

## Teaching Strategies and the Reading Comprehension Competence of Grade 7 Students

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**ABSTRACT:** Reading comprehension plays a pivotal role in understanding the material at hand. Without this skill, readers would encounter difficulties comprehending what they read, ultimately impeding their academic performance. The study investigated the effectiveness of teaching strategies, including Vocabulary Knowledge, Context Clues, Identifying the Main Idea and Key Details, and Sequencing a Passage into Ordinal Series, to improve the reading comprehension competence of Grade 7 students. The initial scores on the pretest for all measures were relatively low, ranging from 1.98 to 2.66. However, the post test scores showed a significant increase, ranging from 3.47 to 4.58. The t-values for all measures were highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the improvements observed between the pretest and post test scores were not due to chance. The study included a sample size of 64 respondents, with 63 degrees of freedom for each measure. In summary, the results of the study indicated that the implementation of various teaching strategies resulted in significant improvements in all aspects of reading comprehension. The negative t-values demonstrate statistically significant enhancements in scores from the pretest to the post test. Moreover, the p-values (all less than .001) indicate that these improvements were highly unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. Therefore, it can be concluded that strategies such as reading aloud in the classroom, using the QAR strategy (Question-Answer Relationship), and incorporating contextual clues were effective in enhancing the students' reading comprehension competence.

**Keywords:** Comprehension, Strategies, Context Clues, Main Idea and Key Details, and Sequencing.

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### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted face-to-face schooling, forcing learners to study at home for the past two years. However, the new academic year in 2022-2023 marked a return to traditional classroom instruction, with teachers facing new challenges. The importance of teachers and their irreplaceable role in education is emphasized, though digital experiences can supplement their teaching. An assessment conducted by Sta. Anastacia-San Rafael National High School revealed alarming reading skills and comprehension levels among Grade 7 learners, comparable to elementary levels. Proficiency in English reading is vital in the Philippine educational system, as it facilitates accessing information in higher education and serves as a primary source of knowledge. Students learning English as a second language often struggle due to various factors, but with proper instruction and time, they can overcome these challenges. Reading comprehension plays a crucial role in understanding materials, performing well academically, and succeeding in future careers. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) is introduced as an assessment tool that determines students' reading performance and helps tailor instruction to their needs. Grade 7 students face difficulties comprehending English lessons, writing, and responding to texts. Their poor performance in English-medium subjects reflects their reading difficulties, which could hinder their communication skills. Therefore, the researcher aims to develop an intervention strategy to improve students' comprehension levels and enhance their competitive edge. The findings will guide the development of reading interventions and techniques specific to Grade 7, preparing them for future challenges.

Reading Comprehension requires the ability to read with comprehension. Finding the meaning or message of the text at hand is almost always the aim of reading. This calls for the implementation and fusion of numerous procedures. The basic cognitive mechanisms that underlie reading comprehension, are along with their connections to the PASS (Planning, Attention, Simultaneous, and Successive Processing) theory of intelligence. Empirical data that illustrates how each of the PASS components contributes to reading comprehension in adolescent readers enrich this topic. [Kendeou, Papadopoulos 2015]. It is difficult for students to understand, deliver, and share new knowledge since students' aptitude for comprehension is tied to how well they can recognize and decode symbols or characters. These have an impact on struggling readers' grades in other subjects in addition to English. They could also become more manipulative and gullible as a result of it. The inability to read and comprehend may, above all, lower a person's self-confidence and cause them to do poorly in tasks that require communication with others, such as recitations and even writing. This issue affects not only the English subject but also other academic fields that employ English as their primary language

