



Boosting Reading Comprehension of Grade 6 Pupils through Comic-Based Reading Materials: An Investigation of Effectiveness

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of Comic-Based Reading Materials in enhancing the reading comprehension of Grade 6 pupils in Sampiruhan Elementary School. The researcher crafted these Comic-Based reading materials, which are reading texts and literatures adapted from the DepEd R4A Pivot Modules in English transformed into comics-type reading materials. These served as the instrument of the study. The result of the study was analyzed using the outcome of the pupils' pretest and posttest. Two groups of pupils served as the participants of the study. Each group was composed of thirty (30) pupils, each chosen using a match-pairing from the result of their pretest. The participants' reading comprehension baseline was measured using a standardized test from the Phil-Iri. The comic-based reading materials crafted by the researcher were implemented in the experimental group.

In contrast, the comparison group utilized the common materials from the DepEd R4A Pivot Modules the Department of Education provided. Independent and Paired Sample T-tests were used to analyze the data and answer the inferential questions from the study. After implementing the instrument, the researcher discovered that the experimental group performed better on their posttest than their pretest. In addition, the experimental group also outscored the comparison group during their posttest. Between the scores of the two groups, a significant difference was observed. This revealed the effectiveness of the comic-based reading materials on the reading comprehension of grade 6 pupils. Hence, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the posttest of the two groups was rejected.

Keywords *Comic-based Reading Material, comprehension module, effectiveness*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is often identified as looking at written symbols and getting their sense or meanings (englishclub.com). It is one of the macro skills that everyone must have. When one reads, as the reader, he receives information. It is a complex process and requires different skills, such as speaking and understanding. Reading can also be identified as a productive skill because in this macro skill, we will not only retrieve information but also transfer information, even if only to ourselves.

Since the enactment of Republic Act No. 105333, also known as The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the K to 12 curricula emerged. This was considered very relevant to learners of this time since all the skills and knowledge embedded in the curriculum targets 21st century learners. With all the aspects of the curriculum, the foundation skill that needs to be mastered first and entirely is the ability to read and comprehend texts. Consequently, there must be new techniques for how learners enhance their reading comprehension skills. Thus, one way to make



them practice understanding while reading is by using comic-based reading materials.

It was discussed by Sandhu (2021) that reading is a method of word recognition that leads to comprehension development. Reading is a process that settles meanings between the reader and the text they read. And the reading process has three stages: pre-reading, which permits an individual to activate their schema or background knowledge; The next stage is the reading process. In this stage, the reader makes predictions as they start reading and then provides confirmation or revision of what they predicted. The last stage is called "After Reading," which allows readers to discuss what they read and learned and will allow them to retell the stories.

From different data gathered, it was proven that Filipino learners were dropping behind and were ranked last when it comes to competing with other Southeast Asian countries in the aspect of reading comprehension. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessed grade 5 pupils from different SEA countries through the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM). It was found that most Filipino fifth graders had proficiency levels that could be compared to those in their first years of primary school. Twenty-seven per cent of them were at the lowest level, where the pupils could only match single words to an image of a familiar object or concept. And it was Only 29% of these pupils were tagged as readers able to read a range of everyday texts. If the rankings are to be summed up, the Philippines performed the 2nd worst country in reading comprehension.

In 2018, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) released the average scores of participating countries in their assessment, and the Philippines gained an average score of 340 points in reading. This score is classified as lower than the total average of 487. Countries were also ranked, and the Philippines ranked the 79th country, the last position.

The Department of Education annually does what needs to be done to manifest the measure of the students' and pupils' performance in reading. That is why the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is being conducted. According to the DepEd Memorandum No. 216 series of 2018, the program's implementation aims to describe the level of the learners' performance in reading in both English and Filipino mediums. The said program makes the learners do silent and oral reading, each with different components to be measured.

