

READING COMPREHENSION LEVEL OF GRADE 7 LEARNERS: BASIS FOR A PROPOSED INTERVENTION MATERIAL

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Abstract. This study was conducted to determine the reading comprehension level of the Grade 7 learners and to propose an intervention material. Based on the result, Out of 1,763 learners, 346 or 19.64% are under “frustration”, 556 or 31.56% are classified as “instructional” and 860 or 48.80% are “independent”; the evaluation of the reading coordinators and experts, as to content, it was rated an AWM of 3.71, the rating as to format is 3.73 and as to presentation and organization, the rating is 3.74. All the indicators have a descriptive rating of “Very Satisfactory”. the high number of learners under frustrations permitted the researcher to propose an intervention material. The proposed intervention material is “very Satisfactory”. With this, the proposed intervention is highly recommended to be used

Keywords. Reading, reading comprehension level, interventional material, grade 7

1 Introduction

Among the four language skills, reading is possibly the most extensively and intensively studied by experts in the field of language teaching. According to Pardede (cited by Austria, 2015) for students who are learning reading is the most crucial skill to master due to several reasons. First, students can usually perform at a higher level in reading than in any other skills. They can quite accurately understand written materials that they could not discuss orally or in writing with equivalent accuracy or thoroughness. Such condition will undoubtedly enhance their motivation to learn. Second, reading necessitates very minimum requirements. Different from speaking which requires opportunities to interact with sparring partner, or from writing which needs a lot of guidance and time to practice, reading necessitates only a text and motivation. Third, reading is a service skill. After learning how to read effectively, students were able to learn effectively by reading.

Realizing how crucial reading is for our students, we can see the great importance of developing their reading ability. To achieve it, we should improve our reading lessons by implementing the best method and techniques provided by theories. This article aims to describe principal theories of reading and examine some tips and guidelines for implementing a theory of reading which will help us develop our learner’s abilities.

Former Department of Education Secretary, Bro. Armin A. Luistro (2016) stressed that in assessing the reading capability of learners is the foundation of all academic learning. If a learner fails to master reading skills at the outset, it was a constant struggle for him to get through other disciplines successfully.

It is sad to note that the performance in the National Achievement Test in the Secondary Level -English is below (SY 2013-2014-53.77; 2014-2015-49.48) the National Target of 75%. Below mastery level was obtained also in the Regional (SY 2013-2014-52.49; 2014-2015-40.81) and in the Division Level (SY 2013-2014-55.41; 2014-2015-42.87)

Similarly, the researcher herself as a reading teacher-coordinator in the school, she also observed that most of her learners could hardly answer simple literal questions that the answer is found in the text and is directly stated. Majority of them could not even make simple inferences. Others have difficulty in recalling previous facts or information which they can use to increase their reading comprehension.

From the aforementioned premises, the researcher is motivated to come up with this study because she firmly believes that there is a need to enhance/improve the reading comprehension level of the Grade 7 learners to equip them with functional armor to make them become essential partner in nation-building.

2 Review of Related Literature

The reviewed studies (foreign and local) are directly relevant with the present study because their main purpose or target is to improve reading comprehension in various ways and they are focused on the significance of reading comprehension in academic performance of the student-respondents on the use of varied teaching-learning tools like MIM, film viewing and effect of explicit teaching.

As to the similarity, majority of the reviewed studies--Acheaw (2014), Cekiso (2012), Chenge (2012), Fealy (2013), Vogel (2013), Espino (2017), and the present study, their respondents are the high school students. While the study of Fajardo (2015) utilized the Freshmen College students and the study of Tizon (2013) used the Grade 6 learners. Furthermore, only the study of Cekiso (2012), Alaga (2015), Fernandez (2011) and Fealy (2013) employed experimental method of research while most of the studies were descriptive in nature just like the present study.

The present study is similar with the studies reviewed because all of them were focused on reading comprehension and on how to improve it. The nature of output on the study of Fajardo (2014) and Espino (2017) is in the form of multimedia—non-print while the study of Acheaw (2014), Cekiso (2012), Chenge (2012), Fealy (2013), Vogel (2013), Alaga (2015), Fernandez (2011), Tizon (2013) and the present study dealt with print materials.

