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Project AIRPoDS (**A**udio-assisted **I**ntensive **R**eading as **P**edagogical practice **o**n **D**eveloping comprehension **S**kills)

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ABSTRACT

Comprehension is the key for reading to become leisurely, amusing, and educational. It is a requirement to thrive in educational institutions, professional world, and life in general (Brandon, 2021). However, in the pedagogical world, one of the most predicted costs of the COVID-19 pandemic is that learners' performance will deteriorate or weaken and that prevailing disproportions will upsurge (Forster, Forthmann, Back, & Souvignier, 2022). Moreover, the effects of covid-19 are initiating new and unusual gaps and disproportions in students reading skills (Domingue, 2021). This, along with the reading level reflected in the PHIL-IRI results of the grade 8 learners in Mamplasan National High School as this research's pretest led the researcher to come up with an action research that would try to improve the learners' reading comprehension skills. Two sections which belong to the same instructional reading level were selected as the respondents of this study – one for the control group and one for the experimental group. The control group read a passage traditionally using only printed materials while the experimental group read the same passage but with the assistance of an audio recording recorded by the researcher and validated by English language experts. After reading the same passage, both groups underwent the same reading comprehension test. The results of their tests revealed that the control group gained an average weighted mean of 6.33, while the experimental group attained 8.67, which can be categorized as instructional and independent respectively. There is a significant difference in the posttest scores of the learners who utilized audio-assisted reading and the learners who read the same passage traditionally. Therefore, after reading an audio-assisted text, the learners under experimental group exhibited significant development in their scores as compared to the learners under the control group who read a printed text traditionally. The researcher recommends that English teachers utilize audio-assisted reading in their class using whatever resources are available within their disposal. He also recommends to future researchers to utilize other forms of multimedia such as videos with subtitles or animations to fulfill the absolute level where all learners in a classroom are independent readers. Finally, the researcher suggests to learners to make the most of whatever resources they have such as android phones and computers and utilize them in a way that helps them become experts in reading comprehension.

Keywords: *Mamplasan National High School, audio-assisted reading, instructional reading level, independent reading level, PHIL-IRI.*

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension denotes the understanding skill involved in decoding written words. It is unlike the skill to distinguish words and sounds. Distinguishing words on a selection but not grasping their meaning does not realize the reason behind and the objective of reading which is comprehension. Suppose an instructor hands out a reading material to a learner. The learner can read the entire material, but they understood nothing when somebody asks them to discuss what they read. Comprehension combines meaning to written texts. Reading comprehension happens when written words are not just perceived by the eyes in print but processed in the mind as thoughts and ideas. Comprehension is the key for reading to become leisurely, amusing, and educational. It is a requirement to thrive in educational institutions, professional world, and life in general (Brandon, 2021).

In the pedagogical world, one of the most predicted costs of the COVID-19 pandemic is that learners' performance will deteriorate or weaken and that prevailing disproportions will upsurge (Forster, Forthmann, Back, & Souvignier, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has placed an imprint on the teaching and learning process as it had done since its outburst. Due to this, much consideration must be given to the shift from distance learning modalities back to in-person education as well as its consequences (Stoian, Fărcaşiu, Dragomir, & Gherheş).

According to Domingue (2021), the effects of covid-19 are initiating new and unusual gaps and disproportions in students reading skills. A sizeable amount of learners have become detached from education throughout the widespread of the disease; subsequently, they are not being evaluated for reading fluency. Therefore, educational stakeholders are misjudging the actual consequences. More prominently, these learners may have trouble keeping up and may endure the penalties well into the future. If learners are incapable to recoup, they may go through interruptions in the growth and expansion of further reading-related abilities, making it tough to read future scholastic materials.

Reading comprehension in education is as important as breathing is to humans. It is a key skill all students must be experts at in order to fully grasp all knowledge they will discover and that will be passed on to them very well. It is also necessary for them to cope with the transition from distance learning modalities back to the face-to-face learning. Considering that they were locked down for almost two years, answering their modules at home with minimal to no supervision in reading alone, and in comprehending in the further, this is the perfect time to design materials that will help ease the two years of learning gaps and learning losses and accelerate the pace of learning reading among the learners. This led the researcher to think of solutions to this problem and come up with a concrete plan to help better the reading level of the learners so he desires to find out whether using audio-assisted reading materials are beneficial in helping the learners comprehend and read intensively.

