PAIRED READING TECHNIQUE: A RESPONSE TO READING DIFFICULTIES

Paired Reading Technique: A Response to Reading Difficulties

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Abstract

This paper examines strategies to improve reading comprehension in grades 4 to 6 learners. This research aims to assess the effectiveness of paired reading techniques as a response to the reading difficulties of the learners. A pretest was conducted to measure the learner's reading comprehension using the Phil Iri reading selections. The result of the pretest was the basis on pairing the learners and conducting the intervention using reading selections. After the implementation of the intervention, a posttest is given to the learners to examine the effectiveness of the paired reading technique. Data were collected through pretest, posttest, and observations and analyzed using frequency and percentage counts and the Wilcoxon W. Test. The result showed that the paired reading technique improve learners' reading comprehension. It encourages creativity, collaboration, and active participation. Also given were the recommendations for the effective implementation of paired reading techniques to the learners. Finally, this paper proposes an action plan that can be used to help the learners to improve their reading comprehension.

Keywords: *paired reading, reading difficulties, quasi-experimental design, reading intervention, reading comprehension*

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that is essential for academic success and lifelong learning. However, learners struggle with reading, which can have negative consequences for their academic achievement and future. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened this issue by disrupting traditional modes of education and exacerbating learning poverty, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Moreover, many learners still struggle with reading, as evidenced by the results of the Phil-IRI Assessment conducted in August 2022 in the Initao North District, where learners fall under the frustration level in oral reading, word recognition (35%), reading comprehension and reading level (42%). This reading performance was alarming since learners were expected to be at a proficiency, instructional or dependent level. And in this case, this stage was a transitory of preparing the learners to the next higher level, in which reading skills were essential.

The pandemic had forced many schools to transition to online or hybrid learning models, which had affected reading instruction n and practice for learners. The lacked access to technology, poor internet connectivity, and limited interaction with teachers and peers were made it difficult for some learners to develop strong reading skills. Additionally, the pandemic had worsened learning poverty, which was the persistent lack of access to quality education that undermines learners' abilities to read, write, and do basic math.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized the importance of addressing the challenges faced by learners in the context of the pandemic. In May 2021, DepEd issued Memorandum No. 36, series of 2021, which provided guidelines on the implementation of the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) for the School Year 2021-2022. The BE-LCP aimed to provide continuity of education during the pandemic, while also ensuring the health and safety of learners and educators.

Through DepEd Memorandum number 173 series of 2019, stated "Bawat Bata Bumabasa". It aimed to address the gaps and to meet the learning standards in early language, literacy, and numeracy. There was a need to strengthen the reading proficiency of every learner and to nurture a culture of reading. And that every child a reader by its grade level. Despite these efforts, many learners have difficulties in their learning activities.

The main objective of this study was to assess the reading comprehension of the learners in Kamelon Elementary School, District of Initao North using the Phil IRI selections. The study would be significant to the academic institutions along with the teachers, students, school administrators, and parents as the results of the study could provide systematic inputs to educational policy and program review, reformulation, and implementation to address problems encounter and the coping mechanism to improve reading capability.

Research Questions

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the paired reading technique as a strategies of reading difficulties among learners in their reading difficulties at Kamelon Elementary School, Initao North District, Initao Misamis Oriental. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are the pretest scores of the learners before the implementation of paired reading technique using the Phil Iri selections?
2. What are the post test scores of the learners after the implementation of the paired reading technique using the Phil Iri selections?

3. What is the significant difference between the pretest scores and posttest scores of the learners in the paired reading technique?

4. What action plan can be designed based on the finding of the study?

Methodology

This section presents the research design, research environment, population, sample, and sampling design of the study, data gathering procedure, instrumentation, and the statistical tools used in this study.

Research Design

The research design used in this study was the quasi-experimental method. The respondents were given a pretest to measure their prior knowledge and to establish equality between groups. After the result of the pretest scores, the researcher conducted the lesson using the reading comprehension selections by grade level. The researcher paired learners by pairing low-fluency readers with friends or work partners who have high reading fluency so the struggling readers can hear their friends pronounce tricky words, add expression, and use a natural rhythm when reading aloud. It would be conducted for three weeks. The researcher gave two reading comprehension selections three times a week. After the implementation of intervention, posttest was given to the respondents to measure the effectiveness of the paired reading technique.

