



**ENGLISH TEACHERS' READING STRATEGIES: GROUNDWORK
FOR A SCHOOL-BASED READING PROGRAM**

EDJOVEL T. SAUL

Teacher I

Tagsing-Buyo National High School

edjovel.saul@deped.gov.ph

ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study was conducted to explore the English teachers' reading strategies as groundwork for a school-based reading program. The study was conducted on eighteen (18) public, Junior High School (JHS) English teachers in the Schools District of Santa Barbara using a duly validated In-depth Interview Guide. Furthermore, the data that was gathered was examined using thematic analysis. The study's conclusion showed that English teachers used the reading-aloud strategy, games, crafts and graphic organizers, dimensional strategy, and code-switching strategy in teaching reading. Further, the emergent teachers' positive experiences showed that, through their reading strategies, learners develop better comprehension, learners read efficiently the reading text, expand their creativity and higher-order thinking skills, and develop self-confidence. On the other hand, the emergent themes in negative experiences are poor reading foundation, struggling learners, and teaching reading as energy-draining and needs patience. A reading program was proposed as a result of the study.

Keywords: *Reading Strategies, Experiences, Groundwork, Reading Program*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most important learning activities that learners must complete. It is very vital to one's existence, especially for a child, as it is a key to wisdom and opens the door to pleasures, creativity, and a view of the outside world. The ability to fully and accurately understand texts is a prerequisite for reading.

Consequently, many reading interventions are still being implemented. Few studies have looked into early reading interventions for English Language Learners (ELLs), and most of them show that word reading improves, but that reading comprehension is more difficult to enhance. Additionally, some researchers have found that most students who are at risk for reading difficulties can learn to read at average levels with well-designed, evidence-based classroom reading training.

Despite the fast-improving school curriculum, children who struggle with reading remain an issue in education. Additionally, teachers find it difficult to help these struggling readers become proficient readers.

The Department of Education's research indicates that a majority of nonreaders in high school are a result of the system's lower levels, particularly elementary schools. Even yet, there is a sizable portion of non-readers in every school.

Students need to read a lot in other academic subjects in addition to the content they study in English studies. The problem that the students face, though, is that they do not always understand what they have read. Their subpar reading results reflect this.

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As a teacher for six (6) years, the researcher has observed that every year, teachers are implementing reading programs, yet until now, there are still learners who cannot read words correctly and have poor comprehension.

Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the learners. The distance learning modality deteriorated learners' reading skills due to limited reading strategies used at home. It was observed that even Grade 10 learners could hardly read words and barely understood what they were reading. This should come to an end and be addressed sooner.

Furthermore, according to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) survey published in April 2022 in the Philippines, three (3) out of twenty (20) students, or less than 15% of schoolchildren, could decipher and understand simple texts. Senator Sherwin Gatchalian urged students to improve their reading skills, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic made the issue worse.

Meanwhile, learners are so dependent on their gadgets that they are uninterested in reading books. Also, they are impatient in reading their textbooks and the reading selections needed for the subject.

Based on the sad realities happening in the field and the prevalence of struggling readers, the researcher believed there is a need to delve into the realm of reading and explore the different teachers' reading strategies as groundwork for formulating a school-based reading program. To attain this goal, this study was conducted.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

The chapter presents the underlying processes of this phenomenological research study and discusses the parts, namely: Research Method, Research Design, Participants in the Study, Research Instrument, Validity of the Research Instrument, Data-gathering Procedure, and Data Analyses.



Research Method

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research method using in-depth interview to explore the English teachers' reading strategies as groundwork for a school-based reading program.

The goal of descriptive research is to collect data that will provide a more thorough explanation of the situation and provide impartiality to present concerns.

Research Design

The study utilized the phenomenological research design using in-depth interview. An in-depth interview is an open-ended, discovery-oriented method to obtain detailed information about a topic from a participant.

Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

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Participants of the Study

The participants were the total population of eighteen (18) English teachers from the Junior High School of the Schools District of Santa Barbara, Iloilo. The selection of the participants in the study was based on a strategy referred to as purposive sampling.

Sampling Design

The teacher participants in the study were selected on the basis of a strategy referred to as purposive sampling.

Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell, 2013).

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in the study was a researcher-made interview guide. This was the appropriate instrument to use since the study would require qualitative data, which are mainly narrative.

An in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that is used to conduct detailed interviews with a small number of participants. In contrast to other forms of

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qualitative research, an in-depth interviewing approach invests a significant amount of time with each participant employing a conversational format.

Validity of the Research Instrument

A panel of experts was requested to validate the researcher-made interview guide. The panel of experts was composed of a research expert, an English major, and a qualitative research expert. All comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the research instrument were considered before finalizing the research instrument.

Data Gathering Procedures

After the panel of experts, including the dean of the Graduate School, validated the researcher-made interview guide, the researcher secured a permit to conduct the study from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Iloilo.

Then, a letter of consent was obtained from the office of the school principals and of the public schools district supervisor to conduct the study in the different secondary schools in the district of Santa Barbara.

A letter about the study was also given to each of the eighteen (18) participants before the conduct of the interview.

