

Enhancing Reading Comprehension of at-risk Pupils in Grades 4-6 Students of Escoda Elementary School Through Targeted Intervention Strategies

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Abstract — Reading comprehension challenges in elementary pupils greatly affect their academic success. At-risk pupils often face issues like poor fluency, limited vocabulary, short attention spans, and trouble understanding main ideas and text structures. This study explored how four experienced teachers identify and address these challenges to develop an effective intervention framework. Through interviews and observations, four themes emerged, forming the NOTE Model of Reading Comprehension: Notable Learning Indicators (signs of progress), Outcome-Based Strategies (evidence-based teaching methods), Text Comprehension Difficulties (reading barriers), and Enriching Experiences (extra learning opportunities and collaboration with families). Key findings showed that students with multiple challenges, such as poor decoding, limited vocabulary, and lack of parental support, improved when teachers used strategies like guided reading, read-aloud sessions, WH questioning, targeted vocabulary instruction, ability-based grouping, and formative assessments. These strategies led to better fluency, vocabulary recognition, and comprehension. Enriching experiences and strong home-school partnerships boosted motivation and engagement, while improvements in focus, fluency, and confidence validated the interventions. The NOTE Model is a cycle where identifying reading difficulties helps choose strategies, supported by enriching experiences, leading to observable progress and refining future interventions. The study shows that reading comprehension issues can be addressed with systematic, evidence-based interventions, strong teacher support, and collaboration with families,

resulting in substantial progress for at-risk learners, confirming the NOTE Model as a practical framework for improving literacy and closing achievement gaps.

Keywords: at-risk learners, comprehension strategies, elementary literacy, guided reading, home-school collaboration, reading comprehension, NOTE Model, reading intervention,

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a critical skill that influences a student's academic success across various subjects. Recent assessments at Escoda Elementary School have shown that many Grade 4-6 pupils struggle to understand texts, which is impacting their educational performance. These challenges not only affect current learning but can also hinder future academic achievements and lifelong learning.

This study highlights the urgent need to address reading comprehension issues, which reflect systemic shortcomings in literacy education. Factors such as insufficient instructional techniques, limited access to reading materials, language barriers, and a lack of personalized support contribute to these difficulties. As Sawchuck (2024) noted, reading comprehension is complex and requires new vocabulary and fluency.

Teachers at Escoda Elementary play a vital role in addressing these challenges by using effective methods to enhance reading comprehension. This involves more than just understanding words; it includes connecting ideas, interpreting meanings, and applying knowledge. Teachers must employ evidence-based, engaging strategies tailored to diverse student needs.

Effective techniques, such as explicit comprehension strategies, active questioning, graphic organizers, and real-world texts, can significantly improve reading skills. Creating a supportive classroom environment encourages students to express their thoughts and enhances their motivation to read. Wendaferew & Damtew (2023) stated that reading comprehension improves when students are clearly taught explicitly reading strategies. Likewise, Dalimunthe et. al. (2024)

said that a supportive learning environment is crucial for boosting student motivation and engagement.

The significance of teacher intervention is immense. Educators can transform struggling readers into capable learners with targeted strategies. This study explores methods to meet the needs of Escoda Elementary pupils, aiming to overcome reading difficulties and enhance academic success. As Mar, Z. D. (2023) demonstrated, providing the right support to at-risk students is essential for their future success and ability to compete for jobs.

Reading comprehension requires building a mental picture of the text, involving the reader, the text, and actions within a sociocultural framework. Understanding these processes can lead to effective interventions. Cherry, K. (2025) stated that Sociocultural theory is a way to understand how learning and development are shaped by social interactions and cultural influences. It explains that our thinking skills grow when we interact with people who know more, like friends, parents, and teachers.

