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Users' Perceptions of Contextualized Reading Materials in Enhancing Reading Comprehension

[1]Maria May A. Benosa*, Joy Gaza
Corresponding Author: * mariamay.benosa@unc.edu.ph
[1] University of Nueva Caceres, Naga City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to document the research-based reading interventions and innovations in improving reading competencies among Junior High School Students between 2013 and 2019. Specifically, it sought to answer the following objectives: describe the students' perception of contextualized reading materials, and design a school-based policy to optimize the utilization of the Research-based interventions. This study used a descriptive research design and a mixed method to discuss and answer the objectives of this research. The respondents comprised one teacher who implemented the reading interventions and 15 students who utilized the interventions. Based on the study's results, the archived reading interventions focus on improving students' reading comprehension and English proficiency. Many studies conducted between 2013 and 2019 were designed to address the learners' needs. Each intervention proposed different strategies that could solve the timely concerns about reading. However, only the contextualization of reading materials was realized. It has proven effective and significantly improved reading comprehension since it was frequently utilized. The study showed a high level of engagement among the students with the contextualized reading materials and found them helpful in understanding them. Nevertheless, there were still competencies unsuitable for the student's level. They find it difficult, and sometimes it is hard to understand. Some competencies are not appropriate for the grade level they are and need to provide alternative reading materials instead. Therefore, it is recommended that language teachers revise the reading materials based on the students' interests and level of appropriateness to improve reading comprehension, fill the

students' learning gap, and provide different levels of support and scaffolding to meet the needs of diverse learners. These results served as the basis for crafting the school-based policy on utilizing the reading interventions.

Keywords
Innovations
Interventions
Reading
Reading Comprehension

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Introduction

Reading is one of the fundamental skills in a language that every student needs to develop. It is a development, interactive, and global process involving learned skills. The method incorporates explicitly and can be positively and negatively influenced by nonlinguistic internal and external variables or factors [1]. Learning to read is very challenging when it ends at a later age because of some instances surrounding him. Thus, it is essential for every student to learn at an early age and must be the focus skill in developing their reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is a cognitive process that involves decoding letters, interpreting, and understanding texts. It is the most essential skill that every student must have for academic success to engage in academic discussions. Students with a high level of comprehension had a better interest in reading English; they still used English even though the class was over, used reading techniques effectively, did not do repetition when reading, did not often run out of time when doing the reading test, and did not face serious problem because of grammar. Although students with low levels did not have all that, they made a better effort to use the dictionary when facing unfamiliar words and always prepared for the test [2]. However, many students struggle with reading difficulties, resulting in low comprehension levels due to less reading time and a lack of reading practice.

In addition, students with learning disabilities (LD) in reading generally have low academic growth in their reading performance despite receiving interventions [3]. Researchers have consistently found that interventions for two students with LD must be tailored to their needs to ensure they fully benefit from the interventions [3],[4]. Older students with reading deficits benefit from reading instruction that fosters background knowledge, vocabulary development, the ability to detect and comprehend relationships among concepts, and the ability to use strategies to ensure understanding and retention of reading material. The consequences of poor reading comprehension can be radical leading to student's low performance in school, academically unmotivated, low self-esteem, and decreased opportunities for professional career success [5].

Based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in 2018 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) revealed that the Philippines had the lowest reading comprehension among 79 countries. It is one of the sources and valid evidence that our country's reading comprehension level needs more attention and efforts to improve and increase it [6].

In response to timely educational challenges, multiple interventions and innovations to help and support struggling readers have continuously arrived to solve those challenges. Developmental reading interventions have gained attention in recent years due to their focus on providing individualized, tailored support to students [7]. These interventions typically involve a combination of assessment, instruction, and feedback, designed to address the unique needs and abilities of each student.

Moreover, reading interventions and innovations are the best strategies to solve the problems in reading comprehension that educators must develop to help students improve their comprehension level. Innovating reading strategies is very timely, especially in this challenging time when distance-learning modalities have been implemented for almost three years due to the health crisis. It is apt to innovate strategies to fill in the learning gap among students.

In this study, the researcher documents research-based reading interventions and innovations in improving reading competencies among junior high school students to discover why reading comprehension problems remain unresolved. Based on the results of this study, the researcher developed a school-based policy that utilizes interventions. May this study help educators implement reading interventions to address students with learning disabilities to learn more and improve their reading competencies. This study aimed to document the research-based reading interventions and innovations that improved reading competencies among Junior High School Students from 2008 to 2014. Specifically, it sought to answer the following objectives:

- Describe the students' perception of contextualized reading materials; and
- Design a school-based policy to optimize the utilization of Research-based interventions.

Literature Review

The schema theory is one of the most popular theories on schemas and ideas, which are important for a broader cognitive domain of knowledge. The term "schema" was first used in psychology as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences". It assumes that written text does not carry meaning by itself. Rather, text-only provides directions for readers on how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own previously acquired

knowledge. The theory of Schema can be used to help guide students to comprehend a text from a global point of view. Therefore, the role of Schema theory in comprehension cannot be ignored [8].

The schema was introduced in reading when discussing the critical role of background knowledge in reading comprehension. It plays an important role in reading comprehension where all the background knowledge gained from the learners' environment is recorded and activated when they are in the actual learning environment. The fundamental tenet of schema theory assumes that written text does not carry meaning.

Frederic Bartlett, a psychologist who created schema theory, explained that readers organize and make sense of new information by drawing on their past experiences and knowledge: mental models or concepts known as schemas aid readers in classifying and interpreting data [9].

