



COMPREHENSION LEVEL OF GRADE 9 LEARNERS VIS-a-VIS TEXT AND TEST TYPES IN ENGLISH: BASIS FOR DIGITIZED READING MATERIALS

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Abstract : This study was delimited to the comprehension level of selected Grade 9 learners in Bolinao I and II Districts during the school year 2023-2024. The data gathered were properly coded, recorded, tallied, tabulated and interpreted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for windows. Frequency counts, percentages and weighted mean and standard were used for descriptive analysis. The researcher found out that learners tend to reflect good comprehension of selections written in both genres - narrative and expository - as comprehension level seemed not related to text types. The learners' comprehension levels were of varying degrees based on test types. Their comprehension level adjusted to the test type they were asked to do. Learners did not do well in cloze test using exact responses in both narrative and expository texts. Thus, it may be modified to semantically acceptable responses to see more clearly how learners process the texts both in narrative and expository texts. Good comprehension was revealed in test type using English informal reading inventories both in narrative and expository texts. Teachers may keep on using informal reading inventories for assessment. Learners were at their best with regards to comprehension using retelling as a test type. Teachers may maximize this advantage so that learners excel as readers of narrative and expository texts. Good comprehension level in reading English narrative texts was slightly related to good comprehension level in expository texts. The score obtained in reading narrative text was slightly related to their score in reading expository text. The researcher recommended that teachers may continue giving assessment materials in narrative and expository text because both are related to one another. Test item developers may construct standardized cloze test and additional retelling passages to have alternative means for assessing comprehension. Knowing the comprehension level of levels on different test types shows different dimensions of comprehension as one reads. This will guide the teachers in their instructional planning anchored on the needs of learners in the classroom and on the demands of Filipino national examinations.

Keywords: comprehension level, text types, Grade 9

INTRODUCTION

Reading is undeniably a fundamental skill that must be acquired early in life, as it serves as the gateway to a plethora of other skills, knowledge, and content. The ability to read opens up a world of possibilities for individuals, enabling them to access information on various topics ranging from health to culture. Regrettably, statistics show that a staggering number of individuals, approximately 1 billion worldwide, predominantly from developing countries, struggle with illiteracy. This not only hinders their personal growth but also limits their access to essential information that could potentially improve their quality of life.

In today's world, the right to read is considered a basic civil right, emphasizing the importance of literacy in society. It is during a child's early education that the foundation for reading skills is laid, setting the stage for future academic success. Reading not only enhances cognitive abilities but also nurtures a child's imagination and creativity. A child who is proficient in reading is better equipped to navigate the complexities of education and is more likely to excel academically.

Furthermore, reading is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge; it is a lifelong journey of learning and self-improvement. As individuals progress in their educational endeavors, the ability to read extensively becomes increasingly crucial. Reading comprehension, in particular, plays a pivotal role in the reading process, as it involves a complex interplay of cognitive

functions. The capacity to comprehend and derive meaning from texts is essential for academic achievement and personal development.

In essence, reading is not just a skill; it is a transformative experience that shapes individuals and societies. From the early stages of education to the pursuit of lifelong learning, reading remains a cornerstone of intellectual growth and personal fulfillment. Embracing the power of reading is not only a step towards academic success but also a gateway to a world of endless possibilities and opportunities.

Reading comprehension is an intricate skill that requires time, guidance, and practice to develop fully. It is not something that can be mastered quickly or effortlessly. Parents and teachers play a crucial role in teaching reading comprehension strategies to children, as they possess the knowledge and experience necessary to guide young learners through this complex process. While some may believe that once a child learns to read, they can comprehend any text, the reality is quite different. Reading comprehension strategies must be continuously refined, practiced, and reinforced throughout one's life.

For example, as children progress to the middle grades, the texts they encounter become more diverse and challenging. They need to learn new tools and strategies to effectively comprehend these materials. Content area texts like textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and journal articles present unique challenges that require specific reading strategies to navigate. The development of reading comprehension is an ongoing journey that evolves alongside the complexity of the texts individuals engage with.

Without comprehension, reading becomes a mere exercise in decoding symbols on a page. Imagine trying to read a story written in Egyptian hieroglyphics without understanding their meaning. While the symbols may hold some aesthetic value, true comprehension is lacking. Reading is not just about decoding words; it is about deriving meaning and understanding from the text. Thus, reading comprehension is essential because it is the gateway to gaining knowledge and information from written materials.

Beyond this, reading comprehension is crucial for navigating various aspects of life. The ability to understand written information is paramount in today's society. Functional literacy is a topic that has garnered significant attention, emphasizing the necessity for individuals to comprehend basic texts like bills, housing agreements, and transportation documents. By being able to grasp the content of these materials, people can not only ensure their safety and productivity but also foster their social, emotional, and intellectual growth.

