



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### BUILDING BETTER READERS: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT IN IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AMONG GRADE 10 STUDENTS OF STO. TOMAS COLLEGE-DANA O CITY, INC.

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#### ABSTRACT

Knowledge acquisition relies on the capacity of the students to read and grasp the meaning of the text. However, diverse factors are impeding students' ability to comprehend the breadth and depth of the English subjects—reading material—consequently compelling misinterpretation and incompetence in understanding the projected lessons. This study aimed to identify the effectiveness of vocabulary enrichment in improving students' reading comprehension among the students in Sto. Tomas College Danao City, Inc. It intends to accumulate students' discernment about the integrated method, specifically the unlocking and discussion of the complex words in the provided stories during the conducted reading drill. By employing the mixed-method research design, data were accumulated through the conduct of the survey, utilizing the Likert scale format and a series of questions generally aimed at determining the Grade 10 students' perception about the applied vocabulary enrichment in the contexts of its impact when reading a text, factors affecting students' weak comprehension, and other techniques and strategies to enhance reading comprehension. Thematic analysis was furthermore utilized to generate relevance and major themes anchored on students' responses. The findings suggest that the integration of vocabulary enrichment scaffolded the students to immediately absorb the essence of the stories they were reading (56.41 %), and it assisted them to establish vocabulary depth (understanding of the words' meanings, nuances, and uses) (56.41 %). Moreover, it even helped them enhance their vocabulary size and understand the events and conditions of the text. The students posited that the major cause of the students' incompetence in comprehension is weak vocabulary or inability to understand difficult words and phrases. In the matter of other techniques that may enhance students' reading comprehension, students affirmed that constant reading of any stories or text is definitely the key, as through this, students can think critically and analytically, immerse themselves in a better understanding of the world and environment, be exposed to various information, and widen their vocabulary. By reference to the result and analysis, vocabulary enrichment is an effective leverage for the enhancement of the students' reading comprehension; however, the students highlighted the negative aspect of using vocabulary enrichment, and that is the high tendency to forget the meaning and application of some words. Therefore, they accentuated the consistency and solidified reading sessions and practices for them to become competent and skilled readers.

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning is predominant in an individual's growth process. Generally speaking, it leverages various alterations in the aspect of a person's improvement and enrichment. In addition, learning is not limited to a single dimension, as it is multifaceted. Learning in the aspect of academic education has a similar view about affecting students' holistic process. To successfully obtain knowledge and acquire diverse essential

skills, reading must be done. Reading is a fundamental macro skill that definitely establishes a pavement of learning due to the several cognitive interactions being involved, such as perception, linguistic knowledge, and prior experience (Rumelhart, 1977). Reading thus exceeds its discerned description, as it aims to integrate multiple actions of the human mind, congruently executed with other body parts responsible for making sounds and receiving information. However, reading is a continuing issue among students. In a

global context, a huge portion of students are struggling with reading English texts, specifically accurate pronunciation of words, comprehending every word in a sentence, and acquiring the idea of a given text. Some students may exactly utter each syllable of every word in a sentence but are unable to discern the sentence's meaning. There are approximately 617 million children and adolescents globally who are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, indicating a widespread learning crisis (UNESCO UIS, 2017). Therefore, reading comprehension is an existing problem in a lot of places across nations. 21st-century education immensely imposes multiple actions to produce globally competitive students. Students, who have the knack to thrive in any life pursuit regardless of the recurring critical challenges. For that to happen, students should be able to obtain commendable reading proficiency and fluency in the English language because comprehension is the commencement of knowledge acquisition.

Nationally, the problem pertaining to the students' reading comprehension is ubiquitous in the majority of the country's academic institutions. Filipino students have experienced difficulties in comprehending reading material, particularly in the English medium. Poor reading comprehension blocks the opportunities for them to acquire information from the text they are reading, consequently resulting in their inability to analyze and act based on the demand of the text. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2018) asserted that among 79 participating countries, the Philippines ranked the lowest in reading comprehension, with Filipino students scoring a mean of 340 points, significantly below the OECD average of 487 points. It is alarming data that requires prompt and sustained solutions and action. The English language is regarded as the country's second language; for this reason, Filipino students must be equipped with the proficiency of the language, taking the possible job exits that await them into account.

