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ORAL READING DIFFICULTIES AND READING BEHAVIORS OF ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS) LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study determined the oral reading difficulties and reading behaviors of Grade 11 students who graduated from Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program in relation to some select profile variables. It determined the profile of the respondents in terms of their sex, their age, their track or strand and the number of reading materials they have at home. Moreover, it aimed to find out whether there is a significant difference between the reading difficulties and reading behaviors of the respondents along sex, age, SHS Strand, number of reading materials at home and school year last attended. It also tested whether there is a significant relationship between oral reading difficulties and reading behaviors of the respondents and their socio-demographic profile. The descriptive-correlational research design was mainly used in this study with structured questionnaires and the reading passage for Grade 11 and Oral Reading Checklist from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as main data gathering instruments. The major oral reading difficulty of the respondents in terms of word recognition is mispronunciation of words, followed by repetition of words and phrases. The results further show that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their oral reading difficulties. However, sex and number of reading materials available at home are significantly related to their oral reading difficulties in word recognition and speed.

Key words: Alternative Learning System (ALS) students, language and communication, oral reading difficulties, reading behaviors

Introduction

Fluent reading is necessary for comprehension because attention required for effortful reading draws resources away from comprehension (Perfetti, 1985). One's ability to understand a selection listened to is influenced by vocabulary development while his ability to understand a selection read is influenced by fluency, oral language and vocabulary development. Beyond these problems on miscues are the more basic problems of some students: the slow and the nonreaders. Slow readers are sometimes termed struggling readers because decoding the printed symbols is a constant struggle for them. Then there are the nonreaders - pupils who could not make sense of the printed symbols. However, aside from speed and accuracy, the manner by which the students read matters in fluency. Expression refers to how students read using the proper tone, pauses, and intonation. Fluent reading resembles conversational speaking, that is; students read accurately without effort and with expression. Short pauses between words and longer pauses between sentences are evident.

In line with this, the researcher has noticed in one of her classes that one of the many reasons why students refuse to participate in oral discussions roots from poor reading skills to

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"can't read at all" phenomena. Difficulties with fluent word reading are being manifested by these types of students. Problems with automatic word recognition such mispronunciation, repetition, insertion, substitution, reversal and refusal to read can contribute to difficulties with fluency and in turn, often cause problems with comprehension. It is expected that a senior high school student should already be equipped with such reading competence for him or her to excel with spontaneity. Reading in this context is not merely an ability to recognize written or printed words, but it is putting meaning to what one reads and drawing a unified thought of what is read. Reading in this sense becomes a tool for acquiring higher learning. Without which, it would be impossible for a senior high school student to hurdle more challenging intellectual pursuits in the academe.

If the learner fails to develop his/her reading skills in line with his/her educational achievement, it would be difficult for the student to meet the learning competencies expected of him/her to achieve in the senior high school curriculum. This academic failure will cause a domino effect on the student's educational journey and may even lead to an undesirable viewpoint or perspective about school in particular and education in general.

This undeniable truth about the incidence of non-readers among the senior high school students poses serious concerns, doubts and questions about teaching –learning process. Nonetheless, it presents a compelling research as to what causes this incidence and what research-based interventions can be done about it. It is also wise to identify the factors that cause this occurrence. Since senior high school is a preparatory stage for work, entrepreneurship and higher education, it is a transcendental need to possess functional literacy. The aims and goals of the DepEd will never be materialized if in the first place, students fail on the basic and most fundamental skill they should possess; that is, reading. This then prompted the researcher to study the reading difficulties encountered by senior high school students who graduated from ALS which will eventually open opportunities for research-based classroom interventions and programs that will help mitigate this problem on illiteracy in the senior high school level.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to determine the oral reading difficulties and reading behaviors of Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
   1.1.sex
   1.2. age
   1.3. SHS Track/Strand
   1.4. Number of reading materials available at home
   1.5. school year last attended
2. What are the observed reading difficulties of the respondents in terms of:
   2.1 word recognition
   2.2 speed
3. What are the observed reading behaviors of the respondents?
4. Is there a significant difference between the reading difficulties and reading behaviors of the respondents along sex, age, SHS Strand, number of reading materials at home and school year last attended?

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5. Is there a significant relationship between the reading difficulties and reading behaviors of the respondents along sex, age, SHS Strand, number of reading materials at home and school year last attended?

Literature Review

Oral Reading Difficulties of Students

A student's level of verbal reading proficiency has a 30-year evidence base as one of the most common, reliable, and efficient indicators of student reading comprehension (Reschly, Busch, Betts, Deno, & Long, 2009; Wayman, Wallace, Wiley, Tichá, & Espin, 2007). When used as a predictor of higher stakes reading comprehension tasks, an assessment of oral reading fluency performs as well as or better than many other comprehensive tests of reading (see Baker et al., 2008).

