

Navigating Challenges in Enhancing Pupils' English Reading Comprehension through an Optimal Classroom Environment

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Abstract: Navigating Challenges in Enhancing Pupils' English Reading Comprehension through an Optimal Classroom Environment. This qualitative phenomenological study aims to explore the perspectives, challenges, and coping strategies of teachers in creating such an environment. The findings revealed that teachers perceived an optimal classroom environment for enhancing reading comprehension to encompass a conducive learning environment, enriched learning experiences, and environmental factors. Additionally, the study highlights that teachers face challenges such as limited resources, including funding, materials, and technology, as well as classroom conditions and infrastructure. Moreover, student factors, including low interest in reading, health issues, and absenteeism, add complexity to the challenge. To address these challenges, teachers employ coping strategies like differentiated instruction, resource utilization, improvisation, and seeking parental involvement.

Keywords: reading comprehension, resource limitation, optimum classroom environment, Phenomenology, teachers challenges.

Abstrak: Menavigasi Tantangan dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Membaca Bahasa Inggris Siswa melalui Lingkungan Kelas yang Optimal. Kajian fenomenologi kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif, tantangan, dan strategi penanggulangan guru dalam menciptakan lingkungan seperti itu. Temuannya mengungkapkan bahwa guru memandang lingkungan kelas yang optimal untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca mencakup lingkungan belajar yang kondusif, pengalaman belajar yang diperkaya, dan faktor lingkungan. Selain itu, studi ini menyoroti bahwa guru menghadapi tantangan seperti terbatasnya sumber daya, termasuk pendanaan, materi, dan teknologi, serta kondisi dan infrastruktur kelas. Selain itu, faktor siswa, termasuk rendahnya minat membaca, masalah kesehatan, dan ketidakhadiran, menambah kompleksitas tantangan ini. Untuk mengatasi tantangan ini, guru menerapkan strategi penanggulangan seperti pengajaran yang berbeda, pemanfaatan sumber daya, improvisasi, dan mencari keterlibatan orang tua.

Kata kunci: pemahaman bacaan, keterbatasan sumber daya, lingkungan kelas yang optimal, Fenomenologi, tantangan guru.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is a fundamental skill that empowers individuals to convey their thoughts, ideas, and emotions, fostering meaningful connections and interactions with others. Among the various components of communication, reading ability plays a crucial role in comprehending and interpreting written information (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). According to Chansa (2015), as technology advances, the ability to read and understand written information becomes increasingly essential. It serves as a gateway to knowledge, enabling individuals to access a vast array of resources, engage in critical thinking, and participate actively in both academic and non-academic contexts vital in pupils' academic success and overall development.

Developing reading comprehension skills from an early age is crucial as it serves as a fundamental learning skill that lays the foundation for academic success. In particular, the English language holds significant importance throughout a student's educational journey, starting from elementary school and extending all the way to university level. Proficiency in English enables students to access a wide range of knowledge, communicate effectively, and excel in various academic disciplines. Mastery of reading is crucial for students to comprehend and analyze English texts, and it plays a vital role in shaping the academic future of students who aspire to achieve higher levels of education (Fadilah et al., 2023). Even in secondary schools, numerous students encounter difficulties with reading comprehension, as they grapple with the task of extracting meaning from the texts they read. This deficiency in reading comprehension skills poses a significant obstacle to their capacity to comprehend and interpret written information effectively (Ngwenya, 2004). According to Biancarosa and Snow (2004), students who face challenges in reading comprehension, including those with learning disabilities (LD), often struggle with reading words or sentences, leading to

difficulties in comprehension. These students may have challenges due to limited background knowledge and English language skills, which can affect their understanding of the text. They may also face difficulties with reading fluency, making it harder for them to comprehend the main ideas and core content of the text. According to Kamil et al. (2008), reading comprehension strategy instruction is highly valued as a significant classroom intervention. Its purpose is to enhance readers' comprehension abilities, enabling them to analyze and think critically while reading various texts.

