

Reading Proficiency Levels in English among the Intermediate Graders in Manito District SY 2022-2023

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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to determine the reading proficiency levels in English among intermediate graders in the Manito District, as well as the factors that affect these levels. The research design utilized for this study is descriptive-correlational, which describes the relationship between the factors and the reading proficiency in English of the intermediate graders. The four categories of factors that were explored in this study were pupil factors, teacher factors, home factors, and curriculum factors. The research findings indicated that pupil factors such as vocabulary, comprehension, and word recognition impact intermediate graders' reading proficiency levels in English. Home factors such as parental involvement, access to reading materials, and socioeconomic status also contribute to the development of reading



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proficiency. Teacher and curriculum factors had no significant relationship with reading proficiency levels in English. By addressing the identified factors, parents can be provided with support, and pupils can be given reading materials to create a home learning environment that promotes literacy development. A contextualized illustrated short stories and workbook as supplementary reading material was developed to improve reading proficiency levels in English among intermediate pupils.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is the fundamental cornerstone of the educational process. It is a necessary skill for both academic and lifelong learning. Learning new concepts and expanding one's knowledge are all facilitated by reading. It is a complex task requiring cognitive ability (Ratminingsih et al., 2020). Pourhosein and Sabouri (2016) claimed that reading is an active process in which readers use effective strategies to create a meaningful text representation.

According to Azevedo et al. (2021), reading has a major impact on children's cognitive development because it helps them become more analytical and critical thinkers, focus better, ignite their imaginations, foster greater creativity, and improve their vocabulary and communication skills. Anton (2019) also stated that a learner must have strong reading comprehension to understand and evaluate written material. Pupils can use this ability to find pertinent information, draw inferences, and recognize details. On the other hand, a reader who struggles with comprehension will face challenges in everyday life (Bruggink et al., 2022). Cadiz-Gabejan and Quirino (2021) claimed that a poor understanding of the written text impacted the reader's reading proficiency. For learners to succeed academically, they must be proficient readers. Lack of reading proficiency prevents learners from accessing the necessary resources to continue their education.

Based on the findings of the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) cited by Mullis et al. (2021), which assessed the fourth-graders reading proficiency across 57 nations, the top five countries were Singapore, Hong Kong SAR, Russia, England, and Finland, while the bottom five were South Africa, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, and Brazil.

The PIRLS assessment results show that fourth-grade students from various nations have a wide range of reading proficiency. With average scores above 550, all top-performing nations outperformed the bottom-performing nations, which had scores of 400 or lower. This suggests a significant gap in reading proficiency levels among children in different parts of the world.

One interesting finding from the PIRLS assessment is that nations with

high economic development did not always have the highest reading proficiency levels. For instance, while Finland was among the top five countries in terms of reading proficiency, other highly developed countries such as Australia and the Netherlands had a lower average score compared to it.

The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 evaluated the learning outcomes of Grade 5 students from six Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Lao PDR, as also mentioned in the study of Bernardo et al. (2022) and UNICEF (2020). It's important to note that there may not be a direct comparison between the two assessments because PIRLS evaluated students in the fourth grade, and SEA-PLM evaluated students in the fifth grade. Nonetheless, both assessments provide insightful information about reading ability in Southeast Asia and globally.

Meanwhile, the SEA-PLM 2019 evaluation provides insight into reading ability in Southeast Asian nations. Vietnam had the highest average score, followed by Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Lao PDR. These results suggest significant differences in reading proficiency among Southeast Asian countries, with some countries performing better than others. The differences in reading ability between these nations emphasize how important it is to address reading-related issues to raise reading proficiency levels in low-performing countries. The results of SEA-PLM 2019 confirm ongoing disparities in learning achievement, with children from wealthier backgrounds achieving higher levels while those from the most deprived backgrounds struggle to access high-quality learning opportunities.

Overall, the results of both assessments highlight the importance of improving children's reading proficiency levels globally. Reading well is an essential ability that can affect a child's chances for school, employment, and general well-being.

Improving the reading proficiency levels among learners, particularly in English, can help meet global standards. Learners have to be proficient in English to communicate effectively and understand what they read in the language.

