

**READING ATTITUDES, HABITS AND PERFORMANCE
OF THIRD GRADE ESL STUDENTS PARTICIPATING
IN A READING CHALLENGE PROGRAM**

by

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Abstract

The study examines the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of third graders in an urban elementary school in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico participating in a *20 Book Reading Challenge Program*. Five methods were used: questionnaires, short reading passages, comprehension questions, leveling books, and fieldnotes. The results show the importance of motivating students to read independently material that interests them and is at their appropriate reading level. It also shows the importance of getting parents involved in their children's reading process and reading success. The conclusions show: 1) the reading program motivated the students to read independently, 2) the students were not motivated enough to read other curricular or extracurricular literature beside the reading materials provided to them, 3) the majority of the students were not able to read at or above grade level, and 4) parents showed a positive attitude toward coaching their children's at-home reading assignments.

Resumen

El estudio examina las actitudes, hábitos y habilidades de lectura de los estudiantes de tercer grado en una escuela urbana elemental en Mayagüez, Puerto Rico participando en un programa de lectura en inglés. La metodología usada fue: cuestionarios, pasajes cortos de lectura, preguntas de comprensión de lectura, libros codificados por niveles y anotaciones de las observaciones. Los resultados reflejaron la importancia de motivar a los estudiantes a leer en su nivel de lectura y de su interés como también involucrar a los padres en el proceso de lectura y en el éxito de sus hijos. Las conclusiones mostraron que: 1) el programa de lectura había motivado a los estudiantes a leer independientemente, 2) los estudiantes no estaban suficientemente motivados a leer otros libros fuera del programa, 3) la mayoría de los estudiantes no pudieron leer al nivel o por encima del nivel del grado y 4) los padres mostraron interés en ayudar a sus hijos con las lecturas en la casa.

Dedication

To my loving husband William,

My children Joel, Jessmar, and Jason.

And my grandchildren Krystal, Stephany, Stephen, and Jaelynn

I love you all...

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that primary school children must learn in order to succeed in school and throughout their lives. Therefore, the initial and developmental stages of reading should be a pleasurable and exciting experience. Yet, there is a wide array of factors that either impede or contribute to students' success in acquiring reading skills and developing reading interest. Many educators and researchers have identified the lack of support by teachers and parents during the teaching-learning reading process as one that may lead primary school students to lose self-confidence and the desire to read (Case & Taylor, 2005; Drucker, 2003; Field & Aebersold, 1990; Li & Zhang, 2004; Mohr, 2004; Triplett, 2004).

Parental support is critical in encouraging primary school children's interest in reading. Words of encouragement as well as setting aside a regular time for reading at home can help children increase their reading fluency and eventually inspire them to read independently. Reading time at school should be an attractive and engaging activity. It should inspire children to interact with the author or the characters, motivate students to talk about their own experiences, and encourage them to want to keep on reading. For those who are slow readers or are not literate, listening to the story should be an enjoyable activity. According to Ediger (2002) "developing a liking for reading should be a satisfying, motivating, and yet, a challenging goal of instruction" (p. 3).

Reading is highly valued in our technological society. It is the "key that opens the door to all the knowledge of the world" (US Department of Education, 2005, Foreword). As part of a literate society, people are surrounded by written words in all aspects of their lives. Written symbols add significance to their world and many people read newspapers, books, journals, magazines, and electronic sources to acquire knowledge or even save themselves in "life-and-death matters" (Brown, 2001, p. 298). Therefore the demands for higher literacy in

our society, may create grievous consequences for those who fall short (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 1).

Acknowledging the importance of reading, the United States (US) has promoted and implemented throughout the nation and its territories the teaching of reading as the primary skill students should acquire in order to succeed academically. Initially, President Bill Clinton issued the *America Reads Challenge Program* in 1997. The challenge program stressed the importance of communities coming together to ensure all children read well. Later on, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, established *Reading First* as a new, high-quality, evidence-based program for the students of America. The NCLB Act is a landmark in education reform designed to improve students' achievement. Both programs, promoted by the US, are focused efforts to challenge students to become successful early readers and to assure that no child is left behind academically. The programs are used in primary grades from kindergarten to third grade and their main goal is to ensure that all children learn to read well and independently by the end of third grade.

Consequently, scientifically-based reading programs¹ have been developed throughout the nation to ensure that native English speakers and English language learners (ELL) become independent readers. Reading programs such as the *100 Book Challenge* and *Reading A-Z* are two of the many that have been implemented throughout school curricula in the US to help native and non-native English speakers acquire reading independence, fluency, and proficiency.

Although the *100 Book Challenge Program* is a system designed to get all students into the habit of successful daily independent reading, the program calls for collaboration among parents and teachers to improve children's literacy. The *Reading A-Z Program* is a

¹ Proven methods of early reading instruction.

provider of affordable, high-quality, internet-delivered curriculum resources for educators, students, and parents. The Reading A-Z website was developed to reflect the instructional practices and reading strategies that are best supported by research findings from a wide variety of sources. Both programs, *100 Book Challenge* and *Reading A-Z*, provide teachers, parents, and students reading material to motivate independent reading. In addition, the programs work at the students' individual reading level and take into account their reading interest to motivate them to read.

Through its Standards of Excellence the public educational program in Puerto Rico (PR) recognized the importance of teaching and motivating the students to have a positive attitude toward reading in order to achieve reading independence, fluency, and proficiency. The primary goal set out for the Puerto Rican students is to learn how to decode in their native language, Spanish, by the end of first grade. If first graders learn to decode in Spanish by the second semester, then learning to decode English can be introduced at the end of the semester or at the beginning of second grade. Although the goal is to develop independent readers in both languages, "teaching someone to read is complex. Reading doesn't come naturally. You have to learn it" (National Institute of Literacy, 2006, p.1). Learning to read takes time and effort, but children who learn to read are rewarded with academic achievement and success throughout their lives.

Teaching English as a second language (ESL) can become either a pleasant or a difficult experience, depending on how easily the students learn to read in their native language. Schweers and Hudders (2000) argued that Spanish and English are quite similar languages, and that if the Spanish base is appropriately accessed, it can greatly accelerate the learning of English (p. 80). Accordingly, it is understood that an appropriate access to the Spanish language has positive transfer to the English language, whereas reading difficulties in the native language may transfer reading struggles to the second language. Research

conducted by Royer and Carlo (as cited in August, Calderon, & Carlo, 2002), concluded that “basic interpersonal communication skills acquired in one language do not appear to transfer to a second language, whereas skills that are academically mediated such as reading, do appear to transfer” (p. 12).

Spanish immersion (as is the case of Puerto Rico) can have English-language benefits. Successful Spanish readers learning ESL may make positive transfer into the English language. A case study cited by August, Calderon, and Carlo (2002) revealed that Spanish-English bilingual readers used certain strategies for comprehending both Spanish and English texts such as focusing on unknown words, using cognates, monitoring their comprehension, drawing inferences, and actively using prior knowledge.

On the other hand, transferring reading challenges and struggles from one language to the other may cause the student to fall behind in both languages. Reading frustrations could overwhelm the student and increase the lack of interest in learning and wanting to read curricular and/or extracurricular Spanish and/or English texts. This can in turn negatively affect the students’ attitude and motivation towards the acquisition of the second language. In addition, “the values, attitudes, and expectations held by parents and caregivers with respect to literacy are likely to have a lasting effect on a child’s attitude about learning to read” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 138). Lack of motivation and encouragement to read English may become a stumbling block for many Puerto Rican students.

The US and PR have educational differences besides the language. In the US, children start to learn to read English in Kindergarten. Puerto Rican children start to learn to read in their native language, Spanish, in first grade. US students do not have to learn a second language during their primary grades whereas the students in PR begin their introduction to a second language with the beginning of their formal education in kindergarten. Reading instruction for Puerto Rican ESL students may begin at the end of first grade or in second

grade while they are still learning to decode their native language. If Puerto Rican ESL students are expected to make positive transfer from one language to the other, then, they should get literacy in their native language (L1) before moving to literacy in their second language (L2).

Other factors may also impede or contribute to the success of ESL students learning to read. The environmental context in which Puerto Rican students are raised, urban or rural, their socioeconomic status, and their need to learn another language may have a positive or negative impact when learning English. To address the complexity of this learning environment, it is important to produce and use adequate instructional materials for ESL students in PR that meet the needs of students learning a second language. Instead, “first language instructional materials in English are often used to teach our children” in Puerto Rico (Schweers & Hudders, 2000, p. 76). Using appropriate reading material may develop more successful independent bilingual readers.

The educational systems in the US and PR have set reading goals for primary grade students in their respective native languages; both seek to have independent readers at the end of third grade. Both educational systems emphasize reading first. Although the reading goal in both educational systems seems reasonably suitable for the majority of the native speaking students, it should not be the reading goal for second language learners in PR who begin decoding English at the end of first grade or the beginning of second grade. Additionally, Puerto Rican children do not have the English oral language experience or skills that are necessary as the foundation for reading skills. In spite of the differences between English reading instruction in the US and PR, the Department of Education in Puerto Rico supports the reading goal for ESL students in PR. The distribution of the book *Put Reading First* among the English teachers in the public school system in PR supports the idea of teaching our children to read English well and independently by the end of third grade. Apparently, the

Department of Education believes that a reading goal appropriate for native speakers of English can and should be the goal reached by Puerto Rican students whose linguistic experiences are different from those of the US.

Many Puerto Rican first grade students become fluent Spanish decoders by the end of the second semester. They decode well and comprehend the text they are reading. Still others are in the process of decoding the individual sounds in a word by the end of first grade. Moreover, whether they become fluent Spanish readers by the second semester or not, decoding English text has to be taught. Puerto Rican students have not yet acquired the reading and comprehension skills needed in Spanish when they are expected to transfer what they have (or have not) learned into the English language where phonic sounds are not as transparent as in Spanish. Thus, they are not ready to become independent readers in English by third grade.

Data collected at the school for the 2006-2007 academic year showed that among fifty students registered in first grade twenty-five students (50%) learned to decode Spanish text. The students' grades (A, B, or C) were taken into account to identify the students who had learned to decode Spanish text. Among the other twenty-five students, thirteen (26%) moved on to second grade with poor reading skills and twelve of the students (24%) were held back in first grade because they did not learn to read. This information shows that among the thirty-eight students who moved on to second grade thirty-four percent of the students were decoding Spanish texts poorly and were not ready to start decoding English text.

English teachers in Puerto Rico experience the reading struggles that many students have with the texts which are provided at school. Some students can read the words but can not understand them. Others can neither read nor understand the words, and still others are embarrassed by the thought of making a mistake and being laughed at or being corrected when reading aloud. The lack of oral proficiency (listening and speaking skills) in the English

language, the frustration of not being able to read and understand, and even the students' personal traits such as shyness and lack of self-confidence along with the difficulty of the text, all work to prevent Puerto Rican students from wanting to read and eventually trying to understand what they read in English (e.g. Irizarry-Vicenti, 2005; López-Hernández, 2007).

Among the eighty-one students registered in my second through fourth grade English classes in the 2006-2007 academic year, twenty-two students (27%) had fair or poor grades. The information collected showed that the majority of those twenty-two students were in third or fourth grade. This data suggests that the students probably had reading struggles because of the difficulty of the text and because they lack the oral language skills that may have helped them understand the text.

An anonymous Native American proverb says: "Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand." Students and parents need to be involved in the reading process in order to have success. The booklet, *Dad's Playbook*, (2006) emphasizes that "Reading means power; the power of becoming a strong reader and succeeding in life" (p.1). A Puerto Rican student who can successfully learn to communicate (listen, speak, read, and write) in Spanish and English has better chances of succeeding in life. Therefore, considering that reading well could provide better chances of success, I decided to investigate how to motivate third grade Puerto Rican students to read in English, without the difficulty of the text provided in school.

Although there are many students who become independent readers in Spanish and English by third grade, most struggle with L1 and L2. This research study shows the reading struggles and progress of a third grade ESL group in PR with L2 during the implementation of two modified reading programs, *100 Book Challenge* and *Reading A-Z*. The goal for this third grade group was to motivate them to read L2 curricular and extracurricular literature independently, to get them to read at or above grade level, and to get the parents involved in

their children's reading process. The investigation of motivational reading programs which focused on the students' reading habits, abilities, and interests led to the following research questions.

Research Questions:

1. How does a modified reading challenge program affect the motivation of Puerto Rican children to:
 - a. read independently?
 - b. read at or above grade level?
 - c. read curricular or extracurricular literature?
2. How will the parents react to getting involved in an at-home English reading challenge program?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents the literature review on reading attitudes and the motivation needed to develop independent readers. The first part of the chapter discusses the importance of learning and motivating primary school children to read independently including the reading expectations for the primary grades, the attitudes towards learning and reading English as a second language in the US and PR, the need for parents to become involved in their children's literacy development, and practical tips on how parents can help their child with reading.

The second part of the chapter presents information on the *Reading First* programs used in the US for native and non-native English speakers, such as the *100 Book Challenge Program* and *Reading A-Z Program*. This study is built on the programs, *100 Book Challenge* and *Reading A-Z*. Both programs were modified and combined throughout this study in order to provide a variety of reading materials for the students participating in the study.

Reading L1 in the primary grades

For a child to learn to read is just as important as a baby learning to walk. One builds muscles, the other builds knowledge. At both stages, children should be under the watchful eyes of caregivers in order to build self confidence in their abilities. Children who are learning to decode need appropriate guidance to help them become strong readers. Each step children take toward learning to read should develop the self-confidence to continue taking bigger steps toward enriching their vocabulary, acquiring knowledge, achieving accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. "Every step a child takes toward learning to read leads to another. Bit by bit, the child builds the knowledge that is necessary for being an independent reader" (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p.1).

Many middle or high school students who encounter reading problems were probably not identified and dealt with during the primary grades, since research reveals that "students

who do not read well by the end of third grade are unlikely to catch up with other students in later grades and are more likely to drop out of school.” Additionally, “disparities in early reading skills lay the foundation for larger social and economic inequalities later in life” (Roberts, 1999, Archived information, p. 1). In contrast, children with reading problems which are detected on time with early intervention are likely to develop into good readers. Research shows that learning to read well by the end of third grade usually develops strong readers, but it requires the combined force of teachers and parents (Roberts, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Teachers in school, and parents at home, should provide their children with daily reading practice in order to improve their reading skills.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) listed the beginning and beyond beginning reading skills that children should master in their native language (English or Spanish) in order to be successful readers. Adequate first language reading instruction requires that children: “use reading to obtain meaning from print, have frequent and intensive opportunities to read, be exposed to frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships, learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system, and understand the structure of spoken words” (p. 3). Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the beginning level requires that students:

understand how sounds are represented alphabetically, have sufficient reading practice with a variety of texts to achieve fluency, have sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting, monitor comprehension and repair misunderstandings, and continue to be interested and motivated to read for a variety of purposes. (p. 3)

Thus, motivation, practice time, oral production, phonology, background knowledge, vocabulary, and knowledge of the written system are fundamental building blocks for developing good readers in the primary grades.

“Learning to read is one of the essential tasks of childhood and it can be a long and difficult process for many children. However parents’ encouragement and reading support during the primary grades, coupled with strong reading instruction at school will improve the child’s chances of becoming a good reader” (Mitchell, 2000, p.2). A good quality reading program for the primary grades should include, among other suggestions, the students’ actual reading level, provide a wide variety of reading material to capture students’ reading interest, freedom to choose reading material, and ample time to read for pleasure by viewing pictures and selected words to build sight vocabulary and comprehend content (Ediger, 2002, pp. 4, 5, 8). The National Institute for Literacy points out that the “the skills a child develops from kindergarten through third grade are especially important. By the end of third grade, a child must read with ease and understanding to take advantage of the learning opportunities in fourth grade and beyond” (<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/childhood.html>).

Motivation to read L1 and L2 independently

Students who feel motivated to read are not just learning a set of skills. They include reading as part of their lifestyle. According to the *100 Book Challenge Program*, good readers are the children you see reading on the bus, in the back seat of the car, in the waiting room at the dentist’s office. They are the young people who do well in school. They spend an hour or more reading every day because they want to. For the most part, the lowest-performing students do not read anything except what they are forced to read in school. Independent readers are motivated, and, furthermore, they have developed an appreciation for the rewards of reading.

(<http://www.100bookchallenge.com>)

Learning to read in the native language, either English or Spanish, is a major accomplishment celebrated by teachers, parents, and students. The teaching-learning endeavor is rewarded when students begin reading and continue progressing afterwards. The

acquisition of a second language is also a major event. However, ESL students learning to read in the US may have different motivations to acquire a second language than those in Puerto Rico. Students learning English in the US feel the urgent need to learn English rapidly because they are surrounded by the language at school and during social time. This reality is different for Puerto Rican students. Although the priority to learn English in the US and PR may differ, motivation is essential to acquire the language in both places, in PR as well as in the US.

Snow Burns, and Griffin (1998) point out that in every domain of learning, motivation is crucial. They claim that although most children begin school with positive attitudes and expectations for success, by the end of the primary grades and increasingly thereafter, some children become disinterested in reading. The majority of the reading problems faced by today's adolescents and adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years if exposure to literacy and opportunities to practice reading had increased their possibility of reading achievement.

Additionally, Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) recommended for first through third grade curricula:

supportive daily independent reading of selected texts to be of interest for the student and beneath the student's frustration level, in order to consolidate the student's capacity for independent reading. In addition, the curricula should also promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, summer reading lists, encouraging parental involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians.
(pp. 7-8)

The support of parents and teacher, students' interest in what they read, and consideration of the students' reading level promote independent reading. Adults who

practice shared reading provide their children with an opportunity to increase their understanding of stories, enhance oral language, and build vocabulary. Students learn to read well when they are engaged in reading materials that are appropriate to their reading ability, interesting, and relevant to them (Drucker, 2003, p. 28). People learn to read by reading. Therefore, students should be provided with plenty of opportunities to read independently.

The students' appropriate reading level should be taken into consideration when choosing reading material, since it is an important factor in developing independent readers (Drucker, 2003, p.24). Identifying the appropriate reading level will give the students confidence in their ability to learn to read in the first and second language. Texts for independent reading should be easy enough for the students to decode. The books should contain mostly words that they know or can decode easily with about 95% accuracy. In other words, they should misread about one of every twenty words. The text that is more difficult than the students' reading level will lead them to focus on word recognition, and will not provide them the opportunity to develop fluency (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003, p. 27).

The three categories to take into account so reading material is challenging but not frustrating are:

- Independent level: reading material is easy enough for the reader. The reader can read 95 to 100% of the words. This level provides material a child can easily read and comprehend by themselves.
- Instructional level: reading material is used in guided reading session. The reader can read 90 to 94% of the words. This level is the optimum level for a child to be reading at when receiving instruction from a teacher. It provides just enough success for the child to read without frustration, however, it still provides challenges.
- Frustration level: reading material is too difficult and will frustrate the reader when the reader can read 89% or less. This level contains books that are too hard for a child

to read either independently or with instruction. Children focus their attention on decoding individual words. Therefore, they have little attention left for comprehending the text (<http://www.readinga-z.com>).

Students should also be provided with reading texts that challenge them in order to promote advances in their capabilities. Many students learn to love reading when they are challenged and engaged in the reading process. Children who feel in control of their own reading success will challenge themselves, and achieve reading proficiency.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The population of children in the US who require ESL instruction increases every year. By the year 2000, the US Census Bureau estimated there was a 31.1 million foreign-born population living in the US. Due to the growing population of non-English speakers, classrooms across the US have English Language Learners (ELLs) who are learning to speak, read, and write in their new language (Drucker, 2003, p. 22).

Children who are learning ESL in the US are immersed in the English language during and beyond their school hours. They are being exposed to their new language everywhere they go. They are constantly listening to English at school, the streets, the mall, the park, the library, and so forth. These children feel the necessity to learn the language in order to communicate with others beside their immediate family members. They become aware that in order to succeed in their new home, they need to learn English well. Cummins (as cited by Li and Zhang, 2004) found that with appropriate instruction, it takes about two years for ESL students to become relatively proficient in everyday English. Researchers point out that “in most cases it takes an English-language learner as long as five to seven years to perform as well academically as native English-speaking peers” (Drucker, 2003, p. 23).

In contrast, the English language learners in PR are not immersed in the English language and feel no urgent need to learn it. There are various factors that impede the

learning of English in PR. Puerto Rico's Curriculum Framework for the English Program² (2003) revealed that the students' acquisition of ESL has been affected by their attitudes, motivation and degree of involvement in the learning process. The Curriculum Framework points out that there are wide discrepancies according to students' socio-economic status, their needs and attitudes toward learning English, the support they get at home in that particular subject, their interest and personal goals, and the opportunities for exposure to English outside the second language classroom (p. 16).

Attitudes are an important issue when learning a second language. Schweers and Hudders (2000) argue that in almost all sectors of Puerto Rico's population, there is a complex of negative attitudes toward English; it was an imposed language, and it is perceived as a threat to the dominance and quality of the Spanish language and the Puerto Rican identity (p. 77). The attitude that educational administrators, teachers (especially Spanish teachers), and parents assume is crucial to the learning of English as a second language in Puerto Rico. Teachers and parents need to understand that Spanish and English are not in competition, but partners in the educational endeavor. Additionally, Schweers and Hudders suggest that English and Spanish teachers should work to create the perception that bilingualism in Puerto Rico can and should be additive because it "strengthens the individual in the sense of giving her or him an additional life tool" (Schweers & Hudders, 2000, pp. 81-82).

Since 1948 ESL has been taught in the public school system. Throughout the years the Department of Education in Puerto Rico has made concerted efforts to move ESL students beyond the level of basic skills acquisition toward the mastery of the language, but it has not had the success expected. The ESL students in Puerto Rico still have difficulties communicating verbally, understanding the written words, and writing correctly.

² The Curriculum Framework is the document that assembles the philosophical principles, foundations and focus of each study program, from Kindergarten to Twelfth grade.

Creating consciousness of the importance of acquiring a second language in PR is crucial to learning to read English. Attitude and oral skills in English may be determining factors to want to learn to read English. At present, the Department of Education in Puerto Rico is focused on moving the students beyond the basic skills levels and have provided teachers with the Standards of Excellence and Grade-Level Expectations³ to “ensure that all students are provided a progressive path for literacy development in English, from grade to grade in order to create independent, life-long readers and learners” (Content Standards and Grade-Level Expectations, 2007, p. 13). Their ideal is to develop fully bilingual students, but the ELL’s exposure to English is limited and since learning it is not essential to survive on the island, many students may not be motivated to become fluent speakers and proficient readers and writers.

