

## Module Readability, Reading Skills, and Reading Comprehension of Grade 8 Students

Andy Bon D. Dariagan\*, & Marien A. Laureto

Capiz State University, Pontevedra Campus, 5802 Capiz, Philippines.

\*Email: [malareto@capsu.edu.ph](mailto:malareto@capsu.edu.ph)

### Abstract

*This survey-correlational research aimed to determine the levels of readability of the grade eight English manual, reading skills, which constitute vocabulary and fluency, and the students' reading comprehension of the grade eight students. The "standard" readability level of the grade 8 learners' module indicates that the literary pieces and readings included in it are comprehensible. Grade 8 students are proficient readers; they have the skill in vocabulary and fluency. They can pronounce most of the words with accuracy and understand most of the English words and even give meaning to them. The level of reading comprehension of the grade 8 students is developing. The significant difference on the students' reading skills in terms of age, monthly family income, fathers' educational attainment and mothers' educational attainment indicate that these factors affect the gaining of the students of their reading skills except when classified into sex. Thus, the reading skills of the grade eight students vary in terms of age, monthly family income, fathers' educational attainment and mothers' educational attainment. The significant difference on the students' reading comprehension in terms of monthly family income, mothers' educational attainment and fathers' educational attainment may signify that the aforementioned factors contribute to the acquisition of the ability of the students to comprehend except with sex and age. The reading skills of the students are not significantly related to the readability of the material. The same is true with the module readability and reading comprehension, no significance has been identified. On the other hand, students' reading skills are significantly related to their level of reading comprehension. Looking into the relationship of reading skills to reading comprehension and finding no relationship among readability with reading skills and reading comprehension, it is seen that the factor of learning relies on the students.*

*Keywords: Module readability; Reading comprehension; Reading skills*

### 1. Introduction

Learning the English language is a significant primary scope in the system of education in the Philippines. Some subjects are taught using the English language and it is therefore vital for students to learn the competencies as the basic to learning other subject areas. With the new K to 12 Curriculum, there was a shift in curriculum with the integration, competencies, phases, and time frame. The formal integration of the English language, for instance, starts on the third grade which was introduced in the old curriculum as early as first grade. It is believed that acquiring such competency in using the English language is basic for Filipino students who would want to become successful in life and it is of great challenge in the teaching and learning process how to deal with this objective of global competitiveness among Filipinos.

Being an English teacher is a very challenging role for he must have all the basic and necessary skills and competence in teaching what is needed for the students to learn. Considering the uniqueness and differences of every learner, it requires a highly passionate

teacher who can make several instructional strategies and motivation to encourage and inspire the students to learn the said language.

Reading comprehension speaks on how much the student has learned and acquired the skills in English. From the given symbols to the meaning of the context, one is assessed if he already has acquired and owned the language. The ability to read and comprehend the texts written in English as our second language is considered to be a very fundamental skill for Filipinos. Philippines is well-known to be a country of English-speaking people. Learning the English as a subject has been a part of the Philippine Curriculum. It is of great advantage that Philippines can compete globally because Filipinos have the skill in the use and understanding of the international language.

From elementary grades, learners are taught how to acquire the skills in reading. From simple instructions to long narrations, learners can easily cope with the meanings even if those were written in English language. But as observed, the reading comprehension skill of the students is somehow deteriorating. According to the March 2006 Social Weather Survey, compared to earlier SWS surveys in December 1993 and September 2000, March 2006 results show a decline in all aspects of English proficiency, specifically in reading.

Based on the researchers' experiences as English teachers, students cannot easily conceptualize the ideas of the texts and find difficulty in answering some of the reading comprehension questions. They tend not to understand the literary texts or even falter to conceptualize in mind the scenarios in the reading selections. It took several times of reading before they get into the idea presented in the text. It brought a big question for the researchers if there is something wrong with the reading skills and reading comprehension of the students or is the literary text difficult enough to be understood for their level. Do the students understand the symbols and sound that they read and utter, or do they simply read them but never understood their meanings?

One big change in the content of the English textbook designed for the K to 12 Curriculum is the content itself. The researchers observed that the literary texts included in books are the literary texts that they were able to encounter for the first time when they were already in college. And they were bothered that it required for the students to be guided as they read the selections which they are supposed to do the reading independently. After the reading activity done by the students alone, the teacher is still obliged to do the reading and make it an interactive reading activity instead of the silent reading that is supposed to be done by the learners alone. With these experiences, this study is anchored to see where the problem lies and what possible solutions can be drawn upon identifying the problems.

## **2. Literature Review**

Textbooks are more difficult in high school; there are also more of them and students are expected to understand them with less assistance from the teacher. Studies by Armbruster et al. (2001) have shown that many of the texts students are given to read are poorly written and "inconsiderate." That is, they are written in such a way that the text is not easily understood or remembered, even by a proficient reader. Any reader at any age has difficulty understanding text about an unfamiliar topic. To learn anything new, this information must be connected in some way with existing prior knowledge.

