



Examining the Challenges of Intermediate Readers' Comprehension in Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative research employed a data-driven approach to investigate on the readers' reading comprehension challenges. Non-probability sampling methods, notably convenience and snowball sampling, were applied in the study. The target population included English teachers instructing intermediate-level students in Angeles City and Magalang. This research focused on investigating the reading comprehension difficulties encountered by intermediate-level readers when engaging with short stories in selected public schools within Angeles City and Magalang during the 2023-2024 academic year. Findings revealed that lack of parental and societal support significantly impacted learners' reading comprehension, with a mean of 4.03 (True of Me). Learners commonly sought help from teachers or peers to overcome reading challenges, with a mean of 4.37 (Very True of Me). Asking questions and providing opportunities for student discussion were identified as the most effective strategies, with a mean of 4.80. The study demonstrated that Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) was the most effective intervention tool and the optimal reading time for students was found to be between 7:00 AM – 8:00 AM.

KEYWORDS

intermediate grades, Phil-IRI, reading comprehension, reading intervention matrix, short

I. Introduction

The ability to read is one of the most crucial language skills that pupils should develop. It will enhance students' vocabulary and increase their knowledge. It is an active process in which the ultimate goal is to comprehend the meaning of a text or symbol (Grell, 2023). Reading is an essential skill that students should learn at an early age, yet it is a complex process that requires persistent practice to progress (Domongas and Doctor, 2019; Maryline, 2021). However, according to Sari and Nasution (2023), most students can only read text without knowing the message. Aside from that, some students believe reading is an uninteresting activity (Rambuyon & Susada, 2022). That is to say, as stated by Domongas and Doctor (2019), the inability to read affects the learner's academic progress in understanding concepts in different subjects, and this proves that it is vital to instruct children to read at an early age. Reading comprehension is not merely reading the text; it involves understanding the general meaning or idea of a text, which requires readers to have a source of word knowledge to decode the meanings of the words (Oakhill et al., 2019). Regardless, as per the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), the Philippines scored among the bottom ten out of 81 countries in reading comprehension. Under the Reading Literacy Program outlined in DepEd Order No. 45, series of 2002, learners cannot advance to a higher level unless they demonstrate proficiency in basic literacy skills. As reported by Chanduvi et al. (2022), over 50% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income nations struggled to read or



apprehend simple stories before the pandemic, now, it got worse within two years of COVID-19 school shutdowns, more than 70% is the estimated number which intensified educational disparities. By employing reading techniques and strategies, learners can enhance their reading proficiency and comprehension abilities (Banditvilai, 2020). In a study by Pellicer-Sánchez et al. (2020), pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities are crucial for effective reading comprehension, as they enable learners to activate prior knowledge, understand the text's structure and content, and reflect on their reading experience. Additionally, engaging students with stories enhances their vocabulary, fosters their thinking abilities, and promotes passion for learning and better academic performance (Ramos, 2023).

II. Literature

Reading as an important skill

Reading constitutes a fundamental language skill that pupils must cultivate. Also, to be effective, this process of extracting meaning from texts and symbols must be regarded as a dynamic, strategic, motivationally driven, and lifelong process (Gedik & Akyol, 2022). This practice allowed students to develop their language and experience. Furthermore, they will discover knowledge and ideas that are new to them (Ali & Razali, 2019). Moreover, it is crucial for learners to acquire this knowledge at an early age to improve their overall performance. Also, it fosters positive thinking, sharpens the mind, and delivers a variety of knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, teachers must effectively bridge the gap between students' existing knowledge and the new concepts they are learning. Good reading comprehension is the outcome of learning to read and understand written or printed words.

