



CRITICAL READING SKILLS OF GRADE 5 LEARNERS: BASIS FOR A VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess the critical reading skills of fifth-grade learners and examine differences between students from urban and rural schools. Employing a non-experimental quantitative research design with a descriptive method, the study systematically gathers and analyzes numerical data to evaluate reading proficiency. The research focuses on learners enrolled in Grade 5 during the 2024–2025 academic year in Padada District Elementary Schools, including Padada Central Elementary School, Padada South Elementary School, Paulina J. Dinglasa Elementary School, Mariano Sarona Elementary School, and Lower Katipunan Elementary School, all within the Division of Davao del Sur. The study specifically targets 219 learners, selected from a total population of 485 enrolled students using Slovin's formula to ensure a representative sample. Participants are identified at a frustration level in decoding proficiency based on pre-test reading assessments. Findings indicate that comprehension skills require improvement, as learners achieved only a satisfactory rating in this area. Given these results, the study underscores the need for an intervention program to support struggling readers and enhance their comprehension abilities. The findings serve as a foundation for developing a Vocabulary Development Program, aimed at strengthening students' reading proficiency and overall literacy skills.

KEYWORDS- *Critical Reading Skills, Grade Five Learners, Vocabulary Development Program*

INTRODUCTION

Developing critical reading skills in fifth-grade students is crucial as they move from learning to read to learning through reading. At this level, learners are exposed to more complex texts and are expected to analyze and comprehend deeper meanings. Critical reading abilities involve the ability to assess, understand, and challenge the material that they read. These skills serve as the foundation for sufficient comprehension and learning that continues throughout one's life. Educators can improve students' reading proficiency by focusing on vocabulary development through tailored activities.

It is essential for students to increase their vocabulary since having a strong vocabulary enables them to grasp and engage with printed materials more effectively. Activities aimed to at increasing vocabulary should be interactive, contextual, and integrated into regular reading habits. This approach ensures that new words are not only learned but also retained and applied in appropriate contexts. Educators can use various strategies to foster these skills. These could include reading a variety of genres, engaging students in text-related discussions, and encouraging them to ask questions and draw connections to their own experiences.

A fundamental global educational problem is enhancing the critical reading proficiency of fifth-grade children. It takes active reading, content analysis, argument evaluation, and information synthesis to master these skills, which are essential for both academic success and lifetime learning. Reading comprehension, including critical reading, is one of the five key elements of effective reading instruction, according to the National Reading Panel (2021).

International evaluations, like the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), show that many fifth graders have difficulty with critical analysis and reading comprehension. Lack of exposure to a various of texts, and a lack of instructional strategies emphasizing higher-order thinking skills are some of the factors causing low vocabulary difficulties. Reading comprehension and critical reading abilities are closely related to vocabulary knowledge. Pupils with a large vocabulary are more able to comprehend and interact with texts. Emphasize that teaching vocabulary in context, utilizing interactive techniques, and promoting deep processing of word meanings are all important components of effective vocabulary instruction. To enhance comprehension, vocabulary instruction should be explicit, methodical, and integrated with reading instruction (Mullis et al., 2022).

Reading is a fundamental skill that has a significant impact on academic achievement and overall educational success. Developing critical reading skills is crucial for Grade 5 learners because it serves as a bridge to more complex learning tasks in later grades. However, there is growing concern about critical reading proficiency which can be attributed to a various educational challenge among Grade 5 learners. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only about 37% of fourth graders (the closest comparable data for Grade 5) performed above or at the proficient level in reading, indicating a significant portion of learners are falling short of the expected standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).



Critical reading, which requires understanding, synthesizing, and analyzing texts, is a skill that many students in the fifth grade find challenging. This proficiency is indispensable for comprehending complex material and attaining academic success across a variety of fields. Poor performance in comprehension and other literacy-related domains can result from low critical reading skills, according to research. Teachers have noticed that many Grade 5 students in the local educational context, especially in [specific school or district], struggle with critical reading. These deficiencies are challenges with primary idea comprehension, inference-making, and critical text engagement. Students that have a limited vocabulary have a more difficult time comprehending and evaluating literature, which makes the situation far worse. (Snow, 2021).

In the local scenario, particularly in Paulina J. Dinglasi Elementary School, Division of Davao del Sur, reading difficulty among learners is prevalent. Students can decode but cannot understand what they read. Exposure to English language is limited and that they lack vocabulary to decipher the meaning of the word and the text. The fact that they are unable to comprehend the meaning of the text is the reason why they do not enjoy reading. Additionally, the researcher, who is also a teacher at this institution, investigates the various potential solutions to the problem that was presented before. Hence, this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading critically is an essential skill that needs the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information that is found in written texts. It requires readers to do more than just understand the content; they must also question the underlying assumptions, identify biases, and consider the validity and reliability of the arguments presented. This skill is essential in professional environments, academic settings, and everyday life, allowing individuals to make informed decisions and develop a deeper understanding of various subjects. This will facilitate learners' profound engagement with academic texts, enhancing comprehension and information retention. However, it also gives people the ability to examine information critically, which ultimately leads to more informed judgments in both their personal and professional lives. (Cottrell, 2020).