According to schema theory, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate textual material to one's knowledge. Good reading materials take place in the heart of the readers, where they can recount what they know to what they are going to learn. It is the appropriateness and the localization of the reading materials where they can apply their prior knowledge to the current knowledge gained from the materials and consider the level of appropriateness for effective reading comprehension.

Moreover, the Schema theory is significant in fulfilling the individuals' schema in reading comprehension. Wherein a blank sheet schema absorbs all information gained from the learning environment and is connected to the prior knowledge of the individual [10]. In addition, the underlying premise of schema theory is that people try to make sense of the information they acquire by fitting it into a mental framework. People divide information into generalizable chunks, which are subsequently categorically stored in the brain for future recall. One active strategy coding method that is essential for improving knowledge recall is schema theory. New information is grouped into a new script or coded into an existing schema as it is perceived. Schemata are structured mental models that help students comprehend and relate the information being presented to them.

However, once readers connect new information to their existing schemas, facilitating comprehension and retention would be easy. Readers relate to the information acquired and understand meaningfully all the ideas presented in the materials. Lastly, readers use schemas to make inferences and interpret text beyond literal meaning. It helps readers to think critically and make meaning out of the context that is applied to have better outcomes of understanding.

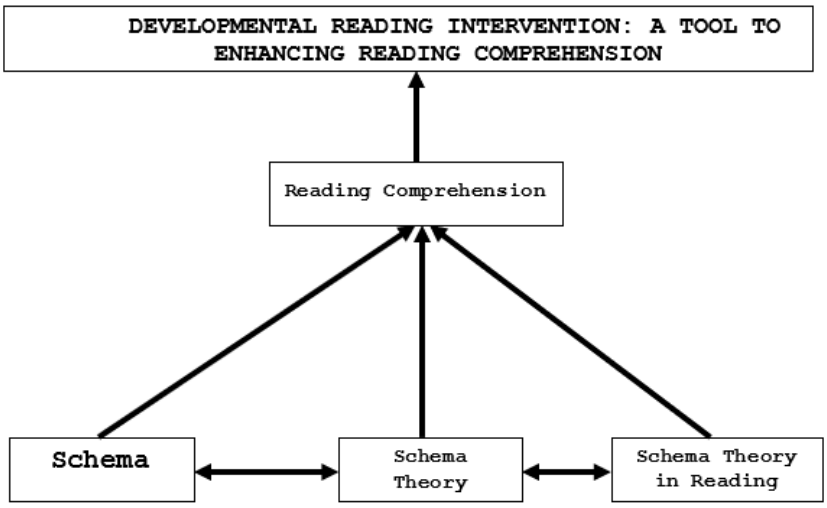


Fig. 1. Theoretical Paradigm

Material and Methods

A. Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design with a mixed-method approach to comprehensively address the objectives of the research. The quantitative data described the participants' perceptions of the reading intervention, while the qualitative data provided deeper insights into their experiences and views. The integration of both data types allowed for a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness and reception of the reading intervention.

B. Respondents and Sampling Technique

The study employed Convenience Sampling, also referred to as Availability Sampling, to identify participants who were accessible and willing to participate. A total of 16 respondents—comprising 15 students and 1 teacher—were selected based on proximity and availability. The selection process did not aim to represent the entire population but rather to obtain relevant data from participants directly engaged in or exposed to the reading intervention.

C. Research Instruments and Data Analysis

Two primary instruments were used for data collection:

1. Interview Guide Questions – administered to the teacher and other proponents of the reading intervention to gather qualitative insights regarding the implementation and impact of the program.
2. Survey Questionnaire – distributed to students who participated in the reading intervention. The questionnaire was adapted from Whitaker [11], *"Development and Validation of the Reading Engagement Survey"* (link). It consisted of four main

indicators: Engagement with contextualized reading materials, Perceived usefulness and relevance, Challenges and suggestions, and Overall perception

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the quantitative data and identify trends in student responses. As Bandara et al. [12]noted, percentage values provide a precise and clear representation of proportions in a dataset. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to complement and interpret the quantitative findings.

Results and Discussion

A. Identified Research-Based Intervention and Innovation

To identify the existing research interventions/innovations, the researcher archived multiple studies at the University of Nueva Caceres' library to determine the reading interventions and innovations. Based on the research, one 1 study related to improving reading competencies and English proficiency existed. The researchers focused on the intervention that promotes literacy development among the students and enhances reading comprehension levels. Perception on the utilization/adaptation of the research-based reading intervention was determined through interviews with the teacher implementer and the distribution of survey questions to the students' beneficiaries. The perception of the utilization/adaptation was measured based on the respondents' positive perceptions.

B. Contextualization of Reading Materials

A study conducted in 2025, the researcher proposed contextualizing Reading Materials according to the students' interests, which aimed to cater to multiple interests and motivate them to learn, especially in reading [13]. The intervention helped the students understand a specific text since it aligned with their interests. It was focused on improving students' reading comprehension and English proficiency. Before implementing the proposed reading intervention, the researcher adopted the Multiple Interests of ITC publication instrument to determine the students' interests. This instrument focused on the students' eight multiple interests and found out that there were 10 parameters in each interest.

During the implementation of the intervention, the research proponent discovered that students with the same interests were likely to perform the activities as a group. They were motivated to read since they were on the same track of interest. In addition, collaboration and self-confidence were also developed in each student so that they could perform activities confidently with the group without any hesitation. After the implementation, students were able to comprehend the text effectively. However, some competencies were found difficult at the student level and needed to be contextualized to be suited to their capability.

