



Teaching to Read: The Insights and Voices of Reading Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research examined the strategies and challenges faced by ten private high school English teachers in the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Candon City, Ilocos Sur, during the 2023-2024 school year, using audio-recorded interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings of this study revealed that the private school English teachers of the SDO of Candon City, Ilocos Sur, applied six (6) strategies in teaching reading, namely technology integration (ICT), game-based instruction, reading connections, probing strategies, contemplative, and collaborative reading. Moreover, the challenges they have encountered include Fluency in Reading, Comprehension Activities, Lexical Skill Development, Demotivating Mindset, and Reading Instructional Strategies. The thematic analysis of this study can help teachers provide a vast amount of knowledge on effective teaching strategies to address the language needs of their learners. Based on the findings and conclusions arrived at, the following actions are recommended: English teachers should apply these teaching strategies more often in their reading class to address the language barriers and deficiencies of the learners. School administrators may endorse the institutionalization of using these strategies to sustain them in teaching reading. Further studies should be conducted to generate other strategies for teaching reading. A similar study can be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the strategies using other disciplines and different participants.

Keywords: Reading Strategies, Challenges in Teaching Reading

INTRODUCTION

Effective reading instruction is crucial for academic success and personal enrichment in today's information-driven society. Teachers must employ effective teaching strategies to develop strong reading skills and enthusiasm for reading. However, teaching reading effectively can be challenging due to the need to tailor methods to individual learners' needs. Understanding teaching tactics and obstacles is essential for creating an effective teaching environment. This study then aimed to delve into the strategies used by teachers in their reading instruction and to identify the challenges they encountered in the process. By gaining insights into the current practices and obstacles faced by teachers, it is nice to devise a way that leads to practical solutions that align with the latest research in reading instruction. Hence, this study is conceptualized.

Statement of the Problem

The main purpose of the study was to determine the strategies utilized in teaching reading and the challenges encountered by the private school teachers of the Schools Division of Candon City.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: What are the teaching strategies of teachers in teaching reading? What are the challenges of teachers in teaching reading?

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research played a pivotal role in exploring the intricate and multifaceted aspects of teaching and learning within the field of education. This research design aimed to delve into the strategies employed by teachers and the challenges they faced when teaching reading. The primary objective was to gather valuable insights from experienced teachers, which would inform the development of an effective training design to enhance reading instruction in educational settings. This research employed a qualitative research design, which emphasized a comprehensive exploration of phenomena while maintaining a naturalistic perspective. The study primarily targeted a specific population of 10 private school English teachers from the Schools Division of Candon City, Ilocos Sur, namely Nicosat Colleges, Inc. (1), St. Joseph's Institute, Inc. (7), Maranatha Christian Academy (1), and St. Cecilia Early Learning Center (1), to provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences in teaching reading and the strategies they used in their reading classes. The 10 participants were professionals with at least two or more years of teaching experience in private schools that handled both Junior High School and Senior High School levels. The study focused specifically on the teaching of reading skills within the English subject curriculum. It investigated the strategies employed by teachers and the challenges they faced when teaching this skill. An interview guide served as the primary research

instrument. The interview guide was carefully designed to facilitate open-ended conversations with teachers who possessed substantial experience in teaching reading. This tool aimed to elicit detailed, rich, and context-specific information regarding the strategies and challenges associated with teaching reading. It provided a flexible framework for probing into teachers' perspectives, allowing for in-depth responses that revealed nuances in their teaching experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Technology integration (ICT). The first and frequently used strategies used by the participants is the integration of technology. This theme emphasizes the blending of conventional methods (such as direct questioning and using books) with contemporary techniques (like e-learning, using visual aids, and preparing PowerPoint presentations). The teachers recognize the value in combining both approaches to enhance the learning experience, making it more dynamic and engaging for students.

