READING PROFICIENCY, COMPREHENSION LEVEL OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS AND READABILITY OF AFRO ASIAN LEARNING MODULE

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Article history:		Abstract:
		This study is conducted to identify the reading proficiency and comprehension level of the Grade 8 students on the different literary texts such as short story, drama and poetry, and the readability of Afro-Asian module. There are 566 respondents randomly selected from the City Schools of Quezon City. The instruments used are MAZE test which consists of a 25-item reading test to assess the reading proficiency and Mc Call Crabb test which consists of a 54-item comprehension test on different literary texts which identifies the comprehension level of the respondents. The Fry Readability Graph is also used to validate the reading level of the Afro-Asian module. From the results of the data gathered, the researcher arrives at the conclusion that most of the respondents are identified frustrational readers based on the MAZE reading test and Mc Call Crabb test on varied literary texts. Using the Fry Readability Graph, Afro-Asian short story and drama texts are in the higher level and the poetry texts are lower than the expected readers. Descriptive-correlation method is used in the study describing the reading proficiency and comprehension level on different literary texts such as short story, poetry and drama of the respondents. The results reveal that reading proficiency and comprehension of the students need to be enhanced in schools to minimize the number of frustrational readers, and the Afro-Asian module should be revised to match the readability of the intended readers.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

People who read are vital to the success of a society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998) as cited by Hartney (2011). Everybody can read and when we read we interact and communicate with the characters and writers. As an individual reads, he remembers the significant details from the text and from there he broadens his vocabulary. Reading is a highly valuable skill and activity.

There is a distinction between reading literacy and comprehension. Readers can recognize words, phrases, and paragraphs but the sense of thought sometimes is lost or comprehension has been neglected. Reading comprehension is the process of understanding what one is reading. It is also an intentional, active, and interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing. Without comprehension, reading is nothing but tracking symbols on a page with your eyes and sounding them out.

Comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. We use the words *extracting* and *constructing* to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension (Snow, 2002).

Iqbal, et.al (2015) studied the Factors Responsible for poor reading comprehension of secondary level students. The investigated the factors and suggested remedies to strengthen English reading comprehension of the students. Test and interviews were conducted to get the data. Different factors like poor command of vocabulary, habit of cramming, no interest to learn, and creativity in reading the sole goal of passing the examination were considered causes of poor English reading comprehension. Motivation to learn reading helps develop the reading comprehension level of students.

Learning materials are known as a series of balanced and chronological presentation of information (Roso, 2009). These materials help beginner educators in providing their designed lesson plans, strategies, and assessment. They are used as a guide in the teaching program and developing curriculum aligned to the needs of the students. According to Eby et.al (2006) in the book "*Teaching K-12 Schools*", teachers should be as reflective and more

inquisitive and independent on the use of learning materials. They have to see to it if materials meet the standard of curriculum guides and if they address the needs of the students.

Since reading is crucial to academic success, learning materials such as textbooks, modules and worksheets should be readable to learners to make out intent transmittable information to the intended learners. An accomplished reader is likely to be bored by unreadable materials, while a poor reader soon become discouraged by the text as he finds it too difficult to read. According to Fry (2006), easy reading facilitates learning and results to enjoyment, so the written form should be easy to read. One factor that makes a reading material unreadable is the complexity of language used in relation to the reading ability of the reader.

According to Valencia (2014) in her journal, 'When High School Students Struggle with Textbook Reading" students have a dilemma in reading because most of them do not recognize or give attention on what they do not understand. This causes low comprehension skills. She found out that most of the reading texts used by the students lack coherence, specialized vocabulary, structure, density; these reading materials are complex text.

Based on the latest findings of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), the reading scores of fourth and eighth grades are terribly low. According to the achievement-level results in reading, both 68% of fourth and eighth graders are below the basic level of reading achievement as cited by Honig, et.al. (2013) in the book *"Teaching Reading Sourcebook"*. This made Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to help the next K-12 students to be college and career ready in literacy no later than the end or high school.

