CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1 English as the Global Language

In its role as a global language, English has become one of the most important academic and professional tools. Gove (1986) mentioned in his preface to Webster's Third New International Dictionary illustrates this point: “It is now fairly clear that before the twentieth century is over every community of the world will have learned how to communicate with all the rest of humanity. In this process of intercommunication the English language has already become the most important language on earth (p. 5a).”

While Crystal (1997) adds: “As English becomes the chief means of communication between nations, it is crucial to ensure that it is taught accurately and efficiently (p. 3).”

Global English in a sociolinguistic context refers almost literally to the use of English as a global language. It means a common language for the world (Crystal, 2003). A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. Having such a status, the global language has to be of a great importance, influencing all the domains of the human activity in the world (Engleza, 2006). For example English dominate such fields as the media, foreign language teaching, business, and many others.

English as we know is derived from the language of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. Until the early 1600s only a few million people spoke English. They lived on a small
island in the North Sea. The English traveled all over the world and settled. The areas where the English settled were called colonies. Trade between the mother country and the colonies became an important factor. The language used was English. Now English has for more than 150 years been called a world language (Engleza, 2006).

English is present on every continent. In over 60 countries it is used officially or without the sanction of government and is prominent in 20 more. There are three kinds of English speakers, those who speak it as their first language, those who speak it as a second language and those who learn it a foreign language. Today about 400 million people speak English as their mother tongue or first language. Over 50 million children study English as an additional language at primary level and over 80 million study it at secondary level.

The English language is recognized as undoubtedly the most important language for the increasingly mobile international community to learn. This is a fact that seems to be irreversible. English has become the official language of the business an

be conscious of language use during teaching sessions (Mung, 2007).

In Taiwan, English is highly regarded as the global language in the areas of research, technology, trade, commerce, tourism, and banking (S. Tsai, 1998). English is the link language between people from diverse cultures and different countries in this global village (C. Wang & Savignon, 2001). In order to express the importance of this global language, Taiwanese government has put heavy emphasis on citizens’ English education for the past few decades, thus, making English language teaching and learning a highly valued part of education in Taiwan.
In addition, traditional English teaching method like Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has still been prevalent in most English classrooms learning today (C. Y. Hsieh, 2004; S. Tsai, 1998; C. C. Wang, 2000). Vocabulary explanations, text translations, and structure analyses have been the focus of teaching and learning in language classrooms (Lai, 2002; Wei, 1997). Lai (2002) also indicated that students lack the opportunities to practice their language skills, more so with their listening and speaking skills, both inside and outside the classrooms; hence, it is difficult for them to acquire communicative competence in the English language.

2.2 English Learning in Taiwan

Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school, and, indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost. Reading is a foundational skill in all children's academic careers; whether they become strong or weak readers has considerable bearing on their success in school and beyond (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Reading is also a process of mentally interpreting written symbols. It involves a series of factors that a reader brings to the text (C. H. Li, 1992). These skills include a reading ability to monitor their own comprehension decode unknown words and fix-up strategies. Reading ability includes understanding ability and reading speed. Understanding needs to consist of understanding both the surface structure and the deep meaning that author express with words and then understand it’s inside meaning.
Whether reading ability is good or not depends on reading speed as well as understanding level. Reading speed and reading comprehension are two elements that cannot be separated. Poor reading ability surely results in slowdown reading speed. Neglect of reading speed must have a bad effect on reading comprehension (Wu, 2003).

Many mentioned that reading is of great importance in basic linguistic knowledge acquisition and English language learning. Reading is very vital to English learning. In reality, reading doesn’t demand too much perquisites, a person is capable of reading a great deal of materials available everywhere, such as magazines, books, newspapers and so on. More importantly, a person can read anywhere and anytime.

In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has highlighted the importance of English learning and reading. According to the general guidelines of grade 1-9 elementary curriculum (MOE, 1997), English language learning programs for Grade 5 and Grade 6 were implemented in the school year 2001. Then on, after four years, English language learning programs were implemented for Grade 3 in the school year 2005.

