Development of Learning Material for Grade 7 Struggling Readers

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Abstract

The study dealt on the development of a supplemental learning material for the instructional remediation of Grade 7 struggling readers sensitized to the needs and conditions of students in Mapandan National High School. The study adopted the descriptive-developmental method using a questionnaire and content-validated oral reading and reading comprehension tests. Data were analyzed using frequency count and percentage distribution. Validated rubrics were used for the qualitative description of the students' word-recognition miscue level and reading comprehension level. Majority of the Grade 7 struggling readers employed as respondents in the study are within the average age for Grade 7. They are male-dominated. Concerning their grades in English during the first and second quarters, majority obtained grades that are below average, while the rest obtained grades that are above average. In terms of access to reading materials, all the students have books available in their homes while few have encyclopedias. With regard to media type exposure, majority have televisions and a few reported having a personal computer or laptop with internet connection. About the extent of their reading time, majority spend, at least, an hour of reading every day, while a meager read at least 2 to 3 hours daily. As to their parents' educational profile, majority of the students' fathers finished high school while the minority is a college undergraduate. Moreover, most of their mothers are high school graduates with a meager trace of those who finished elementary education and a college undergraduate. As to the employment profile of the students' father, the majority labor as agricultural, forestry and fishery workers while one works as a manager. Most of the students' mothers are unemployed, and the remainders work in the service and sales industry. On the income profile of the students' respective families, majority belong to families within the poverty line. The performance tests administered to the students indicate that majority are susceptible to mispronunciation and the remainder to omission errors. Generally, the students were gauged to have "Low Level" performance in literal, interpretive, critical, and application reading comprehension. On the merits of the findings, the study offers several recommendations, including the actual use of the developed learning material for instructional intervention purposes. The study also recommends greater instructional focus along areas that students find most challenging in their reading and comprehension performance.

Keywords: Grammatical competence, subject-verb agreement, supplemental learning material

Introduction

Reading is essential to one's success in the varied industries of society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Most children learn to read fairly well. In the Philippines, teachers are most concerned with the large number of children who may be imperiled in their career path or social opportunities because they have less than the sufficient reading skills that are required to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive economy. Current difficulties in reading are largely indicated by the rising demands for literacy. In a technological society, the demands for higher literacy are ever increasing, creating more grievous consequences for those who fall short (Fountas and Pinnell: 2008).

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Reading is a complex and purposeful socio-cultural, cognitive, and linguistic process in which readers simultaneously use their knowledge of spoken and written language, their knowledge of the topic of the text, and their knowledge of their culture to construct meaning with text. Each of these types of knowledge impacts the sense that readers construct through print. Readers in different parts of the world easily comprehend text with familiar language but are less successful at comprehending text with unfamiliar language. Readers easily comprehend text on familiar topics but are less successful at comprehending texts on unfamiliar topics. At the same time, the interpretations readers construct with texts as well as the types of texts they read are influenced by their life experience (Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English, 2004).

Moreover, majority of students being referred for academic concerns are also identified as either having a specific learning disability or have difficulties in the area of reading. Among the population of students with learning disabilities, an estimated 80 percent have reading disabilities. Students with poor reading skills are becoming more apparent to educators and parents due to the results found on criterion-referenced, high stakes mandatory testing that most schools nationwide have incorporated across grade levels (Joseph, 2002).

The significance of developing students' competitive reading skills is aligned to the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. This is more clearly stipulated in DepEd Memorandum No.402 series of 2004 and Administrative Order No. 324 that implemented the "Every Child a Reader Program" (ECARP). The aim is to teach learners in public schools with planned training in reading and writing to make them independent young readers and writers.

Furthermore, ECARP is also part of the ten-point education agenda of former President Aquino to ensure that the country's public schools produce well-equipped graduates who can cope with different challenges. To reinforce the effectiveness of instruction along reading skills, the pertinent assessment tools have been fortified in order to determine the real status of students' reading proficiency. One such assessment tool is called the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). It measures the reading proficiency of learners through word recognition and reading comprehension in English and in Filipino by obtaining students' rate in word recognition accuracy and in comprehension questions based on the set of criteria for reading levels.

The Phil-IRI scale enables the classification of students into different levels namely, 1) frustration, 2) instructional, and 3) independent. Students under the frustration reading level tend to withdraw from or refuse to read. On the other hand, students with instructional reading level can only read under a teacher's guidance. Those in the independent reading level can read alone with ease even without the guidance of the teacher.

Reading programs have been set up in all school divisions for both public and private schools. However, the programs are not enough to develop students' optimal reading habit. Thus, it is unfortunate to note that despite the efforts and different programs launched by the DepEd to ensure that children in every grade level are equipped with reading skills; actual statistics has indicated that students promoted to high school cannot even read a simple word, i.e. so-called "struggling readers".

Another essential component of reading skill is comprehension. The latter is highly interactive, such that readers must be able to tap on a variety of skills and processes when comprehending texts. These processes are complex and consist of multiple components. A variety of cognitive models have been developed to lend support to the various skills processes thought to impact comprehension (Middleton, 2011).