Antonio Calipjo Go, the Academic Supervisor of Marian School of Quezon City had found some 1,300 errors in the latest book of Department of Education for Grade 10 students. The said books were the learning materials given to the teachers during a seminar. (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2015). Recently, he also noticed that a Grade 4 DepEd Science textbook contains 775 errors ranging from conceptual, pedagogical, logical, and grammatical errors in the simple drawing and illustrations. The issues on textbooks has become alarming not excluding the fact that the government spends millions on the book production.

Dr. Yolanda Quijanao, a former undersecretary of the DepEd's Bureau of Elementary Education mentioned in her 2007 interview that the reading problems is the main source of the poor performance of some students in the National Achievement Test. This is a clear cause for alarm because if the upcoming generation cannot read properly, then there is a big chance that they will have difficulty writing and speaking as well. The recent NAT administered to public schools paint a picture that may threaten that competitiveness. The DepEd reports that there has been a 21.36 percent increase in NAT results from 2006 to 2007. The 2009 NAT revealed a rise in mean percentage score (NPS) of only 66.33 percent for 54.66 percent in 2006, which means an improvement of 11.67 percent. The percentage gains in all subject areas show a steady improvement in the primary education of the country's public school system (PhilStar, 2010).

This has spurred the researchers to investigate on the students' reading proficiency, comprehension level and the readability of Afro-Asian module.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the following theories of reading:

According to Barlett's (1969) **Schema Theory**, people organize everything they know into schemata, or knowledge structures (Gunning, 2010). Anderson and Pearson (1984) asserted that readers have a schemata for reading processes (decoding, skimming, inferencing and summarizing) and for different the types of text structures like narrative texts and expository texts. They argued that the differences in reader's schemata in these realms are related to differences in comprehension. How well developed a reader's schemata are in the areas of skills and texts structures will influence their reading comprehension. The theory influences reading instruction by highlighting the central role of existing knowledge in processing new knowledge (Cobb & Kallus, 2010).
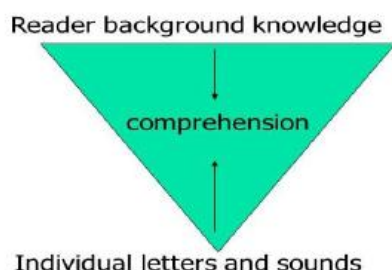

Figure 1. **The Schema Theory Model**

Reader response theorists (Stantley Fish, Wayne Booth, and Louise Rosenblatt) reminded us that comprehending literature is not only a cognitive practice but also an interpretive, aesthetic, literary process. An individual creates his or her own meaning through a "transaction" with the text based on personal associations. Like schema theory, the reader response theory holds the view that meaning in reading was not found in the printed symbols, but in the meaning that readers bring to the text. Rather, reader response theorist involves the reader's

ability—based on the text itself and ones "reservoir of past experiences with language, literature, and life"—to evoke responses, thoughts, feelings, and images in the mind's eye (Cox & Many, 1992, 66).
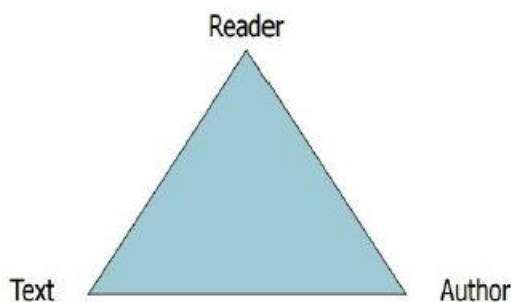

