



English teachers' experiences in the conduct of the reading camp: Bases for reading enhancement program

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Abstract

This qualitative-phenomenological study was conducted to determine the experiences of English teachers, who volunteered in the conduct of Reading Camp, as bases for a proposed Reading Enhancement Program of Local Government Unit (LGU) of the Municipality of Tigbauan. The findings revealed that English teachers' experiences in Reading Camp were fulfilling yet demanding, involved adapting to diverse learners' needs, and needed navigating external influences on the learners' engagement. Challenges encountered were time and resource constraints, difficulty in maintaining learners' engagement and motivation, and low reading levels and learning gaps among participants. To overcome the challenges, English teachers used coping mechanisms such as addressing low reading levels and learning gaps, demonstrating adaptation and resourcefulness of materials, and using engaging and interactive strategies. It concluded that successful reading initiatives would depend not only on teachers' dedication but also on strong partnerships among schools, parents, Department of Education, and Local Government Unit (LGU). A proposed Reading Enhancement Program was recommended based on results of this study.

Keywords: English teachers' experiences, reading camp, reading enhancement program

Introduction

Developing critical thinking skills allows individuals to connect ideas across different parts of a text while uncovering hidden meanings through context analysis and interpretation. These abilities extend beyond basic word-to-phrase comprehension and foster deeper engagement with written materials.

However, reading comprehension remains a global challenge, as evidenced by the 2018 Programme for International Learner Assessment (PISA) results. The Philippines ranked last in reading proficiency among participating countries, with an average score of 340, which was comparable to that of the Dominican Republic. Alarmingly, over 80% of Filipino learners failed to meet minimum proficiency level in reading that made the country one of the lowest performers in assessment (Soria, 2024) ^[49].

In response to the pressing issues, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Tigbauan, through the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Municipal Federation and in partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd), introduced the Summer Reading Camp. It was first launched in 2022 ^[23] during the celebration of Linggo ng Kabataan and evolved into a continuing program implemented in every barangay to support non-readers, particularly from underprivileged backgrounds, as they prepared themselves for face-to-face learning in schools. The program enlisted the help of stakeholders, including barangay teacher coordinators, and other volunteer educators, to provide reading instruction.

Designed to foster the holistic development of young learners, the initiative aimed to enhance their physical, social, emotional, cognitive, psychological, spiritual, and language skills. Moreover, it sought to ease the transition from home-based care to formal education and ensured that children were equipped for primary school (Office of the Sangguniang Kabataan, 2022).

Additionally, the program played a crucial role in strengthening the competencies of service providers and supervisors as well as in maintaining high quality standards

in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programs. Although it was not mandated by a municipal ordinance, the initiative was institutionalized as a continuing program of the Sangguniang Kabataan Municipal Federation of Tigbauan and was integrated into the Comprehensive Barangay Youth Development Plan (CBYDP) and the Annual Barangay Youth Investment Program (ABYIP) across all barangays to ensure its sustainability.

Despite those efforts, significant gaps remained in the effective implementation of the reading programs. The researcher observed that the Reading Camp faced challenges, particularly for English teachers who were responsible for delivering specialized instruction.

One of the primary issues was the lack of adequate reading materials and technological resources in barangay settings. Additionally, volunteer-based teaching posed challenges, as educators had to balance multiple responsibilities that put limit to their participation. Furthermore, the diverse reading abilities of learners required teachers to adapt their instructional methods that added another layer of complexity to the program.

With the given challenges, there was a noticeable lack of research that focused on experiences of volunteer teachers in Reading Camps, particularly in the Municipality of Tigbauan. The gap in literature underscored the need for further investigation. Thus, this study aimed to explore teachers' firsthand experiences in implementing summer Reading Camp activities.

Findings served as foundation for developing a reading enhancement program that would address existing challenges and improve literacy instruction in community-based settings.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the experiences of English teachers who volunteered in the conduct of the Reading Camp that was initiated by the Local Government Unit

(LGU) as bases for reading enhancement program in the Municipality of Tigbauan, for the school year 2024-2025 ^[5, 43].

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of English teachers in the conduct of the Reading Camp?
2. What are the challenges experienced by English teachers in the conduct of the Reading Camp?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of English teachers to overcome the challenges they experienced in the conduct of the Reading Camp?
4. What reading enhancement program can be proposed based on the results of the study?

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on The Active View of Reading (Janefarrall, 2023) ^[25], The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and Scarborough's Reading Rope (Seidenberg, 2017) as cited in Reading Rockets (2025) ^[43].

