

Enhancing The Reading Comprehension Skills Of Grade Four Learners Through Peer-Parent Tutoring

Rochelle DC. Idago

Diliman Elementary School
San Rafael, Bulacan, Philippines
rochelle.idago001@deped.gov.ph

Dr. Maria N. Cusipag

De La Salle Araneta University
Quezon City, Philippines
mariacusipag@yahoo.com

Abstract— The global achievement results of the 2018 examination given to students of 79 nations showed that the Philippines ranked lowest in Reading (Reysio-Cruz, 2019). Hence, this study aimed to improve the word reading and comprehension skills of Grade 4 struggling readers of Diliman Elementary School. Two interventions called CLASP and LIFT were used. CLASP is an acronym for “Community Learning Assisted by Student Peers,” while LIFT is an acronym for “Learning Improvement through Further Tutoring”. The significant change in the reading performance of students was measured by a posttest after the implementation of the interventions. The researchers employed the quantitative research design in analyzing the problem. The Phil – IRI materials were used as tools in assessing the performance of the respondents. The data were analyzed from the pretest and posttest administered to the learners, the findings of the study revealed that the reading comprehension skills improved for both participants of CLASP and LIFT. The results of the study provided insights to elementary teachers, most especially those in the primary level, on how to handle students with reading difficulties. It has been recommended that other researchers replicate this study with a bigger sampling in order to validate the findings.

Keywords— reading intervention, reading difficulty, reading performance, struggling readers

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the foundation of any academic learning. It is a core skill that must be mastered for the students to become literate and productive individuals. Through reading, students acquire new skills and knowledge that can be used to adapt in the ever-changing world. Having this skill, one can be assured that he/she can survive and compete with others.

According to Lowery (2017) literacy is the key to being successful in the educational field and in the workforce. From elementary school to college, every content area relies on the student’s ability to read and process text as the main vehicle for transmitting information.

Thus, of all the skills that the children need to learn, reading is the most important. It is a fundamental skill required for success. Reading proficiency is vital to early literacy success. Blair (2017) mentioned that reading proficiency in elementary school affects the educational and occupational outcomes in adulthood. Carney, Fisher, and Glass (2017) stated that students entering adulthood that have not attained basic literacy skills find themselves at a severe disadvantage with limited earning potential and career options. Cockerham (2013) reiterated that lack of education creates barriers for young adults and produces a group of people who may not be able to support a family or earn a living wage due to their inability to read or understand well enough to obtain education or adequate employment. In addition, without the basic level of literacy, those who have low level of education and who do not read well lack the ability to develop the additional skills that they need as they compete for jobs.

There are many programs designed to improve a student’s reading skills. The government, through the Department of Education, launched the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP). It aims to make all grades three pupils become successful readers. Its goal is to have zero non-reader by grade four. DepEd Order no. 45, s. 2002, concomitant to ECARP, enjoined schools to develop a School-Based Reading Program and to conduct an inventory of children’s reading ability. Schools should

diagnose those who need further reading instructions and measures to improve reading comprehension. DepEd Memorandum no. 143, s. 2012, also requires that all teachers should accomplish the students' individual reading profile. DepEd directive from 2001 also states that students should show written or oral evidence of having read at least two books a year. It aims to promote the love and habit of reading. Another relevant education reform related to reading is a part of the ten-point agenda for Basic Education Reform of the Aquino Administration. It has a goal that all children in grade one must be a reader by the end of 2016. Classroom practices, such as A Word A Day (AWAD), A Paragraph A Day (APAD), and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), are the usual routines done by teachers to improve the reading skills of the pupils. But despite of the collaborative effort taken by the government and the Department of Education, the problem of low reading achievement still persists.

Diliman Elementary School is not exempted from this problem. The prevalence of poor reading performance among students has become so alarming, particularly in Grade four, who reads basic or below basic ranges. It indicates that they have only a partial mastery of the skills needed to be a competent reader. The result of the Phil-IRI Group Screening Test showed that they have poor reading literacy skill. Thus, this prompted the researcher to conduct a study to determine the reading performance of the Grade four students and provide intervention program for them. Goldenberg (as cited in Arnold 2009, p.21) pointed out that there is a "body of evidence suggests that reading problems are preventable for the vast of majority of students who encounter difficulty in learning to read, if the students receive extra support in the form of early intervention program." Hence, providing intervention program suited to the needs of the pupils is imperative to improve reading skills. The present study addresses the identified problem in reading by implementing Reading Intervention Programs to enable fourth Grade students to improve their reading levels.

