LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH EDUCATION: CATCH-UP FRIDAYS IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to recognize the individuality of each student's learning approach and classified students based on their reading levels. This thoughtful categorization enabled the school to tailor activities, ensuring that every student could participate in meaningful learning experiences on Catch-Up Friday. Schools paused regular classes to immerse the entire school in a reading-focused day. This study provided an opportunity for each kid, regardless of reading proficiency, to have a personalized plan for the day centered on the joy of reading. Activities were planned to meet the children' reading levels. For novices, comfortable reading areas with bright picture books were built. Intermediate readers engaged in group reading sessions, while advanced readers were assigned more difficult topics. Teachers gave support suited to each student's reading level throughout the day. In addition to academic catch-up, Catch-Up Friday aims to promote a love of reading. The primary focus of this study was the elementary program teachers who participated in catch-up Friday activities. Each member teaches in a particular public school in Davao City. These participants have been teaching reading for more than five years, and they are presently teaching in the 2023–2024 school year. Ten people in all are included in this study and will participate in a concentrated group discussion and in-depth interview. The information obtained from the IDI and FGD is meticulously documented and converted into an organized summary of the participants' answers. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: the significance of reading comprehension, the need to adapt one's reading techniques, and the imposition of strong incentive.

KEYWORDS: *Learning, strategies, comprehension, elementary, teachers, reading, education, program, intervention*

INTRODUCTION

Students have been gone from classrooms and teachers across the world, yet reading instruction has persisted. Students' reading ability is frequently assessed through high-stakes examinations in various nations. However, because these exams obscure students' reading practices outside of the classroom, they place students in the role of task responders rather than active readers and writers. The authors examine the diversity and fluidity of literacy-related activities and events that are witnessed by teachers and students.

Today we now have access to a diverse range of reading materials, including books, periodicals, newspapers, comics, and the most recent e-books. We still don't make it a habit to read. A recent survey found that the majority of citizens do not read very much. In our modern era, in order to become a successful person or a top-tier student, we must first acquire appropriate knowledge and perspective. Instead, residents in industrialized countries such as Russia, China, Japan, Korea, and Australia are increasing their knowledge and information (Adams, 2020).

First and foremost, reading is an excellent way for us to expand our knowledge. It is undeniable that bookstores are now swamped with a variety of reading materials covering a wide range of topics. Reading a variety of book genres allows us to diversify our perspectives. For example, we can always read publications or books to get expertise and information on specific topics. Magazines and other educational books provide a massive amount of information about science and the most recent technologies (August & Shanahan, 2019). Those who are interested in technology will have the opportunity to have a thorough understanding of the subject, which will help them land a good employment

in the future. Aside from that, reading allows us to stay up with the current happenings in the globe. Additionally, reading helps us improve our linguistic skills (Evans & Green, 2020).

Undeniably, it has become an undeniable fact that most people around the world are not fluent in English, an international language. This is because they prefer to communicate in their native language. Unfortunately, they do not understand the value of English. To master the language, we must develop the habit of reading. Reading introduces us to a thousand and one terms that are rarely used in speech but may come in handy while writing. Persons who do not read much will struggle with essay writing since they lack the necessary writing skills (Elbro & Arnbak, 2021).

As a result, now is the time to make reading a priority. The school realized the importance of cultivating a reading culture early on, so DEAR Day became a celebration of storytelling, imagination, and the limitless possibilities that books provide (DepEd Order, 2024). Each school kept a careful check on student involvement and development throughout the DEAR day. Regular feedback sessions with teachers helped identify successful practices and areas for improvement, ensuring an ongoing commitment to making future Catch-Up Fridays even more effective. The school looks forward to building on this initiative and exploring further opportunities for inclusive and effective learning experiences as outlined in the educational directives set by DepEd.

