fraser placed phrasal idioms into five categories on a continuum of "frozenness", ranging from those that will not undergo the most simple transformation (Level 0: completely frozen) to those which undergo nearly all transformational changes (Level 5):

Level 0 completely frozen - "trip the light fantastic

Level 1 adjunction of some nonidiomatic constituent -

"John hit the ball" - "John's hitting the ball."

- Level 2 insertion - of some constituent into the idiom -
 "John read the riot act to the class" - "John read
 the class the riot act."
- Level 3 permutation of two successive constituents of
 the idioms - "lay down the law" - "lay the law
 down."
- Level 4 extraction of some constituent of the idiom to
 some extra idiom positions in the sentence - "Look
 up the information" - "Look the information up."
- Level 5 reconstruction of the idiom into another consti-
 tuent - "I wouldn't touch that job with a ten foot
 pole" - "with a ten foot pole, I wouldn't touch
 (that job)" (Fraser, 1970, p.38).

Fraser also pointed out that idioms vary from one individual to another and are present in their various forms in text.

II. Idiom Structure and Language Processing Models

Linguists such as Fraser (1970) described the structure of idioms as gestalt form, where the idioms are treated as single lexical items which have much the same characteristics in the grammar as other lexical items. This view of idiomatic structure holds that idiomatic expressions retain the same deep structure representations as their literal counterparts. Therefore according to Prinz, (1983) literal

and idiomatic meanings are differentiated on the basis of interpretation of the sentence in differentiated sentential contexts.

Another view considered idioms as anomalies that did not fit into existing hierarchial structures of syntactic and semantic analysis (Chafe, 1968). Idioms are created over time with idiomatic meanings for utterances gradually splitting from the original literal meanings. Chafe refers to this capacity of language to produce new meaning as a "duality" which accommodates the literal and figurative meaning of words.

Lodge and Leach (1975) describe Chafe's theory as a symbolization system where there is a one-one correspondence between conceptual units and communication symbols. Because of the constantly increasing size of the semantic inventory and because of the finite limits of the phonetic system, this one-one relationship cannot be maintained. The mechanism of duality permits concepts and symbols to develop independently allowing for more than one meaning to be assigned to a single phonetic string.

According to Lodge and Leach, idioms are processed as semantic units requiring conversion into arrangements of other semantic units before they are encoded into sound. Literal meanings are acquired first. The literal meaning of "to kick the bucket" for example, is first learned as "to strike a pail with one's foot" and is processed by cummula-

tively adding each component word. The idiomatic meaning "to die" has been developed through the process of duality, allowing for and bringing new semantic material into the language at minimum expense by making use of readily available linguistic units, arrangements and symbolizations. This theoretical position has also been used by Clark and Lucy (1975) to support the claim that for children, literal comprehension precedes idiomatic comprehension.

More recently, the views held by Fraser (1970) and Chafe (1968) have been developed into two general processing models: The Idioms List Hypothesis and the Lexical Representation Hypothesis (Swinney and Cutler, 1979).

The Idioms List Hypothesis holds that idioms are stored and accessed from a special list that is not part of the normal lexicon. This model holds that a literal analysis is always attempted on a word string before an idiom mode of processing is undertaken. Swinney and Cutler (1979) report that Bobrow and Bell (1973) documented the Idioms List Hypothesis in an experiment in which adult subjects saw either a set of four sentences containing literal interpretations or four sentences containing idiomatic phrases, followed by a grammatically idiomatic sentence. Subjects were asked to report which meaning of the idiomatic string they first perceived in each of the conditions. Their evidence of increased idiomatic meanings for the idiomatic set and similar results for the literal set implied that a special

idiomatic mode of processing occurred. However, Swinney and Cutler criticized this as measuring the process after it was completed, rather than as it occurred.

The Lexical Representation Hypothesis is derived from Fraser's conclusions that idioms are an extension of single lexical items. In studying this area, Swinney and Cutler (1979) argued that idioms are stored and retrieved as single lexical items, where multiple computation of both idiomatic and literal meanings are "simultaneously initiated upon occurrence of the first word in the idiomatic string... Structural analysis is undertaken on these words at the same time that lexical access... of... a 'long word' is taking place" (p.525).

Swinney and Cutler (1979) hypothesized that if the Idioms List Hypothesis was the process, decisions regarding phrase classifications of idioms should take longer than for non idiomatic strings. If the Lexical Representation Hypothesis was to hold, decisions regarding idiomatic strings would be accessed faster, because literal and figurative meanings would be simultaneously processed: the idiomatic meaning would be treated as a single unit to access, while the search in the lexicon to relate the items in the literal interpretation would take longer.

When presented with idiomatic and control strings of varying structural levels, adult subjects were asked to respond as quickly as possible when they decided the string formed a meaningful natural phrase. They responded to the idiomatic strings faster than the control strings, suggesting that the access and computation of the relationships among the several words in the control phrases necessitated computing the accumulated meaning of each individual word. Thus, Swinney and Cutler's data supports the Lexical Representation Hypothesis of idiom processing.

The Lexical Representation Hypothesis is also supported by Ortony et al (1978). Adult subjects were presented with the idioms on a screen in sections and were asked to respond when they had read and understood the section. Response times were recorded. The added component was the presentation of the target string, following an idiomatic or literal context. The control target was the literal version of the idiomatic string, preceded by context that supported the target. Ortony et al. reported that comprehension of idiomatic phrases in their idiomatic sense took no longer, and in fact were often faster than in their literal sense. Ortony et al. proposed that the faster access and processing of idiomatic expressions may be due to the lower processing

demands at the syntactic level because the meaning of an idiom appears to be stored in much the same way as the meaning of a single lexical item.

Gibbs (1980) also questioned whether literal meaning was computed or required before subjects arrived at an indirect (idiomatic) meaning. He proposed that different response times in processing idioms and literal expressions in previous research may be the result of problems understanding the utterance without appropriate context. He argued that in most linguistic situations, the presence of appropriate contextual information should affect ease of comprehension; without context, there was no predictive power and processing would be much slower. However, because idioms have strong conventional meaning (the usual idiomatic meaning), context may play less of a role in constructing an appropriate interpretation, but may be crucial in determining that the unconventional (literal version) of an idiom is appropriate in a given situation.

To resolve the role of context in comprehending idioms Gills (1980) conducted three experiments. In the first experiment, Gibbs hypothesized that literal meaning of idioms were not important in understanding idioms that could be taken idiomatically or literally. Target sentences were

placed in a context or no context situation. Subjects were asked to make a paraphrase judgment and response times were measured. Results showed that conventional uses of idioms did not take any longer to comprehend than literal uses of the same expressions. Without context, there were longer response times suggesting that there were not enough semantic clues for the subjects to recognize the potential idiomatic interpretation. When a literal interpretation of an idiomatic target sentence was required, (an unconventional use of the idiomatic phrase), subjects required additional processing time to find and verify some schema in memory to account for the sentence. Furthermore, without context, there were not enough pragmatic cues to recognize the potential unconventional interpretations.

In the second experiment, subjects recalled the unconventional uses of an idiom within a sentence better than they did the conventional interpretations, suggesting to Gibbs that the greater the uniqueness of the unconventional use of the idioms at the time of input into memory, the greater the discriminability from other utterances in memory.

In the third experiment, Gibbs used prompted recall as

a measure of inferential activity for idiomatic and literal target sentences. Subjects were given literal prompts "cat" and idiomatic prompts "revealed secret" for the target sentence "let the cat out of the bag". The processing of the conventional idiomatic meaning occurred first before deciding that the literal meaning was appropriate. The appropriate context facilitated recall, while recall prompts guided the memory search.

Gibbs concluded that the results of his data argued against a serial process in which the literal meaning is first determined before the idiomatic interpretation is derived. He also concluded that unconventional (literal) uses of the idioms were recalled better than the conventional (usual idiomatic) uses, because they produced a "double take" reaction to the unfamiliar usage and remained distinct in memory.

Most of the investigation concerning processing and comprehension of idioms has occurred at the adult level. However, in 1982, Ackerman proposed a more complete model for processing idioms that was a combination of the theories proposed by Chafe (1968) and Fraser (1970) and which has served to bridge the gap between the cognitive processing of idioms by adults and by children.

Ackerman (1982) studied children ages six, eight, ten and a college group. All were asked to listen to eighteen short stories, each of which ended in an idiomatic sentence. Each story had versions biased toward different interpretations of the final sentence: idiomatic, literal and ambiguous. In addition, each idiomatic sentence had a changed form involving the substitution of the main verb, which, when given the appropriate context, a figurative interpretation might be possible. Subjects were asked to give a yes or no response indicating awareness of a figurative interpretation, as well as an explanation of the meaning of the final sentence.

Ackerman found that the number of idiomatic explanations increased as a function of age. Children in the six and eight year old range primarily gave literal explanations, which often extended to the literal and ambiguous versions.

For children ten years of age and beyond, idiom interpretation was relatively fixed and not strongly dependent on contextual support, unless the idiom forms were changed and presented in an ambiguous context. In these instances, contextual support determined the figurative response.

In contrast, six and eight year old children gave figurative explanations only when presented with idiomatic sentences in a biasing context, suggesting that context was a

significant factor in assisting young children to interpret the idiomatic phrases. Since the youngest children were aware of a figurative meaning Ackerman claimed that context did not teach the idiomatic phrase but may have indicated the need for an idiomatic interpretation.

Ackerman (1982) concluded that a child's understanding of a speaker's nonliteral intent is dependent initially on an analysis of the context of use. The child would first learn to recognize contextually inappropriate literal utterances which violate relevancy rules of conversation. This would occur in a gradual developmental process, much as a lexical entry would be learned. Once it was seen that a nonliteral interpretation was required, the fixed meaning of an idiom may be applied if it is known. When it is not known, Ackerman suggests that children will tend to fall back on known literal interpretations, constructed from the context. About ten years of age, contextual cues will assist children to construct appropriate interpretations of unfamiliar idioms. He believed that fixed idiomatic forms (noted in fifth graders and adolescents) are learned, and then can be accessed and brought to conscious awareness in a process that in time becomes automatic, as are literal lexical items. Thus, comprehension of idioms is complete during this age span and enhanced by contextual support.

Ackerman (1982) also believed that idiomatic meaning is the preferred meaning of an idiomatic phrase and is the outcome of processing solutions similar to those used in interpreting the literal meaning of a sentence. He found that for children, difficulties arise when an unfamiliar idiom is encountered and or there is no strong biasing context, suggesting that idiomatic processing and comprehension is enhanced by contextually generated expectations.

III. Idioms in Reading

Though the nature and extent of children's ability to comprehend idioms has only recently received attention in research investigations, idioms have been utilized throughout children's reading instructional materials. For example, in a random sampling of currently authorized reading instructional materials at the Manitoba elementary school level, the following idioms were found:

Grade 1 "Don't fool around." - tournure idiom
"(to be) home safe and sound" - irreversible
binomial

- Grade 2 "to jump right out of their shirts" - tournure idiom
"to make up my mind" - tournure idiom containing a direct object.
- Grade 3 "Please don't spread the word." - tournure idiom containing the definite article "the"
"We'll get to the bottom of this." - tournure idiom
- Grade 4 "I call them bread and butter questions." - irreversible binomial.
"I got the picture." - tournure idiom containing the definite article "the".
- Grade 5 "(to be) well-off" - tournure idiom where the leading verb is "be".
"to bell the cat" - tournure idiom containing the definite article "the".
- Grade 6 "to hit the deck" - tournure idiom containing the definite article "the".
"he's been on my tail the whole time" - tournure idiom where the leading verb is "be".

Such findings are not unusual since written materials are symbolic representations of oral language. Idioms can be expected in all their forms in most types of writing, thus attracting researchers to the reading comprehension of idioms.

A. Reading Comprehension of Idioms

The first investigations into children's ability to comprehend idioms were conducted using idioms in isolation or with minimal sentence context. In these investigations the younger subjects were not successful in assigning idiomatic meaning and a significantly greater number of literal meanings than idiomatic meanings were assigned to ambiguous sentences. However, the trends did show idiomatic choices increasing with age. (Lodge and Leach, 1975; Strand and Fraser, 1979; Prinz, 1983)

Lodge and Leach (1975) maintained that children under the age of nine were not able to deal with ambiguity. To reach these conclusions, Lodge and Leach had six, nine, twelve and twenty-one year olds listen to ten sentences containing tournures, each accompanied by four pictures depicting four different meanings: literal, figurative, literal variation and figurative variation. Six and nine year olds tended to choose significantly higher proportions

of literal and literal variation pictures, suggesting that they have not as yet acquired a full understanding of the particular idiom.

Strand and Fraser (1970) questioned Lodge and Leach's interpretations of the results because the test design presented both literal and figurative choices together for each item. Therefore, Strand and Fraser separated comprehension of literal choices from idiomatic choices and found evidence that the youngest (ages five and seven) could select some of the idiomatic meanings, although they could not as easily explain their meanings.

In replicating the work of Lodge and Leach (1975), Prinz (1983) used the same test items and found a significant increase in the comprehension of idiomatic meaning as a function of age. In his study, children below the age of nine tended to literalize idiomatic strings and had a higher proportion of literal variation pictures in comparison with idiomatic or idiomatic variation pictures. In addition, Prinz showed a relationship between recognition and identification of idiomatic meaning (selecting an appropriate picture); and the ability to verbally interpret (explain the idiomatic meaning). Generally, young children, under the age of nine, were aware of an idiomatic expression but were unable to explain the idiomatic meaning: they adopted a partial or complete literal strategy. Prinz

termed this "passive idiomatic comprehension" which he believed develops separately and prior to the ability to explain idiomatic meaning. Prinz concluded that "identification and explanation of idiomatic meanings was dependent upon an appreciation of ambiguity in that certain words, phrases and sentences can mean different things, depending on the context." (p.264)

On the other hand, Douglas and Peel (1979) presented orally in a minimal context to children in grades one, three, five and seven, dual function words, idiomatic phrases and proverbs. The subjects were required to explain the meaning of the sentence. Consistent with Strand and Fraser (1979) they found that children in first grade could translate successfully and they saw a steady growth in richness and complexity of figurative language from first to seventh grade. However, they noted large individual differences in rate of development and inconsistent performance within categories of items.

Edwards (1974) presented grade eight students with test passages containing increasing amounts of idiomatic expressions embedded in a minimal context. For example, "After a wild goose chase, the two mounties returned to police headquarters to write a report." Four alternatives were given as a comprehension measure:

What would the mounties report?

- a. They had arrested an escaped prisoner.
- b. They had taken a holiday.
- c. Their mission had been unsuccessful.
- d. Their mission had failed.

The results showed that idioms had a significant adverse effect on children's reading and understanding of prose. There was a positive relationship between the incidence of idioms in test material and the amount of difficulty experienced by the children.

Role of Context in Reading Comprehension

The early studies examining idiomatic comprehension used minimal context but as knowledge about reading comprehension expanded, so did the research of idioms using context.

Norton (1979) sought to determine whether an extended contextual setting could be used effectively to gain meaning for idioms. She compared the performance of sixth and eighth grade students to discover if differences existed in the effectiveness of context as a function of grade placement (maturation) and reading achievement (ability). Tests of idioms in context called for the subjects to read three passages, answer multiple-choice comprehension questions and then read a reprinted passage with target words underlined

so that the students would refer to context. Then the students were required to select definitions from a list provided. The results showed that comprehension was facilitated more by context than by definition, suggesting that students can comprehend passages containing idiomatic expressions even when they have difficulty defining those same idioms.

In Norton's research, ability was a significant factor affecting performance: students of lower ability performed less well than higher students. However, low average Grade Eight students had the benefit of two years' experience, which favourably affected their performance as compared to average Grade Six students, suggesting the influence of experience and practice. Norton concluded that context does facilitate comprehension and that idiomatic expressions may cause difficulty for some readers, especially for those of low ability (p.17).

Page (1981) studied the effect of idiomatic language on the reading comprehension of Grades Three and Four deaf and hearing subjects. Twelve passages containing varying levels of idiomatic language were administered. The deaf and hearing subjects did not differ in their ability to comprehend passages containing idioms. Furthermore, within groups, the

subjects did not differ in their ability to define the idioms contained in the passages. Page suggested that when idioms are embedded in passages where sufficient contextual support is provided, comprehension is not impaired. She also stated that ability to define an idiom was not an accurate predictor of comprehension of reading materials containing idiomatic language.

Support for the influence of context is also evidenced in Houck's (1982) study using Grade Ten hearing impaired students. Control subjects were asked to select the correct idioms to fill in the blanks in sentences which had no surrounding context in an idiom comprehension test. Experimental subjects scored significantly higher when they were asked to read a reading comprehension passage which contained the same idioms used in the control test. This indicated to Houck that deaf students could make use of contextual cues in reading to ascertain the meaning of idioms. There was also a significant positive correlation between comprehension scores and reading levels.

Types of Idioms and Reading Comprehension

More recently, two studies have focussed on the developmental ability of children to comprehend idioms and which types of idioms present in text are more difficult for children to comprehend.

Kane (1985) conducted a content analysis of idioms in basal readers across four grades and studied the effects of comprehension on idioms that are visual, nonvisual, semantic and phraseological. Kane examined twenty basal readers from five publishers at Grades Two, Four, Six and Eight for frequency of use and type of idiom that appeared in ten passages from each of the twenty books. She assumed that idiom content, which is not included in any current method of determining readability, is in fact an important determinant of reading difficulty level.

Kane's content analysis found that idioms were used frequently, (355 idioms in 200 passages) and that publishers differed widely in their presentation. Total idioms at each grade level differed: Eighth grade - 152; Sixth grade - 65; Fourth grade - 86 and Second grade - 52. She concluded that the type of idiom affects comprehension at Grades Four and Eight; at fourth grade, phraseological idioms were easier and at eighth grade, semantic idioms were easier.

Hesseltine (1984) investigated the relationship between reading comprehension, hearing ability and four measures of idiom comprehension on students between ten and eighteen years of age. Using a multiple-choice test consisting of phrasal verb idioms, tournure idioms and phrasal compound idioms as categorized by Makkai (1969), she concluded that

reading comprehension was highly correlated with idiom comprehension. Also significant in these findings was the difficulty evident among the various idiom types. Phrasal verb idioms ("to put up with") were easiest, followed by tournure idioms ("to break the ice"), then phrasal compound idioms ("white paper", "black eye").

In sum, conclusions regarding children's ability to comprehend idioms must be regarded as tentative in view of the limited research in this area. Makkai (1969) and Fraser (1970) found a significant relationship between certain types of idioms as found in students' texts and their reading comprehension.

There are also conflicting research results which may be due in part to variations in sampling idiom categories, and in design and procedures of the research, such as the number of test items ranging from five (Douglas and Peel, 1979) to eighteen items (Ackerman, 1982). Other problems are that test items have not always been identified as members of a particular structural hierarchy [Kane (1985), Hesseltine (1984)], and some test items have been presented in isolation while other items have been embedded in varying amounts of context. Procedures have varied also, some presented items orally, while others in written form. Dependent measures of comprehension have ranged from pictorial selection, multiple-choice selection to written definition and explanation. Finally, tests have been administered in groups or individually.

There is a need, then, for more research into idiom comprehension with more consistent procedures. A second reason for more research is in the frequency of idioms found in current instructional reading materials.

IV. Tournure Idioms in Three Current Instructional Reading Materials

An analysis of three currently authorized Manitoba reading instructional series was undertaken to determine evidence of idioms in typical elementary reading instructional materials. Using the categorization by Makkai (1969), Table 1 outlines the number of idioms within each structural category.

Generally, Table 1 shows that:

- a. the number of idioms increases per grade up to and including the fifth grade.
- b. The frequency within the types of idioms encountered in the instructional reading material varied from grade to grade and series to series.
- c. Of the three series, the most recent, Impressions has the highest frequency of idioms.

TABLE 1
 FREQUENCY COUNT OF IDIOMS IN THREE
 INSTRUCTIONAL READING SERIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	Tot.
Net-													
works 1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	3	1	8
2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	-	1	-	9
3	2	2	-	2	-	-	5	5	-	1	1	-	18
4	9	4	2	1	1	-	1	8	1	3	1	2	33
5	2	10	2	1	2	-	17	8	5	4	7	1	59
6	16	7	1	-	1	1	10	1	5	-	4	1	47
Total	33	24	5	4	5	1	33	27	12	8	17	5	174
Gage													
1	8	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	13
2	4	2	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	10
3	2	4	1	1	-	-	14	9	1	1	-	1	34
4	3	3	-	1	-	-	5	1	1	1	1	-	16
5	24	10	2	4	3	-	27	16	5	2	2	2	97
6	7	7	1	-	-	-	17	3	5	1	1	-	42
Total	48	30	4	6	3	-	66	28	13	6	4	3	211
Impres-													
sions 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
2	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	9	-	17
3	5	3	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	2	1	-	18
4	2	-	-	1	2	1	19	18	8	2	13	2	68
5	20	6	-	-	1	-	16	9	7	4	2	1	67
6	6	10	1	-	3	-	9	9	5	2	5	-	49
Total	38	20	1	1	6	1	47	41	21	10	30	3	219

Categories of Lexemic Tournure Idioms used for
Content Analysis

- A Phrasal Verb Idioms
- B Tournure - containing "it"
- C Tournure - containing the definite article "the"
- D Tournure - containing the indefinite article "a"
- E Tournure - containing an irreversible binomial
- F Tournure - containing an irreversible binomial introduced by a preposition rather than a verb
- G Tournure - leading verb followed by a direct object and further modifiers
- H Tournure - leading verb followed by no direct object, but by a preposition and a noun, or nothing
- I Tournure - leading verb not itself a part of the idioms is "be"
- J Tournure - functioning as an adverb composed of several words
- K Idiomatic proverbs
- L Phrasal Compounds

Instructional Reading Series

Networks, Nelson Canada, Scarborough, Ont. (1982-1988)

Expressways, Gage Publishing Co., Toronto, Ont. (1977-1981)

Impressions, Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Ltd.,
Toronto, Ont. (1984-1988)

The results of this frequency count support Kane (1985) who found that publishers differ in their presentation and inclusion of material containing idioms.

In summary, on the basis of the paucity of research in reading comprehension of idioms at the elementary level and the fact that idioms are found in reading instructional materials, there is a need for more investigation into how elementary children comprehend certain types of idioms.

For the purposes of this study, four tournure idioms were selected;

- a. The idioms with the compulsory "it" such as "to break it up".
- b. The idioms with the indefinite article "a" such as "to lend a hand".
- c. The idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object and further modifiers such as "to blow off steam".
- d. The idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing such as "to babysit".

These idioms are present in reading instructional materials as shown in Table 1, page 39.

The study undertook then, the following questions for examination:

1. Do Grade Three readers comprehend the following types of tournure idioms:
 - a) the compulsory "it".
 - b) the indefinite article "a".
 - c) leading verb followed by a direct object.
 - d) leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing?
2. Do Grade Five readers comprehend the following types of tournure idioms:
 - a) the compulsory "it".
 - b) the indefinite article "a".
 - c) leading verb followed by a direct object.
 - d) leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing?
3. Is there a difference between Grade Three and Grade Five readers in the comprehension of the four types of tournure idioms under consideration?