Hence, the CLASP and LIFT were conceived. CLASP is an acronym for *Community Learning Assisted by Student Peers*.

A selected *student peer*, who is an independent reader, teaches, holds, or *clasps* one struggling reader from a *community* or group of struggling *learners* and *assists* him/her through guided peer tutoring. The peer tutor gets guidance and instructions from the class adviser on what to teach during the tutorial stage. Peer tutoring is a classroom practice and strategy that employs students classified as independent level readers to provide individualized instruction. Peer tutoring is an effective method in teaching reading and in facilitating social integration (Leidig et al., 2018). Tutoring involves a kind of scaffolding process that aims to make struggling readers to become a proficient reader by the end of the program. After *clasping* the frustration level reader, the peer tutor now *lifts* up this reader to a higher level and goes to Project **LIFT**.

LIFT is an acronym for *Learning Improvement Through Further Tutoring*. It aims to assist instructional level students through one-on-one tutorial with the help of the parent at home. The parent gets guidance and instructions from the class adviser on what to teach during the tutorial stage. Found to be beneficial to struggling readers, home literacy learning helps in supplementing the received instruction in school. Parents can be valuable models toward a positive attitude in reading. Merga and Ledger (2018) mentioned that parental modeling of reading has been found to increase children's reading fluency. The significant change in the reading performance of students after the implementation of the intervention can be measured by a posttest.

The conceptual paradigm of the study is shown in Figure 1.

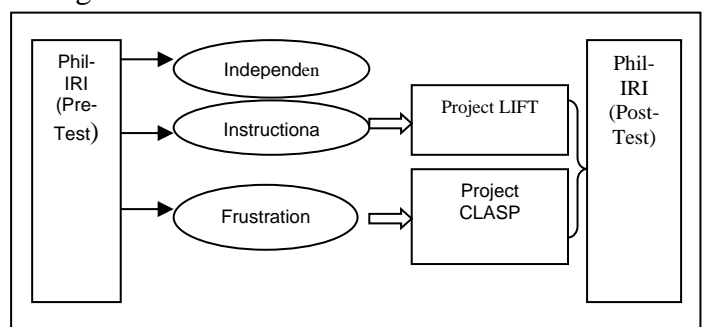


Fig.1. Research Paradigm of the study.

Research Problem

This study aimed to assess the reading performance of grade four pupils at Diliman Elementary School, San Rafael West District, Bulacan during the school year 2018-2019. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the students in terms of the following:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Individual Phil-IRI pretest performance result
 - 1.4 Oral reading behavior
2. What are the oral reading behaviors of students during the implementation of :
 - 2.1 CLASP among frustration readers
 - 2.2 LIFT among instructional readers
3. What are the changes in the reading performance skills of the respondents before and after the intervention:
 - 3.1 Word reading skills
 - 3.2 Comprehension skills
4. Is there any significant change in the Phil-IRI performance of the learners before and after the intervention?
5. What are the oral reading behaviors manifested by the learners after the intervention?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive action research design was used in this study, following the PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycle. The first stage is *PLAN*. Planning involves diagnosing the problem, collecting baseline information related to the problem, as well as designing the intervention and methods of evaluation to address the problem. The second stage is *DO*. It is the actual implementation of the intervention that is based on the sample. It includes the collection of relevant data after the implementation of the intervention program. The third stage is *STUDY*. It is the result of the actions taken and the data collected. The data are interpreted through minimal statistical analysis. For the purpose of this study, the researchers used frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, gain score, and Cohen's *d* to assess the impact of the interventions on the reading

performance of struggling readers. The fourth stage is *ACT*. It entails plans for the dissemination of the study and revised action plan for the next cycle of the study.

Implementation Plan

The reading instructions for Project CLASP starts with letter-sound production, followed by sight-word reading, reading phrases, sentences, reading a short story, and answering of comprehension questions.