In teaching-learning process needs the right way how to teach fun and give a good motivation for students. Information Communication and Technology (ICT) is one strategy that can use in the teaching-learning process because it can be developed in the human being life and educational development. It is where the participants use ICT software or hardware to present their lessons in class. For them, technology integration contributes to captivating the interest of the learners. The following are the excerpts where the participants mentioned about the usage of technology: "...teaching strategies, I use traditional approach and at the same time the modern approach." (P3) "The strategies that I normally use are a combination of the traditional and the modern, which involves books with technologies...for them to be able to understand more... I incorporate them in our videos...So for them to be able to understand or visualize what is written on the text, I use videos." (P4) "...I am more into like questioning, direct questioning... I will show them pictures that are connected to the text that we are going to read and then a brief discussion about that picture." (P5) "...we can use the e-learning, yes, electronics. So we can use visual aids... but most of the time, it's better if we are preparing PowerPoint." (P9). Therefore, they gained many insights from the texts they studied in Reading Comprehension. Students should study reading comprehension using not only the material from their lecturer but also other sources, such as the internet or media. This can enhance their vocabulary and understanding of the text, helping them overcome obstacles in comprehending long texts. Game-based Learning (GBL). This theme highlights the strategy of incorporating games into the instructional process to make learning more enjoyable and effective. Game-based learning replaces traditional teaching techniques by fusing game elements—rules, challenges, competition, and rewards—with educational objectives. The following excerpts show how the participant used game-based learning in his reading class. "...the strategies that I use a lot or most of the time is game-based instruction... in game-based, because they are entertained, and at the same time, they are learning." (P1) Game-based learning, which underscores the advantages of interactive, captivating, and stimulating learning settings. Research has demonstrated that GBL can augment students' curiosity, emotional involvement, and eagerness to acquire knowledge, while also offering a well-rounded method for instructing academic content. The study found notable improvements in students' reading comprehension abilities. Both teachers and students expressed favorable feedback, highlighting that the use of games in delivering knowledge was captivating and stimulating, thereby improving the reading lesson. The alignment between the results of this study and the favorable outcomes reported in the Game-Based Learning group strengthens the idea that game-based learning is a promising approach for enhancing reading comprehension and fostering students' excitement for learning. This strategy is one of the common strategies employed by the teacher-participants. The excerpts of their responses in the interview are as follows: "I think it's the making connections because they are, they have their different or they have their own stories. That's why. And if I ask them something and then they can relate to that their idea will come out. I think that's the most effective one. In my class, if I think you're going to be in the same class, even if I don't ask you a question for processing when I give her, just read it. I don't always have the same problem with my own questions, but I'm going to start with the questions that are more authentic." (P5) It can also be analyzed from the excerpts that P2, P3, and P5 use the making connection strategy to facilitate better discussions, considering that their learners have reading comprehension difficulties. The participants find making connections to be an effective strategy for eliciting information and valuable experiences from the learners. They could imagine the cause and effect of the tsunami by connecting to the text they had read before, their own experience or world experience. Probing Strategies. This theme highlights the importance of using question-and-answer techniques not merely to convey information but to encourage students to explore and discover knowledge independently. It emphasizes the value of fostering an interactive learning environment where students are active participants in their own learning process. These can be recalled from the excerpt of the respondent below: "...question and answer response. Kasi nga not just about giving what I know, it is about them to explore and discover the things that I did not provide..." (P3) "...I am more into like questioning, direct questioning." (P5) Based from the statement of P3 and P5, they utilized questioning to elicit answers from their learners. They find this strategy effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of the learners because through this strategy, their learners were able to connect their background knowledge into the reading text which gave them relatable ideas to the text they read. This result is aligned to the study of Banditvilai (2020) wherein he discussed that questioning strategy, the students return to the text throughout the reading process to find the answers to the questions. Questioning helps students to clarify and comprehend what they are reading. In this strategy, asking appropriate questions permits successful readers to concentrate on the most important information of a text. Asking questions while involving in the reading process provides students with an opportunity to think about what they are reading, be active and independent readers, and be able to appropriately reflect on their reading. Contemplative Reading. This theme underscores the significance of engaging in reflective reading practices, where students are encouraged to connect personally with the text, analyze its content, and delve deeper into its meaning. Excerpts of the recorded interview of the participant is shown below: "For me personally, I prefer, how did I conduct? Um, reflective reading is one of my favorites. Um, I prefer to teach my students the importance of reflective reading which most of the students tend to neglect and some teachers as well. Um, they tend to forget the importance. Taking time to reflect what you've read and connecting to your own experiences or other knowledge is more effective. Um, I believe because they're able to connect their personal experience. They have this personal touch on the learning that they have read... It's very important

