

Strengthening the Reading Comprehension of Students Using a Context Clue

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ABSTRAK

Salah satu tujuan terpenting dalam pendidikan adalah pemahaman membaca siswa untuk dikembangkan. Tampaknya, tujuan kurikulum menekankan pada pengetahuan konstruksi siswa, keterampilan berpikir tingkat tinggi dan keterampilan pemrosesan informasi. Oleh karena itu, untuk meningkatkan prestasi akademik pelajar, siswa harus dihadapkan pada bentuk strategi atau intervensi pengajaran tertentu. Pemahaman membaca seorang siswa adalah pemahaman tentang apa yang dibaca. Maksud dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui dampak dari petunjuk konteks sebagai intervensi untuk pemahaman bacaan. Penelitian dilakukan di 8 sekolah dasar yang respondennya adalah siswa kelas 4 yang bonafid. Studi ini menyelidiki keefektifan petunjuk konteks sebagai bantuan untuk pemahaman bacaan melalui peningkatan kosakata siswa yang memanfaatkan Inventarisasi Membaca Informal Filipina (Phil-IRI) yang direvisi. Hasil Phil-IRI dari tiga tahun terakhir dikumpulkan dan ternyata cukup rendah. Di sisi lain, hasil Phil-IRI tahun ajaran saat ini juga dikumpulkan dan menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan dengan tiga tahun terakhir. Selain itu, hasil pre-test hingga post-test menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan terhadap kemampuan membaca siswa. Dengan demikian, petunjuk konteks memiliki dampak positif terhadap pemahaman membaca siswa kelas 4. Disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan petunjuk konteks meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Siswa yang dimodelkan strategi petunjuk konteks selama periode waktu tertentu meningkatkan kemampuan mereka untuk menemukan petunjuk dalam teks dan mengurangi tingkat pemahaman.

ABSTRACT

One of the most important aims in education is the students' reading comprehension to be developed. Seemingly, the goal of the curriculum emphasis on students' constructing knowledge, higher order thinking skills and information processing skills. Hence, to improve the learners' academic achievement, students should be exposed to a particular form of teaching strategy or intervention. A reading comprehension of a student is the understanding of what is read. The intent of this study is to determine the impact of context clue as intervention for reading comprehension. The study was conducted in 8 elementary schools where the respondents are bona fide Grade 4 learners. The study investigated the effectiveness of context clues as aid for reading comprehension through enhancing student's vocabulary which utilizes the revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Phil-IRI result of the last three years were gathered and found out to be quite low. On the other hand, result of the Phil-IRI of the current school year was also gathered and shows to have significant difference to the last three years. Moreover, the pre-test to post-test result shows to have a significant improvement to students' reading ability. Thus, context clues have exhibit positive impact to reading comprehension of grade 4 students. It is concluded that the use of context clue increases the reading comprehension of the students. Students that are modeled context clue strategies over a period of time improve their ability to locate clues in the text and alleviate comprehension level.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aims in education is the students' reading comprehension to be developed. Seemingly, the goal of the curriculum emphasis on students' constructing knowledge, higher order thinking skills and information processing skills (Tavera & Casinillo, 2020). Hence, to improve the learners' academic achievement, students should be exposed to a particular form of teaching strategy or intervention (Adewale, 2014; Casinillo & Guarte, 2018; Suarez & Casinillo, 2020). Indeed, the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines provides a standard tool to measure and describe students' reading performance in a classroom-based assessment, that is, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). Phil-IRI refers to the revised assessment tool composed of a set of graded passages

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administered to the whole class and to individual students, which was designed to determine a student's reading level.

