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Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit (CERPT): Enhance Learners' English Reading Proficiency

Dr. Irene C. Culaste-Quimbo

Abstract

The Department of Education has introduced numerous intervention and remediation programs to address the reading needs of learners. Despite these, data showed that majority of the learners still have reading problems when they reach higher grade levels. Henceforth, the study experimented on the innovation – Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit (CERPT) to help the learners of Kibacania Elementary School improved their reading ability level. All the pupils were exposed to CERPT. A pre-experimental research design was employed in this study. Findings revealed that the learners' reading ability level enhanced from frustration to instructional. There was a significant difference in the learners' reading ability levels before and after exposure to CERPT. Thus, the study commends the use of CERPT to help in the improvement of the learners' reading ability level.

Keywords: contextualized, reading ability level, reading toolkit, frustration, instructional

1. Introduction

Success in reading is critical to the success in school and reading problems will influence every facet of a child's academic achievement. Therefore, early reading is so important. Children who learn to read early go on to develop exceptional reading skills and achieve greater academic success in school. When kids fall behind in reading, they also lag in other subject areas, and will struggle with schoolwork. They become discouraged, lose motivation, fall further behind, and it becomes a vicious cycle downwards.

DepEd has presented programs to affect the reading needs of learners. It issued DepEd Order No. 45 s. 2002 or Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) as a national program with a goal that every child will be a reader by the time, they finish grade three. Numerous intervention and remediation programs had been conducted by teachers to address the call of DepEd. However, data showed that most of the learners reaching grades four and above still have difficulties in their reading proficiency level.

In fact, the Philippine – Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) English Post-Test result in Kibacania Elementary School for the academic year 2018–2019 revealed that 24% of the grades four to six learners were frustrated readers, 31% were instructional readers, and 36% were independent readers. When examined closely

by the class advisers through the individual oral reading of graded passages, it was found out that the frustrated readers were having word recognition problems on words with consonant blends and consonant digraphs. It was also found out that both frustrated and instructional readers had problems with fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension. This result emerges and replicates a depressing level of reading proficiency by the learners.

Krause et al. (2016) [1] conversed that the use of content contextualization is supported by three principles: prior knowledge, promoting conceptual change, and promoting metacognition. Firstly, contextualized content instruction activates the learners' prior knowledge and promote more effective problem solving. Student can retain information better if things can be related to their daily life. Secondly, an improvement in learning is evident when content contextualization activities are interactive and engaging that motivates students with a concept relevance. Thirdly, contextualization of content helps students reflect on their learning to link ideas from a recognizable tangible context of an abstract idea so they can distinguish their own personal association to these ideas.

Bonganciso, 2016 [2] conducted a study on the effects of Contextualized Teaching and Learning on the reading comprehension performance of the thirty-three Bachelor of Science in Information Technology students. Results revealed that there was a significant increase on the reading comprehension performance of the students from pretest to posttest. Hence, positive effects on the learners' reading comprehension performance are visible when reading tasks given were contextualized.

Subsequently, this gave light to the researcher to design a Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit (CERPT) to address the English reading needs of the learners. Reading resources shall be within the concern and within the context of the learners to foster higher performance in reading proficiency.

Particularly, the purpose of this study was to see if the use of CERPT greatly enhances the English reading proficiency level of grades one to six learners in Kibacania Elementary School for the academic year 2019–2020. Thereby making them independent readers.

2. Action research questions

The study aims to help the grades one to six learners of Kibacania Elementary School in the academic year 2019–2020 enhance their English reading proficiency level through the Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit. Thereby making them independent readers.

The research questions providing focus for this study are:

1. What is the English reading proficiency level of grades one to six learners in Kibacania Elementary School in terms of word reading and comprehension before and after using the Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit?
2. Is there a significant increase in the English reading proficiency level of grades one to six learners in terms of word reading and comprehension after using the Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit?

3. Hypothesis of the study

The hypothesis of this study was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant increase in the English reading proficiency level of grades one to six learners in terms of word reading and comprehension after using the Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit.

