



DECODING, VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This survey- correlational study was conducted to find out the relationship of Decoding and Vocabulary Skills to the comprehension skills of Junior High School students. One hundred Twenty- five (125) students were the subjects of this study from Infant Jesus Academy, Kalibo in the School Year 2016- 2017. The dependent variable in this study was the Comprehension Skills while the independent variables were Decoding and Vocabulary Skills. Primary data were used in this study. It underwent validation and analysis. The descriptive statistics used were frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and the inferential statistics used were the Pearson r and linear regression to correlate the results of Decoding and Vocabulary skills to Comprehension Skills of students. The level of significance was set at 5%. Major findings of the study revealed that the students' Decoding skills is "very competent" while the level of Vocabulary and Comprehension skills of students is "competent". On the other hand, there is no significant relationship between the Decoding Skills and Comprehension Skills of the students. However, there is a significant relationship in the Vocabulary Skills and Comprehension Skills of students. The results of the students' Vocabulary Skills are significant predictors to the Comprehension Skills of Junior High School students.

Keywords: Decoding, Vocabulary, Comprehension

Introduction

Reading ability may influence the quality of the input, as well as the amount of practice. Poorer readers may choose to read less challenging books, ones that do not extend their current word reading or reading comprehension abilities. As a result, poor readers may not only experience reduced growth in their literacy skills in general, they may also have fewer opportunities to learn about different topic areas and to extend language skills that can be developed through books. It is easy to see how reading experience may influence word reading development, because the printed word is unique to reading. Children who read more will come



across a greater number of words and get more practice at decoding words, and have greater opportunities to enhance their knowledge of morphology and spelling than less avid readers. We need to consider differences between print and speech to understand better why reading might additionally enhance reading comprehension and other language skills and knowledge (Cain & Oakhill, 2006).

This study focused on the decoding and vocabulary skills as independent variables and reading comprehension skills as dependent variable of Junior High School Students .

This study was conducted to determine the relationship of Decoding and Vocabulary Skills to the Reading Comprehension Skills of Junior High School Students at Infant Jesus Academy, Kalibo, Aklan , Academic Year 2016- 2017.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of decoding skills of Junior High School Students?
2. What is the level of vocabulary skills of Junior High School Students?
3. What is the level of comprehension skills of Junior High School Students?
4. Are there significant relationships among the decoding and vocabulary skills and comprehension skills of Junior High School Students?
5. Are the decoding and vocabulary skills significant predictors of comprehension skills of Junior High School Students?

Based on the above stated statement of the problem, the following hypotheses were advanced:

1. There are no significant relationships among the decoding, vocabulary and comprehension skills of Junior High School Students.
2. There are no significant predictors of comprehension skills from the decoding and vocabulary skills of Junior High School Students.

This study utilized the survey- correlational research design. According to Mercado (1994) as cited by David (2005), survey method obtains data to determine specific characteristics of a group. The purpose of a survey is to get a general picture of the characteristics of a study population at a particular time. The use of the survey approach is appropriate for most descriptive and correlational study. Correlational study, on the other hand, investigates the possibility of relationships between or among variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

The participants of this study were the Junior High School Students of Infant Jesus Academy for the school year 2016- 2017. From the population size of 181, a



sample size of 125 was randomly taken using the Slovin formula. The selection used stratified random sampling.

The result of the study showed “very competent” in the students’ level of decoding skills. It means that most of the students have reached the highest level of competency in word recognition. Students can read all words including complex words that they have not encountered before. They can read the texts fluently with proper pronunciation, diction and intonation.

When classified according to grade level, the result of the mean is getting higher from grade 7 to grade 10. This implies that when students are well exposed to words as they move into higher level, they also get the improvement needed for their decoding skills. Moreover, the strategies applied by their teachers in improving students’ decoding skills are very effective that resulted to a very competent skill level. Giving daily oral reading test, storytelling activities and other strategies applied by their English teachers that involves decoding skills practices really helped students improved their decoding skills.

As a group, the level of students’ vocabulary skills is found to be “competent” with a mean of 15.86 and a standard deviation of 4.31.

