



The Extent of Challenges Faced by Teachers in the Online Teaching of English Reading to Primary Grades

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ABSTRACT

Literacy proficiency is a universal goal for all elementary school students. As soon as students enter the primary level, they are taught the alphabet, its distinct sound, and word meaning. This goal is especially difficult for language learners, particularly those who are just learning to write and read. The world has become so text-oriented which made writing and reading to be identified as one of the most important skills. As a result of this change, language instructors are affected and are in need of effective techniques to improve these two particular skills.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the challenges that most teachers find in the online teaching of English reading to primary level students and in what degree do these challenges concern the goal of achieving the second language literacy. This research is believed to be beneficial to the educators, community, and other researchers. This could be a basis for an improvement plan to enhance word literacy with the current educational setup as future researchers could find this study a groundwork for forthcoming studies that are also aiming for the advanced development of online teaching strategies of the foundation of reading and writing.

Keywords: English literacy, teacher's challenges, student's experiences, online learning modality, primary level students

INTRODUCTION

The world is facing a new pandemic, known as COVID-19, and the Philippines is hardly coping up with the current situation. Due to this, the Department of Education implemented distance learning modalities that prohibits learning stagnancy. Given this situation, teachers and students have limited face-to-face communication which could make the goal of achieving literacy proficiency more difficult to accomplish.

This claim is supported when Allen and Nash (2020) stated that social distancing protocol due to COVID-19 could pose real challenges. This is because learning to read is an inherently social activity. Also, when children attend school in person, most reading instruction happens between teachers and other students.

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Many families and teachers are worried that children will fall behind during the coronavirus pandemic. In terms of reading and writing, this concern is quite reasonable, given that only 52.4% of elementary graduates can read, write, compute, and comprehend, according to the National Statistician and Civil Registrar General in 2020. Though this percentage is pretty high, among 79 participating countries and economies, the Philippines scored the lowest in reading comprehension in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reported by Baclig (2020).

In fact, according to Klein (2020), a recent study finds reading skills among young students stalled during the pandemic. Researchers find that reading fluency among second- and third-graders in the U.S. is roughly 30 percent behind what would be expected in a typical year. (<https://www.edweek.org/technology/teaching-reading-during-covid-19-frustrated-students-tech-challenges/2020/09>)

Philippines is not any other case, Felipe (2020) wrote in his report that Filipino elementary students lags in reading, writing, and math in Southeast Asia in the recent study entitle Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), which revealed only 10 percent of Filipino learners have developed proficiency in reading, 17 percent in mathematics and only one percent in writing. (<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/12/06/2061805/study-finds-pinoy-students-lagging-reading-writing-math-senator>)

Teachers as front liners of education during this global crisis are finding ways and implementing techniques and strategies in teaching reading and writing from behind their computer screens. According to Cooper Borkenhagen cited by Simonton (2020), the best teachers are the ones who can incorporate diverse strategies — phonics, multi-sensory instruction and text-based lessons. Many will use techniques that help students visualize and verbalize letters, while also providing physical objects that enhance learning.

However, he also added that all of these ideas are based on the idea that a teacher and her students are in a conventional classroom setting. Teachers have no control over the materials that the learners have in front of them. A teacher can direct their attention in specific and controlled ways. It's not to say that they can't do some of that in an online setting, but it seems that in online learning modality, all of those activities that the teacher relies upon become very difficult.” (<https://www.the74million.org/article/my-biggest-challenge-and-my-biggest-fear-teaching-kids-how-to-read-remotely-during-the-pandemic/>)

Finally, in the study of Dolighan and Owen (2021), the majority of respondents (96.2%) reported having 11 or more years of face-to-face teaching experience (n=127). However, this level of experience did not translate into efficacy for online teaching. The overall mean of TSEOT scores (M=22.06, SD=4.38) indicates a lower online teaching efficacy score for the survey sample in terms of teachers reporting they feel they could do between “very little” to “some” online instruction.



