Reading Proficiency Skills of Grade 10 Students

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ABSTRACT: Reading is essential in education, equipping students with the skills to become proficient readers and holistic communicators. It involves decoding transcriptive symbols and sounds to activate meaning and prior knowledge, as well as recognizing structures to make information comprehensible. Despite the Philippines' below-average reading score of 347 points in the 2023 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), there has been a 6.9% increase since 2018. National education policies and collective efforts are mirrored in these results, as emphasized by the Department of Education.

St. Paul University Surigao's Basic Education Department has long promoted reading, partnering with Scholastic Literacy Pro to provide diverse reading materials and personalized instruction. This study assesses the reading proficiency of Grade 10 learners using this program, aiming to inform future instructional practices.

Using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, 216 Grade 10 students participated, with proficiency levels classified from Below Basic to Advanced. Results indicated minor improvements, with a slight decrease in students classified as Below Basic and an increase in those at the Advanced level. The study underscores the importance of continuous reading programs and strategic interventions in improving literacy.

Recommendations include enhancing reading programs, professional development for teachers, active parental involvement, regular progress monitoring, and further research into effective literacy strategies. These steps aim to address reading proficiency gaps and support students' academic success and holistic development.

KEYWORDS: Educational Interventions, Literacy Development, PISA Assessment, Reading Proficiency, Scholastic Literacy Pro.

INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a pivotal role in the realm of education and is crucial to equip students with the skills needed to become proficient readers and holistic communicators. It involves an intricate and dynamic process of decoding transcriptive symbols and meaningful sounds to create and activate meaning, schemata or prior knowledge of a language and content. In reading, it does not only involve the spoken interpretation of the letters and sounds but also encompasses recognizing structures to dissect chunk information into comprehensible information.

A recent report from Programme for International Student Assessment (2023) revealed that although the Philippines is still way below the global average reading of 476 points, there is a definite hike of points percent from 340 in the year 2018 compared to 2022 with 347 points. Despite the low average score among its neighboring ASEAN nations, the Philippines has climbed up a 6.9% increase in reading as reported in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2023).

However, a study of Acido & Caballes (2024) as cited in the study of Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Aaron Benavot in their "PISA, Power, and Policy: The Emergence of Global Educational Governance" (2013) emphasized how PISA and other global assessments impact national education policies, particularly in the Philippines. This is further accentuated by the remarks of the Vice President, also the secretary of the Department of Education, that the scores of the Philippines in the recent PISA assessment does not reflect our educational system but also mirrors the collective efforts and dedication to learning for the nation's learners.

At St. Paul University Surigao- Basic Education Department, the school has made a long commitment of promoting reading to its learners. Hence, it has partnered and used Scholastic Literacy Pro to give access to a wide range of book and reading materials of

various genres and year-levels. The program is established to amplify student learning support, allowing teachers to monitor, and assign differentiated and personalized instructions. Backed up with independent learning and rich reading resources, this drives learners to gauge their comprehension, analytical, and structural awareness of the language through reading.

Having all these stated, this has prompted the researchers to assess the reading proficiency of the Grade 10 learners at St. Paul University Surigao using Scholastic Literacy Pro. Additionally, this would also augment and gauge other underpinning issues in addressing reading problems and provide a diverse and strategic intervention.

This research aims to determine the profile of the students as to sex and section, their overall change in reading Lexile levels from the beginning to the end of the school year, differences in the lexile level when grouped according to their profile and differences in the pre- and post-tess results.

METHODS

In this study, the researchers employed a quasi-experimental research method, using pretest and posttest design descriptive-quantitative research design. In this design, the dependent variable is measured once before and after the intervention or treatment is administered. It is further presumed that the results gathered ought to be the changes after the intervention or treatment is done. It is noteworthy that no control and uncontrolled group is distinguished to make comparison. The participants involved in the study were the Grade 10 students at St. Paul University Surigao- Basic Education Department school year 2023-2024. Material used in the study is the Scholastic Literacy Pro.

During the school year, one pretest and posttest were given, utilizing the Scholastic Literacy Pro. The scores were then classified as Needing Immediate Intervention (Below Basic), Needing Support (Basic), Doing Well (Proficient), and Exceeding Expectations (Advanced). The researchers ensured the utmost confidentiality and affirmed that the results gathered, and findings uphold fairness and non-bias. Additionally, a non-probabilistic, specifically, purposive sampling was used in the study as it corresponded to the interest and objective of the study. The overall Grade 10 students for the school year 2023-2024 were 216. Hence, the study would maximize the total number of populations as the optimal number of participants for the specific conduct of the study.