Nationally, reading comprehension challenges are significant. The Philippines ranked low in international assessments, indicating a need for improvement. Despite government efforts, many students still struggle with reading, vocabulary, and critical thinking. Bordey (2025) revealed in a Senate Hearing led by Sherwin Gatchalian that 18 million junior high school graduates were functionally illiterate, based on the 2024 FLEMMS survey, indicating that many cannot read, write, compute, or comprehend. Idulog et al. (2023) likewise stressed that Filipino students' reading proficiency remains a serious concern, as many still struggle with comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking despite government efforts. Servillos (2023) confirmed this through the 2022 PISA results, which showed that the Philippines ranked 76th out of 81 countries in reading comprehension, with little progress in mathematics and science and a decline in performance among low-performing students. Atrero et al. (2024) noted that the 2023 PISA scores showed only a slight improvement from 340 to 347, indicating that, while there are small gains, overall literacy and comprehension remain low. Taken together, these studies highlight a serious literacy crisis in the Philippines and urge schools to strengthen programs that improve reading comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking.

This study explored the root causes of reading difficulties and propose targeted interventions tailored to Escoda Elementary pupils. By focusing on specific learning gaps, it seeks to provide educators with tools to improve literacy outcomes, thereby contributing to educational quality and equity in the country.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore how targeted intervention strategies can enhance reading comprehension among Grades 4-6 students at Escoda Elementary School. Despite the importance of reading comprehension in academic success, many pupils struggle to fully understand and interpret texts. This research seeks to identify the specific challenges faced by these pupils and to determine how targeted interventions can address them.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What are the significant experiences of teachers teaching reading comprehension among pupils with manifestation of reading difficulties?
2. What core narratives derived from the significant experiences of the co-participants?
3. What are the creative insights gained by the researcher based on the significant statements of the co-participants?
4. What intervention strategies can be formulated based on the significant experiences of the co-participants?

Research Design

This research employed a narrative approach to investigate the experiences of four teachers from Escoda Elementary School who have used specific intervention strategies to enhance reading comprehension among pupils in Grades 4-6. According to Deakin University Library (2025), narrative inquiry captures the experiences of a single person or a small group, showcasing that person's lived experience or unique viewpoint, typically through documented, organized interviews that are arranged in a chronological story. So, these educators recounted their personal experiences, detailing the obstacles they encountered, the strategies they employed, and the improvements they noted in their pupils. Their stories offered nuanced and in-depth insights into how particular interventions were tailored to address the distinct needs of their classrooms, how their teaching philosophies transformed, and how they managed both achievements and challenges throughout the process.

On the other hand, the National University (2025) stated that investigating teaching is most effectively approached through narrative methods of inquiry, as comprehending a teacher's practice, whether from their perspective or that of an observer, requires uncovering a meaningful story that reflects their engagement with their pupils. So, this approach was particularly fitted for the study because it facilitates a more profound understanding of the personal aspects of teaching, capturing not only the outcomes of the interventions but also the emotions, reflections, and professional development of the involved educators. By focusing on teachers' lived experiences, the research can reveal contextual factors within the school environment, providing a more holistic perspective on what genuinely influences improvements in reading comprehension in this specific educational context.

Data Generation

The data generation process for this study began with an extensive review of the literature focused on reading comprehension challenges among elementary pupils. This step established a theoretical foundation and highlighted the presence of similar issues, drawing parallels to the

current situation at Escoda Elementary School. Afterwards, the literature was reviewed and confirmed the need for this research, and a formal letter was drafted and sent to the School Head requesting permission to conduct the study. Upon receiving approval, consent letters were then distributed to the selected teacher participants, explaining the study's purpose, ethical considerations, and their role in sharing their experiences with reading interventions. After securing their consent, the next step was to coordinate and schedule interviews at times convenient for the teachers, ensuring minimal disruption to their teaching schedules. The interview proper followed, during which in-depth, open-ended questions were posed to elicit rich narratives about the teachers' strategies, challenges, and observations regarding reading comprehension interventions.

