

Cebuano and English Oral Reading Fluency Among Beginning Readers

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Abstract: This paper presents the oral reading performance among selected Grade 1 pupils in Cebu City South District. There were two hundred eight pupils in five (5) Elementary public schools that participated through purposive-convenience sampling. Students were asked to do an oral reading of a Cebuano folktale in two languages, Cebuano and English. As they read, the difficulties they encountered and the errors they committed were determined and analyzed using the framework of McGinnis & Smith (1982). After the results were identified, implications on MTBMLE materials preparation and development were formulated. The pupils' oral reading in both their L1 (Cebuano) and their L2 (English) served as basis for the evaluation of the reading abilities among beginning readers and provided teaching implications in relation to the implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy in the country.

Keywords: Beginning Readers, Cebuano, English, Fluency, Oral Reading

1. Introduction

In this era of globalization, reading has taken a new perspective. The popularity of modern communication gadgets and the availability of Internet connections everywhere have influenced the students' reading attitude in one way or another. In fact, the elementary students' exposure to these materials affected the development of their language skills, particularly that of reading. Studies have shown that students both in high school and college levels [2], [5] are, in one way or another, not fluent in oral reading (Anino, 1999, Cabasan, 2008). In order to verify this claim, a number of beginning readers were asked to read a Cebuano folktale in two languages, Cebuano and English, in order to determine their oral reading fluency level. McGinnis & Smith ((1982) believe that the way individuals read depends largely on their language development, experience, cognitive ability, and attitude towards reading [11]. When students read they commit reading errors because they have different reading experiences and exposures.

Considered as the most widely researched and the "most enigmatic of the so-called language skills" [1] (Alderson, 2005), reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols as the reader interprets the text in order to construct

meaning. Through the interaction between the reader and the text, comprehension takes place. However, since reading is a process, the reader should be able to recognize words in print first, a process called word recognition before meaning can be derived. Thus, awareness of the sounds of a language helps in articulating the words being read. After which, one starts to activate his knowledge of the meaning of words and combines it with his previous knowledge. On the other hand, oral reading is the articulation of the sound and the letter combination of a language. During oral reading, students' reading difficulty can be identified and can be given proper intervention. Thus, oral reading is a useful tool in assessing one's reading ability.

The purpose of this study is to present the oral reading fluency in L1 and L2 based on McGinnis & Smith (1982) errors in oral reading namely: *repetition, substitution, omission, insertion, mispronunciation, reversal and words aided* [11]. Oral reading of the passage in two languages L1 (Cebuano) and L2 (english), reflect the reading abilities and difficulties among beginning readers that provide teaching implications in relation to the implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy in the country. Mother Tongue Instruction is a new language area in the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 that solicit a lot of challenges, especially in the teaching and learning of reading

in the primary grades.

On Reading

There are two kinds of reading, namely: silent reading and oral reading (Stone, 1922). In contrast to silent reading where a teacher cannot monitor and evaluate how a student reads, oral reading is a good way of assessing students' reading fluency (i.e. Informal Reading Inventories (IRIs) done in the classroom). Moreover, oral reading also provides an opportunity for the teacher to guide the learner and give any feedback [4] (Bethwinst, 2010). Determining the students' accuracy in word decoding and word recognition, the researcher believes that accuracy is important because if the readers decode words inaccurately and they do not recognize words immediately, their comprehension is affected.

Oral reading performance is a great factor in language proficiency. When one reads fluently a reading material orally, it is a sign of his language aptitude. In a very general sense, every child is capable of oral reading as long as the material suits his age, education, and interest. However, when oral reading fluency is monitored, readers are either too conscious about what they read or hasty in articulating the words they read. Students who can read orally are neither fluent nor accurate in the language they are reading. This observation is a common perception among teachers.

Oral reading is a reliable language activity of monitoring the reading fluency of the students. Oral reading fluency is also one of the expected skill elementary students need to develop because it is an indicator of their language ability particularly in reading and also on their actual language use. With the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program and the institutionalization of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy, an investigation on the students' oral reading ability can impart practical implications to the teaching of and the teaching through the students' language. In determining the Grade One pupils' oral reading fluency both in Cebuano (L1) and in English (L2), the teacher needs to identify specific concerns which can be addressed by providing relevant reading materials. Thus, this study sought to determine the Cebuano and English oral reading fluency of Grade One pupils to provide local data on this subject. How reading in a first language differs from reading in another language is partly being taken into account. In determining the students' oral reading fluency in both Cebuano (L1) and English (L2), certain implications can be derived as the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy has already been implemented since June 2012 of this academic year. In identifying the language use through oral reading of the pupils, empirical data on the students' language ability might help in making a model for whatever interventions to be created to improve reading instruction.

Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) is the Philippine government's banner program for education as a salient part of the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. Its significance is underscored by the passing of Republic Act 10523, otherwise known as the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. With the

implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, DepEd Order No. 74, series of 2009 mandates the institutionalization of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy in the Philippine Educational System. This implies the use of the Mother Tongue both as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) and as a Learning Area (Subject) from Grade 1 until Grade 3 [6]. In effect, students' oral fluency is tested in their dominant language or languages and in their L2 and L3. Thus, an investigation on the students' language use necessitates the importance of the present oral reading abilities of beginning readers in order to determine their language facility and fluency since this is also the goal of the MTBMLE Policy. It is in this light that this paper is conceptualized in order to provide empirical data on the Grade 1 pupils' oral reading performance in their Mother Tongue or L1 (Cebuano) and in their L2 (English).

