Enhancing Reading Comprehension Skills of Grade 6 Learners through Interactive Reading Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the efficiency of different interactive reading strategies in improving the reading comprehension of Grade 6 learners. In particular, the study had implemented Reciprocal Teaching, Think-Aloud, Jigsaw, and Graphic Organizers to test their combined effect on the learners' abilities to understand and analyze texts. The study used a one-group pre-test and post-test experimental design, involving 29 Grade 6 learners from Calubian South Central School. The intervention consisted of two weeks of weekly sessions where the learners were engaged in these interactive strategies. Results from pre- and post-tests showed that improvements in reading comprehension were significant, as seen from a paired samples t-test (t = -8.070, p < 0.001). Before the intervention, most learners were at the frustration level; however, after the intervention, a considerable shift was noted, with 41.38% of learners achieving an independent level. A number of learners still struggled, but the intervention was effective in moving learners from frustration to instructional levels. Therefore, it infers that the strategies had a positive effect on the learners. The study concluded that integrating such interactive strategies facilitates student engagement and improves comprehension, hence offering a possible framework for reading interventions in upper elementary education.

Keywords: interactive reading, reciprocal teaching, think-aloud, jigsaw, graphic organizers

1. Introduction

Comprehension is one of the main skills in reading and plays a central role in students' success throughout their education. However, for Grade 6 learners, this skill becomes very crucial once they begin to encounter increasingly complex academic material. Being able to comprehend texts effectively is not just central to language arts but to all subjects. Nevertheless, at this stage, most of the learners have difficulties fully comprehending the material they read, which adversely affects their performance across the curriculum. At this point in their learning, when it becomes more complex, it is necessary that teaching strategies be instituted to help them enhance their reading comprehension skills.

This study investigates the enhancement of reading comprehension skills among Grade 6 learners through the employment of four interactive reading strategies, namely Reciprocal Teaching, Think-Aloud, Jigsaw, and Graphic Organizers. The four strategies are bound to deepen the engagement of the learners and enhance their understanding of what they read. By exploring how these four interactive reading strategies can work together, this study is focused on discovering how they might better improve learners' reading skills, making them confident and capable readers.

Reciprocal teaching is a technique that puts learners at the forefront in their learning. As suggested by Palincsar and Brown (1984), the learners are grouped to predict, question, clarify, and summarize the text. Over the last couple of decades, RT has been found to be very effective in reading comprehension. According to a study by Yang & Liu (2019), RT was very helpful for middle school learners with difficulties in reading. The approach allows learners to enact a "teacher" role in discussions, making them more engaged and able to process information at higher levels, thus increasing their comprehension. A study by Miller & Glover (2017) supported this, when it observed that RT aids in both understanding and building learners' confidence in reading.

Another strategy that will eventually make learners more aware of their thought processes while reading is Think-Aloud. This technique involves the verbalization of thoughts of learners while reading, which allows them to reflect on their understanding and recognize areas in which they may be confused. According to Zhou and Xu (2017), Think-Aloud helps learners engage in deeper reading by leading them to think more deeply about what they are reading. As pointed out by Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), such a method encourages learners to monitor their comprehension more actively. Green and Meilleur (2020) further noted that Think-Alouds were particularly useful for learners experiencing challenges in self-regulation, as it helped them become more aware of their cognitive processes and adjust their strategies while reading.

The Jigsaw method is a cooperative learning approach where the learners are divided into small groups. Each group works with a different part of a text, and later, learners regroup to share what they have learned so that they themselves can piece together the full understanding of the material. In the study conducted by Vargas and Saldana (2017), they found that Jigsaw indeed helped learners understand better what they were reading, especially when they

had to explain the content to their peers. While individually working, a learner improves his comprehension and solidifies his learning while teaching others. This was supported by findings from Liu and Wang (2019), saying that Jigsaw allows learners to take responsibility for their learning while enhancing social and cognitive skills. Learners are able to build critical thinking skills in this method, given that discussion and analysis of a text have to take place, making it an efficient way to develop reading comprehension.

Another effective tool in learning for reading comprehension includes graphic organizers. These are learning tools that break down information into smaller parts using concept maps, Venn diagrams, or storyboards. Bai and Wang (2015) noted how graphic organizers helped learners in the identification of key ideas and how these ideas were related to other concepts through the use of comparison, contrast, or cause-and-effect relationships, thus improving understanding and retention. Lee et al. (2019) reported a significant increase in learner comprehension when graphic organizers were used in conjunction with other reading strategies. The tools allow learners to organize their thoughts into a systematic way that makes it simpler to connect ideas and retain important details. Gonzalez and Reyes (2021) also note that these graphic tools assist the learners in synthesizing and comprehending the text much better, thus providing a clearer pathway toward subsequent comprehension of complex texts.