Following the interviews, the data were organized and analyzed using narrative analysis techniques to identify common themes, patterns, and insights regarding the effectiveness of the interventions. This thorough analysis not only uncovered successful strategies but also highlighted areas that require further attention. The final step in the data generation process was the creation of a proposed output, such as a targeted intervention program or NOTE-Based Data Generation Toolkit like a teacher interview guide, reading observation checklist, learner reading profile sheet aligned with Phil-IRI results, home-reading support log for parent involvement, graphic organizer for qualitative evidence designed to address the specific reading comprehension challenges identified in the study. This intervention was tailored to the unique needs of Escoda Elementary School and presented to both the school administration and participating teachers for potential implementation.

Selection of Co-Participants

The process of selecting co-participants focused on identifying four teachers with direct experience teaching reading comprehension to pupils in Grades 4-6. These educators were selected based on specific criteria, including their years of teaching, past involvement in reading interventions, and understanding of the reading difficulties their pupils' encounter. Preference was given to those who have actively participated in literacy initiatives or introduced creative strategies

to improve reading comprehension in their lessons. Their direct experiences and insights were crucial for assessing the success of targeted interventions, the challenges faced, and the overall effects on pupil performance. By selecting teachers who employed a range of methods and had diverse backgrounds, the study sought to gather a variety of viewpoints that enriched the data and helped develop more effective reading comprehension strategies suited to the needs of Escoda Elementary School.

Thematic Analysis

The focus of this study was to explore the personal experiences and stories shared by the four teacher participants. As stated by Naeem et. al. (2023), there are six stages for examining the complex aspects of a solid methodological approach referred to as systematic thematic analysis: creating transcripts and familiarizing oneself with the data; identifying key terms; choosing codes; developing themes; conceptualizing through the interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes; and, ultimately, constructing a conceptual model.

The process of thematic analysis begins with this step. It entails transcribing data and becoming acquainted with it. Go deeply into the material to identify key passages and emerging ideas. After that, choose quotations that vividly depict the data and suitably capture a range of perspectives and trends relevant to the study's goals. Second, it entails a detailed analysis of the data, from interviews and from pinpointing common themes, terminology, and visual aspects, and labeling them as keywords. These keywords summarize participants' experiences and perceptions and are directly extracted from the data. In the third phase, coding involves assigning brief phrases or terms to segments of data that encapsulate the data's fundamental message, importance, or theme. This step streamlines complex textual data by converting it into a theoretical framework and helps identify components pertinent to the research questions. Keywords are crucial in the coding process, as they serve as the foundation of the analysis and facilitate transforming raw data into meaningful, manageable units. Fourth, developing themes involves arranging codes into relevant categories to identify patterns and connections, thereby providing understanding related to the research question. At this stage, the researcher shifts from an in-depth examination of codes

and categories to a more conceptual understanding, developing themes. These themes are not merely recurring elements; rather, they represent structured meanings that connect the research questions to the data. Fifth, consists of grasping and clarifying the concepts that arise from the data. The researcher detects social trends and refines them into definitions that correspond with my investigation. I use tools such as diagrams and models to understand the connections between these concepts. The quality of these definitions is evaluated based on criteria like clarity, accuracy, reliability, applicability, and their contribution to both theory and practice. The last phase of thematic analysis involves constructing a conceptual model. This task entails forming a distinct representation of the data, often influenced by established theories. The model aims to address the research questions and highlight the study's contribution to the body of knowledge. This phase concludes the analysis and summarizes all discoveries and insights derived from the data (Naeem et al., 2023).

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following are the summary of findings.

1. The teachers' co-participants consistently encountered and addressed reading comprehension challenges among at-risk students. They used similar diagnostic tools, mainly the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), to identify struggling readers. Their intervention strategies included guided reading, WH-questioning, vocabulary building, read-aloud sessions, ability-based grouping, and differentiated instruction tailored to individual needs. Common issues among these students were poor decoding skills, limited fluency, inadequate vocabulary, weak comprehension of text structures, short attention spans, and low motivation. Long comprehension passages were found to be ineffective, whereas shorter, scaffolded texts with guided support were more beneficial. The teachers also noted the importance of parental involvement and regular home reading practice for sustained progress; without family support, classroom efforts had limited long-term impact. By implementing targeted, multicomponent interventions—combining explicit strategy instruction, immediate feedback, repeated practice, and home-school

collaboration—they observed improvements in students' reading levels, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension accuracy, and motivation.