Standford's (2015) research found several key factors that impede a students' reading comprehension. In reading, numerous cognitive processes are used in aid of comprehension. Likewise, strong vocabulary skills aid a student's ability to read proficiently. Unfortunately, as students struggle to read, they often avoid reading. Refusal to read implies a wide range of consequences since reading also influences vocabulary development. Thus, when one's reading is not fluent or a regular habit, then the development of one's vocabulary is also retarded. During reading, students continually process words to create meaning; and without a strong vocabulary, students struggle to understand what they read.

The study of Cadias (2013) reinforces the foregoing explanation. Accordingly, Cardias states that of the four macro skills, little attention has been paid to reading. This goes true with one of the micro skill under Reading, which is comprehension. The latter was found to be a major challenge for many students, which has qualified the academic weakness of most high school students.

On account of this researcher's survey of the teacher feedbacks on the reading performance of Grade 7

students in Mapandan National High School, it was found that most of the students especially in lower sections are consigned to "frustration level". A pre-reading test, administered last June 27-30, 2017 among 551 Grade 7 students of the school, revealed that a total of 33 students were identified to be at "frustration level" in terms of word recognition and reading comprehension. The same observation was figured in other schools in Mapandan as the researcher learned about it through the consolidated status report in reading. This gives rise to the exigency and imperative for reinforced remedial instructional materials in reading. With the alarming large fraction of struggling readers among Grade 7 students, an urgent solution is imperative.

Launched from the above national context and the local situation of the school where the researcher is in the roster of teachers, this study was conducted in order to provide crucial information to the concerned teachers and a general reference for all other teachers encountering similar problems with their students regarding poor reading performance and poor comprehension. It is every student's right to receive competent instruction that shapes him / her to be a skilled reader. Thus, in aid of the teacher's agentive role in the enterprise of reading skills, this study offers a prototype of a supplementary learning material that may be employed by teachers to improve the word recognition level and comprehension skills of struggling readers.

Literature Review

On Reading

The road to knowledge begins with the turn of a page. The ability to read is recognized as one of the most important skills that a person can have. It is difficult to discover any ability in the school, in the home, in business, or in any other field of endeavor that does not require reading. Through reading, one can ponder the mysteries of the world, explore accumulated knowledge, and contemplate the unknown (Sanders & Rivers, 2005).

Similarly, Flores (2009) emphasizes that learning to read is one of the most important skills. With the ability to speak effectively and to write in a variety of forms and for a variety purposes, reading competency can open avenues for upward mobility or economic opportunity, improve social status, increase personal pleasure and enhance self-respect. Thus, the ability to read and to comprehend the printed work is a prerequisite to academic success.

In the same way, Resurrection (2010) describes reading as the basic tool for learning, for it facilitates the ability to reason, to think, judge and evaluate what has been read and to solve problems. Additionally, reading is a necessary tool for learning the subject in the curriculum and the ability to read is indispensable in leading a successful life.

Miller as cited by Alonzo (2005), it is very important to know the reading performance of the students since this skill is considered the key for gaining knowledge. One reads to attain knowledge that is useful in constructing new knowledge. Comprehension refers to the creation and re-creation of meaning from the printed materials.

However, one cannot deny the fact that hard of reading ability is a perennial problem in the educational system. Teachers must be aware of this because they are the central figures in all teaching activities. The challenge for a brighter future of our school children depends on the teachers. So they must accept the challenge and perform their duties and responsibilities honestly and devotedly (www.sciencedaily.com).

Accordingly, the International Reading Association (2000) issues a position statement that provides a research-based description of the distinguishing qualities of excellent classroom reading teachers. Excellent reading teachers share several critical qualities of knowledge and practice which are contributory to the students' reading performance:

    a. They understand reading and writing development, and believe all children can learn to read and write.
    b. They continually assess children's individual progress and relate reading instruction to children's previous experiences.
    c. They know a variety of ways to teach reading, when to use each method, and how to combine the method into an effective instruction program.
    d. They offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read and are good reading "coaches".
    e. They use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students.

Likewise, Karp (2006) states that the new three-word aim of the U.S. Department of Education's Early Childhood Division in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement underscores the priority of building an adequate

foundation for later reading success: relationships, resiliency, and readiness.

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is one of the most useful classroom tools in assessing a student's reading ability. It is one variation of Informal Reading Inventory (IRI). It is adopted in the context of IRI to help teachers determine the reading abilities and needs of their students in order to provide bases for planning their classroom instruction. It can give teachers information on the level of their student's performance in reading through actual observation (http://philinformal.reading).

Ayson (2008) says a typical IRI is administered individually and it consists of graded stories followed by comprehension questions of different dimensions. Depending on the purpose, an IRI may contain comprehension questions on a few or more on the following reading skills: getting the main idea, inference, sequencing events, finding cause-effect relationship, and noting details. Most IRIs would include measures of word miscues and comprehension as well as provision for student's re-telling of the passage read.

Thus, the IRI provides the teachers with a comprehensive profile of their student's ability in reading, whether orally or silently, including their reading habits and attitudes. The teachers may then use this information in planning their classroom reading instruction (https://philinformal.reading).

