Short Paper

The Use of Images in Reading Comprehension

Sherrylynn Jennifer S. Carantes
DepED-Magsaysay National High School, Philippines
sherrycarantes@yahoo.com

Ryan Jayson V. Delos Reyes
Urdaneta City University, Philippines
ryanvdelosreyes@gmail.com
(corresponding author)

Abstract

This study underpinned the authentic materials using images for reading comprehension. It sought to determine the proficiency level of the respondents in reading comprehension skills along with vocabulary, making inferences, sequencing events, and drawing conclusions and proficiency level of the respondents in the comprehension of advertisements, graphic organizers, graphs. The respondents are Grade VII students of Magsaysay National High School Baguio City, Philippines selected using purposive sampling. A multiple-choice test was utilized as the main instrument to support and further verify the information gathered. Findings revealed that student's proficiency level in reading comprehension skills is good; have very good results in comprehension of authentic materials such as images; least comprehension of news stories; and have a good comprehension of intervention materials. Subsequently, respondents vary in their reading comprehension; instructional materials are very essential and an overall rating of good in reading comprehension skills. Hence, it is imperative to set goals for reading instruction, better reading comprehension using images. This study highly recommends that the language teacher must have diversified classroom activities using authentic materials and they should use images in teaching reading comprehension skills. The goal of images in reading instruction is effective for comprehension. Thus, the instructional tasks or activities should use images to be concerned with building comprehension strategies especially the use of print media and other sources of graphic materials. This study gives the concerned teachers to design

better materials to teach reading comprehension more actively through the use of images as authentic materials that will allow meaningful interaction between the learners and the text.

INTRODUCTION

Reading has a vital role in one's life. It is an avenue to an endless opportunity, a wide-open door to greater intellectual growth. It deepens perception, raises standards, and enhances effective hobby, business, trade, or profession. Villamin et al.(2001) contend that experts agree on reading as the golden key to the world of enlightenment and enjoyment. Without comprehension, reading will just be like recognizing the letters in a word and nothing else. Hence, authentic materials as interventions are needed to enhance the reading comprehension of the Grade VII students.Current studies on reading comprehension show that few have endeavored on testing reading comprehension using authentic materials as input. Authentic materials are indispensable in the language classroom to help students understand and remember what they read.

Traditional definitions of reading state that learning to read means to pronounce words, to identify words, and get their meaning, and to bring meaning to a text to construct meaning. Inherent in constructing meaning is the reader's ability to activate prior knowledge, use reading strategies, and adapt to the reading situation (Crudo, 2005). Reading with comprehension becomes a matter of getting your questions answered (Smith, 1985). Reading is a process that is complete only when comprehension is attained. The critical element is that the reader reconstructs the message encoded in the written language. This means that comprehension depends as much or even more on the information stored in the reader's brain than on the information stored in the text (Dechant, 1991). Rumelhart and Ortony (1977) state that successful reading is both a perceptual and a cognitive process while Bernardo (2009) contends that reading comprehension is the ability to understand or get meaning from text (any type of written materials).

Reading comprehension requires motivation, a mental framework for holding ideas, concentration, and good study techniques. Good readers can establish the relationship between what the author explicitly declares and what he implicitly says. They use not only the clues found in the text but also their schema (Anderson & Pearson,1984). Reading comprehension is a complex undertaking that involves many levels of processing. One of the most fundamental aspects of comprehension is the ability to deal with unfamiliar words encountered in text. It is not enough to rely on the context cues to

predict the meaning of new words, since this strategy often results in an erroneous or superficial understanding of key terms, especially in content-area reading.

