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ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES IN UPGRADING READING PROFICIENCY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examined how may the five reading strategies namely: semantic feature analysis, Venn diagram and summary, structured note-taking, guided high-lighted reading, and using context clues to get meaning of words affect the reading comprehension ability of Grade 9 students of Caniogan High School, in Calumpit, Bulacan. One hundred forty-four students in a small public school were identified for this study. The students were given a reading comprehension pre-test to assess their comprehension level as to excellent, above average, average, below average and poor.

Based on the results of the study, it was found out that students gained a significant difference between the pre-test and post test scores. The result of the independent sample t-test showed that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post test of the respondents. The computed mean score during the pre-test was 37.28 (below average) while during the post-test 54.26 (average) was computed. An increase of mean up to 8.49 as the effect of intervention can be attributed to the result of a 10-week training on how to use the five reading strategies in improving their comprehension ability. The results of the analysis of variance of the pre-test and post test also revealed that the mean pre-test scores of the four sections differ significantly ($F=16.27$, $P<.05$), and so with the post test ($F=6.62$, $P< 0.05$). Based on the results of the analysis

of variance, there was a significant difference of the scores of the pre-test and post test. This conclusion was verified through the journal writings of the respondents which were positive and conclusive that the five reading strategies were effective in improving students' reading comprehension ability.

Keywords: reading, proficiency, high school

Introduction

Literacy is required so that students succeed in accomplishing the academic life at the present considering the demands of the workplace in the future. It is then expected that students are supposed to be lifelong learners and also critical self-learners. Moreover, comprehension is the ability of the students to understand what they are reading; interpret ideas and deduce meaning to printed words. Therefore, without enabling skills in reading comprehension, students' success whether in academics or in life in general would greatly be affected.

Cayubit (2012) believes that the decline in the achievement among students has been the concern of experts and educators who are increasingly held accountable for it. Reading plays a vital role in one's success in school because it serves as a gateway to every student to learn the different subjects; without proper training under this macro skill, he or she may encounter also difficulties in all subject areas.

Reading is a habit in which students learn, gain knowledge and develop new skills. Understanding the significance of reading and in line with the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, the Department of Education implemented "Every Child a Reader Program" (ECARP) to directly address the literacy thrust of the Department of Education. This memorandum aims to teach public elementary pupils with planned training in reading and writing to make them independent young readers and writers. In addition, ECARP is also a part of the ten-point education agenda of the previous administration to ensure that the country's public schools produce well-equipped graduates who could cope with the different challenges in life.

The ability to read and write is a priority, so various efforts to promote literacy by the government, nongovernmental organizations, or even private individuals are exerted. One of these efforts is the 2013 FLEMMS which is designed to provide a quantitative framework that serves as basis in the formulation of policies and programs on the improvement of literacy and education status of the population here in the Philippines. According to the survey by FLEMMS which is done every 5 years, basic literacy rate in 2013 was 96.5% compared with 95.6% in 2008 of 74 million Filipinos 10 years old and over. While functional literacy among 69 million population 10 to 64 years old, was estimated in 2013 at 90.3% compared with 86.4% in 2008.

Despite the long years of learning English and the effort of the government to improve functional literacy, students are still having problems with their reading comprehension skills. Graduates of each educational level do not have reading ability as expected of them when they are in the field of endeavor. Generally, it was pinpointed that the problem was caused by the inadequacy of teaching and learning process.

According to Carrell and Grabe (2002), reading pertains to processing of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic and discourse elements. Also, it needs goal setting, text-summary building, interpretive elaborating from knowledge resources, monitoring and assessment of goal achievement. It is geared towards making various adjustments in language processing to enhance comprehension, and making repairs to comprehension processing when needed.

In a learning institution, there is always a need to intensify renewed efforts as well as commitment to promoting and sustaining effective reading skills even more in today's rapidly changing conditions. Educators share a common notion that students who manifest negative attitudes towards schooling and poor performance in any learning area are those who can hardly understand printed texts; therefore, it is imperative that teachers must provide students with varied, adequate and meaningful strategies to achieve reading comprehension. It is therefore, necessary that the reading performance of students is thoroughly assessed in order that appropriate strategies may be taught or given.

