# PICTURE-WORD-CONCEPT ASSOCIATION: BUILDING VOCABULARY, ENRICHING COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Torrentira, Aubrey E.

Completed 2019

E - Saliksik
Department of Education
Research Portal
e-saliksik.deped.gov.ph

Abstract

This classroom-based action research aimed to develop reading comprehension by enriching vocabulary through picture-word-concept association. This was conducted in School Year 2019-2020 in one of the schools in Tugbok district which has an ID number of 129735. Ten pupils were purposively chosen to participate in this action research as they were found to fare poorly in reading comprehension in English based on the Philippine-Individual Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) result. The intervention used to enrich their vocabulary and thereby improve reading comprehension is dubbed as the Inductive Picture Hunt as they were to hunt for pictures in a box that correspond to the words in the sentence which they were tasked to read. After finding all the pictures correctly, they were asked several different questions about the sentence and when their thorough understanding of the sentence was tested, they were then tasked to search for another picture which corresponds to the concept of the sentence. The data were gathered through pre- and post-test and were analyzed through frequency and percentage. The results revealed that there was an increase in their correct responses to the comprehension questions in all ten worksheets which is indicative that the intervention was effective. Based on the findings, it is suggested that pictures shall be included in vocabulary enrichment exercises as they appeal to the children making it easier to catch their attention. Moreover, pictures retain in their thoughts much longer thus aid their imagination and association of concepts, thereby makes reading more meaningful and appreciable.

Keywords: reading, comprehension, vocabulary, picture, association

## I. Context and Rationale

Poor reading comprehension appears to be a perennial problem especially in the academic society. There already has been quite a bulk of studies aiming to address the problem, but still the problem persists year after year. Indeed, the emerging large number of reading strategies and interventions aimed to improve comprehension unfortunately have made its way to building a notion that reading comprehension is an over-worked yet unaddressed problem.

I must admit, I feel for the individuals who have grown skeptic of the studies relating to reading comprehension because in one way or another, I have been disheartened with an array of seemingly ineffective strategies. However, I also cannot disregard the fact that comprehension plays a vital role in the overall learning of every learner. Being a teacher, it has been my continuous labor to have all my pupils' become achievers in class. Hence, nothing can ever be more painful than writing in report cards the pupils' low marks in different learning areas. This makes me feel that I am a failure as their teacher.

As I constantly ponder on the probable causes of poor academic performance, taking into consideration the multiple studies which had been conducted for such purpose, I am always led to the idea that poor comprehension leads to poor academic performance. I therefore came into thinking that I cannot address problems on academic performance by skipping comprehension problems. After all, the failure to understand a sentence results to a failure in analyzing and solving word problems in Mathematics, for instance. Indeed, comprehension takes a big part in –if not the core of-- the learning process. This makes comprehension a consistent area of concern and a potential topic for intensive and further exploration, ergo, continuous studies –so goes to imply that in comprehension strategies, no one size fits all.

In reading assessments, specifically with the use of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), pupils are assessed based on their word recognition and comprehension then categorized as independent, instructional, or frustration readers. In years of the implementation of the Phil-IRI, I have observed that my pupils fared well in word recognition but performed poorly in comprehension, resulting them to be categorized as frustration readers.

The new guidelines of the Phil-IRI which was rolled out in year 2018 set a new process in categorizing the learners as to their reading level. First, a Group Screening Test (GST) is conducted to the whole class. The pupils who would not pass the GST will be categorized to two or three levels lower than their present grade level, depending on their score. Ideally, only a very limited number of pupils would not pass the GST. Sadly, in my class, 33 pupils did not pass the GST in English and 19 of them were categorized to three levels lower, which is Grade Two. It is further sad to note that when these pupils were then asked to answer questions pertaining to a passage in grade two

level, the scores of ten of these pupils were still very low that they again were categorized as frustration readers. This only goes to say that these pupils have difficulty in answering questions even as simple as noting explicit details, and they encountered these difficulties most probably because they did not understand the passage they were reading even if it was supposedly very simple for their age.

