

THE **STRUGGLING READERS' PERCEPTIONS** ON THE
INTENSIVE READING PROGRAMME

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PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of a ten-week Intensive Reading programme on struggling readers following a usability perspective design. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the ten-week Intensive Reading Programme designed to provide extra coaching for struggling readers. The ten weeks IRP covered various aspects of literacy teaching such as phonics rules, phonetic word test, sight words, paragraph reading, organizing story map, comprehending text. In this study, four reading strategies were being used by the struggling readers in the IRP, and they are: reading aloud, silent reading, cooperative reading and oral reading. The study addresses two major questions. The first examined the struggling readers' perspective of IRP. The second one investigates if there is any significant difference in using Intensive Reading Programme on students reading comprehension of struggling readers. A total number of 32 primary school students from Sri Mawar private school, Johor Bahru, 17 males and 15 females were involved. They were put into two groups for monitoring purpose. A quantitative analysis was used to examine the effects of the IRP on struggling readers. Data was gathered through questionnaire and this supports the first research question. This questionnaire was framed as per the Summer Literacy Program Participant Survey and Questionnaire which was designed by Haug (2010). The Reading Assessment Tests were the grade three paper, designed by Sri Mawar International English Subject teachers. The findings revealed that IRP was successful as the survey results showed a majority of participants felt the positive effects of the IRP on comfort and confidence levels. Besides that, students' reading assessment results indicated a significant increase in scores for the population from reading assessment tests.

Therefore, this study could be used as a guide as reading programme developers can see how the pupils' have improved in their reading abilities from the data collected.

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KESAN PROGRAM BACAAN INTENSIF TERHADAP MURID YANG LEMAH DALAM BACAAN.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini melibatkan kesan bagi sepuluh minggu perlaksanaan Program Bacaan Intensif pada murid-murid yang menghadapi kesukaran dalam membaca. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan satu kumpulan reka bentuk perspektif kebolegunaan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan sepuluh minggu Program Bacaan Intensif yang direka untuk menyediakan bimbingan tambahan untuk murid-murid yang mengalami kesukaran dalam membaca. Sepuluh minggu Program Bacaan Intensif merangkumi pelbagai aspek pengajaran literasi seperti peraturan fonik, ujian perkataan fonetik, kata penglihatan, bacaan perenggan, mengorganisasikan peta cerita, memahami teks. Murid-murid yang mengalami kesukaran dalam membaca menggunakan empat strategi membaca dalam kajian ini iaitu membaca dengan lantang, bacaan senyap, pembacaan koperatif dan bacaan lisan di Program Bacaan Intensif. Kajian ini menangani dua soalan utama. Yang pertama, apakah persepsi pembaca yang mengalami kesukaran dalam membaca mengenai Program Bacaan Intensif (IRP). Soalan yang kedua menyiasat jika terdapat sebarang perbezaan yang signifikan menggunakan Program Bacaan Intensif pada kefahaman murid yang menghadapi kesukaran dalam membaca. Seramai 32 pelajar sekolah rendah dari sekolah swasta Sri Mawar, Johor Bahru, 17 lelaki dan 15 perempuan terlibat dalam kajian ini. Mereka dimasukkan ke dalam dua kumpulan untuk tujuan pemantauan. Analisis kuantitatif telah digunakan untuk mengkaji kesan IRP pada murid-murid yang mengalami kesukaran dalam membaca. Data dikumpulkan melalui soal selidik dan ini menyokong persoalan

kajian yang pertama. Soal selidik ini telah dirangka mengikut Peserta “Summer Literacy Program”, Ukur dan Soal Selidik yang direka oleh Haug (2010). Penilaian membaca adalah kertas gred tiga, yang direka oleh guru Bahasa Inggeris Sekolah antarabangsa Sri Mawar. Kertas ujian penilaian membaca ini digunakan untuk menentukan perbezaan yang signifikan daripada IRP pada peserta kefahaman membaca. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa IRP telah berjaya sebagai hasil kajian di mana majoriti peserta merasakan kesan positif daripada IRP pada tahap keselesaan dan keyakinan. Selain itu, hasil kefahaman pelajar menunjukkan peningkatan yang ketara dalam skor untuk populasi dari Ujian Penilaian membaca. Oleh itu, kajian ini boleh digunakan sebagai panduan kerana pemaju program membaca boleh melihat bagaimana murid telah bertambah baik dalam kebolehan membaca mereka dari data yang dikumpul.

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CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Reading, like spoken language is a complex cognitive activity. According to Inderjit (2014), reading is regarded as a process, a mode of thinking, a kind of real experience and it involves many complex skills, such as: the ability to perceive printed words, to skim for information, and then perhaps to read intensively. According to Snow et al. (1998), reading is a complex developmental challenge that we know to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments, some of which are: attention, memory, language, and motivation, for example. Hence, reading is not only a cognitive psycholinguistic activity, but also a social activity.

Gates (1949) defined reading as a complex organization of the patterns of higher mental processes that can and should embrace all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem-solving. The reading process requires continuous practices, development and refinement. Like all other languages, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader, which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community; which is culturally and socially situated. Developing and mastering reading skills in the target language, is an achievement that benefits a learner throughout his or her lifetime.

Basic literacy skills need to be learned when children are in the primary grades (Gable et al., 2012). According to Philips (1984), second language reading may be even more complex, for it requires processing using sufficient knowledge of the language. Therefore, sufficient knowledge as well as lots

of exposure to the language are required to improve one's second language skills.

There are several problems encountered in Malaysian primary schools where children could not read at grade level. Children at the age of seven should be able to recognise words, word segments and letter-sound relationship, which leads to phonological awareness. Furthermore, longitudinal studies have also shown that children who fail to gain adequate basic literacy skills at an early stage are unlikely to catch-up later (Brooks, 2007; Francis et al., 1996; Juel, 1988).

The importance placed on the development of children's literacy has resulted in the design of numerous interventions for children in the form of programs, products, practices and policies. These reading strategies must be taught often in addition to what is taught in the regular curriculum. Many different types of interventions have been designed to bring struggling readers up to grade level. Research shows that early training in linguistic skills, improves the reading performance of children; especially those at risk from reading difficulties (Lovett et al., 1990; Lundberg et al., 1988).

More so, one-to-one tutoring by experienced teachers appears to be the most effective method, yet only a few schools can afford to tutor all the students who experience difficulties in learning to read. A recent systematic review of interventions for struggling readers by Slavin et al. (2011), found the phonetic one-to-one tutoring by certified teachers, to be the most effective method for supporting struggling readers. In a 'Best Evidence Encyclopaedia' review focussing on struggling readers at the early elementary stage; Slavin et al. (2009), concluded that regardless of the programme type, a strong emphasis upon phonics was

evident in the most successful programmes, and the one-to-one programme appears particularly effective especially if delivered by a teacher rather than a paraprofessional or a volunteer.

Many different types of interventions have been designed to bring struggling readers up to grade level. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time "believes that high quality after-school programmes should focus on the development of the whole child, integrating academic supports such as literacy skills into programming, which can also promote the children's social, emotional, and physical development" (Hynes et al., 1999).

1.2 Background of Study

1.2.1 Importance of reading

Reading is viewed by many linguists as the most important skill among the well-known learning four skills, which are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Inderjit (2014), informed that through reading, we acquire new ideas and knowledge, obtain needed information, relax the mind and improve our command of language and vocabulary. It is important to state that reading is the most fundamental tool of learning for students (Senay, 2009). The same view is also shared by Anderson (1999), who stated that "among the four language skills, reading is often regarded by many as the most important skill". This means that to acquire a language, it is very important to enhance one's reading skills. In like manner, Lesaux (2012), defines reading as a process of developing "skill-based competencies" and "knowledge-based competencies". "Skill-based competencies" are skills of decoding and word recognition process, while

“knowledge-based competencies’ focusses on conceptual and vocabulary knowledge to comprehension.

She further explains that difficulties in reading occur when a reader is unable to acquire one or both competencies. This situation is also known as “strategy imbalance” (Blevin, 2006). Therefore, reading truly is important in every academic discipline (White, 2004; Lei et al., 2010); due to the way we share information (Tarchi, 2010). Many of the skills and strategies required for reading comprehension are already present in beginning readers in their ability to comprehend the spoken word. As with the spoken word, meaning is often deeper than a single word, single sentence, or even a single paragraph. Hence, readers must make use of their existing knowledge to make the inferences necessary to uncover these deeper meanings (Hirsch, 2003).

As cited by Morales (2010), Wallace (1992) stated that reading is a tool for survival, a medium for social interaction and a means to access general knowledge of the world. Reading is also an important skill to students, as most of everything they do in school is based on the ability to read and understand printed texts. The ability to read and comprehend is a prerequisite in any field of study. Unless students are able to understand textual information, their time would be wasted. Krashen (1984) claimed that “it is reading that gives the writer the ‘feel’ for the look and texture of reader-based prose” (Yoshimura, 2009). In like manner, Eskey (1970) claimed that the ability to read at a reasonable rate and comprehend a text is considered important.

We should remember that reading skills are the basis for subsequent mastery of almost every subject area. (Kameenui et al., 2002). As such, their

development takes precedence. Halim et al. (2010) found out that reading activity is an effective process redounding the information capacity of humankind, shaping of ideas and beliefs, as well as acquiring his personality. Therefore, reading should be made attractive beginning with school students; as reading is an important aspect in any schooling system. It is an important skill that needs to be mastered for students to do well in their studies.

John Carroll in his 1969 article in 'Elementary Reading Instruction', points out that the essential skill in reading is getting meaning from a printed or written text. However, it has to be stressed that the learners or readers' success in constructing meaning, would depend on their competence in interacting with the text. This meaning construction and comprehension, however involves the application of strategies; and the ability to apply them effectively would determine their success in comprehension. In order to prove this, the researcher and the language department teachers hence decided to conduct a reading programme for the students especially for the ones who have difficulties in reading. The researcher believes that reading is the vital skill that a child needs to acquire in order to excel academically.

1.2.2 Reading system

The concept of a 'balanced reading structure' is structured based on the balanced foundation proposed by Lan et al. (2009). Each instructional package has phonetic rules plus a set of common sight words from the low-level linguistics training, the phonetic word module, and sight word module. Furthermore, based on the content of the low-level linguistic skills, a text containing several comprehension questions was produced in some text

reading activities to provide students with opportunities to master these low-level linguistic skills.

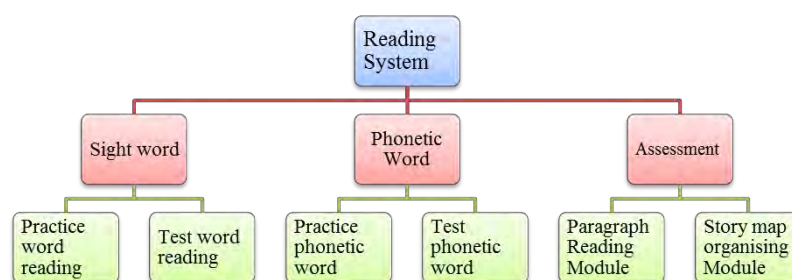


Figure 1.1: Modules of the CAREER system.

Adapted from balanced foundation proposed by Lan et al., (2009)

Figure 1.1 above shows the Intensive Reading programme which is structured based on the computer-assisted reciprocal early English reading (CAREER SYSTEM). The focus of this study is on the use of the scaffolding strategy with minimal use of computers.

This study focuses on four stages which are modelling, coaching, cooperative learning and independent learning. After receiving coaching, the students completed a test and received feedback on their performance.

1.2.3 CAREER System

The CAREER system stands for Computer Assisted Reciprocal Early English Reading. CAREER had been developed by Lan et al. (2009), to evaluate its effect on the early reading skills and learning behaviours of elementary EFL learners. The CAREER system is based on three essential components of effective reading instructions, which are: the balanced reading structure, immediate and specific feedback, and reciprocal learning scenario. Analytical results indicate that the CAREER system reduces the reading problems experienced by students in a

cooperative learning environment; and effectively helps elementary EFL learners orchestrate their learning, while completing individual reading tasks and pursuing group goals. The results also demonstrate that CAREER appears to be able to benefit elementary EFL learners in developing reading skills. In sum, with the support of CAREER, the early reading skills of elementary students are benefitted by cooperating with each other (Lan et al., 2009). The researcher has used the framework of the CAREER system to conduct the Intensive Reading Programme (IRP) and developed reading materials based on the framework. However, the use of computers was very minimal in the current study and students got to participate in classroom activities throughout the 10 weeks of IRP, to complete each task such as practising word reading, practising phonetics, reading short paragraphs, and organising a story map.

1.2.4 Intensive Reading Programme

According to Shi & Govindaraju (2005), Intensive Reading means reading a short text at a slow pace. Intensive Reading Programme was first introduced by Wanzek and Vaughn (2007). From the 13 studies Wanzek and Vaughn were able to identify, Intensive Reading Programmes generally resulted in positive outcomes. In particular, Intensive Reading has been shown to be a highly successful reading programme for students who have reading difficulties.

Furthermore, Wanzek et al. (2013) conducted a synthesis of findings from studies that provided Intensive Reading interventions of 75 or more sessions for students in grades 4–12 with reading difficulties or disabilities. Findings from those previous studies suggested that one of the best ways to help students increase their reading ability especially for struggling readers is to read intensively.

According to Vaughn and Scammacca (2015), intensive reading interventions which focus on various reading areas such as reading comprehension, reading fluency and word reading, have a positive impact on students' reading outcome. Similarly, Wanzek et al. (2013) have carried out an Intensive Reading intervention targeting various reading strategies such as computer-assisted instruction, direct instruction, differentiated instruction, vocabulary, discussion, and word identification.

This study, which focusses on various reading outcome, shows positive impact on students' reading achievements (Wanzek et al., 2013). Despite the number of students struggling to make adequate progress, substantial research in early reading has documented that providing intensive, early reading interventions can produce significant improvements in reading outcomes for most students; hence reducing the performance gap between struggling readers and their higher performing peers (Denton et al., 2006; Denton et al., 2013; Gilbert et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2005; Scanlon, et al., 2005; Vellutino et al., 2006). This is one of the reasons Intensive Reading is encouraged by many educators especially for students with reading problems in primary schools.

According to Wanzek (2018), the effects of Intensive Reading Programmes depend on the duration, number of participants, year group, and language proficiency. In the RTI framework, strong evidence supports the efficacy of intensive reading instruction (Vaughn et al., 2010) delivered for 20 to 40 minutes for 3 to 5 days per week, with instructional time allotment increasing from kindergarten to early primary grades (Gersten et al., 2009).

In the context of this study, IRP was developed by the teachers of the English Language Department of Sekolah Sri Mawar, Johor Bahru, to help struggling

readers in the primary school to improve and develop proper reading skills. The IRP was introduced to minimise the number of low achieving students academically. These students are first and second language learners; as they came from two different streams, namely the International and National school curriculums. However, their language ability is not up to their grade level as they have problems with reading. Although there are variations in the way by which an IRP is administered; the researcher however believes that IRP could help to facilitate struggling readers improve their reading skills with proper guidance in reading.

1.3 Background information of IRP

The term IRP stands for Intensive Reading Program. IRP is a ten-week reading program that was developed by the researcher and the English department teachers of Sekolah Sri Mawar.

The English teachers of Sekolah Sri Mawar discovered that some students in the primary grades needed extra coaching that could help in increasing their literacy skills. Therefore, the English department teachers of sekolah Sri Mawar decided to conduct IRP for students who were unable to meet grade-level standards in literacy as well as those who have performed poorly in the English examination.

IRP is thus, designed to accelerate literacy development so that students are able to make substantial progress toward accomplishing reading tasks that are appropriate for their current grade level. The researcher sent a proposal to the school authorities to get permission to conduct a 10 week after-school intensive reading program for students who showed signs of struggles in reading. After getting permission from the school principal, the researcher asked the English subject teachers of year three until

year six to get a list of student names who face challenges in reading. Thereafter, parents' consent forms were sent out to get permission from their parents, as this reading program was planned to be held after school hours. A total number of 32 students from year three up to year six were identified as struggling readers. These students were gathered in a separate classroom and they were exposed to various reading tasks, techniques and strategies for a duration of 10-weeks.

1.3.1 Development of IRP

IRP was developed based on the reading tasks and activities adopted from the CAREER system. CAREER stands for computer-assisted Early English reading. As mentioned in the previous section, CAREER was developed by Lan et al. (2009), to evaluate its effect on early reading skills and learning behaviours of elementary EFL learners. There are six reading components shown in Figure 1.1. The researcher applied all six reading components in the current study to help struggling readers read effectively. The reading components adopted from the CAREER system are: sight word reading, test word reading, practising phonetics word reading, test phonetic words, reading short paragraphs and organising a story map. The program was chosen based on the fact that researchers who used "Intensive reading" in their study to help struggling readers, resulted in positive outcomes (Wanzek and Vaughn, 2007). As posited by Vaughn and Scammacca (2015), intensive reading interventions which focused on various reading areas such as reading comprehension, reading fluency and word reading, have a positive impact on students' reading outcome. The current study focused on various reading areas to help struggling readers to read. According to Wanzek (2018), Intensive Reading should be targeted for primary school students, as reading problems can be solved when structured reading programs are introduced. In the current study, the age range of the students is within, 9 to 12 years old, and these

students faced challenges in reading during regular English lessons. These students require a supplementary and individualized reading program. As such they were placed in IRP to help them make progress in their reading.

1.3.2 The nature of reading tasks used in IRP

In order for the struggling readers to read fluently, the researcher applied four reading strategies which are: the silent reading, oral reading, reading aloud and co-operative reading. Reading consist of four types. They are intensive reading, extensive reading, aloud reading and silent reading. Each type has different function and all types are useful to improve student knowledge (Ariandika & Kartikawati, 2018). In the beginning of week one until week five, students were encouraged to recognise and associate letter and sounds of the 26 alphabets. The teachers used Jolly Phonics alphabet song to expose letter and sounds to the struggling readers. From week one until week five, reading tasks began from the initial stage of word reading such as sight words reading and phonetic word reading. The group of words were arranged from reading simple three-letter words before proceeding to longer words. The struggling readers were exposed to more than 150 words in IRP. The teachers used word cards and wordlist to expose students to word knowledge so that they would have an enhanced vocabulary knowledge before introducing them to text reading in the 6th week. Reading tasks varied every week for the purpose of giving the students, exposure to various reading areas.

1.3.3 Techniques and methods used in 'IRP'

There are various teaching techniques that the teachers employed throughout the 10 weeks of IRP. Some of the practical activities conducted from week four to week nine include: (1) reading aloud sight words, (2) reading aloud 50-80 words short

paragraph, (3) reading a lengthy paragraph silently, (4) choose a book and read in pairs-cooperative reading strategy, (5) read and answer oral questions based on a text. For two activities done in weeks 7 and 8, which are cooperative reading and organising story map, books from Scholastic Folk & Fairy Easy Readers were used. These books were selected, because the stories were familiar to the students such as Little Red Hen, The Tortoise and The Hare, among others. Every week, students used one or two reading strategies to complete the reading tasks assigned by the teachers.

1.4 Statement of Problem

The state of reading in English among Malaysians' be it adults or youngsters, has reached an alarming level. Even though English is given the status of a second language in Malaysia, this is not the case due to reason being that the exposure to the English language is still minimal. Hashemi (2011) pointed that students' weakness in English language learning is due to the differences of social contexts, and cultural environments; for example, in the environments where the first and second or foreign languages learning takes place, such as: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and others.

According to Mansor (2017), Malaysian students read mostly textbooks; as they are required to read them in order to pass their school-based examination, thus leaving them to just read little of other miscellaneous genres. Mansor also added that from the research conducted on other studies, the reading habits among Malaysian students is not widespread. Hence, Mansor claimed that English materials are read just for academic purpose and the students do not read for pleasure as they spend more time doing their school homework.

Previous studies (Abidin, 2011; Khairuddin, 2013) done on reading, shows that Malaysians' reading habits are largely unsatisfactory. It appears that most of them are minimally aware of the importance of reading, yet they do not spend much time on reading-related activities. It is crucial for this negative attitude to be overcome to create an intellectual society, which in turn would better shape the achievement of Vision 2020 (Mansor, 2017).

Students who show lower response in reading perform poorly academically compared to the students who enjoy reading (Clark, 2013). According to Lemos et al. (2013), one way to teach children to read is by exposing them to phoneme-grapheme in an explicit and systematic teaching, so that the children would be able to master the alphabetic code.

Additionally, the same approach should be applied in helping poor readers who receive supplementary reading intervention. Providing more systematic and intensive instruction, would be of some help for low-progress readers (Adams, 1990; Lemos et al., 2013; Juel, 1988; Vellutino et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Inderjit (2014) argued that reading is not even the favourite pastime of Malaysians, as most prefer to watch television and video. The ignorance of reading is frightening as the reading habit is not given importance. Based on a survey conducted on reading habits, the findings indicated that students read only to acquire knowledge and for academic reasons (Inderjit, 2014).

Although there are several researches on Malaysians' reading habits (Abidin et al., 2011; Saa'id & Wahab, 2014; Ali et al. 2005) and attitudes (Inderjit, 2014; Khairuddin, 2013), there is no known study that have investigated the effects of an Intensive Reading Programme for struggling readers in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, it is agreed that children who have problem with reading in their early years will not meet the reading expectation according to their age or year-level, when they only receive normal classroom education (Spira et al., 2005; Stanovich, 1986). Internationally, it is reported that about 57 percent of students on average, love reading to a certain extent (Mullis et al., 2012).

According to Williams and Ortlieb (2014), struggling readers are prone to develop negative attitudes toward reading. On the other hand, Briggs (1987) argued that poor readers would isolate themselves from involving in any reading activities if there are no reading interventions provided to them. In the long term, negative attitudes will persist into adult life, affecting not only economic status, but other social outcomes as well (Clark et al., 2013).

Research has proven that Malaysians are poor readers especially adults; whilst children prefer to read in preparing for their examinations rather than read for entertainment and acquiring knowledge (Inderjit, 2014). In line with the aforementioned, Yusuf (2011) said that recently, questions about the increase in the number of students who cannot read and dislike reading news from the media, reveals that many students do not have the reading skill instilled in them.

Additionally, the last National Literacy Survey carried out in 2005 reported that Malaysians still read an average of two books a year. In short, there has been no improvement. In a recent survey by the Malaysian National Library with a sample of 60,441 respondents, it was found that the literacy rate has slightly decreased to 92 percent from 93 percent in 1996 (Inderjit, 2014).

In most schools in Malaysia, children who have problems in reading are placed in intervention programmes, so that they can receive proper training and

skills to help them to read and catch up with their peers. These programmes, found in some primary schools, are normally managed by remedial teachers who have received some form of training from courses organised by the Ministry of Education.

Moreover, because of the absence of books and reading in the home environment, schools have become the sole provider of a print and language-rich environment. Unfortunately, most of the schools visited do not provide such an environment. Student work (hence student writing) is seldom on display and both English and Malay print tends to be in the form of either labels (e.g. Computer Room), or in the form of disembodied proverbs or similes (e.g. as good as gold). The libraries are poorly or inappropriately stocked, and books are seldom borrowed by students.

There is therefore a need to unravel more creative and innovative methods to teach reading, especially to struggling readers. According to the US National Reading Panel (2000), five factors must be emphasized if children are to succeed in reading. The five factors are phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Evidence from longitudinal, experimental, intervention and cross-cultural research suggests that a range of phonological skills deficits the failure in learning to read (Fawcett, 2001; Snowling, 2001).

