

Enhancing Reading Proficiency with the Call-Up Approach

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Abstract

This study aimed to enhance the reading proficiency of Grade 7 learners at San Pedro Integrated School through the CALL UP Approach, a tutorial-based intervention. Specifically, the objective was to improve students' English performance by targeting vocabulary, comprehension, and reading fluency using structured weekly sessions and individualized support. The method used was both a quasi-experimental design and an extension program implemented in partnership with the Department of Education. The extension program was conducted over four weeks and included a pre- test and post-test assessment, monitoring of affective filters, tutor observations, and structured tutorial sessions designed based on DepEd-aligned competencies and the Call Up Approach. The study found that the students' reading proficiency level prior to the intervention ranged from 'poor' to 'satisfactory', as reflected in the concentration of scores on the self-made diagnostic test. Weekly monitoring of affective filters revealed fluctuating results alternating from 'mixed' to 'positive' which may be attributed to the weekly rotation of tutors. Nevertheless, the students' reading levels remained consistently within the instructional level across all four tools administered. Similarly, positive washback was

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observed consistently throughout the four reading sessions, as evidenced by student engagement and progression. Tutors consistently rated overall student performance as 'good'. Post-test results showed noticeable improvement, ranging from less to high development in reading proficiency after the intervention. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the next phase of the intervention include enhanced instructional materials focusing on assessing prior knowledge and making inferences, the two areas where development was limited. Further, the tutorial delivery system should be re-evaluated to ensure consistency in affective learning conditions. This study underscores the potential of extension programs such as the Call Up Approach to contribute meaningfully to educational recovery, particularly in strengthening English proficiency among junior high school students.

Keywords: Affective filter, CALL UP Approach, English intervention, Extension program, Reading proficiency

Introduction

Reading proficiency is a cornerstone of academic success and lifelong learning, which serves as the foundation upon which students build critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. In the Philippine context, reading has been identified as a persistent area of concern in basic education, particularly at the junior high school level. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil- IRI) conducted by the Department of Education (DepEd) in 2018 revealed that many learners across grade levels read below expected proficiency standards, with significant difficulties in comprehension and fluency (Tomas et al., 2021). Similarly, results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 placed the Philippines at the lower-end of global rankings in reading literacy, with 80% of 15-year-old Filipino learners unable to reach the minimum level of reading proficiency (OECD, 2019). These findings underscore an urgent need for targeted interventions that address skill gaps in reading.

Several local studies have examined interventions to improve literacy. For instance, Miranda (2018) emphasized that remedial reading programs help struggling learners transition from frustration to instructional reading levels when integrated with individualized tutoring. In another study, David et al. (2020) found that scaffolded reading activities such as guided reading sessions significantly improved comprehension among secondary students in public schools. Likewise, Nolasco and Silva (2021) highlighted the importance of motivational factors. They reported that learners' affective filters such as confidence, anxiety, and willingness to participate directly influence their reading outcomes. These Philippine-based findings resonate with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis cited by Liu (2023), which asserts that low-anxiety and high-motivation environments enhance language acquisition and literacy development.

In response to these challenges, tutorial-based approaches have been advocated as viable supplementary interventions in Philippine schools. Small-group and one-on-one tutorials create opportunities for learners to receive personalized feedback, while also enabling teachers to monitor progress more closely (Villanueva, 2019). Extension programs conducted in partnership with higher education institutions have also been recognized as effective avenues for literacy development as they provide additional manpower, innovative strategies, and community engagement in support of DepEd's reading initiatives (Santos & Alonzo, 2020).

The Calibrating Actions for Life Long Learning to Upstage Pandemic (CALL UP) Approach was developed as a response to these challenges. It is a tutorial-based intervention designed to enhance reading proficiency through structured weekly sessions focusing on comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The approach emphasizes activating prior knowledge, guiding learners in making inferences, and strengthening prediction skills while ensuring that the affective needs of learners are addressed. The CALL UP Approach seeks to help struggling readers progress from frustration levels to instructional and eventually independent reading levels. This is done by combining explicit instruction with opportunities for independent practice.

This study investigated the effectiveness of the CALL UP Approach in enhancing the reading proficiency of Grade 7 learners at San Pedro Integrated School. Specifically, it aimed to assess the learners' baseline reading proficiency, monitor affective filters during the intervention, and evaluate the extent of improvement after a four-week tutorial program. This study contributes to the growing body of Philippine literature on literacy interventions and highlights the potential of extension programs in bridging learning gaps and fostering educational recovery. This is so because the study examines both cognitive and affective dimensions of reading.

Methodology

The study utilized a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design to determine the effect of the CALL UP Approach on learners' reading proficiency. The intervention was also carried out as an extension program facilitated by faculty and tutors from Jose Rizal Memorial State University Main Campus in collaboration with the Department of Education.

