CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Conclusion

The findings from this research show the existence of reading problems in the special education classes in the primary government schools. As the number of the pupils with LDs having this problem is on the increase, measures to remediate this problem must be seriously looked into. Travers I.R.W. (1958) had said ‘A problem should not lead up a dead-end street, but rather it should be an avenue that opens up new territory’.

The teachers in this study, on the other hand, have revealed that they need more knowledge and training in LD Methodology to enable them to address the problem effectively. This study has also revealed that the teachers try their best to help their LD pupils with reading problems during their ESL lessons. However, the study clearly revealed that, in the present school scenario, teachers lack the expertise to handle the LD pupils. Factors like time constraints, lack of adequate training, and lack of proper teaching materials have to be addressed. By overcoming these constraints, then success is in sight.

Apart from the teachers' role, the pupils with LDs themselves need to be motivated to improve their reading ability. Brown (1994) views motivation as an inner drive, impulse or device that moves one to act. However, inner drive minus effort and favourable attitude do not ensure satisfaction as stated by Gardner, R.C. (1985). In fact, any attempt
to learn is a direct function of the attitude the learner brings to affect the students' attitudes. As Vaughan & Estes (1986:235) have said "success breeds success." Likewise, failure breeds failure as described by Nuttall (1982) in her vicious circle of frustration.

5.1 Suggestions and Recommendations

The primary concern of this research is how special education classroom teachers can help a student with reading problems when he or she is in the classroom. In addition to the guidelines suggested earlier, these additional points would help teachers provide a framework upon which to build remedial programmes as given by Otto (1980: 476). The principles are:

i) to present a learning task by breaking down the stages involved into very carefully graded steps

ii) each step should be simple enough for the child to succeed when he makes a response

iii) with LD students more repetition of units of instructions are required to be assimilated and mastered

iv) teachers should ensure over – learning through drills to the point of automatic use of the language.
5.2 Preventing Reading Failures – Early Intervention Programmes for Reading

The primary purpose of this recommendation is to give some insight to the five proven preventive reading programmes which are widely in use the United States of America, identified by Pikulski, (1994: 30). These reading programmes can be adopted and adapted to suite the Malaysian context and may be useful to those working with students who require early intervention in reading.

The Basal block consists primarily of selective use of instructional suggestions from a recently published basal reading programme that includes an anthology of children’s literature and accompanying paperback books. The writing block consists of 5 – 10 minute mini-lessons and student independent writing activities. Students spend a sizable amount of time in reading-related activities, a total of 3 hours and 15 minutes. At the school with a high proposition of at-risk students, an additional 45 minutes of small group instruction is added to the schedule.

I Early Intervention in Reading (EIR)

This first-grade intervention programme has been implemented in several schools in the state of Minnesota, USA, representing both middle and lower socioeconomic levels. It is conducted by the regular classroom teacher. In addition to their regular reading instruction, these teachers work daily with the 5-7 lowest achieving students in each of their classes for an additional 20 minutes of reading instruction.
The small group instruction focuses on the repeated reading of picture books or summaries of these books and on developing student’s phonemic segmentation, blending abilities and other word recognition skills. Students also work individually or in pairs for 5 minutes with an aide, a parent volunteer, or the teacher, rereading materials from their small group instruction sessions.

II  The Boulder Project

This programme involves primary school teachers and students from two schools. In order to create small groups, the primary teacher works with three children for 30 minutes each day while the teacher’s aide instruct other groups. The programme focuses on the repeated reading of predictable trade-books, teaching word identification skills through the use of analogy or word patterns, writing words from the word pattern instruction and writing about topics of choice in notebooks.

III  Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is an individual tutoring programme in which a tutor meets with a child for 30 minutes each day outside the child’s regular classroom. Although the tutor determines the instructional strategies, Reading Recovery lessons operate within a clearly defined framework. Each day, teachers and students are involved in 5 major activities.
The first activity is the reading of familiar stories. Students read at least two stories from books they have read previously. Second, the teacher takes a running record of a book that was introduced to the student the previous day. A running record is a set of notations that records the child’s oral reading. Next is working with letters, though letter activities can occur at several points in the lessons. Fourth, the child dictates a sentence or short story that the teacher records and the rereads to the child, guiding the child to write it accurately. The final activity is the reading of a new book. Before reading, the teacher and child thoroughly explore the book and the teacher introduces concepts, language of the story and specific vocabulary items as needed.

5.3 Remedial Programmes through Art Activities

Another suggested method of reinforcing LD readers is through art activities as recommended by Jasson and Schiller (1980: 28). These students often display a lack of interest in reading, which many consider to be the result of repeated failure. Both of them believe that the lack of interest is the product of negative conditioning and so all remediation works should begin with a reconditioning process that is more focussed on the students’ accomplishments.

This reconditioning for success may be achieved partly through activities, which are centered on the child. These types of activities tend to be more meaningful and motivating for the student and therefore more likely to yield success. Generally any forms of creative art activities are student-centered and are easily adaptable in any classroom situation. The teacher has to bear in mind the finished product is the one that enhance
their self-esteem. Art is means of expression and this expression can be a cognitive experience.