Comprehension and retention of information are enhanced through critical reading, necessitating active engagement with the material. Reading critically helps readers develop their analytical skills by pushing them to analyze and evaluate arguments. It calls them to recognize arguments, challenge presumptions, and identify underlying themes and ideas. The ability to recognize biases, logical fallacies, and the quality of the evidence that is presented is made easier by the possession of this talent. Critical reading is not just an academic skill; it is a crucial competency for personal and professional development. Critical reading skills are invaluable in educational research, professional fields, and everyday decision-making. Reading critically equips individuals with the abilities necessary to navigate and contribute to a world that is getting increasingly complicated. This is accomplished by enhancing their comprehension, analytical thinking, writing, and learning that continues throughout their lives. (Paul, 2021).

Critical reading promotes critical thinking by encouraging readers to look beyond surface-level understanding. It entails analyzing a text's purpose, audience, and context, as well as synthesizing information from various sources. In a democratic society, proficient critical reading abilities enable individuals to assess news, political discourse, and social issues judiciously. This enables them to become informed citizens capable of making sound decisions and participating in civic life. Critical reading extends beyond academic texts to include literature, media, and other forms of content. Engaging with diverse materials broadens perspectives, increases empathy, and fosters a lifelong love of learning (Facione, 2022).

Critical reading, while necessary for thorough comprehension and text engagement, has certain disadvantages. Critical reading takes a significant amount of time and effort. Analyzing and evaluating texts in depth can slow the reading process. This is especially difficult for students and professionals who read extensively. The depth and detail involved in critical reading require a significant investment of time, which can be a disadvantage when dealing with large amounts of material in short periods. Critical reading may occasionally lead to "paralysis by analysis," wherein the reader becomes so absorbed in scrutinizing and evaluating the text that they are unable to advance or make determinations based on it. This phenomenon explains how closely scrutinizing every aspect of a text can impair the ability to draw conclusions and take action (Wilson, 2021).

Critical reading skills are essential in today's information-rich world, with numerous benefits in personal, academic, and professional life. These abilities entail thoroughly analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating texts rather than simply understanding their surface meaning. Individuals who practice critical reading can better understand and remember information. Readers are more likely to retain the material and comprehend its deeper meanings when they engage with the text through questioning and analysis. Critical reading provides individuals with the necessary skills to make informed judgments. Readers can make better decisions in both personal and professional situations by assessing the credibility and relevance of information (Johnson, 2021).

Critical reading skills are essential for engaging with complex texts, allowing readers to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively. Critical reading involves questioning the text, determining the author's intent, and assessing the evidence presented. This skill is crucial in academic settings, where students must discern credible sources and biased information (Giancarlo and Facione (2020).



Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to determine the level of Critical Reading Skills of Grade five Learners. Moreover, it aims to answer the following sub-problems:

1. Is there a significant difference in the critical reading skills of Grade Five Learners when analyzed by type of school:
 - 1.1 Rural
 - 1.2 Urban
2. What is the level of Critical Reading Skills of Grade five Learners in terms of:
 - 2.1 Fluency
 - 2.2 Comprehension
 - 2.3 Text Evaluation
3. Based on the findings drawn out from the study, what Vocabulary Development program can be proposed and designed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will utilize non-experimental quantitative research design using descriptive method. Quantitative research is described as an analysis of phenomena that is carried out methodically by the collection of measurable data and the application of statistical, mathematical, or computational methods... It is descriptive because the data are presented in quantitative descriptions on the “Critical Reading Skills of Grade Five Learners: Basis for Vocabulary Development Program.

Research Respondents

The respondents to this study will be grade five learners from Padada District elementary schools, specifically Padada Central Elementary School, Padada South Elementary School, Mariano Sarona Elementary School, Paulina J. Dinglasa Elementary School, and Lower Katipunan Elementary School, all located in the Division of Davao del Sur. The study will only include learners who are officially enrolled in Grade 5 during the current school year of 2024-2025 and have a reading profile that indicates frustration during the pre-test reading assessment.

This study will focus on 219 Grade 5 learners selected from a total population of 485 enrolled learners across the Padada District during the school year 2024–2025. The sample was determined using Slovin’s formula, which provides a method to calculate an appropriate sample size given a known population of 485 grade 5 learners and a margin of error of 5%. The selected participants include 146 learners from Padada Central Elementary School, 36 from Mariano Sarona Elementary School, 24 from Padada South Elementary School, 11 from Paulina J. Dinglasa Elementary School, and two from Lower Katipunan Elementary School. To ensure fair representation, stratified random sampling was applied, dividing the total population into subgroups based on their respective schools and proportionally selecting participants from each group.

Additionally, in order to conduct the study, the researcher utilized stratified random sampling, which is a statistical method that involves dividing a population into distinct subsets, often known as strata, and then picking a random sample from each category. (Ali & Al-Kassab, 2015). By guaranteeing that every subgroup is fairly represented, this approach improves estimate precision, which is especially advantageous in populations with heterogeneity. Compared to simple random sampling, the approach is well known for producing estimators with more minor variances. To improve representativeness and lessen sampling bias, random samples are taken from each stratum proportionate to their size in the total population (Goyal et al., 2024). It is helpful for aggregate queries in data analysis since it seeks to increase statistical precision and lower estimator variance (Nguyen et al., 2018).