Policies have truly been imposed in the Philippines in connection with the DepEd's curriculum emphasizing the role of reading. The National Capital Region (NCR) DepEd memorandum order number 67, series of 2014, indicates the 'No Read, No Pass' policy and moreover states that if the students at a certain grade level do not acquire the required standard level of reading, they are unpermitted to proceed to another year level. But even so, several Filipino high school students explicitly struggle with reading English texts. This inferred gap motivates the researchers to relentlessly venture in finding the possible application to improve the students' comprehension, as reading is a bottom line of knowledge acquisition. The students' weak reading comprehension is inclined in various factors affecting their reading abilities. The study pertaining to the "Factors that Affect Reading Comprehension of Grade 11 HUMSS Students in Bestlink College of the Philippines" by B. C. B. C. B. C. (2022), identifies various factors influencing reading comprehension among Grade 11 students, including poor vocabulary. The findings suggest that limited vocabulary knowledge is a significant barrier to understanding texts, highlighting the need for targeted vocabulary development strategies. The study about "Low Reading Literacy Skills of Elementary Pupils in the Philippines: A Meta-Synthesis" by Tomas et al. (2021), determines factors affecting low reading literacy among elementary pupils, highlighting poor vocabulary as a significant contributor to poor reading comprehension. The

study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to enhance vocabulary development in early education. The aforementioned relevant studies underscore the critical role of various aspects in the students' reading comprehension, specifically the factor that conceptualizes students' vocabulary depth and size. Elaboratively, the identification of those factors absolutely contributes to finding and examining the effective intervention for such a problem. In fact, several studies have posited the significant affiliation of reading comprehension with the vocabulary. Another study pertaining to "Vocabulary Instruction: A Critical Analysis of Theories, Research, and Practice" by William E. Nagy and Judith A. Scott (2019)," explores the direct relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, asserting that limited vocabulary can significantly impede a student's ability to understand and engage with texts.

Regionally, reading comprehension among students remains a dilemma. A study in 2022 focusing on the grade 6 students in Cebu City, "Cebuano and English Oral Reading Fluency among Beginning Readers" (Cristie and Delfin), asserts that students comprehend better in Cebuano text than in English. English text needs to be translated into Cebuano lingo in order for the students to apprehend the breadth and depth of the text. This underscores the importance of having a fortified and sustainable intervention upon reading English texts. According to the Philippine Information Agency, in June 2023, the Department of Education administered a Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) with the objective of identifying the numbers of readers and non-readers in 67 barangays of Cebu City. The assessment's findings state that 4,865 Grade 2 learners are either struggling or non-readers. Hence, there is an evident need to remedy this literacy issue as early as possible, because it is proven that high school students still encounter complexity in reading, as an article released by PressReader states that Paknaan National High School in Mandaue City reported, as of 2022, 785 students from grades 7 to 10 have reading gaps in the context of the English language. The data suggests an action that must be done to solve this alarming matter. In Danao City, there is an esteemed institution residing, Sto. Tomas College-Danao City, Inc., whose dilemmas related to the student's reading comprehension are similarly existing and require an immediate solution. The researchers had observed during their on-campus pre-service teaching that the junior high school students are facing a critical situation when reading and comprehending texts relevant to their subject reading materials. In the matter of this, the researchers decided to undertake this academic endeavor, aiming to examine and determine the effectiveness of vocabulary enrichment in view of several factors in improving the reading comprehension among grade 10 students through the conduct of a reading drill of the diversified literary pieces.

This study seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of Vocabulary Enrichment in improving the students' reading comprehension among grade 10 students of Sto. Tomas College-Danao City, Inc. It aims to know to what extent does the integration of vocabulary enrichment assist them in comprehending the provided classified stories. It further targets the determination of the underlying factors that possibly affect the students' reading comprehension. By reference to the findings, this study seeks to identify other techniques and strategies to enhance student's reading comprehension.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The researchers used a mix-method employing both qualitative and quantitative methods that aim to identify the relationships between the two variables in the research study. It additionally seeks to identify the effectiveness of vocabulary enrichment in enhancing students' reading comprehension of the varied reading materials featuring the varied reading-related activities in a classroom.

**Research Instrument:** The primary research instrument used in this study is a survey questionnaire through face-to-face surveys conducted in the classroom to ensure direct engagement and accurate responses from the students. The instrument included a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 to assess students comprehension skills and engagement with reading materials or activities. Additionally, open-ended questions were included in the survey to obtain deeper insights into students' reading comprehension difficulties and the effectiveness of vocabulary enrichment strategies.

