PROBATION AND ADVERSITY OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN READING: COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF STUDENT LEARNING ENGLISH AS ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the probation and adversity faced by elementary teachers in teaching reading comprehension skills as an additional language to grade five learners. The study included a total of nine (9) participants from Davao del Sur. If necessary, participants engaged in either focused group discussions or in-depth interviews. Specifically, five participants took part in the in-depth interviews (IDI), while the remaining four participated in focused group discussions (FGD). They were required to have a minimum of five years of experience in teaching English. This experience included working with students whose primary language was not English. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design and procedure to capture in-depth insights into the learning processes and strategies of participants. This study explores the challenges faced by elementary teachers during their probationary period and the adversity they encounter while teaching reading comprehension to students learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). It highlights the impact of addressing diverse reading levels in the classroom, where teachers employ various strategies, such as using visuals and interactive activities, to cater to the needs of EAL learners. The study also emphasizes the role of staff meetings and professional development in supporting teachers, providing opportunities for growth, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices. By examining these themes, the research aims to identify the factors influencing both teachers' effectiveness and students' reading comprehension skills, ultimately offering insights into the importance of teacher support and targeted instructional strategies for EAL learners.

KEYWORDS- *Probation, Adversity, Elementary Teachers, Reading, Comprehension Skills, Student Learning English, Additional Language*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. It relies on two, interconnected abilities: word reading and language comprehension. However, the main challenges and problems in the field of reading comprehension in the Philippines include poor reading abilities among students, a lack of resources, socioeconomic factors, and a decline in English proficiency. These challenges have led to difficulties in vocabulary development, critical thinking skills, and understanding reading materials. Additionally, struggling readers face social problems and the existing reading programs need enhancements to cater to the growing needs of learners. Teachers' strategies and students' reading interests also affect learning outcomes.

In Ghana, teaching English as an Additional Language involves supporting learners to access a mainstream curriculum taught in English. For those learners, English is not their first language they are acquiring proficiency in the language while also learning subjects through English (Anderson & Freebody, 2021).

According to Anglin (2023) in the United States of America, children with English as an additional language need to hear English spoken by the adults in the setting in as many different contexts as possible. When the context has meaning for the child, they are more able to learn spoken English from the adult. Your role is crucial in modelling the accurate use of English, noting the child's spoken vocabulary and building on what the child already knows.

However, in China it is good for children with English as an additional language to be able to speak their home language in the setting and talk to providers who speak the same language if there are any. This will further aid them in learning English. Most children adapt to speaking more than one language. The security of knowing what resources will be available in each area, each day supports children's wellbeing and achievements in learning. Keep the provision consistent. Observing how the children respond will inform you when a change is needed. This may be to add something more, or a specific enrichment to extend the children's learning (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (Bartlett, 2022).

According to the Department of Education in Metro Manila, Philippines (2018) reading comprehension in the Philippines particularly in NCR is low due to several factors. One factor is the limited availability of reading materials, both at home and in schools. Another factor is the inadequacy of reading instruction, which affects students' ability to develop strong comprehension skills. Additionally, there is a lack of focus on specific sub-skills

of reading comprehension, such as identifying main ideas and making inferences. These sub-skills are crucial for effective comprehension but are not given enough attention in the educational system.

Furthermore, there may be a lack of intervention programs to address weak areas of reading comprehension, such as interpretative, critical, and application skills. Overall, these factors contribute to the low levels of reading comprehension in the Philippines.

Meanwhile in Cebu City, Sapnas (2022) posited that classroom reading corner projects a class home atmosphere, displays a bulletin of information, provides enough tables and chairs for reading, clean, organi2ed, and conducive for student's reader. It is an area inside the classroom which provides a silent and oral reading tool, reading materials, passages, and text. All of these are readily available and accessible to learners for their reading development. Before the classroom reading corner was installed.

On the other hand, the city school's division of Davao is really keen on doing something about this concern. It intends to improve the performance level of its learners. It was determined that having a reading program in each school is essential. The Division Office then through the collaboration of the Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) project and the University of the Philippines developed a reading program (eReading) which empowers teachers, supervisors, and other stakeholders to improve pupils' performance. A series of trainings for such ensued. As of the last two years, the implementation of the aforementioned is in full blast already (Department of Education 2019).

