











Enhancing Grade 7 Reading Proficiency through an English Reading Program Intervention in High School

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the level of reading proficiency of Grade 7 students through the implementation of an English Reading Program at Public National High School, Philippines. A quantitative one-group pretest–posttest design was employed, involving 494 Grade 7 students across eleven sections. Data were gathered using validated standardized reading comprehension assessments administered before and after the intervention. Findings revealed that the English Reading Program was effective in improving students' reading proficiency. Post-test results showed a notable increase in reading comprehension levels, with no students classified as non-readers after the intervention. The use of contextualized learning materials contributed to measurable improvements in students' ability to decode, comprehend, and interpret texts. Overall, the study provides evidence-based support for the effectiveness of structured reading intervention programs in enhancing reading proficiency among junior high school learners. The findings offer practical implications for school administrators and teachers and highlight the importance of targeted reading programs in improving academic performance and promoting the overall well-being of Grade 7 students.

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1. Introduction

In the school curriculum, reading is the basic tool in learning. It is the process of getting meaning and interpreting symbols drawn from the printed page and experiencing the image, idea, passion, or experience of the author. As stated by Alnahdi and Aftab (2020), reading is a gateway to all other information, which may lead to understanding

the world outside the text. It is one of the most important skills a person can acquire. In this study, reading proficiency refers to learners' ability to decode text accurately, read fluently, and comprehend meaning at levels classified as Frustration, Instructional, or Independent based on standardized assessment criteria. Reading comprehension, on the other hand, is defined as the cognitive process through which readers construct meaning from written text by integrating textual information with linguistic knowledge.

Through reading, an individual can get information concerning problems or issues that affect one's life. Moreover, reading requires effective skills that support intellectual growth and lifelong learning. According to Torres (2019), reading is a key to learning in school and throughout life. This skill allows learners to connect their prior knowledge with new learning, enhance their understanding of ideas and practices, and ensure that these are passed on continuously to the next generation. The ability to read with high comprehension is an asset for good performance in school, out of school, and in any field of endeavor. Reading is a complex cognitive process that enables readers to interpret written text, expand knowledge, and achieve personal growth and academic success (Hence, Al-Jarf, 2021).

Furthermore, Meniado (2016) believed reading to be one of the linguistic skills that students should develop for academic success and quality of life. Therefore, the development of reading abilities is of great importance. The cognitive processes underlying reading heavily influence student performance, particularly in academic tasks that require comprehension of written texts. The theoretical foundation of this study is Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through understanding and activating prior knowledge. In accordance with constructivist theory, Kintsch (2004) suggested that when individuals engage in analytical problem solving, they learn to read fluently and develop automatic understanding of the information presented.

Conversely, the Bottom-Up Theory is a theory of reading comprehension that focuses on the process of decoding and translating written symbols into meaning. In this theory, readers recognize letters and words before phrases, clauses, and sentences can be comprehended. This means that the reading process begins from the text and progresses upward to meaning, without initially considering the readers' experiences and prior knowledge. This theory emphasizes that interaction between the reader and the text includes little or no inference from background knowledge (Goodman, 1985, as cited in Bernardez, 2014). Poor reading comprehension, however, is a global problem. It is not only evident in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world. This is corroborated by reports showing that even in the United States, many students cannot read with comprehension. Even today, a large number of high school students experience difficulty completing academic tasks because of their inability to understand what they read, contributing to school disengagement and dropout (Hernandez, 2011).

A reading program is a structured intervention designed to address the needs of students whose reading achievement is below the proficient level. A reading intervention program is necessary to help students overcome their reading weaknesses (Lagarto, 2021). Such programs provide teachers with instructional tools to support struggling readers. The English Reading Program implemented in this study utilized contextualized reading materials aligned with learners' linguistic levels and school context, integrating both decoding-focused and comprehension-driven activities. Unlike generic intervention models, this program was designed to address the specific instructional needs of Grade 7 students transitioning from elementary to secondary education, where academic reading demands increase substantially. This contextualization strengthens the program's relevance and applicability to public secondary schools with diverse learner profiles. As reported by Shaywitz (2018), effective intervention programs provide systematic and direct instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics. Furthermore, Hutamares (2023) stated that reading intervention greatly improved reading comprehension, resulting in a decrease in learners' frustration and instructional levels and an increase in their independent reading levels.

Despite the implementation of various reading programs in the Philippines, limited empirical evidence remains regarding the effectiveness of structured reading interventions at the Grade 7 level in public secondary schools. Specifically, the combined impact of decoding-focused and comprehension-based strategies within a single intervention remains underexplored. This gap is critical, as Grade 7 learners are expected to transition toward independent reading of more complex academic texts. Thus, this study aims to address this gap by determining the level of reading proficiency of Grade 7 students before and after the implementation of an English Reading Program.

To better understand the theoretical and empirical foundations of this intervention, the following section reviews relevant international and local literature on reading proficiency and reading intervention programs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. International Literature and Empirical Evidence

Reading has been acknowledged as a complex cognitive and linguistic process that entails interpreting symbolic writing to generate meaning, enhance knowledge, and facilitate academic achievement (Al-Jarf, 2021). It has been ranked among the most crucial language skills that individuals, especially learners, should acquire to achieve academic success and function effectively in daily life (Meniado, 2016). Many researchers concur that reading enables individuals to understand messages conveyed in writing, obtain information, and grasp realities beyond the text itself (Rosli et al., 2018; Alnahdi & Aftab, 2020). Similarly, reading has been described as a process of communication between a writer and a reader, in which meaning is actively constructed through decoding and interpretation (Erguvan, 2016; Mirza et al., 2021). Taken together, these perspectives highlight reading as both a cognitive and interactive process rather than a passive reception of written symbols.