The respondents of this study were the 56 learners out of 77 learners from Grades 4-6 learners of Kamelon Elementary School which were composed one section in each grade level. The learners of these sections were arranged heterogeneously. The grade 4 class was composed of 27 learners, 21 learners was the respondents, the grade 5 class was also composed of 25 learners and 15 of them were the respondents, and the grade 6 class also composed of 25 learners which 20 of them were the respondents.

Participants

The respondents of this study were the 56 Learners of Kamelon Elementary School who were officially enrolled during the school year 2023-2024. There would be three grade level involved in this study which were composed of seventy-seven (56) learners, who were being taught in English.

To ensure that ethical consideration would be upheld, an informed consent form would be obtained from all the participants prior to their involvement in the study. The confidentiality of the participants would also be maintained throughout the research process, and all data will be treated with the utmost discretion and would be only used for research purposes. By implementing these measures, the study aimed to adhere to ethical standards in conducting research with human subject. The table below presents the number of respondents.

Table 1. *Respondents of the Study*

Grade Level	Total Enrollment	Number of Respondents
Grade 4	27	21
Grade 5	25	15
Grade 6	25	20
Total	77	56

Pre-Test was administered to the 56 learners comprising from grade 4 to grade 6 in order to measure their prior knowledge about their reading comprehension skills. The researcher modeled the procedure to ensure that learners understand how to use the strategy.

Instruments

There were two sets of adopted questionnaires used in this study, the pretest and posttest questionnaires based on a Table of Specification corresponding to the objectives from the DepEd K-12 Basic Curriculum Guide for Teachers. An item analysis was done to check the reliability of the questionnaires. After the implementation of pretest, the paired reading technique then follows that will be conducted three times a week for a month. Using paired reading technique as an intervention of the learners reading difficulties. After the intervention conducted the posttest questionnaire was used to measure that the intervention was effective to the comprehension skills of the respondents with the used of the Phil IRI selection.

First week, was the conduct of pretest using the pretest selections from Phil Irri. After checking the pretest, the researcher tallied the scores. Knowing the scores of the learners, the researcher then paired the learners according to their reading capabilities, skills and knowledge.

The second week after the implementation of pretest, the intervention was conducted. As the learners were paired, the learner with reading comprehension skills and the other learner who had a low reading skill. They were paired with each other and together read the reading comprehension selections. There were two sets of reading comprehension selections per session.

The third week of conducting the intervention was the same process of procedure. The learners read two selections three times a week by paired and answer the questions after reading.

Fourth week was also the same procedure in conducting the intervention. They were given two sets of reading comprehension selections three times a week. After reading the learners were answer the questions. With this intervention they were able to comprehend through the help of their peers.

After the three weeks of intervention, the researcher conducted the posttest using the Phil Irri reading comprehension selections.

Procedure

The following were the steps which were carried out upon gathering the pertinent data of the study:

The researcher sent out letters to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Misamis Oriental to conduct the research after the recommendation of the Dean of the Graduate School, St. Peter's College, Iligan City. After the approval by the SDS, the letter was forwarded to the school Head of Kamelon Elementary School.

When the permission was secured, the researcher gathered the prior knowledge of the learners about the subject matter by administering the pretest. The pretest was administered to the learners. The pretest was given to the respondents a week before the conduct of the study. The researcher administered the pretest to measure the prior knowledge of the respondents about the topic. Confidentially of their identity and answers were secured observing the Ethics of Research.

After the implementation of the pretest, the result was the basis of pairing the learners, the learner got the high score was paired to the learner got low score. They read the selection together, with their peer who had a high level of comprehension help her/his peer to understand the selection and let his peer answer the questions. The paired reading technique then followed as an intervention to the reading difficulties of the learners using the reading comprehension selections. It was be conducted three times a week during the English subject in the class. The learners were given reading selections in every session. After the intervention a posttest was given to measure that the paired reading intervention was effective to improve the reading comprehension skills of the learners. The pretest and posttest scores were recorded, tallied, and consolidated the correct responses for each correct item. Then the researcher analyzed the data and interpreted the research study.

Statistical Tool

The following statistical tools were used to analyze and explain the variation of the sample data.

