

Effectiveness of Utilizing Small Story Books to Improve the Reading Skills of Grade 3 Pupils

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Abstract — This study evaluates the effectiveness of utilizing small story books to improve the reading skills of Grade 3 pupils in Mahayag Elementary School, Ormoc City District I, Ormoc City Division for School Year 2022-2023. Utilizing the quasi-experimental research design employing the pre-test and post-test performance of the Grade 3 pupils in reading for an in-depth analysis of the study, the researcher used the researcher-made test which covers the 1st quarter Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in reading skills. Simple percentage and t-test of mean difference were the statistical tools used. Results of the study revealed a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the Grade 3 pupils in reading before and after the utilization of small story books in learning comprehension skills. This shows that utilizing the small story books where stories and other activities are contextualized and suited to the needs of the pupils is an effective learning material in improving the reading skills of the Grade 3 pupils.

Keywords — *Effectiveness, Utilizing Small Story Books, Improve, Reading Skills, Grade 3 Pupils*

I. Introduction

Success in reading is critical to the success in school and reading problems will influence every facet of a child's academic achievement. Therefore, early reading is so important. Children who learn to read early go on to develop exceptional reading skills and achieve greater academic success in school. When kids fall behind in reading, they also lag in other subject areas, and will struggle with schoolwork. They become discouraged, lose motivation, fall further behind, and it becomes a vicious cycle downwards.

In the last two years of implementation of distance learning, reading ability of the pupils were affected. Teachers were not able to assess the literacy performance due to the restrictions of face-to-face interaction. It was then during the last two grading period of school year 2021-2022,

the teachers conducted an oral reading test to the pupils in the grade. When examined closely by the class advisers through the individual oral reading of graded passages, it was found out that the frustrated readers were having word recognition problems on words with consonant blends and consonant digraphs. It was also found out that both frustrated and instructional readers had problems with fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension. This result emerges and replicates a depressing level of reading proficiency by the learners. With the implementation of modular learning modality, common reading problems met by the pupils are on comprehension.

Another school year has opened and limited face-to-face classes was implemented. As mandated by DepEd, teachers have to conduct diagnostic tests to the pupils most especially their literacy and numeracy performance. It was then that the researcher conducted oral reading test to the pupils. The result was so annoying that almost all of them cannot understand what they read. In this regard, DepEd has presented programs to affect the reading needs of learners. It issued DepEd Order No. 45, s. 2002 or Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) as a national program with a goal that every child will be a reader by the time, they finish grade three. Numerous intervention and remediation programs had been conducted by teachers to address the call of DepEd. However, data showed that most of the learners reaching grades four and above still have difficulties in their reading proficiency level. Thus, the researcher formulated intervention materials to address the gaps in reading.

Improving students reading comprehension performance is a crucial task which most of the teachers and learners find difficult in dealing with. Likewise, students nowadays do not read a lot because of the presence of high technology gadgets which occupied their spare time. Books and print materials are sometimes set aside due to the influx of reading articles on the internet. In addition, learners today, seldom read articles which are not relevant to their needs and interest. This situation posed a problem to the reading teacher. Teacher will face difficulty during reading lessons if he does not know how to arouse the interest of the students. In capturing the students' interests in reading instruction, teachers must design a lesson which does not bore the students. To address this problem, teachers need to contextualize the reading lesson. Materials should be within the concern and within the context of the students to foster higher performance in reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is the most common skill for asking and answering questions in education, and educators use it as a tool to evaluate students' processes and verify learning. Reading plays an important role because through this skill, students can learn new words; improve the punctuation and grammatical structures in context enhancing oral and writing speech. To this respect, McCullough (1974), Harmer (2007), Gunderson (2009), and Weaver (2009) claimed that reading suggests models to re-think knowledge and provides topics that stimulate discussion, and imaginative forms which enhance memory processes. In other words, reading offers not only a possibility to obtain information from written documents, but also a way to enhance other processes such as interpretation, deduction, inference and comprehension, which are essential to

make sense of written texts within the particular context in which they are read. In that sense, teachers should develop materials focused on reading to foster students' comprehension.

