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Contextualization in Teaching Short Stories: Students' Interest and Comprehension

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Abstract

Purpose: *The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of contextualization in teaching Philippine short stories in English to students' reading comprehension and the relationship between students' reading interest and their comprehension levels.*

Approach/Methodology/Design: *The study is experimental in design. It employed the Z-test and utilized a structured survey questionnaire in collecting the data. Seventy-two (72) Grade 7 students of Lila National High School in the school year 2018-2019 had the Frustration level of reading comprehension based on the Phil-IRI results conducted before the experimentation took place. Contextualized teaching instruction and learning activities were utilized by the experimental group during the discussion of the three Philippine short stories in English.*

Findings: *The study revealed that (a) both the experimental and control groups had the average interest level towards Philippine short stories in English, (b) in the Phil- IRI comprehension result, both the experimental and control groups' level of comprehension is in the frustration level in three comprehension test categories namely literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical, (c) in the formative comprehension test results, the experimental group's comprehension level increased to instructional level where in the literal and inferential test levels, the group is classified under independent level and instructional level in evaluative/critical. On the other hand, the control group's comprehension level fell under instructional in the literal and inferential test levels and remained frustration under evaluative/critical.*

Practical Implications: *The study has practical implications for literature teachers. The findings will assist the literature teachers especially those who are handling Philippine Literature subjects. In addition, an Action Program is proposed to improve reading comprehension in Lila National High School, Philippines.*

Originality/value: *The study is different from existing researches since it focused on the contextualization in teaching Philippine literary pieces, particularly short stories to increase students' interest in learning and improve comprehension.*

1. Introduction

Learning takes place when students have successfully related and applied what they have learned in school to real life situations. For learning to be more effective and lasting, students must be able to see the relevance of the lessons in their respective contexts because relevance is

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a key component to intrinsically motivating student learning (Kember et al., 2008). By establishing both personal and real-world relevance, students are provided with an important opportunity to relate the subject matter to the world around them, and to assimilate it in accordance with their previously held assumptions and beliefs. It is a key factor in providing a learning context in which students construct their own understanding of the course material (Kember et al., 2008).

Literature teachers' ability to help students see the relevance of the lesson to their lives is crucial. That is why, literature teachers have to be equipped with interactive skills and methodologies that utilize learners' experiences and prior knowledge and usher them into a new world of fantasy where they learn about the real world vicariously. It is unfortunate though that not all instructors are equipped or prepared to teach Literature interactively, and an approach lacking interaction. Literature teachers thus need to explore new possibilities for improving ways of teaching. Findings show that methods that engage the learners' culture and background knowledge and consider their personal and emotional response to literature are favoured by students and bring about better results (Divsar & Tahriri, 2009). One way to do this is through contextualization of lessons.

Berns and Ericson (2001), as cited by Baker, et al.,(2009) in their *study Contextualized Teaching and Learning: A Faculty Primer*, define contextualization as the notion in teaching and learning which relates the lesson or the content of a subject matter into a real world setting.
It can be done in all learning areas especially in literature classes. This should be done in teaching Literature because students in a literature class are passive and literature reading in the Philippines is dead (Mendiola, 1998). Literature teachers teach different text types as the curriculum requires, but it is noteworthy that contextualization should be done more especially in teaching short stories because as per researcher's observation, the majority of the students, particularly in Grade 7 show low interest when it comes to the discussion of short stories, leading to poor participation.

Getting and sustaining the attention of these students throughout the classroom discussion is indeed a very challenging task on the teacher's part. Additionally, most of the short stories provided in the curriculum are written by authors outside Bohol and whose cultural background is different from the students'. The use of these selections in the discussion during literature classes especially in literature of the Philippines will leave the students feeling like a stranger to their own literary heritage. Furthermore, it has been observed that the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) results show that they have difficulty in understanding reading text by themselves which resulted to *Frustration* level. This means that the scores obtained by these students in the comprehension test is equivalent to 58% and below. This result poses a challenge to this researcher who teaches literature to Grade 7 students, and prompts her to do an immediate action to improve the students' comprehension level. For this experimental study, contextualization and localization of instruction and learning activities in literature classes is considered. Taking into account the researchers'

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observations and the results of the reading inventory, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study on contextualization, students' reading interest, and comprehension. Further, this study aimed to determine whether contextualization and localization effectively works in teaching Philippine short stories in English. Moreover, the study guides teachers to come up with appropriate teaching methodologies in order to bring up enjoyable, useful, and meaningful literature classes.

2. Literature Review

This study is anchored on the theories of Contextualized Teaching and Learning namely: Constructivism, Progressivism, Socio-cultural Learning Theory and Barret's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension. Each of these shall be discussed comprehensively in relation to the present study.

Jean Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory, also known as Constructivism relies on the notion that students create their own meaning of concepts when they learn through experience, which furthers an innate motivation and desire to learn. Roblyer (2006), as cited by Uriarte and Uriarte (2009) in their study entitled *Constructivism and Technology in the Classroom*, notes that constructivists believe learning to occur when one constructs both mechanisms for learning and his or her own unique version of the knowledge, coloured by background, experiences, and aptitudes. Knowledge is therefore constructed and not transmitted and students generate new knowledge through activities, experiences, and experiments. This theory works in the study because students reflect and use their prior knowledge and experiences to relate and understand the learning activities given in the literature class. The strategy used in the discussion of the short stories and even the different learning activities, depict real life experiences.