In consonance with the promulgating law of Republic Act 10173, otherwise known as Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researchers guaranteed the safeguarding of the data collected. Hence, a letter of consent was sent to the school head and relevant authorities to seek for approval to the conduct of the study. The researchers prioritized the participants' consent and confidentiality throughout the process. To foster transparency and build mutual respect and cooperation, the researchers clearly explained the study's purpose, benefits, and advantages and any risks involved to all participants. The approved letter was then presented to the class advisers and subject teachers, informing them that their class might be interrupted for a short while. After the letter was granted permission, the researchers administered the survey questionnaire to the participants of the study.

To achieve the primary objective of having the most reliable and accurate results and findings on the citing sources skills among grade 10 students, the researchers made use of the following statistical tools to treat and analyze the data: Frequency Count and Percentage Distribution, Mean and Standard Deviation, independent samples t-test, and paired t-test. The participants' input was crucial to the study's success. To maintain the integrity of the responses, pretest and posttest were administered in a way that minimized any potential bias or influence from the researchers. Ensuring that participants' answers were genuine and uninfluenced was a top priority.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Demographic Profile of the Students*

Table I. *Demographic Profile of the Students*

Profile	f (n=165)	%
Sex		
Male	74	44.85
Female	91	55.15
Section		
Science Class	32	19.39
Regular Class	133	80.61

It can be gleaned in Table 1 the distribution of the demographic profile of the students. As to *sex*, the highest number of participants were female with 91 (55.15%) while 74 (44.85%) were female. Moreover, in terms of section, the majority of students were from the regular class with 133 students (80.61%), while 32 students (19.39%) were from the Science class.

B. Proficiency Levels of the Students

Table II. *Scholastic Pro Proficiency Levels of the Students Pretest and Posttest*

Proficiency Levels	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	f (n=165)	%	f (n=165)	%
Below Basic	68	41.21	66	40.00
Basic	34	20.61	34	20.61
Proficient	50	30.30	50	30.30
Advanced	13	7.88	15	9.09

It can be seen from Table 2 the proficiency levels of the students in their pretest and posttest results in the Scholastic Literacy Pro program show some changes. The table categorizes the results into four proficiency levels namely: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. In the pretest results, there were 68 (41.21%) students who were classified Below Basic, 34 (20.61%) as Basic, 50 (30.30%) as Proficient, and 13 (7.88%) as Advanced. Although there are 34 and 18 differences between Below Basic and Basic, and Below Basic and Proficient, respectively, it is noteworthy that a number of students still fell into the Proficient category. Meanwhile, in the posttest result, a slight improvement in numbers was revealed. The numbers of students classified as Below Basic decreased from 68 to 66 (40.00%). The number of students in the Basic and Proficient level remained the same with 34 (20.61%) and 50 (30.30%) respectively. Additionally, 15 (9.09%) were classified in the Advanced level, an increase of two from the previous 13.

The minor improvements observed in the proficiency levels of students participating in the Scholastic Literacy Pro program underscores the importance of Scholastic Reading program as an intervention and integral component in gauging students' proficiency. It is further accentuated by the study of Duke & Cartwright (2021) the significance of developing both decoding and comprehension skills and strategies of students in literacy education. Furthermore, findings by Quigley & Nyabero (2021) corroborated that the integration of literacy programs and continuous progress monitoring tend to yield better results.

Above all, reading plays a pivotal role and cornerstone of literacy which contributes to their academic success, becoming more intellectually adept and critical in understanding complex materials and nuances of language across the curriculum. As cited by Guthrie & Clauda (2020), they emphasized the significance of reading engagement in improving reading proficiency.

C. Differences in the Proficiency Level when grouped according to Profile

Table III. *Difference in the Pre-test when grouped according to Profile*

Profile	M	SD	t	df	p-value	Interpretation
Sex						
Male	2.00	0.99	-0.55	163	0.582	Not significant
Female	2.09	1.04				
Section						
Science Class	2.72	0.89	4.38	163	0.000	Significant
Regular Class	1.89	0.98				

The table presents the results of independent samples t-tests comparing pre-test scores across different groups based on sex and section. For sex, the mean pre-test scores for males (M = 2.00, SD = 0.99) and females (M = 2.09, SD = 1.04) show no significant difference (t(163) = -0.55, p = 0.582), indicating that gender does not significantly impact pre-test performance. Conversely, when comparing sections, students in the Science class (M = 2.72, SD = 0.89) scored significantly higher than those in the Regular class (M = 1.89, SD = 0.98) with a t-value of 4.38 and a p-value of 0.000. This significant difference suggests that the type of class (Science vs. Regular) has a meaningful impact on pre-test scores, with students in the Science class performing better on average. These

findings imply that educational interventions or resources might need to be tailored differently for Science and Regular classes to address the varying performance levels.