As for the instrument used, Acheaw (2014), Fajardo (2014), and Tizon (2013) utilized a questionnaire, while the study of Cekiso (2012), Chenge (2012), Fealy (2013), Alaga (2015), Espino (2017), Fernandez (2011) and the present study used a reading comprehension test (pencil and paper test). Only the study of Vogel (2013) used the triangulation style, he incorporated the findings from interview, observation and documents.

As far as statistical tool is concerned, Acheaw (2014), Vogel (2013), Espino (2017), Fajardo (2014), Tizon (2013) and the present study utilized the descriptive statistics while the study of Cekiso (2012), Chenge (2012), Alaga (2015), Fealy (2013) and Fernandez (2011) used inferential statistics.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed the descriptive-developmental method of research. According to Fox (2007) descriptive type of research is a design focused on the present condition and is geared towards finding new truth to generate more knowledge and understanding of the subject which seeks to determine changes over time. It is descriptive because the researcher tried to describe the existing condition of the reading comprehension of the learners in Grade 7. This study is also developmental because the researcher developed a proposed reading intervention material.

3.2 Population and Sample Size

The subjects of this study were the one thousand seven hundred sixty two (1,762) Grade 7 learners who are enrolled during the SY 2017-2018. The twelve (12) reading coordinators and three (3) experts (Division English Supervisor, Division Learning Resource Management Development System (LRMDS) Supervisor and District Administrator in-Charge of Reading served as the respondents of this study.

3.3 Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were tabulated, analyzed and presented in textual and tabular form. For sub-problem number 1, Frequency counts and percentages were used to present the data on the reading comprehension level of the Grade 7 learners classified as: Independent, Instructional and Frustration. To answer sub-problem number 2, the researcher prepared and

developed a reading intervention material for grade 7 learners. The results of the assessment on the reading comprehension were the bases in crafting the proposed intervention material. For sub-problem number 3, Average Weighted Mean (AWM) was utilized to analyze the answers to questions having scaled response. To answer sub-problem number 4, all the comments and suggestions of the reading coordinators and experts on the proposed intervention material were recorded and incorporated in the final copy. To answer sub-problem number 5, the reading intervention material was presented in its final form integrating the recommendations from the reading coordinators and experts.

4 Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1 Proposed Intervention Material to Enhance the Reading Comprehension Level of the Grade 7 Learners

Intervention material (IM) is an instructional material meant to reteach the concepts or skills. These are materials given to learners to help them master a competency -based skill which they were not able to develop during the regular classroom teaching (with minimal intervention/guide of a teacher).

It contains very simple topic anchored on a focus skill which is also called focused learning competency. This material is designed especially for the learner who did not master the specified skill in the lesson. In this study, the proposed IMs consists of three (3) essentials parts/features namely: Read Me; Comprehension Check; and Key Answer. Each of the parts/features was content validated by the experts and reading teachers using the evaluation rating from the office of the LRMS.

4.2 Evaluation of the Reading Coordinators and Experts on the Proposed Intervention Material – As to Content

Table 1. Evaluation of the Reading Coordinators and Experts on the Proposed Intervention Material in Terms of Content, N=15

| Items | AWN | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---|------|------------------------|
| Content is suitable to the student's level of development. | 3.74 | VS |
| Material contributes to the achievement of specific objectives of the subject area and grade/year level for which it is intended. | 3.65 | VS |
| Material provides for the development of higher cognitive skills such as critical thinking, creativity, inquiry, problem solving, etc | 3.97 | VS |
| Material is free of ideological, cultural, religious, racial, and gender biases and prejudices. | 3.82 | VS |
| Material enhances the development of desirable values and traits | 3.16 | S |
| Material has the potential to arouse interest of target reader. | 3.88 | VS |
| Adequate warning/cautionary notes are provided in topics and activities where safety and health are of concern. | 3.74 | VS |
| OAWN | 3.71 | VS |

It is good to note that 6 out of 7 items in the indicators from Content were rated as “Very Satisfactory”. Along this line, the table above further shows that item number 3, as rated by the reading coordinators and experts, has the highest mean of 3.97 with a descriptive rating of “Very Satisfactory”. This finding would suggest that as to content, the respondents believe that the proposed IMs can provide avenues for the learners to develop or further enhance their critical thinking, creativity, learning by doing, inquiry, problem solving and the likes.