Children who have difficulty learning to read do less well in other subject areas, have lower esteem, pose greater discipline problems in school, and are less likely to complete a high school education (Shanahan & Barr,1995). Reading recovery program is an early instructional intervention that attempts to prevent eventual failure in learning to read by providing an intensive, highly structured program of instruction for at-risk children (Shanahan & Barr,1995). Recent intervention research demonstrates that direct, intensive phoneme awareness and phonics improve decoding and word identification in poor readers but yields only minimal gains in reading fluency. These findings attest to the need to give attention to fluency. A major reason for focusing on the development of fluent reading is the theoretical relationship between fluency and comprehension. In theory, fluent reading allows the reader to attend to the meaning of text rather than to the mechanics of reading (Samuels, 1979). Without a certain level of reading proficiency, second language learners find it difficult to cope with their studies. Also, Fletcher (2006), reading comprehension is determined in part by the material presented for comprehending and the format that is used for assessing comprehension of the material. Measuring reading comprehension could be further integrated by perspectives that cut across particular approaches to the measurement of images in the text.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) point out that the ability to read the written language at a reasonable rate and with good comprehension has long been recognized to be as important as oral skills, if not more important. Reading is paramount and vital to learning. It is the key that unlocks the door to the world of enlightenment and enjoyment, the basic tool for learning in the content fields.

For man, most of the things he does involve reading. He reads from labels of medicine bottles and cosmetics to periodicals and monitors of computers. With the rapid change nowadays, use of high-speed computers, and tremendous advances in science and technology,there is a need for efficient reading and that today's faster living means faster learning. Hence, one who is handicapped in reading is deprived of a wonderful medium of learning. To read efficiently is to be able to decode written symbols, to get the meaning from the printed page, to put meaning from the printed page, and to integrate the idea into one's background of experience (Villamin, 1984).

Furthermore, comprehensive reading intervention programs must be built around an organized scope and sequence of instruction. "Because the end goal of reading is comprehension, early in the reading process, teachers should consider how individual skills could eventually be linked to the larger process of reading and that with practice, these skills could lead to improved comprehension" (Boyle, 2008, p.7).

In conjunction with the issues and concerns presented, this study concerns itself with the use of authentic materials as a test of comprehension for the Grade VII students.

Their performance will be evaluated based on their ability to comprehend what they read by giving correct responses to questions asked.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is a multifaceted process that develops only with practice. There are certain aspects of reading, such as fluency and word recognition, which can be learned in a few years. These basics must be mastered but at the same time, reading comprehension should be emphasized in the process. Students can parrot words on a page all day long but if they don't have the necessary comprehension skills they will not be able to make predictions about what will happen next, monitor their understanding of content, sequence of characters, clarify confusing parts of the text or connect what they're reading to their own experience or prior knowledge. And that is what true comprehension is all about (K12 Readers).

This study used the following concepts namely Interactive Theory, Schematic Theory, and Vocabulary Knowledge. The interactive theory built on the notion that reading is only incidentally visual, on the other hand, emphasizes that meaning is not fully present in a text waiting to be decoded but is created through the interaction of text and reader. Two kinds of knowledge processing operating simultaneously are relied upon processing based on linguistics input from the text called bottom-up or text-based and processing based on prior knowledge to predict data in a text. The latter type is called top-down or knowledge-based.

The reader's knowledge of form will provide expectations about the language of the text so that during the physical act of reading, he can identify forms using a minimum number of visual cues. Simultaneously his knowledge of substance will provide certain expectations about the conceptual structure of the text thereby enabling him to make accurate predictions in interpreting the meaning of a text as a whole or achieving comprehension.

Smith (1985) believes that reading is primarily a meaning-making activity. His model shows that there is a reciprocal relationship between what the reader sees (visual information) and the reader's knowledge of the world (non-visual information). If one cannot construct this relationship, visual information cannot be processed. Also, he strongly suggests that an approach to teaching reading should give priority to meaning identification and should draw upon children's natural and constructive patterns of learning.