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension encompasses the capacity to read, comprehend, and analyze written material. Furthermore, according to Sari and Nasution (2023), it involves actively engaging with the text by utilizing prior knowledge and making predictions, which constitutes the essence of the reading process. Also, it is one of the essential reading abilities necessary to achieve the overall reading outcomes, recognized as an indispensable characteristic of proficient readers who can significantly contribute to social development (Khasawneh & Al-Rub, 2020). Although reading comprehension is essential across all subjects and daily life, the government's attempts to improve students' reading abilities are insufficient, as the Philippines still struggles with low rankings in this area (Idulog et al., 2020). The Department of Education must assess the effectiveness of these programs and address any shortcomings in implementation. Therefore, Pua (2022) suggested that educators or intervention specialists might need to work one-on-one with pupils to practice letter-sound correspondences and phonics. As per Smith et al. (2021), background knowledge impacts stronger and weaker readers differentially. Reading comprehension is a challenging skill to cultivate for readers of all ages (Eastern Washington University, 2022). To increase students' reading comprehension, short stories are an effective tool in language development and skills (Pardede, 2021).

Importance of short stories

Short stories, noted as intellectually stimulating (Mondal, 2023), provide concise depictions of characters' lives or events, often centered on specific themes or emotions (Ezra, 2023). In addition, their significance lies in enhancing reading comprehension and language learning, motivating students to expand vocabulary (Beno, 2019), and stimulating interest in learning (Bhatti et al., 2022). Also, short stories are gaining global popularity to improve reading skills and offer an enjoyable learning experience (Dari, 2020). Furthermore, Rahmawati (2020)



discovered that integrating short stories into classroom activities provides positive outcomes, especially in enhancing students' vocabulary, communication fluency, text comprehension, diverse writing, and understanding of stories based on oral context. As Pardede (2021) demonstrates, short stories produce a relatable atmosphere and practicality for readers due to their restricted number of characters and an emphasis on a theme and the plot. It allows writers to explore a specific subject or theme while maintaining reader accessibility (Ballan, 2023). In addition to Nazara (2019), short stories are typically briefer than novels and written in a prose narrative style. It can also aid students in improving their English proficiency by encouraging them to engage with both imaginative and real-life situations they encounter daily. Aside from this, learners can read and converse about short stories engagingly (Sari & Nasution, 2023). The significance of short stories extends to their impact on reading comprehension and language learning, as they serve as indicators of comprehension and are potent tools for language acquisition (Federe et al., 2023).

Some studies have shown the challenges of intermediate students' reading comprehension in short stories. It covered the following points in sequence: a.) Text Complexity, b.) Parent Involvement and Motivation, c.) Instructional Materials and Assessment Tools, d.) Reading strategies.

Text complexity

Furthermore, the level of text complexity can impact the reader's ability to efficiently digest and assimilate information (Tolochko & Boomgaarden, 2019). Besides, educators and policymakers in the Philippines have faced challenges in improving literacy rates among students, with many needing assistances in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills (Idulog et al., 2020). Also, when reading fluently aloud, mistakes can happen, especially with complex texts, as readers balance different reading and language skills (Nguyen et al., 2020). Moreover, according to Morozov et al. (2022), determining text complexity is a complex process that involves considering multiple linguistic factors to ensure the readability and comprehensibility of a text.

Parent involvement and motivation

As reported by Khofifah and Ramadan (2021), studies have shown that the lack of teacher commitment and parental involvement in Global Social Leaders (GSL) education can lead to student's impassive in reading and writing, impacting the development of literacy culture. Building on this idea, Xia et al. (2019) highlighted that parental support and encouragement have a profound impact on children's reading motivation and their academic success, particularly in reading comprehension. Moreover, home literacy fosters a culture of reading among family members and friends, which supports kids to develop in a book-loving atmosphere (Caliskan & Ulas, 2022; Hiğde et al., 2020). In other words, parents with higher educational backgrounds tend to create a book-friendly environment at home, engaging in literacy-related activities and reading to their children from a young age. Also, including simple and engaging reading activities into morning routine is achievable and may set the tone for a good day for the entire family, even if a child lacked sufficient rest the night before (Scholastic Parents Staff, 2022). Moreover, parents who encourage their children to read literary pieces during their free time have the likelihood to be successful in the future by equipping their reading skills at an early age (Pua, 2022). With that, it significantly influenced the academic success of learners when parents are involved in giving knowledge, attitude, and goals. As Caliskan and Ulas (2022) concluded, the parent-involved reading activities designed by the researchers improved the student's reading comprehension, motivation, and fostered a greater appreciation for reading.