In the education system in the Philippines, year by year, there are plenty of non-reader cases and frustration level cases in the Phil-IRI, in both elementary and secondary. The Phil-IRI is only implemented in the mid-first quarter of the school year, thus making it very valid that the learners must have a level that fits their grade level. The Phil-IRI is the standard for determining how a learner is expected to perform reading and comprehension. Also, the program, after identifying who is in the lowest bracket, those who are below the reading level expectations are given remediation passages that need to be passed. Identifying their reading level is the only basis on how many grade levels they will fall and how many grade-level courses they need to complete and perfect before they cease to be in their regular grade level bracket.

From the yearly assessment of the program, a significant number of low performers are seen and also identified to be not passing the post-remediation stage of the program. Thus, another project is being done by some schools to manifest an improvement in the reading level of Filipino learners, the Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) Time. This program is very effective in some schools, especially in private schools. The execution of this program is effortless and child friendly. The learners are given an hour or half an hour a day to just do reading on their own. This is somewhat related to the idea of pleasure reading. The more the learners like what book or text type they have, the more they become engaged in reading, and the more they understand what they read, the more they increase their reading and comprehension levels.

With the alarming issue of the so-called mass promotion in the DepEd the system, in which non-readers are climbing up grade level by grade level without considering their reading level. The Phil-IRI is the measurement area and the basis of passing the learners today, some teachers use their objectivity and will not pass learners, but some are using their affective sides to pass the students even if the learner did not meet the proper standards in reading. The problem is always the low-key ability of Filipino learners in schools. No matter what happens to them, pass or fail, it is always on them that the effect of not becoming literate and good readers will fall.

That is why DEAR Time can be a fuel to ignite the reading capability of every learner. According

to Mendoza (2011), the Philippines has one of the richest cultures in the world and good writers. These factors can be astounding facets to make and interest children in doing their DEAR Time Program. The program should start by making the learners realize how colourful the literature is in their country, after having them know that the spark of not only nationalism can be built up but also the ability to love reading literature.

According to McCloud (1993), as cited by Mendez Leon & Cardenas (2018), an investigation states that "comics are juxtaposed pictorials and other images in a deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and produce an aesthetic response in the viewer." Comic books are text types distinguished mainly by illustrations that put the readers in a particular situation shown by the text. If the two circumstances are observed, reading comprehension will be enforced.

According to a survey conducted by the National Book Development Board in 2017, reading to learn more about new things (40.98%) and reading for leisure (22.50%) is why Filipino youth read. Also, almost 53% of Filipinos intend to read picture books or storybooks with illustrations. These facts and statements prove that young readers will take reading seriously because they want to know more, enjoy and relax. The reading materials include drawings or are comic-based.

Reading comprehension in the Philippines is now on the verge of decline, as shown by the data and figures of different international tests and survey results. This alarming problem seen among Filipino readers has been made a reason why this research intends an intervention using comic-based reading materials. This seeks to improve the English reading comprehension of learners, especially those at the elementary level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There was a relatively substantial amount of research on links between recreational reading and health. These are mostly related to changes in stress levels and relaxation, health literacy, and improvements in depression and dementia symptoms. One review showed mixed results on the positive effects of reading for pleasure and neurological conditions. (Bront, 2012).

Reading is essential in today's world. They need this to be fully equipped because Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will need to read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced literacy levels to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the information they find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so that they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes dangerous world, reading can be crucial. (Rumbold 2015).

The complexity of reading presented by Nuttall became the most accurate theory in a lesson because, in reading, you need to know all of its components before fully accepting and learning it. The things to be considered and mastered in reading are hefty loads. There are too many factors to take into account of. That is why the need to accept it entirely is to love reading. Understanding all these objective concepts will puncture the learners' ears in understanding the totality of being a good reader, from the structure to the comprehension.

Furthermore, as McMaster & Espin (2014) stressed, once a pupil or learner connects to what he is reading especially using his insights and experiences, he will become more engaged in reading. Thus, the willingness and interest in reading can be connected to better comprehension and improvement in learning.