Schematic theory views organizedknowledge as an elaborate network of abstract mental structures, which represent the ones how he understands the world. It views that comprehension depends on the understanding of the world. It views that comprehension depends on integrating new knowledge with a network of prior knowledge. Reading is seen as "an active process of constructing meaning by connecting old knowledge with

new information encountered in a text (Anderson& Pearson, 1984). The underlying principles are: 1) it is important to teach general knowledge and generic concepts. A large proportion of learner difficulties can be traced to insufficient general knowledge, especially in cross-cultural situations. 2) Teachers must help learners build schemata and make connections between ideas. Discussions, songs, role plays, illustrations, visual aids, and explanations of how a piece of knowledge applies are some of the techniques used to strengthen connections. 3) Since prior knowledge is essential for the comprehension of new information, teachers either need to: help students build the prerequisite knowledge, or remind them of what they already know before introducing new material. 4) Schemata grow and change as new information is acquired. 5) Learners feel internal conflict if they are trying to assimilate schemata that contradict their previous suppositions. Teachers need to understand and be sympathetic to this tension.

Vocabulary knowledge is also one of the best predictors of reading achievement. Also, a comprehensive review of research on vocabulary development concludes that vocabulary knowledge promotes reading fluency, boosts reading comprehension, improves academic achievement, and enhances thinking and communication. Reading fluency improves reading comprehension. When they read, children need to be able to use the three cueing systems. These systems represent signals that interact and overlap to help the reader understand what he or she is reading. Most poor readers have a strategy imbalance. They tend to over-rely on one reading strategy, such as the use of context clues, to the exclusion of other strategies that might be more appropriate. To become skilled fluent readers, children need to have a repertoire of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words (Richek, 2005).

Authentic materials are slightly different in literature written by different researchers of language. It also defines as the "appropriate" and "quality" in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs, and interest and "natural" in terms of real-life and meaningful communication. Authentic texts as Widdowson (1990) conceives of language teaching are kind of operational research that materials are designed for native speakers; designed not for language students, but the speakers of the language (p.7). In short, the value of empirical research ultimately depends on the quality that defines the object of inquiry (Widdowson, 1990, p. 25). Thus, authentic materials are materials that can be used by the students in the classroom. Some authentic materials that can be used as a springboard in a language class are advertisements, graphic organizers, graphs, news stories, editorial cartoons, and others.

Objectives of the Study

This study determined the level of proficiency using images among the Grade VII students in Magsaysay National High School in Baguio City, Philippines. This answered the following objectives:
1. To know the proficiency level of the Grade VII students in reading comprehension skills along:

a. Vocabulary,
b. Making Inference,
c. Sequencing events, and
d. Drawing Conclusions?
2. To determine the proficiency level of the Grade VII students in reading comprehension along:
a. advertisement,
b. graphic organizers, and
c. graphs?

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methods and procedures in the conduct of the study. Specifically, it presents the design, place, time, and subjects of the study. Further, the procedure, instruments, and treatment of the data are also included.

This study used a descriptive developmental design in determining the proficiency level of the students in reading comprehension using images. A 100- test item developed by the researchers that underwent validation to 5 language experts, consisting of 20 items each for vocabulary, making inferences, sequencing events, and concluding was administered to the students to determine their proficiency level in reading comprehension using intervention materials like images. Advertisements and graphs were taken from the Google page under images while the graphic organizers were taken from the book Skill Builders Edition 16. The news stories were taken from various sources. There were 120 respondents out of 279 learners of this study who were randomly selected using convenience sampling from the identified learners under the frustration level of the PHIL-IRI results from Grade VII students S.Y. 2018-2019 at Magsaysay National High School situated along New Lucban Barangay, Baguio City, Philippines.

The test administered was composed of different reading texts taken from several advertisements, news stories, and editorial cartoons. The results collected were tabulated and analyzed. A score range in Table 1 (Reading Performance Score Range)was used to describe the performance of the students in reading comprehension using images. A multiple-choice type of test was used in which every correct answer was given a score of 1. The data were gathered by administering a multiple choice type of test used to measure the proficiency level of the students in reading comprehension using images.