Instructional materials and assessment tools



As stated by Abubakar (2020), instructional materials are essential tools used by teachers to enhance the learning experience for students, aiming to unlock their full potential and facilitate the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. With the incorporation of concrete and non-concrete visual and audio-visual aids, these materials are indispensable for stimulating the sense organs (Lukman, 2022). The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), a reading assessment tool mandated by the Department of Education (DepEd), is designed for assessing learners' reading proficiency. Though they identified barriers in implementation, resulting in lapses in improving literacy, writing, and reading competency among learners, Phil-IRI results provided a basis for instructors to construct suitable reading intervention strategies to support struggling readers (Abril et al., 2020).

Reading strategies

Par (2020) classified reading strategies into three distinct groups: global, problem-solving, and supporting. Making predictions, evaluating the text, summarizing facts, and using reading strategies are all ways that readers interact with the authors of the works they read (Ali & Razali, 2019). Researchers and educators emphasize the significance of several reading skills, such as word identification, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and motivation in the reading process (Parkin, 2021). Banditvilai (2020) states that by using reading techniques and strategies, learners can improve their reading proficiency and comprehension. A study suggests that pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities can significantly assist students in activating prior knowledge, understanding the text's structure and content, and reflecting on their reading experience (Pellicer-Sánchez et al., 2020). Motivation is also a crucial factor in effective reading, as eager learners can engage more effectively in reading activities and improve their skills (Nazara, 2019). Additionally, offering students a variety of reading materials and practice opportunities can foster fluent reading and comprehension skills, ultimately enhancing their reading development and academic success (Jeni, 2020).

Although the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) is extensively employed as an assessment tool for students' reading levels, there is limited research on its effectiveness in improving reading comprehension skills. While Phil-IRI provides valuable information about students' reading abilities, it lacks studies examining how using short stories might improve them. This research endeavors to bridge the research gap by investigating the impact of incorporating short stories into the Phil-IRI assessment process. By integrating these additional resources, researchers seek to cultivate a more engaging and interactive reading experience that fosters enhanced reading comprehension among learners. Moreover, the research findings offer valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers. By exploring new ways to utilize different reading intervention tools in conjunction with short stories and instructional materials, this study aims to provide insights into innovative strategies for enhancing literacy instruction in schools. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance reading comprehension skills among Filipino students.

This rationale emphasizes the significance of reading comprehension in academic success. Despite the critical nature of this skill, many children struggle to comprehend the information they read. Recent studies have shown a decline in reading comprehension skills in the Philippines, particularly exacerbated by the challenges brought about by the pandemic. The country's low ranking in reading comprehension among 81 countries for 2022 poses a significant threat to society, and it can increase illiteracy rates among children (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2023). The researchers aim to alleviate the challenges intermediate learners encounter in comprehending short stories and to encourage teachers, stakeholders, and legislators to ameliorate effective instructional strategies that can boost the reading comprehension of intermediate learners. By fostering a love for reading and transforming students' perceptions of reading from an obligation to a



pleasurable activity, the ultimate goal is to reduce illiteracy rates in the country and encourage a lifelong love of learning.

III. Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative research method. Bryman (2001) argues that the quantitative research approach emphasizes numbers and figures in the collection and analysis of data. As a result, it is data-driven by employing this method to focus on the readers' reading comprehension challenges. A survey questionnaire is the instrument that the researchers utilized. The survey questionnaire used a Likert scale to evaluate the reading comprehension of intermediate students in selected schools in Angeles City and Magalang.

A descriptive research design was applied to gather information regarding the challenges faced by intermediate readers in comprehension. Creswell defines a descriptive research design as an investigation that describes the characteristics of a population or phenomenon under investigation. It involves collecting data through surveys, interviews, or observation.

The researchers chose non-probability sampling methods, namely convenience and snowball sampling. As Simkus (2023) shows, convenience sampling is a method of non-probability sampling that researchers employ to select their respondents in the most practical and accessible manner. Snowball sampling is a method wherein the researchers initially recruit the initial respondents, who later recruit additional qualified candidates for the study (Bobbitt, 2020). Due to the high heat index in the country, these sampling methods were appropriate for selecting respondents. Researchers applied these methods to ask participants to choose or recommend eligible colleagues to participate in the study.