While effective instructional strategies and engaging materials are vital for developing reading comprehension skills, the classroom environment also plays a significant role in supporting pupils' progress in this area. The main factor that determines effective education is a learning environment that is favorable and supportive. The creation and maintenance of engaging learning environments have been proven to be accomplished through well-organized classrooms that take into account all the elements necessary for a well-rounded education (Wreikat et al., 2014). In order for education to fulfill its essential role in societal transformation, it must encompass crucial elements such as quality infrastructure, including suitable and well-equipped classrooms, highly motivated and competent teachers, and comprehensive instructional materials and curriculum, as emphasized by Nnabugwu et al., (2020). Cliff (2026) has consistently emphasized the importance of students' mental, physical, and social readiness for effective reading practices. Additionally, factors such as students' needs, ages, backgrounds, and learning environment play a significant role in shaping their reading experiences (Thibaut, 2018). These reinforces the notion that a holistic understanding of students' readiness and contextual factors is crucial for promoting successful reading outcomes.

An ideal classroom setting incorporates diverse elements, such as the physical layout, social dynamics, and psychological factors, all working together to create a conducive atmosphere that enhances reading comprehension. The physical aspects encompass seating arrangements, classroom design, lighting, and access to appropriate reading materials. Meanwhile, the social environment involves interactions among peers, collaborative activities, and a positive classroom culture that encourages meaningful discussions and cooperative learning. While an optimal classroom environment can significantly improve students' learning outcomes, it remains a challenge for schools located in marginalized areas, like Villareal District 1, with elementary schools situated in mountainous and seaside places. Limited access to technological advancements in such areas can hinder reading comprehension, leading to frustration and demotivation in the learning process for students. This schools have a mean approximation of 28.07% of the total enrollment comprises pupils at the frustration reading level. Many of their parents work as farmers and have limited education, with basic English skills and proficiency in Tagalog and native waray-waray as their primary languages of comprehension. In some cases, parents may even be illiterate. Consequently, it is essential to develop targeted reading support techniques that address the specific challenges faced by learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The struggle with reading comprehension leads to

frustration and discouragement, significantly affecting their overall learning journey in school.

This study examines the perspective and challenges of teachers face in establishing an ideal classroom environment for improving pupils' reading comprehension. It provides valuable insights into the complexities teachers encounter and explores the strategies they employ to create a supportive learning atmosphere. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, actions may be considered by education policy makers, expert in curriculum, education authorities to create classrooms that empower pupils to develop strong reading skills and critical thinking abilities.

■ **METHODS**

Participants

The participants in this study were purposively selected based on specific criteria. These criteria included being a teacher in an elementary school in Villareal I without a full-fledged School Head, being stationed at a mountain or seaside school, handling a grade level with recorded readers falling under the frustration or non-reader category, and having teaching experience ranging from 1 to 20 years across different grade levels in the District of Villareal 1. The study population consisted of elementary teachers from ten schools in Villareal District, totaling of 39 teachers. The sample size for the study was determined based on data saturation, and it included 17 teachers as participants as shown in the demographic data :

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the teacher- participants

Participant	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Number of Years in Teaching	Grade Level taught	Highest Educational Attainment
1	30	Male	Waray	7	Grade 6	Bachelor's Degree
2	32	Male	Tag-alog	7	Grade 6	Bachelor's Degree

3	29	Female	Waray	7	Grade 1	Bachelor's Degree
4	29	Male	Waray	2	Grade 6	Bachelor's Degree
5	30	Female	Waray	7	Grade 6	Bachelor's Degree
6	33	Female	Waray	2	Grade 1	Bachelor's Degree
7	34	Male	Waray	9	Grade 5	Bachelor's Degree
8	26	Female	Waray	2	Grade 4	Bachelor's Degree
9	34	Female	Waray	5	Grade 3	Bachelor's Degree
10	29	Female	Waray	6	Grade 5	Bachelor's Degree
11	28	Female	Waray	7	Grade 3	Master's Degree
12	39	Female	Waray	6	Grade 1	Bachelor's Degree
13	38	Female	Waray	14	Grade 4	Master's Degree
14	32	Female	Waray	5	Grade 1	Bachelor's Degree
15	40	Female	Bisaya	16	Grade 3	Bachelor's Degree
16	28	Female	Waray	2	Grade 5	Bachelor's Degree
17	34	Female	Waray	10	Grade 1	Bachelor's Degree