Oral reading fluency is a key skill, which is a prerequisite for comprehension as emphasized by Tindal et al. (2016) and Rasinski (2014). They believe that fluency as a skill feeds into comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading. According to DiSalle and Rasinski (2017), 90% of comprehension problems are due to the deficiency in oral fluency. Thus, students who have poor reading fluency in their early stage of academic life will likely have problems in later academic stages.

A limited number of studies have investigated the prevalence of difficulties in reading fluency and vocabulary among adolescent readers. Among existing studies, Hock et al. (2009) identified adolescent readers in urban settings who performed below the 40th percentile on a composite score of reading comprehension. Approximately 88% of students fell below the 40th percentile on a composite variable that included measures of fluency reading words in list form, decoding, and connected text. Approximately 82% of students fell below the 40th percentile on a composite variable that included measures of vocabulary and listening comprehension, and 74% demonstrated low scores in both areas. In a subsequent study using the same data set, Brasseur-Hock et al. (2011) used latent class analysis (LCA) to identify students with low reading comprehension. These authors found that nearly 70% of students demonstrated weaknesses in reading fluency specifically (which included fluency reading words in isolation and connected text), or in addition to difficulties in decoding and language skills (which included measures of vocabulary and listening comprehension). The largest single subgroup consisted of students with moderate global weaknesses across all component skills (36%). Furthermore, Lesaux and Kieffer (2010) used LCA to identify skill profiles among languageminority sixth-grade students who scored below the 35th percentile on a measure of reading comprehension. Their findings showed that all of the skill profiles included low vocabulary skills, and more than 80% of students exhibited skill profiles that also included difficulties in reading fluency. Cirino et al. (2013) utilized factor analysis to investigate the difficulties of students in sixth through eighth grades in decoding, reading fluency (text reading fluency was included on a factor with word list reading measures), and comprehension, finding that decoding and fluency difficulties were prevalent among struggling comprehenders (vocabulary was not measured).

Van Dijk (2018) investigated the influence of students' characteristics on early elementary oral reading fluency including grades one, two and three. It was found that the students' characteristics such as gender and their basic foundation of English skills can affect their oral reading fluency. For gender, the results presented that girls performed better than boys in the ORF test. Also, the students with a good foundation of phonics awareness and word recognition performed better than those, who did not receive a good basis of English literacy skills.

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Miscues, Possible Causes and Suggested Intervention by Phil-IRI 2017 Manual

a. *Omission*: an omission error occurs when the reader omits a unit of written language, such as a word, parts of words, several words or a sentence. There are several possible causes for omitting a word or parts of a word, a phrase or a sentence:

1. The reader reads fast that he unconsciously omits reading a word, part of a word, a phrase or a sentence.
2. The reader does not know how to read the word, part of a word, phrase or sentence so he consciously omits it.

The first cause is easier to remedy; the teacher advises the reader to slow down in reading so that he is able to see and read each word. Likewise, the reader may be advised to use a marker while reading so that s/he can track the lines. However, the second cause is an indication that a pupil has a problem reading the words which are expected to be read in his grade level.

b. *Substitution*: a substitution error is noted when a real word (or words) is substituted for the word in the text. A reader may substitute a word for the following reasons:

1. The reader cannot decode the whole word but he recognizes some letters in it; he guesses the word.

Example: text: The children are playing in the ground.
reader: The children are playing in the group.

Group is very similar to ground so the reader substitutes group for ground

1. The reader does not know the word but he can read the other words in the sentence; hence, he substitutes the unknown word in the sentence with a word that will fit the context.

Example: text: There is a parrot in the cage.
reader: There is a monkey in the cage.

In both cases, the meaning of the sentence was changed. The substitution made by the first reader was based on the graphic similarity of the word group to ground; apparently he cannot decode ground but he recognized some letters in it. The second reader based his substitution on context; a monkey could be in a cage.

The first reader may have a problem with decoding; s/he should be encouraged to look carefully at the details in a word. The second reader may be advised to slow down, look at each word carefully and avoid guessing.

c. *Mispronunciation*: a mispronunciation miscue is one in which the word is pronounced incorrectly. There are several causes for the mispronunciation:

1. The mispronunciation could be due to regional interference. In some regions, short e sounds like long e in their Mother Tongue; there is a carry-over when the pupil reads the Filipino and/or English words.
2. The reader is reading the English words phonetically. It should be noted that the pupils started reading in the Mother Tongue and in Filipino where the words are phonetically consistent (Kung ano ang baybay, ganoon din ang bigkas). When a reader reads in English, s/he may read the words in the same manner.

In the first case, the teacher should emphasize correct pronunciation of words when reading in Filipino and English; in the second case, the teacher should note that the pupil should be given extra instruction in reading English words.

d. *Insertion*: The insertion miscue results when a word or words is inserted in the passage. The pupil inserts some words in the text that s/he is reading for some reasons:

1. S/he reads fast that s/he anticipates some words that are not actually part of the text.
2. It is common for some pupils to insert the article in the sentences. For example, in the sentence: The children are in school; some readers automatically read it as

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The children are in the school.