An important foundation of the English reading process is early preparation. In the revised curriculum goals, an important article was added, which is to recognize the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet in listening; to be able to speak the twenty-six letters in speaking; to be able to recognize the twenty-six letters in reading; and to be able to write the twenty-six letters in writing (MOE, 2001). These goals are the very core and essential steps in helping Taiwanese students cultivate a better English learning environment.
Influenced by the US program of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), in 1996, Taiwan started to implement its goals in the *Action Plan for Educational Reform*; which is to teach each student well (Fan, 2006). A lot of efforts are now being placed on low achievers or underachievers. In order to solve the problem, many studies have proved that early intervention and remedial instruction can help in nurturing the students’ learning ability (Pikulski, 1994; Torgesen, 2000). Furthermore, some researchers mentioned that from the positions of the government, it is helpful to have remedial instructions during the early stages, for this will lower future social cost (Berk, 1996; Shanahan & Barr, 1995). Thus, it is important for remedial schools such as cram schools, in helping the students learning abilities.

2.3 Cram School and the English Language Learning

Throughout the history of education many different terms have been used to describe or characterize children whose second language is English. For example, students with Limited English Proficiency (LEPs), students for them English are a Second Language (ESLs), or Second Language Learners (SLLs). Currently educators refer to these children as English Language Learners (ELLs). This shift in language represents a more accurate reflection of the process of language acquisition (Gifford, 2008).

In the East Asian context, many countries regard English as their second language. With the advent of globalization and internationalization, the trend of English as an international language had become evident among Taiwan society and academe. Making
the English language learning a much sought after commodity in the market (Schutz, 2006). Taiwanese parents, with the desire for the improvement of their children’s English ability; many have let their children learn English at an early stage in life (Stevenson et al., 1990). Students are not limited to learning the English language in regular schools, but are also required by their parents to attend bushi ban (a similar place to a cram school in Japan, where the students prepare for major exams, and passing grades, They help students understand what missed at school) after class.

Li (2004) mentioned that in a survey done by the Commonwealth magazine, 61% of the Taiwanese parents agreed that their children should start learning English as early as possible. In addition, 34.4% of the parents have already let their children learn English even before their kindergarten, which could indicate that students start to learn English at the age of around three to five years old. Similarly, in a news reported in China Times, Chen (2004) added that around 60% of Taiwanese parents send their children to cram schools, with the expectation of improving their children’s English language ability. Around 57% of the parents admitted that they started to send their children to cram school during their children’s Grade one to Grade three academic years, while about 75% for Grade four to Grade six students.

In both cases, almost more than 60% of the Taiwanese parents accepted the idea that a child’s English ability would directly affect their career in the future. Around 48% of the parents bought English learning visual-medias like videos, tapes or book to help improve their children’s English language ability. Likewise, around 20% of the parents talked to their children using the English language as much as they can (L. W. Chen,
Thus, these clearly showed that Taiwanese parents place great importance in their children’s English language learning ability.

2.3.1 Cram School in Taiwan

Cram school comes from the root word *cram*, which means to prepare hastily for an examination; or to study a subject intensively especially for an imminent examination (Cram, 2008). Simply put, cram schools are specialized schools that teach their students to meet particular objectives or goals in a short period of time. Some typical objectives are passing various entrance examinations in different levels of education (Huang, 2004). As the name suggests, the aim of cram schools is to impart as much information to its students in the shortest possible period of time. The goal is to enable the students to memorize; which is to unthinkingly repeat, information that is deemed necessary for particular examinations or tasks. Cram schools are sometimes criticized, along with the countries in which they are prevalent, for the lack of training their students receive in critical thinking and analysis.

