

Effectiveness of Read Along Application – A Digitized Reading Material and Mentoring Strategy to Improve the Reading Performance of Grade 6 Pupils

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Abstract —The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Read Along application, a digitized reading material, and a mentoring strategy to improve the reading performance of Grade 6 pupils. Utilizing the quasi-experimental research design for a thorough evaluation of the research, the researcher used the researcher-made reading passages along with comprehension questions to determine the reading performance of the Grade 6 learners. Simple Percentage and t-Test of Mean Difference were the statistical tools used. The study revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Grade 6 pupils' reading performance before and after the utilization of digitized reading materials in Read Along application with mentoring strategy. The integration of technology helps increase their interest and motivates them to improve their reading performance as well as the mentoring strategy provided by the teacher to them. Thus, the Read Along application which contains the digitized reading materials, with mentoring strategy, is effective in improving the reading performance of the Grade 6 pupils.

Keywords — *Effectiveness, Read Along Application, Digitized Reading Material, Mentoring Strategy, Reading Performance, Grade 6 Pupils*

I. Introduction

Learning about anything can be accessed through reading. It supports our learning and broadens our knowledge in any area of life that we are interested in. Just about every topic we can think of is covered in a book, so everyone can just pick one up and start reading. Reading the world thus precedes reading the word and writing a new text must be one means of transforming the world (Freire, 1983). Through reading the things they appreciate; any youngster can discover more about their hobbies and even themselves. One of the finest methods to help children develop their vocabulary and strengthen their language abilities is to open up the world of words to them.

Regular reading can help people communicate more effectively both verbally and in writing. The first stage is to learn to read. A child will then start to improve comprehension and develop reading fluency. The adoption of effective reading techniques is crucial for learning and for daily life. Text comprehension is now based on an increasing number of digital reading devices (computers and laptops, e-books, and tablet devices), which can become a crucial support to enhance traditional reading comprehension and learning skills. This is due to the diffusion of technology in many areas of daily life (e.g., inference generation). Today's realms of research, practice, and policy seem to be pairing literacy and technology more and more frequently. People frequently talk about the need to learn how to use computers; authors discuss digital literacy (and related concepts like visual literacy and media literacy) as one of the crucial new discourses in our schools; and studies have looked into how technology can enhance literacy instruction and acquisition.

In the time of new normal setting of education, due to pandemic, it was found out that there were students whose reading performance was affected based on the monthly tracking of oral reading test results in observance of Regional Memorandum No. 197, s. 2019 – Field Test of the Philippine-Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) Data Gathering Tool and the quarterly conduct of School Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adjustment (SMEA). Lack of learning facilitators while doing the learning tasks at home, students' laziness, a lack of enthusiasm to learn to read, and the shift away from face-to-face classes to remote learning are some of the main factors which impact students' reading performance.

In support of the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, the Department of Education (DepEd) is simultaneously fulfilling its mandate to produce productive and responsible citizens equipped with essential competencies and skills for lifelong learning. Basically, to meet this goal, we must make every learner a proficient reader, schools across the country are tasked to help learners develop their reading skills. In order to address the gaps, there is a need to strengthen the reading proficiency of every learner and to nurture a culture of reading which is a requisite skill in all content areas. In adherence to DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019, the L. Cabahug Elementary School initiated an intervention since reading proficiency is an essential skill required for academic success, especially after the sixth grade. Students are expected to be proficient readers at the end of fourth quarter period so they will become more improved and productive learners on the next level of learning.

Currently, in the field of education, both teachers and learners benefit from technology because it gives them with fast access to knowledge, rapid learning, and engaging ways to apply what they've learned. Technically, teachers want to see their students perform better, and technology may help them do so. To address the issues in terms of reading performance of the learners, this study will utilize Read Along application, a free reading application for Android in Google Apps, where digitized reading materials are downloadable and easy to be utilized by the learners. These digitized reading materials, like in PHIL-IRI, are categorized to personalize the experience by recommending the right difficulty level of stories and games based on their reading