In both cases, the teacher should call the reader's attention to look carefully at the text.

e. Repetition: This miscue occurs when a word or phrase is repeated. A reader may repeat a word or a phrase in the sentence for some reasons:

1. In order to give him time to recognize the next word which s/he finds difficult to decode he needs time to fully understand what he reads.

Example: The men are working in the in the factory.

The problem of the first reader could be on word recognition; the second reader may have problem on comprehension.

f. *Transposition/reversal*: This error occurs when the order of a word or words in the text is reversed or transposed.

Why does a reader reverse the order of words in a phrase?

Sometimes the reader recognizes a familiar word at the end of a sentence, so he reads it first.

Sometimes he intends to omit a difficult word in a sentence, then goes back and tries to read it.

Why does s/he reverse the order of letters in words?

It is likewise common for a reader to read the word saw as was; on as no; dear as read because the second word is more common or easier to read.

The teacher should ask the reader to reread the sentence or word. If the problem persists, there could be a problem on word recognition.

Methodology

The descriptive correlational research design was utilized in this study to describe the variables and the relationships that occur naturally between and among them. The descriptive method was used to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of their age, sex, last school year attended, the reading materials they have at home, and their choice of track/strand in senior high school. The correlational method was used to describe whether there is a significant relationship between the oral reading difficulties of the respondents and their profile variables. Mixed method was also useful in understanding contradictions between quantitative results and qualitative findings of this study. It ensures that the findings are grounded in participants' experiences. The respondents of the study were 55 graduates of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program of the Department of Education (DepEd) who were enrolled in Grade 11.

The main data gathering instruments used in the study were Rubrics for Oral Reading Miscues that summarizes the miscues of the respondents in terms of Word Recognition such as mispronunciation, substitution, omission, insertion, repetition, reversal and refusal; and Checklist for Reading Behavior of the respondents taken from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) Manual. Moreover, the reading material used in the entire reading activity is an excerpt from the inaugural address of His Excellency Diosdado Macapagal delivered in Quirino Grandstand, Manila in December 30, 1961 taken from the Oral Communication in Context DepEd Learner's Material. It was selected on the basis of its content and inspirational message it can give to the students, and that it is being used as an instructional material in one of their topics in Types of Speech According to Delivery. A questionnaire meant to elicit information on the socio-demographic profile of the respondents such as their age, sex, track/strand, number of reading materials at home, and last school year to attend formal school was also utilized by the researcher.

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Following the IATF health protocols, the researcher conducted a home visitation to personally meet the respondents. She then oriented them about the purpose of the study and gave a copy of the passage for them to read orally at their own pace. The researcher had the same copy of the passage where she marked miscues of respondents as they read orally the passage given to them. A set of rubrics was used in summarizing the reading miscues of the respondents. Errors were coded using marking set in the rubrics taken from Phil-IRI Manual. A checklist was also used by the researcher to take note of the respondents' reading behavior. The whole oral activity was audio-recorded.

In order to establish validity and reliability of results and to validate the correctness of the markings, the marked papers were subjected to experts' verification. Using random sampling, the experts selected the marked papers where they carefully evaluated the miscues of the respondents. Although there were some discrepancies in the summary of the errors, the numbers were not sufficient to affect the statistical results of the study.

Descriptive analytical tools such as frequency counts, percentages and means were utilized to analyze the profile of the respondents like sex, age, strand, school year last attended, number of reading materials available at home. Independent samples t-test was used to test significant difference between student's reading difficulties on word recognition and speed in terms of sex while one-way analysis of variance was used in terms of age. Likewise, ChiSquare test was used to test significant difference between sex and reading behavior. On the other hand, the Kruskal Wallis test was used to test significant difference in the reading difficulties of the respondents on word recognition and speed in terms of their strand, number of available reading materials at home and school year attended; while Chi- Square Test was used for reading behavior. Kruskal Wallis test is a non-parametric test used to compare significant difference between 3 or more independent variables and is used if the data are not normally distributed (Ostertagova, et al 2014, *Methodology and Application of Kruskal-Wallis Test*). Upon testing the said variables, using Shapiro-Wilk Test on normality test in SPSS, the data are found not normally distributed.

Furthermore, the Rubrics for Oral Reading Miscues that summarizes the miscues of the respondents in terms of Word Recognition such as mispronunciation, substitution, omission, insertion, repetition, reversal and refusal; and Checklist for Reading Behavior of the respondents taken from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) Manual were used. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test significant relationship between reading difficulties of the respondents in relation to their profile variables.

