
The Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Reading Strategies Used By the Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the relationship between reading comprehension and reading strategies used by the students. Specifically, it sought to answer the following problems (a) how is the reading comprehension of the students described in terms of, understanding vocabulary in context, noting details, getting the main idea and determining story structure; (b) how often do the students use strategies before, during and after reading stages; (c) there a significant relationship between reading comprehension and reading strategies of the students; and (d) what is the implication of the findings to English reading instruction.

The study made used of the descriptive correlation design. To find out their reading comprehension level, they were given test items on understanding vocabulary in context, noting details, getting the main idea, and determining story structure. To identify the reading strategies employed, they were asked to answer a check list of questionnaire on reading strategies. There were 267 respondents of students who were enrolled at the college.

The research findings revealed that the students had a hard time in understanding vocabulary in context as well as in getting the main idea, but they excelled in noting details and determining the story structure of the story. The frequently used strategy in pre- reading was previewing the text, during reading is the thinking about the topic of the story and visualizing the text information and for the post reading, was the

checking for fulfillment of the purpose of reading.

The students did not grasp immediately the gist of the text that they read and they did not give so much attention in looking for the meaning of the words unfamiliar to them. They did understand the details of the reading passage and they determined story structure. To comprehend the text, students previewed it before reading; thought about the topic and visualized the text information while reading; and check for fulfillment after reading.

KEYWORDS

Reading, Reading Comprehension, Reading Strategies, Reading Style of Students, Noting Details, Getting the Main Idea, Vocabulary in Context.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, knowing how to read and write is a sign that one acquired and education. It is also an accepted situation that reading is an important component in the development of an individual's personality. Reading is said to be the training of the mind and the means to attain deeper meaning of reality and it is a habit where students learn, gain knowledge and develop new skills (Olivar, 2014).

Learning to read is an essential part of the basic education. Reading, after all, is an important gateway to the other disciplines.

Wooly (2005) also reported that in the United States, students showed a significant reading disability.

In fact, readers easily comprehend text with familiar language but are less successful at comprehending text with unfamiliar language. Readers easily comprehend text on familiar topics but are less successful at comprehending texts on unfamiliar topics. At the same time, the interpretations readers construct with texts as well as the types of texts they read are influenced by their life experience (Commission on Reading of the National Council of Teachers of English, 2004).

In other part of the world also faces the same problems in reading. In fact, the reading test scores of students reveal that only one-sixth to one-third of students can read independently at the desired grade level. By the end of their study cycle, over one-third of the graduates were identified as “frustrated” readers; another one-third was “instructional” readers. Both levels are below the desired reading level at the end of the study cycle (Luz, 2007).

In the recent National Achievement Tests (NAT) administered to public schools painted a picture that may threaten global competitiveness. The 66.33 MPS (from 54.66 in 2006) is still a rather low score. What is more alarming is that mastery is only at 14.4 percent among students and 1.1 percent among fourth-year high school students, which means below-mastery scores are a staggering 85.6 percent among the former and 98.1 percent among the latter. According to Quijano (2010) attributed that the reading problems as the main culprit for the poor performance of some students in the NAT (The Philippine Star, 2010).

Likewise, colleges also encountered students with reading difficulties. The researcher has observed that students had a hard time in

expressing themselves in English. Many could read but could hardly understand what they have read. When asked to read a passage, some are hesitant to do so. One reason is that they do not want to be teased when they read. Others avoid being asked about the text they have just read for fear that they may not be able to answer the teacher’s questions. Another is the lack of motivation when it comes to reading. Lastly, is that students lack the necessary reading strategies that could aid them to understand what they read. Hence, this study was conducted to determine if there is a significant relationship between reading comprehension and reading strategies used by the students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

This study aims to determine the relationship between silent reading comprehension and reading strategies used by the students. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following problems.

1. How is the reading comprehension of students described in terms of the following skills? (a) Understanding Vocabulary in Context; (b) Noting Details; (c) Getting the Main Idea; (d) Determining Story Structure.
2. How often do the students use the strategies before, during and after reading stages?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the reading comprehension and reading strategies of the students?
4. What is the implication of the findings to English reading instruction?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will be tested on a 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant positive relationship between the reading comprehension and reading strategies of the students.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study used descriptive correlation design because it determined the relationship between reading comprehension and the reading strategies used by the student. To find out the reading comprehension level of the students, they were given test items on understanding vocabulary in context, noting details, getting the main idea, and determining story structure.

To identify the reading strategies employed by the students while trying to comprehend the text that they read, they were asked to answer a check list of questionnaire on reading strategies. The respondents of the study were the college students. To get the number of student respondents the Slovin formula was used.

A simple random sampling was employed in the study. A fishbowl technique was utilized. In this study the researcher utilized survey questionnaire to determine what reading strategies the students used while reading and a reading comprehension test to gauge their reading comprehension skills. The survey questionnaire is a list of different reading strategies and the students were asked to answer it by putting a check mark (✓) on the corresponding box of their answers. The reliability and validity of the instruments were carefully considered. To make the study richer the researcher did intensive research to gather data from different sources such as, books, magazines, journals, different research works related to the study, and on line studies relevant to the topic. For the survey questionnaire, descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, ranking, means, and standard

deviation were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents and discusses the data gathered in tabular forms. The data were gathered, analyzed and examined using the appropriate statistical tools and procedures.