2. An analysis of teachers' experiences uncovers key insights into addressing reading comprehension challenges among at-risk elementary students. The first insight, Text Comprehension Difficulties, highlights issues such as short attention spans, weak decoding and fluency, limited vocabulary, trouble identifying main ideas and text structures, and lack of parental support. These factors form cognitive, linguistic, and environmental barriers to understanding. The second insight, Outcome-Based Strategies, shows that teachers used structured methods such as guided reading, daily read-alouds, WH questioning, vocabulary enhancement, ability-based grouping, peer tutoring, differentiated texts, and formative assessments to address these challenges. The third insight, Enriching Experiences, describes how teachers created engaging literacy environments with routines, interactive activities, multimodal texts, collaborative learning, and strong home-school partnerships to extend learning and build motivation. The fourth insight, Notable Learning Indicators, records progress such as improved focus, reading stamina, fluency, vocabulary recognition, comprehension skills, and increased engagement and confidence. These narratives demonstrate that improvements in reading comprehension result from intentional interventions addressing cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects, with family involvement as a crucial component.
3. The analysis of teachers' statements reveals five key insights that go beyond typical reading interventions. First, reading difficulties are complex and involve cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and motivational issues. Struggling readers often lack confidence and are less willing to engage with texts, so interventions must address these emotional factors alongside skill development. Second, early identification and ongoing intervention are crucial. Teachers note that comprehension problems in early grades can worsen if left unaddressed, highlighting the need for continuous support rather than sporadic interventions. Third, flexible teaching and professional judgment are vital. Effective teachers adapt strategies based on each student's needs and classroom observations, suggesting that intervention frameworks should support teacher autonomy. Fourth,

partnerships between home and school are essential for lasting reading improvement. Teachers stress that classroom instruction alone isn't enough without parental involvement in at-home reading. Finally, teacher support systems are crucial for successful interventions. Despite challenges, teachers show strong commitment to at-risk students, but this dedication needs backing through professional development, resources, and recognition of their role in literacy development.

4. The NOTE Model of Reading Comprehension is a detailed framework based on teachers' real experiences, designed to help at-risk elementary pupils overcome reading challenges. It starts with identifying Text Comprehension Difficulties (T), which are the specific cognitive, linguistic, and motivational barriers, such as weak vocabulary, poor fluency, limited background knowledge, short attention spans, difficulty identifying main ideas and text structures, and lack of parental support. These form the basis for all further interventions. Teachers then use Outcome-Based Strategies (O), which include evidence-based methods like guided reading with feedback, daily read-alouds, WH questions to enhance comprehension, targeted vocabulary drills, flexible groupings, peer tutoring, differentiated texts, and formative assessments, all aimed at improving fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Enriching Experiences (E) add to classroom learning with extra sessions, more reading time, diverse materials, and strong home-school partnerships, where parents support reading habits and track progress, boosting motivation and confidence. Finally, Notable Learning Indicators (N) show the effectiveness of the interventions through measurable improvements in focus, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, ability to identify main ideas, participation, and confidence, confirming that this cyclical approach leads to significant, lasting progress in reading comprehension.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded:

1. The experiences of four expert teachers show that reading comprehension problems in at-risk students can be effectively addressed. These challenges can be overcome with

intentional, well-planned interventions that include clear teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and strong partnerships between home and school. To boost reading comprehension, a comprehensive approach is needed that focuses on both academic skills and emotional factors such as motivation, confidence, and belonging. Importantly, lasting improvement in reading comes from shared responsibility—teachers must provide structured, adaptive instruction, while parents support reading habits at home. Together, they create a support system that acknowledges the child's progress and encourages a positive relationship with reading. When these elements align—focused intervention, teacher dedication, family involvement, and sufficient time and resources—students who struggle with reading can shift from frustration to finding it a meaningful and achievable skill, paving the way for success in all subjects and grade levels.

