

TEACHERS' READING STRATEGIES: ITS IMPLICATION TO THE READING LEVEL AMONG EARLY GRADE LEARNERS

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Abstract

Despite the several researches conducted on reading, still it is the most interesting topic until the present. This quantitative study aimed to determine the relationship of the teachers' reading strategies to the reading level of the early grade learners ages 8-10 years old. The reading level of 2 groups of learners were compared in this study, those with the inclusion of speed and the other are those with the exclusion of speed in the computation of their reading level. The data revealed in this study that there is no significant difference in the reading level of the pupil-respondents in the group with the inclusion of speed when they are grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy. On the other hand, it was found out that there is a significant difference in the reading level of the pupil-respondents in the group with the exclusion of speed when they are grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy. In the post hoc analysis, pupils, whose teacher categorized as Level 2 or those who have attended 1-5 reading related trainings attained higher reading level as compared to other pupils. 1 to 5 trainings may not be that much compared to other teachers, perhaps with the proper selection of the reading related trainings and application inside the class, this will have a positive impact to the development of the reading level of the early grade learners. Furthermore, the data show that teachers in the group of pupil-respondents with the inclusion of speed always used teaching strategy A and B. They also used teaching strategy C, E, F G, H K and L. However they sometimes used the teaching strategy D, I and J. On the other hand, teachers in the group of pupil -respondents with the exclusion of speed always used teaching strategy A only. They also used teaching strategy B, E, G, H, I and L. However, teaching strategy C, D, J, and K are sometimes used. The table shows that teachers in the both group always used teaching strategy A only or the "Small Group Reading Instruction". Therefore, this study recommends to every reading teacher to utilize various reading strategies after having found out that early grade learners taught with varied reading strategies manifested a better performance in terms of their reading level.

Keywords: *teachers' reading strategies, reading level, early grade learners, implication to reading, Phil-IRI, significant relationship, teachers' training, reading speed,*

INTRODUCTION

At its most basic level, early childhood education (ECE) encompasses all forms of education, both formal and informal, provided to young children up to approximately 3-8 years of age. This education is fundamental to the development of a child and can significantly shape the later years of an individual's life. Studies that have been performed over the past several decades have given added weight to the importance of early childhood education in preparing children to enter and succeed in a post-kindergarten school environment. Some of the benefits include a diminished risk of social-emotional mental health problems and increased self-sufficiency as children mature and enter adulthood.

With this premise, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Philippines had intensified several programs that will nurture the early development of young Filipinos. Specifically, the Early Childhood Care and Development Information System was developed by the DSWD in 2006, with the mandate and assistance of UNICEF. The information system was designed to establish an automated and state monitoring system that generates reliable, comprehensive and timely data and information on the ECCD program for effective monitoring and evaluation, as well as for social protection program and policy development, planning, standards setting and improving service delivery.

Among the programs emphasized in the early childhood education is the beginning reading by introducing the symbols and sounds of every letters. This is a very good introductory delivery on the complex processes of teaching reading. It has been observed that learners are exposed nowadays to different ideas, people and products; and viewpoints increase as rapidly as the changes in the society. Just about everyone in the Philippines knows how

to read. As a nation, almost everybody enjoys a high rate of literacy. Unfortunately, not every Filipino is a good reader who can derive meaning from a written material and go on to analyze and apply that meaning. Thus, readers who can only read facts and nothing more can never be called good readers. (Santos et.al, 2013)

In order to make teaching reading efficient, schools must also look into the strategies employed by the teachers. Often the term skill and strategy are used interchangeably, but there is still difference between both of them. An important distinction can be made between strategies and skills (McDonough, 1995). Strategies can be defined as conscious actions that learners take to achieve desired objectives, but a skill is a strategy that has become automatic. This characterization underscores the active role that readers play in strategic reading. Alderson emphasized that as learners consciously learn and practice specific reading strategies, the strategies moved from conscious to unconscious, also from strategy to skill. The goal for explicit strategy instruction is to move readers from conscious control of reading strategies to unconscious use of reading skills.

In relation to the aforementioned statements, this study was conducted to determine the significant relationship of the teachers' reading strategies to the reading level in English of the early grade learners.

RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

On Reading Strategies

Literature on reading strategies have been abundant in recent years though different people have addressed the issue from different perspectives. Some researchers attempted to identify reading strategies available to various groups of readers (Young & Oxford 1997). Others, based on their theoretical and empirical research, recommended strategies and techniques that can be used to facilitate reading comprehension. Still others have investigated the effects of various reading strategies on improving comprehension (Afflerbach, 1990; Nolan 1991).

Reading strategy which is defined varies from one researcher to researcher. According to Cohen (1986), reading strategies refer to those mental processes that readers consciously choose to use in accomplishing reading tasks. As Bloch defined, reading strategies are technique and methods readers use to make their reading successful. These methods include how to conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how readers make senses of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand. Just as Anderson (2003a) explained, to achieve success, readers should take the active role in strategic reading, learning how to use a range of reading strategies that serve their purpose.

On The Role of Reading Strategies

As Oxford explained, strategies are the tools for active, self-directed involvement that is necessary for developing communicating ability. Strategies are not a single event, but rather a creative sequence of events that learners used actively. Anderson (1991) indicated that there is no single set of processing strategies that significantly contributes to success in second language tasks. Besides, he also noted that strategic reading means not only knowing what strategy to use, but knowing how to use and integrate arrange of strategies. Pressley et. al (1989) described that reading that reading strategies were conscious, instantiated, and flexible plans readers applied and adapted to a variety of texts and tasks. In short, reading strategies are tools which allow readers to be more actively involved in reading.

On Reading Strategies Instruction

Reading is regarded as a complex process and the prime objective of reading is comprehension. A dozen of studies have proven that reading strategies are effective in promoting comprehension (Anderson 1991; carrel et. al (1989). Besides, considerable research documents that good readers are strategic readers who use more strategies than poor readers as they read (Dole et. al 1991; Erwin & Baker, 1989). Therefore teaching readers how to use specific reading strategies should be a prime consideration (Anderson, 1990; Oxford, 1990). In addition, reading strategies should be aware of the need for students to become effective strategy users through explicit teacher modelling in reading instruction (Richards &Renandya, 2002).Saavedra (2020) also emphasized in her study that in teaching reading to the primary learners, it is also good to consider their first language.

On Teaching Reading Strategies

Much research indicates that all students can benefit from strategy instruction. For instance, to aim at investigating the effects of teaching reading strategies on reading comprehension for ESL learners, Zhang (1992) conducted a study to incorporate four reading strategies into reading instruction. The four strategies are cognitive, memory, compensation, and test-taking strategies. The result indicates that the reading strategies instruction really help the students in the experimental group make more improvement in reading comprehension than the control

group. However, there was no interactive effect between the reading levels of the reader and the teaching method used.

Song (1998) modified Palincsar and Brown's reading strategies to teach in an on going EFL university reading classroom. The finding showed that the reading strategy training EFL college students reading proficiency. It revealed that less able readers might benefit more from the training than more able readers. In order to take advantage of the potential of collaboration for language development in content classroom, Klingner and Vaughn (2000) researched the helping behaviour of the fifth-grade students while using collaborative strategic reading (CSR) in ESL content classes. With CSR, students work in groups, and each student in a group performed a different role, such as a leader, clunk expert, announcer, encourager and timekeeper. Students assisted one another in applying four Collaborative Strategic Reading Strategies: preview, click and clunk, get the gist and wrap-up to facilitate their comprehension of context-area text. The result revealed that student's helping behaviour was facilitated by provision of specific instruction in when and how to help their peers. It is worth stressing that readers especially with lower level language proficiency might benefit from the strategy instruction.

Chen et.al, (2005) also conducted a study examining the use of reading strategies among EFL students in Taiwan. Through the questionnaire of 200 college students, Chen intended to find out whether good foreign language comprehenders would differ from poor ones in the frequency of their use of certain "effective strategies". Her findings indicated that majority of strategies were underused by Chinese EFL students of all levels. While this may imply that there was still enormous room for the practice of the strategic instruction, it is imperative to keep it in mind what most of the EFL readers in Taiwan need may be simply a revival of their dormant skills or a promotion of their old skills to higher level rather than instruction on brand new tricks.

Based on the academic records of 218 students, Chang (1998) chose the top ten and bottom ten percent of college students for her study. Subjects in that study were 20 college-level students who were studying English as their major in Taiwan. Her finding indicated that high achievers were different from low achievers in the quantity and quality of their strategy used.