In any school, the information gathered from Phil-IRI will be an aid for school leaders and policy makers in education for appropriate reading activities and to improve the student learning achievement. Based on the result of the Phil-IRI, the identified problems in any school is the poor reading comprehension of the students (Luciano, 2019). Hence, teachers were trying to understand the knowledge acquisition and looking for the best techniques and strategies for the students to learn effectively particularly in reading comprehension (Tavera & Casinillo, 2020). Lots of strategies and techniques were introduced and practiced in the classroom, but there are few that could give more relaxing and enjoyable for both the teacher and learners to learn effectively. The use of context clues is one of the most effective ways in developing and enhancing reading comprehension because it helps the reader to figure out the meaning of unknown words and strengthens learners' vocabulary (İlter, 2019; Mauliza et al., 2019; Putri & Fitrawati, 2019). The use of context clues was highly related to overall reading effectiveness (Putri & Fitrawati, 2019). Context clues are the words and sentences that surround a word and help explain the words meaning. It also helps the reader figure out the meaning of an unknown word. Antonyms, synonyms, stated examples, contrasts and restatements all function as context clues (Humes, 1978). Context clues are hugely important because their comprehension and effective usage leads to academic success. They can strengthen the learner's vocabulary, reading comprehension and make learners a better writer (Al Jumaily, 2021). In the elementary schools of San Ricardo District, Philippines, it is found out that the results of the Phil-IRI for Grade 4 students' reading performance was below par. Seemingly, the Department of Education (DepEd) emphasized that low students' reading comprehension skills is a main factor in failure rate of students in mathematics and science that impedes global competitiveness. Actually, several studies stated that improving students' reading comprehension skills may be one of the factors affecting students' mathematics and science achievement (Imam et al., 2013, 2014; Nicolas & Emata, 2018). The students' reading comprehension skills is a paradigm shift (Imam et al., 2014).

Hence, this study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the use of context clues as an intervention for the problem related to poor reading comprehension in English of the Grade 4 learners in San Ricardo District. Specifically, the study aims to answers the following objectives: (1) to determine the reading comprehension level of the Grade 4 learners during the conduct of the Phil-IRI (Oral and Silent) Reading in English in the last 3 years; (2) to determine the reading comprehension level of Grade 4 learners during the conduct of Phil-IRI (Oral and Silent) reading in English in the current school year; and (3) to determine the significant difference in the reading comprehension level of the Grade 4 learners in three consecutive school years and the current school year in the conduct of Phil-IRI (Oral and Silent) reading in English using context clue as intervention. The goal of this study is to strengthen the reading comprehension of the Grade 4 learners and contribute to the body of knowledge specifically in education. In addition, this study serves as a benchmark for strengthening English and Language teaching.

2. METHODS

The research design of this study was a quasi-experimental design (Yunzal & Casinillo, 2020). The design involves a pre-test and post-test that captures the effectiveness of the intervention and engaged a quantitative data. This study utilized some descriptive measures such as percentages, mean and standard deviation. In addition, paired T-test was used to capture the significant impact of the intervention. Through a complete enumeration, the respondents of the study were all bona fide Grade 4 learners of San Ricardo District, Southern Leyte, Philippines. Table 1 shows the different schools in San Ricardo District and corresponding enrollees.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants

School	Number of enrollees
San Ricardo Central School	52
Benit Elementary School	20
Camang Elementary School	12
Esperanza Elementary School	40
Pinut-an Elementary School	34
Kinachawa Elementary School	13
San Ramon Elementary School	8
Saub Integrated School	18
Total	197

Prior to the conduct of this study, a humble permission was requested to the head of San Ricardo School District through a formal letter. Having done that, a formal letter also was sent to Grade 4 teachers to collaborate in the conduct of intervention. This study was conceded out for 3 months for all Grade 4 students. In administering the context clues, the teacher reviews the skill, explain the purpose of the lesson, building on past lesson using context clues, and model how to find the context clues. During reading, the teacher displays a short passage on the interactive show me board. Have student read the passage in pairs. Call students to come up with the show me board and highlight unfamiliar words and surrounding context clues, and have them share their thinking and discuss, and to confirm their thinking, have student search for words in dictionaries and other resources. Teacher may repeat the process. Have the students use context clues to understand new vocabulary and track these words to the class. The researchers made data gathering on Phil-IRI (Oral and Silent) reading in English for the last three consecutive school years as comparison. Before the implementation of the intervention, a pre-test reading comprehension score was obtained. And after the implementation, a post-test reading comprehension score was also obtained. In describing the performance of students in reading comprehension, the Phil-IRI criteria was adopted as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Criteria for Word Comprehension (DepEd, 2009)

Level	Comprehension
Independent	90% or higher
Instructional	80% to 89%
Frustration	75% to 79%