The educational value of Comic-Based Materials

When teaching students to read, the number one priority is for the learners to understand every concept presented in the text and relate their experiences vicariously to every situation or scene described. This is factual, although another factor that should be considered when making learners read and comprehend is their interest and engagement with the material. Since most young learners are tagged as visual learners, seeing more combinations of visuals and texts, like that in comics, is fascinating. A study by Roozafzai (2012), as cited by Robbani and Khoirotunnisa (2021), revealed that using comics in teaching an individual to read is more effective than teaching reading through a general material full of printed texts. While teaching reading using wits, it was proven that students' imagination and interests were developed, making them more engaged in understanding the meanings behind every reading material.

Lyu et al. (2021) conducted a study titled "Measuring the Educational Value of Comic Books from the School Librarians' Perspective: A Region-wide Quantitative Survey in Taiwan", where they discussed the possibility of comic books becoming a crucial component of the education system, particularly in enhancing reading and comprehension skills. The study's researchers released a survey questionnaire from the perspective of knowing the educational value or effectiveness of using comic books in lessons. The result of the study suggests three main points; first, comic books have the potential to attract more students to go to libraries and read after class. Next is that it facilitates students' reading comprehension skills and fosters their interest in voluntary reading.

According to Book Trust (2013), the ample space and gap between achieving success and failure in the economic and educative world are between reading only with the eyes and reading with the mind. In today's situation, many things are tough to decipher, especially in the world of jobs. An individual needs to understand what he reads to be safe and earn a living.

According to Clark and Sence (2018), the key to improving one's reading ability is reading interest, which falls under two types: situational and individual interest. Individual claim relates to what a person wants and is interested in reading. While situational interest is temporary, these are short-lived interests that last for the shortest time.

Research has also shown that children can read and comprehend more complex texts on a topic they enjoy; students who read a text above their reading age were likelier to persevere with the task if they perceived the case enjoyable. When a child enjoys reading, it is also when the child improves in reading with critical comprehension. (Fulmers 2011).

Nuttall (2015) states that reading is complex, and reading has different definitions in three main areas: decoding, pronouncing, and understanding. These areas are all connected to make sense of a text. It is necessary to be able to decipher the code the text is written in, like the Roman alphabet, for example (decoding); as well as to be able to read through it with fluency and clarity, understanding how the words sound

According to Jeng (2013), so many reading identities exist. It is not reading only. Giving children a choice in their reading can also help them to become more aware of their own reading identities. The child will develop his abilities and style of reading and understanding text once he can control the readers he wants.

Benefits of Pleasure Reading

According Rose (2012), in his study *Reading for Pleasure: Reviewing the Evidence*, mentioned that Reading for pleasure has been associated not only with increases in reading attainment but also with writing ability, text comprehension, grammar, breadth of vocabulary, attitudes, self-confidence as a reader, pleasure in reading in later life, general knowledge, a better understanding of other cultures, community participation, a greater insight into human nature and decision-making.

Oxford University (2017) mentioned that routines will always be the foundations of everything. The recurrence of DEAR across a school week would guarantee that learners were practising the significant reading abilities desirable for their education but were doing that through reading something of their choosing.

According to Adler (2016), the DEAR time should not only be a free will of reading but there sometimes should have a differentiated structure. Some children think they don't like reading because they haven't liked the selection of literature to which they've been exposed—present nonfiction titles, including biographies, autobiographies, and historical and scientific works. Present a range of fiction, including adventure, fantasy, mystery, science fiction, historical fiction, and available selections.

According to Seravillo (2016), the DEAR Time program is not always Drop Everything And Read. Sometimes it includes picking; picking up on what engages students and supporting them with their engagement, picking up on goals that students can focus on, picking up some conference notes and getting around the room to talk to readers as they read.

Sanford (2015) understood what factors affect an individual's reading comprehension. He stated six reasons: vocabulary, working memory, word recognition, prior knowledge, reading strategies, and motivation. In some parts of his writings in his *Factors that Affect the Reading Comprehension of Students with Disabilities*, a focus was pointed out on reason. According to that,

an individual can learn and understand things they read if there is an interest in the material. This means that if an individual is exposed to plenty of materials they are interested in, he can have a mastery understanding of what the reading text or materials talk about. Thus, comprehension will develop from motivation and interests.