Data gathered from the respondents were summarized and cross-tabulated.To describe the reading performance of students along with vocabulary, making inference, sequencing events, and concluding, a range was used:

Table 1. Reading Performance Score Range

Description	Range
Excellent	(17-20)
Very Good	(13-16)
Good	(9-12)
Fair	(4-8)
Poor	(0-3)

RESULTS

It is indispensable in teaching English to use authentic materials as a springboard to enhance the comprehension skills of the students because visuals play an important part in learning. They emphasize that humans are typically very visually oriented, and the retention of the information presented in the visual form usually exceeds the retention of the information presented verbally. Learners can enhance what they read by reading and interpreting visuals accurately, and by creating their related visuals. When students learn how to use and construct graphic representations, they are in control of a study strategy that allows them to identify what parts of a text are important, how ideas and concepts are encountered in the text are related, and where they can find specific information to support more important ideas. Learners need to see these relationships and learn how to link ideas. When students use graphics while studying a concept, they build these links.

The proficiency level of the Grade VII students in reading comprehension skills

The level of reading comprehension using images was based on the mean scores of the students in each category. Table 2 presents the proficiency level of the Grade VII students in reading comprehension.

Table 2. The proficiency level of the Grade VII students in reading comprehension skills

SKILLS	MEAN	PROFICIENCY LEVEL
Vocabulary	12.33	Good
Making Inference	9.62	Good
Sequencing Events	9.34	Good
Drawing Conclusions	8.68	Fair
OVERALL	10.594	Good

Table 2 shows the overall proficiency level of the respondents which is 10.594 (Good). The skills of the respondents were divided into vocabulary, making inferences, sequencing events, and concluding. Indeed, the performance of every student is influenced by his background knowledge. Rumelhart et al. (1977) hypothesized that the background knowledge one brings to the text is directly related to how well he comprehends and how motivated is he concerning the topic. They also mentioned that reading authorities on the readers-text relationship agree that meaning comes from the

interaction between the content and structure of the text and background knowledge of the reader.

On the other hand, in the reading survey test conducted by Widdowson (1990), he found that students excelled in noting details, getting the implied meaning of the words, while their reading weaknesses were grasping the inferring traits and concluding.

Proficiency Level of Grade VII Students along with Reading Materials

Table 3presents the proficiency level of the respondents in the comprehension of authentic materials specifically the advertisement, graphs, editorial cartoons, news stories, and graphics. Comprehension of graph topped the proficiency level of the respondents as very good with a mean of 14.25. This was followed by a graphic organizer as good with a mean of 11.86, and advertisement – 10.79.

Table 3. The proficiency level of Grade VII students in the reading comprehension

Activity	Mean	Proficiency Level
Advertisement	10.79	Good
Graph	14.25	Very Good
Graphic Organizer	11.86	Good
Overall	11.474	Good

This could also imply that students are not interested in reading news reports. Hence, their attention should be somehow directed to reading news stories to enhance their reading comprehension. Another reason is associated with the issue of prediction in reading. This indicates schema building which is related to one's ability to interpret text meaningfully. Schemata are the fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends and Rumelhart (1977) calls them the building blocks of cognition.

Richeck (2005) also pointed out that background knowledge can guide and influence the comprehension process. He added that comprehension outcome is based on the previous knowledge of similar texts. That is, if the reader regularly reads a newspaper and is aware of all the events and issues either locally, nationally, or internationally, then comprehension would be easier.

Content schemata deal with the knowledge relative to the content domain of the text, which is the key to the understanding of texts since one language is not only a simple combination of vocabulary sentence structure and grammar but also the bearer of different levels of the language's culture. To some extent, content schemata can make up for the lack of language schemata, and thus help learners understand texts by predicting, choosing information, and removing ambiguities. Crudo (2005) emphasized that graphs used for communication are pictures intended to convey information about numbers and relationships among numbers; a good graph forces the reader to see the information the designer wanted to convey.

