PEER READING TUTORIAL AND WORD READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of a 5-Week Peer Reading Strategy as a program on the Word Reading Skills (WRS) of 30 fifth-grade students enrolled at Candiis Elementary School. To gather data, a quasi-experimental, single-group pre-test post-test design was employed. The results of the experiment indicated a positive result in the WRS of the participants subsequent to their participation in the PRT program. These findings suggest that implementing a PRT program could be an effective strategy to provide additional support and address the reading deficiencies of students. Moreover, this study contributes valuable insights to the field of education by expanding the knowledge base through an exploration of peer tutoring and its potential to enhance student reading performance.

Keyword: *peer reading tutorial, word reading skills, quasi-experimental research design*

1. INTRODUCTION

Word reading skills are crucial for academic performance and overall development, yet many students struggle in this area, affecting their comprehension, fluency, and communication. Research shows a correlation between poor word reading skills and lower academic outcomes. In the US, only 35% of 4th graders and 34% of 8th graders were proficient in reading as of 2019. Studies indicate that students with stronger reading skills perform better academically across subjects. For example, a study in Korea demonstrated the positive impact of peer-led tutoring on word reading skills, suggesting the need for more research on peer-led interventions.

In the Philippines, reading proficiency is alarmingly low, with significant efforts like the 3Bs Initiative launched to address this issue. At Candiis Elementary School, fifth-grade students scored poorly in reading assessments, highlighting the urgent need for effective interventions. While there is substantial research on reading interventions, further studies are required to evaluate the effectiveness of peer reading tutorials in enhancing word reading skills. This research could lead to improved, evidence-based reading programs incorporating peer-led elements.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Word Reading Skills. This section emphasizes the importance of word reading skills and peer reading tutorials for literacy development and academic success. Key predictors of word reading skills include phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming, and letter knowledge (McBride-Chang et al., 2003). Interventions like phonics

instruction improve these skills (Ehri et al., 2001; Torgesen et al., 2001). A large vocabulary, closely tied to strong reading skills, benefits from targeted vocabulary programs (Gottardo et al., 2001; Carlo et al., 2004). Reading fluency, essential for comprehension and enjoyment, can be enhanced through repeated reading interventions (Rasinski et al., 2005; Samuels & Farstrup, 2006). For diverse backgrounds, bilingual instruction and culturally relevant texts are effective (August et al., 2006; Garcia & Jensen, 2009). Implementing these strategies can help educators ensure all children become proficient readers.

Peer Reading Tutorial. Peer reading tutorials, also known as peer-assisted learning, involve students working in pairs or small groups to enhance their reading abilities. Studies have shown that peer reading tutorials are effective in improving reading skills, with first-grade students making significant progress in phonemic awareness and word reading through peer-assisted learning (Denton et al., 2008). Peer interaction plays a crucial role, fostering collaboration, strategy sharing, and mutual support, which enhances reading accuracy and comprehension (Baker, Johnson & Smith, 2014). These sessions also boost students' motivation and interest in reading (Gao et al., 2019). Peer reading tutorials benefit diverse learners, including those struggling with reading and English learners. Effective implementation requires careful planning and teacher training (Hedges et al., 2018). According to Vygotsky's social development theory, peer tutoring allows students to engage in structured, productive learning experiences, benefiting both the tutor and the tutee by reinforcing knowledge and providing personalized attention. Research, such as the study by Elbaum et al. (2000), confirms that peer tutoring significantly improves reading comprehension, making it a valuable instructional strategy for enhancing academic performance and social skills across various educational contexts.

Relationship Between Peer Reading Tutorial and Word Reading Skills. Recent research highlights the positive impact of peer reading tutorials on word reading skills, especially for struggling readers. Unlike traditional teacher-led or computer-based interventions, peer-led approaches promote active reading behaviors through discussions about texts and reading strategies. Studies show that peer interactions, including peer conferences and tutoring, help students implement, evaluate, and modify their reading strategies, thereby improving comprehension and self-regulation. Significant improvements in reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, have been observed in various studies, with peer tutoring providing the necessary support and scaffolding often missing in traditional classroom settings. Key components of successful peer tutoring programs include clear objectives, structured sessions, and comprehensive training for both tutors and tutees. This approach has proven effective across diverse student populations, including English language learners and students with reading difficulties, and has shown potential for enhancing overall academic performance and social skills. The accumulated evidence underscores the importance of incorporating peer reading tutorials into comprehensive reading instruction programs.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions with More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) in facilitating learning. MKOs, such as Peer Reading Tutors in this study, provide guidance and scaffolding to learners, enhancing their word reading skills through modeling, feedback, and cognitive support. The study aims to assess the impact of peer tutoring on the reading performance of Grade 5 students, with word reading skills measured before and after a five-week intervention conducted twice a week. This approach leverages the higher reading proficiency of peer tutors to create a collaborative learning environment, fostering improved reading abilities in struggling readers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of Peer Reading Tutorial in improving Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 learners at Candiis Elementary School, Candiis, Laak, Davao de Oro. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 learners as reflected in the Pretest?
2. What is the level of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 learners as reflected in the Posttest scores?
3. Is there a significant difference in the Word Reading Skills of the Grade 5 learners during the Pretest and Posttest scores?