Readability continues to be among the most discussed, misunderstood, and misused concepts in reading. It is all too commonly, but erroneously, thought to be a precise numerical score, obtained through the use of readability "formulas," that indicates the level of difficulty of a text. In such an oversimplified view of readability, the degree of difficulty resides completely in the text. In a very global sense this view has great intuitive appeal; some texts clearly seem inherently more difficult than others. For example, Dr. Seuss books certainly have a lower level of readability than Shakespearean plays. However, within narrower ranges of texts the readability or difficulty of texts is not as clear. Is a science text measured to beat fourth-grade readability really easier to read than a fifth-grade readability social studies text? Might one child find the science text easier, while another might be more successful with the social studies text? A more reasonable definition of readability that is in keeping with more recent research and theory is the level of ease or difficulty with which text material can be understood by a particular reader who is reading that text for a specific purpose. Readability is dependent upon many characteristics of a text and many characteristics of readers (Pikulski, 2009). It is often stated that communication presupposes comprehension. The main purpose of readability studies is thus to measure the comprehensibility of a piece of writing. In this regard, different readability measures were initially devised to help educators select passages suitable for both children and adults.

Readability assessment has been a field of interest for linguists since the 1920s but intensive research begun in the U.S. in the late 1940s (Sjöholm, 2012). Readability is an attempt to match the reading level of written material to the "reading with understanding" level of the reader. It does not necessarily equate to a "reading age" of the text. All readability tests rely on a very rough gauge of the level of reading vocabulary people can expect to acquire by a certain point in their development - they stop generally around the 20 mark. But successful reading is about far more than word recognition - it's about style, content, physical presentation, complexity of intellectual engagement required, learner interest, confidence and skill.

Therefore, a reader-text mismatch (for example, assigning a selection from the unabridged "Othello" for a 3rd grade reading exercise) can result in the user failing to use or ignoring the text. To avoid mismatch, educators would like a tool to check if a given text would be readable by its intended audience. Inventing such tools has been the primary focus of readability research for the past 90 years (Kondru, 2006).

Reading skills enable readers to turn writing into meaning and achieve the goals of reading independence, comprehension, and fluency. Irvin (2001) identifies one of four literacy practices of strong readers which is code breaking. Code-breaking entails knowing about the using of relationship of spoken sounds in the language to the graphic codes and symbols used to represent those sounds (including punctuation and formatting conventions). This practice involves recognizing and using the alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax and vocabulary.

Vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to comprehension because (1) understanding words enables readers to understand passages, (2) verbal aptitude underlies both word and passage comprehension, and (3) vocabulary knowledge maybe related to a person's store of background information (Irvin et al., 2001).

Fluency in oral reading refers to the ability to read connected text aloud with *accuracy, speed, and appropriate phrasing*. Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly (Hudson et al., 2005). It is a set of skills that allows readers to rapidly decode text while maintaining high comprehension. Fluency also involves reading a text

with proper expression. There are three major components of fluency: accuracy, which refers to the person's ability to read words correctly; rate, the speed a person reads; and prosody, which is commonly referred to as reading with feeling and involves the stress, intonation, and pauses when reading (Rasinski, 2006). Fluency is often considered the bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Armbruster et al., 2001; Pikulski and Chard, 2005; Walczyk and Griffith-Ross, 2007). Kuhn (2004) believes one important reason for the need of fluency instruction is that fluent readers no longer have to decode the majority of the words they encounter, but instead can recognize words accurately and automatically. This allows readers to shift their focus to comprehension and provides the main reason why fluency is so important.

Generally speaking, as oral reading skill increases, so does reading comprehension. One reason for this might be that when Word Recognition becomes automatic a reader can dedicate more cognitive resources to understanding what he or she is reading. Conversely, when a reader has to spend time decoding words, that reader is devoting cognitive resources to Word Analysis instead of comprehension. When reading rate is poor, consequently, the comprehension may suffer.

The aim of all reading instruction is to increase the level of Silent Reading Comprehension. In order to be able to devote attention to the meaning of sentences and paragraphs, learners have to be fluent readers. Hesitations caused by a need to decode unfamiliar words interrupt the flow of the author's intended meaning. Fluent reading requires that word reading ability be automatic for the particular reading level being assessed. Researchers have found high correlations between oral reading Fluency and reading comprehension.

Poor Fluency Can Have an Effect on Reading Comprehension. Comprehension is not guaranteed with fluency, but it is difficult without fluency. If a reader has to frequently stop to figure out unknown words, most likely the reader will not remember or understand much of what is read (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time, whereas less fluent readers must focus their attention on figuring out the words, leaving them little attention for understanding the text (Armbruster et al., 2001). When gains are made in fluency, readers can focus their attention on comprehension and understand more of what is read.

If children are too focused on word reading, then little remains for higher-level comprehension (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). Two theories, the automaticity theory and the verbal efficiency theory highlight the harmful effects of inefficient fluency skills on comprehension. According to both theories, beginning readers first concentrate on word reading and gradually shift their attention to what they read and understand. However, when decoding becomes automatic, requiring little attention, more attention may be allocated for comprehending a text. Thus, a direct relationship can be assumed between fluency and reading comprehension.

According to Hudson et al. (2005), each aspect of fluency has a clear connection to reading comprehension. For example, inaccurate word reading can lead to misinterpretations of the story, poor automaticity can strain the reader's ability to construct ongoing interpretation of the story, and poor prosody can lead to confusion through inappropriate groupings of words or the inappropriate use of expression.

