

Hug-Done Helping School Children through Laddered Reading of Grade Three Learners

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Abstract: The ultimate purpose of this action research is to improve the reading performance of the Grade III learners of Danabunga Elementary School, Botolan District, Schools Division of Zambales through the utilization of the Helping School Children Through Laddered Reading of Grade Three Pupil in Danabunga Elementary School in Zambales Reading has been capitalized in the education process. It has been put premium in the context of the learning recovery as the return of in-person of classes is observed. This action research aimed to examine the reading performance level of Grade III pupils of Danabunga Elementary School before and after the employment of project HUG-DONE (Collaborative Approach in Reading in Enhanced Network Supports). This study further determined the aspects of the introduced intervention that facilitated their reading performance. The participants of the study were the Grade III pupils of Danabunga Elementary School of Schools Division of Zambales in the school year 2022-2023. The data were gathered through a mixed method. The qualitative part employed thematic analysis to interpret the transcribed interviews. On the other hand, the quantitative one-group pretest-post-test design used the mean and paired sample t-test to measure the reading performance of the learners in the phases of treatment. The analysis of how the project HUG-DONE facilitate their reading performance has emerged into two themes: availability of learning support, and access to reading resources. The level of learners' oral word recognition in the pre-intervention was found frustration and instructional in the post-intervention. Similarly, there was a leaped in progression of the reading comprehension of the learners where they were marked frustration in the pre-test and independent in the post-test. Notably, there is a significant difference in the learners' reading performance level before and after the intervention. This outcome suggests that the project HUG-DONE is effective in improving the reading performance of the learners. In this regard, school heads, teachers, and students are encouraged to adopt the intervention because of its efficacy.

Keywords: reading performance, project HUGDONE, independent, instructional, frustration, collaborative approach, support network.

1. Introduction

Reading is a fundamental ability that is essential for both academic and professional success in a variety of areas (Merimack, 2021). Developing reading skills early on is crucial, as it can help students to succeed in all areas of their academic and personal lives (Warner, 2020). Similarly, the Grade III level is a critical time for developing reading skills as student's transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

According to the results of the most recent assessment of reading proficiency carried out by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018, the Philippines was ranked in the bottom third of countries (San Juan, 2019), with a score that was significantly lower than the average score found internationally. This inadequate performance in reading proficiency has important repercussions for the educational system in the Philippines as well as for the future opportunities available to its population (Miñoza & Montero, 2019).

Seemingly, students all throughout the world have seen a significant loss of learning as a direct effect of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the severe disruption in education (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Reading performance is one area that has been significantly impacted due to this issue. This is because it can have long-term repercussions for the academic progress of pupils as well as their future opportunities (Tadese, Yeshaneh, & Mulu, 2022).

Owing to the learning loss, poor reading performance has been escalated and apparently manifested among the learners of Danabunga Elementary School. During the recent reading assessment of Danabunga Elementary School, results project a downtrend with 82% learning loss, and only 18%total of Grade III students in the class show a passing literacy mark. Most students have difficulty in the accuracy of word sounds and recognition and in answering critical and evaluative questions.

A majority even got the imprecise answers for the literal question. These pieces of evidence suggest that the reading achievement levels of the learners are lower than they should be. As a result, enhancing reading performance is a top goal for educators and policymakers, and there is a demand for efficient reading treatments that can assist students in developing their reading skills (Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014).

In the same vein, reading multiple texts that are progressively more challenging than the last is what is known as "laddered reading," and it is a strategy that's used to improve one's reading abilities over time (Shea & Ceprano, 2017). Alghonaim (2020) contends that the method has a long history of application in the field of language instruction, and recent findings suggest that it may represent a useful strategy for enhancing students' reading abilities.

Reading is in sequential order (Ehmer, 2016), as in a ladder, and is supposed to encourage students to become more self-

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assured and motivated as they go forward in the curriculum. Nancy Young (2022) underscores that learners can gradually improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and reading speed by beginning with books that are simpler to read and gradually progressing to readings that are more difficult. This strategy helps to guarantee that students are not overwhelmed by texts that are too difficult for them to comprehend, which can be disappointing and lead to a loss of interest in reading (Shanahan, 2020).

Wayne Brinda (2021) mentioned that this reading approach is one method that has been demonstrated to be beneficial in boosting reading proficiency. Students are provided with a sequence of texts that gradually grow in complexity as part of a reading strategy. Stambaugh (2017) contends that this strategy enables pupils to enhance their reading skills in a methodical manner. Even though the method has been utilized in language instruction for a considerable amount of time, there is still a great deal that can be learned about how it operates and how it may be utilized most successfully.

