CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study answered the initial research questions about the strategies of organizing a balanced reading instruction to improve first grade student’s reading ability, and simultaneously improve their learning attitude toward English reading. After these instructions and reading programs, most of the students improved their phonemic awareness, word recognition, reading comprehension, and spelling. In addition, significant increases in the students’ learning attitudes toward English reading were also noted.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The main findings of the study in answering two research questions are summarized in the first section. This is followed by the pedagogical implications which are generated for instructors and educators. Lastly, suggestions and insights are also given to aid in future researches.

5.1 Main Findings

The Quantitative data showed that almost all of the researcher’s students had made adequate progress in their reading development. Some had actually made quite amazing progress since the beginning of the semester. It is found that the students demonstrated more confidence in reading, more fluent reading, increased sight vocabulary, improved ability to use cues and strategies, better phonemic awareness and
ability to use phonics, improved comprehension and increased attitude toward reading. In addition, during independent reading students tend to ask for more books. More details are as following:

1. BRI worked better for low to intermediate level readers enhancing letter knowledge and phonological awareness and reading attitude
2. It built a positive atmosphere for stronger readers who could collaborate with the low level readers to create a healthy environment.
3. It built up students’ confidence and enhances students reading not just in school but also at home.
4. Improve in phonic skills, reading comprehension and ability to complete simple written responses in reading journal.

More confidence during reading class and increased vocabulary spelling - the results indicated that the BRI program enhanced seven of fifteen participants’ motivation to learn English (SG7, SG9, SB10, SB11, SB12, SB13 and SB15). Their confident showed during class time, when they volunteer to answer teacher’s questions and sometimes even pose questions. They also believed that even if the difficulty level of learning contents in their English class would increase in the future, they had the confidence to overcome it.
**Improved phonics skills** – Individual reading conferences books and the Abecedarian test indicated that almost all students improved their phonemic awareness and their phonics skills, as well as their ability to use these skills to decode.

**Improved reading comprehension and ability to complete simple written responses in reading journals** – Students reading journals confirmed that the students had increased their reading comprehension, as demonstrated in their ability to respond appropriately to the books that they had read.

The qualitative data from the researcher’s journal, as well as surveys and interviews from parents, students, and colleagues, also revealed some interesting information. Summary of results are as such:

The reading program resulted in improved reading skills and strategies. Student surveys and interviews revealed the students felt that their reading skills had improved since the beginning of the year. “I can read along during summer reading program.” Several mentioned that they improved in their reading, by means of strategies, and motivation through rewards. (Interview notes (students): July, 2008). The contrast results appeared to low up to intermediate level readers in the present study.

Parent surveys and interviews also showed positive feedback about their children’s performance in reading skill. Some comments are as follows. “...doesn’t feel anxious and nervous like before, is able to sound out words with more success, recognizes sight words faster and with more confidence, reads more books, read more
fluently, read independently…” The reasons for these changes were written and noted as “…extra help after class hour, lots of help at school, home, rewards and encouragement for reading, lots of practice, reading to learn about different things like animals,…”

(Interview notes (parents): July, 2008)

The reading program also showed improvement in students’ attitudes regarding reading. Many parents reported improvements in their child’s attitude. They reported and commented through the communication booklets and also through the questionnaires.

Another way to motivate the students’ reading attitude was the use of rewards and incentives. Prizes were effective in motivating some children to engage in more reading tasks. The researcher reflected on the reading incentive program in her journal when she wrote, “The school also gave an incentives of 1000 NT$ for the best students of the semester at the end of the semester. It is also part of the motivation; the stars which collected each day during class time were counted by the students as they were expected to get toys of presents from our Rewards Shelf. At the end of the semester, the Director allowed us to watch a movie”

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

Throughout this inquiry into practice, the researcher identified some important aspects of a successful intervention program for struggling readers. The researcher
clarified the understanding of the several suggestions for cram school which are essential in an instructional program that will support the reading development of all children.

First, the researcher noted that the underachievers should have an intensive program, which will ensure more time for building their reading skills ability. Through smaller group or individualized strategies and activities by more specific instruction in applying sight vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonic skills and more beginners reading, the underachievers will enable to increase their reading ability and motivation of learning English.

Second, the researcher discovered English teachers are supposed to provide students with varied reading materials in order to improve their English comprehension. There are several teaching strategies that are effective in supporting children. Teaching Phonics will improve the students’ ability to recognize words. Beside the strategies of reading partners, guided reading, the use of word study, rewards and incentive programs, making words activities, and the use of a wide variety of leveled fiction and non-fiction reading material will balance the students’ learning.

Third, as a practitioner or English teacher should use pictures and words in picture storybooks to comprehend students’ reading on text.

Finally, the researcher is now even more certain that children who struggle to read can be helped with well-planned, intensive, individualized intervention programs. The
researcher also revealed that interaction and input of partners, professional’s colleagues, and parents of the students are helpful and insightful. Although she felt that it was her responsibility to create the appropriate environment and to establish the teaching procedures necessary for the students to learn to read, it was difficult for her to do the whole task alone, especially for the weaker readers in her class. The researcher needed the assistance of colleagues to help implement the strategies that the researcher felt would lead to improvement for all her students.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although the findings in this study indicate that BRI is possibly beneficial and effective in improving EFL beginners in a Taiwan cram school students’ letter knowledge, phonological awareness and reinforce reading attitudes toward English children’s literatures, there are still some limitations of the present study explained as follows. Therefore, some suggestions are provided for future research to compensate the limitations of the study and to further explore the effects of BRI in the EFL learning environment.

First, the sample size of this present study is small; therefore the results cannot be generalize able to a wider population, such as participants of different ages or different kind of cram school in Taiwan. Second, the period of time was inadequate, required to the semester program, the BRI program lasted more than 5 months with 30 half an hour reading sessions. Thus, future research can conduct a longer period of time to examine the effects of BRI. Because the results showed BRI seems not to significantly enhance
the whole class students’ reading attitudes toward English children’s literatures. It might because of students’ deficient word recognition and lack of ability also sufficient exposure of the context. Third, the assessment or evaluation adopted in this study was limited to investigate students’ gain in letter knowledge and phonological awareness. Consequently, future studies are recommended to design a multiple evaluation or assessment instrument to explore students’ language skills including listening, speaking and writing ability.

Last but not least, the researcher needs to find resource support and early intervention programs for young learners. Since some children need intensive intervention in order to learn how to read, Teachers should be provided with ongoing professional development to help them acquire the expertise and skills necessary to teach children with reading difficulties and other learning problems. This requires a great deal of knowledge, effort and flexibility on the part of the classroom teacher, but it is absolutely crucial if the students are to be successful. The job would definitely be easier if resources were specifically allocated to early intervention programs. Finally, the researcher know that her action research inquiry into effective strategies in teaching students who struggle to learn how to read, and the resulting search for partnerships to improve student learning, will continue in the future. The quest may even result in another action research project.