

Improving the Reading Level of Grade 3 Learners Using Contextualized Skill Book in English



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ABSTRACT: The researcher determined eleven grade 3 learners belonged to the struggling level where they got low scores in pre-test of the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) in the first quarter of SY 2022–2023. Nevertheless, with the commitment and dedication of the researcher as a teacher, the researcher decided to develop reading material that suited the learners. Moreover, it aimed to develop a contextualized skill book in English to improve the reading level of grade 3 learners.

Accordingly, the study focused on improving the reading level and effectiveness of the contextualized skill book used. Furthermore, learners' reading levels improved after the intervention's implementation. In addition, pre-test and post-test results showed a significant difference, which implies that the intervention is effective. Particularly, as perceived by the learners, the contextualized skill book improved their reading abilities and academic performance in other subjects, consequently their love for reading developed. Finally, the contextualized skill book used showed effectiveness among the respondents, as well as appropriate for struggling learners. Similarly, the skill book was extremely recommended for use by other educators in the improvement of the reading level of their learners.

Therefore, the researcher recommended that other researchers develop a contextualized skill book used as an intervention for struggling readers because it proved effective in improving the reading level of learners.

KEYWORDS: reading level, intervention, contextualized, implementation, effect, result

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is essential for mental growth since it gives us useful knowledge and life skills and helps us understand the world. By increasing our vocabulary and enhancing our communication skills, it keeps our thoughts active and our creative juices flowing. Despite this, a number of kids currently read below the level that is expected for their respective grade levels. Nevertheless, reading remained a vital component of efficient interaction with the outside world.

A researcher looked for evidence to back up her claim about the low literacy rates. Global literacy levels have significantly increased during the previous two centuries, claim Ortiz-Ospina and Roser (2018). Only 14% of the world's population remained illiterate in 2016, down from 12% in 1820 when only 12% of people could read and write. The global literacy rate increased steadily throughout the last 65 years, increasing by 4% every 5 years, from 42% in 1960 to 86% in 2015. By making sure that every learner developed reading proficiency, this knowledge encouraged teachers to raise literacy rates.

The Philippines received the lowest reading comprehension score among the 79 nations and economies that took part in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which revealed on Tuesday. additionally, PISA is a global assessment of students' knowledge in reading, mathematics, and science administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In the 2018 PISA, reading was the primary subject assessed among 15-year-old students. The Philippines had a reading score of 340 on average, which was more than 200 points lower than China's score of 555 and more than 100 points below the OECD average of 487. Furthermore, according to the Philippine Star (2019), both the Philippines' and girls' reading performance ranked last among PISA-participating countries.

Finally, Vice President and Secretary of Education Sara Duterte signed DepEd Order 44 Series of 2022, allowing the resumption of face-to-face classes, which disrupted for nearly two years due to the pandemic. Educators taken aback by kids' reading and academic performance, with many struggling to read at their expected level. This study also looked into the

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possibility of using modern student resources as remedial methods for teaching reading. The critical point for prioritizing our learners' current requirements and circumstances.

Learning to read starts with letter sounds, then moves on to blending, and then to three-letter words. There are no shortcuts in this procedure, which needs patience, consistency, and tenacity. Reading levels can, however, improve appropriate reading resources. Readers must integrate text-based information with past knowledge to generate a deeper understanding of the text, according to Kanninen, Kiili, Tolvanen, Aro, and Leppanen (2022). Unfortunately, some readers experienced with precise and fluent word identification, as well as spelling and decoding ability, which can contribute to reading comprehension difficulties

Research on contextualization in college settings revealed that employing materials anchored in students' cultures was helpful; in 2022, Mazzariello emphasized two types of contextualization that researched: contextualized and integrated instruction. However, as mandated by our educational system, just a few researches on contextualization carried out at the basic level for the next academic year 2022-2023. Despite the creation of contextualized materials, the researcher did not formally state that the goal of the study was to produce a recognized contextualized skill book in her name.