As stated by Liberman and Shankweiler (1989), children have difficulties in processing phonological features at their cognitive level. On the other hand, a study by Stanovich (1988) and Torgesen (1993) stated that phonemic awareness deficit is the cause of numerous reading disabilities in children

and in adults. Thus, children at the primary level are demotivated to read when they lack phonological awareness.

Slavin et al. (2009) came into a conclusion that successful programmes had several common elements which included extensive professional development and follow-up on specific teaching methods for teachers; co-operative learning at their core, with children working together on structured activities; a strong focus on teaching phonics and phonemic awareness and well-developed programmes that integrates curriculum, pedagogy and extensive professional development.

In teaching a class with mixed ability students, a teacher has to be creative and sensitive to cater for the needs of the different learning styles of her students. Her task becomes even more demanding especially with the presence of those students who cannot read at all. This is where a reading programme plays a very important role. In a private school where the researcher teaches English to lower primary students, it was discovered that children from year 3 up to year 6, show signs of struggles in reading. Consequently, studies have shown that ethnic minorities, children from poor families, children attending schools in poor neighbourhoods, non-native speakers of English are very likely to have difficulty learning to read, and show persistent poor performance through their middle and secondary school years (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).

This driving force of this study therefore was to examine the effects of an Intensive Reading programme on the reading abilities of struggling primary readers. Furthermore, another target of the study is the enhancement of the achievement of students who are experiencing difficulties in learning to read. This

study also looked at the differences in a child's reading achievement after the ten weeks of implementing the Intensive Reading Programme.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is the investigation with regards to the effect of an Intensive Reading Programme on a group of struggling readers.

Other specific objectives of this research are outlined below:

1. To examine the struggling readers' perceptions of Intensive Reading Program (IRP).
2. To find out if the Intensive Reading Programme improves the reading comprehension of struggling readers.

1.6 Research Questions

This study will be driven by the following research questions:

1. What are the struggling readers' perceptions of the Intensive Reading Programme (IRP)?
2. Is there any significant difference in using the Intensive Reading Programme on the reading comprehension of struggling readers?

1.7 Definitions of Terms

Effectiveness- According to Wojtczak (2002), effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which a specific intervention, procedure or measure has been implemented or applied in a certain field. In the current study, the findings will determine whether the Intensive Reading Programme is effective or not in developing the reading skills of struggling readers.

Intensive reading- Intensive reading is a close study of the linguistic elements, including syntactic, semantic, and lexical, in a short passage (Rasoul et al., 2014). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), intensive reading is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance.

Intensive reading programme (IRP) – a reading remediation programme implemented for struggling readers from Sri Mawar schools to increase the student's reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is defined as the ability to read, understand and process the meaning of words in a text (Collins, 2005). In this study, it was expected that students should be able to read a text and complete the assigned tasks that were related to the reading material, for example retelling a story read, organising a story map, and answering open ended questions.

Struggling Readers - Students who have difficulties reading with fluency and comprehension at the basic level in all subject areas (Gaskins, 2005; Strickland et al., 2002). Struggling readers in this study are from year 3 to year 6 primary students who scored low marks below 50 in their English examination and who showed signs of struggle in reading a paragraph or a whole text.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Research into the use of reading strategy is essential as it can help to create awareness about how readers go about and manage any reading material. Based on the observation of the researcher from the way past teachers handling teaching, it was discovered that teachers generally approach the teaching of reading through choral repetition of reading texts and choral spelling aloud of words. Phonics are not taught and teachers do not seem to be aware of the fact that the name of a letter

and its sound are not the same, and indeed that the difference is confusing to the learners. Teachers seldom ask students questions about the meaning of a text or encourage prediction, self-correction or word attack skills. Unfortunately, when students read aloud individually, they are given no pause time to use reading strategies and are over-corrected for small and often insignificant pronunciation errors.

The significance of this study is that it creates allowance for teachers to make use of effective and well-structured reading strategies in improving struggling readers' abilities to read. Moreover, the in-house English language teachers also have the opportunity to discuss and share the benefits of the findings. This will improve the pedagogical knowledge in teaching literacy particularly, reading. Thirdly, and most importantly, the selected subjects will be motivated to want to learn to read fast as they are given support in a non-threatening environment to learn reading. The school and education authorities may introduce Intensive Reading Programme specifically for this group of pupils. They may lag behind if teachers do not have enough time to coach them during the classroom time. Lastly, as the hands-on researcher, this researcher gets to verify her beliefs on how a reading programme for struggling readers should be conducted in the reading classroom.

1.9 Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study was to enhance the students' interest in reading through fun learning and to enable struggling readers to grasp what is being taught.

Besides that, it exposed students to various reading strategies which would be helpful for them to manage any reading materials. This knowledge would also enhance the student's comprehension and help them to become strategic readers.

This study also benefits the reading program developers; as this study was able to show the documentation of development and provide a model on how to develop a reading programme for struggling readers. Also, the study could be used as a guide, as the reading program developers can see how the pupils' have improved in their reading abilities from the data collected.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations in this study. Firstly, the study lacks a control group. In experimental studies, a control group can determine if the effects of the treatment have resulted from the treatment rather than other possible factors. Secondly, the number of participants for this study were quite few due to time constraint and unavailability of the students. There were approximately 32 students who were involved in this research. They are of different proficiency levels and the study focused only on struggling readers based on the Intensive Reading Programme. The study is confined to a group of students, who were selected as respondents for the research. Thus, the findings and conclusions of the present study is in reference to the sample involved and cannot be generalized to other populations.

The researcher and teachers involved in IRP selected students for participation in the intervention study on the basis that they scored below 50 Marks in their English paper final examination. The participants came from 6 different classes

and ages. However, the researcher could not afford to have a control group due to the small number of students.

This study was done based on a quasi-experimental design. A single group was used throughout the treatment (Brown and Rodgers, 2002). This study was conducted in a private school where the number of students in each class or group level are small: approximately 8 to 12 students. There are two groups of primary school students who follow the international and national syllabuses. The participants were selected from both streams based on the lowest marks scored in their Final Year English examination paper. The researcher was interested in selecting students who struggle to read at the basic level.

The researcher and teachers involved in IRP have selected those students who scored below 50 Marks in their final examination of English paper. The participants came from 6 different classes and ages. The researcher could not have a control group due to the small number of students in the school. The total number of students in all the 6 classes were only 74 students. In that case 32 participants out of 74 had been identified as struggling readers. It is important to state that there are cases whereby an experimental study can be conducted without a control group just like that of Scholars like Ramsey and Schafer (2012), who managed to conduct an experimental study without a control group. Another study by Vaughn et al. (2003) was also conducted without a comparison group, on 26 grade two students. These students who have reading difficulties were proven to be successful after the 13 weeks of reading sessions. The students made significant gains in their vocabulary, reading comprehension and oral reading fluency.

Similarly, the current research investigated the effectiveness of IRP for a small number of students with reading difficulties or known as struggling readers without

a control group. The researchers' focus was mainly to improve the struggling readers' comprehension skills. However, the current research would have been enhanced through a comparison group, which would have allowed the researcher to determine the effects of IRP compared to typical classroom instruction.

Another limitation of the study is that the duration of the Intensive Reading Programme was short, as it was only a 10-week IRP. Hence, the multiple reading components inculcated in the IRP might require more time to strengthen the skills for the struggling readers involved in the programme. It is known that second language learning is challenging and requires an ample learning time to be mastered by struggling readers (Finnochiro, 1989).

1.11 Summary

This chapter introduces the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, the research questions, hypotheses and the significance of the study as well as the limitations. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effectiveness of the Intensive Reading Programme among struggling readers in a selected private school in Johor Bahru. The theoretical foundation of this study is presented in chapter two. In chapter two, the details of the literature review are further explored.

CHAPTER2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature that is related to the topic of the current study. The first section includes a general discussion of what is meant by reading and intensive reading. Besides that, the background of IRP and the importance of IRP are also presented in this chapter. Consequently, a review of literature consisting several studies that have been carried out in Malaysia is being presented; after which the chapter proceeds to present the phonological awareness and importance of reading comprehension by giving a brief review of the importance of phonological awareness and reading comprehension in relation to reading. Additionally, this chapter also focuses on the causes of reading disabilities, successful reading programs, and struggling readers.

2.2 Reading

Many researchers have given varieties of definition to reading, some of which shall be discussed here. According to Buckingham et al. (2013), reading is the ability of a reader to decode and recognise written text and make meaning of the text that is being read. Other scholars such as, Ulas et al. (2010), stated that reading activity is an effective process to gather information, ideas and beliefs. This process is an intellectual activity in which an individual's biological, psychological, and physiological properties, work together collectively (Ulas et al., 2010). On the other hand, Clark (2005), claimed that reading is an adventure and people who read derive pleasure from it. Hence, a person may read for enjoyment or to enhance the knowledge of the language being read. In second language reading, learners are

exposed to valuable second language input which they can use to advance their second language acquisition. Fundamentally, as stated by Raja Gopal (2003), there is an interaction between language and thought; in cases where the writer puts his thought in a written text and the reader decodes the written text to thought. No other skill taught and learned in school is more important than reading, as reading is a gateway to all other streams of knowledge. According to Bracken & Fischel (2008), children who face reading difficulties at an early age could not achieve the targeted reading skills if they learn how to read during their everyday classroom learning, despite the need for extra coaching outside the classroom to brush their reading skills. Therefore, reading is an essential skill that every child needs to acquire at an early age. However, the knowledge of how to read, would help the child to excel academically and increase their language skills.

According to Spira et.al (2005), competency in reading can only be achieved if the students are put in a special remedial class. There is a considerable agreement as to the fact that children who face reading difficulty at an early age will not be able to meet their year-level expectations, when they receive only regular classroom education (Spira et al., 2005). Theories about reading and numerous teaching techniques have created an awareness of the influence that reading skill has on other skills such as listening, speaking, writing, and even translating (Clark, et al., 2013). Hence, from the cognitive constructivism perspective, we believe that struggling readers can improve their performance through the use of interactive (through dialogue) strategies and the reconstruction of ideas (Tarchi, 2010).

This study looked at the effectiveness of the Intensive Reading Program (IRP) for the struggling readers who are studying in a private primary school. The researcher intended to help struggling readers to pick up reading at an early stage.

Hence, the researcher provided an IRP to the struggling readers in a 10- week reading program. The major aim of the current study is to find out if IRP would help struggling readers to read and assist in improving their reading comprehension.

2.2.1 Intensive reading

Intensive reading is normally practiced by teachers who teach languages. Intensive reading is always short, and students must study the text carefully. In fact, intensive reading is a close study of the linguistic elements, including the syntactic, semantic, and lexical ones, found in a short passage (Ejraee et al., 2014). In view of this, Brown (1989) explains that intensive reading “calls the attention to grammatical forms, discourse markers, and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding the literal meaning, implications, and rhetorical relationships, among other details in the text” (p.41). Whereas, Long and Richards (1987), informed that it is a “detailed in- class” analysis led by the teacher, which includes the vocabulary and grammar points, in a short passage” (p.37). Mainly, intensive reading emphasizes on a thorough study of the language parts in relation to the improvement of one’s reading skills. In addition, implementation of intensive reading would be helpful to the struggling readers, when presented under a well- structured program.

Intensive Reading is also concerned with other related skills, such as developing strategies of expectation and the guessing of a meaning from a context, as well as dictionaries (Alinejad, 2004). Hence, the purpose of intensive reading is to help students build up their linguistic skills and correct their errors in the language (Krashan, 1993). It is important to note that students, who show signs

of struggles in reading, should be encouraged to read intensively. Furthermore, as intensive reading is used around the world, it is believed that in teaching and reading comprehension, intensive reading can be beneficial in the expansion of reading comprehension (Yang, 2012). Waring (1997) argues that intensive reading is very useful for the learning of vocabulary and in understanding how text is organized. Moreover, Stahl (2003) found out that there is a relationship between intensive reading activities and overall language proficiency. Stahl (2003) further examined 88 Chinese students who were asked to read a given text and find the meaning, synonym or antonym of the unknown words, give a paraphrase and write a summary. It was revealed in the aforementioned study that due to the activity given, there was a significant improvement in the comprehension ability of the students. In an attempt to establish the importance of intensive reading for teachers, Paran (2003) emphasized that teachers need intensive reading to maximize learning based on the three phases of pre-, during and post-reading, for better language preparation, retention and activation strategies. A study was conducted by Torgesen et al. (2001) on the effects of intensive reading intervention for 60 students from grade 3 to grade 5; from the study, it was discovered that the students who had intractable reading problems, made dramatic gain in the reading comprehension. Similarly, a longitudinal study of first grade students (Fuchs et al., 2008), who received nine weeks of intensive intervention during the first semester of the first grade, revealed that there was a demonstration of maintenance effects until the end of the second grade, by those students who deemed responsive to the intervention.

Additionally, intensive reading involves close reading of a text, to be able to understand the meaning in detail. This usually needs a slower reading process.

For low level readers, intensive reading is possibly the fastest way to build their vocabulary. Enhancement in vocabulary would improve the performance in reading of struggling readers; as they could make sense of what they have read. Some foreign language students are able to successfully add 10 or more comprehension words per day. More so, reading a difficult material forces a learner to develop strategies for dealing with texts that are too hard to read comfortably. Intensive reading, is, therefore, regarded as an effective tool that can be used in improving people's reading comprehension (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2011).

2.2.2 Background of Intensive Reading Program (IRP)

According to Govindaraju (2005), Intensive Reading means reading a short text at a slow pace. Intensive Reading Programs were first introduced by Wanzek and Vaughn (2007). From the 13 studies that Wanzek and Vaughn have identified, it has been observed that Intensive Reading Programs have generally resulted in positive outcomes. In particular, Intensive Reading has been shown to be a highly successful reading program for students who have reading difficulties. Wanzek et al. (2013) conducted a synthesis of findings from studies that provided intensive reading interventions of 75 or more sessions, for students in grades 4–12 with reading difficulties or disabilities. Findings suggest that one of the best ways to help students increase their reading ability especially for struggling readers, is to read intensively. According to Scammacca et al. (2015), intensive reading interventions which focus on various reading areas such as; reading comprehension, reading fluency and word reading, have a positive impact on the students' reading outcome. Similarly, Wanzek et al., (2013) have carried out an Intensive reading intervention, targeting various reading strategies such as

computer assisted instruction, direct instruction, differentiated instruction, vocabulary, discussion, and word identification. Findings from the study reveals that, focus on various reading outcome shows positive impact on the students reading achievement (Wanzek et al., 2013). Despite the number of students struggling to make adequate progress, substantial research in early reading has documented that providing intensive as well as early reading interventions, can produce significant improvements in the reading outcomes of most students; hence reducing the performance gap between struggling readers and their higher performing peers (Denton et al., 2006; Denton et al., 2013; Gilbert et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2005; Scanlon et al., 2005; Vellutino et al., 2006). In view of the aforementioned facts, Intensive Reading is encouraged by many educators; especially for students with reading problems in the primary school. According to Wanzek (2018), the effects of the Intensive Reading Programs depend on the duration, number of participants, year group, and language proficiency. In the RTI framework, strong evidence supports the efficacy of intensive reading instruction (Vaughn et al., 2010), which is delivered within a duration of 20 to 40 minutes for 3 to 5 days per week, with an instructional time allotment, increasing from kindergarten to the early primary grades (Gersten et al., 2009). In the context of this study, IRP was developed by the teachers of the English Language Department in Sekolah Sri Mawar, Johor Bahru; to help struggling readers in the primary school to improve and develop proper reading skills. The IRP was introduced to minimize the number of low achieving students academically. These students are first and second language learners; as they came from two different streams, which are the International and National school curriculums. However their language ability is not up to their grade level, due to the problems they have with reading. Although

there are variations with regards to the ways in which an IRP is administered, the researcher however believes that IRP could help to cater struggling readers improve their reading skills with proper guidance in reading.

2.3 Struggling readers

Struggling readers are those students who have difficulties in reading with fluency and comprehension at the basic level in all subject areas (Gaskins, 2005; Strickland et al., 2002). Struggling reading students also have poor intellectual capacity and language development that can cause reading difficulties (Florio-Ruane et al., 2004). Many struggling readers are “disengaged from reading and reading activities related to schooling” (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Furthermore, struggling readers in a regular classroom isolate themselves due to their poor reading skills. Children will learn to read in the first years of school if the individual needs of the child are taken seriously and if there is attention given to their personal learning schedules.

Not all students easily become proficient readers and those that are not proficient often fall into the category of students that are at-risk, low-achieving, or struggling. In order to understand what causes a student to struggle, one must first understand what is necessary to make one a proficient reader. A proficient reader must possess a broad knowledge of cognitive and linguistic skills, such as the ability to make inferences, recall text, background knowledge of the topic read, and vocabulary (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). By mastering these skills, a reader will be able to read fluently and comprehend at a higher level than at a literal level. Proficient readers are also able to decode letters and sounds automatically and still simultaneously comprehend (Lubliner, 2004). According to Bob Wise in the

January 2006 edition of Newsleader, “Every school day, 7000 students will drop out of school and the vast majority will never return to the classroom”. Most of these students leave because they lack the necessary reading skills to succeed (Wise et al., 2007). Early intervention, which includes individually designed and delivered lessons, is a solution for minimizing children with difficulties in reading (Clay, 1993). Even so, reading problems are found in every classroom and among all types of students; however, children with certain demographic characteristics are at a greater risk of reading difficulties than others. It could be that biological deficits makes the processing of sound-symbol relationships difficult or perhaps could be due to poor reading instruction (Snow et al., 1998). Several studies have researched the various interventions that can assist struggling readers in becoming proficient readers. Addressing the needs of a struggling reader is necessary, but the way by which the instruction takes place, may vary. Researchers such as Trout et al. (2003) used the Direct Instruction (Carnine et al., 1997) reading curriculum, Reading Mastery I (Engelmann & Bruner, 1988), and Great Leaps (Mercer & Campbell, 1998): which is a fluency building program, as remediation programs in a study to try and improve the reading skills necessary for decoding, comprehension, and fluency in kindergarten students. These daily half hour programs along with the regular classroom curriculum, allowed the educators to assess the effects of supplementary curriculum on basic reading skills. This study found that the use of early intervention programs improved the students' early phonemic awareness skills and deterred their reading failure. In the current research, the struggling readers are students within the age of nine to twelve years old. It was found out that these students could not perform well academically due to poor reading skills; and this is backup by findings from a research which stated

that they face difficulties in reading fluently and lack comprehension skills (Gaskins, 2005; Strickland et al., 2002).

2.3.1 The importance of IRP for ESL struggling readers

Most of the research that have been carried out over the past 10 years, have proven that struggling readers are able to achieve the targeted reading skills, when provided with well planned, supporting materials and evidence-based reading interventions (Mathes et al., 2005; Vaughn et al., 2010). According to O'Connor & Fuchs (2013), more than 10 percent of the student population with reading ability and 50 percent of students with disabilities in reading, do not respond well to the same reading programs; hence, these students need more intensive programs to help them overcome reading problems (Fuchs, 2015; McMaster et al., 2005). Providing early Intensive Reading Program to children with reading difficulties would promote reading achievement among them (Hanselman & Borman et.al, 2013). Based on a study conducted by Juel (1988), students with reading problems in their first grade who did not receive any kind of remedial reading are likely to struggle in reading during their fourth grade. Also, as informed by another study, students who have reading difficulties especially those who are in their primary years, would not be able to read at the same fluency level as their classmates (Torgesen et al., 2001). Research carried out in the past indicates that struggling readers would read better and show progression academically, if reading programs are intensified by increasing the sessions, providing proper training for the instructors, ensuring small group size, or variation in the activities, and delivery of the reading program (Fuchs et al., 2015; Wanzek et al., 2013). According to Denton et al. (2013), regarding the number of struggling readers who could not perform in reading, providing intensive and early reading programs can help struggling

readers to progress in reading and reduce the performance gap between struggling readers and their counterpart peers who perform well in reading. According to Wanzek (2018), Intensive Reading should be targeted for primary school students, as reading problems can be solved when early reading interventions are introduced. In the current study, students in their primary school years have difficulties in reading and this becomes a hindrance for them to excel academically. A study conducted by Christodoulou et al. (2017) on an intensive summer reading program which was held during a non - academic summer for struggling early readers between 6 to 9 years, found improvement in reading when compared to students who did not receive the intervention. Another study conducted by Erickson (2013) was to evaluate if intensive reading intervention has some effects on the score of the California standardized test (CST) of students in a rural middle school. However, the findings of Erickson's study did not find significance between the intervention and an increase in the CST scores of students who were enrolled in the intervention.

Based on the literature, the researcher and other educators who worked together, decided to implement an Intensive Reading Program for struggling readers in a Malaysian Private School for the upper primary students after considering that the best means of helping them was to increase their reading ability in English. Therefore, the researcher hopes that IRP would benefit the struggling readers to read at their grade level and gain confidence in reading. Importantly, the researcher conducted the Intensive Reading Program for students aged 9 to 11 years old; as there is little research done regarding the use of Intensive Reading Program in helping the primary school struggling readers to read in Malaysia. In short, the above discussion has enlightened us on the importance of intensive reading as a

means to develop reading skills for struggling readers. Based on the review from some previous studies, it is found out that intensive reading has been effective in developing reading skills for students with reading disabilities (Fuchs, 2015; McMaster et al., 2005).

2.4 Theories related to the study

2.4.1 Introduction

To explore the process of reading for struggling readers, the study is foregrounded on two theories which are: the Information Processing theory and the Schema theory. These theories are amalgamated together to represent the reading process of struggling readers in an Intensive Reading Program.

2.4.2 The Information processing theory

The best articulated and most heavily researched model is the Information Processing Model (IPM), which was developed in the early 1950s. IPM describes how information is received, processed, stored and then retrieved in the human brain. It is interesting to note that this theory compares the processing of information by humans to that of computers. As stated by Halpern (2004), humans have the ability to process information with amazing efficiency and often perform better than highly sophisticated machines, most especially in cases of handling tasks such as problem solving and critical thinking. The theory interprets that when people comprehend, they need to combine their own background knowledge with the information in a text. In this process, the prior knowledge and knowledge structure works effectively in people's cognitive activities (Zhao & Zhu, 2012). Furthermore, IRP trains a child to use creativity and critical thinking skills in one of the activities, whereby the child is required to read

a book and transform the details of the story into a story map. According to Poulos et al. (2008), Information processing theory is the analysis of the way a person learns something new. He posited that, it is important to discover the techniques or strategies needed to teach reading to a struggling reader, so that that particular child would be able to learn new things faster. The researcher therefore introduced IRP to guide struggling readers to learn reading throughout the 10 weeks of the Intensive Reading Program and help them build confidence with reading. The students who have learning and behaviour problems often find learning to be challenging; as they struggle to process, organise and apply information especially during lessons conducted in classrooms. These students have many learning problems such as reading issues (decoding words, and comprehension), writing difficulties (written expression, handwriting, and spelling), mathematics difficulties, and difficulty in performing learning skills. Hence, exposing them to the right strategies and techniques of reading would help them learn easier (Poulos et al., 2008). Also as mentioned by Poulos et al. (2008), children who face problems with reading, such as hitches in decoding words and comprehension, would be able to read easily by applying the structure demonstrated through the Information Processing theory. IRP helps struggling readers to learn new strategies in improving their reading skills which is not done during the regular classroom teaching. It is however important to note that the IRP was mainly developed by focusing on the Information Processing theory. Struggling readers who received the 10 weeks of IRP are required to process the reading strategies they have learned, store the strategies, techniques and activities and then retrieve or apply these when they come across any reading materials.

