

USING EXTENSIVE READING IN IMPROVING READING SPEED AND LEVEL OF READING COMPREHENSION OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: In the Philippines, English may be considered as the second language, but students may still be struggling to cope with learning to read; something that even authorities admit even though students' reading aptitude in public elementary and high schools, for years, has been measured using intensive reading. In search for alternative reading approach to get children interested in reading, the researchers tried Extensive Reading (ER) which has been promoted to be the best way to improve language proficiency of the second language learners. Using the one-group pretest-posttest method, the study involved 10 children residing in a local barangay (the smallest administrative division in the Philippines) in Manila who were initially diagnosed as frustrated readers. The participants were allowed to choose the reading materials based following their graded reading level, and they were given assessment each time they have completed their reading. After the ten-week sessions, remarkable changes in the reading performance of the children were found in their reading performance both in speed and comprehension. The positive results of this experiment served as strong basis for an extension activity to be conducted to continue monitoring the reading performance of the children participants in the said barangay.

KEYWORDS: Extensive Reading, Reading, Reading Comprehension, Reading Speed, Reading

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the major skills that an ESL/EFL learner should master. Glimpse is not enough to effectively understand scenarios from a text. According to Schoenbach, et al. (2012), reading becomes effective when readers achieve the overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than obtaining meaning from isolated words or sentences. Reading is also considered by many people as a gratifying activity that broadens one's knowledge and vocabulary. However, if one asks below-average learners of English whether they like reading, mostly, their answers are negative. Learners who are learning to read in English usually abhor it and spend limited time on reading (Stanley, 2007).

Written texts in a second language sometimes make the learners slow readers with low comprehension level (Hatch, 1974). Dr. Yolanda Quijano, head of the Department of Education's Bureau of Elementary Education, has stated in her interview that the main reason for the poor performance of some students in the National Achievement Test is the problem in reading ("Low Proficiency in Reading," 2010).

According to the National Assessment of Education Progress (1998) the academic achievement of students in public schools in the Philippines show to be weak in their ability to cope with the challenges of the 21st century. Moreover, the results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) shows that most of test takers were weak in the reading comprehension part of the English subject both in elementary and high school.

With this situation, reading teachers explicitly practice reading strategies to handle the challenges in the reading obstacles of learners (McNamara, 2007). Moreover, many researchers try to improve reading comprehension and find traces to figure out better ideas to emphasize the clutch of knowledge in reading second language.

The common strategy seen in the classroom setting in the country is intensive reading that makes students read materials such as textbooks in detail aiming the specific goals and tasks provided. Intensive reading is more focused in language-learning where the learners consult dictionaries in reading (Nation, 2009) to find deeper

meaning of lexical items. At some point, this strategy makes students feel pressure and exhaustion because it requires great amount of time and preparedness of mind.

This propelled the researchers to use another strategy or approach called extensive reading that aims to get students read in the second language (Day & Bamford, 2004). As Bamford suggests, that ESL/EFL teacher should be guided by helping the learners develop love for reading (Bamford & Day, 1997). Students find it difficult to have a positive attitude towards reading if they are not given the chance to try reading in English as a gratifying and viable activity and at the same time, are exposed to texts that are not appropriate to their level.

Implementing extensive reading is the best way to improve the language proficiency of second language learners (Renandaya & Jacob, 2016). Through extensive reading, students are given enough time, encouragement, and the chance to read appropriate text materials pleasurably for their age level (Davis, 1995).

Extensive reading (ER) has been characterized by reading specialists, researchers, and teachers in different ways. The first person who coined the term “extensive reading” in teaching foreign language (FL) or second language (L2) was Harold Palmer (Kelly, 1969). Palmer (as cited in Kelly) elucidates that extensive reading is reading books successionaly where the main goal is to understand the meaning of the text and not the language used. It is said that the term extensive reading was chosen to differentiate its essentialities from intensive reading (IR). Thus, the difference between them is still useful.

According to Bamford and Day (1997), intensive reading pertains to the careful interpretation or reading of shorter and complex text in a foreign language that aims to obtain a comprehensive and thorough understanding. The texts need to be intensively studied to institute skills in reading such as identifying the main idea from the detail of a text, looking for the referents of pronoun, and conceiving the meaning of difficult words. Extensive reading, on the other hand, is reading a copious amount of reading materials with the purpose of understanding its general meaning and not the meaning of particular sentences or words.