5.4 Guide for Teachers in Identifying the LD Readers

Professionals in the field of LD have used several correlating factors in order to properly identify individuals with this problem. Many of the correlating symptoms and behaviours can be seen in individuals who are described as LD readers. They were proposed by Spaffard, (1996:6) and are as follows:

1. Delayed language development and/or language related problems
2. Late talkers
3. Verbal processing defects involving phonological and/or auditory processing defects
4. Reduced naming rates of colours, numbers and objects in pictures
5. Relatively poor peripheral light sensitivity
6. Relatively good peripheral vision
7. Errors in oral reading
8. Serial order and sequencing problems
9. Family history
10. Motor sequencing problems
11. Problems in writing and spelling
12. Slow recognition of individual letters and words
13. Overall IQs in the low 90's
14. Confusion between right and left
15. Reduced reading rates as adults
16. Time and directional confusion
17. Lack of adequate problem-solving strategies
18. Problems with attention
19. Diminished on task behaviour such as completion and follow-through of assigned task understanding and following directions and completing tasks independently
20. Social behaviour problems
21. Memory defects
22. Erratic eye movements
23. Neurological anomalies/disruptions

In view of the above guideline, it is not always easy to identify one group of people who are clearly LD readers and another group who are not. Almost all of us have learning difficulties in some aspect of our lives. Some people who are exceptionally skilled with language and even become English teachers have difficulties in balancing their cheque books (maths). On the other hand, many people never fail a subject in school but are at a complete loss when figuring out a diagram for making a simple house repair. Similarly, children may experience real success in some school subjects, yet find other school tasks very difficult, frustrating, or too time consuming to complete.
The individual with learning difficulties may appear to possess the characteristics of a person with LD. However, it is only when those with learning difficulties are so severe that they markedly interfere with learning that a disability is suspected. Careful assessment by a professional team that utilises a variety of standardised instruments and observations are an important part of verifying the existence of LD.

5.5 Suggestions to the Education Planners and Teachers

The burden of educating the LD students does not solely fall on the teachers alone, but the education planners and policy makers are also directly responsible. They have a greater responsibility for providing adequate training to equip the teachers to cope with these problems in schools.

There are several aspects that they need to consider in achieving the desired results:

i) To maintain an adequate ratio of teaching personnel (special education teachers and counsellors) in every school.

ii) To have more in-service courses so that teachers and headmasters have a better understanding of the theories and ways of handling these students.

iii) Special education courses have to be made compulsory in all teacher-training programmes.

iv) Provision of better finance for teaching aids, instruments and a good school library with reading facilities.

v) Raise the status of the teaching profession to attract dynamic, talented people.
vi) Even and compatible distribution of periods in the timetable and a reasonable workload.

vii) Adoption of suitable methods of teaching.

viii) Social recognition of teachers for students and positive sympathy of teachers for students.

ix) Create a classroom environment more conducive to English Language teaching.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

This study indicates that there is a definite link between the teachers’ awareness and the extent to which they implement LD teaching methods. Although this research has its limitations, other variables related to this study need to be researched further. These areas are:

i) The extent of use of the LD teaching methods in special education classrooms.

ii) To probe further on the suitability of the teaching materials available for use in both in lower and upper secondary.

iii) To further study the relationship between the teacher attitude versus training.

iv) Analysis of textbooks in English may be undertaken to provide further information regarding pupils’ difficulties in mastering English.
v) A study may be undertaken on the attitude of English teachers and their levels of proficiency to teach English in special education schools and on the efficiency of their teaching.

vi) Auditory comprehension tests may be constructed.

vii) A study may be made to determine the types and nature of incentives to special education teachers of English which would improve their standards of teaching.

5.7 Summary

Perhaps the teachers of the LD pupils could also employ the eclectic approach. With an eclectic approach, teachers are able to use a variety of materials and activities in any combination and with any emphasis they feel is best for their students. In effect, teachers select materials and activities from the great variety available. They can fashion their own programmes and take the best that each approach has to offer. It has been indicated that an eclectic approach has the greatest possibilities for catching and maintaining the students’ interest. An eclectic teacher, then, is one who knows many approaches and materials, and selects among them what seems to be needed for an individual at a given time.

The creation and implementation of an eclectic programme is preceded by a diagnostic evaluation of students’ strengths and weaknesses. Informal inventories are often used as the primary diagnostic tool, although formal diagnostic tests maybe used.
It is definitely not a panacea to solve reading disabilities but it is hoped that an awareness can be created in teachers, to be constantly alert and to nip reading disabilities in the bud. ‘it would be less than honest to leave the impression that magical techniques and procedures will work wonders for the learning disabled child’, Ekwall, (1977: 365). It would appear that the personality of the teachers who are knowledgeable about LD would have more of an impact than a particular technique or approach. It is time to act to meet the needs of the LD students.