In this regard, reading functions as a cognitive activity that involves decoding and comprehending various forms of texts, including books, journals, newspapers, and digital materials (Bhan & Gupta, 2014; Baron, 2017). The complexity of this process underscores the need for systematic instructional support, particularly for learners who struggle with foundational reading skills. Studies consistently show that targeted, structured, and timely instruction plays a critical role in developing proficient readers, with struggling students benefiting the most from deliberate interventions. Intensive and early reading interventions have been found effective in helping beginning and struggling readers acquire foundational skills necessary for long-term academic success (Maiao et al., 2014).

From a constructivist perspective, reading comprehension requires learners to integrate prior knowledge with new textual information, establish connections among ideas, and actively construct meaning through meaningful literacy experiences (Espin et al., 2015; Rapp et al., 2017). This view suggests that effective reading instruction should go beyond mechanical decoding and instead promote synthesis, interpretation, and intentional engagement with texts. Such instructional approaches align with contemporary views of reading as a meaning-making process that supports deeper learning and comprehension.

However, learners who fail to master basic reading skills at an early stage often experience cumulative difficulties that negatively affect academic performance over time (Carlson & Francis, 2014). This escalating challenge highlights the necessity of sustained and structured reading intervention programs beyond the primary grade levels. According to Shaywitz (2018), effective interventions for struggling readers should include direct instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension, along with opportunities to strengthen oral language skills. These components collectively address both lower-level decoding processes and higher-level comprehension skills.

While international research strongly supports the effectiveness of structured reading interventions, differences in implementation contexts are evident across regions. Western studies frequently report technology-supported, individualized, or small-group intervention models, whereas studies conducted in the Philippines and Southeast Asia often describe teacher-led, classroom-based interventions implemented under conditions of large class sizes and limited instructional resources (Wanzek et al., 2013; Hutamares, 2023). These contextual differences underscore the importance of developing localized reading intervention models that remain effective and feasible within public secondary school settings.

2.2. Local Literature and Studies

In the Philippine context, research on reading proficiency consistently emphasizes the critical role of reading skills in students' academic achievement and overall development. Flores (2015) found that secondary students with higher

reading proficiency demonstrated better academic performance and greater confidence in learning tasks. Similarly, Resurrection (2017) reported that competent reading skills contribute significantly to the development of higher-order thinking abilities, such as reasoning, judgment, and problem-solving.

Recent local studies have also highlighted persistent challenges in word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension among Filipino learners, particularly those transitioning to higher grade levels. Lagarto (2021) identified deficiencies in word recognition and comprehension as common concerns among learners, stressing the need for structured instructional support to address these gaps. Likewise, Hutamares (2023) demonstrated that reading intervention programs significantly improved learners' comprehension levels, reduced frustration and instructional reading levels, and increased independent reading abilities. These findings affirm the effectiveness of structured interventions in addressing reading difficulties within Philippine school settings.

2.3. Reading Proficiency in Philippine Context

In the Philippine educational context, national reading initiatives such as the Department of Education's 3Bs Initiative and the Every Child a Reader Program reflect the government's commitment to improving literacy outcomes among learners. However, these initiatives primarily target early-grade reading development and foundational literacy skills. Relatively few studies have examined the sustained impact of reading interventions at the junior high school level, particularly during Grade 7, when learners transition from learning to read toward reading to learn.

Reading proficiency in the Philippines is not only essential for academic success but also for learners' personal, social, and cognitive development. Learning to read serves as a crucial milestone in education, enabling learners to connect prior knowledge with newly acquired concepts and facilitating the transmission of learning across generations (Torres, 2019). Through reading, individuals refine their thinking abilities, broaden perspectives, and internalize values necessary for becoming productive members of society (Issa et al., 2012). The Bottom-Up Model of reading, which emphasizes decoding letters and words as a foundation for comprehending larger linguistic units, further underscores the importance of systematic literacy instruction (Goodman, as cited in Bernardez, 2014).

Reading proficiency becomes increasingly critical as students advance through the educational system and encounter greater academic demands and more complex texts (Sari, 2017). Learners who fail to develop adequate reading competence by the end of a school grade are at higher risk of poor academic performance and school dropout (Hernandez, 2011). Philippine researchers likewise affirm that competent reading skills enable students to experience academic advancement, financial opportunity, and overall social mobility (Flores, 2015). Given these realities, recent Philippine studies continue to stress the urgency of implementing structured reading intervention programs to address persistent reading difficulties among learners (Lagarto, 2021; Hutamares, 2023).

Based on the reviewed international and local literature, reading interventions that integrate both decoding-focused and comprehension-based strategies remain underexplored at the Grade 7 level in public secondary schools. This study addresses this gap through a contextualized English Reading Program designed to improve reading proficiency among junior high school learners.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theories of reading: Constructivist Theory and Bottom-Up Theory, both of which provide a strong theoretical basis for the design and implementation of the English Reading Program. Constructivist Theory emphasizes that learning occurs when learners actively construct meaning by integrating new information with prior knowledge. In the context of reading, this theory highlights the importance of comprehension, coherence-building, and meaningful engagement with texts. As suggested by Kintsch (2013), readers develop fluency and understanding when they actively process information, organize ideas, and relate texts to their existing knowledge structures. This theoretical perspective informs the use of contextualized reading materials and comprehension-focused activities in the English Reading Program.