Likewise, Progressivism Theory of John Dewey strengthens the study. It can be gleaned from this theory, which students study well if they learn about something that they have known. Teaching-learning process will be produced if the students are involved actively in the teaching- learning process at school, and this only happens if students have background information in order to actively relate to the lesson discussed. In addition, progressivists believe that education should focus on the whole child, rather than on the content or the teacher and that curriculum content is derived from student interests and questions. The study holds the principles of progressivism because the contextualized teaching instruction in the study is within student's interest. Furthermore, students make meaning of the information learned through their individual experience in the physical and cultural context to know. Another theory which supports the study is Lev Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning. It promotes collaborative learning practices, recognizing that people learn from each other, not in a vacuum, and that they learn from more knowledgeable others such as teachers, other adults, or even peers. This theory believes that a child is an active member of a constantly changing community of learners where knowledge is constructed by cultural systems and

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learning is both formal and informa, Larson & Marsha (2005), as cited from *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension* by O'Flynn (2016).

This theory reflects in the study because the teacher guides the students in understanding the short stories taken up by giving learning activities which are related to real life experiences. In addition, the students deal with these learning activities by group wherein collaborative learning takes place. Moreover, Dr. Thomas C. Barrett `s Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension (1972) reinforces the said study. His taxonomy classified reading comprehension skills through four categories namely literal, inference, evaluation and appreciation. Jufri (2015) explained the reading skills for each level; recognizing and recalling facts, identifying main idea, locating information, using context clues to supply meaning, following specific directions, identifying stated conclusion, and identifying explicitly stated relationships and organizational patterns; inferential level of comprehension stresses the making of inferences, interpreting figurative language, drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes, determining the mood, and judging the author's point of view; finally, critical comprehension includes evaluation of the quality, values of the writing, the author's reasoning, simplifications, and generalizations.

Also, a comprehensive definition of each of the three levels of comprehension is specified by Alcantara et al. (2003).They labelled literal level as a means of reading the lines in order to get the gist and answering questions on knowledge such as the who, what, where, and when of a text. Secondly, inferential level means reading between the lines, combining information, making inferences and comprehending them wherein the how and why questions are focused. The last level- critical or evaluative discusses about the characters, plot, and style. It answers open-ended questions regarding the behaviour of the major and minor character and the style of presentation.

Barret's Taxonomy is connected to how this study proceeds. Basically, students are given a comprehension test based on the three short stories discussed in class in which students' comprehension in three categories namely the literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical are tested. Improving students' reading comprehension performance is a crucial task which most of the teachers and learners find difficult in dealing with. Sousa (2005), cited *in Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension* by O'Flynn *(2016),* highlighted that the crucial goal of reading is for readers to become adequately fluent to comprehend what they read. Comprehension is an active process that must be developed if a learner is to become a proficient reader. Thus, effective reading skill development is further accomplished when the learner becomes proficient in literal, inferential and evaluative comprehensive reading.

Moreover, Martin and Kragler (2012), as cited by O'Flynn (2016) in his study *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension*, found that students like when their personal experiences support the topic they are reading. Providing the students with real world reasons for engaging with informational texts is the most significant factor in improving their reading of these texts because students want to read short stories that connect

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to their real life. Interaction between the students and teacher in a Literature class takes place when students understand the literary pieces taken. This only happens if students' interest is stimulated in order to sustain their attention all throughout the discussion.

A student's motivation and interest may play a role in their comprehension abilities. Thomas (2001), cited by Osako (1993) in his study *The Effect of Reading Interest on Comprehension of Expository Materials with Controls for Prior Knowledge*, specified that reading interest has been used to refer to reader perception in regards to the degree to which a reader enjoys reading or considers it potentially exciting or interesting. Based on Bernstein (1955), study on the relationship of reading interest and comprehension among 100 ninth grade students cited in *The Effect of Reading Interest on Comprehension of Expository Materials with Controls for Prior Knowledge* by Osako(1993), there was a positive relationship between students' reading interest and comprehension. It showed that the high interest passage yielded higher scores in comprehension.

Likewise, Belloni and Jongsma (1978), as cited by O'Flynn (2016) in *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension*, stated that students comprehend better when they are interested in what they are reading. The study of O'Flynn (2016) on *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension* also adds support to the claim that students' reading interest influences comprehension. The study found interest in a text can be a leading factor on students' abilities to be able to comprehend. Thus, Literature teachers must design lessons which do not bore the students to capture and sustain their interest during reading sessions.

Conversely, Brooks' (1971) study on *Investigation of the Relationship between Reading Interest and Comprehension* revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension. His study hypothesized that a positive relationship exists between a reader's interest in a passage and his level of comprehension of it. The subjects, 90 sixth grade boys of at least average ability, read a pre-test passage and indicated their interest and comprehension by writing in the deletions for the previously read passage as it appeared in cloze form. After the pre-test, the subjects read five passages, indicating which one of each of two was more interesting when each passage was paired with each of the other passages in the series, and their comprehension was indicated by the same process as in the pre-test. It was concluded that there was no statistical difference between interest and comprehension, and therefore they were not related. He concluded that though interest may influence selection of material read, apparently degree of interest does not influence degree of comprehension.

Whether students' reading interest affects reading comprehension or not, it is still important to take into consideration that students' find the relevance of the lesson in their lives for them to connect easily with what is taught to them. As what Mucherah and Herendeen (2013), cited in *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension* by O'Flynn(2016) found curiosity is one of the main reasons students read books. Students will push their

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reading abilities if they are enjoying what they are reading. This is why contextualization of learning activities is needed in the discussion of short stories for students want to see the content of a certain story in the context of their lives. Authentic learning opportunities that connect home and school triggers students' curiosity in reading which allows them to engage with texts in meaningful ways.