The Department of Education (DepEd) continuously works hard to raise educational standards in the Philippines. Since the enactment of the Enhanced Basic Education Act, also known as Republic Act 10533 (Official Gazette, 2013), the department has now implemented the K–12 curriculum. This act enhances the Philippine educational system by ensuring that every learner can receive a quality education that is on par with international standards and is based on a pedagogically sound curriculum. As stated in the DepEd Order No. 31 s. 2012, the curriculum requires grades 1-3 to be taught in their mother tongue (MTB) as

the medium of instruction, while grades 4 through 10 are taught using English and Filipino.

To fulfil its goal of turning every child in the nation into a reader, the Department of Education continuously improves its reading programs to raise the reading proficiency of every learner. The schools use the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) 2018 to evaluate the reading performance of intermediate-grade pupils in both English and Filipino. This comprises a set of graded passages administered to the class or to individual learners to assess their reading level regarding frustration, instructional, and independent reading. The frustration reading level is how readers struggle to read texts that cannot effectively engage them (Pado et al., 2018). The instructional reading level is where readers gain the most from teacher-led instruction, while the independent reading level is where readers achieve nearly perfect oral reading and comprehension. Identifying the areas for improvement and implementing effective interventions can improve reading proficiency levels.

Based on the result of the Phil-IRI pretest in English, most of the pupils are at a frustration reading level. Since pupils struggle to understand what they read while some struggle to read in English, it will affect their performance in the language. The academic performance in English among the intermediate graders shows that the majority of the pupils, or 33.12 %, have satisfactory ratings (80-84 average), 25.70% have very satisfactory ratings (85-89 average), 20.67% were fairly satisfactory (75-79 average), 18.32% were outstanding (90-100), and 2.19 % of the intermediate graders did not meet the expectation (below 75 average).

The findings of this study provided valuable insights into the factors affecting reading proficiency levels among intermediate graders. They informed the development of contextualized supplementary reading material aimed at improving pupils' reading proficiency levels in English in the Manito District.

FRAMEWORK

The Schema Theory of David Rumelhart, as cited by Yan (2020) and Torres (2019), and the Cognitive Theory of Jean Piaget (1896–1988) are the two theories that served as the foundation for this study.

Schema theory explains how a person uses their background knowledge, or schema, to comprehend the text they are reading. The human brain has a stored schema, according to schema theory. The schema comprises background knowledge that a person has learned from experience. Schema has a significant impact on the reader's cognitive processes. Reading comprehension will fail unless the reader can draw associations between the information in the text and

their schema, according to Yan (2020).

Readers only comprehend what they read when it connects to what they already know, according to Ambruster et al. (2002). The reader constructs meaning from the text by connecting information with their background knowledge. People must combine the text's information with their background knowledge to comprehend it (Zhao & Zhu, 2012). Readers comprehend what they read because they can extend the stimulus beyond its graphical representation to consider whether it belongs to a relevant group of previously acquired concepts. The reader decides what something means while reading by bringing information, knowledge, emotion, experiences, and culture to the written word. The reader creates the reading process through the interaction of the text and the reader's background knowledge or schemata (Shen, 2008).

According to cognitive theory, the interaction between innate capacities (nature) and environmental events (nurture) leads to cognitive development. Nature describes how a person's genetics affect their development, whereas nurture describes how a person's environment, including their relationships and experiences, affects their development (Cherry, 2022). Each stage of an individual's development involves learning, which is influenced by his environment and the experiences he has gained from it. The experiences of the pupil gained from the activities in both school and at home can be a big contributor to the development of the learner.

According to cognitivism, reading involves gleaning meaning from the text. As he uses his reading abilities and comprehension techniques, a child is seen as an active constructor of his reading. Additionally, as he engages with the text, the child uses his schema (Marquez et al., 2009).