4. Is there a difference between weak and good readers in Grade Three in the comprehension of the four types of tournure idioms?
5. Is there a difference between weak and good readers in Grade Five in the comprehension of the four types of tournure idioms?

Furthermore, a follow-up interview of a random sample employing oral reading and open ended questions was implemented to explore some of the possible reasons for miscomprehension of idioms.

Chapter 3

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate children's comprehension of certain tournure idioms which are evident in third and fifth grade basal readers. This study addressed these general questions:

1. Do third and fifth grade readers comprehend the following types of tournure idioms:

- a) the compulsory "it"
- b) the indefinite article "a"
- c) leading verb followed by a direct object
- d) leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing?

2. Is there a relationship between reading ability and ability to comprehend the four types of tournure phrases?

Comprehension of the four types of tournure idioms was assessed by means of a Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) which had been developed and piloted by the investigator. This test assesses students' ability to understand the meaning of four types of tournure idioms identified by Makkai (1969).

The study explored the relationship between reading ability, grade level and the ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms. A related but secondary issue was to investigate possible reasons for the misunderstanding of these tournure idioms.

The pilot study which developed the TCTI and the procedures in administering the TCTI is presented first, followed by a description of the testing instruments, while the last part of the chapter describes the research study.

Pilot Study

As shown in Table 1 (p.39) current elementary reading instructional materials contain numerous idioms. This finding is supported by Page's (1981) report that idioms do occur in students' texts.

A pilot study was undertaken to determine whether there were differences in readers' ability to comprehend different types of tournure idioms in selected reading passages and if so, to develop and refine a testing instrument including follow-up interview questions.

The pilot study consisted of twenty students from grades three and five with equal numbers of above-average and below-average reading abilities within each grade. The students were from a suburban Winnipeg school and were selected by the teachers, using the criteria that the subjects should represent a cross-section of reading ability.

The first stages in the development of the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) contained five types of tournure idioms and 25 items (five passages per idiom). When this first test was conducted, it became apparent that the reading activity was too long, thus one of the types of idioms was dropped and each type of idiom was considered in five passages, providing more reliability.

To control the readability factors in the TCTI, the passages are modified versions of students' instructional reading materials containing the specific idioms under study and have been rewritten at a readability level of approximately 2.5 reading difficulty according to Spache Readability Formula. Further, to avoid any possibility of the subjects having seen these idioms in their original contexts, the idioms were placed in entirely new contexts. (The calculated readability levels for each passage using the Spache Readability Formula (Revised) are described in Appendix A.) The instructions for administration were also developed and refined during the pilot.

Scoring procedures were based on Gorman (1956), Douglas and Peel (1979), and Ackerman (1982): 3 points for a figurative, conventional use of an idiom: 2 points for an inferential, transitional response: 1 point for a

literal response, including exact repetitions, and/or repeating the gist of the passage, without describing the idiomatic phrase. Answers such as an unrelated response, no response, or "I don't know" did not receive any points. A separate summary short form was constructed to facilitate scoring.

To develop a standard interviewing technique, random samples of students who performed well and who performed poorly were individually interviewed using an audiotape. Open ended questions were asked to identify possible sources of difficulty in comprehending tournure idioms, and to probe the effects of context and oral reading.

Though the set of questions was basically identical for each student the sequence of these questions was determined by the responses of the student. The pilot study revealed differences in the ability to comprehend tournure idioms for grade and ability and there were differences for the five types of tournure idioms for grade and ability levels.

Once the TCTI and administration procedures were developed and the interviewing format established, the research study was undertaken.

RESEARCH STUDY

Description of the Population

The study was conducted in a large metropolitan suburban school division. Schools were randomly selected on the basis that they represented a cross section of the socio-economic spectrum in that division and had not participated in the pilot study.

Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of 89 students from grades three and five. Grade three has been chosen for this study on the basis of third grade students having the necessary decoding skills for the test, and their ability to describe their strategy on comprehending idioms. Grade five was chosen, on the basis that a span of two years from the third grade has been found to provide sufficient differentiation in levels of student responses (Norton, 1979).

As stated on page ten, the students were then divided into groupings of good and weak reading ability according to their June 1988 scores on the reading subtest of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) Level 8, Form 5 and Level 10, Form 6.

Testing Instruments

The CTBS was chosen because it has been thoroughly standardized in Canada and Buros' (1959) review of the Iowa

Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) from which the CTBS is a Canadian adaptation, states:

A major strength of this new battery is its curricular validation... Technically, the tests are beyond criticism. Items selected from three times as many tryout items were carefully edited for educational and statistical acceptability. Standardization of the test is excellent. It is based on a sample as near as humanly obtainable to a true random sample... They are a superbly engineered set of tools for the elementary schools.

(Buros, 1959, p.32-37)

In reviewing the CTBS, Buros concluded:

The same level of technical sophistication that gave the Iowa test its fine qualities is evident in the design of the CTBS and the production of norms. Standardization was on a group of over 30,000 children drawn from a stratified random sample of some 225 schools from the English speaking sector in all provinces of Canada This is probably as useful an instrument as exists

(Buros, 1972, p.16)

The scores received on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills reading subtests were used to ability group the students into two sections. Students were placed in the good reading group if their reading score fell at/or beyond the five months of their grade placement, and students in the weak reading group were those whose score on the reading subtest fell at/or below the five months of their grade placement. As illustrated in Table 2, in grade three, 21 students were assigned to the weak reading ability group,

and 21 to the good reading ability group. In grade five, 28 students were assigned to the weak reading ability group and 19 to the good reading ability group.

TABLE 2
POPULATION SAMPLE, ACCORDING TO PERFORMANCE ON
THE CTBS

Reading Ability	grade 3	grade 5
weak	21	28
good	21	19
Total	42	47

Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI)

The TCTI had been developed and piloted including the administrative procedures by the investigator. This test assesses students' ability to understand four types of tournure idioms as identified by Makkai (1969) and are found in the instructional reading materials currently used in the school division as well as in the province of Manitoba.

The test consists of twenty passages, each passage containing one underlined tournure idiom phrase. There are

five passages of each for the four types of tournure idioms under study.

The TCTI was presented in booklet form. (See Appendix B). The subjects were required to read each passage and then to explain in writing, the particular underlined tournure idiom phrase. (The specific procedures for the administration of the TCTI are described in Appendix C).

Testing Procedures

As presented earlier, the results of reading subtest scores of the CTBS June, 1988 were used to classify grades three and five students as weak and good readers.

The Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) was administered to all subjects in the sample during the second week of November, 1988 (See Appendix D for timetable). The students were directed using the standard set of instructions developed during the pilot testing. The students were assured that they had as much time as required to complete the test.

A random sample of ten students (five students at grade three and five students at grade five) who failed to meet the criteria of 36/60 (60%) on the TCTI were interviewed individually to gather information regarding possible factors underlying their misunderstanding of the tournure idioms. The interviewing procedure was followed as developed during the pilot study which included oral reading. The entire interview was audio-taped for the purpose of scoring and checking data.

Since there were no third grade students who met the TCTI's successful score of 48/60 (80%) a further random sample of ten students at grade five were interviewed individually.

Excepting the oral reading, the interview format was identical to that used with the students who did not pass the TCTI.

To conclude the interview on a positive note, those students who had incorrect responses to the TCTI were provided a brief lesson on how to interpret the particular idioms at the conclusion of the interview. (For a detailed description of the follow-up interview format and presentation of tournure idioms in another context see Appendix E.)

Scoring of the TCTI

Using the scoring procedures developed during the pilot study, a maximum individual TCTI score of 60 was possible for each subject. Two experienced teachers who received training in the scoring, independently scored the data. (See Appendix F for a description of the scoring procedure). Only a few small differences occurred which were resolved by conferencing. The independent scoring resulted in an inter-judge agreement of $r=.922$. (See Appendix G.)

Design for Data Analysis

The analysis of data has a factorial design with the following between-subjects factors: grade, reading ability, and type of idioms.

The study utilized factorial design as illustrated in the following diagram:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Reading Ability</u>	<u>Test (Type of Idiom)*</u>
Three	good	B D G H
	weak	

Five	good	
	weak	

* B - the compulsory "it"

D - the indefinite article a

G - leading verb followed by a direct object and further modifiers.

H - leading verb followed by no direct object, but by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

The analysis consisted of a three way 2 x 2 x 4 analysis of variance with three grouping factors (grade, ability, type of idiom). The statistical procedure from the SAS was selected because it may be used to analyze variance for a

variety of fixed effects, such as grade, ability and test, where cell sizes are equal or unequal. The Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison Test was employed to identify significantly different means.

In summary, the sample consisted of 89 randomly selected students, 42 students from grade three, and 47 students from grade five. The subjects were selected from three Winnipeg schools which represented a cross section of socio-economic levels.

Following the administration and the scoring of the TCTI, a descriptive analysis and a statistical analysis was completed. The results are described and tabulated in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between grade, reading ability and reading comprehension of four types of tournure idioms. A secondary issue was investigating possible factors for miscomprehension of these tournure idioms. In order to achieve these objectives, the scores were analyzed from the reading subtests of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) and the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) and the data from the interviews.

The data pertaining to the test scores were processed through the University of Manitoba Computer Centre.

POPULATION SAMPLE

The eighty-nine subjects were from grades three and five: there were forty-two grade three children and forty-seven grade five children. These students were further divided into reading ability groupings according to their scores on the reading subtests of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) with the result that twenty-one grade three students made up the weak reading ability group and twenty-one students

made up the good reading ability group. In grade five, twenty-eight students were in the weak reading ability group and nineteen students comprised the good reading ability group. The sample is illustrated in Table 2 (page 50). (See Appendix H for a summary of the student scores on the CTBS.)

Descriptive Analysis of Responses to the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS)

Grade Three: The grade three weak readers, as presented in Table 3, achieved grade equivalent scores on the CTBS within a range of 1.4 - 2.4 with a mean of 2.14. The range of scores for the good readers is 3.4 - 4.5 with a mean of 3.80. Thus of the forty-two third grade subjects, twenty-one children or 50% of the grade three students were in each of these two groups.

TABLE 3
CTBS SCORE RANGE AND MEANS FOR ABILITY LEVELS AND
TOTAL SAMPLE: GRADE THREE

	weak	good	total
range	1.4 - 2.4	3.4 - 4.5	1.4 - 4.5
mean	2.14	3.80	2.97
no. of students	21	21	42
percentage	50%	50%	100%

Grade Five: As shown in Table 4, the range of grade equivalent scores on the CTBS for the grade five weak reading ability group was 2.7 - 4.4 with a mean of 3.80. Twenty-eight children or 60% of the grade five students formed this group. The range of scores for the good reading ability group is 5.4 - 7.3 with a mean of 5.87, with nineteen or 40% of the grade five students in this group.

TABLE 4
CTBS SCORE RANGE AND MEANS FOR ABILITY LEVELS AND
TOTAL SAMPLE: GRADE FIVE

	weak	weak	total
range	2.7 - 4.4	5.4 - 7.3	2.7 -7.3
mean	3.80	5.87	4.83
no.of students	28	19	47
percentage	60%	40%	100%

Descriptive Analysis of Total Scores on the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI), According to Grade and Ability:

Table 5 summarizes the mean total TCTI scores out of a possible 60, according to grade and ability level.

Grade 3: The range of total scores on the TCTI for the weak readers is 12 - 42 with a mean of 21.24. The range of total scores for the good readers is 20 - 44 with a mean of 36.52.

Grade Five: The range of total scores on the TCTI, for the weak readers is 23 - 49 with a mean of 36.89. The range of total scores for the good readers is 36 - 57 with a mean of 47.21. (See Appendix H for a summary of the student scores on the TCTI.)

TABLE 5
MEAN TOTAL TCTI SCORES ACCORDING TO GRADE
AND ABILITY LEVEL

Reading Ability Level	grade 3	grade 5
weak	21.24	36.89
good	36.52	47.21

Descriptive Analysis of the Failure Rate on the TCTI:

Using the predetermined criterion of 36 correct out of a possible 60 correct or (60%) for the TCTI, 31 subjects out of 89 failed to meet this criteria, constituting a failure rate of 34.83%. Table 6 summarizes the information for the two grade levels.

Grade Three: Twenty-five out of 42 students scored less than 36 out of 60, constituting a failure rate of 59.52% for grade three. In the weak reading group, 20 out of 21 students failed, a failure rate of 95.23%. Six out of 21 in the good reading group failed, a failure rate of 28.57%. No one in either the good or weak reading groups obtained a perfect score.

Grade Five: Twelve out of 47 students scored less than 36 out of 60, a failure rate of 19.15% for the grade five population sample. In the weak reading group 12 students out of 28 failed, a failure rate of 42.86%. In the good reading group, none of the 19 students failed.

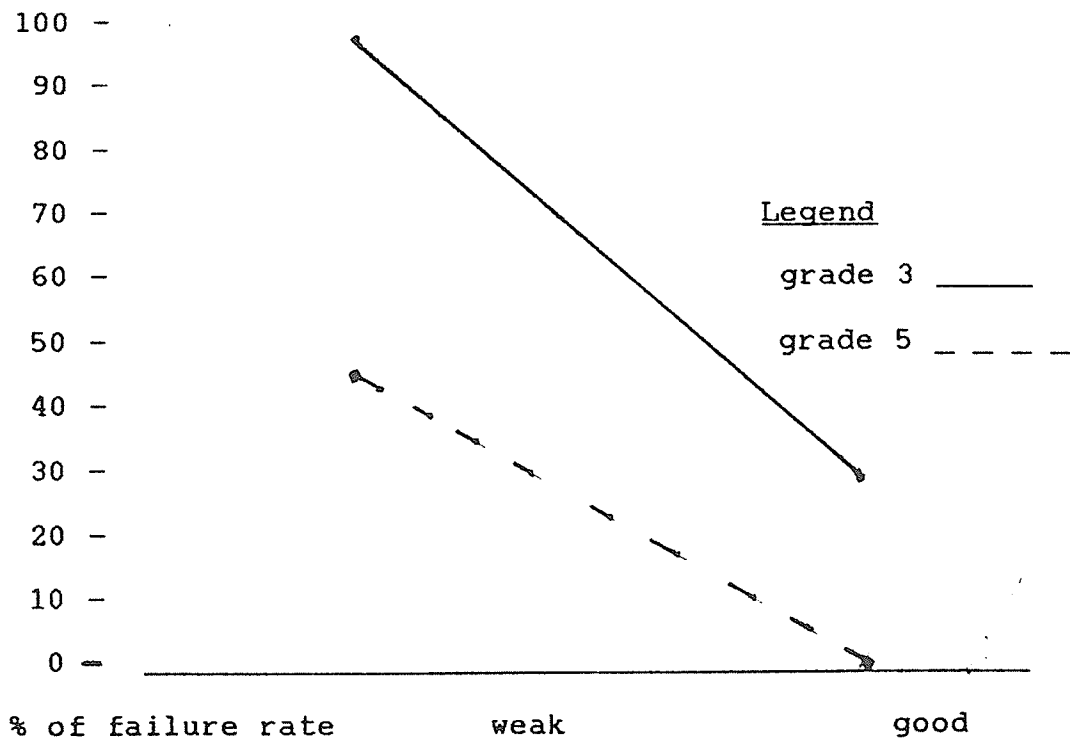
TABLE 6
FAILURE RATE ON THE TCTI ACCORDING TO GRADE AND
ABILITY LEVEL

Reading Ability	grade 3	grade 5
weak	95.23%	42.86%
good	28.57%	0%

A profile of the failure rates on the TCTI according to grade and ability levels is illustrated in Figure 1. A visual glance at this figure reveals that the large failure rate occurred among the weak readers at both grade levels. Further, there is the developmental phenomenon operating; with age and with maturity in reading, there are fewer miscomprehensions of these particular idioms.

FIGURE 1

PROFILES OF FAILURE RATES ON THE TCTI ACCORDING
TO GRADE AND ABILITY LEVEL



Descriptive Analysis of Mean Scores on the Four Subtests of the TCTI According to Grade and Ability Levels:

The study examined four types of tournure idioms: the compulsory "it"; the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; and leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. Table 7 presents the compulsory "it" idiom subtest means scores; Table 8 presents the indefinite article "a" idiom subtest means scores; Table 9 presents the leading verb followed by a direct object idiom subtest means scores while Table 10 presents the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing idiom subtest means scores.

The Compulsory "it" idiom (Subtest 1)

Weak Readers: Out of a possible score of 15, the mean score for the weak readers in grade three is 7.10. In grade five the mean score is 11.50.

Good Readers: The mean score for the good readers in grade three is 10.57, and in grade five the mean score is 13.47.

TABLE 7
 MEAN SCORES ON COMPULSORY "IT" IDIOM ACCORDING
 TO GRADE AND ABILITY LEVEL (SUBTEST I)

Reading Ability	grade 3	grade 5
weak	7.10	11.54
good	10.57	13.47

Indefinite Article "a" Idiom (Subtest 2)

Weak Readers: Out of a possible score of 15, the mean score for the weak readers in grade three is 6.33. In grade five, the mean score is 11.04.

Good Readers: The mean score for the good readers in grade three is 11.57. In grade five the mean score is 11.84.

TABLE 8
 MEAN SCORES ON INDEFINITE ARTICLE "A" IDIOM ACCORDING
 TO GRADE AND ABILITY LEVEL (SUBTEST II)

Reading Ability	grade 3	grade 5
weak	6.33	11.04
good	11.57	11.84

Leading Verb followed by a Direct Object Idiom (Subtest 3):

Weak Readers: Out of a possible score of 15, the mean score for the weak readers in grade three is 5.90. In grade five, the mean score is 8.64.

Good Readers: The mean score for the good readers in grade three is 9.24. In grade five the mean score is 12.26.

TABLE 9
MEAN SCORES ON LEADING VERB FOLLOWED BY A
DIRECT OBJECT IDIOM ACCORDING TO GRADE AND ABILITY
LEVEL (SUBTEST III)

Reading Ability	grade 3	grade 5
weak	5.90	8.64
good	9.24	12.26

Leading Verb followed by a Preposition and a Noun or Nothing (Subtest 4)

Weak Readers: Out of a possible score of 15, the mean score for the weak readers in grade three is 3.33. In grade five, the mean score is 5.64.

Good Readers: The mean score for the good readers in grade three is 5.33. In grade five, the mean score is 9.68

TABLE 10
MEAN SCORES ON LEADING VERB FOLLOWED BY A PREPOSITION
AND A NOUN, OR NOTHING IDIOM ACCORDING TO GRADE AND
ABILITY LEVEL (SUBTEST IV)

Reading Ability	grade 3	grade 5
weak	3.33	5.64
good	5.33	9.68

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The first phase of the analysis of the data involved a descriptive analysis of the mean TCTI scores for each grade level, each reading ability level, and each of the four types of tournure idioms.

The second phase undertook the analysis of TCTI scores as they relate to the study's hypotheses with the significant variation for grade, reading ability, types of tournure idioms, and for the interaction among the three variables. The .05 level was used to evaluate the significance of these variables, using the analysis of variance.

The five hypotheses presented here were generated for the purpose of exploring the relationship of the raw scores on the TCTI and the other variables in the study: grade, reading ability and the four types of tournure idioms. In order to reject the null hypothesis, the variance of the mean scores for each of the variables would have to be significantly greater than the scores within each of the variables. The Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test was employed in order to locate the areas of significant difference.

Hypothesis 1:

There are significant differences between grade three and grade five readers in the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) for all combined reading ability groups. Reading Comprehension of tournure idioms will increase as a function of grade level or maturity.

Hypothesis 2:

There are significant differences between reading ability groups within each grade level. Good readers in grade three will perform better than weak readers in grade three on the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI); good in grade five will perform better than weak readers in grade five on the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI).

Hypothesis 3:

There are significant differences between reading ability groups across grade levels on the overall results of the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI). Good grade three readers will perform as well or better than weak grade five readers in the comprehension of tournure idioms.

Hypothesis 4:

There is a significant interaction between grade level maturity and the four types of tournure idioms.

Hypothesis 5:

There is a significant interaction between the two reading ability groups and the four types of tournure idioms at each grade level.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

Of the five hypotheses that were developed, three examined the mean of TCTI scores with respect to grade and reading ability, while the remaining two examined the degree of significant interaction for each of the following pairs of variables: grade and the four types of tournure idioms, and reading ability and the four types of tournure idioms.

A three factor (A x B x C; with A representing grade, B representing ability, and C representing type of idioms), 2 x 2 x 4 analysis of variance was applied to the data. A significance of $p=.05$ was used to evaluate the significance of these variables. The results are found in Table 11.

TABLE 11
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Source	Sum of Squares	Deg. of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Prob-ability
Grade	714.57498	1	714.57498	106.21	0.0001
Ability	808.83044	1	808.83044	120.21	0.0001
Type of idiom	1230.24719	3	413.41570	61.45	0.0001
Interaction of grade x ability	17.70640	1	17.70640	2.63	0.1057
Interaction of grade x type	15.06525	3	5.02175	0.75	0.5251
Interaction of ability x type	7.06624	3	2.35554	0.35	0.7891
Interaction of grade x ability x type	124.71891	3	41.57297	6.18	0.0004
Error	2287.58835	340	6.7280		

Using the statistical procedure from the SAS, (1987) all main effects were found to be statistically significant (grade - $F=106.21$, df 1,340, $p=.0001$; ability- $F=120.21$, df 1,340, $p=.0001$; type- $F=61.45$, df 1,340, $p=.0001$).

The three way interaction was also found to be statistically significant (grade x ability x type- $F=6.18$, df 3,340, $p=.0004$) which determined the discussion of the analyses: the three levels must be discussed in relationship to one another and not individually in terms of the main effect or two way interaction.

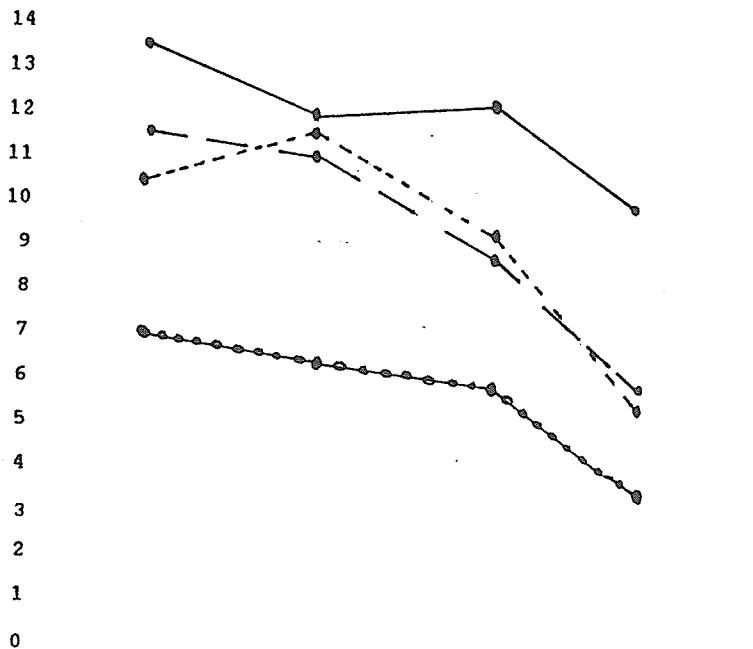
For the purpose of analyzing the hypotheses, the post-hoc Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test procedure was utilized to identify significantly different means. This procedure allows for the comparison of all combinations of means while protecting from Type 1 error. The level of protection chosen was alpha equal to .05. (Klockars and Sax, 1986)

The mean scores of the three way interaction as identified by the Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test are presented in Table 12 and are represented graphically in Figure 2.