Respondents

The respondents of the study comprised of 30 teachers from selected public schools in Angeles City and Magalang, Pampanga, during the academic year 2023–2024. For the final participants' criteria, as a whole, they must: (a) be an English teacher in intermediate grades during the academic year 2023-2024 and (b) be a local teacher teaching either in Angeles City or Magalang, Pampanga. According to the data validated by the Department of Education, 20,587 Grades 4 to 6 learners who underwent the English Phil-IRI assessment were deemed as "struggling readers" (Reysio-Cruz, 2020). According to the Phil-IRI data from selected schools in Angeles City and Magalang, 205 students were non-readers, and 1,889 students were frustrated readers (2024, p. 44). With the given data, the researchers agreed to focus on them because they have the experience of how learners struggle with reading comprehension.

Instruments

The researchers designed a self-made questionnaire, and it was administered electronically via Google Forms. The self-created questionnaire contained the following sections: a) Demographics; b) Reading comprehension challenges among intermediate learners; c) Measures in dealing with reading comprehension challenges; d) Strategies addressing the comprehension reading challenges among intermediate learners; e) Effectiveness of these strategies; f) Reading interventions in the DepEd and their effectiveness; and g) Best time to read. An elementary teacher and an English coordinator validated the questionnaire to ensure it was valid.

Procedure

At the initiation of data collection, the researchers formally obtained approval through a letter signed by both the Research Adviser and the Research Subject Teacher to conduct research activities beyond the campus premises. The survey questionnaire underwent validation by experts. After the university had permitted the



researchers to conduct the study online, the researchers asked for approval from the Angeles City Schools Division Superintendent. After that, the researchers sought authorization from the principals of the public schools in Angeles City and Magalang, Pampanga. Upon approval from principals, the researchers contacted the Intermediate Grade Level teachers to request permission to include them in the study. The researchers then provided a link to a Google Form with the informed consent and questionnaire. The informed consent process consists of the study’s purpose, procedures, potential risks or benefits, the permission to gather the information, and the voluntary nature of participation. Following their consent to participate, the respondents answered the validated survey questionnaire.

Following data collection, data analysis was conducted through a frequency distribution table. The data were categorized based on the following: 1) Reading Comprehension Challenges Among Intermediate Learners; 2) Measures in Dealing with Reading Comprehension Challenges; 3) Strategies Addressing the Comprehension Reading Challenges Among Intermediate Learners; 4) Effectiveness of these Strategies; 5) Reading Interventions in the DepEd and their Effectiveness; 6) Best Time to Read. Following this, the statistician validated the outcomes of the analysis. Afterward, following the validation of the findings, the researchers designed a reading intervention matrix.

IV. Results and Findings

Statement	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Learners are having trouble identifying the phonemes.	3.33	Neutral
Learners have substandard spelling skills	3.93	True of Me
Learners have a slow pace in reading and poor fluency.	3.70	True of Me
Learners struggle to recognize words automatically.	3.43	True of Me
Learners have limited knowledge of the alphabet and words.	2.90	Neutral
Learners are having difficulty decoding unfamiliar words.	3.50	True of Me
Learners lack concentration and feel disinterested in reading.	3.73	True of Me
Learners find answering comprehension questions vague	3.83	True of Me
Learners lack parental and societal support for reading.	4.03	True of Me
Learners have nutritional deficiencies and health issues	3.03	Neutral
Others: Too many reading assessments being conducted; Lack of expository reading materials in their homes.		
Overall Mean	3.54	True of Me



Legend:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
	4.21 – 5.00	Very True of Me
	3.41 – 4.20	True of Me
	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
	1.81 – 2.60	Untrue of Me
	1 – 1.80	Very Untrue of Me
	4.21 – 5.00	Very True of Me

Table 1 demonstrates the reading comprehension challenges among intermediate learners. Among 11 statements about reading comprehension challenges among intermediate learners, it shows that *lack of parental and societal support for reading* among learners has the highest weighted mean of 4.03 (True of Me). On the other hand, the least significant challenge is the statement *“Learners have limited knowledge of the alphabet and words,”* interpreted as Neutral with a weighted mean of 2.90. Moreover, Table 1 demonstrates that *“Too many reading assessments being conducted”* and *“Lack of expository reading materials in their homes”* are considered notable reading challenges. Table 1 shows that a majority of teachers (mean = 3.54) reported their students often struggle with text comprehension, aligning with the *‘True of Me’* interpretation.

