

Correlating Reading Strategies and Comprehension Among First-Year College Students

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Abstract — This study determined the correlation between the reading strategies and comprehension of first-year college students at NIPSC Batad Campus for the S.Y. 2019-2020. The descriptive correlation design determines the relationship between reading strategies and comprehension used by the respondents. The respondents took the test on understanding vocabulary in context, noting details and story structure to determine their reading comprehension level. Moreover, the respondents answered a questionnaire on reading strategies to identify the reading strategies. The use of stratified random sampling determined the 101 first-year college respondents.

The findings revealed that the students had an outstanding comprehension in understanding vocabulary in context, and they excelled in noting details, determining the story structure and details of events.

The most frequently used strategy in pre-reading was *previewing the text*, during-reading was *integrating prior knowledge with what they are reading*, and for the after-reading strategies, were *summarizing and synthesizing what has been read, using what they have read in some applications, and applying the values and skills they have learned from the story*.

Lastly, the study revealed that students' reading comprehension significantly correlated with their reading strategies.

***Keywords* — Teacher Education, Reading, Strategies, Comprehension**

I. Introduction

Reading is an essential skill to obtain information. Tang et al. (2019) state that reading responds to printed or written symbols and establishes skills needed to understand the meaning from different texts that serve as a precursor for the meaning created by the reader's previous experience. Moreover, research shows that readers are active or strategic and use different comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading a text.

A reading strategy is a systematic plan adopted by readers to facilitate understanding of reading (Okkinga, van Steensel, van Gelderen, & Slegers, 2018) and the construction of meaning. These strategies include previewing, self-assessing, creating connections, viewing, understanding how to work, monitoring, summarizing, evaluating, and so on. Researchers believe that using such strategies can help students become metacognitive readers (Al-Mekhlafi, 2018).

While reading is a process, reading comprehension focuses on text comprehension. This understanding comes between the written words and generating knowledge outside the text. Therefore, reading and reading fluency are the cornerstones of success in school and later in life. Considered an essential skill, learning to read and understand what was read is an integral part of each individual's life and indispensable in the educational system.

Moreover, DepEd offered K + 12 subjects to create multi-literate and independent readers. These subjects cover three aspects:

1. In-depth discussions of spiral lessons to develop reading skills;
2. Contextual understanding of texts applied to various sources of reading materials; and
3. Writing exposure to complement reading

These topics help students increase their sense of readability and writing by exposing them to academic and professional texts with real-life practical contextual relationships.

Reading is as vital as any other skills needed in higher education, i.e., university level. Students have increased learning needs when they go from high school to college. The same is true for reading; because of the dramatic rise in reading load and difficulty as students' progress from college to university, the nature of reading changes. More and more independent reading is now necessary to learn critical modules of a course of study. As a result, students must shift their passive reading approach into active reading. However, because they are unfamiliar with or do not practice active reading, the students cannot create proper comprehension of the materials read. As a result, individuals dislike reading, which is the foundation of their authentic learning. Therefore, it is critical to get rid of students' aversion to reading assignments. Teachers play a critical role here since teachers may help students overcome their aversion to reading by establishing active reading skills in them. This strategy can be accomplished by teaching and encouraging students to use active reading strategies and methods.

Albano (2019) reported that in the Philippines-IRI test for 2018-2019, the reading test results revealed 301 English non-readers in Grades 4 to 6 in the Department of Education (DepEd) Cordillera region. There were 9,090 frustration readers (up from 14,682 in the pre-test), 23,267 instructional readers (up from 19,781), and 18,673 independent readers (from 12,736). Most elementary school graduates were found to be frustrated readers who avoided reading instructions and had poor word identification and comprehension skills. These findings are concerning for primary and secondary school instructors because reading is a critical ability at the highest level of education.