The result was truly surprising and equally frustrating. I feel sorry for my pupils, and it worries me to think how they are to cope with the increasing academic demands as they get promoted to the succeeding grade levels without having fully developed their comprehension. If this shall not be addressed, these same pupils will continue to perform low academically in the coming years.

The disheartening situation that my pupils are in is the very reason that pushed me to create an intervention to alleviate their reading status. There might be a wide array of strategies that are available in different resources, but I wanted one that is tailored-fit for their context. These pupils are already faring well in word recognition, so the probable cause of their inability to correctly answer the comprehension questions is their inability to understand the meaning of the words that they read. If they could not understand the meaning of a word more so they could not understand a sentence and a paragraph. This led me to a realization that the best way to make them understand the meaning of a sentence is to have them understand the meaning of the words, one by one and altogether as they form a concept.

It truly frightens me to think of the chain of effects this problem creates to their performance in other learning areas, and even to their self-worth and attitude towards and behavior in social involvements. If I do not answer to this problem, I am not only failing a learner, but I am also breaking a child that they are in their world apart from school.

The outcome of this action research will contribute to the body of knowledge on the effect of using pictures in vocabulary building and in turn its effect to comprehension. This can be utilized by all teachers who need to work on the improvement of the comprehension of their pupils. Most importantly, this benefits all the learners of the English Language, who are struggling in their classes, aiding them in their journey towards a successful learning and making them accomplished and confident children in school and in the community.

## II. Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

The intervention is called Inductive Picture Hunt. It is a strategy that shall help build up the vocabulary of the pupils which in turn shall develop their comprehension of English sentences. According to Weiser (2013), there is a strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Word recognition is important but knowing what the word means has an effect in understanding the meaning of a passage. This goes to say that a limited vocabulary is a hindrance to successful comprehension of grade level texts, and to doing other academic activities like participating in

class discussions, making assignments, or answering tests. It has been suggested that an effective way of improving comprehension is improving vocabulary.

The strategy involved having pupils answer ten worksheets. For each worksheet, there is one sentence with five comprehension questions, all of which pertain to the details of the sentence. Each question has four choices, which can be in a form of words, colors, pictures, or number figures. The choices may appear to violate the principle of plausibility because most choices are words coming from the sentence. I did it purposely to lead the pupils away from purely guessing for the correct answer by looking for words in the choices that look exactly like one of the words in the sentences, the same reason for using colors, pictures, and number figures as choices instead of words.

The same set of worksheets were used for pre-test, strategy implementation or intervention phase (only that only I had the copy of the worksheet, and the questions were given orally), and post-test (wherein only such time were the correct answers revealed to the pupils). The pretest was done in five days, giving two worksheets a day to the pupils so to minimize other factors which might affect their ability to answer, say, exhaustion from too much reading and thinking. Then, strategy implementation or intervention phase took place once a week, making use of only one worksheet. This also allowed for the accommodation of other pupils who failed to attend on schedule. A day after the strategy implementation, the post-test was conducted. For instance, if the strategy implementation is done on a Monday, then the posttest was conducted on a Wednesday. Since there are ten worksheets, the weekly strategy implementation and post-test ran for ten weeks.

The strategy is mainly focused on enriching the vocabulary of the pupils through picture-word-concept association, considering the love of children for pictures as they mostly are visual learners. But this strategy also develops the ability of the pupils to discriminate nuances as they will have to distinguish the correct picture from the similar but incorrect ones. Given the sentence (without questions) the pupils were asked to hunt from a box the appropriate pictures that correspond to the words in the sentence. I, being the teacher, played a crucial role in guiding the pupils select the correct pictures by throwing questions and probing rather than handing them the answer. After having the pupils correctly place the pictures below the word they correspond to, I orally gave questions pertaining to the sentence. When comprehension check had been optimized, I then asked the pupils to hunt again from the box one picture which captures the concept of the sentence –this is the how inductive process came into place. As a supplementary activity in the intervention phase, I created another sentence using most of the vocabulary words in the original sentence, then asked questions about it. I also asked the pupils to demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary words through actions or any other way they could best express their thoughts. This allowed me to validate their learning.

