

Article Identifier: <https://identifier.visnav.in/1.0002/ijabs-22a-05003/>

Reading comprehension predicaments of first year students in selected colleges of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

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Received on: 5 October 2021

Published on: 28 November 2021

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the reading comprehension predicaments and possible solutions of 133 first year students in selected colleges of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology which used quantitative-qualitative method of research. The results indicated that using dictionaries when coming across new words in the English reading revealed as the predicament in the factor language difficulties; the students are not motivated to read if the reading texts are non-fiction revealed in the factor motivation to read; the students cannot comprehend the texts when someone is reading the texts for them revealed in learning styles. The study also found that there was a significant relationship between sex and language difficulties. There was a significant difference in the learning styles based on college or department. The possible solutions to overcome reading comprehension predicaments were to rest for a while then read again; look the meaning in the dictionary and one may be a wide reader.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Predicaments, Language Difficulties, Motivation, Learning Styles

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the key for an individual's mind to enter into a world of wonderful experience. It sheds ignorance, enables one to understand the

world and becomes the master of one's fate. It lights up imaginations, gives strength to overcome the most difficult task and provides marvellous opportunities [1].

Reading is indeed a very important part of our daily lives. It is a key to enter a new world [2]. It can make or break you. It can activate your imagination. You can be a superhero or heroine; you can be a prince or princess and you can even travel into different places even if you are just sitting in one place. Recurrently, that is not always the case. Enjoyable reading may be hindered by these predicaments namely: language difficulties, motivation to read, learning styles (in reading) [3].

Language difficulties can be a predicament to those readers who have a lack of vocabulary or those who have problems in grammar, semantics and other aspects of language [4]. What about motivation? These are the things that encourage students to read. Learning styles in reading has something to do about a reader's way or manner while reading. Examples of these are those activities in which a reader is involved in any kinesthetic activities while reading [5].

First year life in college is said to be the adjusting period because students still have hangovers from their high school life. Thus, first year students of tertiary level will be taken as respondents of the study. One recent study revealed that there is a mixed and wide variation of first year's reading level when they first enter the university [6]. According to Ntereke and Ramoroka (2017) in their study *Reading Competency of First-year Undergraduate Students* that a significant number of first-year entrants are inadequately prepared for university reading and these students had serious reading problems [7]. The

results revealed that the first year had difficulties in high-level reading skills.

Despite its obvious advantages, many children suffer from reading difficulties. These difficulties may affect the reading comprehension of the students. These are called the "reading predicaments." This study is designed to identify the different reading predicaments in terms of comprehension and give possible solutions to solve the problems determined by the researchers.

This study aimed to determine the predicaments in reading comprehension of students in selected colleges of NEUST. Specifically, it tried to answer the following questions (a) How may the profile of the respondents be described in terms of their age, sex, and college or department? (b) How may the reading comprehension predicaments be described in terms of language difficulties, motivation to read; and learning styles (in reading)? (c) Is there a significant relationship between respondents' profile and the factors that affect the reading comprehension predicament? (d) Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension predicaments of the respondents based on their college or department?

2. METHOD AND MATERIAL

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized the quantitative-qualitative method of research. This study applied stratified random sampling and a survey questionnaire

which has three (3) factors, namely: language difficulties, motivation to read, learning styles.

2.2. Respondents of the Study

There were 133 first year students of selected colleges in NEUST, namely College of Architecture (COA), College of Criminology (COC), College of Education (COED), College of Engineering (COE) and College of Nursing (CON), during the 1st semester, Academic Year 2019-2020 who served as respondents of the study.

2.3. Data analysis

The data was collected from the questionnaire and survey and all the data was compiled in a systematic way.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first problem of this study focused on the description of the profile of the respondents. The tables 1, 2 and 3 below present the profile of the selected first year students of NEUST.

3.1. Profile of the Respondents

The profile of the respondents was tabulated and computed according to the following: age, sex, and college or department.

It can be seen from the table 1 that the majority of the respondents are 20 years old and above. The study consists of 133 students who are 18-20 years old and above. Of these, 55.64% are 20 years old. Another 33.83% of respondents were of age 19 years old. The 14 youngest respondents or 10.53% are 18 years old.

From table 2 it can be inferred that female respondents are higher in number than male. Out of 133 respondents, 50.38% were female and 49.62% were male.

The results are supported by the study of Hillman (2018) which found out that in medical and education courses, females dominate males [8].

