Reading Motivation Vs Reading Comprehension of Filipino ESL Learners in the Public Schools: Its Correlation to Phi-IRI Reading Results

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ABSTRACT

A considerable number of studies concerning topics on reading comprehension were conducted significantly; however, less attention was focused on metacognitive motivation of students, particularly among the public secondary schools in the Philippines, whose primary language for communication is Filipino or Tagalog, but are being taught in English as the medium of instruction in most of their basic core subjects. These students are in a crucial transition period from junior high school to senior high school. The present study aims to investigate the current reading level of Filipino ESL learners in the Junior High School who took the Grade 7 Phil-IRI test and how it relates to their metacognitive reading motivation. A total of 229 participants were randomly selected from junior high schools in the Schools Division of Manila. Results reveal that the majority of high school students belong to the instructional level. This explains that, with follow-up on high-quality instructions, students can achieve optimal performance in their studies. Interestingly, data yielded a very significant relationship between the results of the Phil-IRI reading test and the Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI). This means that students who perform well in the Phil-IRI are likely to be highly motivated in their metacognitive strategies when reading academic materials. The pedagogical implications of the study suggest that language teachers should offer more than just reading instruction; learners must be strongly motivated to read, and the teachers should ensure this motivation.

Keywords: Phil-IRI, Reading, Metacognition, Motivation, Reading Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Teaching reading is indeed a significant factor in language teaching. Olusola (2016) strongly emphasized, "reading is the third of the four basic language skills in order of acquisition and it forms part of a complex information processing system through which most formal learning takes place" (p. 83). It is an agreed fact that the learners who made reading their habit gained a wide range of vocabulary that they use in other macro skills. Mart (2012) underscored that reading outside the classroom is the most significant influence on oral communication ability. Davies and Pearse (2000) supported the importance of reading, saying, "real success in English teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English outside the classroom" (p.56).

Reading proficiency, according to Pretorius (2001), correlated so highly with academic success that every effort should be made by teachers to inculcate a reading culture in their students. A bulk of studies highlighted reasons about the importance of reading that would surely benefit learners not only at present but more so during the practice of their profession and careers. Mori (2002) foregrounded that both researchers and educators recognize that motivation can be one of the key predictors of success in second or foreign language learning. Thus, a large quantity of research has been carried out in order to investigate what constitutes motivation and how it works, especially in reading. Researchers like Krashen (1982) and Eskey & Grabe (1988), as cited in Mori, foregrounded that students need to read in substantial quantity not only in order to increase the amount of input but also to develop reading skills and knowledge.

Nonetheless, educators nowadays are confronted with challenges on how to motivate learners to read extensively and make this become part of their habit despite the presence of media of entertainment readily available at the click of one's finger. The impetus of the study is how Filipino in-service teachers, especially in the public schools, confront the issue of making their learners upgrade at least their level of comprehension so as to establish the habit of reading. This paper attempts to investigate the reading motivations of Filipino ESL learners and how these motivations relate to the actual results of their Phil-IRI reading test.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The Reading Situation in the Philippine Education

In the Philippines, one of the ten-point agenda which the Aquino's administration launched when K to 12 Program was initiated is to "make each child able readers by the time they complete Grade 1" (Philippine Education for All Review Report [PEARR], 2015). This is anchored under the program "Every Child A Reader Program," (ECARP).

It was the poor results in reading of Filipino elementary and high school students that prompted the educators to intensity the reading program ECARP. It aims to start from the root which is to inculcate among learners the desire to love reading. Basically, ECARP aims for all children to be able to read in mother tongue by the end of Grade 1, in Filipino by the end of Grade 2 and in English by the end of Grade 3. One of its components is Reading Recovery, an intervention program for children who lag behind their peers in terms of reading and writing (PEARR, 2015).

Part of learners' development assessment is the National Achievement Test (NAT) which is a national standardized test, designed to determine the academic levels, strengths and weaknesses (De Dios, 2013). It is a set of examinations which students who are candidates for completion of Grade level take before their exit in the certain grade level. These are Grades 6, 10, and 12 students in all public and private schools in the Philippines.

