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LEARNERS AND TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE CONDUCT OF CLASSROOM READING ACTIVITIES: GROUNDWORK FOR THE FORMULATION OF A CONTEXTUALIZED READING PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

This study utilized a qualitative method using in-depth interviews, and the design was phenomenology. It was found that the experiences of learners in classroom reading activities included engaging and enjoyable interactions, development of language skills, collaboration and peer interaction, and personal growth and motivation, while teachers' experiences involved diverse learners' needs and abilities, strategies and approaches in reading instruction, and rewarding experiences. As for the challenges, learners encountered language difficulties, group dynamics and participation issues, and reading engagement problems. Meanwhile, teachers had issues with student engagement and motivation, language difficulties, and time constraints. To manage challenges, learners observed practice and repetition, help-seeking and collaboration, use of reading strategies and techniques, and attitude and mindset adjustment. Moreover, teachers emphasized the importance of incorporating diverse strategies, using incentives and motivation, and applying foundational reading methods. In line with the findings, a contextualized reading project was formulated to improve literacy among the youth.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading involves decoding texts and making meaning from them. It plays an essential role in one's success in school serving as a prerequisite of all learning areas and a gateway to learn different subjects. When a learner struggles with reading, they may also face challenges across all subject areas (Tomas et al., 2021). In the teaching and learning continuum, reading has long been indispensable. It enables learners to understand subject content, solve problems, analyze texts, conduct research, and allows teachers to prepare and deliver effective lessons. At the heart of education, reading is a skill that every learner should possess as it, indeed, has a direct relationship with academic achievement. Therefore, providing learners with literacy opportunities should be one salient goal of today's education.

Several studies, however, noted that students in the Philippines face challenges in reading. The PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2022 results revealed that "Some 24% of students in the Philippines attained Level 2 or higher in reading (OECD average: 74%). At a minimum, these students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023).

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Further, in a study conducted by Tomas et al. (2021), results showed that majority, that is 73.24%, of 4,216 English reading profiles of Grade 1-7 learners were at the frustration level. The perceived causes, they noted, were non-mastery of the elements of reading, presence of learners-at-risk, and no culture for reading.

The issues concerning the reading performance of Filipino learners are attributed, but not limited to, COVID-19 pandemic threat, challenges brought by digital era, lack of access to quality learning materials, inadequate teacher training, and learners' low motivation and engagement.

Considering the circumstances aforementioned, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented policies and programs on literacy designed to strengthen literacy competencies among Filipino learners. Included in the department's initiatives are: DepEd Order No. 18, s. 2017 or the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP), DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2015 known as Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program (ELLN), and programs such as Basa Pilipinas in partnership with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Brigada Pagbasa, and the use of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) tool.

In response to this, schools nationwide have worked on their institution-level implementations, adaptations, and innovations. Schools integrate ECARP into their daily classroom instruction, administer Phil-IRI reading assessments to identify struggling readers and provide appropriate reading interventions, promote reading camps, remedial classes, and reading corners as part of National Reading Month and Brigada Pagbasa, and more.

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While schools generally appreciate the focus on literacy and acknowledge improvements in reading competencies, resource limitations, teacher training gaps, and varying levels of learner motivation continue to hinder the full effectiveness of these DepEd efforts.

Hence, the researcher believes that providing direct solution in the microcosm, that is classroom setting, may create a ripple effect towards the nation's developed reading literacy. The data on the experiences of learners and teachers in the conduct of classroom reading activities may also serve as need-based blueprint for the establishment of a contextualized reading project.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants in the study, sampling design, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis to be used in the study. The purpose of this study is to determine the learners and teachers' experiences in the conduct of classroom reading activities as groundwork for the formulation of a contextualized reading project.

Research Method

The research method utilized in this study was the descriptive method under qualitative research using in-depth interviews. The descriptive method of research is a systematic approach used to observe and document various variables and conditions affecting a particular

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phenomenon without manipulating them. Its primary goal is to provide a detailed account of the characteristics, trends, and correlations within a specific population or situation (Singh, 2023).

The interviewer and the interviewee were allowed to sit together and think about the series of questions. The aim was to obtain the main and necessary views of the participants in a social context through their responses.