Common in East Asia; cram schools have become the de facto parallel education system because they are prevalent in East Asia, like Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and many others (Sommers, 2004). Cram schools are mostly privately owned and are commonly called *bushiban* (補習班) in Mainland China and Taiwan, while also having different names in different Asian countries, for example, *Juku* in Japan and *Hagwon* in Korea.
Huang (2004) and Hsieh (2001) mentioned, that in Taiwan most bushiban are not necessarily cram schools in the traditional sense. Almost any kind of co-curricular (academic) and extra-curricular (non-academic) lessons could be termed bushiban, such as mathematics, science, music, arts, language acquisitions, even if students do not attend these classes specifically in order to pass an examination. Most Taiwanese parent believes that it is imperative to send their children to various cram schools in order to become competitive in the future (Stevenson, 1992; Xiang, 2002). Therefore, most children in Taiwan have a schedule packed with all sorts of cram school lessons.

2.3.1.1 Academic Oriented Cram Schools in Taiwan

These are the cram schools whose teaching materials taught are closely related to the subjects taught in regular schools, are generally composed of the traditional bushiban and anchinban (安親班). These bushibans are basically composed of a teacher, which he/she provides a group of students with materials and instruction for subjects taught in regular school (Huang, 2004). Some popular subjects include mathematics, English, science (chemistry and physics). While, the anchinbans are teachers or adults whose main duty is to look after a group of children, and help them with their homework and assignments (Huang, 2004).
2.3.1.2 Non-academic Oriented Cram Schools in Taiwan

These are cram schools whose teachings programs are not directly related to regular school curriculum. Some common types are the **talent and skill class**, wherein a teacher provides a group of students with a program designed only for a specific subject or course, such as foreign language acquisitions, essay writing, calligraphy, music, arts, dancing, sports, judo, swimming, and many others (J. S. Hsieh, 2001). In general, cram schools are determined by the market demand (Sommers, 2004). Therefore, the higher the demand of the general public the more opportunity for cram schools to flourish.

2.4 The Importance of Reading

Since reading plays a crucial role in language learning, especially in children’s literacy development, and as reading served a complex skill and process, is defined as “visual-auditory tasks that involves obtaining meaning from symbols (letters and words)”. Some researchers stated that reading consists of two basic components: word recognition and comprehension (Aaron & Joshi, 1992; Mercer & Pullen, 2005; Nation, 2005). In addition to understand the cognitive development, learner’s attitude or affection reaction also should be concerned. Reading attitude plays an influential role in the process of reading because it influences reading behavior (W. L. Chen, 2003).
2.4.1 Letter Knowledge

Alphabet knowledge is also known as Letter Knowledge; which is a crucial aspect of early readers. To be a successful reader, besides being confidence, students will need to become familiar with the letters of the alphabets. They should know them by heart, without any hesitation and confusion. Students who have the ability to identify letters of the alphabets (by whatever means, letter name, sound or a word that begin with letter) is one of the best predictors of a future successful reader (D. S. Strickland & J. A. Schickedanz).

Blaiklock (2004) previous research showed that positive association about controlling letter knowledge in the students early reading years, however, it reduced most correlations to no significant levels.

Alphabet knowledge includes the knowledge of letter names and the knowledge of letter sounds. Letter-name knowledge measured in kindergarten is the one of the best predictors of future reading and spelling achievement (Badian, 1995; Ehri & Sweet, 1991). Children who can identify some letters are capable of demonstrating that they are noticing print, developing their visual memory, and distinguishing among letters forms.

According to Burns, Griffin, and Snow (1999),

> By the end of kindergarten, children should be able to name most of the letter alphabet, no matter what order they come in, no matter if they are uppercase or lowercase. And they should do it quickly and effortlessly.(p.80)
At the level of preschool, children are generally expected to know at least 10 uppercase letters. Know how to spell their names and parents and teachers suppose to provide more opportunities for children to learn letter names as part of a variety of rich and oral language experiences (S. D. Strickland & A. J. Schickedanz, 2004).

Letter knowledge is necessary for the development of phonological awareness (Morais, 1991), Read at al.(1986), and Enri (1989). They supported learning to spell may facilitate a child’s understanding of grapheme phoneme relationship in alphabetic language to some extent.

