



READING PREDICAMENT WITHSTOOD BY ELEMENTARY LEARNERS: HOME DISTANCE LEARNING IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

The issue of reading becomes more significant when it comes to the English language because English is used in a number of countries as first and second language. Besides, English is used as a medium of instruction in basic school to tertiary levels in these countries. More importantly reading in English is more significant if students are needed to be competent enough in their academic achievement. This study involved teachers in grades 6 in selected public schools in Davao City. This group was chosen because, the following year, they are supposed to be in grade seven to write their examinations which are to be read and answered in English without anybody's help. These examinations are very critical as they determine whether the pupil will proceed to secondary education or not. Therefore, it is expected that by the time a pupil reaches grade six, they must be competent in reading as preparation for their Junior High School life. These participants are currently teaching in the school year 2021-2022 with more than two years of experience in teaching reading. A total of 7 participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion. The results of this study revealed that learners tend to have less access to and poorer quality of education than other groups. Their education often does not incorporate curricula and teaching methods that recognize their communities' histories, cultures, pedagogies, traditional languages, and traditional knowledge. Thus, in teaching them teachers must boost their full courage and dedication so that proper education will be achieved.

KEYWORDS: reading predicament, withstood, elementary learners, home distance learning

INTRODUCTION

Reading is the extent to which learners will learn better in laissez-faire atmosphere of enriched surroundings or in an instructed sequence of direct attention to the strategies of efficient reading (Tellez, 2016). Reading is a key to student gains in linguistic competence, vocabulary, spelling and writing. Tona (2019) also found that reading for pleasure and reading without looking up all the unknown words were both highly correlated with overall language proficiency. Tabi (2015) also suggests the instruction of extensive reading by explaining it as a good strategy to student's effective reading comprehension.

The government of United Kingdom considered reading transfers experiences to the individual so that the reader may expand his or her horizons, identify, extend and intensify his or her interest and gain deeper understanding of the world (Owu-Ewie, 2017). In simple words, it is a process of interpreting printed and written words. In depth, it is an effective process of conscious learning that influences the accuracy of information, attitudes, morals, beliefs, judgments and action of readers (Lone, 2019). Reading is regarded as one of the most important components in learning language and it is an essential tool for lifelong learning for all learners (Lone, 2019). This view supported by Mungungu (2010), who states that through reading, readers develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary and advanced grammar and becomes excellent spellers.

This improves the language proficiency and makes the reader to a better speaker. In their study with adult readers, Marisca (2013) found that reading contributes significantly to job success, career development, and ability to respond



to change. The definition of reading has undergone many improvements. In the past, reading was meant to interpret visual information of any given codes or systems (Lone, 2019). However, after that, reading became more complex and involved the understanding process of a whole text composed of written signs (Lone, 2011). Reading as a process for a reader to understand a writer's message.

In the Philippine education system, reading formed part of the core areas of basic education curriculum. For the last decade, the quality of Philippine education was put into a big question due to poor performance of students in reading both local and abroad. A Filipino child needs to develop higher order skills and functional literacy. It is given that any Filipino child with sufficient reading skills would have greater chances of success in school compared to a child whose reading skills are poor and more often than not, those with poor reading skills when assessed properly are diagnosed with reading disability (Marisca, 2013).

Republic Act No. 9155 (RA No. 9155), otherwise known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, mandates the Department of Education (DepEd) to formulate national educational policies to improve the delivery of its services and achieve basic education outcomes. In line with this, DepEd implemented Republic Act No. 10533 (RA No. 10533) entitled "Enhanced Basic Education Act", also known as the K to 12 Program, which aims to equip Filipino learners with skills and competencies that address the demands of the 21st Century.

In 2018, the Philippines joined the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as part of the Quality Basic Education reform plan and a step towards globalizing the quality of Philippine basic education. Released on December 3, 2019, the 2018 PISA results revealed that the Philippines scored 353 in Mathematics, 357 in Science, and 340 in Reading, all below the average of participating OECD countries. (www.deped.gov.ph) Issues like this triggered the researcher to conduct reading-related research.

The Department of Education Davao City (2015) pointed out that reading is one of the macro-skills which should be developed among learners to become successful in their literacy and academic endeavors. It is the most significant skill to master in order to ensure success in learning (Mondero, 2019). It is believed that failure in all other academic subjects can be attributed to the learners' failure to read and comprehend. Several exercises are designed by teachers to help children develop their reading skills.

A child who fails to develop his or her reading skills at a certain level of education finds reading boring and difficult to achieve (Mondero, 2019). If children are not independent readers by the end of the third grade, it is unlikely that they will be able to be successful in the middle grades and beyond and most likely they will rarely be able to "catch up" with their peers. This phenomenon of reading failure makes the child inattentive, irritable, and passive. Therefore, failure in this area hampers him to achieve academically in other content area subjects. This may even lead to negative attitude towards schooling.

To achieve the main aim of this study, the following research questions are set to generate reliable and authentic data from the elementary teachers who served as the participants of this study, to wit:

1. What are the reading predicament encountered by the teachers in teaching grade 6 students during the pandemic?
2. How do they cope with those reading predicament to achieve reading proficiency during home distance learning?
3. What is the teaching and learning insights can be drawn to enhance the reading abilities of the grade 6 learners?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In the next section, the specific details of the research procedures will be described, so future researchers can generalize the results from this study to other situations. Extensive and careful descriptions of the time, place, context, and culture of the study will be thoroughly discussed to develop transferability, which is the qualitative parallel to external validity in postpositivist research (Mertens, 2010). This section will: (a) discuss the interview approach; (b) explain the role of the researcher; and lastly, (c) describe the sampling method and ethical considerations. Patton (2005) proposes researchers conduct interviews to learn the things they cannot directly observe. Qualitative interviewing is not used to get answers to questions, but to understand the experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of that



experience (Seidman, 2016). Generally, qualitative studies use unstructured, open-ended interviews, because they allow for the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both the participants and interviewer; however, the use of semi-structured interviews is not uncommon and used when the researcher seeks to obtain specific more focused information (Schwandt, 2001).