Bamford and Day (1998) have sought to identify the characteristics of successful extensive reading programmes. After a thorough study, they have developed ten (10) characteristics of a successful extensive program. Bamford and Day’s 10 principles in extensive reading were anchored in William's ten (10) principles in teaching intensive reading which are a) facile reading materials, b) availability of materials in a wide range of subjects, c) students’ choice of materials to read, d) reading as much as possible, e) reading that is focused on satisfaction, information and overall comprehension, f) reading being perceived as reward for itself, g) faster reading speed, h) reading individually and silently, i) teacher’s guidance and orientation of students, and j) teacher being reader's role model.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study sought to determine the effectiveness of extensive reading in improving the reading speed and reading comprehension of students.

Specifically, the study looked into the a) the reading speed and level of the reading comprehension of the students during the pretest, b) reading speed and level of the reading comprehension of the students during the posttest, and c) any significant difference between the pretest and posttest performances of the students.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers used of the Quasi-Experimental (The One-Group Pretest Posttest) design of research.

In quasi-experiment, the researchers attempt to demonstrate the qualities of variable A that influences or causes variable B to do something. In this study, variable A is the intervention of extensive reading and variable B are the tests administered to the students. It demonstrates cause and effect in the students’ reading performances which are the reading speed and reading comprehension.

The One-Group Pretest Posttest Quasi-Experimental Design tells if the student made progress by comparing their scores at the beginning of a study with their scores at the end with the intervention of extensive reading (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The study involved ten (10) students in Barangay 593, Sta. Mesa, Manila. The convenience sampling technique was used in the study where convenience sampling method is used in collecting data from the population. In this sampling technique, all subjects are invited to participate, but only ten (10) students from Barangay 593, Sta. Mesa, Manila voluntarily participated in the study. There were two (2) students from Grade I, two (2) students from Grade II, two (2) students from Grade III, and four (4) students from Grade IV. The students were from the ages 8 to 9 years old. There were four (4) students who are 9 years old only, and while six (6) students are 8 years old. There were eight (8) female students and two (2) male students in the study.

The parents and guardians of the ten (10) students were viited by the researchers for their consent since the program will take ten (10) weeks .

Research Instrument

The study used the test materials which has been validated by language education faculty members of the university. The questionnaires used were based on the Powers-Sumner-Kearl Readability Formula which was suited for primary age children (7-10). It was used in the study in order to ensure that the reading text included were appropriate for the needs of the students.

Also, the study used fourteen (14) leveled books for ages 8 and 9 years old with follow-up questions that consist of 7 items in multiple choice also. The researchers also used the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory in order to establish the reading speed and reading comprehension of the students within the ten-week session.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The researchers conducted a ten-week Extensive Reading Program at the Barangay 593, Sta. Mesa, Manila Day Care Center. Every week, they had three-day sessions for four hours each day.

Twenty (20) volunteer students were initially gathered, and they have all undergone a pre-test in order to know their current reading performance in terms of reading speed and reading comprehension. After the pretest, students whose performance are below the average reading level were invited to the Extensive Reading Program. Parental consents were sought in order for the students to be part of the ten-week long activity.

The researchers provided 14 leveled picture books appropriate to the age level of the students based on the Powers-Sumner-Kearl Readability Formula. After the pretest, ten (10) students have been identified to have below average reading speed and comprehension level. They were categorized according to their ages and grade levels. There were two (2) students from Grade I, two (2) students from Grade II, two (2) students from Grade III, and four (4) students from Grade IV. The students were informed of the schedule for the reading which was two (2) hours every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and were instructed to choose the books they preferred to read. A very important fact that was laid out to the children is that there is no target time for them to finish reading a material, and that a short assessment would be conducted after they finish. As expected, there would be days when they are not interested to read, therefore different activities were also provided by the researchers, like storytelling, drawing, poster making, and role playing relevant to the stories in the 14 leveled books that the students read. Through these, the students were able to express what they have learned in reading while enjoying, and also, it helped the researchers to identify their reading comprehension improvements informally. On the last week of the session, a post-test was administered in order to determine if their reading speed and level of reading comprehension have improved.

Statistical Treatment of Data

This study used the following statistical tools for the collected data: **frequency and percentage** was used to establish information on the students’ age, grade level, reading speed and the level of reading comprehension of the students in the pretest and posttest of the study; and **paired T-Test** was used in the study to determine the significant difference between the pretest and posttest performances of the students.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Pre-Test Reading Speed (RS) of the Students

Pretest	Frequency	Percentage (%)
FAST	3	30.00
SLOW	7	70.00

Total	10	100
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Table 1 shows the pretest results frequency-percentage distribution of the students. Out of 10 students, seven (7) or 70% are slow readers, and three (3) or 30% are fast readers. The reasons why most of them are slow readers is because they are more familiarize with intensive reading, which are commonly implemented in the school reading practices, that require them to read word by word and force them to understand the text materials in a limited period of time (Teacher Finder, 2018). Also, as what Grellet (1981) states, the students took too much time in reading because vocabularies are too difficult, for they are not into reading books every day.