Anderson and Pearson (1984) agree that the use of authentic materials with images creates both verbal and nonverbal codes as well as connections between the two. They concurred that individuals can process information in a variety of ways, and these processes determine what is learned and how well. Thus, information more deeply processed is likely to have a stronger memory path, and therefore, will be remembered longer.
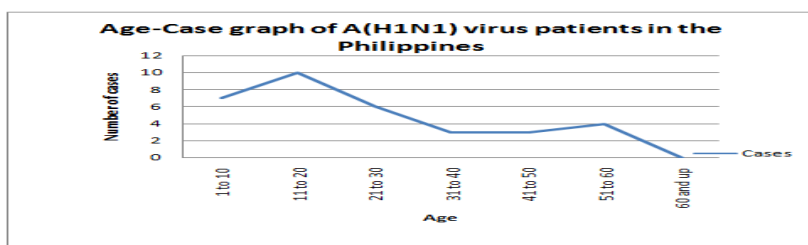
What age has the zero cases of A(H1N1) patients in the graph?
a. 31 to 40   b. 41 to 50   c. 51 to 60   d. 60 and up

Figure 1. Sample image in reading comprehension of the learners (source: google.com/images)

The image above (Figure 1) is an excerpt from the administered test to the respondents. This showed a clear image to the question which the learners can easily answer the question. The posted question shall have the answer of *d.* because it is shown in the image that 60 and up have zero cases of A(H1N1). Although the proficiency levels of the respondents fall under good, there is still a need to enhance their skills through the use of authentic materials especially in concluding and in the comprehension of news stories.

DISCUSSION

Researchers who conducted studies about authentic materials have different views, but they have in common one idea: exposure of students to real language and real life. In other words, the authentic materials should be used following the students' level of knowledge and the students should be helped by their teachers to overcome the difficulties they encounter.Using images in the classroom, even when not done in an authentic situation is significant for many reasons. Students are exposed to real discourse, like videos of interviews with people where they listen for gist; students are motivated to do their tasks; and students are informed about what is happening in the world, so they have an intrinsic educational value. Gou et al. (2020) demonstrated that well-designed graphics can facilitate the learners' understanding of the texts. Moreover, Pan (2009), the presence of pictures in the texts benefits low proficiency learners in EFL Taiwanese college students. Student responses to the effects of visuals on reading comprehension can enhance their understanding of the text itself. Also, it's a fact that several researchers have confirmed the role of authentic materials in developing reading skills through introducing learners to new vocabulary and expressions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions are based on the findings of the study where they vary in their comprehension of vocabulary, making inferences, sequencing events, and concluding; instructional materials are very essential in enhancing reading comprehension skills of the students especially those who are having difficulties along vocabulary using advertisements, graphs, and concluding using graphic organizers with passages. Thus, the overall proficiency level of students in reading comprehension skills is good.

From and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are forwarded for the benefit of the readers. These are: The Grade VII students vary in their reading comprehension skills. Hence, the language teacher must have diversified classroom activities using authentic materials such as images; Intervention materials like advertisements, graphic organizers, and graphs are great sources of information. They should be used in teaching reading comprehension skills. Design better materials in the use of images to teach reading comprehension that will allow meaningful interaction between the learner and the text.

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Authors' Biography

Sherrylynn Jennifer S. Carantes, Ph.D. is a Teacher III in DepED-Magsaysay National High School, Baguio City, Philippines. She graduated her Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English at University of Baguio. She also finished her Master of Arts in English as a Second Language and Doctor of Philosophy in Language major in English Language at Benguet State University, Philippines.

Ryan Jayson V. Delos Reyes, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor 1 in Urdaneta City University, Pangasinan, Philippines. He is presently the program head in Teacher Education and Human Sciences of the Institute of Graduate and Advanced Studies – Urdaneta City University. He finished his Bachelor of Arts in English and Master of Arts in Education

major in Communication Arts- English at Pangasinan State University, Philippines. He finished his Doctor of Philosophy in Language major in English Language at Benguet State University, Philippines.