Attitudes toward reading English as a second language

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005, Online) defines attitude as “the way you think and feel about somebody or something.” Reading is a skill that must be learned, yet the process of learning to read can become pleasurable and easy for some and displeasing and complicated for others. Some students will take on reading as a learning opportunity; others will avoid reading because they struggle and find it complicated. The experiences that ESL students encounter when reading a text could determine the attitude they will take on to the developing stages of reading.

Drucker (2000) describes some similarities between reading in a first and second language. She points out that accomplished readers in their first language tend to use many of the same strategies that successful readers in any language use—skimming, guessing in context, reading for the gist of a text—when they are reading in a second language (p. 22). Students learning a second language can make use of reading skills learned in their first

³ Grade-level expectations are the particular aspects of the standards, such as specific skills and attitudes.

language in order to succeed in their second language provided they have sufficient competence in L2.

Students with a positive attitude find reading a rewarding activity. They are enthusiastic and excited about learning to read in a different language from their own and they take a special interest in the use of the lexicon (the vocabulary of a language), semantics (the study of the meaning of words and sentences), phonology (the sound patterns of language), syntax (the order of elements in sentences and sentence structure), discourse (verbal exchange, conversation), and pragmatics (the ways in which language is used in context) of the second language. Accomplished and successful ESL readers read for enjoyment, to acquire knowledge, to discover new ideas, and to learn to communicate effectively.

On the other hand, ELLs with a negative attitude may feel frustration, anger, and fear when reading English texts. These negative emotions, combined with the embarrassment of not being able to read or keep up with the other students, may produce a harmful situation for the student. Triplett (2004) stated that “emotions such as anger or fear are linked to primary appraisals that a situation is harmful to the individual” (p. 214). Besides the emotional aspects of learning to read English as a second language, researchers (as cited in Li & Zhang, 2004) pointed out educational factors that affected low achievement in English learning such as: “inappropriate materials, poor pacing, and ineffective instruction to inappropriate assessment or lack of assessment and more” (p. 93).

Attitudes toward reading English as a second language in Puerto Rico

Many factors can determine the attitude a student develops towards reading English: the difficulty of the text, reading under pressure, home support, and exposure to language. Baker (2001) indicated that “attitudes and emotions are one explanation of failure or success in learning a second language” (p. 123). Success is highly connected to motivation. Gass and

Selinker (2001) explained that numerous studies provided statistical evidence that indicates motivation as a predictor of language-learning success.

The motivation to learn to read English for ESL students in the US may differ from ESL students in PR. ESL students in the US are exposed to the English language and they need to learn to communicate effectively in an English environment. Puerto Rican ESL students have limited exposure to the English language, so learning to read English texts may become a struggle for many of them. First, the students' efforts are concentrated in learning to decode in their native language. Secondly, the curricula does not provide a well-designed classroom reading program that can build the students' confidence to read English texts and seek a better understanding of the written words. The program needs to develop a love for reading through pleasurable reading (Schweers & Hudders 2000, p. 81). It needs to address the students' individual reading levels. Thirdly, many of the parents can not help their children learn to read English because they lack reading skills in Spanish and/or English.

The implementation of a well-designed classroom reading program for ESL students in PR is supported by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. According to the NCLB Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) "it leaves schools, large or small, no excuse but to resort to all educational means to help every child, including limited English proficiency (LEP) students, to be successful in school" (Li & Zhang, 2004, p. 92).

Recommendations made by educators and researchers to motivate the reading of English texts includes adequate reading material for ESL students, allowing students to use their native language when necessary, encouraging students to read at their reading level, promoting reading by reading aloud to students every day, and giving students plenty of opportunities to read independently (Schweers & Hudders, 2000, Case & Taylor, 2005; Drucker, 2003; Field & Aebersold, 1990; Li & Zhang, 2004; Mohr, 2004; Triplett, 2004).

Motivating and promoting a positive attitude towards reading English is not an easy task for many English teachers in Puerto Rico. Teachers who work with low-achieving students encounter many difficulties and challenges. For example, students in kindergarten and first grade learn the new language developing listening and speaking skills. At the end of first grade or the beginning of second grade, the students are introduced to decoding in English when many of them are still in the early stages of decoding in their native language. The reading difficulties encountered in the native language may produce a negative attitude towards the language that is barely used and needed on the island.

Secondly, students who begin to fall short in third grade are in danger of becoming reluctant readers in their native language. Therefore, many educational administrators, Spanish teachers, and parents concentrate their efforts on helping children read in their native language. Learning to read English in PR may be considered unimportant or irrelevant by parents and the students who are falling behind in their native language. Consequently, reading difficulties in English increase as students move from one grade to another. They read their English books because they have to, but lack interest in reading independently and/or reading extracurricular texts.

Moreover, if the educational goal set for the primary grades is to develop in its students a love for reading, they should be provided with adequate ESL reading material that may help develop reading skills. For example, the use of locally generated materials that reflect the island and the world from the Puerto Rican learner's perspective may motivate beginning readers to make sense of a new linguistic code (Schweers & Hudders, 2000, p. 79).

Content standard # 3, Reading Comprehension, states that "the student demonstrates confidence, independence, and flexibility in the strategic use of reading skills, critical thinking, and the conventions of language for reading a range of simple to complex texts" (Standards of Excellence, 2000, p. 23). However, building confidence, developing

independence, and teaching flexibility in the use of reading skills in ESL readers may sometimes become an arduous task when texts are not pertinent and/or too difficult to understand. As Schweers and Hudders (2000) mentioned, instructional materials used in PR are directed at the linguistic and cultural awareness needs of US residents and not at those living in PR (p. 76). The possibility of using culturally pertinent, relevant, interesting, and useful reading material may motivate ESL students in PR to read English texts.

Furthermore, educational administrators in PR need to understand that English is not a transparent language like Spanish. “English is an opaque language, it holds a weak relationship between the letters and the sounds and many students struggle to decode the words” (Case & Taylor, 2005, p. 130). Puerto Rican students not only struggle to decode words, but they also struggle with the meanings they represent in context. Emergent readers need to be able to feel success in order to challenge themselves to keep on going. Affective factors such as self-confidence, enhanced self-esteem, assurance of success, simultaneously with an engaging program that includes cultural awareness and cognitive development for ESL students in PR, could motivate them to read English texts.

Besides the educational factors that can motivate ESL students in PR to read English texts, there is an emotional aspect that may be influential in the students’ reading activities: parental support. The time set aside by parents to support their child’s reading is important to success in reading. The one-on-one time and attention can help their child become a more effective reader.

Parental involvement in the reading process

A parent is the child’s first and most important teacher and should be primary motivational agent in helping their child become a reader. They do not need to be the best reader to help—their time and interest and the pleasure that they share with their child as part of reading together are what counts (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Although parental

involvement is essential for children's reading success there are guidelines suggested by the by the US government and reading programs that may present a problem for many homes/families in PR. For example, there is a lack of public libraries to go to in many communities throughout PR, many Puerto Rican family homes do not have adequate space to create a quiet reading environment, nor do parents have the time to listen to their children read in Spanish or English.

The booklet *Questions Parents Ask About School* stated that “helping children become—and remain—readers is the single most important thing that parents and families can do to help their children succeed in school and in life” (p. 10). The booklet also suggested effective research-based tips for helping a child to read:

- Read aloud to the child often. Encourage him/her to ask questions and to talk about the story.
- Encourage the child to read on their own. Children who spend at least 30 minutes a day reading for fun develop the skills to be better readers at school.
- Set aside quiet time for family reading. Some families enjoy reading aloud to each other, with each family member choosing a book, story, poem or article to read to the others.
- Visit the library often. See that the child gets his own library card as soon as possible.
- Buy a children's dictionary and start the “let's look it up” habit.
- Make writing materials, such as crayons, pencils, and paper, available.
- Ask family members and friends to consider giving the child books and magazines subscriptions as gifts for birthdays or other special occasions.
- Get help for the child if he/she has a reading problem.
- Look for family or adult reading programs in the community if parents are uncomfortable with their children's reading ability (p. 9-10).

Laura Bush, a librarian, emphasizes the importance of parental involvement when teaching a child to read. The introduction to the booklet *Helping Your Child Become a Reader* (2005) cites Mrs. Bush's words: "as parents, the most important thing we can do is read to our children early and often. Reading is the path to success in school and life. When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning" (p. iii). Parents' attitude towards reading may make assessment of learning success more probable. Their reading attitude will probably reflect on the child's reading attitude. Those who express positivism toward daily at-home reading assignments will be encouraging and motivating their children to read. Parental involvement during the early grades can motivate children to acquire early reading accomplishments.

Other parental involvement tips that can help a child become a better reader were provided by the *100 Book Challenge Program*:

- Be the child's home reading coach.
- Provide the time and opportunity for the child to read a book every day.
- Make sure the child has a relaxed, comfortable place to read.
- Listen to the child read. Be the child's listening ear. Let him or her hold the book.
- Help older children to read fluently and with feeling.
- Encourage older children to bring home books they really want to read.
- Encourage the child to buy books and build his or her personal library at home.
- Set a good example for the child by sharing your own reading experiences. Children are copy cats – if they see you read they will read too.
- Stay in contact with the child's teacher about his/her reading progress.
- Keep it fun. Be sure not to test your child on the reading. Just enjoy it (<http://www.100bookchallenge.com>).

Parents' enthusiasm concerning their child's reading progress can greatly influence how hard their child will try to become a good reader. Genuine praise for their efforts is the best motivational prize a child can receive.

Although parental involvement has been considered essential for a child to succeed academically, many parents do not take on the role expected of them. The local newspaper, *El Nuevo Día* (December 2, 2007), printed an article urging parents to get involved in their children's education. The author Adelaida Colón Olivencia, a Spanish teacher in the town of Lares, declared that teachers face great difficulties in working with students with low academic performance since parents are not committed to their child's education. She cites a study by the psychologist Jerome Bruner who stated the importance of lowering the dropout rates. According to the study, students are constantly held back in a grade and only 42% of the children get to eighth grade.

Furthermore, she wrote about the importance of the child's early learning experiences and how those experiences play the most important role in later academic performance. She added that a child whose parents are facilitators and provide support in their child's educational process can adjust more easily to school than those who do not receive the correct motivation. In order to reinforce the seriousness of the lack of parental involvement at that specific school in Puerto Rico, she said she called a parent/teacher conference for 75 students to discuss their child's poor academic performance or discipline problems and only 16 parents out of 75 attended (p. 24). Home-learning environment and parental involvement are essential to the reading success of a child. The educational system needs to provide reading programs where parents can take a far more active role in their child's reading performance.

The home-learning environment may be affected by parents' socioeconomic status and by socio-cultural features. Parents' attitudes toward education, literacy environments,

materials and emotional home conditions may lead to school success or failure. The inclusion of parents in the operation of the school and involving parents as partners and participants in their child's education such as paired reading schemes may contribute to the reading success of a child (Baker, 2001, p. 298). Yet children come to school with different degrees of familiarity with literacy. The social and cultural context of literacy differs between cultures. Studies conducted by Gregory (as cited by Baker, 2001) demonstrated that "the purposes of reading, the resources provided by the home and the process of parents helping their children to read may differ from the purposes, resources and processes for literacy in the school" (p. 330). Reading problems may be encountered when there is a mismatch between the culture, attitudes, expectations about school and values of the home and school.

Puerto Rico is not necessarily a reading society. Culturally speaking, many Puerto Ricans do not like to read. You will probably not see children or adults reading in the doctor's office, at the beach or the park. Lack of neighborhood libraries and local bookstores are stumbling blocks to access reading material. At school, students are not allowed to take-out books from the school library nor take home the reading texts used in the classroom for fear that the students will not return them. Additionally, single parenting, low-income, and parents' lack of formal education contribute to establishment of other priorities rather than spending time reading a book or making use of their limited economical resources to buy a book.

Since the initial stages of reading, students in PR are not motivated to read outside the classroom. Reading a book is not considered a leisure time activity but a school task. Many schools can not provide take-home reading books; consequently, students learn to read only the texts that are part of the educational curriculum. Lack of motivation to read outside the classroom, lack of reading role models at home, or lack of parental reading support are factors that may transmit a negative attitude towards reading extra-curricular texts. As

children grow older they will reflect the reading habits they have acquired throughout their lives, at home, and school. Therefore reading programs which promote school and home reading partnership may help develop a reading society in Puerto Rico.

Providing additional reading material besides the texts provided in school is essential to developing a literate society. Therefore, the latter part of the chapter discusses two different reading programs used to encourage students to read in school and at home.

Reading First Programs

The inability of many children to read well is an alarming national problem in the US. In 1994, forty percent of fourth graders had not attained the *Basic* level of reading skills, and 70 percent could not be considered *Proficient* in reading. The results were bleaker for students from poor families and students attending urban public schools. Two-thirds of African-American and Hispanic students had not attained *Basic* reading skills (Roberts, 1999, p.1). The urgent need to find possible solutions to the reading problems encountered by students in the US led to the design of the *America Reads Challenge* program. The program was implemented to improve reading skills in grade levels from kindergarten to third grade. It encouraged the participation of private sectors, community, educators, and parents. Funds were directed to improve reading instruction within a school through professional development for teachers, family literacy programs, and tutorial assistance programs in order to develop proficient readers (Roberts, 1999, p. 6).

Later, in the year 2002, the NCLB Act established the *Reading First Program* to ensure that proper academic instruction be implemented in the classroom, ensuring that all children were reading well by the end of third grade. The NCLB Act placed special emphasis on implementing education programs and practices that had been clearly demonstrated to be effective through rigorous scientific research.

Two scientifically based reading programs used in the US are the *100 Book Challenge* and *Reading A-Z*. Both programs are in accordance with the *Reading First* initiative, and they address each of the five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Both programs address the needs of different grade levels including English as a second language (ESL) and English language learners (ELL). They allow beginning-level ELL students to interact successfully with print and to begin acquiring English vocabulary and phonic skills.

Both programs have a leveling system in which books are classified in order to meet each student's reading level. The differences between both programs are that *Reading A-Z* is a provider of affordable, high-quality, internet-delivered curriculum with downloadable books, teaching and learning materials, while the *100 Book Challenge* materials were purchased through the American Reading Company and only schools or school districts could purchase them. The *100 Book Challenge* program includes books, materials, software tools, and professional development to guarantee measurable results and it involves the entire school community—students, parents, teachers, and administrators. *Reading A-Z* can be used freely by parents and teachers from the internet while the *100 Book Challenge* is organized in a way that the entire school community is involved at the same time and focused on accomplishing the program's goal. The following chart contrasts both programs showing their similarities and differences.

Chart 1. Similarities and Differences of the *Reading A-Z* and *100 Book Challenge* Programs

Reading A-Z Program	100 Book Challenge Program
It has leveling system to classify books.	It has a leveling system to classify books
Addresses the five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.	Addresses the five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
Addresses the needs of ESL and ELL.	Addresses the needs of ESL and ELL.
It is an affordable internet-delivered curriculum. It can be purchased by teachers and parents.	Materials can only be purchased through the American Reading Company by school or school districts.
The program can be used freely by parents and teachers from the internet.	The program involves the entire school community - students, parents, teachers, and administrators.
The program provides books, lesson plans, assessments, and reading comprehension material.	The program includes books, materials, software tools, and professional development.

The 100 Book Challenge

The *100 Book Challenge* program was established in 1998 by Ms. Hileman. The program’s website provides information about the program in general. The information provided includes how the program works, it explains why it works, its uses, the products and services it offers as well as the results obtained throughout the program. The *100 Book Challenge* was first used in a suburban Philadelphia school district where Ms. Hileman, founder of the *American Reading Company*, challenged a group of second-graders with kindergarten-level reading abilities to read 100 books. The students were given choices to read books leveled to their abilities; they experienced success with reading and were encouraged to read more. The *100 Book Challenge* is a system designed to get all students into the habit of successful daily independent reading. There are multicultural books that are balanced in terms of including fiction/nonfiction and material that appeals to males and females. There are classics and pop culture, illustrative design style is varied, and there is a mix of paperbacks.

The mission of the *100 Book Challenge* is to ensure that every child in America reads on or above grade level. The program immerses students in real books that students choose to

read. All the reading material and assessment tools are put into one simple color-coded system that children, teachers, and parents can understand and use to work together. Through the *100 Book Challenge* system teachers incorporate independent reading into daily teaching plans for at least 30-minutes per day. Every morning during those 30-minutes, three to four parents come in voluntarily to help the teacher by listening to a certain number of students read a book(s) they have chosen that morning and sign the student's reading log sheet confirming that the student has read the book(s). According to the program, the reading at school guarantees a minimum of 100 hours of independent reading for every student, during the school year, and does not include the reading at home component of the program.

Every day, the students check out books from their classroom library and take them home to read. Parents are asked to supervise 30-minutes of independent reading at home each night and they are asked to sign the log sheet to keep track of the daily independent reading at home. The system calls for collaboration among parents and teachers to improve literacy achievement and learning. Parents are asked not to test their child on reading, but to just enjoy while they listen to their child read aloud to them. Last, but not least important is the need to recognize and reward children for their success. All the students are included in the celebration (<http://www.100bookchallenge.com>).

Reading A-Z

The *Reading A-Z* program was established in 2002 by the Learning A-Z. The *Reading A-Z* program is among the family of Pro Quest Learning Page websites. Because it is delivered over the Internet, *Reading A-Z* is a constantly changing program. Each month, it adds new books, lesson plans, and other resources. The website has more than 1,650 downloadable books and thousands of teaching and learning materials. The mission of *Reading A-Z* is to be the leading provider of affordable, high-quality, internet-delivered curriculum resources for educators, students, and parents.

Reading A-Z pays close attention to the recommendations made by the National Reading Panel⁴ and other research findings when developing its reading resources. The student and teacher resources on the Reading A-Z web site have been developed to reflect the instructional practices and reading strategies that are best supported by research findings from a wide variety of sources. The resources also correspond to the findings of the *Reading First* federal initiative. In addition to the K-6 market, Reading A-Z materials are widely used at a range of grade levels, in special education and special needs, remedial reading, ESL, and ELL (<http://www.readinga-z.com>).

The following chapter discusses the research site, duration of the study, participants, parents, teacher/researcher, and the methodology used to implement a motivational reading program with third grade ESL students in PR. The chapter also describes a pilot study conducted in a second grade classroom before implementing the modified *20 Book Reading Challenge Program* to a third grade classroom and a follow-up program conducted with a fourth grade classroom.

⁴ In 1997, the Congress of the US asked for a national panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. The National Reading Panel was composed of 14 individuals, including leading scientists in reading research, representatives of colleges of education, reading teachers, educational administrators, and parents.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter concerns the methodology that was used to study the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of eighteen third graders in a public housing school in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. This study is based on an action research design. Mills (as cited in Creswell, 2005) defines action research as “systematic procedures done by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather information about, and subsequently improve, the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching, and their student learning” (p. 550).

The first part of the chapter presents a pilot study conducted with a second grade ESL group starting to reading English texts. Following is a description of the actual study: its research site and the duration of the study, including a description of Mayagüez Elementary School, the English classroom, the participants, parents, and the teacher/researcher. The final part of the chapter describes the methods of data collection, including questionnaires, materials, field notes, and short passages which includes the procedures for administration. It also includes a follow-up program conducted with a fourth grade ESL group.

Pilot study

My interest in the *100 Book Challenge* program was the motivation to conduct a pilot study with my second graders before I implemented and tested a modified version of the program. The reason for conducting the pilot study was to investigate if the use of easier reading texts would motivate students to want to read. I wanted the students to learn to decode English texts without the difficulty of the texts provided for their grade level. I wanted them to enjoy their first reading experience in English.

The pilot study was conducted during the first semester of the 2006-2007 school year. The second grade group consisted of 25 students, 15 girls and 10 boys, who were going to begin decoding English. At the beginning of the first semester, the school received two

different English reading books for first grade. After reviewing the books, I thought they would be useful for second graders about to begin decoding English texts. Furthermore, first grade students were being taught to decode in their native language and the introduction to decoding in English could occur at the end of the second semester, depending on their ability to decode in their native language.

As I went over the books, I realized that one of them was very much like the books used in the *100 Book Challenge Program* to initiate kindergarten students in the US to reading. The first book, *Good Times We Share*, had stories using a repetitive pattern with only one or two words changed. Each page had one or two short sentences with illustrations to support the words. Since I knew that the book was not going to be used in first grade, I proceeded to ask the school principal for permission to use it in second grade. The second book, *Take a Closer Look*, was used during the second semester, and it had less repetitive patterns, and introduced more new words in each sentence.

At first I had opposition from the school principal because I was going to use a book way below the reading level the Department of Education stipulates. I tried to convince the principal about the reason for conducting a pilot study with the books and the response was that I needed to consult with the Mayagüez District English Supervisor. I proceeded to consult the District English Supervisor and she gave her approval to use the book in second grade.

I used sight words to introduce the students to reading in English. I prepared flashcards with the sight words and placed them in a visual place for the students to see and read. I also used pictures of the words that could be illustrated and placed them next to each sight word. Then, I proceeded to introduce the words of the first story that was going to be read in class. After the students had sufficient oral practice, listening to the pronunciation of the words, learning to recognize them, and reading them well, I introduced them to the title of

their first story, *I See Red, Blue, Yellow*. As I led them into the story, they used the illustrations to describe and predict the events orally (the students made use of the Spanish language and their knowledge of sight words in English), and they made use of letter-sound knowledge and phonemic awareness to figure out unknown words and their meanings. At the end, they read the story which had fifteen pages, two sentences on each page.

The students enjoyed their reading experience. They wanted to read and were very excited when it was time for their English class. As the children learned to decode and enjoy their reading experience, the homeroom teacher decided to stay in the classroom and witness the students' enthusiasm and reading progress. I definitely believe that the children were able to enjoy their reading and were motivated to read because the story was at their initial reading level.

After repetitive choral and shared reading practice, parents were asked to come to the classroom to help out. I must clarify that only two mothers came to help out in the classroom. Each parent was assigned a row of students; they would listen to each child in that row read independently. The students were not the only ones proud of their reading success; parents were amazed to hear their children reading in English. Both mothers were grateful for the opportunity to be included in their child's reading success.

