PLAY-BASED READING ON CATCH – UP FRIDAYS TOWARDS VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

Melody Q. Mirabueno
melody.mirabueno@deped.gov.ph/mqmirabueno@pcu.gov.ph

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of play-based reading activities in enhancing the vocabulary acquisition of Grade 2 pupils. Recognizing the pivotal role of vocabulary in reading comprehension, the research addresses the limited studies on the use of play-based teaching strategies for vocabulary development among young learners. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent of vocabulary acquisition of Grade 2 pupils before and after engaging in play-based reading activities.

A quantitative, descriptive research design was employed to analyze the impact of three play-based interventions—Vocabulary Dice Game, Word Train, and Vocabulary Pictionary—on the vocabulary acquisition of struggling readers. Using purposive sampling, 20 pupils with below-grade-level reading abilities, identified through the CRLA, participated in the study. Vocabulary acquisition was assessed using the Barton English Vocabulary Test, with vocabulary words categorized based on their difficulty levels via the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

Results indicated statistically significant vocabulary gains across all three interventions. Vocabulary Pictionary yielded the highest posttest, followed by Word Train, and Vocabulary Dice Game. These findings suggest that Vocabulary Pictionary is the most effective play-based reading activity for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among Grade 2 pupils. The study highlights the potential of integrating play-based strategies to improve vocabulary skills and support struggling readers in foundational literacy.

Key Words: *Play-based, Reading, Vocabulary Acquisition, Catch-up Fridays*

Introduction

The reading abilities of Filipino pupils have posed a significant challenge for educators and policymakers, prompting extensive research and analysis in this area.

Over the course of the previous three years, Philippines has actively engaged in two International Large-Scale Assessments (ILSAs) focused on reading literacy. During the assessments, it was observed that the country's performance was unsatisfactory, as it obtained the lowest rank among a total of 79 countries in the Programmed for International Student Assessment (PISA) and fifth out of six countries in the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) (Espinosa et al., 2023).

PISA's finding suggests that a significant proportion of Filipino learners may have challenges in reading (OECD, 2019). To address the low performance of the learners in ILSAs and national assessments, the Department of Education (DepEd) adopts the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP). The NLRP contains the subprogram National Reading Program (NRP) to "promote literacy development from Key Stages 1-3" (Department of Education, 2023).

The NRP subprogram of the NLRP which focuses on the promotion of literacy development is anchored on the foundations of reading skills development in the early grades. This two-tiered program is the department's core reading program under the Literacy, Language, and Text curriculum and serves as a supplementary program to support the realization of the standards of the core curriculum. Under the

NLRP, the scheme "Catch-up Fridays" was launched to promote a culture of reading. The main goal of the scheme is to "help pupils become more proficient writers, critical thinkers, readers, and analysts."

The country's participation in ILSAs revealed the challenges of Filipino learners in reading since these assessments are written using the English Language. Understanding of the text notably depends on a wide vocabulary since it enables readers to comprehend the meaning of words in a text (Idulog et al., 2023). Since the relationship between early vocabulary knowledge and later academic achievement has been well-established (McLeod, Hardy, & Kaizer., 2017), a thorough vocabulary instruction specifically designed to promote a deep and fluent understanding of words is needed because it enhances text comprehension. The improvement in comprehension, not only in reading but also in oral (Chung, 2012), is attributed to the enhanced recall and quality of recall that is facilitated by a comprehensive vocabulary instruction approach (McKeown, Beck, & Perfetti. 1983).

Vocabulary instruction for young children during classroom play is understudied but appears to be a useful context for such interventions, thus, this study was conceived.

This study aimed to shed light on whether the extent of vocabulary acquisition of Grade 2 pupils before the play-based reading activity is not significantly different after the play-based reading activity.

Methods

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative approach, using a descriptive research design to collect and analyze data to determine the effect of play-based reading activities on the vocabulary acquisition of the Grade 2 pupils in the research locale.

Population and Sampling

The study was participated by Grade 2 pupils whose reading ability falls below the grade level based on the result of the CRLA. Upon determining the list of such pupils, a purposive sampling of struggling readers was recruited to participate in the study. Ten (10) pupils who obtained the highest score and ten (10) pupils who obtained the lowest score were chosen as participants of the study.

Instrument

The study utilized the vocabulary words indicated in the Barton English Vocabulary Test. The difficulty of each word has been determined by the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

A total of 7 vocabulary words were introduced to the pupils. Each acquired vocabulary word was marked with one point. Pupils should get a minimum score of 5 or 70% of the total score correctly to complete a level. The study utilizes three play-based reading activities namely: (1) vocabulary dice game, (2) word train, and (3) vocabulary Pictionary.

Results

A total of 20 Grade 2 pupils participated in the study. Their vocabulary acquisition before and after the play-based reading activities are as follows:

Table 1. *Vocabulary acquisition of Grade 2 before and after play-based reading activities*

	Vocabulary Acquisition (%)						
	awfu	licen	fogg	pity	librar	notes	upset
Before	29	14	29	57	0	14	29
After vocabulary dice game	30	45	80	70	75	50	35
After word train	29	14	29	57	0	14	29
After vocabulary pictionary	35	55	80	75	80	80	40

The table shows the percentage of pupils who were already familiar with each of the seven target words: awful, license, foggy, pity, library, notes, and upset.