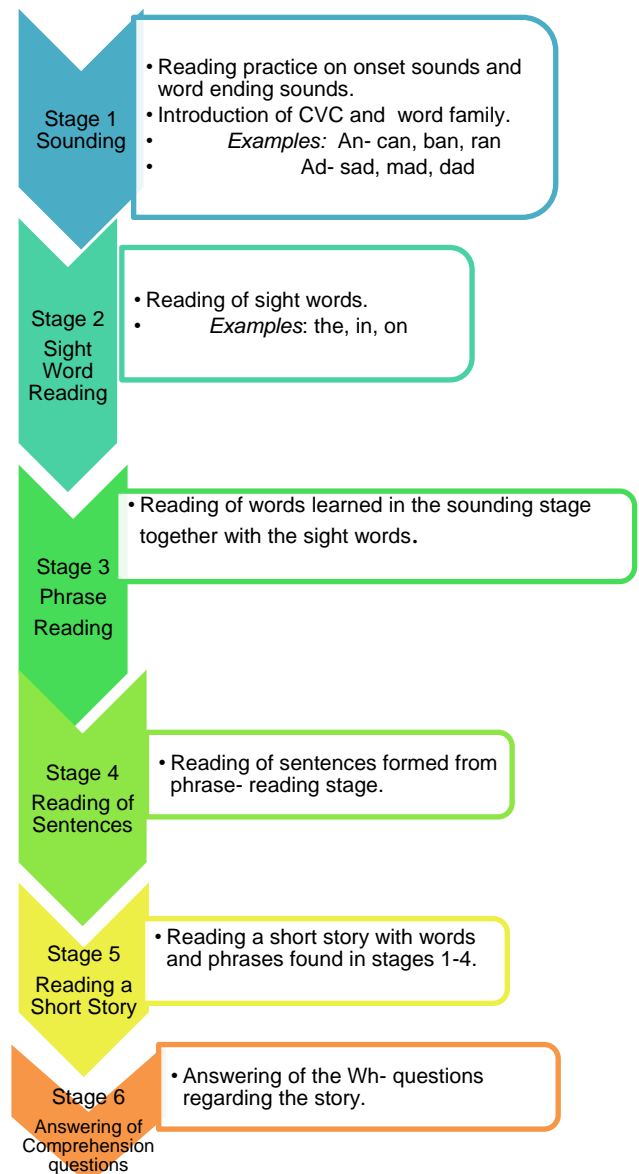


Fig.2. Reading Instructions for Project CLASP.

The reading instructions in Project LIFT shows that the tutoring starts with activating the prior knowledge of the students by asking motive questions, followed by vocabulary

development by means of defining difficult words that can be found in the text, then reading the story guided by the independent level reader. Lastly, the answering of comprehension questions follows.

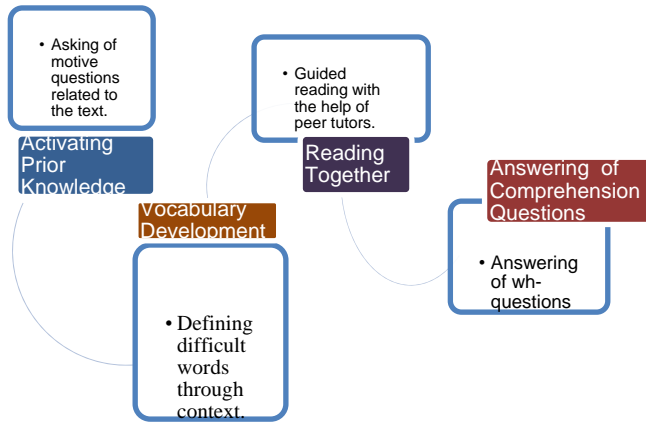


Fig.3. Pedagogical Procedure for Project LIFT.

Project CLASP (see Figure 2) is more on developing the reading fluency of frustration level readers. It has six stages. Stage 1 is sounding and reading of onset and word ending sounds. Stage 2, reading of sight words, is followed by stage 3, the phrase reading part, where the words learned in sounding and the sight words are read together. Next is stage 4, reading of sentences formed from phrase reading stage. This is followed by stage 5, reading of a short story with words and phrases found in stages 1 to 4. Lastly, stage 6 follows, where students are asked to answer comprehension questions regarding the story.