Contextualized Teaching and Learning also known as Contextualized Instruction (cited in *A Framework of Contextualized Teaching and Learning (CTL): Assisting Developmental Education Instructors* (2013) which Mazzeo, Rab & Alssid defined as a diverse family of instructional strategies designed to more seamlessly link the learning of foundational skills and academic or occupational content by focusing teaching and learning squarely on concrete applications in a specific context that is of interest to the student. In other words, CTL is a process built on the recognition that some students learn more effectively when they are taught in a hands-on, real-world context rather than in an abstract manner (Baker et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Johnson (2010) says that CTL is based on the discovery that the students find meaning in their schoolwork when they join the content of academic subjects' lessons with the context of daily life. It is identified as a promising strategy that actively engages students and promotes improved learning and skills development. Learning makes sense if the learners can deal with novel data within their own frame of reference (Berns and Erickson, 2005). Through this, the learner's mind will look for the meaning of the text within the context, that is the reader's mind will associate what is written in the page to his/her previous knowledge and experiences so that the text will emerge valuable (Contextual Learning, n.d).

Contextualization can be done through designing learning activities that centre on the learners' field of interests and environment. It gives teachers the opportunities to use authentic materials, and anchor teaching on context of learners' lives. It helps students relates and adapts learning content specified in the curriculum and the process of teaching and learning to local condition, environment, and resources to meet local needs, address a particular teaching style or learning style, to adapt to a different grade level, to adapt for a different discipline, to adjust to a different learning environment, to address diversity needs, to address a cultural preference, to support a specific pedagogical need, and to address either a school or a district's standardized curriculum (Torres, 2015).

The study of Pittman and Honchell (2014) entitled *Literature Discussion: Encouraging Reading Interest and Comprehension in Struggling Middle School Readers* strengthens the claim of the supporters of CTL because the findings of the study indicated that students understood a text better during literature discussion when they used reading strategies along with prior knowledge to make connections between a text and their own lives. Since the aim of contextualization and localization is to use the students' prior knowledge and experiences, they will be more encouraged to explore a text by assimilating what they have known and

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experienced the same with the issues tackled in the text, thus, stimulating better comprehension.

In addition, the result of Rivet and Krajcik(2007)study on *Contextualizing Instruction: Leveraging Students' Prior Knowledge and Experiences to Foster Understanding of Middle School Science,* provides a preliminary evidence regarding the power of contextualizing instruction in science classrooms to support student learning. With the use of meaningful real-world examples, prior knowledge and experiences, learning is enhanced. Based on a review of the research, Perin (2011), as cited in *A Framework of Contextualized Teaching and Learning (CTL): Assisting Developmental Education Instructors* by Ambrose, V. K., Davis, A. C., & Ziegler, M. F. (20132013), asserted that students' experiences were more valued in contextualized classrooms, which made the learning more valuable to the learners.

Another study that supports the positive assertions of contextualization and localization is Moghaddas' (2013) finding on *The Effect of Contextualization on the Iranian EFL Learners' Performance in Reading Tasks*, wherein a contextualized language teaching framework using oral tasks is proposed. The result showed that the contextualization teaching framework had remarkably promoted the learners' performance and enhanced the participants' knowledge of English in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing. Also, it was revealed that this framework can be employed as an influential method in the English classes by the teachers, scholars and language instructors.

Despite the positive responses of CTL to students' academic performance, it also bears weaknesses. As indicated by Ballesteros (2014) in his study on *Localization and Contextualization of Science Activities in Enhancing Learner's Performance,* one of the weaknesses of contextualized instruction is the unavailability of resources in which most of the schools in the Philippines experience. At times, despite the use of contextualization in teaching, still authentic learning does not take place. The researcher sees the implementation of contextualized teaching a challenge especially in public secondary schools which learning materials are indeed scant. However, the students' experiences are rich sources for discussions in order to better understand fiction in Philippine literature.

The concept of contextualization of instruction embodies the Department of Education order number 42, series of 2017 entitled National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). It is founded on teaching philosophies of learner-centeredness, lifelong learning, and inclusivity/inclusiveness, among others. Three among the seven domains that are required by teachers to be effective in the 21st Century in the Philippines as stated in the PPST is to create a learning environment that is learning-focused and responsive to learners' diversity. In addition, teachers are expected to interact with the national and local curriculum requirements wherein they translate curriculum content into learning activities that are relevant to learners and based on the principles of effective teaching and learning. They apply their professional knowledge to plan and design, individually or in collaboration with colleagues, well-structured and sequenced lessons that

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are contextually relevant, responsive to learners' needs and incorporate a range of teaching and learning resources. Moreover, teachers are anticipated to identify and respond to opportunities that link teaching and learning in the classroom to the experiences, interests and aspirations of the wider school community and other key stakeholders.

Likewise, one of the general features of the K to 12 Reform (Republic Act 10533 of 2013) is making the curriculum relevant to Filipinos learners. Further, curriculum shall be contextualized and global. It shall use pedagogical approaches that are constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative and integrative. The K to 12 curriculum calls for the contextualization of learning tasks and activities to acquire skills in authentic and meaningful contexts of use.

The current study keeps the philosophy of CTL because discussion of the short stories and learning activities in the literature class are contextualized and localized which allow the students relate their personal experiences to the content making learning more meaningful. Moreover, students are encouraged to make connection between the knowledge acquired by its application in their lives as family members and in the community. Above all, the study promotes student-focused learning that deals with putting the students at the centre of the educative process by emphasizing activities within their field of interest.