Cheng (2000) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between four metacognitive factors (subjects' perception about their reading abilities, about repair strategies, and about hat He collected 233 college students' questionnaires to measure their metacognitive awareness of their reading processes in Chinese and English. The results indicated that for reading in Chinese, these subjects metacognitive conceptualization tended to be more global or top-down; in addition, this top-down approach contributed positively to their reading performance in Chinese. Similarly for reading in English, global strategies were also related to subjects reading ability. However, when reading in English, these subjects also relied on some local reading strategies.

Hsu (2000) collected 315 students' questionnaires to examine the reading comprehension difficulties encountered by Junior high school students in Taiwan, to investigate their reading strategies and to compare the differences between good and poor readers. This investigation focused on reading comprehension difficulties they encountered and reading strategies they used at the three stages-pre-reading, while reading and post reading. She gave three suggestions from her finding: (1) JHS teachers should put more emphasis on the teaching of reading comprehension and offer students with systematical and sequential raining in reading comprehension, such as instructing the use of reading strategies, and doing more English comprehension practices. (2) Teachers should provide students, especially those who cannot use reading strategies effectively, with practical guidance in how to learn reading comprehension effectively from English reading programs at school. Then they may able to read independently at home. (3) English teachers should provide various types of reading comprehension practices and related reading materials to help students extend their interest in reading comprehension.

Lin (2004) modified Palincsar and Brown's reading strategies to teach 43 ninth-grade junior high school students. Those students were instructed to learn five selected strategies, i.e., prediction, clarifying, questioning, story mapping and summarizing for here months. The finding showed that the reading strategy instruction made students become more strategic and active in reading. Among these reading strategies, students claimed that clarification and story mapping were the most helpful strategies. Because the teaching material in the study was the novel, *Anne of Green Gable*, it may be a heavy burden for students.

Chen conducted a study incorporating five reading strategies into reading instruction to teach third-grade senior high school students. The five strategies were skimming for the main idea, identifying topics and main ideas, making predictions, making inferences, and guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words from context. The result indicated that the reading strategies instruction helped the students make more improvement in reading

comprehension. However, it was done dogmatic to conclude that the improvement attributes to the reading strategies instruction since there was no control group to contrast.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study was conducted in one of the districts under the Department of Education in Zamboanga City. It comprised of seven (7) elementary schools of varying size and type located at the west coast from the city proper. However, only four schools voluntarily participated in this study. The study was delimited to inclusion and exclusion of the reading speed as a measure on the evaluation of the pupil-respondents' comprehension level. The target population of this study was the 160 fourth grader pupils within the age bracket of 8-11 years old, mixture of male and female.

To meet the objectives of this study, the following research instruments were used:

A. Phil-IRI Silent Reading Passages

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is an initiative of the Bureau of Learning Delivery, Department of Education that directly addresses its thrust to make every Filipino child a reader. It is anchored on the flagship program of the Department: "Every Child A Reader Program," which aims to make every Filipino child a reader and a writer at his/her grade level.

The Phil-IRI is an informal reading inventory composed of graded passages designed to determine the individual student's performance in silent reading. The Phil-IRI Silent Reading Test (Morris and Gunning, 2008) gives quantitative information about the pupil's silent reading capabilities. Quantitative information shows the reading levels namely: frustration, instructional and independent. Furthermore, it uses predetermined set of criteria in identifying the reading levels of the pupils such as the reading speed and percentage of correct answers to comprehension questions. It has adapted the combination of bands of reading rate (words per minute) proposed by Morris and Gunning (2008).

On the other hand in the group with the exclusion of speed, the reading speed was not recorded in the interpretation of the pupil-respondents reading level. The number of the correct answers for the comprehension questions were recorded and used to determine pupil-respondents reading level.

B. Interview Questionnaire and Checklist with Guided Questions for the reading teacher- respondent

This instrument is composed of two parts. This was answered honestly by the teacher-respondents. The first part was employed to know the teacher-respondents' background which also served as the moderating variables such as their highest educational attainment, length of service, teacher's training on teaching reading and teachers' teaching reading strategies. checklist of the strategies that teacher-respondents are using in teaching reading was also utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the Reading Level of the Pupil-Respondents Grouped According to their Teacher's Teaching Strategy Group with the Inclusion of Speed

Table 1. highlights the ANOVA result of the reading level of the pupil-respondents grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy group with the inclusion of speed. The table reveals that there is no significant difference in the reading level of the pupil-respondents in the group with the inclusion of speed when they are grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy.