Table 2. Pre-Test Level of Reading Comprehension (RC) of the Students

Pretest	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Independent	0	0.00
Instructional	0	0.00
Frustration	10	100.00
Total	10	100

Table 2 shows the level of reading comprehension of the students during the pretest. All the students are classified under the frustration level of reading comprehension. Without knowing the concept of extensive reading, the students are still more into intensive reading, giving them a hard time to understand the text material (Park, 2017). For having long years of schooling, the students remain unfamiliar to some English terms because they rarely read books. Therefore, their comprehension level is the same even though they are in different grade levels.

Table 4. Post-Test Reading Speed (RS) of the Students

Posttest	Frequency	Percentage (%)
AVERAGE	1	10.00
FAST	6	60.00
SLOW	3	30.00
Total	10	100

Table 4 shows the posttest frequency-percentage distribution of the students. Out of 10 students, six (6) or 60% are fast readers, three (3) or 30% are slow readers, and one (1) or 10% is an average reader.

After the intervention and implementation of extensive reading, the students reading speed changed from slow to average and fast. From ten slow readers, six students became fast readers and one student became an average reader, and only three students remain as slow readers. The results are aligned to Park’s (2017) findings that if extensive reading are implemented properly then there will be an improvement to the reading speed of the the students.

Table 5. Post-Test Level of Reading Comprehension (RC) of the Students

Posttest	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Independent	3	30.00
Instructional	5	50.00
Frustration	2	20.00
Total	10	100

Table 6. Comparative Data of Students’ and Comprehension Level

NAME	READING COMPREHENSION			
	Pre-test	Level	Post-Test	Level
Student A	14%	FRUSTRATION	57%	FRUSTRATION
Student B	29%	FRUSTRATION	71%	INSTRUCTIONAL
Student C	14%	FRUSTRATION	71%	INSTRUCTIONAL
Student D	43%	FRUSTRATION	86%	INDEPENDENT
Student E	43%	FRUSTRATION	71%	INSTRUCTIONAL
Student F	57%	FRUSTRATION	86%	INDEPENDENT
Student G	43%	FRUSTRATION	57%	FRUSTRATION
Student H	57%	FRUSTRATION	86%	INDEPENDENT
Student I	29%	FRUSTRATION	71%	INSTRUCTIONAL
Student J	29%	FRUSTRATION	71%	INSTRUCTIONAL

Table 6 shows the complete data of each students having the percentage and interpretation during pretest and posttest. Based on the interpretation, from being frustrated readers during pretest, five (5) students became instructional readers, three (3) have become independent readers, and two (2) remained frustrated readers. Having eight (8) of the students improve their reading performance clearly indicates that Extensive Reading have been effective on them.

Table 7. Test of Significant Difference in the Students’ Reading Speed

Reading Speed	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Pretest vs Posttest	0.012	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 7 shows that the p-value is less than the level of significance (0.05); thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the pretest and post-test performance results.

The implementation of extensive reading affects the results of the students’ performance in the pretest and posttest aligned to the findings of the researchers in the Investigation of Extensive Reading with Remedial Students in a Philippine Secondary School (Lituanas, et al., 2001).

Table 8. Test of Significant Difference in the Students’ Reading Comprehension Level

Reading Comprehension	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Pretest vs Posttest	0.004	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 8 shows that the p-value is less than the level of significance (0.05); thus, the null hypothesis is rejected which means that the performance of the students in both test tests vary significantly. This supports the findings of Park (2017) in his research that the reading speed of the students will improve after the proper implementation of extensive reading because students become more engaged more in a member of varied materials.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the majority of the students, from being slow and frustrated readers, have improved to being fast and instructional readers over the ten-week intervention using Extensive Reading. The results of the paired T-test, has confirmed the effectiveness of ER in developing students’ reading performance.

This study recommends the use ER as an alternative method of teaching reading among students. It would be interesting to find out if ER will still be effective among readers if applied in a highly-structured school environment like the public schools in the Philippines. Longer periods of intervention is likewise suggested to determine the effectiveness of ER when used continuously.

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References

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