Through the use of a reading selection gathered from the book Testing Reading Power II for second year high school students, or grade 8 learners, as well as a comprehension test included in the book, accompanied by an audio recording of the reading section that will be validated by three English language experts, the learners will be tested. The results of this study can help not just the teacher-researcher but all English teachers who are in need of effective materials in the world of reading. An improvement in the reading comprehension of the learners is not just an improvement in English and Filipino subjects but in all of their subjects, and their lives in general.

METHODOLOGY

A. Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

This action research caters respondents from the grade 8 level in Mamplasan National High School for the academic year 2022 – 2023. There are 244 students in grade 8 and they are divided into six sections. The students in all six sections are heterogeneously grouped. One of these sections was chosen as the control group and another was selected to be the experimental group. All the learners who participated in the

study were also students of the researcher in the subject of English.

Out of the 889 students of Mamplasan National High School for the academic year 2022-2023, 244 belong to grade 8. The number of students in each section are stated below.

Table 1. Total Enrollment in Grade 8 Per Section

SECTION	ENROLLMENT
Cornelius	40
Damasus	41
Eusebius	39
Gregory	42
Nicholas	40
Pius	42
TOTAL	**244**

Since sections Gregory and Pius have the same highest number of the six sections which is 42, they will be assigned as the control and experimental group respectively.

The respondents of this study belong to the two section Gregory and Pius in the grade 8 level of Mamplasan National High School for school year 2022-2023. Each of the two sections has an enrollment of 42. The learners from these sections were heterogeneously grouped.

The researcher utilized a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling method is employed expansively for educational research studies. This technique yields autonomy in making verdicts on what data points to incorporate in a sample and conduct thorough analysis (Vijayamohan, 2023).

B. Data Gathering Methods

- *Various instruments*

1. Materials – the baseline for this study is the selection Philippine Palms from the textbook Testing Reading Power II. This will be the reading piece that will be read by the learners. The assistive audio reading the same piece will be recorded in the Apple Voice Memos application and edited in BandLab Music Making Studio downloaded from Apps Store. The person who recorded and edited the reading material is also the researcher.
2. Assessment – through the use of a 10-item test, the learners' comprehension of the reading material was tested. The comprehension test was made by the researcher themselves and validated by two Master Teachers of English.
3. Rating Scale – to parallel with the PHIL-IRI (2018) standards, the learners' comprehension level will be categorized as follows:

Table 2. PHIL-IRI Rating Scale.

Comprehension Level	Score	Percentage
Independent	8-10	80% - 100%
Instructional	6-7	59% - 79%
Frustration	0-5	58% and below

- *Procedures for data collection*

This study thoroughly kept pace with one step at a time way to assure the precision of the results.

A. Pre-Experimental Phase

1. The researcher requested for the permission of the school principal to perform the study.
2. After the approval of the research from the principal, the researcher informed the two sections that they would be subject for participating in the research.
3. The researcher asked for the students' guardians' agreement to request for the learners' partaking in the administration of the study.

B. Experimental Phase

1. The teacher disseminated the same printed copies of the reading materials to the two groups.
2. The control group read the reading material in a traditional way. They read the material silently without phonemic guidance from the teacher.
3. The experimental group read the reading material while an assistive audio is being played in the class and connected to speakers to be heard all over the classroom.
4. After the two groups were done reading, a 10-item comprehension test about the selection read was given to them.
5. The students submited the answer sheets to the teacher for checking.
6. The teacher checked all of the correct answers of each learner in each section.

C. Post-Experimental Phase

1. The teacher recorded all the scores of the learners using Microsoft Excel.
2. The results were sent to a teacher-statistician for interpretation of data.

C. Data Analysis Plan

Once all the required data were obtained, the researcher analyzed and compared the scores of the control and experimental groups with the assistance of the teacher-statistician. After recording all the learners' scores, a Likert scale was utilized to make a verbal interpretation of the scores. This was done to determine whether audio-assisted reading was an effective tool in intensive reading comprehension or not.

1. In determining the reading comprehension level the students have, a rating scale based on the 2018 Phil-IRI will be utilized after checking their scores.

Table 2. PHIL-IRI Rating Scale.