Learning is significantly dependent to learning modalities. Teachers must design their lessons based on the modality that is implemented by a school or a department. While majority of schools all over the globe have been implementing modular and online learning modalities, it is important to learn about the challenges that the teachers face in order to solve and prevent such problems for both present and future references.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The researcher used the descriptive design with survey for she believes that it will significantly help this study to gather the needed data.

Research Participants/ Respondents

For this study, the researcher aimed to have at least 25 samples consisting of teachers in selected primary schools in the municipalities of Padre Garcia, Batangas, San Antonio, Quezon, and Tiaong, Quezon, Philippines. The respondents had to be educators who teach primary learner's to read in English during online learning modality.

Sampling Design

The researcher used *purposive sampling*. It is a type of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when selecting members of the population to participate in their study. It is also known as judgmental, specific, or subjective sampling.

Research Procedures of Data Collection

After being reviewed and approved by the research panellists, the researcher has prepared a letter to the school principals/ school heads of the selected schools to ask for permission for the dissemination of the survey questionnaires through Google forms. The use of this online platform allows for secure submission of surveys and for the researchers to anonymize the data. Respondents have the decision whether or not to include any identifying marks or information within the text options of the survey.

Method of Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data through cross-tabulation data analysis. The statistical tools that are used to interpret the data gathered from the respondents are frequency count, ranking, and weighted mean

RESULTS

This part of the research contains the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data in accordance with the respondent's years in service, specific categories of concern and components of reading.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents: Years in Service of the Respondents

Number of Years	0-5	6-10	11- above	TOTAL
Frequency	9	6	10	25

Based on Table 1.1, majority of the respondents' years in service is in the bracket 11-above years which also conclude that majority of these teachers are seasoned teachers. Seasoned teachers are those who have dedicated long years in teaching. Given that it is the first time for the Philippines to conduct online learning modality nationwide, it is expected that these teachers find it hard to cope up with sudden changes; especially that they used to conduct face-to-face classes.

According to Mukherjee (2022), "Using new digital tools for videoconferencing and recorded data helped students learn their lessons faster, but many older teachers and not-so-technical students face various problems." This only supports the claim that older teachers, though competent in teaching, may have various problems in navigating the latest technology to aid student's learning.

In addition, Adetunji (2021) stated that from 74% of teachers, only 69% of teachers are expecting to teach until retirement due to the pandemic. As much as 40% of teachers have been considering early retirement and resignation because of the unbearable change that the online learning set-up has brought to the educational system.

Table 2. General Challenges that Teachers Face in Teaching Reading to Primary Level Students

Category of Concern	Weighted Average Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Ranking
1. Lack of teacher's skills and strategies in conducting online classes	3.48	Agree	5
2. A wide range of student variability (socio-cultural and socio-economic status)	3.24	Neutral	6
3. Low motivation of students	4.68	Strongly Agree	1
4. Lack of student's family involvement	3.04	Neutral	8
5. Ineffective testing and assessment	4.12	Agree	4
6. Time, organization, and classroom management	3.08	Neutral	7
7. Limited materials and resources of both students and teacher	2.20	Disagree	9
8. Unstable internet connection and defective learning device of both students and teacher	4.52	Strongly Agree	2
9. Unfavourable learning space	4.40	Agree	3

Legend:

4.45-5.0 Strongly Agree 3.45-4.44 Agree 2.45- 3.44 Neutral
1.45- 2.44 Disagree 1.0-1.44 Strongly Disagree

Table 2 reveals that the respondents' first challenge when it comes to online learning is the student's motivation. According to Mukherjee (2022), "studying or teaching from home can be more distracting than in-person classes. Family issues, small children, or younger siblings can take up time and focus." This goes both for students and teachers. She also added that, "challenges of online learning include keeping students motivated to become more prominent and improve participation in virtual classroom."

Without motivation to learn, teaching is useless. This is why it is very challenging to teach in times of uncertainty due to the pandemic. With the death toll rising, the virus spreading, and being locked up in their own homes, students cannot concentrate with what is presented during virtual classes.