The theory interprets that when people comprehend, they need to combine their own background knowledge with the information in a text. In this process, the prior knowledge and knowledge structure, works effectively in people's cognitive activities (Zhao & Zhu, 2012). As reading is the most important skill a student needs to master, in order to do well academically, the intention of the researcher is to help struggling readers to pick up reading at an early stage. Hence, the aim of the researcher in providing an Intensive Reading Program is to examine struggling readers perspective and if IRP improves comprehension. The current research also tried to find out if IRP would help struggling readers to read and show some improvement in their reading comprehension.

2.4.3 The Schema Theory

Schema was first mentioned by a German philosopher, Kant in 1781. Today's schema is derived from a Gestalt psycholinguist F. Bartlett, who applied schema to psychology research. Furthermore, it was the American artificial intelligence expert Rumelhart, who finally developed schema into a systemic and integrated theory. However, the educational psychologist Richard Anderson, also played an important part in introducing the schema theory to the educational community (Cui et al., 2002). The Schema Theory hence suggests that a 'schema' or 'frame' is the reader's systematic knowledge of the world; and that it is crucial for comprehending a text, learning and recalling ideas in a story (Mukundan, 1998).

The schema theory believes that a reading text only directs a reader to make meaning of the text they have read. But these directions deeply depend on a framework of knowledge that has been "acquired prior to reading". The reader must use his knowledge to complete a reading task by

constructing the meaning of the text and 'fill out' a skeleton in the process of the meaning's production. Nevertheless, the tendency to construct the meaning of a text is within the reader, and not the text (Yahya, 1991). In addition, Schema theory is an explanation of how readers use their prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from a text (Rumelhart, 1980).

The term "schema" was first used in the field of psychology by Barlett (1932), as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences" (p.201); later on, schema was introduced in reading by (Rumelhart, 1980; Carrell, 1981; Hudson, 1982) with regards to the discussion of the important role of the background knowledge in a reading comprehension. However, Rumelhart (1980, p.34), defined schema as "a data structure for representing the genetic concepts stored in a memory". Anderson and Pearson (1984, p.42) also defined it as "an abstract knowledge structure". Schema theory is based on the belief that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world" (Anderson et al., 1977; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Similarly, and more elaborately, Smith, (1994:p. 8) states that everything we know and believe is organized in a theory of what the world is like, a theory that is the basis of all our perceptions and understanding of the world, the root of all learning, the source of hopes and fears, motive and expectancies, as well as reasoning and creativity. Hence, the schema theory is one of the theories that is concerned with how people read. According to Harris and Hodges (1995), the schema theory is defined as a combination of new knowledge with the previous one.

Therefore, the schema theory can be described as the grasping of the new information and the linkage of such information with the previous information that is already in a person's mind (Jafari, 2013). A meaningful relationship can be

created through this occurrence and the result will be the comprehension of the text or message (Jafari, 2013). Schema theory has a very vital role concerning the reading comprehension process. Anderson (1980), defined a schema as “huge, complex units of knowledge that organizes much of what we know about the general categories of objects, classes of events, and types of people”. Sankarakumar et al. (2012), proposed that the role of schema has been found to be importantly powerful in the top-down approach of the reading comprehension process.

According to the Schema theory, the process of interpretation is guided by the principle, which insinuates that the input is mapped against some existing schema and that all aspects of that schema must be compatible with the input's information (Shen, 2008). This principle results in two basic models of information processing; these models are called the bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing is evoked by the incoming data and is also known to be data driven, this is so because the data enter the system through the best-fitting, and bottom level schemata (Shen, 2008). The Top-down processing takes place as the system makes general predictions based on the higher level, general schema; which is the background knowledge in the reading comprehension (Shen, 2008).

The theory linked to IRP is Cunningham's (1993) Whole to Part Model (WTP) of the reading Comprehension. In this theory, He noted that to achieve a reading comprehension, students must be able to identify words, language comprehension and print their processing abilities. In this research, the researcher assessed the students phonetic and sight word readings to increase their vocabulary. This is so because when students have a handful of known words, it will be easier for them to read a passage or a short story. The IRP encourages students to apply various

techniques of reading such as reading aloud, silent reading and cooperative reading. This will likely lead to language comprehension as it results in increased word recognition. Schemas, or schemata, are cognitive constructs by which we organize information in our long-term memory (Widdowson, 1983). They “reflect the experiences, conceptual understanding, attitudes, values, skills, and strategies we bring to a text situation” (Vacca, 2002). Schemata, therefore, have been called “the building blocks of cognition” (Rumelhart, 1980); because they represent elaborate networks of information that people use to make sense of new stimuli, events, and situations.

The schemata (mental structures) aspect of Piagets’ (1983) theory, is in line with the reading definition of reading beyond the lines. This relates to the way reading is correctly viewed as a highly subjective interaction of the learner’s prior knowledge, perception and purposes with those of the author. This interaction is guided by Piagets’ two complementary processes of assimilation and accommodation. Schemas are believed to be in the process of organizing information in a long-term memory. The purpose of a schema is to relate an incoming information to an already known information (Anderson et al., 2006). In one of the IRP sessions, students were required to read a book and answer some questions related to the story. The students applied schemata knowledge indirectly by using the knowledge they already have on how to apply reading strategies to be able to read and understand the story.

Numerous studies have been done on schema theory and reading comprehension (Carell, 1983; Taylor, 1979). The level of comprehension lies on how the readers use schemata.

2.4.4 Whole- to- Part Model (WTP)

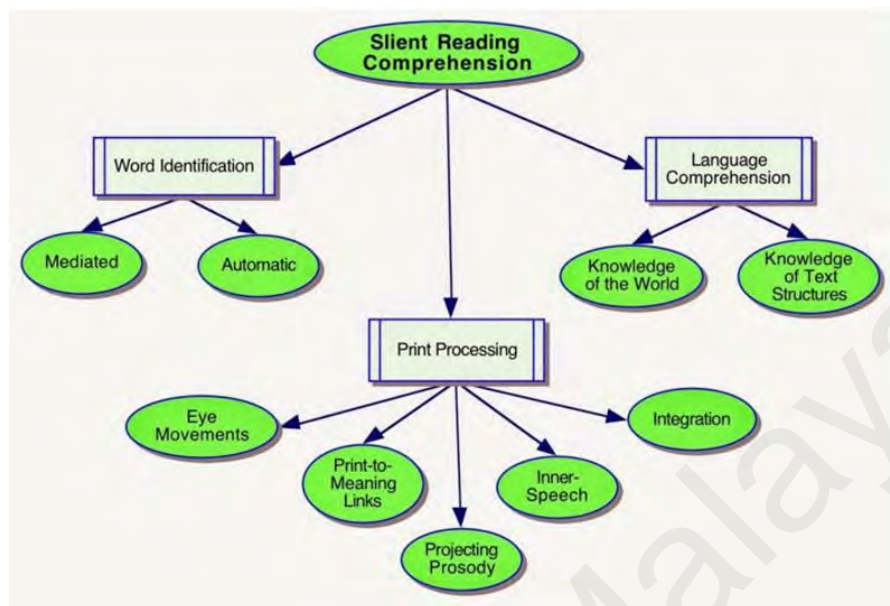


Figure 2.1. Cunningham's (1993) Whole-to-Part Model of Reading Comprehension

Based on the Figure 2.1 above, Cunningham's (1993) has divided the Silent reading comprehension into three reading components which are word identification, language comprehension and print-processing. As such, print-based literacy skills include alphabetic letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness (the ability to sound out words), sight word knowledge, and phonics knowledge. Developing these skills leads to a student who will be able to spell and decode single words. These are important skills to develop in the journey to literacy, but they are only a very small piece of the literacy puzzle. Language-based literacy skills include vocabulary, semantics, sentence structure, grammar, oral language (narrative skills), sequencing, organizing, and comprehension. The development of these skills lead to being able to express oneself in writing and read a variety of texts with comprehension. Print-based and language-based literacy skills fit in the

areas of Word Identification and Language Comprehension respectively in Cunningham's Whole to Part Model of Reading Comprehension as shown in the Figure above). Having low language skills does not prevent a student from learning how to do the mechanical act of reading. It will, however, impact one's ability to interpret, predict, reason or infer information from text. Therefore, the researcher has adapted the WTP model as part of the framework in this study.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

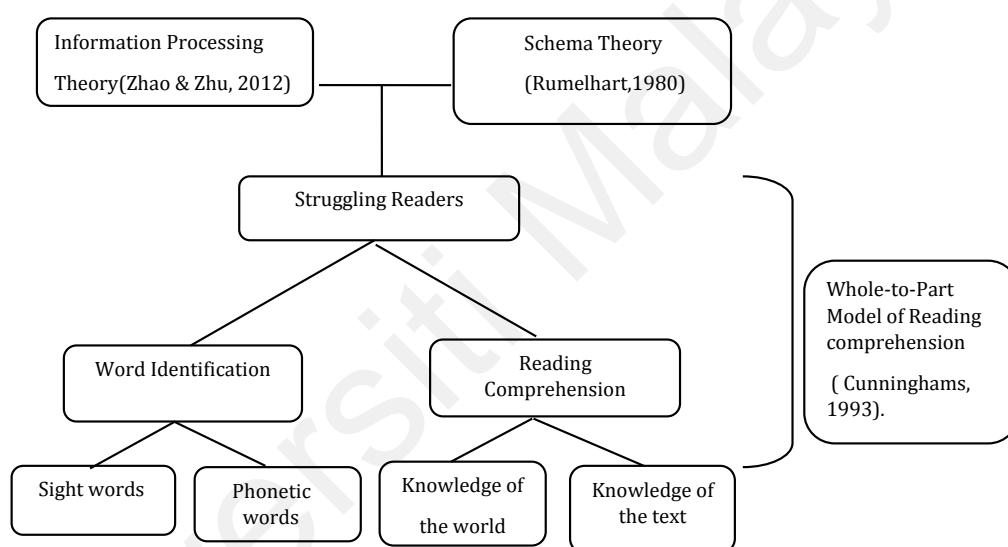


Figure 2.2: Theoretical framework adapted from Cunningham's (1993)

Whole to Part Model of Reading Comprehension, Information Processing Theory (Zhao & Zhu, 2012) and Schema Theory (Rumelhart, 1980).

Figure 2.1 above shows the theoretical framework of this study. The researcher has chosen two theories that serves as the frame-up for this research, which are the Information Processing Theory (IPT) and the Schema Theory. The first theory of this study is the Information Processing Theory. IPT describes how information is received, processed, stored and then retrieved in the human brain (Poulos, 2008).

Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) described IPT as having two main components of a short-term memory (STM) store and long-term memory (LTM) store. STM has a limited amount of storage space and LTM store has an infinite capacity. In a learning environment, there are a number of ways in which Information Processing can be applied. In a classroom setting, learners are continually learning and utilizing memory processes in order to store the information being provided by the instructor (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968). They are also actively retrieving the information required for the lesson. From an instructor's standpoint, Information Processing is used to help learners to further enhance their respective skills and understand the curriculum presented. A great way for teachers and instructors to practice the information processing skills of their learners is to test their focusing, information gathering, remembering, and organizing skills.

The second theory of this study is the Schema Theory. Rumelhart (1980) puts forward the concept of the schema theory, basically as a theory of how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind and how it is being used. In view of this, he informed that "all knowledge is packaged into units, and that these units are the schemata" (Rumelhart, 1980, p.34). According to Pardede (2011), the schema theory describes how a reader uses his background knowledge and past experiences to make sense of the reading text. Fernandez (2009) also contributed by stating that: in order to make meaning or understand a reading text, the materials that the students read, should be familiar to them. It should be a topic that was covered or exposed to them in the classroom.

Therefore, the information processing theory and schema theory are the two theories that were applied in providing IRP to the struggling readers of this study. This framework shows that IRP affects the reading ability of the struggling readers.

In the Intensive reading programme, the reader is an active participant, who is involved in making predictions and processing information. This framework was formed to provide intensive reading intervention to struggling readers in their primary grades can prevent reading difficulties and disabilities (Partanen & Siegel, 2014).

The Whole to Part (WTP) model of reading was developed by Cunningham (1993). The model defines the silent reading comprehension process as consisting of three whole-parts, which are the word identification, language comprehension, and print processing. Each of these three integrated systems functions as a "whole part", which is a part of the silent reading comprehension ability. Whole-to-part activities are commonly associated with predictable materials, which have been described by a number of reading educators (Bridge et al., 1983; McClure, 1985; Rhodes, 1981; Tierney, 1990).

Based on the theoretical framework, the struggling readers were exposed to two types of reading strategies which are word identification and reading comprehension. The word identification component is broken down into two sections which are the sight words and phonetic words. One component of early reading is the development of sight words (Helman & Burns, 2008; Language and Reading Research Consortium, 2015). The term, sight words, refers to words that have been previously read and are stored in an individual's lexical memory (Scott & Ehri, 1990). Sight word reading is one of the processes that readers develop to identify written words (Scott & Ehri, 1990). Secondly, the struggling readers are also exposed to phonetic words. According to Ebrahimi (2010), phonetics is the study, investigation, and description of the sound system in a given language. A phonologist has to, first and foremost, investigate the place of the articulation of

sounds, and then find a detailed way to make a sensible representation of all these sound for learners to be able to achieve native-like pronunciation (Ebrahimi, 2010). In this study, the participants were given a list of sight words and phonetic words. Therefore, on a weekly basis the participants in the IRP practice reading aloud sight words and phonetic words.

For this study, the focus is on word identification and reading comprehension, because for struggling readers, it is important to focus on how they are able to identify words in a text and how they can comprehend a language (Wanzek et al., 2018). One of the components which is the Print-processing component of the WTP model has been eliminated from this framework because it is part of word identification for this study. According to Morris et al. (2013) print-processing tasks are such as word recognition, spelling, and passage-reading. As such print-processing is integrated under word-identification component. Wolf and Cohen (2001) defined word recognition as the ability to read accurately and increase the speed through decoding of printed words. Perfetti (1985) stated that efficient word recognition skills are associated with better reading comprehension. The struggling readers of this study gain the knowledge of print-processing in the activities such as sight word and phonetic word reading, paragraph reading and reading short stories in the IRP.

On the other hand, the reading comprehension section requires the students to acquire the knowledge of the world and the knowledge of the text structure. Miller (2007) describes knowledge of the world as the background knowledge a student has in comprehending a text. According to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), to comprehend a text, students should use their knowledge of the world to connect new text with past experience. According to Grabe (1997), knowledge of the text

is an efficient knowledge of the language. In agreement with the above, Rebecca and Sadow (1985) claimed that reading is related to language and that it requires students to be efficient in a second language. The readers should be able to use their background knowledge to interpret, evaluate, synthesize, and consider alternative interpretations of a reading text (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). After reading the whole text together, students work with sentence strips and word cards, while their attention is directed to words, letters, and sounds. In this research, the researcher assessed students' phonics and sight word reading skill to increase students' vocabulary. When students have a handful of known words, it should be easier for them to read a passage or a short story. The IRP encourages students to apply various techniques of reading such as reading aloud, silent reading and cooperative reading. This could likely lead to language comprehension as it leads to increased word recognition. While doing this task, students need some strategies to help them make their reading comprehension easy. Therefore, various strategies such as reading aloud, silent reading, co-operative reading and oral reading are employed in the teaching and learning process of IRP

2.6 The Response to Intervention (RTI) Model

RTI is a model or framework that is being employed by many schools and educators to provide an intensive intervention for students with reading disabilities. According to Johnson (2014), RTI refers to an overall problem-solving framework consisting of a tiered level of supports (Lembke et al., 2010). It consists of core curriculum instruction provided to all students as well as more intense supports or interventions for students who meet the laid down criteria. For this study, students who scored lower than 50 marks in their final year English examination paper, were chosen as the participants of the Intensive Reading Program.

RTI was designed to improve the academic performance of struggling students with and without disabilities, as well as to provide practitioners with a more valid means of disability identification. Toward these ends, RTI approaches require service delivery to be reorganized, or restructured, into multiple tiers of increasingly intensive instruction. The first tier (Tier 1) refers to the general instruction that all students receive in mainstream classrooms. This instruction should include providing virtually all students with the core instructional program, classroom routines meant to provide opportunity for instructional differentiation, and accommodations that in principle, permits access to the primary prevention programs as well as problem-solving strategies for addressing the students' motivation and behaviour.

Whereas the highly effective Tier 1 programs are designed using instructional principles that have been derived from previous research, however they are not typically validated by such research. Furthermore, the Tier 2 programs, by contrast, often involve small group of instructions that relies on empirically validated instructional practices, typically involving small group interventions. "Validation" means that experimental or quasi experimental studies have demonstrated that the intervention programs are effective for the students for whom they were developed. Such instruction specifies the procedures, duration of the instruction (typically 10 to 20 weeks of 20- to 45-minute sessions), and its frequency (three or four times per week). The intervention programs are often led by an adult that have undergone special training. Assessment at Tier 2 determines whether students have responded adequately to the interventions. This assessment is usually based on progress monitoring, testing following tutoring, or a combination of the two. Schools are supposed to use these data to decide whether students should return to Tier 1

without additional Tier 2 support or whether more intensive intervention is necessary.

There are a few components of the RTI that is agreed to be important for the students who require special education. The components are as listed below: -

- (a) Universal screening in target areas (e.g., reading, math)
- (b) Research-based instruction to assure that all students have an adequate opportunity to learn.
- (c) Successive layers or tiers of intervention; so that students who do not make adequate progress in the research-based classroom instruction are provided with opportunities for more intensive intervention.
- (d) On-going progress monitoring for students to ensure that they are making adequate progress and that instructional practices can be adapted to meet their special needs.

The components above were highlighted by Vaughn et al. (2010). IRP was developed based on the RTI model. IRP is mainly implemented for struggling readers who require more intensive reading instructions. The RTI model is a few layers of the reading assessment and reading program that is designed to provide special attention to struggling readers (Buckingham et al., 2013).

Based on the RTI model used in Buckingham's study, there are three tier's or stages of reading. Each tier briefly explains the stages of a reading program that can be provided according to the needs of the reading program developer. Children who are identified as low-progress readers' start at tier-2 and are placed in a small-group. In the current study, the researcher divided the participants into two groups

in which there were about 16 students in each group. It would be easier for the IRP teachers to monitor the students closely when they sit in smaller groups.

There is a strong evidence to support the effectiveness of using the RTI framework in providing an intensive reading instruction (Vaughn et al., 2010). According to Christodoulou et al. (2017), the reading program designed for children in the kindergarten to early primary grades, which was delivered for 3 to 5 days per week was proven to be effective (Christodoulou et al., 2017). Also, IRP was implemented for students in year 3 up to year 6 who are in their primary years, and they received about an hour of reading instruction for 2 days in a week.

Tier 2 interventions are designed to be relatively brief, which is about 8—12 weeks (Ritchey et al., 2012). Students who are struggling receive increasingly intensive intervention as needed to improve their reading skills (Ritchey et al., 2017). Importantly, IRP was developed by focusing on the tier 2 reading program. RTI tier- 2 which focuses on a small-group based reading program is closely related to IRP. The program conducted involves 32 participants that were divided into 2 groups. According to the RTI Model, tier- 2 intervention is meant to be held for a period of 10 to 20 weeks. IRP is a short- term reading program which is conducted for 10 weeks. In this research, the researcher aimed at finding out if the short- term Intensive Reading Program would demonstrate positive results on the struggling readers reading performance.

Response to Intervention (RTI), provides increasingly intensive interventions for struggling readers and includes explicit emphasis on the components that are identified by the NRP to one extent or another (Gersten et al., 2009; Spear-Swerling

& Cheesman, 2012). It is well established that early reading interventions helps struggling readers to make marked gains in reading (Ehri, 2007).

According to Nation (2004), “intensive reading involves the detailed reading of texts with the two goals of understanding the text and learning language features, through a deliberate focus on these items” (p. 20). The text chosen implies the level of difficulty for the reader due to the content or the language, i.e. unfamiliar grammar or vocabulary. With regards to the aforementioned, Hedgcock & Ferris (2018) mentions the following significant features of intensive reading:

- The teacher selects the texts to be read, introduces, and reinforces certain reading strategies by means of whole-class instruction and student activities.
- Students read the same text at the same pace and complete several exercises that facilitates understanding.
- Teacher and students have clarity about what to do before, during, and after reading.
- Pre-reading activities are decisive to facilitate comprehension. These activities include surveying the text, making predictions, asking questions, and introducing key vocabulary.
- Post-reading activities entail summarizing and responding, thinking critically and reading- writing connections. “Post-reading activities also offer the best opportunities for the teacher’s assessment of the student’s progress, as they make the internal reading process and its outcomes more transparent” (p. 185).

IRP employed some of the intensive reading features that were highlighted by Hedgcock & Ferris (2018) through the RTI model. For example, in the 10 weeks of IRP, the participants were introduced to various reading strategies such as silent reading, reading aloud, co-operative reading and oral reading. Fluent oral reading has been shown to have a strong positive relationship with reading comprehension (Pinnell, 1995). The purpose of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model is to prevent failure. In most states, RTI is used as a program to help students who are having difficulties in reading by providing them with intensive targeted instruction (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013).

Furthermore, differentiation according to need is the most important component of the RTI. The most important factor of intensive reading is that students are exposed to structured reading strategies with guidance. Every week, the participants use one of the reading strategies to build their reading skills. Activities such as paragraph reading, story map organization, short story co-operative reading and answering reading comprehension are some of the significant RTI model's features.

2.6.1 The structure of the RTI model

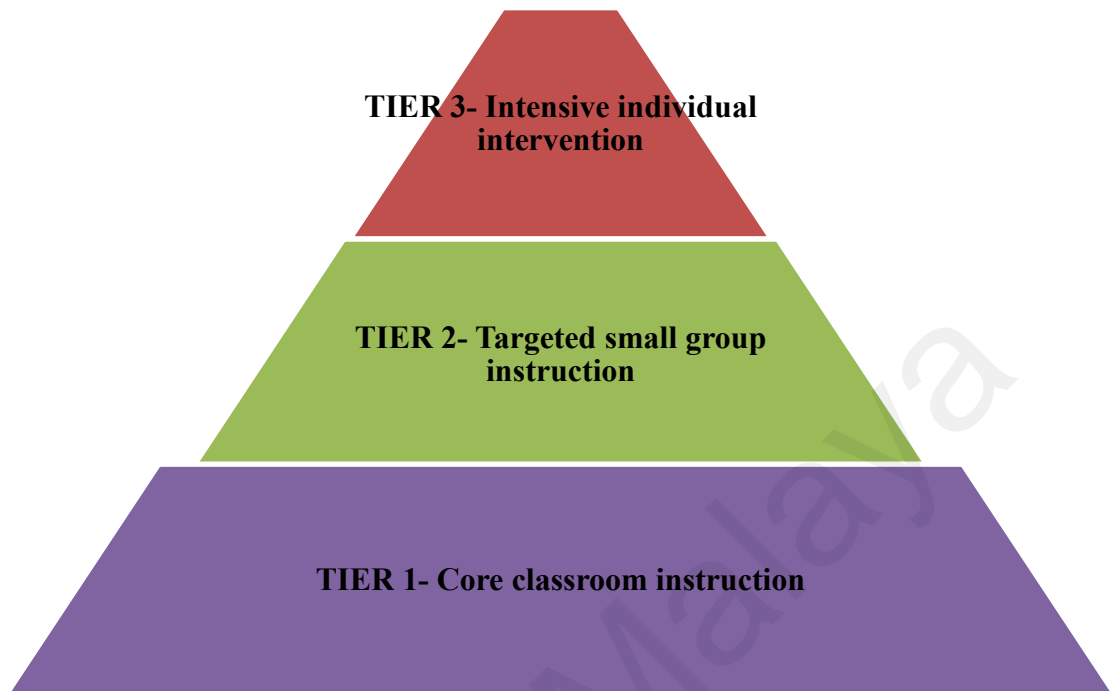


Figure 2.3. The Response-to-Intervention

The structure of the RtI model is displayed in Figure 2.1. As it can be seen, all children who are involved in the Intensive Reading Program would receive the tier-2 intervention. Steps for children identified as low-progress readers commence at tier-2 with a small group-based intervention.