Research Design

The study used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology can be considered a philosophical approach to conducting qualitative research. Its goal is to understand how others view the world and how this view may differ from commonly held perspectives by focusing on a person's subjective interpretations of what they experience.

Phenomenology focuses on the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person perspective. The central aim of phenomenology is to investigate and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced, without resorting to theories about their causal explanations or being influenced by unexamined preconceptions (Biemel & Spiegelberg, 2024).

Participants in the Study

The participants in this study were six (6) English teachers in Junior High School and eighteen (18) grade 7-10 learners attending the English classes of the identified teachers. The teachers were currently employed with permanent positions in the Department of Education (DepEd). The learners were purposively chosen to be participants of the study.

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Sampling Design

A purposive sampling design was used in the study. According to Berg and Lune (2021), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research. This method involves intentionally selecting participants based on specific characteristics, knowledge, experiences, or other criteria relevant to the research objectives. The goal is to gather information-rich cases that can provide deeper insights into the phenomenon being studied.

Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was researcher-made interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of three major questions focusing on the experiences, challenges, and management in the conduct of classroom reading activities of learners and teachers. Voice and video recorders were used for data gathering and documentation, depending on the permission of the participants.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Prior to determining the validity of the interview schedule prepared by the researcher, the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of jurors considered experts in the fields of research, testing and assessment, and English were requested to validate each question for review and modification.

Validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences made by a researcher. In the context of content-related evidence of validity, it is essential that the content and format of a measurement tool are consistent with the

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definitions of the variables and the sample of subjects to be measured. This consistency is crucial for validating the items in a questionnaire and ensuring that the instrument accurately assesses the intended constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The comments, corrections, and suggestions of the panel of validators regarding the interview schedule were considered using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (Appendix D).

Data Gathering Procedures

Permits from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the School Principal, and the individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study.

The participants were informed prior to the interview and were approached during their vacant time to request their cooperation in responding to the interview questions. The researcher assured them that their responses would remain strictly confidential.

Using in-depth interviews, voice and video recorders were used to completely capture the interviewees' responses. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after a series of interviews.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed.

Data Analyses

The information gathered was analyzed using a thematic approach.

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. It is a widely used method that allows researchers to interpret and understand the

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meanings behind the data collected from interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative sources (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

The aim of thematic analysis is to identify themes, such as patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and to use these themes to address the research questions or say something about an issue. This involves summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data gathered and making sense of it.

In this study, the six-phase thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2023) was used. This includes (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report. During the first phase, the participants' responses were read multiple times to gain a deep understanding of them. In the second phase, meaningful data segments were identified and labeled using codes. In the third phase, codes were grouped into themes related to the research question. During the fourth phase, themes were checked for internal consistency. In the fifth phase, these themes were defined and assigned concise and descriptive names. In the final phase, the findings were presented in a narrative explaining each theme, supported by data and linked to the literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study determined the experiences of learners and teachers in the conduct of classroom reading activities as bases for a contextualized reading project in one of the national high schools in the First Congressional District of Iloilo during the School Year 2024-2025.

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The research method utilized in the study was qualitative method using in-depth interview. The research design was phenomenological using thematic analysis.

The participants in the study were six (6) English teachers in junior high school and eighteen (18) grade 7-10 learners attending the English classes of the identified teachers. The teachers were currently employed with permanent positions in the Department of Education (DepEd).

The study used a researcher-made interview schedule, which underwent content-validation by the panel of experts, to gather responses from the participants. Permits were secured and consent letters were given to the participants.

The researcher conducted the in-depth interviews with the participants individually. A voice recorder and notes were used for data gathering and photo documentation, with the participants' permission.

The researcher consolidated all the collected data after series of interviews. The narratives were gathered, transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted using a thematic approach.

The following are the findings of the study:

Based on the responses from the in-depth interview, the learners and teachers have diverse experiences in the conduct of classroom reading activities. The learners' experiences were engaging and enjoyable interaction, development of language skills, collaboration and peer interaction, and personal growth and motivation. As for the teachers, their experiences include diversity of learners' needs and abilities, variety of strategies and approaches, and rewarding experiences.