Moreover, Sevilla et al. (2008) stress that the Phil-IRI-Oral Test is an informal measure that assesses the students' word identification, vocabulary and comprehension skills in oral reading. The Phil-IRI uses a predetermined set of criteria in identifying the reading levels namely; frustration, instructional an independent.

Teachers should continuously monitor the development of the students' reading performance. In this way, teachers could plan for future programs and instructions suited for the students' reading level (Flores, 2009).

On Word Recognition

According to Anderson (2000), all readings begin with recognition of words. In the early years of the child's growth, they learn to produce new words through letter-sound recognition and letter blending. As they mature and begin to spell longer and more complex words, they apply to their spelling the concepts of root words and affixes i.e. prefixes and suffixes. When a child is first taught to read, the emphasis is usually on decoding skills. This is the process whereby the written letters and words are translated into language. He is taught phonics and from learning the sounds of individual letters, he progresses to putting the sounds together to form words.

Similarly, Snow, et al. (2008) disclose that word recognition subsequently becomes increasingly automatized by direct recognition of multi-letter units and whole words. Automatic word recognition enables children to devote their mental resources to the meaning of text rather than to recognizing words, allowing them to use reading as a tool to acquire new concepts and information. It is commonly assumed that both cognitive and linguistic factors have a great impact on reading acquisition and also on reading impairment.

Furthermore, Sanders, et al. (2005) state that word decoding, vocabulary, and listening comprehension can be seen as critical factors for developing the ability to efficiently build up text models during reading comprehension. Moreover, verbal memory skills play a special role in research on the relationship between language and literacy problems. Given the fact that linguistic knowledge and memory capacity can be seen as highly interdependent, short-term memory tasks can be seen as indirect means of assessing the operation of language-processing mechanisms.

On the other hand, Shaywitz (2003) contends that students must learn that there are systematic and predictable relationships between letter combinations and spoken sound. While formal phonics instruction is important, it should not take up more than 25 percent of available reading instruction time. Students should be engaged in actual reading much more than they are engaged in discussing the act of reading.

Verhoeven & Van Leeuwe (2009) explain in word recognition research that L1 reading abounds with a predominant focus on children's acquisition of word recognition skills. The literature indicates that children acquire word recognition skills in their native language gradually with increasing accuracy and speed.

Also, Whitehurst (2010) describes that learning to read is affected by "the foundation skills of phonological processing, print awareness, and oral language". Where these components are lacking, children may be "unready" to begin some of the activities in the kindergarten's literacy curriculum, and they are more likely than other children to be poor readers in the long term.

Lifehack's (2004) contends that students, who lack opportunities to speak English, shun from saying an English word because they are more comfortable in using their mother tongue. Moreover, he suggests that oral

reading has to be done regularly to provide more opportunities for the struggling readers to be exposed in English.

Tonjes and Zintz (2001) point out that one reason why some students are poor in reading is that they have not learned reading styles that are needed to help them extract ideas from print with an economy of effort and with an

appreciation for both the quality of the ideas and the craft of the author. What happens is they begin reading the selection with no particular purpose. They never pause to reflect upon what they are reading and to put the author's ideas into their own personal language.

Matthews (2006) states that omission happens when the reader misses a letter out of a word that is superfluous or that he/she is unable to understand from contextual clues. The reader skips over the word/s and supply with another word.

During oral reading, students often say something other than what is actually printed in the book. Such "miscues" can be used to help teachers make decisions about upcoming reading instruction. Deviations from text during oral reading are not simply random mistakes but form patterns that reveal useful information about children's reading abilities (Villlamin, 2009).

Accordingly, miscue analysis can be employed to assist professionals in gaining insight into the reading process. It involves both a quantitative and a qualitative component. Miscue analysis targets to analyze the oral reading of individual students to gain insight into the linguistic knowledge and strategy use of readers while reading and "meaning making", and to help professionals evaluate reading material. It also provides an objective basis for determining whether a given selection should be used in a reading program and for determining material's suitability for use by students. These are not considered errors or mistakes. Rather, they are considered non-random indices of the individual's underlying reading ability, linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and reading strategies. The interest is both on the miscues and how the miscues change, disrupt, or enhance the meaning of a written text (Matthews, 2006).

Moreover, Reading Miscue Inventory is concerned largely with errors that cause a loss of meaning, the number of errors being less important than their immediate impact on comprehension. There are differences in the acceptability of various miscues. Good miscues maintain meaning and are viewed as an indication that the student is using meaning to drive the reading process, and hence, is on the correct path. Bad miscues are those that alter meaning. Whether the word the student reads corresponds to the written word may not be important in this conception. Within the whole language framework, self-corrections are a clear and pleasing sign that meaning and syntactic cues are being integrated into the reader's strategies (Sanders, 2005).

Similarly, Swerling and Stenberg (1994) assert that good readers self-corrected errors at a higher rate than did poor readers. She considered high rates were indicative of good text-cue integration, which in turn was a measure of reading progress. When text difficulty was controlled in reading level-matched designs, the rates of self-correction became similar among good and poor readers. That is, when text is very difficult everyone is more likely to make errors and increase their rate of self-correction.

