

Reading Performance and Challenges: Reading Initiatives in the New Normal

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Abstract— This study determined the reading performance, reading habits, reading attitudes and available reading resources of primary grades in of the public schools in the Philippines. Using the quantitative data analysis, the results reveal that the reading performances the learners are varied, with a significant proportion of students performing at an instructional or frustration level. However, a considerable number of students achieved an independent level of performance, indicating that they can comprehend and analyze texts on their own. Language proficiency in Filipino is higher than in English, while proficiency in the MTB-MLE program is in between. Results also revealed that they have a relatively good reading habit, spending an average of 8-10 minutes reading books, putting books in their rooms, and visiting the school library. These practices can help improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills. Result also showed a significant relationship between reading performance and reading habits, indicating that students' reading habits play a crucial role in their reading performance. Based on these findings, the study suggested that interventions to students who were performing at an instructional or frustration level in reading while encouraging parents to provide access to a variety of reading materials at home.

Keywords— reading performance, public schools, education improvement, educational system, MTB-MLE program.

INTRODUCTION

Learning to read is a process that builds mastery, an active process that improves several stages and processes that act simultaneously to achieve comprehension (Bukidnon, 2018). It 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 (Alderson, 2014). It is believed that failure in all other academic subjects can be attributed to the learners' failure to read and comprehend.

The Article VIII, Section 2 of the Code of Ethics for Teachers states that the teacher should recognize the interest and welfare of the students as his greatest or highest concern. Students must receive a just and impartial treatment. This also emphasizes the school's consideration on student's differences, especially on intellectual ability. In this sense, a teacher has to employ different and effective reading approaches and intervention programs so that the learners could gain appropriate learning experiences.

Hence, the government instituted agency initiated different programs that can help solve prevailing issues on reading difficulty such as the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program, Professional

Development. Component, and Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) in which reading literacy is strengthened. The program's main concern is to develop in Filipino children literacy and numeracy skills and attitudes which will contribute to lifelong learning. More specifically, it aims to improve reading and numeracy skills of pupils under the restructure curriculum of the department; furthermore, establish sustainable and cost-effective professional systems for teachers.

However, despite of the different programs institutionalized, it was revealed that the reading performance of students is very low locally and internationally. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) Results from PISA 2018 revealed that reading is among the areas that fifteen-year-old students in the Philippines scored lower than those in majority of the countries and economies that participated in PISA 2018. The country's average reading score was 340 score points, on a par with that of the Dominican Republic no country scored lower than the Philippines and the Dominican Republic.

Meanwhile, the decreasing result of National Achievement Test was blamed to the low capability of the pupils in reading. Quijano (2007), voices out that reading problem is the main reason for the poor

performance of some students in NAT. As reflected in the data of the NAT, there is only 21.36% increase from 2006-2009, a Mean Percentage Score of 54.66 percent was noted, an increase gained in 2009, wherein it reached to 66.33 percent which falls as low score or classified under near mastery level.

Added to that, pandemic made the work of a teacher challenging and risky in conducting reading assessment, to go to the field or home visitation especially to the pupils living in remote areas. Conducting remediation limits the teacher to implement reading interventions due to pandemic and limited time to conduct in school and limited number of respondents to participate in particular reading intervention in schools.

As such, Phil-IRI results in one of the districts revealed that the reading comprehension of grade III pupils were not fully developed along Filipino language. The decreasing results were also seen in the conduct of Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) in English particularly in Grade III, only 25% pupils are belonged to adjectival description of grade ready. Therefore, these struggling pupils need intervention programs to address the reading problems of pupils.

As also observed by the researcher there were determinants met by teachers in the conduct of intervention programs such as lack of school-community supports, pupils' absenteeism, insufficiency of instructional materials, discipline and behavior problems amongst learners, lack of reading facilities and other areas of concerns.

The aforementioned situation affects the pupils and the school's performance. The school should therefore initiate an action to address the reading challenges among the struggling readers. Thus, as teacher, the researcher feels the necessity in conducting this research as basis in designing and institutionalizing an appropriate reading intervention program to be used as possible solution to the existing problem. This current study determines the reading initiatives in the new normal that support the learners literacy aiming to improve the reading proficiency of grade three learners, thus, may lead to the development in their academic performance.

Therefore, in order to solve this and other literacy problems, there is a dire need for continued improvement towards reading excellence within the

schools of the district. Moreover, undertaking this study may identify challenges that can be turned into essential contribution in the field of teaching reading. It is the researcher's goal that it could uplift the reading performance of the pupils as well as the teaching performance of language teachers that could support the literacy level of the pupils and the whole district.

