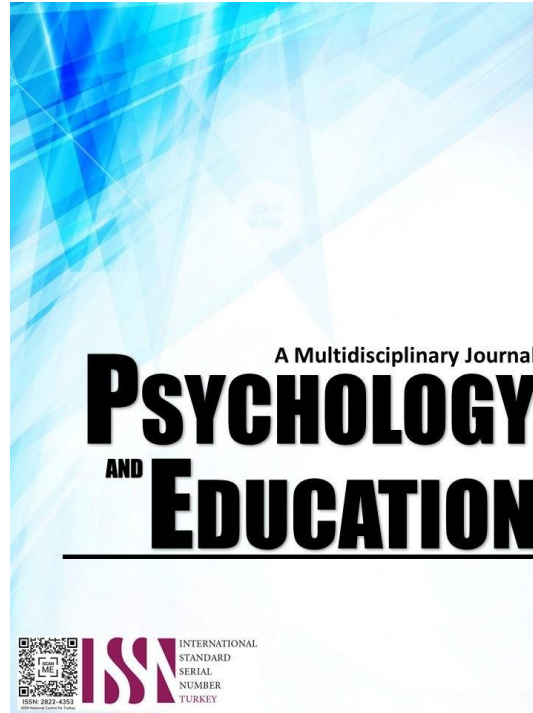


DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION ON IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION OF GRADE THREE LEARNERS



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Differentiated Instruction on Improving Reading Comprehension of Grade Three Learners

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of differentiated instruction on the reading comprehension of Grade 3 learners at Balo-i Central Elementary School, employing a quasi-experimental research design with a pretest-posttest approach. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) served as the primary tool to assess students' reading abilities before and after the intervention. Findings revealed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension following the implementation of differentiated instruction. Initial pre-test results indicated that many learners struggled to understand reading texts. At the same time, post-test scores demonstrated considerable progress, highlighting the effectiveness of tailoring instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs. Statistical analysis confirmed a highly significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study supports existing literature that underscores the importance of differentiated instruction in improving academic performance, particularly in reading. Effective strategies employed included small-group instruction, tiered tasks, and scaffolded learning activities, which catered to individual learning styles and readiness levels. Moreover, the integration of metacognitive strategies, such as summarizing, predicting, and activating prior knowledge, further enhanced students' comprehension abilities. Based on the results, the study recommends that elementary teachers adopt differentiated instruction as a core component of reading instruction to support diverse learners and close comprehension gaps. It is also recommended that school administrators and education policymakers provide targeted professional development and sufficient resources to help teachers effectively implement differentiated instruction in their classrooms. Furthermore, curriculum developers are encouraged to integrate flexible instructional approaches that promote inclusive and learner-centered education. Future research may investigate the long-term effects of differentiated instruction and its applicability across different grade levels and academic subjects. By promoting adaptive teaching practices, the education system can better cater to students' individual needs, ultimately improving learning outcomes and fostering academic success for all learners.

Keywords: *differentiated instruction, reading comprehension, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory*

Introduction

Reading comprehension is a critical skill that is the foundation for lifelong learning and academic success. It involves the ability to decode text and understand, interpret, and analyze its meaning. In recognition of its importance, globally, reading comprehension has long been recognized as a cornerstone of academic success and lifelong learning. In a rapidly changing world where information is continuously expanding, the ability to read, understand, and critically evaluate text is essential for learners to thrive in both academic and real-world contexts. International assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have highlighted significant disparities in reading literacy across countries, drawing attention to the need for effective instructional strategies that accommodate the varying abilities and needs of students. In many education systems, differentiated instruction has emerged as a key approach to address these disparities by providing tailored learning experiences that support all learners, regardless of their starting point.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has implemented programs and policies to enhance reading comprehension among students. One of these is DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019, also known as "Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa," which emphasizes the need for reading interventions to ensure that every child attains functional literacy. Additionally, DepEd Order No. 70, s. 2011, through the "Every Child a Reader Program" (ECARP), underscores the goal of making every child a proficient reader. These initiatives reflect the Department of Education's (DepEd) commitment to addressing literacy challenges and improving the quality of education in the country.

In recent years, the Philippines has faced significant challenges in its educational system, particularly as evidenced by its performance in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The 2018 PISA results revealed that Filipino students ranked among the lowest in reading comprehension, mathematics, and science compared to their peers across 79 countries and economies. Specifically, only 15% of students achieved the minimum proficiency level in reading, highlighting a critical need for educational reforms aimed at improving literacy and comprehension skills among learners. This concerning trend underscores the importance of implementing effective instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction, to better support the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those in the critical stage of their education, such as third graders (Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, 2024).

