

Word Recognition Level and Comprehension Skills of Grade 7 Struggling Readers at Dulag National High School

Cecilia T. Miranda

Dulag National High School Schools Division Office I Pangasinan

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.905000480>

Received: 21 March 2025; Revised: 30 March 2025; Accepted: 02 April 2025; Published: 23 June 2025

ABSTRACT

Reading is fundamental to all forms of learning. Therefore, it is essential for educators to evaluate their students' reading skills to identify and address any challenges early on. This study focused on enhancing the reading proficiency of Grade 7 students at Dulag National High School during the 2018-2019 academic year by examining the levels of word recognition and comprehension among struggling readers. Utilizing a descriptive-developmental approach, the research employed content-validated assessments for data collection. Participants were selected from a previously identified group of Grade 7 struggling readers based on school records. The findings indicated that while the students were generally classified as having a "High Level" of word recognition, many exhibited deficiencies in fluency and speed. They were responsible for a significant number of reading errors, particularly in the areas of "mispronunciation" and "omission." Additionally, the students were assessed as having a "Low Level" of reading comprehension. The results suggest that these learners require support in both word recognition and comprehension skills. Consequently, a prototype of instructional materials aimed at improving reading is proposed as an intervention based on these findings.

Keywords: fluency, miscues, reading comprehension, word recognition level, struggling readers

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The significance of developing students' competitive reading skills is aligned to the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. This is more clearly stipulated in DepEd Memorandum No.402 series of 2004 and Administrative Order No. 324 that implemented the "Every Child a Reader Program" (ECARP). The aim is to teach learners in public schools with planned training in reading and writing to make them independent young readers and writers.

Reading programs have been set up in all school divisions for both public and private schools. However, the programs are not enough to develop students' optimal reading habit. Thus, it is unfortunate to note that despite the efforts and different programs launched by the DepEd to ensure that children in every grade level are equipped with reading skills; actual statistics has indicated that students promoted to the next grade level cannot even read a simple word, i.e. so-called "struggling readers".

On account of this researcher's survey of the teacher feedbacks on the reading performance of Grade 7 students in Dulag National High School, it was found that most of the students especially in lower sections are consigned to "frustration level". A pre-reading test was administered on the week classes opened for the new school year among Grade 7 students of the school that revealed a total of 33 students identified to be at "frustration level" in terms of word recognition. This gives rise to the exigency and imperative for reinforced remedial instructional materials in reading. With the alarming large fraction of struggling readers among Grade 7 students, an urgent solution is imperative.

Launched from the above context of the school where the researcher is in the roster of teachers, this study was conducted in order to provide crucial information to the concerned teachers and a general reference for all other teachers encountering similar problems with their students regarding poor reading performance. Thus, in aid of the teacher's agentive role in the enterprise of reading skills, this study looked into the word recognition

level and comprehension skills of the Grade 7 struggling readers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading plays a crucial role in achieving success across various sectors of society. The ability to read is not only highly esteemed but also vital for social and economic progress. Most children acquire reading skills to a satisfactory level. However, in the Philippines, educators express significant concern over the considerable number of children who may jeopardize their career prospects or social opportunities due to inadequate reading skills, which are essential to navigate an increasingly competitive economy. The current challenges in reading are largely reflected in the growing demands for literacy. In a technology-driven society, the need for advanced literacy continues to rise, leading to more severe repercussions for those who do not meet these standards (Fountas and Pinnell: 2008).

Research on instructional strategies has identified two distinct methods for teaching reading strategies to learners struggling with word recognition: explicit instruction and implicit instruction. Hall (2009) describes explicit instruction as a structured teaching approach that incorporates a series of delivery and design procedures based on effective educational research combined with behavioral analysis. He emphasizes that well-structured explicit instruction includes clear delivery features aimed at group instruction, fostering a high level of interaction between teachers and students. This approach also encompasses the less visible instructional design principles and assumptions that inform the content and strategies being taught. Van Keer (2014) notes that explicit instruction in reading strategies, along with engaging students in interaction with the text, enhances their word recognition and comprehension skills. Furthermore, Miranda (2016) agrees that even if students do not independently employ effective word recognition strategies, explicit instruction in these strategies serves as a practical method for teaching learners to successfully apply them, thereby improving their word recognition and comprehension abilities.