Reading comprehension levels identified as literal, inferential and evaluative/critical were based from Barrett`s Taxonomy of Comprehension. On the other hand, contextualization was culled from the Jean Piaget's Constructivism, John Dewey's Progressivism, and Lev Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Learning Theory.

3. Methodology and Procedures

Research Environment

The current study was conducted in Lila National High School, formerly known as Lila High School. It is a public high school located at Poblacion, Lila, Bohol, Philippines. The school is the researcher's workplace and the participants were the researcher's students in English 7. Furthermore, as per the researcher's observation, the Grade 7 students of the school year 2018-2019 in the concerned school had very poor comprehension skills.

Research Instruments

A validated and pilot-tested researcher-made reading comprehension test was used to measure the students' level of comprehension. This researcher- made instrument test was constructed with table of specification showing the three levels of comprehension namely literal, inferential, and critical/evaluative based on Barrets' Taxonomy of reading comprehension.

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The reading comprehension test included the following: noting of specific details, drawing inferences and conclusion, and evaluating judgment. This researcher-made test was composed of 45 items all in all which included multiple choices with four options and a five-point essay. This five- point essay was scored based on the given rubrics (see Appendix E). There were three stories taken up namely, *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife* by Manuel E. Arguilla, *The Wedding Dance* of Amador Daguio, and *The Mats* by Francisco Arcellana. These stories were used as suggested in DepEd's curriculum guide for Philippine Literature subject. After, each story was discussed; students were tasked to answer the fifteen-item reading comprehension. The instrument also underwent item analysis wherein discrimination index and the index of difficulty were computed.

Another validated and pilot- tested researcher-made survey questionnaire on interest was also employed to identify the students' reading interest to Philippine short stories in English. It has ten (10) attitudinal statements which evaluated the participants' interest to Philippine short stories in English. Participants' responses included *True to me, Somewhat true to me,* and *Not like me.* Each response was given a numerical value from 1 to 3 respectively to get the participants' level of interest to Philippine short stories in English.

Table 2: Participants' Interest Scale

Range	Description
1.00- 1.67	High
1.68- 2.35	Average
2.36- 3.03	Low

Source: Author

Research Procedure

A. Asking Permission. The researcher secured a letter of consent from the office of the Bohol Division Superintendent and the school principal of Lila National High School.

B. Pilot Testing Phase. The pilot test participants were the selected researcher's students in English 7 who were not part of the experimentation. In order for these participants to answer the comprehension questionnaire more seriously, the researcher discussed first the three stories to them. Right after each discussion of the story, the pilot test participants answered the questionnaire. On a separate meeting, the researcher also pilot tested the survey questionnaire on students' interest to Philippine short stories in English. Item analysis then followed after research instruments were pilot tested.

C. Experimentation Phase. On the first meeting of the experimentation period, the researcher oriented first all the participants in the experimental and control groups about the study. This was done for the participants to take their roles responsibly. On the second day, the survey questionnaire on students' interest in Philippine short stories in English was administered to both the experimental and control groups. Ten minutes before the period ended, the survey questionnaires were then collected which was followed by the distribution

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of the hard copies of the first short story to be discussed the next session entitled "How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife" by Manuel E. Arguilla. Hard copies of the three stories to be discussed were distributed to both groups prior to the discussions considering that the participants have no English books to refer and for them to read the short stories in advance.

On the next two weeks and a half the researcher focused on the teaching of the three Philippine short stories in English. Philippine short stories in English referred to the reading materials used in the discussion which included "How My Brother Brought Home a Wife" of Manuel E. Arguilla, "Wedding Dance" of Amador Daguio, and "The Mats" of Francisco Arcellana. In the experimental group, certain episodes and characters cited in these three stories during the discussion where linked to the participants' life contexts for them to come up with appropriate judgments and interpretation of the meaning of the stories. The participants' personal experiences and geographical backgrounds were carefully considered during the discussion to stimulate active and meaningful learning. They were asked about the same happenings cited in the stories they have witnessed or even experienced in their community. Further, in the group activity conducted during the lesson essential issues faced by the characters were associated to the same circumstances the participants' had experienced and gave them the freedom to share their points of view regarding these matters to the class. The experimental group were subjective in dealing with the different comprehension/learning activities provided in the three short stories.

Conversely, the control group employed to the traditional way of teaching short stories wherein the discussion of the three Philippine short stories in English were primarily focused on the characters themselves and the events that took place in the stories. The participants shared new ideas and information acquired from the stories based on how they understood the content of the short stories. They objectively dealt with the comprehension/learning activities in the three short stories taken up. Moreover, in the group activity the participants looked for the specific answers to the questions regarding the content of the stories.

After the discussion of each story, the experimental and control groups answered the fifteen-item comprehension test about the story discussed. The same comprehension tests were given to both groups. They only varied on the teaching instruction and learning activities during the discussion of the three short stories because the experimental group was engaged to contextualization while the control group employed the traditional way of teaching that focused on the objectivity of the participants' understanding and interpretation of the meaning of the of the content of the short stories.

Statistical Treatment

To determine the level of the participants' interest in reading Philippine short stories in English, the profile of the experimental and control groups' reading comprehension in the Phil-IR Inventory based on the three levels, and the profile of the experimental and control groups' reading comprehension in the formative test administered during their Literature classes based on the different levels, the average weighted mean was used.

