

# Reading Constraints of College Freshmen

Jonah Celestino

**Abstract**— Reading without understanding is not reading at all. In order to benefit from reading, students need to understand what comprehension is first and how they take advantage from reading. In College, students are expected to do extensive reading for assignments, project submissions and exams in order to pass a course. But sad to note that many students have hard time comprehending their lessons and take the benefits of reading for granted.

For this reason, this study intended to find out the factors that influence the reading comprehension of students as measures to improve the reading performance are considered.

Findings showed that students in general have less serious problems on reading constraints, but a strong correlation between availability of reading materials at home and the seriousness of home and family-related and student-related constraints in reading comprehension of the college freshmen is realized.

**Keywords**—comprehension, constraints, freshman, reading

## I. INTRODUCTION

**R**EADING is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school, and, indeed, throughout life.

Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost [1]. In other words, a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader.

Good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. They know most of the words in the text already, but they can also determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context - failing this, they can use their dictionary effectively to do so. In summary, good readers can extract from the writing what is important for the particular task they are employed in. And they can do it quickly! [2]

Reading is a prerequisite for personal and mental growth. Students need to develop and master the skills needed to understand the reading materials such as books for studies. It is not only decoding the printed words but also knowing the meaning, as well as giving reactions and views about them [3]. According to an author, reading is the bringing of meaning to, rather than the gaining of meaning from, the printed page. This means that person who has experienced more gets more satisfaction from reading – as from the activities in life – since the interpretation of the graphic symbols is richer, deeper, and more meaningful [4].

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Thus far, an individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by his traits and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. Besides, there are more factors that hinder a student to becoming an engaged and active reader this study will find out.

## *Objectives of the Study*

This study aimed to ascertain the constraints to reading comprehension among the First Year students of the College of Information Technology and Computing Sciences of Quirino State University taking up English 13 (Study and Thinking Skills) this semester of School Year 2014-2015.

Specifically, it intended to

1. determine the profile of the respondents according to sex, age, parent's educational attainment, parent's occupation, and religion.
2. identify the available reading materials of the respondents at home
3. categorize the level of seriousness of the constraints to reading comprehension encountered by the respondents when they were in high school such as student-related, home and family-related, school facility-related, teacher-related constraints.
4. define the significant relationships between the availability of reading materials at home and the level of seriousness of the constraints to the reading comprehension of the respondents

## *Importance of the Study*

There are students who can read but can hardly comprehend and some cannot understand what they are reading at all. The purpose of this study is to identify the constraints why these students cannot and can hardly comprehend and to find solutions to improve their reading comprehension.

Data gathered through this study can be used by teachers as bases to improve their techniques, methods and strategies for better teaching. Optimistically, this can inspire parents to encourage their children to read more and become successful in school. Thus helping the learners develop the reading competence that is essential for academic achievement.

## *Methodology*

This research used the descriptive method that describes the profile of the respondents and the constraints to reading comprehension with reference to the degree of seriousness of each of the constraints. The research was conducted during

first semester of SY 2014-2015 to the first year CITCS students who are taking up English 13 (Study and Thinking Skills) subject. Slovin's formula was used to identify the number of respondents; random sampling was employed.

A three-part questionnaire adapted from Ladrangan [5] was used to gather needed data. The first part is a checklist designed to gather information about the profile of the respondents. The second part is a list of the available reading materials at home and the third part is a list of the constraints to reading comprehension that the students might have encountered.

Data gathered were analyzed using the frequency and percentage to describe the profile of the respondents; means to assess the level of seriousness of the constraints to reading comprehension; t-test and f-test to determine the existence of significant differences on the level of seriousness of the constraints to reading comprehension with the profile of the students; spearman rho to determine the existence of significant relationship between the availability of reading materials at home and the level of seriousness of the constraints to reading comprehension of the students.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

TABLE I  
RESPONDENTS AS TO SEX

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	39	37.14
Female	66	62.86

There were 105 freshmen who were treated as respondents to the study conducted. There were 39 and 66 male and female students, respectively. As the figures suggest, majority of them are females which is a usual scenario in most schools.

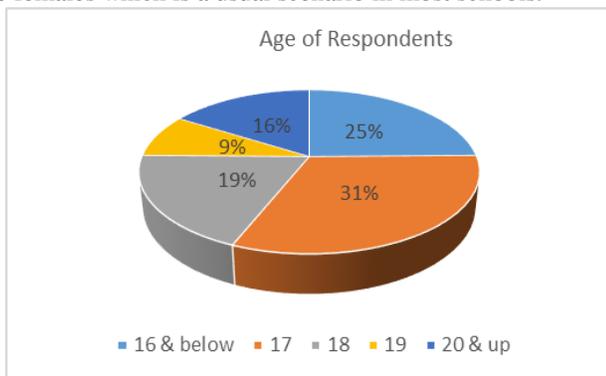


Fig. 1 Age of Respondents mean age= 17.79

Mean age of the respondents is 17.79. This means that most of them have ages within range required for college freshmen.