In general, students are provided with opportunities to enhance comprehension skill, but are not actually taught the strategies themselves or the knowledge of applying them. Given this situation in the Philippines, one of the issues teachers have to deal with their students is their low comprehension ability. It seems that a considerable number of students now a days are not interested in reading; partly because they do not understand the information they are presented with. Therefore, a solution must be presented in order to enhance their reading comprehension skill; thus, training on how to employ different reading strategies can be of great help to the students.

In this regard, to attain the objective of every educator that every learner develops core requirements in terms of knowledge, skills and understandings, and transfer learning automatically and flexibly to combat challenges of life and the demands of the society, the researcher believes that the five reading strategies namely: semantic feature analysis, venn diagram and summary, structured note-taking, guided highlighted reading and using context clues to get the meaning of word can improve the reading comprehension ability of the Grade 9 students.

The quasi-experimental research was conducted in EDDIS 1, Division of Bulacan, specifically in Caniogan High School, located in the municipality of Calumpit, Province of Bulacan with a total enrollment of 642, with 29 teachers headed by a school head. All of the Grade 9 students enrolled in this school year 2016-2017 were the respondents of this study. Four sections namely 9-Honesty, 9-Loyalty, 9-Sincerity and 9-Unity were used in this study. A non-random sampling was done since the researcher handles English classes to all of the respondents. A pretest was given before the teaching of the five reading strategies mentioned earlier. After the 10-week duration of the training on how to employ the five reading strategies, a post test was given to assess the respondents performance in the reading comprehension exam.

It is in the above premises that the researcher was encouraged to determine the reading comprehension ability of Grade 9 students of Caniogan High School and how did the five reading comprehension strategies affect their reading comprehension during the school year 2016-2017.

Statement of the Problem

The general problem of the study is: How may the five reading strategies affect the reading comprehension skills of the Grade 9 students of Caniogan High School during the school year 2016-2017?

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

1.1. family monthly income,

1.2 parents educational background,

1.3 presence of reading materials at home, and

1.4 use of reading strategies while reading?

1. What is the level of reading ability of the respondents before and after the 10-week duration of the training on using the five reading strategies?

3. Is there a significant difference in test scores of the respondents before and after they were taught on how to use the five reading strategies namely: semantic feature analysis, venn diagram and summary, structured-note taking, guided highlighted reading and using context clues to get the meaning of words while reading?

Methodology

The present study utilized the descriptive method of research which involves the description of the status of phenomenon as well as the identification of reading comprehension levels of the students.

This research used quasi-experimental research method with one group pre-test and post test design, which fits the present study, since data were used to estimate the [causal](#) impact of an intervention on its target population without [random assignment](#). There are two variables, namely independent variables and dependent variable. The independent variables were the identified five reading strategies and the dependent variable was the achieved level of reading comprehension ability of the respondents.

The population of the study consisted of 144 students enrolled for the school year 2016-2017 in EDDIS 1, Division of Bulacan, particularly in Caniogan High School, located in Caniogan, Calumpit, Bulacan. Non-random sampling was done since the researcher handled English classes to them.

In this study, the researcher used two instruments to collect the data which required the respondents respond to the research questions. The students' questionnaire included of gender, parents educational attainment, family income, availability of reading materials at home, and how do they feel about the 10-week training on the use of the five reading strategies. The second instrument is a reading comprehension test which is a relevant source of data to measure the reading comprehension level of students and administered as the pre-test and post test to Grade 9 students. The researcher lifted comprehension items from a workbook in English III by Morato, (2002). The reading comprehension instrument consisted of 50-item test with four multiple-choice options. Five competencies were tested namely: determining meaning of words through context, grasping main idea and details, making inferences, reading charts and graphs and interpreting poetry. Each competency covered 10 items to complete a 50-item test. The five reading competencies mentioned earlier were congruent to the curriculum of the Grade 9 under the K to 12 Program.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Respondents

Below is a table which displays the respondents' background characteristics in terms of family monthly income, parents' educational background, and presence of reading materials at home and use of reading strategies before and after the training.