In the Philippines, a concerning trend has emerged where a majority of Filipino students lack the necessary skills and motivation for reading. Studies, such as the evaluation conducted by Scholastic Incorporated and cited in the Philippine Star, have revealed that a staggering 70% of the nation's learners struggle to meet the expected reading proficiency levels. This issue has been attributed to a mismatch between students' reading abilities and the complexity of the materials they are required to read.

According to Snow (2002), reading comprehension involves the simultaneous extraction and construction of meaning through engagement with written language. This process comprises three key elements: the reader, the text, and the purpose for reading. Additionally, Maria (2010) describes reading comprehension as a holistic process that involves the reader's knowledge, interpretation of language, and situational context during reading. McNamara and Kendeou (2011) further emphasize that reading comprehension is a cognitive product formed in the reader's memory during the reading process.

When individuals fail to effectively engage with the reading material, it results in a diminished comprehension outcome. Therefore, improving reading comprehension skills is essential for academic success, professional advancement, and personal development. By honing these skills, individuals can enhance their ability to interpret and derive meaning from various texts, ultimately enriching their overall quality of life.

The study of Binoya (2005) analyzed the comprehension skills of the students of Philippine Public Safety College. The study revealed that the two groups of respondents, the junior and senior students were deficient in their reading comprehension skills especially on paragraph organization, contextual clues and drawing conclusions. Furthermore, no significant difference was noted between the reading comprehensions skills of the two groups of respondents. The study further revealed that the profile of the respondents was not significantly related to the level of their reading comprehension.

The study of Castillo (2004) developed and validated content based instructional materials in the development of critical thinking in reading. The researcher used the pre-test/post-test control group design which involves a control and experimental group. The experimental group was subjected to the use of content based instructional material and the content-based instruction was used as the teaching approach. The control group on the other hand was isolated from any experimental influences.

The result of the study showed that: (1) content-based instructional materials had further developed the reading comprehension skills of the first year students, (2) the experimental groups mean in the pre-test and post-test were 16.41 and 19.15, (3) the control group had 16.84 and 18.36 for the pre-test and post-test respectively, and (4) the control groups mean gain score was 1.19 compared to the mean gain score of the experimental group which was 2.73. The study concluded that: (1) the content based instructional materials were found effective in the development of the following skills: getting the main idea, making inferences, predicting outcomes and making conclusions, and evaluating ideas and making judgments as evaluated by the experts' judgment, and (2) content based instruction could be more effective when used to develop the critical thinking levels of the first year students.

The study of David (2004) was aimed at assessing the English proficiency of fourth year high school students at Mataas na Paaralang Neptali A. Gonzales during school year 2002 to 2003. His respondents were 188 students from five different sections. The study revealed that the mastery level of students in capitalization is 79.5%, vocabulary 50.94%, spelling 43.21%, grammar 37.84% and punctuation 33.83%.

The primary concern of the study of Ginez (2006) was to compare the reading performance and reading proficiency level of the students of the Pogorua National High School for the school year 2005-2006 using the conventional reading materials and the innovative reading materials with urban setting and the rural setting. The study came up with the following conclusions: (1) the proficiency level of the students who used the innovative reading materials is significantly higher than those who used the conventional reading materials, (2) the students who used the innovative reading materials with rural setting have the edge over those who used the urban setting; however the edge is not significant, and (3) the reading proficiency level of the students in both the conventional and innovative reading materials is only literal.

The following were given as recommendations: (1) innovative reading materials should be utilized by English and reading teachers, (2) teachers must be given more time to make their innovative reading materials for effective teaching-learning process, (3) English and reading teachers must be innovative and creative in making their visual aids, (4) the Division Office should provide more reading materials and other educational materials needed for instruction in reading, (5) English teachers should be given in-service training or they will be sent to seminars so they can acquire wider and intensive exposure in the use of teaching reading strategies, and (6) there must be a program on reading on the school, district, and division level which will improve the reading proficiency of the students from the literal to the higher levels.

The primary objective of the study of Dela Cruz (2005) was to develop supplementary instructional materials for Grade IV pupils. The output of this study which is the supplementary instructional materials in English IV provided ready materials for teachers of English IV. The materials were valid and content wise. They contain variety of activities and reading-learning situation which reinforce critical thinking analysis. Also, they provided the pupils with varied exercises on the skills where they were weak. These could be done during their study time period or free time.