TABLE 12
 MEAN SCORES FOR THREE WAY INTERACTION:
 NEWMAN-KEULS MULTIPLE COMPARISON TEST

Type of Idiom	Grade/Reading Ability			
	grade five good	grade five weak	grade three good	grade three weak
"it"	13.4737	11.5000	10.5714	7.0952
"a"	11.8421	11.0357	11.5714	6.3333
lead.verb/ dir.object	12.2632	8.6429	9.2381	5.9048
lead.verb/ prep.noun/ nothing	9.6842	5.6429	5.3333	3.3333

FIGURE 2
 PROFILE OF THE THREE WAY INTERACTION OF
 GRADE X ABILITY X TYPE OF IDIOM: NEWMAN-KEULS
 MULTIPLE COMPARISON TEST



Newman-Keuls Means Scores

"it" "a" lead.verb/ dir.object lead.verb/ prep.noun

Gr. 5 good - _____

Gr. 5 weak - _____

Gr. 3 good - _____

Gr. 3 weak - _____

Effect of the Type of Idioms:

There was a significant effect for type of idiom in the analysis of variance as shown in Table 11. Therefore, the effect of the type of idioms at each grade level and reading ability level was considered within the three way interaction of grade x ability x type of idiom. A comparison of mean scores as identified in the Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test was made for each combination of grade level, reading ability level, and type of tournure idiom. (The comparison of mean scores are reported in Tables 13, 14, 15.) The data are described by comparing good reading ability with weak reading ability in each of the two grade levels under study, and comparing reading abilities across the two grade levels. The third comparison was a combination of grade and ability level (grade five good reading ability with grade three weak reading ability and grade five weak reading ability with grade three good reading ability.)

Idiom Comprehension Within a Grade:Grade five :

As presented in Table 13 there is a significant difference between good grade five readers and weak grade five readers for the leading verb followed by a direct object and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. There is no significant difference for idioms with the compulsory "it" or for idioms with the indefinite article "a".

Thus, good grade five readers performed better than weak grade five readers for the leading verb followed by a direct object and for the leading verb followed by a preposition, and a noun, or nothing.

In the cases of tournure idioms with the indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it", there were no significant differences among the two reading ability levels at the fifth grade.

Grade three:

As indicated in Table 13 there is a significant difference between good grade three readers and weak grade three readers for each of the four types of tournure idioms. Good grade three readers performed significantly better than weak grade three readers in all of the four idioms under study.

TABLE 13
 NEWMAN-KEULS MEANS SCORES: GRADE LEVEL
 AND TYPE OF IDIOM

Grade	Type of Idiom			
	"it"	"a"	Lead.verb Dir.Object	Lead.verb Preposition noun
<u>Grade Five:</u>				
good	13.47	11.84	12.26 *	9.68 *
weak	11.50	11.03	8.64 *	5.64 *
<u>Grade Three:</u>				
good	10.57 *	11.57 *	9.23 *	5.33 *
weak	7.09 *	6.33 *	5.90 *	3.33 *

*significant difference

Idiom Comprehension and Reading Ability:Good Readers in Grades Three and Five:

As presented in Table 14 there is a significant difference between good grade five readers and good grade three readers for the following idioms: the compulsory "it", the leading verb followed by a direct object and the leading verb followed by a preposition, and a noun or nothing. There is no significant difference for the indefinite article "a".

Thus, good grade five readers performed significantly better than good grade three students for three of the four tournure idioms under examination. The tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a" was comprehended equally well by both groups.

Weak readers in Grades Three and Five:

As shown in Table 14 there is a significant difference between weak grade three readers and weak grade five readers for each of the four types of tournure idioms. Weak grade five readers performed significantly better than weak grade three readers in all of the four idioms under examination.

TABLE 14
 NEWMAN-KEULS MEANS SCORES: ABILITY LEVEL
 AND TYPE OF IDIOM

Reading Ability	Type of Idiom			
	"it"	"a"	Lead.verb Dir.Object	Lead.verb Preposition noun
<u>Grade Five:</u>				
good	13.47 *	11.84	12.26 *	9.68 *
<u>Grade Three:</u>				
good	10.57 *	11.57 *	9.23 *	5.33 *
<u>Grade Five:</u>				
weak	11.50 *	11.03 *	8.64 *	5.64 *
<u>Grade Three:</u>				
weak	7.09 *	6.33 *	5.90 *	3.33 *

*significant difference

Idiom Comprehension:Grade and Ability Level:

Good Grade Five Readers and Weak Grade Three Readers:

As shown in Table 15 there is a significant difference between good grade five readers and weak grade three readers for each of the four types of tournure idioms; good grade five readers performed significantly better than weak grade three readers in all of the four idioms under study.

Weak Grade Five Readers and Good Grade Three Readers:

As presented in Table 15 there is no significant difference between weak grade five readers and good grade three readers for each of the four types of tournure idioms. The good readers in grade three comprehended the four idioms under investigation as well as weak readers in the fifth grade.

TABLE 15
 NEWMAN-KEULS MEANS SCORES: GRADE LEVEL AND ABILITY LEVEL
 AND TYPE OF IDIOM

Grade/Ability	Type of Idiom			
	"it"	"a"	Lead.verb Dir.Object	Lead.verb Preposition noun
<u>Grade Five:</u>				
good	13.47 *	11.84 *	12.26 *	9.68 *
<u>Grade Three:</u>				
weak	7.09 *	6.33 *	5.90 *	3.33 *
<u>Grade Five:</u>				
weak	11.50	11.03	8.64	5.64
<u>Grade Three:</u>				
good	10.57	11.57	9.23	5.33

*significant difference

Summary of the Effect of the Type of Idiom:

A comparison of mean scores for each grade and reading ability level revealed:

- a) grade five good readers performed significantly better than grade five weak readers in two types of tournure idioms: leading verb followed by a direct object, leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.
- b) grade five good readers performed significantly better than grade three good readers in all but one type of tournure idiom: the indefinite article "a".
- c) grade five good readers performed significantly better than grade three weak readers for each of the tournure idioms.
- d) grade five weak readers performed as well as grade three good readers, and significantly better than grade three weak readers for each of the tournure idioms.
- e) grade three good readers performed significantly better than grade three weak readers for each of the tournure idioms.

Difficulty Level Of Tournure Idioms: Grade and Reading Ability:

As documented earlier, there are different levels of difficulty for each grade and reading ability across the four types of tournure idioms. Therefore, to identify which types of tournure idioms are most difficult for grade five and grade three readers, a comparison between each type of

idiom was made. The individual mean score variations as identified by the Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test are reported in Table 16.

Comparison of the tournure idiom with the compulsory "it" and the idiom with the indefinite article "a":

There is no significant difference in the difficulty between the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a" for each of the grade and reading ability levels. Thus these two types of idioms were equal in difficulty for each of the four groupings of reading ability: good and weak grade five readers and good and weak grade three readers. However, good grade five readers had the least difficulty while weak grade three readers had the most difficulty with each of these two types of idioms.

Comparison of the tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a" and the tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

There is a significant difference in the difficulty between the indefinite article "a" and the leading verb followed by a direct object for weak grade five readers and for good grade three readers. Of these two types, the leading verb followed by a direct object proved to be more difficult.

There is no significant difference in the difficulty between these two idioms for good grade five readers, and for weak grade three readers. Thus, these idioms were equally difficult for both good grade five readers and weak grade three readers with good grade five readers having the least difficulty, while weak grade three readers had the most difficulty with each of these two idioms.

Comparison of the tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object and the tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

There is a significant difference in the difficulty between the leading verb followed by a direct object and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing for each of the grade and reading ability levels. Of these two types, the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing proved to be more difficult. Of the four groupings of reading ability, good grade five readers had the least difficulty while the weak grade three readers had the most difficulty with each of these two idioms. There was no significant difference between weak grade five

readers and good grade three readers.

Comparison of the tournure idiom with the compulsory "it" and the tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

For weak grade five readers, there is a significant difference in the difficulty between the compulsory "it" and the leading verb followed by a direct object with the latter being more difficult. There is no significant difference in the difficulty between these two idioms for good grade three and grade five readers, or for weak grade three readers. As expected, however, good grade five readers had the least difficulty while weak grade three readers had the most difficulty with each of these two idioms.

Comparison of the tournure idiom with the compulsory "it" and the tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

There is a significant difference in the difficulty between the compulsory 'it' and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing for each of the grade and reading ability levels. Of these two types, the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing proved to be more difficult.

Of the four groupings of reading ability, good grade five readers had the least difficulty, while weak grade three readers had the most difficulty. There is no significant difference between weak grade five readers and good grade three readers.

Comparison of the tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a" and the tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

For weak grade five readers, there is a significant difference in the difficulty between the indefinite article "a" and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing with the latter proving to be more difficult.

There is no significant difference in the difficulty between these two idioms for good grade three and five readers, and for weak grade three readers. Of the four reading ability groupings, good grade five readers had the least difficulty, while weak grade three readers had the most difficulty with these two idioms. There was no significant difference between weak grade five readers and good grade three readers.

TABLE 16

NEWMAN-KEULS MEANS SCORES:
COMPARISON OF LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY BETWEEN TYPES OF IDIOMS

Grade/Ability	Type of Idiom		Significant Difference *
	"it"	"a"	
Gr. 5 - good	13.47	11.84	-
Gr. 5 - weak	11.50	11.03	-
Gr. 3 - good	10.57	11.57	-
Gr. 3 - weak	7.09	6.33	-
	"a"	Lead.verb <u>dir.object</u>	
Gr. 5 - good	11.84	12.26	-
Gr. 5 - weak	11.03	8.64	*
Gr. 3 - good	11.57	9.23	*
Gr. 3 - weak	6.33	5.90	-
	Lead.verb <u>dir.object</u>	Lead.verb <u>prep.noun</u>	
Gr. 5 - good	12.26	9.68	*
Gr. 5 - weak	8.64	5.64	*
Gr. 3 - good	9.23	5.33	*
Gr. 3 - weak	5.90	3.33	*
	"it"	Lead.verb <u>dir.object</u>	
Gr. 5 - good	13.47	12.26	-
Gr. 5 - weak	11.50	8.64	*
Gr. 3 - good	10.57	9.23	-
Gr. 3 - weak	7.09	5.90	-
	"it"	Lead.verb <u>prep.noun</u>	
Gr. 5 - good	13.47	9.68	*
Gr. 5 - weak	11.50	5.64	*
Gr. 3 - good	10.57	5.33	*
Gr. 3 - weak	7.09	3.33	*
	"a"	Lead.verb <u>prep.noun</u>	
Gr. 5 - good	11.84	9.68	-
Gr. 5 - weak	11.03	5.64	*
Gr. 3 - good	11.57	5.33	*
Gr. 3 - weak	6.33	3.33	*

Summary of Idiom Comprehension Difficulty for Grade and Ability Level:

As shown in Figure 2 (page 70) there were significant differences in the level of difficulty of the four types of tournure idioms as they relate to each grade and ability level which are summarized as follows:

Good grade five readers:

The mean score of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is significantly different from: the leading verb followed by a direct object, and the compulsory "it" but not significantly different from the indefinite article "a". The mean scores of the other three tournure idioms are not significantly different from each other.

For good grade five readers the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is more difficult to comprehend than the leading verb followed by a direct object and more difficult than the compulsory "it", but is equal in difficulty to the indefinite article "a". The compulsory "it", the indefinite article "a" and the leading verb followed by a direct object are equally difficult.

Weak grade five readers:

The mean score of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing and the leading verb followed by a direct object is significantly different from

each other and the other idioms. The mean scores of the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a" are not significantly different.

Thus, for weak grade five readers the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is most difficult to comprehend. The leading verb followed by a direct object is more difficult than the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a". The indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it" are equal in difficulty and easiest to comprehend.

Good grade three readers:

The mean score of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is significantly different from each of the other types of idioms. The mean score of the leading verb followed by a direct object is significantly different from the indefinite article "a", but not significantly different from the compulsory "it". The mean score of the indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it" are not significantly different.

Thus, for good grade three readers, the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is most difficult to comprehend. The leading verb followed by a direct object is more difficult than the indefinite article "a" but is equally difficult to the compulsory "it". The indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it" are equal in difficulty.

Weak grade three readers:

The mean score of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is significantly different from each of the other types of idioms.

The mean scores of each of the idioms, except the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing, are not significantly different. Thus for weak grade three readers, all four of the idioms under study proved to be difficult to comprehend.

Comparison of Relative Difficulty of Tournure Idioms for Grade and Ability Levels:

A comparison of the relative difficulty of the four types of idioms for each grade and ability level revealed the following patterns:

Good grade five readers and weak grade five readers:

Good and weak grade five readers each found the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing more difficult than the leading verb followed by a direct object. As well, the compulsory "it", and the indefinite article "a" were not significantly different in difficulty within these reading ability levels.

There was however, a significant difference in the difficulty of the leading verb followed by a direct object as compared to the indefinite article "a" and in the leading

verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing as compared to the indefinite article "a" for weak grade five readers which was not evident for good grade five readers.

Good grade five readers and good grade three readers:

Within each of these reading ability groups, comparisons of: the compulsory "it" with the indefinite article "a"; and the compulsory "it" with the leading verb followed by a direct object, showed no significant difference in difficulty. The leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is more difficult than the leading verb followed by a direct object, and the compulsory "it". However, for good grade five readers, the leading verb followed by a direct object is not significantly different in difficulty than the indefinite article "a", whereas there was a significant difference for good grade three readers.

There was a significant difference in difficulty between the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing and the indefinite article "a" for good grade three readers, but not for good grade five readers.

Good grade five readers and weak grade three readers:

Good grade five readers and weak grade three readers each found the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing more difficult than: the compulsory "it" and the leading verb followed by a direct object. There was no significant difference in difficulty among the indefinite article "a", the compulsory "it" and the leading verb followed by a direct object, within these reading ability levels. However, weak grade three readers found a significant difference in difficulty for the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing as compared to the indefinite article "a", which was not evident for good grade five readers.

Weak grade five readers and good grade three readers:

Weak grade five readers and good grade three readers each found the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing significantly different in difficulty than all of the other idioms. The compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a" were not significantly different in difficulty. The leading verb followed by a direct object and the indefinite article "a" were significantly different. However, the leading verb followed by a direct object is significantly different in difficulty than the compulsory "it" for weak grade five readers, but not for good grade three readers.

Weak grade five readers and weak grade three readers:

Weak readers at these grade levels each found the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing significantly different in difficulty from the other three tournure idioms. The compulsory "it" and indefinite article "a" were not significantly different in difficulty. However, the indefinite article "a" and the leading verb followed by a direct object are significantly different in difficulty for weak grade five readers, but not for weak grade three readers.

Good grade three readers and weak grade three readers:

Good and weak grade three readers each found the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing significantly different from the other three tournure idioms. The compulsory "it", compared with the indefinite article "a" are not significantly different in difficulty. However, the indefinite article "a" and the leading verb followed by a direct object are significantly different in difficulty for good grade three readers but not for weak grade three readers.

INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the interviews was to determine possible factors underlying the reading comprehension of the four types of tournure idioms under study.

It had been decided that for purposes of obtaining a clearer differentiation between the strategies of weak and good readers the scores of 60% or lower would be for the former and 80% or higher for the latter. Thus a random sample of twenty students were chosen from the population: ten students who failed to meet the criteria of 60% and ten students who met or exceeded the criteria of 80%. There were five weak readers from grade three and five weak readers from grade five. None of the grade three students met the criteria of 80%, hence only the fifth grade population could be used comprising ten good readers.

Each student was interviewed individually in a vacant room. As developed in the pilot study, rapport was established and the purpose of the interview was explained. The interviewee's TCTI booklet was placed before the interviewee for reference to the passages and his/her written responses. The interview was audiotaped.

The students who had failed the TCTI were requested to read all passages aloud, one at a time while word recognition errors were carefully noted to determine whether

miscomprehension of the tournure idiom was due to decoding difficulties. The students who passed the TCTI were requested to read orally only those passages in which they had had an incorrect response.

Excepting the oral reading, the interview format was basically the same for both groups. Each interviewee was first asked to read orally his/her written response and to then explain what he/she had meant. The remaining questions which were open-ended, were asked as the flow of the interview dictated. The plan was that if the student still indicated a lack of understanding of the idiom when the interview questions were completed, a teaching strategy was undertaken using an alternate passage.

The interview consisted of nine questions for each passage which called for responses that reflected the student's knowledge of the literal and figurative meaning of the tournure idioms, how and where this knowledge was acquired, the perceived degree of difficulty, and whether context was used in processing the tournure idiom phrase. If the student self-corrected his/her comprehension of the idiom, the passage was then rescored, using the same scoring criteria as for the original TCTI. Later, the data was studied for patterns of miscomprehension.

Description of the Interviewees Who Failed The TCTI:

The individual TCTI scores, CTBS scores and ability levels are summarized in Appendix I.

Grade Three:

Of the five students who failed the TCTI, there were four students of weak reading ability, and one interviewee of good reading ability. Their TCTI scores ranged from 24-35 and their CTBS grade equivalent scores ranged from 2.0-3.5.

Grade Five:

All of the grade five interviewees who failed the TCTI were from the weak reading ability group. Their total TCTI scores ranged from 29-35 and their CTBS grade equivalent scores ranged from 3.1-4.4.

Description of the Interviewees Who Passed the TCTI:Grade Five:

Ten interviewees passed the TCTI, comprising of eight good readers and two weak readers. The total TCTI scores ranged from 48-57 and their CTBS grade equivalent scores ranged from 4.2-6.6.

Word Recognition as a Factor in the Comprehension of the Idioms:

Since word recognition error was considered as a possible factor affecting comprehension of tournure idioms, an analysis of the word recognition errors of the students who failed the TCTI was undertaken during the individual

follow-up interviews. The word recognition errors were analysed using Gillet and Temples' criteria, (1982, p.99) which states that word recognition accuracy of 97% or higher is an independent reading level; 90-96% is an instructional reading level; and lower than 90% is a frustration reading level.

Of the ten interviewees who failed on the TCTI, nine read at the independent level, and one read at the instructional level. A summary of individual word recognition errors and word recognition levels is found in Appendix J. From the results it was evident that word recognition is not a factor in the miscomprehension of tournure idioms, thus an exploration of other factors was undertaken.

To elicit information as to possible factors underlying the miscomprehension of the idioms under study, a comparison of the responses from those subjects who passed the TCTI was made with those who did not pass the TCTI.

The recordings of each student's response to each of the interview questions for every passage were transcribed, categorized and calculated within each of the four types of tournure idioms. There were five passages for each type of tournure idiom. There were five grade three students who failed the TCTI and five grade five students who passed the TCTI. Thus, for every subtest of tournure idioms, there

were five passages x five responses for grade three students who failed; a total of 25 responses, and five passages x five responses for grade five students who failed; a total of 25 responses. There were five passages x ten responses for the grade five students who passed the TCTI; a total of 50 responses.

To facilitate comparison between students who failed the TCTI and students who passed the TCTI, the total number of responses within each category of interview questions was reported as a percentage.

This procedure was used for each of the following possible factors affecting miscomprehension of the four types of tournure idioms under study: comprehension strategies, stated perception of difficulty, use of prior knowledge, use of context and recognition and explanation of the semantic ambiguity of tournure idioms.

A comparison between weak readers at the two grade levels was made in order to determine whether there were differences due to developmental maturity and/or two years of school experience. To determine whether there was evidence of differences due to reading ability, a comparison was made between weak and good readers at each grade level. (The scoring procedure with examples is explained in Appendix F.)

Comprehension Strategies for the Four Types of Idioms:

Two interview questions, "What did you mean?" and "How did you know?" were posed to obtain information on comprehension strategies. The first question "What did you mean?" provided an opportunity for students to explain or expand their written response, whereas the second question allowed the students to discuss the manner in which they generated a definition of the tournure idioms. The results of the interviewees' explanations are presented in Table 17.

TABLE 17
PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES' EXPLAINING THE
IDIOMATIC PHRASES

Type of Idiom	Grade Three: (weak)	Grade Five: (weak)	Grade Five: (good)
"it"	80%	84%	98%
"a"	72%	84%	100%
lead verb/ dir.object	48%	52%	92%
lead.verb/ prep.noun	32%	40%	88%

Subtest 1: Tournure idiom with the compulsory "it":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the compulsory "it" idiom in 80% of

the passages. The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the compulsory "it" idiom in 84% of the passages; a difference of 4% in favour of the higher grade readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the compulsory "it" idiom in 84% of the passages while the grade five good readers were able to explain the figurative meaning in 98% of the passages; a difference of 14% in favour of the better readers.

In summary, weak readers at grades three and five were similar in their ability to explain the figurative meaning of the compulsory "it" idiom; the two additional years in school and/or age difference did not seem to make a difference in their performance on this task.

Good fifth grade readers were able to explain more often the figurative meaning of the compulsory "it" idiom than weak readers at the same grade level which indicates that reading ability may be a factor in comprehension strategies.

Subtest 2: Tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers students were able to explain the figurative meaning of the indefinite article

"a" idiom in 72% of the passages. The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the indefinite article "a" idiom in 84% of the passages; a difference of 12% in favour of the higher grade readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade:

The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the indefinite article "a" idiom in 84% of the passages. The grade five good readers were able to explain the figurative meaning in 100% of the passages with a difference of 16% in favour of the better readers.

In summary weak grade five readers were able to explain the figurative meaning more often than weak grade three readers. The difference between the grade levels indicates that age and/or the two additional years in school may be influencing the ability to explain comprehension strategies for this particular type of idiom.

Good grade five readers explained the figurative meaning of the indefinite article "a" idiom more often than the weak grade five readers, suggesting that reading ability is a factor affecting the ability to explain their comprehension strategies.

Subtest 3: Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a direct object in 48% of the passages. The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning in 52% of the passages; a difference of 4% in favour of the higher grade readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a direct object in 52% of the passages. The grade five good readers were able to explain the figurative meaning in 92% of the passages with a difference of 40% in favour of the better readers.

In summary, weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a direct object slightly more frequently than weak grade three readers, although the difference between the grade levels was minimal. Thus age and/or two additional years at school probably does not influence the students' ability to explain comprehension strategies for this particular type of idiom.

Good grade five readers explained the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a direct object more frequently than weak grade five readers, suggesting that reading ability may be a factor affecting the ability to explain comprehension strategies.

Subtest 4: Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers students were able to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing in 32% of the passages. The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning in 40% of the passages; a difference of 8% in favour of the higher grade readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing in 44% of the passages. The grade five good readers were able to explain the figurative meaning in 88% of the passages; a difference of 44% in favour of the better readers.