Catch-Up Fridays, as per DepEd Order No. 001 Series of 2024, began on January 12, 2024, with an orientation session followed by the first day of activities. The program seeks to give additional support and learning opportunities for students who may have had difficulties during the previous academic year, ensuring that they have the required skills to succeed. Similarly, to strengthen the fundamental education priorities established in the MATATAG Agenda and accelerate the achievement of education targets set forth in DepEd Order (DO) No. 013, s. The 2023 title, Adoption of the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP), emphasizes the importance of Values, Health, and Peace Education. Values education remains a priority in accordance with Republic Act (RA) No. 11476, Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC), and the Values Education Act, which acknowledges the critical role of youth in nation-building. The urgency for Peace Education is a prompt response to the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, which reveal that bullying remains a pervasive problem in public schools, and the need for Filipino learners as global citizens to acquire and strengthen peace competencies, allowing them to become peacemakers and advocates in their individual communities, whereas Health Education necessitates more advocacy to maintain learners' general health and well-being (Eslit, 2019).

The day began with a complete orientation session for kids, parents, and educators at the school. The first day stressed the importance of Catch-Up Fridays in closing academic gaps and creating a good learning environment. During the orientation, the objectives, schedules, and activities for Catch-Up Fridays were discussed. Parents were advised on the curriculum, teaching methods, and expected results for their children. Teachers reviewed personalized learning plans suited to each student's specific requirements and gave resources to help home-based learning (DepEd Order, 2024).

Following the orientation, the students headed to their separate classrooms to begin the inaugural Catch-Up Friday's session. The atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm as educators implemented engaging activities to assess students' current academic standing and identify areas that needed more attention. Teachers used a variety of instructional strategies, such as interactive discussions, group activities, and one-on-one consultations, to accommodate diverse learning styles. Diagnostic evaluations were used to determine the learners' competency levels in important topics. At the end of the day, a quick feedback session was held to elicit views from students through the use of Reflection journals. Initial observations and progress were examined, and any issues identified were addressed immediately (DepEd Order, 2024).

This feedback method is critical to the adaptive aspect of Catch-Up Fridays, ensuring that the program remains attentive to the students' changing needs. The introduction and first day of Catch-Up Fridays marked a successful beginning for this effort. With a solid foundation built on comprehensive planning, devoted instructors, and active participation from students and parents, the program is ready to have a beneficial impact on children's academic journeys this the academic year (Education Development Center, 2019). The introduction of Catch-Up Friday has shown significant positive impacts across various fields. In the realm of games, Catch-Up games create tension and unpredictability, enhancing player engagement regardless of skill level.

Research Questions

Reading fluency is a crucial ability that sixth graders need to develop in order to get ready for junior high school. Elementary school teachers have an obligation to serve their students' needs and act as a catalyst for change in their lives. "Lived experiences of elementary teachers on reading difficulties of grade six learners" is the title of a study that will provide scenarios and instructional ideas on how to enhance the reading instruction system in the Philippines.

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 lived experiences of the teachers in reading comprehension of the learners during Catch-Up Fridays?
2. How do elementary teachers handled the reading challenges that the grade six students encountered during Catch-Up Fridays?
3. What are the opportunities can be developed in teaching reading comprehension during Catch-Up Fridays?

METHODOLOGY
Research Design

This section contains specifics about the research methods used so that scholars in the future might extrapolate the findings of this study to different contexts. Transferability is the qualitative counterpart of external validity in postpositivist research, and it is developed by means of extensive and meticulous descriptions of the time, location, environment, and culture of the study (Mertens, 2005). The interview technique, the researcher's role, the sampling procedure, and ethical considerations will all be covered in this part.

Participants and Sampling

The primary focus of this study was the elementary program teachers who participated in catch-up Friday activities. Each member teaches in a particular public school in Davao City. These participants have been teaching reading for more than five years, and they are presently teaching in the 2023–2024 school year. Ten people in all are included in this study and will participate in a concentrated group discussion and in-depth interview. The information obtained from the IDI and FGD is meticulously documented and converted into an organized summary of the participants' answers.