Results and Discussion

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Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	42	76.4
Female	13	23.6
Age		
17 and below	8	14.5
18-19	33	60.0
20 and above	14	25.5
SHS Strand		
TVL-Agriculture	11	20.0
TVL-Dress Making	4	7.3
TVL-Home Economics	16	29.1
Academic-HUMSS	19	34.5
Academic-STEM	5	9.1
Reading Materials available at home		*Rank*
Modules	55	1st
Textbooks	12	2nd
Magazine	2	5th
E-book	3	4th
Newspaper	6	3rd
School Year Last Attended		
2002-2003	1	1.8
2003-2004	1	1.8
2010-2011	1	1.8
2012-2013	1	1.8
2013-2014	3	5.5
2014-2015	2	3.6
2015-2016	14	25.5
2016-2017	8	14.5
2017-2018	9	16.4
2018-2019	9	16.4
2019-2020	6	10.9
Total Number of Respondents	**55**	**100.00**

Based on the data gathered, more than half or 76.4% of the respondents are females with only 12 or 23.6% males. This implies that ALS is a male-dominated program in Solana North District. As to their age, 60% of them belong to the age range 18-19 which implies that most of the respondents are 2 years behind the age prescribed by the Department of Education for Grade 11. In general, more than half of the respondents are currently enrolled in the TVL track which means that most of their school time, although under the Printed Modular Approach to Learning, is being spent for skills development. This further implies that the respondents will more likely pursue entrepreneurship as their K12 curriculum exit.

Moreover, 34.5% of the respondents are enrolled in the Academic Track particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences Strand (HUMSS). It is safe to say that these respondents are exposed to extensive reading since HUMSS highly requires critical reading skills for areas in the social sciences while Academic-STEM is least preferred by the respondents to enroll in the senior high school. It can be because of the rigorous Mathematics and Science requirements which include critical reading skills. On the data gathered about the number of reading materials they have at home, modules ranked first, primarily because of the learning modality being used in the schools that is Printed Modular Learning. Textbooks ranked second followed by newspapers, e-books and magazines respectively. It can be gleaned that lack of available reading materials at home should not be a problem or a hindrance to the reading activities of the respondents. It can be gleaned that 25.5% of the respondents' last school year to attend formal school is in 2015-2016. This means that they are 5-6 years behind the regular formal school. This further says that upon reaching Grade 6, these students have stopped or dropped out of school. This indicates that they have missed the entire junior high school level upon enrolment to senior high school. This learning gap is one of the major reasons of the respondents' hesitation to study in formal school. The average meeting of the respondents with their ALS teacher is only two to three times a week which further tells that many skills have not been mastered by these types of students. The respondents' main reason of dropping out from school and prefer to enroll in the ALS program is because they opted to work in order to

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finance their family needs. Moreover, 58.2% of the respondents have stopped from school year 2016 until 2020 which covers the four-year Junior High School curriculum.

Reading Difficulties of the Respondents in terms of Word Recognition

Miscues in Word Recognition	Mean	SD	MAX	MIN
Mispronunciation	15	10.46	44	3
Substitution	5	4.28	29	0
Insertion	1	1.77	11	0
Omission	5	3.12	16	0
Reversal	1	0.63	4	0
Repetition	7	5.39	26	0
Refusal to Pronounce	2	3.59	15	0

Based on Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) manual, there are at least seven (7) oral reading miscues on word recognition. These are mispronunciation, substitution, insertion, omission, reversal, repetition and refusal. The average number of miscues committed by the respondents in terms of mispronunciation is 15 which also has the maximum error of 44 and a minimum error of 8. This means that from the given reading material to the respondents, the main oral reading difficulty committed by the respondents in terms of word recognition is mispronunciation, followed by repetition of words/phrases that averages into 7 errors with a maximum error of 26 and 0 minimum error. The most frequent mispronounced words by the respondents are: 1. *patriotism* pronounced by the respondents as [pa-tri-yo-ti-zem; pa-tro-tizam; pa-tro-zam, pa-tri-sem]; 2. *exhibition* pronounced by the respondents as [eg-si-bi-li-teysyon]; 3. a*ppalling* pronounced by the respondents as [a-pey-ling, a-pi-ling]; 4. *undeniable* pronounced by the respondents as [un-den-ya-bal, en-de-ya-bal, en-dye-bal]; 5. *formidable* pronounced by the respondents as [for-mi-dey-bel; for-mi-da-ble]; 6. *task* as [taks]; 7. *democracy* [de-mo-krey-si]; 8. *sustenance* [sus-teyns, sus-te-nan-se]. The mispronunciation of words could be due to regional interference. In some regions, short e sounds like long e in their Mother Tongue; there is a carry-over when the pupil reads the Filipino and/or English words. The reader could also be reading the English words phonetically. It should be noted that the students started reading in Filipino where the words are phonetically consistent (Kung ano ang baybay, ganoon din ang bigkas). When a reader reads in English, s/he may read the words in the same manner.