I made copies of short reading selections for each student. They were asked to read them at home for reading practice while one of their parents listened to them read. At least one or two times a week the students would take a book home to read. An interesting anecdote about this pilot study was that when the students participating in the actual research study were asked if they saw anyone reading at home, three of the students answered they saw a younger sibling reading, which, surprisingly, were second graders in the pilot study.

Finally, I had the students work with the words they learned to decode to create a booklet where they were the authors and illustrators of the story, *I See Red, Blue, Yellow*.

The students illustrated known words such as: *fan, map, bed, pig, dog, and sun* and wrote a sentence for each illustration such as: “I see a red fan.” The writing activity enriched the teaching-learning reading process which included listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

During the pilot study, I did not really challenge my students to read a certain number of books; I simply motivated them to read a story assigned to them and enjoy it. Definitely this was a totally different approach to teaching the students to read in English because teaching the students to read the text provided for the grade level was difficult. The students did not decode many of the sight words when they were expected to decode and understand more difficult words. They had to decode and comprehend a text with four to five sentences on each page, about 20 to 25 pages long, and learn vocabulary that was not easy to illustrate. After the story was “read” the students were asked to identify the main idea and order events as well as other comprehension skills. The students focused on word recognition, which did not allow them the opportunity to develop fluency and enjoy the text.

I continued using the method from the pilot study for the entire school year, and the students ended the year reading and writing at their level. At the end of the school year, I asked the school principal to keep the group together in order to continue working with them in third grade, but, unfortunately, the group was reorganized with students who did not participate in the pilot study and were barely beginning to read and write English. Moreover, the school did not pass the standardized tests. The teachers were asked to use the books assigned in the curricula for each grade and not below grade reading materials. The school system thought that learning to read with below grade level materials would not prepare the students for the standardized tests taken in third grade.

Research Site and Duration of the Study

The research on which this thesis was based was collected in a classroom of an elementary school in Mayagüez, the same as in the Pilot Study. The data was collected from

January 10 to May 15 during the 2006-2007 academic year, a period of four months. To conduct this study and fulfill the requirements for the MAEE degree at the University of Puerto Rico, I first obtained authorization from the Mayagüez Elementary School principal (See Appendix A). Next, I informed my colleague, who was the students' homeroom teacher, about the study I was going to conduct and what my goals were. Then, I sent a letter to the students' parents letting them know about my intentions to develop a special project with their children. I asked them to come to a meeting where I could explain the project in detail (See Appendix B). I prepared a Parents' Attendance Sheet for them to sign on the day of the meeting (See Appendix C). Finally, I obtained the parents' consent for the students to participate in the study. The students were also asked to sign the consent form. The consent form stated the purpose of the study and explained that participation was anonymous and voluntary (See Appendix D). Since all the parents and the students agreed to participate, the participants in this study were the eighteen students registered in one of the two third grade groups.

As an itinerant teacher, I needed the participants' homeroom teacher's approval to conduct the study in the classroom. An itinerant teacher is not in charge of a homeroom classroom, but instead visits the classrooms assigned in the school program to teach the subject that he or she teaches. English, physical education, music, and art teachers for primary grades are mostly itinerant teachers. The homeroom teacher was kind enough to provide space in the classroom for the books that were to be used in the reading book challenge program, the display of a motivational reading chart, and other materials related to the study.

Mayagüez Elementary School

This study was conducted at an elementary school (K-6) which had approximately three hundred students. Most students lived in the public housing projects just across the

street from the school. All the students who attended the school came from low income families. The socio-demographic information for the 2006-2007 academic year showed that 97% of the students registered in the school came from low-income families. Moreover, the majority of the children (16/18) in this study were raised by single parents who may or may not have had a job to help support the family, and many had not completed their education, dropping out of school by ninth grade or in high school (See information about Parents further down).

The main entrance to the school was facing the public housing projects and the rest of the school structure faced Puerto Rico's Highway Number 2. There were two classrooms for each grade, except for kindergarten which had one, a special education classroom, a computer room, a library, a lunchroom, and a material supply room. There were three main offices: the principal's, the social worker's, and counselor's offices. The children's playground faced the road and the children either played there or in the public housing project's yard facing the school's main entrance.

The teachers and the students at the elementary school followed a daily routine which included starting school at 8:00 AM and ending at 3:00 PM. The school day was divided into six class periods, each period consisting of fifty minutes. Five of the six periods were used for the core academic subjects: English, Spanish, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The additional period was used for physical education. The English class was the only one taught in English by a certified English teacher. The other core subjects were taught by the homeroom teacher in Spanish.

English Classroom

The English classroom's main entrance was facing Highway 2 and its back side was facing the public housing projects. The classroom had no air conditioning, but instead had a big fan. It was a very hot classroom in the afternoon, but since the English class was held

during the second period of the day, 8:50 AM to 9:40 AM, the heat was not a major problem. The room consisted of eighteen desks, a teacher's desk, two tables, a computer for the homeroom teacher's use, two chalkboards, and many book shelves. One of the tables displayed the books used in the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program* which were placed in baskets and labeled according to each reading level. The table also had the students' folders containing their reading log sheet and their home-reading books. A reading log chart was displayed on the wall right next to the chalkboards showing the number of books the students were reading.

Participants

I selected a third grade group. I chose the group as the sample for this study because the majority of the students had reading difficulties in L1 and L2. They were a challenge to the investigation of the study and I wanted to know if the reading program could help struggling readers. A third grade group was chosen because they were primary school students whose grade level was included in the federal *Reading First* program. Moreover, third graders were at an appropriate level for this study because they should be reading in their native language and also have some reading experience in English.

The participants of this study were 18 Puerto Rican students, 9 males and 9 females, who were registered in third grade at Mayagüez Elementary School. Their ages ranged from 8 to 11 years old, but only half of the students were at age/grade level and that half had repeated one of their previous years. To gather data about the participants and their parents, I used the Socio-Demographic Questionnaire (Información del Estudiante) the parents filled out at the beginning of the school year (See Appendix E).

As shown on the Table 1, half of the students were 8 years old, which is the approximate age for a third grade student. Seven of the students were 9 years old, one of the students was 10 years old, and another student was eleven years old. Six of the 18 students

had been held back in a previous grade. Four of the students repeated first grade, one of the students repeated second grade, and two of the students were repeating third grade (one of the students held back in third grade also repeated first grade).

Table 1. Participants' age range and grade retention

Age	Boys	Girls	%
8 years old	3/18	6/18	50%
9 years old	6/18	1/18	39%
10 years old	0/18	1/18	6%
11 years old	1/18	0/18	6%
Repeated first grade	2/18	2/18	22%
Repeated second grade	0/18	1/18	6%
Repeating third grade	2/18	0/18	11%

Two of the six students who were held back previously had gone to a public school in the US where both participated in an ESL program. One of the students went to first grade and the other student went to third grade; both students were held back at the end of the school year and both students repeated their grade in Puerto Rico. There were two members of the same family (a brother and a sister) in the same group. The girl, who had been held back in a previous grade, was older than her brother. Eleven of the students (61%) lived in the public housing projects located next to the school, six of the students (33%) lived in the nearby public housing projects, and only one of the students (6%) lived in a nearby neighborhood (barrio).

The homeroom teacher provided information on the students' L1 reading performance. Five of the participants were non readers in L1 or had major reading difficulties. Two of the five participants (boys) participated in the special needs program. Six of the participants were early emergent Spanish readers, four of the participants were early fluent Spanish readers, and three of the participants were fluent Spanish readers. One of the three fluent Spanish readers was also a fluent reader in English.

All my students came from low-income families, had little or no proficiency in English, and were in the majority of the cases raised by a single parent most of whom had not completed their high school education. According to Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998)

children from poor neighborhoods, children with limited proficiency in English, children with hearing impairments, children with preschool language impairments, and children whose parents had difficulty learning to read are particularly at risk of arriving at school with weaknesses in these areas and hence of falling behind from the outset (p. 5).

My students possessed one or more of the characteristics described above and were probably at risk of falling behind in their native and non-native language.

The interaction developed in the classroom was based on a student-centered English class. I encouraged my students to participate in English and they were acknowledged whenever they tried speaking, reading, and/or writing. The students had many difficulties understanding the language and many times I felt that the lesson taught the day before was front line news the next day. Thus, they did not recall most of what was taught the day before and they embraced the lesson as totally new material. But, in spite of their difficulties understanding the language, the majority of the students had a good disposition to participate in class and do their work as best they could. Their participation consisted in choral reading, guided reading, practice exercises, and class discussion. Although I tried to use English as the medium of instruction in class, sometimes it was impossible. Standing in front of a group where the majority of the students just stared at you without the slightest notion of what was being said was not an easy task. I used pictures, charts, mimicry, and even asked students who understood to repeat in their own words what was being said in English. Of course the explanation by the student was given in Spanish. Hence, the students' interaction in the classroom was mainly in Spanish as a bridge to understanding.

Most of the students' parents could not help their child with the English assignments or with testing material, since they did not have the English skills or knowledge to do so. I was constantly receiving parents' comments about how their child had to do their English assignments on their own because they could not offer them any help. Yet, other parents tried to intervene in some way and they sent their child to "tutoring classes" given in the public library of the public housing projects. Nevertheless, tutoring was not offered individually to each child but instead it was offered as a whole group activity because of the lack of personnel for individualized help.

According to the students who attended the tutoring classes, they would hand in their notebooks and the tutors would work on their assignments while they played. Once the assignments were completed by the tutors, the students sat down and copied them. On the next school day, all the students brought back the same answers without the slightest notion of what they had written. The assignment was discussed in class to reinforce the lesson and to help the students understand what they had written at their tutoring sessions. The task of helping the students to study for an English test was done as a whole group interaction with time constraints. Tutors had to help other students or the same students with the other assignments and could not devote sufficient time to a specific task. One or two days before a test, I would devote time to reviewing each of the testing parts, especially for those students whose parents were not able to help them at home.

Parents

The Socio-Demographic Questionnaire also allowed to gather information on the participants' parents. Although there were eighteen students who participated in the investigation, only seventeen parents were counted because there were two students of the same family in third grade. Table 2 shows that a higher percent of the parents completed their high school education than junior high school. Only two of the parents (6%) obtained a

college degree, specifically an Associate Degree. Eighteen percent of the parents (6) did not report any information about their education. Seven of the participants' fathers (41%) and six of the participants' mothers (35%) completed their high school education; six of the participants' mothers (35%) and two of the participants' fathers (12%) completed junior high school; two of the students' mothers and two of the students' fathers (24%) completed their elementary grades and one of the participant's father only studied up to third grade.

Table 2. Participants' parents socio-demographic characteristics

Item	Mothers		Fathers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Did not complete the elementary grades	0/17	0%	1/17	6%	1/34	3%
Completed elementary grades	2/17	12%	2/17	12%	4/34	12%
Completed junior high school	6/17	35%	2/17	12%	8/34	24%
Completed high school	6/17	35%	7/17	41%	13/34	38%
Completed an associate degree	2/17	12%	0/17	0%	2/34	6%
Did not provide information about their school education	1/17	6%	5/17	29%	6/34	18%
Currently working	4/17	24%	6/17	35%	10/34	29%

Taking the mothers and fathers separately, Table 2 shows that a higher percent of the mothers had more formal education than the fathers. Nevertheless, only four of the mothers (24%) were working at the time of the study as opposed to six of the fathers (35%). None of the participants' mothers or fathers worked for the Puerto Rican government; only one of the fathers worked for the United States National Guard. Taking into account the thirteen parents (38%) who did not complete a high school education and the six parents (18%) who did not provide information about their education, it appears that fifty-seven percent of the parents did not complete their formal education through high school. In addition, the majority of the students were raised by one of the parents. Fifteen of the students (88%) lived only with their mothers and two of the students (12%) lived with both parents.

In summary, half of the participants were 8-year-old public school students in third grade who live in the urban public housing projects in Mayagüez. They had been educated in the public schools; six of the students had repeated a previous grade; they had relatively little

experience outside of PR. The majority of the participants were raised by one of their parents. The majority of the participants' parents were not working at the time of the study; forty-four percent of the parents (15/34) had completed a formal education; and mainly the mothers were raising the children by themselves.

Finally, in addition to the Socio-Demographic Questionnaire, I used the 2000 Census to find information that concerned the students' socio-economic status. According to the 2000 Census, the poverty level of Mayaguez was 52 %. The school's socio-economic report for the 2006-2007 academic year showed that 97% of the students were under the poverty level. The data suggest that the overall socio-economic status of the student participants of this study was low.

Teacher/Researcher

I was the teacher/researcher in this study, and therefore, the primary collector and analyzer of the data. I was one of the three English teachers in the school. I taught one second grade, two third grades, and one fourth grade. The male English teacher taught kindergarten, two first grades, and one second grade. The other female English teacher taught one fourth grade group and both fifth and sixth grade groups. Although, I was born and raised in New York, part of my high school and my college education took place in Puerto Rico. I am a certified English teacher and I have taught in private schools in Puerto Rico in the towns of Arecibo, Ponce, and Aguadilla. I have also taught in public schools in the towns of Añasco and Mayagüez. I have 18 years of teaching experience, 15 in private schools and three in the public school system.

I learned about the *100 Book Challenge Program* when I visited my granddaughters during Christmas and summer vacations in Philadelphia. There are more school days in Philadelphia than in Puerto Rico before Christmas and the summer season in Philadelphia starts in July while in PR it is in June allowing me to visit while school was in session. I was

amazed how well my oldest granddaughter read (kindergarten) and how motivated she was to read independently at home. I decided to volunteer to help in the morning reading sessions in her classroom. Every morning the students in the classroom picked two books from their reading level basket, sat down to work on a specific task while they waited for the teacher or a volunteer parent to individually hear them read one or both books. All the kindergarten children were reading at their own reading level. Since, I was curious how well the kindergarten children read, I made an appointment with the teacher to learn more about the program.

The following year, 2004, I volunteered once more as a reading coach in a kindergarten and a first grade group. Furthermore, I was interested in observing English language learners using the *100 Book Challenge Program*. After obtaining the principal's permission, I proceeded to observe the development of an ELL classroom in Philadelphia. There were children from different parts of the world: Africa, South America, Central America, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Approximately eight students were pulled out of their respective classrooms and taken to the ELL classroom. The students picked the books they wanted to read from their reading level basket and read individually to the teacher or teacher's assistant.

I observed that the readings were reinforced with speaking, reading, and writing of sight words. The students' motivation to read and write was amazing. One of the two African boys in the ELL classroom was so happy with his reading accomplishments that once he finished reading his books he exclaimed: "*I am the best! I know how to read and write in English.*" That specific student felt in control of his academic success and he wanted everyone to know it.

In the year 2005, before I wrote my proposal, I visited the *American Reading Company* in King of Prussia in Pennsylvania to learn more about the *100 Book Challenge*

Program. I had the opportunity to meet the founder of the program, took a tour around the company, and met writers and illustrators of some of the kindergarten level books. The purpose of my visit to the company was to learn more about the program and to purchase books for the reading challenge program I was to develop in my school, but it was explained to me that individual buying and selling of the books could not be done because the program was funded by the *Reading First Program* and they dealt only with school districts.

Although I was interested in the program and wanted to acquire books for my ESL students in PR, I could not adopt the program or buy books on my own. Adoption of the program in PR would entail a lot of paperwork with the Department of Education in PR and the *Reading First Funding Program* that would probably have taken a long time to consider. According to a local newspaper, *El Nuevo Dia* (April 22, 2007), the *Reading First program* had failed to obtain \$200 million because the educational system preferred to wait and see if they could adapt the program to reading in Spanish. When I read the news, I wrote a letter on three different occasions, to the Secretary of Education, Rafael Aragunde, about my findings related to the *100 Book Challenge Program* and its support with the *Reading First Program*, but unfortunately I never received a response. I did not write to him again and I continued with the reading program in my classroom. I bought books online to begin the classroom library and followed the *100 Book Challenge* leveling system to classify them.

Methods of Data Collection

There are questions referring to the practicality of the reading challenge programs used in the US with primary students in the public school system in Puerto Rico. Will challenging reading programs used in the US motivate students whose linguistic needs are different from those of the US to become independent, fluent, and proficient readers? The study was conducted as a modified version of the *100 Book Challenge* program. Instead of a

100 Book Challenge, it was a *20 Book Reading Challenge* which included reading at school and at home.

In order to investigate the practicality of the programs, I used several methods to collect data concerning the students' reading attitudes, habits, and performance. I administered a pre and post questionnaire to the participants (See Appendices F-G). A parent's questionnaire was administered at the end of the program to obtain their thoughts about the program and their child's reading in general (See Appendix H). Short reading passages and *Reading A-Z* running records were used to obtain each student's appropriate reading level for independent reading sessions (See Appendices I). *Reading A-Z* comprehension quick check questions were asked at the end of the program to obtain data on students' reading comprehension skills. Leveling books were used throughout the program by the participants to motivate independent reading in school and at home. A reading log sheet was used to register the books read by the student, as well as to register the signature of the teacher, parent, or guardian who took the time to listen to the child read a book for enjoyment and pleasure (See Appendix J). The reading challenge program was enriched with other activities such as: the film *The Page Master*, a visit to a local bookstore, and a recognition celebration.

The questionnaires provided data concerning the students' reading attitudes and habits in school and at home before and after participating in the reading challenge program. They also provided data on parental involvement before and during the program, as well as their willingness to support their child's reading development once the program had ended. The running records provided data on the students' reading fluency and accuracy. However, because of the uniqueness of working with primary school students, I found it necessary and beneficial to use observations, field notes, and pictures to further highlight the findings. The combination of research methods gave me a wealth of data to interpret, draw conclusions

from, and to triangulate the findings allow me to make suggestions for future English reading challenge programs for ESL students in Puerto Rico.

Questionnaires

The students' pre-questionnaire, students' post-questionnaire, and parents' questionnaire were constructed by the teacher/researcher under the advice and supervision of the graduate committee. The students' pre-questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the study. The students' post-questionnaire and parents' questionnaire were administered at the end of the reading challenge program.

Students' Pre and Post Questionnaires

In order to carryout this study, I constructed a student's pre-questionnaire which was administered before starting the reading challenge program (See Appendix F). The questionnaire was constructed and administered in Spanish so the students would have a better understanding of the questions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information about the participants' reading attitudes, habits, and their home reading environment including the parents' participation in their children's reading activities before the reading challenge program began. The questionnaire asked basic personal information such as gender, age, and grade followed by 20 questions; nine were closed-ended questions and eleven were open-ended questions. The questions were based on three categories: (1) students' reading attitudes (items 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, and 20), (2) students' reading habits (items 3, 4, 5, 8, 15, 16, 17, and 18), (3) students' home environment and parental involvement (items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 19).

The questionnaire was administered using a one-on-one interview in Spanish. I chose a one-on one interview because I had non-readers or slow readers in the classroom. It took several days to administer the questionnaire because I only had 50 minutes, my class period. During class time, I would ask the students to do a specific task while I administered the

questionnaire. If the homeroom teacher allowed it, I used my professional hour in the afternoon to continue conducting the interviews whenever I could.

The post questionnaire was administered at the end of the reading challenge program (See Appendix G). This questionnaire was also constructed and administered in Spanish and conducted using a one-on-one interview. The questionnaire asked basic information such as number of books read at school and the number of books read at home. This questionnaire was designed to obtain data about the students' reading attitudes and habits, and parental involvement during the reading challenge program. The questionnaire consisted of nineteen questions, fifteen closed-ended questions and four open-ended questions. Three categories were used: (1) information on the students' reading attitudes (items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 16, 17, 18, and 19), students' reading habits (items 4, 8, 11, and 12), and parental involvement (items 9, 13, 14, and 15). Again, I used my class period and professional hour to conduct the one-on-one interviews. The pre and post questionnaires were administered to provide insight before, during, and after the study.

Parents' Questionnaire

The parents' questionnaire consisted of 13 close-ended questions. An additional item was included which allowed parents to comment on the reading challenge program (See Appendix H). The questionnaire was constructed in Spanish, acknowledging parents' reading difficulties in English. I used the student's folder where they carried their reading books and reading log sheet to send home the questionnaire. Since the parents already knew the program's reading dynamic and the significance of the folder, I knew they would check the folder and find the questionnaire. I asked the students to remind their parents to complete the questionnaire and return it in the same folder.

The parents' questionnaire consisted of: (1) how the parents perceived their child's reading attitude before and during the reading challenge program (items 1, 3, 4, and 8), (2)

the child’s reading habits before and during the reading program (items 2, 5, 6, and 7), (3) parents’ attitude toward reading (items 9, 10, and 11), (4) parents’ understanding of the English language (item 12), (5) who answered the questionnaire (item 13), and (6) parents’ comments about the program (item 14).

Procedure

I used the *100 Book Challenge Program* as a guide to implement the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program* in the classroom. I used color codes to classify the books and the baskets where the books were kept (See Table 3). The baskets and books were labeled with color stickers so the student could identify them easily. Each student had a reading log sheet and the students’ reading coach, teacher or parent, signed it after listening to the child read (See Appendix J). Each student had folders with inside pockets to have them carry their books home. I kept a motivational chart next to the board where the students were able to put a sticker to show how many books they had read weekly. Short reading passages were used at the beginning of the program to identify the students’ reading levels. The idea of inviting parents to come in the classroom to be reading coaches and to motivate parents to be reading coaches at home is part of the *100 Book Challenge Program* that was maintained in this study.

Table 3. 100 Book Challenge Color Codes

Grade	Level	Grade	Level	Grade	Level	Grade	Level
K	one yellow (Y)	1	two green (GG)	2	one red (R)	3	One white (Wh)
K	two yellow (YY)	1	one blue (B)	2	two red (RR)		
K	one green (G)	1	two blue (BB)				

I bought approximately sixty-five books through the internet to match the description of the *100 Book Challenge* leveling system through <http://www.amazon.com>. Another eight

books were given as a gift by two authors working in the *100 Book Challenge Company*. As I received a tour through the company, I had the privilege of meeting two of the company's writers/illustrators for the kindergarten reading level, specifically the double Y (YY) level. The person in charge of the tour explained that the company had writers who wrote books for the kindergarten level because it was difficult to find many books that fit into the level's description.