In summary, weak readers at grade three and grade five were similar in their ability to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. For this comparison, the age and/or two additional years in school did not seem to make a difference in their performance on this task.

Good grade five readers explained the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing more often than weak grade five readers indicating that reading ability may be affecting the ability to explain comprehension strategies.

Summary:

Good fifth grade readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of each of the four types of tournure idioms under consideration more often than weak fifth grade readers. The difference between these good and weak readers was greatest for the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing, and least for the compulsory "it" idioms.

Differences due to developmental maturity were most evident among weak readers at grades three and five for the indefinite article "a" idioms, with grade five readers more able to explain the figurative meaning than grade three readers. There was little difference in ability to explain

the compulsory "it", the leading verb followed by a direct object and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

The ability of the interviewees to explain the figurative meaning of each of the tournure idioms under consideration followed a similar pattern for both grade levels and reading ability levels with one exception: all the grade five interviewees regardless of reading ability were able to explain the figurative meaning the indefinite article "a" idioms most often, while the grade three weak readers were able to explain the figurative meaning of the compulsory "it" idioms most often. On the other hand, both grade three and five readers alike, were able to explain the figurative meaning of the leading verb followed by a direct object slightly more often than the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Stated Perception of Difficulty for Each of the Four
Types of Tournure Idioms

Each interviewee was asked to consider whether the tournure idiom in each passage was easy or difficult with the questions "Was this easy?"... "Difficult?"... "Why?" The results of the responses are presented in Table 18.

TABLE 18
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED THE
 IDIOMATIC PHRASE WAS EASY TO COMPREHEND

Type of Idiom	grade three (weak)	grade five (weak)	grade five (good)
"it"	76%	76%	88%
"a"	68%	72%	92%
lead.verb dir.object	64%	72%	90%
lead.verb prep.noun	16%	44%	56%

Subtest 1. Tournure idiom with the compulsory "it".

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers and the grade five weak readers stated the compulsory "it" idiom is easy in 76% of the passages; thus there was no difference in the perception of difficulty between the two grade levels.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated the compulsory "it" idiom is easy in 76% of the passages. The grade five good readers stated the compulsory "it" idiom is easy in 88% of the passages, a difference of 12% favouring the better readers.

In summary, weak readers at grade three and grade five were identical in their perception of the difficulty of this type of tournure idiom. However, good grade five readers found this type of tournure idiom to be easier more often than weak grade five readers, suggesting that reading ability influences the perceived difficulty level of this particular idiom.

Subtest 2. Tournure idioms with the indefinite article "a":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers stated the indefinite article "a" idiom is easy in 68% of the passages. The grade five weak readers stated the indefinite article "a" idiom is easy in 72% of the passages; a difference of 4% in favour of the higher grade level.

b. Weak vs good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated the indefinite article "a" idiom is easy in 72% of the passages. The grade five good readers stated this type of idiom is easy in 92% of the passages; a difference of 20% in favour of the better readers.

In summary, weak grade five readers reported slightly more frequently than the weak grade three readers that the indefinite article "a" idiom was easier. In this comparison, grade level made little difference.

Again, good grade five readers considered idioms with the indefinite article "a" to be easy more often than weak readers at the same grade level, indicating that reading ability appears to influence perceived difficulty levels.

Subtest 3. Tournure idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

a. Weak readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers stated the leading verb followed by a direct object is easy in 64% of the passages. The grade five weak readers stated this type of idiom is easy in 72% of the passages; a difference of 8% in favour of the higher grade readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated the leading verb followed by a direct object is easy in 72% of the passages. The grade five good readers stated this type of tournure idiom is easy in 90% of the passages; a difference of 18% in favour of the better readers.

In summary, weak readers at grade five stated that the leading verb followed by a direct object to be easy more frequently than weak readers at grade three. The age and/or two additional years in school appears to influence the perceived difficulty levels of this particular idiom.

Subtest 4. Tournure idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers stated the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is easy in 16% of the passages. The grade five weak readers stated this type of idiom is easy in 44% of the passages; a difference of 28% in favour of the higher grade level.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade level

The grade five weak readers stated the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is easy in 44% of the passages. The grade five good readers stated this type of idiom is easy in 56% of the passages; a difference of 12% in favour of the better readers.

In summary, weak readers at grade five stated the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is easy much more frequently than weak readers at grade three. The difference between the weak readers suggests that age and/or two additional years at school influences the perceived difficulty level of this particular idiom.

Good grade five readers stated this type of idiom is easy more frequently than weak readers at the grade five

level, suggesting that reading ability influences the perceived difficulty level.

Summary:

Reading ability appears to affect the perceived difficulty levels: the good grade five readers stated for each of the four tournure idioms under study that the idioms were easier than was indicated by their counterparts of weak reading ability. The difference between good and weak readers at this grade level was greatest for the indefinite article "a"; and the least for the compulsory "it", and for the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Differences between weak readers at the two grade levels were most evident for the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing, and least evident for the indefinite article "a". The compulsory "it" was stated easiest by both grade levels, while the stated perception of difficulty of the leading verb followed by a direct object were similar.

The stated perception of difficulty followed a pattern for grade level and reading ability level. Weak grade three and grade five readers stated the compulsory "it" to be the easiest. The indefinite article "a" was easier than the

leading verb followed by a direct object for grade three readers, whereas these two type of idioms were stated as being equally easy for weak grade five readers. The leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing was stated to be the most difficult for weak readers at both grade levels. The good grade five readers considered the indefinite article "a" to be the easiest, while the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing was found to be the most difficult.

Use of Prior Knowledge in Processing the Four Types of Tournure Idioms:

In order to gain some insight into use of prior knowledge regarding the particular tournure idioms under study, questions asking "Have you ever heard the (tournure idiom) phrase before?".... and "If so, tell me about it." were posed. An analysis of the responses indicated three main sources: reading, hearing it from others, and hearing it on television. The results of the analysis are summarized in Tables 19, 20, 21.

TABLE 19
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED SOURCES OF PRIOR
 KNOWLEDGE FOR THE IDIOMATIC PHRASE: GRADE THREE WEAK
 TCTI READERS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing from Others	Hearing on Television	Total
"it"	4%	60%	20%	84%
"a"	4%	64%	4%	72%
lead.verb dir. obj.	0%	44%	8%	52%
lead.verb prep.noun	4%	12%	4%	20%

TABLE 20
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED SOURCES OF PRIOR
 KNOWLEDGE FOR THE IDIOMATIC PHRASE: GRADE FIVE WEAK
 TCTI READERS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing from Others	Hearing on Television	Total
"it"	0%	76%	12%	88%
"a"	4%	88%	8%	100%
lead.verb dir.object	0%	68%	4%	72%
lead.verb prep.noun	4%	24%	4%	32%

TABLE 21
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED SOURCES OF PRIOR
 KNOWLEDGE FOR IDIOMATIC PHRASE: GRADE FIVE GOOD TCTI
 READERS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing from Others	Hearing on Television	Total
"it"	8%	80%	10%	98%
"a"	0%	78%	10%	88%
lead.verb dir.object	12%	64%	2%	78%
lead.verb prep.noun	10%	38%	8%	56%

Subtest 1. Tournure idiom with the compulsory "it:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The weak grade three readers indicated that they were familiar with the tournure idiom in 84% of the passages while the weak grade five readers indicated that they knew of this idiom in 88% of the passages; a difference of 4% in favour of the higher grade.

Weak readers at both grade levels used "hearing from others" as the main source, with grade three readers more often stating "hearing on television" and "reading" as sources of prior knowledge than grade five readers. None of the weak grade five readers claimed they had encountered this idiom in their reading.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The weak grade five readers indicated their familiarity with the tournure idiom in 88% of the passages while the good grade five readers indicated their familiarity in 98% of the passages; a difference of 10% in favour of the better readers.

Fifth grade readers stated "hearing from others" as the main source and "reading" as the least; however, good readers more often said "reading" was their source of prior knowledge. Weak grade five readers stated "hearing on television" slightly more often than good readers.

In summary, weak grade three and grade five readers were similar in their sources of prior knowledge for the tournure idiom "it".

All interviewees reported hearing most frequently the tournure idiom phrase from others; hearing the phrase on television was the second most frequently reported source of prior knowledge, and reading was third.

Subtest 2. Tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The weak grade three readers indicated that they were familiar with this type of idiom in 72% of the passages while the weak grade five readers stated their familiarity in all passages; a difference of 28% in favour of the higher grade level.

Weak readers at both grade levels stated "hearing from others" as the main source and "reading" as the least; however, grade five readers more often used "hearing on television" than grade three readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade:

As stated above, weak grade five readers indicated their familiarity in all of the passages; the good grade five readers indicated their familiarity with this particular idiom in 88% of the passages; a difference of 12% in favour of the weaker readers.

Fifth grade readers stated "hearing from others" as the main source, followed by "hearing on television". Good readers stated slightly more often "hearing on television" than their weak counterparts. On the other hand, none of the good grade five readers encountered this idiom through their reading.

In summary, weak grade five readers indicated that they were familiar with the tournure idiom "a" more frequently than weak readers at grade three or good readers at grade five. The difference between weak readers at different grade levels was greater than the difference between the good and weak readers at grade five, indicating that age and/or two additional years at school may be a greater influence than reading ability in recognizing tournure idioms with "a" from prior knowledge.

All of the interviewees most frequently reported hearing the tournure idiom phrase from others. For example, in the tournure phrase "to shake-a-leg", readers reported that "My mom says it all the time." In the phrase to "break it up", readers stated "My teacher says it all the time." Hearing the phrases on television was the second most frequently reported source of prior knowledge. This idiom was least encountered through reading, with none of the good grade five readers claiming they had seen it in their reading.

Subtest 3. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers indicated their familiarity with this tournure idiom in 52% of the passages while the grade five weak readers indicated their familiarity in 72% of the passages; a difference of 20% in favour of the higher grade level.

Weak readers at both grade levels used "hearing from others" as the main source of prior knowledge. Both groups stated they had not encountered the idiom in their reading. Grade three readers used more often "hearing on television" than grade five readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade:

The grade five weak readers indicated their familiarity with this tournure idiom in 72% of the passages while the grade five good readers indicated their familiarity in 78% of the passages; a difference of 6% in favour of the better readers.

Fifth grade readers stated "hearing from others" as the main source of prior knowledge. According to their statements, none of the weak grade five readers encountered the idiom in their reading.

In summary, weak readers at grade five indicated that they were familiar with the leading verb followed by a direct object more frequently than weak readers at grade three.

Although good readers in grade five indicated their familiarity of the leading verb followed by a direct object more frequently than weak readers at the same level, the difference between the good and weak readers at grade five is less than the difference between weak readers at different grade levels. Thus, for this particular type of tournure idiom, the age and/or two additional years at school seems to be a greater influence than reading ability in drawing upon prior knowledge of the leading verb followed by a direct object.

All of the interviewees reported most frequently hearing the tournure idiom phrase from others. For example, in the tournure phrase "to put your foot down", some readers reported that "My mom says that at home to not let us get away with it." or "My dad says it." For good readers, reading the phrase in books was reported more frequently than hearing the phrase on television.

Subtest 4. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

Grade three weak readers indicated their familiarity

with this tournure idiom in 20% of the passages. The grade five weak readers indicated their familiarity in 32% of the passages; a difference of 12% in favour of the higher grade.

Weak readers at both grade levels stated most often "hearing from others" as the main source of prior knowledge followed by "reading" and "hearing on television".

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers indicated their familiarity with this tournure idiom in 32% of the passages while the grade five good readers indicated their familiarity in 56% of the passages; a difference of 24% in favour of the better readers.

Fifth grade readers stated "hearing from others" as the main source of prior knowledge while weak fifth grade readers stated "reading" and "hearing on television".

In summary, weak grade five readers indicated that they used prior knowledge of the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing more frequently than weak readers at grade three.

Good readers at grade five indicated their familiarity with this particular idiom more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level. The difference between the good

and weak readers at the fifth grade is greater than the difference between the weak readers at different grade levels suggesting that reading ability was a greater influence than age and/or two additional years at school in gaining familiarity with the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

All of the interviewees most frequently reported hearing the tournure idiom phrase from others. For example, in the passage containing the phrase "to beat around the bush", some readers reported that "My mom uses it." This was followed by a similar number of reports of reading the phrase in books and hearing the phrase on television.

Summary:

Good readers were more familiar with the tournure idioms under study than weak readers, with one exception: weak grade five readers indicated familiarity with the tournure idiom "a" in more passages than either good grade five readers or weak grade three readers.

Drawing upon prior knowledge appeared to be a factor of developmental maturity or the two additional years at school in all of the four types of tournure idioms. Within each of these types of idioms, grade five readers more frequently reported familiarity than the grade three readers.

The particular type of prior knowledge to aid comprehension for each of the four types of tournure idioms under consideration followed a similar pattern for each of the grade and ability levels, with one exception: weak grade three readers and good grade five readers recognized idioms with "it" most often while weak grade five readers recognized idioms with "a" most often. All of the interviewees recognized idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object more often than idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Sources of prior knowledge in order of frequency were: hearing from others, hearing on television, then reading.

Use of Context as a Strategy:

The questions asking "Were there any clues to the phrase in the passage?... "Where?"... "How did they help?" were posed to elicit evidence of the use of context. An analysis of the interviewees' responses indicated that context was used in three ways: the students referred to the passages as a whole; to specific phrases and sentences which preceded and/or followed the tournure idiom phrase; or they used the tournure idiom itself to aid comprehension. The results of the analysis are summarized in Tables 22, 23, and 24.

TABLE 22
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED USE OF CONTEXT
 AND THE IDIOMATIC PHRASE: GRADE THREE WEAK TCTI
 READERS

Type of Idiom	Whole passage	Phrases/ sentences	Idiom phrase	Total
"it"	0%	32%	24%	56%
"a"	0%	48%	12%	60%
lead.verb dir.object	0%	60%	24%	84%
lead.verb prep.noun	8%	36%	0%	44%

TABLE 23
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED USE OF CONTEXT
 AND THE IDIOMATIC PHRASE: GRADE FIVE WEAK TCTI
 READERS

Type of Idiom	Whole passage	Phrases/ sentences	Idiom phrase	Total
"it"	12%	48%	0%	60%
"a"	8%	36%	24%	68%
lead.verb dir.object	8%	44%	12%	64%
lead.verb prep.noun	36%	40%	4%	80%

TABLE 24
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES WHO STATED USE OF CONTEXT
 AND THE IDIOMATIC PHRASE: GRADE FIVE GOOD TCTI
 READERS

Type of Idiom	Whole passage	Phrases/ sentences	Idiom phrase	Total
"it"	12%	68%	14%	94%
"a"	6%	54%	36%	96%
lead.verb dir.object	10%	66%	18%	94%
lead.verb prep.noun	12%	78%	4%	94%

Subtest 1. Tournure idiom with the compulsory "it":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers stated that they used context in 56% of the passages while the grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 60% of the passages; a difference of 4% favouring the higher grade level.

Weak readers at both grade levels most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passage. Grade three readers did not use the whole passages, whereas some grade five readers used it for comprehension.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 60% of the passages. The grade five good readers used context in 94% of the passages; a difference of 34% in favour of the better readers.

Fifth grade readers most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passage. Only a few good and poor grade five readers used the idiom phrase.

In summary, weak readers at grade three and grade five were similar in their use of context in comprehending tournure idioms with the compulsory "it"; thus, the influence of age and/or the two additional years in school appears to be non-existent.

Good readers used context more than weak readers at the same grade level. The difference between the grade levels was much greater than the difference between the reading ability levels at the same grade, suggesting that reading ability influences the frequency of using context for comprehension of this particular idiom.

The most frequently reported use of context was the selection of particular phrases or sentences for all of the interviewees, followed by the whole passage.

Subtest 2. Tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers indicated that they used context in 60% of the passages while the grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 68% of the passages; a difference of 8% favouring the higher grade level.

Weak readers at both grade levels most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passage, and used least often the whole passage. Weak grade five readers twice as frequently used the idiom phrase itself as compared to weak grade three readers.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 68% of the passages. The grade five good readers

stated that they used context in 96% of the passages; a difference of 28% favouring the better readers.

Fifth grade readers most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passage and used least often the whole passage.

In summary, weak grade five readers used context more frequently than weak grade three readers, although the difference between the two grade levels does not indicate that age and/or the two additional years in school is an influence.

Good readers used context more than weak readers at the same grade level. The difference between the grade levels was much greater than the difference between the reading ability levels within the same grade. Thus, reading ability seems to influence the frequency of the use of context for comprehension of this particular tournure idiom.

The most frequently reported use of context was the selection of particular phrases or sentences for all of the interviewees, while the tournure idiom phrase itself was the second most frequently used.

Subtest 3. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers stated that they used context in 84% of the passages. The grade five weak readers

stated that they used context in 64% of the passages; a difference of 20% favouring the lower grade level.

Weak readers at both grade levels most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passages and used least often the whole passage. However, weak grade three readers twice as frequently used the idiom phrase itself, as compared to their counterparts in grade five.

b. Weak vs Good at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 64% of the passages. The grade five good readers stated that they used context in 94% of the passages; a difference of 30% favouring the better readers.

Fifth grade readers most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passage, and used least often the whole passage.

In summary, weak readers at grade three used context for this tournure idiom more frequently than weak readers at grade five. Age and/or two additional years in school did not seem to influence the older but weak grade five readers into using context for comprehension of this particular idiom.

Good readers used context more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level, which suggests that reading ability influences the use of context.

The most frequently reported use of context for all interviewees was the selection of particular phrases or sentences, while the tournure idiom phrase itself was the second most frequently used. It is interesting to note that in Subtest 3, the idiom phrase itself was used 50% less than in Subtest 2 by all fifth grade readers while selection of the idiom phrase itself increased 50% for weak readers at grade three. Also, weak grade three readers did not use the context of the whole passage as an aid for comprehension.

Subtest 4. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers stated that they used context in 44% of the passages while the grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 80% of the passages; a difference of 36% favouring the higher grade level.

Weak readers at both grade levels most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passages. Weak grade three readers did not use the idiom phrase at all.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers stated that they used context in 80% of the passages while the grade five good readers stated that they used context in 94% of the passages; a difference of 14% favouring the better readers.

Fifth grade readers most often selected particular phrases and/or sentences in the passage and used least often the idiom phrase itself as an aid to comprehension.

In summary, weak readers at grade five used context more frequently than weak readers at grade three. For this comparison, age and/or two additional years in school seemed to influence grade five readers considering context as an aid to comprehension of this particular tournure idiom.

Good readers used context more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level, suggesting that reading ability influences the context as a useful aid for comprehension.

The most frequent use of context reported was the selection of particular phrases or sentences for all interviewees and the whole passage was utilized for interviewees more often than the idiom phrase alone.

Summary:

Good grade five readers used context more frequently than weak grade five readers. The difference between good and weak readers at grade five in using context was greatest for idioms with the compulsory "it", with good readers using context much more frequently than weak readers at grade five.

Differences in the use of context for comprehension due to age and/or years of school experience were most evident

among weak readers at grades three and five for the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. Weak grade five readers extensively used context in comparison to their use of context for the other three types of tournure idioms, while weak grade three readers showed the least use of context for this idiom.

All interviewees, most often pointed out particular phrases and sentences that occurred before and/or after the tournure phrase, thereby linking the ideas together to gain understanding of the idiom phrase in the passage. When the particular tournure idiom phrase was perceived as "difficult", all interviewees then used the context of the whole passage.

Thus it seems that successful readers utilize context as an aid for comprehending each of the tournure idioms more frequently than unsuccessful readers and it appears that age and/or grade level influences the use of context in comprehending this particular tournure idiom.

Recognition of the Semantic Ambiguity and Figurative Interpretation of Tournure Idioms

The ability to recognize the semantic ambiguity of tournure idioms was addressed in question "Does it (the tournure idiom phrase) mean what it says?" This part of the interview kept in mind studies by Ackerman (1982) and Prinz (1983) which stated that young children are sensitive to the

use of nonliteral language, but are not necessarily able to explain what they mean or how they know. Regardless of whether the reader responded "yes" or "no" the question was followed by "How do you know?", which considered the readers' ability to explain the tournure idiom in terms of the dual meanings; that is, the literal or surface interpretation and the deeper figurative meaning, or in terms of a figurative interpretation alone. The explanation thus allowed for the scoring of whether the idiom was comprehended accurately or not.

Readers responded in four particular ways:

- a. They were sensitive to the nonliteral meaning but could not explain how they arrived at their response. In the example, "does 'to fall for it' mean what it says?", some readers responded "No. I don't know why." Other readers responded "No. It's a saying." Their responses were scored as not comprehended, but awareness of ambiguity was recognized.
- b. They were sensitive to the nonliteral meaning and proceeded to explain the absurdity of the tournure phrase in its literal sense within the context of the passage. For example, responses such as "No, how can you actually fly off the handle?" or "No, you can't really read between the lines because there's nothing to read.", were typical and frequently reported. These responses were scored as comprehended and explained, using the dual meanings or semantic duality.

c. They were only aware of the literal or surface interpretation. For example, a response such as "Yes, to put your foot down means he stamped his foot" would be scored as not comprehended.

d. They recognized and explained the idiom by its deeper figurative interpretation. For example, some readers responded "Yes, to lend a hand means to help." This type of response was scored as comprehended, using the figurative interpretation.

Tables 25, 26, 27 summarize the responses according to recognition of semantic ambiguity and explanations.

TABLE 25
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES AND RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION
 OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY OF IDIOMATIC PHRASES: GRADE THREE
 WEAK TCTI READERS

Type of Idiom	Recognized Semantic Ambiguity	Explained Semantic Ambiguity		Total
		Explained Semantic Duality	Explained Figurative Interpretation	
"it"	76%	36%	8%	44%
"a"	88%	56%	16%	72%
lead.verb dir.object	64%	44%	12%	56%
lead.verb prep.noun	64%	24%	12%	36%

TABLE 26
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES AND RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION
 OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY OF IDIOMATIC PHRASES: GRADE FIVE
 WEAK READERS

Type of Idiom	Recognized Semantic Ambiguity	Explained Semantic Ambiguity		Total
		Explained Semantic Duality	Explained Figurative Interpretation	
"it"	80%	44%	20%	64%
"a"	84%	64%	20%	84%
lead.verb dir.object	64%	60%	4%	64%
lead.verb prep.noun	52%	32%	12%	44%

TABLE 27
 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES AND RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION
 OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY OF IDIOMATIC PHRASES: GRADE FIVE
 GOOD READERS

Type of Idiom	Recognized Semantic Ambiguity	Explained Semantic Ambiguity		Total
		Explained Semantic Duality	Explained Figurative Interpretation	
"it"	98%	62%	34%	96%
"a"	98%	78%	18%	96%
lead.verb dir.object	90%	80%	4%	84%

Subtest 1. Tournure idiom with the compulsory "it":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the compulsory "it" idiom in 76% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 44% of the passages: 36% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 8% were explained as a figurative interpretation of the tournure idiom.