Despite the government's efforts to support the DepEd's vision, the growing reading problem persists. The researcher was driven to learn whether reading strategies are being emphasized at the higher education level after realizing the importance of reading abilities at the university. Because the researcher works as a language and literature professor at NIPSC Batad Campus, Batad, Iloilo, an external campus of the NIPSC System in Iloilo's 5th district, it was

chosen as a research site. During 2019-2020, the researcher determined the relationship between reading strategies and reading comprehension among first-year college students.

This study answered the following research issues in light of the study's background: (1) What are the students' before, during, and after reading strategies? (2) Is there a relationship between students' reading strategies and reading comprehension before, during, and after reading the texts? The following are the study's two hypotheses: (H₀) There is no relationship between students' reading comprehension and reading strategies. (H_a) There is a relationship between students' reading strategies and comprehension.

Literature Review

The section presents the previous studies about reading strategies and reading comprehension, which identifies the gap resulting in conducting the study.

Reading strategies

Reading or comprehension strategies refer to the skills or methods required to comprehend a text. According to Habók & Magyar (2019), comprehension strategies are deliberate sets of procedures that competent readers utilize to make sense of the text.

Wahyono (2019) did research with the following goals: 1) to describe students' responses to cognitive reading methods and their reading comprehension score, and 2) to determine the relationship between students' cognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension. The current study is a quantitative one. The quantitative is meant to reflect students' responses to cognitive and reading methods and clarify the extent to which cognitive reading techniques and reading comprehension are related. As subjects or participants in the study, the samples are fourth-semester English education students. Data was gathered by handing out questionnaires to students, who were asked to respond to questions about Cognitive Reading Strategies. Students' reading comprehension scores were determined using the IELTS Reading Test. The correlation product moment was used to examine the quantitative data. The study's findings demonstrate that most students employ the four cognitive reading techniques examined in this study and that these strategies are strongly related to students' reading comprehension, with a p-value of 0.00 and a coefficient value of 0.61.

Wahab (2012) conducted a study in Darussalam that focused on the difficulties in reading comprehension faced by first-grade students in senior high school. The study's goals were to discover the challenges faced by first-grade pupils at SMAN 1 Darussalam in Aceh Besar and the causes that contributed to these issues. The method employed was descriptive quantitative, and the instrument data collection methods were a test and a questionnaire. The test had 20 questions divided into five categories: main idea, specific information, forming conclusions, locating references, and vocabulary. The data was analyzed using the index difficulty and percentage. According to the test results, the majority of the first-grade pupils at SMAN 1 Darussalam, Aceh Besar, had difficulty answering primary ideas, making inferences, and locating reference questions. Finding main concept questions was the most challenging element for the students of

SMAN 1 Darussalam, Aceh Besar because the main idea was tough to find. Furthermore, the students' replies in the questionnaire revealed that they had issues understanding vocabulary, poor command of grammar, difficulty understanding long sentences, a lack of media learning, little family support, and a lack of knowledge of reading comprehension skills.

In Indonesia, Par (2018) has a study that attempts to investigate the differences in EFL critical reading skills between field independent (FI) and field-dependent (FD) learners. As subjects, 60 undergraduate EFL students who had completed and passed the Critical Reading course were used. The Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) divided the students into two groups based on their cognitive styles: FI and FD. In addition, a critical reading comprehension exam (CRCT) in the form of multiple-choice questions was devised and delivered to assess the students' critical reading skills. The test items were designed to evaluate students' analytical and inferential reading skills, specifically their ability to determine the primary concept, purpose, tone, inference, and conclusions from texts. The findings show a statistically significant difference in critical reading skills between FI and FD pupils. Furthermore, the distinctions in the CRCT texts are precise in determining the primary concept, determining the purpose, making an inference, and drawing a conclusion. Therefore, selecting appropriate reading materials to employ in Critical Reading course practice for strengthening students' critical reading skills will be advantageous for both FI and FD students from a pedagogical standpoint.

