

# Promoting Reading Skills or Wasting Time? Students' Benefits of Reading at The Jolencio R. Alberca Elementary School

LEONIZA B. MILLEJOR

Teacher 1

Rizal Memorial Colleges Inc.

Master of Arts in Educational Management

leonizabustamantemillejor@gmail.com

*Abstract* — Notwithstanding the substantial transformation of education in the last 20 years, specifically to redress the past inequalities, the challenges are ongoing. These challenges include public elementary institutions having to accommodate a culturally and linguistically diverse group of learners, often second-language (L2) English speakers, in an English lingua franca classroom. This study investigated the reading attitudes and habits of learners of Jolencio R. Alberca Elementary School in San Nicolas Tres de Mayo, Digos City, Davao del Sur in a reading program and any perceived changes to these attitudes or habits, as well as their perceptions of the promotion of reading by the program. On successful completion of the program, learners register for the compulsory course and are required to complete a test. The teaching of reading appeared invaluable with the indication that learners' attitudes and behavior changed and that they realized the academic value thereof, made decisions to take up reading as a hobby and discovered new genres. Several educational plans were shared by learners to the researcher. These plans were actually what they hope to gain in the future as learners who can read. They shared the following: continue to read textbooks, reference materials and other reading resources as they progress to their educational endeavors; to make reading as a hobby in their life; to share with other learners what they have read; to widen their vocabulary as result of their reading; to listen and pay attention to their teachers and other adults in matters of reading; and to improve their basic skills in reading through literacy strategies.

*Keywords* — *Reading, Challenges, Perspectives, Difficulties, Program, Educational Plans*

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## I. Introduction

Many definitions have been suggested for reading, including reading is a complex information processing skill in which the readers interact with the text in order to create meaningful discourse' (Akarsu & Harputlu, 2019). Tien (2019) posits that extensive reading is essential for the enhancement of readings skills and acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, reading is an indispensable skill; it is also fundamentally interrelated to the process of education and to students achieving educational success.

Sutherland (2019) states that because of the lack of skills in students, there has been a need to implement programs in schools, especially in secondary education (HE) institutions to bring HE

to students who otherwise would not have had access to these institutions. These skills include communication, reading, listening, life and numeric skills. A challenge faced by schools is that there has been a shift towards a supply-oriented view with a demand for new knowledge and skills (Bodendorf & Swain, 2021). Institutions need to consider this factor when developing their curriculum and ensure they provide education that meets the needs of job markets. This has led to the implementation of programs that aim to address deficiencies in the skills of students and provide them with the tools for academic success.

This study aims to evaluate the students' attitudes towards the reading program of the school and their perceptions of the benefits in the enhancement of reading skills. It is conducted to answer the research question: Do the learners who are enrolled in the reading program of the school developing reading skills or are just wasting time.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of students about the benefits of reading in the elementary program. This study was carried out to determine whether there were benefits in the reading program of the school or the students are just wasting time. The data were then analyzed and subjected to interpretation of the researcher.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What were the perceptions of the learners in the reading program of the school?
2. What were the problems in reading of the learners?
3. What are the future educational plans of the learners when it comes to reading?

#### *Reading supports academic achievement*

There can never be enough emphasis placed on the role and importance of the English reading in the attainment of education through communication abilities, specifically in the English lingua franca classroom (Aina, Ogundele & Olanipekun 2019). Schools require students to spend large amounts of time in reading to gain the required information and knowledge from the content of the prescribed reading material. There is a growing call for schools to take note of the importance of reading, to recognize that most learning takes place through reading the written word and to consider realizing the need for reading programs (Pretorius, 2020).

Pretorius (2020) opines that even though 'language proficiency and reading skills both draw on linguistic knowledge and skills, reading develops specific cognitive-linguistic skills that are not necessarily operative in oral forms of discourse'. As reading for the purposes of learning and for the development of knowledge in the academic institution requires students to be able to make links, understand opinions, research and be able apply this to studies, there appears to be a definite correlation between the level of proficiency in the reading ability in English and the academic performance of students (Aina et al. 2019). A student who is a good reader will perform better academically than his/her lesser skilled peers. According to Pretorius (2020), the

improvement of reading skills in students will lead to an improvement in the reading levels of the students, leading to better comprehension, understanding and academic achievement.

This study takes cognizance that there are immeasurable benefits to reading, specifically academically. There are problems associated with reading skills, and the ones addressed in this research relate to the use of English lingua franca in a school where the dominant language in the elementary classes that were researched indicates that the highest percentage of students are first-language Cebuano speakers at 18.55%, followed by Dabaowenyo with 15.35%, a number of lesser percentages for other language, and English speakers lagging behind making up a mere 1.28% of the total students.

