

Predictors of Sixth-Grade English Reading Performance in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines

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Abstract - The main purpose of this study was to determine the significant child, home, and school reading-related predictors of the sixth-grade English-reading performance. Employing the step-by-step cluster random sampling, 10 schools located within the cities of Mindanao, Philippines, which is run and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church, were selected. There were 335 sixth graders, which is 91% of the targeted sample of 369 from the total population of 630. These 335 respondents were composed of 157 girls and 178 boys with an average age equivalent to 11.9 years old. Most of them came from Cebuano homes, which is equivalent to 73.1%. This quantitative study employed the descriptive-correlational design. It was established in this study that personal characteristics, as well as the home and school environments are factors of English-reading performance of the sixth graders. It is important to note that positive attitude towards reading and exposure to the varied classroom reading events are significant considerations in the nurture of a school child towards academic success. The challenge of increasing the reading performance

of school-age boys continues. Likewise, the education of mothers and mothers to be is vital.

Keywords - reading skills, performance predictors, academic success

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, unsatisfactory academic performance has persisted as a controversial issue in basic education. The underdeveloped reading skills of the school children have been identified as the cause of this low achievement (Agudon, 2004; Burns, Roe, & Ross, 1988). In the Philippines, the entrance of the twenty-first century did not change this image (Republic of the Philippines Department of Education [RPDepED], 2005b) although teaching reading innovations have been emphasized. It is alarming that when poor reading skills persist, harmful effects are believed to continue throughout the whole academic process, and eventually affect the “success in life” (Good, Gruba, & Kaminski, 2002) of every school child.

While schools in the Philippines presently play various educational roles for society (Tanodra, 2003), the teaching of reading still should come first as the emphasis of basic education as put forward by Good and his colleagues (2002). Melton, Pickett, and Sherer (1999) wrote that reading, as a language skill, is the “basic tool of communication essential in the modern world”. However, reading has been stressed as a “complex cognitive activity” (Catts & Kamhi, 1999; Solso, Maclin & Maclin, 2005) and is “made up of many components” according to Beck (1989).

Reading, as a thinking process, comes in three models—top-down, bottom-up, and their interaction—(Alcantara, Cabanilla, Espina, & Villamin, 2003; Anderson, 1999). In the top-down model, the reader processes written information from a general point of view down to the specific literal meanings, while in the bottom-up, the reader processes the prints from the fundamental characteristics of the written language to the generalization of the meaning. Employing both models simultaneously is called the interaction model of thinking.

The reading-thinking models recognize the various “factors that influence comprehension” (Pearson & Raphael, 1990). One factor is

the “vast knowledge of the world” (Solso et al., 2005). Sixth graders have possibly accumulated experiences in life that affect their thinking process. The daily experiences mold the thinking and establish the characteristics of the child. In effect, the meaning of the printed text is generated by some personal, home, and school factors.

Investigations on factors that affect reading performance among children in Philippine Adventist schools yielded various results. In Central Luzon, Philippines, Cariaga (1995) found that emotional stability and mental aptitude are related to reading comprehension achievement. In western Visayas, Philippines, Arquizo (1995) found that prior knowledge, teachers’ practices and behavior, and instructional time are related to reading comprehension skills. In Manila area, Philippines, Vasquez (1995) found a positive relationship between attitudes toward reading and reading achievement. In Mindanao, Mercedes (1999) found significant differences in the school children’s comprehension and the variables on parental education, parental income, type of school, and study habits. Considering the factors mentioned above, these factors of performance can be categorized into three: the child, home, and school reading-related factors.

While similarities in thinking are noticeable among children, it is also possible that each child retains a “certain degree of uniqueness” (Melton et al., 1990). This uniqueness is influenced by the “physical, mental, and spiritual powers” (White, 1952). Reading and the home were identified as “the number one predictors of success in school” (Zahler, 1997). It is believed that the “root of reading begins at home” (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1987). The teaching of reading is the “major mission of the elementary schools” (Joyce et al., 2000) with teachers as “curriculum creators” (Schubert, 1986). Reading teachers decide the skills to teach in the class either using the teacher-direct-whole-class instruction (TDWCI), teacher-class-interaction (TCI), answering-worksheets-independently (AWI) or other events (OE). This decision includes the needed preparations for the “ESL reading classes” (Anderson, 1999).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted primarily to determine the predictors of the sixth-grade English-reading performance in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-2006. Selected child, home, and school reading-related factors were used as variables

The following are the specific objectives:

1. To determine the profile of the sixth graders in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines, in terms of child, home, and school reading-related factors during the school year 2005-06;
2. To describe the performance of the sixth graders in literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and overall English-reading;
3. To determine the English-reading performance profile of the sixth graders according to child, home, and school reading-related variables during the school year 2005-06;
4. To identify what learning event influences each reading subskill of the sixth graders; and,
5. To determine which factors predict the English-reading performance of the sixth-graders.