Moreover, contextualization was an effective strategy for helping students learn more effectively. It made the reading text more straightforward and understandable since it aligned with the students' interests and needs. The study on contextualizing reading materials

emphasized the significance of students' interests in the learning process [14]. The intervention contextualized reading materials that aligned with the students' interests and integrated them into the learning process to help students understand the text.

Above all, this reading intervention was focused on engagement and interactive activities, which helped improve reading competencies. This study was supported by Gardner's Multiple Intelligences [15],[16], who revealed that the learners are placed in an engaging, significant, and real scenario when contextualizing reading materials. Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development also support this, explaining that children learn by interacting with their surroundings [17].

Based on the study's findings, some tailored recommendations were made to fill the learners' reading gaps, such as assessing the students' reading proficiency before implementing the intervention for appropriate reading materials. Peer tutoring should be promoted to give each struggling reader a study partner. Contextualized reading resources associated with the student's interests are used in practice to improve reading comprehension.

C. Teachers' Perception of the Contextualization of Reading Materials

Table 1 shows the teacher's perception of the contextualized reading materials in terms of utilization of the materials, challenges encountered, and assessment of the implementation.

Table 1. Teachers' Perception of the Contextualized Reading Materials in Terms of Utilization, Challenge, and Assessment

Themes of Experiences	Sample Statements
• Utilization of the Contextualized Reading Materials	*"I utilized/implemented the intervention I proposed in my study/research."*
• Challenges Encountered	*"Still, different competencies are needed at another level. so, I plan to create another."*
• Assessment of the Implementation	*"It was a success, and learners were interested because of the differentiated activities."*

These themes provide insight into how educators adapt, experience, and evaluate contextualized learning resources.

1. Utilization of the Contextualized Reading Materials

The proponent stated, "She utilized/implemented the intervention she proposed in her study/research." This statement suggests a positive and research-informed approach to instruction, where teachers directly apply interventions derived from their own or others' scholarly studies. It highlights the practical implementation of contextualization as a pedagogical strategy. Teachers are not just passive users but active developers of instructional interventions. This suggests a reflective and research-informed teaching culture. Professional development should continue to support teachers in designing and evaluating their own instructional strategies.

The findings revealed that "Contextualization of Reading Materials according to the interest of the students [18] was utilized. It indicated that contextualizing the reading materials based on students' interests has been completely incorporated into the teaching strategies. Based on the results, it has contributed significantly to improving reading comprehension since it was frequently utilized. It indicates that this specific innovation has become a part of the learning process. It might be a crucial area of analysis for understanding how and why contextualized materials are being used to enhance student learning. In line with this, contextualized reading materials based on the students' multiple interests were essential to motivate them to read, improve their reading comprehension, and develop their love for reading. Sambayon [15] supported this claim, which proved that contextualized teaching and learning can improve reading comprehension and skills. Jean Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory also supported this. This theory emphasizes that learners actively construct their knowledge by connecting their prior knowledge to new information found in the text [19]. In support of Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory, students used their prior knowledge to understand the new context. Students quickly understand new information connected to their background knowledge. According to Suganop and Oliva [20], contextualization allows learners to connect reading materials to their lived experiences, which enhances comprehension and motivation. Teachers who design or adapt materials based on their learners' backgrounds will likely witness better engagement.

In addition, a study [18], found that Grade 5 learners could read and comprehend what they read. There are no non-readers from the posttest who are less frustrated. It implies that improvements have occurred. Fantinelli et al. [21] found that contextualization helped bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application, particularly in local and indigenous contexts. Integrating contextualized reading materials in classrooms has been widely acknowledged for enhancing learner engagement and reading proficiency.

According to Tefera [22], localized and differentiated materials significantly improved students' motivation and academic performance. Azzad [23] further supported this claim, noting that contextualized texts increased comprehension and student interest, especially when aligned with learners' real-life experiences. Teachers play a vital role in utilizing such materials effectively. Empowering teachers to develop their resources fosters ownership and innovation in instruction. Similarly, culturally relevant pedagogy has been highlighted as an important approach for strengthening learners' engagement and connection with reading materials. Based on the positive perceptions, it is recommended to utilize contextualized reading materials in teaching reading to make it easy for the students to understand the text.

2. Challenges Encountered

The proponent claims, "Still, different competencies are needed at another level. So, I plan to create another." The statement reflects a limitation in the scope of the existing materials, indicating that while some competencies were addressed, others were not. It shows the teacher's willingness to revise or develop new materials to meet evolving student needs. Teachers recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient, especially in multi-level classrooms. This shows that while teachers acknowledge the usefulness of contextualized materials, they face the challenge of addressing varied competency levels. It implies the need for differentiated or scaffolded materials to cater to diverse learners.

In a study by Chisunum & Nwadiokwu [24], teachers reported that while contextualized materials improved engagement, they also found gaps in alignment with specific curriculum standards, necessitating continuous material development. While contextualized resources are practical, they require continuous evaluation to remain aligned with curriculum goals and learner needs. While contextualized materials offer pedagogical benefits, several studies highlight ongoing challenges. Cayabas and Sumeg-ang [25] reported that teachers often struggle with time constraints and lack training when developing customized materials. In addition, instructional materials often require continuous adjustment to accommodate diverse learner competencies, which can increase teachers' workload. Addressing multiple reading levels within a single classroom also remains a persistent challenge, as it frequently requires the preparation of different versions of the same material. This is consistent with Abad [26] findings, who emphasized the necessity of differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning needs.

