

Reading Skills of Elementary Pupils as Basis for an Intervention Plan: The Case of Don E. Sero Elementary School, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Every pupil who starts primary school learns to read during his/her ordinary developmental period and makes sense of the text. However, even if some pupils learn to read, they have difficulty reading fluently and experiencing problems in understanding what they read. This study aimed to determine the reading skills of Grade II pupils at Don E. Sero Elementary School with an end to propose an intervention, innovation, and strategy. The study is a descriptive survey utilizing a researcher-made questionnaire administered to 56 pupils who are non-readers, using purposive sampling, employing frequency counts, percentage, and mean. Findings revealed that reading skills in terms of phonemic

awareness were high, which has helped understand how pupils acquire the ability to read the text in which their future achievement in reading is greatly enhanced. Reading comprehension is revealed to be high as pupils comprehend what they are reading, their effectiveness and pleasure in reading increase. Thus, non-readers must be adequately guided to learn in any school subject and to pass high-stakes tests. However, it is suggested that there is a need to propose an intervention, innovation, and strategy to sustain their reading performance especially understanding profound Filipino texts.

Keywords — Action research, reading skills, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, descriptive survey, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate purpose of reading is to understand and make sense of the text being read. Every child who starts primary school usually learns to read during his/her ordinary developmental period. However, even if some children learn to read, they have difficulty reading fluently and experiencing problems in understanding what they read (Aşıkcan & Saban, 2021).

Poor reading comprehension among children and youth is an ongoing concern. Data show stagnant performance in reading achievement over the past decades only about one-third of fourth-graders exhibiting proficient reading skills (Snyder, De Brey, & Dillow, 2016). Low reading achievement is associated with adversities in several areas, including educational progress, employment opportunities, and health outcomes (Ritchie & Bates, 2013).

In Indonesia, pupils had shown improvement in reading comprehension, social values, and classroom situation when teachers employed reciprocal teaching as strategies, thereby increased in comprehending reading texts (Ardiansyah, Aryanti, & Ujihanti, 2020). Similarly, in Singapore, recreational reading is seen as a peripheral radical shift in mindset may be needed to change the attitude in reading in order to encourage pupils to develop reading habits as it helps them promote self-directed, lifelong learning (Garces-Bacsal & Yeo, 2017; Lim, 2016).

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia is implementing a new education system that is capable of producing competitive, highly intelligent, and independent pupils through integrating various technology-based teaching and learning approaches that are beneficial in many different aspects of learning (Singh & Shaari, 2019). Just like in Myanmar, teachers have

created some applicable teaching techniques to facilitate pupils in their second language learning in order to increase reading comprehension through the use of clickers for reading skill; project paper, and minute paper for writing skill, think-pair-share and making presentations for speaking skills, and listening activities in language laboratory (González, 2019; Khine, & Nway, 2018).

Although, in the Philippines, reading habits play a vital role in the pupils' reading skills and academic performance in general, still, pupils are at the frustration level wherein they can only recognize and decode words without comprehension (Francisco & Madrazo, 2019). In response to the pupils' poor reading skills, the Department of Education issued DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019 will make every learner a proficient reader where schools across the country are tasked to develop their reading skills. There is a need to strengthen every learner's reading proficiency and nurture a culture of reading, which is a requisite skill in all content areas (Cabalo & Cabalo, 2019). Hence, in this context, the researchers are motivated to find out the reading skills of Grade II pupils at Don E. Sero Elementary School and offer a proposal on how to improve their performance through a project titled "Project KPP, Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa."

Elementary school-age pupils are essential to study because it is during this period that instruction in reading takes place (Young-Suk, & Piper, 2019). However, phonemic awareness and reading comprehension have been documented to be associated with poor reading skills. However, for the pupils to increase their reading skills, the researchers propose a project titled "Project KPP, Project Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa," an innovation, intervention, and strategies integrating phonemic awareness and reading comprehension to ensure that pupils will have a 75% improvement of reading skills by the end of the school year.