The 2006 results of the (NAT) given to Grade 6 and 4th-year high school students reported that their reading mastery levels were only 14.4% and 1.1%, respectively (Philstar Global, 2006). This means that Grade 6 students are below mastery at 85.6, while 4th-year high school students are below mastery at 98.1, which is indeed a very alarming report. When asked what could be the reason for this "below mastery levels"? The Director of DepEd's Bureau of Elementary Education, Dr. Yolanda Quijano, explained, "Reading problems are the main culprit for the poor performance of some students in the NAT". (Philstar Global, 2006)

After the launch of ECARP, a more recent government report on the development of NAT results showed an increase in the mean percentage score (DepEd, 2016). It reported thus, "To ensure preparedness of every graduate for further education and the world of work, a percentage increase of 12 % in Grade 10 Achievement rate in NAT, which is 50%-62% in the mean percentage score" (DepEd, 2016).

Meanwhile, to measure the reading comprehension of Grade 7 learners in public high schools who have just completed the elementary level, another reading tool is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). This reading test aims to measure and establish the reading level profile of children in the public elementary school system (Bureau of Elementary Education, 2009). It must be noted that the test is intended for elementary pupils; however, teachers were directed to administer it to Grade 7 students in junior high school, as per a memorandum from the Regional Director of the Department of Education.

Reading Motivation of ESL Learners

Guthrie, Bennett, and McGough (1994) explicated motivations for reading as "internalized reasons for reading without activating cognitive operations that enable the individual to perform such acts as acquiring knowledge, enjoying aesthetic experiences, performing tasks, and participating in social contexts."

Understanding motivation for reading provides Filipino learners with a clear idea of the demand for English, which can be acquired and honed through reading. The demand for quality skills in global competition, especially

in the field of communication, requires a Filipino learner not only to become literate but to achieve accuracy in understanding and comprehending written and spoken texts. Reading as one of the macro skills in language communication demands a significant amount of attention for learners to excel in school and eventually in the professional field they will embark on someday.

Thus, a learner needs to fully understand that reading skills should always be enhanced or practiced, just as a pencil is sharpened from time to time to improve writing precision. Supported by parents/caregivers and guided by their teacher, the purpose of achieving a higher level of mastery can only be attained if learners have the utmost desire to read. This motivational attitude is primarily expected to have been imbibed by parents and passed on to learners at home, then practiced and developed by teachers with their learners in school.

In reading, motivation plays a crucial role in every learner's learning process. One may not be fully aware of it, but it slowly forms as a child learns sounds, words, phrases, and later, more complex sentences. Krashen (1982) pointed out, "language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication" (p.10). Similarly, reading is like acquiring a language that may go through different phases.

Alderson et al. (as cited in Magogwe, 2013) support the idea that research shows a positive relationship between students' metacognitive awareness of the reading process and their ability to read and excel academically. Carell et al. (as cited in Magogwe, 2013) underscored the importance of reading skills in academic contexts, making it imperative to support students in their academic reading and writing tasks.

Motivation plays a crucial role in a child's learning process. One may not be fully aware of it, but it is already embedded in one's system the moment a child desires to read and learn. Cambria and Guthrie (2009) asserted that one may certainly disregard motivation if a person prefers it, but if one does, the most important part of reading, which is the "will," may be neglected. Cambria and Guthrie (2009) further stressed that reading skills have two sides. One side includes phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, and simple comprehension, while the other side includes the "will" to read. A good reader has both the skill and the "will". Lau (as cited in Chan, 2003) emphasized that, as in other English reading studies on motivation, the strategies used and the metacognitive skills also play significant roles in Chinese students' reading comprehension.

However, it must also be considered why a learner may have been experiencing lags in their comprehension and retention, as this does not mean a child is a poor reader. Cicerchia (2016) identified three common reading problems that may be similar to those encountered by Filipino learners in public schools. These are the issues regarding decoding, poor comprehension, and speed. Decoding occurs when a child matches sounds to letters to sound out written language, which is common among beginning readers who struggle with new or unfamiliar words. Secondly, poor comprehension is when a beginner reader encounters unfamiliar words they do not know or recognize. Further, Cicerchia (2016) mentioned that when students decode inaccurately, the usual tendency is to skip the word or words. Hence, the more words they skip, the harder it is for them to understand the complete thought or idea of the text. Speed is when their vocabulary expands, they recognize more words by sight, and their reading speeds up.