However, there were still competencies unsuitable for the student's level. They find it difficult, and sometimes it is hard to understand. Some competencies are not appropriate for their grade level and need to provide alternative reading materials instead. Therefore, it is recommended that language teachers revise the reading materials based on the students' interests and level of appropriateness to improve reading comprehension, fill the students' learning gap, and provide different levels of support and scaffolding to meet the needs of diverse learners.

3. Assessment of the Implementation

The proponent testified, "It was a success, and learners were interested because of the differentiated activities." This positive feedback underscores the effectiveness of differentiated contextualized reading tasks. It indicates that learners responded favorably, likely due to relevance and engagement, essential in learner-centered instruction. This

highlights the positive impact of contextualized materials on student engagement and learning outcomes. The reference to "differentiated activities" supports the idea that customization enhances learner participation. When materials are localized and tailored, students are more motivated and involved, which teachers perceive as successful in implementation. In addition, students feel motivated to read when reading materials are related to their real-life scenarios. It boosts their love for reading since the materials are connected to their interest and related to their own experiences.

The result implied that contextualizing reading materials improved reading comprehension among the students. English teachers should provide contextualized reading materials aligned with the students' interests for better understanding, like local stories, where they can relate to the content. It helped the students foster their love for reading since they found the reading materials interesting. This also shows that teachers are interested in observing impact and results, an important component of reflective instruction, and putting materials into practice. It demonstrates how educators use student responses as feedback to enhance their courses and conduct informal assessments.

Teachers generally perceive contextualized instruction positively when it results in active student participation. Learner engagement tends to increase when instructional texts and activities are closely connected to local contexts. Such culturally aligned materials can foster stronger emotional involvement and support deeper comprehension, while classroom practice suggests that successful implementation is closely related to the extent to which learning materials are effectively differentiated. Cholsakorn and Piamsai [27] found that differentiated reading instruction improved comprehension and student confidence. Atondo [28] further emphasized that contextualization promotes inclusivity and supports learner-centered education, especially in diverse and multilingual classrooms. Bongancisco [29] highlighted differentiated and contextualized materials improved reading comprehension assessment performance among Grade 6 students. Using localized reading content significantly increased learner motivation and participation in class activities.

To have a successful intervention, it is recommended that implementers continue assessing the contextualized reading materials for improvement and appropriateness to learners' ability and interest. Provide differentiated reading materials to cater to the diverse needs of the learners.

D. Students' Perceptions of Contextualized Reading Materials along with Engagement, Usefulness, Relevance, and Challenges

Table 2 shows the students' perception of contextualized reading materials along with engagement, usefulness, relevance, and challenges. The students' engagement revealed that 60%

of the respondents were interested in reading materials about culture, language, or community; 46.67% utilized them; and 60% enjoyed reading them. On the other hand, 73.33% of the respondents on the usefulness and relevance of the contextualized reading materials understood the lesson better; 53.33% find the materials easier to read and understand the stories or text; and 100% believe that reading the materials related to culture, language, and community is essential. While on the challenges, 60% of the respondents find it difficult to understand new things, and 100% find the materials sometimes hard to understand.

Table 2. Students' Perception of Contextualized Reading Materials along with Engagement, Usefulness, Relevance, and Challenges

Engagement with Contextualized Reading Materials	**Percentage**
• Interest	60
• Utilization	46.67
• Enjoyment of Reading	60
Usefulness and Relevance of Contextualized Reading Materials	**Percentage**
• The materials help a lot to understand the lesson better	73.33
• Easier to read and understand stories or text	53.33
• Help in understanding culture, language, and community	100
Challenges	**Percentage**
• Students find it difficult to understand new things	60
• The reading materials are sometimes hard to understand	100

E. Engagement with Contextualized Reading Materials

This section discusses the engagement of the students with the contextualized reading materials in terms of interest, utilization, and enjoyment in reading.

1. Interest

The result signifies that contextualized reading materials significantly improve reading comprehension, as they are closely aligned with students' interests and experiences. When students engage with texts that reflect their culture, language, and community, they develop a stronger connection to the material, making reading more meaningful and enjoyable. Using contextualized reading materials regularly boosts interest in reading and fosters intrinsic motivation. When students find personal relevance in what they read, they are more likely to actively engage with the text, analyze information critically, and retain knowledge more effectively. This process leads to deeper comprehension and stronger literacy skills over time.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that most respondents prefer reading materials related to their culture, language, and community, demonstrating a willingness to gain knowledge and expand their understanding of their heritage and identity. It highlights the importance of culturally responsive teaching, which acknowledges students' backgrounds and integrates them into the learning process. Additionally, exposure to contextualized

materials helps develop critical thinking skills as students relate their personal experiences to the broader themes presented in the texts. This result was strengthened by Tisa et al. [30], who showed a positive direct effect of reading interest on English text comprehension and achievement motivation towards reading comprehension. It implied that the 21st-century literacy learning process, both informal and non-formal educational institutions, needs to be more relevant and supportive for the growth and increase of reading interest and achievement motivation. Abad [1] emphasized that the developed reading material enhances the reading proficiency of Indigenous learners and supplements textbooks used in the classroom.

According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, cognitive development is influenced by cultural and social factors [17]. According to this theory, learning occurs best when students engage with materials that reflect their social and cultural backgrounds. Using contextualized reading resources motivates the students to learn, use their schema to understand the text, connect the text and context, and boost their confidence because reading instructions are within their framework [31]. Constructivist Learning Theory [32] also contributed to this theory, where students construct their understanding by connecting background knowledge to a new concept. Reader-response theory [33] also supports these findings, stressing the importance of the reader in making meaning from a text.

