



English Reading Partners on the Move: A Pre-Experimental Study to Improve Grade 2 Learners' Reading Skills

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ABSTRACT

The alarming prevalence of reading skill deprivation in young learners has been exacerbated by the pandemic and school closures. As a result, a reading intervention was seen as essential to supplement and meet the needs of learners in terms of reading retention. The researchers conducted a pre-experimental study with Grade 2 learners at St. Anne Learning Center to gradually provide a solution to this underlying problem. The pre-experimental study focused on English Reading Partners, four weeks of reading intervention program designed to improve learners' skills in reading comprehension, sight-word efficacy, and fluency. The program's impact was evaluated using a one-group pre-test and post-test design, comparing results before and after the reading intervention. The study's results, analyzed using Bett's Criteria, P-Value, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, were further validated by feedback from learners and advisers, attesting to the significant changes observed. In conclusion, the reading intervention was effective, as significant changes were proven by a thorough analysis of the statistical method. This study shows that learners were below the frustration level but became instructional after receiving the intervention. Overall, English Reading Partners helped Grade 2 learners regain their reading skills and identified a few key factors in fully maximizing them.

Keywords: *English Reading Partners, Fluency, Learning Group, Reading Comprehension, Sight-Word Efficacy*



INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted daily life and the educational system, leading to widespread school closures and changes in learning modalities, with students facing challenges in online and distance education. Notably, the pandemic has exacerbated issues in reading skills, particularly among young learners. Reports indicate that many students struggle with remote learning, resulting in decreased interest in reading. Data from UNICEF reveals a decline in reading proficiency among Filipino youth, with 3 out of 20 learners capable of reading simple texts after almost two years of disrupted schooling. Factors such as lack of preparedness, learning gaps, and socio-economic status further influence reading skills. To address these challenges, various reading programs, such as the Philippines Whole School Reading Program (WSRP) and Reading Partners, have been implemented. The WSRP, specifically designed for pandemic-affected young learners, has shown positive outcomes, while Reading Partners, a one-on-one tutoring intervention, has demonstrated statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension scores. The research aims to implement a modified reading program focusing on comprehension, sight-word efficacy, and fluency to help struggling school children affected by the pandemic and strengthen their reading skills for lifelong learning.

The significance of the English language to the developing country where every student needs to learn the basic English for them to understand the real world (Putra, 2020). Especially, since using the English Language is a way that every student to learn the world and the world can be only understood using

the English language through internet access (British Council, n.d.).

Reading is crucial for accessing condensed knowledge, and the strategies to improve reading skills, such as mastering techniques and employing interventions, significantly enhance comprehension abilities, fostering active engagement with the context. Effective strategies for improving reading skills, as highlighted by Bandtvilai (2020), involve mastering technique and understanding their purpose, timing, mechanics, and justifications, impacting both expert and less competent readers. Small group reading therapies, such as repeated reading and passage review that emphasized by Hall and Burns (2018), contribute to increase fluency while in intervention or incorporating vocabulary mastery and techniques like the Fix-up method in order to appear to have an successful in enhancing the Primary Learners' reading comprehension abilities.

Tutoring, as a supplementary service, aids students who didn't reach their expected grade level by enhancing their knowledge in various subjects and promoting adaptable, customized learning (Nickow, et. Al, 2020). Tutorial programs not only reduce academic failure but also enhance students' confidence, communication skills, and self-esteem through positive affirmations and encouragement. Implementing collaborative learning in these programs boosts learners' productivity, improves various language skills, and is perceived by students as a significant factor in their achievement in English subjects (Glomo, 2019). Vocabulary is a crucial factor in determining a student's reading comprehension, suggesting that comprehension follows mastery in other language areas like vocabulary and grammar. Vocabulary intervention, which expands a



Learners's word knowledge, which enhances their general language ability and decoding skills, is essential for improving comprehension (Gavin B., et al., 2021 p. 351).

The study is anchored on Rudolf Flesch (1995) bottom-up theory of reading which from the term itself, "Bottom-Up," the process of reading focuses on equipping students with foundational skills that involve explicit instructions where basic skills are being taught with plan, sequential order. Important information is shown in small steps and reinforced by having practice activities until learners are able to be familiar with it by mastering, as each step is built on the previous one.

