Research Article

Peer Tutoring towards Improved Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Learners in a National High School

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine the performances of learners in reading comprehension before and after written and oral assessments thru peer tutoring strategy as a basis in formulating a reading intervention program. This used the experimental design which aimed at finding the cause-effect relationship among variables in a controlled condition. To identify the effects of peer tutoring in the reading comprehension of Grade 10 learners, two groups, the experimental and controlled, were utilized. The performances of the learners in both oral and written assessments before and after the intervention were analyzed. Learners in the control group are classified under the advanced level (M=45.47) while the learners in the experimental group are classified under the superior level (M=63.33) in the reading comprehension written test after the intervention. The control group obtained no significant difference (t=0.666; p=0.509) while there exists a significant difference in the experimental group (t=7.180; p=0.000) between the pre and post oral assessment. Based from the findings of the study, it was suggested that English teachers may infuse peer tutoring strategies tailored to the needs of their learners to enhance learners' reading comprehension skills. The study proposed an intervention program for peer tutoring to improve the reading comprehension of Grade 10 learners.

Keywords: control group, experimental group, oral fluency, peer tutoring, peer, reading comprehension

Background

Reading is an essential skill not only in the teaching-learning scenario but also throughout one's life. The ability to read is highly-regarded as one of the reasons why there is advancement in one's self and in the community.

In the local setting, there is a serious concern towards the achievement of learners in their academic performances not only in understanding the contexts and contents of English subject, but also to other subjects that use English as a medium of instruction like:

Mathematics; Science; Music, Arts, Physical Education, Health (MAPEH); and in Technological Livelihood Education (TLE). Such performances reflect the poor ability of students in comprehending texts at their level. This can be attributed to other key components in reading wherein their level of phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, fluency, and vocabulary determine their comprehension.

Thus, the researcher proposed the use of peer tutoring technique that can be applied in teaching reading to determine its effects in the reading comprehension of Grade 10 learners. Peer tutoring is a strategy where learners alternate between the role of a tutor and tutee in groups or pairs. Peer tutoring refers to the process where the learners assist each other in the process of learning. With this, the researcher decided to find out the effects of peer tutoring in the reading comprehension of the learners when applied in the class.

Hence, this study took up on the peer tutoring as a strategy in improving the reading performances of the Grade 10 learners which also aimed at coming up with a reading intervention plan.

Methods

This study used the experimental design of research. Experimental research seeks to find the relationship among variables in a controlled condition. This design provides a researcher to manipulate the conditions in an area of discipline where these variables can be used to create intervention and show a difference in a similar field of interest (Louis, 2007). Therefore, there are two variables to be observed—the controlled and the experimental.

The pretest-posttest model and Rubric for Assessing Oral Fluency were used by the researcher to gather the pertinent data needed to accomplish the study.

Since the study was concerned with the significant effects of peer tutoring in the reading comprehension of Grade 10 learners through assessing their oral and written comprehension skills, the experimental method of research was the most appropriate method to use. This method enabled the researcher to test hypothesis by reaching valid conclusions about relationships between independent and dependent variables. It referred to the conceptual framework within which the experiment was conducted.

Population/Respondents

The Grade 10 learners of San Miguel National High School were the main respondents of this study. There were 42 learners from the experimental group and 41 learners from the control group. Both groups belong to heterogeneous section. They were chosen using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling method that occurs when the researcher's judgment chooses elements selected for the sample (Crisolo et al., 2021). Purposive sampling is a subjective sampling that is useful in situations when you need to reach a targeted sample quickly without considering the proportionality of samples. A maximum variation or heterogeneous purposive sampling was used. The purpose of this kind of sample design is to provide as much insight as possible into the event or phenomenon under examination (Crossman, 2018).

Instrument

The two groups were assessed using oral and written assessments. In oral assessment, reading materials and Rubric for Assessing Oral Fluency were used. Reading materials that are used in the intervention varied in levels of difficulty. Learners have read low beginning level of reading text during the start of the intervention then it levelled up progressively to mid advanced and high advanced respectively, to help boost learners' comprehension and fluency following the concept of scaffolding.

In order to help the students reach their full potential to master the content and use the language independently, a teacher needs to scaffold. Instructional scaffolding is a process wherein a support is given to a learner to help him/her follow the correct process of learning new knowledge and acquiring learning competencies or essential skills.