The motivation behind my interest in studying differentiated instruction at Balo-I Central School stems from my observations of the diverse learning needs among students within the institution. As an educator, I noticed that students in the classroom have varying levels of academic abilities, learning styles, and interests, which often makes it challenging to meet everyone's needs using a one-size-

fits-all approach. Differentiated instruction, which involves tailoring teaching methods to accommodate these differences, seemed to offer a promising solution to this challenge. The variety in students' responses to lesson delivery prompted me to explore how differentiated instruction could improve their engagement and academic performance. This study aims to better understand the effectiveness of such teaching strategies in meeting the diverse needs of learners, ultimately contributing to an inclusive and supportive learning environment at the school.

However, research has shown that while the concept of differentiated instruction has gained attention, its implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in reading classrooms. Teachers often focus more on struggling readers, leaving advanced readers with little guidance or encouragement to pursue challenging materials (Reis et al., 2019; Sally et al., 2020). This lack of consistent differentiation negatively impacts students' overall engagement with reading, further contributing to the ongoing struggle in achieving proficiency in reading comprehension.

Grade Three represents a critical stage in a child's educational journey, particularly in reading comprehension and the application of literacy skills across various subjects. By this time, students are expected not only to master the foundational reading and writing skills acquired in earlier grades but also to engage in more complex reading tasks that require analysis and synthesis of information across disciplines such as mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts (Hernandez, 2020; Davidsen, 2023). As students transition from learning to read in third and fourth grades to reading to learn in fifth grade, they must develop the ability to utilize context clues to infer, summarize, and paraphrase various texts (McNamara, Ozuru, Floyd, & Davidsen, 2021; Davidsen, 2023).

Direct instruction and teacher modeling are essential components in bridging this gap, particularly through differentiated instruction approaches, which may lack empirical support in certain contexts (Halpin & Kieffer, 2021; Davidsen, 2023).

Given the critical nature of Third grade in shaping students' future academic trajectories, it is essential to explore the impact of differentiated instruction on reading comprehension and overall literacy development in this grade level. Students who struggle with reading comprehension may face significant challenges in understanding informational and literary texts, which can impact their performance across core subjects and underscore the need for effective instructional strategies tailored to their diverse learning needs (Davidsen, 2023).

The importance of reading comprehension in the Philippine educational system cannot be overstated, particularly for third-graders who are transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn. This critical stage in a child's education is foundational for their success in higher academic pursuits, as students are expected to apply their reading skills across various subjects, including mathematics and science. Despite the implementation of numerous reading programs within public schools, assessments such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) have revealed a worrying decline in students' reading competencies. This suggests that many learners continue to struggle with comprehension, necessitating targeted interventions.

Differentiated instruction has emerged as a promising approach to address the diverse learning needs of students. By tailoring teaching methods to accommodate various learning styles and levels, educators can enhance engagement and improve comprehension outcomes. The Department of Education has recognized the importance of effective reading strategies and has initiated programs to support reading education.

Research Objectives

Given this context, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of differentiated instruction on the reading comprehension of grade three learners in Balo-I Central Elementary School, Lanao del Norte. By examining the strategies employed and their alignment with curricular goals, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of more effective reading interventions within the Philippine education system. The findings will contribute to enhancing reading competencies, thereby preparing students for the academic challenges that lie ahead and ultimately improving educational outcomes in the region (Dinoro et al., 2023). To achieve this, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To describe the pre-test score in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory of the Grade Three pupils before using differentiated instruction on reading comprehension.
2. To describe the post-test score in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory of the Grade Three pupils after using differentiated instruction on reading comprehension.
3. To describe the gain score of Grade Three learners before and after implementation of differentiated instruction.
4. To determine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory.
5. To recommend a Learning Development Plan for teachers and learners in reading based on the findings of the study.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a one-group pre-test and post-test research design to investigate the impact of differentiated instruction on the reading comprehension of Grade 3 learners at Balo-i Central Elementary School. The design incorporated a pretest-posttest approach to assess the reading comprehension levels of the participants before and after the intervention. A single group of Grade three learners

was cluster-selected, and their baseline reading comprehension skills were measured using a standardized pre-test. Differentiated instruction was implemented over a specified period, tailored to accommodate the diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences of the learners.