Moreover, words/phrases such as *political, partisan, patriotism, the three, was, an, in the, collaboration, formidable, patriotism, prove, I express, this is, a, partisanship, sustenance, simultaneously* are being repeated by the respondents. A reader may repeat a word or a phrase in the sentence in order to give him time to recognize the next word which s/he finds difficult to decode he needs time to fully understand what he reads.

Furthermore, words such as *providing* is being substituted as *proving; succeed* to *success; electoral* to *electronic; good* to *God; partisanship* to *partnership; require* to *request; political* to *politics; congressional* to *congregational.* The respondents may have substituted a word for because s/he can't actually decode the whole word but he recognizes some letters in it; s/he then guesses the word. Or, the reader does not know the word but s/he can read the other words in the sentence; hence, s/he substitutes the unknown word in the sentence with a word that will fit the context.

Also, words such as *a, in, of, the,* are being inserted by the respondents while reading the passage given them. One reason for insertion could be the reader anticipates some words

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that are not actually part of the text and it is common for some readers to insert the article in the sentences. (Phil-IRI 2017 Manual)

In addition, there are words/phrases in the text being omitted by the respondents. Some of which are: *popular sustenance; undeniable political fact; the; that; this.* Reversal of words was also observed in the respondents such as *enough for* to *for enough.* Refusal to pronounce words such as *democracy, patriotism, decency, sustenance,* and other lines of the text was also observed in the respondents. The reader might have read fast that s/he unconsciously omits reading a word, part of a word, a phrase or a sentence. Or simply, the reader does not know how to read the word, part of a word, phrase or sentence so s/he consciously omits it.

The least number of miscues committed by the respondents is reversal of words/phrases with 1 error as the mean, while refusal to pronounce words/phrases can also be noticed because the average error is 2 with 15 maximum errors in terms of this aspect. It can be gleaned that all of the respondents committed errors in terms of mispronunciation of words. These imply that the major oral reading difficulty of the respondents in terms of word recognition that needs to be addressed is mispronunciation of words.

These reading miscues manifested by the students may also mean that they may not be able to comprehend the reading material given them. This claim is supported by Hudson, et.al (2020) that students who were good decoders but non-fluent readers were weaker in reading comprehension as compared to those with strong decoding and fluency skills. They further explained that the inability to achieve automaticity in lower-order processing places large demands on working memory, leaving few resources available to negotiate meaning making in texts. Considering the centrality of working memory in facilitating the storage and retrieval of information in texts during the process of reading for comprehension, non-automaticity in decoding hinders reading comprehension.

A miscue, which is defined as an actual observed response in oral reading which does not match the expected response, is like a window on the reading process, Nothing the reader does in reading is accidental. Both his expected responses and his miscues are produced as he attempts to process the print and get to meaning, (Goodman, 1973). These findings imply and provide new insights for reading teachers and a new basis for developmental and remedial instruction.

Reading Rate/speed of the Respondents

Table 3. Reading rate/speed of the respondents

Number of words per minute	Frequency	Percent
85 below	5	9.1
86 -122	15	27.3
123-159	17	30.9
160-196	16	29.1
197-223	2	3.6
Total	55	100.0

Average: 139 words per minute

The average word per minute spent by the respondents in reading a 365-word speech is 130 words per minute. This is far from the average word per minute for high school student which is 200-300 words per minute. This further means that the respondents should only be reading the speech for 1 minute and 30. Even the minimum number of minutes spent in reading by the respondents which is 2 minutes and 37 seconds does not surpass the average words per minute. The speed manifested by the respondents concurs with their reading behavior. Hence,

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their reading behavior can be the major influence to their speed. It is also recorded that the maximum minutes spent reading by one of the respondents is 12 minutes and 25 seconds which is triple the average speed of the respondents.

However, the minutes spent in reading by the respondents does not equate to their reading comprehension. Reading speed is commonly used as an index of reading fluency. However, reading speed is not a consistent predictor of text comprehension, when speed and comprehension are measured on the same text within the same reader. This might be due to the somewhat ambiguous nature of reading speed, which is sometimes regarded as a feature of the reading process, and sometimes as a product of that process, (Wallot, S., O'Brien, B. A., Haussmann, A., Kloos, H., & Lyby, M. S., 2014). Word-by-word reading reduces their automaticity and often this has a critical impact on their comprehension (Allington, 2009). In contrast, fluent readers read with speed and accuracy. They focus less on word recognition; thus, they can concentrate on making sense of what the print means. They can pay attention to the connections about the ideas presented in the text and their background knowledge (Ambruster, 2009). Their cognitive resources are used to make sense of what they read.

Fluent readers can focus on decoding words and comprehending text at the same time. They can self-monitor as they read. Pauses and rereading are done to correct their miscues or to pay attention to appropriate phrasing and punctuations so that they can make sense of what is read. Fluency is the link between decoding and comprehension.