4. Description of Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit (CERPT)

The Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit (CERPT) is an English reading resource made by the researcher. This is an initiative to address the gap in English reading proficiency levels of the Kibacania Elementary School learners from grade one to grade six. It focuses on the development of phonemic awareness, beginning reading, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

The CERPT consists of four workbooks: the phonemic awareness for workbook 1, beginning reading for workbook 2, word recognition and comprehension for workbook 3, and developing reading comprehension for workbook 4.

The first workbook which is the Phonemic Awareness was designed to help the struggling readers memorize all the consonant letter names and sounds. This workbook offers brilliant exercise with phonemic awareness skills for beginning and ending sounds. One of the most important Kindergarten skills is complete memorization of all consonant letter sounds since this is the backbone to reading success in first grade. It is also recommended that this toolkit be reviewed for the first month of first grade before any word reading takes place.

Phonemic Awareness denotes to being able to recognize where a certain sound occurs in the word: beginning, middle, or end. It is a critical skill for spelling unknown words and is helpful in deciphering new reading words. Children who do not have satisfactory phonemic awareness skills will not only suffer slower reading progress but will become severely frustrated when trying to spell words while writing sentences, paragraphs, or stories.

The second workbook is on the development of Beginning Reading. It was designed to help the grade one and struggling readers how to blend the sound of every letter to read the word or what we call decoding. It utilized the “stop at the vowel” strategy and consists of five parts. The pupils would learn how to read CVC words.

The third workbook is the Word Recognition and Comprehension Development. It includes short vowel words in CVC pattern, consonant blends, consonant digraphs, long vowel words ending in silent e, words with vowel digraphs, and words with vowel diphthongs. This workbook is designed for the grades two and three pupils as well as the struggling readers in grades four, five and six.

Finally, the fourth workbook is the Developing Reading Comprehension. It includes graded reading comprehension passages that addresses the literal, inferential and critical skills. This toolkit was designed to augment the English reading proficiency level of grades four, five and six learners as well as of the struggling readers.

5. Methodology

A pre-experimental research design was employed in this study. All the participants in the study were exposed to the innovation which was the use of Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit. The Phil-IRI assessment tool pre-test and post-test result were utilized for data analysis.

Purposive sampling was employed in determining the participants of this study who were the grades one to six learners of Kibacania Elementary School for the academic year 2019–2020. **Table 1** shows the detailed breakdown of the participants of this study. The study was conducted on July 1, 2019 to December 12, 2019.

The Phil-IRI Assessment Tool pretest and posttest adopted from DepEd Phil-IRI Manual 2018 for grades four to six were utilized as well as the Phil-IRI Manual 2011–2012 for grades one to three were used to determine the reading proficiency level of the participants in this study before and after the implementation of the innovation. The Phil-IRI reading test uses predetermined set of criteria in identifying the reading level of each student for each passage. These criteria include the percentage of word recognition accuracy and the percentage of correct answers to comprehension questions.

To calculate the word reading score in percentage, formula 1 below was used.

Equation 1: Word reading score

$$\text{Word Reading Score} = \frac{(\text{total number of words in the passage} - \text{number of words miscues})}{\text{total number of words in the passage}} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

To compute the reading comprehension score in percentage, formula 2 was followed.

Equation 2: Reading comprehension score

$$\text{Reading Comprehension Score} = \frac{\text{number of correct answers}}{\text{number of questions}} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

To determine the proficiency level of learners in word reading as well as in reading comprehension, the percentage scores were analyzed following the rating scale shown in **Table 2** basing from Phil-IRI Manual, 2018.

Grade level	Male	Female	Total
I	16	10	26
II	8	10	18
III	10	4	14
IV	10	6	16
V	16	11	27
VI	6	7	13
Total	66	48	114

Table 1.
Participants of the study.

Proficiency level	Word reading		Reading comprehension	
	Score (in %)	Mean score	Score (in %)	Mean score
Independent (Ind)	97–100%	97.00–100	80–100%	80.00–100
Instructional (Ins)	90–96%	90.00–96.99	59–79%	59.00–79.99
Frustration (F)	1–89%	1.00–89.99	1–58%	1.00–58.99
Non-reader (NR)	0%	0.00–0.99	0%	0.00–0.99

Table 2.
Criteria in determining the learners' proficiency level in word reading and reading comprehension.

