

## Filipino Learning Support Program: Effects on Reading and Comprehension Skills to Non-Filipino Speakers

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**Abstract** – The increasing number of non-Filipino speaking students struggling with reading and comprehension skills calls for an investigation into the effectiveness of the Learning Support Program as a school intervention, highlighting critical areas for instructional improvement. Employing a Posttest Non-equivalent Group pre-experimental research design to 34 students in Learning Support Program using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), the study reveals that the level of the oral reading of the majority of students at various levels are still at the frustration level with (LSP-Level 0 is 83.33 %, LSP-Level 1 is 40%, and LSP-Level 2 is 83.33 %) in word recognition, (LSP-Level 0 is 58.33 %, LSP-Level 1 is 20%, and LSP-Level 2 is 16.67 %), (LSP-Level 0 is 91.67 %, LSP-Level 1 is 60%, and LSP-Level 2 is 75 %) in reading speed, and (LSP-Level 0 is 58.33 %, LSP-Level 1 is 30%, and LSP-Level 2 is 83.33 %) in comprehension. Additionally, the focused group discussion reveals that LSP helps them primarily with vocabulary building as the highlight, and the lack of differentiated instructional materials for the students as the lowlights of the LSP. Findings revealed that the Learning Support Program in Filipino is not effective in developing oral reading and comprehension among non-Filipino speaking students. The findings emphasize the need for instructional support across levels through comprehensive reading intervention.

**Keywords** – Learning Support Program, Phil-Iri, oral reading, effectiveness

### Introduction

In 2022, around 22, 247 international students chose the Philippines as their study destination (PIE News, 2023). These foreign and non-Filipino-speaking students are not exempted from the Philippine basic education mandate to take Filipino as a subject in all elementary schools, public and private (Pres. Laurel's E.O. No. 10 s. 1943). However, the biggest challenge in teaching Filipino language to foreign students is the lack, if not the absence, of the three basic skills in language proficiency: word recognition (or fluency), reading comprehension, and reading speed. In the hopes of facilitating the development of these skills, Filipino teachers in many private schools enroll them in the Filipino Learning Support Program or LSP where they are assessed and grouped based on the results of the initial assessment. This paper aims to assess the effectiveness of LSP in developing the reading and comprehension skills of these foreign students in a grade school department of a private school in Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines.

Reading serves as the cornerstone of any academic learning. This is the perspective shared by the former Secretary of the Department of Education, Armin Luistro, emphasizing the importance of assessing

students' reading skills. Luistro (2012) noted that failure to master basic reading skills at the outset can lead to constant struggles in other disciplines, hindering students from becoming literate and productive individuals. According to Liu (2016), having an extensive vocabulary plays a crucial role in developing comprehension. However, developing these skills is a complex process and requires careful attention to cognitive skills (Oakhil, et al, 2015; Rayner & Reichle, 2010). On average, no less than 5 percent of private grade school students are foreigners, and they lack sufficient proficiency in the Filipino language for their grade level.

For over 30 years, the SRV model or Simple View of Reading by Gough and Tunmer (1986) has been the basis for understanding the key factors in reading development, specifically decoding reading and language comprehension (Catts, 2018). The significance of these factors has been demonstrated in second language acquisition (Verhoeven & Van Leeuwen, 2012) and among dual-language users (Bonifacci & Tobia, 2017), such as students studying Filipino at Sacred Heart School-Ateneo de Cebu. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) aimed to assess students' reading proficiency through

the "Every Child A Reader Program" using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Learning Support Program in Filipino in developing reading skills among non-Filipino speaking students at SHS-AdC using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as a measure. Specifically, the study will measure its effectiveness in (a) oral reading, encompassing word recognition, comprehension, and reading speed. The study will also examine the strengths and challenges of the program according to implementing teachers and the students themselves. As teachers in the 21st century, the researcher believed in the importance of aligning teaching methods to the characteristics and needs of the learners. Assessing the effectiveness of the said program would unveil the actual progress of students in reading and comprehension skills in the Filipino language. Moreover, the research findings will provide insightful guidance on how to enhance the program for other educators teaching special Filipino classes in the Philippines. Ultimately, the main purpose of this research is not just to highlight the student's level of reading and comprehension skills but, more importantly, to enhance ongoing practice and hopefully provide assistance to educators in the field.

**Methods and Materials**

**Research Design**

This research will utilize a Posttest Non-equivalent Group pre-experimental research design in which a single group will take a posttest after being exposed to the intervention (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Collection of qualitative data will also be done through interview questions in the Focus Group Discussion (Nyumba, T.O., et al, 2018).