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$$NM = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where:

f = frequency

x = item given

N = number of cases

Moreover, to determine the significant mean difference in the Phil-IRI and the formative test results of the control and experimental groups, the z- test was also employed.

$$z = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 - \Delta}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{\sigma_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}_1$ = mean of the first sample

$\bar{x}_2$ = mean of the second sample

Δ = is the hypothesized difference between the population means

σ_1 = standard deviation of the first population

σ_2 = standard deviation of the second population

n_1 = size of the first sample

n_2 = size of the first sample

Lastly, to identify the relationship between students' interest and their levels of comprehension, the Pearson Product Moment of Correlation Coefficient which has the following formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum XY - \frac{(\sum X)(\sum Y)}{n}}{\sqrt{\left(\sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{n}\right)\left(\sum Y^2 - \frac{(\sum Y)^2}{n}\right)}}$$

Where:

r = Pearson r correlation coefficient

n = number of pairs tested for correlation

Σxy = sum of the products of paired scores

Σx = sum of the x scores

Σy = sum of the y scores

Σx^2 = sum of squared x scores

Σy^2 = sum of squared y scores

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The table of significance for the Pearson Moment of Correlation was used for the interpretation of correlation.

R value				Descriptive Meaning
0.00 – 0.20	--	0.00 – 0.20	=	negligible correlation
0.21 – 0.40	--	0.21 – 0.40	=	low or slight correlation
0.41 – 0.70	--	0.41 – 0.70	=	moderate correlation
0.71 – 0.90	--	0.71 – 0.90	=	high relationship
0.91 – 0.99	--	0.91 – 0.99	=	very high relationship
1.0	--	1.0	=	perfect relationship

Source: Author

To further determine whether to reject or accept the null hypothesis, the p value is also used at 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results and Discussion

The first section exposes the participants' interest levels to Philippine short stories in English. The profile of the experimental and control groups' reading comprehension in the Phil-IR Inventory based on the three levels- literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical is presented next. The third section is the profile of the experimental and control groups' reading comprehension in the formative test administered during their literature classes based on the three levels as well. The decision of the hypotheses of the study is showed in the last part.

Table 3: Participants' Interest Levels in Philippine Short Stories in English

Interest Level	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Frequency	***Percentage***	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
High	4	11%	6	17%
Average	30	83%	30	83%
Low	2	6%	0	0
Mean	1.96		2.1	

Legend: *1.00-1.66* ***Low****; 1.67-2.33* ***Average****; 2.34-3.00* ***High***

Source: Author

Table 3 shows the interest levels of both participants under the high, average, and low interest levels in Philippine short stories in English. As presented, both the experimental and the control groups had the average level of interest in Philippine short stories in English with the means of 1.96 and 2.1 respectively. Though there were two more participants in the control group who had high interest in Philippine short stories in English compared to that of the experimental and no one had low interest, the grand means of the two groups indicated that both groups of participants had the same level of interest when it comes to reading Philippine short stories in English; thus, the two sets of participants are comparable.

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The equal number of participants in both groups who fell under the average interest level proved that majority of the participants in both groups had already a noteworthy interest in reading Philippine short stories in English. This can mean that if these groups of participants are taught and given Philippine short stories in English to read, there is a bigger chance of sustaining their attention, becoming more involved during discussion, and most importantly they may improve their comprehension.

Belloni and Jongsma (1978), as cited by O'Flynn (2016) in his study *Students' Reading Interest Impact on Reading Comprehension*, stated that students comprehend better when they are interested in what they are reading. Further, according to Miranda et al. (2011), cited in *The Effects of Reading Interest, Reading Purpose, and Reading Maturity on Reading Comprehension of High School Students* by Squires (2014), individuals with high levels of reading interest often exhibit a number of positive reading behaviors. With a high interest to a certain reading material, active engagement to the said reading material is possible. Because of this interest and engagement, they often find the activity of reading as a pleasurable experience.

Table 4: Profile of the Participants' Reading Comprehension in the Pre-test (Phil-IRI)

Experimental Group						
Test Item Category	*Description*			*Total*	*Average*	*Description*
	Frustration	*Instructional*	*Independent*			
	f	*f*	*f*			
Literal	18	7	11	36	57.40	Frustration
Inferential	30	6	0	36	40.12	Frustration
Evaluative/ Critical	24	11	1	36	36.66	Frustration
General Average	44.44					Frustration
Control Group						
Test Item Category	*Frustration*	*Instructional*	*Independent*	*Total*	*Average*	*Description*
	f	*F*	*f*			
Literal	24	5	7	36	54.62	Frustration
Inferential	36	0	0	36	34.25	Frustration
Evaluative/ Critical	24	10	2	36	40.55	Frustration
General Average	43.14					Frustration

Legend: *58% and below* ***Frustration****; 59-79%* ***Instructional****; 80-100%* ***Independent***
Source: Author

Table 4 presents the profile of the two groups of participants' reading comprehension levels in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil- IRI) conducted during the first quarter.

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This Phil- IRI test results served as the pre-test wherein the participants read series of reading texts by themselves without the teacher's intervention and answered the comprehension questions after. The comprehension questions were classified into three categories- literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical. On the other hand, reading comprehension levels are described as follows: *Frustration*- 58% and below, *Instructional- 59- 79%*, and *Independent*- 80- 100%.

Based on the table, the experimental group gained a general average of 44. 44% comprehension level that falls under *Frustration* level which is also in the same level with the control group having the general average of 43.14. Since the two groups of participants were in *the Frustration* level during the pre-test as shown in their Phil-IRI test results, it can be concluded that the participants had very poor comprehension skills and cannot comprehend thoroughly a reading text without the teacher's intervention.