This study determined reading performance, profile and challenges of pupils. It also determined the reading performance of the pupils along Phil-IRI and CRLA, their reading habits, their reading attitudes and available reading resources they have at home in the implementation of the reading interventions.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was employed in this study for it describes the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of the study and examines the causes of phenomena that is occurring. It also determines the frequency with which something occurs, and categorizing information. The researcher used a quantitative method to determine the reading performance of the pupils in Irosin II District along Phil-IRI and CRLA; their reading habits, reading attitude and the available reading resources they have at home. The 118 respondents in Irosin II District School year 2021-2022 were the respondents of the study and were chosen through purposive sampling. Researcher-made survey questionnaires were the instrument used in the study. During the data collection process the researcher seek the approval of the Public Schools District Supervisor of Irosin II District. After the approval, the researcher undergone several stages on the process of undertaking the study. First, the pupils' survey questionnaire was validated by the expert before using to the respondents. They critiqued the questionnaire and necessary revisions made based on the given suggestions by the experts. More so in order to assure its correctness and suitability, the revised tool was pilot tested to Gabao Elementary School using the approved letter. A final copy of questionnaires was crafted after all the suggestions incorporated in the study. The researcher visited the identified schools. The questionnaires were personally administered and distributed among the identified schools and respondents in Irosin II District on the 2nd week of November, 2022. The pupils were guided by the teachers in answering the questionnaires. The researcher also interviewed the respective teachers about the challenges that they encountered in the implementation of the reading programs. After the

retrieval of the questionnaires on November 18, 2022, the researcher informed the adviser that the data from the questionnaires were checked, tallied and tabulated in preparation for statistical treatment. Their responses were noted down and were likewise organized by the researcher for interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Reading Performance of the Pupils

Reading Profile of Pupils along Phil-IRI. The study analyzed reading profile of pupils along Phil-IRI in Irosin II District. This part shows the reading profile of pupils using the independent, instructional, and frustration levels of the pupils.

Table 2: Reading Profile of Grade 3 Pupils along Phil-IRI

Reading Profile	F	Percentage
Independent	34	28.8%
Instructional	57	48.3%
Frustration	27	28.9%
Total	118	100%

The reading profile of pupils along Phil-IRI which presented three reading performances. 34 among 118 got an independent performance of 28.8 percent while 57 of them with a performance of instructional. Moreover, 27 pupils belong to frustration with 28.9%.

The results show the teachers in the primary grades could provide more instructional assistance to many of these learners since 57 of them are in the instructional level. Significantly, the number of pupils in the frustration level left greater challenge to teachers in the primary grades. These pupils might be needing more time and more instructional activities to make them read. Houchens (2017) intervention in remedial reading class employed the tools of culturally relevant pedagogy which has great effect in reading performance of the child.

Performance along CRLA

This section discusses the reading proficiency of the learners using the grade ready, light refresher, moderate refresher and full refresher category of the pupils.

Table 2B: Performance along CRLA

Categories	MTB	Filipino	English
Grade Ready	58	61	11
Light Refresher	23	32	13
Moderate Refresher	25	21	73
Full Refresher	12	4	21
Total	118	118	118

In terms of reading proficiency, the majority of students in MTB and Filipino are in the Grade Ready category, indicating a solid level of proficiency in those languages. However, for English, the majority of students (73) fall into the Moderate Refresher category, suggesting that they require significant support and review to improve their reading skills. There are a relatively low number of students in the Grade Ready category for English (11), indicating room for improvement. Additionally, there is a notable number of students in the Full Refresher category for English, suggesting a need for extensive support and intervention. Overall, the data highlights the need for targeted efforts to enhance reading proficiency, particularly in English.

The students' language proficiency in Filipino is the highest, followed by their proficiency in the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program, and their proficiency in English is the lowest. It implies that pupils have to go through English reading intervention.

The data suggest that the teacher could conduct reading intervention to the 73 moderate refresher learners and those notable number of full refreshers in English.

These pupils might need intervention to improve their reading skills in English. According to Raramai (2018) there is a need for intervention strategies to address the early learning grades.

II. Reading Habits of Pupils

This part presents the reading habits of pupils. The frequency and ranking of the reading habits are included in Table 3.

Table 3: Reading Habits of Pupils

Indicators	F	Rank
1. I review books what I have read already.	118	1
2. I read books 8-10 minutes.	116	3

3. I can predict what will happen next to the stories I read.	116	3
4. I put books in my room.	116	3
5. I visit school library.	105	6
6. I learn to read fast	105	6
7. I am motivated to read.	105	
8. I read to be informed.	102	8
9. I understand what I read.	95	9
10. I practice reading group of words not word for word.	45	10

The majority of students (116) reported spending 8-10 minutes reading books, indicating a relatively short duration of reading. This suggests that students may benefit from encouragement to spend more time engaged in reading activities. Additionally, a significant number of students (115) visit the school library, demonstrating an active interest in accessing reading materials beyond the classroom.

This highlights the positive engagement with the school library as a valuable resource for reading. It is encouraging to note that the majority of students (116) have books in their rooms, indicating a positive reading environment at home.