**Participants**

This study involved 34 Grade School Learners of Sacred Heart School- Ateneo de Cebu, using complete enumeration sampling. These students are (1) enrolled in the Learning Support Program in Filipino. These students are non-Filipino citizens or Filipinos who were born and raised in another country and/or do not have a Filipino language subject in their previous grade level. Also, these students are from the recommendation of the regular Filipino teacher in the grade level; (2) they will stay in school for the school year 2023-2024. The implementation of the Learning

Support Program in Filipino includes the following interventions a). Content topics are designed to suit the level of language capacity of the learners; b). Learning is through intensive small-group or one-on-one guided instruction and follow-up with a regular teacher.

**Instrument**

The assessment for oral reading involved the Phil-IRI Oral Reading Test based on the Phil-IRI Manual and User's Guidelines. The criteria for Grade were as follows:

Reading Level	Word Recognition	Comprehension
<i>Independent</i>	97-100%	80-100 %
<i>Instructional</i>	90-96 %	59-79 %
<i>Frustration</i>	89%-below	58 %- below

**Table 1. Criteria for Word Recognition and Comprehension**

To determine the overall level of student reading proficiency in oral reading, the following standards were utilized:

**Table 2. Criteria for Reading Speed**

Reading Speed	
Fast Reader	120 WPM and above
Average Reader	91-119 WPM
Slow Reader	90 WPM and below

**Table 3. Criteria for Overall Level for Oral Reding**

Word Recognition	Comprehension	Reading Level
Independent	Independent	<i>Independent</i>
Independent	Instructional	<i>Instructional</i>
Independent	Frustration	<i>Frustration</i>
Instructional	Independent	<i>Independent</i>
Instructional	Instructional	<i>Instructional</i>
Instructional	Frustration	<i>Frustration</i>
Frustration	Frustration	<i>Frustration</i>
Non-Reader	Listening Capacity	<i>Non-Reader</i>

**Procedure**

Students are assessed using the Phil-IRI in Oral Reading. In Oral Reading, the aim is to determine each student's ability or deficiency in reading or recognizing words and the level of their comprehension. The

marking of miscues in oral reading can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4A. Marking of Miscues in Oral Reading**

Types of Miscues	Marking the Miscue	Example	Scoring
Mispronunciation	Underline the text and write the phonetic spelling above it.	<u>slid</u> slide	Count as 1 error every mispronunciation. (The dialectal variation should not be counted as an error).
Omission	Circle the omitted unit of a language.	The <u>hug</u> elephant	Count as one error a word or a phrase omitted.
Substitution	Underline the text and write the substituted word above it.	<u>monky</u> monkey	Count as one error every substitution.
Insertion	Use a caret to show where the word/s was inserted and write the word above the caret.	<u>owly</u> the flowers in the vase	Count a word or a phrase inserted as one error.
Repetition	Underline the portion of the text that was repeated.	They found it <u>in the</u>	Count as one error every word or phrase repeated.
Transposition	Use a transpositional symbol over and under the letters or words transposed.	The girl <u>is</u> pretty	Count as one error every transposition made.
Reversal	Write the word/nonword above the correct word.	<u>ad</u> bad	Count as one error every reversal made.
Self-Correction	Write S above the word that was self-corrected.	S hasn't	Don't count self-correction as an error.

**Table 4B. Summary of Miscues in Oral Reading**

	Types of Miscues (Uri ng Mali)	Number of Miscues (Bilang ng Saltang mali ang basa)
1	Mispronunciation (Maling Bigkas)	
2	Omission (Pagkakaltas)	
3	Substitution (Pagpapalit)	
4	Insertion (Pagsisingit)	
5	Repetition (Pag-uulit)	
6	Transposition (Pagpapalit ng lugar)	
7	Reversal (Paglilipat)	
	<b>Total Miscues (Kabuuan)</b>	
	<b>Number of Words in the Passage</b>	
	<b>Oral Reading Score</b>	
	<b>Reading Level (Antas ng Pagbasa)</b>	

The method of obtaining the percentage in three categories: word recognition, comprehension, and reading speed, can be found in Table 5.

**Table 5. Percentage Computation for Word Recognition, Comprehension, and Reading Speed**

A. Computing the Oral Reading Score per Passage

$$\text{Oral Reading Score: } \frac{\text{the number of words} - \text{number of miscues} \times 100}{\text{number of words}}$$

B. Recording the Speed and Rate in Oral Reading

$$\text{Reading Speed: } \frac{\text{the number of words read} \times 60}{\text{number of words}}$$

C. Computing the Student's Comprehension of the Passage

$$\text{Reading Speed: } \frac{\text{the number of correct answers}}{\text{number of questions}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of comprehension}$$

D. Table of Percentage for Comprehension Scores

**Data Treatment**

Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the students' performances in the Phil-IRI Oral Reading Test based on the Phil-IRI Manual. The quantitative data from the oral reading test will be analyzed through tabulation. The summary of the students' results at each level in their word recognition, comprehension, and reading speed will be obtained using the Phil-IRI standards. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and coding were also utilized to gather qualitative responses from the implementing teachers and students participating in the program.