On Levels of Reading Comprehension

Woolley (2011) claims that reading is a two-way process that combines information from the text-based model with information from prior knowledge using inference.

On the other hand, Gamboa (2014) believes that instruction for word recognition is a critical process for students. Some students continue to struggle with derive meaning or acquiring knowledge from text in spite of possessing sufficient word recognition skills. Additionally, these students experience greater difficulty in upper elementary grades seeing attention switch from learning to read to reading to learn. Particularly, the students encounter problems about finding main idea, making predictions, using background knowledge, making connections, creating mind images, asking questions , drawing inferences, and summarizing information.

The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and refinement. In addition, reading requires creativity and critical analysis. Reading ability is determined by many factors, and requires the development of certain skills through early reading instruction to attain initial success and build on it. Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. An individual's ability to comprehend a text is influenced

by his traits and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences (De Certaeau, 2010).

Moreover, Alonzo (2005) states that students should be expected to extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, draw conclusion and make connections from their own experience including other reading experiences.

Lutkus, Rampey and Donahue (2005) also say that students should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, by drawing conclusions, and by making connections to their own experiences including

reading experiences.

Lifehack (2004) declares that to achieve reading comprehension, the reader should read every day, and use skills such as generating the ideas and information in the selection, and looking for the answers while reading.

In addition, Neufeld (2006) and Mercurio (2005), as cited by Jude and Ajayi (2012), believe that to achieve reading comprehension, the reader should employ skills such as identifying the main idea of a passage, summarizing the context of a text, generating questions about the information in the text and looking for clues that answer those questions.

Furthermore, Vacca (2005) contends that learners must work with print in an effort to explore and construct meaning and that reading is first and foremost a conversation, a give and take process, between the reader and the text. However, the burden is always on the reader.

Moinzade and Salari (2015) disclose that reading comprehension among 120 Iranan EFL learners involves highly complex cognitive processing operations. Teaching English to language learners especially on how to read is a vital issue in their current educational policy and practice. While many students do well in literacy, several English language learners tend to exhibit lower academic achievement especially in reading. When second language readers read second language texts, they are encountering difficulty in processing them; they may get frustrated with reading, and experience anxiety.

Derk (2012) asserts that comprehension means understanding what is being said or read. When it comes to reading, it is an active process that must be developed if a learner wants to become a proficient reader. Effective reading skill development is further accomplished when the learner becomes proficient in literal, inferential and critical comprehension reading.

The first level of reading is literal which has been defined by Roundy (2014) as what the text simply says. It is what actually happens in the story. This is a very important level to understanding because it provides the foundation for more advanced comprehension. Without understanding the material in this level, you could not go any further. He explicates level concerns itself with why the author says what he or she says. This high level of comprehension requires the reader to use some external criteria from his/her own experience in order to evaluate the quality, values of the writing, the author's reasoning, simplifications, and generalizations. The reader will react emotionally and intellectually with the material. The literal level comes out with understanding and absorbing facts, the interpretive level concerns underlying implications, and the applied level focuses on translating topics into real-world situations.

Jude (2012) affirms that literal comprehension is technically the basic form of reading comprehension that involves understanding facts and descriptions that are found in the text. Questions on literal comprehension simply engage students to locate information that are already explicit in the reading material.

Inferential level of comprehension presupposes the ability to process the information in the text and be able to reach a conclusion about the reading material. Inferential level deals with what the author means by what is said. The reader must simply read between the lines and make inferences about things not directly stated. Again these inferences are made in the main idea, supporting details, and cause and effect relationships. Inferential comprehension could also involve interpreting figurative language, drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes, determining the mood, and judging the author's point of view (Cherry, 2016).

Huggins (2009) states that critical comprehension is more than evaluating quality of the text or stating an opinion about it and requires readers to make judgments about what they are reading based on an evaluation of several text-grounded factors, such as the quality of the writing, the determination that it is fact or opinion, the objectivity of the author, and whether the text is believable.

Abdullah (2008) then confirms that a critical reader has achieved the state of critical comprehension when he or she is satisfied that the inferences or meaning obtained from reading, that includes evaluation of the information presented by style, language tone and mode of writing, is consistent with his or her own interpretation, when all contradictions are resolved.

According to Turner (2008) the skills involved in critical reading are one of the highest levels in the hierarchy of reading skills if there is any hierarchy at all.

Finally, Davis 2015 says that application or evaluative reading level is often referred to as "beyond the text" and includes "big picture" comprehension. Often there are no right or wrong answers but rather justification for thinking in a particular way.

On the Development of Learning Material

According to Kellough (2005), the detailed planning for teaching and learning is carried out for several reasons, but the most important one is to ensure curriculum coherence. The workbook or learning material in particular, serves as an agenda for the teacher, a helpful aid for substitute teachers and a useful record for use in the future when teaching similar lessons and classes. Further, it provides information on the quality of teaching and learning, and what the teacher and students could do to improve the standard of their performance.

Barry and King (2007) take the discussion a step further and explain that the keeping of a learning material in any subject area is an administrative requirement. It shows the coverage of work relative to similar classes at both school and national levels. With this information, the educational administrators such as head teachers are able to assess the work of the teacher as well as that of the students and suggest ways of reinforcing the strengths and addressing the limitations.