The Grade 7 students from San Pedro Integrated School were selected to participate in the intervention program. They were chosen using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using a self-made diagnostic test aligned with DepEd competencies, observation checklists for affective filters, reading-level assessments, and tutor observation forms. The test focused on four (4) major reading comprehension components, namely: (a) getting the main idea, (b) checking prior knowledge, (c) making inferences, and (d) predicting outcomes. The program ran for four (4) weeks. Learners took a pre-test to establish baseline proficiency. They then underwent weekly tutorial sessions following the CALL UP Approach, where reading tasks were scaffolded through direct instruction, guided practice, and independent application.

Affective filter observations and performance ratings were documented each week. A post-test was administered to measure learning gains at the end of the intervention. Scores were tabulated and summarized using descriptive statistics. Comparisons between pre-test and post-test performance were made to determine improvements. Qualitative observations from tutors regarding affective filters and classroom engagement supplemented the quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

The findings from pre-test and post-test assessments, affective filter monitoring, and tutor observations revealed significant insights into the effectiveness of the CALL UP Approach. Table 1 shows the students' baseline reading proficiency across four (4) components, namely: getting the main idea, checking prior knowledge, inferencing, and predicting. As shown, students' reading proficiency levels were low, with scores ranging from poor to fair prior to the intervention. The lowest performance was in identifying main idea which garnered 26.67%, followed by checking prior knowledge with 33.33%, and predicting outcomes with 40%, while inferencing showed slightly stronger but still limited ability with the result of 43.33%. The results indicate that prior to the intervention, learners generally performed at poor to fair levels. This reflects significant gaps in comprehension. The lowest performance was recorded in identifying main ideas, a fundamental skill in reading comprehension, while inferencing registered the relatively highest mean score. This finding aligns with earlier studies highlighting that Filipino learners often struggle with higher-order comprehension skills, particularly main idea identification and prediction (Jimenez, 2023).

Table 1. Student Pretest Scores in the 4 Components of Reading Comprehension

Components	Percentage (%)	Description
A. Getting the Main Idea	26.67	<i>Poor and Fair</i>
B. Checking Prior Knowledge	33.33	<i>Fair and Satisfactory</i>
C. Inferencing	43.33	<i>Fair and Satisfactory</i>
D. Predicting	40.00	<i>Poor</i>

Table 2 shows fluctuating affective filter results. Positive affective responses ranged between 26.09% and 53.85%, while mixed affective states dominated in most sessions, peaking at 66.67% in Tool 4. Negative affective responses were minimal, though not absent. These fluctuations may be explained by the weekly rotation of tutors, which created inconsistencies in rapport and learner comfort. This supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis cited by Bedford (2023), which posits that high affective barriers such as anxiety or lack of motivation inhibit learning, while low affective filters facilitate language acquisition. Meanwhile, the majority of learners still engaged positively despite these challenges, which shows their adaptability in tutorial environments. Observations before reading sessions showed that many students displayed mixed affective states. They manifested both enthusiasm and anxiety. Fluctuations were noted across the four (4) weeks, which could be attributed to the rotation of tutors. This finding affirms Krashen's notion that affective conditions directly influence language acquisition (Gonzalez, 2020).

Table 2. Before Reading Observation on Students' Affective Filter

Category	Tool 1 (%)	Tool 2 (%)	Tool 3 (%)	Tool 4 (%)
Positive	26.09	50.00	53.85	27.78
Mix	60.87	26.92	23.08	66.67
Negative	13.04	23.08	20.08	5.56

As shown in Table 3, most learners were consistently categorized at the instructional level with 47.83 to 66.67%. Independent reading levels decreased as the sessions progressed, while instructional-level readers increased. This obviously demonstrates the capacity of students to learn with scaffolding. The result suggests that the intervention successfully engaged students at a level where they required scaffolding but could still progress with teacher support. This indicates that the Call Up Approach provided adequate support for learners to engage with reading tasks. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development supports this interpretation, saying that learners achieve more when guided by a more

knowledgeable other, which is consistent with the tutorial-based Call Up Approach.

Table 3. During Reading Observation on Students' Reading Levels

Category	Tool 1 (%)	Tool 2 (%)	Tool 3 (%)	Tool 4 (%)
Frustrated	21.74	15.38	19.23	22.22
Instructional	47.83	46.15	57.69	66.67
Independent	30.43	38.46	23.08	11.11

The after-reading observations shown in Table 4 revealed overwhelmingly positive washback with percentages ranging from 72.22% to 96.15% across sessions. Since positive washback was consistently high ranging from 82.61% to 96.15% across tools, the study reflects the motivational impact of the intervention. This suggests that the program not only enhanced proficiency but also improved learners' confidence and engagement. Likewise, the study proves that learners perceived the reading activities as beneficial and motivating. Positive washback reflects increased learner confidence, enthusiasm, and willingness to engage in subsequent reading tasks. The minimal presence of negative washback indicates that the intervention succeeded in reducing disengagement, a challenge frequently encountered in remedial reading programs (Mejala, 2024).