According to the Department of Education (2019) in Sulop Davao del Sur the goal of the Davao del Sur Special School is to produce individuals who will become assets of a growing and progressing nation. The school believes that integration of reading skills in different subject areas would help in the realization of this goal. In order to achieve this, School Based Training Programs (SBTP) are being conducted every last Friday of the month to have a well-equipped teaching force who can address the intricacies of literacy and teach all of the children to read well.

LITERATURE REVIEW
This chapter view that reading has different definition based on different people. According to Qian (2022) "reading is a process of getting the meaning of something written of printed by interpreting its characters or symbols. Reading is a second language that defined as process of grasping full linguistics meaning in the new language through the symbol used to represent it."
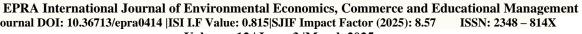
In the same way, Ramirez, et al (2020) posits that "reading is to get information of some words from turn the printed symbols into the sounds which are language. But since we get information in the same way from spoken language, this purpose does not define reading in a way that distinguishes it from talking. "Meanly the reason we turn the print into sound is to get at the meaning. On the other hand, Harris said that "reading is the meaningful interpretation of printed of written verbal symbols which also involves sensing, perceiving, achieving meaning, learning reacting in variety of ways."

From these definitions, it can be said that reading is an effort from the students to get or transfer the meaning and information from the text by understanding, grasping, translating, and giving meaning to the written form. Therefore, it can be concluded that reading is not only looking at word in the form of graphic symbols but also getting meaning from word to word to understand the content of a text and to get information from the text (Kendeou, et al, 2019).

Reading is only incidentally visual more information is contributed by the reader than print in the page. The meant of this statement is from the product like book have we read we have to get the conclusion there is information that we get from it. Not just read, after read we forgot all of have, we read. If we just hope we can get more many knowledge just from listening and looking it is wrong because almost of knowledge is print in the textbook. And it is simpler for students because must not meet with and expert to get knowledge from she or he but we can learn from their blab our and book (Kail, et al, 2019; Lerner & Lonigan, 2019; MacCallum, et al, 2019).

When reading a text, students may encounter many factors contribute as the cause of students' difficulties in comprehending text. Some of those factors are language knowledge, learner's background knowledge, motivation, the lack of reading strategies, and reading process (Deacon, et al, 2024).

Language knowledge has always been expected that readers must acquire language knowledge first before they can read in second and foreign language. Word knowledge is the most important element for reading comprehension because readers cannot comprehend the sentence without attaching the meaning to the word that a passage with many unfamiliar words cause difficulties in comprehesSion. As similar to the view Alderson struggling to read because of unknown words will obviously affect reading pleasure and comprehension. The researcher concludes that difficulties of language knowledge are readers cannot comprehend the sentence without attaching the meaning to the word and that a passage with many unfamiliar words cause difficulties in comprehension (Daery, et al, 2020; Armon-Lotem, 2018; Barac, et al, 2024; Adlof, et al, 2020).

Research Questions

Reading comprehension is essential for language and literature, as well as developing a student's critical thinking and memory skills, focus and their ability to solve problems all necessary for every kind of student or professional. Therefore, literacy is arguably the most important competence to teach. A student who can master reading comprehension will not only have high chances of becoming an avid reader and cultured person but also be a higher-achieving professional in nearly all areas of knowledge. Meaningfully, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What challenges do teachers experienced in teaching reading comprehension to grade five students?
2. What are the coping strategies used by the teachers in teaching reading comprehension to grade five students?
3. How do elementary teachers express their educational insights gained through the process of using reading comprehension to grade five students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design and procedure to capture in-depth insights into the learning processes and strategies of participants. The design began with a clear definition of the research questions and objectives, focusing on understanding the experiences and perceptions of elementary teachers regarding reading comprehension, particularly in the context of learners who were learning English as an additional language. The procedure involved several key steps.

Initially, a purposive sample of participants, including elementary teachers and literacy experts, was selected to provide rich, relevant data about reading comprehension practices. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and strategies. During interviews and focus groups, open-ended questions were used to encourage detailed responses and discussions about reading challenges, comprehension strategies, and instructional methods.

Observations of classroom settings and reading activities provided contextual insights into the practical application of reading strategies. The collected data were then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes and patterns related to reading comprehension. This analysis helped uncover how different factors, such as instructional techniques and learner attitudes, influenced reading comprehension outcomes.

The design and procedure were iterative, with continuous reflection and adaptation based on emerging findings to ensure a thorough and responsive investigation into the complexities of reading comprehension.