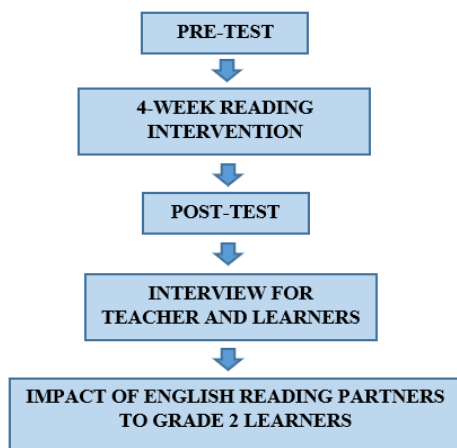


Figure 1 Research Paradigm

The illustration depicts the research framework for learners participating in a 4-week English Reading Partners program. Learners underwent both pre- and post-tests, conducted before and after the program, respectively, following the interview for the teacher and learner for the completion of the program.

The statement of the problem of this study determines the answer of what is the mean score, the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the

respondents in terms of reading comprehension, sight-word efficacy, and fluency and the feedback received from the Grade 2 learners and the classroom adviser.

A reading intervention program for Grade 2 students at St. Anne Learning School who are enrolled in the school year 2022-2023. The study is restricted only to the struggling readers based on their pre-test and will receive the reading intervention program on weekdays for four consecutive weeks. Following the reading intervention program, a post-test and interview with their classroom teacher and learners.

This research may be beneficial to the following; Students, it may assist them to develop their skills, learn efficiently and improve academic performance and in the use of English language; Future Teachers, it will provide learning experience, enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching English language; Teachers, it will make their job easier to teach students in English reading with comprehension; Department of Education

(DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED), this will inform both institutions of the benefits of the partnership program and to consider; and for future researchers, it may provide concrete data, evidence, and information that will aid in their future research.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a pre-experimental design to assess the progress of Grade 2 students' reading skills during a 4-week English Reading Partners program.

Research Design.

The design observes changes in a single group throughout an

intervention, validated the program's effectiveness, and laid the groundwork for future English reading partner-like interventions. The type of pre-experimental research used is the one-group pre-test-post-test, which evaluates learners' improvement in their reading skills throughout the conducted reading intervention program. With the use of a one-group pretest-post design, the impact of the program is concluded by the researchers by analyzing the changes that occurred in the learners, particularly in their sight-word efficacy, reading comprehension, and fluency.

Population and Sampling Technique

The participants of this study are the 10 qualified struggling readers from Grade 2 learners of St. Anne Learning Center based on the pre-test and underwent the program for 4 consecutive weeks only on weekdays. Afterward, a post-test given to assess their learning progress. Finally, an interview with the learners and their classroom teacher.

Data Gathering

The pre-test and post-test instruments used in the program were researcher-made that consisted of 25-item multiple choice from A to C with five stories in every five questions of the instrument. The researchers conducted a pre-test to determine the struggling students. At the end of the program the researchers conducted a post-test and interview with the classroom adviser as well as the feedback of the learners about the program.

Data Analysis

Nonparametric statistics are chosen in order to statistically

measure the data of the learners both from pre-test and post-test results. The research instrument uses three dimensions of reading assessment, namely, 'Reading comprehension,' 'sight word efficacy,' and 'fluency.'

Ethical Considerations.

In the study, statistical treatment involved calculating the mean of both pre-test and post-test results for learners using the mean. Additionally, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed to assess readers' correct words per minute and fluency skills. The interpretation of Grade 2 learners' reading comprehension and sight-word efficacy was determined using READING LEVELS based on Betts' criteria, while the average reading speed by grade level, measured by interpreting the word count per minute mean score, served as a crucial indicator for assessing the reading proficiency of Grade 2 learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Score in Reading Comprehension of Grade 2 Learners of St. Anne Learning Center

Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Score in Reading Comprehension of Grade 2 Learners		
	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean Score	41.2	74
Verbal Interpretation	Frustration	Instructional or Frustration

