Digital Storytelling: An Innovative Instructional Material in Improving the Reading Level of Grade 10 Learners

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Abstract. The student's reading ability is confronted by educational lapses due to the implementation of remote teaching and learning during and after the global health crisis. With this, the researcher aimed to develop innovative instructional material to improve the reading level of Grade 10 learners of Santiago Integrated School in Schools Divisions Office of Iriga City, Philippines. This study is a Quantitative Research Design. The study included three (3) classes of Grade 10 learners, with 83 enrolled at the Santiago Integrated School in Iriga City. This includes 100 percent of the learners in the three classes. Based on the study results, Santiago Integrated School has Grade 10 learners who mostly learn at their reading level based on Phil-Iri exemplifies the reader's skills. The Miscues of the learners have much technical knowledge. As for Reading Comprehension, the learners are dependent on the teachers. Supplemental material is necessary to improve their skills and help them become proficient in learning. Digital storytelling is an innovative material that will increase learners' literacy to become more proficient in their macro skills, especially reading.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Instructional Material, Reading Level.

1   Introduction

After the height of the pandemic, the learner has struggled a lot in many ways, such as their cognitive, sociological, and psychomotor skills. Many learners need recalibration to be at par with their current level. This becomes a challenge for the learners, educators, school administrators, and the educational system. The need to explore and reflect on the current and future directions should be given focus to ensure that the learners in the future will no longer be able to experience the same concerns.

With the result of the survey and assessment of the learners' reading proficiency, the Department of Education in the Philippines has decided to bring back face-to-face classes from blended learning from August to October 2022 and full face-to-face classes from November 2022. This aims to bridge the learning gaps of the learners due to the long remote learning experience due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic. Through this, the Regional Memorandum No. 104, s. 2022 was also released to provide policy guidelines on the implementation of the learning recovery curriculum to the learners in the Bicol Region as a response to the poor learning outcomes of the learners who are struggling in their learning, particularly in the reading and numeracy of the

learners (Sadsad, 2022; CNN Philippines, 2022). This learning recovery plan is DepEd Bicol's way of assessing the learners' proficiency and creating an innovative way of improving the students' literacy through a strategy that shall improve the student's grasp on the basic concepts and skills needed to improve.

With this, the researcher would like to contribute a strategy to help the Department of Education improve students' reading comprehension. Strategy in teaching is vital in increasing the learners' engagement in the learning process, thereby assisting the learners in participating, connecting, and being excited with the content that will be delivered (Bouslog, 2019).

One of the strategies that may be interesting for the learners is using images, graphics, music, and sounds to deliver the learning content, thus considering the short-term attention of the learners in a mono-strategy of teaching. In a study by Raheim (2021), it was noted that to improve reading comprehension, storytelling transitioned to a digital modality, which is even more entertaining, captivating, engaging, communicative, and theatrical for the learners. The use of technology should be taken advantage of and integrated into one of the tools in teaching and learning. The learners in the present time are naturally digitally savvy. Their learning is fast when integrated into digital learning, like social media, online channels, etc. Sometimes, they independently discover many things at the edge of their fingers and become more advanced than our way of the utilization of technology. Thus, encouraging them to improve their reading is necessary, and technological intervention will be an avenue to help them cope with their concerns about reading.

Taking advantage of being digital natives, such as increasing engagement in discussions, engagement in the screen displays, and visual presentation, allows the learners to be attentive and focused on what they are doing. This strategy centralizes on the Grade 10 and other learners of the Santiago Integrated School at Santiago, Iriga City. Grade 10 and the other group of learners of junior high school are the last steps before senior high school, in which the learners are being prepared for many concepts to be absorbed in the pre-college years. The skills in reading comprehension have to be ripened and reach maturity before taking the road towards reading complex concepts and comprehensive strategies.