Recent studies indicate that when put together, several interactive strategies can truly have a powerful impact on reading comprehension. Xu et al. (2020) demonstrated that using Reciprocal Teaching, Think-Aloud, Jigsaw, and Graphic Organizers in a complementary way makes the learning environment active, where learners take part in reading, reflect upon their own understandings, and discuss it with their peers. Cummings and Orton (2018) also note that when these strategies are combined, learners show clear gains in comprehension of the text, critical thinking, and engagement in the reading process. The combinations of these methodologies create a rich, dynamic learning experience for the learners and allow them to grasp concepts on a higher level and retain more information.

Zhang and Zhao furthered this in 2021 by proving that the application of a combination of interactive strategies helps the learner to approach reading from different angles, which does not only enhance their comprehension but also enhances their capability to think more critically over what they read. The study found that it was possible for learners to analyze and make informed evaluations about texts upon exposure to multiple strategies, hence helping them develop a vital skill while progressing through school.

Consequently, the development of reading comprehension in Grade 6 learners has paramount importance in their academic pursuits. The adoption of different interactive strategies of Reciprocal Teaching, Think-Aloud, Jigsaw, and Graphic Organizers can best be combined as a means to develop reading comprehension. All these approaches will not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the material by learners but also help in critical thinking, collaboration, and metacognitive awareness. A combination of such methods is likely to create a dynamic, interactive learning environment that stimulates learners to become active participants in learning and more confident, independent readers. This study seeks to explore how these strategies might be combined to support Grade 6 learners in developing better reading comprehension and thus prepare them for challenges in subsequent academic work.

Significance of the Study. The findings will help teachers and curriculum planners design instructional strategies to include learners in reading actively, which would enhance comprehension, academic performance, and dispositions about reading. Furthermore, the study contributes to the literature relating to interactive reading pedagogy at the upper elementary level.

2. Objectives

1. Discuss how interactive reading strategies intervention is implemented to improve the reading comprehension performance of the learners.

2. Establish the learners' performance before and after the intervention by comparing pretest and posttest results.

3. Ascertain the difference between the pretest and posttest scores to establish the effect of the intervention on reading comprehension ability among the learners.

4. Develop an implementation plan or sustainability plan.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored essentially on the Social Constructivism Theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and Metacognitive Theory by Flavell (1979). It has been emphasized that learning is a social process where knowledge could be co-constructed through interaction. When learners think about their thinking while reading, they become strategic and reflective readers.

Conceptual Model:

Interactive Strategies - Reciprocal Teaching + Think-Aloud + Jigsaw + Graphic Organizers → More Engagement and Strategy Use → Better Reading Comprehension.

3. Methodology

This study investigated ways of enhancing Grade 6 learners' reading comprehension by incorporating an interactive approach to reading. The researcher used a quantitative approach and, specifically, a one-group pre-test and post-test experimental design, whereby the influence of the interactive approach on reading strategies was measured by testing the ability of the learners to understand texts before and after the intervention. By comparing their

performance before and after the intervention, the study aimed to show whether these strategies could lead to improvements in reading comprehension among the learners.

It involved 29 Grade 6 learners from Calubian South Central School, who were identified to represent the frustration, instructional, and independent levels for reading skills through the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory. This ensured that the learners selected were those who stood to benefit from the reading intervention the most. The learners had a mix of academic abilities and reading experiences, giving a true reflection of the diversity in a typical classroom. In measuring reading comprehension, they make use of District Reading Pre-Test materials. Content and language were reviewed in our District to align with the MELCs of the Department of Education for Grade 6 English. The test passage contained reading questions designed to assess the ability to recall, but more importantly, to connect ideas and make deeper meanings, which are critical skills for language development.

The research design was implemented in three stages. During the first stage, all the 29 learners completed the test to establish the baseline for their reading comprehension skills. The results obtained from this initial test showed a clear picture of the starting point of each learner. Over two successive weeks, learners participated in weekly interactive reading strategy sessions. Week 1: Orientation and modeling of interactive strategies (reciprocal teaching, think-alouds). Week 2: Jigsaw reading and use of graphic organizers, followed by posttest. Each session used multimedia-intensive, interactive stories that matched the Grade 6 MELCs. The sessions themselves were formatted into three parts: pre-reading activities that explained challenging vocabulary and established the purpose for reading. Guided reading of the story with pause points for questions and discussion; and post-reading activities that included comprehension questions. These activities engaged the learners on multiple levels to help them connect with the material and retain what they learned. The stories had been chosen not only for their language level but also for their cultural relevance and the ability to captivate the learners' interest. At the close of the intervention, the learners took the same comprehension check questions to afford a fair comparison between their performance before and after the intervention.

Three statistical techniques were used to analyze the data collected. First, in order to establish the average performance of learners reading comprehension, the mean was computed. This was further complemented by the use of standard deviation to provide information about the reliability and dispersion of the scores, showing how closely the scores were bunched around the average. Lastly, a paired t-test was used to compare the same group of participants at two different time points: before and after the intervention. Using a paired t-test allows for a test of whether the mean difference between the two sets of scores, before and after the intervention, is statistically significant. The findings of this study gave valuable insight into the way interactive reading strategies might help learners improve their vocabulary, understand word meanings, and make inferences. A comparison of pre- and post-test scores proved the efficiency of using interactive methods in the classroom and supported their potential to become an important part of literacy interventions in the immediate future.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Grade 6 Learners Pre Test Result before the use of interventions.