As I searched the internet for more books I found the *Reading A-Z* website. After reading about the program, I subscribed to it in order to complement the books already purchased. I was able to download approximately seventy books from the *Reading A-Z* website. Although *Reading A-Z* had its own leveling system for their books, I used the *100 Book Challenge* leveling system for all the books. I went over each of the books downloaded and classified them according to the book's description given by the *100 Book Challenge Program*. Seven baskets were filled with approximately 20 books for each reading level. Some of the books were colorful while others were black and white. The colorful books were used in the classroom and the others were used for take-home readings.

I used the *Reading A-Z* running records and comprehension quick check questions at the end of the program. I also used the *Reading A-Z* error and accuracy rate formula as well as the running record symbols and marking conventions to identify the students' beginning and final reading levels and their comprehension levels (See Appendix K).

The *20 Book Challenge Program* took place two times a week, on different days. Home-reading assignments were scheduled taking into consideration holidays, faculty meetings, workshops, weather conditions, and/or any other situation that may interrupt a school day during the week for fear that the participants would forget to return the books the next day if they did not have to attend school. At the end of the program, I used the *100 Book*

Challenge recognition celebration idea and rewarded the student with a medal and a certificate for their reading achievement.

Materials

The materials used in the study consisted of: books, baskets, folders, a motivational chart, stickers, medals, certificates, short reading passages, *Reading A-Z Running Records and Benchmark Books*, *Reading A-Z Comprehension Quick Checks Questions*, questionnaires, and reading log sheets. I bought the books, baskets, folders, the motivational chart, and stickers. The school provided the medals and made the certificates for all the students participating in the study. The school also provided the copies for the short passages, comprehension quick checks questions, questionnaires, reading log sheets, parents' letters, and permission slip for the fieldtrip. The school library provided the movie *The Pagemaster*.

During my visits to a classroom in the Philadelphia area one of the teachers I visited was kind enough to share with me information on the *100 Book Challenge Program*. When I visited the *American Reading Company*, I learned I could not purchase books as an individual teacher, so I purchased similar books through Amazon website at: <http://amazon.com>. Some of the books were new and others were used books but in very good condition. In order to complete a set of 20 to 25 books per basket, I subscribed to the *Reading A-Z* website and downloaded books that corresponded to the *100 Book Challenge* leveling code. The books purchased online and the *Reading A-Z* books were labeled and put together in baskets that were also labeled according to the *100 Book Challenge* leveling codes. The books were also labeled with the codes in case they happened to be misplaced. I also downloaded the *Reading A-Z* running records, benchmark books, and comprehension quick checks questions from its website.

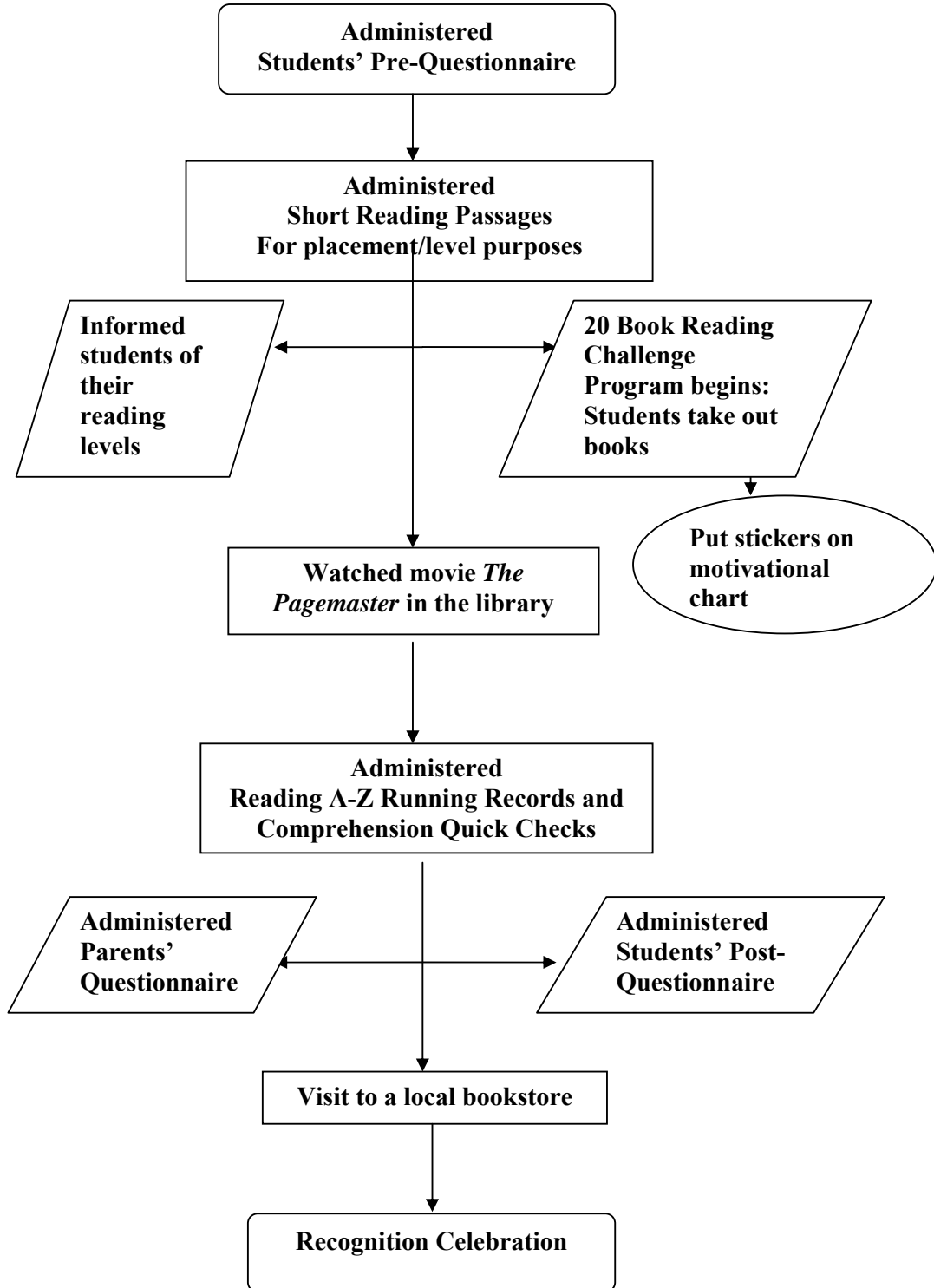
Short reading passages were used at the beginning of the study to assess the students' reading level. I downloaded the *Reading A-Z* running records and comprehension quick

check questions from its website and used them at the end of the program to check the students' comprehension level; I used the *Reading A-Z* instruments to enrich the *20 Book Challenge Program* with additional reading materials. The *Reading A-Z* running records and comprehension quick check questions were carefully chosen to reflect the *100 Book Challenge* running records leveling codes.

The motivational chart and stickers were used throughout the program. The students' folders were used to carry the books, reading log sheet, and the letters written to the parents. The movie *The Pagemaster* was shown towards the end of the program in the school library. The reward and recognition celebration was at the end of the program after the students visited a local bookstore. All the students received a medal and reading certificate.

The following flowchart demonstrates the timeline used during the *20 Book Challenge Program*.

Flowchart 1. 20 Book Reading Challenge Timeline



Administration of Short Reading Passages

Short reading passages used as running records were administered using a one-on-one conference with each student at the beginning of the reading challenge program. The color-coded running record instrument was used to identify the students' English reading level and assess students' reading performance. Running records are reading texts used to place students at their reading levels. Running record codes were used to record the students' reading behavior as they read out loud (See Appendix K). Each word in the reading passage was marked with codes in a running record form (a passage exactly like the student's) as the participants read out loud. While the student read the running record passage, I intervened if the student got stuck on a word while reading. An accuracy rate formula was used to determine if the text read was easy enough for independent reading (appropriate to use without frustration), or if it was too difficult for the reader. The students' accuracy rate was expressed as a percentage using the following formula:

$$\text{(Total words read - Total errors) / Total words read by 100 = Accuracy rate}$$

An example of the accuracy rate formula would be:

$$60 - 5 = 55 / 60 \times 100 = 92\%$$

After administering the running records and scoring them, the students were placed in one of the reading levels. According to the *100 Book Challenge* leveling system, students reading at an accuracy rate between 90 to 100% are independent readers. The "just right" independent level is the level where the readers can use what they know when reading and figure out the few new challenges encountered without frustration (<http://100bookchallenge.com>). Finally, the students were placed in one of the color-coded reading levels.

A standard scale showing the percentages for independent, instructional, and frustrational reading level is shown below. However, the *100 Book Challenge* "just right"

independent level seems to include the instructional level. Since the *100 Book Challenge* website does not provide its reading level scale, it is possible that their program lowered its independent reading level to include the instructional level. The instructional level is considered to be “the optimum level for a child to be reading at since it provides challenges that the child can apply newly learned strategies to”

(<http://staffweb.wwcsd.nt/moored/litterms.htm>).

Reading Levels
Independent: 95 – 100%
Instructional: 90 – 94%
Frustration: 89% and below

The reading passages were marked with a color-coded representation for each reading level from kindergarten to third grade that increased in difficulty from one level to the other. According to the *100 Book Challenge Program* using colors makes it easy for the students to remember their level—and easy for them to find the books that they can read and want to read. The program cites Terrance Paul from the Institute for Academic Excellence saying, “The reading level at which a student is being challenged by exposure to new vocabulary and concepts, without being frustrated, is the reading level at which reading practice will promote maximum development” (<http://www.100bookchallenge.com>). The *100 Book Challenge Program* adds that if a book is a little hard, or a little challenging, students will become frustrated and will not want to read. The more a child reads at, or even below, his or her “Just Right” reading level, the better reader he or she will become. Table 4 shows the guidelines used in the *100 Book Challenge Program* to classify the books for kindergarten to third grade.

Table 4. 100 Book Challenge Leveling Book Code

Grade	Level	Level Difficulty	Reading Pattern Used
K	one yellow (Y)	one word (labeling)	Familiar object is cued by obvious picture.
K	two yellow (YY)	one phrase or sentence per page	Sentence pattern repeats. Only one word changes per page. Initial consonants. Voice print match.
K	one green (G)	1 or 2 sentences per page	Pattern that repeats with one or two changes per page. First sight words. Initial consonants.
1	two green (GG)	1 or 2 sentences per page	Less pattern support. Basic sight words. Blends and digraphs.
1	one blue (B)	1 -3 sentences per page	Little or no pattern support. Simple story. Basic sight words. Rhyming/word families.
1	two blue (BB)	3 – 6 sentences per page	Longer stories. Large type. Pictures still tell about the story. Compound words, endings.
2	one red (R)	print smaller	Pictures part of every page. Regular 3–syllable words.
2	two red (RR)	1 st chapter books (or difficult picture books)	Pictures every so often. Harder 3–syllable words from everyday speech.
3	one white (Wh)	Easy chapter Books	Few or no pictures. Some words not familiar from everyday speech.

As shown in Table 4, kindergarten has three reading levels, one yellow (**Y**), two yellow (**YY**), and one green (**G**). All kindergarten students begin the school year at the one yellow reading level. By the end of the first semester or the beginning of the second semester, they should be reading at the two yellow (**YY**) level. Kindergarten students should be able to end the school year reading at the one green (**G**) level. Depending on the students' reading performance, a first grader may begin the school year at the one green (**G**) level or the two green (**GG**) level. The students who are ready to move from one level to another will do so by mid year and/or at the end of the school year. Levels one red (**R**) and two red (**RR**) shows the reading level for second grade and one white (**Wt**) is the reading challenge set for third grade. The teachers using the *100 Book Challenge Program* will monitor the reading progress

of each student and keep records of the student's performance in order for a student to move from one reading level to another.

The reading levels shown on Table 4 are guidelines for each grade; the students do not have to feel they are restrained to the grade's reading levels. It will all depend on the student's "just right" reading level where students are reading the "right books" to maximize their daily practice and progress (<http://www.100bookchallenge.com>). Table 4 includes the third grade reading level considering the current participants' grade level although subjects in this study were reading at the kindergarten to second grade level during the study. As a reminder, the educational system in PR uses English books one grade level below the student's actual grade. Kindergarten uses no books, and the students are taught basic skills to start developing oral ability in L2. They are taught numbers 1-10, names of toys, school objects, parts of the house, parts of the body, family members, colors, size, shape, how to respond to greetings and commands, etc. First grade uses US kindergarten reading books while second grade uses US first grade reading books and so forth (e.g. Nieves-Perez, 2009).

Administration of the Reading A-Z Running Records

The *Reading A-Z* running records were used at the end of the reading challenge program. The running records were used with its comprehension quick check questions to also assess the students' reading comprehension level. The *Reading A-Z* running records were carefully chosen by the teacher/researcher to reflect the *100 Book Challenge* guidelines shown above.

Table 5 shows how benchmark books and running records are organized in the program. Benchmark books are books selected for running record assessment purposes (See Appendix I). Its labeling system is different from the one used in Table 4. The *Reading A-Z Program* is organized by letters and not by colors as the *100 Book Challenge Program*.

Table 5. Reading A-Z Running Records Code

Grade	Letters	Levels
K	aa-C	Early emergent readers
1	D-J	Emergent readers
2	K-P	Early fluent readers
3	Q-T	Fluent readers

The running records were conducted using a one-on-one conference with each student. I used this program at the end of the study because it provided downloadable benchmark books, running records, and comprehension quick checks (<http://www.readinga-z.com>). Although running records are taken most often at the earlier stages of reading or with students who are not progressing at the expected rate, I also used them at the end of the program to identify the students' final reading level. Administering running records at the end of the program allowed the comparison of the students' initial and final reading levels to see if there was a difference. Running record symbols and marking conventions were used to record the student's reading performance.

Benchmark books were used with running records. A running record form with text from the book printed on the form accompanies each of the benchmark books. Benchmark books have pictures on every page that allow the students to better comprehend what they were reading. The student read from the book while the teacher used the running record for that particular benchmark book to record the student's reading performance or behavior. The students used the pictures in the benchmark books to reinforce their understanding of the text.

Administration of the Reading A-Z Comprehension Quick Checks Questions

After recording the students' reading behavior in the running record, the participants' comprehension levels were assessed through comprehension quick checks questions used as oral assessments. The comprehension quick checks questions were administered orally and the students verbalized their answers in Spanish and/or English, or used the pictures in the Benchmark books to illustrate their understanding of the question. Comprehension involved

the ability to remember what was read, to think about it, and to react. There were three types of comprehension questions: text-based, inferential, and critical response. Each question was labeled. After the student had answered all of the questions, the teacher marked the Comprehension Analysis chart at the top right of the page with the number of correct answers. For example: if the student answered correctly three out of the four questions, a three (3) was marked on that line. The Comprehension Level was calculated with the following formula:

Divide the total points scored in all categories by the total points available in all categories
--

An example of the comprehension level formula would be:

$4 / 5 = 80\%$

Finally, the appropriate Comprehension Level is circled in one of the following categories:

<u>Comprehension Level</u> Independent – 95% - 100% Instructional – 80% - 90% Frustrational – 75% and below

Quick comprehension checks began at level **C**, since levels **aa**, **A**, and **B** consisted of word labeling or one or two words changed in a repetitive pattern. Students at levels **aa**, **A**, and **B** are learning to decode and are concentrating more on word recognition rather than reading comprehension.

Leveling Books

Leveling books are ordinary books classified according to the leveling system of a reading program such as *100 Book Challenge* or *Reading A-Z*. The leveling books were used throughout the program to motivate independent reading. Furthermore, the leveling books were used to help develop reading fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. For example, the books had context and picture

relationship to help acquire vocabulary and develop comprehension; use of sight words and sentence pattern support aid in fluency; rhymes and word families develop phonics skills and phonemic awareness.

The leveling books were used after the participants had read the short reading passages in order to determine the student's independent reading level. The students were informed of their reading level so they could easily identify the leveling code basket from which they could borrow books to read independently.

Fieldnotes

According to Creswell (2005) fieldnotes are text (words) recorded by the researcher during an observation (p. 213). Written records on separate pieces of paper were kept in the form of fieldnotes with observations and reflections during the reading challenge program. I also kept fieldnotes during and after watching the film *The Page Master*, which the students saw at the school library, and during the students' visit to a local bookstore. I wrote down the students' reactions to reading in English, their behavior, comments, and the parents' comments about the reading program. The fieldnotes were used throughout the discussion of the results to provide insight about some of the students, especially those who stood out negatively or positively during the reading challenge program.

This chapter discussed the methodology used to conduct the study. First, it focused on the research site and duration of the study, the English classroom, the participants, and the teacher/researcher. Second, it focused on the methods of data collection: students' pre and post questionnaires, parents' questionnaires, the procedure describing the combined programs, materials such as: short reading passages, comprehension questions, leveling books, and field-notes.

The end of this chapter is a Follow Up which states what reading activity the fourth grade students conducted a year after this study. The next chapter discusses the results

obtained with regard to the participants' reading attitudes, habits, and performance before and during the study, as well as findings regarding parental involvement and comments.

Follow-Up

During the 2007-2008 academic year the school principal made arrangements so that one of the fourth grade groups could have two English class periods. I was given the opportunity to teach that fourth grade group during the entire year. During the first class period I used the texts and materials provided for the grade by the Department of Education. During the second period I used a modified version of the *100 Book Challenge Program* and the *Reading A-Z* reading and assessment materials to motivate the students to read independently to obtain fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.

Initially, I did a one-on-one conference to assess the students' individual reading levels by using short reading passages as running records. Then, the students used the leveling books to read according to their individual reading levels and interest. During the class period the students were not tested on their readings; it was just fun reading and sharing. I served as a reading coach since I did not invite parents to the classroom to help me out. The students were allowed to take books home to read with the promise of returning them the next day.

During the second semester of the school year, I used *Reading A-Z* fluency passages to assess students' fluency and accuracy rates. "Fluency refers to a student's speed, smoothness, and ease of oral reading. Fluent readers read more quickly and smoothly allowing them to focus on comprehension." (<http://www.readinga-z.com>) The fluency passages help determined the students' accuracy rate, number of errors, and reading rate in Words per Minute (WPM). I also used the *Reading A-Z Fluency Standard Table* to determine if the students were making progress in their ability to recognize words automatically (See Table 6). The table below shows the *Reading A-Z* recommendations for an average early and

end reading rate per grade level. The majority of the students achieved second or third grade WPM end rate at the end of the school year.

Table 6. Reading A-Z early and end fluency reading rate per grade level

<i>Reading A-Z Recommendations</i> Words per Minute (WPM)		
Grade	Early Rate	End Rate
1	50	70
2	70	100
3	100	130
4	130	140
5	140	160
6	160	170

Friendly competition occurred among the students as they tried to read accurately as many words as possible in one minute. The fluency passages were administered monthly. Students were allowed to do several readings of the passage to improve reading rate and accuracy. The errors in reading a fluency passage included:

- Skipped words
- Mispronounced words
- Word substitutions, including incorrect forms of the word
- Words in the wrong order
- Struggling that lasted 3 to 5 seconds, or more

The following were not considered errors:

- Added words
- Varying pronunciation due to accent, dialect, or speech impediment
- Repetitions in which the wording is correct
- Self-correcting a mistake (<http://www.readinga-z.com>).

The class also included readings of high-frequency word lists, fluency assessments

reading to assess students' reading sentence comprehension in one-minute, graphic organizers, oral talks, interviews, book reports, etc. to enrich the students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing English skills. All the students were motivated to speak, read, and write in English. These students also put on the play "*Do you live in a nest?*" and learned their lines in English and presented it to the school community including students, parents, and faculty. Currently, (2008-2009 academic year) the fifth grade teacher was amazed how well these students did in the English class. These accomplishments were possible because the extra hour allowed the implementation of an organized reading program.

Chapter IV Results and Discussion

Results for Research Questions 1a

Research question # 1 asked: How does a modified reading challenge program in Puerto Rico affect the motivation of Puerto Rican children to read independently? This section answers the questions through the examination of the results of the students' pre-questionnaire, the parents' questionnaire, the students' post-questionnaire, and fieldnotes.

Students' Pre-Questionnaire

The data collected in the students' pre-questionnaire provides information on the students' reading attitudes and home reading habits with regard to reading texts independently before the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program* started. Table 7 shows that sixteen of the students (89%) reported that they liked to read while two of the students (11%) did not like to read (item 1). The participants who liked to read reported they read books such as *The Ugly Duckling*, *Arthur*, *Popeye*, *The Cat and the Mouse* and *Indians*. In addition, they liked to read non-fiction stories about ballerinas, princesses, animals, and heroes; one of the students reported not knowing what he liked reading and another did not provide any information (Item 2).

Table 7. Students' reading attitudes and home reading habits

	N	%
Like to read	16/18	89%
Does not like to read	2/18	11%
Reads at home	14/18	78%
Does not read at home	4/18	22%
At home, reads seven days a week	3/14	21%
At home, reads 5 to 6 days a week	2/14	14%
At home, reads 4 or less days in a week	9/14	64%

The majority of the students (78%) reported reading at home while four of the students (22%) said they did not read at home. Of the fourteen students who reported reading at home, nine (64%) read books, two (14%) read magazines, two (14%) read the newspaper,

and one (7%) read cereal boxes (Item 3). The frequency with which the fourteen participants read at home was distributed as follows: twenty-one percent (3/14) read seven days a week, fourteen percent (2/14) read 5 to 6 days a week, and sixty-four percent (9/14) read 4 or less days a week (item 4). Overall, the majority of the participants who reported reading at home did not have daily independent reading habits.

At home, eighty-three percent of the participants (15/18) did not have a favorite place to read independently; three of the students (17%) who did have a specific reading place reported reading in their rooms (Item 5). Fourteen of the students (78%) preferred reading a story on their own while four of the students (22%) preferred listening to a story. The reasons for wanting to read a story by themselves was distributed as follows: to understand it better, it was more fun, to learn to read, they wanted to know what was happening, sometimes the person reading was not doing it right, and reading alone entertained them. The reasons that four of the students preferred listening to a story than reading it were: to learn (50%), does not want to read (6%), and (6%) does not read (Item 6). Overall, sixteen of the participants that reported liking to read contrasted with the fourteen students who preferred to read independently on their own. Apparently, two of the students that reported liking to read preferred to listen to a story and not read it on their own, nevertheless, the other 14 preferred to read independently.