Moreover, reading passages at progressively higher levels of difficulty is a tried-and-true method in the field of language education (Gedik & Akyol, 2022), and there is a sizeable body of research that demonstrates the method's efficacy. Students are given a set of texts that gradually become more challenging as they progress through the method, which allows for a steady development of their reading abilities on their part. Learners can gradually improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and reading speed by beginning with books that are simpler to read and gradually progressing to readings that are more difficult.

Mounting evidence cites that reading in a stepped-up fashion, or "laddering," has been demonstrated over and over again to be an excellent method for enhancing reading abilities. McGeown et al. (2012), as cited Padelia (2021) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered that laddered reading interventions were connected to significant increases in reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary knowledge. Likewise, Choi and Kim (2018) conducted research in which they discovered that children in Korean middle schools who participated in laddered reading interventions showed significant gains in their reading comprehension.

2. Methods

A. Research Design

In this study, the researcher utilized a mixed method particularly the concurrent mixed method design. The quantitative part shall employ the one-group pretest and post-test design. This shall ascertain the level of learners reading proficiency particular, on reading recognition and comprehension and its significant difference in both phases after the pretest and post-test results are inferentially compared.

Meanwhile, the qualitative part used the in-depth structured interview to determine the learners' thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, particularly on how the intervention HUG-DONE facilitates the reading performance of the Grade III learners.

1) Respondent

The participants of this study shall be the Grade III learners of Danabunga School in the school year 2022-2023, Schools Division of Zambales, whose reading performance is below the passing mark and are marked as frustration and non-reader level. There are 45 participants in this study. They are determined using purposive sampling which represents the true characteristics of the population (Alchemer, 2021).

2) Data Analysis Plan

To indicate how the data was analyzed and reported, the following specifications for the quantitative and qualitative methods were used in analyzing the data gathered from the research.

For Research Problem 1. The mean will be employed to describe the level of Grade III learners' reading performance in word recognition and comprehension.

For Research Problem 2. The mean will be employed to describe the level of Grade III learners' reading performance in word recognition and comprehension.

For Research Problem 3. Paired t-test shall be used to determine if there is a significant difference in the of Grade III learners' reading performance in word recognition and comprehension.

For Research Problem 5. Thematic analysis shall be used on the transcribed data to describe how the respondents improve their reading proficiency through the HAGDAN-HUG-DONE approach.

3. Result and Discussion

Problem 1: What is the level of Grade III pupils' reading performance before and after the reading intervention in terms of oral word recognition and reading comprehension?

Table 1 shows the mean percentage of the Grade III pupils in oral word recognition and reading comprehension in both phases, pre-test, and post-test. It can be gleaned from the table that in the pre-test, the mean percentage of oral word recognition is 55.67%, described as frustration. This result implies that the Grade III learners struggle to correctly read the word lists and sight words in the reading passage appropriated to their grade level. Araim (2016) study shared a resemblance and surmised that when students read at their frustration level, they had lower comprehension scores and reported feeling more negative emotions towards reading. Likewise, Nevenglosky, Cale, and Aguilar (2019) argue that while some level of frustration is necessary for learning and growth, excessive frustration can have negative effects on reading development

Table 1
Level of oral word recognition and reading comprehension of Grade III

Assessment	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	MP	Level Description	MP	Level Description
Oral Word Recognition	56.67	Frustration	93.62	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	44.13	Frustration	82.22	Independent

Word Recognition: 98%-below-Frustration; 90%-96%-Instructional; 97%-100-Independent

Reading Comprehension: 58%-below-Frustration; 59%-79%-Instructional; 80%-100-Independent

Table 2

Test of significant difference on students' level of reading performance							
Phase	n	mean	variance	df	t-stat	Critical value	p-value
Pre-Test	45	50.40	209.05	44	16.97	1.67	0.003
Pos-Test		88.22	6.67				

*Significance at 0.05 level

and should be minimized. Hence, project HUG-DONE was employed.

Consequently, it can be noted that after the intervention, oral word recognition has leaped to a mean percentage of 93.62%, described as instructional level. This finding suggests that the Grade III pupils is able to read with support and guidance from a teacher and reading support within the project HUG-DONE framework. This progression level of provides a balance between challenge and success, allowing the student to learn and grow while still feeling confident and motivated. Moreover, they are able to decode and recognize most of the words that require support and guidance from the teacher and reading support through the ladder reading approach under the project HUG-DONE.