Fluency instruction can have an effect on reading comprehension. The National Assessment of Educational Progress found a close relationship between fluency and reading comprehension (Armbruster et al., 2001). A representative sample of the nation's fourth-

grade students who scored low on fluency measures also scored low on comprehension measures (Armbruster et al., 2001). This suggests that fluency is often neglected in many classrooms across the country and may be affecting many students' reading comprehension. All three fluency areas—accuracy, rate, and prosody—need to be developed for effective comprehensive reading instruction for students (Hudson et al., 2005). Although some readers may recognize words automatically in isolation or on a list, they might not read the same words fluently when they appear in context. It is important to provide students with instruction and practice in fluency as they read (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). These findings can allow teachers to use a measure of context fluency to estimate overall reading comprehension.

Fluency development showed a positive effect on second graders' reading comprehension. The study assessed the effects of developing second-grade students' oral reading fluency using the oral recitation lesson (ORL) and the effects that fluency training had on reading comprehension. Results of this study found that the performance of students who participated in the ORL group was "superior to that of the control group", which suggests fluency development has a strong effect on reading comprehension (Reutzel and Hollingsworth, 1993).

Repeated reading is considered the most commonly recommended procedure for improving reading rate (Armbruster et al., 2001). Repeated reading of text aimed at developing fluency also may be related to improvement in students' reading comprehension. A study conducted by O'Connor et al. (2007) found that repeated reading not only improved reading rate, but also word identification and reading comprehension for below-level readers in grades two through four. This suggested that repeated and monitored oral reading improved reading fluency and overall reading achievement.

### **3. Model, Data and Methodology**

Out of the total population of grade eight which is 591, 115 were used as participants in the study. These 115 participants are the students enrolled in Cabugcabug National High School, Philippines during the school year 2014 – 2015. They were classified according to sex, age, monthly family income, and educational attainment of parents.

The sample was randomly selected through a lottery technique and was used as the respondents of the study. This was done by putting all the names on strips of paper and then placed in a box. Names were picked and were identified as the study respondents. The number of respondents was identified using the formula of Sloven.

Out of 115 participants, a large percentage (69.6 percent) is female and the rest (30.4 percent) are males. A big majority (85.2 percent) is 12-14 years old, 13.9 percent age 15-17 years old, and a single respondent (.9 percent) falls the bracket with the age of 18 and above. More than half (51.3 percent) of the participants have a monthly family income of below P 5,000, nearly one third (32.2 percent) have the monthly family income of P 5,000 to P 15,000, and a minimal (16.5 percent) have more than P 15, 000. Almost equal percentage of fathers had attained elementary (13.0 percent), graduated elementary (12.2 percent), reached high school (13.9 percent), graduated high school (13.9 percent), and college level (14.8 percent). The rest of the fathers had finished college (29.6 percent), a few (1.7 percent) held master's degree and a single one (.9 percent) is a doctorate degree holder. Finally, nearly equal

percentage of mothers finished high school and college with the percentage of 19.1 and 20.9, respectively, so with the high school level with 23.5 percent. An equal number of mothers have master's degree units (3.5 percent) and are master's degree holder (3.5 percent). The rest of the mothers are elementary level (7.0 percent), elementary graduate (12.2), college level (9.6 percent), and with units in doctorate (.9 percent).

**Table A:** Respondents' profile

	f	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	35	30.4
Female	80	69.6
<b>Age</b>		
12-14 yrs old	98	85.2
15-17 yrs old	16	13.9
18-20 yrs old	1	.9
<b>Family income</b>		
below PhP5,000	59	51.3
PhP5,000-15,000	37	32.2
above PhP15,000	19	16.5
<b>Father's educational attainment</b>		
Elementary level	15	13.0
Elementary graduate	14	12.2
High school level	16	13.9
High school graduate	16	13.9
College level	17	14.8
College graduate	34	29.6
Master's degree holder	2	1.7
Doctorate degree holder	1	.9
<b>Mother's educational attainment</b>		
Elementary level	8	7.0
Elementary graduate	14	12.2
High school level	27	23.5
High school graduate	22	19.1
College level	11	9.6
College graduate	24	20.9
With master's units	4	3.5
Master's degree holder	4	3.5
With doctorate units	1	.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100.0</b>

To obtain the data on readability, the literary texts included in the grade eight, third grading students English manual were encoded at readability-score.com and the literary texts were technically assessed using the Felsch Cincaid reading formula on readability.

Scores were obtained using the Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) Readability Formula. The specific mathematical formula is

$$\text{FRE} = 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$$

Notes: ASL denotes Average Sentence Length (i.e., the number of words divided by the number of sentences); ASW denotes Average number of syllables per word (i.e., the number of syllables divided by the number of words).

The output, i.e., RE is a number ranging from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the easier the text is to read.

FRE score	Grade level
90.0 – 100.0	5 <sup>th</sup> grader
60.0 – 70.0	8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> graders
0.0 – 30.0	College graduates

FRE score has the following interpretations,

FRE score	Interpretation
90-100	Very easy
80-89	Easy
70-79	Fairly easy
60-69	Standard
50-59	Fairly difficult
30-49	Difficult
0-29	Very confusing

This instrument is composed of two parts, the fluency and the vocabulary. In order to gather the data on the respondent's reading skill, a multiple fifty items test in vocabulary was made by a researcher. These items undergone and survive pilot-testing to 30 grade eight students at Hipona National High School, Pontevedra, Capiz. The instrument in fluency is a tongue twister poem entitled "Our Queer Language", which is a poem that includes words with the same or almost the same letters used in it but are differently pronounced. A checklist to identify errors per line was used.