In addition to, we can safely conclude that pupil- respondents' reading level in the group with the inclusion of speed taught by teachers with less or more teaching strategies are almost the same. The teachers' teaching strategy was not a factor in the reading scores of the pupil-respondents. Regardless of the teachers' teaching strategy, pupils in the group with the inclusion of speed recorded the same reading level.

Table 1. ANOVA Result of the Reading Level of the Pupil-respondents Grouped According to their Teacher's Reading Strategies in the Group of the Pupil-respondents with the Inclusion of Speed

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F value	p value	Interpretation
Between Groups	273.50	2	91.18	0.331	0.803	Not significant
Within Groups	20934.92	77	275.46			

Total	21208.42	79			
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Note: Not significant at alpha = .05; Null hypothesis is not rejected.

On the Reading Level of the Pupil-Respondents Grouped According to their Teacher's Teaching Strategy in the Group with the Exclusion of Speed

Table 2 below presents the ANOVA Result of the Reading Level of the pupil-respondents grouped according to their Teacher's Teaching Strategy in the group with the exclusion of speed. The table reveals that there is a significant difference in the reading level of the pupil-respondents in the group with the exclusion of speed when they are grouped according to their Teacher's Teaching Strategy. In the post hoc analysis, pupils, whose teacher categorized as Level 2, attained higher reading level as compared to other pupils.

The study of Reyes on Metacognitive Teaching Strategies, Reading Performance and Reader's Self Perception supports the result of this study. In her study, the strategies included think aloud, focusing, pupil-generated questions, reciprocal question-answer, prior knowledge, teacher modeling, Know-Want-Learn, visual imaging and fix-up. Metacognitive classes used these strategies, while the traditional classes followed the procedures in the reading text.

Pretests included a Researcher-Made Test (RMT) and the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) to measure reading performance; the Metacognitive Reading Awareness Inventory (MRAI) to measure pupil's level of awareness of the metacognitive strategies; and the Reader's Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) to measure the pupil's self-image. After about 7 weeks, the same tests were given again to find out whether there were significant gains in reading performance, metacognitive reading awareness, and readers' self-perception.

Based on the results, we can safely say that the use of metacognitive strategies had a significant and positive effect on the reading performance of the students in all three schools except for MAT and MRAI at the Ateneo. Ateneo teachers were already using many of the strategies in their classes so the advantage of meta cognitive teaching was not significant. The overall impact of meta cognitive teaching strategies was more effective at Miriam and Balara, schools where the use of these strategies were new.

Teachers who implement a variety of strategies in their classroom have opportunities to plan differentiated instruction based on each student's needs or independent thinking level so students will be able to achieve their goals. The position of the educator is to serve as a facilitator, construct the learning in the classroom, and address any misconceptions students have (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Students who have been taught how to master problem solving will be able to make the associations between experience and concepts (Coffey, 2009). By modeling and guiding students through explicit instruction in the learning environment and implementing effective strategies for struggling readers, teachers will help ensure that students progress to appropriate reading levels. A cooperative effort at the study site is necessary to solve the gaps in reading instruction. This study was built on collaborative efforts to identify perceptions, misconceptions, and better ways of teaching to improve students' achievement.

Napiñas (2015) in her study "Zoning The Reading Readiness Development Of Preschoolers" has found out in his Quasi-Experimental One Group Time Series Design that there is a significant difference in the grand pre and post tests and in the pre and post tests in the time series. It means that there is a significant improvement in the zoning level of reading readiness when scaffolding is utilized. Furthermore, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development is achieved through scaffolding as children moved from one zone to the next, attaining their potential development from their actual development, thus closing the gap in ZPD.

Subibe (2015) in her study on the "the effectiveness of using explicit skills instruction (ESI) in improving the reading comprehension of struggling grade six pupils" discovered that through an action research design, this study investigated the effectiveness of ESI through hands-on additional classroom interventions, specifically, using vocabulary, context clues and dictionary with every difficult word encountered in every reading passage. The following findings were drawn: (1) the increase in the scores between the pre and post intervention administration of the reading comprehension test was significant; (2) the effects of esi to the attitude of the respondents were positive; reading was regarded as a more positive and challenging activity and not as a chore; and (3) the explicit skills instruction was well received by the respondents.