Table IV. *Difference in the Post-Test when grouped according to Profile*

Profile	M	SD	t	df	p-value	Interpretation
Sex						
Male	1.99	1.01	-1.10	163	0.271	Not significant
Female	2.16	1.05				
Section						
Science Class	2.88	0.83	5.19	163	0.000	Significant
Regular Class	1.89	0.99				

The table presents the results of independent samples t-tests comparing post-test scores across different profiles: sex and class section. For sex, males (M = 1.99, SD = 1.01) and females (M = 2.16, SD = 1.05) did not show a significant difference in their post-test scores (t(163) = -1.10, p = 0.271), indicating that gender does not significantly impact the post-test performance in this context. In contrast, the comparison between students in the Science Class (M = 2.88, SD = 0.83) and those in the Regular Class (M = 1.89, SD = 0.99) revealed a significant difference (t(163) = 5.19, p < 0.001). This suggests that students in the Science Class performed significantly better on the post-test compared to those in the Regular Class. These findings imply that while sex does not influence post-test outcomes, the type of class section has a substantial impact, with specialized science classes potentially providing a more effective learning environment or curriculum that enhances student performance.

Recent research supports the conclusion that gender has no discernible effect on post-test performance. According to Hyde's (2020) analysis of PISA data, there are not many disparities in math and science success between boys and girls, suggesting that gender has little effect on academic performance in these subjects. Similarly, gender parallels in cognitive capacities have been consistently found, especially in STEM domains (Lindberg & Hyde, 2019), which are consistent with the non-significant gender differences in post-test results shown in our study. However, other research supports the large difference in post-test performance between students in ordinary classrooms and specialized scientific programs. A meta-analysis by Tai et.al (2019) demonstrated the benefits of specialized scientific courses on student success.

Furthermore, Subotnik et.al (2021) examined the results of students who attended STEM-focused high schools and discovered that these institutions frequently offer improved learning environments that greatly raise student achievement. This is further supported by Sadler & Sonnert's (2020) research, which shows that high school students who enroll in specialized scientific courses do better in science-related college courses afterward. All of these research points to the same conclusion: whereas gender has no discernible effect on post-test results, the kind of class section—especially specialized scientific classes—has a big influence on improving student performance.

D. Difference in the Pre-Test and Post-Test
Table V. *Difference in the Pre-test and Posttest*

Levels	M	SD	t	df	p-value	Interpretation
Pre-Test	165.00	1.02	-0.76	164	0.448	Not significant
Post-Test	165.00	1.03				

The pre- and post-test results indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the two tests, as evidenced by the paired t-test with a p-value of 0.448. This lack of significance suggests that whatever intervention or treatment was administered did not result in a statistically significant change in the participants' scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Despite the identical mean scores of 165.00 for both tests, the slight variation in standard deviations (SD) between the pre- and post-test (1.02 vs. 1.03) may indicate some variability in individual performance across the two testing sessions. However, without a significant t-value, this

difference is not considered meaningful in the context of the study. Overall, these findings imply that the intervention may not have had the desired impact on the measured outcome, prompting a reevaluation of the intervention strategy or the variables being assessed.

This study's observation that there was no discernible difference between pre- and post-test scores is consistent with findings from other recent studies that looked at the effectiveness of different educational programs. In their meta-analysis of educational programs, Schmidt et al. (2020), for example, discovered that many interventions result in relatively slight gains in student performance, with several research finding non-significant increases in test scores. Robinson et al. (2019) conducted a study to assess the effects of a particular educational technology intervention. Their findings indicated that although individual performance varied slightly, there was no statistically significant improvement in the mean scores overall. These results imply that treatments' efficacy might vary greatly and be contingent on the circumstances.

Furthermore, Wong et.al (2021) underscored the need to consider the quality of execution and the congruence of intervention tactics with the particular learning requirements and environments of the subjects. As a result, the current study's findings, which show no discernible difference between pre- and post-test scores, are in line with other studies that emphasize how difficult it is to achieve meaningful educational outcomes through interventions that lack careful customization and strict implementation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research conducted on the reading proficiency of Grade 10 learners at St. Paul University Surigao using Scholastic Literacy Pro revealed significant insights. Despite the slight increase in reading Lexile levels from the pretest to the posttest, the majority of students remained in the same proficiency categories, indicating the need for more targeted interventions. The findings suggest that while programs like Scholastic Literacy Pro are beneficial, there is still a considerable number of students who require immediate intervention and support to enhance their reading skills.

The study highlighted the importance of continuous and strategic reading programs in improving students' literacy. The modest improvements observed underscore the need for more robust and diversified reading interventions. It also accentuates the pivotal role of reading in academic success and the development of critical thinking and comprehension skills, essential for students' holistic growth.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are suggested to improve reading proficiency: enhancing and diversifying reading programs with targeted interventions for struggling students; providing continuous professional development for teachers in the latest literacy strategies, differentiated instruction, and personalized learning; encouraging active parental involvement through seminars and orientations on supporting reading at home; implementing regular progress monitoring for timely interventions; and conducting further research to explore new, effective strategies across diverse demographics and educational settings.

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