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of instruction [Catuiran, Sacatrapos 2019]. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory helped identify pupils' strengths and limitations. Her research aimed to identify the causes of the reading comprehension issues that current learners were having and examine their reading problems. According to the study, teachers should help students become more cognizant of their level of success as well as their individual reading strengths and shortcomings. The effectiveness of the lesson increases with increased learner awareness. Her research also showed that frequent inventories at the start and end of the school year would allow for the determination of changes in reading achievement levels as well as the development of more specialized skills and tactics. In this way, a precise assessment of A child's growth and development could benefit. Intervention programs were created to individually meet the requirements of students who were struggling readers [Flojo 2007]. Word recognition is the first step in every reading process. Through letter-sound recognition and letter blending, young children develop the ability to create new words. As students become older and start spelling larger, more complicated words, they start to apply their spelling skills to the ideas of root words and affixes, such as prefixes and suffixes. The primary focus of reading instruction for young children is typically on decoding abilities. This is the method used to transform written letters and words into language. He is taught phonics, and after becoming familiar with the sounds of the various letters, he moves on to combining the sounds to create words. These first simple words are frequently repeated in early-stage reading materials. These first simple words are frequently repeated in early reading books to promote the practice and the steady development of a reading vocabulary. The youngster is essentially learning the "code" that lies behind written words at this young age. Decoding abilities are thus the foundation for effective reading. Accuracy and speed in reading are important at this level. A youngster with strong decoding abilities can read quickly and accurately, though not always with comprehension. Since reading comprehension is regarded as the key to knowledge acquisition, it is crucial to understand how well the students are doing in this subject. Reading is done to gain knowledge that can be used to create new knowledge [Anderson 2000]. Teaching reading comprehension methods are intentional plans—sets of procedures that proficient readers utilize to understand the text. Students who receive education in comprehension strategies grow into engaged, intentional readers who are in charge of their reading comprehension. The seven suggestions offered by Adler C.R. appear to have a solid scientific foundation for enhancing text comprehension. They are keeping track of their understanding, metacognition, use of graphic and semantic organizers, question generation, question responding, story structure recognition, and summarizing [Adler C.R. 2001], A teacher may employ a variety of techniques to teach reading. Anyone who teaches must comprehend the ideas and presumptions on which each technique is founded to employ it successfully. Activities that could be categorized as being related to instruction have no shortage of labels or descriptions, A strategy is an action the teacher employs to meet one or more of her teaching-learning objectives. The approach can also be thought of as the overall course chosen for the instruction [Harmer 2007]. Teachers who successfully teach reading comprehension help their students become proficient and successful readers in the classroom. To meet the needs and learning preferences of every student in the classroom, creative teachers employ a variety of techniques and ideas. Effective teaching is more complicated than just having one person with more knowledge impart it to another [Slavin 2000]. As a result, effective reading teachers are aware that numerous teaching methods can be used to teach reading. Teachers must adapt their lessons to meet the needs of their students. Innovative teachers can produce higher outcomes independent of the curricular materials, pedagogical strategies, or reading programs used [Allington 2002].

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are; 1. Determine the baseline reading comprehension levels: Assess the initial reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 students using pretests to establish a baseline for their comprehension skills, 2. Explore the impact of vocabulary knowledge: Investigate the effectiveness of teaching strategies that aim to improve students' vocabulary knowledge on their reading comprehension abilities., and 3. Measure the effectiveness of the implemented teaching strategies: Compare the pretest and posttest scores of Grade 7 students to determine the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed in improving their reading comprehension.

### METHODOLOGY

The study employed an experimental research design, specifically the one-group pre-test, post-test design, to determine whether the reading comprehension of the student respondents improved after utilizing the three Strategies for Reading Comprehension, namely: Reading aloud in the classroom, the QAR Strategy (Question-Answer Relationship), and Using Contextual Clues. The pre-test was administered to students to evaluate their reading comprehension development prior to implementing the three Strategies for Reading Comprehension, namely: Reading aloud in the classroom, the QAR Strategy (Question-Answer Relationship), and Using Contextual Clues. Subsequently, a post-test was conducted after the implementation of these strategies to determine whether students had shown improvement in their reading comprehension levels. The design incorporated a pre-test and post-test methodology to assess the effectiveness of the strategies, utilizing quantitative data. Various measures, including percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were employed in this study. Furthermore, a paired t-test was utilized to determine the significant impact of the strategies. The study encompassed all Grade 7 learners in Sta. Anastacia-San Rafael, Sto. Tomas, Batangas, ensuring a complete enumeration of the respondents.

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### Research Procedure

The researcher conducted the study in the third quarter of the school year 2022-2023. The lessons were based on the MELCS provided by the Department of Education (DepEd) and a self-made lesson plan. The lessons were discussed using the selected three strategies for reading comprehension, namely Reading aloud in the classroom and the QAR Strategy (Question-Answer Relationship).