Reading proficiency level	Word reading level	Reading comprehension level
Independent (Ind)	Independent (Ind)	Independent (Ind)
Instructional (Ins)	Independent (Ind)	Instructional (Ins)
Instructional (Ins)	Instructional (Ins)	Independent (Ind)
Frustration (F)	Instructional (Ins)	Frustration (F)
Frustration (F)	Frustration (F)	Instructional (Ins)
Frustration (F)	Frustration (F)	Frustration (F)

Table 3.
Criteria in determining the learners' reading proficiency level.

Afterwards, the learner's reading proficiency level in general was determined using the criteria presented in **Table 3** basing from Phil-IRI Manual, 2018 [3].

Further, descriptive statistics particularly mean was employed to answer question number one. While inferential statistics specifically paired t-test was utilized to treat question number two.

6. Results/findings of the study

6.1 Reading proficiency level of learners before and after using CERPT

The reading proficiency level of learners in general and in terms of word reading as well as in reading comprehension are presented in **Table 4**.

Legend:

Proficiency level	Word reading mean score	Reading comprehension mean score
Independent (Ind)	97.00–100	80.00–100
Instructional (Ins)	90.00–96.99	59.00–79.99
Frustration (F)	1.00–89.99	1.00–58.99
Non-Reader (NR)	0.00–0.99	0.00–0.99

Reading proficiency level	Word reading level	Reading comprehension level
Independent (Ind)	Independent (Ind)	Independent (Ind)
Instructional (Ins)	Independent (Ind)	Instructional (Ins)
Instructional (Ins)	Instructional (Ins)	Independent (Ind)
Frustration (F)	Instructional (Ins)	Frustration (F)
Frustration (F)	Frustration (F)	Instructional (Ins)
Frustration (F)	Frustration (F)	Frustration (F)

As gleaned in **Table 4**, the reading proficiency level in general for grades two to six is frustration except in grade one which is non-reader before they used the Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit.

In terms of word reading, the proficiency level of grades two to six is frustration with mean values of 46.67, 41.79, 52.81, 57.96, and 64.85 respectively. While for

Grade level	Pre-test					Post-test				
	Word reading		Reading comprehension		Reading proficiency level	Word reading		Reading comprehension		Reading proficiency level
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level		Mean	Level	Mean	Level	
I	0.00	NR	0.00	NR	NR	47.77	F	31.23	F	F
II	46.67	F	27.72	F	F	81.89	F	61.56	Ins	F
III	41.79	F	29.14	F	F	90.00	Ins	60.29	Ins	Ins
IV	52.81	F	36.25	F	F	91.69	Ins	61.88	Ins	Ins
V	57.96	F	39.81	F	F	81.30	F	55.04	F	F
VI	64.85	F	42.38	F	F	91.08	Ins	65.54	Ins	Ins

Table 4.
Reading proficiency level of learners before and after using CERPT.

grade one level, their word reading proficiency level is non-reader with the mean value of 0.00.

In terms of reading comprehension, the proficiency level of grades two to six is also frustration as supported with its mean values of 27.72, 29.14, 36.25, 39.81, and 42.38 respectively. As to grade one, they were still non-reader as supported with its mean value of 0.00.

After the learners were exposed to the use of Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit, some developments were observed in general particularly in grades one, three, four, and six. The reading proficiency level in grade one improved to frustration from being non-reader, and the grades three, four, and six improved to instructional level from frustration level. For grades two and five, the reading proficiency level remains in the frustration level though an increase in the mean scores of both word reading and reading comprehension are visible.

In terms of word reading post-test result, the grade three (mean = 90.00), grade four (mean = 91.69), and grade six (mean = 91.08) learners' word reading proficiency level is instructional as strengthened with its corresponding mean values. There was also an alleviation in grade one (mean = 47.77) from non-reader to frustration as supported by its mean value. As to grades two (mean = 81.89) and five (mean = 81.30) levels, the word reading proficiency level remains frustration nonetheless the mean values increased compared to the pre-test mean values.