Reading comprehension

Understanding what has been read is referred to as "reading comprehension." English is taught as a foreign language in the Philippines. Although the reading process is continuously taught across from grade 4 up to college years, this does not mean that English education was satisfactory. Reading allows students to enjoy their studies while also delivering numerous benefits of knowledge acquisition. Education, politics, social concerns, culture, religion, and health are just a few topics students might study in this broad discipline. To comprehend a document, "language conveys meaning and facilitates the sharing of information, ideas, and opinions," according to Beukeboom & Burgers (2019). To put it another way, when a text is fully comprehended, reading becomes a delightful, thrilling, and transforming activity that opens up new worldviews.

According to Oakhill et al. (2019), reading comprehension is built on two primary skills: language comprehension and word reading. Apart from word reading skills, the researchers looked into various elements that directly impact language comprehension and reading comprehension. Vocabulary, inference, background knowledge, comprehension monitoring, and text structure knowledge are thoroughly examined. The interaction of these factors with reading comprehension and one another is detailed and how to effectively strengthen these skills in struggling comprehenders.

Finally, Salem (2017) studied whether English language teachers in Egypt employ scaffolding tactics for building or testing their students' reading comprehension skills. It also attempted to show whether teachers are aware of these tactics or employ them regularly. For the objective of the study, a questionnaire, as well as structured interviews, were created. The

descriptive qualitative research design was chosen because of its suitability for the study's nature. The study's findings demonstrated that non-native English language teachers are unaware of the nature of the scaffolding tactics they employ; they employ such strategies to test rather than scaffold their students' knowledge. Therefore, it is required that English language teachers understand the nature of scaffolding tactics, how to employ them (when to start using them and when to stop), and how important they are in developing students' comprehension skills in mainstream classrooms.

The findings of the previous years of research have led to a widespread understanding that competent readers use reading strategies to help them generate meaning.

In practice, however, students' reading comprehension skills are inferior. Furthermore, to overcome students' reading difficulties, teachers must first determine the specific reading strategies used by students before, during, and after reading the chosen texts and the difficulties experienced by students during the reading process, and the factors that cause difficulty in reading.

Thus, this study answered the following research issues: (1) What are the students' before, during, and after reading strategies? (2) Is there a relationship between reading strategies and reading comprehension of first-year college students? The following are the study's two hypotheses: (H₀) There is no relationship between students' reading comprehension and reading strategies. (H_a) There is a relationship between students' reading strategies and comprehension.

II. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive-correlational design with a stratified random sampling approach to 101 first-year college students from different disciplines. Moreover, the study utilized frequency counts, percentage, and mean to present the data's descriptive statistics.

The Pearson Product: Moment Correlation explores the relationship between the two variables between the reading strategies and reading comprehension.

This study determined the relationship between reading comprehension and the reading strategies of first-year college students. The respondents took the test on understanding vocabulary in context, noting details, and determining story structure to determine their level of comprehension. Furthermore, they answered a reading strategy checklist to identify their reading strategies while comprehending the text they read.

The survey questionnaire lists different reading strategies, and the students answered it by putting a checkmark (✓) on the corresponding box of their answers. The respondents responded based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. (1=never, 2= rarely, 3=occasionally, 4= frequently, and 5= always).

For the comprehension test, the researcher gave forty-five (45) questions broken down as follows; for vocabulary in context, fifteen (15); noting details, fifteen (15); and determining story

structure, fifteen (15). The test on vocabulary in context, noting details, and determining story structure was a multiple choice.

For the reading passage, the researcher used the story "Footnote to Youth," authored by Jose Garcia Villa, adopted from <http://pingpdf.com>(2018). The researcher chose the story because it has all the necessary elements that the test needs. It has the essential lesson to guide today's young people in their decision-making, especially when entering into an early marriage relationship, since every decision they make will significantly impact their lives.

Lastly, the researcher sought help from English teachers to serve as proctors during the test to avoid bias. After administering the test, the data were gathered, checked, and analyzed.

III. Results and Discussion

In chart and tabular forms, this section presents and discusses the details. The data were obtained, analyzed, and reviewed using suitable statistical methods and procedures.

