

Aligned Local Reading Materials and the Literacy Comprehension Level of Grade 7 Students

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is essential for language and literature, as well as developing a student's critical thinking and memory skills, focus, and their ability to solve problems — all necessary for every kind of student or professional. The study investigated the effectiveness of Aligned Local Reading Materials and the Literacy Comprehension level of Grade 7 students. Employing pre-experimental method as research design, with pretest-posttest method as specific design application, the study outsourced thirty (30) Grade 7 students from one (1) elementary school in Quezon Province as subjects of the study. Pretest assessment was based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) baseline test while posttest data were derived from the aligned local reading materials serving as intervention material during the experimental period. Based on the results, the pretest mean scores for all measures are relatively low, ranging from 4.63 to 9.27. The posttest mean scores are all significantly higher, ranging from 8.03 to 11.47. The *t*- values for all measures are highly significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the differences between the pretest and posttest scores are unlikely to be due to chance. The degrees of freedom are 29 for each measure. Overall, these results suggest that the respondents made significant improvements in all measures after the utilization of Aligned Local Reading Materials. In summary, the results of the study indicated that the implementation of local reading materials resulted in significant improvements in all aspects of reading comprehension. Therefore, it can be concluded that the utilization of local reading materials was effective in enhancing the students' literacy comprehension level.

Keywords: Literacy Comprehension, Aligned Local Reading Materials, Literal Understanding, Inferential Understanding, Critical Understanding, Vocabulary



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INTRODUCTION

Students that struggle with literacy comprehension can benefit greatly from local reading materials as every passage is tailored to each student's unique requirements. This view became the basis in coming up with the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) which was institutionalized by the Department of Education (DepED). The program was especially created for students beginning in the formative years of Grades 1 to 3 who need to communicate the foundation of the language competencies in terms of reading, writing, and speaking using their native (L1) language (Rafael & Tamban, 2022). This perspective also conforms with the study conducted in Malaysia by Mohaiden et al. (2020) where they analyzed the teachers' perspectives in the use of local literary texts as reading materials in English language classrooms. They found out that teachers perceive local materials as more relatable to pupils in comparison to the foreign

texts. The local texts are also perceived to have greater impacts on the students and lessons despite doubts remaining within the autonomy of this selection. These premises have directed the authors to confirm that local reading materials are much better sources of developing the literacy comprehension of students. Thus, the coining of the variable "Aligned Local Reading Materials" for this study.

Aligned Local Reading Materials (ALRM) are reading resources with mother-tongue language specifications. These are locally contextualized reading materials where students can directly relate with its contents. Having these types of reading resources can ensure the comprehension of students given the proper instruction and guidance of their respective teachers. According to Castillo (2019), there are a number of advantages of localized materials implemented or adopted in our educational system as localization maximizes materials, activities, events, and

issues that are readily available in the local environment. To contextualize, teachers must use authentic materials, and anchor teaching in the context of learners' lives.

Under the context of aligned local reading materials, the goal of the study is to identify the root causes of learners' literacy comprehension issues as well as to look at the current reading challenges that learners were experiencing. The researchers believe that students should be made more conscious of their reading proficiency as well as their individual strengths and shortcomings. The more aware the students are, the more effective the instruction is. With this, the study focused in utilizing aligned local reading materials as basis in determining the literacy comprehension level of Grade 7 students for the academic year 2023-2024. Specifically, the objectives of the study are: 1.) To determine the baseline literacy comprehension level of the Grade 7 students using pretest reading results; 2) To determine the comprehension level of the Grade 7 students based on the posttest results using Aligned Local Reading Materials; and, 3) Compare the pretest and posttest scores to determine the effectiveness of the Aligned Local Reading Materials in improving the literacy comprehension of the Grade 7 students.

LITERATURES

The ability of the students to read and understand the texts being read is the most crucial result of using reading resources. Reading comprehension has gained attention in the realm of language acquisition and instruction due to its significance. It is therefore important to remember, though, that teaching reading comprehension to students is not a simple task, nor is it one that all teachers can teach.

