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Research Article

Analysis of Reading Comprehension Level of Students in a Philippine State University

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill for academic success and effective teaching, particularly for students in teacher education programs. However, national and international reports indicate that many Filipino learners struggle with reading comprehension, raising concerns about the literacy preparedness of future educators. This study assessed the reading comprehension levels of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU) across four domains: literal, inferential, critical/evaluative, and integrative/reflective comprehension. The study employed a descriptive survey research design involving 100 BEED students from first to fourth year levels who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using a reading comprehension test adapted from UPCAT review materials, which included three reading passages with questions aligned with Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension. The collected data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results showed that students demonstrated Basic Understanding in the Literal Level (M = 2.12), indicating a moderate ability to identify explicitly stated information. In contrast, the Inferential Level recorded Limited Understanding (M = 1.31), suggesting that many students had difficulty drawing conclusions and interpreting implied meanings. In the Critical/Evaluative Level, students performed at a Developing Level (M = 3.36), reflecting emerging skills in analyzing and evaluating textual information. Similarly, the Integrative/Reflective Level was also categorized as Developing (M = 2.81), indicating inconsistent ability to connect ideas from texts to personal experiences and broader concepts. Overall, the findings suggest that while BEED students possess basic literal comprehension skills, many still struggle with higher-order reading skills such as inference, evaluation, and integration. These results highlight the need for targeted reading instruction and the integration of explicit comprehension strategies within teacher education programs to strengthen the literacy competence of future educators.

Keywords: Comprehension. Descriptive Design, Education, University

I. Introduction

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and make meaning from written texts. It involves recognizing words, grasping ideas, analyzing meaning, and connecting new information with what is already known. According to Kintsch (1998), comprehension happens when readers relate new input to their prior knowledge. Duke and Pearson (2002) describe reading as an active process that uses strategies such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing. Snow (2002) emphasizes that comprehension requires the use of multiple cognitive skills working together.

Reading comprehension has become a growing concern in the Philippine education system. The 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that only 19.4 percent of Filipino students reached the

minimum proficiency level in reading (OECD, 2019). In addition, the World Bank (2021) reported that approximately 90 percent of Filipino children aged ten cannot read and understand a simple text. This widespread issue reflects a condition known as functional illiteracy, where individuals can read words but cannot apply reading skills meaningfully in daily situations. This situation is alarming, especially for those preparing to become classroom teachers.

For students enrolled in the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) program, reading comprehension is an essential academic and professional skill. As future educators, they are expected to model effective reading strategies, interpret instructional materials accurately, and guide young learners in developing literacy skills. Pressley (2006) highlights that teacher who possess strong reading comprehension are more effective in supporting their students' literacy development. On the other hand, BEED students with weak comprehension skills may struggle to teach reading effectively, which can affect their overall classroom performance and their students' learning outcomes.

Despite the availability of national-level data, there is a lack of localized studies that assess the reading comprehension levels of BEED students in specific institutions. Most research efforts focus on learners in elementary or high school, but there is little investigation into how well-prepared teacher education students are in terms of their literacy. Without this information, teacher training institutions may overlook the needs of their students and miss opportunities to strengthen foundational skills that are crucial in the teaching profession.

These include language background, socioeconomic status, access to reading materials, instructional quality, and student motivation. Soriano-Ferrer et al. (2022) identified these as critical variables affecting reading outcomes. Larioque (2019) noted that students with limited exposure to English and few reading resources often struggle more with comprehension. These challenges are common among students in underserved areas, where educational resources are scarce and reading instruction may be limited.

Moreover, the reading proficiency of teachers plays a direct role in shaping their students' literacy outcomes. Stanovich (2000) stated that reading difficulties among students are often linked to the reading limitations of their teachers. When future educators are not equipped with adequate comprehension skills, they may unknowingly reinforce poor reading habits or fail to provide the right support to struggling readers. Improving the reading abilities of BEED students is, therefore, a necessary step in breaking the cycle of weak literacy in the classroom.

This study assessed the reading comprehension levels of BEED students at Eastern Visayas State University. It seeks to identify their literacy strengths and weaknesses to understand better how prepared they are to teach reading effectively in their future classrooms. Overall, reading comprehension is a vital skill for BEED students as it directly influences their capacity to become effective educators. Given the national literacy crisis and the lack of localized data, this study will provide valuable insights into the readiness of future teachers. Ensuring that teacher education students develop strong comprehension skills is essential to improving literacy outcomes and the overall quality of education in the Philippines.

Objectives

Generally, this study aimed to assess the reading comprehension levels of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU). Specifically, to identify the, Literal Level, Inferential Level, Critical/Evaluation Level, Integrative/Reflective Level.