Research Design and Procedures

A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed to gain in-depth insights into the perceptions, challenges faced by teachers, and the strategies they employed to enhance pupils' reading comprehension through an optimal classroom environment. Participants were purposively selected based on pre-set criteria. Prior to their involvement in the research, participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and make an informed decision about their participation. Additionally, participants were informed about the

recording of data, such as audio or video recordings during interviews or observations. The study adhered to the principles of data privacy and confidentiality as outlined in the Data Privacy Act. All collected data were treated with utmost confidentiality and stored securely in the researcher's Google Drive to prevent unauthorized access or disclosure. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with the participants to gather rich and detailed information about their perspectives, challenges, and coping strategies related to the topic under study. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and

categories in the data, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. The study was conducted over an 8-month period October 2022 to June 2023.

Instrument

A researcher-made interview guide was utilized as the research instrument to collect data from the participants. It consisted of a set of open-ended questions specifically designed to explore the participants' perspectives, challenges, and coping strategies in relation to creating an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension. The participants were presented with three major questions, each with follow-up inquiries. They were asked about their understanding of an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension. Secondly, the main challenges they encountered as teachers in creating an effective learning environment for reading comprehension were explored. Finally, the participants were probed on their approaches to addressing these challenges and finding solutions to ensure that their students have an optimal learning experience. To establish the validity of the instrument, it underwent a thorough review by experts in the field of education and qualitative research. Their valuable feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the interview guide. Additionally, a pilot study was also conducted with a small group of participants to assess the clarity and effectiveness of the interview questions. The participants' responses and feedback was used in refining the instrument, ensuring its comprehensibility and relevance of the study.

Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews conducted provided a rich and complex exploration of experience and meaning-making, deepening the understanding of the topic under study (Baum, 2015). Following each interview, the recorded

material was transcribed verbatim and checked against the audio-recording for accuracy. Data were thematically analyzed using line-by-line analysis, and emerging themes were coded and categorized to ensure data saturation and coherent meanings (Vaismoradi et al., 2007). Data triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings. Multiple sources of data were used, including in-depth interviews, observations, and reflective journals. The interview data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their perspectives and experiences. Observations were conducted to directly observe the participants' classroom environments and instructional practices. Additionally, participants maintained reflective journals to document their thoughts, reflections, and challenges encountered during the study. By triangulating data from these different sources, a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research topic was achieved, as the findings could be cross-validated and corroborated.

■ RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher – Participants (T) Perspective on optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension.

The participants' responses regarding their perception of an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension revealed three emerging themes. These themes include Theme 1: Conducive Learning Environment, Theme 2: Learning Experience and Opportunities, and Theme 3: Environmental Factors. These themes represent the key aspects that the participants identified as crucial for creating an effective classroom setting to enhance reading comprehension among pupils.

Theme 1: Conducive Learning Environment

The provided utterances offer support for this theme and underscore the significance of

creating a conducive learning environment to enhance pupils' reading comprehension. The following utterances of the teacher participants include:

“Conducive to learning” (T2, T3, T12); “It should be conducive to learning” (T11); “A classroom where students are set to develop skills towards reading, where learners are assessed on reading abilities and provided with reading materials for remediation” (T4); “That learning environment is relevant for enhancing the reading ability of our learners” (T6); “An environment that helps aim pupils' readiness in a very effective way” (T10); “Well-lighted and ventilated room, conducive reading area, and accessible reading materials” (T11); “Every classroom should be conducive for learning so that learners will be motivated, and it can help enhance their reading comprehension” (T14); and “Optimal classroom environment is a safe classroom environment where learners feel comfortable to learn, share their thoughts, ask questions, and take on challenges in their learning that could help enhance their reading comprehension” (T16). These utterances collectively emphasize the importance of providing an environment that fosters learning readiness, engagement, comfort, motivation, and the availability of appropriate resources for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension.