Following the intervention, a post-test was administered to evaluate the changes in reading comprehension performance. The pre-test and post-test results were compared to determine the effectiveness of the differentiated instruction. This design was appropriate as it allows for a structured examination of the intervention's impact while accounting for the individual differences among learners. The findings provided valuable insights into the role of differentiated instruction in enhancing reading comprehension and informed future instructional strategies for elementary-level learners.

Respondents

The participants in this study were the Grade 3 learners from the Guava section at Balo-i Central Elementary School, who were enrolled during the 2024-2025 academic year. A cluster sampling method was used to select the respondents. This approach was deemed appropriate as it involves choosing an entire group or section—in this case, Section Guava—as the representative sample. Cluster sampling is suitable for studies where naturally occurring groups exist within the population, ensuring that data can be efficiently gathered from a specific and intact group relevant to the research objectives.

The inclusion criteria involved learners who demonstrated varying levels of reading comprehension skills and were able to participate in both the pre-test and post-test phases of the study. The cluster sampling method ensures that the selected participants were representative of the population for which the differentiated instruction strategy was intended. This approach facilitated the collection of data necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in improving reading comprehension among Grade Three learners.

Procedure

In this one-group pre-test and post-test research design, the data-gathering method involved both pre-test and post-test measurements to assess the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The instrument for data collection included standardized test assessment tools from National PHIL-IRI materials that were relevant to the study's focus.

These tests were administered to the experimental groups before and after the intervention to measure any changes or effects. Additionally, observation checklists may be used to gather qualitative data, offering a deeper understanding of behavioral changes or other relevant outcomes.

The process began by selecting participants who met the study's criteria and obtaining informed consent from them. The participants in the experimental group, who received the intervention, were in Section A. Pre-tests were administered to establish a baseline. Following the intervention, post-tests were conducted to measure any changes or improvements. Data was analyzed using statistical methods to compare the differences between the pre-test and post-test results, which determined the effectiveness of the differentiated instruction.

The primary instruments for data gathering included:

This assessment comprises various reading passages from Phil-IRI stories and corresponding comprehension questions designed to measure pupils' reading proficiency and comprehension skills before and after the implementation of differentiated instruction strategies. Two months of English Lesson Plans in the 3rd quarter grading Period for the school year 2023-2024.

The data collection process spanned over two months, beginning with a pre-assessment using Phil-IRI post-test stories to establish baseline reading comprehension levels among the participants. This assessment helped identify the students' initial reading abilities, enabling a clearer understanding of their strengths and areas that need improvement. Following the pre-assessment, differentiated instruction strategies were introduced in the classroom, designed to cater to a variety of learning styles and levels. These strategies included individualized support, flexible grouping, and diverse instructional materials to ensure that each student receives the appropriate level of challenge and support.

After the instructional period, a post-assessment using the same materials was administered to measure any changes in students' reading comprehension levels. The comparison between the pre- and post-assessment scores provided a clear indication of the impact of differentiated instruction on student performance. Throughout the instructional phase, teachers closely monitored progress, adjusting strategies as needed to meet the individual needs of students and maximize their learning potential. This ongoing observation ensures that each learner receives the necessary guidance for improvement.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was focused exclusively on quantitative methods to assess the effectiveness of differentiated instruction on reading comprehension among fifth-grade students.

The quantitative data, specifically the pre- and post-assessment scores, were analyzed using Frequency and Percentage. This provided a summary of the participants' reading comprehension scores before and after the intervention. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare the pre- and post-assessment scores to determine whether there were statistically significant changes in reading

comprehension attributable to the differentiated instruction implemented during the study.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, ethical considerations were prioritized to ensure the protection of all participants involved. The study adhered to ethical standards established by the Panel of Examiners at St. Peter's College, which governs the conduct of research involving human subjects. The following ethical guidelines were implemented:

Informed Consent: Before participation, informed consent was obtained from both learners and their guardians. Participants were fully briefed about the purpose of the study, the data collection methods, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Consent forms were provided, and participants will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Confidentiality: All data collected during the study were treated with the utmost confidentiality. Participants' identities will be anonymized in all reports and publications, ensuring that no individual can be identified from the collected data. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and authorized personnel.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Learners and guardians will be informed that they are not obligated to participate, and their decision will not affect their academic standing or relationship with the school.

Minimizing Harm: The researcher took all necessary precautions to reduce potential psychological or emotional distress that participants might experience during the study. This includes ensuring that the survey and interviews are designed to be age-appropriate and sensitive to the participants' backgrounds.

Approval and Oversight: The research design and ethical considerations were submitted for review and approval by the Panel of Examiners at St. Peter's College to ensure compliance with the ethical standards for research.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the data collected to address the study's research questions. It also analyzes and interprets the data collected by the researcher to solve the issues in the study.

