

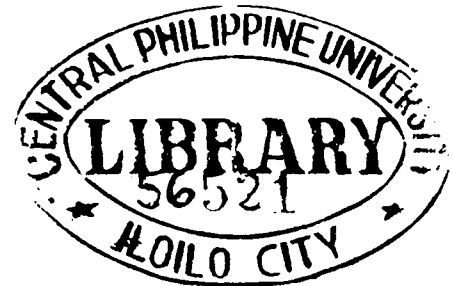
CENTRAL PHILIPPINE UNIVERSITY, ILOILO CITY  
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOME FACTORS  
AND READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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by  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Man's unquenchable thirst for knowledge and his persistent quest for the unknown have made life on this world a constant challenge and an adventure. In our age, we have seen the advent of missiles, the genesis of interplanetary explorations, and the production of a host of electronic machines and gadgets. These place greater demands on today's youth in terms of their fitness to become leaders and workers in a complex industrial and technological world. At no time in the history of our nation has there been greater emphasis placed upon education as the key to maintaining a position of pre-eminence in our world. All eyes are turned to our school systems, both public and private, for the vital role of training men and women in the various disciplines and equipping them with skills with which to explore these disciplines independently. One of these important skills is reading proficiency.

The ability to read well is of prime importance. Ever since man learned to read and write, he has depended immeasurably on the printed page for his personal, cultural, and social progress. Reading enters into nearly every

phase of school life. It is a tool by which pupils and students learn their lessons at each of the successive school levels. It is a key with which students could open the vast storehouse of knowledge that lies between the covers of books.

Furthermore, reading is an indispensable means of communication with an ever-widening world. The average citizen must read his papers, his magazines, his books to keep abreast with the latest improvements and inventions. Reading also enables him to arrive at solutions to the problems he meets each day by gleaning from history the way similar problems have been handled at other times.

Moreover, reading is one of life's inexhaustible pleasures and blessings. It invites one to reflect on what one has learned. It facilitates the release of emotional tensions and gives insight into personal problems. It provides a sense of adventure, entertainment, and enjoyment.

The importance of reading becomes even more obvious if one considers what happens in our culture to one who fails to learn to read well. He is likely to fail in the elementary grades. If he ever gets into high school, he is not likely to finish the secondary course.

The ability to read well is absolutely essential to successful school work or study of any kind.<sup>1</sup> Many studies have shown that reading ability is a necessary prerequisite for success in the elementary and secondary schools. School success in turn, to a large extent, governs the occupations one can enter and the cultural groups in which one is found acceptable. As he gets older, the poor reader is increasingly handicapped by his difficulty. He finds that many desirable occupations are closed to him. He is cut off from cultural activities and finds it difficult to mingle with educated people. Thus, the ability to read well opens the way to a full and satisfying life for the individual.

Finally, the astronomical volume of the body of knowledge is made available to a student and the extraordinary complexity of personal, social, and political problems that he may face demand the fullest possible literacy. Also, the ability to make mature and rational decision requires a high reading proficiency. If the youth must become responsible and better citizens who would be assets rather than liabilities of government and society, they must acquire the ability to read well.

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<sup>1</sup>Guy L. Bond and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction (2d ed.; New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1957), p.4.

Ruth Strang and others summarize all the benefits that one derives from reading thus:

If one can read well, he can function more effectively in daily activities, achieve more satisfactorily in school learnings, satisfy emotional and intellectual needs, maintain better personal and social adjustment, appreciate better our cultural heritage, and be a better citizen.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the almost universal recognition that in our increasingly automated culture literacy is of crucial importance, too many children and adults cannot read for personal enjoyment and fulfillment. Many secondary students lack the reading skills needed in preparing their lessons. In fact many students reach high school without having learned to read well. This problem is felt not only among the low mental group but also among the average and the more capable students. High School and college professors are alarmed at the poor reading skills of some of their otherwise more capable students. Numerous reading authorities, in their professional publications, have testified to the seriousness of the reading problem in schools.

Results of some studies in the United States on the problem of reading reveal that from 8 to 25 per cent of

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<sup>2</sup>Ruth Strang, Constance M. McCullough, and Arthur E. Traxler, The Improvement of Reading (3rd ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 334.

the school children in public schools alone had difficulty in learning to read and in most schools from 10 per cent to 25 per cent are two or more grades retarded in reading achievement.<sup>3</sup> Some authorities point out that a large portion of the pupils who enter junior and senior high school have not attained sixth grade reading ability. The same picture is presented by Witty.<sup>4</sup> In Junior and senior high school, it has been estimated that one fourth or more of the pupils may be disabled readers. Witty estimates that 15 or 20 per cent of high school freshmen read below the norms of the seventh grade. Other studies have shown that, in many secondary schools, up to one third of the students are poor readers and 15 per cent are seriously retarded.<sup>5</sup> Strang and others<sup>6</sup> roughly estimate that 35 to 50 per cent of high school students are not reading as well as their reading ability indicate they should. Furthermore, approximately 25 per cent of college freshmen lack the reading skills to do their work successfully.

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<sup>3</sup>Bond and Tinker, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949), p. 178.

<sup>5</sup>Carl A. Lefevre, Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Strang, McCullough, and Traxler, op. cit., p. 27.