Participants mention that an optimal classroom environment should be conducive to learning, provide a welcoming reading space, be well-lit and ventilated, have accessible reading materials, and be safe and comfortable. According to Suleman and Hussain (2014), the physical arrangement of the classroom plays a crucial role in facilitating effective instruction and creating a smooth teaching-learning process. A well-organized classroom layout not only allows students to engage in social interactions but also provides them with the opportunity to learn

interesting content. A conducive environment supports the development of reading skills, encourages independent reading, motivates learners, instills a lifelong love of reading, and creates opportunities for active engagement, sharing thoughts, asking questions, and taking learning challenges. The study by Shernoff (2013) supports the idea that an optimal classroom environment is essential for improving pupils' reading comprehension. It highlights the significance of creating an ideal classroom setting that promotes student engagement, enhanced learning outcomes, and overall student well-being. By emphasizing the importance of optimal learning environments that foster student engagement, a positive impact of such environments can have on pupils' reading comprehension abilities. Cain and Oakhill (2009), underscores the importance of considering both behavioral and biological factors, as well as the role of the classroom environment, in supporting the growth of reading comprehension skills during this crucial developmental period. They highlight aspects such as readiness for learning, assessment and remediation of reading abilities, availability of relevant materials, well-lit and ventilated spaces, and learner motivation. Thus, participants recognize that creating an optimum classroom environment is a conducive classroom atmosphere that enhances students' reading comprehension abilities.

Theme 2: Learning Experience and Opportunities

The participants expressed their opinions on creating an optimum classroom environment for reading comprehension, emphasizing the theme of Learning Experience and Opportunities. The following utterances provide support of the theme:

“Creating a welcoming reading space in your classroom will not only encourage independent reading among your students but

also enhance their comprehension skills and foster a lifelong passion for reading” (T7); “It is when us teachers applies learning by doing to the learners where they can discover and learn things at their own pace” (T9); “It helps pupils develop knowledge and skills by learning experience” (T13); and “Learning is optimized when teachers create opportunities for students to learn by doing and actively engage with materials and people” (T17).

Participants emphasized the importance of offering diverse learning experiences and opportunities, including hands-on learning, individualized instruction, active engagement, and experiential and interactive approaches, when creating an optimal classroom environment for reading comprehension. According to Millet et al. (2011), creating engaging learning experiences that align with students' intrinsic interests is an effective approach to promote student engagement. As mentioned in the studies of Baeten et al. (2010) and Lea et al. (2003), emphasize the importance of student-centered instructional methods in creating engaging learning environments. These methods focus on actively involving students in their own learning process, encouraging deep approaches to learning. By shifting the focus from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered approaches, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, engage with the content, and develop a deeper understanding. The mentioned studies suggest that student-centered instructional methods, such as cooperative learning, hands-on learning, individualized instruction gained potential to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. These approaches enable the development of pupils' knowledge and skills, promote active learning, and facilitate meaningful interactions with both materials and peers. By incorporating these opportunities, the classroom environment becomes a supportive platform for

enhancing students' reading comprehension abilities. Thus, participants utterances complied to the theme that the optimum classroom environment and the provision of diverse learning experiences and opportunities work hand in hand to create an enriching educational experience for students. The environment sets the stage for learning, while the diverse experiences and opportunities empower students to take ownership of their learning, explore their interests, and develop essential skills and knowledge. Together, they contribute to the enhancement of students' learning outcomes, including reading comprehension skills.

Theme 3: Environmental Factors

This theme highlights the recognition of various environmental factors that can impact pupils' reading comprehension. This utterance *“This refers to the environmental factors that affect the pupils' reading comprehension, such as the home, school, and social, and cultural environment” (T15).*

Participant mention the influence of the home, school, social, and cultural environment on students' reading abilities. The study of Chansa (2015) affirms that children's reading skills were found to be significantly influenced by their home environments, which varied in terms of factors such as family possessions. Moreover, parental reading attitudes emerged as a significant factor that explained the variation in children's reading skills. Furthermore, the findings of Linnakyla et al. (2004) highlight that the likelihood of being a low achiever is significantly influenced by gender and various sociocultural factors. Additionally, students' personal characteristics, attitudes, and activities both within and outside of school play a significant role in determining their academic achievement. When parents held positive views towards reading as an important activity in the home, their children demonstrated better performance in reading skills. Understanding and

addressing these environmental factors are important in creating an optimal classroom environment for enhancing reading comprehension. By considering and adapting to these factors, teachers can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of pupils and enhances their reading comprehension skills

The clustered themes suggest that an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension is characterized by a conducive learning environment that supports active engagement, independent reading, and a positive atmosphere. It should provide a welcoming and comfortable space, be well-equipped with accessible reading materials, and promote hands-on learning experiences. Teachers play a crucial role in creating opportunities for active learning, encouraging students to discover and explore at their own pace, and considering environmental factors that can influence reading comprehension. By fostering a conducive learning environment and providing meaningful learning experiences, teachers can effectively enhance pupils' reading comprehension skills.