2.4.2 Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness is the understanding of words which are made up of speech sounds, or phonemes. The words are made up of syllables, onsets rimes, etc. Children, however are very concrete thinkers, and they tend to be unaware of these abstract characteristics of spoken words, therefore many children will have similar problem in representing words (Sebastian Wren & Jennifer Watts, 2002). Phonemic Awareness is part of phonological awareness which showed the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words and it links directly to phonics, which relates sounds to letters that represent them. Indeed, instruction in phonemic awareness may involve the use of print (D. S. Strickland & J. A. Schickedanz).

MacDonald and Cornwall (1995) research result showed the relative stability of phonological awareness and the importance of this awareness as a precursor to the development of word identification and spelling skills.
2.4.3 Reading Attitudes

Through learning, students can not only develop various capabilities but establish the internal states that influence their choices of personal actions. These outcomes of learning are called attitudes (Gagne, 1985). Because of the influences of attitudes on learners’ behavior, teachers should focus on students’ affective change in addition to students’ cognitive performance.

Reading attitude is related with readers’ perceptions and points of views, such as likes or dislikes the reading materials during the processes of reading. According to Alexander and Hearhington (1988) affective domain related to reading comprises four elements: attitude toward reading, motivation for reading, reading interest, self concept to related reading. They also state that reading attitude is the most important element among these four elements. Similarly, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) emphasized that reading attitude is a definition of student’s reading belief, reading feeling, and reading behavior.

2.4.4 Letter Knowledge, Phonological Awareness and Reading Attitude

Why it is saying that alphabet letter knowledge such a powerful predictor of future reading success? Because letter knowledge is one of the aspects in the early literacy-rich environment by providing children with books and print experiences (Adams, 1990; Scanlon & Vellutino, 1997). Beside letter knowledge helps children to connect printed words with spoken language which then will facilitate their letter-sound knowledge. Letter-sound knowledge requires a higher level of phonological awareness.
skills than does letter naming (Treiman et al., 1998). Phonological awareness contended rhyming perception, phoneme identity-perception, rhyming production and phoneme identity-production which support the children to build correlations between letters and sounds (Sebastian Wren & Jennifer Watts, 2002).

The above two skills show differential predictive effects that should be a better predictor of reading fluency because it reflects a greater depth of grapheme-phoneme knowledge and automaticity (S. D. Strickland & A. J. Schickedanz, 2004). Some researchers from Florida State University, (Hecht. A. S, Burgess, Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 2004) made a research of beginning kindergarten from their first to fourth grade years in reading ability. It shown that reading abilities were related to phonological awareness, rate of access to phonological information in long-term memory, and print knowledge. When they have sufficient knowledge of letter knowledge and phonological awareness skills they won’t be hesitate and confuse in reading the print during their reading time.

2.4.5 Children’s English Literature

Another essential role of reading development is about children literature. It has a tremendous and long life effects on children’s linguistic development and personal growth. During the process of reading literature, children are exploring new information or knowledge. According to Chang (1998) the values of children’s literature include promoting language development, inspiring culture awareness, and encouraging personal growth. It is because the children’s literature provided various experiences and viewpoints which encourage their curiosity of new perceptions of how characters in each stories dealt with their daily problems (Norton, 1993).
Children’s literature like storybooks, picture storybooks become part of children’s language development materials which present various cultures, related to life experiences, facilitate the human life, describe an imaginative world and also contain useful information and knowledge (Bromley, 1996). Ellis and Brewster (1991) presented six values of storybooks which can enhance children’s learning motivation and cultivate their positive attitude; stimulate imagination to develop children’s creativity; provide children with reading experience to understand their own and the world around them; build up children’s confidence and vent their emotion; with repetitive words, phrases, and grammar structures can practice prediction and guessing skills and the last storybooks can develop children’s listening comprehension.