1. The frequency and percentage were used to describe the pretest and posttest scores performances of the respondents.
2. Wilcoxon W Test was used to determine the paired differences between the pretest and posttest scores of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

This section focuses on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data. It presents the data gathered, the results of the statistical analysis done, and the interpretation of findings. These are presented in tables following the sequence of the specific research problem regarding the effectiveness of paired reading technique as a response of reading difficulties to grades 4, 5, and 6 learners.

Problem 1: What are the pretest scores of the learners before the implementation of paired reading technique in reading a selection?

Table 2. *Pretest Scores*

Score Range	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)	Description
1 – 3	16	20.8	Poor
3	18	23.4	Below Average
4	23	29.8	Average
5	7	9.1	Above Average
6 – 7	13	16.9	Excellent
Total	77	100.0	

Table 2 (Figure 1) presents the pretest scores of the learners before the implementation of paired reading technique in reading a selection. As shown in the table, most of the respondents in the pretest got scored average during the pretest.

There were 23 or 29.8% of the respondents who have pretest scores ranges from 6-7 which were an average score and 7 or 9.1% in the pretest scores got an above average score. These results implied that the respondents have average performance prior to the implementation of paired reading using reading selections.

In his book "Learning and Instruction: Theory into Practice," Mayer (2019) addresses the significance of past knowledge in learning. Mayer highlights the role that past information has in the learning process. Mayer contends that prior knowledge is essential for both assisting students in understanding new material and streamlining their acquisition of new knowledge. To effectively teach new concepts and abilities, he contends that educators must consider learners' past knowledge and build upon it.

The study conducted by Cocking et al. (2000) demonstrated that learners' learning outcomes could be considerably impacted by their

prior knowledge. Learning new material is typically easier and more effective for students who have more prior knowledge on a certain subject than for those who have less prior knowledge. This is so that individuals can comprehend and retain new information more efficiently. Learners who have a greater depth of prior knowledge are better equipped to make connections between new and existing information.
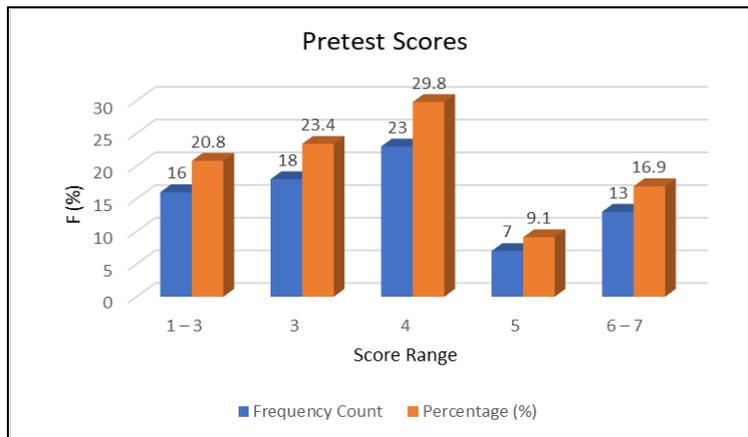

Figure 1. *Pretest Scores*

As a result, when planning education, educators must consider the prior knowledge of their learners. In order to improve learners' comprehension of the new lesson or concepts being presented, help them apply what they have learned to new situations, boost their performance in the classroom, and achieve effective learning, they must build on the prior knowledge of the learners and assist them in making connections between new and existing information.

Problem 2: What are the posttest scores of the learners after the implementation of paired reading technique in reading a selection?

Table 3 (Figure 2) displays the posttest scores of the learners after the implementation of paired reading technique in reading a selection.

As shown in the table, there were 43 or 55.8% of the respondents scored in excellent level and 4 or 5.2% of the respondents scored average and 0 or none of the respondents scored poor during the posttest. Results displayed that there were increased in the posttest scores of the respondents compared to their pretest scores which manifested that those respondents performed excellent during the posttest. The respondents performed excellent during the posttest because the respondents now have the acquired ideas upon conducting the paired reading intervention using the reading selections.