As the findings explicitly show, the learners' greatest reading challenge is a lack of parental and societal support. It suggests that for many learners, the involvement of their parents and support from their community is critical to their reading comprehension. Furthermore, the people in a learner's immediate milieu, particularly their parents, have an immense impact on their reading preferences.

This supports findings from a study conducted by Khofifah and Ramadan (2021), which found that when learners lack assistance from their parents, they tend to feel uninterested in reading and writing, ergo reducing the influence of literacy culture on them.

Statement	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1) My pupils are guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words based on the context of the story.	3.93	True of Me
2) My pupils look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary that allows them to seek out definitions when reading short stories.	3.53	True of Me
3) My pupils are re-reading sentences or passages while reading short stories.	4.03	True of Me
4) Most of the time, my pupils ask for help from me or their peers when they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary in short stories.	4.37	Very True of Me



5) My pupils usually concentrate on understanding the story's more comprehensive message and ignore any unfamiliar vocabulary.	3.67	True of me
6) Sometimes my pupils used their prior knowledge to infer meaning when they encountered complex words.	3.87	True of Me
7) My pupils use visual aids such as pictures and context clues to help them understand unknown vocabulary in short stories.	4.13	True of Me
8) My pupils used to create personal vocabulary notebooks or flashcards to record and review unfamiliar words from short stories.	3.20	Neutral
9) My pupils look up unfamiliar words through Merriam-Webster or any application tool that allows them to seek out definitions when reading short stories.	3.20	Neutral
10)When my pupils find unfamiliar vocabulary, they try to find its synonym or antonym in the text of the story.	3.43	True of Me
11)Others: Pupils always ask for the Filipino translation in every unfamiliar word they encounter		
Overall Mean	3.74	True of Me

Legend:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
	4.21 – 5.00	Very True of Me
	3.41 – 4.20	True of Me
	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
	1.81 – 2.60	Untrue of Me
	1 – 1.80	Very Untrue of Me

Table 2 outlines measures learners use to address reading challenges caused by unfamiliar vocabulary in short stories. The data, presented as weighted means on a scale from "Neutral" to "Very True of Me," show that common strategies include *guessing word meanings from context* (3.93), *re-reading passages* (4.03), *seeking*



help from teachers or peers (4.37), which is interpreted as Very True of Me, using prior knowledge (3.87), and utilizing visual aids (4.13), all rated as "True of Me" aside from the other one. Other frequently used strategies are looking up words in a dictionary (3.53), focusing on the overall story message (3.67), and finding synonyms or antonyms in the text (3.43). Less frequently used strategies include creating personal vocabulary notebooks and using digital tools like Merriam-Webster, which are equally rated as Neutral (3.20). Additionally, pupils often ask for Filipino translations of unfamiliar words. Overall, the strategies are generally interpreted as "True of Me," with a mean response of 3.74.

The evidence clearly shows that pupils use myriad measures to improve their reading comprehension abilities; therefore, teachers must recognize these strategies and facilitate students in expanding their ability to comprehend complex texts. This comprehensive method ensures that every student, irrespective of their learning style, can effectively manage the reading process at an advanced level.

Overall, the outcome of the findings is that there is a need for an innovative approach to reading comprehension that includes both traditional and modern techniques while also considering the needs of every pupil. According to Banditvilai (2020), employing various reading strategies and techniques can develop and support the learner's ability to read and comprehend text. These strategies ensure students develop skills to handle complex texts effectively.