After all the permits and consent letters were ensured, the participants were gathered in one room for a face-to-face orientation. Further, the personal information of the participants was gathered before they answered the main questions. When the transcribed responses were

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completed, the researcher consolidated all the information. Lastly, the responses were analyzed thematically.

Data Analyses

The data gathered for the study was transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set; it often leads to new insights and understanding (Naeem, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study was to explore the English teachers' reading strategies as a groundwork for a school-based reading program.

The participants in the study were the eighteen English teachers in the Schools District of Santa Barbara. They were chosen through purposive sampling.

The instrument used in the study was an in-depth interview guide to collect responses from the participants. The instrument was subjected to face-and-content validation by a panel of experts.

The data collected during the interviews were transcribed manually and then analyzed thematically.

Based on the data presented, the following are the findings:

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The participants' responses on the strategies used by them in the classes were: (1) Reading Aloud Strategy, (2) Use of Games, Crafts, and Graphic Organizers, (3) Dimensional Strategy, and (4) Code-Switching Strategy.

When asked about their experiences the participants shared the following affirmative insights: (1) Learners Develop Better Comprehension, (2) Learners' Read Efficiently the Reading Texts, (3) Expand Creativity and Higher-Order Thinking Skills, (4) Develop Self-confidence; the challenges were: (1) Poor Reading Foundation, (2) Struggling Learners, and (3) Teaching Reading as Energy Draining and Needs Patience.

The English teachers used varied strategies in teaching their reading classes.

Based on the results, a school-based reading program was formulated in the hope of helping learners become better readers.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

It is important that reading activities are learner-centered. Learners have different learning styles and reading teachers can choose appropriate strategies for the learners to be motivated to read.

Students become more engaged and motivated to learn reading comprehension when they employ innovative reading techniques. It is crucial to take into account the students' interests and existing reading proficiency.

Additionally, reading comprehension teaching strategies can be applied based on the needs of the class. It should be modified in accordance with the text's genre, the students' backgrounds, and the issues that arise when teaching reading comprehension.

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Different reading strategies can be maximized to test what is effective and what is not in the class discussion. Also, it is important for teachers to exhibit patience because learning is a process that takes some time.

In addition, flexibility and differentiated instruction can be significant factors in addressing the diverse reading needs of learners. Diagnostic reading levels are essential to provide appropriate interventions, especially for those who struggle significantly.

Learners can be passive at times, thus encouragement from reading teachers is essential. It plays a vital role if the learners can see teachers also interact with the texts and make learning relevant. Furthermore, fun-filled activities can help learners retain the information they read.

As educators, teachers can help learners grow in their reading capacity by engaging learners and igniting their passion for reading by employing varied strategies. The reading strategies are guides but it depends on teachers on how to make it effective and efficient. The compassion to teach, time, and energy are necessary to show learners care and support to continue to love and learn the language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and insights, the following recommendations are advanced:

Learners should realize reading is essential and master the basic skills to comprehend and communicate effectively. It is vital that learners understand the ripple effect of reading skills on other subject areas once they become either struggling or independent readers.

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Reading is the mother of comprehension skills and proficiency in this fundamental skill makes learner exceptional among others.

Teachers should identify the learners' reading level to come up with reading strategies that will suit them. Assessing the reading level can help the teacher decide how to appropriately utilize the reading strategies. Evaluating the learners' reading abilities makes the teacher flexible in the teaching-learning process.

Also, reading selections must suit the level of the learners. Reading strategies on the chosen selections are very important to help struggling readers become interested and active in the discussion and to become independent readers. Teachers must choose the appropriate reading strategies for the learners according to their capabilities and needs. Teachers have to be resourceful and innovative for learning to take place.

Teachers should embrace learners accordingly, especially at their pace of learning. Teachers do not need to rush to make them learn; rather they should be patient, passionate, and committed to them.

With the rising digitalization, teachers also need to adopt the contemporary and various features of gadgets and the Internet to understand and address the behaviors and attention of the learners towards reading. It cannot be denied that there are a lot of applications and artificial bits of intelligence that have emerged; thus, teachers should be wise to create activities and educational games that attract the attention and participation of the learners in the discussion.

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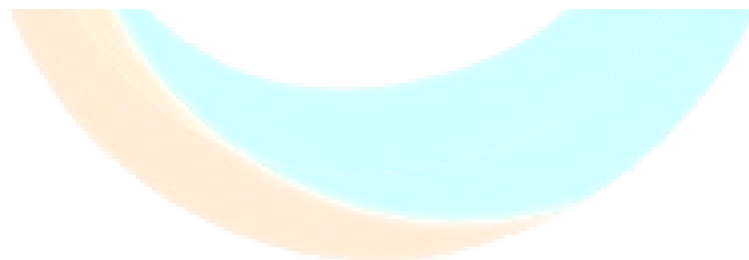
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School heads should also provide support to the teachers such as providing materials and equipment needed in the reading program. Teachers alone cannot do the task efficiently. The work is made easy and effective if there are more hands helping to achieve the goals of the program.

The reading program may be implemented in school activities to help develop and improve learners' reading fluency and comprehension. Its implementation needs full support from the students and all the internal and external stakeholders to ensure success.



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