As shown below in the framework of the Project KPP- Project Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa anchored on the system's approach of Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Ross Ashby (1964) as cited by Drack & Pouvreau (2015), following input-process-output schema, where the input serves as the innovation introduced by the researchers. In this study, "Reading Alphabet" is an innovation designed for those pupils who are non-readers to help them learn the basics of reading. In this project, pupils will be taught to read words and read these words in the meaningful, connected text as soon as possible. Pupils will begin reading the text very early in the process if the text is selected carefully to include practice on word patterns and irregularly spelled high-frequency words.

FRAMEWORK

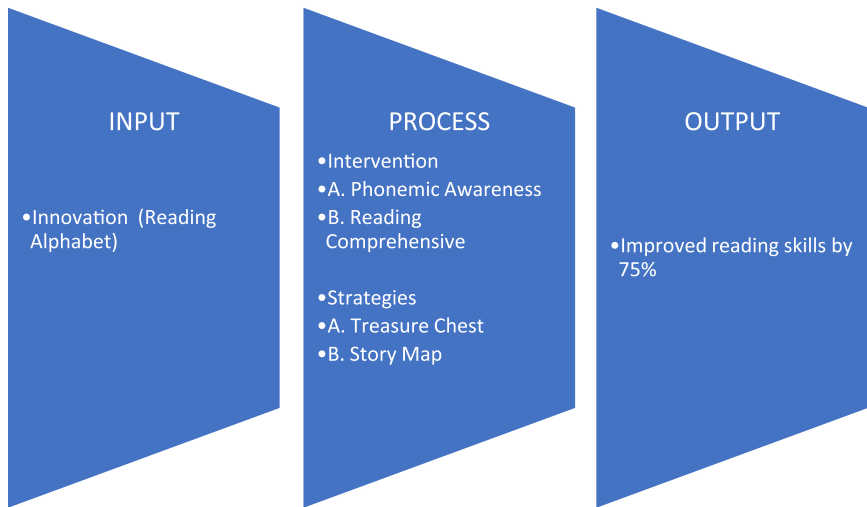


Figure 1. Project KPP- Project Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa

The process used by the researchers to realize this innovation includes intervention and strategies. For the intervention, two components were given importance, namely, phonemic awareness and reading comprehension. In phonemic awareness, pupils acquire the knowledge and manipulation of sounds in words that are spoken. Because letters represent sounds and words consist of sounds assembled in different ways, they can recognize that sounds are like building blocks that can be combined to make different words. While reading comprehension involves grouping words and using previous information to create meaning. This also includes building reasonable and precise meaning by combining what has been read and what the reader already knows. Reading comprehension also includes believing all of this information until it is recognized. Pupils may read instructions to figure out how to complete an activity, read a guidebook to obtain information about a project, read a book to fulfill the requirements for a class or read a book for enjoyment.

For the strategy, Treasure Chest was used as an instructional strategy to help pupils understand phonemic awareness, which focuses on the reading skills by segmenting and blending sounds. When pupils engage in segmenting and

blending sounds, they prepare for the decoding and encoding of words. The Treasure Chest strategy aims to provide emergent or early readers with repeated practice in segmenting and blending phonemes. This strategy is a 4-week activity that started 1st quarter using a virtual literacy or tutorial session and an independent work packet to be used at home with parents, timely during this pandemic. The weekly progress of the pupils was recorded.

Table 1: Project KPP - Project Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa (Treasure Chest)

Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa			
Talaan ng Nilalaman			
Pamagat	Pahina	Pamagat	Pahina
Mga Patinig/katinig	1	Titik Nn	12
Titik Bb	2	Titik Pp	13
Titik Cc	3	Titik Rr	14
Titik Dd	4	Titik Ss	15
Titik Ff	5	Titik Tt	16
Titik Gg	6	Titik Vv	17
Titik Hh	7	Titik Ww	18
Titik Jj	8	Titik Xx	19
Titik Kk	9	Titik Yy	20
Titik Ll	10	Titik Zz	21
Titik Mn	11	Pagbasa	22

Another instructional strategy used in response to reading comprehension is Story Map which uses a visual diagram or graphic organizer to help pupils learn the elements of a book or story and is used during or after reading. By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem, and solution, pupils read carefully to learn the details. In this strategy, the researchers focused on the most fundamental part of the story map, the beginning (character and setting), middle (problem), and end of the story (solution and theme).