A Rubric for Assessing Oral Fluency was used to describe the learner's performance in reading. A learner who scored an average of 81-100 is in the distinguished level; scores 61-80 show that a reader is in the superior level; scores 41-60 signal that a learner is in the

advanced level; scores 21-40 indicate that a learner is in intermediate level; and novice if the score is 0-20.

The written tests, pretest and posttest, were reading comprehension tests given by the researcher. Grade 10 learners who were excluded from the control and experimental groups took the same written test first to check its reliability.

Treatment of Data

T-test was used to indicate the difference of the two groups in both written and oral assessments before and after the peer tutoring intervention. The paired-samples t-test was utilized to know the statistical difference between the pretest and posttest scores (Rogayan et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion
Performance of the learners in oral and written assessment before and after the treatment
Table 1. Learners' Miscues in Pre-Oral Assessment

Miscues	Frequency*	
	Control (n=41)	Experimental (n=42)
Mispronunciation	95	86
Omission	80	72
Substitution	64	72
Insertion	56	47
Repetition	12	5
Transposition	0	0
Reversal	0	0
Total	**308**	**278**

Table 1 shows the learners' miscues in the oral assessment conducted before the intervention in both the control and experimental groups.

The results of the pre-oral assessment in terms of miscues committed by the learners showed that the control group had a higher frequency of miscues with 308 while the experimental group registered a total of 278 miscues. This suggests that learners have difficulties in the different oral reading skills.

Specifically, the learners in both groups obtained a highest miscue in terms of mispronunciation wherein students fail to pronounce a word correctly. Another evident miscues were on omission and substitution. This means that learners in both groups omit a unit of a language while they read and they also make

mention of a word in exchange of the actual word in the text as they read.

Interestingly, learners in both groups did not commit any miscue in terms of transposition and reversal. This implies that learners can avoid switching two letters in a word in positions that created a new string of letters that formed new word. They can also avoid reading backwards the letters in a word which created a dictionary-registered or non-dictionary-registered word.

Acquiring proficient reading skills is a vital key to opening comprehension skills in understanding the content of a specific area of discipline (Alzahrani & Leko, 2017). This is important in learning contents and skills across the curriculum.

Table 2. Learners' Reading Scores in Pre-Oral Assessment

Mean Percent Scores	Control		Experimental		Verbal Description
	F	%	F	%	
81 - 100	37	90.24	42	100	Distinguished
61 – 80	4	9.76	0	0	Superior
41 – 60	0	0	0	0	Advanced

Mean Percent Scores	Control		Experimental		Verbal Description
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	
21 – 40	0	0	0	0	Intermediate
0 – 20	0	0	0	0	Novice
Total	**41**	**100.0**	**42**	**100.0**	

As shown from the table, the learners are generally in the distinguished level of reading in the control group (90.24%) and in the experimental group (100%) before the intervention. Distinguished-level readers understand and appreciate texts like essays which use low-frequency vocabulary. They can comprehend the information found in these types of texts (ACTFL, 2012).

Reading comprehension is the process of interacting to the text (Solis et al., 2011). It is the skill of threading the prior knowledge to the present knowledge, screening significant details, and knowing how these information are relevant (Bulgren, Deshler, & Lenz, 2007; Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, & Wei, 2004).

Table 3. Learners' Written Pre-Assessment Scores per Level

Reading Level	Control		Experimental	
	Mean	**VD**	**Mean**	**VD**
Mid Intermediate	76.93	S	73.67	S
Mid Advanced	32.75	I	29.00	I
Low Advanced	37.10	I	37.10	I
High Advanced	39.38	I	43.13	A
Overall Mean	**49.60**	**A**	**48.20**	**A**

Legend: 0-20 (Novice); 21-40 (Intermediate); 41-60 (Advanced); 61-80 (Superior); 81-100 (Distinguished)

Table 3 shows the learners' pre-assessment scores per level in the written reading comprehension assessment conducted before the intervention.

As shown from the table, the learners are generally in the advanced level of reading comprehension in the written assessment in the control (M=49.60) and experimental group (M=48.20). Advanced-level readers can independently understand texts that are new to them. They have enough linguistic capability to control the ideas that are associated in a given structure. However, they are challenged by texts which contain abstract concepts (ACTFL, 2012).

In terms of the mid-intermediate reading level, the learners in both the control and experimental group are in the "superior" level. The control group performed "intermediate" in all the other reading levels. Meanwhile, the experimental group performed "intermediate" in the mid advanced and low advanced reading levels, and "advanced" in the high advanced reading level.