Richard et al. (2010) contend that effective planning at the school level begins with curriculum development and passes through the scheme of work and units of work to the weekly workbook, learning materials, and daily lesson plans.

In the same way, Dodd (2000) explains that there are three main elements in the process of preparation. First, there is the syllabus, which tells the teacher, in broad outline, what aspects of its subject are to be covered annually. Second, there is the scheme of work, which is the detailed version of the syllabus, a learning material that addresses the specific needs of a class and the school community. The third element is the lesson plan that shows clearly how the lesson is to be taken in the time prescribed by the school timetable. These three elements, according to Dodd, integrate and interrelate to ensure that there is continuity in the teacher's teaching and the child's learning. In preparing and presenting lessons, it is also important for the teacher to include the approaches suggested by Bloom (1956).

Likewise, Gibbs (2002) emphasizes that the design for the development of a module, workbook or any learning material uses a blended pedagogy, combining traditional classroom teaching with e-learning, as part of seeking to utilize all strategies for encouraging students to be independent learners. Influence of workbooks, learning materials on monitoring student progress, delivering formative feedback and guiding students' independent learning was explored.   The development of learning materials presents student perceptions of how this educational approach influences learning and enhances their learning experience. The activities in the learning materials were designed to prompt learners to draw on knowledge and skills acquired during teaching sessions; provide opportunities for reflection; application of theory to practice; and development of a deeper understanding. When faced with this new mode of learning, 75% of respondents agreed that the workbooks and other learning materials increased independent study.

On the Profile of the Students

Chall (2006) affirms that the earliest stage of reading readiness encompasses the skills that young children usually ages 4-6 acquire before they can profit from formal reading instruction. Children with 4 to 6 years old acquire knowledge of the language and of letter names; they learn that spoken words are composed of separate sounds and that letters can represent these sounds. At younger ages, children also learn about other aspects of written language. They can distinguish their script from that of other languages; recognize commercial logos, engage in "pseudo reading" with familiar books, and so on. It has been suggested that these early "reading" behaviors contribute to later

reading success. .

Schmidt and Retelsdorf (2016) in their research article on a new measure of reading habit: going beyond behavioral frequency, offers a rubric to measure reading frequency in which the maximum is "more than 2 hours daily", and the minimum is "up to 30 minutes daily". One to two hours of reading is relegated to the fourth scale in a five-scale range.

Smith (2008) declares that teaching reading is one of the most challenging yet enriching tasks since reading is the key to learning. Traditional approaches to dealing with reading problems such as tracking and grade retention do not help. Instead, expose the child to varied reading materials that could ignite his interest in reading, from simple to complex until he develops his reading performance.

Relative to the above, exposure to music could affect the reading skills of the students. Music, like any written language, can give students that same limitless power felt as a 5-year-old first entering a world filled with words. The key to this hidden realm within music is sight reading. The constant practicing, studying, and challenges that make up a music-learning experience are the perfect ingredients for sight reading success. (https://www.musical-u.com/learn/sight-reading-music/).

According to the article Reading Children Science (Canete, 2007)", reading is said to help the child become familiar with sounds, words, language and the value of books. Their imagination is stimulated; they learn to breakdown words into their most basic sounds called decoding.

Sanklin (2004) asserts that growing body of evidence suggests that reading problems are preventable for learners
who receive extra support in the form of early reading activities.

On the other hand, Walker (2002) states that in kindergarten or first grade, whose ages are below six (6) years old are often given readiness tests that measure abilities in language, knowledge of letter names, a skill in matching words and letters.

Slavin (2004) articulates that literacy is a relatively recent addition to human culture. Humans have used oral language for perhaps 4 million years, but the ability to represent the sounds of language by written symbols. However, the expectation in today's society is that 100 percent of the population will be able to read and comprehend. We live in a society where the development of reading skills serves as the primary foundation for all school based learning. Those who do not read well find limited opportunities for academic and occupational success. Although the expectation that all children will read and comprehend is understandable, we are a long way from reaching this goal.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2008), 38 percent of fourth graders in the United States cannot read at a basic level. This means they cannot read and understand a short paragraph of the type found in a simple children's book.

Based on Lyon (2011), a child who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by the end of third grade is unlikely to be a skilled reader in high school. In fact, research has shown that we can predict, with reasonable accuracy, students' future academic success by their reading level at the end of third grade.

Shaywitz (2003) upholds that even though reading is an acquired skill and not a natural process, most people do become fluent readers, but not without a lot of work. Learning to read is a long, gradual process that begins in infancy. Basic competency usually is not reached until middle childhood. As reading researcher, professor and director of the Yale Center for Learning and Attention, added: "Reading is the most complex of human functions; his age is a determining factor".

In the article of Marshall (2013), it is stated that if a student is struggling with reading, the teacher should take the necessary steps to check for possible learning disabilities. It could be influenced by factors such as the profile of the students, the school or his community.

In the article, "Bridges to Literacy," (Rosenkoetter and Barton, 2001), it is established that reading emerges after instruction, in children who are well nourished and thriving in safe abodes and neighborhoods, in children who are nurtured by strong families who receive the services they need from living in caring communities.