While reading intervention has traditionally been provided individually (Buckingham, 2013; Pinnell, 1995), recent evidence has supported the efficacy of breaking in its focus on early and intensive intervention for the at-risk readers. The program was introduced into the Australian schools in 1984 (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007) and continues to be widely used (Buckingham, 2013); 'Reading Recovery'; 'Reading Recovery Guidelines for 2010 and Beyond'; 'Reading Recovery in the Archdiocese of Melbourne Learning'. Reading Recovery meets some but not all the requirements of the tier-2 intervention. Therefore, in this study the struggling readers falls under the tier-2 category, where a 10-weeks of Intensive Reading Program will be provided to enhance reading comprehension.

2.7 Related Studies Carried Out in Malaysia

Within the Malaysian context, reading is an activity that is fast losing appeal as other forms and types of media gain ascendancy (Pandian, 2004). Although the government has launched several reading campaigns (the recent one is the *Mari Membaca 1Malaysia*, launched in March 2010), to increase the reading habit among Malaysians throughout the years, unfortunately, it is obvious that these campaigns aren't quite working as desired (Kamarudin, 2018).

In Malaysia, reading has been recognized positively by the local educators as beneficial especially in terms of developing pupils' language acquisition

(Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013). One of the earliest reading programmes was the English language Reading Programme (ELRP) which began in 1976. This programme was aimed at promoting reading in English, improve students' reading and encourage language development.

Extensive reading gives a pleasure and tension free situation; hence, it requires no dictionary and examination. It helps and motivates the pupils in their learning activity. So far, there is no research done for Intensive Reading Programme in Malaysia, nevertheless, Mukundan, 1998 has conducted research on the effect of an intensive English program on a group of Malaysian Secondary School students and the program was a success. His research focused on all key language skills which are speaking, listening, reading, writing, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

In Malaysia, where English is taught as a second language, reading in English would undoubtedly help a learner to be proficient in the language as language can be learned through reading (Fatimah & Vishalache, 2006). Various studies have attempted to explain why Malaysian students have continuously been unable to achieve a reasonable competency level in English despite learning it for 11 years in schools (Kaur, 2006; Jalaludin et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, the declining standard of English among school children and the younger citizens in general, has undoubtedly placed worries in the minds of many people, so much to the extent that the Ministry of Education has taken a drastic measure in requiring year 1, form 1 and lower six students to learn mathematics and science in English from 2003 onwards.

According to Phoon (2010), Malaysian students are considered as early bilinguals. A bilingual child is one who has the ability of knowing two languages in a different setting other than his or her home (Jamaludin, 2016). Similarly, in the context of the current study, the targeted students are exposed to English language in a formal schooling environment and majorly used other languages such as Malay and Chinese outside the school setting.

Malaysia's Education Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin was among the many who stated concern about the lack of interest in reading among Malaysians (The Star, 2009). On a report published for the UN Development Programme 2007/2008, Muhyiddin Yassin commented that Malaysians are interested in reading light materials such as newspapers, magazines and comic books, compared to Americans who read fictional books. He further added that positive habits could increase Malaysia's literacy rate so it could match those of the developed countries, such as the United States, Germany, Australia, England and Japan. Many reading programmes such as Class Reader Programme (CRP) and 'Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca (NILAM)', had been introduced in order to encourage reading among students. These reading programmes were introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoE) with the hope that reading can enhance a targeted language learning in a context, help to build the confidence of the pupils' language usage, and also encourage the extensive reading programme.

In the year 2000, the MoE introduced a new curriculum by integrating literature into the English language syllabus for primary schools, which mainly focused on reading skills. The researcher provides IRP for the participants in this study as they belong to two different curriculums, which are the national and international curriculum. IRP is implemented mainly for struggling readers. Hence,

the current research tried to investigate if IRP is effective in resolving reading problems that the students encounter during their early reading stages.

2.8 Struggling Readers

Struggling readers are those students who have difficulties reading with fluency and comprehension at the basic level in all subject areas (Gaskins, 2005; Strickland et al., 2002). Struggling reading students also have poor intellectual capacity and language development that can cause reading difficulties (Florio-Ruane). Moreover, many struggling readers are “disengaged from reading and reading activities that are related to schooling” (Guthrie & Davis, 2003, p. 74). Struggling readers in a regular classroom are known to isolate themselves due to their poor reading skills. Children will learn to read in the first years of school if the individual needs of the child are taken seriously and if there is attention given to their personal learning schedules.

Not all students easily become proficient readers and those that are not proficient often fall into the category of the at-risk, low-achieving, or struggling students. In order to understand what causes a student to struggle, one must first understand what is necessary to make a proficient reader. A proficient reader must possess a broad knowledge of cognitive and linguistic skills, such as the ability to make inferences, recall text, background knowledge of the topic read, and vocabulary (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2007). By mastering these skills, a reader will be able to read fluently and comprehend at a higher level than at the literal level. Proficient readers are also able to decode letters and sounds automatically and still simultaneously comprehend what has been read (Lubliner, 2004).

According to Bob Wise in the January 2006 edition of Newsleader, “Every school day 7000 students will drop out of school and the vast majority will never return to the classroom. Most of these students leave because they lack the necessary reading skills to succeed (Wise, 2006. P.6). Early intervention, which includes individually, designed and delivered lessons, is a solution for minimizing children with difficulties in reading (Clay, 1993). Even so, reading problems are found in every classroom among all types of students; however, children with certain demographic characteristics are at greater risk of reading difficulties than others. It could be that biological deficits make the processing of sound-symbol relationships difficult or that there is poor reading instruction (Snow et al., 1998).

Several studies have researched the various interventions that can assist struggling readers in becoming proficient readers. Addressing the needs of a struggling reader is necessary, but ways as to how the instruction takes place may vary. Researchers such as Trout et al. (2003) made use of the Direct Instruction (Carnine et al., 1997) reading curriculum, Reading Mastery I (Engelmann & Bruner, 1988), and Great Leaps (Mercer & Campbell, 1998), of which is a fluency building program; as remediation programs in a study to try and improve the reading skills necessary for the decoding, comprehension, and fluency in kindergarten students. These daily half hour programs along with the regular classroom curriculum, allowed the educators to assess the effects of the supplementary curriculum on basic reading skills. This study discovered that the use of early intervention programs improved the students' early phonemic awareness skills and deterred their reading failure. Hence, struggling readers need positive feedback, rewards, and intrinsic motivation in wanting to read. The

demonstration of reading skills that is taught to struggling students, should be across the curriculum and the students should be provided an opportunity to interact with peers during this instruction. Finally, struggling readers need to experience a reading curriculum that harmonizes with the student's present achievement level (Ritchey et al., 2017).

Felton and Wood (1992) evaluated the hypothesis which states that that poor readers are characterized by poor non-word reading skills, but that a specific deficit in a non-word reading will be found only in subjects whose readings are discrepant from their intellectual ability. Struggling readers need to choose books for independent reading very carefully (Bomer, 2006). Because reading is so often confusing for them, they need to monitor closely whether they are experiencing the art of understanding or confusion. If the book they are reading feels confusing, they need to find the one that makes them have a feeling of understanding. The teacher needs to interrupt their reading frequently, reminding them to monitor for reasoning and help them in assessing continually as to whether they have chosen wisely. It helps to narrow the selection process with these students, to make books they are likely to find friendly easily available, either in a special section of the class-room library or by developing independent reading agendas limited to texts they are likely to understand.

In this study, a set of books from the scholastic Cambridge resources will be used to cater for the student's needs. However, the Intensive Reading Programme has been structured in a way whereby the students start reading short paragraphs before moving to book reading. Researchers have theorized that struggling readers' decisions are tied to low motivation, poor self-efficacy, or

limited cognitive abilities (Stahl et al., 1991; Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Johnston & Winograd, 1985). Such conceptualizations about struggling readers, suggests that if they developed the appropriate cognitive skills and experienced an increase in motivation and self-efficacy, then they would make more positive decisions about reading and that might likely improve their abilities (Hall, 2009). The teachers' role is to encourage the learners to engage in a focused and motivating reading programme.

2.9 Reading Strategies for struggling readers

There are various strategies that some researchers have presented to encourage reading success in struggling readers. When effective reading strategies are put into practice, students become lifelong readers (Miller & Veatch, 2010). Birch (2002) stated that "the strategies allow the reader to take the text as a source of information and hence, drawing on the knowledge base as another source, makes sense of what is on the printed page" (p. 2).

i) Silent reading

There have been a vast number of studies conducted on silent sustained reading and the benefits of the process, but most have found limited gains in reading achievement because of independent silent reading (Osborn & Lehr, 2003). Due to the lack of research, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) in year 2000, endorsed or advocated for independent silent reading. The report deemed that more experimental research needs to be conducted before any determination can be rendered. The panel members deduced that independent silent reading is not likely to increase reading fluency by any significant gains. First, motivation and time on task have been found to increase

when students are provided time to engage in self-selected, independent level, silent reading (Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In addition, various advantages of silent reading have been emphasized. Hopkins (1997), believes that learners can benefit from silent reading since they will be provided with a better opportunity to read a text at their own speed. Moreover, silent reading can facilitate the learners' confidence in their ability to work through and understand a text autonomously. According to Price (2012), Silent reading becomes one of the modality reading strategy when children move to upper primary grades like fourth grade. Therefore, silent reading is believed to be a mode that prepares learners for life-long reading. Furthermore, McCallum et al., (2006) found that silent reading in the context of an individual assessment of reading comprehension, leads to greater efficiency.

ii) Oral reading

Oral reading provides benefit to beginning or struggling readers as it allows for self-monitoring of progress (Hiebert et al., 2012; Kuhn et al., 2010), reinforcement of letter–sound correspondence, and the use of both reading and listening comprehension skills to facilitate understanding (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Kuhn et al., 2010). Additionally, oral reading results in longer time on-task, as children generally read more slowly when they read aloud (Rayner et al., 2012). The Oral Reading Strategy (Manzo, 1980), briefly described in an earlier chapter, is a simple way to model the complex “inside the head” process, that enables the reader to comprehend and think about the text. In such scenarios, the teacher reads the content-rich material aloud to the students, with series of pauses at logical points to comment or pose simple translation questions. With regards to the effect being made, an effective reader's active reading process is being modelled by the teacher,

and the teacher also urges the student readers to come along. In addition, the strategy builds student familiarity with the cadence and patterns of language and thoughts that are characteristics of different subject areas; hence helping in the introduction of accurate pronunciations of new words in a manner that is informal and direct. In terms of differentiating the effects of silent reading as well as that of reading aloud on a comprehension, an argument was made by Rasinski et al. (2011), which stated that “beginning and poor readers benefit from oral reading, whereas older and proficient readers may comprehend better after silent reading (p. 184). Thus, the fluency of oral reading by the first graders was known to be the subject of research for Ritchey et al. (2017), who categorized oral reading’s growth for the purpose of finding out if reading status has some effect on performance of at-risk students in the first and second grade via a longitudinal study. From this study, it was discovered by the researchers that the at-risk students read less than half as many words per minute and grew at approximately half the rate of their counterpart peers who were in the same age bracket as themselves (Ritchey et al., 2017).

iii) Reading aloud

Reading aloud requires a reader to investigate the meaning of a text with his or her limited cognitive resources (Jafari, 2013). In this case, the reader has to deal with both pronunciation, intonation and at the same time extract meaning from the text.

Therefore, the limited cognitive resources for pronunciation, intonation and vocalization reduces the reader’s overall comprehension (Hale et al., 2007). The benefits of reading aloud are amazing. Many researchers have discovered that the technique of reading aloud help students to improve various components of reading

such as comprehension, vocabulary and listening skills (Routman, 1994; Brooks, 2011). As Gibson (2008) informed, reading aloud could help reading skills through the linkage of the sound and alphabetic improvement. Besides that, reading aloud also motivates the students to read and creates positive attitudes towards reading. The technique of reading aloud that is employed in a few studies has a positive effect on the students reading gains and attitudes (Ariail & Albright, 2006; Duncan, 2010; Routman, 1994; Smith, 1994; Trelease, 2013). It is important to encourage teachers to read aloud to the students and also motivate the students as well to read aloud. According to Spencer (2011), reading aloud gives the opportunity for a student to repeat his or her reading and also encourage them to read several times. Swalm (1972) and Elgart (1978) pointed out that young people displayed a more satisfactory performance in their comprehension of reading after reading aloud. However, some researchers are of the opinion that reading aloud helps in enhancing the reader's comprehension – especially that of poor readers. In such instances, they can facilitate comprehension by hearing themselves while reading the text (Kragler, 1995; Swalm, 1972).

(iv) Co-operative reading

Cooperative reading or cooperative learning have been defined as “small groups of learners who work together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task, or accomplish a common goal” (Artz & Newman, 1990, p.448). The cooperative learning technique requires student to read together in order to achieve their desired objectives (Marzbana & Alinejadb, 2014). According to Marzbana and Alinejadb (2014), many researchers who carried out studies on the importance of cooperative reading, have concluded that cooperative reading help readers to read actively, work as a team and develop group reading skills. They also claim

that, Cooperative learning activities also offer the opportunity to develop and practice strategies for learning and using the language. More specifically, social-affective strategies such as asking for help and cooperation (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 139), are fostered in cooperative settings. Therefore, independent learning and the ability to plan, control and assess the learning process is enhanced by cooperation. Cooperative learning can provide a very pleasant learning atmosphere. Besides that, the readiness to speak and act in a foreign language increases in small groups and students feel more confident to produce utterances in their second language (Dörnyei, 1997; Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006; Marzban & Alinejad, 2014).

(v) Differentiated instruction.

Differentiated instruction refers to the preparation of teaching activities and materials in concordance to the language proficiency of the students. Hence, "it is of much importance to match a student's ability to read with their relative complexity; for example, when a student is provided with a text that is very difficult, he or she would probably struggle and be frustrated while reading such text; another instance might be when provision is made for a student with a text that is very easy, and in this case he or she might feel bored or may not be able to make progress in the ability to read" (Ortlieb & Cheek, 2013, p. 28). Struggling readers who are involved in the IRP came from different age groups. Therefore the teaching instructions are made similar for all age groups. The activities of the weekly lessons are based on the grade 3.

(vi) Adapting the text.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that some changes are being made to a reading text by adapting it to meet the necessity of the struggling readers. This can be achieved via exchanging difficult words with simple ones, and rephrasing the sentences to a more understandable level. The adaptation of a text is of much importance in assisting readers that are struggling to be able to have a good comprehension of a piece of text. Another means by which struggling readers could be assisted is by splitting long texts into more shorter and reduced paragraphs. By so doing; that is separating the text into chunks, there would be less fear by the students when they focus on that specific text. In like manner, the insertion of guidance questions per section would assist the students to be able to concentrate better as to when compared with a large set of questions that is placed at the end of the reading (McCormick & Segal, 2016). This is one of the method that the researcher has employed in IRP to teach comprehension skills.

(vii) Motivation, engagement, and comprehension.

The next strategy is to “Increase Motivation, Engagement, and Comprehension.” Reading lessons, tasks and activities should be able to cater for the needs and ability of the students. Furthermore, instructions should be given to students on monitoring their own reading. For example, in the IRP, students are given a checklist to monitor the number of sight words the students are able to read.

2.10 Vocabulary instruction

“Vocabulary awareness is a major key to reading comprehension because readers cannot comprehend a text without knowing what most of the words mean” (Alaraj, 2015, p. 1). It is therefore important for readers to master the vocabulary

skills in order to be a good reader. Especially when the students go up to different grades, the text seems to be more challenging. “Vocabulary knowledge, which is a key to reading comprehension, must be a focus for every teacher in today's increasingly diverse schools, including those in the mainstream classroom” (Alaraj, 2015, p. 1). Students should have opportunities to work with the vocabulary words. This includes writing them in sentences, acting them out, drawing picture representations of the words, and identifying closely related words. If a student knows a vocabulary word in a piece of text, he or she will feel more confident in reading the whole text. In the current study, the researcher expose students to vocabulary by introducing them to sight words and phonetic words. This skills come under word identification. The teachers prepare interesting activities to enhance the participant’s vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary instruction should be engaging to the student.

Laflamme (1997) found that, “A strategy that allowed students to use new vocabulary in dramatic and written forms, resulted in better retention and usage than memorization and study.”

2.10.1 Methods of teaching vocabulary.

“Reading instruction that focuses on the growth of children’s vocabulary, results in enhancing the students’ abilities to infer meanings and to better comprehend what they read” (Ruply & Nichols, 2005, p. 239). According to Graves (2016), there are four components of vocabulary instruction: Providing rich and diverse language skills, teaching individual words explicitly, teaching word-learning strategies, and fostering word consciousness.

It is suggested that teachers offer eight to ten new vocabulary words each week. Direct vocabulary instruction will help struggling readers who might not spend time to read independently each week (Hanson & Padua, 2011). In order to provide rich vocabulary instruction, teachers must recognize possible words that will be included in the lesson. The teacher must then provide numerous activities that paves way for the student to be exposed to the words. In an article titled “Multisensory Vocabulary Instruction”, Susan Jones gave six guidelines for creating a vocabulary instruction that is successful.

First, Jones recommended that the words should be selected based on a theme rather than simply picking them from a basket. It is important to organize words into topics or themes. This could include studying word parts, prefixes, and suffixes. Secondly, Jones recommended the inclusion of multisensory learning from the beginning. With each word used, description and demonstrations should be introduced. Thirdly, Jones also advised that the demonstration of the activities should be done first. Before any new vocabulary activity is applied, the teacher should introduce the activity and then model the activity using a common word that all the students are familiar with. The fourth guideline stated that meanings should be presented with all vocabulary work. The fifth guideline highlighted the importance of keeping a constant list prominently posted in the room. Hence, “If the words are visible and accessible to students, they are more likely to see them, think about them, and use them” (Jones, 2015, p.1).

Finally, Jones recommended going beyond the definitions of the words. Meanings of words are a great way to look at the vocabulary activities, which may include the following.

- Explain the words.
- Play “quick draw”.
- Play vocabulary charades.
- Give reward for finding the word used in the real world.
- Use the words yourself.
- Have students generate examples and non-examples for words.
- Use “fill in the blank” exercises before you expect the students to use the words in sentences themselves.
- Compose with the words (Jones, 2015).

In the article, “Four Practical Principles for Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction,” the authors introduced a model for introducing word meanings. Presenting the word in the context is the introductory action in this model. The teacher then provides a kid- friendly definition of the targeted word. Multiple examples should be presented to the student in order to fully grasp the word. Students create examples of the word and use the word. A visual image of the word is discussed. Finally, the teacher should conclude with a thoughtful question, which will allow the student to keep thinking about the word (Manyak et al., 2014).

In this study, the researcher examined the best strategy to implement the vocabulary instruction; with the inclusion of activities such as memory game and word puzzles. “In 2000, the National Reading Panel acknowledged vocabulary instruction as one of the five vital components of reading instruction, and a large

body of research specifies the important role that vocabulary knowledge plays in a reading comprehension” (Manyak et al., 2014).

2.10.1.1 Close reading.

Close Reading provides readers who are struggling an opportunity to reverse back to the text and find the meaning to such text. Furthermore, the examination of a short portion of a text is being encompassed by a close reading of such text, coupled with diverse readings accomplished via different instructional lessons (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Hence, the following are included in a close reading:

- Short passages- Texts are generally three paragraphs to three pages in length and they contain the appropriate text complexity for the student.
- Repeated readings- Opportunities are being given to the students to re-read a selection of texts, so as to provide answers to questions being asked as well as get prepared for the session of discussion. “Over the years, evidences of research has suggested that the repetition of an exact text could lead to the improvement of how the students speak fluently, as well as how they are able to comprehend what has been read” (Therrien, 2004, p. 368).
- Annotations- Opportunities are being given to the students to be able to directly write down notes on a text and read at the same time. The aim of this is to ensure that the main ideas are being identified by the students, confusing words are being circled, and reactions as well as questions which have being formed up in their mind are being written down.

- Text-dependent questions- In scenarios whereby questions that are dependent on the text need to be answered by students, it is important that evidences are being provided by them from the text to be able to give support to their answers.
- Discussion of the text- Students use academic language and argumentation to discuss ideas formed from the text. Hence, “Text-based discussions help to improve the way the students comprehend and enables them to be able to clarify their thoughts as well as give consideration to the way other people think” (Kucan & Palincsar, 2013).

As being postulated by Urquhart and Weir (1998), reading strategies has being regarded to as “ways of getting around difficulties encountered while reading” (p. 95).

2.11 Guided reading

According to Tyner (2004), Guided Reading is an instructional approach which allows the teacher to use levelled texts to instruct students on their reading level in a small group setting. Students who are part of the reading group tend to share a similar reading behaviour, which allows the teacher to instruct utilizing strategies to assist them to become effective readers (Guastello & Lenz, 2005, p. 144). Similarly, Fountas and Pinnell (2012) stated that, “Guided Reading is a context in which a teacher supports each reader’s development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty” (p. 2). Harris and Hodges (1995), referred to Guided Reading instruction as an instance in which the teacher provides the structure and purpose for reading and for responding to the material read (Ford & Opitz, 2011, p. 226). Additionally, Guided Reading allows the student to practice reading with fluency and comprehension within their zone of

proximal development. Students are hence, grouped homogenously in a small group setting, and exposed to levelled texts that increase their ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression. The researchers explored whether Project READ (Greene & Enfield, 2006) and Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012), would assist struggling students in making significant gains in word identification, writing vocabulary, sentence dictation, and text level comprehension. This study also looked at whether these changes lasted beyond the first grade level. This study followed the same students from the first through to the third grade and indicated that using both Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012) and Project READ (Greene & Enfield, 2006), assisted the at-risk students in improving their literacy skills and helped them in catching up with peers in their reading group. Struggling students begin to fall behind early in a student's educational career and it is important to remediate any deficiencies as early as possible (Simmons et al., 2008).