Using the selected strategies for reading comprehension, the students engaged in reading activities. The three strategies were used during the period of the experiment. These strategies were divided into lessons/topics for the whole quarter. The respondents took a pretest before the study was conducted to gauge their reading comprehension abilities. After going over the lessons and applying the reading comprehension strategies, a posttest was administered to see if there was a discernible improvement in the respondents' reading comprehension scores.

The researcher administered the study to the selected 64 students who were included in the frustrations readers category, identified through PHIL-IRI results. Most of the struggles and problems that the learners encountered were: a lack of recognition of many high-frequency words at a glance, decoding words slowly, usually letter by letter, a lack of understanding of words they read, and showing anxiety and discomfort while reading aloud.

The researcher prepared three lesson plans that had the application of the three teaching strategies in reading comprehension, namely: Reading aloud in the classroom, the QAR Strategy (Question-Answer Relationship), and using contextual clues. Each lesson was consumed over one to two weeks, providing the researchers with enough time frame to apply all the strategies emphasized in this study. The respondents were classified by giving activities, such as grouping them according to colors or by their level of performance in reading comprehension. After conducting the lessons utilizing the suggested strategies, a survey was administered to gauge the respondents' degree of satisfaction. This survey included elements that gauged their level of satisfaction with the offered activities. For ethical considerations, the researcher asked the school's principal for permission to conduct the study and submitted a letter of consent to use the selected learners as the respondents. The researcher administered the instruction, test, and survey to the respondents for the instrument retrievals. Confidentiality was maintained, and the data was used solely for the purpose of carrying out the study.

### Research Instrument

The research instrument was a customized test in reading comprehension that had been modified to specifically address the identified reading comprehension difficulties. The test contained 40 questions and assessed the respondents' comprehension skills and understanding of written materials. The questions were designed with careful attention to clarity, relevance, and brevity in order to align with the research goals.

A thorough validation process was also conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the test and its ability to measure the intended constructs. The use of a well-crafted and validated research instrument was crucial in obtaining accurate and significant data for the study.

### Statistical Treatment of Data

The statistical analysis of data is an essential step in any research study as it ensures the accuracy and objectivity of the collected data. In this study, various statistical tools were used to analyze and interpret the data effectively. Specifically, a paired t-test, also known as a dependent t-test, was utilized to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of the experimental group. This statistical test is appropriate when comparing two sets of related measurements taken from the same group of participants, such as the pretest and posttest scores in this study.

The paired t-test was used when comparing two related or dependent samples, such as when the same participants were measured twice. The test evaluated whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means of the two samples by examining the difference between the paired observations and testing whether the average difference was significantly different from zero. This was done by comparing the t-statistic to a critical value obtained from a t-distribution with degrees of freedom equal to the sample size minus one.

Furthermore, the researcher used a teacher-made instrument to gauge how satisfied the respondents were with the tactics for improving their reading comprehensions, such as lesson plans and teacher-made tests. This instrument measured the improvements of the respondents before and after using the strategies, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It presents the collated data from the respondents adequately analyzed and carefully interpreted by the researcher to establish conclusions that would help achieve the output of the present endeavor.

**Table 1. Summary of the Pre-Test scores of the respondents in Reading Comprehension Competence before using the Strategies in Terms of Vocabulary Knowledge, Context Clues, Identifying The Main Idea and Key Details, Sequencing a Passage into Ordinal Series.**

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SCORES	VOCABULARY		CONTEXT CLUES		IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEAS AND KEY DETAILS		SEQUENCING		INTERPRETATION
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
9-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	EXCELLENT
7-8	1	1.56%	1	1.56%	-	-	1	1.56%	VERY SATISFACTORY
5-6	5	7.81%	1	1.56%	2	3.13%	6	9.38%	SATISFACTORY
3-4	25	39.06%	15	23.44%	21	32.81%	21	32.81%	FAIR
0-2	33	51.56%	47	73.44%	41	64.06%	36	56.25%	POOR
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>		<b>64</b>		<b>64</b>		<b>64</b>		