Going back to the basics, the study of Soria (2004) was conducted to determine the reading enhancement of students using the eighth-week curriculum. The respondents of the study were 2,564 grade one pupils, 23 grade one teachers and 10 school administrators. Using the correlational method, the study found out that the eight-week curriculum was fully implemented and the reading readiness skills were perceived to be mastered.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to assess the comprehension level of Grade 9 learners of Bolinao I & II Districts, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan during the school year 2023-2024.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the comprehension level of Grade 9 learners before their exposure to the text types as to narrative and expository texts?
2. What is the comprehension level of Grade 9 learners:
 - a. in reading English narrative texts based on test types: informal reading inventory, cloze test, and retelling?
 - b. in reading English expository texts based on test types: informal reading inventory, cloze test, and retelling?
3. Is there a significant different between the comprehension levels of the Grade 9 learners in terms of test types?
4. What narrative and expository texts can be developed to improve the comprehension level of the learners?
5. What is the level of acceptability of the proposed narrative and expository texts as evaluated by experts?
6. Based on the findings, what digitized reading materials on narrative and expository texts can be developed to improve the comprehension level of the Grade 9 learners?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of the study which includes the research design, sources of data, instrumentation and data collection, and the tools for data analysis.

Research Design

The descriptive-correlational design will assess the comprehension level of Grade 9 learners vis-à-vis text and test types. According to the National Research Council (2002), descriptive design is used when data are collected to describe the characteristics of persons, organizations, and settings of phenomena. Oriundo and Antonio (2004) defined correlation design as a design utilized to determine the relationship between two variables that indicate magnitude of relationship and the direction (positive or negative) of the relationship variables. Descriptive design described the comprehension level, and correlation design determined the relationship between text and test types to comprehension levels. The correlation coefficients were interpreted based on the given coefficients by Calmorin and Calmorin (2004).

Sources of Data

This study was conducted in Bolinao I & II Districts, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The study made use of narrative and expository texts in three kinds of tests -informal reading inventory, cloze test, and retelling - to measure the comprehension level of the target respondents. English passages for Informal Reading Inventory and retelling were extracted from the LETRA, a national reading assessment tool prepared by the Department of Education (DepEd) under the initiative of the Bureau of Secondary Education (BSE). In this study, the Grade 9 LETRA reading passages were used as they were deemed standardized; hence, the validity of this instrument has been established. Reading passages from the LETRA was used. Both narrative and expository texts have eight questions of varying levels and difficulty. The cloze test passages were picked from the Grade 9 texts and which were read by the learners. English passages were prepared and evaluated by experts. The experts evaluated the instruments that provided insights for the improvement of the instruments and data gathering procedures. Pilot testing provided feedback to improve the instruments and administration procedures with actual participants. Silent reading and answering was done in informal reading inventory and cloze test while retelling will be conducted through silent reading and recorded oral retelling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter delineates the gathered data, the interpretation and analysis of the findings, and the narrative explanation of the tabulated results providing answers to the problems presented earlier in Chapter I.

Comprehension Levels and Text Types

Table 3 summarizes the comprehension level of the selected Grade 9 learners in reading narrative and expository texts in English whose composite scores were based on three test types administered.

Table 3. Comprehension Level of Selected Grade 9 Learners in Reading English Narrative and Expository Texts

Text Type	Mean Percentage	Composite Scores	Comprehension Level
Narrative Texts	55.09%	2.05	Instructional
Expository Texts	51.97%	1.87	Instructional

The comprehension level in reading narrative texts shown by the composite score is 2.05 interpreted as instructional level, with a mean percentage of 55.90%. On the other hand, the composite score for the comprehension level in reading English expository texts is 1.87, instructional level, with a mean percentage of 51.97%.

The comprehension levels attained by the selected Grade 9 levels can be explained by Gillet and Temple's (2010) idea that learners are reading within their comfortable level with good comprehension and accuracy in word recognition. It supported the fact that students are able to comprehend narrative and expository texts on their grade level, and they stand to benefit from regular instruction ably facilitated by teachers.

Comprehension Level and Test Types

The comprehension level of Grade 9 learners selected for the study was assessed through various methods including the informal reading inventory, cloze test, and retelling. Table 4 presents a detailed breakdown of their performance in reading English narrative and expository texts. The informal reading inventory provided insights into the students' reading abilities by measuring their fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.