Table 1

Background Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Background Characteristics of Respondents</i>		
Characteristics	N Participants	%
Family Monthly Income		
20,000 and Up	12	8%
10,000- 19,000	17	12%
5,000- 9,000	47	33%
4,000 lower	68	47%
Parents' Educational Background		
Father		
College Graduate	21	15%
College Undergraduate	42	29%
High School Graduate	33	23%
High School Undergraduate	26	18%
Elementary Graduate	20	14%
Elementary Undergraduate	2	1%
Mother		
College Graduate	25	17%
College Undergraduate	32	22%
High School Graduate	57	40%
High School Undergraduate	18	13%
Elementary Graduate	12	8%
Elementary Undergraduate	0	0%
Presence of Reading Materials at Home		
Books	98	68%
Magazines	14	10%
Internet sourced	32	21%
None	2	1%
Use of Reading Strategies while Reading		
Before the Training		
Yes	27	19%
No	117	81%
After the Training		
Yes	140	97%
No	4	3%
Total (N)	144	100%

Table 1 indicates the respondents' background characteristics in terms of their family income, parents' educational background, presence of reading materials at home, and the use of strategies while reading.

Based from the table, 68 respondents family income is below 4,000 monthly which marked 47%, 47 respondents earned 5,000-9,000 monthly which garnered 33%, 17 respondents earned 10,000-19,000 with a record of 12%, and the remaining 12 respondents marked 8% who earned 20,000 and up monthly. These data indicate 92% of the respondents were not able to meet the desired amount for their monthly expenditure as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority. According to the agency, an average family income in 2015 was estimated at 22,000 monthly. This statement is as a result from the 2015 Family Income Expenditure Survey released last October 24, 2016.

In line with their parents' educational background, 44% fathers belonged to the category of college graduate or undergraduate while 56% were categorized as within the bracket from high school graduate to elementary undergraduate. Their mothers recorded a 39% college graduate or undergraduate while 61% attained high school graduate to elementary undergraduate. As reflected in the table, the respondents' father educational attainment reached either college graduate or undergraduate which is 44% is higher than their mothers' educational attainment which is 39% respectively. But when it comes to educational attainment as high school graduate or undergraduate, mothers registered 53%, compared to 41% of their fathers. It can be assumed that most respondents' mothers are high school graduates or undergraduates. Regarding parents' educational attainment who belonged to elementary graduate or undergraduate, fathers recorded 15% while mothers noted 8% respectively.

In terms of the presence of reading materials at home, 68% indicated to have books to read, 10% to have magazines, 21% with internet connections and 1% has nothing to read at home. Respondents indicated to have books which were being issued to them by Department of Education which they use in their classes daily. In addition, the 21 % who answered to have internet connections are using internet shops especially when they have school assignments to do. Those who have magazines at home recorded 10% of the total population who were 14 respondents, claimed to use magazines as reading materials. Only 2 respondents claimed to have nothing to read at home; it can be assumed that even they were issued books by the Department of Education; they still didn't consider the books to be reading materials.

Regarding the use of reading strategies while reading, respondents recorded 19% to have used reading strategies before the training. After the 10-week training on how to employ the five reading strategies while reading, respondents marked an increase of 78% respectively. As shown, 97% of the respondents were able to employ the five reading strategies taught by the teacher-researcher in answering the post test.

Level of Reading Comprehension Ability of the Respondents

Table 2.
Students' Overall Pre-test Scores in Reading Comprehension

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
10-19	9	6.25		
20-29	22	15.28		
30-39	50	34.72		
40-49	43	29.86	37.28	11.58
50-59	14	9.72		
60-69	5	3.47		
70-79	1	0.69		
Total	144	100%		

Table 2 presents students' overall pre-test scores in reading comprehension. Score ranges from 10-79; where the lowest score is 10 while the highest gained score is 79. Score range of 1-9 is not included since there is no one among the respondents recorded that score, likewise a score range of 80 and above is not included.