Pre-test Score in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory of the Grade Three pupils before using Differentiated Instruction on Reading Comprehension.

Table 1. *Pre-test Scores*

Score Range	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)	Description
1 – 6	0	0	Poor
7 – 12	33	82.5	Fair
13 – 18	7	17.5	Good
19 – 24	0	0	Very Good
25 – 30	0	0	Exceptional
Total	40	100.0	

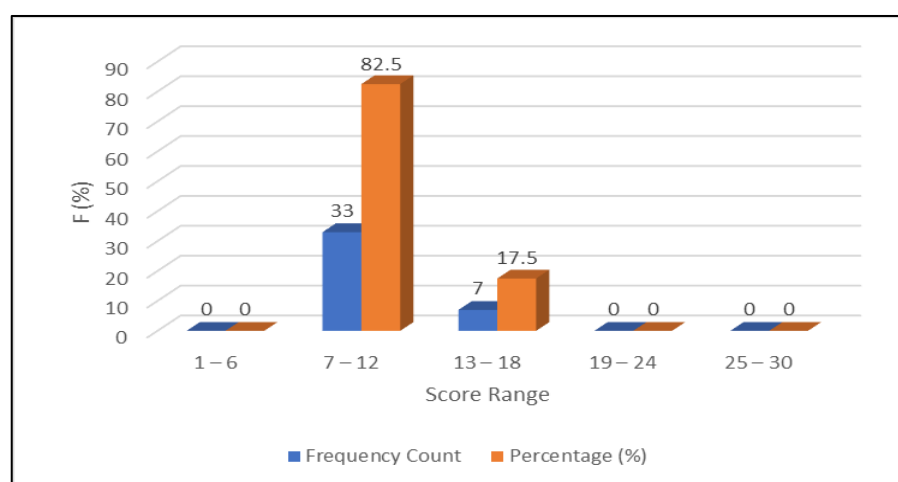


Figure 1. *Pre-test Scores*

Table 1 (Figure 1) presents the pre-test scores of the participants. As shown in the table, the highest frequency count falls within the score range of 7–12, with 33 participants (82.5%), indicating that the majority of the respondents performed below average. In contrast, the lowest frequency count was observed in the score ranges of 1–6, 19–24, and 25–30, with zero participants in these categories. None of the participants performed at a poor, above-average, or excellent level.

This distribution suggests that most participants performed below the expected standard, indicating a potential need for improvement or intervention in the area being assessed. The findings suggest that most participants may have had limited prior knowledge or encountered difficulties in the subject matter before any instructional intervention.

Reading comprehension is a dynamic cognitive process that extends beyond word recognition to encompass meaning construction, as emphasized by Vygotsky (Salem, 2020, as cited in Abela, 2023). Harris and Hodges (Agbo, 2020, in Abela, 2023) further described it as an interactive process between the reader and the text. Sweetland (2021, as cited in Abela, 2023) supported this notion by highlighting the influence of external messages, reader goals, and educational contexts on shaping comprehension. This aligns with the results in Table 1, which indicate that students' reading comprehension is affected by multiple factors, including their cognitive strategies and prior knowledge. Moreover, Suson et al. (2020) defined reading as the ability to interpret both printed and non-printed words for personal growth, an assertion echoed by Dadzie (2021), who emphasized the role of reading in intellectual development. The findings of Table 1 reinforce these perspectives, as they show that learners engaged in reading for various purposes, such as acquiring information and enhancing academic performance.

Furthermore, the literature acknowledges that reading comprehension plays a crucial role across various disciplines, not just in language studies (Sari, 2020, as cited in Suson et al., 2020). This is evident in Table 1, where the data reveal that students struggle in subjects like mathematics and science due to poor comprehension skills, a challenge noted by Callahan and Clark (2020) and Bender et al. (2020). Bowers (2000) and Voss and Silfies (2021, in Suson et al., 2020) emphasized that identifying key details and understanding the main idea are fundamental to academic success, findings that resonate with the results in Table 1, which highlight comprehension difficulties as a major barrier to student achievement.

Struggling readers face various challenges, including limited exposure to vocabulary and difficulties in decoding text (Comings, 2020; Davidsen, 2021). Table 1 reflects these struggles, particularly among students who lack foundational reading skills, as supported by Kim, Apel, and Otaiba (2023), who asserted that social and cultural contexts influence comprehension. The importance of vocabulary development in comprehension is also well-documented (Lesaux et al., 2021), which aligns with the findings of Table 1, where students' limited vocabulary knowledge is identified as a key challenge. Similarly, the effectiveness of instructional methods such as differentiated instruction (DI) has been debated in the literature (Snel et al., 2021; Lenhard et al., 2021), and the results in Table 1 suggest that a lack of tailored reading interventions contributes to students' comprehension difficulties.