Item 7 through 9 showed that eleven of the participants (61%) liked to read in English while seven of the participants (39%) did not (Item 7). Of the eleven participants who liked to read English texts, seven reported reading in school (64%), two at the library (18%), one at an aunt's house (9%), and one at the house or store (9%) (Item 8). The seven students who reported not liking to read English texts expressed the following reasons: two of the participants (29%) do not understand English and each one of the other five students expressed a different reason: not knowing how to read in English, it was difficult, did not

know a lot, sometimes I get lost in the reading, and I hate that class, it is boring and I do not understand it (item 9). Overall, the majority of the students liked to read English texts and did so at school.

The participants' spare time activities shows that sixty-seven percent (12 students) played, six percent (1 student) went swimming, six percent (1 student) went bicycle riding, eleven percent (2 students) played and read a book sometimes, and two of the students did not provide an answer to the question (Item 18). The participants' list of leisure time activities shows that reading is not one of their favorite alternatives among things to do during their spare time.

Item 20 shows that half the participants (50%) agreed that they would be motivated to read if they were to obtain a prize. Four of the students (22%) would be motivated to read if they liked the book, three of the students (17%) would read if they got a certificate that proved how much they read, and two of the participants (11%) would read to meet the goals of a reading program (item 20). Overall, the majority of the participants (14/18) would be motivated to read if there were some type of reward or if they were challenged to read.

Parents' Questionnaire

The data collected provides information on the parents' perspective concerning their children's reading attitudes and habits to read independently before the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program* started. The parents were asked to evaluate their child's reading experience before and during the reading program using the alternatives **excellent**, **good**, **fair**, or **poor** (items 1, 3, 4) and **always**, **sometimes**, **rarely**, or **never** (item 2). According to the data collected, thirty-nine percent of the parents (7) considered their children's reading experience during the program was excellent; forty-four percent of the parents (8) considered it was good; seventeen percent of the parents (3) considered it was a fair experience, and none of the parents considered it was a poor reading experience (item 1). Overall, the

majority of the parents considered their children had an excellent or good reading experience during the program.

According to the parents, none of them had to always remind their children to read; six of the parents (33%) had to remind their children sometimes; two of the parents (11%) had to remind them rarely; and ten of the parents (56%) never had to remind their children to read during the program (item 2). Overall, the majority of the parents did not have to remind their children to read independently during the program.

The majority of the parents considered their children's attitude towards reading books in English before the reading challenge program started was fair or poor. The data collected shows that none of the parents considered that their children's attitude was excellent; two of the parents (11%) considered it was good; ten of the parents (56%) considered it was a fair attitude, and six of the parents (33%) responded that their children had a poor attitude toward reading a book in English prior to the program (item 3). In contrast, during the program, seven of the parents (39%) considered their children had an excellent attitude towards reading English books; eight of the parents (44%) considered their children had a good attitude; three of the parents (17%) considered their children had a fair attitude; and none of the parents considered that their children had a poor attitude towards reading English books during the program (item 4).

Evidently, the parents observed a difference in their children's attitudes toward reading English texts prior to and during the reading program. Table 8 shows that the alternative **Excellent** increased by thirty-nine percent; the alternative **Good** increased by thirty-three percent; the alternative **Fair** decreased by thirty-nine percent; and the alternative **Poor** decreased by thirty-three percent.

Table 8. Students' reading attitude prior to and during the program

	Students' prior attitude toward reading English		Students' attitude toward reading English during the program		Total Difference	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Excellent	0/18	0%	7/18	39%	+ 7/18	39%
Good	2/18	11%	8/18	44%	+ 6/18	33%
Fair	10/18	56%	3/18	17%	- 7/18	39%
Poor	6/18	33%	0/18	0%	- 6/18	33%

The data collected on the language the participants usually read prior to the reading program shows that eighty-three percent of the parents (15) answered that their children read only Spanish texts, none of the parents answered their children read only English texts, seventeen percent of the parents (3) answered their children read Spanish and English texts, and none of the parents responded that the children never read before the program started (item 6). Nevertheless, the majority of the parents (78%) considered that their children will read more in both languages, Spanish and English, after the reading program. Three of the parents (17%) considered their children will continue reading more in Spanish, and one of the parents (6%) considered that their children will read more in English (item 7).

Overall, the participants' parents considered that the reading challenge program changed their children's attitude toward reading English texts and they will tend to read in both languages after the reading program concluded. Table 9 shows that reading only Spanish texts decreased while reading both languages increased from pre-program to post program. Reading Spanish texts decreased by 66% while reading both languages increased by 61% post reading program.

Table 9. Language students read prior to program and will read post program

Item	Prior Reading Program		Post Reading Program	
	N	%	N	%
Spanish	15	83%	3	17%
English	0	0%	1	6%
Both languages: Spanish/English	3	17%	14	78%
Never read	0	0%	ND*	ND*

* No Data

Item 8 asked parents if the program had motivated their children to read more in Spanish. Nine of the parents (50%) answered that their children have always been motivated to read in Spanish and the other fifty percent of the parents answered that the program had motivated their children to read more in their native language. None of the parents answered that their children were not motivated to read in their native language before or during the program.

Students' Post Questionnaire

The data collected helps contrast the participants' reading attitudes and reading habits to read independently prior to and during the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program*. Items 1 thru 3 used the alternatives **always**, **sometimes**, **rarely**, and **never** to assess the participants' response. The participant's attitude toward reading Spanish books showed that four of the participants (22%) always liked to read books in Spanish; eleven of the participants (61%) liked it sometimes; three of the participants (17%) like it rarely and none of the students responded never liking to read books in Spanish (Item 1). The majority of the participants liked reading Spanish books at least sometimes.

Item 2 asked the participants how frequently they read English texts prior to the reading challenge program. Twenty-eight percent of the participants (5) responded always, thirty-nine percent of the participants (7) answered sometimes, six percent of the participants (1) answered rarely, and twenty-eight percent of the participants (5) answered that they never read in English.

The response given by the participants in the post-questionnaire (Item 2) and the answer given in the pre-questionnaire (Item 7) showed a slight difference among the participants answers. Table 10 shows that eleven of the students (61%) liked reading English (pre-questionnaire) while the post-questionnaire showed twelve students (67%) liked to read always or sometimes. Seven students (39%) answered they did not like reading English in the

pre-questionnaire while six students (33%) answered rarely or never in the post-questionnaire. Evidently one of the students who had answered never liking to read English in the pre-questionnaire responded differently in the post-questionnaire. Overall, six to seven of the participants did not like reading English prior to the reading challenge program.

Table 10. Students' attitude toward reading English

Item	Pre-Questionnaire		Post-Questionnaire	
	N	%	N	%
Like reading English	11/18	61%	12/18	67%
Do not like reading English	7/18	39%	6/18	33%

Item 3 collected data on the participants' reading attitude during the program. Sixteen of the participants (89%) answered they always liked reading during the program, two of the participants (11%) answered liking reading sometimes, and none of the participants answered rarely or never.

The participants' attitude toward the books used in the reading challenge program showed that all the students liked the books (item 6) and none of the students reported disliking them (item 7). So, only the reasons for liking the books (item 6) are discussed in this section. The participants could choose more than one alternative to respond to item 6. Table 11 shows that thirteen of the participants (72%) found the readings easy; eleven of the participants (61%) responded that the books were interesting; ten of the participants (56%) answered the books made them laugh; nine of the participants (50%) could make a connection between the words and the pictures in the book; nine of the participants (50%) answered the stories were short; seven of the participants (39%) responded that the books had a surprising ending; and none of the students answered the book reminded them of something similar that happened to them. Overall, the majority of the participants found the readings easy and interesting. One can conclude that the participants were motivated to read the English books because they were at their own reading level of fluency and understanding.

Table 11. Students' reasons for reading during the program

Item	N	%
The readings were easy.	13/18	72%
The books were interesting.	11/18	61%
The books made me laugh.	10/18	56%
I could make a connection between the words and the pictures.	9/18	50%
The stories were short.	9/18	50%
The books had a surprising ending.	7/18	39%
The book reminded me of something similar that happened to me.	0/18	0%
I did not like any of the books.	0/18	0%

The results in the post-questionnaire show that the entire group of eighteen students chose a specific place to read during the reading program (item 8). Ten of the participants (56%) read in their room, seven of the participants (39%) read in the living room, and one of the participants (6%) read in the kitchen. The students reading task at home motivated the participants to choose a specific place to read independently. In contrast, the pre-questionnaire shows that eighty-three percent of the participants had no specific place to read at home before the reading challenge program. Table 12 compares the number of students who reported having a specific place to read before the reading challenge program started (Pre-Questionnaire item 5) with those who reported having a specific reading place during the reading challenge program (item 8).

Table 12. Students' favorite place to read at home

Item	Pre-Questionnaire		Post-Questionnaire	
	N	%	N	%
Had a favorite place to read	3/18	17%	18/18	100%
Did not have a favorite place to read	15/18	83%	0/18	0%
Read in their room	3/3	100%	10/18	56%
Read in the living room	ND*	ND*	7/18	39%
Read in the kitchen	ND*	ND*	1/18	6%

*No Data

The participants had the opportunity to choose their favorite book during the program (item 10). Four of the students (22%) chose *Good Night, Gorilla* (**Level YY**); three of the students (17%) chose *Bears in the Night* (**Level G**); two of the students (11%) chose *Maisy's*

Favorite Animal (**Level Y**); nine of the students (50%) chose one of the following books: *A Jungle of Colors* (**Level YY**); *My Dog* (**Level YY**); *In and Out* (**Level YY**); *The Fox on the Box* (**Level G**); *Clifford the Big Red Dog* (**Level BB**); *Spot's First Walk* (**Level B**); *Things to Cuddle* (**Level Y**); *Zoo Colors* (**Level Y**); and *Sending Messages* (**Level RR**). Overall, three of the books (17%) were at the one Y (**Y**) level, four of the books (22%) were at the two Y (**YY**) level, two of the books (11%) were at the one G (**G**) level, one of each of the following were at the one B (**B**), two B (**BB**), and two R (**RR**) levels respectively.

The participants' motivation towards reading more in their native language (Spanish) once the reading program ended showed that sixty-one percent of the students (11) would like to read more in Spanish while thirty-nine percent of the students (7) would not like to read more in Spanish (item 17). Therefore the program motivated the majority of the participants to read more in their native language.

Fieldnotes

The day the reading challenge program started (February 22, 2007) the participants were given their folders with the reading log sheet. I wrote a letter to the parents stating the purpose of the project, the reading program initial date, the purpose for the folder, the importance of their signature on the reading log sheet, and the importance of returning the books (See Appendix M).

The first day of the program the students were able to choose the books they wanted to read from their reading level. The students were able to read to one of the three reading coaches, two mothers and me. The two mothers who came to help as reading coaches were the ones who helped out in the Pilot study because none of the participants' parents volunteered to help out in the classroom. After one the participants had their individual reading time coached by one of the mothers helping out in the classroom, the students expressed: *Me encanta* (I love it).

All the participants except one seemed to be excited about the reading program. That student was upset and did not want the folder. The student did not want to choose a book to read and far more did not want to take home a reading task. The student threw the folder on the floor, stepped on it and kicked it away from him. The student said in class: *Yo no quiero esa poquería. No me gusta leer en inglés. Yo odio la clase de inglés. El inglés es aburrido* (I don't want that junk. I don't like to read English. I hate the English class. English is boring). Evidently, the student's inability to read in his native and non-native language was expressed with words of frustration, fear, and anger. The student's decision not to read was respected and at the end of the English class I put the student's folder on a table near him just in case he changed his mind and would like to take a book home to read. All but this student took their folders with the reading log sheet and a book to read at home so one of the parents could serve as their reading coach.

The next school day, the participants arrived with enthusiasm. They expressed their home reading experience in class. One of the girls said: *Yo me bañe y mi mamá se sentó conmigo y yo leí mi libro* (I took a bath and my mom sat with me and I read the book). The only participant reading at the second grade level expressed what happened at his house: *Mi mamá no quiere que yo siga leyendo porque ella entendió que no se puede terminar de leer el libro completo y yo quería seguir leyendo* (My mom didn't want me to continue reading because she understood that I shouldn't read the entire book and I wanted to continue reading). The student's books had long stories, so he read part of it in school and part of it at home. Reading a book could take that particular student two or more days if the book had thirty or more pages. The participant wanted me to explain to his mom that he could read all he wanted at home.

The student that expressed not wanting to read in English on the day the reading challenge program began did not take his folder home. But on the following day when he

heard the other participants' home experiences and saw their enthusiasm for reading English texts in the classroom, he decided he wanted to read as well. The participant read two books in class with my help. Although I helped him read the books, after a while he learned to identify some sight words and he was happy with his reading accomplishments. After reading his books in class, he took his folder and made sure it was in a safe place. The participant realized he could decode English at his own reading level which motivated him to try and do so independently.

Only one of the eighteen students did not read his take-home book on the first day of the reading challenge program. He excused himself saying: *No leí mi libro porque me fuí para el cine con mi mamá* (I didn't read the book at home because I went to the movies with my mom). That was the only time the student failed to read at home since he wanted to be part of the enthusiasm and excitement that the other students had experienced at home. During the program, I had a student who failed more than once to bring back the take-home books, although she clarified every time she forgot that she read the book while her mom sat next to her. The student was not given any more books to take home for a while. She only read books at school. After various occasions in which she requested permission and promised to bring the books back, I let her take a book home. The participant's excuse was that she loved to read the books and read them more than once, so she forgot to put them in her school backpack. The next time she took a book home she did not forget to return it the following day.

Throughout the reading challenge program the participants were enthusiastic about the program and they were happy to read in class and at home. There were occasions when I was not able to coach the reading of all eighteen students during my English period (on occasions the mothers who helped out could not make it); and the students would not want me to leave and asked me to come back so they could have the chance to read. I would assure

them that some time during the day I would come back. The student would say: *Misi, no te vayas. Cógeme a mi. Yo quiero leer y quiero que me oigas leer* (Misi do not leave. Take me. I want to read and I want you to listen to me). The days I did not have enough time to coach each one of the students, I noticed that the students were reading their books independently but still wanted me to listen to their progress. Every time I passed by the participants' homeroom they would call me to come in and practically beg me to hear them read the English books they had chosen for the day. So I made countless efforts to use my professional and institutional period to coach my readers. Thankfully, the homeroom teacher did not mind when I used his class period to coach the participants individually while he taught his class.

Discussion of the results for Research Questions 1a

This study made use of four different methodologies to investigate if a modified reading challenge program would motivate Puerto Rican ESL students to read independently. The data collected showed that prior to the reading challenge program sixteen students reported liking to read and 14/18 students read at home and preferred to read independently than to be read to. Of the fourteen students that read at home, nine read 4 or fewer days a week and 7/18 students had not read a book in a month. Fifteen of the eighteen students had no favorite place to read at home. The students' favorite spare time activity was playing and only 2/18 read sometimes.

The parents' questionnaire showed that the majority of the students, 15/18, read only Spanish texts. The data collected on the students' attitude towards reading English texts prior to the reading program contradicted the data collected among the parents. Although 11/18 students reported liking to read English texts, 10/18 parents reported that their children's reading attitude was only fair. Probably the parents' answers showed their personal attitude towards reading English texts and not necessarily their children's reading attitude or the

students provided answers they thought the researcher wanted to hear. There seems to be a contradiction between both answers, but I think that the students' answer is more convincing. At least half of the student liked to read in class, although I had to help them decode the majority of the words.

Overall, although the students reported liking to read, they did not have daily reading habits: the student's data, reading 4 or fewer days a week, is consistent with the parents' data, showing that the students read sometimes and mainly Spanish texts. However, half of the students 9/18 reported they would be motivated to read if they were to win a prize. Children love to win prizes and receive gifts. The findings are similar to one of the research-based tips suggested in the booklet *Question Parents Ask About School* to "ask family members and friends to consider giving the child books and magazines subscriptions as gifts for birthdays or other special occasions" (p. 10).

The answer given by the majority of the students (16/18) who reported liking to read during the program is mostly consistent with 15/18 parents that considered their children's reading experience and reading attitude towards reading English texts during the program was mainly excellent and/or good. Furthermore, the majority of the parents (12/18) rarely or never had to remind their children to read at home during the program. The findings are similar to the *100 Book Challenge Program* which stated that good readers are the children you see reading on the bus, in the back seat of the car, in the waiting room at the dentist's office. They spend an hour or more reading every day because they want to.

All the students reported liking the books because they were easy, they could make a connection between the words read and the illustrations, the stories were short, the stories made them laugh, the stories had surprising endings, and/or the books were interesting. Additionally, the students' motivation to read English texts showed that all the students chose a specific reading place at home versus 15/18 students who did not have a specific place to

read at home prior to the reading program. These findings are related to Drucker (2003) who said that students learn to read well when they are engaged in reading material that are appropriate to their reading ability, interesting and relevant to them.

The majority of the students (11/18) considered they would be reading more Spanish texts when the reading program concluded while the majority of the parents (14/18) considered that their children would be reading in both languages, Spanish and English, after the reading program ended. Although half of the parents considered their children had always been motivated to read Spanish texts, the other half of the parents considered that it was the English reading program that had motivated their children to read more in Spanish. The findings are similar to Schweers and Hudders (2000) who stated that Spanish and English are quite similar languages, and that if the Spanish base is appropriately accessed, it can greatly accelerate the learning of English.

The modified reading challenge program motivated Puerto Rican ESL students to read independently. After the students were tested to determine their English reading level they were able to choose books from their reading level basket. All the students, even the one who joined in later, showed enthusiasm for reading English texts throughout their independent reading sessions in the classroom, and they all showed excitement with their home reading task. Additionally, the number of students reporting they liked reading English texts increased during the program. Although the program was not established as a daily ongoing activity (the curricular text had to be used in class and the in-class independent reading took a significant amount of time), the students were motivated to read in school and at home. At home, all the students chose a specific reading place which the majority did not have before the program. The reading challenge program was able to provide them with books that were interesting, easy, short, funny, had surprise endings and in which there was a connection with pictures to read in school and at home to motivate them to read

independently. These findings agree with Schweers and Hudders (2000) that an important goal in developing love for reading is through pleasurable reading.

The program also seemed to have motivated the participants to read more in their native language. These findings are similar to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) who recommended independent reading of texts that were of the student's particular interest and beneath the individual student's frustration level and by promoting independent at-home reading assignments. They also are similar to Schweers and Hudders (2000) who reported that developing love for reading may be acquired through pleasurable reading.

Results for Research Question 1b

Research question #1b asked: How does a modified reading challenge program in Puerto Rico affect the motivation of Puerto Rican children to read at or above grade level? This section answers the question through the examination of the results from the reading passages used as running records, comprehension quick check questions, and students' post-questionnaire.

Short Reading Passages

The data collected provides information on the participants' reading performance prior to and after participating in the *20 Book Challenge Program*. Table 13 shows the distribution of the participants' initial reading level in which they started the reading challenge program. Six of the participants (33%) were at the initial stages of the Kindergarten level (**Y**), six students (33%) were at the intermediate stages of the Kindergarten level (**YY**), four of the students (22%) were at the final stages of the Kindergarten level (**G**), one of the students (6%) was at the intermediate stages of the First grade level (**B**), one other student was at the final stages of the First grade level (**BB**), and one of the students was at the final stages of the Second grade level (**RR**). At the beginning of the reading challenge program, fifteen of the participants (83%) were at the kindergarten reading level, two of the

participants (11%) were in the first grade level, and one of the participants (6%) was at the second grade level.

Table 13. Students' initial reading level

Item	Grade Level	N	%
Y	Kindergarten	5/18	28%
YY	Kindergarten	6/18	33%
G	Kindergarten	4/18	22%
B	First Grade	1/18	6%
BB	First Grade	1/18	6%
RR	Second Grade	1/18	6%

Four of the five students reading at the initial stages of the Kindergarten level (**Y**) were not literate in Spanish and the fifth student was a non-fluent Spanish reader. The participants at the double Y (**YY**) level were at the initial stages reading Spanish and had difficulties reading English. The participants reading at level one G (**G**) were already reading Spanish, the participants at the one B (**B**), and two B (**BB**) reading levels were fluent Spanish readers. The participant reading at the double R (**RR**) level was a fluent and independent reader of both languages Spanish and English. The student reading at the second grade level (**RR**) was the only student reading at the expected reading level for ESL students in Puerto Rico, which is one level below their actual grade level.

Each of the students was tested in the double Y (**YY**) level and beyond depending on the accuracy rate obtained in the running record passages. None of the participants was tested in the one Y (**Y**) level because it was the pre-emergent reading level; any of the participants scoring 89% or less at the double Y (**YY**) level were placed in the one Y (**Y**) level. The one Y (**Y**) level was the initial level (lowest level) to start reading.

The majority of the most frequently misread words in the levels tested (**YY, G, GG, B, BB, and RR**) were sight words that students in third grade should be able to recognize and read well. Most of the words were either read with a Spanish pronunciation or the English short and long vowel sounds were used indistinctively to pronounce the words. The word

said was misread twenty-two times; **bird** and **here** were misread sixteen times each; **the** was misread twelve times; **looked** was misread eleven times; the words **butterflies** and **go** were misread ten times each; the word **boat** was misread eight times; the words **train**, **ladybug**, **snail**, **like**, and **behind** were misread seven times each; the words **plane**, **who**, **do**, and **Duke** were misread six times each; the word **can** was misread five times; the words **oranges** and **where** were misread four times each; the words **bus**, **grapes**, **apples**, **why**, **stopped**, and **truck** were misread three times each; the words misread two times each were: **that**, **things**, **frog**, **rabbit**, **cream**, **chair**, **Ben**, **my**, **behind**, **driver**, **babies**, and **clean**; and words misread only once were: **car**, **sing**, **wants**, **friend**, **pond**, **sun**, **we**, **girl**, **is**, **under**, **bed**, **toybox**, **street**, **white**, **could**, **throw**, **tricks**, **new**, **used**, **newspaper**, **got**, **then**, **their**, **fell**, and **give**.

The majority of the sight words that should have been learned in previous grades were causing the students reading difficulties. Some examples of the misread words were: **said** as [săid], **looked** as [lökīt], and **where** as [wěřě]. Words that were frequently misread like **bird** appeared in several contexts and it was misread 16 times by fewer than 16 students, whereas the word **girl** was misread only once because it is a more common word than **bird**. The word **girl** is frequently used in the classroom. The mispronunciation of a word may not help the student comprehend its meaning. For example, the mispronunciation of the word **friend** as [friënd] may not help the student understand it, whereas if I pronounce the word **friend** correctly, then the students would immediately say “**amigo**”.