Figure 2. **The Reader-Response Theory**

The abovementioned theories were underlying concepts that helped the researchers establish findings that affected the study, particularly reading proficiency and comprehension level of the students and the readability of the Afro-Asian module. The researchers drew insights based on the theoretical underpinnings which were bases in data gathering and interpretation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following conceptual framework shows the flow of the study.
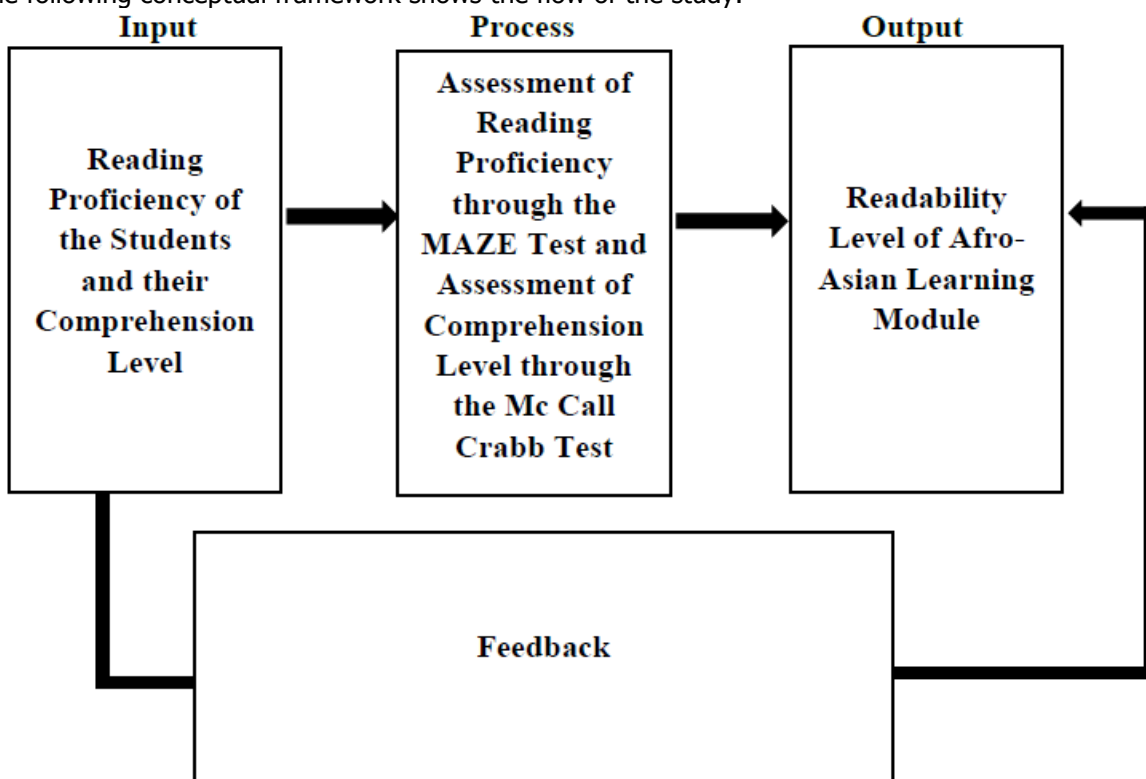
MAZE reading test which was used to assess the reading proficiency which correlates to the students' comprehension level on different literary texts which includes short story, poetry and drama texts. It also illustrates the readability of the different literary texts used in the Afro-Asian learning module.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This researcher aimed to explore the reading proficiency and comprehension level of the Grade 8 students and the readability level of Afro-Asian learning module.

Specifically, it sought to answer to the following questions:
1. What is the level of reading proficiency of Grade 8 students?
2. What is the comprehension level of Grade 8 students in different literary texts- short story, poetry and drama?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of reading proficiency and the level of comprehension level using
   3.1   short story,
   3.2   poetry and
   3.3   drama texts?

4. What is the readability level of the prescribed Afro-Asian learning module of Grade 8 in the following genre of
   4.1   short story,
   4.2   poetry and
   4.3   drama?

HYPOTHESIS

The study investigated the reading proficiency and comprehension level of Grade 8 students and the readability of Afro-Asian module.

The hypothesis that was tested for acceptance or rejection at .05 of significance in the reading proficiency and comprehension level of Grade 8 using reading MAZE test and Mc Call Crabb test.