Overall, the literature supports the results in the table, reinforcing the idea that reading comprehension is a multifaceted process influenced by cognitive skills, vocabulary development, instructional methods, and disciplinary contexts. Addressing these factors through differentiated instruction and vocabulary enrichment programs can help improve students' reading performance and overall academic success.

Post-test Score in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory of the Grade Three pupils after using Differentiated Instruction on Reading Comprehension.

Table 2. Post-test Scores

<i>Score Range</i>	<i>Frequency Count</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Description</i>
1 – 6	0	0	Poor
7 – 12	2	5.0	Fair
13 – 18	33	82.5	Good
19 – 24	5	12.5	Very Good
25 – 30	0	0	Exceptional
Total	30	100.0	

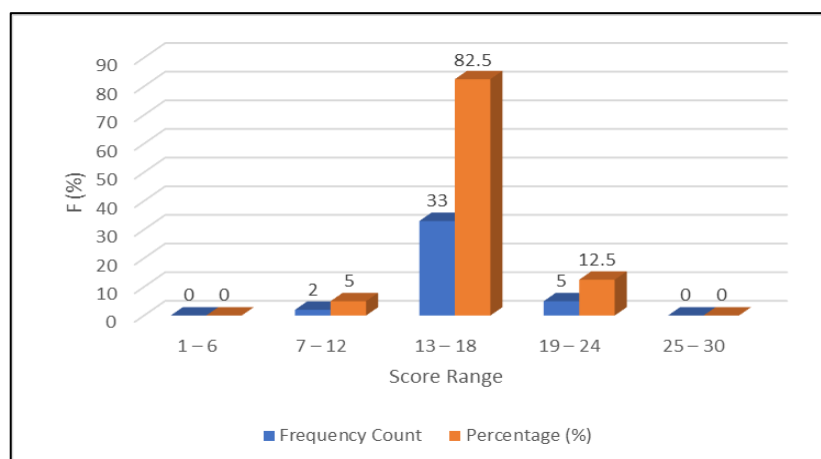


Figure 2. Post-test Scores

Table 2 (Figure 2) illustrates the distribution of their performance levels based on post-test scores. The highest frequency falls within the score range of 13–18, with 33 participants (82.5%) classified as "Good." In contrast, the lowest frequency count is observed in the 1–6 and 25–30 score ranges, where no participants were categorized as either "Poor" or "Fair." These findings imply that while most participants achieved an average level of performance, very few reached an above-average level, and none attained excellence. This may indicate a need for instructional improvements to enhance learners' higher-order comprehension skills.

These results suggest that the implemented intervention or learning activity had a positive impact on student performance, as most students moved up to higher performance categories, with the majority now demonstrating a good to very good understanding of the subject matter.

The findings align with existing literature on reading comprehension, which emphasizes that comprehension is a dynamic cognitive process requiring both decoding skills and the ability to construct meaning. Vygotsky, as cited by Salem (2020) in Abela (2023), defined reading comprehension as an interactive process in which readers extract and construct meaning from text. Similarly, Harris and Hodges, cited by Abela (2023), described reading as a holistic exchange of ideas between the reader and the message, reinforcing the notion that comprehension extends beyond simple word recognition. These perspectives emphasize the importance of metacognitive skills, such as activating prior knowledge, summarizing, and generating questions, to enhance understanding (Sweetland, 2019, as cited by Abela, 2023).

Moreover, reading is widely recognized as a critical skill essential for academic achievement and personal development. Suson et al. (2020) described reading as the ability to understand and apply written information, whether in print or digital form, to facilitate knowledge acquisition and intellectual growth. Dadzie (2021) supported this view, stating that reading plays a fundamental role in cognitive development, reasoning, and problem-solving. Additionally, Palani (2021) emphasized the role of reading comprehension in subjects beyond language studies, including mathematics and science, where it facilitates understanding and retention of concepts. Without sufficient reading comprehension skills, learners may struggle with academic tasks, leading to frustration and decreased motivation (Callahan & Clark, 2019; Bender et al., 2020; Suson et al., 2020).