Complementing this perspective is the Bottom-Up Theory of reading, which explains reading comprehension as a process that begins with decoding letters and words before progressing to phrases, sentences, and complete texts (Goodman, 1985, as cited in Bernardes, 2014). This theory underscores the importance of phonics, word recognition, and automaticity as foundational skills, particularly for struggling readers who rely heavily on text-based cues rather than background knowledge.

Together, these theories justify the structure of the English Reading Program, which integrates systematic decoding instruction (Bottom-Up Theory) with meaning-making and comprehension strategies (Constructivist Theory). The combination of these approaches supports learners' progression from basic word recognition to higher-level reading comprehension, thereby enhancing overall reading proficiency among Grade 7 students.

4. Conceptual Framework

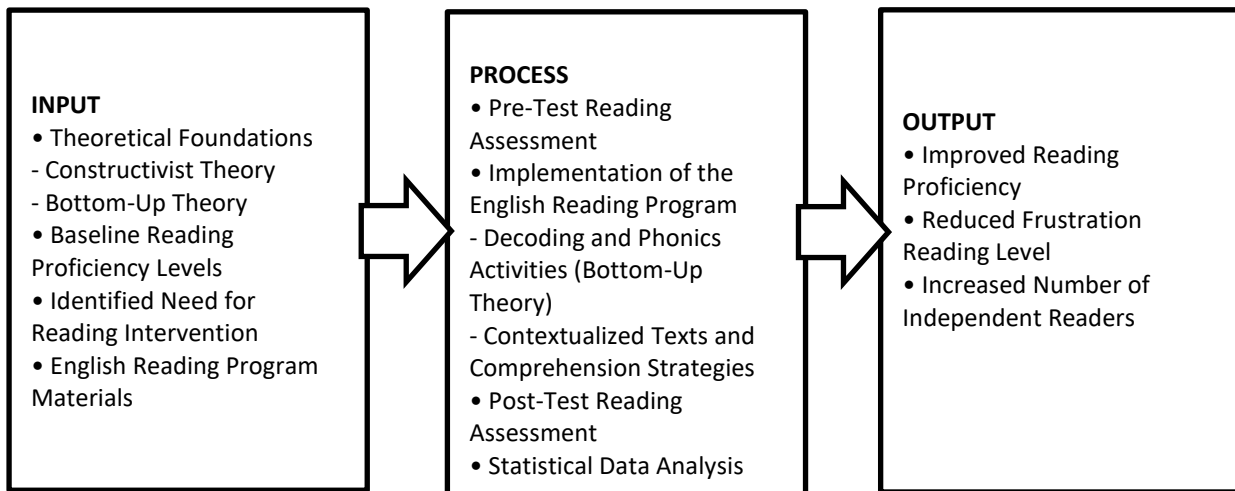


Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study using an Input–Process–Output (IPO) model. The inputs include the theoretical foundations of Constructivist Theory and Bottom-Up Theory, baseline reading proficiency levels, and English Reading Program materials. The process involves the administration of pre-test and post-test reading assessments and the implementation of the English Reading Program, integrating decoding and phonics activities informed by Bottom-Up Theory and comprehension strategies grounded in Constructivist Theory. The expected outputs include improved reading proficiency, reduced frustration reading levels, and an increased number of independent readers among Grade 7 students. This framework guided the design, implementation, and evaluation of the reading intervention.

5. Methods

5.1 Research Design

The design used for this study was a Descriptive Quantitative Research Design specifically a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The overall descriptive method seeks real facts in relation to a current situation. Furthermore, this also involves describing, comparing, contrasting, and interpreting existing conditions. It also aims to describe a situation or a phenomenon accurately and systematically without controlling or manipulating any variables but only observing and measuring them (Calmorin, 2007). Descriptive design is aimed at casting light on current issues or problems, attempting to determine, describe, or identify what is (Shields, 2013). The purpose of this method is to describe “what is”, which was the process of this study. The researcher identified the factors hindering reading comprehension and attempted to analyze, interpret, and report the present status of the students’ reading

comprehension level after the implementation of reading program. While this design allows for the assessment of change following the intervention, it does not permit causal attribution due to the absence of a control group.

5.2 Data Gathering Procedure

The methods listed were utilized to collect data for the intervention study. First, the researchers requested formal validation and approval of the assessment tools. Following this, the researchers sought ethical clearance and formal permission from the Public National High School administration and Grade 7 teachers to conduct research on their students. Once authorization was obtained, the pre-test reading assessment was administered to the respondents under standardized conditions. The respondents were given 30 minutes to complete the questions and undergo the reading test.

Subsequently, the English Reading Program was implemented over a one-month period, with sessions conducted twice a week, each lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, during regular English class hours. After the completion of the intervention, the post-test reading assessment was administered using a printed reading assessment tool that differed from the pre-test instrument. Finally, the researchers reviewed the collected data, analyzed using weighted means and percentages, and presented the findings in the form of consolidated tables, followed by a description of the findings.

5.3 Ethical Consideration

The researchers carefully followed ethical rules throughout the study to protect the rights of everyone who took part. Before participating, all respondents gave their informed consent (permission), and they were clearly told they could say no or stop being part of the study at any moment without any negative results or penalties. To ensure the materials were sound and that proper authority was granted, the researchers first asked for the assessment to be checked and approved by the Grade 7 English teachers. Subsequently, permission to conduct the research was officially requested and secured from Public National High School's Grade 7 teachers. Throughout and after the study, data were securely preserved and not shared outside of the research team. Overall, the study strictly followed the values of respect, beneficence, and justice, resulting in no participant experiencing damage, discomfort, or discrimination as a result of their participation.