**Research Environment and Participants:** This study was conducted at Sto. Tomas College, Danao City, Inc., has consistently been dedicated to contributing to the students' learning and providing them with different skills in cognitive, communication, organizational, leadership, and physical skills. It has been unquestionably an appropriate area for conducting this study that will significantly help the researchers to obtain the required data. The participants are the Grade 10 students who are currently enrolled this academic year 2024-2025. This particular level consists of two sections, namely: St. Ezekiel Moreno and St. Thomas of Villanova. Specifically, St. Ezekiel Moreno has a total of 24 students, and St. Thomas of Villanova has 22 students. Therefore, a total of 46 students will be selected to participate, ensuring relevance to the study's objectives.

**Data Collection Procedure:** To identify the effectiveness of vocabulary enrichment in improving reading comprehension among grade 10 students of Sto. Tomas College, Danao City, Inc., a researcher-designed survey questionnaire checklist and open ended questions was administered. The researcher conducted a vocabulary enrichment by unlocking difficult terms from the three different stories provided with its corresponding questions as the basis of the survey questionnaire. The survey was distributed via face-to-face, with a specific time frame allotted for participants to complete the survey. The researcher applies convenience sampling where the members of the target population who fulfill certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability at the given time, or the willingness to participate are taken into the purpose of the study. It is the simplest way to collect respondents and conduct a survey.

**Data Analysis Procedure:** This study implies likert-scale and thematic analysis to analyze the quantitative and qualitative responses of the participants. The researcher examined the collected data by getting the frequency and percentage of the participants' responses in the quantitative data. For the qualitative data, use an inductive approach through thematic analysis, where the data are analyzed narratively to identify emerging themes. These combined approaches enabled the researcher to classify students' experiences and insights in relation to the vocabulary enrichment.

**Sampling Procedure:** A convenient sampling technique was employed in selecting the research study participants. The primary step involved conducting a reading drill and distributing survey questionnaires to the available and accessible students of Grade 10-St. Thomas of Villanova and in Grade 10—St. Ezekiel Moreno, whose knowledge and ability are substantial in participating in the aforementioned reading activity and answering the survey. The researchers ensured that the selected respondents could respond to the provided questions through the provision of their authentic perceptions. The integration of vocabulary enrichment and the conduct of the survey were personally done by the researchers for more realistic interaction and accurate accumulation of data.

**Ethical Consideration:** In line with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were rigorously upheld. Before the survey was conducted, informed consent was secured, along with approval from the supervising teacher, school principal, college president, and the program head. Before the administration of the survey, a comprehensive process was undertaken to ensure that informed consent was properly obtained from all participants. This process began by securing the necessary approvals from key stakeholders involved in the educational environment. Specifically, consent was granted by the supervising teacher, the school principal, the college president, and the head of the college program. Each of these individuals played a crucial role in overseeing the educational activities and ensuring that ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process.

## RESULTS

The researchers set key themes on students' views regarding the effectiveness of the vocabulary enrichment in improving reading comprehension during the reading drill of Grade 10 students of Sto. Tomas College-Danao City, Inc. It principally targets the identification of the efficacy and efficiency of vocabulary enrichment through asking them to voluntarily label how the vocabulary enrichment helps them to acquire knowledge about the meaning and usage of complex words and idiomatic phrases, to critically and analytically think, to understand the concept and context of the story, to apprehend grammar and sentence construction rules, to establish vocabulary depth and size, and to stimulate engagement in reading. Additionally, this study further seeks to know the dominant factors affecting their reading comprehension and significantly aims to know the possible intervention accompanied by other strategies and techniques to successfully enhance their reading comprehension. The above table shows that in item no. 1, the frequency number is 17, which means that 17 students that corresponds to 43.59 percent labeled the number 5 (strongly agree). These students claimed that vocabulary enrichment helped them understand each statement of the given stories. In the 2nd item, the response anchor that has the highest frequency is No. 5 (strongly agree), and according to the data gathered, 20 students, which equates to 51.28 percent, immensely agreed that vocabulary enrichment assisted them to apprehend the concept of the story. In item no. 3, the response anchor that acquires the highest frequency is No. 5 (strongly agree), and as recorded in the table, 19 students, which corresponds to 48.72 percent, affirmed that vocabulary enrichment assisted them to understand the context