Research Participants

The study included a total of nine (9) participants from Davao del Sur. If necessary, participants engaged in either focused group discussions or in-depth interviews. Specifically, five participants took part in the in-depth interviews (IDI), while the remaining four participated in focused group discussions (FGD). All data collected during the IDI and FGD were recorded and transcribed to summarize participants' responses in an organized manner. The following were the inclusion criteria for the participants.

Participants had to be certified English teachers with a valid teaching license. They needed to have substantial experience and expertise in teaching English, particularly to students who were learning English as an additional language (EAL). They were required to have a minimum of five years of experience in teaching English. This experience included working with students whose primary language was not English, thereby providing relevant insights into EAL teaching methods and comprehension skills.

Participants had to have been employed as English teachers in public schools, with a focus on teaching English to students learning it as an additional language. This ensured that their experiences and observations were up-to-date and directly relevant to the study. Thus, participants were actively involved in classrooms where English was taught as an additional language. This included working with diverse student populations and employing various instructional strategies designed to enhance comprehension skills.

Lastly, participants had to be willing to engage in the study, including participating in interviews, focus groups, or other data collection methods as required. Their willingness to share their experiences and insights was crucial for obtaining valuable data. They needed to have a demonstrated understanding of comprehension strategies and the challenges faced by EAL students. This expertise was evidenced by their teaching practice, professional development, or contributions to curriculum design focused on EAL learners.

Research Instrument

I used instruments that included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews involved open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives in their own words, providing rich, narrative data. Focus groups facilitated group discussions where

participants interacted with each other, offering diverse viewpoints and generating deeper insights into shared experiences.

Observation protocols involved systematically recording behaviors, interactions, and contexts within natural settings, providing a detailed understanding of real-life practices. Each of these instruments was designed to capture the nuances of participants' experiences and the complexity of the research topic. To ensure reliability and validity, researchers often piloted their instruments before full-scale data collection, refining questions and procedures based on feedback. The choice and design of the research instrument were guided by the study's objectives and the nature of the phenomenon being investigated.

Semi-structured interviews combined the flexibility of unstructured, open-ended interviews with directionality and an agenda to produce focused, qualitative, textual data (Schensul et al., 2019). This study collected data using semi-structured interviews to explore how elementary teachers improved the quality of teaching reading to grade five learners. The interviews aimed to describe their experiences, strategies, and outcomes when monitoring the reading comprehension skills of students learning English as an additional language.

To ensure that the same information was collected from all participants, an interview guide was used. The interview guide included open-ended questions and topics to help structure the interview, but when necessary, I also explored, probed, and asked additional questions to clarify and expand on specific topics. The interview guide helped make the process of interviewing multiple participants more systematic and comprehensive by defining in advance the issues to be explored (Patton, 2005).

Data Analysis
Qualitative data analysis involved the process of gathering, structuring, and interpreting qualitative data to understand what it represented. I used qualitative methods to analyze the data, examining the interviews to respond to the first and follow-up study questions. As a result, I identified themes through content analysis of each interview. To address the third study question, I developed a checklist and a rubric to track students' development and the increase in their desire to support effective speaking and writing in the classroom. Finally, I used the research questions to explore the advantages and disadvantages of these interactive slides in response to the last research question.

Qualitative data analysis began with organizing, reducing, and describing the collected data (Schwandt, 2001). Unlike quantitative analysis, there were no prescribed formulas for qualitative analysis. Marshall and Rossman (2006) reminded researchers that qualitative analysis did not proceed linearly and was not neat. However, following good practices and procedures enhanced the credibility of qualitative research. In this final section, I explained the data analysis procedures and thoroughly described the steps taken to ensure the results from this study were credible, transferable, dependable, and authentic.

To guide the data analysis, I used the seven phases of data analysis described by Giorgi (2006). The final step in Colaizzi's method, which involved returning the results to the participants, was approached with caution. Giorgi (2006) criticized this step, noting that the researcher and participant inevitably had different perspectives the researcher from a phenomenological perspective and the participant from their everyday 'natural attitude.' This reflected a broader debate in qualitative research regarding the value of "respondent validation" or "member checking." I agreed that any notion that participants could simply approve an analysis as "correct" was untenable. Nevertheless, given the aims of descriptive phenomenology, it was reasonable to expect that participants should recognize their own experience in the fundamental structure.