The Importance of Reading English among Filipino ESL Learners

For most Filipino learners, reading in English as an L2 can be difficult. This may be because they do not yet have a clear picture of what awaits them, which is attributed to the habit of reading. The importance of learning English language acquisition through reading is foregrounded by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (2007), who state, "English is generally acknowledged to be the world's most important language" (p. 3). This was supported using the four criteria of the universality of the English language. The first criterion is the number of speakers of the language. A second is the language's geographical dispersal. Third is the functional load, and fourth is the economic and political influence of the native speakers of the language. Quirk et al. (2007) accentuated, "The choice of an international language, or *lingua franca*, is never based on linguistic or aesthetic criteria, but always on political, economic and demographic ones" (p.3)

Understanding the importance of English as an international *lingua franca* offers a strong motivation for why students need to read extensively. Kirkpatrick (2007) underpinned, "the adoption of the lingua franca approach also advantages teachers and learners because the focus and aim of English language teaching shifts" (p.194). Kirkpatrick (2007) further emphasized that learning English enables effective communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Gomez Laich and Tuero (2009) discussed that empirical studies of L2 learners' vocabulary learning from reading began to appear in the late 1980s. Krashen (1989) emphasized that L2 learners with advanced reading proficiency will acquire most of their vocabulary through extensive reading rather than through formal vocabulary instruction. Mori (2002) found in one of his studies that students with greater grade-oriented motivation to read (extrinsic motivation) also read more. It was further revealed in Mori's (2002) study that when students see reading as difficult, the less they think it is useful to study English to understand novels/movies.

An interesting study on a metacognitive reading strategy among Filipino bilingual readers was conducted by Estacio (2013), who used two types of reading comprehension tests (multiple-choice and unaided written recall) based on the reading materials. Although there may be no conclusive results regarding the strategy that affects reading comprehension, Estacio (2013) established that "the results of the study validated the relationship between bilinguals' use of metacognitive reading strategies and their reading comprehension" (p. 179).

A large number of studies have explored reading and its relationship to learners' academic performance and other related macro skills and disciplines. However, there are critical issues in reading skills that ELT in developing countries like the Philippines still does not fully understand. The present study aims to provide evidence for the assurance asserted by Quirk et al. (1985): "It is possible that as developing countries become richer they will be able to increase their expenditure on the teaching of English and raise the levels of teacher and student proficiency" (p. 9).

The birth of K to 12 Enhanced Basic Education (EBEC) emphasized a 12-year program that "gives every student an opportunity to receive quality education that is globally competitive based on a pedagogically sound curriculum that is at par with international standards," (Enhanced Basic Education Act, 2013). This study is deemed important to evaluate the significant relationship of reading motivations of Filipino ESL learners, as revealed in the findings of the Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI), with the results of oral and silent reading comprehension of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) prescribed by the government in the public schools. In particular, the study explored the following research questions:

1. How do Filipino ESL high school learners perform in the Phil-IRI reading test?

2. How does the Phil-IRI reading test relate to the results of the Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI)?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the results of the Phil-IRI reading test and MARSI?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

The present study is anchored on the self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1997), who defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p.3). No one else but "us" is the most significant prime mover of success. In the self-efficacy theory, learners themselves are encouraged and expected to be the prime movers of change towards success. The drive and willingness are expected to come from themselves being learners of English as their L2. Through constant practice of reading and input through mental and physical rehearsals, Filipino ESL learners may soon become advanced and proficient readers.

Another theory on which the study is grounded is the effective goal-setting theory by Locke & Latham (2002), who stated, "Goal setting involves establishing quantitative and qualitative standards of objectives to serve as

the aim of one's actions" (p. 15). According to Schunk (1990), this theory is further divided into three aspects that teachers should be aware of while helping their students set academic goals. First, this is a proximal, or short-term, goal rather than a distal, or long-term, goal. Young as they are, high school learners are less likely to become discouraged or unmotivated during long–term tasks. The second aspect points to specific goals that raise performance, specify the effort required for success, and boost self-efficacy. The third goal should be moderately difficult or challenging. Schunk (1990) further explained, "Teachers should teach students how to set personal long-term, medium-term, and short-term goals that relate explicitly to the purpose for them doing the activity or course" (p.16).