For this result, “competent” level of vocabulary skills means that students can understand basic knowledge of word meanings and few complex and unfamiliar words. They are in the progress of improving their vocabulary skills to have a wider range of learning.

When classified according to grade level, the result of their means tend to get higher from Grade 7 to Grade 10. This implies that when students are well exposed to words, they get a higher possibility to enhance their vocabulary skills. Moreover, the effectiveness of the vocabulary activities given by their teachers help students learn more, step by step until they reach the highest level.

Students were not able reach the highest level of competency in their vocabulary skills because some students tend to stop reading whenever they find some words difficult to understand. They also do not have time to read due to technological gadgets that they have. Moreover, students enjoy playing different sports and using gadgets rather than reading. As a result, students do not find reading as an enjoyable past time rather a requirement to be done.

In the level of comprehension skills, the result indicates that most of the students have a “competent” level of comprehension skills with a mean of 22.51 and a standard deviation of 5.66.



The “competent” level of comprehension skills of students means that they can understand the content of a reading text, make inferences and analyse basic structure and story elements. They can also respond to questions orally and written based on their understanding about the reading text.

When classified according to grade level, grade 7 got a mean of 19.42, SD= 6.16 interpreted as “nearly competent” while grade 8 – 10 have a competent level with a mean of M= 24.64, SD= 4.37; M= 22.97, SD= 6.15; M=23.54, SD= 4.44), respectively.

Based on the result, grade 8 to grade 10 got a higher level of comprehension skills compared to grade 7. This implies that grade 7 students need improvement when it comes to their comprehension skills. Students engage more on extra-curricular activities than their academic performance that gives them the negative attitude towards reading. The students’ ability to concentrate is another factor. Due to the latest gadgets that they have, they seem to be disinterested in reading. Nevertheless, this negative attitude in reading could greatly affect their improvements in comprehension skills.

On the other hand, Grade 8 got a higher mean compared to grade 9. This means that even if they are both in a competent level, this batch of grade 8 students are more interested in reading compared to grade 9. As conformed by their English teacher, Grade 9 students get bored easily whenever they have their reading comprehension activities. Compared to the batch of grade 8 students who actively participates in the different classroom activities and competes well when it comes to their academic performance in school. They also have the eagerness and willingness to learn and explore.

The relationships among decoding and vocabulary skills to the comprehension skills of Junior High School Students.

This means that decoding skills and comprehension skills do not affect each other and that no connection can be established between the two variables. Thus, vocabulary skills have an impact on the comprehension skills that could greatly affect each other. Vocabulary skills help students understand what they read. Likewise, the more students read, the more they can build their vocabulary. The knowledge of words and word meanings plays a very important role to the improvement of students’ comprehension.

The result implies that even the students mastered how to recognize words and read words properly, it does not guarantee that they can understand the text. While students who have wide vocabulary really affects their understanding on



the given texts that results to a better comprehension skills. Some students are good in oral reading but cannot understand the reading texts while others who are not good in reading orally can comprehend better. They are the ones who read a lot and find reading as their habit.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between decoding skills to the results of comprehension skills of Junior High School students is accepted. While, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between vocabulary skills to the results of comprehension skills is rejected.

On the other hand, the regression analysis of Decoding and Vocabulary skills as predictors of Comprehension Skills of Junior High School students revealed that Decoding skills is not a significant predictor of Comprehension skills with $t= 0.979 = p < 0.05$, while Vocabulary Skills are significant predictors of Comprehension Skills with $t= 2.340 = p < 0.05$. The result shows that between the two variables, decoding does not affect comprehension.

It means that no matter how good the students in reading orally or in recognizing words clearly, it cannot predict their comprehension level. Whether the students have a high or low result in their decoding skills, it does not affect their comprehension skills. Compared to vocabulary skills that whenever the students get high or low result, it can be a good predictor that students' comprehension skills will be affected.