The grade five weak readers recognized semantic ambiguity in 80% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 64% of the passages: 44% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 20% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers recognized semantic ambiguity in 80% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 64% of the passages: 44% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 20% were explained as a figurative interpretation. In comparison, grade five good readers recognized semantic ambiguity of the compulsory "it" idiom in 98% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 96% of the passages: 62% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 34% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

In summary, weak grade five readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of this particular type of tournure idiom more frequently than weak grade three readers, but the difference between the two grade levels was minimal.

On the other hand, weak grade five readers explained the semantic ambiguity of the literal or surface meaning and the deeper figurative interpretation more frequently than weak grade three readers suggesting that ability to explain the ambiguity of the idiom increases with age and/or school experience.

Good readers recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity of this particular idiom phrase more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level. They also explained the figurative interpretation more often than weak readers, suggesting that reading ability has a strong influence upon the explanation ability.

Subtest 2. Tournure idiom containing the indefinite article "a":

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The weak grade three readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the indefinite article "a" idiom in 88% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 72% of the passages: 56% of the passages were explained by semantic

duality and another 16% were explained as a figurative interpretation. The weak grade five readers recognized semantic ambiguity in 84% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 84% of the passages: 64% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 20% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers recognized semantic ambiguity in 84% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 84% of the passages: 64% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 20% were explained as a figurative interpretation. The grade five good readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the indefinite article "a" idiom in 98% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 96% of the passages: 78% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 18% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

In summary, weak grade three readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of this particular type of idiom as well as weak grade five readers; the difference between these groups was minimal. On the other hand, grade five readers explained the semantic ambiguity more frequently than grade three readers. For this comparison, the ability to explain

the ambiguity between the literal or surface interpretation and the deeper figurative meaning (idiomatic comprehension) increased with age and/or school experience.

Good grade five readers recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level. The difference between the grade five interviewees in their preference for a figurative interpretation of this type of tournure idiom was minimal. Thus, while good grade five readers were more sensitive to the nonliteral interpretation and were better able to explain how they knew than weak grade three or grade five readers, the differences between the interviewee groups in their ability to explain a figurative interpretation were minimal.

Subtest 3. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The grade three weak readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the leading verb followed by a direct object in 64% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 56% of the passages: 44% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 12% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

The weak grade five readers recognized semantic ambiguity in 64% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 64% of the passages: 60% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 4% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers recognized the semantic ambiguity in 64% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 64% of the passages: 60% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 4% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

The good grade five readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the tournure phrase in 90% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 84% of the passages: 80% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 4% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

In summary, weak grade three and grade five readers were very similar in their recognition of the semantic ambiguity of this particular type of tournure idiom, but grade five readers were able to explain the semantic ambiguity more frequently than grade three readers. On the other hand, for this particular idiom alone, grade three readers more frequently explained the figurative interpretation of the phrase. For this comparison, the ability to explain the ambiguity between the literal or

surface interpretation and the deeper figurative meaning increased with years of schooling.

Good grade five readers recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity in terms of the dual meanings of tournure idioms more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level. However, both ability levels at grade five could explain the figurative interpretation of this type of tournure equally well.

Subtest 4. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing:

a. Weak Readers at Grades Three and Five

The weak grade three readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the leading verb followed by a preposition, noun or nothing in 64% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 36% of the passages: 24% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 12% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

The weak grade five readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of the tournure phrase in 52% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 44% of the passages: 32% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 12% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

b. Weak vs Good Readers at the Fifth Grade

The grade five weak readers recognized the semantic ambiguity in 52% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 44% of the passages: 32% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 12% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

The grade five good readers recognized the semantic ambiguity in 94% of the passages. They could explain how they knew in 88% of the passages: 68% of the passages were explained by semantic duality and another 20% were explained as a figurative interpretation.

In summary, weak grade three readers recognized the semantic ambiguity of this particular type of tournure idiom more frequently than weak grade five readers. However, grade five readers were able to more frequently explain the semantic ambiguity. There was no difference between weak readers in their ability to explain the figurative interpretation of this type of tournure idiom. Thus, the ability to explain the semantic ambiguity increases with schooling but not in the explanation of the figurative interpretation.

Good readers recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity and used the figurative interpretation more frequently than weak readers at the same grade level, suggesting that reading ability appears to be a factor in the understanding and explanation of this particular type of tournure idiom.

Summary:

Good grade five readers more frequently recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity than weak grade five readers. The greatest difference between the fifth grade readers was the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing, while the least difference was noted for the indefinite article "a". Good readers at grade five also explained the figurative meaning of the tournure idiom more frequently than weak grade five readers, suggesting that reading ability affected the understanding and explanation of tournure idioms.

Weak grade five readers recognized and explained semantic ambiguity more frequently than weak grade three readers. Weak readers' ability to recognize and explain the semantic ambiguity varied with the type of tournure idiom with the greatest difference for the leading verb followed followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing: in this particular instance grade three readers recognized the ambiguity more frequently than grade five readers. The least difference between weak readers was in their recognition of the semantic ambiguity of the indefinite article "a". On the other hand, weak grade five readers were able more often to explain the semantic ambiguity of each of the four types of tournure idioms.

Overall, weak grade five readers used more frequently the figurative interpretation than weak grade three readers with one exception: grade three readers stated the figurative interpretation for the leading verb followed by a direct object more often than grade five readers.

Thus, it appears that ability to explain figurative meaning increases with maturity and better readers appear to be more sensitive to both the surface or literal interpretation of the idiom phrase and to its deeper or inferred meaning.

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Twenty students participated in the interview: ten readers who failed to meet the predetermined criteria of 60% were considered as "weak TCTI readers" and ten students who met or exceeded the predetermined criteria of 80%, were considered as "good TCTI readers".

The interviewees consisted of five weak grade three readers and five weak grade five readers. Since none of the grade three students met the criteria of 80%, ten good grade five readers were selected.

The summary compares grade three weak readers with grade five weak readers for purposes of examining the effect of developmental maturity; and grade five weak readers with grade five good readers for purposes of examining the effect of reading ability, in the following areas: 1) comprehension strategies; 2) perceived difficulty; 3) use of prior knowledge; 4) use of context; 5) recognition and explanation of the semantic ambiguity and figurative interpretation of the four tournure idioms under study.

1. Comprehension Strategies:

Grade five good readers were more often able to explain the figurative meaning of each of the four types of tournure idioms than grade five weak readers. Grade five weak readers were more often able to explain the figurative meaning of each of the four types of tournure idioms than grade three weak readers.

Order of frequency of explaining the idioms: the indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

2. Stated Perceived Difficulty:

Grade five good readers found the four types of tournure idioms easier than the grade five weak readers. Grade five weak readers found the tournure idioms easier than the grade three weak readers, except for the compulsory "it".

Order of stated perceived difficulty: the compulsory "it" and indefinite article "a" were the easiest; followed by leading verb followed by a direct object; then leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

3. Use of Prior Knowledge:

Grade five good readers were more familiar with the tournure idioms than grade five weak readers, except for the indefinite article "a". Grade five weak readers were more familiar with all of the tournure idioms than grade three weak readers.

Order of frequency in the use of prior knowledge:

Grade three weak readers and grade five good readers: the compulsory "it"; the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Grade five weak readers: the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Sources of prior knowledge in order of frequency: hearing from others; hearing on television; then reading.

4. Use of Context:

Grade five good readers used context more often than grade five weak readers for each of the four types of tournure idioms. Grade five weak readers used context more often than grade three weak readers for all tournure idioms except the leading verb followed by a direct object.

Order of frequency in the use of context:

Grade five good readers - the indefinite article "a"; the other three idioms were similar.

Grade five weak readers - leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing; the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; the compulsory "it".

Grade three weak readers - leading verb followed by a direct object; the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Order of frequency for particular uses of context: specific phrases and/or sentences; the idiom phrase itself; the whole passage.

5. Recognition and Explanation of the Semantic Ambiguity and Figuration Interpretation of Tournure Idioms:

Grade five good readers more frequently recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity of tournure idioms than grade five weak readers. They also used the figurative interpretation more often, except for the compulsory "it", and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Grade five weak readers more frequently recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity than grade three weak readers for each of the four types of tournure idioms.

Grade five weak readers more frequently used the figurative interpretation than grade three weak readers to explain the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a".

Order of frequency in recognition and explanation:

Grade five good readers - the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing; leading verb followed by a direct object.

Grade five weak readers - the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it" and leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Grade three weak readers - indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Reading ability is a factor in the comprehension of tournure idioms in that there were no grade three readers who met the predetermined criteria of 80% and that the good grade five readers surpassed the poor readers in the same grade in explaining tournure idioms; stated perceived difficulty, and use of context.

Developmental maturity is a factor in some areas of comprehending tournure idioms in that the older readers made more use of prior knowledge and in their ability to explain the semantic ambiguity of tournure idioms. On the other hand, however, maturity did not influence the ability to explain comprehension strategies or perception of stated comprehension difficulty, nor in the use of context.

EFFECT OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS UPON COMPREHENSION OF THE
TOURNURE IDIOMS:

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the interviewees who failed the TCTI (weak readers) were asked to read orally, all passages. If their oral reading revealed no serious word recognition errors, then it was assumed that the misunderstanding of the particular passage was due to factors other than word recognition; hence the interview was to uncover some of these factors. However, the interview through its questioning proved to be an instrument of indirect teaching when almost half of the readers came to an understanding of the particular idiom within the reading passage: Forty-four and one half percent corrected their original TCTI response, 27% to a figurative level; 9% to a transitional level and 8.5% to a literal level of understanding.

To illustrate this phenomenon more clearly, the corrections were evaluated accordingly: responses which were exact repetitions of the phrase or the gist of the passage were considered literal; responses indicating a nonliteral interpretation but which were not in agreement with the conventional idiomatic interpretation were considered transitional; while responses which stated the conventional use of the idiom were considered figurative. Responses which still did not relate to the passages were considered uncorrected. (The results of the corrections for each grade

level of weak readers and type of idioms are summarized in Appendix L.) The following discussion is aimed at explaining this phenomenon as it relates to each of the four types of tournure idioms under study.

Subtest 1. Tournure idiom with the compulsory "it":

Grade Three

All of the weak grade three interviewees who had misunderstood the idiom with the compulsory "it" on the TCTI, were able to do some self-correcting.

Of the 8 TCTI passages, five were corrected to a literal level, and three to a figurative level.

The two TCTI responses that had been scored as literal, were now self-corrected to the figurative level.

The four TCTI responses that had been scored as transitional, were now self-corrected to the figurative level.

There were a total of 14 (out of 25) passages which were corrected as a result of the interview; nine of these passages were corrected to the figurative level, and five to a literal level of understanding.

Grade Five

Most of the grade five interviewees who had misunderstood the idioms with the compulsory "it" on the TCTI were able to self-correct to some degree.

Of the five TCTI passages which had been scored incorrect, two remained uncorrected while one was changed to a literal level and two were corrected to a figurative level.

The one TCTI response that had been scored as literal was now corrected to a figurative level.

Of the eight TCTI responses that were scored as transitional, one remained uncorrected while seven were self-corrected to the figurative level of understanding.

There were a total of eleven (out of twenty-five) passages which were corrected as a result of the interview; ten of these passages were corrected to the figurative level and one was corrected to a literal level.

Comparison of Grade Three and Grade Five TCTI Scores and Corrected Responses:

A comparison of grade three and five interviewees' corrections of the TCTI responses indicated that they most frequently corrected to a figurative level of understanding. Corrections to a literal level were more frequent than corrections to a transitional level. However, the

corrections were different between the two grade levels. Grade five readers more often corrected from a transitional level to a figurative level; grade three readers more often corrected from an incorrect response to a literal level of understanding. Both grade levels corrected the literal and transitional responses on the TCTI to a figurative level of understanding.

Subtest 2. Tournure idiom with the indefinite article "a":

Grade Three

All of the weak grade three interviewees who had misunderstood the idioms with the indefinite article "a" on the TCTI self-corrected during the interview.

Of the four TCTI passages that were scored as incorrect on the TCTI, one was self-corrected to a literal level, one was self-corrected to a figurative level and two remained uncorrected.

Of the two TCTI passages that had been scored as literal, one was not corrected; one was corrected to a transitional level.

Of the six TCTI passages that had been scored as transitional, two were not corrected while four were corrected to a figurative level.

Thus, there was a total of seven (out of twenty-five) passages which were corrected. As a result of the interview

five of these passages were corrected to a figurative level; one was corrected to a transitional level and one was corrected to a literal level.

Grade Five

All of the weak grade five interviewees who had misunderstood the idiom in the TCTI with the indefinite article "a" were able to do some self-correcting.

Of the three TCTI passages that were scored as incorrect; one was now self-corrected to a figurative level; two were not corrected.

Of the six TCTI passages that were scored as literal, one was now self-corrected to a transitional level; four were now self-corrected to a figurative level and one was not corrected.

The two TCTI passages that had been scored as transitional, were now self-corrected to a figurative level.

Thus, there was a total of eight (out of twenty-five) passages which were corrected as a result of the interview; seven were now self-corrected to a figurative level, and one was self-corrected to a transitional level of understanding.

Comparison of Grade Three and Grade Five TCTI Scores and Corrected Responses:

A comparison of grade three and five interviewees' corrections of the TCTI responses indicated that they most frequently corrected to a figurative level of understanding.

Corrections to a transitional level were more frequent than corrections to a literal level. Both grade levels made similar corrections from a literal to a transitional level of understanding. Grade five readers corrected half of their literal responses to a figurative level, whereas grade three readers did not. Grade three and grade five readers corrected most of the transitional responses to a figurative level. Both grade levels similarly corrected incorrect responses to a figurative level of understanding. Thus, grade three readers most often corrected from a transitional level to a figurative level whereas grade five readers more often corrected from a literal level to a figurative level of understanding.

Subtest 3. Tournure idioms in which the leading verb is followed by a direct object:

Grade Three

All of the grade three interviewees who had misunderstood the leading verb followed by a direct object on the TCTI were able to do some self-correcting.

Of the eleven TCTI passages that were scored as incorrect; three were now self-corrected to a transitional level; three were now self-corrected to a figurative level; and five were not corrected.

Of the six TCTI passages that were scored as literal; one was now self-corrected to a transitional level; one was now self-corrected to a figurative level; and four were not corrected.

The four TCTI passages that had been scored as transitional were now self-corrected to a figurative level.

Thus, there was a total of twelve (out of twenty-five) passages which were corrected as a result of the interview: eight were now self-corrected to a figurative level; four were now self-corrected to a transitional level.

Grade Five

All of the grade five interviewees who had misunderstood the leading verb followed by a direct object in the TCTI were able to do some self-correcting.

Of the three TCTI passages that had been scored as incorrect, one was now self-corrected to a transitional level; one was now self-corrected to a figurative level, and one was not corrected.

Of the six TCTI passages that had been scored as transitional; three were now self-corrected to a figurative level; three were not corrected.

Thus there was a total of eleven (out of twenty-five) passages which were corrected as a result of the interview; five were now self-corrected to a figurative level and six were now self-corrected to a transitional level.

Comparison of Grade Three and Grade Five TCTI Scores and Corrected Responses:

A comparison of grade three and grade five interviewees' corrections of the TCTI responses indicated that the grade three readers most frequently corrected to a figurative level of understanding, while grade five readers most often corrected to a transitional level. This phenomenon may be accounted for because grade three readers had more incorrect TCTI passages. Incorrect responses of both grade levels were corrected to transitional and figurative levels of understanding. Grade five readers corrected most of the literal responses on the TCTI to a transitional level, whereas most of the grade three readers' literal responses remained uncorrected. Half of the transitional responses were corrected to a figurative level by grade five readers, whereas the grade three readers corrected all of the transitional responses to the figurative level.

Subtest 4. Tournure idiom in which the leading verb is followed by a preposition, noun or nothing:

Grade Three

Four of the five weak grade three interviewees who had misunderstood the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing on the TCTI self-corrected their original responses.

Of the twelve TCTI passages that had been scored as incorrect; three were now self-corrected to a literal level;

four were now self-corrected to a transitional level; two were now self-corrected to a figurative level; three were not corrected.

Of the three TCTI passages that had been scored as transitional; one was now self-corrected to a figurative level; two were not corrected.

Thus, there was a total of eleven (out of twenty-five) TCTI passages which were corrected as a result of the interview: four to a figurative level; four to a transitional level and three to a literal level.

Grade Five

All of the grade five interviewees who had misunderstood the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing on the TCTI were able to self-correct to some degree.

Of the thirteen TCTI passages that had been scored incorrect; seven were now self-corrected to a literal level; two were now self-corrected to a transitional level; two were now self-corrected to a figurative level and two were not corrected.

Of the three TCTI passages that had been scored as literal; one was now self-corrected to a figurative level; two were not corrected.

Of the six TCTI passages that had been scored as transitional, three were now self-corrected to a figurative level; two were not corrected. One interview response could

not be explained by the reader and the response was subsequently changed from transitional to an incorrect response.

Thus there was a total of fifteen (out of twenty-five) passages which were self-corrected as a result of the interview: six were now self-corrected to a figurative level; two were now self-corrected to a transitional level and seven to a literal level.

Comparison of Grade Three and Grade Five TCTI Scores and Corrected Responses:

A comparison of grade three and grade five interviewees' corrections of the TCTI responses indicated that corrections to the TCTI are different between the two grade levels.

Grade three interviewees most frequently corrected to a literal level of understanding while corrections to a transitional level were more frequent than corrections to a figurative level. Grade five interviewees most frequently corrected to a literal level of understanding, while corrections to a figurative level were more frequent than to a transitional level.

SUMMARY OF CORRECTIONS FOR WEAK READERS:

A comparison of the TCTI scores and corrected responses of weak grade three and five readers was made in order to determine whether an effect of indirect teaching was evident.

The comparison revealed that many corrections to the TCTI occurred at both grade levels, but the frequency and type of correction were related to the particular idiom and the grade level, suggesting that the benefits of indirect teaching may be dependent on age and or years of school experience.

The general findings are:

1. Almost half of the responses were corrected with the majority corrected to a figurative level of understanding.
2. Regardless of grade level, idioms with "it" and "a" were corrected most often to a figurative level of understanding.
3. The leading verb followed by a direct object idioms were corrected most often to a figurative level by grade three readers, and to a transitional level by grade five readers.
4. Grade three and grade five interviewees had an equal number of TCTI responses corrected to a literal interpretation of the tournure idioms.

5. Grade five interviewees made more corrections to a transitional level of understanding from a literal response as grade three readers.

6. Grade five interviewees had more transitional level responses that were corrected to a figurative level than grade three.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study was designed to explore the ability of third and fifth grade readers to comprehend four types of tournure idioms. The study endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. Do third and fifth grade readers comprehend the following types of tournure idioms:
 - a. the compulsory "it"
 - b. The indefinite article "a"
 - c. leading verb followed by a direct object
 - d. leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing?
2. Is there a relationship between reading ability and ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms?

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings of the study, to present conclusions based upon these findings and to offer implications for classroom practice; curriculum developers and for publishers of instructional reading materials. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The reading ability was determined for each of the 89 grade three and five subjects by using the reading subtest of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS). The readers were selected from three suburban Winnipeg schools. The Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) was developed and administered to each subject to test his/her ability to comprehend four types of tournure idioms. The TCTI was administered over three days in November, 1988. An audiotaped interview of twenty randomly selected students was analyzed for word recognition errors among the students who failed, and for possible sources of miscomprehension. The follow-up interviews were completed by the end of the second week of January, 1989.

An independent scoring of the TCTI was done to verify the researchers' scoring of the TCTI responses. The statistical significance of the TCTI results, for the variables, grade, ability and type of idiom and the interaction among the variables was measured using an analysis of variance. The significance between all combinations of means for each variable was tested using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison Test.

The main effects for grade level, ability level and type of tournure idiom could not be interpreted individually as stated in the hypotheses in view of the significant three-way interaction for grade x ability x type of idiom.

Because the hypotheses guided the analysis, they will be stated, but each will be explained using the three-way interaction process.

Hypothesis 1:

There are significant differences between grade three and grade five readers in the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI) for all combined reading ability groups. Reading comprehension of tournure idioms will increase as a function of grade level or maturity.

This hypothesis cannot be accepted in view of the significant three-way interaction of grade x type of idiom, which considers the effect of the type of idiom on the various grade levels and ability levels.

Hypothesis 2:

There are significant differences between reading ability groups within each grade level. Good readers in grade three will perform better than weak readers in grade three on the TCTI; good readers in grade five will perform better than weak readers in grade five on the TCTI.

This hypothesis cannot be accepted in view of the significant three-way interaction of grade x ability x type of idiom, which considers the effect of the type of idiom on the various ability levels and grade levels.

Hypothesis 3:

There are significant differences between reading ability groups across grade levels on the overall results of the Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms (TCTI). Good grade three readers will perform as well or better than weak grade five readers in the comprehension of tournure idioms.

This hypothesis cannot be accepted in view of the variations among the four types of idioms evident in the significant three way interaction of grade x ability x type of idiom.

Hypothesis 4:

There is a significant interaction between grade level or maturity and the four types of tournure idioms.

This hypothesis cannot be accepted as stated. The two way interaction of grade level and type of idiom was not significant, but there was a significant three way interaction of grade x ability x type of idiom.

Hypothesis 5:

There is a significant interaction between the two reading ability groups and the four types of tournure idioms at each grade level.

This hypothesis cannot be accepted as stated. The two way interaction of ability x type was not significant but there was a significant three way interaction of grade x ability x type of idiom.

The significant relationships between grade, ability and type of tournure idioms were therefore analyzed in relationship to one another with the following results:

1. Good grade five readers performed significantly better than the good grade three readers in three of the four types of tournure idioms: compulsory "it"; the leading verb followed by a direct object; the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing; and good grade five readers performed significantly better than weak grade three readers. Good grade five readers performed significantly better than weak grade five readers for two of the four idioms under study: the leading verb followed by a direct object; the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

2. Good grade three readers performed significantly better than weak grade three readers. Furthermore, the good grade three readers performed as well as the weak grade five readers.

3. Weak grade five readers performed significantly better than weak grade three readers.

4. There is a hierarchy of difficulty in comprehending tournure idioms for all grade and ability levels with idioms with "it" and "a" the easiest; followed by the leading verb followed by a direct object, with the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing being the most difficult.

A secondary but related issue was investigating possible sources for miscomprehending the tournure idioms. This was done through individual follow-up sessions with a random sampling of readers who failed to meet the predetermined criterion and a random sampling of readers who met/exceeded the predetermined criterion.

The interview results support the findings in the TCTI that reading ability and developmental maturity influenced the comprehension of tournure idioms as follows:

In order of frequency:

1. Grade five good readers, then grade five weak readers, and then grade three weak readers explained the figurative meaning, found idioms easier, were more familiar with the idioms, used context, recognized and explained the semantic ambiguity.
2. Order of frequency of explaining tournure idioms: the compulsory "it" and indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.
3. Order of stated perceived difficulty: the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a" (easiest); leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

4. Order of frequency in use of prior knowledge:

grade three weak readers and grade five good readers: the compulsory "it"; the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

grade five weak readers: the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and noun or nothing.