Reading comprehension and fluency are major avenues to learning. Students who have difficulties with reading and comprehension often lack the motivation to learn and are more likely to have poor academic outcomes (Allington, 2013).

Table 4. Learners' Miscues in Post-Oral Assessment

Miscues	Frequency*	
	Control (n=41)	**Experimental (n=42)**
Mispronunciation	112	66
Omission	64	25
Substitution	60	34

Miscues	Frequency*	
	Control (n=41)	Experimental (n=42)
Insertion	52	17
Repetition	13	1
Transposition	0	0
Reversal	0	0
Total	**301**	**143**

Table 4 shows the students' miscues in the oral assessment conducted after the intervention in both the control and experimental groups.

The results of the post-oral assessment in terms of miscues committed by the learners showed that the control group had a higher frequency of miscues with 301 while the experimental group registered a total of 143 miscues. This suggests that learners have difficulties in the different oral reading skills in the control group while the experimental group significantly reduced its miscues.

Specifically, the learners in both groups obtained a highest miscue in terms of mispronunciation wherein students fail to pronounce a word correctly. Another evident miscues were on omission and substitution. This means that learners in both groups omit a unit of a language while they read and they also make mention of a word in exchange of the actual word in the text as they read.

Interestingly, learners in both groups did not commit any miscue in terms of transposition and reversal as likewise noted during the pre-oral assessment. This implies that learners can avoid switching two letters in a word in positions that created a new string of letters that formed new word. They can also avoid reading backwards the letters in a word which created a dictionary-registered or non-dictionary-registered word.

Peer tutoring is an effective strategy in improving the reading performance of learners. It can also enhance self-confidence at different phases of formal education (Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck & Fantuzzo, 2006; McMaster, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Recent research studies also highlight peer tutoring as a strategy that provides development in reading skills like word recognition, pacing, comprehension, and fluency (Miller, Topping & Thurston, 2010; Oddo, Barnett, Hawkins & Musti-Rao, 2010; Topping, Miller, Thurston, McGavock & Conlin, 2011).

Table 5. Learners' Reading Scores in Post-Oral Assessment

Mean Percent Scores	Control		Experimental		Verbal Description
	F	%	F	%	
81 – 100	41	100.0	42	100	Distinguished
61 – 80	0	0	0	0	Superior
41 – 60	0	0	0	0	Advanced
21 – 40	0	0	0	0	Intermediate
0 – 20	0	0	0	0	Novice
Total	**41**	**100.0**	**42**	**100.0**	

Table 5 shows the learners' reading scores in the oral assessment conducted after the intervention.

As shown from the table, the learners are generally in the distinguished level of reading in the control group (100.0%) and in the experimental group (100%) after the intervention. Distinguished –level readers understand texts that contain cultural complexity and can relate to the writing style of the writer or author regardless of its subtlety. However, they may still have difficulty in comprehending the varieties of written language out of the given standards of the cultural framework where they belong. This shows that the traditional method of instruction (TMI) employed in the control group and the peer-tutoring strategies employed in

the experimental group influenced the oral reading proficiency of the students.

Vilger (2008) described reading fluency as the ability to read text accurately with the appropriate speed and voice tone. In addition, Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, and Meisinger (2010) noted that when reading fluency combined accuracy, automaticity, and prosody, it facilitated the reader's construction of meaning.

Table 6. Learners' Written Post-Assessment Scores per Level

Reading Level	Control		Experimental	
	Mean	**VD**	**Mean**	**VD**
Mid Intermediate	70.57	S	86.51	D
Mid Advanced	36.59	I	60.91	S
Low Advanced	31.71	I	48.81	A
High Advanced	28.96	I	41.67	A
Overall Mean	**45.47**	**A**	**63.33**	**S**

Legend: 1-20 (Novice); 21-40 (Intermediate); 41-60 (Advanced); 61-80 (Superior); 81-100 (Distinguished)

Table 6 shows the learners' post-assessment scores per level in the written reading assessment conducted after the intervention.

As shown from the table, the learners in the control obtained an overall mean of 45.47 in the post-written reading assessment which is classified under the "advanced level." At the Advanced level, readers use contextual clues to comprehend the main idea and supporting details of authentic and descriptive texts. Their comprehension of reading texts is supported by their fluency in language conventions like correct Subject-Verb agreement, noun-adjective relationship, types of verbs and their use, etc.

