
READING COMPREHENSION LEVEL OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS IN UDDIAWAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL: A BASIS FOR DESIGNING CONTEXTUALIZED READING INTERVENTION MATERIAL IN ENGLISH FOR READERS

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ABSTRACT

A fundamental ability that is essential for both academic achievement and lifetime learning is reading comprehension. Recent researches, however, show that many Filipino students, especially those attending rural schools, have difficulty comprehending written materials. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the reading comprehension skills of eighth-grade students at Uddiawan National High School and investigate the ways in which environmental and demographic factors affect their ability. Creating contextualized reading intervention tools that were suited to the needs of the students was the final objective. The study employed a non-experimental, descriptive-correlational and descriptive comparative research design. A total of 133 Grade 8 students were assessed using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Contextualized Group Screening Test. Their profiles—including age, sex, mother tongue, academic performance, and exposure to multimedia resources—were analyzed through descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis, and Spearman's rho to determine significant differences and relationships with reading comprehension levels. The results showed that just 9.8% of the respondents achieved the autonomous level of reading comprehension, while 61.7% were at the frustration level. When categorized by mother language, age, sex, or academic achievement, no discernible variations in reading comprehension were discovered. Similarly, there were no discernible associations between reading comprehension and factors like parental education, income, ethnicity, or exposure to multimedia, with the exception of a little inverse relationship with the presence of a laptop at home, which may indicate a digital distraction. The results underscore the urgency of developing targeted, culturally responsive reading intervention materials. While demographic variables showed limited direct impact, the widespread low comprehension levels indicate the need for interventions grounded in students' local context and educational realities. The study provides a research-based foundation for designing contextualized reading materials that can address the learning gaps among struggling readers in rural secondary schools. It also encourages future research to explore broader cognitive, motivational, and instructional variables influencing reading performance.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, Phil-IRI, contextualized reading intervention, literacy development, digital distractions, academic performance.*

Introduction

Reading comprehension is a vital skill underpinning academic success and lifelong learning, yet empirical data indicates persistent challenges among Filipino secondary students. National assessments, like the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), frequently categorize a large proportion of students at "frustration" or "instructional" reading levels.

Magnitude of the Problem (Local and International):

- International: The 2018 and 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked the Philippines at the lowest in reading comprehension among participating countries. In 2022, only 24% of students achieved Level 2 or above proficiency, significantly lower than the OECD average of .
- Local (Uddiawan National High School - UNHS): Post-pandemic Phil-IRI assessments at UNHS revealed an alarming number of students with reading deficiencies, particularly in Grade 7, where were frustrated readers and were non-readers.
- Need for Contextualization: Existing research lacks focus on creating contextualized reading materials that align with students' local language, culture, and real-life experiences, a mismatch that leads to lost interest and reduced comprehension.

Theoretical Foundation: The study is primarily anchored on the Interactive Model of Reading (emphasizing reader-text interaction) and supported by the Construction-Integration Theory (constructing a coherent mental text representation) and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (guiding learners from independent ability to potential ability).

The Problem

The study proposes to measure the reading comprehension level of Grade 8 students at Uddiawan National High School (UNHS), identify the factors that affect their performance, and use the implications to design contextualized reading intervention materials (Project REACH support).

Specific Research Questions:

1. What is the profile of Grade 8 students (e.g., age, sex, mother tongue, parental education/income/engagement, multimedia exposure/availability, academic performance)?
2. What is the students' reading comprehension level (Independent, Instructional, or Frustration) based on the Phil-IRI Contextualized Group Screening Test (CGST)?
3. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension when students are grouped by selected profile variables (Age, Sex, Mother Tongue, Academic Performance)?
4. Is there a significant relationship between reading comprehension and selected profile variables (Ethnic Affiliation, Parental factors, Socioeconomic Status, Multimedia factors)?
5. What contextualized reading intervention materials can be designed to improve comprehension?

Hypotheses: The study posits two null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in reading comprehension when grouped by Age, Sex, Mother Tongue, and Academic Performance.

2. There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and Ethnic Affiliation, Parental involvement/education, Socio-economic status, and Multimedia resources.

Scope and Delimitation

The study focused on 133 Grade 8 students of Uddiawan National High School for the School Year 2022-2023.

Tools & Measures:

- Reading Comprehension Level: Assessed using the Phil-IRI Contextualized Group Screening Test (CGST), categorizing students into Independent (80-100%), Instructional (59-79%), or Frustration ($\leq$) levels.
- Profile Data: Collected using a Personal Data Sheet to capture the eleven profile variables.

Output: The final output is a work plan for designing a contextualized reading intervention material in English for use by the UNHS Language Department.