Evaluation is conducted to determine the level of reading proficiency of students in public schools and shape an appropriate strategy to educate them with reading abilities. By calculating the percentage of correct responses to comprehension questions and the percentage of accurate word recognition, the

Philippine Informal Reading Inventory, or Phil-IRI, is an informal reading inventory composed of graded passages designed to determine the individual student's performance in oral reading, silent reading and listening comprehension. This manual provides information on the proper administration of the 2018 Phil-IRI (Department of Education, 2018). The students are divided into four groups according to the Phil-IRI scale: non-reader, frustrated, instructional, and independent. The results were based on a set of criteria for reading levels. Pupils that read below the frustration level had difficulty understanding the paragraph and had difficulty understanding the content. Students can only read at the instructional reading level when they are directed, but at the independent reading level, they can read on their own without the teacher's help.

According to Minshew (2023), reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading instruction, enabling students to use reading as a lifelong tool for learning. Hence, every teacher wants to help pupils improve their various reading abilities at various academic levels. As a student reads more, his comprehension and aptitude expand, and his horizon and culture broaden. Based on the theory of Gough and Tunmer in 1986, and built upon by Hoover and Gough in 1990, the "Simple View of Reading" posits that both the ability to decode words and comprehend language are required to master reading comprehension (Lexia Learning, 2022).

Seymour (2023) identified three levels of reading comprehension. These are literal level, inferential level and the critical/evaluative level. In the Literal Level, it is simply what the text says and what actually happens in the story. This is a very important level of understanding because it provides the foundation for more advanced comprehension. It focuses on reading the passages, hearing the words or viewing the images. It involves identifying the important and essential information. With guidance, students can distinguish between the important and less important ideas.

Under the Inferential Level, this involves determining what the text means. Determining inferential meaning requires you to think about the text and draw a conclusion. The focus shifts to reading between the lines, looking at what is implied by the material under study. It requires students to combine pieces of information in order to make inferences about the author's intent and message. Guiding students to recognize these perceived relationships promotes understanding and decreases the risk of being overwhelmed by the complexities of the text being viewed, heard or read.

On the Critical Level, we analyze or synthesize information and apply it to other information. Understandings at the literal and interpretive levels are combined, reorganized and restructured at the critical level to express opinions, draw new insights and develop fresh ideas. Guiding students through the applied level shows them how to synthesize information, to read between the lines and to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts, principles, and implications presented in the text.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The researcher utilized the pre-experimental method of research. Specifically, the pretest-posttest design was used for this study. A pretest-posttest design is an experiment in which measurements are taken on individuals both before and after they were involved in some treatment (Bobbitt, 2020). Henceforth, in reference to the study, reading comprehension pretest scores of the Grade 7 students were employed as baseline data while the posttest scores were derived from the reading comprehension test employing Aligned Local Reading Materials as intervention material. A procedure to compare the results were done in order to determine the effectiveness of the intervention employed.

Subjects of the Study. The study employed thirty (30) Grade 7 students from a local elementary school in Quezon Province, Philippines. The respondents of the study were specifically identified as learners from the frustration level

group - a level at which a reader reads at less than 90% accuracy. Based on the Phil-IRI manual, students identified to be performing below level of expectation (those with a total Raw Score below 14 in the Phil-IRI GST) should undergo further assessment through the individually administered Phil-IRI graded passages (Llego, 2018).

Research Instrument. The researcher used aligned local reading materials as a research instrument. It was based on the standards set forth in the Phil-IRI manual. The material was aligned to the comprehension level of the respondents. There were twelve (12) prepared passages and each of them had fifteen (15) corresponding number of questions categorized under the four (4) literacy comprehension levels: literal understanding, inferential understanding, critical understanding, and vocabulary. The instrument was validated by experts from the Quezon Language Teachers Association (QUELTA). Below is the matrix of rating, score range and respective interpretation to interpret the test results.

