

The Read Adventure – Assessment of Learners’ Needs in Reading Literacy and Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the educational landscape in Barangay Pag-asa, Philippines, through the perspective of pre-service teachers involved in community immersion. Focused on oral vocabulary reading, word recognition, and reading comprehension in 5 to 11-year-old learners, the study employs qualitative methods and the Jennings Informal Reading Assessment for 32 participants. Most participants are aged 7 to 8, highlighting the need for tailored instruction. Findings reveal significant challenges in word recognition and comprehension, underlining the demand for targeted interventions. Collaboration with the community, ongoing evaluation, and resource allocation are vital for intervention success. In summary, this research advocates for a comprehensive approach to address literacy needs within the community, with pre-service teacher education as a key driver.

INTRODUCTION

As part of teacher education preparation, pre-service teachers are given opportunities to immerse themselves in the community to understand the duty of service-oriented profession and extend their help to those who are in need through a community immersion program. Pre-service teachers' preparation is crucial before embarking on the real world of teaching, according to Obispo (2023). This preparation includes service-oriented programs such as community immersion. According to the Global Family Research Project (2019), individuals who are unfamiliar with the people and communities in which they will work can immerse themselves in these settings through community immersion. This allows them to reflect on their assumptions, attitudes, and professional knowledge base, as well as gain cultural competence.

Waddell (2013) stated that communities play an important role in assisting pre-service teachers in understanding the social and historical aspects of community and their impact on schools, students, and families. Communities should play an active and equal role in preparing teachers for today's diverse schools. In accordance with the aim of the Philippine Department of Education or DepEd Order No. 45, s. 2005 Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) and DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019 Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3B's program): it is necessary to develop readers at school as well as in the community for them to develop their learning literacy and competencies.

According to Hulme & Snowling (2011), reading comprehension is a crucial cognitive function for youngsters that promotes academic progress and subsequent engagement in most aspects of adult life. Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive ability that includes linguistic (e.g., vocabulary, grammatical knowledge) and cognitive skills such as working memory, according to De Beni & Palladino (2000). This cognitive ability also includes metacognitive skills (both for knowledge and control) as discussed by Channa et al. (2015), and, more specifically, higher order comprehension skills such as inference generation as stated by Oakhill et al. (2003). This research aims to identify the needs of learners in the community in terms of Oral Vocabulary Reading, Word Recognition Accuracy, and Reading Comprehension.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

This study aims to assess the needs of the learners in terms of Oral Vocabulary Reading, Word Recognition, and Reading Comprehension in the community chosen by the Third Year Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English Pre-service Teachers undertaking the course EDU TC 05: Community Immersion. This course is designed to immerse pre-service teachers in activities that will arm them with the capability to contribute in the upliftment of the general welfare and the quality of life of the community as well as to prepare them for the service-oriented profession of teaching. This course requires Pre-service teachers to be immersed in the community for eighteen (18) hours. There are thirty-five (35) BSED - English Pre-service teachers taking this course. The participants are learners from a local community in Barangay Pag-asa, Olongapo City, Zambales, Philippines.

This study used interviews and observations as part of qualitative research methodology. According to George (2023), observations in research is based on the researcher's subjective interpretation using the sense of sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. As stated by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007) the unique feature of observation as a research process is that it allows an investigator to collect 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. In this manner, the researcher can examine what is happening in real time rather than relying on second-hand accounts. On interviews, Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007) stated that the interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard.

The study employed the Jennings Informal Reading Assessment, an informal reading inventory designed by Dr. Joyce Jennings. This assessment, also known as IRI, was created and field-tested at Northeastern Illinois University's Reading Center and various schools in the Chicago metropolitan area. Graduate students from the university's Departments of Reading and Special Education assisted in the testing. The assessment comprises reading passages and word lists for different proficiency levels, with each word list containing 25 words. These word lists were created based on the Basic Reading Vocabularies (Harris & Jacobson, 1982).

Accompanied by the Community Immersion Adviser, the student representatives of the BSED-English visited the office of the Barangay Chairman of Barangay Pagasa to seek permission and support to conduct the said activities in their barangay. Upon presenting the goals and objectives to the Barangay Chairman, the request was granted and was forwarded to the Councilor officiating the Committee in Education in the barangay to discuss schedules and locations to be used for the activities. The barangay officials carried out an initial registration process, leading to the inclusion of 62 students in the roster. However, only 47 students were present on the assessment day. The skills evaluated in the study participants were described using Frequency and Percentage. The activity was scheduled for every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday throughout a two-week immersion period, spanning from July 11 to July 25, 2022.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this research is to identify areas for enhancing oral vocabulary reading and word recognition skills in children aged 5 to 11 years. The findings from this study will be utilized to create initiatives aimed at enhancing scientific literacy and numerical proficiency in these young learners. The subsequent tables highlight the outcomes and assessment conducted by the researchers.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents according to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
5 to 6	3	9.375
7 to 8	14	43.75
9 to 10	13	40.625
11 to 12	2	6.25
Total	32	100