Descriptions of the Reading Comprehension Level of the Students in Understanding Vocabulary in Context, Noting Details and Determining Story Structure

Reading transcends mere knowledge transmission. Adequate vocabulary is a key for learners to gain understanding.

The following graphs illustrate the explanations of the statistical effects of the degree of reading comprehension of first-year college students.

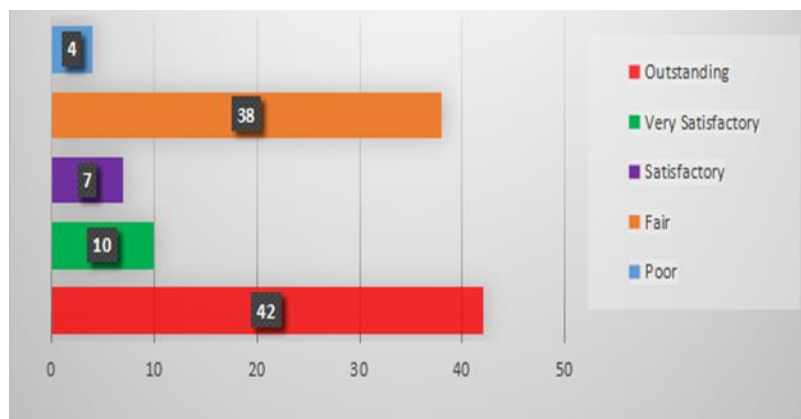


Chart 1. Reading comprehension level of first-year college students in vocabulary in context

Chart 1 shows the frequency of 42 and a percentage of 41.5; most of the respondents have a sufficient understanding of the language, which translates to excellent understanding.

The result means that students should always receive vocabulary activities so that they can enrich their understanding. Anjaniputra & Salsabila (2018) endorsed this finding. They found that teachers should include vocabulary enrichment exercises in their language lessons.

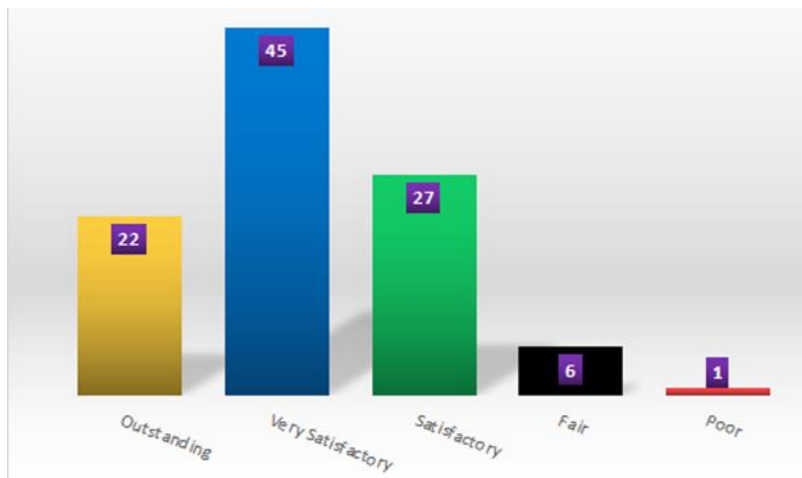


Chart 2. Reading comprehension level of first-year college students in noting details

Chart 2 illustrates that the respondents obtained a frequency of 45 and a percentage of 44.55 in noting information, which corresponds to a very satisfactory performance of understanding.

Students ask questions: respond to questions as they read a letter, passage, or article about who, what, where, and how. Plakans, Liao, & Wang (2019), and Boushey, & Behne (2019) support this finding, as students are interested in learning what they are reading in-depth by noting details.