Meanwhile, the experimental group yielded a higher overall mean of 63.33 which is classified under the "superior" level. At the Superior level, their command of the language such as their ability to understand complex sentence structures and their wide vocabulary help them comprehend a wide range of texts regardless of the target culture (ACTFL, 2012). They can also create meaning through inferences of the details found in the subject matter being dealt with. This further implies that the students exposed in the peer tutoring strategies have higher improvement in their reading comprehension in terms of the writing assessment compared to the control group.

In terms of the mid-intermediate reading level, the learners in the control group is classified under "superior" level while the experimental group is classified under the "distinguished" level.

In terms of the mid-advanced reading level, the control group performed "intermediate" while the experimental group is in the "superior" level.

The low advanced and high advanced reading level showed that the control group is in the "intermediate" level while its counterpart is in the "advanced" level. The results suggest that the experimental group yielded higher means in all the reading levels in terms of reading comprehension based from the written assessment. This was influenced mainly of the intervention employed by the teacher.

Reading comprehension is a process of mastering the screening of facts, information, or ideas in a reading text (Veeravagu, Muthusamy, Marimuthu, & Subrayan, 2010). To engage in experiential learning that is goal-oriented, evidence-based, culturally valid, and adaptive to individual differences and needs, peer tutoring might be implemented (Schmidt et al., 2002). Several literature underlie the effectiveness of peer tutoring approach across multiple age groups regarding academic benefits such as reading performance and social-emotional aspects (Bowman-Perrott, Burke, Zhang, & Zaini, 2014; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Ginsberg-Block, Rohrbeck, & Fantuzzo, 2006).

Difference in the performances of the two groups before and after the treatment

To measure the significant difference of the pretest and posttest in terms of reading comprehension in pre and post-oral assessment, a t-test for paired samples is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Paired Samples T-test of the Pre and Post Oral Assessment

Group	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Gain Score	*t*-value	*p*-value	Remarks
Control	293.49	293.66	0.17	0.666	0.509	Not Significant
Experimental	294.38	297.60	3.21	7.180	0.000	Significant

p<0.05   **equal variances assumed*

Using the t-test for paired samples, the control group obtained no significant difference (t=0.666; p=0.509) in the pre and post oral assessment indicating that the traditional method of instruction (TMI) used by the researcher is not effective in improving learners' reading comprehension based from oral assessment.

Meanwhile, there exist a significant difference between the pre and post assessment (t=7.180; p=0.000) of the experimental group with a gain score of 3.21. This implies that the peer tutoring strategy had a significant influence in the reading comprehension of students in the oral assessment.

Meo (2013) identified the main characteristics of small group teaching such as peer tutoring as active involvement of the learners throughout an entire learning cycle and well-defined task orientation with achievable specific aims and objectives in a given time period. Student collaboration in small groups can open avenues for theoretical and practical insights, offering some of the most important learning experiences in higher education (Light, Cox, & Calkins, 2009).

Table 8. Paired Samples T-test of the Pre and Post Written Assessment

Reading Level	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Gain Score	*t*-value	*p*-value	Remarks
Control						
Mid Intermediate	11.54	10.59	-0.95	2.362	0.023	Significant
Mid Advanced	3.93	4.39	0.46	1.030	0.309	Not Significant
Low Advanced	3.71	3.17	-0.54	2.129	0.039	Significant
High Advanced	3.15	2.32	-0.83	2.690	0.010	Significant
Overall	**22.32**	**20.46**	**-1.85**	**2.042**	**0.048**	**Significant**
Experimental						
Mid Intermediate	11.05	12.98	1.93	5.620	0.000	Significant
Mid Advanced	3.48	7.31	3.83	11.485	0.000	Significant
Low Advanced	3.71	4.88	1.17	3.878	0.000	Significant
High Advanced	3.45	3.33	-0.12	0.488	0.628	Not Significant
Overall	**21.69**	**28.50**	**6.81**	**10.469**	**0.000**	**Significant**

p<0.05   **equal variances assumed*

Using the t-test for paired samples, all the reading levels except with mid-advanced reading level obtained significant difference indicating that the traditional method of instruction is not effective in improving the reading comprehension of the students. As gleaned from the table, the learners obtained an overall gain score of -1.85 which indicates that the post-test scores are lower than the pretest scores in the reading comprehension written test. This suggests that TMI is not an appropriate instructional technique in improving learners' reading proficiency.