1. Description of the Reading Comprehension Level of the Students in terms of, Understanding Vocabulary in Context, Noting Details, Getting the Main Idea and Determining Story Structure.

That majority of the respondents have satisfactory understanding of vocabulary in context with a frequency of 177 and with a percentage of 66.29%. The mean score is 9.06 and with a standard deviation of 1.44 ($SD = 1.44$) which translates to satisfactory understanding.

The data imply that most students do not usually understand the meaning of a word. Most probably they are not given enough activities and exposure in this skill. Students must always be given vocabulary activities for them to enrich their understanding. This idea was upheld by Armbruster and Naggy (2011) in this line, "It is essential that content area teachers incorporate vocabulary work into their planning instruction".

It can be gleaned in Table 2 that in noting details the respondents garnered a mean score of 12.02 and with a standard deviation of 1.03 ($SD = 1.03$), a frequency of 168 with a percentage of 62.92 which corresponds to a very satisfactory performance.

Students do ask questions and answer who, what, where and how questions as they read a text, passage or article. They are interested to know the details of what they are reading. In terms of getting the main idea, Table 3 presented that the respondents, performed satisfactorily

with a mean score of 9.03 and a standard deviation of 1.25 ($X = 9.03$, $SD = 1.25$).

Students can not immediately grasp the gist of the reading text, in just one reading. They need ample time to process, understand and comprehend the content of the reading material they are reading. One reason why is it so is, they are not spending much time in reading, and another is they lack motivation and tools to comprehend what they read. Most students have few if any intellectual tools that would enable them to read deeply, and then apply what they have read (Elder & Paul, 2014).

That the respondents performed very satisfactory in terms of determining story structure with a mean score of 10.83 and a standard deviation of 1.28 ($X = 10.83$, $SD = 1.28$). Students give importance to elements of short story to aid them to have a better understanding to what they read. They are interested on the flow of the story by looking on the setting, character, plot and theme. Just as sentence grammar is used to explain and specify how sentence are constructed, story structure delineates the basic parts of a story and how those works together to create a well-constructed tale (Vacca, 2009).

On the overall analysis of the reading comprehension skills of the Grade 8 students, the data imply that students hardly understand vocabulary in context and could not easily grasp the main ideas in the text. On the other hand, they are able to determine structure of the story and understand details of events in a passage or text.

2. Reading Strategies of the Students

That most frequently used pre-reading strategy is previewing text with a mean score of 3.95 ($X = 3.95$). In general, the respondents use pre-reading strategies occasionally with a grand

mean of 3.33 ($X = 3.33$).

Students are concerned on what they are reading, they check on relevant information given to aid them to have a better understanding of the passage they read. This was strengthened by Anthony & Rafael (2009) in their study; they found out that readers whose prior knowledge is accessible and well- developed remember more from their reading than readers whose prior knowledge of the topic is limited.

That thinking about the topic of the story and visualizing the text information was the most frequently used strategy by the respondents during reading with a mean of 3.59 ($X = 3.59$). In general, the respondents employ reading strategies occasionally as shown by the grand mean of 3.24 ($X = 3.24$).

Students are critical thinkers and visual learners. They scrutinize the passage they read and create mental pictures as they read articles or passages. This upholds the findings of Cleverly and Nicholson (2011) they found out that how well a student comprehends a text is also dependent on metacognition: his ability to think about and to control his thinking process before, during, and after reading. Furthermore, they added that low achieving students, in particular, need to be taught how to monitor their understanding and to select and use appropriate strategies when needed.

That only post-reading strategy used frequently by the respondents is the checking for fulfillment of the purpose of reading with an accumulated mean of 3.54 ($X = 3.54$). In general, post-reading strategies were used occasionally as shown by the grand mean of 3.28 ($X = 3.28$). It could be gleaned from the table that students read for fulfillment, they read to fulfill their thirst of wisdom, and they read for entertainment and for information. Majority of the pre-reading, during reading and post reading strategies were

occasionally utilized by the students. In the research of Brown & Baker (2007) they found out that good readers possess a number of flexible, adaptable strategies that they use before, during and after reading to maximize their comprehension.

3. Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Reading Strategies

That none of the reading comprehension skills is significantly correlated with the use of pre-reading strategies. On the other hand, understanding vocabulary in context and noting details are both significantly correlated with the frequency of use of strategies during reading at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) although the correlation is weak. The skill on noting details is significantly correlated with the frequency of use of post-reading strategies with r value of .141 and Pearson value of .021 ($r = .141, p = .021$). On the overall, the respondents' reading comprehension skills were found to be significantly correlated with the frequency of use of reading strategies with r value of .134 and Pearson value of .029 ($r = .134, p = .029$), although the correlation is weak. Therefore the hypothesis which states that "there is no significant positive relationship between the reading comprehension and reading strategies of the student" was rejected. The correlation data suggest that students have certain strategies that they apply before, during and after reading which help them understand the text.