**Table 1. On the integration of Vocabulary Enrichment**

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
1. The application of Vocabulary Enrichment assisted me to comprehend each sentence in the story.	17	43.59 %
2. The provision of difficult terms and their meanings provided me key points about the concept of the story.	20	51.28 %
3. The integration of Vocabulary Enrichment helped me to recognize and thoroughly understand the sequential events in the story.	19	48.72 %
4. Through the meanings of the difficult words provided, I was able to determine the relationship of those complex words with other words in a sentence.	24	61.54 %
5. Vocabulary Enrichment helped me build a vocabulary depth (the meanings, uses, and relationships with other words).	22	56.41 %
6. Vocabulary enrichment became the way for me to improve my vocabulary size (how many words a person knows).	21	53.85 %
7. Vocabulary Enrichment assisted my way of communication, both oral and written, through a comprehensive expression and reception of ideas.	20	51.28 %
8. With the application of Vocabulary Enrichment, I started to feel engaged in the text I read.	20	51.28 %
9. Learning new words assisted me to immediately absorb the essence of the text.	22	56.41 %
10. Vocabulary enrichment helped me to formulate judgment about the ideas presented.	20	51.28 %
11. I was able to acquire knowledge pertaining to the basic grammar rules and the application of the parts of speech.	21	53.85 %
12. With the utilization of the Vocabulary Enrichment, I was able to apprehend new idiomatic and poetic expressions that contribute to grasping the context of the reading material.	19	48.72 %

of the story, particularly the different situations and conditions involved. With reference to item No. 4, No. 5 (strongly agree) is the leading response anchor. As recorded in the table, 24 students, which equates to 61.54 percent, strongly believed

that through the integration of vocabulary enrichment, they learned the uses and application of the context clues. In item No. 5, the response anchor that accumulated the highest number is No. 5 (strongly agree). According to the data collected, 22 students, which corresponds to 56.41 percent, claimed that vocabulary enrichment contributed to establishing their vocabulary depth (words’ definitions, uses, nuances, and relationships with other words). Referring to item No. 6, the dominant leading response anchor is No. 5 (strongly agree). As shown in the table, 21 students, equivalent to 53.85 percent, firmly believed that the integration of vocabulary enrichment contributed to improving their vocabulary size (the number of words they know). With reference to item No. 7, No. 5 (strongly disagree) is the response anchor, which is leading in the matter of frequency. According to the data collected, 20 students, equivalent to 51.28 percent, affirmed that vocabulary enrichment allowed them to apply the difficult words into another context. In item No. 8, the response anchor that accumulates the highest frequency is No. 5 (strongly agree), and based on the gathered data, 20 students, which corresponds to 51.28 percent, immensely agreed that vocabulary enrichment stimulated their engagement with the stories or with the text. In item No. 9, No. 5 (strongly agree) is the response anchor, which is leading in terms of frequency. According to the table, 22 students, equivalent to 56.41 percent, strongly believed that vocabulary enrichment helped them to easily absorb the essence of the text. With reference to item No. 10, the response anchor that has the highest frequency is No. 4 (Agree), as shown in the table; 20 students, which equates to 51.26 percent, agreed with the idea that vocabulary enrichment scaffolded them in analyzing and interpreting various ideas of the stories. Referring to item No. 11, No. 5 (strongly agree) is the dominating response anchor. According to the data gathered, 21 students, which equals 53.85 percent, firmly believed that vocabulary enrichment added to their knowledge about grammar rules and sentence construction. In the last item, the response anchor that has the highest frequency is No. 5 (strongly agree), and based on the data, 19 students, which equals 48.72 percent, strongly agreed that vocabulary enrichment widened their knowledge about the meanings and uses of idioms and literary devices.

**On Grade 10 Students’ Perspectives:** When the readers encounter words they are not used to or have never encountered before, it becomes confusing and breaks the continuity of understanding. The student expressed, “*It’s difficult and complicated to understand because of unfamiliar words*”. Many participants indicated that words carrying deep, multi-layered meanings or words that carry more than one meaning render understanding even harder. Moreover, a paucity of contextual cues or background information adds to the difficulties of reading. If readers cannot connect the content to previous experience or understand its underlying themes, concepts, and analogies, the material may become daunting. In general, it is quite often not the organization of the content itself but the words and context that determine how accessible it is.