5. Order of frequency in the use of context:

grade five good readers: the indefinite article "a"; the other three types of idioms were similar.

grade five weak readers: leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing; the indefinite article "a"; the leading verb followed by a direct object; the compulsory "it".

grade three weak readers: leading verb followed by a direct object; the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

6. Order of frequency in recognizing and explaining semantic ambiguity:

grade five good readers: the compulsory "it" and indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing; leading verb followed by a direct object.

grade five weak readers: the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it" and leading verb followed by a direct

object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

grade three weak readers: indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

7. There is also evidence to suggest that questions posed in the interview for the information stated above, resulted in improved comprehension of tournure idioms.

CONCLUSIONS

Since this study is an exploratory study, caution must be exercised in making generalizations to populations other than the one studied, nevertheless the following conclusions are presented for tentative consideration:

I. A reader's ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms appears to be related to grade level or developmental maturity. As the age and or years of school experience increase, the ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms appears to increase.

Further, a reader's ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms appears to be related to reading ability, and may in fact have more effect on a reader's ability to comprehend the four types of tournure idioms than does grade level.

a. Good readers at grade five significantly performed better than weak readers at grade five for the leading verb followed by a direct object, and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. There were no significant differences between the reading ability level for the indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it". At the grade three level, the good readers significantly performed better than the weak readers for each of the tournure idioms under study.

b. Good grade five readers significantly performed better than good grade three readers in three of the four types of tournure idioms: the compulsory "it"; the leading verb followed by a direct object and the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. There was no significant difference between the grade levels for the indefinite article "a".

c. Good readers at grade three performed as well as weak grade five readers in all four tournure idioms.

d. Grade five readers, regardless of reading ability significantly performed better than weak grade three readers.

Although studies investigating these specific four types of tournure idioms were not found, this study supports other studies which reported that comprehension of idioms increased as a function of age and/or grade level.

Lodge and Leach (1978) and later Prinz (1983) studied 6, 9, 12 and 21 year olds and reported that six and nine year olds chose significantly higher proportions of literal responses and concluded that acquisition of idioms does not accelerate until after age nine. Prinz reported that nine year olds selected 50% idiomatic choices while 12 year olds selected 80% idiomatic choices, noting a dramatic shift in idiom comprehension between these age levels.

Douglas and Peel (1979) in their study of dual meaning words, idioms and proverbs at grades one, three, five and seven levels, reported a developmental trend of increased abstract understanding, with idioms receiving the highest scores for figurative understanding. As well, they found significant differences for all grade comparisons with comprehension gradually improving. At the third grade, 73% of the subjects were comprehending at the figurative level; at the seventh grade, the comprehension increased to 97%. Individual differences in rate of development were not specified, which may have been due to not considering ability levels within each grade level.

In related research on metaphorical language, Muller (1976) found significant differences in ability to interpret metaphorical language among fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grade readers. Muller's conclusions were that increased precision of interpretation of metaphorical language increases with chronological age.

In Ackerman's (1982) investigation of first, third and fifth grade children and adults' comprehension of idioms, Ackerman found that there were strong developmental increases in making idiomatic interpretations, with first graders rarely making correct explanations, while fifth graders and adults explained correctly most of the time. Third grade readers could orally explain idioms used in contexts biasing an idiomatic interpretation. Without the biasing context, the third grade readers were relatively insensitive to the presence of an idiom. By the fifth grade, interpretations of idioms were relatively fixed; they were able to interpret idioms even in the absence of a biasing context.

The present study supports Ackerman's hypothesis that literal meaning precedes idiomatic or figurative meaning and that development of the ability to recognize contextually incongruent literal interpretations precedes construction of appropriate interpretations. The data from this study showed that weak grade five readers did better than weak grade three readers and good grade five readers did better than good grade three readers. On the other hand, Ackerman's hypothesis did not include the findings found in the present study, that good grade three readers did as well as weak grade five readers. This distinction may be due to the fact that Ackerman's study did not allow for an analysis of reading ability.

The issue of reading ability was addressed by Norton (1979) when she examined sixth and eighth grade readers' comprehension of idiomatic expressions. Norton found that reading ability significantly affected performance on the comprehension of idioms. Good readers performed significantly better than poor readers. As well, high sixth grade readers performed as well as average eighth grade readers but low eighth grade readers performed significantly better than average sixth grade readers. This data suggested that a higher level of reading ability favourably affected comprehension which has support from the present study.

The issues of developmental growth and the effect of reading ability on the comprehension of figurative language, particularly idioms, has not been resolved as there are currently two viewpoints.

The first position supports the Piagetian explanation of cognitive development. Comprehension of figurative language involves cognitive prerequisites such as classification of items based on sets of intersecting properties; such prerequisites are not expected to emerge until middle childhood. Lodge and Leach (1978) and Prinz (1983) held this viewpoint.

The alternative position, proposed by Ortony et al. (1984) states that the capacity to understand figurative language is dependent upon the textual constraints. When explicit references to ambiguous expressions were included

in text, seven year old children could comprehend the meaning; however, when text variables such as indirectness and vagueness were present, performance dropped significantly. Therefore, Ortony believes that variables other than the figurative language per se effect comprehension of idioms. Weak readers who lack the ability to use inferential strategies or who are insensitive to pragmatic factors of communication are less able to "figure the idiom out" whereas good readers are sensitive to the level of indirection or abstraction and have better comprehension strategies enabling them to seek out the figurative meaning.

II. There is a significant difference in the degree of difficulty between each of the four tournure idioms in relation to grade and ability levels. The order of difficulty encountered in the TCTI from least to greatest is as follows:

a. Good grade five readers: idioms with the compulsory "it", the leading verb followed by a direct object and the indefinite article "a"; then the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

b. Weak grade five readers: idioms with the compulsory "it" and the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun.

c. Good grade three readers: idioms with the indefinite article "a" and the compulsory "it"; were easiest;

leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

d. Weak grade three readers: idioms with the compulsory "it", the indefinite article "a" and leading verb followed by a direct object; then leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

The findings of the current study supports the developmental influences found by Hesselstine (1984), who examined the relationship between reading comprehension and phrasal verb idioms, tournure idioms and phrasal compounds with students ten to eighteen years of age. Hesselstine found a significant hierarchy of difficulty, with tournure idioms more difficult than phrasal verb idioms and phrasal compounds more difficult than tournure idioms. Furthermore, the frequency of occurrence of certain classes of idioms was significant for comprehension. In contrast to the results of the present study, Hesselstine did not find age or intelligence to be significant variables. This may be due to the different populations under study. Hesselstine's subjects ranged in age from 10 - 18 years, who, according to Ackerman (1982) have developed a relatively fixed idiomatic interpretation of idioms.

This study also appears to support Kane's (1985) study of the effects of comprehension on semantic and phraseological idioms at grades two, four, six and eight. Kane found that type of idiom significantly affected comprehension at grades four and eight. At grade four, phraseological idioms

were more easily comprehended than higher level semantic idioms, (such as "hot potato") while the reverse was true at grade eight. Kane concluded that idiom content was an important factor in comprehension and the present study shows that comprehension of tournure idioms was more difficult for younger and weaker readers.

III. The significant differences in the level of difficulty among the four types of tournure idioms suggest that perhaps different interpretation skills are required for different tournure idioms. Evidence from the interviews lends credence to this finding.

Because there were no grade three readers who reached the predetermined criteria of 80% score or higher, the interview compared weak and good readers at the fifth grade and weak readers at the third and fifth grades.

Any question of word recognition problems were eliminated when nine of the ten interviewees who failed the TCTI read at the independent reading level, and the remaining interviewee read at the instructional reading level. From this data it was evident that the decoding of the printed material was not a factor affecting comprehension of the tournure idioms.

There were apparent differences in the use and explanation of strategies for comprehension of tournure idioms by weak and good readers as identified in the following areas:

a. Explanation of the Tournure Idiom:

The figurative meaning of each of the four types of

tournure idioms was explained most frequently by good readers at grade five and the weak grade five readers explained more frequently the figurative meaning than weak grade three readers. Order of frequency:

Good Grade Five: indefinite article "a"; compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Weak Grade Five: compulsory "it" and indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Weak Grade Three: compulsory "it"; indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

b. Perceived difficulty:

All four types of tournure idioms were found to be easiest for good grade five readers, with the stated order of difficulty being from easy to most difficult: indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object and the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun.

For weak readers at the third and fifth grade levels, the stated order of difficulty was from easy to most difficult: compulsory "it"; indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun.

It is worthy of noting that the students' perception of difficulty corresponded closely with the order of difficulty identified in the statistical analysis, with one exception: weak readers did not make a distinction in their perceived difficulty of the leading verb followed by a direct object, which they considered to be as easy as the compulsory "it" and indefinite article "a".

c. Effect of prior knowledge:

The use of prior knowledge of the tournure idioms was most frequent for good readers at grade five followed by weak readers at grade five, then weak readers at grade three. Use of prior knowledge of the tournure idioms was reported most frequently in the following order:

Grade five good readers and grade three weak readers: the compulsory "it"; the indefinite article "a"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

Grade five weak readers: the indefinite article "a"; the compulsory "it"; leading verb followed by a direct object; leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing.

This order of frequency was related to idiom comprehension in that the idioms most frequently comprehended ("it", "a") were most frequently recognized from prior knowledge, whereas the least frequently comprehended idioms were also least frequently recognized from prior knowledge; suggesting that prior knowledge is an important factor in comprehending tournure idioms.

Other researchers also found an effect of prior knowledge upon comprehension. Examining second grade readers' use of prior knowledge in the comprehension of explicit and implicit questions, Pearson et al. (1974) found that students with high prior knowledge as well as well developed schemata for a topic could comprehend and infer better than students with less prior knowledge. Pearson et al. stated that prior knowledge allowed readers to fill in the gaps, allowing inferences to be made.

Lipson's (1982) investigation of the effect of prior knowledge in learning new information from text found that prior knowledge was a powerful factor for both average and poor readers at the third grade, with average readers performing better than poor readers in comprehending implicit and explicit questions. In addition, Lipson found qualitative differences in the use of prior knowledge: Weaker readers usually possessed the least prior knowledge or did not use it as effectively and were less able to generate inferences during and after reading.

In comparing pretest and post-test information, Lipson (1982) found that poor readers who drew on erroneous prior knowledge for comprehension and made inappropriate inferences did not correct their schema even when the test explicitly provided the correct information. Only when

there was no prior knowledge did readers resort to text. Lipson states "both poor and average readers seemed better able to learn new information when they did not have the wrong ideas cluttering up their knowledge structures." (p.763).

A second study by Lipson, (1983) of above average fourth, fifth and sixth grade readers' sociocultural knowledge added to Lipson's (1982) findings. Both familiar text and unfamiliar text were better comprehended than a partially familiar text, since children drew upon considerable prior knowledge of the familiar text and used context extensively to comprehend unfamiliar text. However, when presented with a partially familiar text, children relied heavily on their prior knowledge which was often incomplete or erroneous. Support for these findings was evidenced in the present study by an interviewee who misinterpreted the idiom phrase "running in circles." The interviewee's interpretation that it meant "running all around" was explained: "When I do my homework I get confused and I feel like running around, I get real mad." The meaning of "running in circles" was remembered in the child's schema as it was first encoded, albeit erroneously and was recalled and used to explain this particular idiom in spite of a context that would suggest otherwise.

This present study also included a comparison of specific sources of prior knowledge which established the following pattern: hearing from others was the most frequent source, followed by hearing on television, while reading was the third frequent source of prior knowledge. It is noteworthy that, although each of the tournure idioms on the TCTI were obtained from the students' instructional reading materials, the interviewees were generally not aware of them from print. This phenomenon may be better understood in light of Holdaway's (1979) examination of the development of literacy, and research by Van Lancker and Canter (1973) on the effect of intonation in comprehending idiomatic phrases.

In discussing children's encounters with idioms, Holdaway stressed that children who had not had a wide background of oral stories fail to make sense of idioms. To comprehend, the children should have heard the idiom used in appropriate context and with appropriate patterns of intonation necessary to meaning.

Van Lancker and Canter (1973) studied the effect of intonation on comprehending ambiguous phrases with adult subjects and found that the distinction between an idiomatic and a literal interpretation was easily determined by listeners when oral cues were purposely provided by the speaker. It seems that the intonation of the idiomatic

phrase in an orally presented context was the factor which distinguished the idiomatic interpretation.

In the present study, oral reading of the passage by the interviewees confirmed these researchers' positions. The interviewees often used intonation to accentuate the sentences with dialogue. Furthermore, when discussing their prior knowledge of a particular idiom phrase, such as "to put your foot down", several interviewees replicated their parents' tone of voice and included gestures in making the point that they had heard the phrase before.

In summary, these present findings concur with research which states that prior knowledge significantly affects comprehension. On the other hand, it is not simply a matter of having familiarity with the particular idiom, it is a matter of recalling or drawing upon accurate prior knowledge and applying it to the context appropriately.

d. Use of Context:

In the present study, the successful use of context was found to be dependent on the reading ability level, grade level, and the type of idiom as well. Good readers at grade five used context more often than weak readers at both grade levels for each of the four types of tournure idioms, with little variation in the frequency of use between each type of tournure idiom. These data are consistent with Juel's (1980) findings. In her study involving good, average and

poor readers, only the good readers showed a consistent pattern of text reliance. Furthermore, in the present study, good readers most often selected phrases and/or sentences as an aid to comprehension when confronted with difficult idioms such as the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. This suggests that good readers specifically read for specific sentences or "clues" in a passage.

Similarly, McKeown's (1985) investigation of high and low ability fifth grade readers' process of acquiring new word meaning from context, found significant differences in favour of the high ability group. High ability readers were significantly better at selecting available constraints or limitations on possible word meaning within the context. They were able to use contextual constraints to extract accurate information about potential word meanings, whereas the low ability readers often misunderstood the relationship between a word and the surrounding context by equating the context with word meaning. In McKeown's findings, misuse of context occurred when the children associated information outside of the realm of the context to create a "scenario" which was not appropriate to the explanation of the context. An example of this phenomenon in the present study of tournure idioms was demonstrated in the explanation of the tournure idiom "to fly off the handle", which was embedded

within a passage concerning an angry batter in a baseball game; when the batter became angry he threw the bat. A weak reader explained the idiom as meaning "to swing and let go of the bat" because "my friend does that - swings the bat and throws it." The interviewee misinterpreted the meaning by combining a portion of the contextual information with personal or outside information rather than reflecting on the complete contextual situation.

In the present study there was also evidence that developmental maturity or grade level affected the use of context as a strategy for comprehending the tournure idioms. Weak readers at grade five used context more frequently than weak readers at grade three except for the leading verb followed by a direct object. The most notable developmental differences within these weak readers appears to be related to the perceived difficulty of the tournure idiom: weak grade five readers substantially increased their use of context for leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing. For weak grade five readers, it is noteworthy that when the idioms were known from prior knowledge and thereby perceived as less difficult, the use of context was similarly less often used.

On the other hand, weak grade three readers were inconsistent in their use of context. The most difficult idioms

were the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing, yet these students used context the least; they most often used context for the leading verb followed by a direct object, an idiom which they perceived as neither the most or least difficult in the TCTI. Thus, it would seem that the older readers recognize their background knowledge inadequacies and are prepared to draw upon context regardless of reading ability, whereas the inconsistent use of context by younger weak readers may be a consequence of several factors: inability to understand the power of context; relative lack of prior knowledge and inability to check prior knowledge against the context.

The examination of context also included a comparison of how readers used the context. Phrases and/or sentences in the passages were used most frequently by all subjects; less frequently, was the tournure idiom phrase itself, and used least often was the use of context of the whole passage. These findings suggest that even the youngest and weakest readers were beginning to develop a strategy for successful use of context: selecting appropriate parts of the context, testing the meaning of the tournure idiom phrase and confirming the meaning within the limitations of the context.

e. Recognition and explanation of semantic ambiguity:

Recognizing the incongruence of the literal and figurative meanings of tournure idioms appears to be related to

grade, and reading ability levels and the type of idiom. Good readers at grade five were most proficient; weak readers at grade three recognized the ambiguity, but were least able to explain it. The semantic ambiguity of all four types of tournure idioms was recognized but not necessarily explained, especially by the figurative meaning. Generally stated, the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing is difficult to comprehend, least often identified through context, and difficult to explain.

This data supports the conclusions reached by Prinz (1983) who investigated the extent to which children develop the ability to comprehend and explain literal and idiomatic meanings. Prinz found that children under the age of nine were aware of some idiomatic expressions. However, they were generally unable to provide an accurate verbal description of the idiomatic meaning until a later point in development. Children, below age ten, frequently adopted literal strategy. Prinz stated that the ability to actively explain idiomatic meaning develops with age.

The data also supports Menyuk's (1984) position on language development. Menyuk stated that a developmental change in language occurs in when an individual understands that words and sentences can have more than one meaning and can play different roles. Children can first recognize the ambiguity in a new contextual domain fairly early, while the

ability to paraphrase occurs during the middle childhood years. Menyuk examined fourth grade average and above-average readers in a task that required them to read, detect and paraphrase the underlying meaning of ambiguous sentences. The findings were that the task was significantly correlated with reading ability, and that there were differences between average and above-average readers in metalinguistic awareness.

IV. Effect of the interview in eliciting awareness of comprehension strategies:

One of the most interesting findings of the interview was its effect upon self-correction. As the dialogue between the youngster and the interviewer progressed, often the youngster began to realize the meaning of the idiom and would at some point, state this meaning. In other words, the verbal interaction became an indirect instructional tool, leading the youngster to the correct meaning of the idiom.

The analysis of the effect of the interview on students who failed the TCTI yielded the following findings: corrections to the TCTI responses occurred during the interview on the average of 44.5%. The majority of responses were corrected to the figurative level, with grade five readers more efficient in their self-corrections.

The frequency and type of corrections were related to grade level and the type of tournure idiom. The idioms with "it" and "a" were most often corrected to the figurative level. One of the more difficult idioms, the leading verb followed by a direct object, was most often corrected to a transitional level of understanding that reflected the interviewees nonliteral interpretation; however, this interpretation did not "fit" the conventional meaning. This particular type of tournure idiom was most often corrected to the figurative level of understanding by grade five interviewees. The most difficult idiom, the leading verb followed by a preposition and a noun or nothing, was most often corrected to a literal level.

Thus the interview through its questioning appears to have provided external cues for readers which not only facilitated recollection of prior knowledge, but also caused a reflection on their comprehension strategies.

In related research, Kincade (1982) studied second and fifth grade readers' ability to elicit metaphorical information from text and found significant benefits from the provision of external retrieval cues in the form of structured probe questions. Although fifth grade readers performed better, second grade readers were able to complete metaphorical and inferential reasoning when the task was appro-

priately structured for their specific level of cognitive development. Appropriate retrieval cues were considered essential for consistent expression of metaphorical understanding.

On the other hand, Readance et al. (1987) had significant results in their study which taught grade three readers to interpret metaphors through a direct instructional strategy which modeled the inferencing process. Compared with the traditional basal instruction, the process instruction was found to be substantially more effective. Readance et al. concluded that process instruction strategies provided a valuable tool for helping their students towards independent reading.

McKeown (1985) supports the need for teacher intervention through structured recall, because low ability fifth grade readers in her study could not independently identify the correct meaning of an ambiguous word even with direct clues in the text, nor could they independently transfer acquired word meaning to interpret meaning in subsequent contexts.

Duffy's (1982) study on direct teacher explanation during instruction found that teachers who provided explicit explanation about cognitive processing skills produced more awareness and reading achievement. He recommended that teachers take a proactive role which teaches students how to

do the processing of actively integrating new information with prior knowledge.

ASSUMPTIONS

The conclusions of the study must be considered in the light of the following assumptions:

1. The TCTI contains passages that are representative of students' typical language patterns.
2. Satisfactory performance on the TCTI is assumed to indicate reading comprehension of the particular tournure idioms.

LIMITATIONS

The conclusions of the study must be viewed within the following limitations:

1. The findings should not be generalized beyond the particular population in this study.
2. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the comprehension of other types of idioms.
3. As the study was under the direct control of the investigator it may have been unconsciously biased.
4. Perhaps the most important limitation is that there were no third grade readers who reached or exceeded the predetermined 80% mark on the TCTI which delineated "good readers". This severely limited the comparisons between the types of

interviewees. On the other hand, the lack of good readers at the third grade level, reinforced the principle of developmental reading maturity. Nevertheless, this feature is regarded as a limitation and should be pursued as an area for future research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

The following implications appear to be warranted on the basis of the present investigations:

1. Teachers need to be aware that instructional reading materials contain idioms which are difficult for their students to comprehend. This study revealed that of the four types of tournure idioms under investigations, the most difficult for comprehension were also the more frequent in current authorized instructional reading materials. Therefore, attention needs to be given to idiomatic expressions in oral and reading contexts.
2. It would seem advisable that teachers be made aware of the comprehension problems tournure idioms present to reading: comprehension difficulties are related to developmental level, ability level and the types of tournure idioms encountered. Young and weak readers will likely fail either to understand the meaning, or to fully appreciate the authors' literary devices when they encounter tournure

idioms in print with which they are unfamiliar. Teachers should be prepared to introduce and develop background knowledge of the particular tournure idioms by presenting the idiom phrase in the familiar context of the students' past experience. Idioms naturally occurring in the classroom provide a good introduction. For example, the phrase "to shake-a-leg" could be directly related to a request to "hurry along" in time for recess. The phrase "to play it by ear" could be elicited from the school setting as it relates to the frequent interruptions or changes in routine which often occur in the students' school experience.

3. Some children may have the requisite prior knowledge for understanding the tournure idiom but for some reason they are unable to figure it out even though they know that something has to be figured out. Thus teachers need to emphasize the skills that represent the comprehension process by: a) giving explanations that develop the use of comprehension skills, b) modeling the mental processing, c) providing practice and d) taking an active role in the think-aloud process with the students.

4. Teachers must recognize that it is not enough to provide the meaning of the tournure idioms. They must provide either direct explicit instruction or indirect questioning eliciting prior knowledge, inference and the application of context.

Instructional Strategies:

The following tenets for direct teaching (Readance et al. 1987) provide teachers with a framework for developing their own instructional strategies:

1. relevance - students are made aware of the purpose of the instruction;
2. definition - students are told how to apply the strategy and the instructor models its use;
3. guided practice - students are given feedback on their own use of the strategy as instruction proceeds from the simple to the complex;
4. self-regulation - students are given the opportunity to try out the strategy through the use of a think-aloud step and to develop ways to monitor their own use of the strategy;
5. gradual release of responsibility - students are gradually given more responsibility for their learning.

An example of one instructional strategy, (adapted from Gordon, 1985) for developing awareness of an idiom is offered as an illustration.

1. Modeling the Strategy:

First Lesson:

An overhead projector is used to show students two paragraphs; the first containing the underlined tournure phrase and the second identical except for a blank line which replaces the tournure idiom phrase. The first passage

may be directly taken from the instructional material or be composed to represent a behavioural episode containing at least one actor.

On Sunday night my dog Saggie was asleep at the foot of my bed. But I was wide awake. When Daddy came in to see if I needed more covers, he reminded me to set my alarm clock so that I could wake myself up. I forgot. Daddy woke me up. "All right, Speedball, move it! Time to shake-a-leg!" he shouted. I rolled over and covered my head with the blanket.

adapted from "Winter Welcomes"

Networks, 1987, p.14.