because you have this sort of immediate connection because you have to reflect. You have to, this analyzation, you have to go deeper. And try to, um, incorporate your own experiences based on the scenario or the context that you have read. And also you can also, um, add the, your, um, background knowledge in a particular topic..." (P2). Participant 2 found reflective reading more effective in improving the comprehension skills of the learners for it entails reflecting on the material and making connections between it and the learner's own experiences and knowledge. This method integrates prior information and personal experiences into the learning process, which enable the learners to make quick connections and deeper analysis. Further studies to prove the effectivity of this strategy was conduct by Chen & Lin (2024) wherein they claimed that reflections while reading indeed play a crucial role in fostering higher order thinking skills. When learners engage in reflective practices, they have the opportunity to connect with their prior knowledge and construct new concepts. Throughout the reading process, learners actively monitor their comprehension, thereby enhancing their awareness of their own thinking processes. This heightened awareness enables learners to assess their understanding and make necessary adjustments to their cognitive strategies.

Collaborative Reading. Collaborative reading is also utilized by the participants, as stated in the excerpts of the recorded interview. The teacher participants find it beneficial for students to work together and share their ideas about the reading material. Through sharing, they can also express their experiences related to the discussion. Collaborative reading activities can boost their confidence and promote an interactive way of learning. It involves letting the learners be paired in small groups to discuss the text given by the teacher and to answer questions about the text within themselves. The teacher serves as the facilitator throughout the activity, selecting the members of each group. Each group is composed of a learner who is a good reader in class and those who belong to the bottom list of good readers. This set-up provides the opportunity for members to share and collaborate on their ideas about the topic, widen their perspectives through sharing, and simultaneously build openness and friendly relationships among group members. The following are excerpts where the teachers explain how collaborative learning took place in their class. "... they can learn the paired or shared strategy because the smarter or the more fluent student can teach the student who is not yet fluent in reading... Um, since my number one problem is that, lately few of them can't read fluently, I'm really comparing them to students who are fluent in reading so that they can teach themselves..." (P1) "ahhh, so on peer discussion, I randomly picked their names as partner and I give them worksheet to answer. I let each pair analyze the the the worksheet. For example, giving them statements to analyze and then let each partner turn their have their turn to edit or analyze the statement. Which strategy have you found most effective? Siguro it's the the peer tutoring or the peer discussion because they right then and there, they're able to get the feedback. If the classmate or the partner cannot give the correct feedback or answer, I do the the immediate feedbacking or correcting of their answers." (P6) "...among the strategies given above, the most effective or useful strategies is literature circles. In where students will share their knowledge about what they have read or researched. I also found out that learners are more engaged in learning when they are in a group. And when they are being collaborated with their classmates..."(P10) It was shown from the excerpts that P1, P6, and P10 use collaborative reading strategy to facilitate better discussion, considering that their learners have reading comprehension difficulties. The participants recognized the benefits of having students work together, whether through paired reading, peer discussions, or literature circles. These methods help address individual learning needs, provide immediate feedback, and enhance engagement and understanding through shared knowledge and collaboration.

Challenges Encountered in Teaching Reading. Teachers face various challenges when teaching reading. After carefully analyzing the transcribed responses from the interviews with the teacher-participants, the common challenges they encounter in teaching reading include reading fluency of the learners, comprehension activities, lexical skills development, demotivating mindset, and reading instructional resources.

Reading Fluency. The common difficulty encountered by the participants observed that their learners are not fluent in reading. Lack of fluency in reading refers to difficulty in reading text smoothly, accurately, and with proper expression. Fluency is a key component of proficient reading and involves several elements the ability to recognize or decode words correctly, the speed at which a person reads, which should be appropriate for their age and the complexity of the text, and the use of appropriate expression and intonation, which includes reading with the right pitch, stress, and rhythm. "...Um, when it comes to teaching reading, the difficulty that I have noticed is that my students, few of them are not yet fluent in reading. (P1) "...there are still some students who are left behind may gap kung may gap talaga na they don't know how to read..." (P3) "...they don't stop when they're straight... They tend to be straight instead of being pause, long pause, no ..." (P4) "... I have a few students who are not very fluent in reading and it seems like they are hard to address now that they are in 7th grade..." (P5). The learning process is impacted when students are unable to read the sentences or problems. The participants believed that a student's inability to read indicated that they probably couldn't understand. Even worse, students are unable to produce written work. Because literacy is essential to all academic areas, they are thus unable to perform successfully. This was agreed by Ntshangase (2023) in the study about at-risk readers. At-risk readers can be characterized as having a low working memory capacity and processing capacity compared to healthy-progress readers. These learners do not meet the requirement of reading for their grade level. Thus, this study regards at-risk readers as learners who exhibit both aspects: learners who struggle to read and those who are unmotivated to read.