Ericta (2012) states that in the Philippines, about 58 million (86%) of the estimated 80 million Filipinos aged 10 to 64 years old are functionally literate, meaning they can read, write, compute and comprehend. This is based in 2010 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS). It is reported further, that the 2012

functional literacy of 86.4 percent is slightly higher than the 2011 FLEMMS survey result of 84.1 percent. She concluded that literacy is much higher to persons who have completed high school or higher education.

Medina (2000) discloses that the majority of reading problems faced by today's adolescents and adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years. It is imperative that steps be taken to ensure that children overcome these obstacles during the primary grades. Reducing the number of children who enter school with inadequate literacy-related knowledge and skill is an important primary step toward preventing reading difficulties. Although not a panacea, this would serve to reduce considerably the magnitude of the problem currently facing schools.

Estabillo (2008) contends that children who are particularly likely to have difficulty with learning to read in the primary grades are those who begin school with less prior knowledge and skill in relevant domains, most notably general verbal abilities, the ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning, familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, and letter and knowledge.

Tizon (2004) states that children from poor economic status neighborhoods, children with limited proficiency in English, children with hearing impairments, children with preschool language impairments, and children whose parents had difficulty learning to read are particularly at risk of arriving at school with weaknesses in these areas and hence of falling behind from the outset.

Catts & Hogan (2008) confirm that many children learn to read effortlessly; however, there are a great number of children who have difficulty acquiring reading skills and need additional support or specialized instruction. Conditions that place children at risk for reading difficulties include poverty, cultural and linguistic differences, neurologically-based problems, inadequate instruction, limited development-enhancing opportunities, or familial history of reading
disabilities.

Snow, et al. (2008), affirm that reading in any language poses a challenge, but reading in English is particularly difficult. For example, some language systems, such as the Japanese katakana, are based on a system where each syllable is represented by a written symbol. When these symbols are learned, the child can read with relative ease. Spoken English, on the other hand, has approximately 5,000 different possible syllables. Written English uses a system of letters—an alphabet—to make up a spoken syllable. A letter alone does not refer to anything. It must be combined with other letters to represent a meaningful unit or syllable. The child must learn this complex alphabetic system in order to be able to decipher written words.

Tierney (2001) states that reading is a complex process that requires the learner to interact with print on many levels, the type of reading material one reads. It has long been acknowledged that effective word recognition skills are fundamental to proficient reading. Word study addresses not only word recognition, but also vocabulary, spelling, word-level grammatical concepts and effective word choice. These areas work in tandem to help learners develop into mature readers and can be categorized as Independent reader.

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive-developmental research method with the use of a survey questionnaire as the data- gathering instrument was employed in this study. A descriptive study searches for factual data to substantiate an existing truth (Calderon, 2003). Moreover, the aim of was to determine and describe the nature of a thing by deciphering its parts by means of collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This study utilized the descriptive method to enable the analysis of the profile and the reading level of the students as well as their relationship.

As a developmental study, an output was generated, i.e. a learning material appropriate for Grade 7 struggling readers. The development of this output underwent the standard scientific steps in instructional development. The merits obtained from correlating the sets of variables inspired the outline, features and contents of the instructional material.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study are thirty-three (33) Grade 7 students of Mapandan National High School, Mapandan, Pangasinan during the school year 2017-2018. The students were prior identified as struggling readers based on teacher assessment and as revealed by the result of the pre-reading test conducted in the beginning of the school year 2017.

Total enumeration was employed, thereby including the complete list of the Grade 7 struggling readers. The population was congenial for applying the selected statistical tool.

Data Gathering Instruments

Relevant data to actualize the research analyses were gathered using three (3) sets of instruments, namely: 1) the survey questionnaire, which determined the profile of the students in terms of age, sex, reading materials at home, extent of reading time, media type exposure, grades in English during the first and second quarters, highest educational attainment of parents, their occupations and monthly family income; 2) the oral reading passage which determined the reading miscues and word recognition level of the students; and 3) the reading comprehension test which gauged the level of comprehension of the students in literal, interpretative, critical and application type of comprehension.

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix C) determined personal information such as students' age, sex, reading materials present in their homes, extent of reading time, media type exposure, grades in English during the first and second quarters, highest educational attainment of their parents, their occupations and monthly family income. The summary of the data obtained using this instrument including their analysis and interpretation was vital in answering the first question of the research problem.

The oral reading passage (see Appendix D) was adopted from "Reading Links" (Aguinaldo, M.B.et al, 2004).This passage was used in the oral reading test given to the students in order to determine their reading miscues and classify their word recognition level into low, average or high. The matrix for determining the word recognition level is also appended (see Appendix I).

The reading comprehension test is composed of sixty (60) with equal distribution of the questions on literal, interpretative, critical and application levels of reading comprehension. The test also meant to determine the following reading skills: identifying specific information or noting details, sequencing ideas and getting the explicit main ideas; identifying implied main idea, inferring character traits, forming conclusions, anticipating or predicting an action and drawing implications; making judgment of the accuracy and logic of the text, identifying the appropriate title for the passage, distinguishing between fact and opinion, determining the author's intent/purpose, his style of presentation; and application of reading to practical situations.