Table 3.1 Strategies in resolving comprehension challenges among intermediate students

Strategies	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Weighted Mean (Effectiveness)	Interpretation
1) I decode unfamiliar words before we proceed.	4.50	Very True of Me	4.67	Most Effective
2) I use a partner reading technique where my students collaborate to read a text.	4.50	Very True of Me	4.47	Most Effective
3) I frequently ask questions about the stories we have read.	4.80	Very True of Me	4.80	Most Effective
4) My students always have their vocabulary words before the end of the day.	4.30	Very True of Me	4.27	Most Effective
5) We always have time allotted for a reading session, where my students read at their table.	4.50	Very True of Me	4.63	Most Effective
6) I use a play-based technique where my students guess the meaning of the vocabulary words.	4.23	Very True of Me	4.33	Most Effective



7) I give students the chance to raise their questions and concerns.	4.80	Very True of Me	4.70	Most Effective
8) I give a reward (such as recitation points, candies, pens, etc.) to my students who are active in reading as their motivation.	4.50	Very True of Me	4.53	Most Effective
9) I provide students with books that match their reading level to help them build comprehension skills.	4.63	Very True of Me	4.60	Most Effective
10) I read aloud to the class, pausing to ask questions and discuss vocabulary to improve their reading comprehension.	4.70	Very True of Me	4.73	Most Effective
11) I identify students' specific reading difficulties through formal and informal assessments to help educators tailor interventions to meet individual needs.	4.70	Very True of Me	4.70	Most Effective
12) I provide clear, structured lessons on reading strategies, such as visualizing, questioning, summarizing, and making connections, to help students improve their comprehension skills.	4.70	Very True of Me	4.77	Most Effective
13) I regularly assess my students' progress in reading comprehension, allow them to adjust interventions as needed, and ensure that they are effective.	4.53	Very True of Me	4.70	Most Effective



14) I incorporate various sensory experiences, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities, to help students with different learning preferences engage more effectively in reading interventions.	4.57	Very True of Me	4.57	Most Effective
15) I utilize educational technology, such as interactive reading games and apps, to provide additional practice and support for our students to work on their own reading comprehension skills.	4.40	Very True of Me	4.57	Most Effective
16) I allow students to read texts that match their reading abilities.	4.63	Very True of Me	4.47	Most Effective
17) I provide a variety of resources, such as audiobooks, graphic novels, or simplified texts, to cater to diverse learning needs and to improve their reading comprehension.	4.33	Very True of Me	4.30	Most Effective
18) I encourage my students to practice reading aloud, fluency, and comprehension through scripted performances of short plays based on literature.	4.70	Very True of Me	4.70	Most Effective
19) Others: Giving them play time during Friday that relates to comprehension that makes them learn new skills in English.				
Overall Mean	4.56	Very True of Me	4.58	Most Effective



Legend:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Legend (Effectiveness):	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
	4.21 – 5.00	Very True of Me		4.21 – 5.00	Most Effective
	3.41 – 4.20	True of Me		3.41 – 4.20	Often Effective
	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral		2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes Effective
	1.81 – 2.60	Untrue of Me		1.81 – 2.60	Rarely Effective
	1 – 1.80	Very Untrue of Me		1 – 1.80	Never Effective
				0	Not Applicable

Table 3.1 presents the effectiveness of various teaching strategies employed to address challenges in reading comprehension and student engagement. Among the 19 strategies listed, "asking questions about the stories we have read" and "giving students the chance to raise their questions and concerns" both have the highest weighted mean of 4.80, indicating they are "Very True of Me." Despite being interpreted as "Very True of Me," the strategy "My students always have their vocabulary words before the end of the day" is the least significant, with a weighted mean of 4.30. Additionally, the table highlights that "Giving them play time during Friday that relates to comprehension makes them learn new skills in English" is considered a notable reading strategy. According to the data from Table 3.1, strategies such as asking questions, encouraging students' questions, and conducting regular assessments are greatly beneficial. The overall mean score is 3.74, corresponding to "Very True of Me" in interpretation.

The data indicates that a multifaceted approach, combining direct instruction, interactive techniques, and regular assessment, is most effective in addressing reading comprehension challenges. This holistic approach ensures students are engaged, supported, and continually progressing in their reading skills.

Aligned with this, Banditvilai (2020) states that by using reading techniques and strategies, learners can improve their reading proficiency and comprehension.