Reading A-Z Running Records and Benchmark Books

The data collected using the *Reading A-Z* material provided the participants’ reading accuracy and error rate. The participants’ reading progress was interpreted if the reader was ready to advance to the next reading level or the students were reading more correct words than in the initial reading level. The error rate is expressed as a ratio calculated by using the following formula:

Total words / Total errors = Error rate

An example of the formula is:

99 / 8 = 12.38, or 12 rounded to nearest whole number. The ratio is expressed as 1:12. This means that for each error made, the student read approximately 12 words correctly (<http://www.readinga-z.com>).

Since both programs, *100 Book Challenge* and *Reading A-Z*, were combined throughout the reading challenge program, it is necessary to display a table showing the approximate equivalence of the reading levels. I downloaded the *Reading A-Z* books but used the *100 Book Challenge* leveling system to classify them and place them in the baskets where the students were to withdraw books. I also used the *Reading A-Z* running records and classified them according to the *100 Book Challenge Program* so that both programs were combined under one leveling system. Various letter codes used to specify the reading levels of the *Reading A-Z Program* may crossover to another level because there may be reading texts that can be used in one level or another taking into consideration the description given by the *100 Book Challenge Program* (See Table 14). I used the *100 Book Challenge Program* book description to make an approximate equivalence of the *Reading A-Z Program*. I read the books for each level of the *Reading A-Z Program* and classified them according to the *100 Book Challenge Program*.

Table 14. Approximate Equivalence of the leveling system of both programs

100 Book Challenge Reading Level	Reading A-Z Reading Level
One yellow (Y)	One word (labeling)
Two yellow (YY)	aa-A
One green (G)	B-C
Two green (GG)	D-E-F
One blue (B)	H-I-J
Two blue (BB)	J-K-L
One red (R)	K-L-M
Two red (RR)	N-O-P
One white (W)	Q-T

Table 15 shows the initial and final reading accuracy and error rate for each of the participants and the participants' pre and post-reading levels. The participants' final reading level shows the leveling codes used for both programs, *Reading A-Z* and *100 Book Challenge* respectively, to facilitate the usage of both programs. Although some of the students were ready to move to the next level at the end of the program, they did not actually do so.

Table 15 shows the five participants starting the reading program at the lowest reading level (Y) as early emergent readers made significant progress throughout the program. Although only one of the five participants (Student #1) was ready to advance to the next reading level, the other four participants showed changes in their reading accuracy and error rate. Student #1 was ready to move to the next level (YY / Level aa) and read at an accuracy rate above ninety percent and made one error for every twelve words read correctly.

Table 15. Students' initial and final reading levels

Student	Prior-Reading Program <i>100 Book Challenge</i>				Post-Reading Program <i>Reading A-Z</i>			
	Reading Level Tested	Accuracy Rate	Error Rate	Initial Reading Level	Reading Level Tested	Accuracy Rate	Error Rate	Final Reading Level
#1	YY	83%	1:06	Y	Aa	92%	1:12	aa/YY
#2	YY	78%	1:05	Y	Aa	88%	1:08	Y
#3	YY	70%	1:03	Y	Aa	88%	1:08	Y
#4	YY	57%	1:02	Y	Aa	88%	1:08	Y
#5	YY	0%	0:00	Y	Aa	83%	1:06	Y
#6	YY	91%	1:12	YY	D	90%	1:10	D/GG
#7	YY	100%	0:00	YY	B	95%	1:22	B/G
#8	YY	91%	1:12	YY	B	88%	1:09	A/YY
#9	YY	96%	1:23	YY	A	93%	1:14	A/YY
#10	YY	91%	1:12	YY	B	91%	1:11	B/G
#11	G	87%	1:08	YY	C	94%	1:18	C/G
#12	G	91%	1:11	G	D	95%	1:20	D/GG
#13	G	96%	1:23	G	D	92%	1:12	D/GG
#14	G	93%	1:15	G	D	94%	1:17	D/GG
#15	G	100%	0:00	G	B	91%	1:11	B/G
#16	B	91%	1:11	B	H	94%	1:17	H/B
#17	BB	96%	1:23	BB	L	90%	1:11	L/R
#18	RR	99%	1:78	RR	R	97%	1:36	R/Wh

Nevertheless, all four participants who remained in their initial reading level made progress reading more words correctly and consequently making fewer reading errors. Student #2 showed a ten percent increase in the accuracy rate with three less reading errors; student #3 increased the accuracy rate by eighteen percent with five less reading errors; student #4 made a thirty-one percent accuracy rate progress with six less reading errors; while student #5 showed major progress. Although student #5 did not read anything at the initial stages of the program, the participant progressed to an eighty-three percent accuracy rate and read approximately six words correctly for each error made.

Of the six participants starting the reading program at the two Y (**YY**) level, only two of the participants (Students #8 and #9) remained at the same level at the end of the program. Student #8 was tested in the next reading level (**G / Level B**) but read below a ninety percent accuracy rate and consequently made more reading errors. Student #9 read at an accuracy rate below the beginning reading level increasing the error rate. Student #6 was ready to advance two more reading levels at the end of the program. The reader was ready to move from level twoY (**YY**) to level two G (**GG / Level D**) showing independent reading at a ninety percent accuracy rate with ten words read correctly for every error made. Students #7, #10, and #11 were ready to advance to the next reading level (**G / Level B**) with an accuracy rate above ninety percent. Three of the last four students on Table 15 that started the reading program at the one G (**G**) level were ready to advance to the next reading level (**GG / Level D**) reading at an accuracy rate above ninety percent. Only one of the **G** level students (Student #15) remained in that same level at the end of the program. To summarize, eight out of fifteen of the participants (53%) who began the program as early emergent readers were ready to advance to another reading level. The progress made by the eight participants either situated them at the next level in the same grade or at the next grade level. Four of the participants

(27%) that started at the Kindergarten reading level (Students #6, #12, #13, and #14) were ready to advance to the first grade reading level.

Two of the eighteen participants started the reading program at the first grade level as emergent readers. One of the participants started at the one B (**B**) level, the other participant started at the two B (**BB**) level. The last of the eighteen participants started the program at the second grade level (**RR**) as an early fluent reader.

Although Student #16 remained in the initial reading level at the end of the program, the participant increased the accuracy rate and read more words with fewer reading errors. An important detail to mention is that the text used at the beginning of the program had less words (87 words) than the text used at the end of the program (139 words) although both texts were at the same reading level. Student #17 was ready to move to the next reading level although the participant declared she wanted to stay at the same reading level because the stories at the next level were too long. The participant read 113 words in the initial text and 168 words in the final text. Student #18 was the only participant who ended the program as a fluent reader at the third grade level. Therefore, ten out of eighteen students (56%) were ready to move on to another reading level at the end of the program. Four of those ten participants (40%) remained in the same grade level and six of the ten students (60%) were ready to move on to another grade level at the end of the program.

Table 16 shows that the number of participants starting at the kindergarten reading level decreased by four students (22%) while the participants reading at the first grade level increased by three students (17%) at the end of the reading program. The second grade reading level started and ended the program with one student and the third grade level ended with one independent reader at that reading level. At the end of the program, there were fewer students reading at the kindergarten level, more students reading at the first grade level, the

same amount of students reading at the second grade level, and one student was ready to advance to the third grade reading level.

Table 16. Students' pre and post reading grade level

Grade	Pre-Reading Level		Post-Reading Level	
	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	15	83%	11	61%
First Grade	2	11%	5	28%
Second Grade	1	6%	1	6%
Third Grade	NA	NA	1	6%

Reading A-Z Comprehension Quick Check Questions

Although this research sought to motivate the participants to read for enjoyment and pleasure, comprehension quick check questions were used to assess students' reading comprehension level and compare it to their reading level. Comprehension quick check questions were asked after the participants read the benchmark book and their reading behaviors were recorded by the researcher. The questions are related to the passage read by the participant. The quick check questions provided by the *Reading A-Z program* ranged from Level C to Z. Comprehension quick check questions were not asked in the lower levels, **aa**, **A**, and **B**, because these levels consist of very simple texts such as one word labeling or one sentence structures and a picture that supports the one sentence text.

According to the program, comprehension involves the ability to remember what one reads, to think about it, and to react. The comprehension quick check questions have three types of comprehension questions: text-based, inferential, and critical response (See Appendix I). Each question is labeled on the quick check form. After the student has answered all of the questions orally, the comprehension analysis chart located at the top right of the page is marked with the number of correct answers. Example: If the student correctly answers three out of the four text-based questions, a 3 is marked on that line. Then, the comprehension level is calculated by dividing the total points scored in all question

categories by the total points available in all categories. Finally, the appropriate comprehension level is circled on the form (<http://www.readinga-z.com>).

As shown in Table 17, the participants’ reading comprehension was tested with students who were independent readers at level C and beyond in the *Reading A-Z Program* (See Table 5). Students reading at level C and higher were beyond the emergent early reading level and decoding well. The comprehension quick check questions were used at the end of the reading program to determine whether the participants’ independent reading level and the reading comprehension level were similar. The data collected show that five of the participants’ (Students # 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7) reading comprehension level were at the frustrational level (63%); two of the participants (Students # 2 and 8) were at the instructional comprehension level (25%); and one of the students (Student # 5) was at the independent comprehension level (13%).

Table 17. Students’ reading comprehension level

Student	Reading Level	%	Reading Comprehension Level Tested	%
#1	C	94%	C	40%
#2	D	90%	C	80%
#3	D	92%	D	60%
#4	D	94%	D	20%
#5	D	95%	D	100%
#6	H	94%	H	40%
#7	L	90%	L	50%
#8	R	97%	R	90%

Overall, one of the readers had successfully moved from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. For the most part, readers at the independent comprehension level are capable of improving their reading skills and selection of materials independently through increased practice (<http://www.readinga-z.com>).

Students' Post-Questionnaire

The data collected informs the students' opinion about their reading progress and reading program. The participants were asked to choose one or more alternatives to indicate how the reading program had helped them (item 16). Since none of the students chose the alternative saying the program did not help them, the other alternatives will be discussed. Six of the participants (33%) thought they read faster, seven of the participants (39%) thought they could read more words, thirty-nine percent of the participants (7/18) thought they had a better understanding of the English class, and fifty-six percent (10/18) thought it helped them to enjoy books. None of the students chose the alternative it helped me enjoy the readings which was added later in the questionnaire.

Item 18 asked the student to choose one or more alternatives related to how they felt about the readings in English. Fifty-six percent of the participants (10/18) wanted to continue reading more books and fifty percent (9/18) wanted to advance to the next reading level. None of the students chose the other alternatives which were: I like to read the books but I am tired of the program or I am not interested in continuing in the program. Overall, the majority of the students enjoyed reading English texts and felt ready to advance to a higher reading level.

Discussion of the Results for Research Question 1b

This study made use of three different methodologies to investigate if a modified reading challenge program would help Puerto Rican ESL students to read at or above the grade level. The findings showed that the majority of the students (15/18) started the reading program at the Kindergarten reading level, two at the first grade level, and one at the second grade level. At the end of the program, eleven of the students were at the kindergarten level, five of the students were at the first grade level, one at the second grade level, and one at the third grade reading level. Although the program did not help the majority of the students to

advance enough to read at or above the grade level expected by the Department of Education (Second Grade), the majority of the students did make significant improvements throughout the two and half month period. These findings are similar to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) who suggested that the implementation of a well-designed classroom reading program for ESL students may be successful in bringing most students to grade level or above during the primary grades.

One of the five students starting at the one Y (**Y**) level was ready to advance to the two Y (**YY**) level; only two of the six students starting at the two Y (**YY**) level remained in that level, three were ready to advance to the one G (**G**) level and one to the two G (**GG**) reading level. The student at the one B (**B**) level remained at the same reading level, the student starting at the two B (**BB**) level was ready to advance to the one R (**R**) level, and the student at the two R (**RR**) level was ready to advance to the White (**Wh**) reading level. This shows that at the end of the program only two students were at or above the reading level established by the Department of Education; eight remained at their initial reading level and ten (including the two reading at and above grade level) were ready to move to the next reading level. These findings are similar to the researchers cited by Li and Zhang (2004) who indicated that with appropriate instruction, it takes about two years for ESL students to become relatively proficient in everyday English and as long as five to seven years to perform as well academically as native English-speakers.

All eighteen students reported that the reading program had helped them in various ways such as: to read faster (6/18), to be able to read more English words (7/18), to better understand English (7/18), and/or enjoy books (10/18). At the end of the program, the students' attitude towards reading English texts showed that they wanted to continue reading more books and/or advance to the next reading level.

The findings showed that the students' reading level was not compatible with the students' comprehension level. The students whose comprehension level was tested were reading at the final stages of the first grade level. These students were decoding faster and fluently, so they should have a better understanding of the text read. The eight students tested showed that five were at the frustration level, two at the instructional level, and only one was at an independent level. The student advancing to the third grade reading level was also at the independent comprehension level. This specific student lived with both parents, both had graduated from high school, his father worked for the Army reserve. Therefore, he was exposed in some way to the English language at home. These findings are similar to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) who provided adequate progress in learning to read English beyond the beginning level such as: have sufficient reading practice to achieve fluency, have sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render texts meaningful and interesting, monitor comprehension, and repair misunderstanding. To summarize, the participants were able to achieve fluency in decoding words with texts beneath their frustration level, but they did not have sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary (limited exposure to English) to comprehend the texts.

Overall, the majority of the students made some advancement throughout the program. Although eight students remained at their initial reading level, Table 15 shows that significant changes can be observed among the students reading at the one Y (Y) level. These five students made progress in the number of words correctly read (Accuracy Rate) and increased the number of words read per error (Error Rate), especially Student #5 who started unable to read and ended reading with an accuracy rate of 88%. Student #5 was the one who said: *Yo no quiero esa poquería. No me gusta leer en inglés. Yo odio la clase de inglés. El inglés es aburrido* (I don't want that junk. I don't like to read English. I hate the English class. English is boring). More than half of the students advanced to the next level and

Student #6 advanced two levels, from two Y (**YY**) to two G (**GG**), at the end of the program. The findings are similar to researchers such as: Case & Taylor (2005), Dricker (2003), Field & Aebersold (1990), Li & Zhang (2004), Mohr (2004), and Triplett (2004) who recommended that encouraging students to read independently will help them be successful readers and help them acquire academic achievements.

Finally, as shown in the running records, comprehension quick check questions, and students' post-questionnaire, 89% of the students were not able to read at or above the grade level established by the Department of Education in PR. Nevertheless, many of the students increased fluency, accuracy, and learned to enjoy English texts. Ninety-four percent of the students' comprehension levels were below their reading level. These findings are similar to Ediger (2002) who stated that developing a liking for reading should be a satisfying, motivating, and yet a challenging goal of instruction.

Results for Research Question 1c

Research question 1c asked: How does a modified reading challenge program in Puerto Rico affect the motivation of Puerto Rican children to read curricula and extracurricular literature? This section answers the question through the examination of the results of the students' pre-questionnaire, parents' questionnaire, students' post-questionnaire, and fieldnotes.

Students' Pre-Questionnaire

The data collected provides information on the participants' reading habits and reading attitudes toward reading curricular and extracurricular literature prior to and during a reading challenge program. Items 10 and 11 show the approximate number of books the participants had at home, which was minimal. Although Table 18 shows that there were more Spanish books than English books, the majority of the students had five or fewer Spanish and/or English books at home. With regard to books in Spanish, Table 18 shows that ten of

the students (59%) had 0-5 books in Spanish, two of the students (11%) had 6-10 books, and six of the students (33%) had more than 11 books. With regard to books in English, seventeen of the students (94%) had 0 to 5 books in English, one of the students (6%) had 6 to 10 books in English, and none of the students had more than 10 books. The majority of the participants' homes had very few or no English books at all at home.

Table 18. Number of books at home

Language	0-5 books		6-10 books		More than 10 books	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Spanish	10/18	56%	2/18	11%	6/18	33%
English	17/18	94%	1/18	6%	0/18	0%

To collect data on the participants' reading of extracurricular texts after school hours, the students were asked about their visits to the library and bookstore (items 15, 16). Twelve of the eighteen participants (67%) reported visiting the library in the public housing projects Monday thru Thursday solely for tutoring purposes and to complete homework tasks. Sixteen of the participants (89%) had never been to a bookstore to buy a book, one of the students (6%) had visited a bookstore with his mother on one occasion, and one of the students did not answer the question.

Table 19 provided data about the number of books the participants read in a month (item 17). Seven of the participants (39%) reported reading none; six of the participants (33%) read 4-6 books, five of the participants (28%) read 1-3 books, and none of the students reported reading 7-10 books in a month. Although eighty-nine percent of the participants reported liking to read and fifty percent of the participants reported reading at home 4 or fewer days (could be 0-4), Table 18 shows that the majority of the participants (61%) read one to six books in a month.

Table 19. Books read in a month

Item	N	%
Read 7-10 books in a month	0	0%
Read 4-6 books in a month	6	33%
Read 1-3 books in a month	5	28%
Read no books in a month	7	39%

Parents' Questionnaire

The data collected through the parents' questionnaire provides information on parents' perception of their children's reading habits toward reading curricular and extracurricular literature. Item 5 investigated whether the children read other books besides the books they were reading in the program. Two of the parents (11%) answered always, eleven of the parents (61%) answered sometimes, four of the parents (22%) answered rarely, none of the parents answered never, and one of the parents (6%) did not answer the question. The parents' responses showed that the majority of the participants sometimes read other books during the reading challenge program.

Students' Post-Questionnaire

The data collected provides information on the participants' reading activities during the program including their visits to libraries and bookstores. The beginning information requested by the participants was the number of books read in school and at home during the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program*. During the program, the books read in school ranged from 12 to 21 books. The number of books read in school may differ among the participants because of the participants' absences, the occasions in which special needs students were drawn out of the classroom to receive their individual educational services, students' forgetting to return the books, longer books took more time to read, and because of the lack of time for one-on-one reading conferences with all participants.

The students reading at the double B (**BB**) and double R (**RR**) levels read books that were longer, so it took them more than one reading session to read their books in school and

at home. Students who were forgetful and did not bring their home-reading books back to school the next day were not given take-home reading books on several occasions until confidence was gained in the student’s promise to return the books.

Table 20 shows the number of books read by the participants in school and at home during the *20 Book Challenge Program* from least to most books read. The number of books read in school ranged from 12 to 21 books while the books read at home ranged from 3 to 11 books. The total books read by the participants ranged from 21 to 32 books from the date the reading program started, February 22, to approximately the first week of May. The table shows that all the students read more than 20 books, since they had the chance to read additional books.

Table 20. Books read in school and at home

Student	Books read in school		Books read at home		Total books Read
	N	%	N	%	
#1	12	60%	9	45%	21
#2	16	80%	6	30%	22
#3	18	90%	4	20%	22
#4	19	95%	3	15%	22
#5	17	85%	6	30%	23
#6	19	95%	5	25%	24
#7	19	95%	7	35%	26
#8	17	85%	10	50%	27
#9	20	100%	7	35%	27
#10	19	95%	9	45%	28
#11	19	95%	9	45%	28
#12	20	100%	9	45%	29
#13	20	100%	9	45%	29
#14	20	100%	9	45%	29
#15	19	95%	11	55%	30
#16	21	105%	10	50%	31
#17	21	105%	10	50%	31
#18	21	105%	11	55%	32

As shown in the table, all of the students were able to surpass the goal of reading more than 20 extracurricular books during the program. Of the eighteen students, seven (39%) were able to read 20 or more books in school. Four of the participants (22%) read 20

books and another three (17%) read more than 20 books (21) in school. Among the eighteen students, five were able to read half or more than half of the 20 books at home. Three of the participants (17%) read ten books and two of the students (11%) read eleven books at home. Overall, the students read a combined total of more than 20 books during the reading program. Nevertheless, three of the students (17%) read 20 or more books in school and 10 or more books at home. Overall, five of the eighteen students (28%) read ten or more books at home.

During the program, six of the students (33%) sometimes read extracurricular books besides the ones chosen to read in the program; three of the students (17%) rarely read other books, and nine of the students (50%) never read other books besides the books chosen in the reading program (item 4).

The participants were able to provide more than one reason for not reading extracurricular books at home besides the books chosen to read in the program (Item 5). Seven of the participants (39%) responded there were no books at home; one of the participants (6%) answered there were books at home, but he/she was not interested in reading them; two of the participants (11%) answered there were books at home but they were too difficult to understand; six of the participants (33%) answered there were books at home but they were too long; and three of the students (17%) did not respond to the question. Overall, fifty percent of the participants (nine) had books at home but did not demonstrate interest in reading them for the reasons expressed above while 39% of the participants (seven) did not have other books to read at home.

Items 11 thru 13 collected data about the students' participation in the library, bookstore, and the books received as a gift during the reading program. None of the eighteen students went to the library to borrow a book during the program. This information supports the data collected in the pre-questionnaire that although twelve of the students visited the

library, they did it solely for tutoring purposes and not to borrow a book. The public housing project library that the participants go to for tutoring does not allow students to take out books. They can only read the books in the library. Six of the students in the pre-questionnaire answered they never went to the library (item 15). The pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire were consistent with the same answer, showing no change at all.

During the program none of the participants visited a bookstore to buy a book (item 12). The pre-questionnaire data shows that only one student at one time had gone to buy a book in a bookstore before the reading program started (item 16). The data collected in both questionnaires may imply that there were probably no bookstores accessible to the participants or that there were other priorities in the family environment that did not include buying a book. Nevertheless, two of the participants (11%) received a book as a gift during the reading program while eighty-nine percent of the participants (16) did not. Of the two participants who received a book as a gift, one received it at the tutoring classes and the other received it from a grandmother. Overall, the entire group of participants did not go the library to borrow a book before or during the reading challenge program. Except for one of the students, seventeen students had not visited a bookstore before or during the program, and only two of the participants received a book as a gift during the reading program.

Fieldnotes

During the reading challenge program the participants were given stickers to put on a motivational chart which showed the number of books they had read. When the participants were called on to put the sticker next to their name, they were proud to call out the number of books they had read. The display of the motivational chart showed how close the participants were to accomplishing the *20 Book Reading Challenge Program* or how far they had gone beyond the reading goal. Overall, the students were motivated to read and the motivational chart kept them moving toward the goal.