RESULTS

Table 1
Matrix of Rating, Score Range and Interpretation

Rating	Score	Interpretation
90 and above	13 - 15	Excellent
85 - 89	10 - 12	Very Good
80 - 84	7 - 9	Good
75 - 79	4 - 6	Fair
70 - 74	0 - 3	Poor

Data Gathering Procedure. The study was conducted during the fourth quarter of the school year 2023-2024. The researcher initially identified the literacy comprehension level of the respondents based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) baseline test. This was used as the pretest data. On the other hand, the aligned local reading material was used as intervention reading material during the experimental period. There were twelve (12) prepared passages and each of them had corresponding numbers of questions under

reading comprehension skills; literal understanding, inferential understanding, and evaluative understanding. For ethical considerations, the researcher sought permission from the head of the school to conduct the study and submitted a letter of consent for the utilization of the instrument. After the test, retrieval of the instrument was done. Data were treated in strict confidentiality and were solely used for the purpose of the study. The data were then tabulated and submitted to the statistician for treatment.

Statistical Treatment. For better analysis, the following statistical tools were utilized. Mean and standard deviation was used to assess the performance of the respondents in their pre-test and post-test scores. To determine the significant difference of the pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents, one sample t-test was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the collated data from the respondents adequately analyzed and carefully interpreted by the researcher to establish conclusions that would help achieve the output of the present endeavor.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Pre-test Scores in Literacy Comprehension

Rating	Scores	Literal	Inferential	Critical	Vocabulary	Interpretation				
90-Above	13-15	1	3.33	-	-	Excellent				
85-89	10-12	14	46.67	-	-	Very Good				
80-84	7-9	11	36.67	8	26.67	5	16.67	4	13.33	Good
75-79	4-6	3	10	14	46.67	15	50	17	56.67	Fair
70-74	0-3	1	3.33	8	26.67	10	33.33	7	23.33	Poor
TOTAL		30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	

The frequency and percentage of respondents who fell into a certain score range, together with the accompanying interpretation of their pre-test literacy comprehension, are displayed in the table. In terms of literal knowledge, the most common score range was 10-12, 14 or 14.67% of respondents, which is categorized as "Very Good." In terms of inferential understanding, the most common score range was 4-6, 14 or 46.67% of respondents, which is categorized as "Fair." According to the table, the majority of respondents received "Fair" ratings,

which are between 4-6, 15 or 50%. The respondents' vocabulary scores, which ranged from 4-6 to 17 or 56.67%, were similar to those for inferential understanding and critical understanding. They similarly fell into the "Fair" category.

Based on the results, it indicates that the literacy comprehension of the respondents is basic understanding of a text or the literal comprehension. The respondents are able to locate the answer directly from the text.

It also shows that vocabulary, inferential, and critical understanding of the students fell under "Fair". If the respondents do not understand the meaning of a word, and the inference depends on the meaning, making an inference is difficult.

Students may struggle with this assignment if they don't know what they do, if they do know but are unsure of how to communicate it, or if they do both. Knowing these challenges helps teachers provide teaching, and they can and should use this knowledge (Feng & Chen, 2016). Reading challenges Children with mixed reading challenges experience literacy classes differently depending on a number of circumstances.

Reading resources from the area offer instances of language use in regular contexts. They might be employed to pique the learner's interest more. They can remind students that there are people in the world who speak the target language on a daily basis. Reading materials that are aligned locally can teach readers about the target culture and present that culture's viewpoint on a problem or occurrence.

The rich language included in regional reading materials offers a source of input that is necessary for language learners to acquire the language. The text itself and the student must negotiate meaning. Because readers, viewers, and listeners need context in addition to content to interpret and understand what they read, see, or hear, kids gain from deriving meaning from age-appropriate, locally relevant reading texts

that match their language proficiency (with scaffolding as needed).

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Post-test Scores in Literacy Comprehension

Rating	Scores	Literal		Inferential		Critical		Vocabulary		Interpretation
90-Above	13-15	12	40	-	-	1	3.33	3	10	Excellent
85-89	10-12	14	46.67	16	53.33	5	16.67	17	56.67	Very Good
80-84	7-9	3	10	13	43.33	15	50	9	30	Good
75-79	4-6	1	3.33	1	3.33	9	30	1	3.33	Fair
70-74	0-3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Poor
TOTAL		30	100	30	100	30	100	30	100	

The frequency and percentage of respondents who fell into a certain score range, together with the accompanying interpretation of their pre-test literacy comprehension, are displayed in the table. The most typical score range—10–12—is designated as "Very Good."