- a. Students are told that the underlined phrase was called a tournure idiom and that to understand them, one has to search one's mind for a missing word or phrase which would have the same meaning as the tournure idiom.
- b. Use context clues along with prior knowledge.

"We are going to learn how to understand the meaning of the underlined phrase by using clues in the story (right there) and what you know about it (in my head). I'm going to show you how I would think. Don't give me any help yet."
- c. Teacher reads the text orally from the overhead.
- d. Teacher asks her/himself an inference question: "Why would Daddy say shake-a-leg?"
- e. Teacher reads the second paragraph on the overhead projector to the students, substituting the word "hurry" for the tournure idiom.

f. Teacher says: "This is how I thought about the question." "I thought to myself, "What does Daddy mean?" "Can the same thing be said using different words?" "I think so." "I know the story is about a boy who forgot to set his alarm clock and his dad had to wake him up. There are clues in the story that are right there." (underline signal words 'set the alarm clock'; 'I forgot')

"I know that Daddy shouted when he called." (underline signal word 'shouted') "I know that Daddy called the boy 'Speedball'." (underline signal word 'Speedball')

"I know that it may be something to do with being fast."

"I know from my head that whenever I forget to set my alarm clock I usually sleep too late." (prior knowledge) "When I'm late I have to get out of bed quickly and hurry to get myself ready for work. I also know that people sometimes stretch and shake their legs when they wake up. All or any of my ideas could be the right answer. My head does not have the only information. So I must think "Do the clues that I have underlined help me to find another word that means the same as the underlined phrase?"

I combine the right words from the story with what I know about being late to come up with the new word "hurry". Now I'll read the paragraph again to see if my word "hurry" makes sense.

- g. Teacher reads orally the second paragraph.
- h. Teacher concludes: "I have put together my own ideas and experience with the author's clues to get the meaning of the phrase "to shake-a-leg."
- i. Teacher provides a third and fourth paragraph for practice. Use the same tournure idiom in a slightly different context. The third paragraph contains the tournure idiom phrase; the fourth paragraph substitutes a blank line for the tournure idiom.

Mrs. Smith's class was getting ready for recess. Timmy was still in the classroom putting on his jacket and mittens. Mrs. Smith called to Timmy, "Time to shake-a-leg. You'll miss recess."

- j. Teacher repeats modeling as in the first and second paragraphs.

Subsequent lessons comprise of the following:

1. Guided practice:
 - a. Teacher provides a new paragraph containing a different tournure idiom phrase, but of the same grammatical structure and a second paragraph with a blank phrase substituted for the tournure idiom phrase.
 - b. Teacher names the skill of making an inference by using context clues and prior knowledge as in the previous lesson.
 - c. Teacher reads the text orally on the overhead.
 - d. Teacher repeats the think-aloud process.

2. Self-regulation:

After modeling the process several times using different tournure idioms or situations (as needed) the readers are asked to share in the modeling process.

- a. Teacher provides two passages; one with a new tournure idiom and the second passage which has a blank substituted for the idiom phrase.
- b. The readers give supporting evidence from their prior knowledge and find signal clues in the passage.
- c. The teacher directs discussion on what text information is relevant and the reasoning for their choices; what clues were used and what experiences were used to come up with the answer, which is part of inference.
- d. The teacher provides the connecting process if necessary and concludes that the thinking processes require combining prior knowledge with relevant contextual information to infer the meaning of the tournure idiom.
- e. In the second paragraph, students substitute the tournure phrase with their definition that has been inferred and then they reread the paragraph to see if their definition makes sense.

3. Release of responsibility:
 - a. Teacher names the skill of making inferences about the meaning of the tournure idiom phrase.
 - b. Teacher reads the text; one passage containing the tournure idiom phrase.
 - c. Teacher asks the meaning of the underlined phrase.
 - d. Students respond from prior knowledge or inferences they have made.
 - e. Teacher cites evidence in context to support student inferences.
 - f. Teacher - student discussion is primarily about the inference between prior knowledge and text evidence.
4. Student-directed inferencing:
 - a. Teacher provides a passage containing a tournure idiom phrase.
 - b. Students review the process of interpretation citing supporting evidence and explaining the reasoning involved. Students assume full responsibility for orally resolving the ambiguity of the tournure idiom phrase.
 - c. A written passage may then be provided for the students' independent follow-up.

5. Related follow-up activities adapted from Auslin (1983) and May (1979):
- a. Teachers should consider having students make up new context or situations that are appropriate for the particular idiom which will provide a transfer of meaning from one context to another related context.
 - b. Charts of learned idioms can be kept which are added to as the students' knowledge of tournure idioms increases.
 - c. The following activities suggested by Auslin (1983) should provide an ongoing interest in tournure idioms:
 - (i) Select an "Idiom of the Week". The students find as many examples of that idiom as they can, and describe them to the class, teach the idiom to a friend or family member or use it once a day for a week.
 - (ii) Divide the class into two teams. After ten or more idioms have been introduced, one team acts out the idiom while the other team has to guess what it is.
 - (iii) Have the students find an idiom they like or do not like and explain why.
 - (iv) Have each student choose an idiom that reminds them of food, an animal, etc.: draw a picture representing the idiom, create a context that supports the meaning: make a book or diorama around the idiom of their choice.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLISHERS OF INSTRUCTIONAL READING

MATERIALS

Because of the frequency of tournure idioms in instructional reading materials, publishers of such materials need to seriously consider the importance of this linguistic element in their instructional materials.

1. Publishers need to be aware of the difficulties to comprehension presented by tournure idioms. They need to be aware that the ability to comprehend tournure idioms is related to developmental maturity, reading ability in relation to the type of tournure idiom.
2. Less reliance must be placed on the traditional readability formulae as a gauge of text difficulty since such formulae cannot recognize the frequency of idiom usage nor their relative difficulty in comprehension.
3. The manuals accompanying the instructional reading materials should contain information outlining the difficulty levels of tournure idioms and provide explicit instructional strategies which teach the necessary comprehension processes and provide concrete examples.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

With the present focus on incorporating selections from well-known children's literature into instructional reading materials and on the development of stories that represent realistic and naturally occurring oral language, reading materials cannot avoid tournure idioms. However, curriculum developers must give recognition to the importance of tournure idioms as an obstacle to reading comprehension, especially for the young and weak reader. The various forms of tournure idioms should be carefully and clearly outlined in the curriculum guides along with specific teaching strategies that consider developmental and reading ability factors and comprehension processes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Because of the specific nature of this exploratory study, and as a result of the findings of this study, a number of suggested areas for further research are offered:

1. Since tournure idioms are the most complex of lexemic idioms and are linguistically ordered into nine specific classes, it would be useful to conduct research involving the other five types of tournure idioms at various age levels and across reading abilities.

2. Because there was a significant interaction among grade level, ability level and type of tournure idiom, replication of this study would be useful to determine whether there was an independent significance for each variable.
3. Further research is needed to account for the hierarchy of difficulty of the four types of tournure idioms for each grade and ability level.
4. Because the good grade three readers and the weak grade five readers performed equally well on the TCTI, further research is needed to account for this finding.
5. Replication of the tournure idioms in other or extended contexts would be useful in determining the significance of the context variable.
6. The interview was developed to investigate possible sources of miscomprehension of the tournure idioms under study. Using a more specific and/or indepth interview format and the development of a quantitative analysis to compare the effect of context and prior knowledge or other sources of miscomprehension would be useful.
7. Since the interview sample compared weak and good readers at grade five and only weak readers at grade three, further research that compares weak and good readers at both grade levels would provide a clearer understanding of the effects of developmental maturity and reading ability. As

well, further research using a larger sample should be conducted to substantiate these findings.

8. The Test of Comprehension of Tournure Idioms should be used with populations similar to that in the current study in order to further validate it as a measure of children's ability to comprehend four types of tournure idioms.

9. In view of the self-corrected comprehension of tournure idioms evidenced during the interview, it would be useful to investigate the elements of such interviews which impacted upon this self-corrected phenomenon.

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A P P E N D I X A
PASSAGE READABILITY LEVELS -
SPACHE READABILITY FORMULA
(REVISED)

PASSAGE READABILITY LEVELS - SPACHE READABILITY FORMULA(REVISED)

1.	1.90
2.	1.6
3.	2.3
4.	2.0
5.	2.3
6.	2.3
7.	2.1
8.	1.7
9.	1.9
10.	1.7
11.	2.5
12.	2.3
13.	2.1
14.	2.4
15.	2.3
16.	2.0
17.	2.5
18.	1.9
19.	1.7
20.	2.1

A P P E N D I X B

TEST OF COMPREHENSION

OF TOURNURE IDIOMS

Date: _____ Name: _____ Grade _____

This booklet contains some short stories. Read each story. Then complete the sentence after each story to show that you understand the meaning of the underlined phrase. Take as much time as you need to complete the booklet.

1. Scott had no money left to buy the new skateboard he wanted. Then he had an idea. "I'll ask my brother Allan if I can borrow some money." Scott found Allan in his room. "Allan, may I borrow \$40.00 from you?" "What for?" asked Allan. "Not much, I just need it, that's all." said Allan. "You don't have to beat around the bush, Scott." said Allan. "I'll lend you the money if it's for something important."

to beat around the bush means: _____

2. The Boy Scouts were out on their first weekend camping trip. It began to rain hard. It rained all day. The wood was too wet to make a fire. When the Boy Scouts got back, John said to his Mom, "I could eat a horse! Let's go home."

to eat a horse means: _____

3. Once upon a time bears and foxes both had long bushy tails. One day a fox came along carrying a string of fish. "How did you catch the fish?" asked the bear. "Cut a hole in the ice. Put your tail in and wait." said the fox. "When you tail begins to tingle, pull hard and you will catch a fine fish." As the fox walked away, he thought "That bear is sure to fall for it." When the bear pulled, his tail was stuck fast in the ice. And that's why bears have short tails.

to fall for it means: _____

4. Brad and Chad are twins. They always dress the same way. One day, Brad was throwing snowballs and one broke a school window. A teacher told him to stay after school.

Brad didn't want to miss his hockey game. He planned to pull a fast one, so he whispered to his brother. At 3:30, the teacher said, "Brad, you will have to pay for the window." "But I'm not Brad, I'm Chad" said the twin.

to pull a fast one means: _____

5. When the triplets were ten months old they did not like vegetables. Every time their mother tried to feed them vegetables they would make a face and refuse to eat. They were so funny to watch!

to make a face means: _____

6. Oakdale is a small town with no hospital. People who live here must go to Greenway, 25 kilometers away, if they need a doctor. One day Mr. Smith was very excited. "Next year in Oakdale, we will have a new hospital" he told his friends. "My doctor in Greenway told me that he and two other doctors are going to come here. So we know the story is true because I got it straight from the horse's mouth!"

to come straight from the horse's mouth means: _____

7. Penny always watches TV until 9:00. Then it is time for her to go to bed. On some nights she does not want to go to bed and she is very slow to turn off the TV. On Tuesday, Penny's father became very upset with her. "It's 9:30 now and you should be in bed" he said. "I'll have to put my foot down. No more TV for the rest of the week."

to put my foot down means: _____

8. The circus was coming to town on Saturday. Dad had promised to get us tickets. On Saturday morning he got called back to work. "I'm sorry," Dad said. "I can't take you this time, but I promise to make it up to you. We'll go to the zoo on Sunday."

to make it up to means: _____

9. "Jeff is a very good student" said Mrs. Pines. "He tries hard and he wants to do a good job." "I am not surprised at what you are telling me" said Jeff's father. "He does the same at home. I'll tell his mother. The news will tickle her pink."

to tickle her pink means: _____

10. The Park City team was playing baseball at River West. The game was tied 2-2. It was Billy's turn at bat. He missed the ball three times and was out. "This is a stupid game." said Billy, throwing the bat. "Why do you always have to fly off the handle like that?" asked John. "It's only a game."

to fly off the handle means: _____

11. Two men were put in jail for robbing a bank. One night, after the lights were out, they tied their sheets together into a long rope. They climbed out the window and tried to make a break for it. Before they had reached the ground, dogs began to bark and men were yelling.

to make a break for it means: _____

12. Mr. Jones was building a fence around his backyard. He had nails and boards all over the place. His neighbour saw the crooked fence and walked over to Mr. Jones. "Did you come to lend a hand?" asked Mr. Jones. "This fence is a mess and I'm not much of a carpenter."

to lend a hand means: _____

13. Janet got a letter from her father. She did not like the way he sounded. He said he was feeling fine, but Janet thought he sounded tired and not as happy as he did in the last letter. She did not like what she could read between the lines.

to read between the lines means: _____

14. Two boys were fighting on the playground. A group of children gathered around to watch. When the recess bell rang, the teacher went over to the boys who were fighting and told them to break it up. Both boys had to stay in and miss their next recess.

to break it up means: _____

15. Daddy told me to set my alarm clock so that I could wake myself up for our fishing trip; but I forgot. "Time to shake-a-leg" he said the next morning. He was standing ready with the fishing rod.

to shake-a-leg means: _____

16. The girl's basketball team played nine games and lost them all. The girls were very disappointed. Their coach said, "Don't lose heart girls. I am sure we will begin to win soon."

to lose heart means: _____

17. David is twelve years old, but he acts like a baby. He makes funny noises in class, he pulls the girls' hair, he talks strangely, and he makes up crazy stories. He really is trying to make a monkey of himself!

to make a monkey of means: _____

18. "Jim, Jim" called his best friend, Tom. "I just won a prize at the toy store. I just won a new ten speed bike. Do you want to see it?" "Sure I do," said Jim. "Where is it?" "It is in my garage," said Tom. "Let's go." When they went into the garage, Jim didn't see any bike. "Where is your new bike?" he asked. "I really didn't win one," said Tom. "I was just pulling your leg. But I sure wish I had!"

to pull your leg means: _____

19. The Adams family bought an old house which needed a lot of work. The workmen came on weekends. Everyone was running in circles. Finally the jobs were done and the house was ready to live in. Mrs. Adams said, "The mess was worth it. We have a beautiful house now."

running in circles means: _____

20. Kevin's report card was not very good and his Dad was upset. He told Kevin that he could not join the soccer team this year. Kevin's brother Tim started to laugh. "You don't have to rub it in" Dad said. "Both of you boys can spend more time on your homework."

to rub it in means: _____

Name and Grade Level: _____ Reading Level _____

School: _____ CTBS Reading Score: _____

Summary of Responses:

3. _____	2. _____	7. _____	1. _____
8. _____	4. _____	9. _____	6. _____
11. _____	5. _____	17. _____	10. _____
14. _____	12. _____	18. _____	13. _____
20. _____	15. _____	19. _____	16. _____

Total for Test: ____/60 _____%

Comments:

A P P E N D I X C

TEST OF COMPREHENSION OF TOURNURE IDIOMS (TCTI):

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION

TEST OF COMPREHENSION OF TOURNURE IDIOMS (TCTI)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION

The TCTI was administered to entire intact classes of grade five and grade three students. (The test booklets of the sample population were kept for analysis.) The TCTI was introduced as part of research on reading comprehension.

Instructions given to each class:

"This booklet contains some short stories. Read each story. Then complete the sentence after each story to show that you understand the meaning of the underlined phrase. Take as much time as you need to complete the booklet. There will be no penalty for incorrect spelling."

Then the booklets were distributed and the students were directed to begin. They were given as much time as they needed to complete the booklet.

A P P E N D I X D

TIMETABLE OF ADMINISTRATION
OF TCTI AND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

TIMETABLE OF ADMINISTRATION OF TCTI
AND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Administration of TCTI:

November 8, 1988 Grade three students 2.5 classes School A
a.m.

November 9, 1988 Grade five students 3 classes School A
a.m.

November 10, 1988 Grade three students 3 classes School B
a.m.

November 10, 1988 Grade five students 2 classes School C
a.m.

Follow-up Interviews:

Weeks of December 2, 1988 through December 16, 1988.

Weeks of January 5, 1989 through January 13, 1989.

A P P E N D I X E

FORMAT FOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS, INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND
TOURNURE IDIOMS PRESENTED IN ANOTHER CONTEXT
DURING FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

FORMAT FOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

A random sample of 20 students, 10 who failed to meet the 36 out of a possible 60 or 60% correct; and 10 who met or exceeded the criteria of 48 out of a possible 60 or 80% correct were individually interviewed.

Each student was taken individually into a vacant room. The researcher chatted briefly with each student to establish rapport and to set the student at ease. The student was informed of the purpose of the interview and acquainted with the tape recorder. The TCTI booklet was placed in front of the student, so that references could be made to each passage and to the student's response. From this point on, the interview was audio-taped as the researcher proceeded with the interview questions.

The students who scored 60% or less were requested to read all passages orally, one at a time while word recognition errors were carefully noted. The students who scored 80% or better were requested to read orally their incorrect passages.

Excepting the oral reading of the passages, the interview format was basically the same for both groups. Each interviewee was first asked to read orally their written response and to explain what was meant. The other remaining interview questions were then asked as the flow of the interview dictated.

When a student's response indicated a lack of understanding after the interview, the researcher provided instruction with an alternate passage and a teaching strategy.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name and Grade Level: _____ School _____

Reading Level: _____ CTBS Rdg. Score: _____ Passage: _____

Pass. Raw Score: _____ Rescore: _____ Word Rec. Errors: _____

CRITERIA: Low _____ Met/Exceeded: _____

Decoding:

1. Read this passage out loud. (for incorrect responses only)

Comprehension:

2. Look at this passage. You said: _____ (student's response)

3. What do you mean? _____

Processing:

4. Was this phrase () easy? Difficult? Why? _____
_____5. How do you know what the phrase means? _____

Context:

6. Are there any clues to the phrase () in the passage? Where?
How did they help?

Prior Knowledge:

7. Have you ever heard the phrase () before? If so, tell me
about it.

8. Have you ever heard it () put like this? (Give example)

9. Does the phrase () mean what it says? How do you know?

Teaching strategy: You have some difficulty with this passage. Some phrases do not mean what they say. They are sayings that you will encounter when reading. When you don't know what they mean, ask yourself "Does that phrase make sense in this story?" then reread, looking for clues in the story, usually before and after the phrase, and link the clues together. Ask yourself, "Could the same things be said using different words?"

TOURNURE IDIOMS PRESENTED IN ANOTHER CONTEXT DURING
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

1. to beat around the bush: The students were very noisy while their teacher left the room. Another teacher came to tell them they had a detention. When their teacher came back, she said "What's going on in here? You people are very quiet and you don't look happy." Kevin said, "Um, nothing. Nothing's wrong." The teacher said, "Don't beat around the bush. I know everything isn't right and I want to know why."
2. to eat a horse: I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!
3. to fall for it: A sign at the Red River Ex. said "Come see the gorilla woman. A crowd of people rushed in to look. Inside the room was a woman. Then the lights went out. People heard a loud roaring noise and went screaming outside, chased by a huge gorilla. Afterwards, a man said, "We sure fell for it. That was only someone wearing a gorilla suit."
4. to pull a fast one: A newspaper report said that a man had tried to pull a fast one by gluing two different lottery tickets together so that the numbers would look like a winning ticket; but he was caught by the police.
5. to make a face: "I know you don't like the color of my dress, but you don't have to make a face."

6. to lose heart: "Don't lose heart because you do not feel well today."
7. to put my foot down: Beth was talking on the phone. Mom told her three times to hang up. Finally she took the phone away from Beth and said, "I'm putting my foot down. This phone will now be off limits to you for one week."
8. to make it up to: The Jones family was planning to go to Fun Mountain on Saturday, but it was pouring rain and very cold. Dad said, "We'll make it up to you and go roller skating instead."
9. to tickle her pink: Suzie got 100% on her spelling test. She was tickled pink.
10. to fly off the handle: Billy was taking his coat off when Bobby accidentally bumped into him. Billy turned around and punched him. "Why do you always fly off the handle?" Bobby said. "It was an accident."
11. to make a break for it: The TV news reported that two men tried to make a break for it by hiding in the back of a truck. They were caught by the police.
12. to lend a hand: David was having trouble lacing up his skates. Paul said, "Do you want me to lend a hand?"
13. to read between the lines: Mary said that everything is OK at her house, but we did not like what we could read between the lines.

14. to break it up: A crowd of people ran onto the ice and surrounded Wayne Gretsky after the team won the game. The referees had to break it up and tell everyone to clear the ice.
15. to shake a leg: Mrs. Smith's class was getting ready for recess. "Come on. Shake a leg." she said. "You'll miss recess."
16. straight from the horse's mouth: Paul heard that a new school was being built and he got the news straight from the horse's mouth.
17. to make a monkey of: Stop making a monkey of yourself by acting like that.
18. to pull your leg: Sally was pulling your leg when she told you she got a new puppy.
19. to run in circles: Mother was busy Christmas shopping. After a long day, she only had one present. She said, "It seems like I was running in circles today. I couldn't get anything done."
20. to rub it in: Mary had to stay in. "Ha ha" said her friend. "You don't have to rub it in" said Mary.

A P P E N D I X F

GUIDE FOR SCORING RESPONSES TO THE TCTI:

DEFINITIONS OF TOURNURE IDIOMS

GUIDE FOR SCORING RESPONSES TO THE TCTI

The Directions:

1. Read all passages thoroughly.
2. Score all the responses for Grade 3 and Grade 5 one question at a time. This facilitates consistent scoring.
3. Score each response on a 3 point ranking scale:
 - a) 3 points for a conventional use of a tournure idiom. The response will contain the concept outlined in the definitions of tournure idioms provided.
 - b) 2 points for a transitional response indicating a nonliteral interpretation of the tournure idiom, but which is not in agreement with the conventional idiomatic definition. The response would approximate the idiomatic meaning.
 - c) 1 point for:
 1. a literal response
 2. an exact repetition of the underlined phrase
 3. restating (paraphrasing) the passage but not defining the underlined phrase.
 - d) 0 points for:
 1. a response that does not relate to the passage
 2. no response
 3. "I don't know"
4. There is no penalty for incorrect spelling.
5. Difference in scores among the judges will be resolved by conferencing.

6. Some guidelines for ambiguous responses:
- a) Be certain the subject is not simply responding by giving the meaning of the passage.
 - b) When in doubt, remove the response from the context of the passage and ask "Does the response given define the meaning of the tournure idiom according to the definition?"
 - c) "Could the response given be correctly placed in another context?"

Example: "to tie the knot"

- 3 points: (conventional) "to get married"
- 2 points: (transitional) "to promise to stay together"
- 1 point: (literal) "to make a knot"
- 0 points: (unrelated) "to kiss, hug, love" or "to get it all done".
- No response.
- "I don't know."