5.4 Population and Sampling

The population for this quantitative study consisted of all Grade 7 students of school year 2023-2024 enrolled in Public National High School in the Philippines. The method adopted was census or total enumeration, whereby the whole population ($N=494$) became the respondents for the eleven (11) sections.

5.5 Sampling Technique

The study employed a total enumeration method of sampling whereby the entire number of 494 students that comprised the target population were the respondents in the study. This method was chosen so that the maximum level of generalizability was achieved because this eliminated sampling error and allowed the study to measure the actual baseline and intervention effects of the entire Grade 7 cohort at BNIS.

5.6 Respondents of the Study

The Respondents of our study were drawn from the entire Grade 7 population in Public National High School. A total of 494 students across the eleven (11) grade 7 sections participated in the study. These section included De Ocampo ($N = 52$), Alcala ($N = 53$), Zara ($N = 44$), Velasquez ($N = 45$), Lagmay ($N = 41$), Topacio ($N = 43$), Guiho ($N = 47$), Sicut ($N = 44$), Gomez ($N = 45$), Almeda ($N = 40$), and Punong Bayan ($N = 39$). The utilization of the total Grade 7 cohort as respondents ensured that the results reflect the true impact of the intervention across the entire target population of BNIS. The respondents consisted of both male and female Grade 7 students, with ages ranging approximately from 12 to 13 years. All participants were officially enrolled in regular English classes and had prior

exposure to basic reading instruction under the K–12 Basic Education Curriculum. This demographic profile reflects the typical characteristics of junior high school learners in a public secondary school setting.

5.7 Research Instrument

The assessment tool that was also used by the researchers to gather the needed data for the completion for this study. It is thoroughly validated and approved by English Teachers. The pre-test was used to assess the participants initial reading comprehension skills before the intervention.

The pre and post test consisted of a standardized reading comprehension assessment tool aligned with the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) framework. This ensure the materials were appropriate for the students' instructional and independent reading levels. Furthermore, a readability test was used to check if the words, sentences, and overall reading level of the assessment were appropriate for Grade 7, yielding a score like "Grade Level: 7.2," meaning the test is readable by a typical Grade 7 student.

The pre-test and post-test consisted of different standardized reading comprehension assessment tools. The post-test was used to measure the effect of reading comprehension skills. The scores of the post-test were compared with the scores of the pre-test to determine the effectiveness of the English Reading Program. The researchers aimed to discover the increasing level of Reading Proficiency of students after the implementation of the English Reading Program.

The internal consistency of the reading comprehension assessment was examined prior to implementation. The internal consistency of the reading comprehension assessment was established prior to its administration. Pilot testing of the instrument yielded an acceptable reliability coefficient (Cronbach's $\alpha \approx 0.80$), indicating that the assessment tool was reliable for measuring students' reading proficiency across the pre-test and post-test administrations.

5.8 Statistical Treatment

The following statistical procedure were used to interpret form the respondents of the study.

Equation 1: Simple percentage formula

Where:

P = percentage

F = frequency

N = population

Equation 2: Weighted mean formula

S = sum of the product

F = frequency of every item

W = weight of each item

N = numbers of each respondents

Chi-Square

In addition, a Chi-Square Test of Difference in Distribution was also conducted to see if overall student distribution by reading proficiency levels (Frustration, Instructional, and Independent) differed significantly between pre-test and post-test results. This type of statistical test is valid given the categorical nature of the data and the intention of analyzing whether any resulting change is simply a result of chance.

6. Results

Table 1: Pre-Test in Reading Comprehension of Grade 7 Students

Section	Total N	Frustration (%)	Instructional (%)	Independent (%)	Weighted Mean (\bar{x})	Description
Punongbayan	39	10.26	46.15	43.59	2.33	Instructional
Almeda	40	10.00	32.50	57.50	2.48	Independent
Alcala	53	20.75	54.72	24.53	2.04	Instructional
Topacio	43	11.63	55.81	32.56	2.21	Instructional
Sicat	44	18.18	27.27	54.55	2.36	Independent
Velasquez	45	17.78	51.11	31.11	2.04	Instructional
Zara	44	29.35	61.36	9.09	1.80	Instructional
De Ocampo	53	39.62	45.28	15.09	1.75	Instructional
Gomez	45	17.78	51.11	31.11	2.04	Instructional
Del Mundo	47	31.91	57.45	10.64	1.79	Instructional
Lagmay	41	34.15	46.34	19.51	2.12	Instructional
TOTAL:	494	22.27	49.60	28.14	1.99	Instructional

Note. Percentages in this table are based on section-weighted summaries of reading proficiency levels. Percentages reported in subsequent tables and figures reflect raw population-level frequencies (N = 494).

The pre-test reading proficiency ensured that there was a substantial intervention that was necessary since the student population had a need of intervention (N=494). The results of the aggregate showed that most Grade 7 students were functioning at the Instructional level with a total Results of 1.99 as the overall Weighted Mean. The mean is right in the middle of the range of Instructional range (1.67-2.33), which suggests that almost half of the students (49.60%) needed teacher assistance to read and understand English texts. Moreover, the proportion of the population belonging to the severely deficient Frustration level (22.27) was almost a quarter, which proved the existence of a serious lack of the background reading skills. There were only 28.14 percent of students that were classified as Independent. This baseline information that was classified under Instructional level in most of the 11 sections is a good indicator of the urgency and need to implement the English Reading Program to alleviate such pervasive lacks.