Textbooks as part of the children’s language learning has been argued that make a contribution towards achieving success in educational innovations (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). In Taiwan, the government started introduce English to the young children, The government pay a great deal of attention to the selection and training of teachers for primary level English, less attention has been paid to the selection of suitable materials, and the production of new textbooks designed for the needs of Taiwanese children (Witton, 1995). While some textbook evaluations have been carried out, and guidelines drawn up, it remains to be seen what practical effect this will have on the kinds of textbooks being used, as publishers and book distributors are tending towards caution. The imported materials they presently promote are overwhelmingly of a traditional type, reflecting a belief that teachers here are not ready for anything more “modern”.

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2.5 Balanced Reading Instruction (BRI)

2.5.1 What is balanced Reading Instruction?

Balanced reading instruction usually means a combination of whole language and phonics approaches. Researchers and practitioners alike assert that children need training in both phonemic awareness, by which they develop awareness of individual sounds--and in cueing strategies--through which they learn to decode the text and comprehend the material (Kelly, 1997).

Honing (1996) defines balanced reading instruction as one that combines language and literature rich activities associated with whole language, through explicit teaching of the skills needed to decode words. Balanced reading instruction brought out the spirit of whole language and the skill for teaching phonics (Michael Pressley, 2006).

Cowen (2004) stated that a balanced reading program should provides the authentic, comprehensive, integrated and supportive opportunities in children’s literacy development. Cowen’s descriptive explanation about balanced reading program is indicative of some professional group of elementary teachers who are open to change and incorporate a comprehensive and integrated approach to literacy for the benefit of all children.

Based on more than 20 years of experience as a classroom teacher and more than 30 more years of researching balanced approaches to reading instruction, Cowen (2004) mentioned that “A balanced reading approach is research-based, assessment-based,
comprehensive, integrated, and dynamic, in that it empowers teachers and specialists to respond to the individual assessed literacy needs of children as they relate to their appropriate instructional and developmental levels of decoding, vocabulary, reading comprehension, motivation, and socio-cultural acquisition, with the purpose of learning to read for meaning, understanding and joy.”

In essence, the balanced reading approach has been celebrated for offering an alternative to the extremes of pure phonics or whole language; for providing an effective combination of instructional approaches; and for accommodating various learning styles (M Pressley et al., 1998; Weaver, 1998).

2.5.2 Whole Language and Phonics Approaches

The whole-language approach to reading instruction continues to be widely used in the primary grades in the US schools (Moats, 2000). Over the years more and more educators in the US have started to agree that no single approach to teaching reading is fundamentally superior to all the rest. As early as 1967 the First-Grade Studies project of the US; conducted specifically to examine the best approach to reading, concluded that children learn to read by a variety of materials and methods and that a combination of approaches is often more effective. Moreover, teacher and learning situation characteristics may be more important than the method employed (Bond & Dykstra, 1967).

Young children need instruction in systematic, synthetic phonics in which they are taught sound-symbol correspondences singly, directly, and explicitly (Moats, 2000).
Moats (2000) also mentioned that there are some facts important established from previous scientific researches, that learning to read is not a natural process, children must be taught to read through a structured and prolonged process in which they are made aware of sounds and symbols that represent them, and learn to apply skills and attend to meaning.

Basically, learning to read and spell is like learning to talk. The skilled whole language teacher is the coach, model and guide. Concepts are to be discovered and not presented, for discovery according to the whole language theories, promotes higher ordered thinking skills (Moats, 2000). However, students who are not taught properly are less able to sound out a new word when they encountered one. They would become slower and inaccurate in reading whole words, less able to spell, and less able to interpret punctuation. Students deserve to have sufficient understanding of the language they speak, read, and write, in order to communicate well, which ironically the whole language approach has proven to be of great help.

An alphabetic, phonic approach to teaching reading has been used for centuries. In the 19th century, this kind of approach began to be called phonics (SIL, 1999). Since then it has been further developed and modified. Today a phonics approach is used in varying degrees in most reading methods. Halvorson (1992) mentioned a phonic approach to reading is an approach that teaches the relation of the letters to the sounds they represent to teach reading. Aukerman (1984) also added that once learners have learned the relationships of the letters to the sounds, they can pronounce printed words by blending the sounds together.
In a Phonics classroom, great emphasis is placed on reading precision, and children are encouraged to read the words exactly as they appear on the page. Children are explicitly taught rules about the way words are written and spelled, and they are taught spelling-sound relationships. After a teacher provides an explicit lesson in a particular Phonics rule (e.g. if the last letter of a word is an ‘e’ then the first vowel is usually long), the child is presented with a passage of text that contains many words consistent with that rule (decodable text); this provides the child with the opportunity to apply each Phonics rule on a variety of words in the context of a passage (Cowen, 2004).