level performance. Read Along was developed with children's safety and privacy in mind and has no ads or in-app purchases. Next to the initial download of the app and stories, Read Along works offline without Wi-Fi or data—aiding with worries about unsupervised access to the Internet. Parents or teachers can merely connect to Wi-Fi periodically to download additional stories. Read Along holds young minds engaged with a compilation of various and interesting stories from around the world, and games sprinkled into those stories. While using this application, the role of the teacher is to provide an effective mentoring strategy so learners can acquire the necessary skills and improvement especially their reading performance. The tasks and activities that the mentor and mentee carry out together determine the success of mentoring, not the mentor's personality. The most beneficial mentorship is early and long-lasting; mentoring pairs or teams continue to meet frequently and advance when given "nudging." Effective mentoring enables connections to be strengthened in a variety of ways for both mentors and mentees. A mentor is a "trusted counselor or guide," according to Webster, therefore the main principles of interactions during this process should be on leadership and helpful counseling. When mentoring takes place, the right moment and setting are crucial. In this manner, learners can collect stars and badges as they learn, which motivates them to keep playing and reading (Hyder, 2020) while using this application.

Teachers may employ technology to boost their productivity, integrate valuable digital tools to enhance their students' learning options, and boost student support and participation. Furthermore, it allows teachers to improve their teaching practices and tailor learning for their students. Schools can benefit from technology by reducing the cost of physical teaching materials, expanding the efficiency of educational programs, and maximizing teacher time. The significance of technology in literacy acquisition and instruction, especially for populations in basic grades, is arguably most potentially rewarding for literacy educators when one considers the interaction of technology and literacy holistically. Electronic storybooks, for instance, are known to increase student motivation and comprehension (Matthew, 1997; Doty, Popplewell, & Byers, 2001), as well as to give students immediate decoding feedback (Labbo & Kuhn, 1998; deJong & Bus, 2002; Cazet, 1998; Doty, Popplewell, & Byers, 2001). Thus, the researcher formulated this study to evaluate the effectiveness of Read Along application, a digitized reading material, and a mentoring strategy to improve the reading performance of Grade 6 pupils. A proposed improvement plan on the intervention provided will be formulated based on the result of the study.

It is in the rationale that the researcher who is currently teaching in the above-mentioned locale, would like to delve worthy research undertaking that will benefit the school he is currently teaching and that of his Graduate Program.

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy, particularly with the use of Read Along application, to all Grade 6 learners in L. Cabahug Elementary School, Ormoc City District VII, Ormoc City Division. The findings of the study were bases for the proposed intervention plan.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the reading performance of the Grade 6 pupils before the utilization of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy in Read Along application?
2. What is the reading performance of the Grade 6 pupils after the utilization of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy in Read Along application?
3. Is there a significant difference in the reading performance of Grade 6 learners before and after the utilization of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy in Read Along application?
4. What improvement plan can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

II. Methodology

Design. This study employed the quasi-experimental research design using the pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy, particularly with the use of Read Along append mentoring strategy, to all Grade 6 learners in L. Cabahug Elementary School, Ormoc City District VII, Ormoc City Division. The 32 learners in Grade 6 class in the said locale for school year 2022-2023 were the main respondents and the researcher-made reading passages with comprehension questions were used. The pre-test and post-test were conducted before and after the utilization of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy in Read Along application. This research focused in evaluating the effectiveness of Read Along application, a digitized reading material, and a mentoring strategy to improve the reading performance of Grade 6 pupils and its significant difference. A Proposed Improvement Plan based on the findings of the study is the output.

Sampling. There were 32 Grade 6 pupils involved in this study. The research instruments were distributed personally in face-to-face modality while observing the guidelines on the progressive expansion of face-to-face classes.

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 survey was done through face-to-face modality. Permission from the School Head was secured to ensure that no classes have disrupted. After accomplishing the survey, the researcher accumulated it. Data were tallied and submitted for statistical treatment. Analysis and Interpretation of Data. Making of Proposed Intervention 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. 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 determine the reading performance of the Grade 6 pupils before and after the utilization of digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy in Read Along application. The t-Test of Mean Difference was used to determine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores before and after the utilization of digitized reading materials in Read Along application with mentoring strategy.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1
Pre-Test Performance of Grade 6 Pupils in Reading

Score Range	Description	PRE-TEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	0	0
13-16	Very Good	7	22
9-12	Good	10	31
5-8	Fair	15	47
1-4	Poor	0	0
Total		32	100
Weighted Mean		9.41	Good

Table 1 presents the pre-test performance of Grade 6 pupils in reading. It was revealed that the level of reading performance of Grade 6 pupils has a weighted mean of 9.41 which is interpreted as “Good”. This means that learners in Grade 6 class have been exhibiting good performance in reading. This implies that, despite the impacts of pandemic in our educational system, learners can read substantially.