2.12 Causes of Reading Disabilities

Reading disabilities affect up to 15% of all children and are the most prevalent of all learning disabilities (Lyon et al., 2003). According to Stanovich (1994), individuals who have reading disability have demonstrated to be deficient in their ability to differentiate and segment a word's individual sound and to have problems effectively using phonological codes to support their working memory performance. Unfortunately, the cause of reading disabilities is the deficits of phonological awareness (Lovett et al., 2000). A body of evidence from longitudinal, experimental, intervention and cross-cultural research, suggests that a range of phonological skill deficits are involved in the failure to learn to read (Fawcett, 2001). There are various factors which lead to difficulties

in the process of learning to read. Many children find reading quite challenging due to the environment they come from (Buckingham et al., 2013). The children have little experience in speaking and reading right from the time they commence school. Besides that, some children who belong to low socioeconomic background were not given proper reading guidance by the educators at school (Buckingham et al., 2013). However, the struggling readers in the current study came from a well to do family, but have poor reading skills due to lack of attention given to the child at home. Parents spend less time with the child at home and depend more on educators to provide guidance in reading for their wards.

2.13 Reading programs

A number of reading programs has been implemented to improve various aspects of reading. One of it is the Response to Intervention (RTI), which is predicated on the hypothesis as thus; if struggling readers are provided with intervention that is research based and more intensive than traditional classroom instruction, they will show increased rates of growth in reading (Gelzheiser et al., 2011). Consequently, RTI also reflects the hypothesis which postulates that, interventions may have effects that are strong enough to overcome reading-related cognitive difficulties (Gresham, 2002).

In view of the aforementioned, an Intensive Reading Programme which is carried out in small groups can be a good platform for promoting reading improvement. Besides that, Paran (2003) and Hill (1997) found out that intensive reading can be beneficial for the achievement of reading goals at different levels. Therefore, struggling readers who are in higher grades get to improve their reading skills better than their peers.

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program developed in New Zealand by Clay (1985) to help children who are having difficulties in learning to read after a year of formal reading instruction. Interestingly, the Reading Recovery program is now in use in more than 10,000 elementary schools across the United States and has been described as “phenomenally successful” (Lee-Daniels & Murray, 2000, p.35) and as “the most effective remedial intervention currently available” (Johnston & Winograd, 1985, p.1006). Furthermore, Reading Recovery involves intensive, one-to-one instruction that is in addition to the regular classroom reading program; it is not surprising to state that the program has been shown to be beneficial for many students with early reading difficulties (Pinnell, 1995). However, research has clearly demonstrated that regardless of the subject matter taught, one-to-one instruction is much more effective than classroom instruction (Bloom, 1984). Moreover, researchers who have examined the impact of Reading Recovery on struggling readers, have documented the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery program with the struggling readers in the first grade (Iversen & Tunmer, 1993; Pinnell, 1995; Schwartz, 2005).

Harold Palmer was the first to introduce the term ‘extensive reading’: which refers to great amounts of reading with an emphasis on the meaning of the text. While Michael West called it ‘supplementary reading’ (Day & Bamford, 1998) and Hunt (1967) termed individualised ER as: ‘uninterrupted sustained silent reading’. In addition, Elley and Mangubhai (1983, 1981) called their reading programme as: ‘book flood’, whereas Krashen (2004) utilised the terms: ‘free voluntary reading’, ‘reading for pleasure’ and ‘recreational reading’. Although different terms have been invented over the years, they all own the same theoretical basis as the original

term used by Palmer. The connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading has long been noted. According to Harmon et al. (2008), vocabulary knowledge allows students to comprehend what they read; and the act of reading itself provides the opportunity for students to encounter and learn new words. Stahl and Nagy (2007) suggested that this reciprocal relationship underlines the importance of reading volume in increasing students' vocabularies. The idea that we could learn a lot or most of our vocabulary through reading, or more specifically via comprehensible written input, is now rooted within the second/foreign language teaching (Nation, 2004). Many studies have consistently emphasized the positive effects of extensive reading on language learning at different ages and in many ESL (English as a Second Language)/EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings (Sheu, 2003). Interestingly, the benefits are diverse, namely in the areas of receptive and productive vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, reading speed, grammatical knowledge, writing, and in developing the motivation to read.

After-school programmes have expanded in recent years, particularly in the USA where there are established concerns about keeping children safe and out of trouble, hence giving changes to the patterns of labour force participation. After-school programme goals can be wide and might vary from providing a safe environment and recreational activities; to homework clubs, or more structured programmes that typically focuses on behavioural or academic outcomes. In recent times, in the USA, these program goals have been adopted as a means of raising achievement and closing the attainment gap promoted through the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation. In the last decade, the amount of the after-school program in the United States has grown tremendously.

The number of schools that offered the after-school programs doubled between 1994 and 2000 (De Kanter, 2001), and it was recorded that as at this period, two-thirds of school principals reported that their schools offered these programs (Belden, 2001). It is estimated that at least 6 million, or 11 percent, of school-age youth regularly participated in the after-school programs during the 2002–03 school year (Alliance, 2004).

There have been six major reviews of previous studies with regards to the impact of the out-of-school programs that have included programs with an academic focus (Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Fashola, 1998; Hollister, 2003; Kane, 2004; Scott-Little et al., 2002). However, this new review has a sparkling difference from all the other reviews conducted so far. For example, prior reviewers cast a broad net when defining an after-school program and included programs with a primary focus on tutoring, mentoring, youth development, or comprehensive services. Notably, most of them did not attempt a thorough or systematic search for all evidences; in fact one of the reviews had a limited inclusion to programs with “evidence of effectiveness” or programs that have “active dissemination and replicability materials” (Fashola, 1998, p. 5, 6). All reviews except that of Hollister (2003), included a mix of experimental, quasi-experimental, and even non-experimental studies.

Slavin et al. (2009) review, concluded that successful programmes had a number of common elements, of which included: extensive professional development and follow-up on specific teaching methods for teachers; co-operative learning at their core, with children working together on structured activities; a strong focus on teaching phonics and phonemic awareness and well-

developed programmes that integrate curriculum, pedagogy and extensive professional development.

In a Best Evidence Encyclopaedia review focusing on the struggling readers at the early elementary stage; Slavin et al. (2009) concluded that, regardless of the programme type, a strong emphasis upon phonics was evident in the most successful programmes, and that a one to one programme appeared to be particularly effective especially if delivered by a teacher rather than a paraprofessional or volunteer. These programmes, however, tend to be expensive to deliver and while the evidence suggests that they are more effective than the small group programmes, the review found out that an instructional programme with a focus on cooperative learning and phonics, could provide average effect sizes among the lowest performing children that were similar in magnitude to the one to one tutoring (Biggart et al., 2013). These syntheses provide clear evidence of the types of programmes and the factors associated with improvements in the literacy outcomes of young struggling readers when delivered in the context of the normal school day.

2.13.1 Reading programs in the local context -Nilam

At the school level, under the auspices of the school library, all Malaysian schools incorporate a NILAM programme where students are encouraged to record the books they have read. NILAM stands for 'Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca' (Reading as the Pulse of Knowledge) (Paran, 2003). Launched in September 1999, this programme hopes to inculcate a lasting reading habit among students. It is operated through two levels or elements. The first requires a reading record, where the total number of books read are tabulated and recorded by the students in a

special book. In this record book, students write the necessary details of the book that they have read, a short synopsis of the book and valuable lessons learnt. Records are then verified by a teacher. The second level is referred to as Recognition. Based on the number of books read, the students are awarded a particular NILAM status: bronze, silver, gold and the pinnacle NILAM (Mansor et al. 2013).

2.13.2 Guided Extensive Reading

The Guided Extensive Reading (GER) program was adapted from Hsui's (2000) Guided Independent Reading (GIR) Program. She suggests that GIR can be used as an additional reading program in the upper primary (5th and 6th grade) and lower secondary (7th to 9th grade) classrooms for students who can read at various level of difficulties, but who generally will not read for various reasons, such as failure to develop the love for reading, unavailability of appropriate reading materials, insufficient time to read extensively because of school demands, and lack of the motivation to read extensively" (p. 31). The decision to set up an extensive reading program was also encouraged by the work of Day et al. (1998) on the basis of extensive reading in the second language classroom. The results of this study suggest that students in rural schools can and do benefit from extensive reading. The majority of the students in this study have positive attitudes towards reading in English as they move to the next term, although they were at first unwilling readers. However, as to the fact whether extensive reading helped to increase their ability in English, is something that cannot be determined decisively by this study, given the fact that this study was conducted over a period of four months, and that the effects of extensive reading on the students' language proficiency can best be seen in a longer period of time. The findings are also

consistent with that of Krashen's (1993), who found that studies on free reading that last longer (especially if they are conducted for more than a year), show more consistently positive results on the tests of reading comprehension. It is thus suggested that longitudinal studies be carried out to determine the effect of extensive reading on students' language proficiency (Ratnawati, 2003).

2.13.3 Scholastic Guided Reading Program

The Scholastic Guided Reading Programs deliver the resources teachers need to prepare students in becoming thoughtful and independent readers. The Guided Reading program was formed and vigilantly levelled by Fountas and Pinnell (2012): who are authorities in the field of guided reading. Furthermore, guided practice focuses on comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency (NCLB, 2002). The program itself uses books that have been labelled and levelled (A-Z). Each levelled book has been labelled based on the level of difficulty within the text. Teachers use the even out chart provided within the program to find suitable books for their students (Pinnell & Scharer, 2003). The preliminary levels of this program begin by introducing students to a starter level with easy text. Students who can apply reading phonic skills can remember a core list of high frequency words. Levelled readers allow students the repetition of using these words until understanding begins. However, guided reading is being carried out by a teacher working with a small group of students who demonstrate similar reading behaviours and can all read similar texts. Hence, with the practiced support of the teacher, the text becomes easy for students to read and to understand. Within the text for the levelled readers, there are some challenges and 22 opportunities for problem solving; however, it is simple enough for students to read with some fluency. The teacher chooses the text to help students expand their knowledge. A

large number of books that are organized based on the level of difficulty from the beginning reader to the most advanced readers, are included in this program. In the researcher's school, the collection is used in a central area, the workroom on the first-grade hallway. Each book has several copies, hence enabling the teacher to work with students at the same level in a small group at the same time. The program consists of ten levels for grades K–1 with an additional three or four levels for each later grade. According to Pinnell & Scharer, (2003), a levelled book set has several advantages, one of which is that: an organized set of books makes it easier to select books for groups of children. Having a gradient of text provides a way to assess children's progress over time. Also, a book collection is established that does not need to be replaced but is revised and expanded over time. As the collection expands, the varieties of text will provide opportunities for children to increase their reading power through experiencing diverse texts (p. 3). Importantly, each level of book has many different stories. These stories give room for variety within the program, so as to meet the interest levels of all students. The school wherein this research took place contains numerous books that ranges between genre, including fiction, nonfiction, and bibliographies.

2.14 The importance of phonological awareness to reading

Phonological awareness is closely associated with the process of reading acquisition, regardless of the language degree of the consistency between orthographic and phonological mappings (Duncan, 2010). Phonological awareness refers to the ability to identify and manipulate phonological units as syllables or phonemes. Phonological awareness leads to successful readers. Thus, phonological awareness refers to: the possession of the knowledge that words can rhyme, and that they can be separated into syllables, and are combinations of sounds (Talley,

2017). Also, “Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and work with the sounds of a spoken language” (Pokorni et al., 2004). According to Stahl and Murray (1994), children who do not have skills such as blending sounds, segmenting words, and understanding final consonants, would be left behind by four years of his or her grade level. Phonological awareness further contributes to the establishment of word specific knowledge and thus modulates the reading acquisition in the primary schools (Share & Shalev, 2004). Phonological awareness refers to the awareness of words, syllable, rhymes and sounds in a language. For the past 20 years, phonological awareness has been considered the most influential factor in predicting the reading difficulties in students (Badian, 2005). Thus, previous studies on reading disabilities has focused on the phonological awareness deficits and how to lessen them. It is obvious that phonological awareness is an important feature of any reading program. To be successful, students need to be able to segment words and blend sounds. At the cognitive level, the explanation is that these children have difficulties in processing the phonological features of words (Liberman et al., 1967). A variety of systematic phonics programs have been designed to teach children reading and spelling skills including synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, embedded phonics, analogy phonics, larger units phonics, and phonics-through-spelling (Ehri et al., 2001). Synthetic phonics teaches the child to identify the sounds represented by each letter (or letter cluster) in a word and then to blend those sounds to give the word (e.g., blending the sounds /t/ /a/ /p/ results in the word Tap). Furthermore, analytic phonics makes children to be aware that certain words share sound segments by teaching them letter combinations in a set of words—for example, teaching sets of words that share common beginning or

ending letter sequences with a common pronunciation. Thus, children become aware of individual sounds in words without having to pronounce them in isolation.

In embedded phonics, the emphasis is on spelling patterns that are encountered in the context of a predictable text. For instance, Foorman et al. (1998), provided teachers with a list of sequenced spelling patterns (e.g., -at, -ad, -an, -am) and a list of library books containing these spelling patterns. Children were asked to identify target patterns in these books. In analogy phonics, children learn to identify new words that share similarities with words they already know. For instance, they learn to read the new words like: van, ran, and can by means of the already mastered keyword, man. In phonics-through-spelling, children are taught to segment and write down the phonemes of spoken words.

In the meta-analysis conducted by Ehri et al. (2001), the major research question was whether children that were taught with systematic-phonics programs, outperformed children in the non-systematic phonics or non-phonics programs. Control children were enrolled in five types of programs: basal reading programs, regular curriculum, whole language, whole word, and miscellaneous programs. In basal reading programs, teachers work from a manual that had details of the daily lessons on reading. Only limited or no systematic phonics instruction that was provided in the basal reading studies, were included in the meta-analysis. Instruction in phonics can occur in a variety of ways. Rightmyer et al. (2006), studied the various methods to ascertain if one reading approach aided the students to gain more in phonics than the others. The teachers involved in this study used Breakthrough to Literacy (Brown & Zimmermann, 2004), Early Intervention (Hiebert & Taylor, 1994), Four Blocks (Cunningham & Hall, 2001), and the SRA Reading Mastery (Engelmann & Bruner, 2003), to teach phonics to

the struggling readers. The researchers found that one method for teaching phonics did not prove to be more effective than the other method. The timing of the literacy development and lack of coherence between a student's development level and the appropriate instructional phonics practices, however did prove to be important (Rightmyer et al., 2006). Scholars such as Bruce (2002), studied the need to engage in early diagnosis and intervention to close the gap from the level at which an at-risk student begins the year and the level at which the students finish the year.

Regular curriculum programs referred to programs where control children received the traditional or regular class curriculum in use at schools. However, in none of these cases was phonics taught systematically. In whole-language approaches, it is believed that children will learn language (oral and written) best, if it is learned for authentic purposes (Stahl et al., 1991). It is assumed that the exposure to a literate environment is sufficient to make children read (Stahl, 2003), and phonics is taught unsystematically, only if the need arises.

2.15 The Importance of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to comprehend a reading text and understand its meaning, in order to form some beliefs about the world (Long & Richards, 1987). Recognizing and knowing the meaning of words in a text is an important goal of reading, and a necessary requirement for education (Pinnell, 1995). The knowledge of comprehension is important to analyse words and letters on a page. The purpose of reading instruction changes, depending on the age and reading stage of the students. In early grades, reading instruction is focused on the development of low-level foundational skills, such as decoding and fluency

(Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009). As students become more proficient readers, the purpose of reading changes. Reading is no longer about learning how to read, but rather focuses on gaining information about the world or a specific topic (Chall & Jacobs, 1983). As a result of the aforementioned, expository texts become the predominant reading material. Although comprehension has always been the goal of reading, at this stage it becomes even more important and challenging, and takes on the greater purpose of acquiring new information. This shift typically occurs between the third and fourth grades, when students may demonstrate a drop in skills: which is a trend that has been described as “the fourth-grade slump” (Chall & Jacobs, 1983). Students who experience this slump often fail to transit to higher stages of reading; which compromises their comprehension and learning of new information in the long term (e.g. Chall & Jacobs, 1983; Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009). However, the notion of the fourth-grade slump has been supported by research. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report, has been conducted periodically since 1969, to assess students in reading, mathematics, science, and other subjects. The NAEP report is designed to inform the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States, as well as gather information on the state and national levels. Furthermore, the 2009 report discovered that only 33% of all fourth graders reached a proficiency level in reading (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). Unfortunately, there was no improvement in the national reading scores from 2009 to 2011 in grade 4 students; although there was some improvement in grade 8. When the fourth-grade scores were examined according to states, only four states reported higher reading scores in 2011 than 2009, but two states received lower scores. In the eighth grade, scores were higher in ten states compared to 2009

(Hussar & Bailey, 2011). The reading assessment hence, measures students' reading comprehension by reading passages and answering questions on both literary and informational topics, targeting cognitive behaviours such as recall, interpretation, and evaluation (National Assessment Governing Board, 2012). Collectively, NAEP measurements over time has revealed that many fourth graders do not demonstrate grade level academic performance in a challenging subject matter, and are not able to critically analyse, evaluate, or make inferences about the text. Clearly, this has implications for the education system and progress of American students. For students to perform well on these tests and demonstrate competency, they must be skilled in reading and understanding both narrative and expository texts. They must also have the skills to read a text silently and independently in order to answer questions that follow. This course of progress can be understood through different theories of development. Reading was generally considered to be simply retrieving an author's message by decoding the words of a text (McKeown, 1990; Adams & Collins, 1977). Gradually our understanding of reading comprehension has become more complex, recognizing that the reader derives both implicit and explicit meanings from the text (McKeown, 1990; Adams & Collins, 1977). An explicit understanding of a text is one in which a reader develops a shallow understanding of a text by processing exactly what the author says from the text in isolation from their prior knowledge and experience. If the reader understands the deeper meanings of a text, beyond what the author directly states, they can be said to have an implicit understanding of the text. At the most complex level, if a reader is able to understand the information as presented by the author (both implicit and explicit); as well as how that information integrates into

the reader's existing knowledge, we can say the reader has successfully comprehended the material (Adams & Collins, 1977).

At a first glance, reading comprehension appears to be a hierarchical bottom-up process beginning with the reader's ability to recognize the individual letters of a text. From this, the reader decodes each of the words that are then used to construct the sentences which form the clauses and phrases that the reader will use to extract information and meaning (Adams & Collins, 1977). However, as we will expand on shortly, research in the mid-1970's discovered that the processing of this text hierarchy is bidirectional and that reading comprehension is a dynamic process of constructing coherent representations of inferences and ideas that utilizes both top-down and bottom-up processing (Duke et al., 2004; Graesser & Britton, 1996; Adams & Collins, 1977). Currently, most definitions of reading comprehension takes note of the important relationship between the text and the reader's prior knowledge (Alfassi, 2004; Meneghetti et al., 2006). This perspective appreciates the bottom up flow of information as it is processed from the text itself and balances this with the top-down processing of this information by higher level strategies, which include the use of existing reader knowledge and the integration of new information with that prior knowledge.

Existing reader knowledge will be used in a top down manner to make inferences regarding the meanings and significance of unfamiliar terms and topics that are being processed upwards from the text. The readers knowledge of the relationships between ideas will be used to draw connections between ideas in the text, that are not explicitly stated as well as connections between new information in the text and their existing knowledge structures.

While research is yet to formalize exactly what demonstrates a reader's true comprehension of a specific text (Ozuru et al., 2009), a number of assessment methods can be employed to tease apart a reader's comprehension including free recall, written questions, and key-word sorting tasks, among others. Free recall typically reveals the reader's explicit memory of the text, this can be considered a measure of the text-based representation (McNamara et al., 1996) that the reader has constructed, of which is a concept that will be expanded on in greater detail later. Moreover, written questions can be a little more broad [Is "diagnostic" more accurate than "broad?"] in their assessment and can tease apart a reader's understanding of not only things specific to the text, but also the reader's ability to apply the information to novel problems and integrate it with prior knowledge (McNamara et al., 1996). Key-word sorting tasks are also popular methods used in providing a better look at the reader's understanding of the relationship between concepts and ideas in the text. During this task, the reader will sort key words into categories representing relationships gleaned from the text. A reader's comprehension can be assessed by determining how strongly these key words are sorted according to their respective categories before and after reading (McNamara et al., 1996).

Other popular strategies among instructors include essays, multiple choice questions, and vocabulary definitions. Without comprehension, students at risk for academic failure, cannot understand the written text, which could cause the reader a fundamental problem. To assist in the comprehending of materials and learning to be successful readers, the struggling reader needs to experience a reading curriculum that offers success in learning to read based on an appropriate sequence of reading activities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and design used in collecting and analysing data for this particular study. Furthermore, the chapter provides details of the study, IRP, the IRP teachers' background, role of the researcher, settings of the study, sample, language profile of the IRP participants, research design, research instruments, procedures of data collection, reading task in IRP, strategies used in IRP, as well as the validity and reliability of instruments. Based on the literature review, the researcher implemented the after-school Intensive Reading Programme (IRP), which focuses on enhancing primary children's reading skills in a private school.

3.2 The Study

The conduct of this study took place at Sri Mawar Schools, Johor Bahru. It is a private school in the centre of Johor Bahru town. The student's population of the selected school is about 285, while that of the teachers is just around 35. The school makes use of two curriculums, which are the National curriculum and the International curriculum. Also, **Sri Mawar Schools**, incorporating **Mawar International Schools** and **Sekolah Sri Mawar**, are a combined **International** and **Malaysian National School**, at the same time. Both schools have students from Kindergarten, Primary, all through to Lower and Upper Secondary levels. In the schools, English language is taught four hours a week, while English oral is conducted one hour per week. However, students who showed signs of struggling in reading could not perform well in the class because of the barriers they had in reading.

Therefore, those struggling readers were taken out after- school hours and trained to read in the Intensive Reading Programme.

3.3 Intensive Reading Programme (IRP)

Intensive Reading Programme is a newly developed reading programme that was devised in conjunction with the English Language Club at Sri Mawar Private School, Johor Bahru. It's targeted at the struggling primary school readers (9 to 12-year-old students), hence it involved children to attend an after- school Intensive Reading Programme session twice a week, each lasting for 1 hour. A total of 2 hours training was provided to the participants per week, thereby leading to 20 hours of Intensive Reading Programme in a period of 10 weeks. The training was conducted consecutively on Mondays and Tuesdays from 3.00pm up till 4.00 pm. It is important to state that the programme operated throughout the normal school year, over a 10-week period and was delivered by two teachers and the researcher who were: two qualified English Language teachers and the researcher herself who was the English language teacher in the school, with 32 children drawn from different levels (Primary 3 to Primary 6 students).

The programme had a very structured approach, such of which each session began with reading assessment, which was followed by various aspects of literacy teaching such as phonics rules, phonetic word test, Sight words, paragraph reading, cooperative reading, organizing story map, comprehending text, oral reading test and finally a reading assessment. Students who were eligible for this program were recommended by the English subject teacher of their particular grade, based on the students English examination grades and class performance. Those students who scored below 50 marks in their English Examination were advised to undergo the 10-week IRP. These students were

from the primary school with age ranging from 9 to 12 years old. At the end of the 10th week, a post test was conducted to evaluate the effects of the Intensive Reading Programme on the students reading ability and comprehension skills. Besides that, the researcher was able to persuade all the participants to take part in a survey, which was regarding their perspective of participating in the IRP.