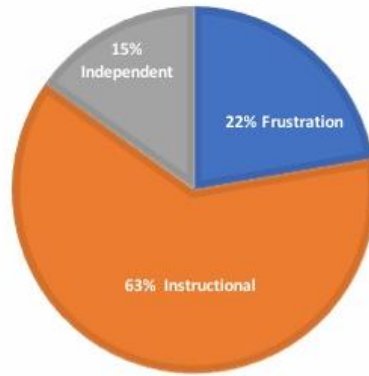


Figure 1. Distribution of Grade 7 Students by Reading Proficiency Level (Pre-Test)

Table 2: Post-Test in Reading Comprehension of Grade 7 Students

Section	Post Test	Post Test Description	Pre-Test (\bar{x})	Change in \bar{x}	Change in Level
Punongbayan	2.51	Independent	2.33	+0.18	Improved (from Instructional to Independent)
Almeda	2.60	Independent	2.48	+0.12	Maintained Independent
Alcala	2.28	Instructional	2.04	+0.24	Maintained Instructional
Topacio	2.28	Instructional	2.21	+0.07	Maintained Instructional
Sicat	2.55	Independent	2.36	+0.19	Maintained Independent
Velasquez	2.31	Instructional	2.04	+0.27	Maintained Instructional
Zara	2.00	Instructional	1.80	+0.20	Maintained Instructional
De Ocampo	2.08	Instructional	1.75	+0.33	Maintained Instructional
Gomez	2.13	Instructional	2.04	+0.09	Maintained Instructional
Del Mundo	2.00	Instructional	1.79	+0.21	Maintained Instructional
Lagmay	2.12	Instructional	1.85	+0.27	Maintained Instructional
Overall	2.19	Instructional	1.99	+0.20	Maintained Instructional

After the English Reading Program was implemented, it was shown that the post-test scores showed a general increase in reading ability in all sections, which led to the support of the program in its effects. Each section had the positive improvement of its Weighted Mean of the improvement of its scores in the form of a signal of change to a higher score to the mean score, which was increased by a certain level of 1.99 to 2.19. The greatest indicator of success was the radical decrease of students in the poorly performing groups: two sections, Punongbayan and Almeda, had been able to arrive at 0% of the students being retained at the Frustration level. In addition, overall

Weighted Mean of Punongbayan section changed categorical status (Instructional in the pre-test and Independent in the post-test) on the way to the pre-test with the mean of 2.33 and post-test with the mean of 2.51. This overall favorable change is a testament that the contextualized version of English Reading Program has been successful in improving the reading proficiencies and comprehension levels of the students and bringing the whole population on the road to increased independent reading.

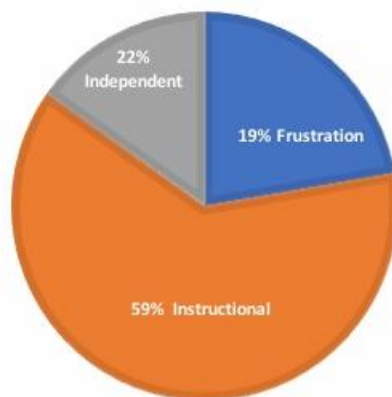


Figure 2. Distribution of Grade 7 Students by Reading Proficiency Level (Post-Test)

Table 3: Distribution of Students by Reading Proficiency Level Before and After the Intervention and Chi-Square Test Result

Reading Level	Pre-Test (n = 494)	%	Post-Test (n = 494)	%
Frustration	110	22.27%	96	19.43%
Instructional	309	62.55%	289	58.50%
Independent	75	15.18%	109	22.07%

In order to affirm whether there was a significant change in the observed improvement in the level of students in terms of their reading proficiency, a Chi-Square Test of Difference in Distribution was carried out. The findings showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of students in the Frustration, Instructional, and Independent levels of the program before and after the intervention of the English Reading Program, $\chi^2(2, N = 494) = 8.88, p = 0.012$.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The research question aimed to identify the rising reading proficiency of Grade 7 students (494) in case of using the English Reading Program in Public National High School. The summary of the findings is presented below, depending on the comparative analysis of the post-test and pre-test data:

6.2 Baseline Reading Proficiency (Pre-Test)

The primary checkup confirmed that there was an urgent need of intervention in the population of Grade 7:

- Overall Level: The total population weighted mean of the aggregate population was 1.99 bringing the student body as a whole to the level of Instructional reading level. This shows that almost half of the students had to be aided by the teacher to understand English texts.

- Frustration Deficiency: Essentially, 22.27% of the students had reached the severely deficient Frustration reading level. This confirmed the postulation that an extreme intervention program was much needed.
- Sectional Level: The three of the eleven sections were reported to be starting at the Independent level (Almeda, Sicat, and Punongbayan), and the other eight started at the Instructional.

6.3 Program Effectiveness and Impact (Post Test)

The test outcomes obtained after the post-test presence the effectiveness of the English Reading Program, which in turn proves the alternative hypothesis that there is a positive effect on reading proficiency.