Under the new normal, a huge gap has been observed because the reading and comprehension of learners are not at the same level as their grades. The current lessons are affected by concerns about their low grasp of reading comprehension, fluency, and listening. Their lack of self-discipline and drills during the pandemic made it difficult for them to catch up with the lessons, and this has contributed to the growing problem concerning literacy appraisal in the country. On the other hand, teachers are also exploring effective and efficient strategies for dealing with the learners' difficulties. Therefore, in its sublime need, teachers ventured into several strategies to ensure students' attention in improving their prime skills. The researcher devised innovative material through Digital Storytelling to motivate the learners and help them improve their reading and comprehension proficiency. Thus, introducing Digital Storytelling brings them closer to literacy and reading proficiency. Through this, the researcher shall determine the importance of the instructional material in enhancing the reading proficiency and comprehension of the learners.

2   Method

2.1   Research Design

This study uses a quantitative research design that involves objectively collecting and analyzing numerical data to describe, predict, or control variables of interest. (McLeod, 2019) The data gathered was described verbally based on the tabulated presentation of data.

In this study, a survey was utilized to answer the questions based on the standard assessment in reading using the Phil-Iri. To support the data gathered from teachers' experiences in implementing digital storytelling through the designed materials,

2.2   Sources of Data

The primary and secondary references of this study are the Phil-Iri, USANT Library, and various websites of journals, articles, and pages. The researcher also used the results of the pre-test and post-test, survey questionnaires, documents of the schools, and transcribed narratives from focus group discussions and interviews with respondents and participants of the study.

2.3   Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study are the 30 students of each class in Grade 10, which are both traditional and experimental subjects of Santiago Integrated School. The researcher considered 100 percent of the population in this study since the assessment for reading comprehension skills is mandatory for the students.

2.4   Data Gathering Tools

The researchers used Phil-Iri (Philippine et al.) as the primary data-gathering tool. It was used to measure the learners' reading level. Phil-Iri is an individualized assessment of the learners in reading for their proficiency in both Filipino and English. The assessor's materials use Filipino and English texts and questions to assess the student's learning. The Phil-Iri Group Screening Test (GST) pre-test in English and Filipino is usually conducted in the first or second month of the school year. At the same time, the post-test is done between January and February.

2.5   Statistical Tool

The percentage technique was used to compute the oral reading score passage, record the speed and rate of oral reading, and compute the students' comprehension of the passage.

3   Results and Discussion

3.1   Reading Level of Grade 10 Learners

The reading level of the Grade 10 learners in Santiago Integrated School is evaluated through the Phil-Iri assessment given to the learners.

Table 1 presents the reading level of Grade 10 learners in Santiago Integrated School through the Phil-Iri Assessment. This table presents the consolidated result of the Grade 10 reading level.

Table 1. Reading Level of Grade 10 Learners

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Independent	59	71.08	1
Instructional	18	21.69	2
Frustration	6	7.23	3
Total	83	100.00	
Students Tested who got less than 14 (<14)			**43**

The result shows that there is a frequency of 59 or 71.08 percent from the Grade 10 learners with an independent level (Rank 1) of reading in Santiago Integrated School, while 18 or 21.69 percent are in the Instructional level (Rank 2), and 6 or 7.23 percent in Frustration level (Rank 3). This shows that most learners are already independent in their reading skills, but the school should not be complacent with their learners because nobody should be left behind. All the learners should be at the same level to improve their learning capacity. Thus, teachers should explore varied ways of ameliorating the learning capacity of the learners to ensure progress. In the same way, learners can track their progress to know how they can become better. Of 83 learners who took the group test Phil-IRI, 43 got scores lesser than 14, meaning they needed to take the Individualized Phil-IRI Assessment.

Despite the result of the pre-test through Phil-Iri for Grade 10 learners, the learners' reading levels are not good because there are still several learners in instructional and frustration levels. In the recent Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics 2019 (SEA-OLM), the Philippines reaches 10 percent among the participants who can meet the minimum reading standard in reading (Dela Pena, 2023). This means that the school should not be contented that a majority of learners are independent. Instead, all learners should be at least in the instructional so that their reading should not be a problem in their coming years of schooling. Reading is part of the "Functional Literacy" of learners because it allows them to engage and independently gain knowledge in varied situations, and it is significant in measuring literacy.