Comprehension Level	Score	Percentage
Independent	8-10	80% - 100%
Instructional	6-7	59% - 79%
Frustration	0-5	58% and below

2. To determine the reading comprehension level of the control and experimental group, the Average Weighted Mean (AWM) was operated using Microsoft Excel. Below is the formula of AWM:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where: X = weighted arithmetic mean

∑fx = sum of all the products of f and x; where f is the frequency of each option and x is the score of each option

N = total number of frequencies

3. To verify the significant difference on the scores of the control and experimental groups, the independent t-test was be applied through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The formula is as follows:

$$t = \frac{\overline{x^1} - \overline{x^2}}{\sqrt{\frac{(s_1)^2}{n_1} + \frac{(s_2)^2}{n_1}}}$$

Where: x^1 = mean of the pretest

x^2 = mean of the posttest

s_1 = standard deviation of the pretest

s_2 = standard deviation of the posttest

n_1 = size of the experiment group

4. To determine the measure of the spread of data about the mean, the standard deviation was used.

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(x - \bar{x})^2}{n - 1}}$$

RESULTS

1. Mean Scores in the Reading Comprehension Tests of Students

Table 3. Average Weighted Mean of Pretest Scores of the Students in Their Reading Comprehension.

Section	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Gregory (Control Group)	6.24	Instructional
Pius (Experimental Group)	6.19	Instructional

Table 3 illustrates the average weighted mean of the students in their reading comprehension pretest scores. The control group got a mean score of 6.24 which can be interpreted as instructional and the experimental group got a mean score of 6.19 which can be categorized under instructional.

According to a study conducted by Casingal (2022), students under the instructional level can read but with the

exhaustive provision of direction and supervision.

Table 4. Average Weighted Mean of Posttest Scores of the Students in Their Reading Comprehension.

Section	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
Gregory (Control Group)	6.33	Instructional
Pius (Experimental Group)	8.67	Independent

Table 4 illustrates the average weighted mean of the learners in their reading comprehension posttest scores. The control group obtained a mean score of 6.33 which falls under the instructional category while the experimental group obtained a mean score of 8.67 which can be classified as independent.

According to Marual-Gillaco (2014), a learner under the independent level can decode printed text unaccompanied and unaided and with effortlessness even without the presence and the guidance from the teacher or a more-knowledgeable peer or adult.

2. Significant Difference on the Test Scores of the Students in Their Reading Comprehension

Table 5. Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Control Group.

Group	Test	Mean	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Control	Pretest	6.24	1.61	0.061	Nonsignificant
	Posttest	6.33			

Table 5 presents the comparison of the pretest and posttest scores of the control group who utilized the traditional method of reading a text. The control group obtained a pretest average weighted mean of 6.24 while they got 6.33 on their posttest. With the F-value of 1.61 and the P-value of 0.061, the remarks is nonsignificant.

Simsek and Erdogan (2015) found that the use of traditional reading techniques among learners harnesses the learners from opportunities to convey and communicate their ideas across the text. The results of their study revealed that no further advancements were exhibited by learners who read a text traditionally.

Table 6. Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Experimental Group.

Group	Test	Mean	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Experimental	Pretest	6.19	4.88	<0.000	Significant
	Posttest	8.67			

Table 6 presents the comparison of the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group who utilized the audio-assisted reading technique in their posttest reading. The group obtained an average weighted mean score of 6.19 in their pretest while they got 8.67 in their posttest. With the F-value of 4.88 and P-value of less than 0.000, the remarks is significant.

Based on the study conducted by Tusmagambet (2020), the experimental group who utilized audiobooks or audio-assisted type of reading gained a significant increase in their reading comprehension scores and performance as compared to the control group who read the same selection in the traditional method. The experimental group outperformed the control group after listening to the audio recording while reading.

Table 7. Comparison of the Posttest Scores of the Control and Experimental Group.

Group	Mean	F-value	P-value	Remarks
Control	6.33	5.03	<0.000	Significant
Experimental	8.67			

Table 7 presents a comparison of the posttest scores of the control and experimental group after utilizing the audio-assisted reading technique. The control group got an average weighted mean score of 6.33 while the experimental group got 8.67. With the F-value of 5.03 and the P-value of less than 0.000, the remarks is significant.

According to a study conduceted by Kirchhoff and Mision (2022), audio-assisted reading has provided second language learners with many advantages including perceiving accurate pronunciation, prosody, and intonation.

DISCUSSION

A. Summary

1. Mean Scores in the Reading Comprehension Tests of Students

The average weighted mean of the control and experimental groups in their pretest are 6.24 and 6.19 respectively which can both be classified as instructional. While the average weighted mean of their posttest scores are 6.33 for the control group which can be categorized as instructional and 8.67 for the experimental group which can be classified under independent level.

