

Reading Habits and Communication Skills Mediated by Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Grade 5 Public School Learners: Bases for Action Plan

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ABSTRACT

In the reading-based educational context today, the reading and language development of learners is critical to their communicative ability. The study identified the association of reading habits, vocabulary acquisition methodologies and communication abilities of Grade 5 learners in the District of Calape, Bohol for School Year 2025–2026. The nature of the study was descriptive–correlational. The researcher used a researcher-made questionnaire in collecting data on reading habits (attitude, frequency, purpose and time), vocabulary learning methodologies and communication skills Cronbach's α of 0.9328284 with an interpretation of highly internally consistent (HIC). Statistical treatments were carried out using the weighted mean, standard deviation, and the path estimates. The findings revealed that the respondents had a moderate level of reading habits ($M = 2.83$), vocabulary learning strategies ($M = 2.98$) and speaking abilities ($M = 3.12$). Results revealed a substantial positive association between reading habits and communication skills ($r = 0.695$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, reading habits and vocabulary learning methodologies were strong predictors of communication skills ($R^2 = 0.628$). The results underline the significance of reading habits and ways of promoting vocabulary acquisition for developing communication abilities of learners. A plan of action was designed to close the gaps identified and to encourage the growth of literacy amongst learners.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Communication, Communication Skills, Reading Habits, Learning Strategies

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Reading habits significantly contribute to the enhancement of students' vocabulary and communication abilities, which are crucial for academic achievement and language development. Consistent engagement with reading materials, whether at home and in educational settings, allows learners to discover and assimilate new vocabulary, so enhancing their linguistic proficiency and capacity for effective expression (Fitria et al., 2021). Notwithstanding this recognized correlation, a significant deficiency of research exists within the Philippine environment, especially concerning Grade 5 students in public primary schools. This phase is pivotal as kids shift from learning to read to reading for comprehension; nevertheless, several studies concentrate on older learners or overall reading proficiency, neglecting this particular demographic.

Fifth-grade public school students in the Philippines frequently encounter obstacles such as restricted access to reading resources, adverse socioeconomic circumstances, and inadequate literacy support at home, which impede their reading advancement, vocabulary expansion, and communication abilities. The challenges are exacerbated by diminished participation in deep reading and insufficient targeted treatments (Ligpitan, 2024). This study seeks to investigate the correlation between reading habits, vocabulary enhancement, and communication abilities among fifth-grade students. The results are anticipated to furnish instructors with evidence-based insights for crafting targeted interventions and enhancing effective reading habits, hence boosting students' literacy and communication outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Design. The study utilized a quantitative, non-experimental mediation research design to investigate the mediating role of vocabulary learning strategies on the relationship between reading habits and communication skills.

Environment and Respondents. The study was conducted at the Municipality of Calape with nineteen (19) public elementary school under one (1) district. Further, the respondents of this study were the Grade 5 learners who were randomly selected through stratified random sampling and distributed across 19 public elementary schools in the district of Calape.

Instrument. The research employed an adapted questionnaire to gather information from participants, comprising three sections. The initial section comprises 23 measures that assess reading habits including attitude (6 items), frequency (5 items), purpose (8 items), and time allocated to reading (4 items), derived from Pham, U. M. N. (2021). The second section includes 15 items on vocabulary acquisition strategies sourced from Tungadewi, I. (2016), whilst the third section consists of 25 items evaluating learners' communication competencies modified from Murlidhar (2013). A 4-point likert scaling was used in and the instruments were subjected to pilot testing to verify reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9328284, signifying a very internally consistent measure.

Procedure. After obtaining ethical approval and permissions from the Campus President, Schools Division Superintendent, Schools District Supervisor of Calape and to the school principals across the 19 public elementary school in the District of Calape. Further, surveys were administered to Grade 5 learners. Confidentiality was assured. Gathered questionnaires were tallied, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted with the assistance of a statistician.

Statistical Treatment. To determine the extent of reading habits, vocabulary learning strategies, and level of communication skills among Grade 5 learners, weighted mean, and standard deviation was used in the study. Furthermore, to determine if the mediating role significantly mediates on the relationship between reading habits and communication skills, mediation analysis was used to determine effect.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of Reading Habits of Grade 5 Learners

Table 1 presents the reading habits of Grade 5 learners as perceived in terms of attitude, frequency, purposes, and time spent.

Table 1 Reading Habits of Grade 5 learners

n =257

Domains	Composite Mean	SD	Interpretation
Purposes	3.17	0,80	Moderately Evident
Attitude	3.04	0.80	Moderately Evident
Frequency	2.63	0.90	Moderately Evident
Time Spent	2.46	0.92	Moderately Evident
Overall Composite Mean	2.83	0.86	Moderately Evident

Table 1 reveals that Grade 5 learners have reasonably evident reading habits in all categories with intent having the highest composite mean ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.80$). This implies that the learners are mainly motivated to read for fun since they prefer to read English books for fun. Also, it is evident that the pupils appreciate reading for fun but it is not yet a regular leisure activity. As for attitude ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.80$), the learners have had a generally good assessment of reading as something gratifying and fascinating. However, their muted reaction to the lack of time of others for reading suggests that reading is not yet a priority in their daily life.