Fifty percent of the results from both categories comprised the reading skills of the respondents. This used the transmutation formula for scores:

$$\text{Grade} = \left( \frac{\text{Score}}{\text{Total number of item}} \times 50 \right) + 50$$

A researcher made questionnaire of 55 multiple choice items test was designed to measure the reading comprehension. Selected literary pieces with the same or almost the same readability level on the content of the grade eight students module in third grading English were used as the content. Questions on comprehension were then made. These 55 items underwent the pilot-testing to 30 grade eight students of Hipona National High School. To interpret the result, the following scale was utilized:

- 90% and above : Advanced
- 85% to 89% : Proficient
- 80% to 84% : Approaching proficiency
- 75% to 79% : Developing
- 74% and below : Beginning

This study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2014-2015. Data on the personal profile of the participants in terms of sex, age, family income, father's educational attainment and mother's educational attainment were collected using a questionnaire. To collect the data on vocabulary, 50 multiple choice items which words were selected from the literary pieces of the grade 8 module was used. As with reading comprehension, a researcher made instrument with 55 multiple items test based on the selected reading selections was used. The result of fluency was obtained using a poem. The participants read the poem orally and were scored by three judges using a checklist on identifying the errors committed. Judges were the researcher himself and the other two are also the English teachers of Cabugcabug National High School. Respondents were gathered in a certain room for the testing.

Permission to administer the instruments was first sought from the school principal of Cabugcabug National High School. When approval was secured, the researcher personally administered the data gathering instruments to the identified participants. Immediate retrieval of the questionnaires was done as soon as the participants were through answering. The data that were gathered were then tallied, tabulated and computed using the appropriate statistical tools. Analyses and interpretation of computed data followed.

The data that were gathered from the investigation were analyzed and interpreted using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software.

- Frequency Counts and Percentages: To determine the number of observations in each category and their corresponding percentages.
- Mean: To determine the scores in fluency and was utilized in getting the results for vocabulary, readability and reading comprehension.
- Standard Deviation: To determine the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the readability, reading skills and reading comprehension of grade 8 pupils.
- t-test for Independent Samples: The test sets at 0.05 alpha level and it is used to determine the significance of the differences between two variables.
- One-way ANOVA: The test sets at 0.05 alpha level and it is used to determine the significant differences among compared groups.
- Pearson's r Product Moment Correlation: The test sets at 0.05 alpha level. It is used to measure the relationship between module readability and reading skills, module readability and reading comprehension, and reading skills and reading comprehension.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

Table 1 shows the readability level of the grade 8 learner's module. The result reveals that the readability level of the material is "standard" ( $M = 68.28$ ,  $SD = 17.01$ ).

This implies that the reading selections or the literary pieces included in the grade 8 student's module suit their level. This means that the short stories, poems, essays, biographies, speeches, or any narrations in their book can be understood by any student in the same level. This further signifies that grade 8 learners should have to be independent readers who need not the assistance of a teacher when reading and comprehending articles from the manual.



This idea disagrees with the scheme of Armbruster et al. (2001) saying that textbooks are more difficult in high school; there are also more of them and students are expected to understand them with less assistance from the teacher. With his studies, data have shown that many of the texts students are given to read are poorly written and “inconsiderate”. That is, they are written in such a way that the text is not easily understood or remembered, even by a proficient reader.

**Table 1:** Level of readability of learners’ module of grade 8 students

	N	Mean	Description	SD
Readability	37	68.28	Standard	17.01
<b>Scale</b>			<b>Description</b>	
90-100			Very easy	
80-89			Easy	
70-79			Fairly easy	
60-69			Standard	
50-59			Fairly difficult	
30-49			Difficult	
0-29			Very confusing	

Table 2 shows the level of reading skills across the profile of the respondents. The result reveals that as an overall group, students are “proficient” ( $M = 85.34$ ,  $SD = 5.91$ ) in reading skills. Data further show that both male and female are “proficient” in reading skills with the means 84.80 ( $SD = 5.60$ ) and  $M = 85.58$  ( $SD = 6.05$ ), respectively. Students with the age ranging from 12 to 14 years old are “proficient” ( $M = 85.91$ ,  $SD = 6.04$ ), however, those with the age ranging from 15 to 18 years old reached only the “approaching proficiency” level with means ranged from 82.00 to 83.00. “Proficient” level in reading skills was also attained by those with the monthly family income of P 5,000 to P 15,000 and above P 15,000 with the means ranging from 87.08 to 89.63 ( $SDs = 5.35$  to  $6.96$ ), yet, those with below P 5,000 got the “approaching proficiency” level of reading skills with mean 82.86 ( $SD = 4.64$ ). Participants with both parents with the educational attainments elementary level, elementary graduate and high school level have the reading skills with description “approaching proficiency” with means ranged from 80.36 to 84.00 ( $SDs = 2.13$  to  $4.54$ ). However, participants with parents with educational attainments high school graduate, college level and college graduate reached “proficient” level of reading skills with means ranging from 84.82 to 88.71 ( $SDs = 6.16$  to  $5.47$ ). Finally, participants with parents whose educational attainment is with master’s units, master’s degree holder, with doctorate degree units or doctorate degree holder has the reading skills level of “advanced” with means ranging from 90.00 to 95.00. With the level of reading skills when classified according to respondents’ profile, data show that better performances were obtained by female, those with the age ranging from 12-14 years old, with monthly family income of above 15,000 pesos, with father’s educational attainment of doctorate degree holder and mother’s educational attainment with master’s units.