Comprehension Activities. It is also added to the list of common challenges encountered by the participants. Poor reading comprehension means having difficulty understanding and interpreting the meaning of written text. As they answered in the interview, the following was transcribed. "... as well as, they are, their comprehension skill is not that good because they can read, but when I ask questions about that specific text or that story that we read, um, they cannot answer properly because, they just read, but they didn't understand very well..." (P1) "... If we are honest, we have many difficulties. Once we found out, it was there in reading comprehension..." (P2) "... Their understanding, their hard to understand. I think anything, even if it's not a text, even if it's just a simple instruction like they have a hard time grasping the meaning, because you don't have to repeat it or if not, you need to granslate it to another language..." (P5) "... understanding and interpreting texts can also be charging for them..." (P8) The participants of this study observed that most of their learners have poor reading comprehension. Furthermore, Loopoo & Balfour (2021) showed that children have trouble decoding and read extremely slowly with little comprehension. This is in large part because teachers have low expectations of learners and have little understanding of the reading levels children should be achieving by the end of each term. Accordingly, if assessment strategies are adapted to detect problems with reading at the earliest possible point, certain interventions can get underway before problems with literacy affect learners' chances of academic success later in life.

Lexical Skill Development. Another common difficulty encountered by the teacher-participants in teaching reading is students having poor vocabulary skills. Limited vocabulary skills can impede communicators from effectively conveying messages, whether written or verbal. It's essential for communicators to understand the precise meanings of the words they use and be ready to substitute them appropriately if necessary. Using incorrect or

insufficient words can obscure the intended message. This also affects the reading comprehension of the learners, as stated in the excerpts of the recorded interview below. "... I think because of the vocabulary, for example, when the words are too deep, they don't understand it very well. It's hard. It's hard..." (P1) "...alam na lang nila yung mga basic words or they don't understand terminologies..." (P3) "...they will still encounter some terminologies who you find it very simple, but for them it's very hard to decipher...Even though context clues are being taught already on the lower grade, it's still a challenge for all reading teachers. For example, for me, when I always use terminologies for them to make sure that they have wide vocab so you it's always a challenge for students to understand a certain terminology, especially if it's new to them, so it's make you need to make sure that you as a teacher, you know also the meaning, so that because I know because if they don't know the terminology, they don't understand the text itself...it also affects because if there is poor vocabulary, it affects poor comprehension..." (P7) "...especially when they lack vocabulary or knowledge..." (P8) "... If they do not know that word, because it is inevitable that when you read selection or stories or any reading materials, there are really unfamiliar words that you are going to encounter. So, I always say, to look for the meaning of that word. Mm-hmm. Yes please. So, why not use Google to find the meaning of that word? (P9)