Methodology

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design, combining two approaches:

1. **Descriptive-Comparative:** Used to determine if there were significant differences in reading comprehension levels when Grade 8 students were grouped by categorical profile variables (Age, Sex, Mother Tongue, and Academic Performance).
2. **Descriptive-Correlational:** Used to examine the significant relationships between the reading comprehension level and other continuous or ordinal profile variables (Ethnic Affiliation, Parental Income/Education/Engagement, and Multimedia Access).

Statistical Tools:

- Descriptive: Percentage and Frequency (for profile data), Mean (for summarizing reading performance level).
- Inferential (Difference): Kruskal-Wallis Test (appropriate for non-normally distributed data and multiple group comparisons).
- Inferential (Relationship): Spearman Rho (ρ) (suitable for assessing associations in ordinal or non-normally distributed data).

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted at Uddiawan National High School in Barangay Uddiawan, Solano, Nueva Vizcaya. The school is a medium-sized institution located in a mountainous area, serving students from Uddiawan and several neighboring barangays. The school offers both Junior and Senior High School programs.

The participants were the 133 Grade 8 students currently enrolled at Uddiawan National High School for the School Year 2024-2025.

- Sampling: Convenience sampling was used to select the entire population of Grade 8 students across the three sections: Apollo (45), Aphrodite (44), and Dionysus (44).

Instrument and Procedure

Research Instruments:

1. **Reading Comprehension Test:** The Contextualized Group Screening Test (CGST)—a 20-item Phil-IRI standardized test for Grade 8, an initiative of DepEd-Nueva Vizcaya.
 - Scoring Guide: Adopted the Phil-IRI criteria to classify students' reading level: Independent (80-100%), Instructional (59-79%), or Frustration (58% and below).
2. Personal Data Sheet: Crafted by the researcher to gather information on the eleven profile variables (e.g., age, sex, mother tongue, parental engagement, academic performance, etc.).

Data Gathering Procedure:

1. Validation: The instruments were reviewed and validated by a panel of experts.
2. Approval: A formal permit was secured from the DepEd-Nueva Vizcaya Schools Division Superintendent and a letter was submitted to the School Head of UNHS.
3. Administration and Retrieval: The researcher administered the CGST and Personal Data Sheet to the Grade 8 students during their vacant time, allowing a one-hour limit for the test to ensure data credibility.
4. Tabulation and Analysis: Data were compiled, organized, and analyzed with the assistance of a statistician using the prescribed statistical tools.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards, including:

- Informed Consent: Obtained from the parents or legal guardians of the student participants.
- Voluntary Participation: Students were assured their participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw without penalty.
- Confidentiality and Privacy: Complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012; all data were kept strictly anonymous and used solely for academic purposes.
- Academic Integrity: Ensured proper citation and freedom from plagiarism.

Results

1. Profile of Grade 8 Students (n=133)

Variable	Predominant Group (f, %)	Key Finding
Age	12-13 years old (116, 87.20%)	Majority are within the typical age range for Grade 8.
Sex	Male (71, 53.40%)	Slightly more males than females.
Mother Tongue	Iloko (60, 45.10%)	Iloko and Ayangan (42.90%) are the dominant languages, reflecting linguistic diversity.
Ethnic Affiliation	Ilokano (72, 54.10%)	Ilokano is the majority, followed by Ifugao (39.80%).
Parental Education	High School Grad. - Doctorate (83, 62.40%)	The majority of parents have attained at least a High School Graduate level.
Monthly Income	P7200 and below (87, 65.40%)	A large majority of families fall into the lowest income bracket, indicating socioeconomic challenge.
Parental Reading Engagement	Yes (112, 84.20%)	Most parents report engaging in reading activities at home.
Frequency of Parental Engagement	Sometimes (95, 71.40%)	Engagement is mostly reported as "Sometimes" (not daily/always).
Multimedia Available	Cellphone (122, 91.70%)	Cellphones are the most common and accessible resource.
Multimedia Exposure	30 mins - 1 hour (71, 53.40%)	Majority use multimedia for a moderate amount of time (30 mins to 1 hour).
Academic Performance	Outstanding (31, 23.30%)	Performance is spread across all categories, with Outstanding being the largest single group.

2. Reading Comprehension Level (RCL)

The mean comprehension percentage score was 53.68, placing the entire group at the Frustration level.

- Frustration (58% and below): 82 students (61.70%)—The majority have significant difficulty comprehending texts.
- Instructional (59-79%): 38 students (28.60%)—Require guidance and support.

- Independent (80-100%): 13 students (9.80%)—Only a small fraction can comprehend texts without assistance.

The data reveals an urgent and widespread need for targeted reading intervention as nearly two-thirds of Grade 8 learners are frustrated readers.

3. Significant Differences in Reading Comprehension (Kruskal-Wallis Test)

The analysis showed no statistically significant difference in students' Reading Comprehension Level when grouped by the following variables (all $p > 0.05$):

- Age ($p=0.865$)
- Sex ($p=0.838$)
- Mother Tongue ($p=0.214$)
- Academic Performance ($p=0.054$)

This suggests that chronological maturity (age), gender, linguistic background, and general academic success alone do not sufficiently explain the variance in reading proficiency in this sample.

