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Strengthening Reading Comprehension Skills Through Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (Fori)

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ABSTRACT

Students who struggled in reading lacked the necessary skills and attention. This Action Research determined the efficacy of Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) in strengthening reading comprehension skills of students in English. It involved the Grade V students who were considered as struggling readers. It lasted for two weeks where learners were got involved in an hour reading activity every day after their classes. Likewise, thematic analysis was done in identifying the themes. Findings revealed that the intervention increased the reading comprehension skills of the students and even made them as independent readers. They suggested that teachers from all grade levels should have to adopt FORI and books would be available at home.

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest problems being faced by the Department of Education is the poor reading comprehension skills of the students especially in English. It can be noted that it is not their native language, and thus, many of the student opted not to focus on enhancing their reading skills (Mohammed, 2018). In the same manner, they are only interested in silent and oral reading. But never on digging deeper into the contexts of the texts.

In the study conducted by Imam et al. (2014) that students' performance in reading comprehension was at low mastery level. Further, it was found out that they poorly performed in understanding vocabulary in context, noting details, predicting outcome, and in making inferences. Also, it was noted that this poor performance in reading affected the different learning disciplines. On the contrary, it was recommended that teachers must have to acknowledge that students have different strategies of learning (Suson et al., 2020).

Problems relative to the presence of non-readers especially by those who have poor comprehension skills is still a major problem. Though, the study of Adapon et al. (2020) cited that CARE for Non-Readers (CRN) was effective, but still those who had taken the 2018 PISA revealed that they faced difficulty with open response questions which hinted at illiteracy. Adding to this, there were 76,000 students from Elementary to Senior High school were identified as struggling or unable to read (Albano, 2021).

Therefore, this action research presented the efficacy of repeated-reading instructional strategy which is named as Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI). This approach involved the repetition of the same text which was introduced among the English as a Second Language (ESL). It was evidently potent in leading students to have fluency in reading, accuracy, and comprehension (Han & Chen, 2010). Indeed, it is an effective strategy that brings

students to the reading texts (Powers, 2007).

Correspondingly, this study is timely and relevant because of the presence of non-readers in the class. With the absence of face-to-face classes because of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered the poor reading skills of students (Schult et al., 2022). Though there were similar studies conducted (Powers, 2007; Han & Chen, 2010; Guerin & Murphy, 2015; Amin, 2022; Park, 2022), but were conducted in the international settings. Hence, this action research was conceptualized and conducted.

Action Research Questions

1. How does Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) strengthen reading comprehension skills of students in English?
2. What can students suggest to further enhance the implementation of Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction?

Intervention

Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) is a repeated-reading instructional strategy which was done among the struggling readers. This was done every afternoon after classes were conducted. They were met every day for the duration of one hour before they were freed to go home. Reading materials were given to them where they repeatedly read the contents and answer the questions that followed. The reading materials contained pictures that would catch the attention of the struggling readers. Its purpose was to motivate them to continue with their quest to improve their reading skills especially in comprehension. Pre-test and post-test were given to determine changes on their performance. To determine the efficacy of the FORI as a remediation program, each student was given enough time to repeatedly read the texts with the close supervision of the teacher-researcher.

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Action Research Methods

Participants and Data Source

The participants of this action research were chosen using the criterion-based purposive sampling. There were ten of them who were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Struggling reader;
2. With basic decoding (reading) skills; and
3. With problem with fluency while reading.

Data Gathering Methods

I followed the protocols in the conduct of this Action Research. First, I designed FORI as an intervention to be given to struggling Grade V students. It explained its rationale and the processes of the implementation. An evaluation sheet was formulated. Each student was purposively chosen using the criterion-based sampling. Since, the participants were underage, a Consent-to-Ascent Form was given to their parents. They affixed their signature signifying that they gave me the go signal in conducting the study to their children. The intervention lasted for 2 weeks where it was conducted every day after their classes. However, prior to this, the objectives of the study were discussed to them thoroughly.

In the same manner, the ethical standards were observed. The anonymity of the student-participants was kept confidential. Their names were changed into codes. Moreover, after the intervention they were interviewed and were asked relative to its efficacy. Also, they suggested for the improvement of the intervention.

Lastly, the results of the interview were translated to English. Themes were extracted and discussed thoroughly. Meanwhile, the results were returned to the participants for confirmation. Token were given to them as a sign of gratitude for the time and efforts they spent.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was done. The transcripts of the interview were translated to English to achieve universality. I re-read the lines and the responses of the participants before I drew the themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Efficacy of Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) in Strengthening Reading Comprehension Skills of Students in English

Increased Reading Comprehension Skills. FORI was found to be an essential tool that helped students in increasing their comprehension skills in English. Prior, to its implementation, those struggling students could not even understand the meaning of words and phrases. When they tried to decode its meaning, they translated it, thus it affected the overall meaning and provided a context that is different from what it should mean.