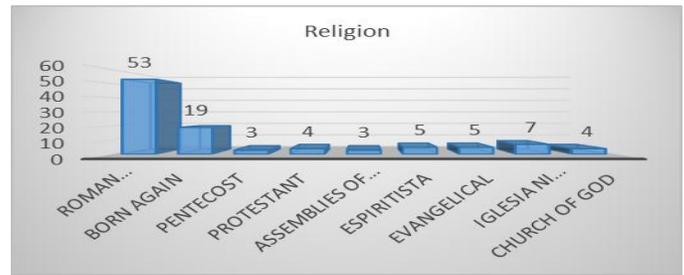


Fig 2 Religion of Respondents

It can be noted from the preceding chart that respondents who are affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church more than doubled the number and percent of the overall number of respondents

TABLE II  
OCCUPATION OF PARENTS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Occupation of Parents	FATHER		MOTHER	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
farming	66	62.86	12	11.43
housekeeping			62	59.05
carpentry	3	2.86		
driving	10	9.52		
employed	8	7.62	7	6.67
in business	6	5.71	6	5.71
OFW	2	1.90	12	11.43
Total	95	90.48	99	94.29

The previous table proves that most of the fathers of the respondents are farmers and most of their mothers are doing the household chores and taking care of the children. It is also noticed that some of the mothers are joining the fathers in the farm; however, some are working as OFWs. Few are employed and into business. Some fathers are driving either their own vehicles or driving others vehicle for a living; yet, few are into business, employed and OFW. It is also obvious that the total number of respondents is not equal the number of both fathers and mothers because some are diseased and other respondents are no longer living with their parents.

TABLE III  
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PARENTS OF THE RESPONDENTS

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PARENTS	FATHER		MOTHER	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
elementary level	23	21.90	11	10.48
elementary graduate	13	12.38	15	14.29
high school level	17	16.19	22	20.95
high school graduate	28	26.67	23	21.90
college level	12	11.43	21	20.00
college graduate	9	8.57	11	10.48
Total	102	97.14	103	98.10

Data on the preceding table prove that both fathers and mothers of the respondents have mostly graduated in high school. Few have entered college but did graduate. Many did not even finish elementary either.

Accordingly, the population of the freshmen in the College was dominated by females, most of them with ages 17 and 18. Mostly are Roman Catholic, their parents are generally farmers and housekeepers and finished high school.

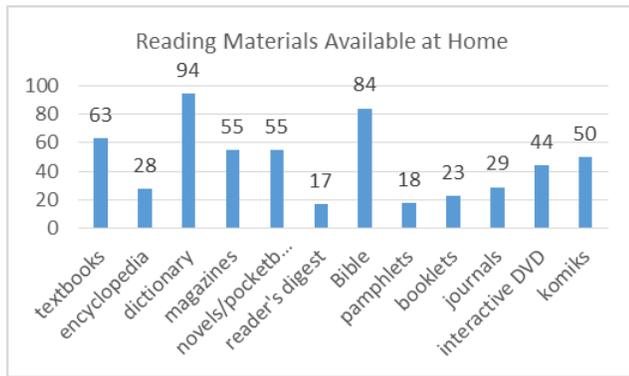


fig. 3 Available Reading Materials at Home

The earlier chart shows the list of reading materials the respondents claim to have in their respective homes. Almost all of the freshmen assert that they have dictionary at home. But sad to note that not all freshmen have Bible in their home. Reader's Digest and pamphlets are the least available at home.

TABLE IV  
CONSTRAINTS TO READING COMPREHENSION ENCOUNTERED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Student-related constraints	Mean	Description
1. I have low vocabulary skills	2.45	Less Serious
2. I have poor study habits	2.21	Less Serious
3. I am inattentive during class and group discussions	2.11	Less Serious
4. I can't concentrate to learn due to physical disability	2.01	Less Serious
5. I always come to school late due to the far distance from school to home	1.95	Less Serious
6. I frequently absent and cut classes	1.78	Less Serious
7. I lack motivation to read	2.00	Less Serious
8. I am fond of daydreaming	2.04	Less Serious
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>Less Serious</b>
Home and Family-related constraints	Mean	Description
1. We do not have available reading materials at home	1.92	Less Serious
2. My parents do not bring home reading materials	1.98	Less Serious
3. My parents are working; hence, they could not find time to assist me	2.23	Less Serious
4. I need to do home chores; therefore, I have no time to read	2.03	Less Serious
5. My parents are working; hence, they can't assist me in my homework	2.14	Less Serious
6. My parents can't afford to buy enough school materials	1.94	Less Serious
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>Less Serious</b>
School facility-related constraints		
1. The school does not have adequate building	1.87	Less Serious
2. The school does not have a library	1.64	Not Serious
3. The school does not have adequate equipment to attract reading activities for students	1.87	Less Serious
4. The school lacks computers for the students	2.33	Less Serious