This availability of books can contribute to fostering a habit of reading among students. Furthermore, all students (118) reported reviewing books they have read already, which demonstrates an active effort to reinforce comprehension and retain information from the texts. This reflects a positive reading habit that can enhance overall reading proficiency.

The study reveals that learners have a relatively good reading habit. They spend an average of 8-10 minutes reading books, which is a positive sign as reading for a few minutes each day can help improve a child's vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills (Baker & Scher, 2002). The fact that they put books in their room and visit the school library also shows a willingness to read and learn more.

The result might suggest the teachers to provide strategies since practicing reading group of words not word for word ranked 10 in the table. Pupils might need more effective strategies to enhance their reading habits. According to Balan (2019) administrators should develop strategies for teachers to create activities that can promote reading habits, which would, in turn, improve students' academic performance.

III. Reading Attitudes

This segment presents the reading attitudes of grade three pupils. Table 4 shows the frequency and ranking of reading habits.

Table 4: Reading Attitudes Questionnaire of Pupils

Indicators	F	Rank
1. I use markers in reading.	115	1
2. I learn when I read.	113	2
3. I believe in my ability to read.	110	3
4. I read at home and school everyday.	105	5
5. I use dictionary when I encounter unfamiliar words in the story I read.	105	5
6. I read books according to my grade level.	105	5
7. Reading is important for me.	104	7.5
8. I feel happy whenever I read.	104	7.5
9. I recall and understand what I read.	102	9
10. I join in reading contest.	100	10

A significant number of students (105) reported reading at home and school every day, indicating a consistent reading habit. This suggests that students are actively engaging in reading activities both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, a majority of students (110)

expressed belief in their ability to read, indicating a positive self-perception regarding their reading skills. This confidence can contribute to their overall reading motivation and performance. When encountering unfamiliar words in the stories they read, a significant

number of students (105) reported using a dictionary. This reflects a proactive approach to enhancing vocabulary and understanding, which can positively impact comprehension and overall reading proficiency. The data suggests that the learners have positive attitudes towards reading, but there are still some areas for improvement. The majority of the students read daily, believe in their ability to read, use a dictionary when encountering unfamiliar words, and read books according to their grade level, which are all positive indicators of their reading habits. The low score in joining reading contests may indicate a lack of interest in participating in extracurricular reading activities.

Teachers and parents can encourage participation in such activities by highlighting the benefits of reading and making it fun and engaging (Guthrie et al., 2000). Providing a variety of reading materials that cater to the students' interests can also help increase their motivation and engagement in reading (Baker & Scher, 2002).

IV. Available Reading Resources They Have at Home

The data shows the reading resources available they have at home. Table 5 presents frequency and ranking of available reading resources of pupils.

Table 5: Available Reading Resources of Pupils

Indicators	F	Rank
1. We have internet connection.	105	1.5
2. Both of my parents are college degree.	105	1.5
3. We have books, magazines and newspapers at home.	100	4
4. My parents support me in the reading contest.	100	4
5. My parents teach me how to read.	100	4
6. We have laptop, tablet and smartphone at home.	95	6
7. My parents provide me reading materials.	25	7.5
8. I have a tutor in reading.	25	7.5
9. We have library at home.	5	9

In terms of reading resources available at home, a majority of students (100) reported having books, magazines, and newspapers at home. This indicates that there are print materials accessible to them, which can support their reading practice and exposure to various texts. Additionally, a significant number of students (105) reported having internet connection at home, which opens up opportunities for accessing digital reading materials and online resources. Regarding electronic devices, a relatively low number of students (95) reported having laptops, tablets, and smartphones at home. While these devices can provide access to digital reading materials, their limited availability might hinder some students' access to a wider range of resources.

Based on the available reading resources of Grade 3 pupils, the following interpretations can be made: The availability of books, magazines, and newspapers at home is perceived as moderate (F=100, Rank=4). It indicates that some students have access to reading materials in their homes. This can be a positive factor that can help students develop their reading skills. The availability of internet connection is perceived as high (F=105, Rank=1.5).

Study shows that primary learners might need internet connection to advance their skills in reading. Equipping the learners with the trend of technology might motivates them more to learn and read that consequently develops their capability in reading.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research found that the reading performance of primary learners is varied, with a significant proportion of students performing at an instructional or frustration level and language proficiency in Filipino is higher than in English, while proficiency in the MTB-MLE program is in between. Moreover, the pupils have a relatively good reading habit, spending an average of 8-10 minutes reading books, putting books in their rooms, and visiting the school library. Added to that, pupils have a positive attitude towards reading, with most of them reading daily, believing in their ability to read, using a dictionary when encountering unfamiliar words, and reading books according to their grade level. Furthermore, the availability of reading resources, such as books, magazines, newspapers, and the internet, is perceived as moderate to high, which can positively impact students' reading skills. The study recommended teachers in

Irosin II District to conduct teachers' training in teaching reading in primary grades that will help uplift and improve the reading performance of the pupils.

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