Contextualizing reading comprehension instruction places the learners in a vivid, meaningful, authentic situation. Contextualization can be done through designing the reading lessons and activities that center on the learners' field of interest and environment. Bonganciso [29] revealed that the learners' reading comprehension performance was significantly increased. Previous studies have shown that pre-thematic aids can have a strong influence on high school students' reading comprehension among various forms of contextual visual support. Providing learners with strategic and meaningful contexts has also been found to enhance interest, curiosity, motivation, and overall engagement in the learning process. The study concluded that reading materials related to their culture or local community should be used in daily teaching-learning, including a wide range of reading materials that cater to the multiple interests of the students, establishing local colors for the students to understand a text better and stimulate eagerness to read by providing materials enhanced to their ability and interest.

2. Utilization

The findings indicate a high level of student engagement when contextualized reading materials are integrated into classroom instruction. This suggests that contextualization plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension, as students are more likely to

engage with materials that reflect their interests, experiences, and everyday realities. Regular exposure to contextualized texts encourages frequent reading practice, which supports cognitive development and enables learners to process information beyond surface-level understanding. Increased reading engagement has been associated with higher comprehension levels, as students who read more consistently tend to acquire broader knowledge and develop more complex thinking skills [30].

Students demonstrate stronger motivation when reading materials resonate with their cultural, linguistic, and environmental contexts. Familiar themes and settings help learners activate prior knowledge, allowing them to connect new information with existing mental frameworks. This process aligns with constructivist learning principles, which emphasize that understanding is built through meaningful connections between prior experiences and new knowledge [17],[19]. Contextualized instruction also fosters a more inclusive classroom environment by affirming learners' identities and valuing their cultural backgrounds. When students see their communities and traditions reflected in reading materials, they are more likely to feel acknowledged and engaged, which supports sustained interest in reading [26][,29].

Beyond motivation, contextualized reading materials contribute to measurable improvements in reading proficiency. Locally relevant and authentic texts reduce cognitive barriers by presenting familiar vocabulary, contexts, and situations, making comprehension more accessible. Several studies have demonstrated that contextualized and localized reading materials significantly improve learners' reading comprehension and overall literacy skills [18]. Similarly, intervention-based contextualized materials have been shown to improve learners' reading performance, particularly when students are given sufficient time to explore and interact with the texts [34].

Reading engagement, which includes reading practices and active involvement with texts, is a critical component of reading development. Research indicates that engagement has a significant and positive effect on reading comprehension, even when reading attitude alone does not directly predict comprehension outcomes [35]. Effective reading strategies, such as predicting, questioning, skimming, and scanning, further enhance comprehension and support active interaction with texts [36]. In addition, school- and community-based literacy initiatives can strengthen students' reading development by providing meaningful and socially relevant reading experiences [37].

Given these findings, schools are encouraged to invest in the development and consistent use of contextualized reading materials that reflect students' local languages, cultures, and environments. Research emphasizes that contextualized learning resources

are particularly effective in English instruction and can help learners achieve better outcomes on reading comprehension assessments [24]. Furthermore, teachers play a key role in contextualizing lessons by linking reading materials to learners' prior experiences and real-life situations, thereby making instruction more meaningful and relevant [28].

3. Enjoyment of Reading

The survey data reveals a unanimous preference among respondents for reading materials that include familiar topics such as local stories, events, or traditions. Specifically, 60% of the participants said they enjoy these materials much more. This strong inclination toward localized content underscores the importance of contextualizing learning materials to enhance student engagement and comprehension.

These recent findings affirm the survey results and underscore the relevance of contextualized reading materials in fostering academic engagement. Integrating culturally familiar content supports language development and nurtures learners' cultural identity and intrinsic motivation. According to Damaianti et al. [38], students showed enhanced engagement and reading comprehension when texts included familiar cultural references. Culturally grounded texts have been shown to strengthen learners' emotional engagement and support deeper comprehension by making reading experiences more meaningful and memorable. Studies indicate that localized and culture-based reading materials enhance students' motivation, sense of identity, and connection to the learning content, which in turn leads to more significant and sustained learning experiences [29]. Incorporating regional and culturally relevant texts into the curriculum also contributes to the preservation of cultural values while simultaneously improving learners' language skills by situating learning within familiar and relevant contexts [26]. Furthermore, the use of indigenized and contextualized instructional materials has been found to promote higher levels of learner involvement and improved comprehension, particularly when materials reflect students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds [18].

Based on the survey results and recent studies, it is recommended that teachers and schools use more reading materials that include familiar and local topics, such as stories about the students' culture, community, and traditions. Since all of the students said they enjoy reading these types of materials, using them in class can help students become more interested and better at understanding what they read. Teachers should try to include stories and texts that students can relate to. Schools and education leaders should also help create and provide learning materials based on local culture. This will not only help students learn better but also help them feel proud of their identity and where they come from.

F. Usefulness and Relevance of Contextualized Reading Materials

This section discussed how the contextualized reading materials helped the respondents in understanding the context especially those were integrated in the classroom instruction.

1. The materials help a lot to understand the lesson better

Of 15 respondents, 73.33% of learners reported that such materials helped them understand the lessons better. These results demonstrate that reading materials embedded with cultural or community-based content are highly effective in facilitating better comprehension. When lessons are presented in a context familiar to students, such as their local traditions, community settings, or everyday experiences, they are more likely to grasp new concepts and retain information.