Table 2 also indicates that 144 respondents marked a mean score of 37.28 with a computed SD of 11.58 which means that their scores are scattered. The computed mean draws conclusion that their reading comprehension ability is "below average" based on the treatment of data which has the following interpretation: score range 81-100 (excellent), 61-80 (above average), 41-60 (average), 21-40 (below average) and 0-20 (poor). The results of the standard deviation show that the group is heterogeneous in terms of their scores during the pre-test. Speaking about their test scores, fifty respondents got scores of 30-39 which is 34.72% of the total population. Only 1 respondent marked a score of 70-79 which is 0.69 % of the population. The

lowest score indicated ranges from 10-19, while the highest score ranges from 70-79. In brief, 86.11% of the respondents' scored lower than 50 points in the comprehension exam, while the remaining 13.88% scored higher than the median score which is 50. In a more specific description, 6.25% student respondents are "poor" in reading comprehension, 50% are "below average", 39.58 % are "average" and only 4.16% are "above average" based on their scores during the pre-test.

Table 3.
Students' Overall Post Test Scores in Reading Comprehension

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
20-29	3	2.08		
30-39	10	6.94		
40-49	36	25.00		
50-59	46	31.94	54.26	13.15
60-59	32	22.22		
70-79	9	6.25		
80-89	8	5.56		
Total	144	100%		

Table 3 shows the post test scores in the reading comprehension test of the respondents. As indicated, 49 respondents scored from 20-49; while 95 respondents garnered scores from 50-89. The table further reveals that 34% of the respondents got scores from 20-49 respectively. 66 % of them garnered scores which range from 50-89 which means they got scores above the median score. To give a clearer picture of the students comprehension ability, 9.02% are "below average", 56.94% are "average", 28.47% are "above average" and the remaining 5.56% are "excellent". A computed mean of 54.26 showed that the respondents garnered "average" rating in the post test compared to 37.28 mean distribution during the pre-test which had " below average" rating.

Looking at table 2 and 3, pre-test (6.25%), post test (0%) were considered as "poor" comprehension level of student respondents, pre-test (50%), post test (9.02%) as "below average" , pre-test (39.58,%), post test (56.94%) as "average", pre-test (4.16%), post test (28.47%) as "above average", pre-test (0%), post test (5.56%) as "excellent". In general, it can be noted that all of the respondents reached "below average " to " average" in terms of their scores in the comprehension exam given as pre-test and post test.

The Significant difference in the Reading Comprehension Test Scores of the Respondents before and after the Treatment.

Table 4.
Mean Score of Groups

Phase	Subjects	Means	SD	F-value	T-value	
Pre-test	Section 1	35	46.86	11.66	16.27	0.00
	Section 2	36	32.22	10.61		
	Section 3	37	32.59	8.31		
	Section 4	36	37.83	9.49		
Post-test	Section 1	35	62.29	14.49	6.62	0.00
	Section 2	36	52.94	12.94		
	Section 3	37	50.65	10.66		
	Section 4	36	51.50	11.44		

*p<.05 Difference is significant

Table 4 demonstrates descriptive statistics giving the mean scores by each phase of test. As seen in the table, Section 1 garnered the highest mean value of 46.86 (average); Section 4 with 37.83 mean (below average); Section 3 with 32.59 mean (below average) and lastly Section 2, with 33.22 mean (below average) respectively. Compared with to the post test, Section 1 still attained the highest mean value of 62.29 (above average); Section 2 with 52.94 mean (average) Section 4 with 51.50 mean (average), then lastly Section 3 with 50.65 (average). It can be concluded that each sections mean value increased. Looking at the result of the pre-test computed means, all of the four sections scored below the median score, while during the post test all of the scores reached above the median score of 50. This can be clearly attributed to the training the respondents went through by using several strategies in understanding the comprehension test.