II.Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive survey design to assess the reading comprehension levels of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU). This design was chosen because it allowed the researchers to collect information about students' comprehension skills in a structured and measurable way.

A descriptive survey design was appropriate for this study because it focused on gathering data through surveys, questionnaires, or tests to describe the current level of reading comprehension among BEED students (Calderon & Gonzales, 2019). Instead of focusing on personal stories or experiences, this design helped in identifying patterns and trends based on measurable responses (Adanza, 2020). It provided a clear picture of how well students understood what they read, which helped in determining areas that needed improvement (Best & Kahn, 2006). By using this design, the study ensured that the findings were objective and could be used to guide actions aimed at improving the reading skills of BEED students. The results were expected to provide useful information for developing better support strategies in reading instruction.

Research Locale

This research was conducted at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU), located in Tacloban City, Philippines. This school was a well-known institution that offered various programs, including the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED). The university was chosen as the research locale because it had a diverse group of students, making it an ideal setting to assess the reading comprehension levels of future teachers. The study focused on BEED students enrolled during the academic year 2023–2024. Understanding the students' reading skills was

important in shaping effective teaching strategies in elementary education. The university setting provided a meaningful context, as it reflected the real challenges and needs that these students faced in developing their reading abilities. These considerations made EVSU a suitable and relevant place for study.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students officially enrolled at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU) for the academic year 2023–2024. There were five hundred (500) BEED students from first year to fourth year officially enrolled at EVSU based on the record of the Department of Elementary Education. The BEED program had a total of 14 sections across all year levels. To select 100 respondents, the researchers randomly chose seven (7) participants from twelve (12) sections and eight (8) participants from the two (2) remaining sections. A non-probability sampling technique, specifically the purposive sampling method, was used to select the one hundred (100) students based on specific criteria. First, students had to be officially enrolled in the BEED program, regardless of year level, to represent the developmental stages of reading comprehension throughout the course. Second, students were selected from both public and private secondary schools to examine how their educational backgrounds influenced their reading skills. Third, students with different levels of English proficiency were included, since English was the main medium of instruction in their program. Lastly, the respondents were grouped into three (3) categories based on their reading comprehension levels: high, average, and low. These criteria were set to ensure a diverse group of participants and to gather relevant data that would help in improving reading instruction and supporting the preparation of future teachers in the university.

Research Instrument

This study used a reading comprehension test from UPCAT Review Materials as the main research instrument to assess the reading comprehension levels of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU). The instrument was a questionnaire composed of three reading passages, each followed by comprehension questions that measured four levels of comprehension: literal, inferential, critical or evaluative, and integrative or reflective, based on Barrett's Taxonomy (1976). Each passage was carefully matched with specific comprehension skills.

Passage 1, titled "Nature's Changes and Creatures," focused on the literal level of comprehension. Passage 2 presented an infographic titled "Language Matters" and was used to assess both inferential and critical thinking skills. Passage 3 was a short article about the effects of social media algorithms and was intended to measure students' integrative and reflective comprehension abilities. The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The Literal and Inferential sections each contained three multiple-choice questions aimed at measuring basic understanding, such as identifying key details and main ideas. The Critical/Evaluative level included two open-ended questions that allowed students to analyze the author's message and evaluate the information presented. The Integrative/Reflective level featured one open-ended question that encouraged students to connect the reading material to personal experiences or broader issues. This mix of question types followed the recommendations and aimed to give a well-rounded view of each student's reading ability. A personal information section was also included to collect background data such as age, gender, year level, and course. This information helped the researchers identify patterns and compare comprehension levels across different student groups.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the content, the reading passages and questions were developed using reliable sources. These included academic journals such as the Journal of Reading Behavior, UPCAT Review Materials, and updated reading selections from online platforms like Vocal Media. These sources were selected to make sure that the materials were appropriate for the students' reading levels and reflective of their cultural and educational context. Overall, the instrument was designed to accurately assess the reading comprehension skills of BEED students and provide meaningful results that reflected their ability to understand, analyze, and apply what they read.

Validation of Research Instrument

To ensure that the instrument used in this study effectively measured the reading comprehension levels of BEED students, the researchers conducted a validation process before the data collection began. The goal was to confirm that the questionnaire items were accurate, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives. The instrument first underwent content validation, which involved evaluation by a panel of experts consisting of language and reading education specialists, as well as experienced researchers in the field of education. This validation process focused on checking whether each question measured the intended level of reading comprehension, including literal, inferential, critical or evaluative, and reflective or integrative levels. The experts also evaluated each item for clarity, conciseness, and age-appropriateness for BEED students. They ensured that the questions were relevant to the reading passages and aligned with the purpose of the study. Each expert rated the items based on clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. Their feedback guided the revision of unclear or unnecessary questions, improving the overall quality and focus of the instrument.