Developing appropriate and pertinent materials is a must for Key Stage 1 teachers who wish to improve their students' reading comprehension. On one hand, "Developing in-house materials makes it more feasible to address the demands of the institutional context and students' profiles, and to achieve academic and language learning goals" (Núñez, 2010). On the other hand, in the reading comprehension process, "the reader carries out a continuous, thoughtful dialogue with the information, ideas, opinions, or feelings expressed by the author. As he [/she] reads, the reader is constantly challenging, accepting, rejecting, weighing, and integrating the views expressed by the author" (Doake, 1974). Thus, the effectiveness and success in improving reading comprehension is a task that depends on how useful and well elaborated materials are for students, and how teachers use texts, questioning, activities, and reading strategies to check the comprehension. Thus, the creation of small story books to address learning gaps of the pupils.

Krause et al. (2016) conversed that the use of content contextualization is supported by three principles: prior knowledge, promoting conceptual change, and promoting metacognition. Firstly, contextualized content instruction activates the learners' prior knowledge and promote more effective problem solving. Student can retain information better if things can be related to their daily life. Secondly, an improvement in learning is evident when content contextualization activities are interactive and engaging that motivates students with a concept relevance. Thirdly, contextualization of content helps students reflect on their learning to link ideas from a recognizable tangible context of an abstract idea so they can distinguish their own personal association to these ideas.

The design of contextualized materials like teacher-designed workshops, worksheets and booklets, among others is also vital to achieve language learning outcomes. These materials, according to Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2017), "are more likely to provide learners with rich, contextualized and comprehensible input to facilitate their language learning targets; raise awareness of their own learning process and assist their on-going development of a balanced set of skills and content". Nevertheless, the development of materials for reading should include some principles that Tomlinson (2003) established as essential rules for creating materials.

The flexibility of the K to 12 curriculum permits curriculum enhancement in consideration of the learners' diverse backgrounds. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533). Sec. 5 states that the Department of Education shall make the basic education curriculum "flexible enough to enable and allow schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social contexts. The production and development of locally produced teaching materials shall also be encouraged." (Department of Education Leyte, 2016).

Small story book is a contextualize reading materials produced by the researcher to address reading gaps of the pupils. This is a short story written in a booklet type with illustrations and

colorful drawings to enable the pupils to understand the short story. The drawings and illustrations guide the pupils in getting the meaning of the words, phrases and sentences in the story. Every reading skill in the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for Grade 3 has corresponding small story books. With this intervention, it is expected that these pupils' reading gaps will be addressed and performance will be improved. A proposed improvement plan will be formulated based on the findings of the study.

It is in the above premise that the researcher who is currently a Grade 3 teacher in Mahayag Elementary School, would like to delve worthy research undertaking that will benefit the school he is currently teaching and that of his Graduate Program he is enrolled at.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of utilizing small story books to improve the reading skills of Grade 3 pupils in Mahayag Elementary School, Ormoc City District I, Ormoc City Division for School Year 2022-2023. The findings of the study were bases for the proposed improvement plan.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the pre-test performance of the Grade 3 pupils in reading before the utilization of small story books?
2. What is the post-test performance of Grade 3 pupils in reading after the utilization of small story books?
3. Is there a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the Grade 3 pupils in reading before and after the utilization of small story books?
4. What improvement plan can be proposed based on the findings of this study?

II. Methodology

Design. This study employed the quasi-experimental research design utilizing the pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of utilizing small story books to improve the reading skills of Grade 3 pupils for School Year 2022-2023. Mahayag Elementary School, Ormoc City District I, Ormoc City Division is the main locale of the study. The 15 Grade 3 pupils enrolled in the said locale for School Year 2022-2023 are the main respondents of the study and a researcher-made test which covers the 1st quarter Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in reading skills was used. The tool was administered before and after the intervention given. This research is focused in evaluating the effectiveness of utilizing small story books to improve the reading skills of Grade 3 pupils through the pre-test and post-test and its significant difference. A Proposed Improvement Plan based on the findings of the study is the output.