The table above shows how effective strategies are in addressing the reading difficulties of the learners. Among the nineteen (19) strategies listed above, "Frequently asking questions about the stories" is the most effective strategy, with a weighted mean of 4.80. However, the least outstanding strategy is "Students always have their vocabulary words before the end of the day," with a weighted mean of 4.27 (Most Effective). Furthermore, another strategy suggested that "Giving them play time during Friday that relates to comprehension makes them learn new skills in English." The overall mean of its effectiveness is 4.58 (Most Effective).

Based on the result of Table 3.1, the highest mean is the frequently asked questions about the stories. The data unequivocally demonstrates that frequent questioning is the most effective approach to enhance reading. Furthermore, their willingness to learn increases as they ask questions and seek answers.

In line with this, according to the study of Aslan (2022), asking questions allows students to exercise various cognitive processes, some of which may reveal information about their critical thinking abilities. Questions can be used as agents to assess the cognitive thinking levels of learners.



Table 3.2 The following are the commonly used intervention tools in addressing the reading comprehension challenges encountered by intermediate learners.

Intervention Tools	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1) Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)	4.43	Most Effective
2) Reading Camp	3.67	Often Effective
3) Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)	3.60	Often Effective
4) Catch-Up Fridays	4.40	Most Effective
5) Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs Initiative)	4.00	Often Effective
6) Rapid Literacy Assessment (RLA)	3.57	Often Effective
7) Read-A-thon	4.00	Often Effective
8) Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT)	3.57	Often Effective
Overall Mean	3.92	Often Effective

Legend:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
	4.21 – 5.00	Most Effective
	3.41 – 4.20	Often Effective
	2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes Effective
	1.81 – 2.60	Rarely Effective
	1 – 1.80	Never Effective
	0	Not Applicable

Table 3.2 shows commonly used intervention tools in addressing the reading comprehension challenges encountered by intermediate learners. *Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)* and *Catch-up Fridays* were identified as the most effective intervention tools for reading outcomes in this study, achieving weighted means of 4.43 and 4.40, respectively. In contrast, the other interventions, such as *Reading Camp*, *Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)*, *Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs Initiative)*, *Rapid Literacy Assessment (RLA)*, *Read-A-Thon*, and *Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT)*, with weighted means ranging from 3.57 to 4.00 (Often Effective). The overall mean of 3.90 suggests that the interventions in this study are generally effective, but there is still room for improvement.

Based on the results of Table 3.2, the most effective intervention tools for improving reading outcomes are the *Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)* and *Catch-Up Fridays*, with weighted means of 4.43 and 4.40. It implies that these intervention tools are most effective on student’s reading comprehension.



This study parallels the study of Abril et al. (2022) in that the results of the Phil-IRI serve as a basis for teachers to develop appropriate reading intervention strategies to support struggling readers.

Table 3.3 Best time to read

Statement	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1) I often ask students to read between 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM	4.37	Always
2) I often ask students to read between 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	3.73	Often
3) I often ask students to read between 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	3.60	Often
4) I often ask students to read between 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	3.37	Sometimes
5) I often ask students to read between 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	3.43	Often
6) I often ask students to read between 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	3.47	Often
7) I often ask students to read between 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	3.40	Sometimes
8) I often ask students to read between 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	3.40	Sometimes
9) I often ask students to read between 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	3.30	Sometimes
10) I often ask students to read between 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM	3.13	Sometimes
Overall Mean	3.52	Often



Legend:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
	4.21 – 5.00	Always
	3.41 – 4.20	Often
	2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes
	1.81 – 2.60	Rarely
	1 – 1.80	Never

Table 3.3 shows the best time to read. The data presented in the table shows the statement, weighted mean of how often educators ask students to read during different time intervals throughout the day and their interpretation. The first statement that *“I often ask students to read between 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM”* received the highest weighted mean of 4.37 (Always). While, in the second statement that *“I often ask students to read between 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM”* slightly decrease but remain consistent with weighted mean of 3.73 (Often). Likewise, the third statement that *“I often ask students to read between 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM”* got weighted mean of 3.60 (Often). However, during the 4th statement it indicates that students sometimes ask students to read *between 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM*. In the next statement the fifth and sixth statement are same with the second and third statement that the *students often to read between 11:00AM - 1:00PM*. However, there is a noticeable drop in frequency during the afternoon, with means ranging from 3.40 to 3.13, indicating that educators sometimes ask students to read during these later time periods. The overall mean of 3.52 indicates that 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM is the best time to read.