4. Significant Relationships with Reading Comprehension (Spearman Rho)

The correlation analysis found no statistically significant relationship between students' Reading Comprehension Level and any of the following profile variables (all $p > 0.05$):

- Ethnic Affiliation ($p=0.665$)
- Monthly Income of Parents ($p=0.753$)
- Parental Reading Engagement at Home ($p=0.332$)
- Parental Highest Education Attainment ($p=0.682$)
- Exposure to Multimedia Resources ($p=0.148$)
- Multimedia Resources Available at Home ($p=0.548$)

Key Interpretation: Despite established literature linking socioeconomic status, parental education, and home literacy environments to reading success, this study found no direct predictive relationship between these profile factors and reading comprehension level among Grade 8 students at UNHS. This suggests that the prevailing factor influencing the low comprehension level is likely related to the quality of instruction, specific instructional strategies, or other factors not measured by the profile variables, overriding the typical influence of home background.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

1. Student Profile and Background (n=133)

- Age and Sex: Most respondents were 12-13 years old (87.2%), the expected age for Grade 8. The gender distribution was nearly balanced, with a slight majority of males (53.4%).
- Linguistic and Ethnic Background: The community is multilingual, dominated by Iloko (45.1%) and Ayangan (42.9%) speakers. The primary ethnic groups are Ilokano (54.1%) and Ifugao (39.8%).

- Socioeconomic Status: The majority of parents reported a low monthly income (65.4% earning P7,200 or below).
- Parental Engagement: While most parents reported being involved in reading activities (84.2%), the frequency was inconsistent; 71.4% reported assisting "sometimes," and only 9.8% reported "always" assisting.
- Multimedia Access: Access to cellphones (91.7%) was nearly universal, while access to dedicated educational resources like laptops (22.6%) and books/journals was limited. Most students reported moderate daily exposure to multimedia (30 minutes to 1 hour, 53.4%).
- Academic Performance: General academic achievement was strong, with the largest single group achieving an "Outstanding" rating (23.3%).

2. Reading Comprehension Level (RCL)

- The mean percentage score on the PHIL-IRI Contextualized Group Screening Test was 53.68%, placing the average student at the Frustration level.
- A vast majority of students were categorized at the lowest levels: Frustration (61.7%) and Instructional (28.6%).
- Only a small fraction achieved the Independent level (9.8%). This indicates that the vast majority of Grade 8 students require intensive support to comprehend grade-level texts.

3. Statistical Analysis (Difference and Relationship)

- Significant Difference (Kruskal-Wallis Test): There was no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension levels when students were grouped by Age ($p=0.865$), Sex ($p=0.838$), Mother Tongue ($p=0.214$), or Academic Performance ($p=0.054$).
- Significant Relationship (Spearman Rho): There was no statistically significant relationship found between reading comprehension and any of the selected profile variables, including ethnic affiliation ($p=0.665$), parental income ($p=0.753$), parental education ($p=0.682$), or parental/multimedia engagement.

Overall Conclusion: The low reading comprehension level is not significantly predicted by the measured demographic or family background factors. This suggests that the solution must lie in improving the quality and contextualization of instruction and intervention materials rather than focusing solely on student demographics.

Conclusions

1. The Grade 8 students at UNHS are a linguistically and ethnically diverse, low-income group with inconsistent but generally present parental engagement in reading.
2. The reading comprehension of most students is at the Frustration level, indicating a critical and urgent need for structured intervention.
3. No significant differences or relationships were found between reading comprehension and any of the profile variables (age, sex, mother tongue, income, parental education, etc.). This underscores that the most effective intervention must be pedagogical and content-based.

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4. The findings necessitate the creation of contextualized reading materials that are culturally relevant and suited to the learners' specific "Frustration" and "Instructional" levels to enhance engagement and comprehension.

Recommendations

1. **Develop Contextualized Intervention Materials:** Design and immediately implement reading materials that are culturally relevant and integrate the students' local languages (Iloko/Ayangan) and familiar experiences to maximize engagement.
2. **Strengthen Reading Program:** Implement regular diagnostic and formative assessments (like PHIL-IRI) to group students by reading level and provide tailored, differentiated instruction. Focus on capacity-building for teachers in guided reading strategies and comprehension monitoring.
3. **Enhance Home-School Partnership:** Guide parents on how to actively and consistently support their children's reading, moving engagement from "sometimes" to "always" with practical, structured tips.
4. **Integrate Digital Learning Resources:** Utilize the highly available cellphones and radio to share educational content, reading activities, and interactive support that aligns with classroom instruction.
5. **Future Research:** Conduct a follow-up study to test the efficacy of the proposed contextualized reading intervention materials and gather feedback from students and teachers for continuous refinement.