Sampling. There are 15 Grade 3 pupils involved in this study. The research instruments were distributed and administered personally during classes with consent from the Local IATF and strictly following the prescribed Health Protocol.

Research Procedure. The researcher prepared the research design and tools to be utilized in the study. Approval and recommendation from the Panel of Examiner of the Graduate Studies was sought. A letter request to conduct this study was forwarded to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon approval, permission from the District Supervisor and School Head was secured before the actual gathering of data. Orientation of the participants and administration of the pre-test was done through face-to-face after the approval of the permit from the parents of the respondents. After accomplishing the pre-test, intervention was given within four weeks. Small story books were provided to the pupils during their lessons in reading. One small story book per week for 4 weeks. After given the intervention, post-test was administered. Results of the tests were collected. Data were tallied and submitted for statistical treatment. Analysis and Interpretation of Data. Making of Proposed Training Plan followed.

Ethical Issues. The right to conduct the study was strictly adhered through the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division, District Supervisor, and School Head. Orientation of the respondents was done using face to face modality during their classes. In the orientation, issues and concerns were addressed and consent to be included in the study were signed.

Treatment of Data. The Simple Percentage was employed to evaluate the pre-test and post-test of the Grade 3 pupils in reading. **t-Test of Mean Difference** was used to determine the significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the Grade 3 pupils in reading.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1
Pre-Test Performance of Grade 3 Pupils in Reading

Score Range	Description	PRETEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	0	0
13-16	Very Good	6	40
9-12	Good	5	33
5-8	Fair	4	27
1-4	Poor	0	0
Total		15	100
Weighted Mean		8.2	Fair

Table 1 presents the pre-test performance of Grade 3 pupils in reading comprehension skills. It was revealed on the table that among the 15 Grade 3 pupil-respondents, 6 or 40% got the scores of 13-16 which is very good, while 5 or 33% got the score of 9-12 which is good and 4 or 27% got the score of 5-8 which is fair. Moreover, the pre-test performance of Grade 3 pupils in reading comprehension skills has a weighted mean of 8.2 which is interpreted as fair. This means that most of the pupils perform fairly in their reading comprehension skills. This implies that there are some Grade 3 pupils who were not able to get the correct answer or cannot comprehend the story or passages given. This implies further that they need intervention to address their difficulty. Further, reading instruction implemented in a manner other than a skill and drill approach can better serve the needs of students preparing to read college texts (Armstrong & Newman, 2011; Caverly, Nicholson, & Radcliffe, 2004; Perin, Bork, Peverly, & Mason, 2013). A focus on providing a developmental curriculum that shifts from the remediation of basic skills to the application of skills through a relevant, meaningful, contextualized curriculum may better prepare students academically and emotionally for college-level tasks and beyond (Perin, 2011). Contextualization, which is teaching basic skills in a disciplinary context, has been shown to increase the transfer of those skills in subsequent content areas (Fernandes, Leite, Mouraz, & Figueiredo, 2013; Perin, 2011). Contextualization further offers students an authentic reading experience that is relevant to their academic and personal needs, and this authenticity can lead to the transfer of skills within different academic content and contexts (Voge, 2011).