Based on the results, it indicates that the literacy comprehension of the respondents is basic understanding of a text or the literal comprehension. The respondents are able to locate the answer directly from the text. The respondents can think beyond what the author has explicitly stated in a passage and look for those details that are implied or hinted. They can make judgments about what they are reading based on an evaluation and information presented in a reading passage. It also shows that the literacy comprehension of the respondents had improved during post-test although critical understanding fell under "Good."

The use of local reading materials offered familiarity with the materials to the learners. That familiarity helped the learners achieve better understanding and enhance their performance in learning English. When students are provided with local reading materials that are relevant to their own language and culture, they show improvements in their ability to focus on the lesson, actively participate in the learning process, and apply reading strategies. Additionally, local reading materials with a readability level appropriate for the students' literacy level had a significant impact on their reading ability and vocabulary retention.

Therefore, using local reading materials can enhance reading comprehension and vocabulary development in language learners and that is why those students who fell under "fair" improved the literacy comprehension level and most of them moved to "good and very good".

Mahabadi (2013) investigated how Iranian EFL students learned using local materials. According to the study's findings, learners would benefit from the localization of materials because it would make them more comfortable and enjoyable. A 2009 study by Erten and Razi examined how familiarity affects reading comprehension. The study draws two conclusions: first, reading activities enhance schematic knowledge and encourage strategic reading behaviors; second, local reading materials continue to have an influence despite reading activities stimulating comprehension.

Table 4
Significant Difference between the Pre-Test and Post-Test in Literacy Comprehension before and after using the Aligned Local Reading Materials (ALRM)

Literacy Comprehension	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD					
Literal	9.27	2.5	11.47	2.24	2.2	-4.29	29	0.000	Significant
Inferential	4.9	2.2	9.63	1.73	4.73	-10.1	29	0.000	Significant
Critical	4.63	1.9	8.03	2.17	3.4	-6.87	29	0.000	Significant
Vocabulary	5.23	2.4	10.27	2.26	5.03	-9.57	29	0.000	Significant

Legend: Sig(2-tailed) ≤ 0.5 (Significant); Sig(2-tailed) ≥ 0.05 (Not Significant)

This table displays the results of a pre-test--post-test study, showing the means, standard deviations, t-values, degrees of freedom, and significance levels for four different measures. The measures are Literal Understanding, Inferential Understanding, Critical Understanding, and Vocabulary.

The pre-test mean scores for all measures are relatively low, ranging from 4.63 to 9.27. The posttest mean scores are all significantly higher, ranging from 8.03 to 11.47. The t- values for all measures are highly significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the differences between the pre-test and post-test scores are unlikely to be due to chance. The degrees of freedom are 29 for each measure, indicating a sample size of 30 respondents. Overall, these results suggest that the respondents made significant

improvements in all measures after the utilization of Aligned Local Reading Materials.

The negative t-values for each measure indicate that there was a statistically significant improvement in scores from pretest to post-test. The p-values (all less than .001) indicate that these improvements were highly unlikely to have occurred by chance alone.

The results of the study demonstrate significant improvements in respondents' literacy comprehension level across various areas.

The mean scores for Literal Understanding, Inferential Understanding, Critical Understanding, and Vocabulary all showed substantial increases from the pre-test to the post-test. Paired samples t-tests confirmed the highly significant differences between the two sets of scores for each skill, indicating that the improvements were not due to chance. These findings provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the strategies employed in enhancing literacy comprehension.

This table provides the results of paired samples t-test, which compared the mean difference between two related groups (in this case, pre-test and post-test scores) to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between them.

The "Paired Differences" column shows the mean and standard deviation of the differences between the pre-test and post-test scores for each variable measured. For example, for Literal Understanding, the mean difference is $9.27 - 11.47 = -2.2$, indicating a decrease in scores from pretest to post-test.

The "t" column shows the calculated t-statistic for each pair, which is a measure of the difference between the means divided by the standard error of the difference. A larger absolute value of t indicates a greater difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, relative to the variability of the data.

The "Sig. (2-tailed)" column provides the p-value associated with each t-test, which indicates the probability of obtaining a t-value

as extreme or more extreme than the one observed, assuming that there is no true difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. A p-value less than .05 is typically considered statistically significant, meaning that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is unlikely to be due to chance.