3.4 The IRP teacher's background

Prior to carrying out the IRP, the teachers involved in the IRP were briefed on its aims and objectives as well as the rationale for implementing it. Then, several aspects pertaining to the implementation of the programme were emphasized. These included issues such as organizing the program, establishing routines and expectations, implementing related activities, as well as monitoring the progress of the students' reading. The IRP was delivered by two certified teachers who possessed more than 3 years of teaching experience. One of them was certified in early childhood education and had a good training experience in teaching early reading for children between 4 to 6 years of age. On the other hand, the second teacher possessed an extensive experience in teaching English to older students and as of the time of this research had completed her Education Course in Singapore.

The teacher who has early childhood education background, Ms. Mona, was assigned to plan and prepare activities for areas such as phonics, sight words and paragraph reading. Whilst the researcher worked together with another teacher, Pn. Norah, who had her educational background from Singapore. The researcher and Pn. Norah prepared and organized reading activities for areas such as: cooperative reading, story map organization, comprehension and oral

reading. Additionally, the teachers were given the opportunity to raise any questions to the researcher pertaining to the implementation of the IRP.

3.5 The researcher

The researcher co-assisted the teachers who were in charge of conducting the reading programme. The researcher also helped in planning and preparing the lesson plan for every session. The researcher also sent a proposal of the IRP to the headmistress of the school so as to get an approval to conduct IRP in the school. Moreover, the researcher was responsible for obtaining parental concern from the parents of the participants to join IRP after school hours. Besides that, the researcher served as a supervisor, by attending each of the reading session to ensure that the students participated in the reading program. Furthermore, the teachers worked together with the researcher in selecting suitable reading materials and activities for the participants. In a means of avoiding biasness, the researcher kept a weekly diary to write down her reflections observed after the completion of every session or reading lessons of the IRP. This keeps her objective throughout the data collection period.

Two teachers were assigned to conduct the lessons. Teacher Mona was in charge of the first group while teacher Norah took over the second group. The two teachers also assisted in creating the visual aids for the reading session. They also took turns in delivering the reading lessons on a weekly basis. In order to ensure orderliness and appropriate record keeping for the students, each of them were given files to keep all their reading worksheets or any other materials used during the lessons such as word list, observation sheet, reading assessment papers, as well as other related reading materials. The lesson plans were also submitted to the Head

teacher of the English department. All the lessons for the IRP were conducted after school hours with the permission of the headmistress.

3.6 Settings of the study

Interestingly, the researcher of this study is also an employed teacher of the selected school. This is a private school which has two different curriculums. Sri Mawar Schools are branches of international schools in Malaysia. The school was established on 1st September 1994. As from year 2006, the Malaysian Government started allowing students from Malaysia to get educated there; thus Sri Mawar gained the status of being both an International and National school. Sri Utama offers students a place in Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary levels. The school's academia includes UPSR, PMR, SPM, as well as a number of International examination papers such as IGCSE. More so, the International Schools teachers follow a well-planned and strategically organized curriculum provided by the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) board. The overall population of the school in Johor Bahru is 285 students.

The sample students for this study were taken from the primary school, comprising both the National and International streams. For the students in the International School curriculum, English language was the medium of instruction for almost all the academic subjects, except for Malay and Mandarin languages. However, the National stream students receive instructions in both Malay and English languages. Therefore, the exposure of English for students from the National curriculum is limited. On the other hand, a number of participants involved in this study were also selected from the International curriculum. Although the exposure to the language is quite frequent, yet they tend to struggle with reading as they have not developed the foundation of reading in their previous

schools. The students came from different backgrounds, as some had reading problems since pre-school.

3.7 The Sample

The sample used for this study consists of 32 students from an urban private school in Johor Bahru. With regard to gender distribution, the 32 students consisted of both males and females. The students were of the age bracket of 9 until 12 years and had different levels of language proficiency. The samples were from year 3, 4, 5 and 6 classes of both the national and international stream. The total population of the school is 285 students, among which, 32 students were from the primary school. Also, before conducting the study on the participants, the researcher ensured that they gave their consent to participate in the IRP; of which the concern letter was signed by their parents.

The sample, which was also known as respondents later in the study were in the primary classes of different grades. They sat for English assessments time to time during their regular classroom education. These respondents came from various backgrounds. It was also discovered that some of the student's language proficiency wasn't up to their grade level, as they belonged to an independent Chinese school previously. Therefore, their exposure to English language was at a minimal range. The participants were selected by their English teachers based on low grades in their first term English language Examination. Since this is a private school, which has two streams that focuses on National and International Curriculums; the struggling readers were of the Malay, Chinese, Iranian and Indian students. To these set of students, English language is a second language. The selection of these participants for the current study is relevant to the claim made by Kourea et al.

(2007). They informed that a proficient reader must possess a broad knowledge of cognitive and linguistic skills, such as the ability to make inferences, recall text, background knowledge of the topic read, and vocabulary. The struggling readers in this study lacked all those skills and they needed an effective reading program to acquire the basic skills of reading. This supports the definition of struggling readers by Gaskin (2005). He stated that struggling readers are those students who have difficulties reading with fluency and comprehension at the basic level in all subject areas (Gaskins, 2005; Strickland et al., 2002). However, Wanzek et al. (2018) stated that one way to identify students in need of intensive intervention, is to examine their reading achievement prior to intervention. Thus, in adoption to the aforementioned identification technique, the researcher selected the struggling readers for the current study based on the scores obtained in the End of the year English Examination. Students who scored below 50 marks in the English paper were encouraged to be part of the IRP.

3.8 Students profile

3.8.1 Language profile of students.

The population of the study has the background of English as a second language. They are known as ESL (English as Second Language) students. According to Hedgcock and Ferris (2009), the ESL students acquired the native language before acquiring the target language. In the current study, the students belong to both National and International curriculums.

Majority of the students who were in the international curriculum are Malaysian students. In the same manner, the students were known to have acquired their mother tongue as their first language. The knowledge of their mother tongue

interferes with the learning of English language, as regarding formal English. Mother-tongue interference refers to the effect of the learners' native language on a second or foreign language learning (Thyab, 2016). According to Thyab (2016), students who learn English and are from different backgrounds, face difficulties when it comes to learning English as a second or foreign language.

Students selected for this study are fluent speakers of their mother tongue languages such as Chinese, Malay, Tamil and Iran. They use their mother tongue in all formal and informal conversation on a daily basis. Hence, all of them are struggling readers and have performed poorly in the school examination on the subject of English language.

Table 3.1 shows the number of students who were involved in the Intensive Reading Programme. There is only one experimental group which consists of male and female students. There are 17 male students and 15 female students.

Table 3.1
Composition of Sample

Sex	Experimental group N (32)
Male	17
Female	15

3.9 Instruments

3.9.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire was admitted to the purposive samples, in a means of supporting the first research question; which was about the struggling readers' perspective of the Intensive Reading Programme (IRP). The questionnaire

consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire were open ended questions. In part one, there were five questions about the respondents' personal details. The researcher included part 1 in the questionnaire to be able to acquire knowledge of the background of the sample population involved in the study. For example, the researcher was interested in knowing the participants gender, age, race, mother tongue and second language.

Part Two of the survey was a Likert Scale survey that was set up with four answers possible to each question. About 14 out of 15 Likert scale questions were adapted from the original version. The phrases such as 'summer program', was substituted with 'Intensive Reading Programme'. Likewise, some phrases such as 'sight words', 'knowledge of the world', and 'knowledge of the text', were added to the statements in accordance to the current study. This questionnaire was framed by adapting Haug's (2010) Summer Literacy Programs, Survey and Questionnaire.

The students circled the number that corresponded to the answer they thought best fit the question. The participants could choose from possible answers which were arranged in a numerical order given as: four (4), which indicated that the student strongly agreed with the statement; three (3), indicating that the participant agreed with the statement; two (2), indicating that the participant disagreed with the statement; and one (1), which indicated that the participant strongly disagreed with the statement.

The survey consisted of 15 Likert Scale questions. The researcher assumed that an answer of strongly agree and agree would be a favourable answer to a question, while disagree and strongly disagree would be a non-favourable answer towards that question. With the help of the teachers, the researchers went through

each item with the students, giving them adequate time to respond to each item. The students were given the opportunity to ask questions about the items. The researcher first read and explained the items of the questionnaire in her own words. As the researcher read through the instruction, the participants in response, answered each question immediately. Then the researcher proceeded in reading every single question for all the three parts, until all the subjects completed answering all the questions in the questionnaire.

3.9.2 Reading Assessment before IRP

A reading assessment was conducted on the first week of the Intensive Reading Programme to measure the reading ability of the struggling readers. The reading assessment reading comprehension paper was that of the third term, grade three paper, which was designed by Sri Mawar international English Subject teacher. The question paper contained eight sections. In section A, the participants answered the Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ's) on vocabulary. In section B, they were required to read a passage about a comprehension titled: "Little Red Hen"; after which they answered five MCQs based on the passage. Then, in section C, there were 5 fill in the blank short passage vocabulary-related tasks. In section D, the participants read another passage and answered open-ended questions based on the passage. Additionally, in this section, the participants' reading comprehension skills were tested.

Finally, sections E and F exposed readers to sentence structured questions such as, completing sentences with suitable words and ordering jumbled up sentences. This set of question paper consumed approximately 1 hour for each student. The reading assessment was conducted by two examiners for the purpose

of validity. The scores provided by the examiners were used to find the average score for each student.

3.9.3 Reading Assessment after IRP

At the end of the tenth week, the participating students were required to sit for a second reading assessment. The reading comprehension paper was a replica of the third term, grade three paper of a previous year, which was designed by a Sri Mawar international English Subject teacher. The question paper contained 6 sections, comprising of sections A, B, C, D, E and F. The test paper consisted of 35 questions, which carried a total of 50 marks.

This set of question paper consumed approximately 1 hour for each student. The reading assessment was conducted by two examiners in order to ensure validity. The scores provided by the examiners were used to find the average score for each student. The format of the post test was similar to that of the first assessment paper. The paper was meant to test the students various reading aspects such as vocabulary, sentence structure, reading comprehension and grammar. Furthermore, the usage of the same format for both reading assessments, enabled the researchers to compare the scores obtained by the students for the reading comprehension. According to the US National Reading Panel (2000), there are five factors which must be emphasized on, if children are to succeed in reading. These five factors are: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary.

3.10 Validity and reliability of the Instruments

This questionnaire was adapted from Haug (2010). The researcher found that their survey questions were very suitable for getting feedback from young readers.

The survey and questionnaire that was developed by Haug (2010), who conducted a research on summer literacy program for struggling readers using strategies such as comprehension, fluency and vocabulary; had received approval from the doctoral committee and was deemed valid for the current research. The questionnaire was validated by a group of professionals from the English Department at Yarmouk University. Hence, this survey was chosen for this study and duly implemented, due to reason being that Huang's research is closely related to the current study. As for reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test was used to evaluate the consistency of the data collected, and interestingly, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.89, which is quite high and acceptable.

Both papers were designed to meet the researcher's expectation. This is to show improvement in all the five components of reading, which are phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary. Furthermore, Grade 3 paper was selected to standardize the test for all grades since the participants in this study are from different levels and grades. Reliability is the consistency of measurement. The instrument was measured in the same manner, at each time the students sit for the test. The assessment papers were designed with two different set of questions. However, they cover the same components of reading in both papers. For example, when a student takes the first reading assessment, the first selection of text might be about a little red hen in section D. The next time the student takes the second reading assessment, the text might be about: The Tortoise and the Hare. However, the format of the test was the same. The level of difficulty for both papers were measured from a checklist of words that was read throughout the 10 weeks of the Intensive Reading Program.

Content validity of each test was determined by two English Department Teachers. Both teachers had at least 10 years of teaching experience at the primary school level. They checked to ensure that the questions were of the level of the pupils in grade 3. The researcher used grade 3 International syllabus and final English examination paper of two different years, for all the 32 participants who were from year three, year four, year five and year six respectively. Additionally, students were given a set of word list in every session during the IRP; to ensure that they were familiar with all those words tested in both reading assessments. The reading assessment and post tests were adapted from the standardized Cambridge international examination of grade three papers, which was designed by the English teacher of Sekolah Sri Mawar. Therefore, the skills and level of difficulty are equivalent.

3.11 Research Design

A quantitative method was followed to address the research questions. More specifically, usability perspective design was employed in this study. The Intensive Reading Programme (IRP) was used to measure the students' reading achievement. The struggling readers of this study take two reading assessment tests before and after the implementation of IRP. The survey questionnaire and Reading Assessments (Reading comprehension Exam Papers) prior to the implementation of IRP are used to obtain the data of the current study. A study attempted to develop Basic Reading Kit for remedial education children in the learning of Malay Language reveal the effectiveness of the Basic Reading Kit in enhancing the reading ability among remedial education children. (Nurul, 2017). Another study conducted on the perceptions of teachers and students on the feasibility and usability of the Malay language teaching modules received a positive comment

from teachers and students. The usability aspect of the module involves the teaching strategies, methods of teaching language skills, grammar teaching methods, usage of teaching and learning materials, and assessment techniques in the classroom (Osman, 2013).

The students underwent ten weeks of teaching and learning, using an intensive reading approach through an Intensive Reading Programme. Figure 3.1 shows the weekly outline of the activities carried out in IRP.

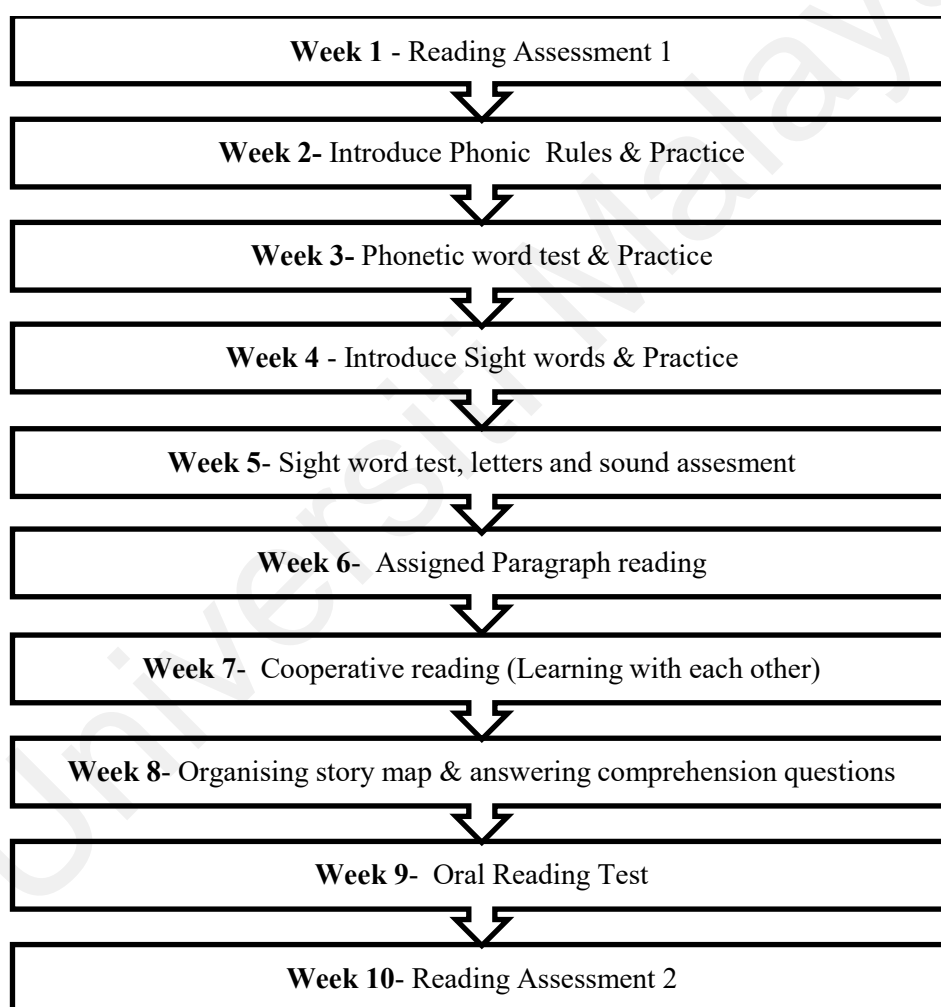


Figure 3.1. Outline of the IRP activities for 10 Weeks

Figure 3.1 represents the ten weeks of reading activities that was conducted in the Intensive Reading Program (IRP). Below is the description of activities that were conducted week by week.

Week 1: A reading assessment was administered to the students (see Appendix C, Reading comprehension paper). The result served as the point of reference to compare the performance of the subjects before and after the 10-weeks IRP. In the same week (session 2), the subjects were introduced to alphabets and three letter words. Recognizing alphabets and knowing the sounds of the letters are the best predictors to reading success (Adams, 1990; Badian, 2005; Snow et al., 1998). Still in this week, the teacher made use of a computer to introduce the 28 letters and their sounds. During this process, the students were asked to match words to the beginning and ending sound and play word games such as memory game. Also, the teacher provided a **Phonetic Word List- 3 to 6 letter phonetic words** (refer to Appendix F, Item number 2 and 3). This word list was used throughout the 10 weeks of IRP; this is because the students needed to practice reading the phonetic words anytime during the IRP, during regular classroom learning or at home.

Week 2: The students were introduced to phonic rules and practiced reading letters and syllable words. The teacher played the jolly phonic CD and asked the students to sing along. The Jolly Phonics program (Lloyd & Wernham, 1992) was implemented as an intervention plan to develop early reading skills. However, the researcher did not implement the whole Jolly Phonics Program in the current study. Furthermore, the researcher only used the alphabetical songs to develop the students' knowledge of phonology. This was repeated a few times until the students managed to dictate the sound of the letters. Besides

that, extra practice was given by playing a memory game. With the help of the memory game, students were able to see the displayed picture cards for a few minutes and match the same letter sounds. After that, the teachers provided another set of Cambridge starter wordlist (refer to Appendix f, Item number 4). This word list consists of two to four syllable words. These are high frequency words that struggling readers need to have in building their vocabulary, so as to enable them in reading a passage or story. Therefore, the struggling readers were required to revise the words time to time as well.

Week 3: Students were given a phonetic word test and more practice of reading syllable words. There were about 80 to 100 words in the reading card. Once the students were able to achieve the reading target, the teachers used an observation sheet (refer to Appendix G) to monitor the students word identification skills, which in return leads to the development of Phonology. Phonological awareness has been reported to be a predictor of reading success (Badian, 2005) and general academic achievement (Chard et al., 2000).

Week 4: Students were introduced to sight words and they practiced reading a short paragraph of about 50 to 80 words. The teacher gave a list of sight words to the individual students, together with a checklist. The students used the reading aloud technique to read the sight words. Besides that, various activities such as memory game, word puzzles and spelling, were conducted to enhance the student's vocabulary knowledge. As stated by Alaraj (2015), vocabulary awareness is a most important skill needed in reading, as it helps in the comprehension of a text; because without knowing what most of the words mean, it's difficult to build comprehension skills. Hence, exposure to word identification component that

covers sight words and phonetic words allow students to have a handful of known words that helps them in reading paragraphs and short stories in IRP.

Week 5: Sight word test, letters and sound assessment were done on the students individually. Each teacher handled at least 10 to 12 students by assigning the sight word cards of 20 words (Refer to Appendix F, Item Number 1). According to Hayes (2016), sight word instruction is a successful strategy especially when teaching sight words to students with disabilities and struggling readers. The students were asked to read the words aloud and the teachers used an observation sheet to mark the number of words read correctly. The letter and sound assessment were also done orally, whereby every student took turns sounding pointed letters on the board.

Week 6: Students were given a lengthy paragraph of around 100 to 120 words and were assigned to read the paragraph silently first and then read out loud to the class. The students applied both the silent reading and reading aloud technique to complete this task. After reading the paragraph, the teacher guided the students to answer questions that were related to the paragraph. By doing this, the students were able to build their comprehension skills and learn proper strategies to comprehend a text. Hence, this activity was important as they were given more challenging tasks in the following week such as reading a short story book.

Week 7: Students were given an opportunity to choose one book which comes from the scholastic **Folk & Fairy Tale Easy Readers**, for them to read in pairs. Reading cooperatively help readers to read actively, work as a team and develop group reading skills (Marzban & Alinejadb, 2013). It is a short story with only 7 to 10 pages. Some of the short stories used in the IRP were: The

Tortoise and The Hare, Cinderella, The Ugly Duckling, The Gingerbread Man, The Little Red Hen, The Nightingale, The Three little pigs, The Elves and The shoemaker, Stone Soup, The City Mouse and The Country Mouse, Goldilocks and The Three Bears and The Three Billy Goats Gruff. This encouraged cooperative reading and helped them to learn from each other. After that, the students were asked to tell the story that they have read, in their own words without referring to the book.

Week 8: Students were taught on how to organize a story map from the book read in week 7, where a story map diagram (Scholastic story Map) was given to them and they were required to fill in the empty boxes with information such as: the title and name of author; the main characters of the book; supporting characters; setting (where the story took place); problems encountered in the story; and lastly the solutions to the problems in the story. Besides that, the students were also required to answer some questions about the story they have read.

Week 9: On an individual basis, the students underwent an oral reading test, whereby a reading text was given to the students and they were asked to read the text aloud. The teachers observed and monitored the students' reading performance, via an observation sheet of how well they had performed in the reading exercise. After the students read the text aloud, the teacher further posed some questions prior to the same reading text. The students were required to answer 5 open-ended questions, based on the story or passage they were given.

Week 10: After 9 weeks of providing the IRP to struggling readers of this study, a second reading assessment was conducted in order to observe the students' reading performance (refer to Appendix D, Reading comprehension paper). All the 32 participants who were involved in IRP were required to complete

the 35 questions of the second reading assessment paper within an hour. The result served as a point of reference to compare the performance of the subjects before and after the 10-weeks of IRP. Additionally, the teachers of IRP conducted revision lessons before the second reading assessment. Activities such as reading aloud wordlist, answering reading comprehension questions, using sight words in filling in the blank exercises and ordering words to form correct sentences, were conducted in this week.

3.12 Procedure

The children received 2 hours of reading lessons every week over a period of 10 weeks. They received a total of 20 hours of reading lessons in the Intensive Reading Programme. There were two reading assessments administered before and after the implementation of IRP. The reading assessments were conducted over two sessions. The first session was administered before the 10-weeks of the IRP; and the second one was conducted after the 10 weeks of the IRP.

3.12.1 Intensive Reading Programme's Procedure

The after-school Intensive Reading Programme (IRP) was held after the school hours. The normal closing time of the school is at 3 pm. The IRP was conducted on every Mondays and Tuesdays, from 3 to 4 pm for a period of 10 weeks. The students who were involved in the program were struggling readers from different grades. The students were from grade 3, 4, 5 and 6. These students came from two different streams that comprised both the national and international curriculum. Two English language teachers, together with the researcher who have experience in teaching preschool and primary school students, conducted the program. IRP was adapted from the

computer-assisted reciprocal of the early English reading CAREER system (Lan et al. 2009). The CAREER system has three modules: a sight word module; a phonetic word module; and a peer assessment module. In this study, computer is not fully utilised, but all the three modules which are the sight word module, phonetic word module and the peer assessment module were applied in the IRP. Every week, students were assigned to different reading activities based on the research outline shown in Figure 3.1. A week by week activities and strategies was layered in the outline (Figure 3.1). The researcher and the IRP teachers worked together in executing the 10 weeks IRP plan. Also, the researcher layered out the teaching and learning activities that were conducted per week.