The table shows the frequency and percentage of respondents who received a certain score range and the corresponding interpretation of their ability in different areas. The areas assessed include vocabulary, context clues, identifying the main ideas and key details, and sequencing. The table shows that most respondents scored in the "POOR" and "FAIR" categories in all areas assessed, except for sequencing, where a slightly higher percentage scored in the "SATISFACTORY" category. From the table, we can also see that the interpretation of the different score ranges is consistent across all areas assessed. For example, a score of 9-10 is labeled "EXCELLENT" in all areas assessed, while a score of 0-2 is labeled "POOR" in all areas assessed. Improving vocabulary knowledge, understanding context clues, identifying the main idea and key details, and sequencing a passage can significantly enhance reading comprehension. Improving vocabulary knowledge has multiple benefits for reading comprehension. Firstly, it enhances word recognition by allowing readers to quickly understand words in a text, reducing the need for decoding unfamiliar words. Context clues also play a significant role in comprehension

by providing hints about the meaning of unfamiliar words, allowing readers to infer and comprehend their intended meaning. Moreover, identifying the main idea and key details in a text focuses reading efforts and helps establish the text's structure, guiding readers' comprehension and enabling them to prioritize relevant information. Lastly, sequencing a passage into a logical order enhances comprehension by helping readers understand the chronological or logical progression of events or ideas and improving overall coherence. By developing vocabulary knowledge, effectively utilizing context clues, identifying the main idea and key details, and sequencing a passage, readers can greatly enhance their reading comprehension. These skills work together to accurately decode words, understand their meanings in context, grasp the main ideas and relevant details, and follow the logical flow of information. Practicing and refining these skills through explicit instruction, guided practice, and exposure to various texts can lead to significant improvements in overall reading comprehension abilities.

**Table 2. Summary of Post-Test scores of the respondents in Reading Comprehension Competence after using the strategies in Terms of Vocabulary Knowledge, Context Clues, Identifying the Main Idea and Key Details, Sequencing a Passage into Ordinal Series.**

SCORES	VOCABULARY		CONTEXT CLUES		IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEAS AND KEY DETAILS		SEQUENCING		INTERPRETATION
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
9-10	1	1.56%	-	-	-	-	3	4.69%	EXCELLENT
7-8	10	15.63%	1	1.56%	2	3.13%	7	10.94%	VERY SATISFACTORY
5-6	18	28.13%	15	23.44%	19	29.69%	19	29.69%	SATISFACTORY
3-4	26	40.63%	31	48.44%	36	56.25%	19	29.69%	FAIR
0-2	9	14.06%	17	26.56%	7	10.94%	16	25.00%	POOR
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>		<b>64</b>		<b>64</b>		<b>64</b>		

This table shows the results of assessments in four different reading skills - vocabulary, context clues, identifying the main ideas and key details, and sequencing (their respective interpretations) based on the number of correct answers. The table also provides the frequency and percentage of students who obtained a certain score range for each reading skill. For vocabulary, only one respondent (1.56%) got a score of 9-10, which is considered excellent. For context clues, no respondents got a perfect score of 9-10. Only one respondent (1.56%) got a score of 7-8, which is considered very satisfactory. For identifying the main ideas and key details, no respondent got a perfect score of 9-10. Two respondents (3.13%) got a score of 7-8, which is considered very satisfactory. For sequencing, three respondents (4.69%) got a score of 9-10, which is considered excellent. The majority of the respondents got a score range of 3-6 for each reading skill, which falls under fair or satisfactory interpretation. A significant percentage of respondents got a score range of 0-2 for context clues and identifying the main ideas and key details, which is considered poor.

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**Table 3. Significant Difference between the Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Respondents before and after Using the Strategies in Teaching Reading Comprehension.**

	Pretest		Posttest		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation			
<b>2.1 Vocabulary Knowledge</b>	2.66	1.42	4.58	1.89	-10.365	63	.000
<b>2.2 Context Clues</b>	1.98	1.21	3.47	1.43	-10.285	63	.000
<b>2.3 Identifying The Main Idea and Key Details</b>	2.28	1.16	3.98	1.27	-11.570	63	.000
<b>2.4 Sequencing a Passage into Ordinal Series</b>	2.27	1.76	4.27	2.41	-10.168	63	.000
<b>PREALL - POSTALL</b>	9.19	3.55	16.30	4.78	-20.306	63	.000