According to Young-Scholten & Limon (2015), quantity, purposeful reading, and fluency will benefit pleasure reading. They both believed that books are sources which offer a contented amount of text. At the same time, the other one, fiction, is ensured to provide text that could enhance a reader's linguistic, cognitive skills and expressiveness. These statements or arguments show how a learner can be developed by reading academic books and studying non-academics such as fiction. Different benefits can be gained from using both. Still, as these proponents suggested, additional skills in comprehension can be founded, but all the skills will be helpful to target improvement in reading and comprehension.

According to Wilhelm & Smith (2016), pleasure reading is one type of reading essential to children. They talked about how pleasure reading dramatically affects children's achievement, especially those aged five to ten. Based on their key findings, there is a noticeable increase in the cognitive ability of the children when pleasure reading is imposed in these early stages. Also, they manifested that this type of reading strengthens the child's educational achievement and social mobility. In these early stages, it is good to introduce unforceful strategies to enforce the importance of reading. As was described early, this means that the child is still learning based on his own experiences and interests.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the quasi-experimental research design to verify the effectiveness of the intervention suggested by the researcher through the utilization of comic-based reading materials on the reading comprehension skills of grade six pupils. The study shall not randomly select participants, as three sixth-grade level sections will be the participants to undergo the examination. With the circumstances presented in the study, the quasi-experimental research design is considered the most suitable design. In this case, the researcher will structure the survey into a combination of a nonequivalent design and a pre-and-post-test design. With these, two groups will undergo a pretest for reading comprehension. The results of the pretest will be analyzed and will be the basis of the said intervention. The identified experimental group will be given the intervention of comic-based reading materials. In contrast, the control group will not be given such intervention and will stick to using their English 6 PIVOT 4-A Modules. After six weeks of intervention for the experimental group, both groups' reading comprehension will again be measured by a posttest. The results will reveal the extent of the enhancement in both groups' reading comprehension and how the intervention's utilisation affected the experimental group. With the nature of the problem at hand, this research method has been found effective.

For the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered, the following statistical tools were employed:

The researcher used a descriptive analysis of the mean score and standard deviation of the experimental and comparison groups gathered from the pretest and post-test. The researchers used a Paired Sample T-test to determine if there was a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of the experimental group. This was done to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in improving the participants' reading comprehension. Additionally, an Independent Sample T-test was used to compare the mean scores of the experimental group and the comparison group during the post-test. This data provided further details on whether the intervention being utilized is effective.

Additionally, complementing the results of the Independent Sample T-test will be Cohen's d value. This value is determined to allow the researcher to know the effectiveness of the intervention. For this treatment to be calculated and analyzed, the SD of both group's post-test result shall be identified. The estimated degree or size of the effect using Cohen's d value revealed whether the extent of the impact can be classified as small, medium, or large.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Performance of the Comparison and Experimental Group during the post-test

Table 2. Posttest Mean Level of Performance

Test	Group	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Posttest	Experimental	13.87	3.12	Average
	Comparison	10.77	4.02	Low

Table 2 shows the result of the post-test performance between the two groups. As indicated above, the experimental group achieved a mean level of 13.87, while the comparison group garnered a 10.77 mean level. It was observed that there was a significant difference between the performance of the two groups: the experimental group did better during the post-test than the comparison, with a 3.1 mean difference.

It was also shown in the table that the post-test scores of the participants in the comparison group were more spread out, with a standard deviation of 4.02, than those of the experimental group, with an SD of 3.12.

Difference between the Pretest and Post-test Performance of the Experimental Group

Table 3. Test of Difference on Experimental Group's Pretest and Post-test Score

Group	Test	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Mean-Diff	Cohen's D	Effective Size
Experimental	Post-test	13.87	3.12	5.343 **	29	1.667	0.501	Medium
	Pretest	12.20	3.53					

** - Test is Significant @ p-value < 0.01; Cohen's d: 0.01-0.49: Small; 0.50-0.79: Medium; 0.80 or higher: Large.

Shown in Table 3 is the result of the paired sample t-test employed to determine the statistical difference between the experimental group's pretest and post-test mean level performance.