On April 30th and May 1st, the students were taken to the school library to watch the movie *The Pagemaster* in Spanish. The movie *The Pagemaster* is about “a boy who lives his life fearing practically everything. One day he gets caught in a storm and takes refuge in an empty library. While he is in the library, he is sent on an amazing animated adventure by The Pagemaster, keeper of the books and guardian of the written word. Making the acquaintance of three books, each representing the timeless themes of Adventure, Fantasy, and Horror, the boy takes a breathtaking journey as his new friends lead him through their limitless world of imagination” (<http://movies.yahoo.com>).

The participants watched the film quietly, and if any of the students talked during the movie the other students would *shush* them. After the movie ended the participants discussed it in class using assessment activities such the graphic organizers, Story Map and Concept Map, to recall details and explain the importance of visiting a library.

Days before taking the students to a local bookstore, I wrote the parents a letter thanking them for their support during the program and informing them about the trip to the bookstore (See Appendix M). I asked them to sign the permission sheet if they agreed to let their children go to the bookstore during school hours (See Appendix N).

On May 14th the participants were taken to a local bookstore at a mall. The students were transported in a public school bus that was paid for by the local Municipal government. The school principal, the homeroom teacher, a school parent, and I were the students’ guardians during the trip and each one was in charge of approximately 3 to 4 students. Days before the trip, I contacted the local bookstore requesting permission to take the students and requesting a guide for the students. After the person in charge requested the required information, name of school, location, number of students, and so forth, I explained to the person that seventeen of the eighteen students had never been to a bookstore. I also told her that I knew for a fact that a couple of my students had never been to the mall. I wanted to

explain beforehand that the students might be a bit too excited by their new experience and I wanted someone who could relate to their experience. The person in charge assured me of having the perfect person for my students.

On the day of the trip, fourteen of the eighteen students were able to go on the bookstore trip with their parents' permission. The four students that were not able to go to the bookstore said their parents did not have money for lunch, although the permission letter stated that the students would be eating lunch at school. When the students arrived at the bookstore, there was a guide who was waiting for them. The guide gave them a tour around the bookstore. Then they were taken to the children's section and were read to. Next, they were able to choose books to read on their own, and finally, they were able to roam around the store (with supervision) and choose a book to buy. I noticed during the students' quiet reading time in the store that all of the students chose to read Spanish books. The books that the students bought with the money their parents had given them were also in Spanish. A few of the students did not have money to buy a book, so one of the other students bought a bargain of three books for a special price and gave her two friends a book to take home. Nine of the fourteen students were able to buy a book with the money their parents had given them. The students behaved very well during their stay at the bookstore. The guide said: *Estos niños se han portado muy bien. Se portaron mejor que los niños que he atendido de escuelas privadas* (These kids behaved very well. They have behaved even better than the private school kids). As the tour guide led the students through the bookstore, they were amazed and excited as they explored a new world of books.

The next school day, the students made comments about their trip to the bookstore. The brother and sister that were in the group said: *Mi mamá me dio chavo para comer pero cuando le dije que era para comprame un libro porque íbamos a almorzar en la escuela me los quitó y dijo que no tenía chavo para libros* (My mom gave us money for food but when

we told her it was to buy a book because we were eating in the school lunchroom, she took the money back and said she had no money for books). These two students with three others were not given money to buy a book. Nevertheless, two of them received a book from one of their classmates. One of the students who was not able to go to the bookstore said: *Me dicen que la gira estuvo buenisima* (They told me the trip was really good). The student regretted not being able to on to the trip.

Discussion of the results for Research Questions 1c

This study made use of four different methodologies to investigate if a modified reading challenge program would motivate Puerto Rican ESL students to read curricular and extracurricular literature. The data collected showed that (10/18) of the students had 0 to 5 extracurricular Spanish books, 17/18 students had 0 to 5 extracurricular English books at home to read. Twelve of the eighteen students visited the library Monday thru Thursday solely for tutoring purposes and not to read or borrow extracurricular books. The data was consistent with the information collected in the post-questionnaire in that none of the students had visited a library to read or borrow a book. Only one student had gone to a bookstore before the reading program started and none of the students went during the program.

The parents' questionnaire showed that 11/18 students sometimes read extracurricular texts. The data collected in the students' post questionnaire showed consistency with the parents' questionnaire in that 11/18 students read extracurricular Spanish texts sometimes. The participants read extracurricular texts, 12 to 21 books in school and 3 to 11 books at home, during an approximate two and half month school period. This finding is related to the National Institute for Literacy (2003) that stated identifying the appropriate reading level will give the students confidence in their ability to learn to read in the first and second language.

Overall, as shown in the Students' Pre-Questionnaire, Students' Post-Questionnaire, Parents' Questionnaire, and Fieldnotes, the students were motivated to read curricular and

extracurricular English text in school and at home when they were provided with adequate individual reading material. This finding also shows, that during the program none of the students were motivated enough to go to the library to read or borrow books on their own although the majority of the students that live in the public housing project next to the school had the community library in the projects. None of the students was taken to a bookstore by their parents, although the parents reported that their children were motivated to read during the program. Buying a book probably was not a priority for these families who live on a low-income budget and need to feed and dress their families. This finding is in agreement with Schweers and Hudders (2000) who say that the environmental context which Puerto Rican students are raised in, urban or rural, their socioeconomic status, and their need to learn another language may have a positive or negative impact when learning to read English. Nevertheless, the study showed that the reading material provided to the students was very well accepted by students as well as parents. These findings are related to Mitchell (2000) who stated that learning to read is one of the essential tasks of childhood and it can be a long and difficult process for many children. However, parents' encouragement and reading support during the primary grades, coupled with strong reading instruction at school will improve the child's chances of becoming a good reader.

Results for Research Question 2

Research question # 2 asked: How will the parents react to getting involved in an at-home English reading challenge program? This section answers the question through the examination of the results from the Students' Pre-Questionnaire, Students' Post-Questionnaire, Parents' Questionnaire, and Fieldnotes.

Students' Pre-Questionnaire

The data collected provides information on how the students perceived parental involvement prior to the program. Eleven of the participants (61%) reported that no one read

to them at home while seven of the participants (39%) reported they were read to at home. Of the seven participants who were read to at home, one (14%) was read to everyday, four (57%) were read to sometimes, and two of the participants did not say with what frequency they were read to (item 12). Of the seven participants read to at home, four (28%) reported that their mothers read to them and two (11%) reported being read to by another family member such as a grandmother or a sister (item 13).

The majority of the participants, ten (56%), saw no one reading at home while eight of the participants (44%) reported seeing someone reading at home. Five of the eight students (63%) who saw someone reading at home reported the reader to be a younger or an older sibling, four other students reported seeing their mother, a grandmother, or a stepfather (item 14).

Item 19 asked if someone spoke or read English at the participants' homes. Thirteen of the participants (72%) reported that no one at home spoke or read English while five of the students (28%) answered that someone at home spoke or read a little bit of English such as their mother, grandmother, or an older sibling.

Students' Post-Questionnaire

The data collected provides information on the students' perception on parental involvement during the program. Item 9 asked about the parents' involvement during the home reading task. During the reading challenge program eighty-nine percent of the mothers (16) listened to their child read a book and eleven percent of the entire family (2) listened to the child read a book at home. The data shows that the family came together to support their child's reading task. Although the majority of the parents did not speak or read English, they were supportive of their child's English reading task during the reading challenge program. The participants' parents were willing to help their children in their reading task.

Item 14 used the alternatives **Very good**, **Good**, **Fair**, and **Do not like it** to collect data on the parents' attitude toward the home reading task. Twelve of the students (67%) responded that their parents had a very good reaction, five of the students (28%) responded it was a good reaction, one of the students (6%) responded it was a fair reaction, and none of the students responded that their parents did not like the home reading task. Considering the alternatives **Very good** and **Good** together, the data suggests that the majority of the parents (94%) had a positive attitude towards the English reading task their child brought home.

The students were asked if their parents had read to them at home since the reading program started (item 15). Fifteen of the participants (83%) answered no one read to them at home during the reading program while three of the students (17%) answered they were read to at home during the reading program by their mother or another sibling. Table 21 shows a comparison of the data collected for Item 15 with the pre-questionnaire (items 12, 13) related to parents' reading to their children at home. The pre-questionnaire revealed that 39% (7/18) were read to at home while 61% (11/18) answered they were not read to at home. The data collected in both questionnaires shows that the number of parents who read to their children decreased by 22% (4/18) during the home reading task. Evidently, four of the parents who were reading to their children before the reading program probably wanted to give their children more opportunities to read on their own. In other words, the children were reading instead of the parents.

Table 21. Parental involvement prior to and during the program

Item	Pre-Questionnaire		Post-Questionnaire		Total difference	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Were read to at home	7	38%	3	17%	4	22%
Were not read to at home	11	61%	15	83%	4	22%

Parents' Questionnaire

The data collected provides information on the parents' attitude toward the program, their reading habits, on-going parental involvement activities, and their opinion about the program. The parents were asked to evaluate their experience with the English reading program using the alternatives: **Excellent**, **Good**, **Fair**, or **Poor** (item 9). Fifty percent of the parents (9/18) described their experience as excellent; thirty-nine percent of the parents (7/18) described it as good; six percent of the parents (one for each answer) considered it was regular or poor respectively. The data collected shows that 89% of the parents considered their experience with the reading program as excellent or good versus 11% of the parents whose experience was fair or poor.

Parents were asked to choose one of the alternatives (**Always read**, **Sometimes read**, **Rarely read**, or **Never read**) to show how frequently they read (item 10). Four of the parents (22%) responded always reading, twelve of the parents (67%) read sometimes, one of the parents (6%) never read, and another (6%) did not answer the question. None of the parents answered rarely reading. The majority of the parents seem to read sometimes demonstrating that reading is not an everyday activity in their lives.

As a result of the program, parents were asked to indicate what changes they would make to continue motivating their children to read. The parents had the opportunity to choose more than one alternative for item 11. Fourteen of the parents (78%) plan to dedicate time to listening to their children read, ten of the parents (56%) plan to buy books that their children like, four of the parents (22%) plan to take their children to the Children's Library (Biblioteca Juvenil), two of the parents (11%) plan to read to their children everyday, and none of the parents chose to do anything to continue motivating their children's readings. The data collected suggests that more parents were willing to continue listening to their children read books and buy books for them than take them to the library or read to them everyday

respectively. The information may suggest that parents have poor reading skills or reading habits and would rather listen to than read to their child.

Parents were asked to describe their understanding of the English language using the following alternatives: **Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor** (item 12). Fifty percent of the parents (9/18) described it as fair because it was easy enough to understand, twenty-two percent of the parents (4/18) described it as good, twenty-two percent of the parents (4/18) described it as poor, and eleven percent of the parents (2/18) described it as excellent. The data collected demonstrates that the majority of the parents (72%) consider they have a fair or poor understanding of the English language versus 33% who consider that their understanding of the English language to be excellent or good.

In all cases, the questionnaire was answered by the participants' mothers (item 13). For item 14 parents were asked to write their comments about the English reading challenge program. Chart 3 shows the comments that thirteen of the seventeen mothers wrote concerning the English reading challenge program. All comments were written in Spanish and translated to English (See Appendix O). Although, not all seventeen parents wrote their comments, the thirteen comments written by the participants' mothers (72%) were positive. Only four of the participants' mothers (28%) did not comment on the program.

The majority of the comments written by the participants' mothers expressed the usefulness of the program to motivate their children to read at home and to involve parents in the reading process. Apparently, parental involvement in reading English texts was new to many parents since they considered that it was a great idea that should be continued. Another important comment made by the participants' mothers about the program was that they considered that their children were able to understand what they were reading in English. Learning to read English texts at home was beneficial for both the participants and the parents as shown in Comments 3 and 4. The participants' mothers expressed that they were

able to have a better understanding of their children’s reading texts and they even learned a bit more English. The reading program motivated parents to be more interested with their children’s home assignments (Comment #11). She felt the responsibility to have better communication with her son and be more interested in his assignments. Overall, the English reading challenge program was a positive experience for the majority of the parents.

Chart 3. Parents’ comments on the English reading challenge program

1. It was very useful for my son.
2. It was a great idea for the children to read in English.
3. This workshop was very important in my home. Everyone heard my son read and for the first time we knew what he was reading in English. It was of great help. My personal opinion is that this should be done always.
4. I loved that my son went through this learning process because it helped me and my son learn a bit more and understand much better.
5. I liked the English reading program because it motivated my son to read in English and acquire knowledge of what he read.
6. It was a good idea.
7. It helped my daughter to learn to read English which was a motivation to her and helped her learn and understand much better the English language.
8. Rather excellent and educational.
9. It is very good, educational, and motivational for any child, it was an excellent idea to have this program.
10. It is a very good program. More similar programs should be used to continue motivating the children to read.
11. It was for me a nice experience. Especially, one feels the obligation to share and talk more and be more interested in our son’s assignments. It was very pleasing.
12. Children should be given shorter stories so they will be motivated to read more in English.
13. It is important to learn to read and write so in the future they can understand it and get good grades in English.

Fieldnotes

The comments made by one of the mothers was: “*Mi hijo estaba tan emocionado que le leyó el libro a mi, su papá y a su abuelo*” (My son was excited about reading the book that he read it to me, his dad, and grandpa). The mother was worried because the student had left his take-home book in the house and he was crying because he wouldn’t get another one to read at home. His mother came to excuse him and assure she would bring the book back in the afternoon. Later in class, the boy found the book in his bookbag and he was very excited

because he did not have to wait for his mom to return the book and he would receive another take-home book.

Another participant said: “*Mi mamá quiere que me des más libros para leer en la casa porque ella quiere que yo sea el primero en terminar de leer 20 libros. Yo también quiero leer más de un libro*” (My mom wants you to give me more than one take-home book because she wants me to be the first to read twenty books. I also want to read more than one book). I had to explain to the participant that the program was meant for them to enjoy reading and learning at their own reading level and it was not meant to be a competitive program waiting to see who got to meet the goal first.

Discussion of the Results for Research Question 2

This study made use of four different methodologies to investigate the parents’ reaction to the home reading English assignments during the reading challenge program. The findings show that the majority of the students (11/18) were not read to before the reading program started and 15/18 students were not read to during the program. This shows that 22% of the parents stopped reading to their children during the program. Ten of the students reported not seeing anyone read at home while the majority of the parents (12/18) reported reading sometimes. The findings show that the 13/18 students had no one who spoke or read English at home which is somewhat compatible with 13/18 parents who reported that their understanding of English was Fair and/or Poor. These findings are in agreement with the 100 Book Challenge Program that suggested that parents set a good example for the child by sharing their own reading experiences. Children are copy cats – if they see the parents read they will read too.

Eighty-nine percent of the mothers (16/18) were coaching their children’s home-reading tasks (16/18 were single parents). The majority of the students (12/18) perceived that their parents’ attitude towards the home-reading task was **Very Good** while the majority of

the parents (16/18) reported their experience with the program was **Excellent** and/ or **Good**. Among the changes that the parents would make to continue motivating their children to read were to continue coaching their children's reading, buy books, take them to the Mayaguez Children's Library, and/or read to them everyday. I hope the effects will last as Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) indicated that the values, attitudes, and expectations held by parents and caregivers with respect to literacy are likely to have a lasting effect on a child's attitude about learning to read.

Thirteen of the eighteen parents made positive comments about the reading program, but Comments #3, #4, and #11 stand out among the others because the parents felt part of their children's reading process. Comment #3 expressed how the family came together to coach their son's reading and the texts were easy enough for the entire family to understand. Comment #4 the parent expressed learning a bit more English through the son's home-reading assignments. Comment #11 the parent expressed how the home-reading tasks helped them to be aware of the son's assignments. The findings concur with the U.S. Department of Education (2005) that stated that parents do not need to be the best reader to help—their time and interest and the pleasure that they share with their child as part of reading together are what counts.

In conclusion, the majority of the parents had little or no understanding of the English language, but they reacted very well to coaching their children's home-reading tasks. The students were motivated to read at home because their parents were involved in the reading process. One of the factors that helped the student progress in reading English texts was a team effort that included parental involvement. The findings agree with Laura Bush who reported that parents who expressed a positive attitude toward daily at-home reading assignments were encouraging and motivating their children to read (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Finally, as shown in the Students' Pre-Questionnaire, Students' Post-Questionnaire, Parents' Questionnaire, and Fieldnotes, parental involvement did make a difference in the students' attitude and motivation towards reading English texts. Additionally, the parents developed a positive attitude towards the English language through the reading program, and they were motivated to continue motivating their children to read.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This thesis addressed the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of third grade ESL students before and during their participation in a reading challenge program. It also examined parental involvement in the children's reading process prior to and during the reading program. The main findings showed that:

- the reading program motivated the students to read independently
- the students were motivated to read the reading material provided to them, but they were not motivated enough to read other curricular or extracurricular reading material.
- all the students, except for two, were not able to read at or above the grade level, but they made improvements in their reading fluency and accuracy rate and were able to decrease their error rate.
- the reading program, which included the parents' participation, showed that parents had a positive attitude toward coaching their children's at home reading assignments.

These findings are similar to Baker (2001) who stated that the inclusion of parents in the operation of the school and involving parents as partners and participants in their child's education such as paired reading schemes, may contribute to the reading success of a child.

Pedagogical Implications

When I began my study, I had been teaching in the English classroom at Mayagüez Elementary School for two years. During that time, I heard negative comments from the parents concerning the English language. Many parents would say they could not help their children with the English assignments because they did not understand the language, they felt dumb concerning the English language (*Yo soy bruta para el inglés*), or they did not have the educational skills to help their children. These comments were constantly repeated by the parents, and although I tried to help by explaining the homework instructions to the students in Spanish, the students would arrive the next school day without their assignments. On

several occasions when I asked for their assignments, the students answered that their mother had told them to put away the English notebook because they did not understand English and did not want to know anything about English. In spite of my efforts, the parents persisted in their negative attitude toward the English language. It therefore came as a surprise to find, as a result of this study, that in general, the parents enjoyed being their children's reading coaches during the home-reading assignments.

Thus, the first pedagogical implication of this study is that teachers should not assume that parents will not be involved in their children's learning of the English language in spite of the parents' difficulties or attitudes toward the English language. Teachers should meet with the parents to motivate them and help them understand that they can be part of their children's learning to read in English. This is important because, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2003) helping children become—and remain—readers is the single most important thing that parents and families can do to help their children succeed in school and life.

In order to get parents involved, the task will have to be something they see as engaging and something they are capable of doing. Parents' resistance to help their children with English assignments under ordinary circumstances may have been due to their own poor literacy skills in English and their personal experience with the English language during their school years. Although many parents will be unable to monitor their children's comprehension because of their insecurities about their own English, they can ask their children to tell them what the stories are about. They can be their child's reading coach and enjoy the story with them learning comprehension skills to be taught and reinforced in the classroom.

The program discussed here seemed to work; therefore another pedagogical implication is that the educational system in Puerto Rico should design an English reading

program that considers the students' reading level. Thus, teachers should have the freedom to combine the English program with an attractive do-able program that is at the students' reading level so it can help them experience reading success in L2. Teachers should also make a list of level books from a local library (Mayagüez Children's Library) and motivate the students to visit the library to take out books to read at home. The teacher's suggestion to read extracurricular text may motivate the students to want to explore and begin reading a wide variety of books found at the library in both languages.

The students were able to succeed in spite of reading a second language prematurely (in other words before reading well in the first language). The students were reading material that was above their level, still decoding, and not comprehending the English texts used in the school's curriculum. Teachers should provide adequate reading material to meet the students' individual reading needs to motivate them to read a second language. This will help them increase their vocabulary, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and reading comprehension in order to read at or above their grade level.

Reading can be a fun activity, which can motivate the students to want to read English texts. This finding is in agreement with Ediger (2002) who suggested that a good quality reading program for the primary grades should include the student's actual reading level, provide a wide variety of reading material to capture student's reading interest, freedom to choose reading material, and ample time to read for pleasure.

The competition developed with parents and students proved to be safe, when guided, and it led to motivation. All the students were rewarded for their reading achievements. The importance of rewards to kids was expressed in the students' pre-questionnaire. I think their greatest reward was their reading accomplishments. Parents and students were motivated to accomplish the goal of reading 20 books. Competition to meet the goal was based on motivation and not rivalry among parents and students indicating that the element of

competition can safely be included in school reading programs which is another pedagogical implication.

The study allows elementary school teachers to use the findings to improve reading in their classes. The importance of reading at the appropriate level can lead to reading success and rewarding life achievements. As the National Institute for Literacy (2003) stated texts which are more difficult than the student's reading level will lead them to focus on word recognition, and will not provide them the opportunity to develop fluency and comprehension. Parental involvement and a well-designed reading program for Puerto Rican ESL students should improve reading in the class.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study is the fact that the answers the students provided on the questionnaires may not be reliable. For example, the participants' answers to the number of extracurricular books read in a week or in a month may not accurately represent their reading habits.

Second, the participants in this study were 18 students registered in one of the third grade groups at Mayagüez Elementary School. If I had used both third grade classes, considering that both groups had relatively the same characteristics, one would have had the reading challenge program and the other would have served as a control group to create an experimental study. I would have been able to compare the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of both groups and probably would have been able to evaluate them differently.

Third, I did not use the same alternatives to compare the students' attitudes towards reading English texts in the pre and post questionnaire. I used the alternatives **Yes** or **No** in the pre-questionnaire and **Always**, **Sometimes**, **Rarely**, and **Never** in the post-questionnaire to ask if they liked to read English texts prior to the reading challenge program. Since I did

not give the same alternatives, I was not able to compare their responses in both questionnaires.

Finally, my study concerned the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of the students registered in a third grade group at one urban Puerto Rican Elementary School. Therefore my findings cannot be generalized to all third grade students in Puerto Rico since factors such as where students live, urban or rural, school location, parental involvement, attitude towards the English language by students and parents, economic status, and social environment may affect the findings of such a study.