The Active View of Reading model emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text, suggesting that reading is not just a passive activity but an active process where readers construct meaning based on their experiences and knowledge. This perspective encourages strategies that engage learners actively, making Reading Camps more interactive and responsive to individual needs (Janefarrall, 2023) ^[25].

The Simple View of Reading, a well-established model, proposes that reading comprehension results from the combination of two elements: decoding, which is the ability to read words, and language comprehension, which is the ability to understand spoken language (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

This theory can inform Reading Camp activities by ensuring that both aspects are addressed which further help learners develop both their decoding skills and their understanding of language (Reading Rockets, 2025) ^[43].

Scarborough's Reading Rope model by Seidenberg (2017) expands on the Simple View by illustrating how various skills intertwine to support reading comprehension. It highlights the importance of both word recognition and language comprehension, suggesting that effective reading instruction should integrate these elements.

Reading Camps can utilize this model to create a balanced curriculum that fosters comprehensive reading skills (Reading Rockets, 2025) ^[43].

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study aimed to determine the experiences of English teachers in the conduct of the Reading Camp, that was initiated by the Local Government Unit (LGU), as bases for a proposed reading enhancement program in the Municipality of Tigbauan for the school year 2024-2025 ^[5, 43].

The study employed a qualitative research method utilizing in-depth interviews, with a phenomenological research design.

The participants were ten (10) purposively selected English teachers who took part in the Reading Camp, which served as the basis for the Reading Enhancement Program initiated by the Local Government Unit (LGU) of the Municipality of Tigbauan during the school year 2024–2025 ^[5, 51].

Participants were selected based on the following criterion: English teachers who volunteered in Reading Camp in the Municipality of Tigbauan, Tigbauan, Iloilo.

This study utilized a researcher-made interview guide which was designed to gather rich details about teachers' experiences in conducting Reading Camp.

The instrument underwent validation by the qualified experts in the fields of English, testing, and research.

Thematic Analysis was used to analyze and interpret the responses gathered.

Research Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive research method and conducted in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of English teachers who volunteered in the Reading Camp. According to Sirisilla (2023) ^[25], descriptive research design is an effective approach for scientists and researchers to collect detailed information about a specific group or phenomenon.

Research Design

This study used qualitative design using a phenomenological approach. Furthermore, this study was anchored to the phenomenological theory initiated by Edmund Husserl which declared that the exploration and understanding of lived experience was the work of individual subjects, and that particular research went into great depth and detail regarding teachers' experiences in the conduct of Reading Camps and aimed to fathom the true essence of their perceptions and insights (Tassone, 2017).

Phenomenology, as Husserl asserted, further aimed to encourage the researcher to suspend or bracket the presuppositions to carefully listen to the subjective experiences of research participants, such that their voices led into important thematic areas for exploration. It gave way to understanding teachers' challenges and successes which can be leveraged in an educational program improvement strategy.

Respondents

The participants in the study were purposively selected ten (10) English teachers who volunteered in the conduct of a Reading Camp Program in the Municipality of Tigbauan for school year 2024-2025 ^[5, 43]. They were selected based on the given criteria: English teachers in the different schools within the Schools District of Tigbauan; and teacher participants should volunteer themselves to participate in the conduct of the Reading Camp program.

Sampling Design

The participants for this study were chosen using purposive sampling. This sampling method is commonly employed in research across various paradigms because it helps ensure the selection of a high-quality sample without bias, thereby enhancing the reliability and credibility of the findings (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024) ^[50].

The participants were Ten (10) purposively selected English teachers who volunteered in conducting the Reading Camp in the Municipality of Tigbauan during the school year 2024-2025 ^[5, 43].

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher utilized a self-developed interview schedule, which consisted of three (3) interview guides. The questions

were designed to explore the experiences of English teachers during the Reading Camp, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they employed to overcome these challenges.

This researcher-designed instrument was employed in face-to-face interviews. Upon completion, the participants' responses were collected, organized, recorded, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and generate key themes.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection process commenced once the study received approval from the panel of experts. Initially, the researcher obtained the necessary permits to conduct the study from the Dean of the Graduate School, the District Supervisor, the School Heads of the selected secondary schools in the District of Tigbauan, and the Mayor of the Municipality of Tigbauan.

After the permissions were granted, the researcher proceeded with scheduling the interviews at a time most convenient for the participants to minimize disruption to their teaching responsibilities. A formal invitation, including the purpose of the study, the scope of the interviews, and the estimated duration, was sent to the participants in advance.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face to ensure a more personal and detailed exchange of information. Each interview was expected to last between 30 to 45 minutes and would depend on the depth of the responses.

During the interview, the researcher followed a semi-structured format using a prepared researcher-made interview guide. Such approach allowed flexibility for the participants to elaborate on their experiences and make sure that all necessary topics were covered.