This strategy is limited only to enriching the comprehension on pre-selected sentences. The sentences and comprehension questions were constructed by me as they are tailored-fit to the reading ability of my pupils, and the pictures used were downloaded from the internet. Since the vocabulary development in this study revolved around the words used in pre-selected sentences, the comprehension skill that may be developed in this study may not apply to sentences and passages using words other than the ones utilized in this study.

## III. Action Research Question

This action research aims to enhance the comprehension of the 10 pupils in my class by building their vocabulary through picture-word-concept association, especially through the use of Inductive Picture Hunt strategy. Ultimately, this study aims to find out whether the strategy shall be effective in making the pupils understand what they read which shall be reflected in their answers to the comprehension questions. Specifically, this action research seeks to answer the question: Can the Inductive Picture Hunt strategy enhance the comprehension of my 10 pupils?

## IV. Action Research Methods

In my study I utilized action research to help me understand what is happening in my classroom and identify changes in my classroom teaching and learning process. Action research help me answer specific instructional strategies to utilize in my teaching to improve the performance of my students, classroom management, and teaching techniques.

### a. Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

This study employed the purposive sampling. The participants of this action research were only the ten pupils in my Grade Five class in school year 2019-2020 in one of the schools in Tugbok district, with an ID number of 129735. These pupils were categorized as frustration readers in grade two level in the reading assessment using the Phil-IRI. For the purpose of this research, each participant was assigned a number from 1 to 10. Primary data which focused on the participants' scores in the pre-test and post-test were gathered.

### b. Data Gathering Methods

Prior to the conduct of my study, I had conducted the following steps (1) **Letter to the Principal –** I had submitted a formal letter to the office of the school principal asking permission to conduct a classroom-based action research and informing her of the necessary processes to be conducted during the process. (2) **Orientation to Parents and Teachers –** Parents and teachers were informed to give access on personal information of the learners during the study and teachers to give feedbacks on learners' performances and academic status for references. (3) **Consent and Assent Form –** Since the participants of my action research were minors, a consent form were send to the parents for the approval that their son/daughter will participate in the

action research for improvement of their academic performance, also my students were given assent forms, to make sure that they were informed and agreed that they will participate in the action research for the improvement of their academic performance.

The data were collected through the administration of pre- and post-test. The result of the pre-test served as the baseline data. The pre-test was conducted in five days, giving two sets of one-sentence-five-questions in a day. The post-test was done once a week for ten weeks, the same weeks for the conduct of the intervention. The approval of the school principal was sought, as well as the consent of the participants' parent or guardian. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' identity was also guaranteed.

In this action research, I made sure that the intervention did not cause any harm nor anxiety to my students/pupils. All of my students were included during the implementation of the innovation to avoid discrimination, however, only the focus of the data collection and analysis were the selected participants.

### c. Data Analysis

The scores attained by the participants' during the pre- and post-test were converted into percentage against the possible perfect scores. The generated ratings were analyzed using graphical presentations. The data gathered in the pretest and posttest were compared and examined to see if there was an improvement in my students/pupils' performance.

## V. Discussion of Results and Reflection

This section of my action research presents the data gathered after the implementation of my Innovation . I used graph to present the pretest and posttest scores of my students/pupils.
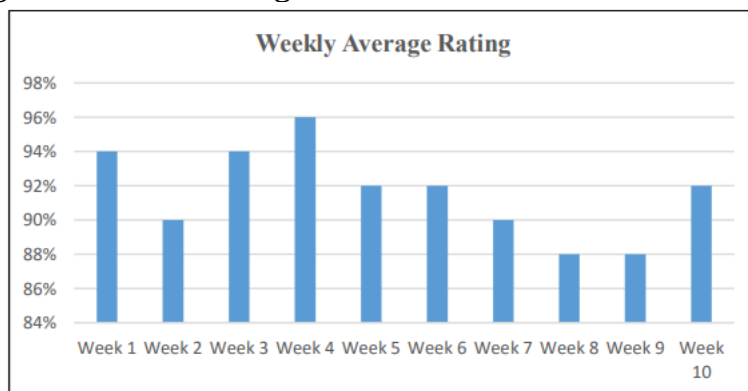
### a. Baseline Data Observation