4.3 Evaluation of the Reading Coordinators and Experts on the Proposed Intervention Material – As to Format

The format has an AWM of 3.73 and the descriptive rating of “Very Satisfactory”. This would simply mean that the intervention material is able to meet all the features beyond standards; highly recommended for approval for public utilization. This finding is in parallel with the results of the study by Espino (2017) that her MIM was also rated with “Very Satisfactory” both by the teachers and the experts

Table 2. Evaluation of the Reading Coordinators and Experts on the Proposed Intervention Material in Terms of Format, N=15

| Items | AWN | Descriptive Equivalent |
|--|------|------------------------|
| 1.1 Size of letters is appropriate to the intended user | 3.88 | VS |
| 1.2 Spaces between letters and words facilitate reading | 3.93 | VS |
| 1.3 Font is easy to read | 3.85 | VS |
| 1.4 Printing is of good quality (i.e., no broken letters, even density, correct alignment, properly placed screen registration). | 3.69 | VS |
| 2.1 Simple and easily recognizable. | 3.91 | VS |
| 2.2 Clarify and supplement the text. | 3.82 | VS |
| 2.3 Properly labelled or captioned (if applicable) | 3.72 | VS |
| 2.4 Realistic / appropriate colors | 3.45 | VS |
| 2.5 Attractive and appealing. | 3.64 | VS |
| 2.6 Culturally relevant. | 3.90 | VS |
| 3.1 Attractive and pleasing to look at | 3.66 | VS |
| 3.2 Simple (i.e., does not distract the attention of the reader) | 3.92 | VS |
| 3.3 Adequate illustration in relation to text. | 3.17 | S |
| 4. Harmonious blending of elements (e.g., illustrations and text). | 3.56 | VS |
| 4.1 Easy to handle | 3.81 | VS |
| 4.2 Relatively light. | 3.82 | VS |
| OAWN | 3.73 | VS |

4.4 Evaluation of the Reading Coordinators and Experts on the Proposed Intervention Material – As to Presentation and Organization

Table 3 explicitly shows that item number 1 among the indicators has the highest mean of 3.91 with a descriptive rating of “Very Satisfactory”. Items number 2 and 4 were noted as the items with the lowest AWM though it is described as “Very Satisfactory”. This finding simply means that intervention material was able to meet all the features above standards; highly recommended for approval for public utilization.

Table 3. Evaluation of the Reading Coordinators and Experts on the Proposed Intervention Material in Terms of Presentation and Organization. N=15

| Items | AWN | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---|------|------------------------|
| Presentation is engaging, interesting, and understandable. | 3.91 | VS |
| There is logical and smooth flow of ideas. | 3.58 | VS |
| Vocabulary level is adapted to target reader's life like experience and level of understanding. | 3.73 | VS |
| Length of sentences is suited to the comprehension level of the target reader. | 3.58 | VS |
| Sentences and paragraph structures are varied and interesting to the target reader. | 3.88 | VS |
| OAWN | 3.74 | VS |

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

With the number of learners under “frustration level”, an intervention material should be proposed. The proposed intervention material is rated “very Satisfactory” thus, it could be concluded that their intervention material was able to meet all the features above standards and therefore highly recommended for approval for utilization in Grade 7 classrooms. The suggestions and recommendations of the reading coordinators and experts were incorporated to the final form of the intervention material.

The proposed intervention is highly recommended for classroom use, with the permission from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, since it met the prescribed requirements based from the tools used given by the office of the LRMDS. Further study on the utilization of the proposed material, having a larger number of respondents and scope, and comparing the responses of the experts and reading coordinators will provide a good research venture. Further enhancement of the proposed intervention material, e.g. digitization, and testing its effectiveness are highly recommended.

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