In the three test item categories, it can be noticed that both groups dropped at the lowest level- *Frustration level.* This result simply shows that the reading comprehension skills of the Grade 7 students are far from being developed as what is expected from them as high school students. Furthermore, it can be said that the students need the supervision and involvement of the Literature teacher during the discussions on short stories to help them understand difficult words used in the text to comprehend it thoroughly. High school students are expected to have far developed or are well- equipped with appropriate reading comprehension skills in preparation for more complex text types they will encounter in College, but unfortunately they are not reflected in this result. If not all, majority of these students have very poor reading comprehension skill that they cannot comprehend short stories thoroughly by themselves. This result is a challenge for Literature teachers to think of a way to improve these students' comprehension level.

Table 5: Profile of the Participants' Reading Comprehension in the Post-test

Experimental Group						
Test Item Category	*Description*			*Total*	*Average*	*Description*
	Frustration	*Instructional*	*Independent*			
	f	*f*	*f*			
Literal	5	5	26	36	82.22	Independent
Inferential	2	10	24	36	81.66	Independent
Evaluative/ Critical	11	14	11	36	65.74	Instructional
General Average	76.54					Instructional
Control Group						
Test Item Category	*Frustration*	*Instructional*	*Independent*	*Total*	*Average*	*Description*
	f	*f*	*f*			

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Literal	5	13	18	36	74.81	Instructional
Inferential	9	18	9	36	66.11	Instructional
Evaluative/ Critical	15	16	5	36	56.11	Frustration
General Average	65.67					Instructional

Legend: *58% and below* ***Frustration****; 59-79%* ***Instructional****; 80-100%* ***Independent***
Source: Author

Based on the gathered data in Table 5, the experimental and the control groups' comprehension levels in the formative test increased from frustration level in the pre-test (Phil-IRI) to instructional during the post test with the general average of 76.54 and 65. 67 respectively. It can be perceived that there is a consistent increase of the comprehension levels especially in the experimental group in the different test levels. On the other hand, the control group shows only increase of the comprehension level in the two test-item categories- literal and inferential. The control's group level of comprehension in the evaluative/critical level remains the same with pre-test (Phil- IRI) result.

The increase of experimental group's comprehension in the three test categories- literal from 57.40 to 82.22, inferential from 40.12 to 81.66, and evaluative/critical from 36.66 to 65.74 indicates a positive response of the participants towards contextualization of teaching instruction and learning activities in teaching Philippine short stories in English. Though the two groups have the same comprehension level, it is noteworthy that there is still a significant difference between their means. Since the general average of the experimental group is way higher than that of the control group, it can be safely implied that these participants can comprehend the content of the story better if the events and characters in the said reading material are associated to their experiences and life context.

This finding complements with the theories of Contextualized Teaching and Learning which posits that the students find meaning in their schoolwork when they join the content of academic subjects' lessons with the context of daily life. In addition, it actively engages students and improved learning and skills development. Berns and Erickson (2005) further stated that learning makes sense if the learners can deal with novel data within their own frame of reference .Through this, the learner's mind will look for the meaning of the text within the context; that is, the reader's mind will associate what is written in the page to his/her previous knowledge and experiences so that the text will emerge valuable (Contextual Learning, n.d). With contextualization in teaching Philippine short stories in English, learners were more engaged with the discussion of the stories *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife, The Wedding Dance,* and *The Mats.* They felt at ease in dealing with the different learning activities because the activities and discussions were either situated in their locality or depicting a similar experience. Additionally, Piaget's Constructivism strengthens the findings because the participants construct knowledge out of their experiences. Furthermore,

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Dewey's Progressivism reinforces the result of the current study because the participants comprehend the stories better because they have connected the different events in the stories to what they have already known, just like with their experiences and observation. The participants used their background information about the issues tackled in the stories in order to actively relate to the lesson.

The identical comprehension level of the control group in the evaluative/critical level during the pre-test (Phil- IRI) and the post-test implies that there is really a need for contextualization of teaching instruction and learning activities in teaching Philippine short stories in English to achieve higher level of comprehension skill.

Table 6: Mean Difference between the Participants' Pre-test (Phil-IRI) and the Post-test Results

	Experimental Group					
	Mean	*SD*	*z- value*	*p- value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
Pre-test (Phil- IRI)	44.44	303.84	8.504	1.95	There is a significant difference	Reject H_o
Post-test	76.54	168.99				
	Control Group					
	Mean	*SD*	*z- value*	*p- value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
Pre-test (Phil- IRI)	43.14	184.49	6.710	1.95	There is a significant difference	Reject H_o
Posttest	65.67	200.39				

Source: Author

Table 6 presents the mean difference of the participants' pre-test (Phil-IRI) and the post-test results. As the table shows, the experimental group's mean in the pre-test (Phil-IRI) is 44.44 which is far higher than the result in the post-test which is 76.54. Since the computed value z-value is greater than the p- value, it can be implied that there is a significant difference between the test results of the experimental group in the pre-test (Phil-IRI) and in the post-test. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This is the same result obtained in the control group where the mean in the post-test which is 65.67 is higher than 43.14 in the pre-test. Given the results, it can be understood that the two groups of participants' comprehension levels had improved after the post-test for the reason that the short stories were discussed first to the class with the teacher's guidance, unlike during the pre-test (Phil-IRI) wherein the participants were left alone to read and understand the reading texts by themselves. Yet, it is noteworthy that the experimental group's post-test mean is higher than that of the control group which simply says that the intervention done which is the contextualization of the teaching instruction and learning activities in teaching short stories was helpful to consistently improve comprehension.