Students who have a high vocabulary skills can make a high result in their reading comprehension. Since vocabulary can predict students' comprehension skills, it is necessary to develop students' vocabulary skills by reading in order to enhance their comprehension skills. Moreover, the exposure of words to students while reading, also widen their vocabulary skills as they continue to explore and read text that are more complex.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant predictor between decoding and comprehension skills of Junior High School students is accepted. While the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant predictor between vocabulary skills and comprehension skills is hereby rejected. This survey-correlational research was conducted among 125 Junior high School students who are officially enrolled at Infant Jesus Academy for the SY 2016-2017. The findings of this study are:

1. The skill level in Decoding Skills of Junior High School students is "very competent".



2. The skill level in Vocabulary Skills of Junior High School students is “competent”.
3. The skill level in Comprehension Skills of Junior High School students is “competent”.
4. There is no significant relationship between decoding skills and comprehension skills. However, there is a significant relationship between vocabulary skills and comprehension skills.
5. Decoding skills are not a significant predictor of comprehension skills. But, vocabulary skills are.

Based on the findings mentioned above the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The “very competent” level of Junior high School students in terms of the decoding skills points out that they can recognize words clearly and effectively. Students are able to pronounce words correctly and read words with proper pronunciation, diction and intonation. This may mean that they have mastered their oral reading skills effectively. Likewise, students can also process automatically and efficiently the oral reading strategies applied to them by their teachers as it helps them glean more from what they read and have a successful and fulfilling experience with text.
2. The “competent” level in terms of the vocabulary skills of Junior High School students showed that they can understand basic word meanings and few complex words that they have not encountered before. Multiple exposures to words enhances their vocabulary skills as they proceed to a higher level of learning every grade level.

Even though “competent” level is a positive result to students’ vocabulary skills, it does not mean that they have already mastered the skill they need in order to understand word meanings effectively. Students still need to improve their vocabulary skills into a wider range of understanding word meanings. Their daily communication in the class, processing of the materials read, and comprehension of the lessons, are hindered by their difficulty to grasp the meaning of unfamiliar words they meet in the communicative events.

3. The “competent” skill level in terms of the comprehension skills of Junior High School students connotes that they can understand and comprehend the text well. They can answer basic information about the selection they have read and they can retell the story based on their own understanding. They have this basic knowledge awareness that help them comprehending and understanding written texts. However, this “competent” skill level may indicate that students’



comprehension may just be in a normal stage of understanding the text. They lack metacognitive strategies, have difficulties in answering higher level of cognitive requirements when it comes to reading and simply unable to select or use strategies effectively.

4. The significant relationships among students' skills in decoding, vocabulary and comprehension indicate that students with well-developed vocabulary learn more words and can comprehend better. They develop their vocabulary skills when they are exposed to reading and gain more knowledge about unfamiliar words that they have not encountered before. When students lack familiarity of certain words encountered on the materials read or is poor in vocabulary would also lead to poor comprehension skills. Thus, having no significant relationship between decoding and comprehension indicates that recognizing words and proper reading of texts do not guarantee that the reader absorbs the message of the reading text.

5. Between the two independent variables, only vocabulary is a significant predictor of comprehension skills. Students who read more texts widen their vocabulary than those who do not. Vocabulary improves better when students are well exposed to reading and understanding. Thus, proper reading by recognizing words as their decoding skill cannot guarantee that it could help improve students' comprehension skills. As a conclusion, word learning strategies, or increasing students' volume of reading can help improve students' vocabulary skills. Likewise, the wider the vocabulary, the deeper understanding of the text can be achieved.

Based upon the conclusions, the researcher presents the following recommendations:

1. Since the skill level in terms of decoding of the Junior High School students is very competent, the researcher suggests that students have to continue the very competent result. However, practicing their oral reading skills for more improvement should be continued in order to become fluent readers. Many students were better at sounding out words in isolation but were still not able to read fluently on the page. Moreover, teachers have to realize that phonological processing is an important part of the reading process, it alone is not enough to develop global readers. So, they need to explore ways to develop students' symbol imagery skills and concept imagery skills to continue the progress of students' development in their decoding skills. Practicing basic decoding skills can significantly improve word-attack and word-recognition skills. Once students



have solid symbol imagery in place, they are ready to move on to a higher level of decoding skills.