On the other hand, the reading comprehension level of the Grade III pupils in the pre-test was 44.13%, marked as frustration. This finding equates to the word recognition level. However, it can be noted that after the employment of the intervention, the reading comprehension level of pupils is 82.22%, labeled as independent. The findings further suggest that the Grade III pupils can read and comprehend texts on their own after the intensive reading intervention through project HUG-DONE. Learners are typically able to decode words, understand vocabulary, and comprehend the meaning of the text without assistance following the step-by-step process.

The result basically implies that after the implementation of the intervention project HUG-DONE, there was a progression of the reading level of the Grade III pupils in oral word recognition and reading comprehension from the baseline of frustration to instructional and independent, respectively. İler (2017) emphasizes that moving students from frustration levels to instructional and independent reading levels is a critical goal for literacy instruction. This process involves providing appropriate support and grade passage level and instruction to help struggling readers develop the skills and strategies they need to read and comprehend texts on their own. These were evidently demonstrated in the project HUG-DONE.

These findings are equally supported by Iwai (2016) study that underscores explicit instruction as well as modeling of successful reading skills provided in the reading assistance intervention can help learners improve their reading level. He contends that ladder reading support has demonstrated facilitation on reading skills such as decoding, assessing comprehension, and vocabulary expansion and then urges students to apply these strategies on their own.

Similarly, the guided reading practice in the project HUG-DONE is where a teacher or another adult and a small group of students are working together to read a text in an extensive reading setup. Sioringas and Steier (2019) mentioned that the reading support is there to help and provide direction whenever it's required, and they also work with the class to build efficient reading strategies. This can be an efficient method for helping

pupils progress from the level of annoyance to the level of teaching and then ultimately to the level of independence.

Problem 2: Is there a significant difference between the level of Grade III pupils' reading performance before and after the reading intervention?

Table 2 displays that the t-stat is bigger than the critical value of 1.67 after the treatment. Furthermore, it illustrates the epochal divergence that exists between the means of the pre and post-implementation of the intervention from 50.40 to 88.22. Similarly, the table also poses a remarkable increase in the post-intervention weighted mean, which roughly almost doubled the pre-intervention weighted mean. This projects that the Grade III reading performance in the pre-intervention is frustration to instructional and independent levels. Clearly, this indicates that the employment of the project HUG-DONE is essentially effectual to the improvement of the reading performance of the student.

Moreover, the utilization of the intervention yielded a p-value of 0.003 which is less than the significance level. Hence, there is a significant difference in the Grade III pupils' level of reading performance both prior to and subsequent to the application of the project HUG-DONE.

Problem 3: How does project HUG-DONE facilitate the reading performance of the Grade III pupils?

Horizontalization, clustering, and convergence are the three established processes that were followed in order to identify the themes. Horizontalization was achieved through identifying and emphasizing the views, opinions, and feelings of the Grade III learners. For the sake of a more thorough examination, these were grouped together.

The analysis on how the project HUG-DONE facilitate their reading performance has emerged into two themes: availability of learning support, and access to reading resources.

Theme 1: Appropriation of Reading Level

Most of the participants in this study reported that through the project HUG-DONE, availability of the learning supports was noted and facilitated their improvement to reading:

With the availability of reading material befitting to my level, it makes me sure and at ease to accomplish the reading materials (P2).

The reading sheets were accomplished by ensuring that someone from the family and the community can help me in my reading activity and that they are from easy to difficult. Slowly, I have progressed to improve my reading (P3).

I now confidence to read because of the friendly level reading, available to help in improving my reading performance. They taught how to read the difficult words and understand the story (P4).

Keyser (2021) mentioned that the appropriation of reading support befitting to the grade level is essential for ensuring that all pupils have the chance to acquire excellent reading skills. Reading is a crucial ability for academic achievement and

personal development. Children who struggle with reading may fall academically behind their peers, which can have lasting effects on their educational and employment chances.

This reading support can take various forms, such as individualized tutoring, classroom instruction, access to reading materials, and technology-based aids (Tomas, Villaros and Galman 2021). Schools and families can help students overcome reading difficulties and build strong reading skills by offering reading support.

Theme 2: Access to Reading Resources

Based on the responses, most participants highlighted that they got engaged in reading activity through the availability of the access to reading resources:

I can now access reading materials at school. I enjoy reading and learning more (P1).