Overall, the table suggests that there are significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores for all variables measured, as indicated by the very small p-values (all less than .001). The results suggested that the strategies in teaching reading comprehension were effective in improving the respondents' scores on all five measures, as indicated by the significant paired differences and low p-values.

In accordance with the data found in the implementation of Aligned Local Reading Materials (ALRM) in teaching reading, the researcher concludes that it is a strategy which can assist students in their reading comprehension. It was proved by the fact that their scores from pretest to post-test had an improvement especially in inferential, critical, and vocabulary aspects. The ALRM made students to make meaning and become creative in answering questions because all the passages were simple, hence, reduce students' difficulties on their reading comprehension and made it easier for them to find out the answer either explicitly or implicitly. Through ALRM, the students can realize that the answers of questions do not only come from the text itself but also can be related with students' own experience and knowledge. The use of ALRM in reading activity also gives motivation and stimulation to students to read and understand the information of the text by predicting what the text tells about based on the title. Furthermore, the teacher tells the students about how to find the answers of questions that make it easier to get the point of the text they read.

It was shown from the enthusiasm of students in giving responses and answering the questions related to the text to explore their

knowledge. The distinction of students' answers is an effect of students' background knowledge.

The use of ALRM also provided motivation and stimulation for students to read and understand the information in the text by predicting what it was about based on the title. Moreover, ALRM encouraged students to participate more actively in the teaching and learning process, as shown by their enthusiasm in responding to the teacher's questions during pre-reading activities. The distinction of students' answers is likely due to their background knowledge. Therefore, implementing ALRM in teaching reading can be a beneficial strategy for improving students' literacy comprehension and increasing their participation in the learning process.

By using the local texts, the students generally attested to an improvement in their comprehension skills and their development as proficient readers. Additionally, they insisted that they had been able to correctly pronounce the terms they had learnt. More intriguingly, because they were often trying to make connections between what they already knew and the surroundings, the students were observed to have developed their critical thinking abilities. They also highlighted being able to share their newfound knowledge from the literature included in the materials with friends and family.

Conclusion. The initial assessment of Grade 7 learners' literacy comprehension revealed a significant number of respondents performing poorly in various areas, such as literal understanding, inferential understanding, critical understanding, and lastly vocabulary knowledge into ordinal series. These results highlight the need for targeted support and strategies to address these skill gaps. Only a small percentage of respondents obtained excellent and very good scores, indicating room for improvement.

Following the implementation of reading comprehension strategies to Grade 7 learners, there has been a noticeable improvement in performance compared to the previous

assessment. The percentage of participants scoring in the higher ranges of excellent and very good has increased across different levels, literal understanding, inferential understanding, critical understanding, and lastly vocabulary knowledge into ordinal series. However, the majority of respondents still fall within the fair and good ranges, suggesting the need for continued support and intervention in literal understanding, inferential understanding, critical understanding, and lastly vocabulary knowledge.

The application of strategy like utilization of local reading materials yielded significant improvements in all assessed levels and the overall scores of the respondents. The differences in mean scores between the pretest and posttest were statistically significant, indicating the positive effects of these strategies. Focusing on crucial reading comprehension competencies such as vocabulary knowledge, context clues, identifying the main idea and key details, and sequencing a passage into ordinal series, these strategies have the potential to significantly enhance students' reading abilities.

Recommendations. Teachers as curriculum makers and implementers may craft and provide the supplemental materials applicable to the implementation of distance learning and, at the same time, address the needs of the learners. Teachers may craft and provide the supplemental materials applicable to the literacy comprehension level of the students and, at the same time, address the needs of the learners. The administration may provide an avenue for the teachers to develop skills in crafting supplemental materials. Additionally, they could provide a budget for the utilization of the materials' reproduction as a strategy for the learners. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct additional studies that explore a broader range of teaching strategies in reading and their impact on reading comprehension competence. Investigating the effectiveness of different instructional methods, intervention programs, or technology-based approaches can contribute to a deeper understanding of

how-to best support students' reading comprehension development.

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