**Ethical Consideration**

Prior to the conduct of study, an endorsement and approval from the Sacred Heart School-Ateneo de Cebu grade school principal's office and institutional research council will be sought, respectively. And since the study involves minor participants (age below 18), a consent form explaining the purpose of study, procedure, risks assessment, benefits, duration of participation, statement of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and termination of participation will also be sought both from the participants and their parents and guardians. In accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all data will be gathered, analyzed, kept, and disposed of with utmost confidentiality.

**Results & Discussion**

No. of Items	Score in Comprehension	%	No. of Items	Score in Comprehension	%
5	5	100	6	6	100
	4	80		5	83
	3	60		4	67
	2	40		3	50
	1	20		2	33
			1	17	
No. of Items	Score in Comprehension	%	No. of Items	Score in Comprehension	%
7	7	100	8	8	100
	6	86		7	88
	5	71		6	75
	4	57		5	63
	3	43		4	50
	2	29		3	38
	1	14		2	25
			1	13	

**Table 1. Results for Word Recognition and Comprehension**

Reading always starts with recognition of the words, Anderson (2000). In teaching a learner how to read, translating and deciphering skills must be emphasized. It requires repetition of basic words to encourage practice then the gradual building of vocabulary until it is used in a sentence. As mentioned by Miller as cited by Alonzo (2005), comprehension involves both initially constructing meaning and continually reconstructing that meaning to get more information or as it changes the reader’s perspective. It is not one time grasping the knowledge but a continuous process of recognizing, interpreting, and decoding the words until it reach the target level of comprehension.

**Table 1.A Results for Word Recognition**

<b>Level of Assessment</b>	<b>LSP Level 0</b>	<b>LSP Level 1</b>	<b>LSP Level 2</b>
<b>Independent</b>	8.33%	20%	8.33 %
<b>Instructional</b>	33.33%	60%	75 %
<b>Frustration</b>	58.33%	20%	16.67 %

Table 1. A shows the distribution of pupils beyond the three levels of assessment (Independent, Instructional, and Frustration) varies extensively across the three LSP levels in terms of word recognition.

The majority of students (58.33%) at LSP level 0, were assessed to be at the Frustration level, implying significant obstacles in recognizing Filipino words in the passage. This is concerning, as it proposes that a valuable proportion of pupils at the entry point of LSP are struggling with essential reading skills. On the contrary, only 8.33% of pupils at this level were assessed to be Independent, displaying the demand for targeted interventions to guide these pupils. The development of reading skills from the beginning stage of learning to read to the advanced stage where reading is an essential tool for obtaining comprehension and information. Knowing the proficiency and capabilities essential for pupils to acquire skills in reading varies from those required to understand complex texts. Thus, educators must use reading interventions to help pupils in recognizing the words (Jean Chall, 1996; Chall & Jacobs, 1983; Cantago et. al., 2024; Colinares & Derasin, 2023). In FGD, one pupil mentioned, *“My teacher uses Talasalitaan as an intervention to make us understand the words we are about to read. It helps sometimes, especially with easy Filipino words but I find it hard to understand because*

*I am not familiar with other Filipino words”*. It only proves that there’s a great need to make more interventions that target the needs of LSP 0 pupils.

Moving to LSP Levels 1 and 2, there is a remarkable shift toward the Instructional level, with 60% (level 1) and 75% (level 2) of pupils needing guidance and assistance in recognizing Filipino words. This can tell that the LSP has been victorious in targeted support, qualifying a significant proportion of pupils to recognize Filipino words with guidance. In the Philippines, the DepEd's K-12 Filipino Language Curriculum Guides Provide comprehensive frameworks for teaching Filipino language and literacy abilities that involve word recognition and progress on vocabulary. Teachers can use the provided guide to assist pupils in word recognition. While progress can be seen from LSP level 0, the fact that only 20% (level 1) and 8.33% (level 2) of pupils have attained Independent status, the program still faces a dispute with promoting independence in reading skills at this level. During the FGD, pupils expressed, *“I need my teacher to translate the words in English so I can understand”*, and *“During the reading assessment, I am just guessing the meaning of the word because I can’t understand the text”*. Brown et al. (2018), discovered that pupils habitually ask teachers for assistance most especially when faced with challenging texts. Likewise, Lee (2019) observed that pupils mostly rely on teachers' cues and prompts in recognizing unfamiliar words, showing dependency on external support and sacrificing the development of independent word recognition strategies. Further improvements to the program may be needed to support pupils in complete independence in word recognition.