In terms of the learners' reading comprehension proficiency level in post-test, it progresses to instructional level particularly in grade two (mean = 61.56), grade three (mean = 60.29, grade four (mean = 61.88), and grade six (mean = 65.54). For grade one (mean = 31.23), the mean value has increased as well as its proficiency level to frustration from non-reader. As to grade five (mean = 55.04), the mean value also increased but the proficiency level remains frustration.

Results implies that the contextualization of reading materials helps the learners in the development of their word reading skills as well as their reading comprehension skills. The learners were able to make connections to what they were reading. The lesson or the reading text were related to the learners' interest and were familiar to them since they were able to somehow comprehend on it. As what Perin (2011) [4] suggests that lower-skilled schoolchildren benefit from contextualization, not because it helps them become flexible students but because it upsurges their mastery of basic skills as well as rises the probability of transmission of basic skills to content courses that is not happening in old-style, decontextualized learning situations.

6.2 Significant increase on learners' reading proficiency level after using CERPT

The significant increase on learners' reading proficiency level after using the CERPT was determined using paired t-test. **Table 5** shows that there is indeed a significant increase in the reading proficiency level of grades one to six learners of Kibacania Elementary School in terms of word reading and reading comprehension. The word reading t-value is -8.588 with a significant value of 0.000, which means that it is highly significant at 0.05 level. The same is true in reading comprehension with t-value of -9.507 and significant value of 0.000. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant increase in the English reading proficiency level of grades one to six learners in terms of word reading and comprehension after using the Contextualized English Reading Proficiency Toolkit is rejected.

This result is in consonance to the study of Bonganciso (2016) [2]. Results of his study revealed that there was a significant increase of the reading performance of the students from pretest to posttest after using contextualized reading materials.

Test	N	Word reading				Reading comprehension			
		\bar{X}	SD	t-value	Sig	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	Sig
Pre-test	114	44.01	23.04	-8.588	.000	29.22	15.43	-9.507	.000
Post-test	114	80.57	16.71			55.92	12.56		

Table 5.

Significant increase on learners' reading proficiency level in terms of word reading and reading comprehension after using CERPT.

Henceforth, contextualizing the reading tasks of the learners had positive effects on their reading performance. Contextualized teaching and learning are recommended in helping learners improve their performance in reading.

7. Reflection

I learned that teaching reading comprehension is difficult especially when the learner has difficulty in word recognition because the teacher needs to go back to the basics of teaching reading. As a result, the teacher and learner need to double time in order to cope up with the competencies that were not yet developed by the learner. If the teacher and the learner will not double time, the learner will be left behind of the competencies and skills that he/she is expected to learn in his/her present grade level.

I realized then that teachers in every grade level must do all means in order to materialize the competencies needed by the learner so he/she will be ready in the next grade level. By that, the learner will have more time mastering the competencies he/she needed.

The facilitative aspect of the action research that contributed much to its success was the cooperation of my colleagues and learners. The teachers were very much cooperative in every activity and instructions given to them were followed without any complain. The learners were looking forward for the reading time every Tuesday and Thursday, they keep reminding me to have our reading time every time I missed it.

It would have been better if the intervention was done for the whole school year so there will be an ample time to make up with those missed reading competencies by the learners in the previous grade level.

8. Conclusions

Based on the findings delineated in the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

In terms of word reading, the learners' reading proficiency level before using the Contextualized English reading Proficiency Toolkit was non-reader for grade one, and frustration for grades two to six. After using the CERPT, the proficiency level improved to instructional for grade three, grade four, as well as in grade six. An improvement to frustration level was also observed for grade one. While it remained in the frustration level for grades two and five.

In terms of reading comprehension, the learners' reading proficiency level before using the CERPT was non-reader for grade one and frustration for grades two to six. After using the CERPT, the learners' proficiency level developed to instructional level for grades two, three, four, and six. A development was also

evident for grade one from non-reader to frustration level. However, for grade five, the proficiency level remains frustration.

There was a significant increase on the learners' reading proficiency level in terms of word reading as well as in reading comprehension after using the CERPT.

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