Local empirical studies on reading particularly on reading fluency (Balansag and Pantaleon, 2011) and on reading comprehension levels [5] and on reading level assessment [2] (Cabasan 2008, Anino 1999, Pajarito 1996), but the respondents are high school students and college freshmen. There is a very limited account for preschoolers or beginning readers. There are not much findings also about oral reading fluency, especially between L1 and L2, specifically on both Cebuano and English. The empirical research on L1 and L2 oral reading fluency in the Philippines is very limited at the moment. Most studies in reading are mostly on reading speed and comprehension levels. Not much about oral reading fluency among beginning readers has been investigated.

Studies on oral reading fluency in two languages (L1, L2) are meagre, but there are recent studies on oral reading in L2 that vary in scope and focus (Jeon, 2012) on role of oral reading fluency in second language reading [7], Saiegh-Haddad (2003) on relevance of *Oral Reading Fluency* (ORF) to reading comprehension in the native language and in English [12] that both correlate results to reading comprehension while Heitin, L. (2015) espoused the irony on reading rate and comprehension [13]. These studies serve as anchor in analyzing this paper.

Errors in Oral Reading

McGinnis & Smith (1982) identified seven errors in oral reading namely: *repetition, substitution, omission, insertion, mispronunciation, reversal* and *words aided* [11]. First, Repetition is an error made when readers say a syllable, word, a part of a word, a phrase or a sentence repetitively [10]. If the occurrence of the repetition comes before a word that is unfamiliar or difficult to read, the reader may be buying some time to prepare or decode the word ("Miscue Analysis", 2009).

Second, Substitution error is characterized by saying another word, another syllable, or another letter instead of what is found in the text [9]. Third, Omission is characterized by leaving out some vowels, syllables and portions of words [9]. Anino (1999) explained that omitting words may be accounted for by the reader's desire to speed up his reading to the point of omitting words [1]. He added that omitting words may be caused by poor reading habits and lack of

focus. Fourth, Insertion is characterized by adding letters, articles, prepositions, syllables, and words. Insertion often happens when the reader puts in some words to make sense of what he is reading. Fifth, Mispronunciation is characterized by the reader's incorrect accent or wrong pronunciation of vowels and consonants (McGinnis and Smith, 1982) [10].

Sixth, Reversal error happens when the reader reverses the order of the words in the printed text. It is characterized by lack of training in directional attack and show possible learning disability. Lastly, Words Aided is experienced when a reader comes across a challenging word which may cause the reader to hesitate for a longer time. When the reader is aided in reading, it suggests that they have weak decoding skills. As the student reads orally, word recognition skills are at work and when the reader fails to decode the printed words then miscues are observed. Thus, these seven errors in reading [11] by McGinnis & Smith (1982) become the basis in assessing beginning readers' oral reading fluency.

For beginning readers, fluency—or the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression—is often simply a product of practice [8]. But for some young readers, fluency becomes a blockade. The letter sounds, words, or phrases never seem to fit together correctly.

3. Results and Discussion

2. Research Methodology

This study employed the descriptive research method using qualitative-quantitative research procedures that looked into the Cebuano and English oral reading performance among selected Grade One pupils in Cebu City South District during the academic year 2011-2012.

A researcher-selected reading materials, a Cebuano folktale, entitled “Nganong Motuktugaok Ang Sunoy” and its English version “Why The Cock Crows” were used during the oral reading to determine the pupil's oral reading ability in Cebuano and in English. The reading was done inside the students' classroom after their class. There were 5 Public Elementary Schools that were considered in this research study. These were chosen based on the accessibility of the Grade 1 children who can already read. There were 208 pupils who participated in this study. Purposive-convenient sampling was used in selecting the participants of this study. Purposive-convenient sampling was used since only those who were available and willing were selected. Convenience sampling was also utilized because the selection of the pupils was based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study including the researcher's availability in terms of time and proximity to the research locale.