Directions for Future Research

Possible future research that can contribute to a broader picture of the reading attitudes, habits and performance of ESL students in Puerto Rico include the following:

- One study could select a number of schools from the four regions of the island and carry out the treatment used in this study with improvement such as same alternatives in pre and post questionnaires. The study would allow the researcher to compare the reading attitudes, habits and performance across the island. In addition, the study could include a cross-sectional view of educational levels: elementary and middle school students.
- A possible study could investigate the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of students in the primary grades, first through third, and grades four through six. This would allow the researcher to compare the reading attitudes, habits, and performance of primary grade students with upper elementary grade students.
- Another study could investigate how long it takes ESL students in Puerto Rico to reach grade level when participating in a reading program (using individual reading levels) starting in first grade and/or second grade.

- Another study could use two similar grade groups, one as a control group and the other an experimental study using the reading challenge program.
- A possible study could compare ESL students to native US students in terms of grade level. The investigation could compare if the use of two languages, Spanish and English, can place (in the future) ESL students at or above grade level and compare them to US students who learn only one language.
- Another study could follow students from third grade through fifth grade to investigate their reading progress.

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Appendix A

Authorization Request to Conduct a Study in the School

Sra. Ana Zambrana, Directora

El proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje se debe enriquecer cada día con nuevos métodos y estrategias que ayude al estudiante alcanzar sus metas educacionales. La enseñar del inglés como segundo idioma necesita transformaciones constantes para lograr las metas y los estándares que exige el Departamento de Educación. Una estrategia de enseñanza que propulsa el Departamento de Educación es la enseñanza de la lectura para el logro de metas educacionales.

El periódico El Nuevo Día del miércoles, 27 de septiembre del corriente año señala que el Departamento de Educación propone implementar en los grados primarios la propuesta federal “Reading First” con el propósito de reforzar las destrezas lingüísticas de los estudiantes. La meta de lograr que los estudiantes adquieran fluidez en la lectura en el idioma inglés y que ellos puedan alcanzar el nivel de lectura de su grado va en conformidad con el programa federal “Reading First.”

Como maestra de inglés de los grados segundo a cuarto en su escuela entiendo que los estudiantes deben ser motivados a la lectura para que puedan mejorar las destrezas que componen las cuatro artes del lenguaje. Es por tal razón que deseo solicitar de usted, como directora de la escuela Franklin D. Roosevelt, permiso para desarrollar un proyecto especial de lectura en dicha escuela. El proyecto será parte de mi tesis de maestría en inglés que estoy completando en la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez.

El proyecto tiene como base el programa “100 Book Challenge” que se usa en los Estados Unidos. El programa será una versión modificada y adaptada al ambiente escolar de Puerto Rico y específicamente al estudiantado de la Escuela Franklin D. Roosevelt. Este proyecto se podrá trabajar durante el segundo semestre del año escolar 2006-2007 y se podrá utilizar a los estudiantes de uno de los dos grupos de tercer grados de la escuela, específicamente el 3-2. El programa deberá constar con la participación de padres como del uso de la biblioteca de la escuela.

De usted evaluar positivamente esta propuesta para desarrollar el proyecto especial de lectura en inglés, entonces solicitaría permiso para reunir los padres del grupo mencionado arriba para hablarles del proyecto. La reunión tiene como propósito el obtener el permiso de los padres para la participación y la toma de fotos y/o video de sus hijos durante el proceso del proyecto y conseguir un grupo de padres que dominan el idioma inglés y estén disponibles para ayudar en el salón de clases.

Gracias por su anticipada cooperación.

Sra. Lizzel Martínez Marrero

Maestra de Inglés de la Escuela Franklin D. Roosevelt

Appendix B

Letter inviting parents to a meeting about the reading program

Apreciados Padres,

El proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje se debe enriquecer cada día con nuevos métodos y estrategias que ayuden al estudiante a alcanzar metas educativas. Uno de estos métodos es el énfasis en la lectura en inglés del programa federal *Reading First* (la lectura primero).

El propósito del programa *Reading First* es reforzar las destrezas lingüísticas de los estudiantes y que ellos desarrollen fluidez en la lectura en inglés. Este programa se implementa en los grados de Zinder a tercero para que los estudiantes puedan alcanzar el nivel de lectura de su grado.

Como maestra de inglés estoy interesada en desarrollar el proyecto especial en el grado donde su hijo está 3-2 del Sr. Madera. Por tal razón le estamos solicitando su asistencia a una reunión en la escuela el miércoles, 17 de enero de 2007 a las 8:00 a.m. En dicha reunión se orientará a los padres sobre el programa, propósito del mismo y las metas a alcanzar.

Su asistencia es muy importante para el desarrollo de las metas educativas de su hijo o hija. Les esperaremos el miércoles, 17 de enero.

Atentamente,

Sra. Ana Zambrana, Directora

Sra. Lizzel Martínez, Maestra

Appendix C
Parents' Attendance Sheet to Meeting about reading program

PARENTS' ATTENDANCE SHEET

3-2

Date	Student's Name	Parent's Signature

Parent's Meeting: January 17, 2007

Place: In the school's library

Time: 8:00 A.M.

Purposes:

1. Inform parents about the **"20 Book Challenge Program"**
2. Get parents to sign consent form

Appendix D
Consent Form

Proyecto: “La actitud y habilidad del estudiante hacia la lectura en inglés”

La siguiente información es provista para ayudarle a decidir si le permitirá a su hijo(a) participar en el presente proyecto especial. Usted tiene la opción de aceptar o negarse a que su hijo(a) participe o de retirar a su hijo(a) del proyecto en cualquier momento.

El propósito de este proyecto es investigar la actitud, retos y habilidad del estudiante en la lectura en inglés. La información será obtenida a través de cuestionarios, observaciones y a través de la participación de un programa de lectura.

No dude en preguntar sobre el proyecto antes de permitirle a su hijo(a) participar en el mismo o durante el estudio. Con gusto compartiré los resultados con usted después que haya concluido el proyecto especial. El nombre de su hijo(a) no aparecerá en el informe que escribiré y la información obtenida será utilizada como herramienta de entendimiento para profesionales en la educación y otras ramas relacionadas a la lectura.

Los beneficios esperados de la participación de su hijo(a) será obtener información sobre cómo ayudar a los estudiantes a leer independientemente y desarrollar en ellos el interés en la lectura.

Al firma esta hoja de consentimiento usted está consciente de la naturaleza y propósito del proyecto y usted también accede a que se le pueda tomar fotos o videos a su hijo(a) durante el proceso del estudio.

Firma del padre o encargado

Fecha

Firma del estudiante

Fecha

Appendix E
Socio-Demographic Questionnaire

Información del Estudiante

- Maestro: _____ Núm. Seg. Social: _____
- Salón Hogar: _____
1. _____
Apellido paterno Apellido Materno Nombre Inicial
2. Sexo: _____ 3. Edad: _____
4. Dirección residencial: _____
- _____
- Zona: Rural _____ Urbana _____
5. Apartado: _____ Teléfono: _____
6. Fecha y lugar de nacimiento: _____
7. Cuántos viven en la casa: _____ Núm. de hijos en la familia: _____
8. Hermanos o hermanas mayores: _____ menores: _____
9. Nombre del padre: _____ Vive: ___ Si ___ No
10. Ocupación: _____ Escolaridad: _____
11. Nombre del encargado: _____
12. Dirección del encargado: _____
13. Escolaridad del encargado: _____
14. Nombre de la madre: _____ Vive: ___ Si ___ No
15. Ocupación: _____ Escolaridad: _____
16. Ingreso: _____ anual: _____ mensual: _____ semanal: _____
17. Ayudas económicas: _____
18. Grados que ha repetido el estudiante: _____
19. Has vivido en Estados Unidos? _____
20. Enfermedades que padeces: _____
21. ¿Estás bajo tratamiento? _____ Si _____ No
22. Estatura _____ Peso _____
23. ¿Usas espejuelos? _____ Si _____ No
24. ¿Necesitas servicios dentales? _____ Si _____ No
25. Pertenece al Programa de Título 1? _____ Si _____ No
26. ¿Posee plan médico? _____ Si _____ No ¿Cuál? _____

Appendix F
Student's Pre-Questionnaire
Cuestionario del Estudiante

Sexo: F / M

Edad: _____

Grado: _____

1. ¿Te gusta leer?

- a. Sí b. No

2. Los cuentos que me gusta leer son de _____

3. ¿Tu lees cuando estás en tu casa?

- a. Sí b. No

Si contestaste **sí**, ¿qué lees? _____

4. Estando en tu casa, ¿cuántas veces a la semana lees libros no escolares?

- a. 7 días a la semana
b. 5 a 6 días a la semana
c. 4 o menos días a la semana
d. Nunca leo

5. ¿Tienes algún lugar preferido en tu casa donde te gusta ir a leer?

- a. Sí b. No

Si contestaste **sí**, ¿cuál es? _____

6. Prefieres escuchar un cuento o leerlo por ti mismo? ¿Por qué?

7. Te gusta leer en inglés?

- a. Sí b. No

8. Yo leo libros en inglés en la _____

9. No me gusta leer en inglés porque _____

10. Aproximadamente, ¿cuántos libros en español tienes en casa?

- a. 0-5 libros b. 6-10 libros c. más de 11 libros

11. Aproximadamente, ¿cuántos libros en inglés tienes en casa?

- a. 0-5 libros b. 6-10 libros c. más de 11 libros

12. ¿Alguien te lee cuentos en tu casa? ¿Con cuánta frecuencia? _____

- a. Sí b. No

13. Si alguien te lee en casa, ¿quién lo hace?

- a. Mamá b. Papa c. Otro familiar d. Nadie

14. ¿Tu ves a algún familiar de tu casa leyendo?
a. Sí b. No
Si contestaste **sí**, ¿a quién? _____
15. ¿Tu visitas una biblioteca fuera del horario escolar?
a. Sí b. No
Si contestaste **sí**, ¿cuándo los haces y con qué frecuencia? _____
16. ¿Haz visitado una librería para comprarte un libro?
a. Sí b. No
Si contestaste **sí**, ¿cuántas veces lo has hecho y con quién? _____
17. Durante este mes, ¿cuántos libros has leído?
a. 7-10 libros b. 4-6 libros c. 1-3 libros d. Ninguno
18. En mi tiempo libre me gusta _____.
19. ¿Alguien en tu casa habla o lee en inglés?
a. Sí b. No
Si contestaste **sí**, ¿quién es? _____
20. ¿Cuál de las siguientes te motivaría a leer?
a. Un libro que me guste
b. Tratar de alcanzar una meta de lectura
c. Para obtener un premio
d. Para obtener un certificado que muestre cuanto he leído

Appendix G
Student's Post Questionnaire
Cuestionario del Estudiantes

Libros leídos: Escuela: _____ Casa: _____

Favor de marcar su respuesta con un X.

1. ¿Te gusta leer libros en español?
____ Siempre ____ A veces ____ Rara vez ____ Nunca
2. ¿Te gustaba leer en inglés antes de comenzar el programa de lectura?
____ Siempre ____ A veces ____ Rara vez ____ Nunca
3. Durante el programa de lectura, ¿te ha gustado leer?
____ Siempre ____ A veces ____ Rara vez ____ Nunca
4. Durante el programa, ¿lees en tu casa otros libros que no son del programa?
____ Siempre ____ A veces ____ Rara vez ____ Nunca
5. Si no lees otros libros en tu casa, ¿a qué se debe?
____ No hay libros en mi casa.
____ Hay libros en mi casa pero no me interesa leerlos.
____ Hay libros en mi casa pero son muy difíciles de entender.
____ Hay libros en mi casa pero son muy largos.
6. ¿Qué te gusta de los libros del programa de inglés? Puedes marcar más de una respuesta.
____ Las lecturas son fáciles.
____ Puedo relacionar lo que leo con las láminas.
____ Los cuentos son cortos.
____ El libro me hace reír.
____ El libro me recuerda de algo parecido que me pasó.
____ El libro tiene un final sorprendente.
____ El libro es interesante.
____ No me gusta ninguno de los libros.

7. ¿Qué no te gusta de los libros del programa de inglés? Puedes marcar más de una respuesta.

___ Los cuentos son muy largos.

___ Los cuentos tienen pocas láminas.

___ Me aburren los cuentos.

___ No entiendo los cuentos.

8. Desde que estás leyendo un libro en tu casa, ¿cuál es tu lugar preferido para leer?

___ el cuarto ___ la sala ___ la cocina ___ otro lugar

9. En tu casa, ¿quién te escucha leer el libro en inglés?

___ Padre ___ Madre ___ Tutor ___ Toda la familia

10. ¿Cuál es el título del libro que más te gustó leer?

11. Desde que comenzó el programa, ¿has pedido prestado libros en la biblioteca?

___ Siempre ___ A veces ___ Rara vez ___ Nunca

12. Durante el programa, ¿has visitado una librería para comprarte un libro?

___ Si ___ No

13. Durante el programa, ¿te han regalado un libro?

___ Si ___ No ¿Quién? _____

14. ¿Cómo ha reaccionado tu padre o madre con la tarea de leer un libro en inglés en la casa?

___ Muy bien ___ Bien ___ Regular ___ No le gusta

15. Desde que comenzó el programa, ¿te han leído un cuento en tu casa?

___ Si ___ No ¿Quién? _____

16. Si el programa de lectura en inglés te ha ayudado en algo, ¿en qué ha sido?

___ Leo más rápido.

___ Se leer más palabras.

___ Se me ha hecho más fácil entender la clase de inglés.

___ Me gusta más los libros.

___ No me ha ayudado en nada.

17. Ahora que has participado del programa de lectura en inglés, ¿te gustaría leer más en español?

___ Si ___ No

18. Al finalizar el programa, ¿cómo te sientes de la lectura en inglés?

___ Quisiera seguir leyendo más libros.

___ Me gusta leer los libros pero ya estoy cansado del programa.

___ Quisiera pasar a otro nivel de lectura.

___ No me interesa seguir con el programa.

19. Si no te interesa seguir en el programa, favor de explicar por qué.

Appendix H
Parents' Questionnaire
Cuestionario a Padres

Espero que su hijo/hija se haya beneficiado del programa de lectura en inglés. Me agradecería saber qué usted piensa del programa. Favor de llenar el cuestionario y devolver el mismo con su hijo/hija.

Favor de marcar su contestación con una X.

1. ¿Cómo calificaría usted la experiencia de su hijo/hija durante el programa de lectura en inglés?
 Excelente Bueno Regular Pobre
2. Durante el programa, ¿tenía usted que recordarle a su hijo/hija que hiciera su tarea de lectura?
 Siempre A veces Rara vez Nunca
3. Antes de comenzar el programa, ¿cuál era la reacción de su hijo/hija para leer un libro en inglés?
 Excelente Bueno Regular Pobre
4. Como resultado del programa, ¿cuál ha sido la reacción de su hijo/hija para leer un libro en inglés?
 Excelente Bueno Regular Pobre
5. Además de los libros del programa, ¿lee su hijo/hija otros libros?
 Siempre A veces Rara vez Nunca
6. Antes de comenzar el programa, ¿en qué idioma usualmente leía su hijo/hija?
 Español Inglés Ambos idiomas Nunca leía
7. ¿En qué idioma cree usted que su hijo/hija leerá más después del programa?
 Español Inglés Ambos idiomas
8. ¿Cree usted que el programa de lectura en inglés haya motivado a su hijo/hija a leer más en su idioma "español"?
 Siempre ha estado motivado a leer en español.
 Si, está más motivado a leer en español.
 No está motivado a leer en español.
9. ¿Cuál ha sido su experiencia como padre/madre con el programa de lectura en inglés?
 Excelente Bien Regular Pobre

10. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedica usted a leer?

Siempre leo A veces Rara vez Nunca

11. Como resultado del programa, ¿qué cambios haría usted para continuar motivando a su hijo/hija a leer?

- Llevarlo a la Biblioteca Juvenil.
- Comprar libros que le gustan para que siga leyendo.
- Leerle un cuento todos los días.
- Sacar tiempo para escucharlo leer.
- No puedo hacer nada.

12. ¿Cuál es su entendimiento del idioma inglés?

Excelente Bien Regular Pobre

13. ¿Quién contestó este cuestionario?

Madre Padre Tutor Otro familiar

14. Comentarios sobre el programa de lectura en inglés:

¡Gracias por participar!

Appendix I

Titles of the stories for the Reading A-Z Running Records, Benchmark books, and

Comprehension Quick Check Questions

Website: www.readinga-z.com

1. Funny Cat – by Chuck Garofano
2. I Go – by Felicia Brown
3. The Sandwich – by Cheryl Ryan
4. I Can Help – by Ned Jensen
5. The Wheel – by Cheryl Ryan
6. Bath Time – by Felicia Brown
7. Many Roads – by Vic Moors
8. Signs Are Everywhere – by Vic Moors
9. How Long Does It Take? – by Ned Jensen
10. On Vacation – by Susan Spence-Allard
11. The Mailman’s Hat – by Kitty Higgins
12. Harold the Hungry Plant – by William Harryman
13. Go Away, Sun – by Pam Bull
14. Dinosaurs – by Elizabeth Austin
15. The Hunting Trip – by Katherine Follet

Appendix J
Student's Reading Log Sheet

Reading Log

20 Book Challenge

Name: _____



The More You Read, The Smarter You Get

Book #	Title	Level	Date	Coach's Signature

Please indicate which books were read at home with an asterisk (*Favor de marcar con un asterisco los libros que se leyeron en la casa*)

Appendix K
Running Record Codes

Accurate	√
Substitution*	$\frac{\text{child's response}}{\text{text word}}$
Repetitions	R - repeated once R2 - repeated twice
Self-corrections	SC
Omissions*	— $\frac{\text{text word omitted}}$
Insertions*	Λ $\frac{\text{word inserted}}$
Interventions	TTA = Try that again T* = Told
Pause	/ = 1 second // = 2 seconds /// = 3 seconds

***These behaviors count as one error.**

Appendix L
Letter to the parents: The Reading Program started

Apreciados Padres,

Hoy, 22 de febrero de 2007 se comenzará con el proyecto especial de lectura en inglés. Dos días a la semana su hijo o hija llevará un libro para leer a su casa de asignación. El libro estará dentro de un cartapacio que contiene la hoja donde usted anotará el título del libro, la fecha cuando su hijo o hija leyó el libro y la firma suya aseverando que se leyó el libro en su presencia.

Le agradeceré que firme la hoja luego de escuchar a su hijo o hija leer el libro. Una vez su hijo o hija haya leído el libro y usted haya escrito la información requerida en la hoja, verifique que su hijo o hija guarde el libro en el cartapacio y lo ponga en su bulto para regresarlo al día siguiente a la escuela.

SI NO REGRESA EL LIBRO A LA ESCUELA AL DIA SIGUIENTE, NO SE LE DARA MAS LIBROS PARA LLEVAR A LA CASA.

El propósito de este proyecto es desarrollar en su hijo o hija fluidez, comprensión y amor a la lectura en inglés. Al final del proyecto se premiarán a los estudiantes que hayan llegado o sobrepasado la meta de leer 20 libros.

Cuanto más lea su hijo o hija mejor estudiante será. Gracias por ser un asistente en la educación de su hijo o hija.

Atentamente,

Sra. Ana Zambrana, Directora

Sra. Lizzel Martínez, Maestra

Appendix M

Letter informing parents about a trip to a local bookstore

10 de mayo de 2007

A Padres del Grupo 3-2,

Gracias por su apoyo al programa de lectura en inglés. Para motivar a sus hijos a continuar leyendo libros hemos planificado una actividad para la librería Borders en Mayagüez Mall. Sus hijos tendrán la oportunidad de conocer la librería ya que tendrán un guía que les enseñará la misma, escucharán la narración de un cuento, podrán leer diferentes libros de la sección de niños y tendrán la oportunidad de comprarse el libro de su predilección.

Dicha actividad se llevará a cabo el lunes, 14 de mayo de 9:00 a.m. a 11:00 a.m. Se proveerá transportación escolar para los niños. Los estudiantes estarán acompañados por la directora de la escuela la Sra. Ana C. Zambrana, el maestro de salón hogar el Sr. Madera, la Sra. Wanda Santiago y esta servidora la Sra. Martínez maestra de inglés. Los niños almorzarán en la escuela, por lo tanto, solo necesitarán una merienda para llevar consigo. Los estudiantes debe usar el uniforme escolar para la actividad.

Agradeceremos que puedan apoyar la actividad final del programa de lectura. Adjunto está el permiso que ustedes deberán llenar y firmar si desean que sus hijos participen de dicha actividad. El permiso debe entregarse el día de la actividad para poder participar de la misma.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre la actividad no dude en acercarse a esta servidora.

Atentamente,

Sra. Ana C. Zambrana

Sra. Lizzel Martínez

Sr. Eugenio Madera

Appendix N
Parents' Permission to go to a local bookstore
PERMISO PARA EXCURSION

Yo, _____ padre, encargado o tutor, autorizo a mi hijo/hija a participar de la actividad en _____. La misma se llevará a cabo el día lunes, 14 de mayo de 2007 en Mayagüez.

Medio de transportación:

____ caminando

____ Autorizo

____ No autorizo

X **en guagua escolar**

____ en auto del padre

Firma del padre o encargado

Appendix O
Parents' comments about the reading program in Spanish
Comentarios de los padres

1. Fue muy provechoso para mi hijo.
2. Fue una gran idea que los niños leyeran en inglés.
3. Este taller fue muy importante para mi hogar. Pues todos escuchábamos leer a mi hijo y por primera vez sabíamos que era lo que leía en inglés. Y a la vez nos fue de gran ayuda. Opinión personal: Deberían hacer esto siempre.
4. La cual me encanta que se le de este aprendizaje a mi hijo por lo cual le ayuda a mi y a mi hijo aprender un poco mejor y entender bien.
5. El programa de la lectura en inglés me gustó por que ayudó a mi hijo a motivarse a leer inglés y a tener conocimiento de lo que lee.
6. Fue un buena idea.
7. Que le ayuda a mi hija aprender a leer inglés la cual es una motivación para ella y así aprender a entender un poco más el inglés.
8. Bastante excelente y educativo.
9. Es muy bueno, educativo y motivador para cualquier niño, es excelente la idea de tener ese programa.
10. Es un programa muy bueno debería usar más programas similares para seguir motivando a los niños a leer.
11. Para mi fue una experiencia bonita y sobre todo se ve uno en la obligación de compartir y dialogar más y también interesarse más por el trabajo de nuestro hijo. Fue muy agradable.
12. Darle cuentos pequeños para que se motive a leer más en inglés.
13. Es importante para aprender a leer y hacerlo escribirlo para un futuro puedan entenderlo y pueda tener buena nota en inglés.