The experiences pupils have during the educational process aid in developing more schemata, which are stored in their minds. Increased reading activities for pupils will foster their interest in reading and help them acquire relevant background knowledge. The pupils can use this background knowledge or schemata to connect to the text and comprehend its meaning.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study state that the learners' experiences influenced their cognitive development. These learning opportunities aid learners in developing their background knowledge, which they can use to comprehend texts written in English. By involving learners in reading activities that will challenge their thinking, teachers and parents can assist learners in building background knowledge. It is crucial to choose a reading selection to which learners can relate their experiences to increase their interest in reading activities. More motivated learners show more interest in reading-related activities. Additionally, learners who participate more in reading activities at school and

home will increase their reading performance and level of reading proficiency.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the reading proficiency levels in English among the intermediate graders in Manito District for SY 2022-2023. Specifically, it sought to identify the status of the reading proficiency levels in English among the intermediate graders based on the Phil-IRI Pretest result, determine the factors affecting the reading proficiency levels in English as perceived by the English teachers and the school reading coordinators, determine if there is a significant relationship between the factors and the reading proficiency in English of the intermediate graders.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational and survey research design. Quantitative research involves collecting numerical data that can be analyzed statistically. Descriptive research is a type of research that aims to describe a phenomenon or a group of people or objects. It identifies the characteristics, frequency patterns, trends, and categories (McCombes, 2022). It refers to questions, study design, and data analysis on a specific topic (Harappa, 2021).

Correlational research design investigates the relationships of variables that are not controlled or subjected to manipulation. It shows how strongly and in what direction two or more variables are correlated. It is perfect for quickly gathering information from natural settings. This aids in the external validity of generalizing findings to real-life situations, according to Bhandari (2021).

Descriptive-correlational research is identified as an appropriate research design in this study since it determines the relationships between the factors and the reading proficiency of intermediate graders.

Participants

The respondent teachers of this study included all intermediate-grade English teachers who are regular-permanent and the school reading coordinators. The respondents were 58 English teachers and 7 school reading coordinators; the majority, or 54, 83.08 %, were females, and 11 or 16.92%, were males. Most respondents, or 33.85%, were aged 41-50, 30.77% were aged 31-40, 18.46% were below 30 years old and 16.92% were above 51. The majority of the respondents, or 52.31%, had an experience of more than ten years in

teaching, 35.38% had 4-10 years of experience, and only 12.31% had 0-3 years of experience. The total enumeration of respondents was done since there were only 65 respondents, including intermediate-grade English teachers and school reading coordinators in Manito District.

Instrument

A survey questionnaire was composed of (A) Pupil Factors, (B) Teacher factors, (C) Home factors, and (D) Curriculum factors to determine the factors affecting the reading proficiency levels of the intermediate graders. The indicators in the pupil factors were from the literacy domains mentioned in the Phil-IRI manual 2018, and the other factors were conceptualized based on the experience and observation of the researcher, which were examined and validated by three master teachers in the district; a master teacher II and doctor of education, a master teacher I having 33 years of experience in teaching reading, and master teacher I who is also the reading coordinator in the district. The questionnaire was also reviewed by the adviser and evaluated by the panel.

A 4-point Likert scale was employed in the instrument. The reliability test was conducted to evaluate the quality and consistency of the scores of the questions using the Test-Retest Method. The computed correlation was 0.81, which means high reliability using the Spearman foot rule formula. The result was interpreted based on the following: 1.00 (Perfect Correlation); 0.91 – 0.99 (Very High); 0.71 – 0.90 (High); 0.41 – 0.70 (Moderate); 0.21 – 0.40 (Slight); 0.01 – 0.20 (Negligible). Thus, the computed correlation value indicated that the instrument is reliable.

To determine the reading proficiency levels of the intermediate graders, the following computation is used: A. Word Reading = $\frac{\text{number of words} - \text{number of miscues}}{\text{number of words}} \times 100$; B. Comprehension = $\frac{\text{no. of correct answers}}{\text{no. of questions}} \times 100$. The Phil-IRI uses the oral reading criteria: Independent Level (97-100% word reading and 80-100% comprehension), Instructional (90-96% word reading and 59-79% comprehension), Frustration (89% and below word reading and 58% and below comprehension).

Data Gathering

The researcher sought permission from the district supervisor and the school heads of each school to use the Phil-IRI pretest results and asked for a copy of the consolidated Phil-IRI results from the district reading coordinator to determine the reading proficiency of the intermediate pupils. The district English coordinator also sought a copy of the academic performance in English.

The researcher informed each respondent about the purposes of the

study and guaranteed the strict confidentiality of the data gathered. Afterwards, the instrument was personally distributed to the respondent teachers and school reading coordinators, who were asked to fill out the questionnaire, which was retrieved personally from them. The survey's findings were used to create the suggested supplementary reading material in English.