- Positive Mean Shift: Each of the eleven sections showed a positive change in its Weighted Mean ($\Delta\bar{x} > 0$). The total mean population weighted averages rose by the overall weighted mean to a value of 2.19 instead of 1.99.
- Deficiency Mitigation: The mitigation of the Frustration level was the most persuasive way of success. Two groups, Punongbayan and Almeda, had 0% students who were retained at the Frustration level at the end of the intervention. This finding confirmed previous studies which reveal that intervention improves reading comprehension to a large extent.
- Categorical Improvement: The Punongbayan section showed a complete categorical change as the instructional reading level of the pre-test stage ($\bar{x} = 2.33$) was changed to an Independent level ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) in the post-test. This shows the capability of the program to redirect the students to high-comprehension skills.
- Overall Outcome: The final evaluation suggested an improvement of grade 7 students reading comprehension since there were no non-readers of the post-test that had lower levels of frustration.

7. Discussion

The present study examined the effectiveness of an English Reading Program in enhancing the reading proficiency of Grade 7 students at Public National High School. The findings directly respond to the identified need for structured reading intervention among learners exhibiting low reading proficiency levels, particularly those classified under the Frustration and Instructional categories.

7.1 Program Effectiveness Interpretation

The pre-test results confirmed the urgency of implementing a reading intervention, as the majority of Grade 7 students were classified at the Instructional level (Weighted Mean = 1.99), while a considerable proportion (22.27%) fell under the Frustration level. This distribution suggests that many learners possessed insufficient foundational reading skills to independently comprehend grade-level texts, reinforcing earlier findings that students entering secondary education often struggle with academic reading demands (Hernandez, 2011; Lagarto, 2021).

Following the implementation of the English Reading Program, post-test results revealed a general improvement in reading proficiency across all eleven sections. The increase in the overall weighted mean from 1.99 to 2.19 indicates a positive shift toward higher reading levels. More notably, the substantial reduction in the number of students classified under the Frustration level—particularly the complete elimination of frustrated readers in the Punongbayan and Almeda sections—suggests that the intervention was effective in addressing severe reading difficulties. These findings align with recent intervention studies demonstrating that structured reading programs integrating decoding and comprehension strategies significantly improve learners' reading performance (Shaywitz, 2018; Hutameres, 2023; Kim, Hemphill, Troyer, & McCutchen, 2020).

The statistically significant chi-square result further strengthens this interpretation, indicating that the observed changes in reading proficiency levels were unlikely due to chance alone. The upward movement from Frustration to Instructional and, in some cases, Independent reading levels reflects meaningful instructional gains rather than short-

term score fluctuations. Similar patterns have been reported in recent intervention research, where sustained, systematic reading instruction resulted in categorical improvements in students' reading levels over time (Wanzek et al., 2019; McKenna & Stahl, 2021).

7.2 Connection with Theoretical Frameworks

The effectiveness of the English Reading Program can be interpreted through the combined lenses of Constructivist Theory and Bottom-Up Theory. The program's use of contextualized reading materials and comprehension-focused activities supports the constructivist view that learners actively construct meaning by integrating new information with prior knowledge (Kintsch, 2013). Recent studies affirm that contextualized and meaning-based instruction enhances learners' engagement and comprehension, particularly among struggling adolescent readers (Duke, Ward, & Pearson, 2021).

At the same time, the inclusion of decoding and phonics activities reflects the principles of Bottom-Up Theory, emphasizing the importance of automatic word recognition as a foundation for comprehension (Goodman, as cited in Bernardez, 2014). Research conducted between 2018 and 2024 consistently highlights that adolescents with reading difficulties benefit most from interventions that explicitly combine phonics-based instruction with comprehension strategies rather than relying on either approach alone (Connor et al., 2019; Vaughn et al., 2022). The observed improvement in sections such as Punongbayan, which progressed from the Instructional to the Independent level, provides empirical support for the complementary application of these two theoretical frameworks.

7.3 Consideration of Confounding Factors

Despite the positive outcomes, several confounding factors may have influenced the results of the study. Teacher instructional style and classroom management differences could have affected the consistency of program implementation across sections. Additionally, learners' familiarity with the assessment format during the post-test may have contributed to improved performance, independent of actual gains in reading proficiency. Variations in student motivation, attendance, and classroom engagement may also have played a role in the observed improvements.

While these factors were not experimentally controlled due to the one-group pretest–posttest design, the census-based approach and the standardized implementation of the English Reading Program across all sections helped mitigate potential biases. Nonetheless, future studies employing control or comparison groups, longer intervention durations, and qualitative classroom observations are recommended to isolate program effects more precisely and strengthen causal claims, as suggested in recent methodological critiques of school-based intervention research (Slavin, 2020; Burns, 2021).

8. Conclusion

The present study demonstrated that the implementation of the English Reading Program at Public National High School was effective in improving the reading proficiency of Grade 7 students. The findings provide empirical support for the alternative hypothesis, confirming that the program produced a statistically significant positive impact on students' reading performance.

Quantitative results revealed consistent improvements across all eleven sections, as reflected in the increase in the overall weighted mean and the marked reduction in the number of students classified at the Frustration level. These outcomes indicate that the intervention not only addressed foundational reading deficiencies but also facilitated learners' progression toward higher levels of reading independence, particularly in vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension skills.

Inferential analysis further strengthened these conclusions. The Chi-Square Test of Difference in Distribution revealed a statistically significant shift in students' reading proficiency levels from pre-test to post-test, demonstrating that the observed improvements were not due to chance but to the structured and systematic implementation of the English Reading Program. This finding underscores the value of evidence-based reading interventions in addressing persistent literacy challenges among junior high school learners.