The results entail that sex is not a factor whether or not a student acquire skills in reading. Both have an equal chance of attaining the skill provided he or she has the interest of learning it. Students with the age 12 to 14 years old have better reading skills compared to those with 15 to 20. The participants with age 15 to 20 may have stopped from schooling the

reason why they were not able to acquire thorough skills in reading. The higher the monthly family income the higher the tendency of a student to have the skills in reading. This may be due to the availability of reading resources and exposure to technology which help develop their interest and reading skills. Finally, the results imply that the higher the educational attainment of parents, the higher is the chance of a student to have the needed reading skill. This may be because of the encouragement of the parents to value education and setting as an example to their children. Also, students may be challenged to perform well because of their parents' expectations.

The result in terms of age confirms the finding of Pasadas (2012) revealing that a child performs better in academics if his age corresponds to the age expected in his year level. Regalado (2000) and Falsario (2000) who pointed out that females are better than males in academic performance does not conform the result when it comes to sex. On the other hand, the result of the study of Dela Cruz (2000) who found out that the higher the educational attainment of the parents, the better is their influence on the studies of their children verifies the result on parents' education. Parental attitude towards study which in return is influenced by the education of parents is a factor which may affect the performance of pupils in school. Possibly, students need economically capable parents that can provide them with their study needs. This idea of Dequiña (2011) supports the result that family income somehow is a factor affecting a student's performance.

**Table 2:** Level of reading skills across respondents' profile.

	N	Mean	Description	SD
Overall	115	85.34	P	5.91
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	35	84.80	P	5.60
Female	80	85.58	P	6.05
<b>Age</b>				
12-14 yrs old	98	85.91	P	6.04
15-17 yrs old	16	82.00	AP	3.81
18-20 yrs old	1	83.00	AP	.
<b>Family income</b>				
below PhP5,000	59	82.86	AP	4.64
PhP5,000-15,000	37	87.08	P	5.35
above PhP15,000	19	89.63	P	6.96
<b>Father's educational attainment</b>				
Elementary level	15	82.33	AP	4.15
Elementary graduate	14	81.79	AP	3.89
High school level	16	82.25	AP	4.12
High school graduate	16	86.38	P	5.62
College level	17	85.41	P	5.71
College graduate	34	88.35	P	6.18
Master's degree holder	2	92.50	A	6.36
Doctorate degree Holder	1	95.00	A	.
<b>Mother's educational attainment</b>				
Elementary level	8	84.00	AP	4.54

Elementary graduate	14	80.36	AP	2.13
High school level	27	83.11	AP	3.93
High school graduate	22	84.82	P	6.16
College level	11	85.00	P	6.28
College graduate	24	88.71	P	5.47
With master's units	4	94.25	A	2.99
Master's degree holder	4	94.00	A	4.08
With doctorate units	1	90.00	A	.

Scale	Description
85.90 and above	(A) Advanced
84.50-89.49	(P) Proficient
79.50-84.49	(AP) Approaching Proficiency
74.50-79.49	(D) Developing
74.49 and below	(B)_ Beginning

Table 3 shows the level of reading comprehension across respondents' profile. The results reveal that as an entire group, students' reading comprehension is "developing" with mean 76.18 (SD = 11.30). The same reading comprehension description is obtained even when males are separated from females with means 75.26 and 76.59, (SD = 10.93 and 11.51). Participants with age 12 to 14 fell on the same level of "developing" stage with mean 77.00 (SD = 11.52); 15 to 17 years old got the "beginning" stage (M = 70.88, SD = 8.79); and "approaching proficiency" (M = 81.00) for participant with age 18 to 20 years old. Participants with monthly family income of below P 5,000 resulted "beginning" in reading comprehension with mean 74.34 (SD = 9.45); "developing" (M = 75.89, SD = 11.88) for participants with P 5,000 to P 15,000 monthly family income; and "approaching proficiency" (M = 82.47, SD = 13.63). Respondents' fathers with educational attainment elementary level resulted to "beginning" (M = 70.40, SD = 8.65) in the category of reading comprehension skills, while respondents with mothers whose educational attainment is elementary level resulted to "developing" stage with mean 76.75 (SD = 7.83); participants with both parents who are elementary graduate and high school level obtained "beginning" level with means ranging from 71.86 to 73.56 (SDs 6.64 to 11.55); participants with fathers who are high school graduate have the "developing" level with mean 78.44 (SD = 12.55), different from the participants with fathers who are college level and college graduate with levels "beginning" and "approaching proficiency" levels, respectively with respective means 74.65 (SD = 11.59) and 80.62 (SD = 11.74). On the other hand, participants whose fathers held master's degree and doctorate degree reached the levels "advanced" (M = 92.00, SD = 1.41) and "proficient" (M = 85.00), respectively. With respondents whose mother's educational attainment is high school graduate or college level, they obtained "beginning" level with means 73.95 (SD = 10.93) and 74.45 (SD = 13.90), respectively. Respondents with mothers whose educational attainment is college graduate and those with units in master's degree attained "approaching proficiency" level with means 79.96 to 83.50 (SD = 11.16 to 12.77). Finally, participant with mother whose educational attainment is with doctorate units reached "proficient" level with mean 89.00. With the results on the level of reading comprehension when classified as with the respondents' profile, data reveal that better performances were

attained by female, with age ranging from 18 to 20 years old, with monthly family income of above 15,000 pesos, with father's educational attainment of doctorate degree holder and with mother's educational attainment of master's degree holder.