METHODOLOGY

Schools included in this study were owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church. These schools were located within the immediate perimeter of a city in Mindanao. The grade six classes were organized into a single-grade class. To ensure a wide-range representation of the whole island, the step-by-step cluster random sampling that started from the provincial down to the city levels was made. First, the provinces were grouped by regions and then the casting of lots was started. If the selected province had only one city, that city was automatically included otherwise the second step of random selection procedure took place. This procedure went on until the targeted 10 sample schools were determined. After further inquiries, there were 368 sixth graders in these 10 schools which is equivalent to 53% of the 630 total populations.

After data collection, the actual respondents of this study totaled to 335 sixth graders which is 91% of 368 targeted samples. The Power and Precision on-line software was used to check the probability and power of the statistical result based on the sample size of 368 respondents. Setting an alpha of .05, a small effect size of $r = 0.15$ (equivalent to $R^2 = 2.25\%$), the power of 80% statistical significance was ensured in a sample size of 340 (Borenstein, Rothstein, & Cohen, 2001).

The data was personally collected by the researcher, from January 30 to February 17, 2006, using the five research instruments. Each instrument was expert analyzed and pilot tested. The inter-item reliability analyses obtained Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of no less than 0.60. The SPSS version 11.5 software program was used to run the analyses of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the analyses and the interpretations of the data, the findings were finally established. Based on the child reading-related profile, there was almost the same number of boys ($n = 178$, 53.1%) and girls ($n = 157$, 46.9%), more than half were 12 years old ($n = 2002$, 60.3%), and mostly were Cebuanos ($n = 245$, 73.1%) sixth graders in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06. Generally, the sixth graders had fairly positive attitudes toward reading ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.66$) and good eye health ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.53$).

Concerning the home reading-related profile, most of the sixth graders belonged to the nuclear ($n = 122$, 36.4%) and extended ($n = 103$, 30.7%) types of family structure. The parents were mostly college graduates (fathers $n = 196$, 59.1%; mothers $n = 224$, 66.9%). English language used at home was sometimes only ($\pm 25\%$), which was about a quarter of the day. The involvement of parents in the reading of the children was rated "average" ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.65$).

In terms of school reading-related profile, more than one third of the respondents ($n = 117$, 34.9%) did not go to the school library, and a little more than one half ($n = 168$, 50.1%) spent about one hour per week in the school library. Mostly ($n = 136$, 40.6%) read an average of 1-10 pages of regular book size weekly. The teacher-direct-whole-

class instruction (TDWCI) ($f = 92 - 166, 27.5\% - 49.6\%$), teacher-class interaction ($f = 64 - 99, 19.9\% - 29.6\%$), and answering worksheets independently ($f = 50 - 115, 14.9\% - 34.3\%$) were among the highly identified classroom learning-reading events.

The sixth graders in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school 2005-06 satisfactorily performed in English-reading test ($M = 18.69, SD 4.04$). They performed significantly better in the inferential ($M = 9.53, SD 1.98$) than in literal ($M = 9.16, SD 2.43$) comprehension skills. Performance on subskill in inferring meaning was superior ($M = 1.87, SD 0.35$), but weak ($M = 1.18, SD 0.76$) in using library resources.

The English-reading performance profile of the sixth graders in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06 is as follows: The girls ($M = 20.04, SD 3.20$) significantly outperformed the boys ($M = 17.50, SD 4.27$). Performance did not significantly differ according to age.

A borderline significant difference between non-Cebuans and Cebuans favoring the latter (M difference = 0.82, $SED = .43, t(318) = 1.93, p = .054$) was found.

The attitude towards reading had a positive significant relationship to performance ($r = .31, p < .01$). Performance was not significantly related to eye health as perceived by the respondents.

Respondents who belonged to the extended family type performed significantly higher than those without parents family structure ($F = 3.99, p = .02$). Respondents who have college graduate fathers ($t = 3.01, p < .01$) and/or mothers ($t = 3.60, p < .001$) scored significantly higher than those who have non-college graduate parents.

Increased English language use at home was significantly related to performance ($r = .209, p < .01$). Parental reading involvement had a significant positive relationship to performance ($r = .14, p < .01$). More number of pages read independently had a significant positive relationship to performance ($r = .30, p < .01$). The time spent in school library use did not significantly relate to performance.

The respondents who indicated NE "no event" in learning "using library resources" skill scored significantly higher in performance over those who indicated AWI (answering worksheets independently) ($F = 3.99, p < .001$). Those who indicated AWI event in "predicting outcomes" scored significantly higher than those who indicated NE ($F = 3.78, p <$

.01). All other defined events in learning English-reading subskills did not make significant differences in English-reading performance.