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The comprehension levels of the two groups of participants increased in the post-test. It can mean that the reading materials must be discussed by the teacher first before they deal with the comprehension test. The participants need a closer guidance by the literature teacher to fully grasp what they are reading for they cannot do it by themselves. This is very evident in their pre-test (Phil-IRI) result where the two groups of participants fall under the lowest comprehension level- *Frustration* in all of the three test item levels, in which the participants were left alone to read and understand the reading material without the teacher's guidance.

The pre-test (Phil-IRI) result of the two groups of participants is aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory which says that a child is an active member of a constantly changing community of learners where knowledge is constructed by cultural system. Learners learn from more knowledgeable others such as teachers, other adults, or even peers. Hence, collaboration between the teacher and the students must take place for a successful teaching- learning process.

It was also shown in the previous tables that the experimental group who was exposed to contextualization consistently increased the comprehension level in three test item levels, compared to the control group which obtained the same level of comprehension for the evaluative/critical test level in the Phil-IRI and formative tests. Therefore, it is safe to say that comprehension level far more increases when contextualization is utilized.

Table 7: Mean Difference between the Post-test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups

Participants	**Mean**	**SD**	**z- value**	**p- value**	**Interpretation**	**Decision**
Experimental Group	76.29	168.99	-3.06	1.95	There is a significant difference	Reject H_o
Control Group	65.67	200.39				

Source: Author

Table 7 shows the mean difference between the post-test results of the experimental and control groups. By simply referring to the means of the two groups of participants, it is evident that they have different means and that the experimental group's mean is higher than that of the control group. Further, the computed z- value of -3.06 is greater than the critical value of 1.95 which shows that there is a significant mean difference of the post-test results between the experimental and control groups. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Considering the aforementioned result, it is worth mentioning that contextualization in teaching Philippine short stories in English advances reading comprehension. This result matches with the result of Rivet and Krajcik's study on *Contextualizing Instruction: Leveraging Students' Prior Knowledge and Experiences to Foster Understanding of Middle*

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School Science (2007) that provides preliminary evidence regarding the power of contextualizing instruction in science classrooms to support student learning. With the use of meaningful real-world examples, prior knowledge and experiences, learning is enhanced. Based on a review of the research, Perin (2011, cited in *A Framework of Contextualized Teaching and Learning (CTL): Assisting Developmental Education Instructors*, 2013) asserted that students' experiences were more valued in contextualized classrooms, which made the learning more valuable to the learners.

The study of Pittman and Honchell (2014) entitled Literature Discussion: *Encouraging Reading Interest and Comprehension in Struggling Middle School Readers* also supports the positive result of this study for they found out that students understood a text better during literature discussion when they used reading strategies along with prior knowledge to make connections between a text and their own lives.

With contextualization in teaching short stories, the students feel more involved in the discussion. Martin and Kragler(2012), cited in *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension* by O'Flynn(2016), found that students like when their personal experiences support the topic they are reading. Providing the students with real world reasons for engaging with informational texts is the most significant factor in improving their reading of these texts because students want to read short stories that connect to real life settings.

Table 8: Correlation between the Participants' Interest and their Comprehension Levels in Philippine Short Stories in English

	Computed value	Tabular value	Decision	Interpretation
Experimental	0.095	0.329	Accept H_o	Negligible Correlation (Insignificant)
Control	0.118	0.329	Accept H_o	Negligible Correlation (Insignificant)

Source: Author

Table 8 further explains the insignificant relationship between the participants' interest levels and their comprehension levels. The computed value of the experimental group of 0.095 implies that there is a negligible correlation between their reading interest and comprehension. Likewise, the p-value of 0.329 suggests that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted. This is true also to the control group, where the computed value of 0.118 entails a negligible correlation between their reading interest and comprehension and that there is no significant relationship between the two variables.

This finding contradicts with the study of O'Flynn (2016) on *Students' Reading Interests Impact on Reading Comprehension* who claims that students' reading interest influences comprehension. The study found interest in a text can be a leading factor on students' abilities to be able to comprehend. In addition, Bernstein (1955), cited in *The Effect of*

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Reading Interest on Comprehension of Expository Materials with Controls for Prior Knowledge by Osako(1983) attest the relationship of reading interest and comprehension among 100 ninth grade students as his study showed a positive relationship between students' reading interest and comprehension. It revealed that the high interest passage yielded higher scores in comprehension.

However, the negligible correlation between reading interest and comprehension in this study indicates that a learner`s capacity to comprehend is not directly influenced by his/her reading interest. This is reinforced by Brooks (1971) study on *Investigation of the Relationship Between Reading Interest and Comprehension* who found no statistical significant relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension. He concluded that though interest may influence selection of material read, apparently degree of interest does not influence degree of comprehension.

Further elaboration of the insignificant correlation of the participants' reading interest in Philippine short stories in English and their levels of comprehension is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Comparison of the Participants' Interest and Reading Comprehension Levels in Philippine Short Stories in English

Experimental Group			
Interest Level	**Interest Mean**	**Comprehension Mean**	**Description**
High	2.43	73.88	Instructional
Average	1.94	78	Instructional
Low	1.45	60	Instructional
	Control Group		
Interest Level	**Interest Mean**	**Comprehension Mean**	**Description**
High	2.47	70	Instructional
Average	2.03	78	Instructional
Low			

Source: Author

As exposed in Table 9, the two groups of participants who had high levels of interest in reading Philippine short stories in English did not reach the highest comprehension level-*Independent* level as expected, they were only up to the *Instructional* level. Generally speaking, the participants having the high, average, and low interest levels had the same comprehension level which is *Instructional.* This basically means the participants' interest levels do not directly influence their reading comprehension levels. The finding shows that

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neither high nor low interest level in reading Philippine short stories in English guarantees a higher comprehension level.