However, struggling readers face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to comprehend texts effectively. Research by Comings (2020) and Davidsen (2021) suggested that reading comprehension difficulties arise from multiple factors, including foundational skills, higher-order processing, and social or cultural influences. Early exposure to language and vocabulary has a significant impact on future reading success, as noted by Kim, Apel, and Otaiba (2023). Conversely, limited exposure to oral and written communication can contribute to long-term struggles in reading comprehension. Similarly, decoding and word recognition difficulties are significant barriers to reading proficiency (Adler & Van Doren, 2020; Davidsen, 2023).

Furthermore, studies on instructional methods emphasize the importance of evidence-based strategies in improving reading comprehension. Research by Snel et al. (2020) compared guided co-construction and direct instruction strategies, finding no significant differences in their impact on students' reading skills. Lenhard et al. (2020) also investigated two reading programs—Reading Detectives and Context—but found no significant differences in students' comprehension outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of tailoring instructional approaches to meet students' diverse learning needs, as supported by research on differentiated instruction (DI) (Valiandes, 2021; Rodicio et al., 2021).

Differentiated instruction is crucial for addressing the diverse learning needs of students in mixed-ability classrooms. However, misconceptions among educators often hinder its effective implementation. Pilten (2022) found that some teachers mistakenly focus DI on high-achieving students while neglecting struggling learners, contradicting its core principle of personalized instruction. To implement DI effectively, teachers require ongoing professional development, collaboration, and support (Stover et al., 2021). The use of pre- and post-tests is crucial for assessing student progress and designing targeted interventions (Valiandes, 2022). Addressing the needs of both struggling and advanced learners is vital, as research shows that traditional teaching methods often fail to engage students across varying academic levels (Firmender, Reis, & Sweeny, 2022).

Additionally, vocabulary instruction plays a critical role in reading comprehension. Studies by Elleman et al. (2022), Marulis and Neuman (2023), and Varga (2020) emphasize that vocabulary acquisition is a key predictor of reading success. Fisher and Frey (2020) argue that explicit instruction in academic vocabulary is necessary for students to meet literacy standards.

Furthermore, research by Wei and Attan (2020) comparing different vocabulary teaching strategies suggested that a combination of rote copying and contextualized reading significantly improves comprehension for students from marginalized backgrounds.

The theoretical foundations of differentiated instruction include constructivist theory, brain-based learning, and multiple intelligences theory. While qualitative research highlights its benefits in enhancing student motivation and engagement (Burkett, 2020; Maeng, 2021), quantitative studies have yielded mixed results regarding its effectiveness compared to traditional instruction (Aliakbari & Haghighi, 2022; Dosch & Zidon, 2022). Notably, research on DI is limited in high school science classrooms, underscoring the need for further empirical investigation (Eady, 2008; Tobin & Tippet, 2020).

In contrast, direct instruction, a structured teacher-centered approach, has been shown to benefit students with lower academic performance levels. Slavin's QAIT Teaching/Learning Model emphasizes that effective instruction relies on factors such as lesson

quality, appropriate difficulty levels, incentives, and time allocation (Huitt, 2020; Slavin, 2023). Research suggests that teacher-led instruction, combined with differentiated strategies, can enhance reading comprehension outcomes (Suprayogi, Valcke, & Godwin, 2021; Wanzek & Roberts, 2021).

Overall, the findings from the post-test scores reinforce the importance of improving reading comprehension through differentiated instruction, targeted vocabulary development, and evidence-based teaching strategies. Addressing the specific challenges faced by struggling readers while maintaining high expectations for all students is essential for fostering literacy skills and academic success.

Gain Score of Grade Three Learners before and after Implementation of Differentiated Instruction.

Table 3. Gain Scores

<i>Range</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
1 – 2	2	5.0
3 – 4	6	15.0
5 – 6	19	47.0
7 – 8	13	33.0
Total	40	100.0