Table 4 also presents the result of the analysis of variance of the pre-test and post test scores in reading comprehension ability when the respondents were grouped according to sections. Analysis of the data reveals that the mean pre-test scores of the four sections differ significantly ($F=16.27, P<.05$), more so in the post test ($F=6.62, P<0.5$). It can be concluded based on the results of the analysis of variance, that there is significant difference of the scores of the pre-test and post test.

Section 1 recorded a mean distribution of 46.86; Section 2 (32.22), Section 3 (32.59) and Section 4 (37.83) respectively. Section 1 revealed the highest mean distribution, seconded by section 4, followed by section 3; then lastly, section 2. It further shows that three sections (Section 2, Section 3, Section 4) garnered "below average" comprehension level while only one section (Section 1) was marked with an "average" comprehension ability based on sample treatment of collection of data with the following score range (81-100) Excellent, (61-80) Above Average, (41-60) Average, (21-40) Below Average, (0-20) Poor.

Section 1 recorded a mean distribution of 62.29, Section 2 (52.94), Section 3 (50.65), and Section 4 (51.50) respectively. One section obtained "above average" reading comprehension ability based on the computed mean. Comparing the results from the pre-test, the post test marked a significant increase of mean score. The rest of the (3) three sections reflected an "average" reading comprehension ability.

Comparing the mean difference incurred by each section, Section 2 gained the highest mean difference of 20.72; followed by Section 3 which has a mean difference of 18.06; Section 1 with 15.43, and Section 4 with 12.82 gain in mean score. It is therefore safe to say that all of the four sections gained a significant increase of scores from the pre-test to the post test based on the computed mean per section.

Table 4
Paired T-Test of the Pre-test and Post Test Scores of the Respondents

Phase	Subjects	Lowest Score	Highest Score	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Pretest	144	10	70	37.28	11.58	8.49	15.95	.000
Post-test	144	20	86	54.26	13.5			

*p<.05. There is a significant difference

As shown in Table 4, the results of independent sample t-test showed that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post test scores of the respondents. The mean score during the pre-test was 37.28 while the post test is 54.26; this showed a mean difference of 8.49.

Computed SD for pre-test is marked at 11.58 while post test computed SD is 13.5. Thus, respondents are heterogeneous in terms of their scores both pre-test and post test. In brief, the respondents who received the instruction on how to use the five reading strategies while answering the reading comprehension test reached a significant level after being examined by independent sample t-test ($p=.000$, $p<.05$).

Table 4 also indicates that the five reading comprehension strategies are effective method in increasing their scores in taking the comprehension test. In other words, reading strategies are obviously effective in the development of reading comprehension. Thus the answer to the third research question is that the strategy instruction helps improve the respondents' reading comprehension.

The effects of the five reading strategies on the level of reading comprehension of respondents

The discussion on the effects of the five reading strategies on respondents is supported by a graphical representation of the pre-test and post test results per section, as presented in table which shows the mean increase per section, and the overall mean distribution of the pre-test and post test. This further illustrates how each section gained a higher score during the post test compared with the pre-test. This section also answers the third question of this study which is, "Is there a significant difference in the test scores of the respondents before and after they were taught on how to use the five reading strategies namely: semantic feature analysis, Venn diagram and summary, structured note- taking, guided highlighted reading and using context clues to get the meaning of words while reading?".

It can be noted that Section 1 gained 46.86 computed mean during the pre-test, while the post test computed mean is 62.29. Section 2 recorded a computed mean of 32.22 compared to the post test which is 52.94. Section 3 garnered 32.59 during the pre-test and 50.65 during the post test. Section 4 recorded also a computed mean of 37.83 during the pre-test and 51.50 during the post test.

Figure 3 also shows the increase on the overall rating of the students' per section on the level of comprehension based on the results of the pre-test and post test. The highest score obtained

from the pre-test is 70 while the lowest score is 10. On the other hand, post test recorded 86 as the highest score while the lowest was 20. The figure also illustrates that there is a significant increase of mean scores which can be associated with the use of the five reading strategies namely: semantic feature analysis, Venn diagram and summary, structured-note taking, guided-highlighted reading and using context clues to get meaning of words.