The goal of the Phonics teacher, then, is to instill children with the Phonics rules and the common spelling-sound relationships, and to teach children to apply this knowledge in sounding-out each word they encounter, making the assumption that comprehension and appreciation will be a natural consequence of accuracy (Wren, 2003).

2.5.3 The Principles and Design of the BRI

A balanced approach requires and enables a teacher to reflect on what he or she is doing and to modify instruction daily based on the needs of each individual learner. So there are some points which become balanced approach considerations according to (Blair-Larsen & Williams, 1999) which learners, teachers, curricular, and schools varies and children deserve consistent curriculum. Holdaway (1979) presents four strategies of a balanced program that have existed in New Zealand for more than two decades:

**Guided Reading** – involves a teacher working with a small group of four to six children reading individual copies of the same text. The texts are selected by the teacher
to be at the children’s learning level. The texts have some challenges and the teacher prepares the children to use a range of problem solving strategies to read them. The texts used over successive sessions should have a careful gradient of difficulty (Hill, 1999).

**Independent Reading** – the purpose is to build fluency and motivation for reading. Children are encouraged to read texts at their independent reading level so that reading is practiced and fluency is increased. Each child is challenged to read on their own for a sustained period of time (Hill, 1999).

**Shared Reading**- is usually a whole group activity and although it is led by the teacher, children can participate in the reading in various ways, including choral reading and readers’ theatre. The focus for shared reading may be to learn how to read various text types, how to solve problems in identifying various words or, at the sentence level, the way punctuation and grammar are used to communicate meaning (Hill, 1999).

**Language Experience Approach** - supports children's concept development and vocabulary growth while offering many opportunities for meaningful reading and writing activities. Another benefit of the language experience approach is the development of shared experiences that extend children's knowledge of the world around them while building a sense of classroom community. Students are involved in planning, experiencing, responding to, and recording the experience and later, in participating in ‘remember when we?’ conversations (Regina, 1992).
2.5.4 Related Studies on BRI

In order to gain better insights on previous research done on BRI, a thorough compilation of foreign studies related to BRI were compiled. Listed below are some of the research descriptions, which were found to be of support to the current research.

Baumann (1996) in the study entitled “Reports on a Nationwide survey of Instructional Beliefs and Practices of Elementary Public School Teachers”, finds that teachers generally do not assume a polar, either/or approach to phonics and whole language, but instead provide children a balanced eclectic program involving both reading skill instruction and immersion in enriched literacy experiences. While, Pressley, Weaver, Kelly & Alterman (1998) in their study entitled “A Study of Effective First-Grade Literacy Instruction”, mentioned that most of elementary teachers use whole language and phonics skills in balanced reading instruction among their classes which improves the students reading ability and involves multiple instructional components articulated with one another.

In a book edition by Baltas & Shafer (1996) entitled “Scholastic Guide to Balanced Reading K-2: Making It Work for You”, they mentioned that BRI programs gives educators a chance to step into actual classrooms where teachers have successfully implemented effective programs. While Foorman (1996), in her study entitled “An experiment comparing Balanced Grade-1 to Whole Language and skills emphasis instruction”, stated that the students in balanced instruction were doing much better than students either in the whole language or skill emphasis classrooms.
Abbott, Reed, Abbott & Berninger (1997), led sixteen children with severe reading problems in the first grade, to receive a year-long individual tutorial intervention. Results showed that the children improved a lot on the measures of orthographic and phonological coding, word identification, word attack skills, reading comprehension, letter automaticity, and spelling.