A positive attitude towards reading has been identified as motivation for students to continue reading, and reading has been identified as a tool for academic success. Academic success for students should be the foundation of any program or curriculum development, and this study investigates the impact of the reading module on the students' attitudes towards reading. This is performed to identify whether there has been a change in the attitudes of students towards reading, their perceptions of the change in reading attitudes and whether they intend to continue reading.

The activity of reading is demanding for the reader, and in the last 20 years, researchers have investigated the motivations for reading (Seitz, 2020), which are multidimensional and include the following components: self-efficacy, interest, preference for challenge and social interaction. A central factor affecting reading performance is the attitude of the student. Seitz (2020) suggests that recurring failures to succeed and self-concept issues often complicate a student's ability to learn any of a variety of reading skills'. Reading attitude can be altered by rebuilding damaged self-concepts, and the reading program of the school focuses on encouraging the student to develop reading skills in an attempt to uplift students' self-concepts and change their attitudes towards reading.

It is important not to underestimate the role of reading in academics and its influence on learning. Researchers have highlighted the value of developing reading skills and the benefits of reading, but the studies have moved towards stressing students' positive attitudes and motivations towards reading (Tien, 2019). Students who have difficulty reading may develop a lifelong aversion towards reading (Seitz, 2020), and history and experience appear to influence reading attitudes (Lukhele, 2019).

#### *Guidelines for Effective Teaching of Reading*

The tips are arranged in three sections which are parallel with the three consecutive reading stages: before reading, during reading, and after reading (Wallace, 2019).

### *Pre-Reading Tips*

Before the actual reading act on a text starts, some points should be considered for making the reading process more comprehensible. First, teachers should ensure that the words and grammatical structures in the texts to read are familiar to the learners. Suppose the texts have unfamiliar words, they could be introduced in pre-reading activities focusing on language awareness, such as finding synonyms, antonyms, derivatives, or associated words. Second, teachers need to make certain that the topics of chosen texts are in accordance with the learners' age range, interests, sex, and cultural background. If they are not, necessary background information should be provided to the reader to facilitate comprehension. Assigning the class members to brainstorm ideas about the meaning of a title or an illustration and discuss what they know are recommended to conduct this activity.

The followings are some activities teacher can use during the pre-reading stage. These activities do not necessitate a long time to conduct. But, they are very effective to overcome the common urge to start reading a text closely right away from the beginning.

1. Teacher-directed pre-reading, which is directed to explain some key vocabulary, ideas in the text, and the text type. In this approach, the teacher the information the students will need, including key concepts, important vocabulary, and appropriate conceptual framework are directly explained. The reason for introducing the text types is that texts may take on different forms and hold certain pieces of information in different places. The students' familiarity of the text types they are reading will develop their understanding of the layout of the material. Such familiarity will, in turn, enable them to focus more deeply on the parts that are more densely compacted with information. Paying attention to the author's name and the year of publication, if applicable, may even help the reader in assuming the text meaning.
2. Interactive activities, in which the teacher leads a discussion by drawing out the information students already have and interjects additional information considered to be necessary to an understanding of the text to be read. The teacher can also overtly link the students' prior knowledge and important information in the text.
3. Reflective activities, which is directed to guide the students to realize the purpose and objective for reading a certain piece of written material. This can be done at the initial stages, but this strategy can be left to the students when they have become better readers. For example, the students may be guided to ask themselves, "Why should I read this text? What benefits can I get after finished reading this? Their awareness of the purpose and goal to read, later—in during-reading activities—will enable them to determine the correct skill(s) to employ: skimming, scanning, reading for details, or critical reading.

*During-reading tips*

The activities carried out in during-reading stage include taking notes, reacting, predicting, selecting significant information, questioning the writer's position, evaluating, and placing a text within one's own experience. Due to the fact that most attention is often paid to dictionaries, the text, and the teacher in English reading classes, these processes can be the most complex to develop in a classroom setting. To encourage active reading, the teacher is recommended to let the students to practice the followings are tips.

1. Making predictions: Students should be guided to master the skill to predict what is going to happen next in the text because it is necessary to enable them to integrate and combine what has come with what is to come.
2. Making selections: Proficient readers are more selective in what to read.
3. Integrating prior knowledge: To facilitate comprehension, the schemata activated in the pre-reading section are required to be called upon.
4. Skipping insignificant parts: The more proficient a person reads, the more he will concentrate on important pieces of information and skip unimportant pieces.
5. Re-reading: Students should be made aware of the importance of re-reading to increase their comprehension.
6. Making use of context or guessing: encouraging students to define and understand every single unknown word in a text is necessary. They should also be taught to use the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.
7. Breaking words into their component parts: To read more efficiently, students should analyze unknown words by breaking them into their affixes or roots. Such analysis can help them guess the meaning of a word so that they do not need to consult a dictionary and keep the process of comprehension continuing.
8. Reading in chunks: To read faster, students should practice reading groups of words together. Such an act will also improve comprehension.
9. Pausing: Good readers do not read with the same speed from the beginning to the end. At certain sections, he will pause to absorb and internalize the material being read and sort out information.
10. Paraphrasing: Some parts of texts might need to be paraphrased sub-vocally to verify what it means.
11. Monitoring: Good readers always check their understanding to evaluate whether the text or the reading of it, is meeting their goals.