Reading is essential in the educational system, according to IPL.org (2021). According to Gutman, children require adequate education to improve their reading and comprehension skills. However, some students may struggle with their reading abilities owing to a variety of causes, resulting in them failing to attain the projected grade 3 level. To address this issue, a researcher ran a study at Mangan Elementary School to improve the reading competency of grade 3 learners.

As a result, the researcher used the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) results as the basis for creating a contextualized skill book as a study outcome that raised learners' reading proficiency and created specifically for them. The researcher developed contextualized and localized materials in accordance with the department's directive regarding the K-12 curriculum to attract their attention by utilizing familiar material.

In conclusion, it was evident that these efforts were ineffective without proper reading materials customized to their needs despite adopting a five-minute reading program before every subject and a daily remedial reading session from 1:00 to 1:30. The researcher established a weekly remedial reading session that employed assessment and training every Friday from 3:40 to 4:30 to solve the problem. Finally, an English 3 contextualized skill book found effective in this study.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

This research aimed to improve the reading level of struggling readers at Mangan Elementary School using the contextualized skill book in English 3. Specifically, it determined to find the answer to the following questions:

1. What are the reading levels of grade three learners in pre-test and post-test?
2. Is there a significant difference in the reading level of Grade 3 after the implementation of the intervention?
3. What is the perception of the learners of the reading intervention used?

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

In this study, quasi-experimental one-group pre-test-post-test design used. Besides, this design doesn't require large sample size or high cost to follow up with a control group. Furthermore, the outcome of interest measured twice, before and after exposing a non-random group of participants to a specific intervention or treatment. Quasi-experimentation is a significant methodological development in the social sciences, as per Reichardt (2019). Additionally, the FLAT (Functional Literacy Assessment Tool) used as a new data-gathering tool in the elementary department during the second year, which doesn't require validation.

Finally, this design aimed to determine the improved reading level of respondents using the contextualized skill book in English 3.

3.2 Participants

For this study, Grade 3 learners as respondents represented the total population. Total population sampling is a purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population with specific characteristics, such as attributes, traits, experience, knowledge, skills, exposure to an event, and more, according to Tagama (2020). Although total population sampling is not commonly used, it can be particularly useful in certain types of research. Definitely, units make up the population when sampling, and in total enumeration sampling, it is likely that these units will be people.

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Moreover, all the grade 3 learners participated, since they were small and had poor reading skills. There were (6) six letter-level readers, (2) two syllable-level readers, and (3) three word-level readers in grade 3 at Mangan Elementary School in Santol District of the Division of La Union for the school year 2022-2023 during pre-test.

3.3 Intervention

Initially, the purpose of contextualized skill book was to enhance the reading level of grade 3 learners. Besides, the book designed using trusted strategies and approaches to reading, as well as reading materials such as the Marungko Approach, Dolch basic sight words, and the Fuller Method. Especially, to ensure its effectiveness, five district specialists and panels also evaluated the innovation and provided recommendations to further improve.

Particularly, the learners struggled to read even at letter level. In order to help the learners, the researcher used Marungko Approach to teach them the sounds. Once they mastered this skill, they read CVC pattern words with ease. At this time, with growing confidence in their reading ability, the researcher introduced the DOLCH basic sight words that helped improve their fluency. When they read fluently, the researcher introduced the Fuller method, which involved reading words, phrases, and sentences. In addition to this, to further develop their reading skills, the researcher gave them short stories to read and answered three to five comprehension questions. To sum up, the strategies used in this program helped learners improve their reading levels through contextualized skill books.

With regards to enhancing the reading abilities of learners and achieving better academic outcomes, additional measures taken beyond the regular 5-minute reading program and daily 1 o'clock reading habit, LUSSD (2021). For this reason, a weekly special session introduced from January to May 2023, every Friday from 3:40 to 4:30 p.m. During this session, learners reviewed and re-read weekly reading materials to ensure that they grasped the content within the given time frame. Indeed, the researcher facilitated the session, and learners' progress closely monitored, needs identified, and reading materials were adjusted accordingly.