No identified learning reading event significantly influenced the English-reading subskills in “decoding meaning of words,” “using library resources,” “finding the main idea,” “organizing ideas,” “perceiving cause and effect relationships,” “drawing conclusions,” and “evaluating ideas and making judgments.” However, the following events significantly influenced some English-reading subskills:

TDWCI (teacher direct whole class instruction) positively influenced the “following series of direction” skill ($\beta = .17$, $\Delta R^2 = .015$ at $p < .01$). AWI (answering worksheets independently) positively influenced “sequencing of events” ($\beta = .12$, $\Delta R^2 = .014$ at $p < .05$), and “predicting outcomes,” ($\beta = .20$, $\Delta R^2 = .039$ at $p < .001$), but negatively influenced “noting significant details” ($\beta = -.12$, $\Delta R^2 = .015$ at $p < .05$). OE (other event) negatively influenced “inferring meanings” ($\beta = -.13$, $\Delta R^2 = .018$ at $p < .001$).

The child reading-related variables on being a girl, having a positive attitude towards reading, and being a Cebuan significantly predicted the overall English-reading performance of the sixth graders in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06 ($R^2_{\text{total}} = .157$).

The home reading-related variables on having a college graduate mother, parental reading involvement by making reading materials accessible at home, and frequent daily English language use at home significantly predicted the overall English-reading performance of the sixth graders in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06 ($R^2_{\text{total}} = .082$).

The school reading-related variables on independent reading, and all the defined learning-reading events in some way significantly predicted the overall English-reading performance of the sixth graders in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06 ($R^2_{\text{total}} = .239$). The events paired with the learning of a reading skill that predicted the overall performance were the TDWCI rather than OE in “drawing conclusions” and “organizing ideas,” as well as TDWCI rather than NE in “decoding meaning of words;” TCI rather than AWI in “using library resources” and TCI rather than NE in “sequencing events;” AWI rather than NE in “predicting outcomes;”

OE rather than NE in “following series of direction” and “decoding meaning of words;” and NE rather than AWI in “using library resources.”

Combining the child, home, and school reading-related variables, being a girl, attitude towards reading, having a college graduate mother, and the learning-reading events (TDWCI, TCI, AWI, OE), in some ways, significantly predicted the English-reading performance of the sixth graders in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06 ($R^2_{\text{total}} = .279$). The events that were most outstanding predictors after combining all of the categorized significant variables were TDWCI rather than OE in “organizing ideas” and “perceiving cause-effect relationship,” as well as TDWCI rather than NE in “following a series of direction” and “finding main ideas;” TCI rather than NE in “inferring meaning of words;” AWI rather than NE “in following a series of direction;” and OE rather than NE in “decoding meaning of words.”

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that, taken separately, the child, home, and school reading-related factors predicted the English-reading performance of the sixth graders in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06. Taken as whole, among all the defined factors, being a girl, attitude towards reading, having a college graduate mother, and learning-reading events (Teacher-Direct-Whole-Class Instruction, Teacher-Class Interaction, Answering Worksheets Independently, Other Events), in some ways, significantly predicted the English-reading performance of the sixth graders in Adventist Schools in Mindanao, Philippines, during the school year 2005-06 ($R^2_{\text{total}} = .279$).

The reading process is interactive and involves personal characteristics, family or home environment, and school influences. These predictors are salient basis to the profile of sixth grader or sixth graders who can possibly perform satisfactorily in the reading tests of similar conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the result of the study, the following recommendations are offered;

1. The parents of sixth graders in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines. Since the sixth graders indicated that parents' involvement in the reading activities was average, getting more involved is very necessary. The positive significant result of making reading accessible to children suggests for a continued regular supply of reading materials at home. Using the English language at home must as well be encouraged. Above all, maintaining the extended family structure, which means the presence of the immediate family members and the closest kin, is very essential to a Filipino school child.

2. The school administrators in Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines. It is worth noting that the variable "library use" did not come out as a predictor and the "using library resources" skill was performed the weakest. This result is possibly caused by unequipped school libraries as personally observed. It is recommended, therefore, that school administrators equip their school libraries.

3. The sixth-graders English-reading teachers. The significantly related independent reading variable to performance suggests that teacher must continue to require independent reading reports to children. Strategies in helping the boys as well as the older pupils in the class improve in reading must be given due attention. Furthermore, the reading teachers must endeavor to use appropriate learning event in teaching a reading subskill.

4. The reading researcher. In this study, the predictors of sixth-graders reading performance in the specific population are established, and therefore further research can be made on different populations to check the reliability of the result. The time spent in the school library and the library skills were very unsatisfactory. It is recommended that further study be done on the need of school libraries. Furthermore, the findings on the influences of learning events suggest further study. Other learning events that have not been identified in this study as contributory to English reading performance is another area to explore.

5. Curriculum developers and undergraduate professors. The

curriculum developers and undergraduate professors of teaching reading courses for teacher education curriculum must seriously consider emphasizing the TDWCI, TCI, and AWI strategies and other learning events not defined in this study to equip the future teachers.

6. The Seventh-day Adventist church. The church leaders especially the education, children ministries, and parent and home departments must start a seminar about successful parenting by calling attention to a continued or even better home and school partnership in educating children.

7. The educational authorities. Educational authorities may now include the fact that both home and school must be strengthened, and not only one institution of learning working by itself. This result may be incorporated in the theoretical framework of the very recent Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) (RPDepED, 2005) and its application to Adventist schools in Mindanao, Philippines.

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