Table 3. ANOVA Result of the Reading Level of the Pupil-respondents Grouped According to Their Teacher's Reading Strategies in the Group with the Exclusion of Speed

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F Value	p value	Interpretation
Between Groups	40904.36	3	13634.79	82.318	<0.001	Significant*
Within Groups	12588.27	76	165.64			
Total	53492.63	79				

Note: Significant at alpha = .05

Since there was a significant difference on the reading level of the pupil-respondents when data are grouped according to the teachers' teaching strategy, table 3. highlights post hoc test on the reading level of the pupil-respondents when grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy in the group with the exclusion of speed. This shows that pupil-respondents taught by teachers in the Level 2 manifested higher reading scores compared to the pupil-respondents taught by teachers with Level 1, level 3 and 4.

Table 3. Frequency of Teaching Strategy Used by the Teachers in the Group of Pupil-respondents with the Inclusion and the Exclusion of Reading Speed

Note: Scale: 0.00-1.00 (only when needed); 1.01-2.00 (sometimes); 2.01-3.00 (most of the time); 3.01-4.00 –

Teacher's Teaching Strategies	Frequency of Used	
	Group with the inclusion of speed	Group with the Exclusion of speed
A Small Group Reading Instruction	3.25	3.5
B Phonemic Awareness Remediation	3.25	2.3
C Phonics Remediation	2.75	1.5
D Animal Fluency Articles	1.25	1.3
E Individualized Instructions	3	2.8
F Use of Spelling Pattern Worksheets	2.75	2
G Use Reading and Spelling Flash Card Games	2.25	2.8
H Context clues Vocabulary strategies and Practice	2.25	3
I Role Playing	1.25	2.5
J Film Viewing	1.75	1.8
K ICT Integration	2	1.5
L Concept Map	2.5	2.3

(Always)

The data show that teachers in the group of pupil-respondents with the inclusion of speed always used teaching strategy A and B. They also used teaching strategy C, E, F G, H K and L. However they sometimes used the teaching strategy D, I and J.

On the other hand, teachers in the group of pupil-respondents with the exclusion of speed always used teaching strategy A only. They also used teaching strategy B, E, G, H, I and L. However, teaching strategy C, D, J, and K are sometimes used. The table shows that teachers in the both group always used teaching strategy A only.

Table 4. Post Hoc Test on the Reading Level of the Pupil-respondents When Grouped According to Their Teacher's Teaching Strategy in the Group with the Exclusion of Speed

Teacher's Teaching Strategy	N	Reading Level
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Level 2	20	38.56 ^a
Level 4	20	76.14 ^b
Level 3	20	22.04 ^c
Level 1	20	19.55 ^c

Legend: ^aMeans are not significantly different at alpha .05, based on Tukey's Test.

Level 1-no trainings attended

Level 2- 1-5 trainings attended

Level 3- 6-10 trainings attended

Level 4- more than 10 trainings

CONCLUSION

In the teaching process, strategies used by the teachers are considered to be the very influential factor to the learning of the students. Therefore, careful planning and consideration must always be kept in mind. The data revealed in this study that there is no significant difference in the reading level of the pupil-respondents in the group with the inclusion of speed when they are grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy. On the other hand, it was found out that there is a significant difference in the reading level of the pupil-respondents in the group with the exclusion of speed when they are grouped according to their teacher's teaching strategy. In the post hoc analysis, pupils, whose teacher categorized as Level 2 or those who have attended 1-5 reading related trainings attained higher reading level as compared to other pupils. 1 to 5 trainings may not be that much compared to other teachers, perhaps with the proper selection of the reading related trainings and application inside the class, this will have a positive impact to the development of the reading level of the early grade learners.

Furthermore, the data show that teachers in the group of pupil-respondents with the inclusion of speed always used teaching strategy A and B. They also used teaching strategy C, E, F G, H K and L. However they sometimes used the teaching strategy D, I and J.

On the other hand, teachers in the group of pupil -respondents with the exclusion of speed always used teaching strategy A only. They also used teaching strategy B, E, G, H, I and L. However, teaching strategy C, D, J, and K are sometimes used. The table shows that teachers in the both group always used teaching strategy A only or the "Small Group Reading Instruction". Therefore, this study recommends to every reading teacher to utilize various reading strategies after having found out that early grade learners taught with varied reading strategies manifested a better performance in terms of their reading level.

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