Reading Behavior of the Respondents

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of students' reading behavior

	Observed		Not Observed	
Reading Behavior	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Does word-by-word reading	53	96.40%	2	3.60%
Lacks expression, reads in a monotonous tone	53	96.40%	2	3.60%
Voice is hardly audible	42	76.40%	13	23.60%
Disregards punctuation marks	53	96.40%	2	3.60%
Points to each word with his finger	26	47.40%	29	52.70%
Employs little or no method of analysis	53	96.40%	2	3.60%

Using the Observation Checklist adapted from Gray Oral Reading Behavior, data shows that 96.40% of the respondents show reading behaviors like word-by-word reading, lack of expression, disregarding punctuation marks, and employing little to no method of analysis. The hesitations, pauses, and repetitions of sounds or syllables may indicate that the student is concentrating hard to tap his or her phonics knowledge to make sense of the text. Speaking in a soft, inaudible voice may suggest uncertainty on the accuracy of the words being read. Even when a student reads accurately with automatic word recognition, lack of expression may still be evident. Reading may be in monotone like reading a list of words rather than connected text. One possible reason for this could be the student is not reading in phrase units. Reading with automaticity develops as the student gets repeated exposures and practice to read appropriate texts at his or her level. Fluent readers typically read with proper phrasing. They may reread the text to get the phrasing right. Somehow, they connect how print is read to how one hears it in spoken language. Fluent readers also use their knowledge of punctuation marks such as commas, periods, question marks, and exclamation points as clues for phrasing and intonation. Considering the fact that the respondents were currently enrolled in senior high school at the

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time of the study and that they display these kinds of reading behavior plus their age, it can be perceived that their reading behavior does not meet what is expected from them in their current level of education.

However, this incidence among the respondents can also be influenced by their low self-confidence as said by the respondents during the data gathering. It also shows that their voice is hardly audible which manifests poor self-esteem. What influences their poor self-esteem observed in the time of data gathering can also be the audio-recording of the reading activity by the researcher. There were also instances in the reading activity where male respondents requested for a male company because they were not confident reading in front of the female researcher. If these reading behaviors continue to happen among the respondents, their journey to higher education will be affected.

Epidemiological research has shown that reading ability and reading difficulties occur on a continuum (Gilger, Borecki, Smith, DeFries, & Pennington, 1996; Shaywitz, Escobar, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Makuch, 1992; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2005). Typically achieving readers and poor readers tend to maintain their relative positions along this continuum over time (Felton, Naylor, & Wood, 1990; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; Kwiatkowska-White, Kirby, & Lee, 2016). Children with severe reading difficulties continue to struggle in reading as they mature, demonstrating that at least some reading difficulties are persistent and chronic conditions (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2005). Children with reading difficulties are less likely to graduate from high school and are at a greater risk for future unemployment, underemployment, and incarceration (Grigorenko, 2006; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Norton & Wolf, 2012; Snow et al., 1998; Svensson, Lundberg, & Jacobson, 2001). Therefore, providing appropriate and early interventions to these children is essential to their future outcomes and can change their overall trajectories (Norton & Wolf, 2012; Snow et al., 1998; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Tanzman, 1998). However, developing effective intervention methods requires diagnostic assessment, which in turn requires understanding the underlying nature of these reading difficulties.

Moreover, these reading behaviors must have to be understood beyond the superficial behavior of readers (Goodman, 1973). Teachers must try to see what is happening that is causing that behavior. When teachers teach reading they are trying to build the competence which underlies the superficial behavior; they are not trying simply to change the behavior.

Oral Reading Difficulties of the Respondents

Table 5. Test of significant difference in the reading difficulties of the respondents and their profile variables

Sex							
Reading Difficulties	Sex	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	Computed value	p-value	Interpretation
Word recognition	Female Male	19.38 38.55	6.28 16.64	T-test	4.04	0.000*	Significant
Speed	Female Male	5.21 3.02	0.11 0.34	T-test	2.13	0.001*	Significant
Age							
Reading Difficulties	Age group	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	Computed value	p-value	Interpretation
Word recognition	17 and below	21.41	6.28	One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	0.546	0.583	NS
Speed	18-19	20.49	8.64				

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20 and above	22.99	9.23				
17 and below	4.93	0.11	One way			
18-19	5.02	0.12	Analysis			
20 and above			of	0.017	0.456	NS
	4.82	0.45	Variance			
			(ANOVA)			

SHS Track/Strand

Reading Difficulties	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Interpretation
Word recognition	7.155	4	0.128	NS
Speed	5.91	4	0.453	NS

Number of available reading materials at home

Reading Difficulties	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Interpretation
Word recognition	-4.155**	4	0.002	significant
Speed	2.12	4	0.601	NS

School year last attended

Reading Difficulties	Chi-Square Value	Df	p-value	Interpretation
Word recognition	3.01	4	0.331	NS
Speed	4.29	4	0.505	NS