Research Ethics Protocol

The participants were told that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary. Additionally, they received assurances that their identity would be kept confidential. Information was kept private and will not be disclosed in this paper. The researcher got consent from the respondents to answer the questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis

To answer objective number 1, which is to identify the status of the reading proficiency levels of the intermediate graders, the researcher utilized the weighted mean. The researcher used the weighted mean for objective 2, which is to determine the factors affecting the reading proficiency levels in English, such as pupil, teacher, home, and curriculum factors.

To interpret the study's findings, the researcher used the four-point Likert scale and the corresponding quantification and adjectival interpretation. To answer objective 3, which is to determine if there is a significant relationship between the factors and the reading proficiency in English of the intermediate graders, the researcher used the Person Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the analysis and interpretation of the data collected and discusses the findings. The discussion was presented based on the objective of the study.

Reading Proficiency Levels in English among the Intermediate Graders

Table 1 shows the reading proficiency levels in English among the intermediate graders. Based on the district consolidated report of the Phil-IRI pretest in English of the intermediate graders (Grade IV, V, VI), there were 1,842 pupils tested: 1,169 intermediate pupils were under frustration reading level, 438 were in the instructional reading level, and 235 pupils were at the independent reading level. The findings showed that most of the pupils in the intermediate

grade were at the frustration reading level in English.

The result of the Phil-IRI implies that only a few pupils were proficient in reading English, and the majority was less proficient, which may also impact their academic performance. Since reading is a necessary component for every subject taught, it is an integral part of the educational process (Cimmiyotti, 2013, cited by Nyarko, Kugbey, Kofi, Cole and Adertwi, 2018). The learner falls behind in terms of achievement in both reading and other subjects because of poor word reading and vocabulary (Gedik & Akyol, 2022).

This further implies that each school in the district may intensify the reading programs. Administrators, teachers, and parents may work together to do follow-up reading at home and school to improve reading proficiency levels and support the overall development of every pupil in Manito District.

Factors Affecting the Reading Proficiency Levels in English

The study focused on the factors affecting the reading proficiency levels among the intermediate graders in terms of pupil factors, teacher factors, home factors, and curriculum factors.

The data revealed that the pupil factors had a weighted mean of 3.56, interpreted as strongly agree. This means that pupil factors affect reading proficiency in English. This implies that the low reading proficiency in English among the intermediate graders was affected by the pupils' limited vocabulary in English, difficulty recognizing words, and difficulty comprehending the English text. Pupils having these difficulties may affect their reading proficiencies and their academic performance.

According to McPherson (2015), word recognition is important because it enables individuals to read fluently. At the same time, Meyer and Felton (1999) state that poor fluency stunts vocabulary and comprehension development. Fluent readers are more likely to benefit from acquired vocabulary during reading (Paige, 2020). Limited vocabulary, poor language comprehension, and students' struggles to read affect other areas of learning (Jalongo and Sobolak, 2011). The study by Manaois (2021) revealed that poor vocabulary, grammar, and low comprehension contribute to poor understanding of what the student reads, which affects their reading performance.

Meanwhile, the study by Mohammed and Amponsah (2018) found that one factor affecting reading comprehension is the absence of pre-reader books in schools and homes, confidence to practice reading in class, and a teacher's knowledge of strategies to teach reading. Hu et al. (2022) claimed that vocabulary is important for reading comprehension. Also, the study of Decena (2021) revealed that a lack of vocabulary knowledge and understanding

hampered comprehension. The study of Pourhosein and Sabouri (2016) asserted that word knowledge, vocabulary, spelling, and capacity to comprehend words in print significantly impacted reading comprehension.

As to the teacher factors, the data showed that it has a weighted mean of 2.29, which is interpreted as disagree. This means that the teacher factors did not contribute to the intermediate pupils' low reading proficiency in English. This implies that the teachers are doing their best to help the pupils learn to read and improve their reading proficiency level in English. Most of the teachers in the district were also equipped with training and had more experience in teaching.