Table 3.2

Teaching and learning activities of IRP

Week No	Outline of IRP	Activities	Strategies
1	Reading assessment Introduce Phonic Rules & Practice	1. Students sit for the reading assessment. 2. Teacher introduce alphabets and sounds of letters using computer.	Silent reading and Reading aloud
2	Introduce Phonic Rules & Practice	1. Learn sounds of letters through Jolly Phonics. 2. Matching letters to words through a memory game. Exposed to a list of 3 letter phonetic words, e.g. pan, bag, cat, man.	Reading aloud
3	Phonetic word test & Practice	1. Practice reading the phonetic words by reading the words aloud. 2. Teacher uses a checklist to check the	Reading Aloud

		number of words students manage to read.	
4	Introduce Sight words & Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read aloud a list of sight words. 2. Use sight words in sentences and spoken language. 3. Identify sight words in a paragraph. 	Reading aloud
5	Sight word test, letters and sound assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher uses a checklist to monitor the number of sight words students could read. 2. Students make sounds of letters displayed on board. 	Reading aloud
6	Assigned Paragraph reading	<p>Students read a paragraph silently. Students then read the same paragraph aloud the second time.</p> <p>Students answer guided questions from teacher about the paragraph read.</p>	Silent reading & Reading aloud
7	Cooperative reading (Learning with each other)	<p>Students choose a book from Scholastic Folk & Fairy Easy Readers and read in pairs.</p> <p>Students tell the story about the book read in front of the class.</p>	Cooperative reading
8	Organising story map & answering comprehension questions.	<p>Students use a story map template to put in information such as the main characters, setting, title, name of author, problems, and solutions about the book read in week 7.</p> <p>Students then answer some open-ended questions based on the book(short stories from Scholastic Folk & Fairy Easy Readers)</p>	Cooperative learning.
9	Oral Reading Test	Teacher gives a text to individual students and	Reading aloud & Oral reading.

		ask them to read the text aloud. Teacher asks 5 questions based on the text.	
10	Reading Assessment	Students take the reading assessment for an hour. Teacher conduct revision on word reading and comprehension skills before the assessment.	Silent reading and Reading aloud.

3.13 Reading Tasks in IRP

IRP is a 10-week reading program framed based on the CAREER system (Lan et al., 2009) and Cunningham's (1993) Whole to Part Model (WTP). IRP was conducted for students who have difficulties in reading during regular classroom learning. These students were gathered in a separate classroom after school for reading exercises. Every week, two sessions of reading class was held, with focus on varieties of reading tasks, such as introducing phonic rules and practicing reading letters and one syllable words; reading two up to six syllable words; reading sight words; reading short paragraph of 50 to 80 words; reading lengthy paragraph of 100 to 120 words; reading short stories and organising story maps from the book read. Furthermore, some of the short stories used in the IRP were: The Tortoise and The Hare, Cinderella, The Ugly Duckling, The Gingerbread Man, The Little Red Hen, The Nightingale, The Three little pigs, The Elves and The shoemaker, Stone Soup, The City Mouse and The Country Mouse, Goldilocks and The Three Bears and The Three Billy Goats Gruff. Finally, students were required to complete a story map based on one of the short stories read. All the short story books were taken from the Scholastic Folk & Fairy Tale Easy Readers.

a. Reading Strategies used in IRP

The participants of the IRP were exposed to four different reading techniques such as reading aloud, silent reading, cooperative reading and oral reading for a period of ten weeks.

3.13.1 Reading aloud

The reading aloud skill was applied for the activities conducted in week 4, 5, 6 and 9. During this exercise, the participants were required to read words, paragraphs and short stories aloud. These tasks were usually done on a one-one basis on each student, to ensure that each of them could pronounce words clearly and audibly. In the current study, IRP had included the read-aloud technique to allow students to pronounce word by word clearly. Unfortunately, the struggling readers involved in IRP got little attention during regular classroom lessons, thus, IRP provided ample time for each student to read a passage aloud.

Reading aloud is a strategy that benefits children to read and improve their understanding of a reading text (Fox, 2013). According to Trelease (2013), when students read a text aloud, they can hear the words uttered which help in improving their pronunciation. A study conducted by Swanson et al. (2015), found out that reading aloud to children with reading difficulties, brings about the positive effects of the child's phonological awareness, comprehension and vocabulary. Also, during the read-aloud sessions, students participated in questioning and answering sessions as well as dialogue and inquiry-based learning (Trelease, 2013).

3.13.2 Silent reading

Silent reading technique was applied in the activity conducted in week 6. Students were asked to read a lengthy paragraph of 100 to 120 words silently. After the students had read the paragraph silently, they were required to read it aloud for the second time. The researcher combined both techniques to enhance the students reading skills. According to Hopkins (1997), silent reading allows a child to read a text at their own speed. In addition, silent reading can also build the learners' confidence in their abilities to work through and understand a text independently. In this sense, silent reading is seen as a strategy that prepares learners for a life-long reading. Consequently, a report by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (Shanahan, 2004), recommended that if silent reading is used as a classroom technique, which is intended to develop reading skills and fluency, it should be done in combination with other types of reading instructions, such as guided oral reading. In this study a combination of two strategies of reading were employed in tasks such as paragraph reading, reading stories and oral reading test.

3.13.3 Cooperative reading

To make the IRP sessions more fun and interesting, cooperative reading technique was applied. This was to help the students read and learn from their peers. When children learn together, they would be able to guide each other in reading. Students were given the opportunity to choose one of their favourite books from the Scholastic Folk & Fairy Tale Easy Readers. After reading the book in pairs, the students were asked to tell the story they had read. The teacher hence prompted the students by asking a few questions about the story to encourage them to speak. Since it was a reading program, the participants of the study were

encouraged to speak out and comprehend what they have read. According to Polat et al. (2016), cooperative reading engages students into a reading task effectively, creates a healthy English learning environment, make language learning more meaningful and increases the understanding of the material read.

3.13.4 Oral reading

Oral reading allows struggling readers to improve their fluency. Furthermore, it is a technique used to improve struggling readers' word identification skills. Besides that, oral reading of a text emphasizes on a reader's pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency. However, on the other hand, oral reading is closely related to intensive reading, which is known as the word-for-word type of reading. The researcher's purpose of employing the oral reading technique was to assist the struggling readers' attain a comprehensive understanding of a reading text.

Below is a table with a list of techniques and activities carried out in the IRP.

Table 3.3
Strategies and activities in IRP

Week	Strategies	Activity
4	Reading aloud	Students' read the words aloud and the teachers use an observation sheet to mark the number of words read correctly.
5	Reading aloud	Students use flash cards for sight word practice and read a short paragraph aloud. Students were introduced to sight words and practiced the reading of a short paragraph of 50 to 80 words.
6	Silent reading and reading aloud	Students read a lengthy paragraph of 100 to 120 words silently first and then read it out loud to the class.
7	Cooperative reading	Students choose a book to read in pairs. After that, students were asked to tell the

	story they had read in their own words without referring to the book.
9 Oral reading	Teacher uses a short text to allow individual students to read the text aloud. After that, teacher asks a few questions based on the reading text.

3.14 Data Analysis

Before collecting the data, the researcher selected two English language teachers to mark the students' reading assessment paper. Then the results were used to categorise the students into two groups. Students who achieved a score lower than 50 % were placed in level 1 (group 1), whereas students who scored marks above 50 % were placed in level 2 (group 2). These students were separated into two groups in order to ensure an easier monitoring of the students in smaller groups. Questionnaires were distributed to the samples to determine the effectiveness of the IRP after the 10 weeks programme. Furthermore, data were collected from the comparison of the two reading assessment scores. A quantitative method was applied in this study. Before the 10 weeks of the training session, reading assessment scores were recorded and after the intervention, the students were given another reading assessment to investigate if there was a significant difference in their reading achievement after the implementation of the Intensive Reading Programme.

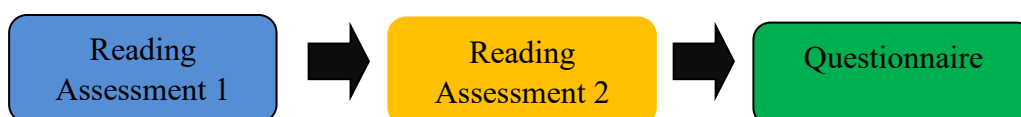


Figure 3.2: Flow of data collection for this study

3.15 Quantitative data analysis process

The data analysis was done quantitatively. Also, the data obtained from the current study was analysed through questionnaires, reading assessment and post test results. The data collected through the questionnaires was entered in the 'variable view' and 'data view' cells of SPSS to generate statistical results. In the main procedure of the data analysis, the descriptive statistics of the scores were calculated. Descriptive analysis was used to identify and describe the mean and the standard deviation of the scores of the learners on the reading assessment. The results were displayed in a tabular form to show the respondents responses of every Likert scale questions. SPSS (Version 14) was used to analyse the data. To answer the research questions, paired sample and independent sample t-test were used to determine the Mean and standard deviation of the students' reading achievement. This t-test was chosen because the statistical analysis was to determine if the IRP caused a significant increase in the scores from the reading assessments.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the result from the analysed data. It further analyses the quantitative data that was collected from the reading assessment results, as well as the findings from the questionnaire. Prior to the Intensive Reading Programme, all the reading assessment scores were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 14) software program. The purpose of this study is to find out if an Intensive Reading Programme can help struggling readers read effectively. After describing the findings, the final section of this chapter gives a detailed discussion of the obtained results.

4.2 Data Analysis

Table 4.1

Participants involved in the Intensive Reading Programme.

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	17	53.1
Female	15	46.9
Total	32	100.0

As shown in Table 4.1, a total of 17 male and 15 female students, participated in this study. This sample was a non-randomized sample, meaning that the participants were chosen purposely for the study. The number of struggling readers who took part in the study, was derived based on the condition that they scored less than 50 marks in their final year English Examination test paper. The samples for the current study are 32 primary

school students from a private school. These students are from years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Purposive sampling method was used to select the struggling readers, and they were provided with a 10-week Intensive Reading Programme (IRP).

4.3 Research Findings for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the struggling readers' perceptions of the Intensive Reading Programme (IRP)?

4.3.1 Survey Results

In order to answer the first research question, the researcher provided a survey to the participants of the Intensive Reading Programme. The survey was a Likert Scale survey, set up with four possible choices to each question. The students circled the number that corresponded to the answer they thought would best fit the question. The possible answers the participant could choose from were in the following order: four (4) - which meant the student strongly agreed with the statement; three (3) - denoting that the participant agreed with the statement; two (2) - indicating that the participant disagreed with the statement; and one (1) - which indicated that the participant strongly disagreed with the statement. Furthermore, it was assumed that the survey questionnaire's answers such as strongly agree and agree would be a favourable answer to the question, while disagree and strongly disagree would be a non-favourable answer towards the 15 Likert Scale questions.

Table 4.2

Analysis of the questionnaire part B (Likert Scale)

		item	1	2	3	4	Total
No.	Statements		SD	D	A	SD	
1	The teachers made me feel part of the IRP.	N	1	1	20	10	32
		%	3.1	3.1	62.5	31.3	100.0
2	I felt more successful in the IRP than regular classroom.	N	1	4	22	5	32
		%	3.1	12.5	68.8	15.6	100.0
3	The teachers made me feel safe to take chances with my reading.	N	0	1	8	23	32
		%	0	3.1	25.0	71.9	100.0
4	The teachers made me feel better about my reading ability.	N	0	1	16	15	32
		%	0	3.1	50.0	46.9	100.0
5	The program gave me helpful hints to be a better reader.	N	1	0	15	16	32
		%	3.1	0	46.9	50.0	100.0
6	The program has given me the confidence to read in front of my class.	N	0	2	15	15	32
		%	0	6.3	46.9	46.9	100.0
7	I comprehend (understand) more of what I read now.	N	0	2	20	10	32
		%	0	6.3	62.5	31.3	100.0
8	I feel more comfortable with vocabulary.	N	2	5	10	15	32
		%	6.3	15.6	31.3	46.9	100.0
9	I feel more comfortable reading a list of words.	N	1	5	12	14	32
		%	3.1	15.6	37.5	43.8	100.0
10	I understand what I read and remember the information once done.	N	1	3	16	12	32
		%	3.1	9.4	50.0	37.5	100.0
11	I felt I was a better reader at the end of the IRP.	N	0	2	18	12	32
		%	0	6.3	56.3	37.5	100.0
12	I will read more because of my participation in the program.	N	0	2	13	17	32
		%	0	6.3	40.6	53.1	100.0
13	The program has given me more confidence when I read.	N	0	1	11	20	32
		%	0	3.1	34.4	62.5	100.0
14	I feel the IRP was successful.	N	0	2	14	16	32
		%	0	6.3	43.8	50.0	100.0
15	I would participate in the IRP again.	N	0	2	17	13	32
		%	0	6.3	53.1	40.6	100.0

Findings from Table 4.2 revealed the responses from the students for each of the aspects as shown in the table above. The data gathered through the questionnaire were used to triangulate with the findings obtained from the reading assessments. This questionnaire was administered to a total of 32 students from Year 3, all through to Year 6. They were the participants in this study.

Questionnaire item 1 (The teachers made me feel as a part of the IRP)

Upon analysing the data from 32 participants, in a private Primary school, it was revealed (see Table 4.2), that, 62.5% of the survey participants agreed that the teachers made them feel part of the Intensive Reading Programme; Furthermore, 31.3% strongly agreed to the first statement and only 3.1% of them disagreed, coupled with another 3.1% who strongly disagreed to the same item. This allows the researcher to feel confident that the teachers did a good job by helping the struggling readers to read better in the IRP, compared to their regular classroom learning. From the above findings, it was obvious that the majority of the participants (62.5% out of 32 participants) were glad to be part of the IRP.

Questionnaire item 2 (I felt more successful in the IRP than the regular classroom)

This question was aimed at obtaining the participants response about their preferred learning environment. The question hence was given as thus: Is Intensive Reading Programme better than regular classroom learning? In response to the question, 15.6% strongly agreed that learning to read in the IRP is way better than reading in the regular classroom; while 12.5% of them

disagreed and 3.1% of them strongly disagreed that they can do better at reading due to their attendance of the IRP. However and interestingly, a majority of 68.8% (N = 22), of the surveyed participants felt more successful in the IRP, compared to learning to read in the regular classroom. This question was asked to determine if the participants' confidence level increased compared to their actual reading levels. On this note, it was discovered that the level of motivation has increased in the struggling readers after participating in the IRP. Hence, motivation plays an important role for students to read. Being informed by previous studies, it has been observed that when students are not engaged in what they are reading, they will not read (Talley, 2017). This was the concern of the researcher and the teachers of the IRP, knowing well that the participants had to experience success within the 10 weeks of IRP.

Questionnaire item 3 (The teachers made me feel safe to take chances with my reading)

Exactly 50 % of the survey participants agreed to the fact that the teachers made the students feel better about their reading ability. In fact, 46.9 % strongly agreed and only a little portion of 3.1 % of them disagreed, however none of them reported to have strongly disagreed with the question. Furthermore, IRP is a well-structured reading program that includes reading tasks such as practicing reading letters and syllable words; reading sight words; reading short paragraphs of about 50 to 80 words; reading lengthy paragraphs of about 100 to 120 words; reading short stories and organising story maps after reading Scholastic short stories published by Folk and Fairies easy readers. In this context, the reading tasks were adapted from the reading system which is also known as: Modules of the CAREER system (Lan et al., 2007) reading system, of which has been

mentioned by the researcher in chapter 1. As such, the tasks were related to that of the ability of the struggling readers, involved in the IRP.

Questionnaire item 4 (The teachers made me feel better about my reading ability- The use of various reading strategies)

A total of 50% of survey participants reported to have agreed that the teachers made them feel better about their reading ability, however, another 46.9% strongly agreed and only 3.1% of them disagreed, leaving none to have strongly disagreed. These findings reveal that there was a need to look into some effective ways of introducing either a method, or an approach to reading. The teachers exposed the participants to various reading strategies that could enable them to become better readers. From the findings, 3.1% of the students believed that they were not exposed to reading strategies that could assist them in reading. In this context, there were four reading strategies that the struggling readers encountered in the IRP which are: reading aloud, silent reading, co-operative reading and oral reading. These four strategies were applied in the reading tasks such as paragraph reading, reading aloud sight words, reading a short story book co-operatively with their peer and oral reading test. Therefore, the students in the IRP were able to read words, a passage or a text by applying these strategies throughout the 10-weeks of the IRP.

Questionnaire item 5 (The program gave me helpful hints to be a better reader)

With reference to table 4.1, 46.9% of the survey participants with a mean of 3.41 (SD= 0.615), reported to have felt that the Intensive Reading Programme has given them the confidence to read in front of the class. Interestingly, none

of them strongly disagreed to that statement, although a little portion of them, around 6.3%, reported to have disagreed with the statement. Hence, the response to a question directly relating to the confidence question is overwhelmingly agreeable and supports part of the programs' goal. Impressively, around 46.9% of those surveyed, felt that their participation in the Intensive Reading Programme, provided a change in their confidence to read in front of a class. The success the students felt from the IRP, allowed them to take chances and participate in reading in front of the class. Hence, the struggling readers should be motivated to read so that they can gain improvement in their comprehension skills. In this study, the teachers contributed in providing helpful hints; such as how to apply the reading strategies in word reading and reading a text. For example, students used the reading aloud strategy to read sight words and paragraphs.

Questionnaire item 6 (The program has given me the confidence to read in front of my class)

With reference to Table 4.1, 46.9% of the survey participants with a mean of 3.41 (SD= 0.615), reportedly agreed to the fact that they felt that the Intensive Reading Programme has given them the confidence to read in front of the class. None of them strongly disagreed, however only 6.3% disagreed on the statement. The response to this question is directly related to the confidence of the students involved in the IRP. Hence, it is overwhelmingly agreeable and supports the implementation of IRP. It was also observed that the struggling readers' level of confidence increased after the implementation of a structured and well-planned IRP. Besides that, they became confident to participate in reading activities in both

IRP and their regular classroom learning after developing effective reading strategies.

Questionnaire item 7 (I comprehend (understand) more of what I read now (Knowledge of the world))

Based on the evidence obtained from the survey question 7, 62.5% of the participants agreed with the statement, followed by 31.3% of them who strongly agreed and only 6.3% of them disagreed, leaving no record of anyone strongly disagreeing. The mean recorded for this response is 3.25, with a standard deviation of 0.568. Furthermore, the responses to this statement provides an evidence as to the fact that the participants' reading comprehension skills have improved. The students read various reading text such as long and short paragraphs, oral reading text and short stories. Activities such as answering questions based on passages and generating information in a story map, was used to test the students' comprehension skills. In chapter 2, the researcher included the knowledge of the world in the theoretical framework, which was in accordance in helping to develop struggling readers reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the favourable response to this question has proven that struggling readers in this study were able to obtain relevant comprehending skills.

Questionnaire item 8 (I feel more comfortable with vocabulary)

With reference to table 4.1, 43.8% of the survey participants strongly agreed with the statement in Survey Question 9, followed by 37.5% who reported to have agreed, however 15.6% of them disagreed, leaving the remaining 3.1% apportioned to those who strongly disagreed. The repeated use

of words allowed 43.8% of the surveyed participants to feel more comfortable with the given word list. It is important to state that the participants' vocabulary knowledge enhanced after being exposed to phonetic words, sight words and high frequency words (two, three, four and six syllable words). Hence, providing vocabulary activities that enhance student's vocabulary knowledge, results in increasing their ability to comprehend a text (Ruply & Nichols, 2005).

Questionnaire item 9 (I feel more comfortable reading a list of sight words)

Based on the evidence from question 9, 43.8% of the survey participants strongly agreed with the statement that they feel better about reading a list of sight words. Besides that, 37.5% of the participants agreed; and 15.6% of them disagreed with the statement; however, 3.1% of them strongly disagreed with the same item. The mean recorded for this response is 3.22, with a standard deviation of 0.832.

The results from the aforementioned, reveals that the IRP was successful in providing strategies for students to use as aid for comprehension, when reading. It is also vital to state note that in the current study, students started learning sight words in week 4.

Questionnaire item 10 (I understand what I read and remember the Information once done [Knowledge of the text]).

With reference to Table 4.1, 87.5% of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed that the programme was successful, as they could understand what was being read and were able to remember the information once done with the

reading text. The mean recorded for this response is 3.22, with a standard deviation of 0.751. The participants in this study made use of their knowledge of text to generate and transfer information into a graphical organisation. As such, in week 8, students were required to transfer the information from a book into a story map. Thus, it was mandatory for the students to use the knowledge of the text in order to organise a story map. The positive response to this question is an evidence that students could use the knowledge of text to complete assigned reading tasks.

Questionnaire item 11 (I felt I was a better reader at the end of the IRP)

With reference to table 4.1, 93.8% of the respondents had the feeling that they have improved in reading, after attending the 10-weeks of the IRP. The objective of the Intensive Reading Programme was not only to help increase comprehension levels, but to change the habits of participants. Hence, more exposure to reading will help in the fluency and vocabulary ability of participants in their future educational endeavours.

Questionnaire item 12 (I will read more because of my participation in the program)

It was found that 53.1% of the survey participants strongly agreed that they will read more, because of being part of the IRP. Furthermore, 40.6% of them agreed, however, 6.3% of them disagreed; while none of them strongly disagreed. The mean recorded for this response is 3.47, with a standard deviation of 0.621. The participants in this study were in the first place, reluctant readers who did not show interest in reading activities conducted in their regular classrooms. Nevertheless, they tremendously improved in reading and did not hesitate to

take part in reading related lessons conducted during their regular classroom learning.

Questionnaire item 13 (The program has given me more confidence when I read)

The struggling readers reported to have gained confidence in reading as they attended the reading lessons conducted through the IRP. Additionally, the evidence shows that 96.9% of the participants who completed the program, either strongly agreed or agreed to the fact that the Intensive Reading Programme has increased their confidence in reading. This question described the participants' responses as being able to read and comprehend a text after attending the IRP. However, they were known to have been struggling with comprehension, before they became part of the IRP. The emphasis of participants was on their comprehension, phonics, vocabulary, and fluency (Shanahan, 2004); with supported materials such as Jolly phonics and Scholastic Easy Readers. Therefore, providing well-structured reading program helps struggling readers to do better in various reading areas.

Questionnaire item 14 (I feel the IRP was successful)

The response of the majority of the participants with regards to question 14, was quite favourable. With reference to Table 4.1, 50% of the participants who completed the program, strongly agreed that the Intensive Reading Programme was successful. On the other hand, 43.8% of them agreed, while 6.3% disagreed; and the statement was not strongly disagreed by any of them. The mean recorded for this response is 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.619.

The above findings is in line with the notion which states that, if struggling readers are provided with an intervention that is research based and more intensive than the traditional classroom instruction, they will show increased rates of growth in reading (Gelzheiser et al., 2011).

Questionnaire item 15 (I would participate in the IRP again)

Based on the evidence provided from question 15, 53.1% of the participants who completed the programme, agreed that they would participate in the Intensive Reading Programme again. On the other hand, 40.6% strongly agreed to the statement, however, 6.3% of them disagreed; while none of them strongly disagreed. The mean recorded for this response is 3.34, with a standard deviation of 0.602.