Familiarity with reading content can reduce cognitive load, allowing students to focus more on meaning-making rather than on decoding unfamiliar language or references. This supports the view that contextualization enhances comprehension and learner confidence, as students tend to be more engaged when their identities, experiences, and cultural backgrounds are reflected in instructional materials [29]. Such an approach is consistent with constructivist learning principles, which emphasize that learners construct new knowledge by connecting new information to prior experiences and existing cognitive structures [17]. Moreover, culturally relevant reading materials promote inclusivity by acknowledging and valuing students' diverse backgrounds, thereby contributing to a more equitable and responsive learning environment.

In light of these findings, teachers are encouraged to continue using reading resources that highlight local culture, language, and community life. Contextualized materials not only support academic development but also help preserve cultural heritage and strengthen students' sense of identity, making learning more meaningful across subject areas [33]. Developing a collection of localized texts and integrating them into daily instruction can enhance reading skills and sustain students' interest in both literacy and their cultural context.

Reading comprehension involves constructing meaning by connecting words, sentences, and prior knowledge to form a coherent understanding of a text. When learners possess relevant background knowledge, comprehension moves beyond surface-level processing toward deeper interpretation, in line with constructivist learning principles [17]. Research shows that reading comprehension is influenced by engagement, motivation, and instructional design, particularly when learning materials are meaningful and relevant to learners' experiences [30]. Culturally integrated and contextualized reading materials support this process by reducing cognitive barriers and aligning texts

with students' interests, thereby enhancing comprehension and overall reading development [18].

2. Easier to read and understand stories or text

It shows that using familiar vocabulary, primarily rooted in the learners' language, or Cultural setting reduces linguistic barriers and enhances decoding and comprehension. In addition, it highlights the importance of personal and cultural relevance in fostering reader engagement. These findings affirmed that language comprehension and reader empathy are strengthened when learners encounter content reflecting their lived experiences.

When students see their communities, traditions, and environments reflected in stories, they are more likely to connect emotionally with the text, increasing comprehension and motivation to read. It supports Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory, which emphasizes the transactional relationship between the reader and the text, where meaning is actively constructed based on the reader's background, emotions, and experiences.

Moreover, comprehension of words is enhanced when materials are in the learners' local language or simplified English tied to culturally relevant contexts, making learning more accessible for struggling readers or those in early grade levels. It also aligns with inclusive education principles, where equity in learning is supported by removing cultural and linguistic obstacles.

The fact that most learners found the characters and situations relatable also points to the power of contextualization in fostering empathy, critical thinking, and moral development. Stories rooted in familiar settings allow students to reflect on real-life issues and explore values that are meaningful in their communities. It makes reading a cognitive process and a social and emotional experience.

The results implied that students understand the words better and relate to the characters or situations if the reading materials are connected to their real-life scenarios. Contextualization of a text helped them better understand the meaning and internalize the messages found in the text, since they are observable in their community. It signifies that the ideas found in the text can help solve the problems that the students face in everyday situations.

The result was supported by Ladson-Billings [39]. It revealed that contextualized learning material in teaching Mother Tongue was effective. Perin [37] proved that the level of contextualization using the learning resource materials for the learners, which is composed of desired learning outcomes, content, illustrations, and effectiveness, has an awe-inspiring result. There was a significant difference in the learners' reading ability levels before and after reading innovation (CERPT) exposure. Thus, the study commends reading innovation (CERPT) to help improve the learners' reading ability.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that teachers consistently integrate contextualized reading materials into classroom instruction, as these materials significantly enhance comprehension and engagement. Teachers should use texts that reflect the students' culture, language, environment, and real-life experiences to create meaningful connections between the reader and the text. Developing a standard reading guide tailored to these localized materials can further support students by providing structure and scaffolding during reading activities. This guide may include pre-reading questions, vocabulary previews, guided reading prompts, and post-reading reflection tasks. In addition, schools should encourage collaboration with local writers, elders, and community members to create or adapt reading materials that are culturally rich and relevant. By doing so, reading instruction becomes a tool for academic success and a way to preserve cultural identity and promote a lifelong love for reading.

3. Help in understanding culture, language, and community

100% of respondents unanimously agreed that these reading materials are essential in the educational setting. This strong and unified response indicates that students place a high value on culturally relevant texts, recognizing their role in making learning more meaningful, relatable, and engaging. Including reading materials that reflect students' backgrounds helps them feel seen, respected, and connected to the content, which can lead to increased motivation, participation, and comprehension. Learners who encounter texts that align with their cultural identity and lived experiences are more likely to engage in deeper thinking and reflective learning.

Moreover, the unanimous response highlights the need for schools to embrace culturally responsive pedagogy, which encourages integrating localized content to meet learners' diverse needs better. When students see themselves represented in the materials they read, it nurtures a sense of belonging and encourages them to take ownership of their learning.

Students' reading comprehension tends to improve when instructional texts reflect their cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds. Culturally relevant reading materials allow learners to connect prior knowledge with new information, thereby supporting deeper comprehension and meaningful engagement [29]. In the Philippine context, studies have shown that localized and contextualized reading materials significantly enhance students' reading performance, motivation, and sense of identity when texts incorporate familiar values, language, and cultural references [18],[33]. Cultural identity also plays an important role in communication, as learners express local beliefs and traditions more effectively when learning materials are socially and culturally

grounded. Furthermore, contextualization has been found to improve learning mastery and communicative competence by reducing cognitive barriers and increasing relevance [28]. These findings suggest that curricula should prioritize culturally based reading materials across grade levels to promote comprehension, engagement, and inclusive literacy development.