Research Questions

This study sought to determine the word recognition level and comprehension skills of the Grade 7 struggling readers in Dulag National High School during the school year 2018 -2019.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the word recognition level of students along
 - a. insertion;
 - b. mispronunciation;
 - c. omission;
 - d. repetition;
 - e. reversal;
 - f. substitution, and
 - g. transposition?
2. What is the comprehension level of the students along
 - a. literal;
 - b. interpretative;
 - c. critical, and
 - d. application?

Scope and Limitation

This study looked into the word recognition level and comprehension skills of the Grade VII students in Dulag National High School under Binmaley District, S.Y. 2018-2019. It looked into the level of word recognition along insertion, mispronunciation, omission, repetition, reversal, substitution and transposition as well as their comprehension skills along literal, interpretative, critical and application.

This study is delimited to the Grade 7 students who were diagnosed as struggling readers based on the results of the pre-reading assessment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The 100% (N = 13) total population of Grade 7 students served as respondents of the study. Primary source of data were the 33 students diagnosed as struggling readers at DNHS during the pre-reading assessment.

Data Collection

Documentary analysis was used in determining the word recognition level and comprehension skills of the Grade 7 struggling readers at Dulag National High School based on the results of the reading assessment.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data on the word recognition level and comprehension level of the Grade 7 struggling readers at Dulag National High School during the school year 2018 – 2019.

Table 1 Word recognition levels of Grade 7 struggling readers along the types of reading miscues

Word Recognition Level						
Type of Miscue	Low		Average		High	
	F	%	f	%	f	%
Insertion	0	0	0	0	33	100
Mispronunciation	20	60.6	0	0	13	39.4
Omission	13	39.4	1	3.0	19	57.6
Repetition	0	0	1	3.0	22	97.0
Reversal	0	0	0	0	33	100
Substitution	0	0	2	6.1	31	93.9
Transposition	0	0	0	0	33	100

The data presented above categorizes the students' accounts according to seven distinct types of miscues. Among these, the most significant reading errors identified among the respondents are “mispronunciation” and “omission.” The data reveals that a greater number of students, specifically 20 (60.6%), experienced mispronunciation errors, in contrast to 13 students (39.4%) who made errors of omission. Furthermore, it is evident that the mispronunciation errors were largely attributed to the students' limited familiarity with certain English words, as only 13 students (39.4%) demonstrated a “High Level” of word recognition in this category, which represents less than half of the total respondents.

The 13 students who made errors in “Omission” were classified as having a “Low Level” of word recognition. In contrast, 19 respondents achieved a “High Level” rating, with their reading errors being largely insignificant. In relation to this finding, Matthew (2006) notes that omission errors typically occur when respondents overlook words while reading.

Regarding the students' performance in the areas of “insertion, reversal, and transposition,” they were rated as having a “High Level” of word recognition due to the minimal errors observed in these categories. However, it is noteworthy that the respondents took longer than the allotted time to read the material, which suggests slow

reading and indicates that they may be struggling readers. Additionally, the respondents generally received a “High Level” rating in word recognition for the category of “repetition,” with the vast majority of students (32 or 97%) not demonstrating any repetition errors. Only one student (3%) was noted to have made this error, and even then, it was minimal. Similarly, the respondents achieved a “High Level” rating in word recognition for the category of “substitution,” as evidenced by 31 students (93.9%) not making any such errors.

It can be gleaned from the data that the respondents in this study were rated High Level in word recognition relative to the types of miscues.

Table 2. Reading comprehension level of the Grade 7 struggling readers

Reading Comprehension									
Level of Performance	Score Range	Literal		Interpretative		Critical		Application	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Low	0-5	28	69.7	31	93.94	31	93.94	30	90.91
Average	6-10	9	27.3	2	6.06	2	6.06	3	9.09
High	11-15	1	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		33	100	33	100	33	100	33	100

Table 2 presents the reading comprehension level of the student respondents along literal, inferential, critical, and application.

In terms of students' performance at the literal level of reading comprehension, a significant majority, specifically 23 students (69.7%), scored between 0 and 5, categorizing them as having a "Low performance level." In contrast, only 9 students (27.3%) reached an "Average performance level," and just one student (3.0%) attained a "High performance reading level." These results suggest that students generally struggle with literal comprehension tasks, which involve identifying specific information, noting details, sequencing ideas, and recognizing explicit main ideas. Literal comprehension questions require students to find information that is clearly stated in the text. According to Jude (2012), literal comprehension represents the foundational aspect of reading comprehension, focusing on understanding facts and descriptions present in the material. Regrettably, students demonstrated challenges even with this basic skill.