Project LIFT (see Figure 3) has fifteen activities in varying difficulties. The primary aim of this intervention is to enhance the reading comprehension of the students. In doing the activity, the students are asked about their relevant knowledge or their experiences in connection to the text they are reading. Activating prior knowledge or schema helps the students to have a better understanding about the text. It is followed by vocabulary development in which unfamiliar words found in the text are defined through context. Wide vocabulary is important in reading comprehension. The next step is the reading-together stage wherein the independent and instructional level readers read

together. Both the tutors and the tutee are benefited because they enjoy the camaraderie of reading a story together. Lastly, the students are asked to answer comprehension questions to assess their reading comprehension.

Research Participants

The study was conducted at Diliman Elementary School located at 144 Diliman 1st, San Rafael, Bulacan, Philippines. Fifty-four grade four students for academic year 2018 – 2019 participated in the study. Thirty-seven students diagnosed to be in the frustration level of readers underwent the Project CLASP, while fifteen students diagnosed to be in the instructional reading level underwent the Project LIFT. Two students who were diagnosed to be in the independent level of readers served as tutors to their fellow students under Project CLASP.

Research Instrument

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) was utilized as the instrument in gathering the primary data for the study. It was a nationally validated assessment tool used by the DepEd to measure the reading proficiency level of public elementary school students both in English and Filipino languages. For the purpose of this study, the researcher determined the students' reading ability by the number of words correctly identified/ word recognition and the comprehension questions that the students answered correctly based on the graded passages that were used for each individual. Phil – IRI, as a nationwide assessment tool, presents reliable and dependable information. It is a valid instrument that provides true measurements, measuring exactly what it intends to measure.

Data Gathering Procedure

Pre-Implementation. The researcher asked permission from the Division Superintendent and from the School Principal of Diliman Elementary School to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher sent permission slips and asked for parent-signed consent forms from the parents of the students after which the Phil-IRI Pretest was administered. Further testing through individually administered Phil-IRI graded passages was also conducted. The students read one passage and the miscues such

as mispronunciation, omission, substitution, insertion; repetition, transposition, and reversal were recorded. The data were used to know the word recognition skills of the students (see Appendix C for computing the oral reading score per passage). For the comprehension skills, the students' responses to the questions were counted and computed (See Appendix D for computing the student's comprehension of the passage). These data were the bases for classifying the Students' Reading Profile as Independent, Instructional, or Frustration Reading Level before assigning them a designed reading intervention program.

During Implementation. The researcher focused on the student's classified as either Instructional or Frustration Level. The Frustration Level students underwent the Project CLASP (Community Learning Assisted by Student Peers), while the Instructional Level students underwent the Project LIFT (Learning Improvement through Further Tutoring). One-on-one reading tutorial in school through the help of student peers under the guidance of the teacher was done. The same process was done at home together with their parents but with instructions given by the teacher. Both Project CLASP and Project LIFT had 30 sessions that lasted for thirty to forty minutes per session. A checklist was provided to determine the oral reading behavior of the students throughout the fifteen activities, both in Project CLASP and Project LIFT.

Post Implementation. After thirty sessions of intervention, a posttest was given. The researcher assessed the changes in the reading performance skills of the respondents after the intervention program. Then the instrument was retrieved, and statistical treatment was applied to the data gathered from the instrument.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative approach in analyzing the data. The profile of the students per age, gender, Phil-IRI Pretest/Posttest results, reading profile, word recognition skills, and comprehension skills were collected and analyzed using frequency and percentage. The

qualitative analysis was done by describing the student's behavior while reading the text. Through this, the oral reading behavior of the student was determined and tabulated. The quantitative analysis for the Individual Phil-IRI pretest and posttest used mean, standard deviation, gain score, and Cohen's d.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the statistical results of the study, the following were drawn:

Table 1. *Frequency Distribution and Reading Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age*

Age	Pretest			Posttest			N
	Ind	Ins	Frus	Ind	Ins	Frus	
9	2	10	20	5	20	7	32
10		6	15	1	13	7	21
11			1		1		1
Total							54

Legend: Ind- Independent; Ins-Instructional; Frus- Frustration

Age is considered as one of the contributing factors that influenced the reading ability of the respondents, Babuder (2013), Cockerham (2013), and Vlachos (2015). Their studies showed that older students read better than their younger peers. In this study, the results showed that younger students performed better than the older students which are in contrast to the study of Babuder (2013), Cockerham (2013), and Vlachos (2015).