Table 3 presents the data gathered in terms of the College or Department of the respondents. It can be inferred from the table that the majority of the respondents are from Colleges of Education followed by College of Engineering. The sample of each college taken from its population is the reason why there is a difference in the number of respondents per course. The researchers apply the frequency

Age	f	Percentage
18	14	10.53%
19	45	33.83%
20 and above	74	55.64%
Total	133	100%

Sex	F	Percentage
Male	66	49.62%
Female	67	50.38%
Total	133	100%

College	f	Percentage
College of Architecture	13	9.77%
College of Criminology	33	24.81%
College of Education	43	32.33%
College of Engineering	34	25.56%
College of Nursing	10	7.52%
Total	133	100%

Table 4: Language Difficulties of the Respondents

Language Difficulties	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
I grasp the main idea from the text of the material while reading English.	3.76	High	4
I turn to dictionaries when coming across new words in English reading.	4.1	High	1
I do not bother with the grammatical structure of the sentences while reading English.	3.32	Moderate	14
I read the main idea of the whole passage from its title or subtitles.	3.86	High	2
I guess the meanings of new words by analyzing their roots or prefixes or suffixes.	3.74	High	5
I pay attention to the implied meaning of the reading material.	3.69	High	7
When I read English articles, I skip the words that are new to me.	2.89	Moderate	15
I pause and analyze the structure of sentences when reading in English.	3.64	High	9
I try to understand complicated sentences by analyzing their structure.	3.72	High	6
I grasp the gist of the reading material through quickly reading the first and the last paragraph.	3.37	Moderate	13
I guess the meaning of new words in context when reading in English.	3.42	High	11
I try to interpret the writer's intention while reading in English.	3.56	High	10
I overlook sentences with complicated structures.	3.39	Moderate	12
I use simple words to replace difficult ones in sentence understanding.	3.86	High	2
I try to grasp the general idea of a sentence before reading the next sentence.	3.68	High	8
General Weighted Mean	3.60	High	

and percentage distribution for the population wherein it determines the number of respondents corresponding to particular colleges against the total number of respondents. Out of 133 respondents, 32.33% are from the College of Education (COED), 25.56% are from College of Engineering (COE), 24.81% are from College of Criminology (COC) and 9.77% are from College of Architecture (COA). There were only 7.52% respondents who were from College of Nursing (CON).

3.2. Reading Comprehension Predicaments

The description of the reading comprehension predicaments such as the language difficulties, motivation, and learning styles are well discussed.

The table 4 states that, students who turn to dictionaries when coming across new words in the English reading ranked as the highest in language difficulties with a weighted mean of 4.1 which was verbally interpreted as "High." On the other hand, students while reading English articles, skips the new words ranked as the lowest language of the text with a weighted

Table 5: The predicaments on motivation of the respondents

Motivation to Read	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
I read when the book's appearance is attractive.	3.92	High	5
I like reading non-fiction.	3.41	High	20
I like reading fiction.	3.65	High	11
I like reading fantasy stories.	3.57	High	16
I like reading poems.	3.55	High	18
I like reading novels.	3.63	High	13
I like reading short stories.	3.99	High	2
I read because it brings me to a different world.	3.91	High	6
I read to familiarize myself with different cultures.	3.83	High	7
I read because it gives me a lot of information.	4.21	Very High	1
I only read stories and other passages because it is required.	3.43	High	19
I read because it has a positive effect on my proficiency in English.	3.93	High	4
I prefer reading text materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and journals, etc.	3.58	High	15
I prefer reading text-based materials such as e-books, iPad and Wattpad on a computer.	3.56	High	17
I often look for extra books or articles to read about something which interests me.	3.62	High	14
I read because it relieves me from problems.	3.66	High	10
I see reading books and other stories as a good and interesting hobby.	3.8	High	8
Encountering unfamiliar words strive me to read even more.	3.72	High	9
I read to be entertained.	3.95	High	3
Reading is exciting, thus, I always read.	3.64	High	12
General Weighted Mean	3.73	High	

mean of 2.89 which is verbally interpreted as "Low."