In the research of Gunner, Smith & Sauda (1999), a balanced reading program was implemented to improve students’ attitudes toward reading and to promote comprehension within the target classrooms. Result showed that there was an increased growth in reading comprehension within all targeted grades. A post survey showed that students’ attitude improved. In addition, Pernai, Pulciani & Vahle (2000) tested the effectiveness of the implementation of the Hello Reader Scholastic Phonics program as an addition to an already rich, literature based curriculum. Results showed that a balanced reading program successfully enhanced student’s growth in upper case letter identification, lower case letter identification, letter/sound recognition, and pre-primer word identification.

The balanced reading instruction was not really popular in Taiwan yet, but perhaps some elementary teachers have implemented this instruction without deeply understanding of it. The below are some summaries of BRI researches in the Taiwan contexts, mostly in Elementary school.

In a paper entitled “The effects of balanced reading instruction on Elementary School Students’ English Word Recognition, Reading Comprehension and Reading Attitude”, the researcher mentioned that BRI was beneficial in enhancing students’ English word recognition, improve students’ English reading comprehension ability, did
not enhance students’ attitudes toward reading English children’s books (Y. C. Fu, 2008).

In addition, Tsai (2006) dissertation entitled “Balanced Reading Instruction Model and the Experimental Study on the Effects of This Model for EFL Students in Senior High School”, mentioned that BRI was able to enhance students’ word-reading ability, helped enhance students’ English reading comprehension ability, could improve the students’ attitude toward English reading.

Leou (2005) study entitled “Influence of Balanced Reading Instruction on Students’ Reading Ability and Reading Motivation”, stated that BRI had indeed produced positive influences on students’ reading ability and reading motivation. Similarly, in Tsao (2005) master’s thesis entitled “Effects of Balanced Reading Instruction on Fifth-grade Students’ English Reading Ability and Reading Attitude”, found out that there is no significant difference on English Reading Ability Test between the Experimental Group and the Controlled Group. Also, in a study entitled “Action Research of the Balanced Reading Instruction in Elementary Literature and Language Field”, results showed that students while in the progress of the BRI faced teachers in a more positive attitude towards the courses. Students ask themselves criticize gradually. Students ask for reading more books and love to read (K. C. Hsieh, 2005).

Liaw (2003) did research on the efficacy of integrating phonics instruction and whole language principles into an elementary EFL classroom. The participants were thirty seven fifth graders. Field notes, videotaping and quantifiable evaluation methods were used to collect data. The result showed that children demonstrated positive gains in their phonics skills and vocabulary recognition. While, Leou and Huang (2007) designed a balanced reading program and tested its effect on vocational high school students’ word
recognition ability and reading motivation. The results showed that the experimental group scores significantly higher than the controlled group in the reading subtest and the reading motivation questionnaire after the instruction, but there were no significant differences in a spelling test between the two groups.

2.5.5 Synthesis of the previous BRI studies

From the previous discussed researches from both foreign and local sources, some general facts can be noted. First, most elementary school teachers support a balanced reading instruction. Second, a balanced reading instruction is helpful to developing students reading ability and interest. Third, a balanced reading instruction can work in both first language learner and second language learner classrooms.

2.6 Reading Assessment

2.6.1 Reading Assessment and the Abecedarian Reading Assessment Method

Effective reading instruction begins with assessment (Pearson, 2006). Individual children come to class with such diverse literacy backgrounds, it is not safe to assume that they will all learn to read the same way and that they will all benefit equally from classroom lessons. Reading is a skill, and as such, teachers should begin by determining what skills and knowledge each child already has, and the teacher should customize instruction to the individual learning needs of the students (Anderson et al., 1985).
Good reading instruction also begins with assessment (Pearson, 2006). The need for assessment stems from the fact that children are not all identical. If all children were identical, instruction would be a whole lot easier (Wren & Watts, 2003a). Wren and Watts (2003b) also mentioned that an effective teachers teach children what they are ready to learn, and do not waste time teaching children what they already know. Reading assessments help teachers keep track of the zone of proximal development for each child, so instruction can be designed which is neither too easy nor too challenging.