The gathered data are analyzed and presented in the most appropriate manner. The data are grouped based on the school year results. It is purposely done to determine the difference of the reading comprehension level of the Grade 4 learners in English. For analysis and interpretation of data, percentages, mean and standard deviation was employed to describe its nature and characteristics. To determine the effectiveness of the intervention, a paired T-test results was obtained. In order to obtain an accurate calculation, a statistical software called Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 was utilized.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Last 3 years Phil-IRI results were gathered to determine the status of reading comprehension level of grade 4 students in the different schools of San Ricardo District. In Table 3, it shows that, on average, 18% of students belong to frustration, 35% also belong to instructional level and only 37% number of students belong to independent level. Perhaps, the overall rating of the reading comprehension of students for the last 3 years reveals a frustration level ($\bar{x} = 75.44$, $sd = 11.96$). In current school year, the pre-test result shows that, on average, 34% of students belong to frustration, 30% also belong to instructional level and 36% number of students belong to independent level. The overall rating for pre-test reveals that the reading comprehension of Grade 4 students is in the instructional level ($\bar{x} = 85.47$, $sd = 5.94$). Post-test Phil-IRI result of the current school year were gathered to determine the comprehension level of grade 4 students in San Ricardo as exposed to the proposed intervention called context clue as way to unlock difficult words. Hence, the post-test result reveals that, on average, about 15% of students belong to frustration, 21% belong to instructional level and 64% of students belong to independent level. And the overall rating for post-test reveals that the reading comprehension of students is in the instructional level ($\bar{x} = 89.00$, $sd = 5.67$).

Based on Table 4, the finding reveals that there is a highly significant difference on the post-test Phil-IRI result (reading comprehension) of the current school year as compare to the result of the last 3 years ($t = -5.70$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$). Phil-IRI Post-test result show that the current school year ($\bar{x} = 89.00$, $sd = 5.67$) has higher mean reading comprehension score compared to the score of students in the last 3 years ($\bar{x} = 75.44$, $sd = 11.96$).

Table 3. Grade 4 English Phil-IRI (Oral and Silent) Result of The Last 3 Years and Current School Year (2018-2019)

Schools	Grade 4 English Phil-IRI result								
	Frustration			Instructional			Independent		
	Last 3 years	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Last 3 years	Post-test	Last 3 years	Pre-test	Post-test
San Ricardo Central School	20%	16%	7%	40%	47%	25%	44%	44%	68%
Benit Elementary School	18%	9%	6%	13%	13%	14%	69%	78%	80%
Camang Elementary School	2%	10%	6%	45%	75%	14%	23%	45%	80%
Esperanza Elementary School	46%	62%	36%	20%	33%	31%	21%	18%	35%
Pinut-an Elementary School	24%	15%	10%	9%	51%	5%	25%	76%	85%
Kinachawa Elementary School	34%	38%	19%	38%	38%	19%	28%	24%	62%
San Ramon Elementary School	16%	50%	0%	50%	46%	25%	38%	0%	75%
Saub Integrated School	2%	72%	2%	24%	13%	12%	85%	4%	86%
Average	18%	34%	15%	30%	35%	21%	37%	36%	64%
Overall rating (a)	Last 3 years: 75.44 (Frustration) Pre-test: 85.47 (Instructional) Post-test: 89.00 (Instructional)								

Note: a – See Table 2 for details.

Table 4. Significant Difference in Reading Comprehension Level of The Grade 4 Learners in Last Three Consecutive School Years and The Current School Year (post-test)

Reading Comprehension Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean difference	T-test	df	P-value
Last 3 S.Y.	75.44	11.96	13.56	-5.700	196	<0.001
Current S.Y. (Post-test)	89.00	5.674				

In Table 5, it reveals that there is a highly significant difference on the pre-test and post-test Phil-IRI reading comprehension result ($t=-20.99$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$). Furthermore, post-test result show that the current school year ($\bar{x} = 89.00$, $sd = 5.67$) has higher mean reading comprehension score compared to the pre-test score of students ($\bar{x} = 85.47$, $sd = 5.94$).