Descriptive phenomenology was especially valuable in areas with limited existing research, such as the experience of recreational camping, which I explored. For psychologists, Colaizzi's method offered a clear and systematic approach; its thematic nature may have been more familiar and accessible than the "distilling" style proposed by Giorgi.

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, I created a sheet of notes for each participant. These summary sheets served as a quick reference to the original data as the analysis progressed (Hatch, 2002).

After the initial readings, I followed Hatch's (2002) advice to read the data completely with one typology in mind. Patton (1990) defines typologies as classification systems consisting of categories that divide aspects of the world into parts. According to Hatch (2002), typologies are generated from theory, common sense, or research objectives. For this study, I used the typologies or themes from the literature review as constructs through which to view the data.

Once I had read through the data with each construct or typology in mind, I coded the data into five categories derived from the literature, identifying excerpts of text and placing them into specific categories.

After coding, I read through the data again, writing analytic memos on my thoughts and insights, and began the process of interpretation. During this stage, I interpreted the data to find significance and meaning in the teachers' instructional experiences by pulling salient themes, recurring ideas, and patterns of belief that resonated collectively throughout the interviews.

As themes in the data began to emerge, I offered interpretations. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) as cited in Soriano (2019), this aspect of data analysis provided context to the themes and categories, enabling me to create connections between the interviews. I started analyzing the information to derive importance and interpretation from the educators' teaching experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter shed light on the significant implications of the study as it highlighted the challenges that elementary teachers faced during their probationary period, especially when tasked with improving the reading comprehension skills of students learning English as an additional language (EAL). Teachers often encountered adversity due to the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of EAL students, which required specialized instructional strategies. These challenges led to increased stress and burnout for teachers, particularly when they lacked the necessary professional development, resources, or support to effectively address the unique needs of these students. Consequently, teachers struggled to provide the differentiated instruction required to close the reading comprehension gaps among EAL learners.

Implications

This study revealed important implications in relation to several key theories of reading and comprehension, including Jean Piaget's Schema Theory, Walter Kintsch's Interactive Model of Reading, and Kintsch's Construction-Integration Model. These frameworks helped illuminate how teachers' experiences during their probationary period, especially when working with students learning English as an additional language (EAL), can affect both teaching methods and student learning outcomes. By analyzing the challenges and adversity faced by teachers, the study provided insights into how these theories could be applied or hindered in the context of EAL students' reading comprehension development.

In relation to Piaget's Schema Theory, the study highlighted the importance of activating prior knowledge for EAL students. Piaget's theory asserts that learners build understanding by connecting new information to existing cognitive structures, or schemas. However, EAL students often lack the necessary background knowledge or schemas in the new language, making it difficult for them to process and comprehend texts effectively. Teachers on probation, who were still developing their instructional strategies, often faced adversity in providing these students with the right scaffolding.

Without appropriate support, these students struggled to form the necessary connections between their existing knowledge in their native language and the new content they were encountering in English. The study emphasized the need for teachers to receive specialized training to help bridge these gaps by adapting their teaching methods to better connect new vocabulary and concepts to students' prior experiences and knowledge.

The study also revealed how the Interactive Model of Reading, developed by Walter Kintsch, could be impacted by the challenges faced by teachers in a probationary context. According to the interactive model, reading comprehension involves a dynamic interaction between the reader's knowledge and the text. The model posits that readers actively construct meaning by drawing from both their linguistic skills and world knowledge. In the case of EAL students, their limited proficiency in English can significantly hinder the interaction between their background knowledge and the text.

Teachers, particularly those on probation, were often unprepared to address this challenge effectively, leading to difficulties in fostering the interaction between the student's existing knowledge and the English texts they were reading. The study suggested that teachers needed more support in applying the interactive model to meet the specific needs of EAL learners, using strategies like pre-teaching vocabulary, using visual aids, and providing context before reading.

The Construction-Integration Model, also developed by Walter Kintsch, offers another relevant framework for understanding the reading comprehension challenges faced by EAL students. This model focuses on the process of constructing a mental representation of the text and integrating new information into that representation.

However, EAL students frequently faced difficulty in constructing coherent mental representations due to language barriers. Teachers who were still in their probationary phase often lacked the strategies to help students effectively build and integrate these representations. The study suggested that teachers could benefit from professional development that focused on helping students break down texts into manageable parts, use graphic organizers, and actively engage in discussion to facilitate the construction and integration of meaning. Without such strategies, EAL students struggled to process the content at the deeper levels required for effective comprehension.