The program’s efficacy in showing a good trend and reducing the proportion of pupils at the frustration level, cannot hide the fact that a sizable portion of pupils are still at the Instructional level. It only highlights the dependency of pupils on reading skills and is an ongoing challenge for the teachers handling LSP Filipino.

**Table 1.B Results for Comprehension**

<b>Level of Assessment</b>	<b>LSP Level 0</b>	<b>LSP Level 1</b>	<b>LSP Level 2</b>
<b>Independent</b>	8.33%	40%	0 %
<b>Instructional</b>	33.33%	30%	16.67 %
<b>Frustration</b>	58.33%	30%	83.33 %

Table 1. B showcases the varying degrees of comprehension results across different levels 0-2. In levels 0-2, clearly shown a remarkable proportion of pupils under frustration, expressing difficulty in understanding the text. It is to be noted that these pupils' first language is not Filipino, mostly they are Foreign pupils. Second language (L2) as Ellis (1997) mentioned, is learning another language aside from their mother tongue which foreign ones find hard to understand most especially the younger ones. An LSP teacher mentioned in FGD, *"The pupils find it hard to understand the text knowing that in their sentence making there's a pattern given to them. Moreover, they are just memorizing the pattern of a sentence to understand the meaning. That is why when they read texts they find it hard to understand them"*. It was also mentioned that *"some pupils under LSP Filipino have difficulty in understanding English words"* all the more that they find it challenging to understand the Filipino language.

There's also a need for targeted support to surpass Independence knowing a substantial number of pupils are at Instructional. Personalized reading interventions will help in aiding pupils' comprehension. Some studies emphasize the efficacy of contextual learning in aiding the pupils to comprehend and achieve vocabulary acquisition. Contextualized stories, real-life situations, and vocabulary-building activities will greatly help in reinforcing meanings and usage to fully reach the comprehension level of pupils Smith, (2018); Johnson et al., (2019). Chen & Chang, (2017); Wang & Wu, (2019) added that encouraging our learners to connect the new vocabulary words to their existing knowledge will clear the way for retention and recall, making it easy to comprehend. Although they are researchers who show skepticism about verifiable proof that supports the efficacy of personalized reading interventions Dynarski et al., (2018). Therrien, et.al., (2006) expressed that various uses of the intervention resulted in significant improvements in fluency outcomes, but there was no significant difference in comprehension outcomes.

Noticeably, a lesser but still valuable percentage of pupils reach the level of Independent, featuring the efficacy of LSP Filipino but for a few learners only. More advanced reading ability is needed to further strengthen the independence of pupils in terms of comprehension. With the advent of time where digital

technology is everywhere, advanced reading abilities can extend to researching and evaluating the information online Leu et al., (2013). Wolf, (2007) added, that continuous learning is achieved if one will use the advantages of digital technology in getting their needs to fully comprehend what they need to learn. However, digital technology as a tool for advanced reading abilities can have negative effects. It can solely let pupils depend on using translation and searching for the meaning of the words instead of focusing on the context itself Gutiérrez & Rogoff, (2003).

The complexities of a second language and the necessity for tailored assistance to bolster learners' reading proficiency and overall comprehension level are highlighted. This emphasizes the significance of personalized interventions, advanced reading abilities, and contextual learning in enhancing comprehension for LSP pupils.

**Table 2. Results for Reading Speed**

<b>Level of Assessment</b>	<b>LSP Level 0</b>	<b>LSP Level 1</b>	<b>LSP Level 2</b>
<b>Fast Reader</b>	0%	10 %	0 %
<b>Average Reader</b>	8.33 %	30 %	25 %
<b>Slow Reader</b>	91.67 %	60 %	75 %

The data presented in the table provides a clear insight into the reading speed of the students at different levels. It clearly shows that across various levels, the majority of the students fall into the "Slow Reader" category. It implies that a significant portion of the overall student population enrolled in the Learning Support Program relatively takes a longer time to read the passage given to them. On the other hand, a few of the students, still across levels, are at moderate reading speed. Notably, there is a solitary "Fast Reader" identified in the LSP-Level 1, who is also the same student identified as "independent" in the overall oral reading level.