A survey in the city of New York to determine the reading achievement of freshmen and sophomore high school students compared with their mental ability revealed that 15.6 per cent of the students were reading at least one year above expectancy, 42.1 per cent were achieving commensurate with their ability, while 42.3 per cent were reading below expectancy.<sup>7</sup> This condition is further supported by a report before the White House Conference on Children in 1970. The report cited that one school child out of four suffered serious reading difficulties.<sup>8</sup> The gravity of the problem is further cited in a news item which appeared in the Philippines Daily Express on September 11, 1979. The news item reported that as many as 64 million adult Americans lack the language skills to perform everyday tasks like addressing an envelope. It also reported that a new Ford Foundation study found out that Federal literacy programs have made only a small dent in the problem. The startling statistic cited by the study is the result of a new, broader definition of illiteracy than a simple inability to read and write, the

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<sup>7</sup>Bernard E. Danovan, "Survey of Abilities of Pupils Entering the Academic High Schools in September 1955" (New York: New York Board of Education, 1955), p. 3 cited in the Journal of Psychology, XLIII (March 1950), p. 544.

<sup>8</sup>"The Right to Read," (Report of Forum 7, White House Conference on Children, 1970) The Reading Teacher, XXV (March 1972), p. 593.

report stated.<sup>9</sup>

In school teachers are aware that many of their instructional problems of one sort or another are closely related to the inability of children to read. Bond and Wagner<sup>10</sup> say that teachers believe that "lack of success in learning geography, for example, is often attributed to the poor reading of the children. Norberg<sup>11</sup> said:

. . . among the youth reading rates are appallingly low, vocabularies are unnecessarily limited, word attack skills are underdeveloped, and comprehension is a sometime thing.

Even among the children of superior mental ability, the problem of reading is felt. Rodil<sup>12</sup> quoted Paul Witty, a prominent author on reading:

The fact merits emphasis that, not infrequently, mentally superior students make surprisingly poor scholastic records because of their inability to read.

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<sup>9</sup>"U. S. Illiteracy Cited," The Philippines Daily Express, September 11, 1979, p. 8, col. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read (rev. ed.; New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956), p.6.

<sup>11</sup>H. Orville Norberg, James M. Bradfield, and William C. Odell, Secondary School Teaching (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1962), p. 256.

<sup>12</sup>Carmen F. Rodil, "Teaching the Filipino Child to Read," The Catholic Teacher, XI (January 1966), p. 1.



The problem of reading is more seriously felt in the Philippines where reading is taught in a foreign language which is also the medium of instruction. Rodil cited the findings of the Swanson Committee that reading is one of the subjects in which much of the weaknesses of the Filipino students are found.<sup>13</sup> She also cited the results of the Bureau of Public Schools Survey of 1960 which found that the reading achievement of Filipino students was two years behind that of 1925.<sup>14</sup> She also cited the results of the studies made by Maria Cid Peralta, Curriculum Coordinator of the Philippine Women's University. The studies found out that the reading ability of the average Filipino high school graduate is behind that of the average American student by two grade levels. In her own study of high school girls in St. Theresa's College, Manila, a group belonging to the upper socio-economic class, Carmen Rodil found that in the fourth year classes, 26 per cent were found to be three or more grade levels below that of grade placement.<sup>15</sup> These findings are further supported by a report of the Minister of Education and Culture, Juan Manuel, to some 500 superintendents attending the annual convention at the Teachers' Camp, Baguio City, on

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

April 19, 1979. His report said that at least 45 per cent of Grade Six pupils in the Philippines "public elementary schools can neither read nor compute." He attributed the poor quality of elementary school graduates to incompetent teachers and school officials, the shortage of necessary instructional materials like teaching aids and devices, and the poor socio-economic status of the people.<sup>16</sup>

The results of these studies can easily be duplicated in other schools of the country. Conditions could be worse where reading is taught not as a separate subject but incorporated in the teaching of literature or grammar and composition to constitute one subject. No less than Juan Manuel, the former Minister of Education and Culture, lamented the fact that "some products of the elementary level are semi-literates which is one of the tragedies of public education in the Philippines today."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, he issued the directive that pupils should not be allowed to graduate from the elementary course unless he can read with understanding and write to be adequately understood.

In school, scholastic failures are often attributed to poor study habits, a major cause of which is poor

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<sup>16</sup>Bulletin Today, April 21, 1979, pp. 1,11.

<sup>17</sup>"Program seeks to restore lost prestige of teachers," Philippines Sunday Express, December 2, 1979, p.2, col. 9.

reading skills. What are the factors related to reading comprehension ability? To what extent are these factors related to reading comprehension ability? Which of these could be developed at least within the power and capacity of the teachers, the school, and the parents? In what reading skills are present students weak? What are the common reading difficulties of the boys? of the girls? of the bright group? of the low mental ability group? These are the problems to which this study aims to find solutions or explanations.

#### DEFINITION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This is a study of the relationships between some factors and reading comprehension ability. The dependent variable is reading comprehension ability, and the independent variables are mental ability, home literary environment, self-concept, authoritarianism of parents, and gender. This study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. Is mental ability related to reading comprehension ability?
2. Is home literary environment related to reading comprehension ability?
3. Is self-concept related to reading comprehension ability?

4. Is authoritarianism on the part of parents associated with reading comprehension ability of the child?
5. Is mental ability related to reading comprehension ability when self-concept, home literary environment are kept constant?
6. What reading difficulties are common among the boys? among the girls? among the bright group? among the low mental ability group?
7. Is performance in each major type of comprehension skill related to gender?
8. Is performance in each major type of comprehension skill related to mental ability?