The Philippines may have reached 91.6 percent according to the data in the 2019 Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), yet the result in other tests, such as the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa), showed the result otherwise (Philippine et al., 2023).

There has to be an aggressive move from the institution in recalibrating the learner's level so that they may be at par with the others and be able to engage with other communities beyond their classroom. Reading may be a task for an ordinary learner, but this skill must be learned to address half of a person's life and battles.

3.2   Reading Difficulties

Another variable that the researcher considered is the reading difficulties of the learners. Out of the 43 learners who scored less than 14, they were reassessed through the Individualized Phil-IRI Assessment. The table presents the reading difficulties of the Grade 10 learners along the three categories measured in Phil-Iri - Miscues, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Speed. The computation of the learner's reading difficulties shall follow the

guidelines mentioned in the methodology, and the scores that they incur shall be classified if the student's score is Independent, Instructional, or Frustration Level. For instance, in Miscues, the data presented shows the number of students who are independent, instructional, or frustrated with their reading difficulties.

In Table 2, the researcher presents the number of learners categorized as independent, Instructional, or Frustrated in their reading difficulties, specifically in Miscues. Based on the result, after the individual computation of their miscues, their scores are categorized if they belong to what level of reading difficulty.

Table 2. Reading Difficulties of the Grade 10 Learners

	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Miscues			
Independent	17	39.54	1
Instructional	13	30.23	2.5
Frustration	13	30.23	2.5
Reading Comprehension			
Independent	11	25.58	2
Instructional	23	53.49	1
Frustration	10	23.26	3
Reading Speed			
Independent	15	34.88	2
Instructional	18	41.86	1
Frustration	10	23.26	3
Total	**43**	**100**	

It shows that 17 or 39.54 percent of the learners are categorized as Independent in their Reading Difficulty under Miscues, ranking one among the Instructional and Frustration levels. Also, there are 13 or 30.23 percent of learners whose reading difficulty in Miscues is classified as both Instructional and Frustration, which ranks 2.5. This means there are 17 Independent Learners who outrank the number of learners classified from the Instructional and Frustration.

This implies that 13 learners need guidance on fixing their miscues and 13 learners are having severe problems with their miscues; thus, if instructional and frustration levels of learners are added, the majority of the Grade 10 learners are in the Instructional

and Frustration, and this should be addressed by providing supplementary activities or a thorough change of teaching reading as a strategy to ensure that learners shall improve in their proficiency and lessen their miscues. Their need to practice reading should be done to ensure they can fluently read the text. Miscues should be avoided in reading because they imply non-familiarity and less competence in their reading fluency, which may significantly impact their future academic journey and profession.

The miscues of the learners would state that there have been so many concerns about the technical knowledge of the learners. This means that the teachers should provide supplemental learning for these learners to practice and correct themselves on their usual drills in learning. The miscues provide an idea that the majority of the learners should be recalibrated through the guidance of teachers and the progressive development of materials to urge the learners in the outcome.

Upon computation of the student's reading comprehension scores, each grade of the learners is classified under the Independent, Instructional, or Frustration level in their reading difficulties. Regarding reading comprehension difficulties, 23 or 53.49 percent of learners are at the instructional level, which ranks 1. At the same time, 11 or 25.58 percent of learners are in the independent reading level, which ranks 2, and 10, or 23.26 percent, are in Frustration, which ranks 3.

This means that 23 students in the Instructional level of reading difficulties in Reading Comprehension state that the highest category of learners in Grade 10 need guidance in reading from the educator, and they cannot comprehend their reading independently. Also, 11 learners were classified as independent and could read and comprehend their reading independently. Ten students have problematic reading concerns because they have unsatisfactory reading comprehension and cannot read independently.