Table 3. *Posttest Scores*

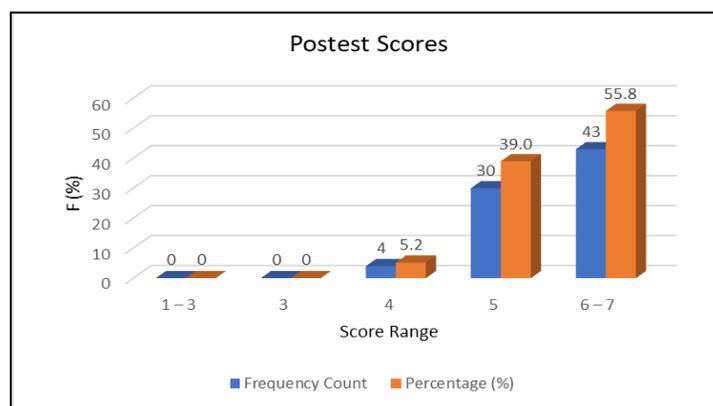| Score Range	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)	Description
1 – 3	0	0	Poor
3	0	0	Below Average
4	4	5.2	Average
5	30	39.0	Above Average
6 – 7	43	55.8	Excellent
Total	77	100.0	

Figure 2. *Posttest Scores*

Toppings (2014) defined paired reading as one of the best researched, most effective, and most cost-effective methods of raising children's reading achievement. Paired Reading is a broad experience that provides benefits to both tutees and tutors across academic, social, and leisure domains. It is a reading support technique specifically designed for non-professionals, making it an appealing option for schools and other educational institutions looking to capitalize on community support.

With paired reading, the respondents in this study become active participants, not passive, in the learning process. Paired reading provided the learners to be autonomous in their literacy learning. Through their interactions with symbols and their meaning and various learning activities learners developed their own strategies to increase their knowledge. The method helps develop learners' reading abilities. Specifically, the technique should help the pair improve their ability to extract and interpret information from texts infer and deduce the writer's intentions; justify their own ideas on what they have read, comprehend the nature and purpose of texts, and comprehend how text can be used to create meaning. Thus, when learners solved problems on the learning activities their motivation increased.

Problem 3: Is there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the learners after using the paired reading technique in reading a selection?

Table 4. *Difference1 Pre-test and Post-test Scores*

		Statistic	p	Mean difference	SE difference	Effect Size
Pretest (Multimedia)	Pretest (Conventional	2080	<0.001	2.00	0.146	1.00

*Note: 1 – Wilcoxon W ** - p < 0.01 *** - p < 0.001 ns – p > 0.05 * - p < 0.05*

Table 4 presents the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the learners after using the paired reading technique in reading a selection. The data revealed that the respondents' posttest scores had a significant difference between the pretest scores after the implementation of the paired reading technique in reading a selection. Thus, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the posttest and pretest scores of the learners after using the paired reading technique in reading a selection, was rejected.

According to Ofsted (2012), the effective use of teaching strategy in teaching has changed the classroom, and it has created more educational options. Both the teacher and the leaner have benefited from this type of teaching strategy. The teachers have learned how to integrate educational approaches into their classrooms, and it motivated the learners to learn more.

Ofsted clearly stated Paired reading offers a very up-to-date strategy that has been proven through systematic research to improve reading in Year 3-7 learners. Paired reading should also promote the ability of teachers to 5 deliver the following aim of the guidance provided by Ofsted on developing literacy. It also ensures 'differentiation' and 'appropriate challenge' as children are paired according to progress levels.

According to McClain (2022), the impact of incorporating a quick app-based mindfulness intervention into an already established, evidence-based reading fluency intervention (paired reading) would help learners' comprehension of what they read. Study shows that learners were active learners, were able to collaborate with their peers, and developed teamwork skills when the intervention was provided, confirming the literature that cooperative learning encourages active student participation (Bamiro, 2015; Listiadi et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Lukas & Jurkowski, 2021; Abiodun et al., 2022).

Generally, the pre-test and post-test results highlight that paired reading can improve learners' performance and participation, especially in building quantities. The teamwork, motivation, idea sharing, and confidence associated with cooperative learning are essential to the learners. By using this paired reading strategy, the learners would be able to improve their reading comprehension as it could be done with teacher guiding the learners in reading.

Problem 4: What action plan can be designed based on the results of the study?