3.4 Instrumentation and Data Collection

The innovation entitled Contextualized Skill Book in English 3 has eight focus areas in reading for twenty weeks of implementation. First, in week 1, dealt with phonics using Marungko Approach and read CVC pattern words by reading the code or letter. Second, in weeks 2–5, the Fuller Approach to Reading focuses on sound in reading three-letter words, phrases, sentences, and then short stories with minimal sentences only. Third, in week 6, there were medial vowel sounds with only three sets to ensure mastery. Fourth, in week seven, we focused on consonant blends. Fifth, in weeks 8–12, Dolch Basic Sight Words, with 10 sets to read. Sixth, in weeks 13–14, they focused on reading digraph words and sentences. Seventh, in weeks 15–17, read six short stories with comprehension. Lastly, in weeks 18–20, they focused on six contextualized stories with comprehension questions to check their reading comprehension.

3.5 Data Analysis

In order to determine the reading level of the learners before and after the intervention, as stated in problem number one, the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) used as the basis for the crafting of the contextualized skill book.

A t-test, according to Hayes (2022), is an inferential statistic used to assess if there is a significant difference in the means of two groups and how they related to each other. When the data sets have a normal distribution and unknown variances, T-tests utilized. Moreover, the t-test is a statistical hypothesis test that uses the t-statistic, t-distribution values, and degrees of freedom to evaluate statistical significance. Therefore, the significant difference in the reading level of the learners before and after the intervention measured using the T-test. The calculated t-value then compared against a value obtained from a critical value table called the T-distribution table. Whereas, the higher values of the t-score indicate that a large difference exists between the two sample sets and the smaller the t-value, the more similarity exists between the two sample sets.

Definitely, the formula for computing the t-value and degrees of freedom for a paired t-test is:

$$T = \frac{\text{mean 1; mean 2} - s(\text{diff})}{\sqrt{v(n)}}$$

where:

mean1 and mean2 = the average values of each of the sample sets.

s (diff) = standard deviation of the differences between the paired data values.

n = sample size (the number of paired differences).

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$n-1$ = degree of freedom.

In addition, for problem number three (3), the thematic analysis used to justify the perceptions of learners through the intervention. Moreover, the learners' responses recorded, treated, and analyzed using thematic analysis to get their perceptions on the effectiveness of the intervention materials used. The researcher meticulously examines the data to uncover reoccurring themes—topics, ideas, and meaning patterns.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Reading levels of grade three learners.

Table 1. Reading Performance

| Literacy Level | Pretest | Post Test |
|----------------|---------|-----------|
| Mean | 1.73 | 3.64 |
| % of Mastery | 28.78% | 60.6% |

The study went into the issues of readers who were having difficulty, offering several explanations. Finally, the researchers uncovered a key element during their prior grade levels: a lack of in-person engagement. Besides, the study included six letter-level students, two words-level learners, and three paragraph-level learners. Moreover, the researcher observed that after implementing the intervention and administering the post-test, none of the 11 struggling learners remained at the letter level, one was at the word level, four were at the paragraph level, four were at the story level, and two had advanced to the story + comprehension level.

The data in Table 1 reveals that the reading performance of 11 third-grade learners showed a significant improvement after receiving intervention. Their average score increased from 1.73 in pretest to 3.64 in post-test, indicating a notable improvement of 1.91 points. Furthermore, this increase in the mean score shows that their performance has gotten better. Additionally, the increase in the percentage of performance from 28.78% in pretest to 60.6% in post-test, which considered "Very Satisfactory" according to the Norms for Interpretations. Along with, this percentage change of 31.82% between pretest and posttest gives a more accurate reflection of the learners' progress. In conclusion, the intervention had a positive and significant impact on the reading performance of the learners.

4.2 Significant difference in the reading level of Grade 3 after the implementation of the intervention.

Table 2. T-test for the Significant Difference

| Variables | Means | T value/ T Stat | P Value | Decision | Remarks |
|-----------|-------|-----------------------|---------|--------------|-------------|
| Pretest | 1.73 | | | | |
| Post Test | 3.64 | -4.9 | .000044 | Reject Ho | Significant |

Table 2 shows the difference in reading levels for third-grade students before and after an intervention. Furthermore, the T-test results indicated a significant difference, with a value of -4.89565 and a p-value of 0.000044, which is less than 0.05. Obviously, this means rejecting the null hypothesis and there was a significant relationship in reading levels after the use of contextualized skill books.