After the content validation, a pilot test was conducted using a small group of BEED students who were not included in the actual study. This pilot test helped the researchers check the clarity of the questions and instructions, the estimated time required to finish the test, and any confusing or misunderstood items. It also

evaluated whether the reading materials were suitable for the target participants. The researchers also analyzed the pilot responses to check for consistency and reliability. Based on the feedback from the content validation and the results of the pilot testing, necessary revisions were made to improve the instrument's structure, clarity, and readability. The finalized questionnaire included three reading selections, each followed by a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions organized under the four reading comprehension levels. This version of the instrument was then used for the actual data collection in the study.

Ethical Considerations

This study upheld the highest ethical standards to ensure the well-being and respect of all respondents. Before participating, students received detailed information about the study, including its purpose, methodology, potential benefits and risks, and their right to withdraw at any time (Resnik, 2020). They were asked to sign a written consent form. Their identities were kept strictly confidential. The researchers encouraged the respondents to use pseudonyms to protect their privacy in all research materials and publications (Wiles et al., 2008). Respondents were given ample time to express their thoughts and feelings without interruption and were informed about how their data were stored and used. Students have the right to access their data or request its removal from the study (National Privacy Commission, 2017). The researchers recognized that discussions about reading comprehension can be sensitive and evoke emotional responses. The researchers prepared to handle these situations with empathy and support, ensuring that participants feel safe and respected (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). The researchers acknowledged that their perspectives and experiences can influence the research process. Striving for objectivity by being aware of one's own biases and seeking feedback from colleagues to mitigate potential bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers first secured approval from the assigned panelists, research coordinator, and adviser to conduct the study. A formal letter requesting permission to administer the instrument was submitted to the Dean of the College of Education. After receiving approval, the researchers coordinated with the selected BEED students who participated in the survey. Following institutional procedures and obtaining proper authorization were necessary to ensure the research was conducted ethically and in line with academic standards (BERA, 2018).

Before administering the questionnaire, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the participants and assured them that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous (Resnik, 2020). The instrument included reading passages followed by questions that measured four levels of reading comprehension: literal, inferential, critical or evaluative, and reflective or integrative (Barrett, 1976). The questionnaires were distributed in person during a scheduled time, allowing each participant enough time to complete the test in a quiet and comfortable environment. Creating a structured and distraction-free setting helped improve the quality and honesty of the students' responses (Israel & Hay, 2006).

After all participants completed the questionnaire, the researchers gathered the responses and reviewed them for completeness. The collected data were then organized and prepared for analysis. Each response was coded and sorted according to the specific reading comprehension level it addressed. This process made it easier to analyze the results and identify trends in students' reading abilities (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Careful data handling and organization helped ensure the accuracy, clarity, and trustworthiness of the study's findings (Adanza, 2020).

Statistical Treatment

To analyze the data collected from the reading comprehension test, the researchers used the following statistical methods:

Frequency and Percentage. The researchers counted how many students fell into each reading comprehension category, such as "Proficient," "Developing," and "Beginning." Then, they calculated the percentage of students in each category to describe the distribution of reading levels among the respondents (Creswell, 2014). This helped show the overall pattern of student performance.

Weighted Mean. The researchers computed the weighted mean to find the average score of students in each level of reading comprehension. This method showed the general performance of students and helped identify which level had the highest or lowest average understanding of the reading material (Fitzpatrick, 2008).

Standard Deviation. Standard deviation was used to measure how spread out the students' scores were. It showed whether most students had similar scores or if their scores were very different from each other. A smaller standard deviation meant more consistent results, while a larger one indicated a wider range of reading abilities (Field, 2013).

Method of Scoring & Interpretation

The researchers used the following method of scoring and interpretation to determine the reading comprehension level of BEED students in Eastern Visayas State University.

Method of Scoring for Literal and Inferential Levels

Category	Range of Average Points	Description

Limited Understanding	1	Shows limited understanding; struggles with identifying facts or making inferences.
Basic Understanding	2	Shows basic understanding; can answer some literal or inferential questions correctly.
Strong Understanding	3	Shows strong understanding; correctly answers most or all questions.