Teacher – Participants (T) Key Challenges Encountered in Creating Optimum Classroom Environment for Enhancing Pupil's English Reading Comprehension

The participants' feedback regarding the main challenges faced in establishing an optimal classroom environment to improve pupils' English reading comprehension revealed three prominent themes. These themes encompassed Resource Limitations and Support, Classroom Conditions and Infrastructure, and Students Factors and Engagement. These themes reflect the significant aspects identified by the participants as essential for creating a conducive classroom environment that fosters reading comprehension among pupils.

Theme 1: Resource Limitations and Support

This theme revolves around the challenges related to limited resources and support. The following utterances provides supports:

“Fund to set up the classroom, Conceptual knowledge on what is really the effective learning environment for reading comprehension”. (T1) ; “Classroom set-up and the availability of learning materials” (T2) ; “lack of classroom, dilapidated classrooms, and lack of time due to additional workloads” (T3) ; “Constant guide of the parents when learners were at home is not evident” (T4) ; “Unavailability of materials and lack of support from the parents”(T6) ; “stakeholders’ support and commitment” (T7); “Unavailability of materials due to limited resources” (T11); “Unavailability of instructional materials or instructional technology” (T13); “As a teacher, the main challenges that I face are having not enough space for the reading area and a lack of instructional materials for making reading materials” (T16) ; and “Poor learning environment and lack of parental support” (T17).

Participants in the study identified various challenges related to resource limitations and support in creating an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension. These challenges include difficulties in securing funds for classroom setup, a lack of materials and textbooks, unavailability of instructional materials or technology, and limited resources in general. The participants expressed concerns about the inadequacy of reading materials and resources to meet the diverse needs of students. Usman (2016) emphasizes the notable challenges encountered in achieving effective school administration due to the limited availability and insufficient access

to educational resources. The study reveals that numerous schools experience a scarcity of crucial resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, and modern technology. Consequently, this shortage of resources adversely affects the efficiency of teaching and learning within educational institutions. However, the research also underscores the positive influence of ample and high-quality resources on both student achievement and teacher effectiveness. According to Mueni (2019), the level of learners' engagement in school activities and learning was significantly influenced by the inclusiveness of the classroom environment. An inclusive classroom environment fostered active participation among learners, which was facilitated by the availability of a variety of instructional materials. The use of instructional materials not only promoted learners' willingness to engage in classroom activities but also contributed to the development of a positive attitude towards learning. The use of instructional materials created favorable learning conditions and sparked learners' interest in the subject, nurturing their curiosity and desire to explore and learn more.

In addition, participants identified the lack of parental support and consistent guidance at home as a significant challenge when creating an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' English reading comprehension. Ngwenya's study (2004) emphasized that the absence of emotional support from parents' places learners at a disadvantage in terms of their learning and the development of reading comprehension skills. The school alone may not be in the position to improve reading comprehension skills without the help of parents. According to Elley (1994), that factors such as parental occupation and education, the availability of home and literacy resources, and the interactions between parents and children related to literacy and language can have an impact on children's reading performance.

Theme 2: Challenges on Classroom Conditions and Infrastructure

Participants highlighted the difficulties associated with the physical environment of the classroom as a major obstacle in creating an optimum classroom setting for reading comprehension. The following statements provide support for this theme:

"Classroom set-up and the availability of learning materials" (T2) ; "lack of classroom, dilapidated classrooms, and lack of time due to additional workloads" (T3) ; "The temperature because it is summer time" (T10); "Having a makeshift classroom which is not conducive to learning" (T12); and "The main challenges I face as a teacher in creating an effective learning environment for reading comprehension is the classroom itself is not well ventilated. It needs major repair" (T15).