Based on the assessment of students' reading speeds concerning their comprehension levels, it can be observed that the majority of slow readers also have a small percentage of comprehension. This result aligns with the study conducted by Baldi, & Mejia (2023), which found that comprehension was dependent on reading speed, with slower readers exhibiting poorer comprehension. However, this relationship is not always consistent, as other research has shown that

there is no significant relationship when measuring reading speed and comprehension of the same text (Wallot, 2014).

When reading aloud, most of the miscues that students make in reading passages, which affect their reading speed, are "maling bigkas" or mispronunciation, and "pag-uulit" or repetition of words. In the focus group discussion from the teachers' perspective, one teacher highlighted that "some of the students have a hard time when it comes to the correct pronunciation of words, given their cultural diversity. For example, Korean students have a different way of pronouncing words." This is further supported by an LSP student who mentioned, "In our language, we have a different alphabet, and Filipino also has a different alphabet, which makes it more difficult for us to read and pronounce words."

This, based on the results of word recognition, comprehension, and the summary of the miscues, it can be best interpreted that the miscues committed by the students have a bearing on their overall reading speed.

**Table 3: Results for Overall Level for Oral Reading**

Table 3 revealed the overall level of student reading proficiency in oral reading. It uses predetermined criteria in identifying the reading level of each student per passage.

Level of Assessment	LSP Level 0	LSP Level 1	LSP Level 2
<b>Fast Reader</b>	0%	10 %	0 %
<b>Average Reader</b>	16.67%	50 %	16.67 %
<b>Slow Reader</b>	83.33 %	40 %	83.33 %

The data from Table 3 illustrates a diverse range of reading levels among the participants, categorized into three main levels: Instructional, Frustration, and Independent. These levels provide insights into the participants' abilities and challenges in oral reading comprehension. Participants falling under the Instructional level in the Reading Level column demonstrate a certain degree of proficiency in both word recognition and comprehension. This suggests that they possess the necessary skills to engage with and understand the text at an instructional level. On the other hand, participants categorized under the Frustration level exhibit difficulties in either word recognition, comprehension, or both. This indicates

challenges in processing and understanding the text, leading to frustration during the reading process. Notably, a few participants are classified under the Independent level, indicating a high level of proficiency in both word recognition and comprehension. These individuals can read and comprehend text independently, showcasing advanced reading skills.

According to the evaluation conducted by Scholastic Incorporated (2017), as cited in the Philippine Star (2017), 70% of the nation's learners are incapable of reading within the expected proficiency level. One cause of this is a mismatch between the reader's ability and the level of reading materials that students are required to read. In the focus group discussion (FGD), one of the LSP teachers mentioned, "LSP is a program that helps those non-Filipino speakers; however, the program is not focused on reading, especially since there are no instructional materials like reading materials that are specifically tailored to the students' needs." To improve students' reading proficiency levels, the availability of sufficient reading materials is highly necessary (Morelos, 2021). In a study conducted by Chavez et al. (2023), English-speaking learners often struggle with understanding and speaking the language, particularly with pronunciation, grammar structures, and vocabulary. This is also the expectation of the LSP teachers handling non-Filipino speakers; thus, the focus of the program is more on vocabulary building integrated with an understanding of Filipino grammar structures. In the FGD from the students' point of view, one student mentioned, "LSP is really a big help, especially in understanding Filipino words through talasalitaan." Though students aren't exposed to intensive reading in the program, they still see the program as a significant aid in learning Filipino.

As mentioned in DepEd Memorandum No. 173 s. 2019 "Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa," when children know and understand the meaning of a word, they are more likely to read it and comprehend it within a text. However, this observation contrasts with the researcher's findings regarding student behavior while reading, as indicated by the observation checklist adapted from Gray Oral Reading Behavior. While students may be capable of reading words, particularly at Level-2 where many are at the Instructional Level, they struggle to comprehend words when used in sentences and situations within

the text. One contributing factor to this is the limited exposure to reading passages and insufficient reading materials. The program's focus leans more towards vocabulary building rather than reading comprehension. Despite the low proficiency levels in reading, students in the program still perceive the Learning Support Program as highly beneficial due to the support it provides despite its limitations.

### Conclusion

The findings revealed that the Learning Support Program in Filipino is not effective in developing oral reading and comprehension among non-Filipino speaking students. The findings emphasize the need for instructional support across levels through comprehensive reading intervention.

### Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions provided, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) Teachers shall develop reading interventions or specialized instruction according to the individual needs of the learners. (2) Strengthen the use of passages to aid learners in their comprehension. (3) Provide instructional materials, specifically reading materials tailored to the needs of the students. (4) Regularly monitor students' progress across levels in oral reading. (5) Benchmark best practices from other schools that offer Learning Support Programs in Filipino.

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