Demotivating Mindset. Lack of motivation affects the acquisition of knowledge and skills by students, even if they have outstanding abilities. Motivation is the first condition for completing a learning task and the driving force behind the educational process (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016). Based on the excerpts of the recorded interview, the teacher-participants found it hard to capture the attention of the learners and encourage their active participation in reading texts. This significantly affects the reading comprehension of the learners, as stated in the excerpts of the recorded interview below. "...first thing first of all the first or the main reason or the main problem that I encountered is the the students don't have that innate motivation and under that innate motivation may mga branches yan since they don't have that innate motivation to read ganyan kasi it is not their hobby reading so I ask them who are you are a fan of reading ganyan is the teacher happy isa dalawa lang yung ganyan nag-read before yan I ask them since that is the main problem since it is not their hobby syempre it is difficult for me as a teacher to make it as their hobby di ba kasi nga hobby is something that you really want to do di ba. so since reading is not their hobby talaga what i'm doing is i'm trying to make it as their hobby so I ask them that aside from these stories aside from these poems aside from these letters you can actually be a writer as well ganyan..." (P3) "... It's hard for you to convince them to read especially since you gave them an assignment especially in reading and writing we even in the 21st century literature so it's hard for them to convince you to read or assignment you, they'd rather watch his adaptation than read it that's my biggest problem really..." (P5) "Teaching reading is challenging because it's hard to maintain the focus of my students especially when reading long passages or literature...It's also hard to keep students engaged and motivated..." (P8) "It's inevitable that they really all really really want to read (forced). Mm-hmm. Yes... That they're all really so eager to read, or there's that, that's what we call it, there's theirs, that's the desire to read..." (P9) "...of course lack of motivation for the students to read because they are distracted from technology and other activities that lead them to become lazy..." (P10) As stated by P3, P5, P8, P9, and P10, the lack of motivation to participate in the reading class is one of the common problems they encounter which greatly affects the reading performance of the learners. This claim is supported by Relleve (2023), as he stated that some of the challenges met by the teachers in teaching reading having low levels of class participation. This hesitance to participate in class because of reading difficulties slows down the teaching and learning process. Participants, to address the situation, translate the discussion in a language much more familiar to the learners such as Tagalog even if the medium of instruction is in English. The participants observed that their learners' poor reading comprehension was influenced by their low self-esteem. The excerpt of their responses are as follows: "...particularly, they lack confidence. They lack self-esteem to express their insights..." (P6) This finding was aligned to Rosalina & Nasrullah (2019) study where they claimed that self-esteem is one of the psychological factors which influence the students to learn about language. They found out that learners prefer watching the movie adaptations of a certain reading material if it is available. "...our students nowadays are not fun when it comes to reading, they are fond of viewing, so they prefer watching..."(P7) At this time, technological sophistication is equipped with cell phones with various kinds of social media, which is one of the causes of the low interest in reading among students. Students prefer to play on their cell phones and watch and listen to YouTube or TikTok to find information through videos (Fyfield, 2022). This implies that it causes students to watch and listen more than they look for information by reading. This finding is aligned with the findings of Musta'aliyah et al., (2022) in which the result of this research from the correlation analysis based on product-moment was a positive correlation between students' reading interest and reading comprehension. Furthermore, it was classified as moderate based on questionnaire analysis. Students were only interested in certain books and genres, only some of them often read books even though it is only 15-30 minutes and only to fill their spare time, and sometimes they felt bored doing it. In addition, students read not from them but when the teacher asks for a reading assignment. Meanwhile, based on the test reading comprehension analysis, students' score was a medium category. Because they cannot answer when there is a question whose answer is not in the text, as if they cannot answer the question of how the author feels, what is the author's opinion or this comprehension focuses on the readers' ability to find explicit information. Reading Instructional Resources. The participant observed that having a limited access to diverse and age-appropriate reading materials can hinder the development of fundamental literacy skills, including vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Students without sufficient reading resources often struggle to keep up with their peers academically. This can lead to lower grades and a decreased likelihood of continuing education. The excerpt of the participant's response is as follows: "...limited resources in whether are insufficient access to quality reading materials technology or support that can hinder effective teaching..." (P10)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: 1) Improving learners' reading skills is a multifaceted effort, requiring a combination of effective strategies and supportive learning environments. By implementing innovative and comprehensive approaches to reading instruction, such as technology integration (ICT), game-based instruction, reading connections, probing strategies, contemplative reading, and collaborative reading, educators can meet the diverse needs of learners and promote a deeper understanding of the text in different contexts. 2)

Additionally, addressing underlying issues such as fluency in reading, lexical skill development, comprehension activities, demotivating mindset, and reading instructional resources can be addressed through targeted interventions and engaging activities. These interventions can further strengthen reading skills and help learners overcome obstacles. Ultimately, by prioritizing individualized support, creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with text, and cultivating a love of reading, educators can help learners become confident and competent readers. This will equip them with the necessary aptitude, skills, and abilities to succeed in school and beyond. Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were drawn; 1) To address the challenges and shortcomings of their students, the study suggests that English teachers employ these reading tactics more frequently in their classes, as indicated by the research findings and conclusions drawn 2) Additionally, to sustain students' acquisition of reading fluency in the classroom, school administrators may support the institutionalization of specific instructional techniques to further develop reading instruction methodologies. However, further research is needed to investigate the efficacy of these tactics with other individuals and in different disciplines.

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