The findings above revealed that none of the students were dissatisfied with being part of the IRP, which meant that all participants have indicated that IRP had made a positive impact towards their reading. In a way, this can mean that these participants who were in the IRP had confidence in themselves, regarding their ability to understand what they read.

4.4 Research Findings for Research Question 2

Is there any significant difference in using Intensive Reading Programme on students reading comprehension of struggling readers?

4.4.1 Quantitative Analysis on the first and second Reading assessment Results

Table 4.3

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	SD	Std. Error
Mean pair 1				
Reading Assessment 1	36.97	32	11.749	2.077
Reading Assessment 2	61.81	32	9.566	1.69

Table 4.3 above shows the paired samples statistics for the mean scores of the reading assessments. The mean scores of the first reading assessment is 36.97, with a standard deviation of 11.749; while the mean scores of the second reading assessment is 61.81, with a standard deviation of 9.566.

Table 4.4

Paired differences

95% CI of the Difference Pair 1 Reading assessments (1 and 2)	
Mean	-24.844
SD	6.769
SE	1.197
Mean	
Lower	-27.284
Upper	-22.403
T	-20.763
Df	31
Sig(2 Tailed)	.000

The paired-sample *t*-test analysis in Table 4.3, shows that the mean score for the second reading assessment ($M = 61.81$), is significantly greater than that of the reading assessment ($M = 36.97$). However, the observed mean difference

is -24.844, implying that the performance of the Experimental Group had improved significantly. Therefore, H02 (no significant difference between reading assessments in the reading comprehension scores in the Experimental Group), was also rejected. As it can be seen from the paired sample *t*-test results, and the comparison of means between the reading assessment scores for the Experimental Group in Table 4.4, the mean difference was approximately 24.844, which indicates a significant improvement.

Based on the results, it might be reasonable to draw a conclusion that the experiment group exemplified a significant improvement in the second reading assessment with the difference in mean ($M=24.84$) and standard deviation ($SD=6.769$).

In line with the above findings, attention can be drawn back to the research question 2 established earlier, as well as the null hypothesis outlined for this study and try to address them. RQ2: Is there any significant difference in using Intensive Reading Programme on students reading comprehension of struggling readers? The null hypothesis: there is no significant improvement on students' reading comprehension after being part of Intensive Reading Program.

The above findings suggest a significant improvement on the students' reading comprehension after being part of the Intensive Reading Program. Consequently, the data provide sufficient evidence to summarise that the Intensive Reading Programme had indeed helped to significantly elevate the students' performance in their reading comprehension. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

4.5 Results of the Findings and Analysis

In response to the first research question which is: what are the struggling reader's perceptions of IRP? 15 Likert scale questionnaire described various aspects in reading such as confidence, motivation, engagement, reading strategies, knowledge of the world and knowledge of the text structure, comprehension skills and vocabulary development.

The statement number six, as depicted in Table 4.1 (The program has given me the confidence to read in front of my class), tells the researcher about how confident the readers were after participating in the IRP. Secondly, statement number 2 (I felt more successful in the IRP than regular classroom), shows that the participants were happy to participate in the reading activities in the IRP, compared to their normal education classes. Hence, the students' engagement was seen during activities such as co-operative reading and oral reading. It was also found out that they love reading a book with their peers and to read aloud a text in front of the class.

Besides that, motivation also plays an important role in helping children to read. As such, statement number 5 (The program gave me helpful hints to be a better reader), presents the reading development of struggling readers who received guidance in reading. For example, the teachers provided helpful hints such as, using reading aloud strategy to read sight words. This questionnaire is relevant to the argument made by Christodoulou et al., (2017), who stated that unmotivated readers are usually unwilling to improve their reading and do not acquire the necessary skills to become proficient readers.

Furthermore, a readers' world knowledge is an essential component of reading comprehension (Torgesen et al., 2001). The knowledge of the world is the background knowledge or prior knowledge that a reader has when he or she reads a reading text (Miller, 2007). As such, students were able to read and answer open-ended questions based on a given passage or short stories. This is in line with statement number 7 (I comprehend [understand] more of what I read now); and statement number 10 (I understand what I read and remember the Information once done). According to Gillingham (1987), to be able to assess students' knowledge of text structure, it is important to ask the students to perform in some way and to infer knowledge from their performance. For instance, a researcher might ask a student to read or write a piece of exposition and analyse the unity, emphasis, and coherence of its recall or production. Therefore, in this study, students completed a story map with relevant information based on the short stories the students had read earlier.

The second research question was to find out whether there is any significant difference in using Intensive Reading Programme on students reading comprehension of struggling readers. Thus, the results confirmed the researchers' belief that IRP is beneficial to reading comprehension and that it is a worthy pedagogical approach. In the current study, the improved reading performance in the second reading assessment, shows that the participants have acquired comprehension skills. The results are also consistent with the findings of Yang et al., (2012) as given earlier. He further informed that intensive reading can be beneficial to expand reading comprehension; however, Waring (1997) argued that intensive reading is very useful for learning vocabulary and in understanding how a text is organized. Moreover, various reading

strategies such as reading aloud, silent reading, co-operative reading and oral reading, have been used in this study. The teachers exposed the students to fill in the blanks with words, ordering words to form correct sentences, put information in a story map, and answering oral and open-ended questions based on a reading text. Most importantly, these activities have improved the students' comprehension skills. Scholars like Pollar et al., (2011), have regarded Intensive reading as an effective tool for improving reading comprehension.

The application of the Whole-to -Part Model by Cunninghams' (1993), has given a positive impact to struggling readers reading comprehension, as the WTP model in this study mainly focused on word identification and reading comprehension. According to Wanzek et al., (2018), struggling readers who are in the early grades, may gain benefits from a reading program when the researchers focus on various reading areas including, explicit comprehension and vocabulary components in addition to word recognition and fluency.

Thus, as can be seen from the positive results of the comparison of the reading assessments, the IRP was effective in improving the struggling readers' reading comprehension, especially as proven in the participants' scores before and after the 10-weeks of the IRP.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of this study, as presented in the previous chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study that is concerned, with the effectiveness of a 10-week Intensive Reading Program (IRP) on struggling readers. Also, a detailed discussion of the research findings in relation to the theories of the study and some recommendation for future study, is being reported in this chapter. However, it is important to note there are a number of limitations in the current study, as aforementioned in the previous chapter. Thus, the findings are not relevant to be generalised, when applied to a different population.

5.2 Summary of the study

This study is about a newly developed Intensive Reading Programme, which was devised in conjunction with the English Language Club at Sri Mawar Private School, Johor Bahru. The Intensive Reading Programme, as implemented in this study focused on various reading areas; such as reading comprehension, reading fluency and word reading (Vaughn & Scammacca, 2015). Its targeted aim was at struggling primary school readers (9 to 12-year-old students). It involved a category of readers who attended an Intensive Reading Program session twice a week for a total period of 10 weeks, each lasting 1 hour. This study was to investigate the students' perspective in the Intensive Reading Programme and whether it improves readers' reading comprehension skills. To achieve such, the struggling readers of this study were exposed to various reading strategies, such as Reading Aloud, Silent Reading, Co-operative Reading and Oral Reading;

throughout their participation in the IRP. According to Vaughn and Scammacca (2015), intensive reading interventions which focus on various reading areas such as reading comprehension, reading fluency and word reading, have a positive impact on students' reading outcome. Hence, the adaptation of these strategies has given the researcher a new enlightenment in dealing with struggling readers. Eventually, at the end of the IRP, the struggling readers of this study were able to use the four reading strategies to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. These strategies are reading aloud, silent reading, cooperative reading and oral reading. As stated in chapter 2, "Vocabulary knowledge, which is a key to reading comprehension; must be a focus for every teacher in today's increasingly diverse schools, including those in the normal classroom" (Alaraj, 2015, p. 1). As such, the researcher ensured that the participants practiced the art of reading aloud a list of sight words and phonetic words, in order to master their individual (the participants) word identification skills. Within week 3 to week 5, many activities such as reading aloud word list, memorization of words and playing memory games, were observed to have helped the struggling readers in developing their vocabulary skills. This study also poses some benefits to the reading programme developers; as it highlights the perspective of the struggling readers on the Intensive Reading Programme. Besides that, the current study could be used as a guide for the reading programme developers, as they can see how the pupils' have improved in their reading abilities from the data collected.

The hypothesis for the study was that, the implementation of a ten-week Intensive Reading Programme will significantly increase the comprehension levels of the participants, as indicated by the reading assessment scores before and after the implementation of the IRP. Important to note, the components or elements of

the program was adapted from the “CAREER system” proposed by Lan et al (2007) and Cunningham’s Whole- to- Part (WTP) model of reading comprehension, Information Processing Theory (Zhao & Zhu, 2012) and Schema Theory (Rumelhart,1980).

Furthermore, scholars like Paran (2003) and Hill (1997), found out that intensive reading can be beneficial for achieving reading goals at different levels. In this study, the struggling readers were also from different levels and were divided into two groups based on the reading assessment scores obtained by the students in the first week of the IRP implementation.

The discussion of this chapter is divided according to the two research questions that have been addressed in Chapter 1. Therefore, the researcher will proceed with the discussion based on the two research questions.

There are two research questions on which the findings of this study is being addressed on:

- 1. What are the struggling readers’ perceptions of the Intensive Reading Programme (IRP)?**
- 2. Is there any significant difference in using Intensive Reading Programme on students reading comprehension of struggling readers?**

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 What are the struggling readers’ perception of IRP?

To answer the first research question, a survey questionnaire of 15 questions, adapted from Summer Literacy Program Participant Survey and Questionnaire (Haug, 2010), was used as an instrument. The Intensive Reading Program did

stimulate the students' interests in reading. Analysis of the survey showed that out of the 32 students who completed the survey, a majority of the students responded favourably to all questions. The finding for questionnaire number 7 (I comprehend more of what I read), showed a favourable response, whereby the students reported that they could use the knowledge of the world (Miller, 2007) or their background knowledge to make meaning of the text. Knowledge of the world is one of the components that the researcher mentioned in the theoretical framework. According to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), the readers should be able to use their background knowledge to interpret, evaluate, synthesize, and consider alternative interpretations of a reading text. In weeks 6 to 9, the students were able to achieve language comprehension by participating in activities such as; reading short and lengthy paragraphs, answering questions based on a story book, completing a story map and oral reading (refer to Figure 3.1, Chapter 3, The outline of the IRP activities). However, these activities require some background knowledge to interpret, evaluate, and synthesize a reading text (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Therefore, the struggling readers in this study made use of various comprehending strategies such as interpreting, evaluating and synthesizing a reading text, to understand and generate meaning from what has been read.

On the other hand, the data obtained through questionnaire 8 (I feel more comfortable with vocabulary) and questionnaire 9 (I feel more comfortable reading a list of sight words), showed that the students have mastered the word identification component mentioned in the theoretical framework. There are two categories of words that the struggling readers encountered during the IRP, which are the phonetic words and sight words. The mastery of the two-word components have gained the students' confidence in

reading. Sight word reading is one of the processes that readers develop in order to identify written words (Scott & Ehri, 1990). In that case, the experimental group was able to develop a strong reading foundation. Word identification is the basis to acquire knowledge of a reading comprehension. Furthermore, the participants gave a favourable answer to questionnaire number 10 (I understand what I read and remember the Information once done). Activities such as, reading short stories and answering some questions based on the story, gave the students the opportunity to develop their comprehension skills. This question is in correspondence to one of the sub-components under reading comprehension, which is the knowledge of the text structure. This is in line with the insight of Grabe (1997), who described knowledge of the text as an efficient knowledge of the language. According to Gillingham (1987), in order to assess students' knowledge of text structure, it is necessary to ask the students to perform in some way, so as to infer knowledge from their performance. In this study, during week 8, students completed a story map worksheet based on a short story that they have read in week 7. The ability to fill in the information in the layout of a story map shows that the students have gained the knowledge of a text structure. With the above discussion of the findings, the questionnaire was able to gather the perception of the participants of this study on the effects of the IRP. Additionally, the researcher also included statements such as: "The teachers made me feel as a part of the IRP", "I felt more successful in the IRP than in the regular classroom", and "The program has given me the confidence to read in front of my class".

Moreover, the purpose of asking those questions was to find out the level of confidence and motivation of the struggling readers reading ability after participating in the IRP. The teachers played an important role in motivating the

struggling readers of this study to improve their reading skills. The encouragement, guidance and support given by the IRP teachers have allowed the participants to achieve a reasonable level of reading success at the end of the IRP. Similarly, in the earlier chapter, it was recalled that Macid and Kimber (2013) informed that unmotivated students are usually not willing to improve their reading and do not obtain the necessary skills to become capable readers. Hence, the struggling readers became more confident readers after being a part of the IRP and have shown improvement in their reading comprehension.

5.3.2 What are the effects of using the Intensive Reading Programme on the reading comprehension of struggling readers?

The primary objectives of the IRP were to help struggling readers to read fluently and improve their reading comprehension. To answer the second research question, the researcher analysed the reading assessment scores of the participants collected before and after IRP with the use of a t-test for the difference, between means. Results of the paired-sample t-test analysis in Table 4.17, shows that the mean score on the second reading assessment ($M = 61.81$) is significantly greater than the mean score on the first reading assessment ($M = 36.97$). The observed mean difference is -24.844 , implying that the performance of the Experimental Group had improved significantly. Based on the aforementioned question, the following alternative hypothesis was formulated as:

H₁: There is a significant difference in using Intensive Reading Programme on Students' reading comprehension of struggling readers.

There were statistically significant effects found for the treatment on measures of the reading comprehension of struggling readers. It is apparent that

Cunningham's (1993) whole-to-part model that was used to design the activities of the IRP program, has been helpful in improving the participants' reading comprehension. In the IRP, the students have been exposed to multiple components of reading such as, word identification and reading comprehension. Under the word identification component, there are two types of word skills that the students are exposed to; they are the sight words and phonetic words. According to Hayes (2016), sight word instruction is a successful strategy that is used; especially when teaching sight words to students with disabilities as well as struggling readers. On the other hand, Phonics is the system of instruction that is used to teach children the connection between letters and sounds (Snow et al., 1998).

Theoretically, the study comprises of the Information Processing Theory (Zhao & Zhu, 2012) and the Schema Theory (Rumelhart, 1998). These theories reflected on the reading of the struggling readers who attended the IRP. In the 10-weeks of the IRP, the struggling readers were able to develop a strong reading foundation. The mastery of sight words and phonetic words in week 2 until week 5, helped in developing the student's vocabulary knowledge. Also, there were many activities carried out to enhance the students' vocabulary skills. For example, in week 3 up to week 5, activities such as reading aloud sight words, using sight words in sentences, identifying sight words in picture book and playing memory games about sight words, aided the improvement of the student's word identification knowledge, which falls under the word identification component. Evidently, in the current study, vocabulary enrichment in the beginning of the reading sessions gave allowance to the struggling readers of this study to read paragraphs and short stories confidently. Interestingly, these findings are consistent with that from previous research, whereby vocabulary knowledge allows students

to comprehend what they read and reading provides the opportunity for students to encounter and learn new words (Harmon & Wood, 2008). The importance of the knowledge of the world and the knowledge of the text structure, came into the picture when the struggling readers reading comprehension skills became prominent in achieving reading success. At the end of the IRP, in week 9, oral reading test was conducted on each of the students. However, with a strong foundation of vocabulary, phonics and comprehension skills, the struggling readers were able to proceed with the oral reading test. Researcher such as Prior et al. (2011) argued that “beginning and poor readers benefit from oral reading, whereas older and proficient readers may comprehend better after silent reading” (p. 184). In the current study, the participants were tested on reading fluency, wherein the researcher and the IRP teachers assigned them to read short stories from the **Scholastic Folk and Fairies Easy Readers** and prompted them to answer some questions based on the text. This activity was conducted in week 7 and 8, towards the end of the IRP. Besides that, the oral reading activity in week 9, allowed the teachers of the IRP and the researcher to monitor the reading performance of the students on an individual basis. Furthermore, the ability to read and answer questions during the oral reading activity, shows that the students have acquired comprehension skills, as it is one of the means to be proficient readers. Therefore, the oral reading test enabled the researcher to identify how the students use the knowledge of the world in making meaning of the text. Miller (2007) describes the knowledge of the world, as the background knowledge a student has in comprehending a text. The use of short stories taken from the scholastic **Folk & Fairy Tale Easy Readers**, helped the students in answering multiple choice and

open-ended questions, based on reading passages included in section B and Section D of the second reading assessment.

More so, reading with comprehension, as described by Hume and Snowling (2011), is one of the primary goals of early education. However, the findings of the current study provide a contradictory conclusion to the claim of Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2009). It is evident that IRP which was provided to a big number of participants, had improved the comprehension skills of struggling readers of different levels, as to when compared with the one to one programme. Fortunately, the researcher could monitor the progress of each student in the IRP after they were separated into two groups. Students who achieved score lower than 50% in the reading assessment, were placed in level 1 (group 1); whereby students who scored marks above 50%, were placed in level 2 (group 2). The findings of this study also revealed that students who receive reading remediation through IRP had acquired the knowledge of learning something new (Poulos et al., 2008).

In summary, providing Intensive Reading to the students in the primary grades shows positive outcomes than interventions conducted in the secondary grades (Vaughn, & Stuebing, 2015). This is also supported by Scissons and Gutknectch (2011), who claimed that students will face difficulties reading throughout school, if they did not develop strong reading skills in the primary grades.

5.4 Discussion of Major Findings

The major findings of this study revealed that the Intensive Reading Programme significantly improved the reading levels of the participants. The two theories which are the Information Processing theory and Schema theory that were discussed in the theoretical framework of this study, worked in unison to achieve

the reading development. IPT works like a computer where the struggling reader codes information, stores information, uses information, and produces an output. The information can be stored, retrieved and transformed using the “mental programs” process. As discussed in Chapter 1, reading is regarded as a process, a mode of thinking, a kind of real experience; and involves many complex skills: the ability to perceive printed words, to skim for information and then perhaps to read intensively (Inderjit, 2014). Hence, it is eminent to note that, the struggling readers of this study were exposed to structured reading lessons with a vast exposure to word identification (vocabulary) and reading comprehension skills.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of the IRP was measured by a survey given to the participants upon completion of the reading program. The survey results showed that a majority of the participants positively perceived IRP. Participants rated the components of the program, as well as the effect that the IRP had on their reading confidence levels, by completing a Likert Scale survey. The quantitative data consisted of the scores of the population before the program, compared to the scores of the population upon completion of the program. The results indicated a significant increase in scores for the population from the reading assessments. It is important to state that the success of the program has great implications for future use in the school. As reviewed in Chapter Two, the findings of the study are in line with the argument made by Gelzheiser, Scanlon, Vellutino, and Flynn (2011). They made mention that struggling readers will show increased rates of growth in reading, if they are provided with an intervention that is research based and more intensive than the traditional classroom instruction. Similarly, Paran (2003) and Hill (1997), found that intensive reading can be beneficial for achieving reading goals at different levels.

Moreover, the Intensive Reading Program had a very structured approach in that each session began with a reading assessment; was followed by various aspects of literacy teaching such as phonics rules, phonetic word test, Sight words, paragraph reading, cooperative reading, organizing story map, comprehending test, oral reading test; and finally, a reading assessment. At the end of the program, students were exposed to short stories and comprehension exercises that might help them to develop a strong foundation in reading, especially on comprehension skills. In addition, the findings of the current study similarly reflected Kroner's (2012) claim, which states that the struggling reader needs to experience a reading curriculum that offers success in learning to read based on an appropriate sequence of reading activities.

5.5 Implications

The present study has two main pedagogical implications. The first implication is the feasibility of the teachers to develop a reading program to help struggling readers. It is hoped that the reading programme implemented in this study will serve as a useful guide to teachers in coaching students who face difficulties with readings. This research has highlighted the important role of IRP in improving struggling readers' fluency. Additionally, the implications derived from this research points to the fact that any reading program to help struggling readers, must be led by a teacher who is first fluent in reading, in order to be a role model for the struggling readers. Findings from this research had shown that Intensive reading had a positive impact on the fluency of the struggling readers.

Many struggling readers lack confidence in their own ability to learn unfamiliar words or phrases found in a text (Sharmini, 2003). To eradicate this reading problem, the reader needs to be exposed to other viewpoints of the text.

IRP has a structured design followed by various aspects of literacy teaching such as phonics rules, phonetic word test, Sight words, paragraph reading, cooperative reading, organizing story map, comprehending test and oral reading. According to Singhal (2001), task requirements help determine strategy choice. It is important for readers to identify the strategies that can be used to facilitate comprehension with the task requirements. For example, a learner can employ the memory strategy of grouping, to understand the meaning of vocabulary more efficiently and more effectively. This is supported by Anderson's (1991) study which indicates that successful reading depends on not only knowing which strategies to use, but also knowing how to apply those strategies successfully. In short, successful readers appear to use more strategies than less successful readers and also appear to use them more frequently.

5.6 Further Research

The present research is limited by the fact that the study lacks a control group. In experimental studies, a control group can determine if the effects of the treatment have resulted from the treatment itself, rather than other possible factors. Secondly, the size of the subjects that participated in this study is quite limited in number, due to time constraint and unavailability of the students. It is hence recommended that in the future, to be able to see better effects of IRP, it should be carried out by using an experimental design in a real classroom setting for several months with a control group and an experimental group. Continuing intensive instruction throughout a complete school year with the same teaching strategies that are implemented after-school IRP, is another recommendation from the researcher. If this is applied, students would then have the benefit of a continuation of the Intensive Reading Program throughout the school year, which could help in supporting what they

learn during the class. Additionally, hiring additional classroom aides to support this model, may benefit the students in the long run and eliminate the number of students with below grade level scores too.

5.7 Conclusion

This study was planned to evaluate a new language reading program called the Intensive Reading Programme (IRP), which was adapted from a balanced foundation proposed by Lan et al (2007). The effects of IRP for students who showed signs of struggle in reading were analysed and reported. The responses from the pre-post test scores and survey questionnaire were also analysed and presented.

Struggling readers need to be coached, assisted, trained and monitored through their learning in order to become capable academic readers. Struggling readers are prevalent in every school and too often, most interventions that are put in place to assist them fail. However, as proven by findings of this study, the IRP improved the reading ability and confidence levels of the participants. Importantly, the exposure to the different types of teaching methodology, coupled with the help from instructors, would definitely further assist them in comprehending advanced texts.

This study investigated the perception of struggling readers on IRP, a new language reading program, referred to as: Intensive Reading Programme (IRP), which was adapted from the CAREER system under the balanced foundation proposed by Lan et al (2007).

Furthermore, the effects of IRP for students who showed signs of struggle in reading were analysed and reported. The responses from the reading assessment scores, alongside the survey questionnaire, were also analysed and have been presented. In conclusion, the current study has provided a window into the

effectiveness of IRP in developing the reading comprehension of primary struggling readers in a private school, located in Johor Bahru. Interestingly, the findings benefited the students who received the IRP and have improved their reading ability, as observed at the end of the study.

Struggling readers need to be coached, assisted, trained and monitored through their learning in order to become capable academic readers. Struggling readers are prevalent in every school and too often, interventions fail. The IRP improved the reading ability and confidence levels of the participants.

In conclusion, the current study has provided a window into the effectiveness of IRP in developing the reading comprehension of struggling readers from primary grades of a private school in Johor Bahru. The findings revealed that the students in the IRP reacted positively and were able to attain a tremendous level of improvement in reading at the end of the study.

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