Table 5. *Action Plan on Paired Reading*

Phases of the Action Plan	Goals and Objective	Activities/ Strategies	Person/s Involved	Resources Needed	Time Frame	Success Indicator
Phase I Orientation	1. To give orientation on the nature, scope, and rationale of the paired reading to learners and parents for familiarity and stimulate learners for reading.	Information dissemination and Orientation of parents and learners through letters and personal conversation.	All teachers, learners and Parents.	Letter to parents.	1st week of February 2024	100% of the students and parents and learners oriented and fami-liarized on the reading program.
	2. To prepare reading materials for pretest from	Printing, compiling reading materials for	All teachers	Phil IRI reading passage, Reading	2nd week of February	100% of the reading

			comprehend-sion selections, and stories.		materials were compiled and printed.
grade 4 to grade 6.	learners.				
3. To set schedule for the conduct of paired reading.	Group learners according to their reading level. Scheduling of learners.	Class Advisers	List of learners	3rd week of February	100% of the learners were informed of their schedule
Phase II Conduct 1. To assess the reading level of the pupils through giving pretest.	Assessment of pupils reading level by giving pretest.	All teachers	Pretest Question-naire Phil IRI Materials Reading of the story Answering of the compre-hension questions.	4th week of February	Reports on Reading Diagnosis
2. To increase and improved the reading proficiency of learners by presenting engaging activities.	Applying paired reading as reading intervention for the struggling readers.	Teachers and learners.	A. Reading Selections with compre-hension questions. B. Printed Story materials with compre-hension questions.	1st week of March to 3rd week of March	Maximum participation of the learners.
3. To encourage the sense of personal responsibility for one's own progress.	Embracing reading even at home with the guidance of the parents, sisters, and brothers.	Learners and relative.	Reading Short Stories and Legends.	4th week of March	100% level of participation of the learners and coope-ration of parents.
Phase III Post Implementation Final Evaluation To evaluate the improvement learners reading proficiency.	Evaluation of learners reading level.	Teachers and learners.	Furnish Post Test: Oral and Written Reading Test.	1st week of April	Repot on frequency count and percen-tage level.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, before the intervention was applied to the respondents, they had prior knowledge about reading comprehension. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, which states that there is no significant difference between the posttest and pretest scores of the learners after using the paired reading technique in reading a selection. This was supported by the statement of Jebur et al. (2012), Ahmed (2016), and Parker (2021) that paired reading, expressing ideas to a partner, and elaborating on details may lead them to even better problem-solving. By sharing with one learner first, the ashamed learner has a chance to see that his/her ideas are not bad and may have less anxiety about delivering them to the group. Thus, Paired Reading resulted in greater fluency, fewer refusals (greater confidence), greater use of the context and a greater likelihood of self-correction, fewer errors (greater accuracy) and better phonic skills. In addition, the respondents showed a significant improvement in their posttest scores after implementing the paired reading technique. In as much as the respondents improved comprehension of the selections based on their pretest and posttest scores.

Indeed, previous research has suggested that the effects of interventions which focus on skills such as reading fluency and reading comprehension may take some time to emerge (Gunn et al., 2002). Here, feedback from tutors and tutees suggested that a number of tutees may have experienced greater interest in reading after participating in Paired Reading. This greater interest may ultimately translate into a larger volume of reading, and increased reading practice. Delayed post-testing would be needed to detect such effects. Furthermore, children in need of additional reading support may learn at slower rates than their typically performing peers and may also have histories of academic failure. Such children may need more intensive instruction. This is particularly important for interventions such as Paired Reading, where students may learn more gradually through a modelling-based learning approach. Although research has produced mixed findings surrounding the level of intensity required by literacy interventions, it is likely that more intensive support than was offered here is required.

In general, the respondents registered an improvement in comprehending reading selections using the paired reading technique which contribute positively in improving the learning of the learners.

In the light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are enumerated. (1) Teachers shall continue providing a more meaningful way for learners to comprehend a certain selection, passage, and short stories or any form of written genre. (2) The teachers shall continue utilizing strategies that promote meaningful learning and pupil-centered instruction so that learners will be actively engaged on the activities and discussion. (3) Teachers shall be a continuous assessment of reading comprehension abilities of the learners to monitor the progress of their performances. (4) Parents shall make follow-up on their children's reading activities. (5) The district supervisor shall have seminar workshops for those personnel involved in the teaching process to further enhance their teaching skills in reading comprehension and to acquire new strategies to be used in developing one's ability.

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