The graph displays the pre-test result. It is shown that given the ten worksheets with an overall perfect score of 50, the ten pupils did not attain the passing rate of 75%. The highest rate is only 74% by Pupil 7 and the lowest is 26% by Pupil 5.
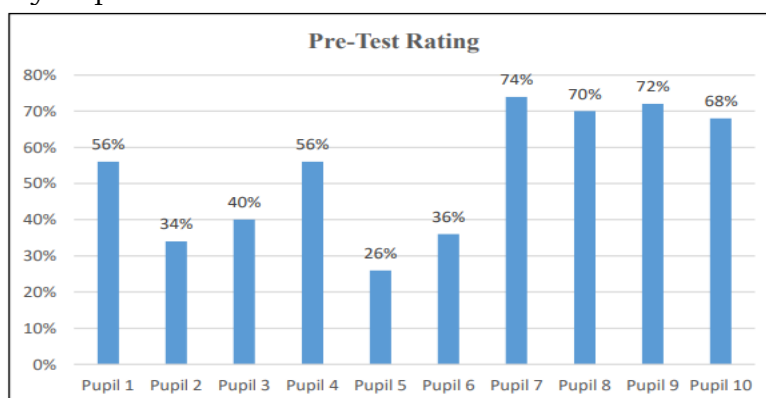
This supports the initial finding during the implementation of the Phil-IRI that the participants had a problem understanding what they were reading because they only got a few correct answers to the questions pertaining to sentences they were tasked to read. On average, the number of items that they correctly answered was only 3 out of 5 which is only equivalent to 60%.

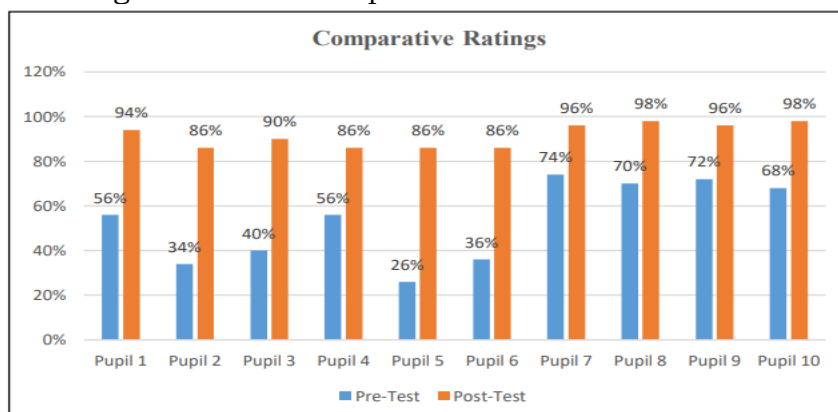b.  During the Implementation of the Intervention
The graph discloses the average rating of the 10 pupils in each week of the implementation of the intervention. It can be noted that across the ten weeks, their ratings are already above the passing rate of 75%, with 96% being the highest and 88% being the lowest.