2. Since the skill level of vocabulary of Junior High School students is “competent”, students have to read more and expose themselves to unfamiliar words in order to reach the very competent level of their vocabulary skills. When they get bored in reading, teachers may provide different activities that could help widen their vocabulary such as word factory, scrabble, online vocabulary games, Wattpad reading etc. Learning while playing is a good strategy that their teachers may use in order for them to be motivated. On the other hand, teachers may also plan different strategies that could help their students improve their vocabulary skills. Teaching words, morphology, and word origins are important component in any vocabulary learning program. It is also necessary to provide multiple exposures to the word in different contexts and to teach word learning strategies, such as using context clues and cognate information. Giving activities like “word of the day” with correct spelling, synonyms, antonyms, pronunciation and its application in the sentence are very helpful to the students’ learning. Teachers can also give assignments to students to independently research at least 20 words a week and use them in a sentence. They can also exchange their output to their classmates and share the different words that they have learned and they can make a compilation of their “newly found words” at the end of the quarter. Although teaching can make a real difference in vocabulary learning, explicit teaching of vocabulary is not enough. Parents must encourage their children to participate in school, help them look for different meanings via dictionary and do some research about certain words that their children would like to know. Parents should be aware of their children’s performance in school in order for them to guide and help their children improve well.

3. Since the comprehension skills of Junior High School students are in the “competent level”, it is recommended that students need to strive in reading more books and expose themselves to other reading materials in order to achieve a very competent level. Also, students need to improve their comprehension skills in order for them to have better understanding of the text. Teachers, on the other hand, can apply different strategies to help improve their students’ comprehension skills. They can assign their students to make book reports, movie analysis, reaction papers, travelogues and etc. to encourage students to read more. Also, teachers can research different online applications that could enhance students’ comprehension. Since Infant Jesus Academy has an AraLinks



Technology program, teachers can download different slides and other engaging activities that could motivate the students to read and participate. Additionally, graphic organizers can also be used by their teachers to illustrate concepts and relationships between concepts in a text or using diagrams. Additionally, graphic organizers are known by different names, such as maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames, or clusters. Regardless of the label, graphic organizers can help readers focus on concepts and how they are related to other concepts. This help students read and understand textbooks and picture books. Thus, parents can also encourage their children to read even at home and monitor the progress of their children.

4. Since decoding skills have no significant relationship with the comprehension skills of Junior High School students, the researcher still suggests that students have to practice reading more to recognize unfamiliar words that they have not encountered before. In this case, they can expose themselves to different word pronunciations as well as their meanings. Teachers should also provide a lot of exercises, let the students practice this skill by evaluating and monitoring them from time to time. On the other hand, since the vocabulary skills of students have significant relationship to their Comprehension skills, the researcher suggests that students should be more engaged in different vocabulary enhancement activities. Teachers have to provide variety of reading materials and facilities with plenty of reading resources. They can help students to improve their vocabulary by encouraging wide reading, teaching words and word learning strategies, and promoting active learning and interest in words. As for the parents, they should be aware of their responsibilities of providing reading materials that can hone the skills of their children.

5. Since vocabulary is a significant predictor to comprehension skills, the researcher suggests that students have to develop wide vocabulary skills in order for them to comprehend well. They need to engage themselves to variety of reading materials and gain new knowledge by reading. On the other hand, in order to motivate their students to read, teachers can apply different reading strategies in new ways, using digital tools, media, and the Internet-that is, to deploy technology in service of vocabulary learning. Technology, when used flexibly in response to students' varied needs and interests, can and should be part of the solution to the vocabulary gap. Thus, parents can also encourage their children in all reading efforts. They have to establish a reading time, even if it is only ten minutes a day or include reading in different ways like cooking (reading



a recipe) or assembling toys of their younger siblings (reading direction). These ways can help students improve their comprehension skills as well as widening their vocabulary skills in an interactive and motivational approach of learning. To the future researchers, the findings obtained in this study will serve as a baseline data for similar studies as they create another study that would enhance the students' decoding, vocabulary and comprehension skills.

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