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Method of Scoring for Critical and Integrative Levels

Category	Range of Average Points	Description
Advanced	4.21 – 5.00	Demonstrates exceptional understanding and application of concepts. Consistently exceeds expectations with minimal to no errors.
Proficient	3.41 – 4.20	Shows solid understanding and competent application of skills. Meets expectations with minor errors or inconsistencies.
Developing	2.61 – 3.40	Exhibits partial understanding and emerging skills. Requires further practice and support to meet expectations.
Beginning	1.81 – 2.60	Shows limited understanding and struggles with consistent performance. Needs significant support and guidance.
Struggling	1.00 – 1.80	Demonstrates very minimal understanding and performance. Requires intensive intervention and close supervision.

III.Results And Discussion

The findings were organized based on the specific research questions stated in the study, allowing for a focused examination of the reading comprehension levels of BEED students. The results were grouped and discussed according to the four comprehension domains assessed, providing a clear understanding of students' strengths and areas that needed improvement.

Table 1.Reading Comprehension Level among EED students in terms of Literal Level

Category	N	(%)
Limited understanding	18	18.0
Basic understanding	52	52.0
Strong understanding	30	30.0

Table 1 illustrates the Literal Comprehension Level of BEED students. Most of the participants (52.0%) exhibited a basic understanding, indicating that more than half of the students were able to recognize straightforward facts and details from the text but might find it challenging to comprehend more subtle meanings. In contrast, 30.0% demonstrated a strong understanding, suggesting they were able to grasp most accurately, or all of the literal information presented. However, 18.0% showed limited understanding, which indicates difficulties in identifying ideas that are stated directly. This distribution indicates a generally moderate proficiency among students when it comes to surface-level reading comprehension. Literal comprehension is considered a foundational skill in reading, as it involves recognizing and recalling explicit information, which is essential before progressing to higher-order comprehension.

This result highlights that while a good number of students are capable of identifying basic facts and details from texts, many still need support in strengthening this essential skill. Since literal comprehension is a stepping stone to deeper reading tasks, like interpreting meaning, making inferences, or analyzing content, students with only basic or limited understanding may struggle with more complex academic materials (Snow, 2002). Teachers should consider integrating targeted reading activities and strategies that help students improve their literal comprehension before moving to higher-level reading skills. This also highlights the importance of early intervention in literacy development to prevent future academic difficulties (Duke & Pearson, 2009).

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Level among EED students in terms of Inferential Level

Category	N	(%)
Limited understanding	74	74.0

Basic understanding	21	21.0
Strong understanding	5	5.0

Table 2 shows the performance of the respondents in the Inferential Comprehension Level. A large portion of the students, 74.0% demonstrated limited understanding, meaning they had difficulty making inferences or interpreting ideas that were not directly stated in the text. Only 21.0% of the respondents showed basic understanding, and just 5.0% were able to demonstrate a strong ability in making inferences. Inferential comprehension involves thinking beyond the text, using background knowledge, and drawing logical conclusions based on clues and context (Snow, 2002). This skill is essential for higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and academic success. The results indicated that while many students were able to understand basic information, most had difficulty identifying deeper meanings or drawing conclusions from what they read.
These findings suggested a need to strengthen inferential reading skills across all year levels. Teachers may need to incorporate more activities that promote reasoning and interpretation, such as asking open-ended questions, using texts with implied meanings, and encouraging discussion about ideas that are not directly stated. Improving this skill can help students perform better not only in reading-related tasks but also in other academic subjects and real-life situations that require critical thinking.

Table 3. Reading Comprehension level among EED students in terms of Critical/Evaluation Level

Category	**N**	**(%)**
Struggling	4	4.0
Beginning	18	18.0
Developing	34	34.0
Proficient	22	22.0
Advanced	22	22.0

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' scores in the Critical/Evaluative Comprehension Level. This level measured the students' ability to judge, analyze, and evaluate information especially in terms of logic, bias, and relevance. The largest group, 34.0%, was categorized as Developing, which meant they were starting to build evaluative skills but were not yet consistent in applying them. Encouragingly, 22.0% of the students were rated Proficient, and another 22.0% achieved an Advanced level, showing that nearly half of the respondents had strong to excellent critical reading skills. However, 18.0% were still at the Beginning stage, and 4.0% were classified as struggling, indicating that a portion of the respondents needed more support in developing higher-order thinking. Compared to other levels, this category showed a more even spread of performance, suggesting a gradual development of evaluative comprehension among BEED students.
These results implied that while many students were making progress in critical thinking, a focused effort was still needed to help those at the lower end. Evaluative comprehension is essential not just in reading but also in forming independent opinions, detecting bias, and making logical decisions. These are important skills not only for academic achievement but also for lifelong learning and responsible decision-making in everyday life. Teachers could improve this skill by integrating activities that train students to evaluate the reliability of information, identify logical fallacies, and form balanced arguments. With consistent instruction and practice, even those at the beginning and struggling levels could improve their evaluative comprehension (ILA, 2019). Strengthening this skill will better prepare future educators to guide their students in becoming critical and reflective thinkers.