Table 5 shows test of significant difference in the reading difficulties in word recognition of the respondents in terms of sex using Independent samples t-test. The results showed significant difference in the reading difficulties of the respondents in word recognition and speed in terms of sex since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance. This further shows that in terms of word recognition the male group committed more miscues in oral reading than the female group. Also, the female group gained a greater speed in reading than the male group. This finding is supported by the study of Doca (2017) which concludes that the sex of the respondents is significantly related to their oral reading performance level. His finding implies that female pupils scored significantly higher than their male counterparts in the oral reading test. This finding is also consistent with Nancollis, Lawrie, & Dodd, (2005) that girls are generally thought to perform better than boys in verbal and linguistic functions; that the reading skills of girls are slightly more advanced than those of boys; and that girls outperformed boys in English. The study of Frijters, Brown at. Al (2019) also claims that in both reading performance and motivation, female learners perform better than male learners. Additionally, a significant body of research claims that more boys than girls experience reading problems. (Wheldall & Limbrock, 2010).

Moreover, it shows the test of significant difference in the reading difficulties of the respondents in word recognition and speed. The p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance hence; there is no significant difference on the reading difficulties experienced by the respondents in both word recognition and speed. This shows that regardless of age, the students experience difficulties in word recognition and speed. However, this finding contrasts with the study of Vlachos, et.al (2017) that a significant effect of age in reading performance, with older children having better scores than younger ones for reading fluency, reading comprehension and the total reading performance.

Additionally, the table shows test of significant difference in the reading difficulties of the participants in word recognition and speed. The results showed no significant difference in the reading difficulties of the participants by strand since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that their choice of track/strand has no effect in the reading difficulties experienced by the students in word recognition and speed. However, there are no recent studies that can support nor oppose this claim yet.

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Furthermore, the results showed significant difference in word recognition and number of reading materials available since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance. This means that the more number of reading materials available the lesser that number of errors committed by the students in reading. On the other hand, speed found no significant difference. Studies on reading motivation have found that access to reading materials has an important influence on the amount students choose to read.

Consistent with previous research, convenient access to reading material, regardless of a student's reading ability, was associated with more frequent reading. In addition, more voluntary or "free" reading was associated with higher levels of reading proficiency, (Jeff Mcquillan, Julie Au, 2011).

Moreover, digital reading devices are increasingly popular among students; however, their effect on reading time and text comprehension has not been examined in depth. The present study compared the Kindle 3 eBook reader and Apple's iPad tablet computer to a printed document to determine if text presentation format had a significant effect on reading time and text comprehension. Results indicated that those reading printed materials had faster reading times than those reading from eBook readers and tablets. Participants found the tablet the most usable, followed by the eBook reader, and the printed material was considered the least usable. There was no effect of text presentation format on reading comprehension, supporting the use of eBook readers and tablet computers in academic environments, (Connell, Caroline; Bayliss, Lauren; Farmer, Whitney, 2012).

In terms of their last school year attended, the results showed no significant difference in word recognition since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that the respondents experience difficulties in word recognition and speed regardless of the school year he or she attended. The number of years that the respondents were not able to attend formal education does not have significant bearing on the respondents' reading difficulties.

Table 6. Test of significant difference in reading behavior of the respondents and their profile variables

Profile variables	Chi Square Value	Df	p-value	Interpretation
sex	5.535	3	0.137	NS
age	6.051	3	0.225	NS
Track/strand	6.051	3	0.225	NS
No. of reading materials	1.051	3	0.125	NS
School year last attended	3.17	3	0.091	NS

In terms of reading behavior, the table shows no significant difference between male and female since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that both groups experience the same difficulties in terms of reading behavior. It also shows no significant difference in age since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that all age groups experienced same difficulties in terms of reading behavior. Moreover, the table shows no significant difference in strand since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that regardless of strands, students experience same difficulties in terms of reading behavior. Additionally, shows no significant difference in the number of reading materials since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that regardless of the number of reading materials available at home, students experienced same difficulties on reading behavior. Furthermore, the table shows no significant difference in the school year attended by the respondents since the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that regardless of the school year attended, the respondents experience the same difficulties on reading behavior. All in all, the profile variables of the respondents do not have significant bearing on their oral reading behavior.

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Table 7. Test of significant relationship in the reading difficulties in word recognition and profile of the respondents

Independent Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	0.450**	0.002	Significant
Age	0.129	0.663	NS
Strand	-0.175	0.129	NS
School Year Attended	0.389	0.510	NS
Number of reading materials	0.245**	0.021	Significant

** significant at 0.05 level of significance

The table shows test of significant relationship between reading difficulties and profile of the respondents. Findings revealed a positive relationship on sex and number of reading materials towards reading difficulties in word recognition experienced by the students. On the other hand, age, strand and school year found insignificant relationship on student's reading difficulties.