Table 4 After Reading observation on Test Washback

Category	Tool 1 (%)	Tool 2 (%)	Tool 3 (%)	Tool 4 (%)
Positive	82.61	96.15	88.46	72.22
Mix	17.39	0	3.85	22.22
Negative	0	3.85	7.69	5.56

As shown in Table 5, tutors rated most students as "good" throughout the intervention, with some progressing to "excellent" by Tool 3 with 19.23% and Tool 4 with 11.11%. No students were rated as "poor," suggesting that the intervention raised the general performance level of all participants. These ratings confirm the quantitative improvements observed in test scores and reinforce the value of individualized tutorial support in enhancing reading proficiency (Villanueva, 2019).

Table 5. Over-all Performance Level based on Tutors Observation

Description	Tool 1 (%)	Tool 2 (%)	Tool 3 (%)	Tool 4 (%)
Poor	0	0	0	0
Fair	26.09	11.54	11.54	11.11
Satisfactory	34.78	26.92	23.08	27.78
Good	39.13	46.15	46.15	50.00
Excellent	0	15.38	19.23	11.11

The post-test results shown in Table 6 indicate significant improvement in reading proficiency. Scores rose in main idea identification with 26.67% to 42.86%, checking prior knowledge with 33.33% to 52.28%, and inferencing with 43.33% to 66.67%. Prediction skills showed a nuanced outcome, with the percentage score decreasing slightly with 40.00% to 33.33%, but with qualitative improvement in descriptor, shifting from “poor” to “good.” This suggests that while fewer students excelled numerically in prediction, those who did demonstrated deeper comprehension skills.

The findings demonstrate that the CALL UP Approach effectively improved learners’ reading proficiency, validating the importance of structured, scaffolded tutorials. Students achieved measurable progress despite inconsistencies in affective states due to rotating tutors. These results support prior research emphasizing the significance of affective support and individualized instruction in literacy development.

Table 6. Student Post test Scores in the 4 Components of Reading Comprehension

Components	Percentage (%)	Description
A. Getting the Main Idea	42.86	<i>Satisfactory</i>
B. Checking Prior Knowledge	52.28	<i>Fair</i>
C. Inferencing	66.67	<i>Fair</i>
D. Predicting	33.33	<i>Good</i>

Tutors reported progressive improvement in student performance with a majority of learners rated good and a growing proportion achieving excellent by the fourth week. Results revealed improvement in all areas of reading proficiency. Scores in main idea recognition rose from 26.67% to

42.86%, prior knowledge from 33.33% to 52.28%, and inferencing from 43.33% to 66.67%. Interestingly, predicting skills declined in percentage but improved in quality descriptors. This indicates a shift from poor to good.

The comparative data reflected in Table 7 clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the CALL UP Approach. Across all four components, learners moved from “poor, fair” levels to “fair, satisfactory, good,” confirming measurable gains in reading comprehension. These results are consistent with Philippine-based interventions that emphasize scaffolded reading instruction as a means to raise proficiency (David et al., 2020; Mateo et al., 2024).

Table 7. Comparison of Pretest and Post-Test of Students’ Test Scores

Components	Pretest (%)	Description	Post Test (%)	Description
A. Getting the Main Idea	26.67	<i>Poor and Fair</i>	42.86	<i>Satisfactory</i>
B. Checking Prior Knowledge	33.33	<i>Fair and Satisfactory</i>	52.28	<i>Fair</i>
C. Inferencing	43.33	<i>Fair and Satisfactory</i>	66.67	<i>Fair</i>
D. Predicting	40.00	<i>Poor</i>	33.33	<i>Good</i>

The findings reveal that the CALL UP Approach was successful in enhancing reading proficiency among Grade 7 learners. Improvements were observed not only in test scores but also in affective engagement and tutor-observed performance. The consistent placement of learners in the instructional level highlights the importance of guided support, while the strong positive washback underscores the motivational value of the intervention.

However, the data also point to areas requiring further refinement. The fluctuating affective filters suggest that tutor consistency should be prioritized to build stronger rapport and reduce anxiety. Moreover, prediction skills, though qualitatively improved, require further instructional attention. These findings mirror Alcajde and Basilan’s (2024) assertion

that differentiated strategies and sustained tutorial programs are necessary to fully address reading difficulties.

In general, the CALL UP Approach demonstrated effectiveness as a school-based extension program that combines cognitive and affective dimensions of literacy development. It holds potential for broader application in similar contexts where learners struggle with English proficiency, contributing to DepEd's literacy recovery efforts in the post-pandemic era.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the CALL UP Approach significantly enhances the reading proficiency of Grade 7 learners. Therefore, using the Approach, the study addresses key areas of comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Learners showed notable improvement in post-test results and displayed positive engagement throughout the intervention. Although affective fluctuations were observed, the overall effect of the program was positive. This directly implies direct reinforcement to their weaknesses thus, revealing the importance of structured and scaffolded tutorial interventions in reading instruction. This alone shows that future implementation of the program should consider tutor consistency to stabilize affective learning conditions, refine instructional materials for prediction tasks, and extend the program duration to sustain learning gains. Considering the positive outcome of the intervention program in the context of a national high school in the city, comparative studies with other interventions may further establish the approach's effectiveness.

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