At the interpretative level, the situation worsens, with the majority of students, 31 in total (93.94%), classified as low performers, scoring between 0 and 5 (i.e., Low Performance Level). Only two students (6.06%) achieved an average performance level, indicating a decline in students' abilities in interpretative comprehension compared to their performance at the literal level.

The findings indicate that students struggled to interpret the reading selection according to the criteria necessary for interpretative comprehension. This includes recognizing implied main ideas, inferring character traits, drawing conclusions, predicting actions, and deriving implications from the text. The challenge arises from the implicit nature of the ideas that students are expected to extract from the passage, which necessitates imaginative engagement to infer meaning from the explicit information provided.

Regarding the critical comprehension level, data reveals that a significant majority of students (31 or 93.94%) fell into the "low performance level," with scores between 0 and 5. Only a small number, 2 students (6.06%), achieved an "average performance level," and none reached a high-performance level. This indicates that students faced considerable difficulties when responding to critical questions in the comprehension test, suggesting that their competencies in critical reading are insufficient.

In terms of the application level, results show that most students (30 or 90.91%) were rated at a "low performance level," with scores also ranging from 0 to 5. Only 3 students (9.09%) were classified as "average

performance level," and none achieved a "high performance level." These results are consistent with the performance levels observed in both the interpretative and critical comprehension assessments.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study point to the importance of reading as the foundation of all learning as once underscored by then DepEd Secretary Bro. Armin Luistro, FSC. It makes it imperative that teachers in particular and education stakeholders in general give particular attention and action to improving the reading comprehension of all learners. It points to the importance of reading assessment at the onset and the consequent remediation and intervention needed to address learners' reading difficulties. It is in view of these that a learning material is hereby recommended for struggling readers to not just improve their word recognition level but their levels of comprehension, too.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The entirety of this work is not made possible without the people who are instrumental in enabling me to finish this study. It is just fitting that I give due recognition to the contribution they have extended for the successful completion of this work.

The researcher would like to express her profound thanks and grateful appreciation to all who have given their support, assistance, and efforts in the completion of this study.

DR. BERNARDITA F. BAUTISTA, PSDS, for her insightful advice for the completion of this study;

The researcher would like to express her sincere gratitude to her school head, **ALEJANDRA A. DE VERA**, who was extremely helpful and offered invaluable assistance, support, and guidance. The researcher could not have imagined having a more competent school head and mentor for her study.

Deepest gratitude also goes to **ALL GRADE 7 ADVISERS** at Dulag National High School, for the support, suggestions, kindness, and encouragement which motivated the researcher to complete this fruit of labor; Her sincere thanks to all her friends. In particular, she is grateful to her husband, **DANILO G. MIRANDA**, for the support and encouragement he has extended;

This study would not be complete without mention of the support given to her by her parents and siblings; Her daughter, **DANICA CLAIRE T. MIRANDA** who always serves as her inspiration;

Above all, to **God Almighty**, for His divine love for making this possible and for bestowing His blessings and divine guidance while the researcher is conducting the research.

REFERENCES

1. Aguinaldo, A. (2004). 'Beliefs about reading, metacognitive reading strategies and text comprehension among secondary students in a private school', *Philippine English Second Language Journal* 7, 28–36.
2. Calderon, D. A., (2003), *Introduction to research in education*, 5th edn., Rex Bookstore, Manila.
3. Fountas, K, & Pinnel, M. (2008). *Comprehension strategies instruction. Literacy for all: Issues in teaching and learning* (pp. 113-133). New York: Guilford.
4. Hall, J. (2009). *Improving Reading Comprehension Skills Through Effective Reading Strategies. Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 70, pages 709-714.
5. *K TO 12 Basic Education Curriculum Guide* (2013). Deped Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City.
6. Lifhack, A. (2004). *Rethinking reading comprehension. Solving problems in the teaching of literacy. An (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED481439)*. Retrieved May 20, 2009, from ERIC database.

7. Matthew, K. (2006). Rethinking vocabulary instruction. *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 14(Spring), 3-12.
8. Miranda, C. (2016). *The Reading Ability of Grade 10 Students in Binmaley District*. Unpublished Thesis. The Adelphi College, Lingayen.
9. Ramakrishna, S. (2014). *An Evaluation of a Remedial Reading Program for Middle-Grade Students in a Southeastern State Public School*. Retrieved on December 20, 2017. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=education_etd
10. Van Keer, W. J. (2014). Fluency and comprehension gains as a result of remedial reading. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25, 252-261