Table 2
Post-Test Performance of Grade 3 Pupils in Reading

Score Range	Description	POST-TEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	12	80
13-16	Very Good	3	20
9-12	Good	0	0
5-8	Fair	0	0
1-4	Poor	0	0
Total		15	100
Weighted Mean		18.13	Excellent

Table 2 presents the post-test performance of Grade 3 pupils in reading skills. It was revealed on the table that among the 15 pupil-respondents, 12 or 80% got the score of 17-20 which is interpreted as excellent and 3 or 20% got the score of 13-16 which is very good. Further, the table also revealed that the post-test performance of the Grade 3 pupils in reading skills has a weighted mean of 18.13 which is interpreted as excellent. This means that after the utilization of small story books, their reading performance has increased. This implies that the intervention given has become effective in the sense that the pupils' interest to learn to read has increase. With the illustrative, colorful and attractive materials provided, of which passages are suited to their level,

their reading performance increase. Contextualizing reading comprehension instruction and materials places the pupils in a vivid and meaningful authentic situation. Contextualization can be done through designing reading lessons and activities that center on the pupils' field of interests and environment. It also promotes positive pupils' engagement and improves learning skills among pupils.

Table 3
Test of Difference Between the Scores in the Pre-Test and Post-Test
of Grade 3 Pupils in Reading

Aspects	Test Scores		Computed T	Critical T	Decision	Interpretation
Grade 3 in Reading	Pre	8.20	3.182	0.142	Reject H ₀	Significant
	Post	18.13				

Table 3 presents the test of difference between the scores in the pre-test and post-test of Grade 3 pupils in reading comprehension skills. It was revealed on the table that the computed value of t of 3.182 is greater than the critical value of t which is 0.142, so null hypothesis is rejected. The weighted mean in the pre-test performance of 8.20 had increased after the utilization of small story books and the weighted mean had reached to 18.13 in the post-test. This means that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the Grade 3 pupils in reading before and after the utilization of small story books in learning reading skills. This implies that the intervention given is effective. This implies further that utilizing a contextualized, child-friendly and motivating reading materials help in the improvement of the reading performance of the Grade 3 pupils. According to Bonganciso (2015), improving students reading comprehension performance is a crucial task which most of the teachers and learners find difficult in dealing with. Likewise, students nowadays do not read a lot because of the presence of high technology gadgets which occupied their spare time. Books and print materials are sometimes set aside due to the influx of reading articles on the internet. In addition, learners today, seldom read articles which are not relevant to their needs and interest. This situation posed a problem to the reading teacher. Teacher will face difficulty during reading lessons if he does not know how to arouse the interest of the students. In capturing the students' interests in reading instruction, teachers must design a lesson which does not bore the students. To address this problem, teachers need to contextualize the reading lesson. Materials should be within the concern and within the context of the students to foster higher performance in reading comprehension. The small story books provided to the pupils address the learning gaps in literacy.

IV. Conclusion

This study revealed a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the Grade 3 pupils in reading before and after the utilization of small story books in learning comprehension skills. This shows that utilizing the small story books where stories and other activities are contextualize and suited to the needs of the pupils is an effective learning material in improving the reading skills of the Grade 3 pupils.

V. Recommendations

1. The proposed improvement plan formulated should be utilized;
2. Teachers should produce small story books to be used by the pupils in improving their reading skills;
3. Teachers should provide small story books to each of the pupils in their class;
4. Teachers should attend training and workshops for the construction and proper utilization of small story books;
5. Teachers should encourage pupils to use the small story books provided to them and be able to accomplish the activities provided in the material;
6. School Heads should conduct training to teachers for the production of small story books;
7. School Heads should submit the small story books crafted for quality assurance;
8. School Heads provide appropriate technical assistance to the teachers in teaching the reading skills to the pupils;
9. School Heads should provide materials for the construction of small story books for the pupils; and
10. Future researchers should replicate this study to include different locale and include different variables aside from the mentioned in this study.

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He is teaching for two years as volunteer kindergarten teacher at Mahayag Elementary School in the year 2011-2013. After he graduated his bachelor's degree he was teaching as pre-school teacher at Garnet Early Learning Center Inc., Carmen, Bohol in the year 2016-2018. In the year 2018 he was hired in the DepEd and currently teaching Grade 3 pupils at Mahayag Elementary School. He also attended series of webinars/seminars and trainings to increase his professional growth as a teacher.