2. Teachers' experiences reveal that helping at-risk elementary pupils improve their reading comprehension requires a comprehensive, evidence-based approach. This involves using diagnostic assessments, strategic instruction, enriching experiences, and ongoing progress monitoring, all within a supportive partnership between home and school. The NOTE Model of Reading Comprehension—focusing on key learning indicators, outcome-based strategies, text comprehension challenges, and enriching experiences—offers a practical framework. It addresses the complexity of reading difficulties and the effectiveness of targeted teaching methods. Success in enhancing reading comprehension relies on using multiple research-backed strategies together: explicit teaching of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; using texts that match students' levels; guided reading with immediate feedback; daily routines that demonstrate fluent reading; and active parental involvement to reinforce skills and build positive reading habits. Teachers find that when these strategies are applied with dedication and sensitivity to each student's needs, at-risk learners show significant improvement in comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and motivation. Ultimately, students shift from seeing reading as frustrating to experiencing it as a valuable skill that supports success in all subjects and grades.
3. The researcher's insights show that improving reading comprehension for at-risk elementary students requires a shift in perspective. Instead of seeing reading intervention

as just a technical skill, it should be viewed as a comprehensive approach that includes emotional understanding and systemic support. This involves combining cognitive instruction with emotional engagement, continuous monitoring, flexible teaching, collaboration between home and school, and strong teacher support. Effective intervention isn't just about using a set curriculum or techniques; it requires teachers to be adaptable professionals who tailor methods to each student's needs, provide emotional support, and work closely with families to build lasting support systems. Teachers' experiences highlight that helping struggling readers is about building relationships, commitment, and coordination, where teachers' expertise and dedication are crucial. Therefore, schools should invest in three key areas: (1) student-focused interventions that mix skill instruction with emotional support, (2) family engagement programs that treat parents as partners with guidance and communication, and (3) teacher support systems offering professional development and resources, acknowledging that the quality of reading instruction reflects how much schools value and support their educators.

4. The NOTE Model of Reading Comprehension provides schools with a cohesive, practical framework for improving reading interventions for at-risk students. It breaks down reading instruction into four connected areas that reflect how teachers solve problems in their classrooms. Unlike a step-by-step process, this model views reading comprehension as a cycle in which learning indicators indicate the success of interventions and guide future adjustments. This creates a feedback loop that helps teachers adapt their teaching in real time. The model is based on real teacher practices, making it both practical and sophisticated. To implement it, schools should: (1) diagnose and monitor reading difficulties using assessments and observations, (2) support teachers with professional development for effective strategies, (3) provide resources for enriching reading experiences, and (4) track learning indicators to make informed adjustments. The model's success comes from using all four components together to improve reading outcomes for at-risk learners.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Implement the NOTE Model Division-Wide. Division should formally integrate the NOTE Model into curriculum guides, intervention frameworks, and teacher training to ensure consistency and fidelity across grade levels.
2. Prioritize Outcome-Based Strategies in Daily Practice. Teachers should embed guided reading, WH questioning, vocabulary drills, and read-alouds into daily routines, with flexible grouping to match learners' evolving needs.
3. Promote Home-School Partnerships. Schools should establish structured programs that engage parents in home reading practices, provide literacy resources, and encourage family participation to sustain progress.
4. Support Teacher Autonomy and Professional Growth. Provide teachers with ongoing professional development, collaborative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and resources that allow them to adapt strategies based on classroom observations and student profiles.
5. Adopt Holistic Monitoring Systems. Move beyond single-point assessments by combining diagnostic tools, classroom observations, formative assessments, and parental input to create comprehensive learner profiles.
6. Ensure Access to Differentiated Materials. Supply levelled readers, scaffolded texts, and multimodal resources to meet diverse reading levels, while gradually increasing text complexity to build stamina and confidence.
7. Recognize Teacher Commitment. Divisions should reduce workload pressures, acknowledge teachers' efforts in literacy development, and provide institutional support to sustain their dedication to at-risk learners.

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