Example: "to shake a leg"

- 3 points: (conventional) "to hurry"
- 2 points: (transitional) "to get going"
- 1 point: (literal) "to shake your leg"
- 0 points: (unrelated) "to wake up and smell the coffee"

TEST OF COMPREHENSION OF TOURNURE IDIOMS (TCTI)DEFINITIONS OF TOURNURE IDIOMS

1. "to beat around the bush" - to delay talking about or considering the most important point or part of discussion; to have trouble asking for what you want.
2. "to eat a horse" - to eat a great deal; to be extremely hungry.
3. "to fall for it" - to allow oneself to be persuaded by a line of talk, argument or propaganda.
4. "to pull a fast one" - to deceive or cheat (often after to try to).
5. "to make a face" - to show one's dissatisfaction, dislike, etc. by twisting the expression on one's face.
6. "straight from the horse's mouth" - (to come) from the person most closely concerned with the subject being discussed; (to come) directly from the person who has the right information (the source).
7. "to put my (one's) foot down" - to be firm in one's purpose or desires e.g. to not allow another person to do something.
8. "to make it up to" - to give to somebody in compensation for something he/she has missed or suffered.
9. "to tickle (her) pink" - delighted, pleased or amused.
10. "to fly off the handle" - to become very angry, upset; to get excited, upset, angered in a temper; to make a quick remark.

11. "to make a break for it" - to attempt to escape (especially from prison or the police).
12. "to lend a hand" - to give help to someone.
13. "to read between the lines" - to discover the true facts of a person's real feelings or opinions that are not directly expressed in words: to understand more than is actually written or spoken.
14. "to break it up" - to disperse, scatter, go their separate ways often by force.
15. "to shake a leg" - to hurry, try to do something faster.
16. "to lose heart" - to become discouraged, lose hope.
17. "to make a monkey of" - to make/cause somebody to look foolish by the way you act; to appear to be silly or foolish.
18. "to pull your (somebody's) leg" - to make fun of someone in a friendly way, e.g. by trying to make him believe something that is not true.
19. "to run in circles" - to put oneself to great trouble in order to do something especially to become very confused at the same time; to use the long method, or to take a long time to do or obtain something.
20. "to rub it in" - to keep reminding someone about something he has done wrong especially in an unkind manner (from to rub someone's nose in it).

A P P E N D I X G

CALCULATION OF INTER-JUDGE AGREEMENT

OF TCTI SCORES BY: PRODUCT MOMENT CO-EFFICIENT OF
CORRELATION

CALCULATION OF INTER-JUDGE AGREEMENT
OF TCTI SCORES BY: PRODUCT MOMENT CO-EFFICIENT OF CORRELATION

Grade Three:

Judge A	Judge B	Judge B	Judge C	Judge A	Judge C	Avg.
.967		.930		.935		.944

Grade Five:

Judge A	Judge B	Judge B	Judge C	Judge A	Judge C	Avg.
.934		.853		.908		.898

Grade Three and Grade Five Combined Interjudge Agreement:

Judge A	Judge B	Judge B	Judge C	Judge A	Judge C	Avg.
.951		.892		.922		.922

A P P E N D I X H
SUMMARY OF STUDENT SCORES ON THE
CANADIAN TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS (CTBS)
AND THE TEST OF COMPREHENSION OF
TOURNURE IDIOMS (TCTI) BY GRADE AND READING ACHIEVEMENT

GRADE THREE: LOW ACHIEVEMENT SCORES

Subject	CTBS		TCTI SUBTEST			
	Grade Equiv.	it	a	Ldg. Verb dir.obj.	Ldg. Verb prep.	Total
1	2.4	12	11	3	9	35
2	2.3	10	12	12	8	42
3	2.4	6	11	4	4	25
4	1.9	10	6	7	4	27
5	2.3	2	7	9	6	24
6	2.0	8	9	5	2	24
7	2.4	9	11	7	5	32
8	1.8	6	3	5	7	21
9	2.3	3	3	4	2	12
10	2.4	12	6	10	5	33
11	2.1	4	0	6	2	12
12	1.6	5	2	3	2	12
13	2.3	7	4	2	1	14
14	2.4	8	4	4	2	18
15	1.9	6	2	3	2	13
16	2.4	2	3	9	1	15
17	2.0	7	9	4	1	21
18	1.9	6	4	4	2	16
19	2.4	8	8	8	2	26
20	2.3	10	11	4	0	25
21	1.4	8	7	11	3	29
TOTAL		149	133	124	70	446
	21	7.10	6.33	5.90	3.33	21 21.24

GRADE THREE: HIGH ACHIEVEMENT READERS

CTBS

TCTI SUBTEST

Subject	Grade Equiv.	it	a	Ldg. Verb dir. obj.	Ldg. Verb prep.	Total
22	3.9	8	7	8	6	29
23	4.5	12	13	8	3	36
24	3.7	6	11	6	3	24
25	3.4	9	11	11	5	36
26	4.1	15	13	12	4	44
27	3.6	12	14	11	7	44
28	3.7	6	7	7	0	20
29	4.1	12	12	11	7	42
30	4.5	15	14	7	6	42
31	3.7	6	10	11	5	32
32	3.6	12	11	6	10	37
33	3.4	11	10	10	8	39
34	3.4	12	13	7	5	37
35	4.3	12	12	10	5	39
36	3.4	10	12	11	7	40
37	3.7	13	12	12	6	43
38	3.6	13	12	11	6	42
39	3.5	7	12	5	3	27
40	3.6	9	11	7	6	33
41	4.3	9	15	11	2	37
42	3.7	13	11	12	8	44
TOTAL		222	243	194	112	767
	21	10.57	11.57	9.24	5.33	21 36.52

GRADE FIVE: LOW ACHIEVEMENT READERS
CTBS

TCTI SUBTEST

Subject	Grade Equiv.	it	a	Ldg. Verb dir.obj.	Ldg. Verb prep.	Total
43	3.7	9	14	10	7	40
44	4.4	10	9	8	7	34
45	4.1	14	12	9	8	43
46	4.1	12	10	12	5	39
47	3.9	7	7	9	0	23
48	4.0	6	11	5	3	25
49	4.2	14	14	10	7	45
50	3.1	15	10	7	3	35
51	3.1	14	15	9	6	44
52	2.8	12	14	9	7	42
53	2.7	12	10	10	7	39
54	3.8	12	10	9	8	39
55	4.2	14	12	8	5	39
56	4.2	12	12	9	2	35
57	3.7	11	9	9	6	35
58	4.1	11	11	5	8	35
59	3.1	10	11	8	2	31
60	3.5	13	13	7	5	38
61	4.2	14	14	11	9	48
62	3.7	11	8	9	5	33
63	4.3	12	12	14	6	44
64	4.4	14	9	8	6	37
65	4.2	14	13	13	9	49
66	4.4	13	9	13	10	45
67	4.4	6	13	6	4	29
68	4.3	11	9	7	8	35
69	3.2	15	13	6	4	38
70	2.7	4	5	2	1	12
TOTAL		322	309	242	158	1031
		11.50	11.04	8.64	5.64	36.82

GRADE FIVE: HIGH ACHIEVEMENT READERS

CTBS

TCTI SUBTEST

Subject	Grade Equiv.	it	a	Ldg. Verb dir.obj.	Ldg. Verb prep.	Total
71	5.9	14	15	13	14	56
72	5.4	11	9	11	9	40
73	6.7	14	14	12	10	50
74	5.5	11	11	11	7	40
75	5.8	15	15	12	14	56
76	5.4	13	14	11	5	43
77	5.8	13	13	10	4	40
78	7.3	13	8	11	8	39
79	6.1	15	12	12	10	49
80	5.5	15	12	15	9	51
81	5.7	10	10	11	6	37
82	6.1	15	12	13	10	50
83	5.5	14	10	14	14	52
84	6.1	15	10	14	12	51
85	5.4	13	12	15	11	51
86	5.9	14	11	12	10	47
87	5.4	11	8	12	5	36
88	6.1	15	14	12	11	52
89	5.9	15	15	12	15	57
TOTAL		256	225	233	184	897
	19	13.47	11.84	12.26	9.68	19 47.21

A P P E N D I X I
SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL TCTI SCORES,
CTBS SCORES, GRADE LEVELS AND ABILITY LEVELS

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL TCTI SCORES, CTBS SCORES,
GRADE LEVELS, AND ABILITY SCORES

	subjects	gr. level	ability level	CTBS	TCTI Total
Failed	1	3	weak	2.4	35
TCTI	3	3	weak	2.4	25
	6	3	weak	2.0	24
	7	3	weak	2.4	32
	39	3	good	3.5	27
	56	5	weak	4.2	35
	57	5	weak	3.7	35
	59	5	weak	3.1	31
	62	5	weak	3.7	33
	67	5	weak	4.4	29
Passed	61	5	weak	4.2	48
TCTI	65	5	weak	4.2	49
	71	5	good	5.9	56
	73	5	good	6.7	50
	75	5	good	5.8	56
	79	5	good	6.1	49
	84	5	good	6.1	51
	85	5	good	5.4	51
	88	5	good	6.1	52
	89	5	good	5.9	57

A P P E N D I X J

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL PASSAGE
WORD RECOGNITION ERRORS AND
WORD RECOGNITION LEVEL:
STUDENTS WHO FAILED THE TCTI

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL PASSAGEWORD RECOGNITION ERRORS ANDWORD RECOGNITION LEVEL:

Passage	# of words	Errors/Student										
		1	3	6	7	39	56	57	59	62	67	
1	74	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	48	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	96	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
4	76	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	36	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	77	0	2	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	73	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	50	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	47	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	58	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	52	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	49	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
13	49	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
14	48	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
16	32	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
17	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
18	84	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	50	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	51	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1130	8	9	28	14	2	0	5	4	0	0	0

Reading Level ind ind inst ind ind ind ind ind ind ind

A P P E N D I X K

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
ON EXPLANATION OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES, DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY,
SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE, USE OF CONTEXT, RECOGNITION/EXPLANATION
OF THE SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY OF THE FOUR TYPES OF TOURNURE IDIOMS

WEAK STUDENTS (GRADE THREE AND GRADE FIVE):

GOOD STUDENTS (GRADE FIVE)

COMPREHENSION STRATEGIESEXPLAINED TOURNURE IDIOM PHRASE

Type of Idiom	Gr. Three Weak	Gr. Five Weak	Gr. Five Good
"it" Passage	3	5	10
	8	4	10
	11	5	10
	14	5	10
	20	1	9
Total Responses	20/25	21/25	49/50
"a" Passage	2	5	10
	4	1	10
	5	5	10
	12	5	10
	15	2	10
Total Responses	18/25	21/25	50/50

COMPREHENSION STRATEGIESEXPLAINED TOURNURE IDIOM PHRASE

Type of Idiom	Gr. Three Weak	Gr. Five Weak	Gr. Five Good
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	3	10
	9	1	10
	17	2	10
	18	5	9
	19	1	7
Total Responses	12/25	13/25	46/50
Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	0	7
	6	2	10
	10	2	10
	13	0	7
	16	4	10
Total Responses	8/25	10/25	44/50

STATED DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

Type of Idiom	Gr. Three Weak	Gr. Five Weak	Gr. Five Good
"it" Passage	3	4	5
	8	4	10
	11	4	10
	14	5	10
	20	2	9
Total Responses	19/25	19/25	44/50
"a" Passage	2	4	9
	4	3	7
	5	4	10
	12	4	10
	15	2	10
Total Responses	17/25	18/25	46/50

STATED DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

Type of Idiom	Gr. Three Weak	Gr. Five Weak	Gr. Five Good
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	4	9
	9	1	9
	17	3	10
	18	5	10
	19	3	7
Total Responses	16/25	18/25	45/50
Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	2	5
	6	1	4
	10	1	6
	13	0	5
	16	0	8
Total Responses	4/25	11/25	28/50

SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: GRADE THREE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing fr. Others	Hearing on Television	Total
---------------	---------	-----------------------	--------------------------	-------

"it" Passage	3	1	3	1
	8	0	5	0
	11	0	1	3
	14	0	5	1
	20	0	1	1

Total Responses	1	15	5	21
-----------------	---	----	---	----

"a" Passage	2	0	4	0
	4	1	2	0
	5	0	4	0
	12	0	5	0
	15	0	1	1

Total Responses	1	16	1	18
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SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: GRADE THREE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing fr. Others	Hearing on Television	Total
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Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	0	5	0
	9	0	0	1
	17	0	2	0
	18	0	2	1
	19	0	2	0

Total Responses	0	11	2	13
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Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	0	2	0
	6	0	0	1
	10	1	0	0
	13	0	0	0
	16	0	1	0

Total Responses	1	3	1	5
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SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing fr. Others	Hearing on Television	Total
"it" Passage	3	0	5	0
	8	0	5	0
	11	0	2	3
	14	0	5	0
	20	0	2	0
Total Responses	0	19	3	22
"a" Passage	2	0	4	1
	4	1	4	0
	5	0	5	0
	12	0	5	0
	15	0	4	1
Total Responses	1	22	2	25

SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing fr. Others	Hearing on Television	Total
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	0	3	0
	9	0	1	1
	17	0	3	0
	18	0	5	0
	19	0	5	0
Total Responses	0	17	1	18
Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	0	1	0
	6	0	2	0
	10	0	2	1
	13	1	0	0
	16	0	1	0
Total Responses	1	6	1	8

SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: GRADE FIVE GOOD STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing fr. Others	Hearing on Television	Total
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"it"				
Passage	3	0	10	0
	8	1	9	0
	11	1	5	4
	14	2	8	0
	20	0	8	1

Total Responses	4	40	5	49
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"a"				
Passage	2	0	9	0
	4	0	4	3
	5	0	9	0
	12	0	10	0
	15	0	7	2

Total Responses	0	39	5	44
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SOURCES OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: GRADE FIVE GOOD STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Reading	Hearing fr. Others	Hearing on Television	Total
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Lead. Verb Dir. Obj.				
Passage	7	1	5	0
	9	2	4	1
	17	0	9	0
	18	1	8	0
	19	2	6	0

Total Responses	6	32	1	39
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Lead. Verb Prep. Noun				
Passage	1	3	4	1
	6	0	6	1
	10	0	4	0
	13	2	4	1
	16	0	1	1

Total Responses	5	19	4	28
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SOURCES OF CONTEXT: GRADE THREE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Whole Pass	Phrases/Sentences	Tournure Idiom Phrase	Total
<u>"it"</u>				
Passage	3	0	1	2
	8	0	3	1
	11	0	3	0
	14	0	1	2
	20	0	0	1
Total Responses	0	8	6	14
<u>"a"</u>				
Passage	2	0	2	0
	4	0	4	0
	5	0	3	1
	12	0	1	1
	15	0	2	1
Total Responses	0	12	3	15

SOURCES OF CONTEXT: GRADE THREE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Whole Pass.	Phrases/Sentences	Tournure Idiom Phrase	Total
<u>Lead. Verb Dir. Obj.</u>				
Passage	7	0	4	1
	9	0	2	0
	17	0	4	2
	18	0	3	1
	19	0	2	2
Total Responses	0	15	6	21
<u>Lead. Verb Prep. Noun</u>				
Passage	1	0	0	0
	6	0	3	0
	10	1	2	0
	13	0	2	0
	16	1	2	0
Total Responses	2	9	0	11

SOURCES OF CONTEXT: GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Whole Pass	Phrases/Sentences	Tournure Idiom Phrase	Total
"it"				
Passage	3	0	0	0
	8	0	2	0
	11	0	3	0
	14	1	4	0
	20	2	3	0

Total Responses	3	12	0	15
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"a"				
Passage	2	1	2	2
	4	0	2	0
	5	0	1	4
	12	1	1	0
	15	0	3	0

Total Responses	2	9	6	17
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SOURCES OF CONTEXT: GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Whole Pass.	Phrases/Sentences	Tournure Idiom Phrase	Total
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Lead. Verb				
Dir. Obj.				
Passage	7	0	3	1
	9	0	3	0
	17	0	3	0
	18	1	0	3
	19	1	2	0

Total Responses	2	11	3	16
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Lead. Verb				
Prep. Noun				
Passage	1	2	1	0
	6	4	2	0
	10	1	2	0
	13	0	2	1
	16	2	3	0

Total Responses	9	10	1	20
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SOURCES OF CONTEXT: GRADE FIVE GOOD STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Whole Pass.	Phrases/Sentences	Tournure Idiom Phrase	Total
"it" Passage	3	2	7	1
	8	1	7	0
	11	0	9	1
	14	1	9	3
	20	2	5	2
Total Responses	6	34	7	47

"a" Passage	2	0	3	6
	4	3	7	0
	5	0	6	4
	12	0	4	6
	15	0	7	2
Total Responses	3	27	18	48

SOURCES OF CONTEXT: GRADE FIVE GOOD STUDENTS

Type of Idiom	Whole Pass.	Phrases/Sentences	Tournure Idiom Phrase	Total
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	1	9	0
	9	0	7	2
	17	3	7	4
	18	1	4	3
	19	0	6	3
Total Responses	5	33	9	47

Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	3	4	1
	6	1	9	0
	10	0	10	0
	13	1	8	1
	16	1	8	0
Total Responses	6	39	2	47

GRADE THREE WEAK STUDENTS

Explained Semantic Ambiguity

Type of Idiom	Recog. Sem.Amb.	Expl.Sem. Duality	Used Figurative Interpretation	Total
"It"				
Passage	3	4	0	4
	8	1	0	1
	11	1	1	2
	14	2	1	3
	20	1	0	1
Total Responses	19	9	2	11

"a"				
Passage	2	3	1	4
	4	0	1	1
	5	4	1	5
	12	3	1	4
	15	4	0	4
Total Responses	22	14	4	18

RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY

GRADE THREE WEAK STUDENTS

Explained Semantic Ambiguity

Type of Idiom	Recog. Sem.Amb.	Expl.Sem. Duality	Used Figurative Interpretation	Total
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	3	0	3
	9	1	1	1
	17	3	1	2
	18	5	1	5
	19	4	3	3
Total Responses	16	11	3	14

Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	1	0	1
	6	4	0	2
	10	4	0	1
	13	2	0	1
	16	5	3	4
Total Responses	16	6	3	9

RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY

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GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

Explained Semantic Ambiguity

Type of Idiom	Recog. Sem.Amb.	Expl.Sem. Duality	Used Figurative Interpretation	Total
"it"				
Passage	3	4	0	4
	8	4	0	2
	11	4	2	4
	14	5	3	4
	20	3	0	2
Total Responses	20	11	5	16

"a"					
Passage	2	5	4	1	5
	4	2	1	1	2
	5	5	4	1	5
	12	5	4	1	5
	15	4	3	1	4
Total Responses	21	16	5	21	

RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY

GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

Explained Semantic Ambiguity

Type of Idiom	Recog. Sem.Amb.	Expl.Sem. Duality	Used Figurative Interpretation	Total	
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj.					
Passage	7	3	3	0	3
	9	2	2	0	2
	17	5	5	0	5
	18	5	4	1	5
	19	1	1	0	1
Total Responses	16	15	1	16	

Lead. Verb Prep. Noun					
Passage	1	2	1	0	1
	6	4	4	0	4
	10	2	1	1	2
	13	2	1	0	1
	16	3	1	2	3
Total Responses	13	8	3	11	

GRADE FIVE GOOD STUDENTS

Explained Semantic Ambiguity

Type of Idiom	Recog. Sem. Amb.	Expl. Sem. Duality	Used Figurative Interpretation	Total	
"it" Passage	3	9	7	2	9
	8	10	7	3	10
	11	10	5	4	9
	14	10	5	5	10
	20	10	0	3	3
Total Responses	49	31	17	48	

"a" Passage	2	10	10	0	10
	4	10	6	3	9
	5	9	6	3	9
	12	10	7	3	10
	15	10	10	0	10
Total Responses	49	39	9	48	

RECOGNITION AND EXPLANATION OF SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY

GRADE FIVE GOOD STUDENTS

Explained Semantic Ambiguity

Type of Idiom	Recog. Sem. Amb.	Expl. Sem. Duality	Used Figurative Interpretation	Total	
Lead. Verb Dir. Obj. Passage	7	9	8	0	8
	9	9	8	1	9
	17	8	8	0	8
	18	10	10	0	10
	19	9	6	1	7
Total Responses	45	40	2	42	

Lead. Verb Prep. Noun Passage	1	9	2	4	6
	6	10	10	0	10
	10	10	9	1	10
	13	8	7	1	8
	16	10	6	4	10
Total Responses	47	34	10	44	

A P P E N D I X L

COMPARISON OF TCTI SCORES AND CORRECTED SCORES
FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEWS: GRADE THREE AND GRADE FIVE
WEAK STUDENTS

TCTI SCORES AND INTERVIEW SCORES FOR
TOURNURE IDIOMS CONTAINING THE COMPULSORY "IT":
GRADE THREE AND GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

	Grade Three					Grade Five				
Students:	1	3	6	7	39	56	57	59	62	67
Passage										
3	3 3	3 3	2 3	2 3	0 3	3 3	2 3	2 3	2 3	2 3
8	3 3	0 1	0 2	1 3	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	0 0	2 2
11	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	1 3	2 2	3 3	2 3	3 3	0 3
14	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	1 3
20	0 1	0 3	0 1	0 1	0 1	2 3	0 1	0 0	3 3	0 3

TCTI SCORES AND INTERVIEW SCORES FOR
TOURNURE IDIOMS CONTAINING THE
INDEFINITE ARTICLE "A":
GRADE THREE AND GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

	Grade Three					Grade Five				
Students:	1	3	6	7	39	56	57	59	62	67
Passage										
2	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3
4	1 1	2 2	0 1	0 0	0 3	1 1	2 3	1 2	0 0	3 3
5	2 3	3 3	2 3	2 3	3 3	2 3	1 3	0 3	1 3	3 3
12	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3
15	2 2	0 0	1 2	3 3	3 3	3 3	0 0	3 3	1 3	1 3

TCTI SCORES AND INTERVIEW SCORES FOR TOURNURE IDIOMS
IN WHICH THE LEADING VERB IS FOLLOWED BY A DIRECT OBJECT:
GRADE THREE AND GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

	Grade Three					Grade Five				
Students:	1	3	6	7	39	56	57	59	62	67
Passage										
7	1 1	2 3	2 3	1 1	2 3	1 2	2 3	3 3	1 3	2 2
9	1 2	0 0	3 3	1 1	0 0	3 3	1 2	1 2	0 0	1 1
17	1 1	0 0	0 2	3 3	0 3	2 3	3 3	2 2	3 3	0 3
18	0 3	2 3	0 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	2 3
19	0 2	0 0	0 2	1 3	0 0	0 2	1 1	1 2	2 2	1 2

TCTI SCORES AND INTERVIEW SCORES FOR TOURNURE IDIOMS IN WHICH
THE LEADING VERB IS FOLLOWED BY A PREPOSITION, NOUN, OR
NOTHING: GRADE THREE AND GRADE FIVE WEAK STUDENTS

	Grade Three					Grade Five				
Students:	1	3	6	7	39	56	57	59	62	67
Passage										
1	2 2	1 1	0 0	1 1	0 0	3 3	1 1	2 3	0 1	0 0
6	3 3	0 2	0 2	0 0	0 3	0 3	2 3	2 3	2 0	0 3
10	1 1	0 1	0 2	1 3	0 3	0 2	3 3	0 1	0 1	1 3
13	1 1	0 1	0 1	1 1	0 2	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 1	1 1
16	2 2	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	2 2	0 2	0 0	3 3	2 2