Moreover, the male group committed more miscues in oral reading than the female group. This finding is supported by the study of Doca (2017) which concludes that the sex of the respondents is significantly related to their oral reading performance level. His finding implies that female pupils scored significantly higher than their male counterparts in the oral reading test. This finding is also consistent with Nancollis, Lawrie, & Dodd, (2005) that girls are generally thought to perform better than boys in verbal and linguistic functions; that the reading skills of girls are slightly more advanced than those of boys; and that girls outperformed boys in English. The study of Frijters, Brown at. Al (2019) also claims that in both reading performance and motivation, female learners perform better than male learners. Additionally, a significant body of research claims that more boys than girls experience reading problems. (Wheldall & Limbrock, 2010). Moreover, in the Philippines, female students performed significantly better than male students in Overall Reading Literacy with a 27-point difference, (PISA 2018 National Report of the Philippines). Furthermore, the prevalence of reading difficulties is typically higher in males than females in both referred and research-identified samples, and the ratio of males to females is greater in more affected samples, (Wadsworth, Olson, et.al 2009).

In the case of the respondents, male students prefer to work than to read. This is consistent with the findings of UNESCO that another reason for slightly higher female functional literacy rate is the pressure for young boys to augment family income and the need for adult males to seek employment or livelihood for family support.

In terms of reading materials, the greater number of reading materials available for the students to read, the lesser the number of errors committed by the students in oral reading. Hence, if they are exposed to different relevant reading materials, they will more likely succeed in their reading journey. These facts bring the need for schools to improve their retention power, for the government officials to allot more facilities in the form of libraries or e-libraries and reading centers to provide support for the continuing education of those who have to drop out of school for economic and other reasons.

Table 8. Test of significant relationship in reading behavior and profile of the respondents

Independent Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation

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Sex	0.012	0.563	NS
Age	0.311	0.701	NS
Strand	0.470	0.129	NS
School Year Attended	0.112	0.712	NS
Number of reading materials	0.023	0.067	NS

It can be gleaned from the table above that the profile of the respondents has no significant relationship in their reading behavior. This implies that regardless of sex, age, strand, school year last attended and the number of reading materials available at home, the respondents experience problems in terms of reading behavior.

Word-by-word reading is common at the earliest stage of beginning reading (Chall 1983 in Allington, 2009). The student may track or point to each word as s/he reads. This is considered a significant phase as the reader starts to understand the concept of a "word" as s/he actually attends to print. Initially, there may be minimal or lack of expression as text is read. The hesitations, pauses, and repetitions of sounds or syllables may indicate that the student is concentrating hard to tap his or her phonics knowledge to make sense of the text. Speaking in a soft, inaudible voice may suggest uncertainty on the accuracy of the words being read. Hence, it can be inferred that reading strategies of the students and strategies in teaching reading of the teachers should be both strengthened.

Table 9. Test of significant relationship in the reading difficulties in speed and profile of the respondents

Independent Variables	**r-value**	**p-value**	Interpretation
Sex	0.766**	0.000	Significant
Age	0.445	0.410	NS
Strand	0.123	0.567	NS
School Year Attended	0.010	0.710	NS
Number of reading materials	0.514**	0.004	Significant

** significant at 0.05 level of significance

In terms of speed, sex has a positive correlation with r=0.766 and p-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This shows that sex in relation to speed in reading is found to have a strong and positive correlation. Likewise, speed and number of reading materials is found to have a significant relationship with r=0.514 and p=0.004. This means that the more reading materials available at home the better the reading speed of the respondents. All other variables are found with no significant relationship.

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In the study *Gender Differences in Processing Speed by* Oulu University Hospital · Department of Medical Rehabilitation, it was found that females have an advantage in processing speed tasks involving digits and alphabets as well as in rapid naming tasks while males are faster on reaction time tests and finger tapping. Females also outperform males in reading and writing skills. However, no significant gender differences were found in general, crystallized (verbal) or fluid (nonverbal) intelligence, nor in the more narrow skills measured by individual subtests of common IQ tests, nor in short-term memory or inspection time. It is concluded that gender differences in reading and writing fluency may have a significant effect on gender differences in processing speed tasks. Following Lynn and Mikk (2009), it is suggested that female superiority in reading and writing skills may be partly based on their deeper engagement in language related activities at school and at home. Male superiority in reaction time and finger tapping tests is most likely based on other factors. The results of the study support the theory of several speed abilities as opposed to a general processing speed ability. (Eka Roivainen, 2011).

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the study concludes that ALS learners are challenged in the development of their oral reading skills as manifested both by their reading difficulties and reading behaviors. Their word recognition skills are far from being developed as further demonstrated in their major oral reading miscue which is mispronunciation of words. This has implication to the ALS reading program which needs immediate and well-planned intervention.

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