The reading comprehension mean score was 41.2% which is verbally interpreted as frustration. The post-test overall result of reading comprehension improved to 74% or verbally interpreted instructional which concludes that the intervention

program enhanced the reading comprehension of the learners. The mean score of the pre-test concludes that most of the learners are struggling in reading and understanding the text before taking part in the English Reading Partners program which resulted in their low performance on the test. The post-test shows that learners have improved based on their percentage before the reading intervention. Therefore, the program can support and sustain the learners who are in need to maintain their reading skills. The study of Mohammed and Amponsah (2018), It stated that there are components that exert influence on the ability of the learners to read by comprehending the text which include; a lack of confidence in reading itself, poor motivation from people around them that could stimulate their interest, lack of reading materials, inaccurate knowledge on phonemic awareness of the teacher, and lack in healthy competition among learners in school.

Table 2. Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Score in Sight-Word Efficacy of Grade 2 Learners of St. Anne Learning Center

Pre-test and Post-test Mean Score in Sight-Word Efficacy of Grade 2 Learners		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean Score	85	96.3
Verbal Interpretation	Frustration	Instructional

This table illustrates the mean score of the learners in the pre-test in terms of sight word efficacy or their ability to recognize the words upon reading the given materials. The mean score of sight word efficacy based on the pre-test result is 85% which is verbally interpreted as frustration based on the reading level criteria of Bett. The mean score implies the learner's ability to recognize the

words from the text that they have read has not fully developed yet. This simply means that the learners are having difficulty identifying the words they have encountered as they are reading the following stories provided on the given pre-test stories. The table illustrated the post-test results of the reading skills of the learners in sight-word efficacy for 96.3% which is verbally interpreted as instructional. The post-test result means the English Reading Partners were able to instruct and improve the learner's ability in reading. Additionally, it implies that the learners develop the ability to recognize the words that they have read from the text after participating in the English Reading Partners program and it was evident on the test papers of the learners where some got a higher score in the after intervention than their score before intervention and some got a perfect score. According to the study of Burke, Grant, & Levitas (2021) that reading intervention gives a primary supplement to boost the struggling readers, given from the intervention models 20% of the learners need supplemental support from the instruction of the intervention while 5% of the learners need intensive or concentrated intervention.

Table 3. Word Count Per Minute of the Grade 2 Learners in St. Anne Learning Center in Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and Post-test Mean Score in Fluency of Grade 2 Learners		
	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean Score	63.9	43.4

This table illustrates the word count per minute of the learners in taking the pre-test and post-test. The fluency mean score in pre-test is 63.9 and 43.4 in post-test. This table concludes that most of the learners

got a lot of misread or cannot read words which affect their performance in taking the pre-test that resulted in their low scores. Some of them prioritize finishing the test immediately instead of reading the stories carefully which indicates that learners still need to develop their reading skills specifically in their fluency in reading a text. The table further shows that learners are still learning in decoding the text while learning at their own pace, therefore, the low score result was not resulted by them only wanting to finish the given pre-test but there are also some factors why they came to finish the pre-test such as they became discouraged by how long the stories from the pre-test. The post-test concludes that although the learners during the pre-test finished earlier, they didn't take the test seriously as they were focused on finishing it immediately that is why they got more word count per minute as they only read the stories and not spending time comprehending it resulting to their low scores, while during the post-test the learners spend more time reading slowly and analyzing the stories which resulted to improve their performance and got a highest score in post-test compare to their pre-test. In the in-depth study of Reading Rockets (2023), learner's slow reading can be a strategy whereas they read the material slowly with the intent of improving their reading comprehension and this occurs when they have encountered many unfamiliar words. As correspondence to this, Read Naturally (2023) mentioned that the learners who read slowly tend to understand more what they are decoding rather than learners who read faster but cannot understand the words they are reading.