5. The classrooms are not conducive to learning	1.88	Less Serious
6. The textbooks are not sufficient	1.89	Less Serious
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>Less Serious</b>
Teacher-related constraints		
1. The teachers do not have sufficient SIM in teaching	1.82	Less Serious
2. The teachers have poor motivational techniques of teaching to improve students' interest	1.82	Less Serious
3. The teachers do not regularly have classes due to on the spot instructions of principals/head teachers and other intervening activities	1.95	Less Serious
4. The teachers are frequently absent due to poor health and personal problems	2.02	Less Serious
5. Some teachers are very strict; hence, students prefer not to attend classes	2.06	Less Serious
6. The teachers do not assist/guide their students during discussions and activities	1.76	Less Serious
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>	<b>1.90</b>	<b>Less Serious</b>

The constraints on reading comprehension by the college freshmen are divided into four categories, such as: student-related, home and family-related, school facility-related and teacher-related. It can be gleaned from the table that all the constraints are perceived by the respondents as "less serious". "The school does not have a library" under School facility-related is "Not Serious" either.

TABLE V  
LEVEL OF SERIOUSNESS OF THE CONSTRAINTS TO READING COMPREHENSION WHEN RESPONDENTS ARE GROUPED BY THEIR PROFILE

Constraints	Profile						
	Age	Sex	Religion	Occupation of father	Occupation of Mother	Educational Attainment of Father	Educational Attainment of Mother
<b>Student-Related</b>							
1. I have low vocabulary skills	*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
2. I have poor study habits	*	ns	ns	ns	*	ns	ns
3. I am inattentive during class and group discussions	*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	*
4. I can't concentrate to learn due to physical disability	*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
<b>Home/Family -Related</b>							
1. We do not have available reading materials at home	*	ns	ns	ns	*	ns	ns
2. My parents do not bring home reading materials	ns	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	ns
6. My parents can't afford to buy enough school materials	*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
<b>School Facility -Related</b>							
1. The school does not have adequate building	ns	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	ns
4. The school lacks computers for the students	ns	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	*
5. The classrooms are not conducive to learning	ns	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	ns
6. The textbooks are not sufficient	ns	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	ns

\* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

ns= not significant

As noted in the result presented by the previous table, Student-related constraints such as: *I have low vocabulary skills, I have poor study habits, I am inattentive during class and group discussions*, and *I can't concentrate to learn due to physical disability* are significant when the respondents are grouped by age; *I have poor study habits* is also significant when respondents are grouped according to occupation of mother; and *I am inattentive during class and group discussions* is significant as well when they are grouped according to the educational attainment of their mothers.

Beneath Home and Family-related constraints, *We do not have available reading materials at home, My parents do not bring home reading materials, My parents can't afford to buy enough school materials* are significant when respondents are grouped according to age, religion, and occupation of mother, respectively.

Under School Facility-Related Constraints, *The school does not have adequate building, The school lacks computers for the students, The classrooms are not conducive to learning, and the textbooks are not sufficient* are significant when the respondents are grouped by religious affiliation. *Lack computers for the students* is also significant when the respondents are grouped by educational attainment of mother. These statements are based on the setting of the high school the respondents graduated from.

The table further shows that Occupation and Educational Attainment of Father do not have significance in the reading comprehension of the respondents.

TABLE VI  
CORRELATION BETWEEN THE AVAILABILITY OF READING MATERIALS AT HOME AND LEVEL OF SERIOUSNESS OF THE CONSTRAINTS OF READING COMPREHENSION ENCOUNTERED BY THE RESPONDENTS

Constraints	Pearson correlation	P-value	Decision
Student-related	-.199*	0.041	Reject Ho
Home and family-related	-0.313**	0.001	Reject Ho
School facility-related	-0.132	0.18	Accept Ho
Teacher-related	-0.141	0.15	Accept Ho

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There is a very strong correlation between availability of reading materials at home and the seriousness of home and family-related and student-related constraints in reading comprehension of the college freshmen. It can be gleaned that students who have available reading materials at home encounter less serious problems in reading comprehension.

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