Table 4. Comprehension Level of Selected Grade 9 Learners in Reading English Texts in Each Test Type

Text Type	Test Type					
	LETRA		Cloze Test		Retelling	
	MP	CS	MP	CS	MP	CS
Narrative	78.23%	2.00	38.46%	1.31	51.00%	2.46
Expository	65.26%	1.85	33.85%	1.23	56.46%	2.54

MP – mean percentage, CS – composite scores

Referring to Table 4, it is evident that the Grade 9 learners displayed a commendable level of comprehension when utilizing informal reading inventory in both narrative and expository texts. The mean percentage of learners using this method in narrative text stood at 78.23%, while for expository texts, it was 65.26%. These results indicate a good grasp of the content and accuracy in word recognition among the students. It is clear that a regular classroom environment with teacher guidance could further enhance their interaction with texts and their ability to derive meaning from them.

Moving on to Table 4, a different picture emerges when looking at the learners' performance using the cloze test. In narrative text, only 38.46% of learners achieved a satisfactory level of comprehension, while the figure dropped to 33.85% for Filipino expository texts. These results were categorized as frustration level, suggesting that the nature of the cloze test posed challenges for the students. It is worth noting that the criteria for this test emphasized exact word replacements, which may have limited the students' ability to demonstrate their true comprehension.

Comprehension Level of Grade 9 Learners in Relation to Text and Test Types

Table 5 illustrates the comprehension levels of Grade 9 students in relation to different text types, specifically narrative and expository texts. The analysis revealed a positive correlation coefficient of .398, indicating a low or slight correlation between the mean percentage of comprehension levels. This suggests that as the comprehension level of English narrative texts slightly increases, so does the comprehension level of English expository texts.

Table 5. Comprehension Level of Grade 9 Learners in Relation to Text Types

Text Types	Pearson r	Magnitude	Direction
Narrative and Expository Texts	+0.398	low or slight	positive

It may be inferred that an increase in children's ability to understand narrative texts preceded the ability to comprehend expository texts. It may mean that the higher the comprehension level in reading the narrative text, the same will be in their comprehension level in reading expository text. Good comprehension level in narrative texts may mean slightly related to good comprehension level in expository texts or vice versa. This frequent assumption is true perhaps only when the reading instruction of expository texts is aided by content subjects in narrative form (Anthony, Pearson, & Raphael, 2009). Dr. Gatmaitan uses this writing style in children's story book in narrative form but with science content. Delivering science content implied or directly stated in narration form helps in improving comprehension of exposition which is one nature of content area reading (Anthony, Pearson, & Raphael, 2009).

Comprehension Level of the Selected Grade 9 Learners in Relation to Test Types

Table 6 shows the relationship of the comprehension level in each type of test in both narrative and expository texts.

**Table 6. Comprehension Level of the Selected Grade 9 Learners
in Relation to Test Types**

Variable	Pearson r	Magnitude	Direction
N & E IRI	- 0.098	negligible	negative
N & E Cloze	- 0.022	negligible	negative
N & E Retelling	+0.974	high	positive

Informal Reading Inventory

Table 6 presents the correlation between narrative and expository texts in informal reading inventories, revealing a negligible and negative relationship with a computed correlation coefficient of .098. This indicates that comprehension levels in narrative and expository texts do not significantly influence each other. The disparity in skills measured by each type of passage comprehension test, which involves lexical, semantic, and syntactic knowledge, could explain this negligible relationship. For instance, while narrative comprehension may focus on character development and plot, expository comprehension may require understanding of factual information and logical organization.

Moreover, the challenges posed by multiple-choice response tests in assessing comprehension are highlighted by Cain and Oakhill (2006), who argue that crafting effective questions already presents difficulties, especially considering students' varying levels of schema. Additionally, the tendency for learners to guess answers without fully engaging with the text in multiple-choice tests can skew results. This forced response nature of selecting an answer from options might not accurately reflect true comprehension levels.

Acceptability of the Developed Reading Comprehension Materials

The acceptability of the developed Reading Comprehension Materials in English for Grade 9 learners was evaluated by the experts like the Master Teacher in English, Head Teacher in English and Education Program Supervisor in English.

Acceptability was assessed in terms of content, format, language, and organization and presentation of the various reading skills in Literal, Interpretative, and Applied levels of comprehension. The average weighted mean score for each item was obtained to numerically summarize the evaluators' rating. These average weighted means were then interpreted using the suggested acceptability scale.