Findings

Given the comprehensive examination and analysis of the data, the researcher arrived at certain findings. Both the experimental and control groups shared the same level of interest towards Philippine short stories in English which is in the *average* interest level. In the pre-test comprehension result, both the experimental and control groups' level of comprehension is at the *frustration* level in the literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical test categories. Moreover, in the comprehension post-test result, the experimental group's comprehension level in the literal and inferential test categories increased to *independent* level, while it remained in the *instructional* level for the evaluative/critical category. On the other hand, the control group's comprehension level fell under *instructional* level in the literal and inferential categories and remained in the *frustration* level in evaluative/critical. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant mean difference between the experimental and control groups' Phil-IRI and formative test results. There is no significant relationship between the two group of participants' interest to Philippine short stories in English and their comprehension.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the analyses of the findings, the study concludes that contextualization in teaching Philippine short stories in English has a positive effect on improving participants' reading comprehension levels. In addition, it is concluded that the traditional way of teaching short stories, wherein the teacher is present during the reading discussions, poses a positive effect on the participants' comprehension skills if compared to merely letting these participants deal with the reading materials by themselves as done in the pre-test. Yet, it is still worthy to note that the post-test result of the students who were exposed to the traditional method of teaching Philippine short stories is not as high as the results of the students exposed to contextualized teaching instruction and learning activities. Furthermore, the study concludes that the participants' reading interest is not a factor that influences their comprehension levels.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that literature teachers especially those who are handling Philippine Literature subjects should continue introducing different Philippine literary works, specifically short stories to the students not just to promote Philippine Literature, more so to strengthen and increase students' interest even up to the highest level given that they have already this notable interest towards Philippine short stories in English. English teachers should guide the students during the conduct of the Phil- IRI comprehension test in order to assist them thoroughly comprehend the content of the reading texts provided. It is also recommended to contextualize the teaching instruction and learning activities in teaching short stories to engage students and sustain their attention during the

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discussion which may result to better comprehension. More importantly, this study may be replicated considering other fields in which contextualization would be applicable. Future researchers in the field of English instruction may contextualize the lessons on Grammar. MAPEH teachers may also contextualize the songs, dances, and sports/games in Music and Physical Education, as well as the learning materials in Arts class to make the lesson more personal, relevant and meaningful to students. Additionally, Mathematics teachers also may also contextualize their lessons on problem solving wherein students may be provided real life mathematical problems for them to see authentic situations.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the article declares no conflict of interest.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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Appendix

Proposed Action Program to Improve Reading Comprehension in Lila National High School

Rationale

When a student reads a certain literary piece and could not successfully process and recognize the meaning of the reading text, it can be concluded that comprehension doesn't take place. Given such situation, intervention of the teacher must be considered. Most students need teacher's guidance and involvement to understand a reading material. This is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural learning theory which says that a child is an active member of a constantly changing community of learners where knowledge is constructed by cultural system. Learners learn from more knowledgeable others such as teachers, other adults, or even peers. Hence, collaboration between the teacher and the students must take place for a successful teaching- learning process.

Literature teachers must consistently innovate in their teaching strategies to help students comprehend the meaning of the reading text they deal with. Students must feel their active involvement during the discussion of the reading text and help them feel its relevance to them. With contextualization and localization in teaching reading texts, students are helped to find meaning of what they are reading which can promote better comprehension.

The study exposed that the students' reading comprehension level increases to instructional which is a step higher before the study took place. Though there is a positive increase of their comprehension levels, they are still a step away from being independent readers in literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical categories. This finding made to arrive to a need of making an action plan to enhance the teaching of Philippine short stories in English at Lila National High School.

Program Description

This action plan shall be tentatively called as Reading Comprehension Enhancement Program. It requires a year round enactment wherein Literature subjects are given the most emphasis. Literature teachers are the ones who contextualized the teaching instruction and learning activities in the Literature classes. On the other hand, the administrator gives the necessary support and assistance to the concerned teachers to realize the said program. The Reading Comprehension Enhancement Program holds the following objectives:

1. Expose the students to various reading materials within their level;
2. Improve the students' levels of comprehension through a series of contextualized and localized comprehension activities;
3. Engage both students and teachers to the discussion of the reading text to promote collaboration;
4. Develop Literature teachers' creativity and patience in teaching and guiding the students all throughout the reading sessions;
5. Enhance the students' comprehension in the different text levels like literal, inferential, and evaluative/critical through different sets of reading comprehension activities; and

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6. Inculcate to students the core of reading comprehension and its relevance to real life situations.

Reading Comprehension Enhancement Program

Area of Concern/ Activities	Objectives	Findings	Strategies/ Suggested Activities	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Success Indicator
Literal	To guide students easily recall and recognize information explicitly stated in the reading text	The experimental group's posttest result shows a noticeable increase of the comprehension levels in the three test categories- literal, inferential, evaluative/critical. It was noted that during the pre-test that is before the contextualization of the teaching instruction and learning activities, the comprehension levels in all of the three test categories were in the *Frustration* level.	The teacher must emphasize during the discussion the basic elements of the story which include the setting, characters, and plot.	Teachers and Students	Year round	Students must be able to get 59% and above correct responses of the said text level.

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