5 Public Elementary Schools in Cebu City South

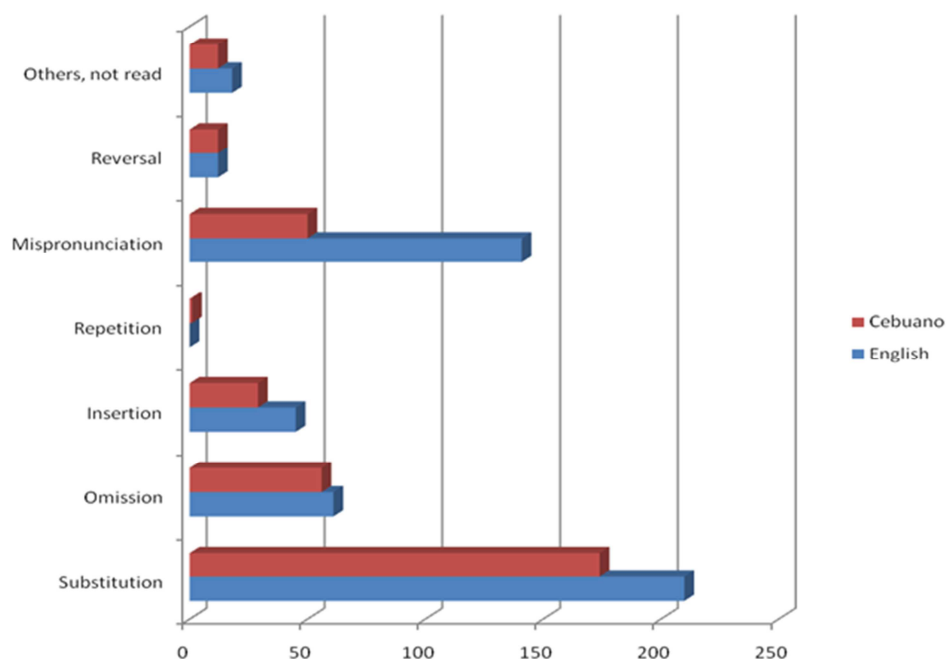


Figure 1. Oral Reading Errors.

Oral reading difficulties sprang from a variety of causes depending on the reading background of the reader. Some students lack fluency because they're still struggling with decoding words (Heitin, 2015) [8]. Figure 1 shows the results of the oral reading reveal the Grade One pupils' reading

errors based on McGinnis & Smith (1982), namely: repetition, substitution, omission, insertion, mispronunciation, reversal, and words aided [11].

It was found that among the seven reading errors, substitution was the most dominant and recurring error made

by the students. Substitution error is characterized by saying another word, syllable or letter instead of what is printed on the text. This error is caused by poor word recognition and carelessness or sloppy habits (Anino, 1999) [2]. Substitution was classified into two, phonemic substitution and word substitution. In English, phonemic substitution was more evident compared to word substitution since there are English phonemes that are absent in Cebuano language. Substitution in English was also higher compared to Cebuano. In Cebuano, word and phonemic substitution are in close range with each other because the students' first language is Cebuano. Substitution errors, also known as semantic errors when a reader reads another word instead (Read with Me, 2014) [13], are some of the common reading miscues among beginning readers.

The second highest reading error is mispronunciation. Although the students could already read in English, they also mispronounced some words during their oral reading due to phonemic substitution. This finding supports Tayao (2004) and other Philippine English researchers' claim that there are a number of features of General American English that are absent categories in Philippine English phonology [16]. Mispronunciation in English was very high compared to Cebuano which was only one third from English. This implies the first language advantage of the readers compared to a foreign language. This supports the claim of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) that reading in the L2 is only introduced after basic L1 reading fluency and L2 oral proficiency are developed. Students with well-developed skills in their first language have been shown to acquire additional languages more easily and fully and that, in turn, has a positive impact on academic achievement [6].

Omission and insertion followed respectively. Omission is characterized by leaving out some vowels, syllables and portions of words. Anino (1999) explained that omitting words may be accounted for by the reader's desire to speed up his reading to the point of omitting words [2]. He added that omitting words may be caused by poor reading habits and lack of focus. On the other hand, insertion is characterized by adding letters, articles, prepositions, syllables, and words. Insertion often happens when the reader puts in some words to make sense of what he is reading [11].

4. Conclusions

The findings of the study reflect the importance of word recognition skills in developing oral reading fluency among beginning readers. Likewise, familiarity of the sound and sound patterns of the students' first language became an advantage in making the students read. The following generalizations may be stated: a. Grade 1 pupils fall short of the oral reading ability expected of them. b. Errors in word recognition reflect non mastery of the basic sounds of both the Cebuano and English languages, however, it was minimal in Cebuano compared to English. c. Less exposure to varied reading materials in English became a factor in the students'

reading errors and d. Reading materials in the Mother Tongue are needed to enhance the students' oral reading fluency in their first language.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is then recommended that beginning readers must be provided oral reading opportunities in the classroom like storytelling and book talk so they will be motivated to read. This will help them develop their oral reading fluency. Teachers must also model oral reading through story reading in class. Moreover, they need to have available big books and alphabet charts in the Mother Tongue in the classroom so they develop the interest to read these reading materials in class. Furthermore, there is a need for more local instructional materials in the Mother Tongue since Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) is just recently implemented in the country and both teachers and students alike have limited access to these materials like big books, textbooks, and alphabet charts.

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Biography



Dr. Cristie Ann Jaca Delfin is an Associate Professor of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City, Philippines. She was the former Chair of the Department of Teacher Education (AY 2014-2016) and teaches professional education courses and major classes in English for both undergraduate and graduate programs. She was also the Head of the English Language Section of the Department of Languages and Literature of the same university (AY 2008-2010). Dr. Delfin is a teacher-researcher who embraces the challenges of the teaching-learning process by conducting action researches to improve her career as a facilitator of learning. Her fields of expertise include Language Teaching, Mother Tongue Instruction, Reading, and Teacher Training.