By examining their reading profiles and learning needs, the study aims to shed light on key factors affecting reading proficiency among grade 5 learners. This research will contribute to the development of more targeted and effective reading interventions supporting the academic growth of learners across these schools and serving as the foundation for a school-based vocabulary development program tailored to their needs.

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Research Instrument

In this study, one (1) set of questionnaires will be used. The test is anchored on the adopted program of the Department of Education using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory Assessment (PHIL-IRI) which aims to improve reading performance of the pupils. The questionnaire focuses on the items of Critical Reading Skills of Grade five Learners through a test type questionnaire.

Data Analysis

To organize and analyze the data, the following statistical tool will be utilized:



Average Weighted Mean. Mean, commonly referred to as the average, is the critical measure of central tendency in statistics, providing insight into the overall performance of a group. It represents the midpoint of a set of values, calculated by summing all values and dividing by the number of observations (Bland, 2006)

This tool will be used to determine the level of the pretest and posttest mean scores of the reading proficiency levels of grade 5 learners. By calculating the mean for both sets of scores, this tool enables for a clear comparison between the learner's initial reading abilities and their progress after intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations that were derived following the analysis and interpretation of the findings was presented in this chapter.

This study sought to determine and evaluate learners in the fifth grade on their level of critical reading skills. Eventually, it also sought to determine the significant difference in the critical reading skills of the grade five learners from urban and rural schools. This study used non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing descriptive method. Quantitative research was defined as the systematic investigation of phenomena by gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. It is descriptive because the data were presented in quantitative descriptions on the “Critical Reading Skills of Grade Five Learners: Basis for Vocabulary Development Program.

The respondents to this study were the grade five learners from Padada District Elementary Schools, specifically Padada Central Elementary School, Padada South Elementary School, Paulina J. Dinglasa Elementary School, Mariano Sarona Elementary School, and Lower Katipunan elementary school, all located in the Division of Davao del Sur. The study will only include learners officially enrolled in Grade 5 during the current academic year of 2024-2025, who are identified at a frustration level on decoding proficiency level in reading during the pre-test reading assessment.

This study will target a total of 219 Grade 5 learners, carefully selected from a population of 485 enrolled students across the Padada District during the 2024–2025 school year. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, a statistical tool designed to calculate an optimal sample size for a given population. This ensures that the sample is manageable and representative of the larger population.

This revealed that the critical reading skills of the grade five learners need to be improved particularly in comprehension where the learners got satisfactory rating. An intervention program should be developed to catch those who are struggling with reading comprehension.

Conclusions

Based on the aggregated results and findings of this study, the subsequent conclusions were drawn:

The critical reading skills of the grade five learners in terms of fluency were Very Satisfactory. The critical reading skills of the grade five learners in terms of comprehension were Satisfactory. The critical reading skills of the grade five learners in terms of fluency were Very Satisfactory. The critical reading skills of the grade five learners in terms of text evaluation were Satisfactory and that there is no significant difference on the critical reading skills of Grade five learners from rural and urban schools.

The results of this study were aligned to the theory of Bean (2020) who said that critical reading is a process that goes beyond mere comprehension; it requires readers to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to cultivate a more profound comprehension and viewpoint of the material. Critical reading skills involve the active and systematic evaluation and interpretation of texts to understand their meaning, purpose, and implications. This is a manifestation of a pressing need to develop a reading intervention program in school.

From the viewpoint of Gay (2020), he said that reading is a vital skill necessary for academic and lifelong achievement. Many children and adults encounter difficulties in reading due to several causes, including learning disorders, insufficient exposure to print, and poor teaching. Reading intervention programs are designed to assist struggling readers in enhancing their reading abilities and aligning their capabilities with those of their peers. This article examines evidence-based reading intervention strategies proven to improve reading results for struggling readers.

Recommendations

In light of the findings obtained from this study, the following recommendations were offered:

DepEd Officials may create a policy that would consider vocabulary program as an integral part in improving the reading comprehension skills. Besides, the department will conduct a reorientation for all school leaders on the mechanics in the development of a vocabulary program so that school heads and reading teachers will have knowledge and eventually can come with a responsive and dynamic vocabulary development program.

School Heads may initiate school-based programs that would strengthen the vocabulary schema of the learners across grade levels. They may develop a school-based intervention program that would help the students improve their reading comprehension, which is currently quite low.



Teachers may have extended extra miles by conducting vocabulary development program to enable learners understand what they read. Learners can be guided further if teachers give further instruction on the activity, they are going to do on the selection they read.

Future Researchers are enjoined to have deep understanding on the importance of vocabulary development as an advantage on the part of the learners as they continue reading and understand what is embedded in the text. Hence, a further study is recommended.

To establish a common frame of reference, the terms pertinent to the study are herein defined:

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