### *After-reading tips*

Post-reading activities are essentially determined by the reading purpose and the information type extracted from the text. According to Barnett (2019), post-reading exercises first monitor students' comprehension and then lead them to a deeper analysis of the text. In the real world, the reading is not directed to summarize a text content or to memorize the author's viewpoint. The true goal of reading is to see into the author's mind or to engage new information with what one already knows. To let the students, check the information they did not comprehend or miscomprehended, holding a group discussion is recommended.

Vaezi (2019) accentuated that post-reading can stage generally take the form of these activities: (1) discussing the text: written/oral, (2) summarizing: written/oral, (3) making questions: written/oral, (3) answering questions: written/oral, (4) filling in forms and charts (5) writing reading logs (6) completing a text, (7) listening to or reading other related materials, and (7) role-playing.

There are three main theories which explain the nature of learning to read. *First, the traditional theory, or bottom up processing* (Gray & Rogers, 2019), which focused on the printed form of a text. *Second, the cognitive view, or top-down processing* (Smith, 2019) enhanced the role of background knowledge in addition to what appeared on the printed page. *Third, the metacognitive view* (Block, 2019) which is based on the control and manipulation that a reader can have on the act of comprehending a text, and thus, emphasizes the involvement of the reader's thinking about what he is doing while reading.

Based on the aforementioned ideas, it is obvious that in order to teach reading effectively, the teacher's role to activate and build schemata is paramount. To achieve it, he should in advance select texts that are relevant to the students' needs, preferences, individual differences, and cultures in order to provide meaningful texts so the students understand the message, which entails activating existing schemata and helping build new schemata. Then, after selecting the text, he needs to do the following three stages of activities to activate and build the students' schemata. (1) Pre-reading activities, in which the teacher have students think, write, and discuss everything they know about the topic, employing techniques such as prediction, semantic mapping, and reconciled reading. The objective is to make sure that students have the relevant schema for understanding the text. (2) During-reading activities, in which the teacher guide and monitor the interaction between the reader and the text. One important skill teachers can impart at this stage is note-taking, which allows students to compile new vocabulary and important information and details, and to summarize information and record their reactions and opinions. (3) Post-reading activities which facilitate the chance to evaluate students' adequacy of interpretation, while bearing in mind that accuracy is relative and that "readership" must be respected as long as the writer's intentions are addressed (Tierney & Pearson, 2019). Post-reading activities focus on a wide range of questions that allow for different interpretations.



While schema activation and building can occur in all three stages, the pre-reading stage deserves special attention since it is here, during the students' initial contact with the text, where their schemata will be activated.

## II. Methodology

This study focuses on content analysis and on several definitions and descriptions of content analysis as a quantitative and/or qualitative method that have been presented over the years. Berelson (1999) defined content analysis as “*a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.*” By using the concepts *technique* and *objective*, Berelson underlines the process of analysis as a reliable and learnable method that precludes the personal authority of the researcher.

The most commonly used method in content analysis studies is purposive sampling (Kyngäs, Elo, Pölkki, Kääriäinen, & Kanste, 2019):

purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative studies where the researcher is interested in informants who have the best knowledge concerning the research topic. The researcher chose 20 young people or elementary learners in this study ranging from age 10 to 13 years of age; resident of San Nicolas, Tres de Mayo, Digos City; enrolled in Jolencio R. Alberca Elementary School in Digos City, and had been in the locality of Tres de Mayo .

The interview questionnaire was designed to identify students' skills and perceptions of reading. The final open-ended question was designed to provide insight into the opinions of participants regarding the development of reading skills. The comments made by the participants were examined for similarities and linked in themes for reporting.

This study uses content analysis in deciphering and interpretation of its collected data. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. As an example, researchers can evaluate language used within a news article to search for bias or partiality. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text.

## III. Results and Discussion

The participants believe that the program played a part in developing their reading skills. Owing to the size of the study, it is not possible to include all the reasons supplied by the participants for their belief in the development of readings skills. However, some of the reasons and emerging themes are: vocabulary and reading speed had increased; general enjoyment in

reading; discovering new genres and developing an interest; and change in attitude towards reading.