G. Challenges

This section discussed the challenges encountered by the students in the utilization of the contextualized reading materials.

1. Students find it difficult to understand new things

Based on the data shown, all respondents (100%) indicated that the main challenge they face when using reading materials related to their culture or community is that "they find it difficult to understand new things." The result suggests that while culturally relevant materials are appreciated and enjoyed, there may still be issues with how these materials present new information, such as unfamiliar vocabulary, outdated content, or unclear explanations of cultural topics.

The survey results highlighted that even though the students enjoy reading materials related to their culture and community, they may struggle to fully understand these texts when new or unfamiliar contexts are introduced. The result implies that localized content, though culturally relevant, does not automatically ensure clarity or practical learning.

Several studies indicate that the effectiveness of contextualized reading materials depends not only on cultural relevance but also on their suitability to students' reading levels and linguistic abilities. Poorly structured or overly complex localized texts may hinder comprehension if they are not aligned with learners' proficiency levels [32]. While contextualization can enhance engagement, it needs to be supported by clear instructional design to ensure that cultural content does not create confusion, particularly when introducing new or abstract concepts [28]. Teachers also face challenges in developing effective localized materials due to limited resources and insufficient guidance, which can affect the quality and clarity of instructional texts [25]. Research further shows that simplified and well-organized contextualized reading materials lead to better comprehension and higher student engagement, highlighting the critical role of teachers in designing materials that are both culturally relevant and pedagogically appropriate [33].

Based on the results, it is recommended that teachers, writers, and curriculum developers simplify the language and structure of these texts without removing their cultural value. Reading materials should be carefully designed to match the learners' language proficiency and cognitive level. In addition, teachers should provide pre-reading

activities and background information to help students understand unfamiliar ideas more easily.

2. The reading materials are sometimes hard to understand

While learners recognize the value and relevance of culturally based texts, comprehension remains a key challenge, possibly due to unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentence structures, or limited background knowledge of certain cultural elements. Despite being culturally familiar, some texts may still include traditional terms, historical references, or idiomatic expressions that are not commonly used in everyday language, which can hinder understanding. The absence of issues related to interest or motivation shows that students are generally engaged and willing to read materials tied to their cultural context.

However, the reported comprehension difficulty implies better scaffolding and instructional support during reading activities. Teachers can help address this challenge by pre-teaching unfamiliar vocabulary, providing context through discussions or visual aids, and incorporating guided reading strategies. Furthermore, adapting or modifying texts to suit students' reading levels while preserving cultural richness can make them more accessible without compromising content.

These findings emphasize that culturally relevant reading materials must be carefully selected and adapted to learners' developmental and linguistic levels to be effective. Although contextualized texts generally increase engagement, students may still experience comprehension difficulties when materials contain unfamiliar vocabulary, complex language structures, or cultural references that exceed their background knowledge [29],[32]. Studies have shown that the benefits of contextualization are maximized only when instructional design is clear and aligned with students' reading abilities, as poorly structured materials can lead to confusion despite their cultural relevance [28]. In addition, limited access to high-quality localized resources often constrains teachers' ability to provide materials that are both culturally appropriate and pedagogically suitable [25]. Vocabulary remains a critical factor influencing comprehension, as unfamiliar words can hinder meaning-making and reduce learners' interest in reading [33]. Therefore, simplifying language and carefully scaffolding culturally based texts are essential to support effective reading comprehension.

On the other hand, reading comprehension was the primary concern of language teachers among students. Most students nowadays have a low reading comprehension level, resulting in low class performance. According to the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD), the Philippines had the lowest reading comprehension among 79 countries. It is one of the sources and valid evidence that our country's reading comprehension level needs more attention and efforts to improve and increase it [6]. For several years, the Department of Education proposed many interventions to meet the learners' needs in education. The department required every school to implement all the proposed interventions as needed, and it encouraged language teachers to innovate in teaching reading. In response to sensible educational concerns, contextualized reading material was recommended.

Based on the successful implementation of the contextualized reading materials and the students' positive perceptions, the researcher derived this School-based Policy to utilize the recommended reading intervention. This school-based policy on utilizing research-based intervention was developed based on the study results and proved to be an effective strategy to solve the students' low level of comprehension. This policy aligned with the Department of Education (DepEd) Vision, Mission, Mandate, and Core Values toward the effective and efficient achievement of education outcomes. It is designed to help students improve their reading competencies, especially junior high school students who need more attention in developing their reading skills. It follows the IPO (Input, Process, Output) Model.

3. Input

The input comprises different factors contributing to the implementation: students' acceptability toward the intervention, prior knowledge, interests, and age appropriateness. Contextualization of reading materials aligned with the student's interests, and cultural or academic background serves as a key input to the improvement of comprehension level.

The proponent recommended the intervention to help the students become readers and improve their reading competencies using contextualized reading materials. This policy will serve as the guiding principle in the program implementation. As the product of a profound analysis of the materials, the proponent found the intervention to be highly utilized.

4. Process

The process incorporates evaluating the current state of the reading intervention and outcomes among the students. Also, this study gathered input from the participants, such as the program proponent and the students involved, through surveys and interviews to get the program's outcomes. The program proponent justified that the intervention was proven effective in teaching. On the other hand, students who utilized and were recipients of the contextualized reading materials also gave positive feedback on the intervention.