The following table shows the increase of mean per section as recorded by their scores incurred during the pre-test compared to the post test.

Table 5

Mean Increase per Section from Pre-test to Post test

Name of Section	Computed Mean Increase
Section 1 (9- Honesty)	15.43
Section 2 (9- Loyalty)	20.72
Section 3 (9- Sincerity)	18.06
Section 4 (9- Unity)	13.67

Based on the computed mean of each section, Section 1 increased computed mean is 15.43, Section 2 (20.72), Section 3 (18.06), and Section 4 (13.67) respectively. It can also be noted that section 2 incurred the greatest increase of mean, seconded by section 3, followed by section 1, and lastly by section 4. In general, all of the four sections manifested significant difference in their scores from the pre-test to the post test as shown by the results of independent t-test ($p=.000$, $p<.05$)

A 10-week duration of training yielded to a positive effect on improving scores of the respondents by employing five reading comprehension strategies in answering the post test. Furthermore, this study focuses only on how the five reading strategies may affect the comprehension skills of the respondents. It doesn't include findings on which strategy is the most or least effective.

The students' level of comprehension in the pre-test registered 37.28 in the mean distribution which has description of "below average" and recorded 54.26 mean distribution for the post test which is " average". An increase of mean up to 8.49 as effect of intervention and can be attributed to the result of the 10-week training on how to use the five reading strategies.

Conclusion

The aforementioned findings on the Alternative Strategies in Upgrading Reading Proficiency of High School Students lend some empirical data in the formulation of the following conclusions:

1. . The reading comprehension ability of the respondents improved from “below average” to “average”, based on the computed mean scores of the pretest and post-test.
2. . Mean score of pretest from 37.28 which increased to 54.26 with a mean difference of 8.49 concludes that there is significant difference in the scores of the pretest and post-test.
3. . Respondents who received the instruction on how to use the five reading strategies while answering the reading comprehension test reached a significant level after being examined by independent sample t-test (t-value 15.95) and a p-value (.000). Where $*p < .05$. (There is a significant difference).
- 4). The five reading strategies namely: semantic feature analysis, Venn diagram and analysis, structured note-taking, guided high-lighted reading and using context clues helped the respondents perform better in the reading comprehension test.
- 5). Both the qualitative and quantitative parts of this study point toward the fact that the respondents who participated in this study indeed benefited from the 10-week training on how to use the five reading strategies while reading. Quantitative data specifically journal writings confirmed that the five strategies which were taught by their teacher helped them to perform better in the comprehension test.
- 6). Strategies have primordial roles in the meaning-making process of good readers. Though nobody can claim that there is one best reading strategy to make sense of the text, a good knowledge on how to employ varied reading strategies can greatly affect one’s comprehension ability.
- 7). The findings of this study suggest the importance of incorporating reading strategies into the different content areas in order to make reading in a second language an autonomous process where learners are geared toward becoming lifelong learners and also critical self-learners ready to face the demands of the workplace in the future.

Recommendations

Based on the aforesaid findings, conclusions and implications, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. Teachers should first assess the learning styles and the reading strategy used of their students, because such assessment leads to greater understanding of styles and strategies. The more that teachers know about their students' style preferences, the more effectively they can orient their instruction, as well as the strategy teaching that can be interwoven into language instruction, matched with those style preferences.
2. Teachers should receive a serious and continuous in-service strategy workshop from highly competent literacy professionals; this will facilitate transfer of skills among students.
3. An intensified strategy-anchored reading component for each subject area across different year or grade level can be put into the new curriculum since learners' success depends on the students' ability to read.
4. Instructional material writers should develop task-based materials that will induce learners' use of different reading strategies.
5. Remedial classes should be made functional in every school to improve student reading comprehension level.
6. Development and adoption of more appropriate reading materials can also be done to ensure that they conform to learning styles, preferences, and skills of the students.
7. A study on the use different reading strategies should be conducted using other variables.

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