Participants mention issues such as inadequate classroom space, dilapidated classrooms, poor ventilation, and the need for major repairs have a significant impact on students' reading comprehension. These conditions hinder the learning environment and create distractions that impede students' focus and concentration. Limited space may lead to overcrowding, making it difficult for students to engage in reading activities comfortably. Dilapidated classrooms and poor ventilation can affect students' physical comfort and well-being, making it challenging for them to concentrate on reading materials. The need for major repairs can further disrupt the learning process and create an unfavorable environment for effective reading comprehension. The investigation conducted by Barrett et al. (2015) reveals that the physical classroom environment has a significant impact on students' overall learning outcomes. Creating an optimal learning environment that maximizes students' reading achievement relies on various factors of classroom design, including natural light, temperature, color, and flexibility. However,

participants in the study encountered challenges in achieving this due to their schools being situated in a disadvantaged demographic location and limited resources. These factors hindered the ability to provide the ideal learning conditions necessary for enhancing students' reading skills.

Theme 3: Student Factors and Engagement

This theme sheds light on the complex interplay between student factors and engagement within the context of creating an optimal classroom environment to enhance reading comprehension. The participants' responses provide valuable insights that support this theme:

“Student’s low interest in reading” (T8) ; *“Focus due to health status. Most of them go to school with an empty stomach” (T9)*; and *“Lack of classroom, absenteeism of the learners” (T14)* .

Educators and schools are grappling with a common obstacle: students' lack of interest in reading. This concern has been acknowledged by participants involved in the education system. The absence of interest poses difficulties in actively engaging students in reading activities and cultivating a positive reading culture. Another significant issue within the domain of reading is the challenge students face in effectively comprehending texts, which is further compounded by their limited interest in reading (Desysetyowati, et al., 2023). This lack of interest hampers their ability to comprehend and engage with the material they encounter. Several factors may contribute to this low interest, such as a dearth of enjoyable reading materials, restricted access to captivating reading resources, or personal preferences and interests. In addition, participant T9 draws attention to the significant impact of students' health conditions on their ability to concentrate and engage in reading. When students come to school with hunger or inadequate nutrition, their cognitive functions can be affected, leading to decreased focus and attention during

reading activities. It is reinforced by the study of Suwandi & Wardhani (2023) that reading practices can be challenging to implement if students are not mentally, physically, or socially prepared. This emphasizes the need for schools to address students' basic needs, such as providing meals or implementing programs that ensure students have access to proper nutrition. Moreover, limited classroom space or facilities can impact the availability of suitable learning environments for reading activities. Frequent student absenteeism hinders their regular participation in reading lessons and practice. The study by Merga (2020) provides evidence supporting the idea that absenteeism is linked to poor literacy outcomes for both younger and older students.

The challenges of low interest in reading, students' health status, inadequate classroom resources, and absenteeism all add to the complexities involved in creating an optimal classroom environment to enhance reading comprehension. However, by addressing these factors, schools can establish a supportive and engaging learning environment that fosters students' reading engagement and ultimately improves their reading comprehension skills. It is crucial to recognize and tackle these challenges to ensure that students have the necessary resources, motivation, and support to excel in their reading abilities.

Teacher Participants Addressing Challenges on Effective Learning Environment for Reading Comprehension

With teacher participants' dedication to creating an effective learning environment for reading comprehension, they encounter various challenges that demand resourcefulness and adaptability. To address these challenges, emergent themes have been identified as coping strategies. Theme 1 highlights the implementation of differentiated instruction and support

strategies, enabling teachers to cater to the diverse needs of their students. Theme 2 emphasizes resource utilization and improvisation, as teachers creatively leverage available resources to enhance the learning experience. Theme 3 underscores the significance of parental involvement and support in fostering an effective learning environment.

Theme 1: Differentiated Instruction and Support

The analysis of teacher participants' efforts to create an effective learning environment for reading comprehension revealed the prominent theme of differentiated instruction and support. This theme underscores the significance of adapting instruction and providing personalized assistance to cater to the diverse learning needs of students. The utterances provided by the participants further support the notion of tailoring teaching approaches and offering individualized support to enhance students' reading comprehension abilities are as follows:

"Providing daily reading time and selecting fast readers to match the slow readers." (T1); "When teachers invest the time to build a rapport with students, understand their individual needs, and establish meaningful connections, it significantly enhances student learning." (T7); "By giving them engaging reading materials like a storybook that has a picture of the characters to gain the pupils' interest in reading." (T8); and "Create another one that is familiar to the pupils using localized stories and materials that can catch their interest." (T13).