**Table 3:** Level of reading comprehension across respondents' profile

	N	Mean	Description	SD
Overall	115	76.18	D	11.30
<b>Sex</b>			D	
Male	35	75.26	D	10.93
Female	80	76.59	D	11.51
<b>Age</b>				
12-14 yrs old	98	77.00	D	11.52
15-17 yrs old	16	70.88	B	8.79
18-20 yrs old	1	81.00	AP	.
<b>Family Income</b>				
below PhP5,000	59	74.34	B	9.45
PhP5,000-15,000	37	75.89	D	11.88
above PhP15,000	19	82.47	AP	13.63
<b>Father's Educational Attainment</b>				
Elementary level	15	70.40	B	8.65
Elementary Graduate	14	72.57	B	8.23
High School level	16	72.19	B	9.16
High School Graduate	16	78.44	D	12.55
College level	17	74.65	D	11.59
College Graduate	34	80.62	AP	11.74
Master's Degree Holder	2	92.00	A	1.41
Doctorate Degree Holder	1	85.00	P	.
<b>Mother's Educational Attainment</b>				
Elementary level	8	76.75	D	7.83
Elementary Graduate	14	71.86	B	6.64
High School level	27	73.56	B	11.55
High School Graduate	22	73.95	B	10.93
College level	11	74.45	B	13.90
College Graduate	24	79.96	AP	11.16
With Master's Units	4	83.50	AP	12.77
Master's Degree Holder	4	91.75	A	1.50
With Doctorate Units	1	89.00	P	.

Scale	Description
85.90 and above	(A) Advanced
84.50-89.49	(P) Proficient
79.50-84.49	(AP) Approaching Proficiency
74.50-79.49	(D) Developing
74.49 and below	(B) Beginning

This implies that the reading comprehension level of the grade eight students of Cabugcabug National High School needs to be honed and developed for they only acquire the passing rate which is the developing stage. The comprehension skill doesn't vary in gender which signifies that both sexes are capable of enhancing the skill in comprehension without considering their identities. The age, monthly family income, or even the educational attainment of parents cannot speak on how a student acquires skills in comprehension. These factors do not directly contribute to student's ability to understand a certain reading selection or on their skill in comprehension. This further implies that how a student comprehends is based on his or her individuality and ability to grasp a certain skill which enables him or her to develop. Lagon (2012) who found out that age isn't a factor that affect the academic performance of students affirms the result.

Table 4a shows the result of t-test on the difference in the reading skills as to sex. Statistical analysis reveals no significant difference in the students' reading skills when classified as to sex,  $t(113) = .646$  with  $p = .520$ . This means that regardless of sex of the students, their reading skill remains the same. The result confirms that sex did not affect the proficiency in English of the respondents. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of reading skills of the grade eight students when they are classified in terms of sex is accepted.

**Table 4a:** t-test in reading skills according to sex

Sex	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Male	35	85	6	-.646	113	.520
female	80	86	6			

Table 4b shows the analysis of variance in reading skills across age, family income and parent's educational attainment. It is observed that students' reading skills differ significantly when classified as to age,  $F(2, 112) = 3.21$  with  $p = 0.044$ , family income,  $F(2, 112) = 14.63$  with  $p = .000$ , fathers' educational attainment,  $F(7, 107) = 5.05$  with  $p = .000$  and mothers' educational attainment,  $F(8, 106) = 7.32$  with  $p = .000$ . It is observed that students' reading skills differ significantly when classified as to age. The results indicate that age, family income and parent's educational attainment affect the reading skills of the students. This means that the younger or the older a student is, equal is the chance to develop or acquire the skill. It may not be too late or too early for a learner to have the skills in reading. It is on the readiness on when one attains this ability. Monthly family income is also a factor on one's skill in reading. If the family provides enough resources in reading, one has the chance to practice and sharpen the reading skills. The exposure to certain books, encyclopedias, comics, or gadgets somehow encourages learning skills in reading. Lastly, parents' educational attainment also affects the skill in reading of a student. This may be due to the training and teaching a parent could lend to his or her child at a young age where he or she develops a certain skill in reading. Also, it is a motivation and a challenge for a child to learn knowing what their parents expect them to do so. In other scenarios, it may be due to idealism of a child seeing their parents as an example that they need to follow.

**Table 4b:** Analysis of variance in reading skills across age, family income and parents educational attainment

	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
<b>Reading skills across age</b>					
Between Groups	215.60	2	107.80	3.21*	.044
Within Groups	3760.17	112	33.57		
Total	3975.77	114			
<b>Family Income</b>					
Between Groups	823.68	2	411.84	14.63*	.000
Within Groups	3152.09	112	28.14		
Total	3975.77	114			
<b>Father's Educational Attainment</b>					
Between Groups	986.95	7	140.99	5.05*	.000
Within Groups	2988.82	107	27.93		
Total	3975.77	114			
<b>Mother's Educational Attainment</b>					
Between Groups	1414.91	8	176.86	7.32*	.000
Within Groups	2560.86	106	24.16		
Total	3975.774	114			

\*p<0.05 significant @ 5% alpha level

Pupils who came from homes whose parents were highly educated and economically secured showed superior levels in reading in comparison to parents who attained lower levels of education. This result of the study of Damaso (2007) somehow supports the finding of this study. In addition, the result in terms of parents' educational attainment affirms the findings of Lagon (2012) who revealed that there was a highly significant difference in the level of academic performance of students when classified according to parents' educational attainment. The higher the educational attainment of the parents, the higher is the level of performance of the students. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of reading skills of the grade eight students when they are classified in terms of age, year level, monthly family income, and educational attainment of parents is rejected.