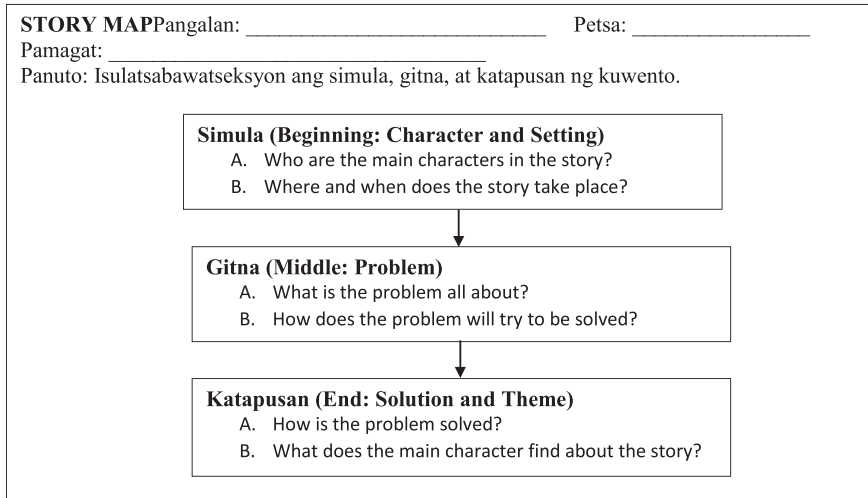


Figure 1. Project KPP- Project Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa (Story Map)

The Story Map strategy’s objective is to provide emergent or early readers identify common elements of narrative texts, which results in higher literacy comprehension and a better understanding of story structure. This strategy is a 4-week activity that started 2nd quarter using the PHIL-IRI tools employing a virtual reading or visual representation session and an independent work packet to be used at home with parents, timely during this pandemic. The weekly progress of the pupils was recorded.

For the output, the researchers intend to have at least 75 percent out of 56 non-reader Grade II pupils improve reading using phonemic awareness (Treasure Chest) and reading comprehension (Story Map) based on the Project KPP Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa. Given the intervention, the researchers administered the treasure chest and story map as strategies to ensure that there will be an improvement in reading, as well as the monitoring on the number of pupils who have learned to read and comprehend following the number of weeks that the strategies are implemented and the weekly progress report.

Table 2. Number of Pupils Who Have Shown Improvement after the Administration of the Intervention and the Strategies

Pupils	Phonemic Awareness (Treasure Chest)				Reading Comprehension (Story Map)			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
56	10	18	30	48	8	18	35	43

Table 2 presents the number of pupils who have shown improvement after administering the intervention and strategies. On the first of the week, 10 and 8 pupils, out of 56 non-reader pupils have shown improvement in both intervention and strategies implemented, while on the second-week increase to 18 (both intervention and strategies), the third week is 30 and 35 respectively, and on the last week have shown a significant increase to 48 in phonemic awareness (Treasure Chest), and 43 in reading comprehension (Story Map). Further explanation of the findings will be discussed in the results and discussion section of this paper.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the reading skills of Grade II pupils in Don E. Sero Elementary Schools as a basis for a proposed Action Plan. Specifically, it aimed to (1) determine the extent of reading skills of Grade II pupils in phonemic awareness and reading comprehension, (2) ascertain the extent of improvement by 75% reading skills of Grade II pupils, and (3) suggest an action plan which can be used for intervention further to improve the reading skills of Grade II pupils.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive survey to determine the components of reading skills in terms of phonemic awareness and reading comprehension of Grade II pupils. This design was used to gather data about varying subjects to which different conditions can be obtained among these subjects. This study made use of a survey using the prepared questionnaire using 4 points Likert scale. The three experts of the field validated the questionnaire with a mean of 3.55, which was interpreted as a valid instrument. The reliability evaluation using

Cronbach's Alpha method was used, which revealed a result of 0.950 described as highly reliable. The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted using mean.

However, for the administration of the treasure chest as an instructional strategy, the researchers used a virtual literacy or tutorial session based on the DepEd online tutorial session for learners and parents, while the story map used the PHIL-IRI tools employing a virtual reading or visual representation session. Also, both strategies used independent work packets to be used at home with parents, timely during this pandemic.