T1 emphasizes the practice of providing daily reading time and selecting reading materials that are suitable for both fast and slow readers. This approach recognizes the varying reading abilities of students and aims to cater to their individual needs. T7 highlights the significance of building meaningful relationships with students.

When teachers invest time and effort to understand their students' needs and establish a supportive connection, student learning is enhanced. T8 underscores the value of engaging reading materials, such as storybooks with captivating illustrations, to spark students' interest in reading. By presenting visually appealing content, teachers can capture the pupils' attention and motivate them to actively engage with the text. T13 suggests the creation of familiar and localized stories and materials that resonate with the pupils' interests. By incorporating elements that are relevant and relatable to the students' cultural and personal backgrounds, teachers can promote a sense of connection and engagement. Differentiated instruction has consistently shown to have a positive influence on student learning outcomes. This is evident in the research conducted by Firmender, et al., (2013), who found that implementing differentiated instruction led to significant progress in reading for all learners. Their study highlights the effectiveness of tailoring instruction to meet the individual needs of students, ensuring that each student receives the necessary support to enhance their reading skills. Similarly, Tobin and McInnes (2008) concluded that differentiated instruction plays a crucial role in the development of student understanding of literacy. Thus, the participants in the study recognized the effectiveness and importance of implementing strategies such as differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students. By providing dedicated reading time, establishing meaningful relationships, offering engaging reading materials, and utilizing localized resources, teachers can meet the diverse needs of their students, foster a love for reading, and enhance their overall comprehension skills. They acknowledged the significance of adapting teaching methods and materials to accommodate the varying abilities and learning styles of their students. By doing so, they aimed to foster deeper engagement and enhance comprehension of

literacy concepts. These strategies were considered valuable in creating an inclusive and optimum learning environment that caters to the individual needs of each student, ultimately promoting their overall learning and academic success.

Theme 2: Resource Utilization and Improvisation

This theme highlights the creative ways in which teachers make use of available resources and find alternative solutions to overcome resource constraints. The following utterances of participants supports this theme:

“Using technology during class activities is of great help to divert the attention of the learners from the lack of school facilities.” (T3) ; *“Educational media are very helpful to sustain the insufficiency of learning materials such as textbooks.” (T5)* ; *“Self-provision of hard copies of reading materials to be used by our learners.” (T6)* ; *“I use my personal money to buy a fan so that it is very conducive to my pupils.” (T10)* ; *“The school requested a repair. We put used tarpaulin so that the rain will not pour inside.” (T15)* ; and *“During SLAC session, together with the other teachers, we discussed and planned out a suitable solution that could address the problem and could help to increase the reading development and reading interest of the learners.” (T16)*

The use of technology during class activities (T3) helps to engage students and divert their attention from the lack of adequate school facilities. Educational media (T5) serve as valuable alternatives to compensate for the insufficiency of learning materials like textbooks. Teachers take the initiative to self-provide hard copies of reading materials (T6) to ensure that their students have access to necessary resources. In some cases, teachers go above and beyond by using personal funds to enhance the learning

environment, such as buying a fan for the comfort of their pupils (T10). To address infrastructure issues, teachers find creative solutions like using tarpaulin to prevent rainwater from entering the classroom (T15). Collaboration among teachers during sessions like SLAC (School Learning Action Cell) enables them to collectively identify and plan suitable solutions to improve reading development and students’ interest in reading (T16). The use of traditional textbooks as the sole learning source can lead to student boredom and hinder their engagement in instructional activities, particularly for those who lack reading interest.