The positive perceptions and recommendations helped shape the focus and priorities of the policy. This policy establishes guidelines for implementing effective reading interventions aimed at helping Junior High School students strengthen their reading skills. It will contextualize reading materials according to the student's interests, a method that has shown effectiveness during the implementation. It comprised three steps that developed the policy.

The initial step consists of collecting reading interventions that are based on research. It was achieved by graduating students from the MA English program at the University of Nueva Caceres for 2008-2014. Many studies were conducted, and reading interventions were suggested, but only one acknowledged the program. The researcher then interviewed the teacher implementors about the intervention and provided survey questionnaires to the student beneficiaries to assess how much the program was being used and adapted.

The final step involved a detailed examination of how to develop the school-based policy following DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2015 - A process for developing policy was instituted at the Department of Education. The DepEd memorandum guided the policy's development by considering the implementation process, stakeholder involvement, duties and responsibilities, and review and evaluation to ensure proper implementation.

5. Output

Finally, the result of this policy will be “Every learner is a reader.” As a result, following the policy's implementation, students should be readers capable of higher-level comprehension than the prior year, able to analyze text analytically, and address critical issues logically through intervention. Moreover, students’ involvement in class will foster a collaborative learning environment and enhance their self-confidence in undertaking related tasks and activities.

Nonetheless, the interventions should be fine-tuned to align with the competencies suitable for the students. The extent to which the contextualized reading materials are adapted and used will thus be linked to beneficial learning experiences and heightened student engagement. According to DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2015 – Establishment of a Policy Development Process at the Department of Education stated that the Department of Education (DepEd) issues the enclosed Guidelines on the Establishment of a Policy Development Process at the Department of Education, which aims to establish a policy development process that provides for systematic, evidence-based and participatory mechanisms and procedures for the formulation, adoption, and review of policies issued by the DepEd Central Office (CO).

Mechanisms and procedures constituting the process shall guide the DepEd CO and its stakeholders in drafting and issuing policies anchored on the DepEd's vision, mission, mandate, and core values and towards the effective and efficient achievement of education outcomes [36]. Denton et al. [7] highlighted that creating school policies and procedures is critical to running a successful educational institution. Schools can create an environment that supports optimal learning and growth by establishing clear guidelines, promoting fairness, and ensuring the safety and well-being of all stakeholders. Through collaboration, effective communication, and ongoing evaluation, schools can continuously refine their policies and procedures to meet the evolving needs of their community.

Together, let us build a foundation for success in education. ongoing assessments should be conducted to monitor students' progress in reading to achieve this intervention. Facilitate training for educators on effective reading interventions to equip them with the necessary strategies for assisting learners who struggle with reading. Utilize data gathered from the evaluation to contextualize the reading materials as required. Urge all stakeholders to endorse the policy above to ensure the success of the reading intervention. Ensure that the reading materials are contextualized appropriately. The school can implement and sustain the reading intervention policy by considering these recommendations for improving literacy.

Table 3. Input-Process-Output Design for School-based Policy

Input	Process	Output
Users' Perceptions of Contextualized Reading Materials in Enhancing Reading Comprehension among Grade 10 students during the 2008-2014	• Collected reading intervention • Interviewed Teacher Implementer. • Distributed survey questionnaires to the students • Detailed examination of how to design the school-based policy • Crafted School-based Policy on Utilizing the Contextualized Reading Materials	Students should be readers capable of higher-level comprehension than the prior year, able to analyze text analytically, and address critical issues logically through intervention

Conclusion

This study aimed to document the research-based reading interventions and innovations successfully implemented among Junior High School students from 2008 to 2014. Specifically, it sought to describe the students' perception of contextualized reading materials and to design a school-based policy that would optimize the utilization of research-based interventions. The proposed reading intervention developed by the research proponent was designed to enhance students' reading competencies, particularly their reading

comprehension. The findings revealed that the program positively influenced students, teachers, school heads, and the overall school performance. However, it was also found that some competencies embedded in the materials were not suitable for the students' level, making comprehension challenging for some learners. Certain tasks and reading contents were not aligned with the grade-level standards, indicating the need for alternative reading materials that are more appropriate to students' capabilities.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that language teachers review and revise the reading materials to ensure their relevance to students' interests, reading proficiency, and grade-level appropriateness. By doing so, teachers can better support reading comprehension, bridge existing learning gaps, and provide differentiated instruction that caters to the needs of diverse learners. Furthermore, the study's results serve as a foundation for developing a school-based policy focused on the effective implementation and continual improvement of research-based reading interventions to foster sustained literacy growth among Junior High School students.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Authors



Maria May A. Benosa is a faculty member at the University of Nueva Caceres, Naga City, Philippines. Her academic interests include language education, reading intervention, and curriculum innovation. She has been actively involved in research focusing on contextualized learning materials and literacy development among junior high school students. As a corresponding author, she continues to contribute to studies that aim to improve reading comprehension and instructional practices in Philippine education. (mail: mariamay.benosa@unc.edu.ph).



Joy Gaza is a Professor at the University of Nueva Caceres, Naga, Philippines, and holds a Doctor of Education in Educational Management. Her academic expertise lies in educational management, leadership, and assessment. She has an established research profile with publications focusing on education-related issues. Her current scholarly interest centers on global citizenship education, particularly exploring how education and awareness can foster a just, peaceful, and humane society. Through her teaching and research, she is committed to advancing educational leadership and inclusive educational practices. (email: joy.gaza@unc.edu.ph).