The table shows the age of the participants of the community immersion. The majority of participants fall within the 7 to 8 age group, comprising 43.75% of the total. This suggests that this age group is more representative in the population being studied. Participants aged 9 to 10 are the next most frequent, making up 40.625% of the total. Participants aged 5 to 6 and 11 to 12 are less represented, each accounting for around 9.375% and 6.25% respectively.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Oral Vocabulary Reading

Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-primer Level	16	50
Primer Level	7	21.875
Level 1	2	6.25
Level 2	3	9.375
Level 3	0	0
Level 4	2	6.25
Level 5	1	3.125
Level 6	0	0
Level 7	0	0
Level 8	1	3.125
Total	32	100

The data provides insight into the distribution of words across different reading levels. Majority of the participants were at the pre-primer level with 16 participants equivalent to 50%. There are 7 participants equivalent to 21.875% at the primer Level. Levels 1 (2 participants) and 2 (3 participants) include 6.25% and 9.375% of instances, respectively. There are no participants at Level 3, 6, and 7. Both levels 4 and 8 account for 6.25% of instances each. 3.125% of the participants were at Level 5. This suggests that the dataset is skewed towards foundational and basic vocabulary, with limited instances in the more advanced levels.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Word Recognition Accuracy

Number of Errors	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
0 to 4	Independent	4	12.5
5 to 9	Instructional	4	12.5
10 or more	Frustration	24	75
Total		32	100

The data presented on the table essentially reflects the performance of individuals in terms of word recognition accuracy and categorizes their proficiency or struggle based on the number of errors made. There are four (4) participants identified as independent and instructional levels based on the number of errors they committed in word recognition. This accounts for 12.5% each. Majority of the participants (24 participants) fall into the Frustrational category. Individuals in this group struggle with word recognition accuracy, making 10 or more errors. This suggests a lower proficiency level and potential frustration when trying to recognize words accurately. This category represents 75% of the instances.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Reading Comprehension

Number of Correct	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
7 to 10	Independent	8	25
5 to 6	Instructional	4	12.5
4 or less	Frustrational	20	62.5
Total		32	100

Participants in the Independent category answered a substantial number of questions correctly (7 to 10). This indicates a high level of comprehension, and these participants are likely able to understand the material on their own. This category comprises 25% of the participants. At the Instructional category, participants gave a moderate number of correct answers (5 to 6). They may require some guidance or instruction to improve their comprehension further. This category represents 12.5% of the participants. The majority of participants fall into the frustrational category which is 62.5%. They answered 4 or fewer questions correctly, which suggests a lower level of comprehension. These participants might find the material frustrating or challenging to understand without substantial support or intervention. The data provides insights into participants' comprehension levels based on their performance. It highlights that a significant portion of participants struggled with comprehension, while a smaller portion demonstrated a high level of independent comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conducted research, "READventure – Assessment of Learners' Needs in Reading Literacy and Comprehension," aimed to understand the reading literacy and comprehension needs of learners within a community. Through community immersion, pre-service teachers gained insight into the community's dynamics and needs. The study employed qualitative methods such as observations and interviews to gather data and utilized the Jennings Informal Reading Assessment to assess learners' reading abilities. The findings have been presented and analyzed, shedding light on the participants' age distribution, oral vocabulary reading levels, word recognition accuracy, and reading comprehension levels.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made:

1. **Tailored Instructional Strategies.** Given the varying age groups and reading levels observed in the community, it is recommended to develop instructional strategies that cater to the diverse needs of the learners. Different age groups may require different approaches to enhance their reading and comprehension skills effectively.
2. **Support for Word Recognition.** To address the majority of participants struggling with word recognition accuracy, targeted interventions should be designed to improve participants' word recognition skills. These interventions could include phonics-based activities, vocabulary-building exercises, and regular reading practice.
3. **Comprehension Enhancement Programs.** Considering the substantial number of participants in the frustrational category for reading comprehension, specialized programs focusing on comprehension skills development should be devised. These programs could incorporate strategies for understanding context, making inferences, and critical thinking during reading.
4. **Collaboration with the Community.** Collaborative efforts with the community, particularly schools and local educational institutions, can enhance the impact of reading and comprehension improvement initiatives. Engaging community stakeholders in designing and implementing programs can yield more effective outcomes.
5. **Professional Development for Pre-Service Teachers.** The positive role of community immersion in understanding learners' needs and local context emphasizes the importance of integrating more of such experiential learning opportunities into teacher education programs. This can better prepare pre-service teachers to serve diverse communities effectively.

6. **Long-term Monitoring and Evaluation.** Implementing reading and comprehension programs requires consistent monitoring and evaluation to track progress. Long-term assessments can provide insights into the effectiveness of interventions and allow for adjustments as needed.
7. **Resource Allocation.** Considering the higher concentration of participants in specific age groups and skill levels, allocating resources appropriately can optimize the impact of interventions. Resources such as reading materials, technological tools, and trained personnel can be directed where they are most needed.

In conclusion, the research underscores the significance of understanding learners' needs in reading literacy and comprehension within the community context. By tailoring interventions, collaborating with community stakeholders, and focusing on professional development, the potential to enhance learners' reading abilities and comprehension skills is substantial. This, in turn, contributes to the broader goals of fostering a literate and engaged community.

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