**Theme 2: Poor Vocabulary:** According to the various reasons provided by students, a few among them state that reading comprehension is not up to the mark. One of the students expressed, “*Limited vocabularies are unable to comprehend texts that contain new or difficult words*”. This unfamiliarity with words generally stems from a lack of exposure to adequate reading materials or reading very rarely. A few

respondents also stated that students are not accustomed to reading on a daily basis, so it is hard for them to establish fluency and comprehension. Poor interest in the subject matter, distractions due to games, and indolence were also noted as major causes. In addition, poor understanding of grammar rules and absence of re-reading or note-taking practices undermine comprehension. Without regular reading, interaction, and vocabulary building, students tend to struggle to comprehend what they read.

**Theme 3: Through the provision of difficult terms, accompanied by their meaning:** A Grade 10 student identified the importance of challenging vocabulary along with their definitions. The students feel that learning new, complex words enhances their understanding of the texts. One student noted, "It allows me to gain a deeper understanding of the text with the support of difficult terms." Reading capabilities and prepares them for more advanced literary analysis in the future. Through this dedicated effort to comprehend challenging vocabulary, students build a solid foundation for their academic growth and foster a lifelong love for reading and learning.

**Theme 4: Positive- Improve or expand vocabulary:** Grade 10 students of Sto. Tomas College-Danao City, Inc. have believed that expanding one's vocabulary will help one's reading comprehension. Most students believe that by learning new words helps them comprehend texts more fully. One student said, "It made me understand more and expand my vocabulary."

They added that students should have to read a variety of stories and infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from context to build and enhance their vocabulary. Group work and many other cooperative activities help students improve their skills as they learn from each other's insights. One student has explained, "You can easily forget the words or its meaning." These students have enhanced their reading skills and prepared themselves for success in class by concentrating on the vocabulary.

*By reference to the findings, what other techniques or strategies are needed to improve students' reading comprehension?*

**Theme 5: Immersing oneself into regular reading sessions:** To fully understand and retain what is read, enhancing reading comprehension requires a variety of strategies, not just expanding vocabulary. Some of the students' responses are "Reading more books every day," "Reading a poem," "Repetition (reading repetitively until understood) and research." Most respondents highlighted the importance of repeating and rereading because these strategies help solidify information in the long term.

Others noted that reading tends to expose one to a range of linguistic forms, such as poetry and complex stories. With the assistance of easier-to-read words and simplification of hard sentences using tools like ChatGPT or research also helps in easier understanding. Visual aids and multimedia websites like YouTube and Netflix were cited as useful tools for visual learners. Overall, regular reading, curiosity, and using more than one method are required for easier comprehension.

## CONCLUSION

This study examines the impact of vocabulary enrichment on reading comprehension among Grade 10 students at Sto. Tomas College Danao City Inc. The results showed that expanding vocabulary significantly improved students' ability to understand and retain information from texts. Students found it easier to grasp difficult words and follow main ideas in reading materials. However, the study also noted that the effectiveness of vocabulary enrichment depends on the students' prior knowledge and the frequency with which new words are incorporated into the reading materials.

Despite the positive outcomes, challenges in implementing vocabulary enrichment programs were observed, particularly in terms of students' consistency and the time constraints of the curriculum. It is important to recognize the need for regular reinforcement and the integration of vocabulary exercises across all subject areas to sustain long-term improvement in reading comprehension. Overall, vocabulary enrichment is a valuable strategy for enhancing reading comprehension. Schools should prioritize vocabulary development to help students become more confident and skilled readers.

**Future Directions:** This study highlights practical solutions to help students enhance their skills in reading comprehension. Enrichment in vocabulary is essential, as having a broad, wide-ranging vocabulary is crucial for understanding, analyzing, and interacting with textual materials. By improving a student's vocabulary, it allows them to think critically and analyze text deeply, helping them access more complex and abstract concepts. Vocabulary knowledge extends to any field and across subjects like science, math, social sciences, and other academic and non-academic contexts. If you want to make learning new words easier for yourself, as well as your writing, experience difficult texts. Reading books of different genres or using word learning apps can assist in acquiring more vocabulary. The important factor is to remain persistent since expanding your vocabulary is no overnight task. These seemingly small approaches

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