Based on the reading results for grade 1 elementary school learners, the reading abilities of grade 1 elementary school learners are very diverse. The results showed that some learners were able to read well without being assisted and some learners still had difficulty reading. The difficulties experienced by learners when reading are: reading diphthongs, double vowels and double consonants, (S1); not being able to read sentences, (S3); reading and still stuttering, (S5); reading carelessly, (S7); quickly forgets the words he spells, (S4); adds and replaces words, (S6); and the spelling time is quite long. (S8).

Several educational plans were shared by learners to the researcher. These plans were actually what they hope to gain in the future as learners who can read. They shared the following: continue to read textbooks, reference materials and other reading resources as they progress to their educational endeavors; (S4); to make reading as a hobby in their life; (S7); to share with other learners what they have read; (S1); to widen their vocabulary as result of their reading; (S9); to listen and pay attention to their teachers and other adults in matters of reading; (S10); and to improve their basic skills in reading through literacy strategies. (S5).

### *Discussion*

The results from this study cannot be generalized to other public schools, as there may be immense differences such as socio-economic status and cultural demographics of students. The male to female ratio in this study was fairly balanced but this study did not examine the differences between male and female perceptions or attitudes towards reading; this could be investigated further. It is also recommended that future studies include a benchmark test before the commencement of the program and a test after completion of the program. This would be beneficial for future studies because the statistical evidence of a before and after test could be used to compare participants' perceptions about actual achievements.

The researchers recommend the continuation of the reading course in the elementary program. This recommendation is supported by the positive feedback received from the students and motivated by a review of reading research (Pretorius 2020; Lewin 2019) which indicates that students benefit from the explicit teaching of reading. An additional factor is the comparison of the data obtained from the tests, which indicates that learners who completed the intermediary program performed better than the students who did not attend the program.

It is hoped that the research article will serve as a catalyst for institutions to seriously consider initiating similar programs (Pretorius 2020) or recognize the value of reading programs and the benefits gained by students.



#### IV. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the substantial transformation of education the last 20 years, specifically to redress the past inequalities, the challenges are ongoing. These challenges include tertiary institutions having to accommodate a culturally and linguistically diverse group of students, often second-language (L2) English speakers, in an English lingua franca classroom.

This study investigated the reading attitudes and habits of students in an elementary program of a institution and any perceived changes to these attitudes or habits, as well as their perceptions of the promotion of reading by the program. On successful completion of the program, learners register for the compulsory course and are required to complete a test. The teaching of reading appeared invaluable with the indication that students' attitudes and behavior changed and that they realized the academic value thereof, made decisions to take up reading as a hobby and discovered new genres.

Through the research article, the results indicate that the participants in this study, the majority perceived there had been a change in their reading skills and only a small number believed that there had not been a change in their reading skills. Furthermore, many participants plan to make reading their hobby and when asked if they understand that good reading skills will improve their academic performance and make them better students, many participants agreed. These figures are a clear indication of the substantial benefits from the program, with students developing an enjoyment and enthusiasm about the reading. This leads to an improved attitude in students towards reading and a change in reading behavior

Lewin (2020) posits that the ability to read complex material is one of the major predictors of success. Texts at tertiary level are much more complex and require the utilization of sophisticated reading strategies. Moreover, L2 learners have added problems. Weak reading levels have serious implications on learners' academic performance self-esteem and their ability to follow written instructions.

As stated by Bamford and Day (2019) in order to become good readers, students need to read large quantities of material. The aim of the intermediary program is to encourage and promote reading in learners and to develop the skills of students that are required to achieve success in a tertiary institution; in doing so, students are provided with the valuable resources and knowledge to excel in their chosen disciplines.

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### **AUTHOR'S PROFILE**



#### **LEONIZA B. MILLEJOR**

Leoniza B. Millejor is 43 years old and born at Goma , Digos City. She is the oldest child in the family of Zosimo Bustamante and Leonila Bustamante. Her aim is to become a meaningful member of the community by sharing her knowledge and abilities to help young people become decent people.

She graduated from the University of Mindanao Digos Branch in 2002 with a Bachelor of Elementary Education degree. She is lucky to be married to Noel V. Millejor, with whom she has a lovely marriage, and took the 2013 Licensure Examination for Teachers at Kennedy town, Hongkong SAR.

At Isaac Abalayan Elementary School, Leoniza B. Millejor worked as a professional teacher for a single month. And currently working as a pleasant and effective teacher for seven happy years at Jolencio R. Alberca Elementary School in San Nicolas, Tres De Mayo, Digos City.

Throughout her tenure at the Department of Education, she also worked as a Grade 2 adviser. She is presently enrolled in Davao City's Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc. to pursue a Master of Arts in Educational Management.

Leoniza B. Millejor is brave enough to participate in a variety of sporting events that will aid in the development of young people's self-confidence. She is a committed teacher who greatly admires students who exhibit critical thinking and academic excellence.

Leoniza B. Millejor believed in every goal of a child's education, no matter how young, is to prepare them for life, not only for school.