This aligns with the findings of Puspitarini et al. (2019) that students may find it difficult to follow instructional activities when their only option is a textbook. However, Arsyad (2011) supports the use of learning media and other learning technologies, highlighting the benefits of employing interesting and innovative methods to capture students’ attention and motivation. By incorporating learning media, teachers can create a more dynamic learning environment that enhances student understanding and helps them achieve their learning goals. The utilization of technology applications in literacy education has the potential to increase students’ reading skills and enhance reading comprehension (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012). By maximizing the use of technology, educational media, and personal resources, teachers aim to compensate for the lack of learning materials and facilities in their classrooms. Participants demonstrate their commitment to creating an optimal classroom environment for reading comprehension by employing innovative approaches, such as using localized stories and materials, and leveraging resourcefulness and improvisation to provide students with the necessary tools and opportunities for effective learning, thereby addressing challenges and fostering a conducive learning environment.

Theme 3: Parental Involvement and Support

This theme highlights the importance of parental involvement and support in establishing an effective learning environment for reading comprehension. The following participants' utterances provide evidence in support of this theme:

"Talk to parents and seek help to give a solution to the problem." (T2); "Giving them reminders that breakfast and meals are important before going to school." (T9); "To communicate with the parents and have them sign the reading materials that the learners need to read. They have to sign on the reading materials after reading." (T14); and "Having compassion and empathy and supporting the academic risk of the children." (T17).

Participants acknowledge the importance of open communication and collaboration with parents, recognizing them as valuable partners in improving the learning performance of their children. They understand that by actively involving parents in the educational process and seeking their input and support, they can work together to address challenges and create a more conducive learning environment for their students. The study of Cisse, et al (2023) highlights the significance of establishing strong home-school partnerships to promote the holistic development and academic success of the learners. Unfortunately, the poor academic performance of children in schools is often linked to inadequate school-family relationships and a lack of empowerment for both teachers and parents. By strengthening school-family partnerships and empowering both teachers and parents, a more conducive and enriching educational experience can be created for all children. The significance of breakfast and meals before school extends beyond academic performance to students' overall well-being. Participants acknowledge that starting the day with a nutritious meal positively impacts students' energy levels, focus, and

readiness to engage in learning activities. However, they also recognize that factors related to students attending school without meals are often linked to the socioeconomic background of their families. This highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses not only academic support but also socio-economic barriers to ensure all students have access to proper nutrition for optimal learning outcomes. Furthermore, participants stress the need for compassion, empathy, and support to address academic risks faced by the children. Therefore, participants emphasize the crucial role of parents in cultivating their children's reading habits. They recognize the importance of parents in providing nutritious meals, offering encouragement and motivation, and actively collaborating with teachers to enhance students' literacy skills. These strategies highlight the pivotal role of parents in creating an optimal learning environment for reading comprehension and promoting the overall academic success of their children.

CONCLUSIONS

In light of the findings of this study, it is evident that creating an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension is crucial. To address the challenges identified and capitalize on the perceived elements of an effective learning environment, several recommendations can be made. The need for addressing resource limitations and support is essential. Education policymakers and authorities should prioritize providing teachers with adequate resources, such as reading materials, technological tools, and instructional aids, to support effective reading instruction. Additionally, professional development programs and training opportunities should be offered to teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills and knowledge in reading instruction. Another one is improving classroom conditions and infrastructure is vital. Schools

should allocate resources to maintain well-equipped classrooms with comfortable seating arrangements, adequate lighting, and suitable classroom layouts. Access to a variety of reading resources, both print and digital, should be ensured to cater to different learning styles and interests. recognizing the importance of student factors and engagement is crucial. Teachers should employ differentiated instruction strategies to address the diverse needs and abilities of students. They can incorporate interactive and engaging activities, such as group discussions, cooperative learning, and hands-on projects, to promote active participation and student engagement in reading activities. Meanwhile, parental involvement and support should be encouraged and facilitated. Schools can establish effective communication channels with parents and provide them with guidance on how to support their children's reading development at home. Parent workshops and literacy programs can be organized to enhance parents' understanding of the importance of reading and strategies to promote reading comprehension.

In order to create an optimal classroom environment for enhancing pupils' reading comprehension, it is recommended to address resource limitations, improve classroom conditions, consider student factors and engagement, and foster parental involvement and support. By implementing these recommendations, educators and policymakers can work together to ensure that pupils have the necessary tools, resources, and support to develop strong reading skills and critical

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