Pre-test and Post-test Mean Score		
	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean Score	10.3	18.4
Verbal Interpretation	Poor	Very Satisfactory

This table illustrates the pre-test mean score of Grade 2 learners. The pre-test mean was 10.3 which is verbally interpreted as poor. The table identified that there is a change that happened after the execution of the English Reading Partners, with a mean score of 10.3 or poor. The overall mean score of the learners in taking the post-test is 18.4 which is verbally interpreted as very satisfactory. The pre-test scores and mean score depict that most of the learners are not proficient in reading and comprehending the provided stories and their corresponding questions resulting in their low scores. Post-test mean score reveal that the level of performance was from poor in the pre-test to very satisfactory showing that the learners' reading comprehension, sight word efficacy, and fluency has improved after participating in the English Reading Partners Program. Aforementioned by the study of Reading Rockets (2023), most of the readers who are struggling are second graders to fifth graders, which is why it is important to build a solid foundation for young learners in reading skills. In the study of Mohammed and Amponsah (2018), it is stated that there are factors that affect the ability of the learners to read and comprehend the text which include; a lack of confidence in reading itself, poor motivation from people around them that could stimulate their interest, insufficient reading materials, poor knowledge on phonemic awareness of the teacher, and lack of healthy competition

Table 4. Pre-test and Post-test Mean Score

among learners in school.

Table 5. The Significant difference between the pre-test and post-test means scores in terms of Reading Comprehension, Sight-Word Efficacy, and Fluency

Reading Comprehension	Test	Mean Score	P-Value	W-Value	W-Critical Value	Decision
	Pre	41.2	0.006	1	8	
	Post	73.6				
	Difference	-32.4				
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Sight-Word Efficacy	Test	Mean Score	P-Value	W-Value	W-Critical Value	Decision
	Pre	84.9	0.006	4	8	
	Post	96.3				
	Difference	-11.4				
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Fluency	Test	Mean Score	P-Value	W-Value	W-Critical Value	Decision
	Pre	63.9	0.131	6	8	
	Post	43.4				
	Difference	20.5				

The difference between the pre-test and post-test in terms of Reading Comprehension is -32.4. The decision rejected the research' null hypothesis and found that the pre-test and post-test in reading comprehension have significant differences. It signifies that the program is successful enough to supplement the learning progress and encourages the students to reach their reading skills optimum level in the post-test implementation. In Sight-Word efficacy, the pretest mean score is 84.9 while the post-test mean score is 96.3, resulting in a difference of -11.4. The data rejected the null hypothesis and accepted significant differences between the pre-test and post-test. The study implies that effective and significant differences would manifest in the learners as they are exposed to the versatility in teaching where learners find it better (Nickow et. Al, 2020). Further, the mean score of Pre-test in the fluency is 63.9 while the post-test mean score is 43.4 which resulted to a -20.5 difference. The difference in the mean

scores is significant and the null hypothesis is rejected. Significant difference depicts that the learners improved and managed to fluently read the texts. This stated learning retention takes place specifically in honing their reading skills even if they are taking their English subject aside from the tutorial program (Arhin, Ampofo, Segbenya, & Segbenya, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The English Reading Partners improved the reading comprehension and sight-word efficacy of Grade 2 Learners. Nonetheless, fluency is perceived as the outcome of reading a text but not understanding its meaning, which results in poor reading fluency performance.

2. There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of Grade 2 learners which clearly illustrate that their reading comprehension and sight word efficacy have improved.

3. The feedback of the Grade 2 learners and their teacher demonstrates how the program contributes a significant improvement to the learners' reading skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the overall results of the study, the researchers recommend the following to further strengthen the study and address the gaps identified in this paper.

Strengthen the English Reading Partners

Recommendation 1. Develop the effectiveness of English Reading Partners as a reading intervention program specifically to their reading comprehension, sight word efficacy, and fluency.

Duration of the Program

Recommendation 2. Established an efficient period by allocating the appropriate time and date of conducting the program specifically, the duration of the reading intervention that must be every day and should not be less than four (4) weeks.

Consideration of requiring the College students to conduct the English Reading Partners

Recommendation 3. The Dean of the College of Education and its Department Heads should consider English Reading Partners as a reading intervention program to be treated as part of the student's requirement in a particular course to achieve the aim of the program.

Partnership between the DepEd and CHED

Recommendation 4. The Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education should mandate a learning partnership between a Third Year College under the College of Education program in any major to allocate at least 1-2 hours twice a week to offer this English reading intervention to the Grade 2 Learners.

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