Educators use instructional materials, such as books, activities, and supplementary resources, to assist in teaching and learning. Apart from this, the utilization of contextualized skill books resulted in a significant increase in post test scores from 1.73 to 3.64. Similarly, Abalos, Valdez, and Ablao (2021) found that interventions and remedial instructions improved learners' reading levels.

4.3 Learners' perceptions of the reading intervention used.

The learners who used the contextualized skill book experienced several benefits apart from this, they discovered that it helped them read faster and enhanced their general reading ability. As their English reading skills improved consequently, they also noticed improvements in other subjects. Moreover, most of the respondents found the skill book beneficial both at school and at home. Along with this, they appreciated the convenience of being able to take it with them and read wherever they pleased. In summary, the learners enjoyed using the material and found that it significantly improved their reading comprehension. Besides, they also observed improvement in their fluency and spelling after using the skill book for an extended

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period. Therefore, after comparing pretest and post test results, the researcher concluded that the innovation was effective due to a significant improvement in the reading level.

V. DISCUSSION

From the famous line of an American journalist and critic, Fuller, M., "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader". In this case, the researcher believed that effective to motivate the youth through reading, respondents learn incredible knowledge and gain insight into different worlds, actions, and motivations, added by kumon.co.uk (Ltd, P.W.S.). In addition to this, a lot of benefits to developing reading skills at a young age. Moreover, as children learn to read, their vocabulary expands, and they gain a greater understanding of the meaning of words. Hence, it enables a child to be more expressive when they speak and use a broad range of words to express their ideas.

Generally speaking, developing confidence and independence in child's reading skills develop confidence and independence as they tackle unknown words on their own. Eventually, once they have a base knowledge of words, spelling, pronunciation, and grammar, they will feel more confident to learn new vocabulary alone using the knowledge they have previously acquired. Furthermore, young readers developed the ability to decipher unknown words and associated meanings and correct pronunciation as they saw patterns in the words they read in books.

Encouraging young children to engage with reading will help them develop into confident, independent learners. As a matter of fact, educators encouraged children to start reading from a young age; after all, as Margaret Fuller said, "If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it." Moreover, the learners as seen in their responses go along with it because they were confident readers and still excited to read. Apart from this, the researcher continues to give them suitable reading materials that ignite their interest, just like this contextualized skill book that has a simple to higher level of reading difficulty.

As observed by the researcher during the study, the key concepts of consistency and conditioning helped the learners learn and appreciate reading, agreed to Kannianen (2019). In this case, the remedial teacher becomes consistent in the conduct of remedial reading sessions. In the long run, this led to keeping track of the progress of pupils from the first day up to the post-test, which ensured the remedial reading program was sustainable. Moreover, the giving of varied remedial reading materials that the learners can bring home and use in reading was a good intervention to consider. The next day, as required, learners read the text provided to them as their assignment.

It should be noted that contextualized reading passages, vivid illustrations, and word choices in each passage have guided readers to easily understand the story found in the teacher-created small books, making it an effective learning resource to help learners improve their reading abilities, as demonstrated by Abenir (2023). Absolutely, the respondents eagerly and excited to show in class that they could read the printed materials given to them with colorful backgrounds and attractive designs. Provided that, they waited when our school principal asked them again to go to her office and read. Besides, even waiting for visitors to let them read. Finally, they were not hesitant to read, just like before, now they enjoy reading confidently.

The above findings are congruent with the study of Tomelden (2019) on the effectiveness of remedial reading and agreed with Kannianen (2019) on his findings that the performance of learners improved when the correct reading materials were handed to them.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Following the intervention, the third-grade learners' reading levels improved. As evidenced by pretest and post-test results, statistical treatment using the T-test, and learners' perceptions that they not only increased their reading levels but also their performance in all subject areas. Indeed, the intervention was beneficial and included as one of the interventions that used by other teachers with struggling readers.

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