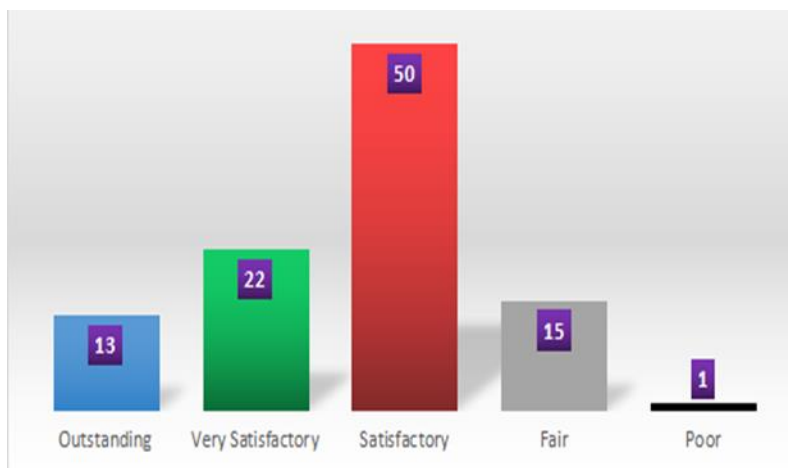


Chart 3. Reading comprehension level of first-year college students in determining story structure

Respondents performed satisfactorily in determining story structure from Chart 3 with a frequency of 50 and a percentage of 49.5, which translates into a satisfactory result.

Students give sense to short story elements to help them understand what they are reading. By looking at the setting, personality, plot, and theme, they are interested in the story's flow. Just as sentence grammar clarifies and defines sentence construction, the story structure delineates the necessary parts and how those works together to produce a well-constructed tale (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Shafiee (2018).

The results show that students quickly grasp vocabulary in context in the general study of first-year college students' reading comprehension skills. They can also assess the narrative structure and grasp the details of events in a passage.

Table 1.

Mean and Verbal Description of *Before-Reading* Strategies Used by First-Year College Students

Strategies	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Preview the text by looking at the title, picture, graphics and other relevant items.	4.06	Always
2. Predict what the story or book will be about.	3.49	Occasionally
3. Set purpose on reading by asking questions.	3.51	Frequently
4. Choose an appropriate strategy based on predictions and questions.	3.30	Occasionally
5. Read swiftly or glance quickly in search of information (skimming).	3.34	Occasionally
6. Read rapidly to get special details (scanning).	3.35	Occasionally
7. Read the text orally to get used on the way how the words are pronounced.	3.49	Occasionally
Total Mean	3.50	Frequently

Table 1 presents the strategy used by first-year college students before reading. They **always** preview texts by looking at the title, picture, graphics, and other relevant items with a mean score of 4.06 ($X = 4.06$). In addition, first-year college students frequently use *before-reading* strategies with a grand mean of 3.50 ($X = 3.50$).

Students are concerned about what they read. Therefore, they check relevant information to help them better understand the text they read. Hedgcock & Ferris (2018) strengthened the finding that readers whose prior knowledge is accessible and well-developed recall more than readers whose previous knowledge of the subject is limited.

Table 2.
Mean and Verbal Description of *During-Reading* Strategies Used by First-Year College Students

Strategies	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Think about the topic of the story and visualize the text information.	3.37	Occasionally
2. Slow my reading rate to adjust to the text difficulty.	3.14	Occasionally
3. Predict what happens next.	3.21	Occasionally
4. Integrate prior knowledge with what I am reading.	3.51	Frequently
5. Pose questions to help me understand the information	3.34	Occasionally
6. Use context clues to understand unknown vocabulary.	3.36	Occasionally
7. Make inferences while reading.	3.12	Occasionally
8. Use graphic organizers to outline difficult text information.	3.17	Occasionally
9. Write down ideas if there is too much information to remember.	3.14	Occasionally
10. Look for parallel ideas of what I'm reading	3.13	Occasionally
11. Reread sections of the text for clarity.	3.36	Occasionally
Total Mean	3.28	Occasionally

Table 2 reveals that *integrating prior knowledge with reading* was the most **frequently** used strategy by the first-year college students *during a reading* with a mean of 3.51 ($X = 3.51$). In general, the respondents employ reading strategies **occasionally**, as shown by the grand mean of 3.28 ($X = 3.28$).