Here in our house, we start to collect the book and other reading materials. I love to read and my parents also guide us. Sometimes we use the tablet to access other reading activities online (P5).

This theme result is faithfully included in the vast articles of education which consistently ingeminates that access to reading resources can improve learning reading performance. Liu and Chen (2022) underscores that access to reading materials is vital to guaranteeing that all persons have the chance to acquire strong reading skills. Further, Allcott (2021) elaborates that access to reading resources includes physical books, e-books, audiobooks, and online resources, among others. Hence, individuals can locate reading materials that match their interests and reading levels if they have access to a variety of reading resources, which can make reading more pleasurable and help them develop a love of reading.

Same backing proposed by Starke (2020) that schoolchildren who have access to books both at home and in school are more likely to develop proficient reading abilities and a love of reading. In addition, students with access to reading resources are more likely to achieve academic success and have better long-term educational and professional results.

4. Intervention and Strategy

The HUG-DONE reading approach employs "laddered reading" employs which entails giving pupils texts of progressively higher difficulty and level of complexity as they progress through the program and mnemonic device in reading. This strategy is aimed at assisting pupils in the steady development of their reading skills as well as the growth of their confidence as they make progress.

The laddered reading is employed on the following mechanisms: (1) Differentiated Laddered reading gives teachers the ability to provide instruction that is differentiated so that they can address the requirements of learners who have diverse levels of reading ability. Teachers are able to ensure that each student is pushed without becoming overwhelmed if they provide learners with books written at varying levels; (2) Increase in Difficulty Over Time, hence, this enables learners to gradually grow their reading skills by progressively increasing in difficulty over time. This helps learners gradually build their reading skills from the basic letter to reading a full

story with comprehension. They will be exposed to more difficult vocabulary, sentence structures, and topics as they continue through the course; (3) Improved Confidence: Differentiated reading instruction can assist learners in developing a greater sense of confidence in their own reading ability. They can observe their development over time, which may be quite motivating for them, especially if they begin with books that are relatively simple and then progressively go on to materials that are increasingly difficult as they improve; (4) Provides learners with exposure to a variety of texts at different levels, which can assist in broadening their knowledge and understanding of many genres and themes.

This intervention shall make use of the FLAT tool. To ensure the development of reading comprehension, the HUG-DONE reading strategy, which is a mnemonic device that helps learners remember the key steps involved in effective reading comprehension, will employed following the processes:

H - Highlight important information, and U - Underline key details. To actively engage with the text and find the most significant information in order to highlight important information and underline key elements, learners must first actively engage with the text. They may find it easier to concentrate their attention on the material that is most pertinent to them and to remember that information as a result.

G - Generate questions. Reading comprehension relies heavily on the ability to recognize and understand the text's central message. In order for learners to completely grasp the meaning and relevance of a piece of writing, they must first be able to determine its overarching concept or subject.

D - Determine the main idea. The process of organizing information entails organizing the information in a manner that is both easy to recall and makes sense in context. This may entail having learners create outlines, diagrams, or other visual aids to assist them in making connections between the various bits of knowledge they have been given.

O - Organize information and NE - Note-taking and Evaluation. In the final step of the process, called "note-taking and evaluation," learners will summarize the most important ideas discussed in the text and evaluate how effective the reading approach was. They may benefit from this in that it can allow them to consolidate their learning and identify any areas in which they may need to focus their attention in future reading sessions.

5. Conclusion

The oral word recognition of the Grade III pupils before the intervention was 56.67% described at frustration level. Oral reading progression was noted in the post-test were Grade III learner's oral reading performance was marked instructional having a mean of 93.62%. Likewise, the reading comprehension has leaped from 44.1% described as frustration to 82.22 marked as independent reading gain.

There is a significant difference in the reading performance of the Grade III pupils before and after the intervention project HUG-DONE.

Availability of reading support and access to the reading resources were the themes generated in the responses of the

participants.

6. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are formulated:

DepEd officials may craft a program that focuses on reading support network and maximize the use of accessibility of reading resources and other similar to the intervention division-wide and conduct training for reading upliftment to ensure the attainment of the reading proficiency.

The school heads should invest more and campaign the reading support network. They may also enhance the and embed the same intervention to the reading program.

The teachers may adopt the utilization of the project HUG-DONE in the at the classroom level.

The parents should intensify their reading support and guidance to the learners and monitor their children's learning progress.

Future researchers are urged to continue the investigation using comparable variables. In addition, they may expand the research to cover the division-wide query.

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