The experimental group's pretest and post-test mean level performance conditions differed significantly [$t(29) = 5.343$, mean-diff = 1.667, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$]. It was also observed that the scores of the experimental group during the post-test became less scattered, with an SD of 3.12 compared to that on the pretest, 3.53.

Also shown in the table is Cohen's D value, which measures the relative difference between the two means (Pretest = 12.20, Posttest = 13.87). The calculated value of 0.501 signifies a *medium* effect size between the two means. This also implies a slight-to-significant difference between the post-test and pretest performance of the experimental group.

The experimental group was always the main focus of every study, and their scores or performances on all tests given to them, especially the pretest and posttest, revealed major factors in where the investigation will proceed. This affirmed the perspective of Achenbach (2017) in his research *Future Directions for Clinical Research, Services, and Training: Evidence-Based Assessment across Informants, cultures, and Dimensional Hierarchies*, stating that data collection was important in all points of the study. The effectiveness of the implemented interventions must be tested over a longer period. The result will be yielded once the implementation is completed; hence, the use of the scheme pretest-posttest is extensively considered in almost every research.

Difference between the Pretest and Post-test Performance of the Comparison Group

Shown in Table 4 is the result of the paired sample t-test employed to determine the statistical difference between the comparison group's pretest and post-test mean level performance. The comparison group's pretest and post-test mean level performance conditions differed significantly [$t(29) = -4.241$, Mean-Diff = -1.433, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$]. Since there was a negative mean difference, it only shows that the performance of the comparison group regressed from the pretest to the posttest. It was also observed that the scores of this group during the post-test became slightly more dispersed, having an SD of 4.02 compared to the pretest's 3.53.

The calculated value for Cohen's D was 0.378, signifying a small effect size. The range of difference between the means of the pretest and the post-test of the comparison group is small,

implying no significant difference between the two tests.

Table 4. Test of Difference on Comparison Group's Pretest and Post-test Score

Group	Test	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Mean-Diff	Cohen's D	Effect Size
Comparison	Posttest	10.77	4.02	-4.241 **	29	-1.433	0.378	Small
	Pretest	12.20	3.53					

Pretest and Posttest served as the implementation's beginning and ending, where the pretest revealed the baseline performance. At the same time, the posttest shows the result of the implemented interventions of a study. With the same viewpoint, Gliner et al. (2003), in their research Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group Designs: Analysis and Interpretation, the design of the using pretest-posttest in the group of variables was identified as the most widespread and efficient model to draw out reliable analysis based on the results.

Difference between the Post-test Mean Level of the Experimental and Comparison group

Table 5. Test of Difference on Post-test Score of Experimental and Comparison Group

Test	Group	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Mean-Diff	Cohen's D	Effect Size
Post-test	Experimental	13.87	3.12	3.337 **	58	3.100	0.862	Large
	Comparison	10.77	4.02					

** - Test is Significant @ p-value < 0.01; Cohen's d: 0.01-0.49: Small; 0.50-0.79: Medium; 0.80 or higher: Large.

Shown in Table 5 is the result of an independent samples t-test employed to determine the statistical difference between the post-test mean level performance of the experimental and comparison groups.

There was a significant difference between the post-test mean level performance of the experimental and comparison group conditions [$t(58) = 3.337$, Mean-Diff = 3.100, p-value < 0.01]. Also shown in the table is that the scores of the experimental group were closer and more collective, having a standard deviation of 3.12 compared to that of the control group, having an SD of 4.02, in which scores were dispersed.

The effect was largely based on the calculated value of Cohen's D of 0.862. This means that the range of difference between the means of the post-tests between the two groups is enormous. This implies an obvious, significant difference between the performance of the experimental group and the comparison group during the post-test.

The result of this study corroborates the study conducted by Roozafzai (2012), wherein the result meant that the utilization of comics and comic-like materials in teaching individuals to read is more effective than teaching reading through materials with full printed texts.

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