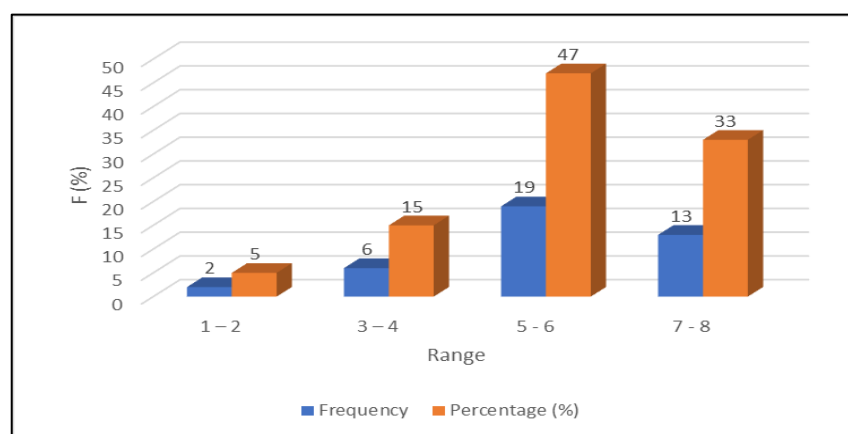


Figure 3. Gain Scores

Table 3 (Figure 3) shows that the gain scores of the participants reveal a majority (47%) scored within the range of 5–6, while the lowest frequency (5%) was observed in the 1–2 range. Most pupils demonstrated moderate improvement, with a significant percentage achieving higher gains (33% within the 7–8 range). A smaller group of students gained 3–4 points (15.0%), and only 5.0% had minimal improvement with a gain of 1–2 points.

Overall, these results indicate that a majority of students demonstrated noticeable academic improvement, with 80% of them gaining 5 points or more. This suggests that the intervention or instructional approach was effective in enhancing students' learning outcomes.

The results align with existing literature, which emphasizes the role of reading comprehension as a cognitive process involving decoding and meaning construction (Vygotsky, as cited by Salem, 2020). The findings supported Harris and Hodges' assertion (cited in Agbo, 2020, in Abela, 2023) that reading comprehension is an active exchange of ideas between the reader and the text, reinforcing the idea that students who develop metacognitive strategies—such as summarizing and activating prior knowledge—tend to achieve better comprehension and, consequently, higher gain scores (Sweetland, 2022, as cited by Abela, 2023).

However, the presence of participants with minimal gain scores may pose difficulties in comprehension, potentially due to limited vocabulary exposure or ineffective reading strategies. This aligns with research by Elleman et al. (2020), who highlighted that pupils struggling with phonemic awareness and word recognition often face challenges in improving comprehension skills. Furthermore, the variation in gain scores underscores the need for differentiated instruction (DI), as supported by Valiandes (2022), who emphasized that tailoring instruction to individual learning needs leads to better academic outcomes.

The findings of this study have several educational implications. First, the results highlight the importance of integrating explicit reading comprehension strategies into instructional practices. Educators should emphasize metacognitive approaches, such as self-questioning, summarization, and schema activation, to enhance students' comprehension skills. Second, the presence of students with minimal gain scores suggests a need for targeted interventions, such as remedial reading programs or individualized support, to address specific comprehension difficulties. Schools and policymakers should consider implementing structured literacy programs that cater to students with diverse learning needs.

Additionally, the findings underscore the necessity of ongoing assessments to monitor students' progress and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Formative assessments can help identify struggling readers early, allowing educators to provide timely interventions.

Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of cultivating a reading culture, both within and outside the classroom. Encouraging independent reading and providing access to diverse reading materials can help students strengthen their comprehension skills, ultimately improving their academic performance.

Significant Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory.

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

		Static	Mean Difference	SE Difference	p-value
Post-test	Pre-test	820	5.50	0.242	<0.001

Note: 2 – Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test ** - $p < 0.01$ *** - $p < 0.001$ ns - $p > 0.05$ * - $p < 0.05$

Table 4 presents the difference between the post-test and pre-test scores of the participants. The data revealed a highly significant difference between the post-test and pre-test scores, as indicated by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test result ($p < 0.001$). The intervention or instructional approach applied in the study had a meaningful impact on the participants' performance. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the post-test and pre-test scores, was rejected.

The significant increase in post-test scores suggests that the instructional strategy employed contributed to students' academic improvement. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasized the role of guided learning and scaffolding in cognitive development. The improvement in scores also supports Bloom's (1984) Mastery Learning Theory, which asserts that with appropriate instructional support and sufficient learning time, most students can achieve higher levels of mastery.

Furthermore, the results are consistent with previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of evidence-based instructional strategies in enhancing student learning outcomes. For example, Hattie's (2021) meta-analysis of student achievement factors found that explicit teaching strategies and formative assessments have a significant impact on learning gains. Similarly, Marzano et al. (2022) emphasized that active engagement through structured learning activities leads to better academic performance.

These findings carry several important implications for educators and policymakers. First, they reinforce the necessity of using targeted instructional interventions to support student learning. Teachers should incorporate differentiated instruction to accommodate students' diverse learning needs, as supported by Tomlinson's (2024) framework on differentiated instruction. Second, the study highlights the value of continuous assessment in monitoring student progress. Formative assessments should be integrated into the curriculum to provide real-time feedback and guide instructional adjustments.