Inclusion Criteria of the participants

Participants   Inclusion Criteria

1. With seven (7) years teaching experience in one of the public schools in Davao City. A licensed professional teacher in English.
2. English teacher in grade six (6) for more than ten (10) years. A reading program coordinator in one of the public schools in Davao City.
3. Assigned as catch -up Friday's coordinator in their school. A licensed professional teacher for almost eight (8) years handling elementary learners.
4. Elementary teacher in English for more than five (5) years in the public school. She experienced teaching reading under catch-up Friday's program of deped.
5. A licensed professional teacher in public school for almost 9 years teaching reading to grade six elementary learners.
6. A licensed professional teacher teaching in a public school and taught General education subjects including reading for more than 4 years in Grade 6.
7. She taught reading comprehension subjects to grade six elementary learners for more than seven (7) years in one of the public schools in Davao City.
8. A licensed teacher. He is teaching in a public school for almost 6 years. As an English teacher, he was assigned in teaching reading to grade 6 students.
9. A licensed teacher in one of the public schools in Davao City for more than nine (9) years. Currently, he is the language teacher of the grade 6 students.
10. Teaching English in the Elementary unit for almost 9 years. She is a licensed teacher and currently enrolled her Master of Arts in teaching English in one of the private schools in Davao City.

Research Instrument
To generate targeted, qualitative, textual data, I combined the directionality and agenda of semi-structured interviews with the flexibility of unstructured, open-ended interviews (Schensul et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data for this study in order to investigate how elementary teachers enhance the quality of reading instruction for elementary students and to characterize their experiences, difficulties, and goals when participating in reading-related classes.

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, 2018). 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, 2019).

To ensure that the same information was collected from all the participants, an interview guide was used. The interview guide included open-ended questions and topics to help structure the interview, but when needed, the interviewer also explored, probed, and asked additional questions to clarify and expand on a particular topic. The interview guide helped make interviewing several different participants more systematic and comprehensive by defining in advance the issues to be explored (Patton, 2005) as cited in Clark (2024). The open-ended questions were framed in a way, so the participants could represent their views and perspectives in their own words and terms, in addition to taking the questions in any direction that they chose.

Since qualitative research studies subjects in their natural setting, all interviews must be done through face-to-face interviews at a time convenient for the participants. All interview sessions were tape-recorded for purposes of transcription. I used follow-up interviews after transcription to clarify meaning or explore areas in more depth.

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, I did the content analysis of each interview, and the themes were identified. To answer the third research question, I 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 catch up Fridays. Finally, the questionnaire was used to explore the advantages and disadvantages of these interactive slides in reply to the last research question.

Qualitative data analysis begins with the process of organizing, reducing, and describing the collected data (Schwandt, 2021). Unlike quantitative analysis, there are no prescribed formulas for qualitative analysis. Marshall and Rossman (2006) remind researchers that qualitative analysis does not proceed linearly and is not neat.

To guide the data analysis, I used the seven phases of data analysis and described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) as cited in Academia (2019) to reduce data, create manageable pieces, allow for interpretation, and find meaning in the words of the participants.

Data analysis first begins with organizing the data. The organization of the data involved keeping information provided by each participant separate and in sequence with the order of the interviews. The process of organizing the data allowed it to remain manageable, easily accessible, and readily available. The digital audio files from the interviews were carefully transcribed into written form. Electronic folders were established to create an organization for the data collected from each participant.

Next, I became familiar with the data through extensive reading of the interviews to gain an understanding of the content. This involved reading through the interviews at least three times. Following Hatch's (2002) recommendations for qualitative analysis, the researcher created a sheet of notes for each participant. The summary sheets were a quick way to refer to the original data as the data analysis continued (Hatch, 2002) as cited in Evans (2020).

After the initial readings, Hatch (2002) recommends researchers read data through completely with one typology in mind. Patton (1990) defines typologies as classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspects of the world into parts. Typologies are generated from the theory, common sense, or research objectives. For this study, the researcher used the typologies or themes from the literature review as the constructs through which to view the data.

After reading through the data with each constructor typology in mind, the researcher coded the data into five categories from the literature by taking excerpts of text from the data and identifying them within a particular category.