Research Site

The research was conducted at Don E. Sero Elementary School, a public elementary school located at Rosary Heights 5, Cotabato City.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were the Grade 2 pupils of Don E. Sero Elementary School. They were chosen because the advisers identified them as non-readers. A total of 56 pupils using purposive sampling were the respondents of the study. Observations, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and virtual audio-visual were used as sources of data.

Data Gathering Method

The researchers secured the permission of the school principal of Don E. Sero Elementary School for the data gathering. Upon approval, the researchers distributed the questionnaires to the respondents of the study with the guidance of their parents. For the ethical considerations, the respondents were assured that their responses were treated with the utmost confidentiality and that the results were used for research and professional development purposes. The researchers requested the presence of the respondents' parents in their free time to answer the questionnaire. After the retrieval of the questionnaire, the researchers tabulated and processed the data for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The research employed frequency counts, percentage, and mean as a statistical data tool. Frequency counts and percentages were used to determine the 75% reading improvement, while the mean was used to determine the extent of reading skills of Grade II pupils in terms of phonemic awareness and reading comprehension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As presented in Table 3 is the mean score of reading skills which revealed that phonemic awareness has helped understand how pupils acquire the ability to read the text in which their future achievement in reading is greatly enhanced with a mean of 4.35 interpreted as high.

Table 3. Mean Scores on Reading Skills

Reading Skills	Mean	Description
Phonemic Awareness	4.35	High
Reading Comprehension	4.40	High
Overall Mean	4.38	High

Although, it is unclear whether phoneme awareness acts in a way to help pupils benefit from learning and teaching experiences. Teachers much understand that phonemic awareness is valuable in helping pupils understand languages that are dependent on alphabets. Phonemic awareness can also be applied to understand how pupils acquire the ability to read the text (Bishara & Weiss, 2017). With this finding, the researchers were able to identify who will be able to read easily simultaneously; they could identify who has problems and estimate the degree to which pupils have acquired phonemic awareness. Thus, phonemic awareness is vital in learning to read. Once pupils have phonemic awareness, they can recognize that sounds are like building blocks that can be combined to make different words (Kahn-Horwitz, 2016).

On the other hand, reading skills in reading comprehension revealed that when pupils comprehend what they are reading, their effectiveness and pleasure in reading increase with a mean of 4.40, interpreted as high. Pupils need reading comprehension skills to learn in any school subject and to pass high-stakes tests. If a pupil can read the words but does not comprehend the meanings of the words, he or she is not reading. To comprehend a text, a pupil must use the four other reading elements and draw upon common thinking skills.

That is why reading comprehension is the end goal of reading and the final aim in reading instruction. All of the other components of reading are used to develop comprehension. When a reader is actively engaged with what they are reading, the reader asks and responds to questions about the text and summarizes what they have read, with proper instruction and constant practice are required (Ajideh, Zohrabi, & Pournalvar, 2018; Johansson & Myrberg, 2019). Thus,

text comprehension should be accentuated from the start; instruction in text comprehension should not be delayed until a pupil has learned the fundamentals of reading. Pupils can benefit from being taught that reading is a method of making sense of words or building meaning at all grade levels. Early readers and more advanced readers must be taught that the greatest goal of reading is comprehension (Wang, Silvestri, & Jahromi, 2018).

Presented in Table 4 is the percentage of improvement pupils after administering the strategies, which revealed an increased percentage of pupils who have shown improvement of their reading skills due to the treasure chest and story map strategies. On week 1 of administration of treasure chest, 18% out of 56 pupils have gradually learned to read, and then on week 2, 32%, week 3, 54%, and on week 4, 86% of them have improved.

Table 4. Percentage of Pupils Who Have Shown Improvement after the Administration of the Strategies

Pupils	Treasure Chest				Story Map			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
56	18%	32%	54%	86%	14%	32%	63%	77%

This shows that the target of 75% improvement of pupils’ reading skills is significantly increasing and has reached its target. Research shows that using Treasure chest supports reading by providing meaningful instruction in content areas like Filipino. It effectively builds content-area knowledge and explicitly links concepts to students’ backgrounds, such as leveled readers (print and audio), alphabet sound, photo cards, and home-school connection workbooks. With this, a teacher will know when pupils are ready to learn to read.