The aforementioned test items were formulated based on the five reading passages excerpted mostly from "Reading Links". Moreover, the structure of the questions was patterned after the departmental and division-made tests. It was designed to classify the students' literal, interpretative, critical and application levels of comprehension. Prior to the administration of the test, it was subjected to content validation. The selection of evaluators was based on professional experience and academic expertise. Comprising the roster of evaluators are the department heads, master teachers, and teachers of English from different secondary schools. The test was assessed in terms of clarity, vividness and definiteness based on the Content Validity Questionnaire (see Appendix G). Accordingly, the test obtained an overall rating of 4.74 or Highly Valid (Appendix H).Comments and suggestions of the evaluators were integrated in the final revision of the comprehension test.

Data Gathering Procedure

In gathering the research data, adequate administrative and ethical protocols were observed. At the commencement of the procedures for data gathering, a formal communication was addressed to the principal of Mapandan National High Schools (Appendix A) requesting to administer the research instruments.

The administration of the research instruments to the students was conducted by the researcher and ably assisted by the school's English teachers. Clarification and transparency clauses were made to inform the teachers and the students about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of the data obtained.

In the conduct of the oral reading test, the students were asked to read the passage orally, while the

researcher documented the students' reading performance and miscues using the Miscue Analysis Chart (Goodman, 1969 in Walsh, 1979). This chart also enabled the qualification of the different miscues into cases of insertion, mispronunciation, omission, repetition, reversal, substitution, and transposition. Pre- identified symbols were used to facilitate in the recording of the students' oral reading miscues (Appendix E). The researcher also used audio recorder to document all the miscues that would be missed during the live reading.

      The reading comprehension test was administered after the oral reading test. The students were asked to read the passages silently and then answered the comprehension test. The aforementioned sets of data gathered through the use of the tests were noted, analyzed and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools**.**

Statistical Treatment of Data
      Gathered data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistical tools.
      In answering question number 1, the students' profile was described using percentage and frequency count.
      In answering question number 2, the students' word recognition level was determined using the scale below:

Level	Word Recognition (WR)
High	89 below
Average	90-96%
Low	97-100 %

In answering question number 3, the researcher utilized frequency count and percentage distribution. In determining the reading comprehension level of the students to the different reading categories, it was described by the researcher employing the scale below:

Score Range	Descriptive Equivalent
11-15	High Performance
6-10	Average Performance
0-5	Low Performance

      In answering question number 4, the learning material for Grade 7 struggling readers was developed based on the results of the reading test focused on word recognition and the levels of reading comprehension. The material was designed relative to the nuances that characterize the typical errors of students. Certain merits were also drawn from the learner-profile variables to ensure that the learning tasks are contextualized and sensitized to the personal characteristics of the learners.

      Moreover, the learning material produced in this study was subjected to content validation procedure. This entailed the use of a content validity questionnaire which the evaluators used to indicate their ratings on the material. The average weighted mean (AWM) of the ratings were obtained, which were further transposed to the implication of the ratings on the learning material's level of content validity. The rubric below shows the formula for determining the level of content validity of the learning material:

Range of AWM of the Evaluators' Ratings	Level of Content Validity
4.50 – 5.00	Highly Valid
3.50 – 4.49	Valid
2.50 – 3.49	Moderately Valid
1.50 – 2.49	Fairly Valid
1.00 – 1.49	Not Valid

Findings and Discussion

This study dealt on the development of a supplemental learning material appropriate for Grade 7 struggling readers. A prototype of the material was offered based on the guidelines proposed by this study. In turn, the guidelines were

based on the merits of the research findings to ensure the contextualization of the material in consideration of the characteristics of the students in the research locale. The research findings were focused on the analyses and interpretation of the students' learner variables, the identification of their performance level in word recognition, their susceptibility to the categories of reading miscues, and their performance in the four levels of reading comprehension. Researcher-developed and modified instruments were used in gathering the data.

The following provides a summary of the salient points in the research findings.

Profile of the Grade 7 Struggling Readers

The research involved the participation of 33 Grade 7 students. The typical age of the students is 13. There are isolated cases of students in the same grade level aged 12 (being the youngest) and 18 (being the oldest). The research population is also male-dominated. As per students' self-report, there are available reading materials accessible in their respective homes, majority of which are books, while others reported having magazines, encyclopedia, and dictionaries in their homes in addition to books. All the respondents account for exposure to various media, which is typically the television. Majority of them have cell phones, and are exposed to media that features music. There is a small trace of students having further exposure to internet resources using computer and video games. With regard to the extent of their reading time, majority of the students (84.8 percent) engage in, at least, an hour of reading at home while the rest (15.2 percent) have 2 to 3 hours extent of reading time. Pertaining to the students' grades, majority of the students (57.6 percent) obtained grades below the average while the rest (42.4 percent) obtained grades above the average in the first quarter. This pattern also applies in the second quarter with more students obtaining grades below the average (60.6 percent) than those with grades above the average (39.4 percent). Noteworthy is the increase of the number of students with below average grades from the first to the second quarter.