**Weekly Average Rating**

| Week | Rating |
|------|--------|
| Week 1 | 94% |
| Week 2 | 90% |
| Week 3 | 94% |
| Week 4 | 96% |
| Week 5 | 92% |
| Week 6 | 92% |
| Week 7 | 90% |
| Week 8 | 88% |
| Week 9 | 88% |
| Week 10 | 92% |

This result implies that the participants' comprehension improved as it appears their correct responses to the questions increased. The participants were able to answer the worksheets perfectly. If not, their mistake was no more than one. On average, their rating is at 92%. This further means that the participants already had a better understanding of the texts that they were reading which thereby led to their choosing of the correct answer to each comprehension question. This is indicative that pictures can aid understanding of English texts.

c.  Post Data Observation
The graph shows the comparative pre-test and post-test rating of each participant. It can be observed that their post-test rating is higher than that in pre-test. It can be further noted that Pupil 5 displays the highest improvement in his ratings, in which he started with 26% in the pre-test then achieved 86% in the post-test. On average, the post-test rating is at 92% which is 39 points higher than that in pre-test.

**Comparative Ratings**

| Pupil | Pre-Test | Post-Test |
|-------|----------|-----------|
| Pupil 1 | 56% | 94% |
| Pupil 2 | 34% | 86% |
| Pupil 3 | 40% | 90% |
| Pupil 4 | 56% | 86% |
| Pupil 5 | 26% | 86% |
| Pupil 6 | 36% | 86% |
| Pupil 7 | 74% | 96% |
| Pupil 8 | 70% | 98% |
| Pupil 9 | 72% | 96% |
| Pupil 10 | 68% | 98% |

The result indicates that the intervention helped the participants improve their understanding of the words used in the sentence. This contributed to their better grasp of the meaning of the sentence in whole. These processes in turn contributed to their correct choice of answer to each comprehension question.

**Reflection**

I had significant observations on the behavior of the participants during the implementation of the intervention which I believe were contributory to their reading outcomes.

During the first week, I observed that the participants were not engaged with the texts. They would simply sound out the letters, but they seemed detached with what they were reading. When asked about the text, they seemed to not realize that they should answer based on what they read. They appeared to be thinking apart from the text, resulting to a wrong answer to the questions. This made the first week much of a struggle because as it turned out, I needed to focus not only on enriching the vocabulary of the participants so to improve their reading comprehension, but to also to guiding them "how" to read.

For one, I observed that the participants manifested non-attention. They had tendencies to not pay attention on their reading task especially in the first week. They would play with the pictures in the box, communicate either verbally or non-verbally with other participants, make unnecessary movements, or appeared to be preoccupied with something else. They seemed to think that being able to sound out the letters is all it means to read.

Second, the participants also had manifestations of non-imagination and/or no association. They read without creating pictures in their mind. They were mostly focused on how to sound out the letters properly which in effect did not leave a room for imagination or for association of what is being read to their previous experiences or stored knowledge about the words. This was verified through nonverbal cues. For instance, when a question about the sentence is asked right after they finish reading, their first reaction was to re-read the sentence silently (sometimes with moving lips), more than once. In most times, they would also display confusion through facial expressions. Other times they would be seemingly staring at the worksheets but with thoughts preoccupied with something else.

All these observations on their behaviors made me realize that learners with reading comprehension problems most probably have vocabulary problems especially if they deal with a language that is not their own. But before vocabulary problems can be addressed, the learners must foremost be taught how to read. That is, they should be taught that reading requires attention, imagination, and association and that they should be guided how to do these. Developing these skills is essential not only in learning to read but also in appreciating and even loving to read. This left me thinking that in

implementing planned interventions, circumstances may require the urgency and necessity to address unforeseen problems.

Further, I realized that pictures always are appealing to children. Given the pictures in the intervention, I noticed how the participants showed enthusiasm in looking at and interacting with the pictures. To note, they were very keen in spotting the differences among the pictures.

I furthermore realized that a group of ten pupils was too big for an effective reading remediation. They were times when some participants would not be able to attend on schedule. When there were only at most 5 participants, they appeared to be more focused and engaged on the task, and the remediation was more fruitful, hence more beneficial for the learners.