On the other hand, all the reading levels except the high advanced level obtained a significant difference before and after the reading

comprehension reading test. The overall t-value of 10.469 and a p-value of 0.000 suggests that the peer tutoring strategy has significantly improved the students' reading comprehension.

Based from the table, the experimental class registered the highest gain score of 3.83 in the mid advanced reading level. This gain score is considered significant based on the t-test results (t=11.485; p=.000). Moreover, there exist significant differences between the post-test and pretest mean scores in mid intermediate level (t=5.620; p=0.000), and low advanced level (t=3.878; p=0.000).

Small group teaching like peer tutoring can increase student interest, develop teamwork skills, help with knowledge retention, encourage exchange of cross-cultural information, and motivate autonomous learning. Grouoping of students may also extend the comprehension of the students on the particular topic (Rogayan, 2014). Small group learning environments help students develop flexibility, interact and engage, negotiate understandings and differences, and cultivate shared meanings (Mills & Alexander, 2013).

The results imply that the reading comprehension skills of the learners in the mid intermediate, mid advanced and low levels have improved after the implementation of the Peer Tutoring Strategy. The strategy used by the teacher generally improved the reading comprehension of the learners.

Peer tutoring strategy is highly manualized which can provide teachers with necessary strategies to engage culturally and academically diverse learners in improving language acquisition and reading comprehension (Jones et al., 2017). Subsequently, various literature reviews and research studies have supported it as an effective strategy across multiple academic and behavioural disciplines (Okilwa & Shelby, 2010; Stenhoff & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2007).

Lastly, peer tutoring is easy to implement. It is an ideal intervention to bridge the gap of academically and culturally diverse learners in a classroom where resources can always be available. This can also help teachers to diagnose the reading difficulties and struggles of learners with individual differences and

diverse needs and interests which can lead to formulating an intervention to address and correct these gaps specifically in reading comprehension and language conventions (Alzahrani & Leko, 2017).

Conclusion

The level of reading comprehension of the learners is "distinguished" prior to the intervention in terms of oral assessment in both the control and experimental group. In terms of written assessment, the learners' reading comprehension is "advanced" in both groups before the intervention. The students had a higher miscues in the control group compared to its counterpart. The reading comprehension skills of the class have improved further to distinguished level in the post-intervention in both the control and experimental group in terms of oral assessment. In terms of written assessment, learners in the control group are classified under the advanced level while the learners in the experimental group are classified under the superior level in the reading comprehension written test after the intervention.

There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension of the learners before and after the intervention in the control group while there is a significant difference in the reading comprehension of the learners in the experimental group in terms of oral assessment. However, both groups had a significant difference in terms of reading comprehension before and after the written assessment. The proposed reading comprehension action plan is deemed effective.

Proposed Intervention Program

The proposed intervention program (see Appendix A) is crafted by the researcher based on the results of the study.

Reading instruction is a central goal in most educational settings and active programming to prevent reading failure is nearly universal (Jones, Ostojic, Menard, Picard, & Miller, 2017). Peer tutoring can be utilized to create an efficient reading intervention program that can provide cultural and social integration for learners. In order to attain general comprehension, 95% of the words must be recognized while 98% recognition is needed for full

comprehension (Ramos, 2015). Thus, L2 learners with poor reading ability are less likely to be equipped with the skills necessary for acquiring new information incidentally through reading (Hwang, 2012).

Moreover, reading comprehension is a complex skill that targets the interaction of the readers to the texts using prior knowledge, fluent language conventions, and concrete reading comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension success or failure depends on an individual's capacity to recognize words, ability to process the connections and relationship between these words, and the skill to interact with the ideas in contexts. However, reading comprehension's success or failure can also be attributed to other cognitive skills such as but are not limited to decoding of vocabulary, inference, and transfer of meaning in contexts

Recommendation

Reading teachers in English may customize the intervention considering the needs and interests of the learners. English teachers may infuse peer tutoring strategies tailored to the needs of their students to enhance students' reading comprehension skills. Schools may conduct learning action cell (LAC) with the teachers regarding the approaches and techniques in the effective implementation of the peer tutoring strategy. A standardized rubric may be formulated to gauge the peer tutoring process. Reading teachers may give emphasis in the improvement of the oral miscues of the students which were the lowest based from the assessment.

The proposed reading intervention plan may be implemented in the school to increase students' reading comprehension. Further study may explore other variables which has a possible relationship with the students' reading comprehension.

Acknowledgment

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