The t-test result in Table 5a shows that student's sex,  $t(113) = .579$  with  $p = .549$ , does not make a difference in the students' reading skills. The result implies that either a student is male or female, it does not follow that he or she is good at reading comprehension. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of the reading comprehension of the grade eight students as when they are classified in terms of sex is accepted.

**Table 5a:** t-test in Reading Comprehension According to Sex

Sex	N	Mean	SD	T	df	Sig
Male	35	75.26	10.93	-.579	113	.564
Female	80	76.59	11.51			

Table 5b shows analysis of variance in reading comprehension according to age, family income and parents' educational attainment. It can be observed that age,  $F(2, 112) = 2.15$  with  $p = .121$  does not differ significantly with the students' reading comprehension.

However, the monthly family income,  $F(2, 112) = 3.93$  with  $p = .022$ , fathers' educational attainment,  $F(7, 107) = 2.88$  with  $p = .009$  and mothers' educational attainment  $F(8, 106) = 2.46$  with  $p = .017$  make significant differences with students' reading comprehension. It can be observed that age does not differ significantly with the students' reading comprehension.

**Table 5b:** Analysis of variance in reading comprehension according to age, family income, and parents educational attainment

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
<b>Age</b>					
Between Groups	539.42	2	269.71	2.15	.121
Within Groups	14021.75	112	125.19		
Total	14561.17	114			
<b>Family Income</b>					
Between Groups	955.64	2	477.82	3.93*	.022
Within Groups	13605.52	112	121.48		
Total	14561.17	114			
<b>Father's Educational Attainment</b>					
Between Groups	2307.85	7	329.69	2.88*	.009
Within Groups	12253.32	107	114.52		
Total	14561.17	114			
<b>Mother's Educational Attainment</b>					
Between Groups	2282.89	8	285.36	2.46*	.017
Within Groups	12278.27	106	115.83		
Total	14561.17	114			

\* $p < 0.05$  significant @ 5% alpha level

The results entail that the younger or the older a student is, his or her reading comprehension does not directly correspond to it. A student may be developed or not in understanding a certain reading selection whether he or she is young or old enough. On the contrary, as with the monthly family income, it is seen that this factor somehow contributes to a students' performance the same with the effect of parents' educational attainment. The results disagree with the findings of Dequiña (2011) stating that regardless of age, a student's performance in English remains to be the same. Also, English performance of students turned out to be the same irrespective of their parents' education, occupation, monthly income and their involvement in their children's studies. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of the reading comprehension of the grade eight students when they are classified in terms of age is accepted while on monthly family income and parents' educational attainment are accepted.

Table 6 shows the relationship between readability and reading skills, readability and reading comprehension and reading skills with reading comprehension. The results of Pearson's  $r$  reveals that there are no significant relationships between readability and reading skills,  $r = -0.034$  with  $p = 0.715$  and between readability and reading comprehension,  $r = -0.062$  with  $p = 0.511$ . Conversely, the results show significant relationship between reading skills and reading comprehension. The results indicate that the better the reading skills which include vocabulary and fluency of the students, the higher is the tendency that they comprehend what they read.

Table 6: Results on Pearson r among readability, reading skills and reading comprehension

	R	Sig
Module Readability and Reading Skills	-0.034	0.715
Module Readability and Reading Comprehension	-0.062	0.511
Reading Skills and Reading Comprehension	0.744*	0.000

p<0.05 significant @ 5% alpha level

Comprehension is not guaranteed with fluency, but it is difficult without fluency. If a reader has to frequently stop to figure out unknown words, most likely the reader will not remember or understand much of what is read (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time, whereas less fluent readers must focus their attention on figuring out the words, leaving them little attention for understanding the text (Armbruster et al., 2001). When gains are made in fluency, readers can focus their attention on comprehension and understand more of what is read. Lastly, effective reading comprehension is the culmination of mastering vocabulary, phonics, fluency, and reading skills (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there are no significant relationships between the readability and reading skills, and no significant relationship on readability and comprehension is accepted while on reading skills and reading comprehension of the grade eight students, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## 5. Conclusions

The “standard” readability level of the grade 8 learners’ module may indicate that the literary pieces and readings included in it are comprehensible. Students are expected to read the literature independently without the assistance of any teacher or peers. The reading selections are not so hard or easy enough to be understood for they suit the level of the students.

Grade 8 students are proficient readers; they have the skill in vocabulary and fluency. They can pronounce most of the words with accuracy and understand most of the English words and even give meaning to them. This may imply that their oral reading skills have been practiced and developed resulting to a better reading oral performance. Also, the development of their vocabulary skills has been a part of their training and honed their skill in giving meaning to English words. This case is may be due to their exposure on individual or choral reading activities inside the classroom. In addition, their exposure to certain reading materials and gadgets somehow contributed to acquiring the skills in reading. The level of reading comprehension of the grade 8 students is developing. This is may be due to their interest and patience in reading. Their attitude towards reading activities contributes to their understanding. Due to their short span of concentration as they read, they are capable of neglecting the totality of the content, ideas and thought of a certain reading article.