Research Design

To analyze the relationship between the Phil-IRI results of Filipino ESL students in public schools in Manila and their reading motivation, the study employed a quantitative descriptive method. According to Zulueta and Costales Jr. (2003), this method is a procedure that involves assigning numerical values to variables. The researcher followed strictly the research ethics. First, the customary procedure of writing a letter to the office of the Superintendent of the Division of Manila was conducted. It must be noted that the letter seeking permission to conduct a study in the public schools was duly signed by the researcher herself and noted by her research mentor. After the Superintendent approved, the researcher met with the School Principals of the concerned schools, and the Principals endorsed the letter to the Head of the English Department. The Department Head for English endorsed it to the teacher or Master Teacher concerned. Finally, the MARSI instrument was given to students.

Since all respondents are in Grade 8 and considered minors, a letter of consent to their parents and/or guardians was provided to each student to allow them to participate in the study.

The Participants

The total number of participants in this study is 229, all of whom are currently enrolled in Grade 8. They are from different schools in the Division of Manila, randomly chosen by their English teacher. As students from public schools and residents of Manila, these students belong to families whose parents are employed and receive the minimum wage (Tubadeza & Rosero, 2015).

It must be noted that all participants are in Grade 8 because the results are readily available. Students are now in Grade 8, and in practice, they finished the test when they were still in Grade 7. The results of Phil-IRI were retrieved from the school file with proper permission.

The Instruments

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). This informal reading inventory is a program that was initially implemented during the school year 2011-2012 by the Bureau of Elementary Education (now Bureau of Learning Delivery) of the Department of Education. The Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) is one of the most useful classroom tools in assessing pupils' reading ability. It can provide an indication of pupils' reading performance through direct observation. It is typically administered individually and consists of grade-level stories followed by comprehension questions of varying difficulty.

Also, in the Phil-IRI, the adjectival rate of pupils/students is categorized by reading level, comprehension, and speed. These levels are frustration, instructional, or independent. The non-reader level is not considered a variable in the Junior High School because it is for those who cannot recognize and sound out letter-sound for single consonants. They are those who are unable to blend consonants and vowel in simple word (cvc, ccvc,cvcc) patterns. For a complete description of reading levels, please see *Appendix A.*

The test materials package consists of the Manual of Administration, Teacher's/Pupil's copy of the Graded passages, Phil-IRI forms and the Key to Corrections (Phil-IRI DepEd Manual)

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI). Developed and validated by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), it is an instrument specifically designed to assess adolescent and adult readers' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies while reading academic or school-related materials. It is further divided into 3 strategy subscales or factors, namely: Global reading strategies, Problem-solving strategies, and Support reading strategies.

It is practically applied in this study to determine whether the results of the Phil-IRI reading tests have a significant effect on students' reading motivation.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection lasted a month due to various activities coinciding with the school year's closure. The researcher visited different schools, following the usual protocol and research ethics as mentioned earlier, and then proceeded with the study. The Phil-IRI results were obtained from the Curriculum Implementation Department (CID) of the Division Office of Manila, while MARSI was conducted in the classroom under proper guidance from the students' respective English teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the data, the focal aim of the study as mentioned earlier is to evaluate the significant relationship of reading motivations of Filipino ESL learners as revealed in the findings of Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI) with the results of oral and silent reading; speed and comprehension of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) prescribed by the government in the public schools.

The research questions presented earlier are given the utmost analysis and interpretation:

How do Filipino ESL high school learners perform in the Phil-IRI reading test

Table 1 Level of Students in the Phil-IRI for Oral and Silent Reading Tests

Secondary Schools	Oral Reading			Silent Reading		
	Frustration	Instructional	Independent	Frustration	Instructional	Independent
Paez	22%	59%	18%	27%	47%	25%
Laurel	15%	52%	33%	36%	30%	11%
Osmeña	12%	58%	30%	0%	66%	34%
Magsaysay	0%	74%	26%	0%	86%	14%
Araullo	14%	67%	19%	27%	66%	7%
Mapa	50%	37%	13%	42%	47%	11%
Mean Percentage	**19%**	**58%**	**23%**	**22%**	**57%**	**17%**

Table 1 presents the reading levels of participants in the oral and silent tests of the Phil-IRI. The data indicate that the majority of participants belong to the Instructional level, both in oral (58%) and silent reading tests (57%). While the Independent level scored 23% in oral reading and only 17% in silent reading. For the Frustration level, 19% for oral reading and 22% for silent reading.