H.O: There is no significant relationship between the level of reading proficiency and comprehension level of the students.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the procedures and techniques used by the researchers in completing the study. It includes the research design, population and sampling, sources of data, and data analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive-correlation method of research is a fact-finding study with an adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings. It described with emphasis what actually exist such as current conditions, practices, or any phenomena without changing the study subject (Calmorin and Calmorin, 2012).

The descriptive-correlation design was employed in this study to describe the reading proficiency and comprehension level on different literary texts of the Grade 8 students and the readability of the Afro-Asian module.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The study was conducted in the City Schools of Quezon City where English and Tagalog are the languages of instruction used in eight (8) subjects in schools. The city has 48 public high schools and six (6) districts. There are 112,198 male students and 112, 548 female students with a total of 224, 745 enrolled students in the division as of 2016.

Ramdom sampling was used to determine the 800 respondents in this study. The researcher used Jacob Cohen, using the power= .80, alpha .05 and the population effect size is small covering 785.

In the first stage, three (3) districts were randomly selected from six (6) districts in the list of all districts in the City Schools of Quezon City. In the second stage, six (6) public schools from three (3) different districts was randomly selected. In the third stage, three homogeneous sections were randomly sampled. All the Grade 8 population were used as respondents.

SOURCES OF DATA

The MAZE reading test, Mc Call Crabb Test, and Fry Readability Graph were used to support the gathering of pertinent information and data needed to answer the statement of the problem.

Reading Test is a 25-item MAZE reading test from CORE (Consortium on Reading Excellence) that measures how well the students understand them as they read silently. The test differs from the traditional comprehension in that it is based completely on the text. The MAZE reading test identified students and measured changes in their reading behaviors as the result of instruction and practice (Milone, 2009).

Comprehension Test is a 54-item standardized test adopted from Mc Call Crabb version 2016 by William Mc Call which comprises the three domains of Afro-Asian literature. Each domain consists of three (3) passages and18 questions on the different literary texts such as short story, poetry, and drama. The comprehension test identified the comprehension level of the respondents.

Fry Readability Graph of Edward Fry (1968) is a readability metric used for English texts. The grade reading level (or reading difficulty level) is calculated by the average number of sentences (y-axis) and syllables (x-axis) per hundred words. The averages are plotted onto a specific graph; the intersection of the average number of sentences and the average number of syllables determines the reading level of the content.
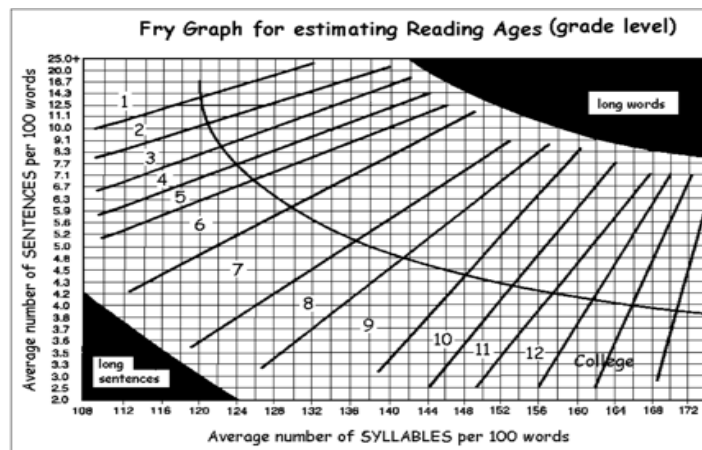
Figure 4. **The Fry Readability Graph**

Both the reading test and comprehension test were scored one (1) point for every correct answer and interpreted using Anderson's Assessment of Reading Level.

The Fry Readability Graph of Edward Fry was used to identify the readability level of the Afro-Asian learning module which used the different literary texts- short story, poetry and drama are subject to error analysis.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE
Validation of Instrument
The MAZE reading test, Mc Call Crabb test and Afro-Asian module were scrutinized by the content experts in the field such as head teacher, master teachers, language coordinator, and reading teacher. The MAZE reading test, Mc Call Crabb test and the Fry Readability Graph were evaluated by the content experts for face and content validation. (Appendix E)

Pilot testing
The MAZE reading test and Mc Call Crabb test were both pilot tested. Results of the pilot testing were analyzed. There were 60 students who took the tests. The results were checked by the researchers. The results gave the researchers the indication that the tests must be facilitated by Tagalog mother-tongue instruction when administered to the respondents.