Looking at the results for the story map, on week 1, out of 56 pupils, 14% of them have gradually learned to read, and an increase of 32% and 63% for weeks 2 and 3, respectively. By week 4, it has increased to 77%, reaching its target of 75% reading improvement. This means that the use of story maps has resulted in positive effects on the reading comprehension skills of Grade II pupils. The findings indicated that 77% of the 56 pupils acquired and maintained the story mapping strategy.

Although it is not significantly increased as the treasure chest, 56 pupils’ listening comprehension increased from baseline to intervention to maintenance conditions. Only 77% of pupils’ performance showed a substantial increase

following instruction on generalization measures of reading comprehension derived from reading materials used in the classroom. The results of this study are essential in that it was this strategy to target pupils who are struggling readers explicitly. The difficulty in acquiring reading skills is a substantial problem for pupils diagnosed with specific learning disabilities (Kormos, 2017).

While proper reading requires both adequate underlying phonemic awareness and reading comprehension, research has shown that difficulties in automatic word identification seriously interfere with reading fluency and vocabulary. Based on the findings, pupils who find it difficult to understand English texts must require teachers' enhancement of strategies. The pupils gradually understand and comprehend the lessons well, but still, there is a need to propose an action plan that will sustain their reading performance. Early readers and more advanced readers must be taught that the greatest goal of having readings skills is comprehension. Thus, the researchers proposed a project dubbed Project KPP-Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study's findings, the researchers conclude that non-readers must be adequately guided to learn in any school subject and pass high-stakes tests. However, it provided unique evidence that phonemic awareness and reading comprehension were helpful interventions but needed to integrate with a treasure chest and story map to help struggling pupils improve Filipino language reading skills. The present results support the fact that interventions and strategies administered by the researchers play a crucial role in improving reading skills and at the same time challenge the outcomes of studies to non-readers by showing that at least only a few Grade II pupils have hardly read, which should be assessed and understand the source of their difficulties. However, it is suggested that there is a need to propose a specific action plan emphasizing intervention, innovation, and strategy to sustain their reading performance especially understanding profound Filipino texts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested, to wit: (1) for the BARMM-MBHTE they may initiate quarterly programs and activities for the teachers throughout implementing the action plan to monitor

pupils’ progress, (2) the principal of Don E. Sero Elementary School may develop a monitoring scheme to ensure that the action plan is implemented correctly and that all suggested activities are congruent with the school’s plans, and (3) for the teachers may provide active involvement of pupils in real-life experiences and Problem-based situations to develop a positive attitude in learning the interventions and strategies implemented to promote a positive attitude towards the project.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Project KPP- Kasiyahan sa Pagkatuto sa Pagbasa is an intervention incorporating strategies to help pupils learn the basics of reading. In this project, pupils will be taught to read words and read these words in the meaningful, connected text as soon as possible. Pupils will begin reading the text very early in the process if the text is selected carefully to include practice on word patterns and irregularly spelled high-frequency words (see detailed action plan below).

Action Plan

Strategies	Resources Needed			Source of Fund	Time Frame	Expected Output
	Human	Physical	Financial			
Adopt and implement a core reading program	Teachers Parents Pupils	Materials for core reading program	P2,000.00	Donation	Whole Year	Adopted and implemented a program
Train appropriate staff in core Reading program interventions.	Teachers Parents Pupils	Core reading program consultant	P2,000.00	Donation	Whole year	Trained staff implementing programs with fidelity
Design and implement 60 min. reading block	Teachers Parents Pupils	Materials for reading block	P2,000.00	Donation	Whole year	Designed and implemented 60 min. reading block
Implement phonemic awareness programs	Teachers Coordinator	Materials for phonemic awareness	P500.00	Donation	Quarterly	Implemented Phonemic awareness

Strategies	Resources Needed			Source of Fund	Time Frame	Expected Output
	Human	Physical	Financial			
Implement vocabulary programs	Teachers Coordinator	Materials for vocabulary	P500.00	Donation	Quarterly	Implemented vocabulary program
Implement fluency programs	Teachers Coordinator	Materials for fluency	P500.00	Donation	Quarterly	Implemented fluency Program
Monitoring and Evaluation	Teachers Coordinator	Materials using PHIL-IRI tools	P500.00	Donation	Quarterly	Implemented monitoring and evaluation

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