4. Implications of the Study in English Reading Instruction

The end goal of a reading instruction which is to help students advance from simply recognizing words to comprehending chunks of texts must be a definitive goal for language teachers. Searching for ways to look into the factors that affect comprehension of students

along with the ways by which they strategize to comprehend a text have to form part of a reading instruction that works.

The results embedded in this study on reading comprehension of students imply that there is a need to further immerse these students to reading activities that would help them grasp the gist or main idea of reading text and those that would provide for understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words. Hence, this may reflect the crucial role of vocabulary instruction in teaching reading. The respondents may have failed to get the gist of the text they read because they lack the understanding and skills to attack words unfamiliar to them.

Effective consideration of the reading strategies used by the students would also allow for reading instruction that would cater readers of all types. The reading strategies gauged in the present study imply that students make use of techniques before, during and after reading. Thus, indirect and even explicit teaching of these strategies can be very advantageous for students especially those who struggle in comprehending texts.

Though the correlation between the reading comprehension and reading strategies of the respondents was found to be weak; still, considering these strategies in teaching reading may help teachers think and plan for interventions or programs to address problems in reading comprehension. This therefore calls for further investigation of effectively describing the co- variance between the two variables.

Before students can become proficient readers they must have tools to be successful; reading strategies and comprehension strategies. Reading strategies help students move forward when they stumble on idea or words they do not

know. Reading strategy helps them to figure out what to do. Comprehension strategies guide students to think about what they are reading to make connections, use visualization, ask questions and make inferences and to synthesize the words they read into something they comprehend. Reading to be noteworthy must be planned and readers must be guided by reading strategies to help them enhance their comprehension.

SUMMARY

The following were the summary of findings that were gathered to answer the questions that were raised at the beginning of this study.

1. Reading Comprehension Level of the Students

Students had a hard time in understanding vocabulary in context that they read as well as in getting the main idea, but they do excel in noting details and determining the story structure of the story.

2. Reading Strategies of the Students

The most frequently used strategy in pre-reading is previewing the text, during reading is thinking about the topic of the story and visualizing the text information and for the post reading, is checking for fulfillment of the purpose of reading.

3. Significant Relationship between the Students' Reading Comprehension and Reading Strategy

None of the reading comprehension skills is significantly correlated with the use of pre-reading strategies. On the other hand, understanding vocabulary in context and noting

details are both significantly correlated with the frequency of use of strategies during reading although the correlation is weak. The skill on noting details is significantly correlated with the frequency of use of post-reading strategy.

On the overall, the respondents' reading comprehension skills were found to be significantly correlated with the frequency of use of reading strategies although the correlation is weak.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and analysis of the data the following conclusions were posited:

1. Students do not grasp immediately the gist of the text that they read and they do not give so much attention in looking for the meaning of the words unfamiliar to them, but they do understand the details of the reading passage and they determine story structure. To comprehend the text, students preview it before reading; think about the topic and visualize the text information while reading; and check for fulfillment after reading.
2. There is a positive relationship on the reading comprehension and reading strategy used by the students.
3. The implication of the strategies used by the students before, during and after reading significantly affects their reading comprehension. The study will aid students to enhance their reading skills especially English is a second language to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are given:

1. School administrators should professionally upgrade reading teachers by sending them to relevant trainings and seminars that may address their concerns in helping struggling readers in their classrooms. School administrators should equip libraries with varied textbooks and reference materials such as; dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and almanacs. They have to put up functional internet library that is always accessible to teachers and students.
2. Curriculum planners should integrate reading strategies, essential reading skills, and concepts in the curriculum to enhance the reading skills of the students and strengthen reading teachers. Curriculum planners should design a functional digital reading program that caters the needs of the students in this high technological age.
3. Reading teachers should provide varied instructions based on assessment result and adapt appropriate instruction to meet the students need. Teachers of reading should find ways to stimulate readers to read through adopting appropriate technique suited to the student's level, background and culture. Reading teachers should expose students to varied reading activities like reading festival, reading marathon or reading Olympics to stimulate or encourage them to read.
4. Reading teachers should put up a mini library and a reading corner in their classrooms to raise the awareness of reading among the students. Reading comprehension strategies should be modeled in isolation many times for the students to get used to it and to hold a firm grasp of what the strategy is and how it helps them to have a better comprehension on the text. Teachers should help students enhance their reading strategies that positively influence their reading comprehension.
5. Reading teachers should use social network

like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and email to facilitate reading lessons and activities.

6. ESL learners should cultivate a habit of reading by allotting time in their daily routine a reading schedule. ESL learners should tie up with their friends or classmates for peer reading session to elevate their reading skills.

7. Parents should attend homeroom meetings to check on their children performance and collaborate with the teacher for the improvement of their children. Parents should buy inexpensive books and put up a reading corner at home to monitor the reading skills of their children.

8. Future researchers may conduct a related study but they can use more sophisticated research design and study variables, which may also include comprehension on line texts via computer or any electronic device.

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