Based on the data, this implies that the reading comprehension level of most students is Instructional and Frustration, which denotes that they are still being guided and their competence is still honed. The teacher needs to focus on continuous training and crafting innovative strategies to improve students' learning. Intervention and exposure to drills are necessary to improve the student's reading comprehension. When the goal is to have no less frustration level in the student's reading comprehension, the need to ameliorate the pedagogy of the teacher should be done.

As for Reading Comprehension, the learners are dependent on the teachers. They are willing to learn, but they need to be given guidance and be guided with the discipline to ensure that they will learn until they can make the habit of reading on their own with self-understanding of what they learn and make it part of

Their system. The need for supplemental material to ensure the learners' motivation is necessary to improve their skills and become proficient in learning.

Lastly, in Reading Speed, the rate of learner's speed in reading is classified under the parameters of being Independent, Instructional, and Frustration level in Reading Speed. Based on the assessment, there are 18, or 41.86 percent; Independent learners, which ranks 1, and 15, or 34.88 percent; Instructional learners, which rank 2; and 10, or 23.26 percent, which ranks 3. The reading speed of the learners presents that most of them are in the process of development and need practice to get used to reading, which will eventually improve their reading speed.

The Reading Speed of the learners is also in the process of guidance of the teacher, and they should be given more practice in reading to ensure that their proficiency is beyond the average reading level in which they can do the scanning and skimming techniques in reading. More drills and practice should be needed so that learners can improve their proficiency.

The result shows that Grade 10 learners are mainly independent and instructional learners, which may sound positive because of their level of learning. It may seem that the learners are at a good level of learning. However, in terms of literacy, the measurement is not about the majority but individualized literacy, which may not consider proficiency when there are frustration levels among learners. Nevertheless, the frustration level is low, and there is a need to recalibrate the teaching methodology, strategy, and modality to ensure the learners can cope with their minimal difficulties. Also, more engaging resources should be needed to address the needs and lure the learners' attention to valuable learning.

4   Conclusion

From the analysis, the researchers decided to develop Digital Storytelling: An Innovative Instructional Material in Improving the Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Learners.

Innovative instructional material is essential in addressing the learners' learning gaps because it allows them to be introduced to new approaches that improve the transfer of knowledge and the process of connecting with the learners in knowledge building and skill development (Thompson, 2023). Since knowledge is adaptive and continuously evolving, the educational system should also cope with it so that the learners can sustain their motivation to advance their skills and capabilities. In this case, the researcher designed a way of engaging the learners in learning through a digital storytelling resource.

Digital storytelling is a narrative presentation through multimedia, specifically text, moving images, pictures, audio, and others. This is the process of introducing the story as an engaging, interactive, and luring resource material that allows the learners to see reading and storytelling very interestingly (University of Wollongong, 2023). This strategy is used in other fields or subjects such as science, history, and college.

The study by Loniza, Saad, and Mustafa (2021) stated that digital storytelling

is an essential tool in improving the listening comprehension of the learners and teaching language, for it allows the teachers to combine the artistic way of telling stories through multimedia and the utilization of technology in teaching, such as images, video, audio narration, and music to allow the learners in achieving proficiency in reading comprehension.

Five (5) videos are ready for classroom utilization, and other videos have yet to be launched. These videos were taken from the Phil-Iri material for teaching reading comprehension. The researcher converted the text to digital storytelling to allow the learners to appreciate the story even more, for it becomes visually moving rather than just the text to be read. Two of the videos are for Grade 10 learners, and the title of the 1st video is "The Lottery Ticket" by Anton Chekov, while the 2nd video is "We Shall Overcome"

by Lyndon Baines Johnson. Other innovative materials designed by the researcher are "The Brain" for Grade 7 learners, "The Fun They Had" by Isaac Asimo for Grade 8 learners, and; "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou for Grade 9 learners. These digital stories. Include five (5) questions towards the end of the videos to engage the learners and assess their learning from the reading.

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