Reliability
The reading MAZE reading test and Mc Call Crabb test underwent reliability test. The reading MAZE tests has a Cronbach's Alpha of .834. The Mc Call Crabb Test on short story texts appeared to have .808, while poetry texts had .875 and drama texts had .726 reliability. This means that there were no poor items in and they had an acceptable level of reliability. This further shows that both reading MAZE test and Mc Call Crabb test were considered standardized.

PROCEDURE
The data for this research were collected using reading questionnaires; the MAZE reading test and Mc Call Crabb test which were appropriate to the grade level of the respondents and Afro-Asian literature content. After the validation and pilot testing of the MAZE reading test and Mc Call Crabb test, the researchers sent a letter of request from the City Schools- Division of Quezon City, Philippines then to the principals and head teachers of the schools. The researchers oriented the respondents that the questionnaires were not tests but rather survey of their reading proficiency and comprehension level. The respondents were Grade 8 students described as homogeneous class. The students were given 30 minutes to answer the MAZE reading test. After, the researchers collected the reading tests and underwent statistics. Each Mc Call Crabb test on different literary texts was also given to the respondents every after grading period. The respondents were given one hour to answer the comprehension test assisted by their English teacher. The results of each Mc Call Crabb test on different literary texts also underwent statistics. The researchers assured confidentially of the schools and respondents as requested by the principals. There were expected 800 respondents to answer the reading tests unfortunately 566 students with the response rate of 70% students completed the four tests on short story, poetry, and drama texts. There were no incentives offered to the participants in this study. The results were all valid and reliable.

DATA ANALYSIS
The data were analyzed using the following in order to answer the stated problems in the study.

For research questions 1-2, the researcher made used of the frequency and percentage as appropriate statistical treatment for the responses in reading test and comprehension test.

The results on research questions 3-5 were analyzed through Pearson Chi-Square and Cramers' V.

Scores were classified based on reading level (Anderson, 1984).

Anderson's Assessment of Reading Level

Reading Level	Interpretation of Scores
Independent	70%-100%
Instructional	40%-69%
Frustrational	0%-39%

The readability level was validated through Edward Fry's Readability Graph.

CHAPTER 3
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the results of the study. The findings relate to the research questions that guided the study. Data were analyzed to identify the reading proficiency and comprehension level of the respondents and the readability level of the Afro-Asian module.

Research Question 1. What is the level of reading proficiency of Grade 8 students?

Table 1. Reading Proficiency Level using MAZE Reading Test (Appendix G)

Reading Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percent
Frustrational	326	57.6
Instructional	210	37.1
Independent	30	5.3
TOTAL	566	100%

Using the information displayed in Table 1, out of 566 students who took the MAZE reading test, 326 (57.6%) Grade 8 were under frustrational reading level and 210 (37.1%) and 30 (5.3%) were instructional and independent level respectively.

It shows that most of the Grade 8 students needed direct instructional guidance from their reading teachers. These instructional guidance maybe referred as lecture, drill and practice, presentation, demonstration and guided practice which are compatible in providing information that fully explains the reading concepts and procedures that students required to learn. The students probably received small instructions from their teachers that increased the number of frustrational readers.

Research Question 2. What is the comprehension level of Grade 8 students using different literary texts-short story, poetry, and drama?

Table 2. Comprehension Level on Different Literary Texts (Appendix G)

LITERARY TEXTS	COMPREHENSION LEVEL							
	Frustrational		Instructional		Independent		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
SHORT STORY	435	76.9%	129	22.8%	2	.4%	566	100%
POETRY	372	65.7%	190	33.6%	4	.7%	566	100%
DRAMA	329	58. 1%	211	37.3	26	4.6%	566	100%
Total	1136	66.9%	530	31.21%	32	1.88%	1698	100%

Table 2 presents the comprehension level of the respondents on using different literary texts. The result shows that on the domain of short story, 76.9% were highly frustrational readers which is the same in poetry where 65.7% of the respondents were also frustrational readers and 58.1% were also described as above-mentioned level in the genre of drama. It was also revealed that independent readers were the least students with 4% on short story, 7% on poetry and 5% on drama texts.