Table 5. Significant Difference In Reading Comprehension Level of The Grade 4 Learners on The Current School Year Between Pre-Test and Post-Test

Reading Comprehension Level (Current S.Y.)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean difference	T-test	df	P-value
Pre-test	85.47	5.936	3.53	-20.987	196	<0.001
Post-test	89.00	5.674				

Discussion

Firstly, descriptive measures were made to elucidate the characteristics of the gathered data following the research procedure in the current study (Yunzal & Casinillo, 2020). Result revealed that majority of Grade 4 students in San Ricardo district performed at below average level in reading comprehension for the last three years. On average, the students got an over-all rating of 75.44 in which their reading comprehension level is categorized as "Frustration." The result is parallel to the study prior to the conduct of the class intervention (Garzon & Casinillo, 2021). This suggest that the reading comprehension level of the students from eight elementary schools are moderately low due to some factors. Perhaps, it is evident that intervention made by the teachers on the last three years to elevate the

reading comprehension level of students is not working well or not enough. In the previous study, it is stated that there are factors affecting the students' learning process such as time involvement, behavior problem and type of intervention (Witt et al., 1984). Other reason is that students in the last 3 years are not mature enough to grasp the level of difficulty of words which is a cause for concern (Hagaman et al., 2012). In addition, reading comprehension is influence by knowledge acquisition practices and poor study habits and negative learning attitude can lead to a bad academic performance (Casinillo, 2019; Tavera & Casinillo, 2020).

In the current year, it is shown in the pretest results that student have improve their reading comprehension. On average, these students got an over-all rating of 85.47 in which it is categorized as "Instructional." Perhaps, this is due to today's technologies to get information and the availability of massive materials online like e-books and e-journals increased the students' reading comprehension skills (Moon et al., 2021). Seemingly, the posttest results revealed that the use of context clue is effective in improving the students' reading comprehension skills. On average, students got a higher rating (89.00) compared to pretest in which it is the same category level. Apparently, T-test results showed that the reading performance of students is significantly increasing with the aid of context clue relative to the last three years ($t=-5.70$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$). The difference of the Phil-IRI result specifically on reading comprehension between the current school year result and the last 3 years' result determine further the effectiveness of using context clue as way to unlock difficult words. This further implies that the use of context clue as way to unlock difficult words cause the difference in the post-test significant. This illustrates the significant contribution of context clues in reading comprehension as reflected by several studies which reveals a positive effect towards improving reading comprehension of the students, through contextual method (Mauliza et al., 2019; Putri & Fitrawati, 2019; Yurko & Protsenko, 2020), and increasing a student's vocabulary that leads to the increase the student's reading comprehension (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Tavera & Casinillo, 2020). Hence, the use of context clue for vocabulary can be of great help in to facilitate reading as it improves students' reading comprehension and contextualize reading passage in line to K-12 education program. In addition to the use of context clue, the teacher has to assist students' constructing of meanings of difficult words so that their thinking becomes increasingly pure and clear (Kuter & Özer, 2020).

Furthermore, the result showed that there is a huge number of students alleviated their reading comprehension level from frustration to instructional and instructional to independent. The data further reveals that the number of students in the frustration level has decrease, meanwhile number of students in instructional and independent level have increase. This finding is an evident that majority of grade 4 students have increase their reading comprehension in the post-test result as compare to the pre-test ($t=-20.99$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$). The significant improvement in the post-test reading comprehension result shows the effectiveness of context clue as way to unlock difficult words and help students understand what they read. This result is in consonant to the findings that students' achievement in posttest is better than pretest after the implementation of the intervention (Suarez & Casinillo, 2020). Context clues have a powerful effect on students' comprehension of words and sentences (Mak et al., 2021). Likewise, a student learning the contextual clues can be a proficient in reading comprehension tests (Aidinlou & Mehr, 2012). Moreover, the use of context clues during reading and found out that context clues help gain a knowledge of new words (Teng, 2020). Thus, knowledge and skill of using words in different contexts play an important role in the comprehension of new concepts, ideas and principles. In addition, context clue has developed the students' central coherence which perceive and connect noticeable information in a context (Engel & Ehri, 2021; Happé, 1997; Moon et al., 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the use of context clues increases the reading comprehension of the students. Students that are modeled context clue strategies over a period of time improve their ability to locate clues in the text and alleviate comprehension level. This suggests that the practice of close passages invites new words into the student's life and can assist in bridging the achievement gap between the frustration, instructional, and independent students. Hence, this study recommended developing a contextual clues method in facilitating reading sessions as integrated with the school reading program. The result of this study has shown a positive impact on student learning and teachers' strategy. Students with higher reading levels by having good vocabulary will grow faster and gain understanding quickly on the text and even to the different learning areas.

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