The data imply that students use a dictionary as an aid in understanding unfamiliar words because misapprehending one word might change the understanding of the whole text. This is supported by the study of Neubach and Cohen (2012) which claimed that a dictionary is an accepted instructional aid in foreign language teaching. Its potential as an aid to learning is usually not questioned—both learners and teachers expect the dictionary to solve problems

created by unfamiliar vocabulary items that present themselves during the reading process [9]. Students' search for words in the dictionary are based on the expectation that they will be able to find meanings without too much difficulty and that ideally these meanings will be accompanied by helpful examples of the word used in context. It indicates that dictionaries have proven to be powerful tools for enhancing vocabulary acquisition while reading and improving reading comprehension [10].

Table 6: The predicaments on learning styles of the respondents

Learning Styles	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
When I read, I highlight key information in my texts.	3.89	High	3
I work in a group where we can discuss the texts we have read.	3.36	Moderate	7
I use colored pens and highlighters to focus on key ideas.	3.86	High	4
I write out key concepts and important ideas.	4	High	2
I understand the texts more when I am involved in any movement activity (reading while walking, lying on the bed, etc.)	3.59	High	6
I read aloud.	3.07	Moderate	9
I read silently.	3.8	High	5
I want someone to read the texts for me rather than read it by myself.	2.51	Low	10
I prefer reading texts by myself.	4.01	High	1
I prefer reading books while eating.	3.15	Moderate	8
General Weighted Mean	3.52	High	

Table 5 states that the students read because it gives them a lot of information ranked as the highest motivation with a weighted mean of 4.21 which is verbally interpreted as "Very High." On the other hand, students who like reading non-fiction ranked as the lowest motivation with a weighted mean of 3.41 which was verbally interpreted as "High."

Reading books on varied subjects imparts information and increases the depth about the subject as well. It implies that students read because reading offers an opportunity to learn and it gives a lot of information crucial for their studies and daily living. According to Student 7, *"Reading helps a lot to build up your mind."*

Meanwhile, students do not like reading non-fiction although non-fictions texts are very informative because according to Bauerlein (2010), educators say non-fiction is more

difficult than fiction for students to comprehend [11]. Non-fiction requires more factual knowledge, beyond fiction's simple truths of love, hate, passion and remorse. Thus, even though non-fiction is informative it is still difficult to comprehend [11].

Table 6 shows that the students prefer reading texts by themselves ranked as the highest learning styles with a weighted mean of 4.01 which is verbally interpreted as "High." On the other hand, students want someone to read the texts for them rather than to read it by themselves, ranked as the lowest learning styles with a weighted mean of 2.51 which is verbally interpreted as "Low."

This means that students prefer reading by themselves due to the reasons that there are a lot of benefits of reading and studying on your own such as fewer distractions, control over

Table 7: The findings of reading comprehension predicaments

Reading Comprehension Predicaments Factors	Results of Reading Comprehension Predicaments	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Language Difficulties	I turn to dictionaries when coming across new words in English reading.	4.1	High
Motivation to Read	I like reading non-fiction.	3.41	High
Learning Style	I want someone to read the texts for me rather than read it by myself.	2.51	Low
	General Weighted Mean	3.34	

reading environment, and control over reading schedules [12]. Consequently, students who choose to read by themselves can completely focus on the reading materials. When students read by themselves, they are able to plan a reading schedule that works best for them and take pauses whenever they want that are convenient to them while reading. When students read in a group, the priority is finding time that is suitable for everyone, not finding a time that is most effective reading time for an individual. Reading by themselves allows them to have freedom to select when they want to read and for how long.

As you gleaned at the table, there are six (6) reading comprehension predicaments for this study (table 7). First, most of the students turn to dictionaries when coming across new words in the English reading ranked as the predicament under language difficulties with a weighted mean of 4.1 and verbally interpreted as “High.” Next, most of the students do not like to read non-fiction ranked as the predicament under motivation factor with a weighted mean of 3.41 and verbally interpreted as “High.” Moreover, most of the students do not want someone to read the texts for them, rather than to read it by them, ranked as the predicament

under learning styles with a weighted mean of 2.51 and verbally interpreted as “Low.”

Furthermore, most of the students feel sleepy when they read ranked as the predicament under physiological factors with a weighted mean of 3.15 and verbally interpreted as “Moderate.” Also, most of the students do not understand the text when they are angry, ranked as the predicament under psychological factors with a weighted mean of 2.35 and verbally interpreted as “Low.” Lastly, most of the students cannot read and comprehend a text while someone is talking to them and cannot read when their surroundings are noisy, ranked as the predicament under environmental factors with a weighted mean of 2.55 and verbally interpreted as “Low.”