Children arrive in class with a maddening diversity of understandings and experiences, especially when it comes to reading. The teacher cannot make any assumption about what the child knows and what the child still needs to learn when it comes to developing literacy skills. To be successful and efficient, teachers must be adept at making a quick assessment of each child's reading and pre-reading skills, and further, teachers must be adept at using that assessment information to make decisions about what instruction each child should receive (Wren & Watts, 2003b).

Assessment can be a straightforward observation of a child's behavior when writing; it can be an observation of how well a child plays a word game; it can be an observation of a child's oral reading fluency. Every observation has the capability to be an assessment. It is a good idea, however, to bring together teacher observations with more formal and objective assessment information - the two complement each other, and give the teacher a much better informed picture of each child's reading-related skills (Wren & Watts, 2003b).

The Abecedarian was designed to prove diagnostic information about early reading skills. It is divided into six major subtests. Most of these subtests are further
broken into a variety of tasks. The subtests are further broken into a variety of tasks. The subtests and the tasks were selected and created with the best research information available (please see appendix). The preponderance of research evidence suggests that children who have phoneme awareness in kindergarten are much more likely to be successful readers in third grade than children who lack phoneme awareness (Wren & Watts, 2003a).

Research has visibly shown the benefits of developing all of the knowledge domains tested by the Abecedarian early. The preponderance of research indication suggests that children who have phoneme awareness in kindergarten are much more likely to be successful readers in third grade than children who lack phoneme awareness. Similarly, knowing the letters of the alphabet is one of the best predictors of reading success. The same is true of knowledge of the alphabetic principle and word recognition skills. Vocabulary knowledge both predicts and is a result of reading success, as is decoding fluency (Wren & Watts, 2003a).

It is recommended that all students be able to pass the Letter Knowledge, Phoneme Awareness, and the Alphabetic Principle subtests by the beginning of the first grade. And by the end of the first grade, students should be able to pass the rest of the subtests. The ground rules of assessment are not necessary to give every part of the Abecedarian to every student so teacher should know the strategic. For example, if a student passes the Decoding – Fluency section, it is sure that the students are not necessary to take Letter Knowledge or Alphabetic Principle assessments. The assessment increase in difficulty and the teacher should put in into consideration. The philosophy that underlies the Abecedarian is that assessment is important to inform instruction, but
excessive assessment is a waste of time. Teacher should not miss the opportunity to know their students literacy skills better (Sebastian Wren & Jennifer Watts, 2002).

Figure 2. Research Framework

In this assessment sometimes speech sounds (phonemes) are described, where speech sounds are described, slashes are used to indicate that teachers are referring to a speech sound and not a letter. For example, the sound /k/ represents the letter “k” – the
sound /k/ is the first sound in “cat” and “kite”. The organization of this assessment is somewhat hierarchical, ideally every child will complete some of the *Phoneme Awareness and Phonological Awareness tasks*, and first grade kindergartens should take the Letter Knowledge test. The Vocabulary assessments are always appropriate at either kindergarten or first grade, but the Decoding assessments should only be given to children who have a strong foundation in the more basic “pre-reading” skills. By the end of first grade however every teacher should be confident that every one of their students should pass all the assessments. The research base that was used to inform the creation of the Abecedarian clearly indicates that early mastery of each of the knowledge domains assessed by the Abecedarian is critically important to reading success.

The researchers have attempted to create a flowchart to represent the way these knowledge domains relate to each other and to give some information about how teachers can be strategic in their assessment of early literacy skills. There are six knowledge domains that can be assessed with the Abecedarian, top to bottom, from “most advanced” to “most elementary”. All children should get the vocabulary assessment so all teachers should frequently assess the development. The most advanced children begin with the decoding tasks. And a child who can decode words fluently has moved beyond the basic skills assessed by the Abecedarian. Understanding the knowledge domain will help teacher to be efficient of the assessment (please see figure 2 and www.balancedreading.com for more information)