Students are critical thinkers and visual learners. They scrutinize the paragraphs before they read and create mental images as they read the article or paragraph. This finding confirmed Castillo-Montoya (2017) and Sheikh, Soomro, & Hussain (2019), who found that student's comprehension of the text also depends on prior knowledge and metacognition, which can help in enhancing the attention of students on the reading process that can impact their learning.

Table 3.
Mean and Verbal Description of *After-Reading* Strategies Used by First-Year College Students

Strategies	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Respond appropriately: personally, critically and creatively.	3.38	Occasionally
2. Summarize and synthesize what has been read.	3.51	Frequently
3. Check for fulfilment of the purpose of reading.	3.45	Occasionally
4. Use what I have read in some applications.	3.52	Frequently
5. Retell the story to myself or to others.	3.48	Occasionally
6. Ask myself questions for clarification and deeper understanding.	3.38	Occasionally
7. Apply the values and skills I learned from the story/passage.	3.52	Frequently
8. Re-enact / dramatize what I have read.	3.34	Occasionally
9. Give conclusions/ generalizations.	3.14	Occasionally
10. Visualize what I have read in the form of drawing.	3.20	Occasionally
Total Mean	3.39	Occasionally

Table 3 shows that there are three (3) *after-reading* strategies used frequently by the first-year college students: *summarizing and synthesizing what has been read, using what they have read in some applications, and applying the values and skills they have learned from the story* with a mean of 3.51, 3.52 and 3.52 respectively. In general, *after-reading* strategies were used occasionally by the first college students, as shown by the grand mean of 3.39 ($X = 3.39$).

The result reinforced the study of Magnusson, Roe & Blikstad-Balas (2019) as they found out good readers possess several flexible, adaptable strategies used *before, during, and after reading* to maximize their comprehension.

Table 4.
Relationship between the Reading Strategies and Comprehension of First Year College Students

VARIABLES	r value	p value	Decision
Reading Strategies Reading Comprehension	0.134	0.029	Ho is rejected p < .05 significant

Table 4 shows the respondents' comprehension significantly correlated with their reading strategies with an r-value of 0.364 and p-value of .029 ($r = 0.134$, $p = .029$); the correlation is weak. Hence, the hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between the reading comprehension and reading strategies of the college students, was rejected.

The correlation data suggest that college students have specific reading strategies relevant before, during, and after reading, which helps them comprehend the text.

IV. Conclusion

Research findings revealed that the students had an outstanding comprehension in understanding vocabulary in context, and they excelled in noting details and determining the structure and details of events of the story.

The most frequently used strategy in pre-reading was previewing the text, in during-reading is integrating prior knowledge with what they are reading and for the after-reading, were summarizing and synthesizing what has been read, using what they have read in some applications, and applying the values and skills they have learned from the story.

Lastly, the study revealed that students' reading comprehension significantly correlated with their reading strategies, although the correlation is weak. This finding leads to a general flaw in reading proficiency attributed to various factors like the lack of information on college, English language department curriculum, teaching methodology, lack of the target language environment, and the learners' lack of motivation.

V. Recommendations

The researcher offers the following recommendations drawn from the findings and conclusions.

1. Administrators should put up a functional internet library that is always accessible to teachers and students for their pedagogical skills in research;
2. Curriculum planners should integrate reading strategies and concepts in the curriculum to enhance the reading skills of the students and strengthen reading teachers;
3. Teachers of reading should find ways to stimulate readers to read through adopting appropriate techniques suited to the students' level, background, and culture;
4. Reading teachers should expose students to varied reading activities like the reading festival, reading marathon, or reading Olympics to stimulate or encourage them to read;

5. Reading teachers should put up a mini-library and a reading corner in their classrooms to raise the awareness of reading among the students; and
6. Reading teachers should use social networks like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Google sites, Edmodo, Google Classroom, and email to facilitate reading lessons and activities.

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