However, the table indicated that there were 15 learners, 47% of the Grade 6 class, who are considered as “Fair” readers. These learners who got a score of 8 and below out 20, are some of those learners who have been identified as children with no learning facilitator at home. These learners also were having difficulty in accomplishing the learning tasks at home during the pandemic since they were not able to read well and comprehend the lessons in the self-learning modules. This means that immediate intervention is highly desired in order to improve the reading performance of these learners.

Moreover, it was found out that during the pre-test, there were 17 Grade 6 pupils, 53% of the class, obtained the score of 13 and above out of 20 in which 10 of these learners (31%) are categorized as “Good” readers while 7 learners (22%) are “Very Good” readers. This means that

more than half of the class are performing well when it comes to reading. Although none of these learners are considered as “Poor” readers, it was shown on the table as well that there is none of these pupils belonged to “Excellent” readers. Since these learners have been showing interest in using gadgets, the researcher will implement an intervention with the use technology specifically a tablet device. The said school is one the recipients in the division to receive these tablet devices, hence, the intervention to be implemented will utilize these tablet devices wherein the Read Along application will be installed in each device. Every pupil will be allowed to borrow these tablet devices and help improve their reading performance through digitized reading materials in the said application. To further enhance their reading performance, the teacher will provide mentoring strategy while utilizing digitized reading materials.

Table 2
Post-Test Performance of Grade 6 Pupils in Reading

Score Range	Description	POST-TEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	18	56
13-16	Very Good	14	44
9-12	Good	0	0
5-8	Fair	0	0
1-4	Poor	0	0
Total		32	100
Weighted Mean		17.00	Excellent

Table 2 presents the post-test performance of Grade 6 pupils in reading. After the utilization of Read Along application with digitized reading materials and mentoring strategy, it was revealed on the table the weighted mean of their scores is equivalent to 17.00 which is interpreted as “Excellent”. Among 32 Grade 6 pupils in the class, 18 or 56% are “Excellent” readers while 14 or 44% are “Very Good” readers. All of these learners got a score of 13 and above out of 20. No learner got a failing score after the implementation of intervention. This means that most of these learners are able to improve their reading performance after the implementation of intervention. Moreover, learners found greater interest in practicing reading since they utilized an interactive material to help improve their performance in reading. Learners are able to perform well in reading with mentoring strategy provided by the teacher as learning facilitator, particularly guiding the learners on how to utilize the device and materials, understanding what they are reading, and responding correctly to the tasks given every after reading the materials.

Technically, some strategies have been implemented to improve fluency and reading comprehension, such as repeated readings and listening while reading (Winn, Skinner, Oliver, Hale, Ziegler, 2006). Studies have found a connection between reading comprehension and hearing

comprehension, thus kids who struggle with reading comprehension also frequently struggle with listening comprehension. Therefore, it is advised to incorporate listening and reading together to improve pupils' linked skills (Tennent, 2015). One assisted reading strategy that has been shown to improve reading fluency is listening while reading (Rasinski, & Hoffman, 2003). Repeated reading or listening to texts enables automatic word recognition and fosters prosodic elements (Cohen, 2011). As a result, certain mentoring strategies, including repeated readings and listening while reading, can be combined to help improve students' reading performance. As one of the mentoring strategies given by the teacher, learners were able to increase their interest in reading and help improve their reading performance. Thus, as shown in the table, the reading performance of the pupils have improved through the utilization of digitized reading materials in Read Along application with teacher's mentoring strategy.

Table 3
Test of Difference Between the Scores in the Pre-test and
Post-test of Grade 6 Pupils in Reading

Aspects	Test Scores		Computed T	Critical T	Decision	Interpretation
Grade 6 in Reading	Pre Post	9.41 17.00	2.841	0.374	Reject H ₀	Significant

Table 3 presents the test of relationship between the pre-test and post-test results of Grade 6 pupils in reading. It was revealed on the table that the computed t of 2.841 is greater than the critical value of t of 0.374 at 0.05 level of significance, so null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The pre-test of 9.41 and post-test of 17.00 shows a significant difference. This implies that pupils who utilized digitized reading materials, particularly in Read Along application, with mentoring strategy, helped improved their reading performance. Furthermore, utilizing digitized reading materials like in Read Along application can increase the performance of these learners in reading with appropriate mentoring strategy provided by the teacher.