Based on the results on comprehension level, weak vocabulary, text difficulty were considerable factors that affect the poor comprehension level of the respondents in short story, poetry, and drama texts. The students did not infer from the context, rather, they go directly in finding the actual meaning. They were not interested to read English literature, newspapers, magazines, novels, and other genres.

Research Question 3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of reading proficiency and the comprehension level using short story, poetry, and drama texts?

Table 3 A. Relationship of Reading Proficiency Level and Comprehension Level using Short Story Texts (Appendix G)

	Value	df	Significance
Pearson Chi-Square	18. 938	4	.001
Cramer's V			.001

Based on the table, there is a significant relationship between the reading proficiency level and comprehension level using short story [Pearson Chi-Square (df= 4) = 18.93, p= 001]. The strength of relationship of two variables [Cramer's V= 0.001] which is weak or slightly significant.

As implied in the Mc Call Crabb test on short story, it is possible that students found the comprehension test on short story difficult to comprehend on the areas of making generalizations and predicting outcomes. Somehow the syntactic complexity affects the comprehension level of the respondents.

Table 3 B. Relationship of Reading Proficiency Level and Comprehension Level using Poetry Texts (Appendix G)

	Value	df	Significance
Pearson Chi-Square	67.056	4	.001
Cramer's V			.001

Based on table 4, there is a significant relationship between the reading proficiency level and comprehension level using poetry [Pearson Chi-Square (df= 4) = 67.056, p= .001]. The strength of relationship of two variables [Cramer's V= 0.001] is weak and significant.

In the domain of poetry, the Grade 8 students showed a higher level of difficulty on comprehension. This revealed that studying poetry takes deeper reading strategy on the areas of linguistic features, semantic features, stylistic features, and unawareness of authors' background. They had a hard time extracting meaning from lines and puzzling word usage.

Table 3 C. Relationship of Reading Proficiency Level and Comprehension Level using Drama Texts (Appendix G)

	Value	df	Significance
Pearson Chi-Square	117.091	4	.001
Cramer's V			.001

Based on the table, there is a significant relationship between the reading proficiency level and comprehension level using drama text [Pearson Chi-Square (df= 4) = 117.091, p= .001]. The strength of relationship of two variables [Cramer's V= 0.001] is weak and significant.

The students' perspective about drama is a genre that is meant to be enacted or performed. One reason of the relationship of reading proficiency and comprehension level of the respondents is the difficulty in English syntax, extensive use of symbolism, similes, metaphors, lack of familiarity with culture and social context, length of the passage or they find drama exciting to be watched.

Research Question 4. What is the readability level of the prescribed Afro-Asian learning module of Grade 8 in the domains of short story, poetry and drama texts?

Table 4: The Summary of Readability Level of Afro-Asian Learning Modules using Fry Readability Graph (Appendix G)

		Short Story	Interpretation	Poetry	Interpretation	Drama	Interpretation
Validator 1	Average No. of Sentence	5.5	Grade 7	11.13	Grade 5	14.36	Grade 2
Researcher	Average No. of Syllables	137		139		130	
Validator 2	Average No. of Sentence	6	Beyond Grade 15	11.9	Grade 5	9.6	Grade 5
English Level Coordinator	Average No. of Syllables	185		144		137	
Validator 3	Average No. of Sentence	6.11	Grade 10	12.3	Grade 1	14.5	Grade 6
English Teacher	Average No. of Syllables	159		117		153	
Validator 4	Average No. of Sentence	6.45	Grade 8	12.5	Grade 5	9.76	Grade 6
English Teacher	Average No. of Syllables	144		142		140	

Table 6 presents the readability level of reading texts on narrative, poetry and drama texts. Based on the evaluation and rate, short stories texts are approximately near the grade level of the readers, while on poetry and drama, the texts are lower than the expected grade level of the readers.