On the other hand, another notable challenge is the unstable internet connection and defective learning device of both students and teachers. According to Elyani, et. al (2020), “online learning is the process of learning activities using an online platform, internet connection, media, but flexible in with unlimited time and distance,” making virtual classes dependent to the internet speed performance in the country.

Dela Cruz (2022) stated that compared to the 50 countries in Asia, Philippines ranked 23rd when it comes to mobile internet speed; and 5th out of 10 countries in both fixed broadband and mobile internet speeds compared to the countries in Southeast Asia. The country has spent funds for the improvement of the internet quality, however this is still lacking especially when almost every household in the country uses the internet simultaneously affecting the quality of virtual classes.

Table 3. The Extent of Challenges Met in Teaching the Major Components of Reading

It is challenging for me to teach...	Weighted Average Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Ranking
1. Phonics	2.88	Neutral	4
2. Fluency	2.96	Neutral	3
3. Vocabulary	2.96	Agree	2
4. Comprehension	3.2	Agree	1

Legend:

4.45-5.0 Strongly Agree 3.45-4.44 Agree 2.45- 3.44 Neutral
1.45- 2.44 Disagree 1.0-1.44 Strongly Disagree

Table 3 discloses that comprehension is the most challenging component of reading to teach. Philippines is not any other case, Felipe (2020) wrote in his report that Filipino elementary students lags in reading, writing, and math in Southeast Asia in the recent study entitle Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), which revealed only 10 percent of Filipino learners have developed proficiency in reading, 17 percent in mathematics and only one percent in

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Teachers as front liners of education during this global crisis are finding ways and implementing techniques and strategies in teaching reading and writing from behind their computer screens. According to Cooper Borkenhagen cited by Simonton (2020), the best teachers are the ones who can incorporate diverse strategies — phonics, multi-sensory instruction and text-based lessons. Many will use techniques that help students visualize and verbalize letters, while also providing physical objects that enhance learning.

DISCUSSION

This study analysed the extent of challenges that teachers face in teaching English reading to primary level students within the municipalities of Padre Garcia, Batangas, San Antonio, Quezon, and Tiaong, Quezon. From the cited general objective, the researcher formulated specific objectives to get the data that is necessary for the realization of this study.

Specifically, it replies to the following specific objective:

1. Probe the relationship between teacher's profile and learning modality.
Majority of the 25 respondents have served 11 and above years in teaching face-to-face classes. With the sudden change of learning modality, they have found various challenges that caused them frustration, especially when teaching English language to primary level students.
2. Discern the extent of categories of concern that teachers face during the online teaching of English reading to primary grades.

When it comes to general concerns, it is notable that the respondents "strongly agree" that student's lack of motivation and unstable internet connection disrupts the effectiveness of live online instructions.

3. Determine the extent of challenges in the online teaching of the major components of reading: phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

The teachers all agree that the components of reading that are challenging to teach in online classes ranked according to its difficulty are: 1.) comprehension, 2.) vocabulary, 3.) fluency, 4.) phonics.



CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, the researcher concludes the following:

1. That teachers, although competent in conducting face-to-face classes, find it challenging to teach using the online learning modality especially those who are not fully equipped with knowledge in navigating the technology needed in conducting online classes;
2. That students' motivation is very essential to learning, let alone while also having unstable internet connection for both teachers and students;
3. And that primary teachers find it harder to teach comprehension and vocabulary than phonics and fluency.

Reflected on the foregoing findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Conduct necessary seminars about how to conduct online-classes effectively.
2. The faculty should have a peer-to-peer support, pairing those who are technologically-equipped to those who are not.
3. Invest for a quality internet provider.
4. Communicate well with the parent and guardians of the students in order for them to be much more guided and motivated.
5. Provide sufficient time for teachers to prepare instructional materials in teaching English reading.
6. Conduct interactive online activities/ contests for learners to deviate them from the feeling of boredom during class discussions.

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