Additionally, the significant improvement observed suggests that educational institutions should prioritize professional development programs for teachers, equipping them with research-based strategies to enhance student learning. Lastly, policymakers should consider allocating resources for instructional innovations and intervention programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

Overall, the significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores confirms the effectiveness of the implemented instructional strategy. The findings support existing educational theories and research advocating for structured, student-centered learning approaches. Moving forward, further research can investigate the long-term effects of such interventions and their applicability across various educational contexts.

Conclusions

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that differentiated instruction significantly enhances the reading comprehension of Grade Three learners at Balo-i Central Elementary School. The pre-test results indicated that many learners initially struggled with reading comprehension, highlighting challenges in vocabulary recognition, decoding, and extracting meaning from texts. This finding suggests that traditional, one-size-fits-all instructional methods may not effectively address the diverse learning needs of students.

The post-test results demonstrated a notable improvement in students' reading comprehension after implementing differentiated instruction. The increase in post-test scores suggests that tailoring instruction to individual learning styles and abilities contributes to better academic outcomes. The success of differentiated instruction aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of adaptive teaching methods in fostering student engagement and comprehension.

The gain scores further support the positive impact of differentiated instruction, as the majority of learners exhibited moderate to high improvement. While most learners benefited from the intervention, a small percentage displayed minimal progress, indicating that additional instructional support may be necessary for some students. Factors such as prior knowledge, learning preferences, and individual cognitive development could have influenced the varying degrees of progress observed among participants.

The significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, as revealed by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, confirms the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in enhancing reading comprehension. This statistical finding reinforces the idea that personalized learning strategies, including scaffolding, flexible grouping, and targeted interventions, play a crucial role in improving student outcomes. The rejection of the null hypothesis further validates the necessity of implementing differentiated instruction in early literacy education.

These findings support theoretical perspectives, such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and interactive learning, as well as constructivist principles, which highlight the role of active engagement in the learning process. The study also aligns with research suggesting that students develop better reading comprehension skills when exposed to instruction tailored to their individual needs.

Differentiated instruction is an effective strategy for enhancing reading comprehension among young learners. However, continuous assessment and targeted interventions are necessary to ensure that all students, including those who made minimal progress, receive the support they need. Future studies may explore additional instructional strategies to refine differentiated approaches further, ensuring that every learner achieves optimal literacy development.

In light of the study's findings, conclusions, and implications, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation of differentiated instruction and improve reading comprehension among Grade Three learners at Balo-i Central Elementary School. For school heads, it is recommended to support teachers in implementing differentiated instruction by providing necessary resources, professional development opportunities, and instructional materials tailored to various learning needs. Additionally, they should offer technical assistance to teachers during classroom observations. Allocating time for teacher collaboration and training sessions on differentiated instruction strategies will help ensure effective implementation and sustain the program's impact on learners' learning. For teachers, it is crucial to continue applying differentiated instruction strategies in their daily teaching practices to cater to the diverse learning styles and needs of learners. Utilizing flexible grouping, scaffolding, and personalized learning activities can help improve reading comprehension skills.

Additionally, teachers should consistently assess students' progress and modify instructional strategies accordingly to address individual challenges and enhance student engagement in reading activities, as well as the use of differentiated instruction. For students, they should actively participate in reading activities and take responsibility for their learning by utilizing the differentiated strategies provided by their teachers. Developing self-awareness of their learning preferences and engaging in independent reading practices can further enhance their comprehension skills. Encouraging a positive reading culture and fostering motivation through interactive and student-centered learning experiences will also contribute to their academic success.

For the Division of Lanao del Norte, it is recommended that policies be reinforced to promote differentiated instruction in schools, particularly in early literacy programs. Providing ongoing training for teachers on innovative instructional approaches and equipping schools with adequate reading materials will support effective literacy instruction. Furthermore, conducting monitoring and evaluation activities will help assess the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and identify areas for improvement. For the PHIL-IRI coordinator, it is essential to integrate differentiated instruction strategies into reading assessment programs and ensure that intervention plans align with students' specific learning needs. Conducting regular reading assessments and sharing the results with teachers will aid in developing targeted instructional strategies for struggling readers. Collaboration with educators to refine reading intervention programs will further enhance students' reading comprehension skills. For future researchers, it is recommended to explore other factors influencing the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in reading comprehension, such as learners' motivation, parental involvement, and the use of technology-based interventions. Expanding the study to different grade levels and educational settings can provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of differentiated instruction on literacy development. Additionally, future research may investigate other subject areas where differentiated instruction can be applied to improve overall learners' performance.

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