Participants and Sampling

All of the participants were between 18 years old and above and are teachers in selected public schools in Davao City. These participants are currently teaching in the school year 2021-2022 with more than five years of experience in teaching reading. A total of 7 participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion. Seven of them will join the in-depth interview (IDI). All data gathered during IDI and will be recorded and transmuted to summarize the responses of the participants in an orderly manner.

Research Instruments

Purposive criterion sampling was employed to interview elementary teachers who were likely to have relevant and rich sources of information, but also meet certain criteria. The criteria for participation in the study will be thoroughly disclosed in the following paragraphs. The researcher was specifically interested in elementary teachers who experienced classes in reading comprehension in the elementary program for the school year 2021-2022.

For this study, elementary teachers were defined as teachers who experienced classes in reading comprehension for the school year 2021-2022. All of them have experienced both face-to-face classes and online virtual platforms to lay down comparisons and contrast.

The sampling method used was purposeful and also what Patton (2005) calls extreme or deviant case sampling. Deviant case sampling focuses on cases that are rich in information because they are unusual or special in some way. The researcher selected a total of seven participants from selected public schools in Davao City. The researcher was interested in this sample to explore and compare the themes that developed between the participants with differing populations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was done in the qualitative method. To answer the first and second research questions, the researcher analyzed the interviews. Therefore, she did the content analysis of each interview, and the themes were identified. To answer the third research question, the researcher created a rubric and a checklist to determine the progress of students and the increase in the amount of their willingness to promote reading comprehension skills during the pandemic. Finally, the questionnaire was used to explore the advantages and disadvantages of these interactive slides in reply to the last research question.

The following tool was used in interpreting the responses and information in this study.

In-depth Interview (IDI): This was used by the researcher to learn the reading predicament withstood the learners during home distance learning.

Thematic Content Analysis. This was used in interpreting the responses made by the key participants in determining the views and insights of teachers in relation to reading predicament of elementary learners.

Their answers were analyzed after being processed. The transcripts underwent extensive coding, with the primary emphasis fluctuating between the participant's main assertions and the researcher's subjective interpretation of the responses.

Phases utilized the Positioning Triad as a framework to analyze the data generated from Phase. According to Slocum & Lagenhove (2004), the positioning triangle is an analytical technique that draws attention to the connection between the ideas, experiences, and conversation experiences of informants, the constituents of meaning and the meaning building blocks.

Positioning Theory, a more contemporary method to understanding discursive behaviors developed by Boxer (2010), supports this by focusing on understanding people's positions rather than the roles they play. By doing this, what is



going on in a particular group can be revealed through the dynamics of developing story lines and metaphors used to explain circumstances.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the data revealed three themes; namely, the *importance of reading comprehension, modification of reading strategies, and imposition of strong motivation.*

The data from the interviews were analyzed using a process of thematic analysis facilitated by initial coding of the interview transcripts, identifying preliminary categories, second round coding, refining categories, and recognizing emerging themes. Main themes were identified through the iterative process of coding and categorizing, resulting in the most salient topics in participants' responses to the interview questions. These themes were discovered inductively in a bottom-up manner as emerging from transcript data when analyzed about the research questions. This resulted in the final distribution of themes deemed as most accurately reflecting the reported experiences of the research participants.

The first theme "importance of reading comprehension" has four (4) sub-themes namely: understanding the English language, proper intonation, and pronunciation, providing appropriate reading materials, and significance of interest in reading. The second theme immersed is "modification of reading strategies" with four (4) sub-themes namely, providing more reading activities, conducting a question-and-answer portion, cooperation between teachers and learners, and practicing reading without teachers. Finally, theme number three which is "imposition of strong motivation" has four (4) immersed themes, to wit: conduct of remedial classes, availability of teachers, reading is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and significance of self-confidence in reading.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research study shares the lived experiences of elementary teachers in teaching reading among elementary learners' value reading comprehension, modification of reading strategies, and imposition of powerful motivation. Just as it informs of the many challenges teachers faced, it exposes numerous areas for further study. The overarching topic of educational disruption could be explored about student achievement, teacher mental health, or teachers leaving the profession.

Within the context of the difficulty in reading among elementary learners and its impact on education, possible directions for research include student attendance, engagement, mental health, and coping strategies. To hone in on student academic progress, the study of the inequities which seemed to be exacerbated during teaching reading, and learning, and the impact of those on the achievement gap in education across the nation could be explored.

Also, worthy of study is how the reading format was beneficial to elementary students as they did not have to manage the complexities of attending school with their peers every day, were allowed to work at their own pace, and possibly received one-to-one interaction and assistance from their teachers. Additionally, I would recommend studies to examine the impact of reading on parents' perceptions of teachers' roles and responsibilities. Other possibilities might involve the notion of reading student cues while video conferencing, and how adaptations teachers made during reading sessions and learning directly impacted their future practice in either a face-to-face or a distance environment.

The extreme disruption of poverty among elementary learners opened the floodgates concerning educational topics worthy of pursuit. My study situates itself in the literature with regards to teachers' experiences in teaching elementary learners. Its findings led to several recommendations and possibilities for additional research.

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