From the findings disclosed in this action research, the following recommendations are suggested. First, observing pupils in addition to collecting data generated from pen-and-paper tasks can better facilitate intervention strategies. Second, addressing unforeseen problems which may emerge along the process of implementing intervention even if it means a delay or a detour is necessary to better address the root cause of the learners' plight. Third, a smaller group of pupils probably with five members at most is more ideal for better remediation outcomes. Lastly, it pays to put more weight on considering including pictures in vocabulary enrichment activities as it was observed that children were drawn and very keen with the pictures used.

## Action Plan

| Action Research Title: | Picture-Word-Concept Association: Building Vocabulary, Enriching Comprehension of English Language Learners |
|---|---|

Inductive Picture Hunt is a strategy that was designed to help build up the vocabulary of the pupils which in turn shall contribute to the development of their comprehension being the second language learners of English. This strategy works by utilizing pictures that correspond to the words in and concept of pre-selected sentences which the learners are tasked to comprehend.

As the results of the post-test indicate that the participants of the study showed improvement in their comprehension of the sentences, this strategy is a potential intervention to help address gaps in the reading performance of the learners.

For this strategy to be implemented in in the school, I will seek the approval of the school principal for its integration in the reading remediation program. Our school recently concluded the 40-day reading remediation program of Davao City Division to make every learner a reader. Throughout the duration of the program, there was a need for our school to focus primarily on the enhancement of the word recognition skill of the lagging learners as this appeared to be necessarily addressed first. Now, it is timely that we complement or extend that 40-day program by focusing on the enhancement

of the learners' comprehension skills through the use of the Inductive Picture Hunt Strategy.

To start, it is integral that the teachers will be oriented on the strategy. Hence, a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) will be scheduled for that purpose. During the SLAC, the findings of the Action Research will be disclosed, and the strategy will be demonstrated. Moreover, the teachers will be informed of the timeline or schedule of the implementation so they will be better guided.

The reproduction of the materials will also be scheduled, allocating five sets to each class adviser so to cater five learners in each remedial session. Conducting the strategy to only five learners at a time is an enhancement of the procedure based on my observations and reflections in carrying out the strategy myself. The strategy was initially designed for ten participants every session but it was observed that five participants at most was ideal for better focus.

Beginning with the pre-test, the implementation of the strategy will run for 11 weeks. Throughout this period, the teachers will be asked to record the performance of the learners in a tracking form that will be provided to them. The teachers will also be provided with reflection sheets for them to write down their observations and reflections during the implementation of the strategy.

After 11 weeks, the records of the teachers will be consolidated. Then, the approval of the school principal will be sought for the teachers to convene and discuss the results and share observations and reflections. This in a way is an avenue to evaluate the implementation of the strategy and the strategy itself, which in turn will serve as basis for possible adjustments.

Should there be a need to extend the conduct of the strategy to remediate reading, another set of sentences and pictures will be made and provided to the teachers. The teachers will also be asked to continue with the tracking, as well as the taking note of their observations and reflections.

## VII. References

Grabe, W. & Stoller, F. (2011). Teaching and Researching Reading, Second Edition. Great Britain: Parson Education Limited

Mohammed, Q. & Rashid, R. (2017). Reading Comprehension Difficulties among EFL Learners: The Case of First and Second Year Students at Yarmouk University in Jordan

Medjahdi, W. (2015). Reading Comprehension Difficulties among EFL Learners: The Case of Third-Yea Learners at Nehali Mohamed Secondary School. Retrieved October 24, 2015 from http://dspace.univ-tlemcen.dz/bitstream/112/7899/1/babayeba-wahiba.pdf

Sad, N. (2016). Reading Difficulties in English as a Foreign Language.
Retrieved October 24, 2018 from
http://nardus.mpn.gov.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/8156/Disertacija
9371.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Weiser, B. (2013). Effective Vocabulary Instruction for Kindergarten to 12th
Grade Students Experiencing Learning Disabilities. Retrieved October 24,
2018 from https://council-for-learning-disabilities.org/effective-vocabulary-
instruction-for-kindergarten-to-12th-grade-students-experiencing-learning-
dis