2. Significant Difference on the Test Scores of the Students in Their Reading Comprehension

The average weighted mean in the pretest and posttest scores of the control group are 6.24 and 6.33 respectively, which can both be classified as instructional. With the F-value of 1.61 and the P-value of 0.061, the remarks is nonsignificant. There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the learners who utilized the traditional method of reading a passage.

The average weighted mean in the pretest score of the experimental group is 6.19 which can be interpreted as instructional, while their posttest score is 8.67 which can be categorized under independent level. With the F-value of 4.88 and P-value of less than 0.000, the remarks is significant. There is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group after utilizing audio-assisted reading.

Finally, the average weighted mean in the posttest scores of the control and experimental group are 6.33 and 8.67 respectively. The control group's score can be categorized under instructional level while the experimental group falls under the independent category. With the F-value of 5.03 and the P-value of less than 0.000, the remarks is significant. There is a significant difference in the posttest scores of the learners who utilized audio-assisted reading and the learners who read the same passage traditionally.

B. Conclusions

1. After reading an audio-assisted text, the learners under experimental group exhibited significant development in their scores as compared to the learners under the control group who read a printed text traditionally.
2. Project AIRPoDS is an effective tool in improving the learners' ability to comprehend a reading text.

C. Recommendations

1. The learners in the experimental group performed significantly higher after utilizing Project AIRPODS as compared to the control group who read the same text traditionally. Therefore, the researcher recommends that English teachers utilize audio-assisted reading in their class using whatever resources are available within their disposal.
2. The researcher recognizes that there is more to technology and multimedia than just an audio to be employed in the reading of the learners. Therefore, the researcher recommends to future researchers to utilize other forms of multimedia such as videos with subtitles or animations to fulfill the absolute level where all learners in a classroom are independent readers.
3. The researcher suggests to learners to make the most of whatever resources they have such as android phones and computers and utilize them in a way that helps them become experts in reading comprehension.

D. Reflection

Project AIRPoDS or Audio-assisted Intensive Reading as Pedagogical practice on Developing comprehension Skills is a modern solution to the growing problems in the reading comprehension of learners in English. The audio played to accompany a reading text may be accessed in-class when the teacher plays it or online if there is availability of the reading material on different streaming platforms. Project AIRPoDS was created

to deliver an innovative and novel manner of imparting reading texts to the learners so they can improve in their reading comprehension.

Up to this day, reading comprehension is still a problem in the Philippine educational landscape, as it ever was even before the pandemic hit the country. Not only the language teachers get affected with the inadequacy of learners to comprehend a reading text, but all teachers in all subjects are affected because reading is the root of all knowledge. That is why Project AIRPoDS is one of the many attempts teachers can advocate for in the pursuit of improving and developing learners' reading comprehension skills. The researcher dreams of a day where reading comprehension is not a problem in our educational setting and there will be no need for projects like this anymore.

While Project AIRPoDS can be a helpful tool to develop the reading comprehension skills of the learners, one can only hope that materials like this can be provided by the department so that teachers do not have to innovate anymore and just focus on delivering instruction to students.

E. Impact of the Study

The action research titled Project AIRPoDS (Audio-assisted Intensive Reading as Pedagogical practice on Developing comprehension Skills) is an initiative aimed at improving the learners' reading comprehension skills and reading level in a non-traditional manner. From the findings of this research, the researcher believes that several impacts can be made on the following:

The Department of Education may benefit from this research improving instructional strategies among teachers that can be reflected in curriculum guides and learning materials they provide to their educators. The findings of this research can also be their basis to test and utilize different technological and multimedia materials in teaching reading among learners.

The English teachers who are challenged to teach reading can also utilize this study as basis for the instructional materials they would prepare for the students. Through incorporating audio-assisted intensive reading strategies into their classrooms, teachers can possibly generate a more engaging and motivating educational setting which can result to amplified learner interest in reading and enhanced comprehension skills, ultimately profiting both parties – the students and teachers.

Learners may benefit from this study by regarding the gadgets readily available to their disposal as aids in improving their reading comprehension skills. After all, they are the primary beneficiary of this research. Once their reading comprehension is developed to an optimum level, they can attain improved academic accomplishment across different subjects and increased self-confidence among themselves.

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