During the interview, it was shared that:

"I am grateful that we have this kind of program especially for us who have the difficulties of digging deeper into the meaning of texts. First and foremost, I did not really have the confidence because I

considered myself one of the weakest in the class. Finally, with this program I am able to develop my skills. It was easy for me to grasp the contexts and used those words and phrases in speaking and writing." (Participant 2)

In addition, the same thought was stated by the participant: *"Prior to the implementation of the intervention, I could hardly understand what I read. With the repetitive strategy, I was able to appreciate that everything was just easy. Also, I can say that I am ready to the next ladder of learning."* (Participant 4)

The theme is in consonance with the findings of Park (2022) that repeated reading rate and comprehension skills of the students. There was a positive correlation between their reading rate and comprehension as manifested on their posttest. For Han and Chen (2010), they stated that it improved the students' fluency in reading, accuracy, and comprehension.

Independent Readers. Because of the implementation of FORI among the students, it made them as independent readers. They were able to read by themselves even without the intervention of the teacher. Every day, there were changes on their perceptions and participations relative to the efficacy of the intervention. Furthermore, the students are able to develop a reading habit where they showed independence in understanding the texts.

The result was supported by the narrative of the participant, who said that:

"I was glad that I was chosen to participant in the said program. I knew that I could make it. Now, I can read independently. Unlike before that I really struggled with the texts." (Participant 1)

In the same vein,

"I really appreciated FORI. It enhanced by reading skills. Now, I can easily understand the meaning of words." (Participant 5)

Further, it was sustained that:

"For me, the intervention was effective. With the help of the teacher, I can read even without her." (Participant 7)

Repeated reading strategy helped students to have the command of the language. Thus, they can have the deeper understanding of the texts. Eventually, this made them independent readers where they do not need anymore the help of an adult that will guide them (Soleimani et al., 2022). Conversely, Guerin and Murphy (2015) concluded that students could uncover the meaning of texts through strategic reading whereby it increase their levels of self-directed learning.

Suggestions to Further Enhance the Implementation of Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI)

Involvement of Teachers. Since this intervention was implemented in one grade alone, it was suggested that teachers in all levels should have to utilize it to their students who have the same experiences. Reading begins from the lower levels. And thus, any problems with non-readers can be associated with poor teaching and intervention strategies of teachers.

One of the participants reiterated that:

"I guess, teachers in all grade levels should have to adopt this intervention/ strategy." (Participant 6)

In support,

"I want all teachers should implement the said strategy to their

students also. *Struggling readers are not only among us but also coming from the lower grades.*" (Participant 9)

It was suggested that without the appropriate guidance, students' interests in reading will decrease (Nichols et al., 2009). Teachers' practical knowledge helped shape students' interest towards reading (Meijer et al., 2001).

Provisions of Reading Materials for Home Reading. It cannot be denied that in order for the students to love reading is the availability of sufficient reading materials which they could bring at home. Mostly, these materials are only for the classroom used and were not allowed to be brought by the students. This suggestion strengthens the importance of reading at home. They can also share these to their siblings. As such, there are adults at home that would guide them in their quest for higher learning. It was highlighted during the interview that:

"I want that more books will be available for home reading." (Participant 1)

"I wish that we will be allowed to bring those books at home where we could continue enhancing our skills instead of spending our time in playing online games and watching TV." (Participant 10)

Students who have struggles in reading need more support from their teachers, peers, and parents. Homes should have the necessary reading materials which will increase their interest towards readings. Aside from this, home is where learning begins (Andrés et al., 2010; Oliveira et al., 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, this study concluded that Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI) was an effective strategy which was used in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the pupils. Indeed, this enabled them to easily grasp the contexts of their lessons not only in English but in all subject areas. In the same manner, this strategy is a big help for the teachers to let their students improve their capabilities in learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since this strategy was found to be effective, it is hereby recommended that each teacher from all grade levels should have to use this in enhancing the reading capabilities of their students. Moreover, findings of the study could be the springboard where it can be used by future researchers.

Limitations

This study is Action Research. Thus, it involved only a few learners. Also, this was conducted in two weeks.

Reflection

Generally, the intervention was found to be effective in strengthening the reading comprehension skills of the students. As a teacher, I was very happy with the findings of the intervention. Nevertheless, this will not be made into reality without the participation of the parents who gave me the consent to conduct this action research to their children.

More importantly, when teachers have the focus and in teaching of reading, I believe that no one will proceed to the next grade without the necessary skills in reading. Comprehension is very crucial because without this reading is useless. It is the ticket of the students to bring themselves to the texts and eventually learn lessons and apply them into their daily lives.

FORI as a strategy opened my horizon as a teacher and a researcher. I can say that if this will be adopted by my colleagues then, I could expect no difficulties in delivering the lessons. Knowing that English is used in different disciplines, therefore, it will free them from the bondage of illiteracy.

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