To ensure the accuracy of the data collected, with participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with written notes. Confidentiality and ethical considerations were strictly upheld throughout the entire process.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. It is a widely used method that enables researchers to interpret and understand the underlying meanings of information gathered from interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative sources. The purpose of thematic analysis is to detect significant or interesting patterns in the data and use these themes to address the research questions or provide insights on a particular issue. Essentially, it involves summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data to make sense of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2023) ^[18].

After the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and analyzed to identify common themes and insights related to participants' experiences in the conduct of the Reading Camp.

The researcher then conducted an open coding process to highlight the most prominent phrases, themes, and trends in the responses of participants. These codes denoted recurring notions or experiences mentioned by the teachers who conducted the Reading Camp.

The raw data were also checked against the identified themes as part of the analysis process to confirm that the themes were what the responses presented. The themes were analyzed and interpreted in relation to the aims of the study after validation. Linking back to the existing literature and

theories, the researcher strengthened the interpretation and understanding of the experiences of English teachers in the conduct of the Reading Camp.

Finally, the results were shared in a narrative with quotes from the participants to highlight their perspectives. Thematic reflections were presented together with their implications for Reading Camp as well as its implementation strategies. The data analysis yielded valuable insights which guided the direction of the study.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the experiences of English teachers who volunteered in the Local Government Unit (LGU) initiated Reading Camp in the Municipality of Tigbauan during the school year 2024–2025 ^[5, 43], as bases for developing a reading enhancement program. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with ten (10) purposively selected English teachers who participated in the Reading Program. A researcher-made interview guide, validated by experts in English, testing, and research, was used to elicit rich descriptions of the teachers' experiences. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that English teachers teaching experiences in the conduct of the Reading Camp went through fulfilling yet demanding experience, adapting to diverse learners' needs, and navigating external influences on learners' engagement.

It was found out that the challenges experienced by English teachers in the conduct of the Reading Camp were time and resource constraints, difficulty in maintaining learners' engagement and motivation, and low reading levels and learning gaps.

The coping mechanisms used by English teachers in the conduct of the Reading Camp as revealed in the study focused on addressing low reading levels and learning gaps, demonstrating adaptation and resourcefulness, and using engaging and interactive strategies.

Insights

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

The findings suggested that while English teachers found the Reading Camp experience personally and professionally fulfilling, significant challenges that required adaptability and resilience were also posted. The sense of fulfillment stemmed from witnessing learners' progress and contributing meaningfully to literacy development, which reinforced teachers' commitment to volunteer service. Teachers' experiences in adapting to diverse learners' needs underscored the importance of professional support and targeted training in reading instruction. Moreover, the influence of external factors, including learners' home environments, attendance, and motivation, indicated that reading interventions were shaped not only by classroom practices but also by broader social contexts.

The identified challenges highlighted key structural and pedagogical issues that influenced the effectiveness of the Reading Camp. Meanwhile, the presence of low reading levels and significant learning gaps underscored the importance of differentiated instruction, diagnostic assessment, and flexible grouping strategies.

The coping mechanisms of the English teachers reflected their adaptability and professional commitment in responding to the challenges of the Reading Camp. By addressing low reading levels and learning gaps, teachers

demonstrated an understanding of the need for differentiated instruction, flexible pacing, and individualized support to ensure that all learners could benefit from the program. Their adaptation and resourcefulness such as modifying lesson plans, improvising instructional materials, and maximizing limited resources highlighted their ability to sustain effective instruction despite constraints. The use of engaging and interactive strategies further indicated that they prioritized learners' motivation and participation, recognizing that meaningful engagement was indeed essential for improving reading skills.

Recommendations

Considering the findings and insights obtained in the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Effective reading enhancement programs should provide institutional support for teachers, incorporate learner-centered and differentiated approaches, and strengthen collaboration among schools, families, and local stakeholders to sustain learners' engagement and reading development.

For Reading Camps to be more effective, program design should align available resources with instructional demands, provide teachers with support and training in differentiated reading instruction, and adopt motivational strategies that address learners' diverse abilities and learning needs.

Teachers' coping practices play a crucial role in the success of reading interventions and underscore the importance of equipping educators with training, resources, and institutional support to strengthen these adaptive and learner-centered approaches.

To validate the results of the present investigation, parallel studies are encouraged to be conducted in a wider scope and consider other variables not mentioned in this study.

Additionally, it is strongly recommended that the proposed output of this study, the Reading Enhancement Program (READ Program), be utilized as a practical guide for planning and implementing Reading Camps and similar literacy interventions.

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