Table 7 on the next page shows that the overall average weighted mean is 4.91 interpreted as Highly Acceptable. This finds support in the literal reading skill on noting and recalling details content, format, language and organization/presentation, all with 4.9 average weighted mean; interpretative reading skill on finding cause-effect relationship format and organization/presentation with both getting average weighted mean of 5.0 and the content and language, 4.9 each; and applied reading skill on giving solutions based from facts and giving appropriate endings format, language and organization/presentation, all with 4.9 and content with average weighted mean of 4.8

Table 7. Acceptability of the Reading Materials in English

Areas	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Literal Reading on noting and Recalling Details		
a. Content	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. Mentions the learning competency.	4.90	
2. Mentions the concrete outcome or product learners are expected to demonstrate.	4.90	
3. Allows pupils to make discoveries and formulate ideas on their own.	4.90	
4. Provides exercises, drills or activities that assess learners understanding of what they have learned and correct errors when appropriate.	4.90	
b. Format	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. Gives a preview of what pupils will learn.	4.90	
2. Cites briefly the activities	4.90	
3. Challenges the leaner in performing the tasks	4.90	
c. Language	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. The language used in the lesson is within the comprehension level of the learners.		
d. Organization/Presentation	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. The lessons reinforce the pupils' practice on the difficult objectives in English.	4.90	
2. The lessons are presented in contexts the learners can identify with.	4.90	
3. The lessons met the needs of the learners in varied English activities.	4.90	
Interpretative Reading Skill on Finding Cause-Effect Relationships		
a. Content	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. Mentions the learning competency.	4.90	
2. Mentions the concrete outcome or product learners are expected to demonstrate.	4.90	
3. Allows learners to make discoveries and formulate ideas on their own.	4.90	
4. Provides exercises, drills or activities that assess learners understanding of what they have learned and correct errors when appropriate.	4.90	
b. Format	5.00	Highly Acceptable
1. Gives a preview of what learners will learn.	4.90	
2. Cites briefly the activities	4.90	

3. Challenges the learner in performing the tasks	4.90	
c. Language	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. The language used in the lesson is within the comprehension level of the learners.		
d. Organization/Presentation	5.00	Highly Acceptable
1. Mentions the learning competency.	5.00	
2. Mentions the concrete outcome or product learners are expected to demonstrate.	5.00	
3. Allows learners to make discoveries and formulate ideas on their own.	5.00	
4. Provides exercises, drills or activities that assess learners understanding of what they have learned and correct errors when appropriate.	5.00	
Applied Reading Skill on Giving Solutions Based from Facts and Giving Appropriate Endings		
a. Content	4.80	Highly Acceptable
1. Mentions the learning competency.	4.80	
2. Mentions the concrete outcome or product learners are expected to demonstrate.	4.80	
3. Allows learners to make discoveries and formulate ideas on their own.	4.80	
4. Provides exercises, drills or activities that assess learners understanding of what they have learned and correct errors when appropriate.	4.80	
b. Format	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. Gives a preview of what learners will learn.	4.90	
2. Cites briefly the activities	4.90	
3. Challenges the learners in performing the tasks		
c. Language	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. The language used in the lesson is within the comprehension level of the learners.	4.90	
d. Organization/Presentation	4.90	Highly Acceptable
1. Mentions the learning competency.	4.90	
2. Mentions the concrete outcome or product pupils are expected to demonstrate.	4.90	
3. Allows learners to make discoveries and formulate ideas on their own.	4.90	
4. Provides exercises, drills or activities that assess learners understanding of what they have learned and correct errors when appropriate.	4.90	
Average Weighted Mean	4.91	Highly Acceptable

Alpha= .8667

Legend:

Point Value

Limits

Descriptive Equivalents

5

4.21 - 5.00

Highly Acceptable

4

3.41 - 4.20

Acceptable

3

2.61 - 3.40

Moderately Acceptable

2

1.81 - 2.60

Slightly Acceptable

1

1.00 - 1.80

Not Acceptable

Recommendations:

1. Teachers play a crucial role in assessing students' comprehension levels through the use of narrative and expository texts. By providing assessment materials in these two forms, educators can effectively evaluate students' understanding and analytical skills. For instance, in a narrative text, students may be asked to analyze characters' motivations and actions, while in an expository text, they may need to identify key arguments and supporting evidence.

2. Test item developers also contribute to the assessment process by creating standardized cloze tests and retelling passages. These alternative assessment methods offer diverse ways to measure students' comprehension abilities. For example, a cloze test where students fill in missing words can assess their vocabulary knowledge and understanding of context.

3. Understanding the different dimensions of comprehension across various test types is essential for teachers. It provides insights into students' strengths and areas for improvement. By analyzing these results, educators can tailor their instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners in the classroom. Additionally, aligning teaching practices with the requirements of national examinations, such as those in the Philippines, ensures that students are prepared for standardized assessments.

4. The use of narrative and expository texts, along with varied assessment methods, enhances the evaluation of students' comprehension skills. Teachers' awareness of different comprehension dimensions and their alignment with instructional planning are vital for promoting effective learning outcomes. By incorporating a range of assessment tools and strategies, educators can support students in developing a deep understanding of the content and achieving academic success.

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