The students' parents are generally at par in their educational attainment. Majority of the students' fathers (84.8 percent) finished High School. There is a small trace found for those whose fathers did not finish High School and elementary education (6.1 percent) or is a college undergraduate (3 percent). On the other hand, majority of the respondents' mothers finished High School (78.8 percent). There is a meager trace of those who finished a college degree (9.1 percent), undergraduate in High School (6.1 percent), and undergraduate in College (3.0 percent). With regard to their parents' occupation, most of the respondents' fathers are employed in the blue collar industry, i.e. as skilled agriculture, forestry and fishery workers (42.4 percent); as craft and related trades workers (30.3 percent); as service and sales workers (12.1 percent); and as plant and machine operators and assemblers (6.1 percent). In contrast, majority of the respondents' mothers are unemployed (84.8 percent), and the remainder who are employed work in the service and sales industry (15.2 percent). Most of the respondents belong to families with relatively low income. Majority of the respondents' have families that generate income below Php 7,890.00 (84.8 percent); while the rest belong to families with slightly higher income brackets namely, Php 7891.00 to 15,780.00 (6.1 percent); Php 15,781 to Php31,560.00 (6.1 percent); and Php31,561 to 78,900.00 (3 percent).

Performance in Word Recognition
Relative to Reading Miscues

Of the seven reading miscues, the students mostly accounted for the categories of "mispronunciation" (60.6 percent) and "omission" (39.4 percent). Likewise, the students who accounted on the aforementioned reading miscues also rated "High Level" in terms of word recognition miscue performance. A small trace of students who also committed "mispronunciation" (39.4 percent) and "omission" (57.6 percent) were rated "Low Level" in word recognition miscue. The students have negligible errors in terms of "insertion, repetition and substitution". They have not accounted any error in terms of "reversal, and transposition" miscues so students were rated with "Low Level" word recognition relative to these miscues.

Performance in Reading Comprehension

a. Literal Level

As per ascending rank in terms of frequency, the students' performance in terms of literal level of comprehension range from "Low Level" (69.7 percent); "Average Level" (27.3 percent); and "High Level" (3.0 percent). Noteworthy is the apparent dominance of students with low literal level of comprehension.

b. Interpretative Level

As per ascending rank in terms of frequency, the students' performance in terms of interpretative level of comprehension range from "Low Level" (93.94 percent); and "Average Level" (6.06 percent). Noteworthy is the greater number of students with low interpretative level of comprehension compared to those with low literal level of comprehension.

c. Critical Level

As per ascending rank in terms of frequency, the students' performance in terms of interpretative level of comprehension range from "Low Level" (93.94 percent); and "Average Level" (6.06 percent). Noteworthy is the comparable number of students with low critical level of comprehension compared to those with low interpretative level of comprehension.

d. Application Level

As per ascending rank in terms of frequency, the students' performance in terms of interpretative level of comprehension range from "Low Level" (90.91 percent); and "Average Level" (9.09 percent). Noteworthy is the relatively comparable rate of students with low application level of comprehension compared to those with low interpretative and critical levels of comprehension.

Contents of the Developed Learning Material

The developed learning material is composed of reading exercises on vowel sounds, consonant blends, digraphs and common sight words to address the word recognition miscues of Grade 7 struggling readers specifically on mispronunciation and omission. It also contains passages with questions to enhance their comprehension level along literal, interpretative, critical and application.

Conclusions

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Majority of the struggling readers are within the average age for Grade 7, male dominated, read books that are available at home, spend time reading for one hour daily, are exposed to varied media and have grades of below average in the first two quarters, with parents who are high school graduates, their fathers are employed in blue collar industries while their mothers are typically unemployed and they typically belong to families with low level income.

2. That word recognition miscue level is committed in most of its categories, with the greater density in mispronunciation and omission.

3. The Grade 7 struggling readers have low level of performance in literal, interpretative, critical and application reading comprehension.

4. The developed learning material is composed of reading exercises to enhance the performance of Grade 7 struggling readers in word recognition specifically mispronunciation and omission as well as in reading comprehension along literal, interpretative, critical and application.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Instructional efforts and preparation of learning materials for reading and comprehension must be sensitized to the varied age range, sex, and other characteristics of the students to ensure that their varied learning needs are addressed. Interventions can be used to improve the reading habit of students and to encourage parents to secure more types of reading materials accessible for their children at home despite economic challenges. Parents

must also be counseled as to how they can reinforce their children's exposure to a broad range of media beneficial for learning.

2. Instructional efforts and preparation of learning materials must focus on the remediation of the common reading miscues of students, i.e. on mispronunciation and omission.

3. Instructional efforts and preparation of learning materials must focus on the remediation of students' apparent weakness in dealing with all levels of comprehension. Teachers with their department head and school head must review the reading materials prescribed to ensure the selection of texts that are more interesting and relevant on the part of students to make them enjoy the task of comprehending their reading materials.

4. The teachers handling Grade 7 struggling readers shall be advised to use the developed learning material as a supplementary material for remedial reading to improve their performance in word recognition and reading comprehension.

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