The significant difference on the students’ reading skills in terms of age, monthly family income, fathers’ educational attainment and mothers’ educational attainment may indicate that these factors affect the gaining of the students of their reading skills except when classified into sex. Thus, the reading skills of the grade eight students vary in terms of age, monthly family income, fathers’ educational attainment and mothers’ educational



attainment. The significant difference on the students' reading comprehension in terms of monthly family income, mothers' educational attainment and fathers' educational attainment may signify that the aforementioned factors contribute to the acquisition of the ability of the students to comprehend except with sex and age. This means that regardless of sex or age, the skills in reading comprehension of the students are not affected.

The reading skills of the students are not significantly related to the readability of the material. This means that whatever reading material or literary content a student reads it doesn't affect his or her skill in reading. The same is true with the module readability and reading comprehension, no significance has been identified. This connotes that whatever content, literary pieces or literary genre a student reads, his ability to comprehend is independent. On the other hand, students' reading skills are significantly related to their level of reading comprehension. This means that if the students have reached the reading skills of proficient level to advanced level, he or she must be capable of comprehending a certain literary reading. With the acquisition of the reading skills goes the acquisition of the reading comprehension ability. The lacking of the skill in reading is the tendency of the student not to understand what he or she reads. These two variables are therefore dependent with each other. With the result of the study, taking into consideration the proficient level in reading skills and the developing level in the reading comprehension, this signifies that it takes a lot more skill in reading to attain higher degree of skill in comprehension because reading comprehension encompasses not only literal interpretation but also interpretive or the so-called "reading between the lines" or the deeper understanding of the texts.

Though a student is proficient in vocabulary or reads words fluently, a higher order of thinking is still required for comprehension for these things are just "chunks" of literacy and reading comprehension focuses on the totality and wholeness of the message implied in specific literary readings. Students may be good in a specific skill but when collaborated with other skills, they find it difficult to use to attain a specific goal. So it goes that if students are good at vocabulary and are fluent readers, skills which are essential in comprehension, there is still a tendency that application of these skills are at risks if the objective will focus on comprehension. The more difficult the reading text would become, only the advanced level will comprehend. The easier is the text, the higher the tendency for everyone to understand the text even with those who belong in the beginning level. Looking into the relationship of reading skills to reading comprehension and finding no relationship among readability with reading skills and reading comprehension, it is seen that the factor is really on the students.

## **References**

- Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read: Kindergarten through grade 3*. Washington, DC: CIERA.
- Damaso, E. F. (2007). *Reading instruction and reading level of grade three pupils*. (Unpublished Thesis. Roxas City: Filamer Christian College).
- Dela Cruz, Y. L. (2000). *Relationship of certain variables to the performance in English of third year secondary students in the municipality of Jamindan*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis. Roxas City: Colegio Dela Purisima Concepcion).
- Dequina, M. G. D. (2011). *Determinants of English performance of students*. (Unpublished Thesis. Roxas City: Filamer Christian University).

- Dougherty-Stahl, K. A. (2004). Proof, practice, and promise: Comprehension strategy instruction in the primary grades. *Reading Teacher, 57*, 598-609.
- Falsario, M. J. (2000). Performance in the District Achievement Test in English of Grade V Pupils in Mambusao East. (Master's Thesis. Mambusao, Capiz: PSPC Graduate School).
- Hudson, R. F., Lane, H. B., & Pullen, P. C. (2005). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? *Reading Teacher, 58*, 702-714.
- Irvin, J. (2001). *Reading strategies for the social studies classroom*. Holt: Rineart and Winston.
- Kuhn, M. (2004). Helping students become accurate, expressive readers: Fluency instruction for small groups. *Reading Teacher, 58*, 338-344.
- Kondru, J. (2006). Using part of speech structure of text in the prediction of its readability. (Unpublished master's thesis. Arlington: University of Texas) Retrieved November 13, 2008, <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb?did=1216761731&sid=1&Fmt=2&clientId=46449&PQT=309&VName=PQD>
- Lagon, R. N. (2012). Thinking styles and academic performance of high school students (Unpublished Master's Thesis. Burias, Mmbusao, Capiz: Capiz State University).
- O'Connor, R. E., White, A., & Swanson, H. L. (2007). Repeated reading versus continuous reading: Influences on reading fluency and comprehension. *Exceptional Children, 74*, 31-46.
- Pikulski, J. J., & Chard, D. J. (2005). Fluency: Bridge between decoding and reading comprehension. *Reading Teacher, 58*, 510-519.
- Pikulski, J. J. (2009). *Readability*. University of Delaware.
- Rasinski, T. V. (2006). Reading fluency instruction: Moving beyond accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. *Reading Teacher, 59*, 704-706.
- Regalado, A. G. (2000). Relationship between selected variables and the performance in social studies of freshmen at Roxas Memorial College of Arts and Trades. (Unpublished Master's Thesis. Kalibo, Aklan: North Western Visayas College).
- Reutzel, D. R., & Hollingsworth, P. M. (1993). Effects of fluency training on second graders' reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Research, 86*, 325-331.
- Sjöholm, J. (2012). Probability as readability: A new machine learning approach to readability assessment for written Swedish. (Unpublished Master's Thesis. Linköping: Linköping University).
- Walczyk, J. J., & Griffith-Ross, D. A. (2007). How important is reading skill fluency for comprehension? *Reading Teacher, 60*, 560-569.