Furthermore, the study highlighted that the challenges teachers faced during their probation period often impeded their ability to effectively apply these theoretical models to their instruction. Teachers on probation were under

pressure to demonstrate proficiency in various aspects of teaching, which made it difficult for them to focus on the nuanced needs of EAL students. They often lacked the experience to recognize when students were struggling with the foundational aspects of schema building, interactive reading, and text integration.

This led to gaps in instruction, where teachers would sometimes fail to support EAL students in activating relevant schemas, interacting with the text in meaningful ways, or integrating new knowledge effectively. The study underscored the importance of targeted support and professional development for teachers to help them better understand how these theories could inform their practice and improve their students' reading comprehension.

In conclusion, the study emphasized the need for a more structured and supportive approach to teaching reading comprehension to EAL students, particularly for teachers who are in the early stages of their careers. Teachers on probation, while eager to improve their practices, often lacked the specialized knowledge and experience necessary to effectively apply the Schema Theory, the Interactive Model of Reading, and the Construction-Integration Model in the classroom.

The study suggested that targeted professional development programs focused on these theoretical frameworks would help teachers build the skills needed to support EAL students. These programs could provide teachers with practical strategies to activate prior knowledge, foster meaningful interactions with text, and help students construct and integrate new information more effectively, ultimately leading to improved reading comprehension outcomes for EAL learners.

Future Directions
The future directions of the study could focus on expanding the research to explore more deeply the specific challenges faced by teachers during their probationary period and how these challenges can be mitigated through targeted support. Future research could investigate the impact of mentorship and peer collaboration on probationary teachers, particularly in the context of supporting English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. By analyzing the effectiveness of mentorship programs that pair new teachers with experienced educators, future studies could explore how these relationships help novice teachers navigate the complexities of teaching EAL students, particularly in developing effective reading comprehension strategies.

Another potential direction for future research could involve examining the long-term effects of professional development programs on teachers' ability to support EAL students. The study could investigate the impact of specific training modules on reading comprehension, such as those focused on differentiated instruction, scaffolding strategies, and culturally responsive teaching practices. Longitudinal studies could track teachers' growth over time, measuring how their ability to apply theoretical frameworks like Schema Theory and the Interactive Model of Reading evolves as they gain experience and undergo targeted professional development. This would offer valuable insights into which types of training most effectively equip teachers to meet the diverse needs of EAL students in their classrooms.

Future studies could also explore the role of school culture and institutional support in shaping teachers' success with EAL learners. Research could investigate how schools with strong support structures for EAL students—such as specialized language programs, resource availability, and collaborative teaching practices impact teachers' ability to close reading comprehension gaps. Understanding how school policies and resources influence teacher performance and student outcomes could provide valuable recommendations for school administrators looking to better support teachers working with diverse language learners. By examining the interactions between teachers, students, and the school environment, future research could identify effective models for improving literacy outcomes for EAL students, especially during the crucial early years of teaching.

Additionally, the study could benefit from incorporating more diverse perspectives by including data from different geographical regions and school contexts. Research could explore how teachers in different cultural and linguistic settings approach the challenges of teaching EAL students, and how contextual factors, such as community involvement, parental support, and local educational policies, influence their teaching practices. Expanding the scope of the study to include teachers in urban, rural, and diverse multicultural settings would allow for a broader understanding of the issues at play, providing a more comprehensive view of the challenges and solutions associated with teaching reading comprehension to EAL students.

Finally, future research could focus on the role of student engagement and motivation in developing reading comprehension skills for EAL learners. Investigating how factors such as student attitudes toward reading, their personal experiences with language learning, and their intrinsic motivation to learn English affect their comprehension abilities could provide insights into how teachers can better engage their EAL students. By examining the relationship between student motivation and teacher strategies, future studies could offer practical recommendations for fostering a more supportive and engaging learning environment for EAL students.

In summary, the future directions of the study should focus on exploring various aspects of teacher preparation, support, and professional development, as well as understanding the broader contextual factors that influence EAL students' reading comprehension. By addressing these areas, future research could provide valuable insights into improving instructional practices and outcomes for both teachers and students in diverse educational settings.
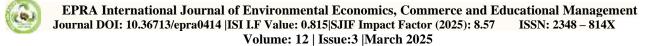
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