Beyond statistical gains, the results highlight the critical role of teacher involvement, consistent instructional delivery, and contextualized reading activities in supporting struggling readers. The program's emphasis on engaging materials and targeted reading strategies also contributed to increased learner motivation and interest in reading. Taken together, these findings affirm that early and sustained reading interventions at the secondary level are essential for strengthening academic readiness and long-term educational success.

From a policy and practice perspective, the study yields three key implications: (1) the institutionalization of school-based reading programs for junior high school learners, (2) the provision of targeted teacher training focused on decoding and comprehension-based intervention strategies, and (3) the implementation of early diagnostic reading assessments upon entry to Grade 7 to ensure timely instructional support. These implications are particularly relevant for public secondary schools serving diverse learner populations with varying levels of reading proficiency.

9. Recommendations

The researchers recommend thinking about researching evidence-based ways for improving Grade 7 students' reading competency, such as introducing diverse reading resources, developing interactive reading activities, developing a reading program, and giving targeted support to struggling readers. That the students increase their reading comprehension level.

For School Administrators and Teachers

- **Prioritize Foundational Skills:** Noting the substantial drop in the Frustration level, administrators can now institutionalize and allocate funds to the English Reading Program curriculum that specifically targets phonics skills and fluency building for entering Grade 7 students.
- **Targeted Diagnostics:** Teachers are encouraged to use diagnostic measures, such as the weighted mean and reading level classifications (Instructional and Frustration), at the beginning of the school year to identify struggling readers early and provide immediate, targeted intervention.
- **Strengthen Parental Engagement:** Schools should actively involve parents in reading development initiatives by raising awareness of the importance of reading proficiency in achieving academic success and overall learner well-being.

For Future Research

- **Examine Long-Term Retention:** Future studies should adopt a longitudinal design to determine whether gains in reading proficiency are sustained as learners progress to Grades 8 and 9.
- **Comparative Intervention:** Researchers are encouraged to compare the effectiveness of the English Reading Program with other intervention models, such as technology-assisted or comprehension-focused programs, to identify the most effective and context-appropriate approach.
- **Mixed-Method Approaches:** Future research should incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews and classroom observations, to examine teacher practices, learner engagement, and implementation fidelity that may influence reading intervention outcomes.

10. Limitations of the Study

Although the results obtained in this research are significant and informative with respect to the effectiveness of the English Reading Program in improving the overall reading competency of Grade 7 students, there are certain limitations that must be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. These limitations are as follows: First, the research design used in this research is One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. That is, there is no control or comparative treatment group. So, it cannot be said that certain extraneous variables such as regular class instruction, school activities, familiarity with tests, learner motivation, or maturation may not affect the outcome.

Second, while the study represented a large census population of 494 students, it was based on a single-school setting, which might affect how readily the results can be generalized across other school settings with varying instructional contexts. Third, while program effectiveness was assessed based on a reasonable short-term intervention, it may not be representative of long-term retention of reading proficiency benefits, an aspect that would be better assessed through a longitudinal design.

Fourthly, the study utilized the weighted mean and percentage method to assess the level of improvement. Though the methods used are apt for school-based analyses of data, the use of more advanced statistical methods such as t-test statistics would enable the study to confirm the significance of the improvement. Future studies can incorporate the use of advanced statistical methods.

Fifth, while the tools for assessing reading were valid and aligned to Phil-IRI standards, for this particular research, reliance on the performance in standardized tests was used primarily to determine competence in reading skills. Moreover, reading is a multifaceted concept that can be affected by various considerations, such as vocabulary, motivation, fluency, metacognition, and language, which in this research are not carefully considered apart from reading skills.

Finally, like in most school-based interventions, implementation fidelity may vary in sections, depending on the instructional method of the teacher and/or engagement of the participants. This was also unmonitored in this study. Despite these limitations, this study provides important and authentic evidence of effectiveness. Future studies may include a control or comparison group, use a mixed methods design, extend the duration of intervention, measure fidelity of implementation, and use various statistical and qualitative procedures.

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Competing Interests

None.

Ethical Statement

This study maintained high levels of good practice, as it upheld the ethics involved in educational research. In this case, permission to conduct this research was sought from the administration and teachers of Grade 7 at the Public National High School, while consent was sought from all participants. In this case, participation in this research was voluntary, and none of the participants suffered any harm, discrimination, or disadvantage.

Author's Contribution

Author¹: Lead Researcher, Conceptualization, Research design, Instrument development and adaptation, Data collection, Data curation, Formal analysis, Statistical modeling and mediation analysis, Interpretation of results, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Author²: Data collection and contributed to parts of the research.

Author³: Assisted in the research process, interpretation of results, and contributed to parts of the research.

Author⁴: Data collection and contributed to parts of the research.

Author⁵: Data collection, editing, and contributed to parts of the research

Author⁶: Methodology, Resources, Software, Writing – review and editing

Author⁷: Data collection, editing, interpretation of results, and contributed to parts of the research.

Author⁸: Data collection.

Author⁹: Data collection and contributed to parts of the research.

Author¹⁰: Data collection and contributed to parts of the research.

Data availability

The data generated and analyzed during the current study, including the full manuscript, datasets, instruments, and supplementary materials, are publicly available in multiple open-access repositories. These can be accessed through the following platforms: ERIC, Harvard Dataverse, Zenodo, Figshare, ICPSR, GESIS, SSRN, Lingbuzz, OER Commons, and Mendeley Data. Direct repository links are provided below for reference:

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Appendix

A. Pre-Test Instrument

Name _____ **Grade 7 Reading Comprehension**

History of Soccer



The oldest soccer-like sport was played over 2,000 years ago in ancient Chinese, Greek, and Roman cultures. A rock sometimes served as the ball. In some instances, a "ball" was made from an animal hide stuffed with hair. In its current form, though, soccer evolved from 19th century England and was brought to the United States by immigrants.