Frequency ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.90$) and time spent ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.92$) both suggest moderate to somewhat positive engagement, suggesting uneven reading behaviors. Although students report still being able to find time to read in spite of scholastic responsibilities, habits such as finishing books consistently or spending long periods of time reading are less typical. Most learners read in small bursts, irregularly, frequently distracted by other schoolwork, lack of resources, and the pull of digital media. Overall, while learners expressed enthusiasm and good attitudes toward reading, their reading habits were underdeveloped and inconsistent, suggesting the need for structured interventions to promote sustained reading practices.

Level of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Table 2 presents the level of vocabulary learning strategies of Grade 5 learners as measured through various indicators.

Table 2 Level of Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Grade 5 Learners

n =257

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I use pictures illustrated in...	3.17	0.76	Agree
2. I learn meaning of words by...	3.15	0.79	Agree
3. I know some new words ...	3.15	0.74	Agree
4. I ask my classmate for...	3.14	0.80	Agree
5. I study a spelling of new...	3.13	0.85	Agree
6. I write new word in a ...	3.08	0.80	Agree
7. I use bilingual dictionary to ...	3.01	0.93	Agree
8. I use physical actions...	2.97	0.89	Agree
9. I ask the lecturer to translate...	2.95	0.88	Agree
10. I ask native speaker for help...	2.95	0.80	Agree
11. I use online exercise to test ...	2.88	0.88	Agree
12. I ask the lecturer to put...	2.85	0.81	Agree
13. I am not worry very much...	2.79	0.89	Agree
14. I repeatedly practice new...	2.50	0.97	Agree
Composite mean	2.98	0.82	Moderately Utilized

The findings of table 2 shows that the highest ranked item among the vocabulary learning strategies is item number 2 which claimed that “I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings” ($M= 3.17$, $SD= 0.76$), Agree, interpreted as “Moderately Utilized”. It means that learners typically rely on visual aids, such as pictures in textbooks, to grasp and determine word meanings. This research validated by Chai et al. (2021) indicated that visual aids, particularly pictures, significantly boost vocabulary learning among primary learners by helping them acquire and recall word meanings more efficiently.

On the other side, the lowest-rated item is the “I repeatedly practice new words” ($M= 2.50$, $SD= 0.97$), Agree, which falls under “Moderately Utilized”. This implies that Grade 5 learners only minimally participate in repeated practice of new vocabulary, suggesting that reinforcement tactics are not regularly implemented. This study coincides with Kim and Webb (2023), in which they underlined that spaced practice and repetition considerably improve vocabulary memory; on the other hand, learners often fail to apply repeated review consistently without structured supervision.

Generally, the table shows the level of vocabulary acquisition strategies of Grade 5 learners, exhibiting a composite mean of ($M=2.98$, $SD= 0.82$), Agree, which is regarded as “Moderately Utilized”. This implies that Grade 5 learners moderately employ vocabulary learning strategies in their language learning process. It also means that while they are aware of and occasionally apply these methods, their use is not yet highly consistent or completely developed.

Level of Communication Skills

Table 3 presents the level of communication skills of Grade 5 learners as measured through various indicators.

Table 3 Level of the Communication Skills of Grade 5 learners

n = 257

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I motivate others to do...	3.33	0.75	Strongly Agree
2. I treat others respectfully.	3.29	0.74	Strongly Agree
3. I ask the best questions ...	3.24	0.74	Agree
4. I give my full attention to...	3.22	0.77	Agree
5. I respect the dignity and ...	3.22	0.81	Agree
6. I respect myself in all my...	3.21	0.74	Agree
7. I optimize others' ...	3.18	0.68	Agree
8. I ask for clarification of r...	3.16	0.75	Agree
9. I share my feelings and ...	3.16	0.77	Agree
10. I praise and reprimand ...	3.15	0.76	Agree
11. I assert my needs...	3.15	0.77	Agree
12. I discover what is in the ...	3.14	0.76	Agree
13. I communicate my ...	3.13	0.75	Agree
14. I deal with conflicts and ...	3.12	0.79	Agree
15. I minimize others'...	3.11	0.76	Agree
16. I maintain eye contact ...	3.10	0.77	Agree
17. I negotiate the best ...	3.10	0.78	Agree
18. I cooperate with others ...	3.07	0.77	Agree
19. I encourage others to ...	3.04	0.81	Agree
20. I understand and ...	3.03	0.72	Agree
21. I optimize ...	3.03	0.73	Agree
22. I respond appropriately ...	3.02	0.81	Agree
23. I deal optimally with ...	2.95	0.88	Agree
24 display empathy.	2.94	0.79	Agree
25. I respond optimally even...	2.93	0.85	Agree
Composite mean	3.12	0.77	Moderately Competent

The result shows that the top ranked item of vocabulary learning strategies is item number 2 : “*I utilize visuals given in the textbook to find the word meaning*” (M= 3.17, SD= 0.76), Agree, interpreted as “Moderately Utilized”. This shows that learners often depend on visual aids like pictures in textbooks to understand and find word meanings. This result was also supported by Chai et al. (2021) who discovered that visual aids, especially pictures, play a vital role in improving vocabulary learning of primary learners in that they facilitate understanding and retention of the meanings of words among learners.