The table presents the results of a pretest-posttest study on four different measures of reading comprehension: Vocabulary Knowledge, Context Clues, Identifying the Main Idea and Key Details, and Sequencing a Passage into Ordinal Series. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies in teaching reading comprehension. The pretest mean scores for all measures were low, ranging from 1.98 to 2.66. However, the posttest mean scores showed significant improvement, ranging from 3.47 to 4.58. The t-values for all measures were highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the differences between the pretest and posttest scores were unlikely to occur by chance. The degrees of freedom were 63 for each measure, suggesting a sample size of 64 respondents. These findings indicate that the respondents made significant improvements in all measures of reading comprehension after the application of the teaching strategies. The negative t-values suggest that there was a statistically significant improvement in scores from the pretest to the posttest. The p-values (all less than .001) further confirm that these improvements were highly unlikely to be due to chance alone.

Overall, the study demonstrates significant enhancements in reading comprehension skills across the four measures. The results provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the strategies employed in improving reading comprehension abilities. The findings also align with previous research on the benefits of strategies such as graphic organizers, reading aloud, question-answer relationships (QAR), and the use of context clues in enhancing reading comprehension.

In conclusion, the strategies implemented in teaching reading comprehension had a significant and positive impact on all four measures assessed. The study's results highlight the importance of employing effective strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension, pronunciation, participation, and motivation.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

1. The initial assessment of Grade 7 learners' reading comprehension skills revealed a significant number of respondents performing poorly in various areas, such as vocabulary knowledge, context clues, identifying main ideas and key details, and sequencing a passage into ordinal series. These results highlight the need for targeted support and strategies to address these skill gaps. Only a small percentage of respondents achieved excellent or very satisfactory scores, indicating room for improvement.

2. Following the implementation of reading comprehension strategies to Grade 7 learners, there has been a noticeable improvement in performance compared to the previous assessment. The percentage of participants scoring in the higher ranges of excellent and very satisfactory has increased across different skill areas, including vocabulary knowledge, context clues, identifying main ideas and key details, and sequencing a passage into ordinal series. However, the majority of respondents still fall within the fair and satisfactory ranges, suggesting the need for continued support and intervention in vocabulary, context clues, main idea identification, sequencing, and interpretation.

3. The application of strategies such as Reading aloud in the classroom, QAR Strategy (Question-Answer Relationship), and contextual clues in teaching reading comprehension has yielded significant improvements in all assessed skills and the overall scores of the respondents. The differences in mean scores between the pretest and posttest were statistically significant, indicating the positive effects of these strategies. Focusing on crucial reading comprehension competencies such as vocabulary knowledge, context clues, identifying the main idea and key details, and sequencing a passage into ordinal series, these strategies have the potential to significantly enhance students' reading abilities.

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### CONCLUSION

From the summarized findings, the following conclusion was drawn:

The null hypothesis “There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the respondents before and after using the strategies in teaching reading comprehension such as: Reading aloud in the classroom, QAR Strategy (Question-Answer Relationship), and contextual clues and Reading Comprehension Competence.” is not sustained in this study.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for potential implementation:

1. Teachers should consider incorporating a variety of strategies in the classroom to enhance reading competence and vocabulary knowledge. Reading aloud, engaging in question and answer sessions, utilizing context clues, identifying main ideas and key details, and sequencing passages can be effective in improving reading comprehension. These strategies can be applied not only in language arts but also across other subjects, promoting interdisciplinary learning.
2. Teachers should also engage in reflective practices to identify areas for improvement in teaching reading comprehension. By critically evaluating their instructional approaches and seeking professional development opportunities, teachers can enhance their effectiveness in facilitating students' reading comprehension competence. This continuous self-assessment and improvement process can lead to increased job satisfaction and fulfillment.
3. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct additional studies that explore a broader range of teaching strategies in reading and their impact on reading comprehension competence. Investigating the effectiveness of different instructional methods, intervention programs, or technology-based approaches can contribute to a deeper understanding of how to best support students' reading comprehension development.
4. By implementing these recommendations, educators can create an engaging and supportive learning environment that fosters strong reading comprehension skills in students, ultimately promoting academic success across various subject areas.

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