Table 2. *Frequency Distribution and Reading Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex*

Sex	Reading Profile						N
	Pretest			Posttest			
	Ind	Ins	Frus	Ind	Ins	Frus	
Male	1	7	21	2	18	9	29
Female	1	8	16	4	15	6	25
Total	2	15	37	6	33	15	54

Legend: Ind- Independent; Ins-Instructional; Frus- Frustration

Gap in reading with regards to sex was also observed in this study. The results showed that female students performed better than the males in their reading performance. The results seem to be an additional support to the existing body of knowledge that females have a better reading ability compared to males.

Table 3. *Word Reading Skills Pretest and Posttest Performance Results*

Word Reading Skills	Frequency		Percent	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Independent	9	20	16.7	37.0
Instructional	30	23	55.6	42.6
Frustration	15	11	27.8	20.4
Total	54	54	100.0	100.0

Table 3 shows the word reading skills in pretest and posttest. It indicates an increase in the number of independent level in word reading skills. The instructional level in word reading decreased in number because most of them became independent level readers in word reading. The frustration level skills in word reading also decreased which is a positive indication that they improved in their ability to read and recognize words.

Table 4. *Comprehension Skills Pretest and Posttest Performance Results*

Comprehension Skills	Frequency		Percent	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Independent	3	10	5.6	18.5
Instructional	17	30	31.5	55.6
Frustration	34	14	63.0	25.9
Total	54	54	100	100

Table 4 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents in terms of comprehension skills during pretest and posttest. It confirms that there is an increase in the number of independent level readers in comprehension skills in the posttest. The instructional level in comprehension also increased while the frustration in comprehension level decreased from pretest to posttest which is a positive indication that there is an improvement in

comprehension skills of the students after attending the reading program.

Improvement in comprehension skills increases the effectiveness of reading. As reflected in Table 4, it clearly shows that CLASP and LIFT build comprehension skills among Instructional and Frustration level of readers, which is useful in the academic, professional, and personal life of the students.

Table 5. *Oral Reading Behaviors During the Pretest and Posttest Performance*

Behaviors While Reading	Frequency	
	Pretest	Posttest
1. Does word-by-word reading.	28	13
2. Reads in a monotonous tone; lack of expression	49	36
3. Voice is hardly audible.	19	1
4. Disregards punctuation.	44	24
5. Points to each word with his/her finger.	19	2
6. Employs little or no method of analysis.	51	50

The changes in oral reading behaviors after the intervention programs exhibited improvement in their reading performance. From a total frequency count of both frustration level readers and instructional level readers, the findings revealed that all the six indicators decreased in number from 210 in the pretest to 126 in the posttest. This indicates effectiveness of CLASP and LIFT as intervention programs to increase the literacy skills of grade four struggling readers.

Implications to Learning/Teaching

Several implications can be derived from the results of the study. The results indicate that providing appropriate intervention programs based on the needs of the students can improve their reading performance. The more teachers can define the students' challenges in reading, the more they are able to construct an effective intervention program. This means that the intervention should be made to specifically target the needed skills of the students. Thus, other teachers may develop their own strategies, such as the CLASP and LIFT, in helping

students perform better in their subjects. The results can be used by future researchers based on the current research.

The study also showed the importance of collaboration to increase the reading performance of the students. Collaborative efforts from the teacher, parents, and the students themselves are important.

The results of the study have shown that CLASP and LIFT programs have improved the reading performance of the students by utilizing the collaborative efforts of the parties involved. Future researchers may include qualitative measures, such as interviews, observations, and focus group discussions to increase the credibility of the information that they gather.

Lastly, the results of the study indicate that many parents do want to be involved in their children's reading development. To become successfully involved, parents need knowledge and techniques that they can use in teaching reading. Future researcher can conduct programs to teach parents on how to meet their child's unique reading strengths and weaknesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the following are recommended:

- a. Device localized and contextualized reading materials, text, and selection in order to connect to the real-life setting of the learners.
- b. Ensure the participation of the parents and the community in uplifting the reading skills of the students.
- c. The school administrator should allocate budget or funds to programs, events and activities related to the uplifting of the reading performance of students (e.g., procurement of materials and books needed for reading remediation)

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