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During the in-depth interviews with participants, it was found that learners faced challenges in classroom reading activities, including language difficulties, issues with group dynamics and participation, and reading engagement. Whereas, the challenges faced by teachers were on student engagement and motivation, language difficulties, and time constraints.

The learners' ways of management on the challenges they encountered classroom reading activities, based on the results of the in-depth interview, were practice and repetition, help-seeking and collaboration, use of reading strategies and techniques, and attitude and mindset adjustment.

On the other hand, teachers recognized the effectiveness of the incorporation of diverse strategies, the use of incentives and motivation, and the use of basic skills and foundational reading methods.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

Learners and teachers generally perceive classroom reading activities as engaging and beneficial to language development. Learners reported positive experiences characterized by enjoyment, peer collaboration, and personal growth, suggesting that well-designed reading activities can foster motivation and a supportive learning environment. Teachers, on the other hand, appreciated the diversity of learner needs and the variety of strategies employed, which contributed to rewarding teaching experiences. These insights underscore the importance of creating interactive and inclusive reading environments that cater to individual learner interests and promote active participation, thereby enhancing overall literacy outcomes.

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Several challenges faced by learners, including language difficulties, such as limited vocabulary and decoding skills, as well as issues related to group dynamics and engagement hinder comprehension and reduce motivation to participate actively in reading tasks. Similarly, teachers faced obstacles related to maintaining student motivation and engagement, managing diverse ability levels, and dealing with time constraints within the instructional schedule.

These challenges highlight the need for targeted language support, differentiated instruction, and efficient classroom management strategies to optimize the effectiveness of reading activities and sustain learner interest.

Both learners and teachers demonstrated resilience and adaptive strategies to address the encountered challenges. Learners reported employing practice, repetition, and seeking peer assistance as ways to overcome language barriers and improve comprehension. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and adjusting their mindset toward reading.

Teachers, meanwhile, recognized the effectiveness of incorporating diverse instructional approaches, such as motivational incentives and foundational skill reinforcement, to sustain student engagement.

These adaptive behaviors suggest that fostering a learner-centered and flexible instructional environment can significantly mitigate the impact of challenges and promote sustained reading development.

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CONCLUSION

Considering the findings and insights arrived at in this study, the following recommendations are highlighted:

A contextualized reading project, titled the "Promoting Literacy Advancement in Youth (PLAY) Project", should be established to promote differentiated and engaging reading activities tailored to the diverse needs of learners. The project should focus on creating an inclusive environment that fosters peer collaboration, active participation, and intrinsic motivation. It should incorporate culturally relevant and context-specific reading materials to make learning more meaningful and relatable. The program should also emphasize the development of foundational reading skills, vocabulary enhancement, and decoding strategies to address language difficulties faced by learners.

To equip teachers with effective instructional strategies, ongoing professional development should be prioritized. Training sessions should focus on differentiated instruction, classroom management, integrating motivational incentives, and utilizing diverse reading strategies. These capacity-building activities will empower teachers to better manage classroom challenges, cater to varied learner needs, and implement innovative approaches that foster student engagement and motivation.

Addressing logistical challenges such as limited time and resources is critical. Schools should be supported with sufficient reading materials, technological tools, and instructional resources that are culturally relevant and age-appropriate. Allocating dedicated time for extended reading sessions and literacy activities can further enhance learner engagement and

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mastery of reading skills. Collaboration with community stakeholders and local organizations can also help in mobilizing additional resources.

Encouraging learner autonomy and peer collaboration should be a cornerstone of the literacy program. Activities that promote cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and group discussions can improve engagement and comprehension. Creating a positive and supportive classroom climate may motivate learners to actively participate and develop a lifelong love for reading.

Establishing a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of the literacy initiatives may also ensure that the program remains responsive to learners' evolving needs. Feedback mechanisms involving teachers, learners, and parents should be institutionalized to inform ongoing adjustments and improvements. Data-driven decision-making may facilitate the sustainability and scalability of the literacy advancement efforts.

These recommendations aim to address the identified challenges while leveraging the strengths observed in both learners and teachers.

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