The results of both oral and silent reading tests yielded consistent mean percentage scores of 58% and 57%, respectively. A very thin line of difference leads to the conclusion that the majority of high school students belong to the Instructional Level. This explains that they are the students who can benefit from and learn from instruction. Their oral reading is rhythmic, conversational, and correct in interpretation. Burkins and Croft (2010) provided a clear interpretation of the "instructional" level of students' reading: "It is the level at which a student has a strong enough reading process to learn from the work" (p.30). Burkins and Croft (2010) further noted that students at this point already have a "repertoire of strategies strong enough to support them to attend dimensions of the text that may be new to them" (p. 36).

Having noted that these students are just in their early years of Junior High School, gives us a clear view that room for improvement in reading that must be addressed properly for these L2 learners. With proper guidance and consistent reading practice, there is no doubt they can improve their reading skills.

Table 2 Level of Students in the Phil-IRI for Speed and Comprehension Reading Tests

Secondary Schools	Speed			Comprehension		
	Slow	Average	Fast	Frustration	Instructional	Independent
Paez	26%	53%	21%	27%	48%	25%
Laurel	1%	46%	53%	1%	60%	39%
Osmeña	42%	38%	30%	0%	66%	34%
Magsaysay	0%	56%	44%	0%	87%	13%
Araullo	48%	21%	31%	32%	58%	11%
Mapa	24%	68%	8%	42%	47%	11%
Mean Percentage	**24%**	**47%**	**31%**	**26%**	**61%**	**22%**

Data in Table 2 shows the speed and comprehension level of students. Table 2 shows that students' average reading level is less than half that of the majority. While a minimal difference is observed for the fast readers (31%) and slow readers (24%).

Speed reading sometimes becomes an issue when comprehension is at stake. Wallot et al. (2014) draw a distinction between reading speed and comprehension. They accentuated, "Reading speed is not a consistent predictor of text comprehension, when speed and comprehension are measured at the same time within the same reader" (p.1745).

The article above supports the idea that speed is not the sole measure of reading skill, especially when there are different purposes for reading. Nonetheless, it must also be considered that slow reading among students is primarily due to difficulty with word recognition, which sometimes leads to poor comprehension.

Regarding comprehension, 61% of participants are at the instructional level. The significant results in comprehension indicate that Filipino high school students are not far behind in comprehension. Burkins and Croft (2010) supported the results, highlighting that both "reading speed and comprehension should be seen as the result of the reading process and that the process of fluent text can instead be described by complexity metrics that quantify aspects of the stability of the reading process" (p. 36).

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The article above supports the idea that speed is not the measuring stick for the skill of reading as a whole, especially when different purposes for reading are the issue. Nonetheless, it must also be noted that slow reading among students is primarily due to difficulty with word recognition, which can lead to poor comprehension.

How does the Phil-IRI reading test relate to the results of the Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI)?

Table 3 Means and Standard Deviation of the Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Schools	Paez	Osmena	Laurel	Mapa	Magsaysay	Araullo	**Mean**	**SD**
Global reading Strategies	3.65	3.53	3.76	3.46	3.63	3.01	**3.51**	**0.26**
Problem- solving Strategies	4.01	3.81	3.89	3.87	3.59	3.51	**3.78**	**0.19**
Support Reading Strategy	3.68	3.36	3.75	3.65	3.21	3.17	**3.47**	**0.25**

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviation of Grade 8 level students who took the Phil-IRI test and who also answered the Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI). It is very evident that in terms of problem-solving strategy the students got a 3.78 mean while in global reading strategies they got 3.51 mean and 3.47 when it comes to support reading strategy.

The result of the means gives a positive impression that students' often use the reading strategies stated in MARSI. MARSI, gives a key average of 3.5 or higher equates positive results. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) foregrounded that the interpretation of information schemes ranges from 1 to 5 while only three level of usage were identified: high (mean of 3.5 or higher), medium (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (2.4 or lower). The overall score averages indicate how often students use all the strategies in the inventory when reading academic materials.