The study of Cabalo and Cabalo (2019) contradicts the present study. Their study found that teacher factors adversely affect pupils' reading proficiency. The study of Vazques-Lopez and Huerta-Manzanilla (2018) also revealed that the student-teacher relationship contributes to the pupils' low reading abilities. However, according to the study by Manaos (2021), the teacher is not a contributing factor in pupils' reading comprehension.

As to the home factors, the data revealed that home factors had a 3.56 weighted mean interpreted as strongly agree. This means that home factors such as parental involvement, access to reading materials, and socioeconomic status greatly contribute to reading proficiency levels in English. This implies that pupils whose parents are involved, supported, and provided the needs of their children in terms of education were found to have a higher reading proficiency level. Access to varied reading materials to follow up on home reading greatly impacts reading proficiency.

This study concurs with the study of Estremera and Estremera (2018), which revealed that home factors such as no follow-up at home, less motivation from siblings, low educational background of parents, being forced to work for an extra income, and the absence of reading materials at home also affected the reading comprehension of the learner. The study by Hanus (2016) also cited that socioeconomic status impacts a student's learning of a new language. Meanwhile, the study by Maleon (2022) indicates that certain home factors, such as parental support, computer access, and home atmosphere, influence reading proficiency. Further, the study of Cekiso et al. (2022) found that parents' low educational attainment, socioeconomic status, unfavourable environment, and lack of reading materials at home and school impact the students' reading performance. Additionally, Geske and Ozola's (2020) study found that parental involvement affects children's reading achievement. Likewise, the Nawas (2019) study found that family wealth and parental education impacted the students' reading performance.

As to the curriculum factors, the data revealed that it had a weighted

mean of 3.16, which was interpreted as agree. This means that increasing the allotted time for reading allows pupils to engage in more reading activities, which may develop their love for reading and help improve their reading proficiency. Learning competencies may give more emphasis on reading engagement. This implies that schools may intensify their reading programs and maximize the allotted time for reading activities using varied reading materials. English competencies may also give more emphasis on the reading engagement of pupils.

According to Locher and Pfost (2019), the amount of time spent reading increases reading comprehension. Likewise, Meyer (2016) states that when students increase the number of minutes they read per day, this improves their comprehension.

Relationship between the Factors and the Reading Proficiency

The result showed the relationship between the factors and the reading proficiency levels in English. It was revealed that the pupil factors had a computed t value of 7.00, higher than the tabular t value of 1.96 at 5%, so the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the pupil factors and the reading proficiency in English have a significant relationship. This implies that pupil factors may affect the intermediate graders' reading proficiency levels in English.

As to the relationship between the teacher factors and the reading proficiency levels in English, the data revealed that the computed t value of teacher factors is 0.59, less than the tabular t value of 1.96 at 5%, so the null hypothesis is accepted. This means there is no significant relationship between the teacher factors and the reading proficiency in English among the intermediate graders. This implies that teachers were doing their best to help the pupils learn to read and improve their reading proficiency in English.

Further, the result showed that home factors had a computed t value of 4.04, higher than the tabular t value of 5% of 1.96, so the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that home factors and reading proficiency in English have a significant relationship. This implies that parents have less involvement in their children's studies and that there is limited access to reading materials and other learning resources due to their socioeconomic status.

Finally, the curriculum factors had a tabulated t value of 0.33, less than the tabular t value of 1.96, so the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that the curriculum factors and the reading proficiency in English have no significant relationship. This implies that the curriculum did not affect the reading proficiency levels of the pupils; however, effective implementation of the programs is necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated: (1) The reading proficiency level in English of the majority of the intermediate graders in Manito District was at the frustration level. (2) The factors affecting the reading proficiency levels in English were pupil and home factors, and the teacher and curriculum factors had no significant relationship with reading proficiency. (3) The contextualized illustrated short stories and workbooks as the intermediate graders may utilize supplementary reading materials to help them increase their reading proficiency levels.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The result of the study might be translated through a journal article for publications or social media for information dissemination. This may also be translated by conducting an orientation to parents and teachers about the factors affecting the reading proficiency levels in English among intermediate graders. The researcher would submit a copy of the manuscript to the study site so that teachers, school reading coordinators and administrators may become aware of the result of the study. Further, each school may be given a copy of supplementary reading material, which is the “Contextualized Illustrated Short Stories and Workbook, which can be used in the reading activities at school or at-home reading.

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