England's first football association was created in 1863, which is when the sport began to become standardized. The association established rules which continued to evolve. One of those rules, that the ball could not be carried by hand, resulted in the official separation between the sports of soccer and rugby.

Increasing industrialization made soccer more and more popular in England. While it had originally been played largely by public school teams, workplace-based teams began to emerge in the 1900s. Talented players were paid, and as a result of workplace-

Name _____ **Grade 7 Reading Comprehension**

QUESTIONS: History of Soccer

Circle the correct answer.

1. The oldest soccer-like sport was played over 2,000 years ago by:
A. Ancient Chinese
B. Ancient Greeks
C. Ancient Romans
D. all of the above
2. Soccer as we know it today evolved from:
A. 19th century England
B. Ancient Greeks
C. Ancient Romans
D. Ancient Chinese
3. True or False: . Increasing urbanization made soccer less and less popular in England.
4. Which came first, public school teams or workplace teams?
A. public school teams
B. workplace teams
5. Which country had the first professional soccer league?
A. Germany
B. England
C. the United States
D. Greece
6. When did the United States start calling football soccer?
A. 1910s/1920s
B. 1949
C. 1963/1964

B. Post-Test Instrument

Phil-IRI Form 1 - Post Test

Reading Level : _____

Name : _____ Grade & Section _____
Speed : _____ Minutes Score : _____
Level : _____ Level : _____

GRADE LEVEL PASSAGE RATING SHEET

Direction: Read the selection silently. Record your reading time as soon as you finish reading. Read the questions and encircle the letter of your answer.

Magician Invents Special Effects

George M'elies, a French movie maker and a former magician happened to invent special effects in movies by accident. He was filming a street scene in Paris when his camera suddenly jammed as a bus was passing by. He stopped, fixed his camera, then went back to filming the same street scene again. When the film was developed, he was surprised to see a carriage in the place where the bus had been! He discovered that the bus had changed into a carriage! From that day on, Mr. M'elies invented many amazing techniques using his camera. He became known as "the magician of movies."

A common special effect he invented is called *projections*. In this effect, a moviemaker projects a picture or a movie on a screen behind the actors. The actors act in front of the screen. Then the camera films the actors and the picture or the movie at the same time. This effect makes it possible for actors to look like they are in imaginary places.

Other special effects Mr. M'elies created are: *animation* which makes lifeless models or objects come to life when they are shown on screen; *matte shots* enabling the moviemaker to cover or matte out part of a film that he doesn't want; and *optical printer* and *computer-age* special effects.

Questions:

- Who became known as the Magician of Movies?
 - George Bush
 - George Clooney
 - George M'elies
 - George Smith
- Which of the following was not invented by M'elies?
 - Animation
 - Projection
 - Matte Shots
 - Still Life
- What special effect makes it possible for actors to look like they are in imaginary places?
 - Projection
 - Optical Printer
 - Computer-age special effect
 - Matte Shots
- What kind of special effect would be used to bring a dinosaur back to life?
 - Matte Shots
 - Animation
 - Projection
 - Optical Printer
- What will happen to a movie without special effects?
 - It will draw a lot of moviegoers.
 - It will be rich in cinematic appeal.
 - It will not be appealing.
 - It will not earn popularity.
- Why do you think George M'elies was called "the magician of movies"?
 - He played the role of a magician in movies several times.
 - His inventions were made into a movie.
 - He studied magic before he became a moviemaker.
 - He accidentally invented special effects in movies.
- What special effect will you use to cover an unwanted part of a film?
 - matte shots
 - projections
 - animations
 - optical printer
- If you were a moviemaker, when would you use animation?
 - When the story is full of adventure
 - When the story is a fantasy
 - When the story is about the life of a famous president of a country
 - When the story is about new inventions

C. Letter of the Respondents

Dear Respondents,

Greetings!

We, Mhel Cedric D. Bendo, Dhana Driff Angue, Jeraldine Buhay, Jiezel Anne Dimaisip, Tracy Lobos, Ellie Grace Pahimnayan, Raj Benedict Piedad, France Lawrence Pulgo, Karylle Ramos, and Whinzel Anne Yabut, are researchers under the Humanities and Social Sciences strand. We are requesting for your cooperation to answer our questionnaires for our research entitled "**Enhancing Grade 7 Reading Proficiency through an English Reading Program Intervention in High School**". Your knowledge, concerns, and response are a sure help for us in achieving our goal. Rest assured that all the information that we would gather will be treated with outmost confidentiality and it will be used for academic purposes only. We are hoping that this request would merit your positive response. Again, thank you for accepting our concern. May God bless you.

Respectfully yours,

Mhel Cedric D. Bendo
Researcher

Dhana Driff Angue
Researcher

Jeraldine Buhay
Researcher

Jiezel Anne Dimaisip
Researcher

Whinzel Anne Yabut
Researcher
Noted by:

Ellie Grace Pahimnayan
Researcher

Raj Benedict Piedad
Researcher

France Lawrence Pulgo
Researcher

Karylle Ramos
Researcher

D. Rubric Likert Scale

Likert Scale/Scoring Rubric

Independent	2.34 – 3.00
Instructional	1.67 – 2.33
Frustration	1.00 – 1.66

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