The lack of variation in the process of reading is one of the causes of low reading performance of learners prior to the implementation of intervention. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain interest in learning so that students can improve reading performance. Based on the statement above, the use of digitized reading materials with mentoring strategy is regarded as one of the ways or methods of learning to improve reading performance of learners. Every reader should aim to comprehend what they read (Teele, 2004). As per the studies, proficient readers actively engage with the text and are conscious of the strategies they employ to comprehend what they read. Through the teaching of reading skills, teachers can aid students in improving their performance. Research has demonstrated that the tactics of predicting, making connections,

visualizing, inferring, questioning, and summarizing can help readers understand better what they are reading (Block & Israel, 2005). Reading performance can be greatly improved by using technology in the classroom. When technology is used regularly in classrooms and is integrated into the curriculum, it is beneficial. Today, there are numerous technological routes designed to support, extend, or improve students' learning (Edutopia Team, 2008). Technology apps can, when utilized as a tool, improve reading comprehension, according to research. The digital devices inspire students, and they desire to use a tool that is a part of their daily lives. Students must have the opportunity to use and study with a tool that motivates them. The first step in giving students opportunity is to direct their own learning and select the things they want to read through the use of available technology tools (Jeffer & Castellani, 2001). If technology is consistently and successfully incorporated into the curriculum, it can be used to improve students' reading performance.

IV. Conclusion

The study revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Grade 6 pupils' reading performance before and after the utilization of digitized reading materials in Read Along application with mentoring strategy. The integration of technology helps increase their interest and motivates them to improve their reading performance as well as the mentoring strategy provided by the teacher to them. Thus, the Read Along application which contains the digitized reading materials, with mentoring strategy, is effective in improving the reading performance of the Grade 6 pupils.

V. Recommendations

1. The proposed intervention plan formulated should be utilized;
2. Teachers should provide varied and differentiated learning materials like digitized reading materials to improve the reading performance of the pupils;
3. Teachers should provide the quality and appropriate mentoring strategy to learners;
4. Teachers should explore more reading applications which can help their learners improve their reading performance;
5. Teachers should be more innovative and resilient in adopting change in the learning of pupils;
6. Teachers should encourage learners to utilize the tools provided by their teachers in order for them to enhance their knowledge;
7. Teachers should encourage the parents or learning facilitators to guide and assist the pupils in reading or utilizing the digitized reading materials given to them;
8. School Heads should encourage teachers to participate in trainings about utilizing digitized reading materials;
9. School Heads should supervise and provide technical assistance to teachers especially in selecting the digitized reading material 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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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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The author was born on June 01, 1994 at Poblacion, Alicia, Bohol, Philippines. He is presently residing at Purok Waling-Waling, Brgy. Punta, Ormoc City, Leyte. He finished his elementary education at Alicia Central Elementary School, Alicia, Bohol in the year 2007 and continue his quest for education and able to finish his secondary education at Alicia Technical-Vocational High School, Alicia, Bohol in the year 2011. To achieve his dream of becoming a teacher, he finished his undergraduate degree, Bachelor in Elementary Education major in General Education, at Visayas State University (Main Campus), Baybay City, Leyte in the year 2016. In the same year he graduated college, he also took the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET)

and passed. To further developed himself professionally, he took up Master of Arts in Education major in School Administration and Supervision with complete academic requirements at Western Leyte College of Ormoc, Ormoc City, Leyte.

He had rendered 3 years as a private-school teacher at Ormoc Sacred Heart Child Development Center, Ormoc City, Leyte. Afterwards, he decided to apply as a public-school teacher and his first station was at L. Cabahug Elementary School. He has been teaching for 3 years and handling the Grade 6 class. He had conducted already an action research entitled “Effectiveness of Strategic Intervention Material (SIM) for the Least Learned Competency in Mathematics 6”. Currently, for his eagerness to grow professionally, he is pursuing the course “Strategic Thinking and Innovation for Educators” as one of the courses offered by National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) and Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization – Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH). With his passion and perseverance, he wanted his learners to be like him – having an excellent reading performance way back his elementary and high school days. He wanted to integrate technology towards learning of every learner which persuades him to conduct his present study entitled “Effectiveness of Read Along Application – A Digitized Reading Material and Mentoring Strategy to Improve the Reading Performance of Grade 6 Pupils”. Upon the conduct of the study, he attended series of trainings and seminars conducted in International, National, Region, Division, and District level.