The data reveal significant variation in the pupils' prior knowledge of the target words. For instance, the word pity is the most familiar, with 57% of the pupils already knowing it, while library is the least known, with 0% familiarity.

After implementing the vocabulary dice game play-based intervention, the results show noticeable improvements in pupils' knowledge of the target vocabulary words. Words that had low pre-intervention familiarity, such as *license* (14% to 45%) and *notes* (14% to 50%), show significant improvement, while some words still has lower levels of familiarity post-intervention.

After the implementation of the word train play-based reading activity, the results show significant gains in vocabulary acquisition among the Grade 2 pupils. Results show that five out of seven words (foggy, library, notes, pity, and license) reached or exceeded 55% acquisition, with three words (foggy, library, and notes) achieving 80%. Words that started with lower acquisition rates, such as license (14% to 55%) and library (0% to 80%), demonstrated the most significant gains. Meanwhile, awful and upset showed smaller improvements, reaching 35% and 40%, respectively.

After conducting the Vocabulary Pictionary play-based reading activity, the pupils demonstrated a significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge across all target words. Notably, library saw the most dramatic increase, with 95% of pupils are now familiar with the word, compared to 0% prior to the intervention. Similarly, upset and notes also saw considerable gains, with 90% and 60% recognition, respectively, reflecting a strong positive impact from the activity. Other words like awful, license, foggy, and pity saw moderate improvements in pupils knowledge, with 50% of pupils now knowing awful, license, and pity, while 40% recognized foggy.

Table 2. *Paired t-test of the vocabulary acquisition of Grade 2 pupils based on different play-based reading activities*

Pair	Variable	M	SD	Mean Diff	t	*Sig.*
Pair 1 Vocabulary dice game	Pretest	1.00	.68	3.05	9.07	<.001
	Posttest	4.05	.68			
Pair 2 Word train	Pretest	1.00	.68	3.35	11.05	<.001
	Posttest	4.35	.68			
	Pretest	1.00	.68	3.45	11.51	<.001
Pair 3 vocabulary Pictionary	Posttest	4.45	.68			

The results of the paired t-test indicate that there is a significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition following the play-based vocabulary dice game.

While all three interventions demonstrated large and statistically significant gains, the Vocabulary Pictionary showed the highest posttest mean (M = 4.45), followed closely by the Word Train (M = 4.35) and the Vocabulary Dice Game (M = 4.05). Given the results, the Vocabulary Pictionary intervention appears to be the most effective in terms of the highest posttest mean.

Discussion

The data presented suggests that the pupils have varying levels of exposure to different vocabulary terms, possibly influenced by factors such as prior experiences, socio-economic background, and exposure to reading materials.

Interestingly, emotion-related words like *awful* and *upset* appear to have some level of prior recognition among the pupils. These words are more commonly used in everyday conversations or emotional contexts, so it is not surprising that a larger proportion of pupils have encountered them. In contrast, more abstract or less frequently used words like *license* and *notes* have much lower familiarity. This pattern suggests that pupils may have more difficulty acquiring vocabulary that is less directly related to their everyday experiences. The lack of familiarity with library suggests that it may not be a word pupils commonly encounter in their personal lives, but it is still an essential term for academic development.

After implementing the vocabulary game play-based intervention, the results show noticeable improvements in pupils' knowledge of the target vocabulary words. While there are substantial gains in vocabulary knowledge, it is important to note that there are still some words with lower levels of familiarity post-intervention. Words like awful and upset showed only modest increases, which might indicate that these words

are either too familiar already or might require more targeted instruction. For words like license, further practice and context-based learning could help pupils develop a deeper understanding. It may be beneficial to incorporate additional strategies, such as using the words in sentences, providing real-life examples, or using multimedia resources, to further solidify their meanings.

After the implementation of the word train play-based reading activity results suggest that the word train strategy was effective, especially in helping pupils learn academic and less familiar words like license, library, and notes.

After conducting the Vocabulary Pictionary play-based reading activity, the pupils demonstrated a significant improvement in their vocabulary knowledge across all target words. The consistent increase in vocabulary acquisition in the target words indicate that the Vocabulary Pictionary activity was effective in engaging pupils and enhancing their understanding.

The findings of this study show that all three play-based reading activities—Vocabulary Dice Game, Word Train, and Vocabulary Pictionary—had a positive effect on improving vocabulary acquisition among Grade 2 pupils. However, Vocabulary Pictionary emerged as the most effective, followed by Word Train and Vocabulary Dice Game. The ranking of these interventions can be explained by the varying levels of engagement, interaction, and cognitive demand involved in each activity. Vocabulary Pictionary, being a visual and interactive game, likely engaged students more deeply. The process of drawing and interpreting words encourages both recall and creative thinking, which are important cognitive processes in vocabulary development. Studies, including those by Berk and Winsler (2023), and Kremmel and Schmitt (2017), support this idea, highlighting that various forms of play can contribute positively to vocabulary acquisition.

Based on the findings between the play-based activities, the utilization of Vocabulary Pictionary as play-based reading activity on Catch-up Fridays is proposed for vocabulary acquisition.

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