After everything was coded, the researcher read through the data again while writing analytic memos on her thoughts and insights and began the process of offering interpretations. During this stage, the researcher began to interpret the data to find significance and meaning in the teachers' instructional experiences through pulling salient themes, reoccurring ideas, and patterns of belief that resonated collectively throughout the interviews.

The offering of interpretations began following the emergence of themes in the data. Marshall and Rossman (2020) believe this part of the data analysis brings meaning to the themes and categories and allows the researcher to develop links between the interviews. The researcher began to interpret the data to find significance and meaning in the teachers' instructional experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The issue of the lived experiences of elementary teachers on reading difficulties encountered by Elementary learners is an issue that needs an immediate solution. More broadly, it is about the education system and the problems that hinder us from making reading a reality. Instilling a love of reading early gives a child a head starts on expanding their vocabulary and building independence and self-confidence. The catch-up Friday's program helps them learn to make sense not only of the world around them but also people, building social-emotional skills and of course, imagination. Reading exposes us to other styles, other voices, other forms, and other genres of writing.

A lot is going on in reading, from the letter and word recognition to understanding meaning at the phrase, sentence, and paragraph level. When beginner reader encounters vocabulary, they do not know or do not recognize due to inaccurate decoding, they are likely to skip ahead. The more blanks in a line of text, the harder it is to make meaning and the more cognitively challenging and frustrating the reading task becomes. That's why poor comprehension can result when a student struggles with decoding, has a limited vocabulary, or attempts to read a text that is at too high of a level.

However, reading also requires being able to pay attention to the narrative. Students need to identify the gist, main ideas, and specific details and even make inferences about what they are reading. If a student has problems staying focused as a result of attention difficulties, it can affect comprehension.

Implications

Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out what is printed on the page. Through hearing stories, children are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them build their vocabulary and improve their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they start to read. They need to understand how stories work too. Even if your child does not understand every word, they will hear new sounds, words, and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard.

Teachers make a difference in the success of their Indigenous students when they hold a fundamental belief that all children can learn to read and when they have the skills and determination to make it happen. These teachers base their classroom practices on sound reading theory, provide instruction that meets the specific learning needs of their students, create an organized and stimulating learning environment, and regularly assess their students' reading achievement about the expectations of the Ontario language curriculum. They do not work alone but see themselves as part of a school team committed to ensuring that every child can read by the end of Grade 5.

I believe 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.

Some students often do not have access to schooling in their traditional languages, and the curriculum and teaching methods do not incorporate nor recognize sufficiently their communities' histories, cultures, ways of learning, and traditional knowledge. While socio-economic outcomes are often worse for Indigenous Peoples than for other groups, the available data typically provide only an incomplete picture of poverty, exclusion, and their priorities and perspectives about education. This is in part because their identity and ways of living encompass both individual and collective rights and cultural, social, and economic aspects.

Reading is a fundamental skill that we all use every single day. Teaching reading strategies for elementary students is so very important. However, reading can be a challenging skill that many students struggle to master. And as teachers, we want nothing more than to help our students become comfortable and confident readers.

In Richard Gregory's theory it draws a paradigm shift that occurred in the cognitive sciences. Behaviorism became somewhat discredited as the new cognitive theory represented the mind's innate capacity for learning, which gave new explanatory power to how humans acquired their first language; this also had a tremendous impact on the field of ESL/EFL as psycholinguists explained: "how such internal representations of the foreign language development within the learner's mind".

Meanwhile, the theory of Flavell "thinking about thinking" also support that reading is a constructive process in which the text, the reader, and the context interact. In this process, the reader can restructure the information in the text based on his/her ability to decode and working memory based on his/her schemata. While readers interact with the text, they can support and assess their own understanding. Now, when readers are conscious and aware of their understanding of the text, metacognition takes place. Metacognitive strategies are known to be essential in improving reading. In reading, metacognitive strategies are defined as self-monitoring and self-regulating activities which focus on both the process and the product of 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 catch-up Fridays 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 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 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 including activities during catch up Friday's session. Its findings led to several recommendations and possibilities for additional research.

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