Table 4.Reading Comprehension level among EED students in terms of Integrative/Reflective Level

Category	**N**	**(%)**
Struggling	23	23.0
Beginning	21	21.0
Developing	28	28.0
Proficient	20	20.0
Advanced	8	8.0

Table 4 presents the performance of students in the Integrative and Reflective Comprehension Level, which measured their ability to connect ideas from a text to personal experiences, real-life situations, or broader

concepts. In this category, 28.0 percent of the respondents were classified as Developing. This meant they showed signs of understanding but had not yet reached consistent performance. Meanwhile, 20.0 percent reached the Proficient level, and 8.0 percent were rated as Advanced, showing that only a small portion of the students had strong integrative and reflective thinking skills.

In contrast, 23.0 percent were categorized as Struggling, while 21.0 percent were at the Beginning level. These two groups made up 44.0 percent of the sample, suggesting that nearly half of the students had difficulty linking what they read to broader knowledge, real-life applications, or personal insights. Integrative and reflective comprehension is important because it helps learners develop deeper understanding by connecting ideas and experiences. This skill supports long-term learning, critical thinking, and personal growth. It allows students to think beyond the text and apply what they learn in meaningful ways. The findings suggested that while some students had started to develop reflective thinking skills, many still needed support. Teachers may improve this skill by using strategies such as reflective writing, open discussions, and real-world applications of classroom readings. These methods can help students relate texts to their own lives and think more deeply about what they learn. Supporting the development of this skill is essential for preparing future educators who can think critically and teach with purpose.

Overall, the results supported the need for balanced and targeted reading instruction. Evaluating students across multiple dimensions literal, inferential, critical, and reflective, offered a clearer and more complete understanding of their reading skills (Afflerbach et al., 2008). These findings could help educators design instructional strategies that focus not only on basic comprehension but also on higher-level thinking skills to support the development of more capable and reflective readers.

IV.Conclusion And Recommendations

Based on the results, several key conclusions were drawn regarding the reading comprehension levels of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students at Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU). The findings revealed that most students generally performed within the developing to instructional range across the four comprehension domains, with the lowest performance in inferential and reflective comprehension. This indicated that while students demonstrated a basic ability to identify explicit details from texts (Literal Level), many struggled to interpret implied meanings, evaluate arguments, and synthesize information across different contexts. Specifically, the Literal Level showed that students had some skill in recognizing directly stated facts, but their comprehension remained at a basic level, lacking consistency in understanding simple content. The Inferential Level had the lowest mean score, suggesting that students had considerable difficulty drawing conclusions and understanding meaning that was not directly stated. In the Critical/Evaluative Level, students showed some progress, but many could not still assess bias, logic, and the reliability of the information. Similarly, in the Integrative/Reflective Level, students struggled to connect texts to personal experiences, broader ideas, or real-life applications.

These findings underscore a clear need for targeted instruction and support in strengthening higher-order thinking skills. Such skills are crucial not only for students' academic performance but also for their future responsibilities as teachers, where the ability to model and teach effective reading strategies will be essential. As future educators, BEED students must be equipped with strong comprehension skills to promote literacy and lifelong learning among their students. Hence, the study concluded that it is vital to embed explicit reading comprehension strategies into the BEED curriculum. Activities such as inference-building exercises, text analysis discussions, and reflective writing should be regularly incorporated into instruction. Strengthening these areas would help students become more independent and critical readers, better preparing them to meet the demands of both higher education and the teaching profession.

Furthermore, the researchers suggest that the university may carry out reading assessments at the start of the academic year. These tests help identify students who needed help in different areas of reading comprehension, such as literal, inferential, critical, and reflective understanding. By knowing the students' levels early, teachers could adjust their teaching and give extra help to those who struggled. This would make sure that students received support before they faced more difficult lessons or tasks. They may also provide a targeted reading instruction focused on key comprehension skills. Teachers were encouraged to focus their lessons on improving specific reading skills where students showed difficulty, especially in making inferences, judging information, and connecting ideas. This could be done by using short texts with follow-up questions, class discussions, and reflective writing. Teachers could guide students in understanding hidden meanings, evaluating the message of a text, and relating what they read to real-life situations. This would help students understand texts more deeply and improve their academic performance. Moreover, reading strategies may be integrated in education subjects across all year levels to support students improved their reading comprehension.

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