It can be interpreted that the reading level for short story are nearly the grade level of readers. This shows that narratives and drama can be easily comprehended by the students since teaching these domains requires vocabulary enrichment and comprehension were practiced. On the later hand, the readability level of poetry is lower than the expected grade levels of the readers. It is because words and structure are too easy to recognize but in terms of poetry analysis and comprehension, students are unable to appreciate poetry because of the complex poetic elements that will enable to appreciate a literary text.

SUMMARY

The study investigated the reading proficiency and comprehension level of Grade 8 students and the readability of the Afro-Asian module. Thus, the following findings found in the study.

1. What is the level of reading proficiency of Grade 8 students?

Out of 566 students who completed MAZE reading test, 326 students were described as frustrational, 210 were instructional and 30 were independent readers. The Grade 8 respondents probably found the reading test difficult. They must spend time reading and they needed direct instructional guidance from their teachers. These activities might refer as lecture, drill, practice, presentations, and demonstrations. These activities enhance their reading proficiency and find reading enjoyable.

2. What is the comprehension level of Grade 8 students using different literary texts- short story, poetry, and drama?

On the results on the comprehension level of three literary texts, the students' comprehension level was described as frustrational, and few of them were independent readers. The factors that might affect their frustrating

comprehension level are weak vocabulary and text complexity. The students answer by getting the meaning explicitly from the text without comprehension. The syntactic, semantic, and stylistic features can be factors why the results of the text are like that.

3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of reading proficiency and comprehension level using short story, poetry and drama texts?

The relationship of students reading proficiency and comprehension level on using short story, poetry and drama texts relationship was defined to be significant. The results showed that the students found the passages on short story difficult to comprehend due to poor vocabulary and text complication. They are not taught how to identify meaning implicitly and word meaning through context clues. They need varied reading strategies to comprehend the passages which were rich in linguistic features, syntax, extensive use of symbolism, figures of speech, length of passages and familiarity with culture and social context.

4. What is the readability level of the prescribed Afro-Asian learning module of Grade 8 in the domains of short story, poetry and drama texts?

It was revealed that the readability of level of the Afro-Asian module using the Fry Readability Graph has a huge mismatch to the intended readers who are Grade 8 students. The literary texts on short story were higher than the grade level of the students while the texts on poetry and drama were lower than the grade level.

CONCLUSION

The key aspect of the study is the reading proficiency and comprehension level of Grade 8 students and the readability of the Afro-Asian module.

1. It showed that most of the Grade 8 students need direct instructional guidance from their reading teachers. This instructional guidance maybe referred to as lecture, drill, and practice.
2. Based on the results of comprehension level of the students, the researchers arrived at the conclusion that weak vocabulary and text difficulty were considerable factors that affect the poor comprehension level. The students did not infer from the context rather they went on finding the actual meaning. They were not interested to read English literature, newspapers, magazines and reading materials.
3. The reading level for short story are nearly the grade level of the readers. Short story and poetry texts can be easily comprehended by the students since teaching these literary texts requires vocabulary enrichment. On the other hand, the readability level of poetry is lower than the expected grade level of the readers. The words and structure are too easy to recognize but in terms of poetry analysis, students are unable to appreciate poetry because of the complexity of poetic elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The students may motivate themselves to read literature books at home. For this, their vocabulary words are being enhanced and developed as well their reading experience and background.

Reading Teachers also may provide literary texts that include varied reading comprehension level to challenge the learners and be able to reach at least instructional and independent level.

Writers may design and publish literary texts that are appropriate to the reading level of the intended readers. The literary texts should follow contextualization for students to appreciate and relate details of the texts.

Curriculum Planners may choose literary texts that will engage the interests, reading background, and reading capacity of the students.

Future Researchers may use the results conducted by the researchers to assess also other reading proficiency and comprehension level of the students and readability level of other modules in English.

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