The results of the data are not conclusive and do not give a general view that the majority of the students in the public school, or even in Manila, apply and use the metacognitive reading strategies as Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) explain it: "The MARSI is not intended to be used as a comprehensive measure of students' comprehension monitoring capabilities. Rather, it is designed as a tool for helping students increase metacognitive awareness and strategy use while reading" (p.255).

Further, from Table 3, it can be seen that the standard deviations for global reading strategies (.26), problem-solving strategies (.19), and support reading strategy (.25) are very low and far from the means. It therefore appears that the spread of data is small.

Is there a significant relationship between the results of the Phil-IRI reading test and MARSI?

Table 4 Relationship between Phil-IRI Reading Results and MARSI

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Pearson	Significance
Phil-IRI	5551	33.91	10.01	.853	P=0.000<0.01 Very significant
MARSI	229	3.59	4.92	.120	P=0.000<0.01 Very significant

Table 4 presents the results of the Phil-IRI reading test and MARSI. Interestingly, the data reveal a highly significant relationship between the Phil-IRI reading test results and the MARSI, as indicated by the p-value.

Further, the obtained Pearson r values of .853 for the Phil-IRI and .120 for the MARSI manifest a very significant relationship. Simply put, students who perform well on the Phil-IRI are likely to be highly motivated to use metacognitive strategies when reading academic materials.

The results shown in Table 4 are consistent with the study by Awe (2014), conducted in Nigeria, which focused mainly on the relationship between reading attitudes and the reading comprehension performance of secondary school students. His findings revealed "there is a very high, significantly positive relationship between reading attitudes and reading comprehension performance" (p.203). He concluded this after calculating the r-value of his study (.836), which is greater than the critical value of .062 at the .05 level. Awe (2014) posited that students need to be equipped with a rich vocabulary "which engenders good performance in reading comprehension tasks" (p. 204). According to Awe (2014), reading scholars have established that learners who struggle with comprehension are likely to develop a dislike for books, which could prevent them from practicing reading adequately.

Limitations of the Study

Since the study is actually based on empirical investigation, the researcher hopes to make this research project an action research of the Schools Division Office of Manila under the Bureau of Education Research Fund (BERF). Hence, any suggestions for improving this endeavor will be humbly accepted and appreciated.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study investigated the reading motivation of Filipino ESL high school students in the Division of Manila and how this motivation relates to their reading performance results. Using the two research instruments, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI), the study attempts to show the real scenario of what is actually the reading level of our Filipino ESL learners in the Junior High School level, particularly in Grade 8 who took the Phil-IRI test when they were in Grade 7.

As motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition and development, the present study aims to equip Filipino ESL learners with the knowledge and skills to meet the growing demands of English as *the lingua franca* of the world and the most salient tool for language communication in the country and the international community. This could be properly addressed if the reading needs of Filipino learners are given utmost attention and intervention.

There are three significant points that the present study establishes. First, Filipino ESL learners in public high schools are at the instructional reading level and are potential catalysts for the country's development if given proper attention and more opportunities to develop themselves. They are those who are eager to profit and enthusiastic to learn from instructions. Second point to consider is that, as language is dynamic, the level of reading skills of Filipino ESL learners is changing. One must not forget that as a language teacher, the specifications given to students are merely numbers and labels of semantics, which are not stationary. Beyond numbers and labels, what is most important are the learners themselves. The reason there are teachers is simply because there are learners who will always be endlessly in line. Simply put, teachers should be the primary means of motivation. A teacher creates a ripple effect of motivation and enthusiasm for her learners. If there are instruments to gauge students' learning and, in fact, they are significant, one must remember that the centrality of learning should still be with the learners.

The most significant concern of this study is that the task of helping our learners form the habit should come foremost from family and community, as partners in learning and for learning. Since the results have shown that a very significant relationship exists between the reading test and students' motivation, it is clear that the true cause of students' poor performance in achievement exams is a lack of motivation from the family and the community.

The findings presented in this paper open the door to further research. Action research for new programs anchored on the *"Every Child a Reader"* program of the Department of Education could be the second research point. Another interesting point of study is the replication of the study involving teachers and parents.

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