Based on the results of table 3.3, majority that the students best time to read is between 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM got weighted mean of 4.37. This implies that most of the students prioritize reading in the morning hours.

It is also akin to the study conducted by Scholastic Parents Staff (2022), which found that including simple and engaging reading activities into morning routine is achievable and may set the tone for a good day for the entire family, even if a child lacked sufficient rest the night before.

Table 4. Reading intervention matrix

Objectives	Activity	Strategies	Time Frame	Output
To improve intermediate readers' comprehension in short stories through expanding their vocabulary.	Words for the Day Give the students vocabulary words along with explanations or words similar in meaning. Let them match the words to their corresponding explanations or synonyms.	Providing vocabulary words before the end of the day.	1 hour per day	Improved vocabulary knowledge.



To analyze and interpret the story details.	Quest for Answers Learners are encouraged to express their ideas and opinions and raise questions about the stories read.	Give students the chance to raise their questions and concerns.	1 hour per day	Enhanced critical thinking skills.
To develop the reading fluency of the learners through reading story scripts.	Radio Drama Learners were given roles and scripts for a play to read in class.	Reading aloud, fluency, and comprehension through scripted performances of short plays based on literature.	1 hour per day	Enhanced reading fluency.
To know the story details, identify the moral of the story, draw conclusions, predict consequences, and follow instructions.	Developing Reading Power It includes reading exercises (e.g., stories) for assessment purposes, designed to evaluate the learner's reading fluency and comprehension.	Provide a clear, structured lessons on reading strategies, visualizing, questioning, summarizing, and making connections, to help students improve their comprehension skills.	1 hour per day	Enhanced the basic reading comprehension skills.
To increase students' interest in reading short stories.	Read, Play, Win Use an interactive reading games and apps through utilizing educational technology.	Utilize educational technology, such as interactive reading games and apps, to provide additional practice and support for our students to work on their own reading comprehension skills.	1 hour per day	Increased engagement and interest of learners in reading.

Table 4 shows an intervention matrix to improve the reading abilities of intermediate learners. Each activity is allocated one hour daily. The first, "Words for the Day," offers vocabulary words to help students expand their vocabulary. "Quest for Answers" aims to analyze and interpret story details by encouraging learners to express their ideas and opinions and raise questions. "Radio Drama" roles and scripts for a play were given to learners to read in class, which targets improving reading fluency. The reading exercises in "Developing Reading Power" are designed to enhance basic comprehension skills. Lastly, "Read, Play, Win," utilizes educational technology and interactive reading apps and games to boost students' interest in reading.

As the findings demonstrate, these activities are aligned and based on the most efficient strategies from Table 3.1. It reveals how effective these strategies are in enhancing pupils' proficiency in reading.

This affirms the study of Jeni (2020) that providing learners with a multitude of reading materials and practice opportunities can foster fluent reading and comprehension skills, ultimately enhancing their reading development and academic success.



V. Statements and Declarations

This research received no external funding.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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VI. Conclusion

In light of the study's findings, the researchers arrive at the following conclusions: 1) it shows that most of the students' reading comprehension challenges lack parental and societal support, with a weighted mean of 4.03 (True of Me); 2) learners employ various measures in dealing with reading difficulties from unfamiliar vocabulary in short stories, and frequent strategies, including asking for help from their teachers or their peers, showed that this is the most common strategy in dealing with challenges in their reading comprehension, with a weighted mean of 4.37 (Very True of Me); 3) these strategies will resolve students' reading comprehension by asking questions about the stories they have read and giving them chance to raise their questions and concerns with a weighted mean of 4.80 (Most Effective); 4) Phil-IRI and Catch-up Fridays were identified as the most effective intervention tools for reading outcomes in this study, achieving weighted means of 4.43 and 4.40, respectively; 5) based on the results of the table, the best time to read is between 7:00 AM - 8:00 AM, with a weighted mean of 4.37.

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