Score Range	TOTAL NO. OF LEARNERS	% Before Intervention	Reading Comprehension
80-100	6	20.69%	Independent
59-79	6	20.69%	Instructional
58 and below	17	58.62%	Frustration
Total	29	100%	

The data provides a snapshot of how Grade 6 learners performed on their pre-test before any interventions were introduced. It shows that only a small group of learners, 6 out of 29, demonstrated an "Independent" reading level, meaning they could comfortably understand and analyze texts on their own. This is a promising sign, but it's clear that most learners still need significant support.

Another group of 6 learners scored in the "Instructional" range. These learners can understand texts but still require help with more complex ideas. This shows they're on the right track but need some extra guidance to become fully independent readers.

The biggest concern is the 17 learners who scored in the "Frustration". These learners are struggling with reading comprehension and find it difficult to understand even the basic material without significant assistance. This highlights a major area of need—nearly 60% of the class is at a level where they are frustrated and unable to progress without intervention.

The data paints a clear picture of a class that, while diverse in its levels of reading comprehension, needs targeted support to help these learners improve and move beyond frustration.

Table 2: Grade 6 Learners Descriptive Statistics after the use of interventions.

Descriptive Statistics

	Midpoint	Frequency Before Intervention	Frequency After Intervention
Mean	62.67	9.667	9.667
Std. Deviation	30.99	6.351	3.215

Table 2 represents the average learner score and the dispersion of scores both before and after an intervention. The mean score before the intervention was 62.67, meaning that, on average, learners fell around this mark. The spread was wide, since the standard deviation of 30.99 means huge variations; some did much better and others much worse than the mean. After the intervention, the mean remained 62.67. However, the spread narrowed dramatically, with the standard deviation falling to 6.351. This points to scores clustering much more tightly around the mean. In other words, the average did not change, but the intervention decreased variability. This suggests greater consistency in performance and a probable positive effect on general performance.

Table 3: Differences between the pretest and posttest scores after the intervention on learners' reading comprehension skills.

Paired Samples T-Test

Measure 1		Measure 2	t	df	p
SCORE BEFORE INTERVENTION	-	SCORE AFTER INTERVENTION	−8.070	28	< .001

Note. Student's t-test.

Table 3 as results of the Paired Samples t-test show a significant difference between the scores before and after the intervention. The test statistics (t) is -8.070, with 28 degrees of freedom and a p-value of less than3% 0.001. The negative t-value suggests that the mean score after the intervention was significantly higher than the mean score before the intervention, and the p-value indicates that this difference is statistically significant. Since the p-value is well below the commonly used threshold of 0.05, which means that the intervention had a measurable effect on improving the participants' scores. This finding suggests that the intervention led to a meaningful improvement in the learners' performance, as evidenced by the significant change in their scores.

5.   Conclusion

The research reveals how integrating different interactive approaches to reading: Reciprocal Teaching, Think-Aloud, Jigsaw, and Graphic Organizers-significantly enhances reading comprehension among Grade 6 students. Post-intervention scores migrated from frustration and instructional levels to the independent level, which evidences a realistic leap in the rates of comprehension. These strategies fostered active engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration, hence improving their use of texts: reading, interpreting, and analyzing them. Whereas individual scores varied, with some students remaining at frustration levels, most indeed realized worthwhile improvements that indicated the effectiveness of this multi-strategy approach.

These findings underscore the importance of vibrant, collaborative learning environments in developing critical reading skills. When students are prepared to discuss texts and reflect on their understanding with peers, comprehension increases and confidence rises. The persistence of some learners at the frustration level points to the need for sustained support and personalized interventions that help every student reach mastery in reading comprehension.

Recommendations

1. Extended Intervention Period: While the two-week pilot test posted some decent gains, extension of this program would allow students to have more involvement with the reading techniques. Such a longer window would give learners ample time for internalizing and applying the strategies effectively.1

2. Targeted Support for the Struggling Learners: Even as many students improved, a significant number continued to remain at the frustration level. More personalized and focused support is needed, such as one-on-one coaching or small-group sessions focused on their needs.

3. Inclusion of More Varied Texts: To enhance understanding even more, add a wider range of texts-in both narrative and expository genres. This will give the learners an opportunity to practice and hone their skills in various types of writing and topics.

4. Regular Use of Interactive Strategies: These interactive approaches should be woven into the routine of the reading curriculum. Through consistent use, Reciprocal Teaching, Think-Aloud, Jigsaw, and Graphic Organizers can help students continually strengthen their comprehension over time.

5. Future Studies: Further research may explore the impact of these strategies on reading comprehension in the long run, and also investigate whether such approaches affect other areas of literacy, like writing, growth of vocabulary, and critical thinking.

6. Teacher Professional Development: The success of the aforementioned techniques greatly relies on equipping teachers with them. Professional development workshops or seminars regarding the interactive strategies will help educators get better prepared to apply them in the classroom.

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