3.3. Significant Relationship between Respondents’ Profile and the Factors

The third problem of this study focused on the significant relationship between respondents’ profile and the factors that affect the reading comprehension of the first-year students. The table below shows the data analysis to determine if there is an existing relationship between the student-respondents profile such as age and sex to the identified reading

Table 8: The findings of reading comprehension predicaments

			Age	Sex
	Spearman's Rho	Language Difficulties	Correlation Coefficient	-0.091
Sig. (2-tailed)			0.297	0.025
N			133	133
Motivation		Correlation Coefficient	-.182*	-0.02
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.036	0.802
		N	133	133
Learning Styles		Correlation Coefficient	0.031	-0.11
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.726	0.207
		N	133	133
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.643	0.264
		N	133	133

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

predicaments such as language difficulties, motivation, learning styles, physiological factors, psychological factors, and environmental factors. Spearman's Rho was used as a statistical tool with a 5% level of significance.

It can be inferred in the table 8 that there is a significant relationship between Sex and Language Difficulties since the p-value was less than .05 or $p = .025$ and Age is found to be significantly correlated to Motivation to Read since the p-value is less .05 or $p = .036$. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated "There is no significant relationship between the profile of the students and the factors of reading predicaments" is rejected, meaning the negative correlations in statistical analysis indicate that male respondents have high language difficulties as compare to females and younger respondents have higher motivation to read as compare to older respondents.

However, no significant relationship was found among sex and motivation, learning styles, physiological factors, psychological factors, and environmental factors. Also, no significant relationship was found among age and language

of the text, learning styles, physiological factors, psychological factors, and environmental factors since their p-values were greater than 0.05.

Significant Difference in Reading Comprehension Predicaments of First year Students based on their College or Department. The fourth problem of this study focused on the significant difference in reading comprehension predicaments of first year students based on college or department they are enrolled in. The table below shows the analysis to determine if there was a significant difference in reading comprehension predicaments of the first-year students based on college or department. Kruskal Wallis Test was used to statistically analyse the data using a 5% level of significance.

It can be inferred in the table 9 that the p-value of learning styles was less than 0.05 or $p = 0.018$, therefore, the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference in reading comprehension predicaments of the first-year students based on their college or department" is rejected, meaning, the learning styles of the first year students of different colleges or departments do significantly differ.

Since, the findings have significant differences in learning styles of first year students based on their college or department; this implies that first year students from various colleges or departments vary in terms of their learning styles when reading. Learning styles depend on the nature of the learning material, since the learning material differs on the courses of the students; therefore, their learning styles vary. Also, students' learning experiences form their learning styles which in turn affect their learning [13].

Meanwhile, the results also indicated that there is no significant difference in the remaining factors such as language difficulties, motivation to read, physiological factors, psychological factors and environmental factors based on college or department since the p-values were greater than 0.05. Thus, college or department is not a factor in those areas of reading comprehension predicaments.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings derived from this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

Majority of the respondents were 20 years old and above, they are the students who were not able to go to college right after they graduated from high school. Also, there are more females than males because skilled careers traditionally chosen by women and males tend to be less interested and less focused on school work, leading to stop from study. Most of them were from College of Education and these education students advocate to impart knowledge and as future teachers they have a higher chance to

solve the reading comprehension predicaments that exist among their students and help to improve their reading comprehension.

The identified predicaments under Language Difficulties was "students turn to dictionary when coming across new words because they lack of vocabulary knowledge", while for Motivation to Read was "students are not motivated to read if the reading texts are non-fiction", for Learning Styles was "students cannot comprehend the texts when someone is reading the texts for them.

Males have higher level of language difficulties as compared to females which resulted in females comprehending the English texts more easily than males. Also, younger readers had higher motivation to read than the older ones. Readers lose interest in reading as they get older because they are confronted with text they must read and have less option to replace a book they are not enjoying with something else.

Learning styles of the students when reading differ according to their college or department because each college or department offers different learning experiences and those learning experiences form their learning styles.

The findings of the study left awareness for future, beginning, current and old teachers of the effects of the reading comprehension predicaments, it is noteworthy to be ready with the consequences of being unmotivated in reading non-fiction texts and provide teaching strategies that can aid the reading comprehension predicaments.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NA

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.

7. SOURCE/S OF FUNDING

NA

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