2. METHODS

This chapter presents research design, research locale, research participants, research instruments, research procedures, statistical treatment of data.

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental single-group pretest-posttest design to assess the impact of peer reading tutoring on the word reading skills of Grade 5 students at Candiis Elementary School, facilitating evaluation of changes in word reading abilities before and after the intervention.

2.2 Research Locale

Candiis Elementary School, located in Barangay Candiis, Laak, Davao de Oro, Philippines, was established in 1996 and serves a predominantly indigenous population of the Dibabawon tribe. Situated in a rugged terrain of hills and mountains with rivers and creeks, the area's economy is primarily agricultural, focusing on crops like rice, corn, and coconut. The school, which started with two teachers in a combined class, now has eight nationally funded teachers and nine school buildings, including seven classrooms. Despite limited resources, it enrolls 148 students (66 males, 82 females) for the school year 2022-2023, with 40% Roman Catholic and 60% Pentecostal affiliations among students.

2.3 Research Subjects

The study focused on Grade 5 learners from Candiis Elementary School in the 2022-2023 school year who scored low on the Phil-IRI Group Screening Test for Word Reading Assessment, comprising a total of 30 students whose data were collected from Pre-Reading and Post-Test assessments.

2.4 Research Instrument

The study utilized an adapted version of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Assessment, a widely recognized tool in the Philippines for assessing students' reading abilities in word recognition, comprehension, and oral reading accuracy (DepEd, 2019), ensuring reliability in evaluating the impact of peer reading tutoring on word reading skills among Grade 5 learners at Candiis Elementary School. The possible descriptive equivalents for the scores could be interpreted as follows:

Phil-IRI Reading Assessment Scores	Descriptive Equivalent
97-100%	Independent
90-96%	Instructional
89 and below%	Frustration

It should be noted that the Phil-IRI Reading Assessment has already been validated by the Department of Education and has been widely used in the Philippines as a tool for assessing reading skills. The use of this assessment tool provides a standardized measure of reading skills and allows for comparisons with other studies using the same instrument.

3. RESULTS

This chapter presents the data gathered and organized in the conduct of the study. It includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data. The presentation of the data and the analysis were organized according to the statement of the problem.

3.1 Level of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 Learners during the Pretest

The data were collected using the written assessment. The test was given twice to the sample to measure students' performance before and after the treatment phase carried out. Pretest of performance of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 Learners Peer Reading Tutorial were analyzed before the conduct of the experiment. Table 2 presents the results of the level of the performance of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 Learners during the Pretest.

Table 1
Level of the Performance of Word Reading Skills of
Grade 5 Learners during the Pretest

Mean	Std Deviation	Description
52.633	23.429	Frustration Level

During the Pretest, Grade 5 learners at Candiis Elementary School exhibited a mean word reading skills score of 52.633, indicating a "Frustration Level" as per educational standards, with a considerable standard deviation of 23.429, suggesting varied individual performance levels. This highlights the need for targeted interventions and personalized teaching strategies to improve their word reading skills.

3.2 Level of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 learners during the Posttest

Table 2 presents the results of the performance of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 Learners using Peer Reading Tutorial in the Posttest.

Table 2
Level of Word Reading Skills of Grade 5 Learners
during the Posttest

Mean	Std Deviation	Description
95.667	8.185	Instructional Level

The mean score of 95.667 in the Post-Reading Assessment indicates Grade 5 learners performed well in word reading skills, with a low standard deviation of 8.185 suggesting minimal variability, placing them at an "Instructional Level" suitable for their grade, reflecting effective teaching methods and strong reading fluency.

3.3 Significant Difference in the Word Reading Skills of the Grade 5 Learners Between Gained Scores in the Pretest and Posttest

After analyzing the obtained data descriptively, then Paired Sample T-test was run to measure the progress of student's word reading performance after being given the treatment. It was used to find out whether Peer Reading Tutorial could improve student's word reading performance or not. The summary of Paired Sample T-Test result is presented in Table 4.

Table 3
Significant Difference in the Word Reading Skills of the Grade 5 Learners
in the Pretest and Posttest

Paired Sample T-Test

	T	df	P
Word Reading Skills - Posttest	-12.524	29	< .001

The table presents a highly significant t-value of -12.524, indicating that Grade 5 learners' word reading skills significantly improved from pretest to posttest due to Peer Reading Tutorial. With 29 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than 0.001, the difference in scores is statistically significant, supporting the conclusion that the intervention effectively enhanced students' word reading abilities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of the research, there were some interpretations could be drawn. Peer Reading Tutorial contributed a significant progress toward students' Word Reading Skills. The Word Reading Skills of the students before and after the experiment was significantly different with an increase of 81.78% of the pretest. Grade 5 students initially scored at a frustration level (mean 52.633%) in pretest but achieved an instructional level (mean 95.677%) in posttest after Peer Reading Tutorial implementation, indicating significant improvement. Peer relationships were crucial, with higher achievers benefiting more. These findings align with Spencer (2011), Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2011), and Vernon-Feagans et al. (2010), suggesting peer tutoring positively impacts literacy. Additionally, studies highlight the effectiveness of small-group interventions like Proactive Reading for foundational skills in ELs, and online peer tutoring significantly improved reading accuracy and fluency, particularly among lower-performing students and younger grades.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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