However, the lowest-rated item is the “*I repeatedly practice new words*” (M= 2.50, SD= 0.97) which is in the “Moderately Utilized” category. Agree This suggests that Grade 5 learners are not highly engaged in repeated practice of new vocabulary, and that reinforcement mechanisms are not routinely employed. This is congruent with Kim and Webb (2023), who pointed out that spaced practice and repetition are quite effective for vocabulary retention, although learners often do not regularly do repeated review without structured direction.

The table as a whole indicates the extent of vocabulary acquisition strategies of Grade 5 learners resulting to a composite mean of (M=2.98, SD= 0.82), Agree, interpreted as “Moderately Utilized”. This implies that Grade 5 learners moderately use vocabulary learning tools in their language learning process. It also means that while they are aware of these methods and sometimes apply them, their use is not yet extremely consistent or completely developed.

Mediation Analysis

This Table 4 collectively presents the mediating role of vocabulary learning strategies on the relationship between reading habits and communication skills of the Grade 5 learners.

Table 4 Vocabulary Learning Strategies Mediates the Relationship Between the Extent of Reading Habits and Communication Skill of the Learners

n =257

Path Estimates

Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	p-value
Experience to challenge	0.793	0.0450	17.62	< .001
Challenges to performance	0.541	0.0540	10.03	< .001
Experience to performance	0.279	0.0578	4.83	< .001

Mediation Estimates

Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Indirect	0.429	0.0492	8.72	< .001	Significant	Reject
Direct	0.279	0.0578	4.83	< .001	Significant	Reject
Total	0.708	0.0459	15.44	< .001	Significant	Reject

Table 4 presents the mediation analysis examining whether vocabulary learning strategies mediate the relationship between the extent of reading habits and learners' communication skills. The findings revealed that reading habits significantly influenced vocabulary learning strategies, as shown by the path estimate ($\beta=0.793$, $p < .001$), indicating that learners with stronger reading habits tend to employ more effective vocabulary learning strategies. Likewise, vocabulary learning strategies significantly affected communication skills ($\beta=0.541$, $p < .001$), suggesting that learners who actively utilize vocabulary strategies demonstrate better communication competence. Furthermore, the direct effect of reading habits on communication skills remained significant ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < .001$), implying that reading habits independently contribute to the development of learners' communication abilities even without the mediating variable. These results emphasize the important role of reading engagement in fostering language-related competencies among learners.

The mediation estimates further demonstrated that vocabulary learning strategies significantly mediated the relationship between reading habits and communication skills, as reflected in the significant indirect effect ($\beta=0.429$, $p < .001$). This indicates that part of the positive influence of reading habits on communication skills operates through the enhancement of learners' vocabulary learning strategies. Since both the indirect and direct effects were significant, the findings suggest partial mediation, meaning that reading habits improve communication skills both directly and indirectly through vocabulary learning strategies. The significant total effect ($\beta=0.708$, $p < .001$) further confirms the strong overall relationship among the variables. Hence, the results imply that promoting consistent reading habits alongside effective vocabulary learning strategies may substantially strengthen learners' communication skills and overall language proficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings conclude that vocabulary learning strategies significantly mediate the relationship between reading habits and learners' communication skills, indicating that learners who frequently engage in reading are more likely to develop effective vocabulary strategies that enhance their communication abilities. The significant direct and indirect effects further suggest that reading habits contribute to communication skills both independently and through vocabulary development processes. These results highlight the importance of integrating reading engagement and vocabulary enrichment activities in language instruction to improve learners' overall communicative competence. However, the study is limited by its reliance on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by social desirability and subjective interpretation. The use of a single group

of respondents also limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and populations. Moreover, the study focused only on selected variables and may not have captured other factors influencing communication skills. Moving forward, future studies may include broader samples, mixed-method approaches, and additional mediating or moderating variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' language development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers are advised to increase and demonstrate strong efforts in fostering a culture of frequent reading practice among learners. Schools may also promote activities that include home-based reading schedules and give accessible manipulative resources to assist learners develop more consistent reading habits.
2. The teachers can offer direct instruction and regular practice on vocabulary-building tactics such as context clues, word mapping, and repetition.
3. Teachers can maintain and increase communication skills by more opportunity to communicate meaningfully and interact.
4. It is advised that the proposed action plan be executed through a structured school-based program that incorporates regular reading exercises, specific vocabulary education, and interactive communication tasks in daily classroom instruction.
5. Future researchers may study different variables and use larger samples to further validate the findings.

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