

# Silent and oral reading methods on improving English reading comprehension among generation alpha pupils

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**Abstract:** Reading comprehension enables each child to make meaning of the world. Therefore, it is important to develop this during the child's primary years in school. Using ex post facto design, this study investigated the effects of reading methods on English reading comprehension of randomly selected 75 Grade 2 pupils in a private school in the Philippines. The scores of pupils who read two comparable narrative passages in oral and silent were compared. Paired t-test results revealed a significant difference between oral reading and silent reading. Silent reading had a greater positive effect on the comprehension of the pupils. Likewise, it was the most preferred reading method among the respondents. Focus group discussion with English teachers results suggested that silent reading was preferred specifically because it helps in understanding the story better, remembering words, and concentrating given its quiet and peaceful nature. It is recommended that teachers employ sustained silent reading classroom practices such as: Silent Reading Activity (SRA) Reading Laboratory, Genuine Love for Reading activities through the Four-pronged approach and Drop Everything and Read time. These methods will help to support the reading needs and preference of the generation alpha pupils and to further strengthen the positive effects of silent reading on improving their reading comprehension.

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## Introduction

Reading comprehension is an important part of learning since it adds meaning to what is reading. It is the ultimate goal in all aspects of reading development (Trainin et al., 2015). Reading comprehension is the manner by which a reader makes meaning from text. Rather than trying to interpret words or phrases on their own, it seeks to fully comprehend the text's content (Klingner et al., 2015). Reading comprehension is affected by different factors, such as the reader's (a) prior knowledge, (b) working memory, and (c) language processes-basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to the form of the text, inferencing, and motivation (Barth et al., 2016; Kendeou et al., 2014; Nation, 2019; Sanford, 2015; Syahfutra, 2017; Zorella, 2017). It also involves strategic processes, such as: metacognition and comprehension monitoring (Nobles & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2020). According to Miller (2023), once teachers are aware of the components of comprehension and the ways in which reader, text, and context interact to produce meaning, they will be better able to instruct students in comprehending. With this, developing reading comprehension during the primary years is essential to make the pupils better understand the world and make meaning of the things around them. Accordingly, reading comprehension is one of the foundations which leads to career and academic success (Antilla, 2013; Brown, 2014; Leahy & Fitzpatrick, 2017). It should be considered as the top priority of curriculum developers and educators, especially from kinder to third grade. Children who fail to develop reading comprehension during their primary years are most likely to encounter difficulties throughout their school years and will continue until adulthood (Brown, 2017; Moats, 2001; Mol & Bus, 2011). First grade pupils who have reading difficulties will have a 90 per cent probability of having academic difficulties when they are already in fourth grade, and third grade pupils

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who have reading difficulties have only 25 per cent probability of being able to catch up with their lessons when they are already in high school (Moats, 2001). However, children can overcome their reading difficulties if they receive appropriate treatment at early ages (Garner et al., 2013, Spear-Swerling, 2016).

The need to solve this ongoing issue with reading comprehension is emphasized by the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd, 2019), particularly in light of the nation's low 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranking. The PISA is a student assessment of 15-year-old learners across 79 countries done by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as part of the Quality Basic Education reform plan and a step towards globalizing the quality of Philippine basic education (DepEd, 2019). Based on the 2022 PISA results, Filipino students obtained an average score of 347 points in overall reading literacy, which was significantly lower than the OECD average of 487 points. The Filipino students were five to six years behind in reading compared to their 15-year-old counterparts from most of the participating countries (Bautista, 2023). The PISA results also reflect the learners' below average performance in the National Achievement Test in the area of reading comprehension (DepEd, 2019). The finding that is indeed reflected in the case of Generation Alpha pupils in one of the private schools in the Philippines.

Generation Alpha kids were born from the year 2010 to 2025 and are children of millennials (Carter, 2016). They are the first generation entirely born within the 21st century. They are also known as the iGeneration, generation connected or dot-com kids, and they use smartphones and tablets naturally. These children were born along with smartphones, tablets, fast broadband, applications, and all things touch screen. They learn and gain knowledge by doing things (Jha, 2020). The Australian futurist Mark McCrindle, who originally used the term "Generation Alpha" in 2008, predicts that this generation will be the most diverse ever (McCrindle, 2016). According to a research study by National Coalition on School Diversity, students in diverse learning environments are exposed to more complex conversation than students in more homogenous environments, which aids in the development of critical thinking (Ayscue et al., 2017). Another definition for Generation Alpha is that they will have the oldest parents of any generation as well as being the iPads as their first babysitters (McCrindle, 2016).

Because of their reliance on a touch-screen device, their reading and verbal communication appear to be problematic (Taylor & Hattingh, 2019). This is particularly true to the case of Generation Alpha pupils in a private school in the Philippines. These pupils were found to be struggling in reading, especially comprehending the text that they read. This is manifested in their formative assessments, summative assessments, and the Scientific Research Associates (SRA) Reading Laboratory kit, specifically when they read and are asked to follow the directions. There is a disconnect between the directions and the answers which is a clear indicator that there is lack of comprehension. Through SRA Reading Laboratory Kit, which is a reading comprehension program placement test, most Generation Alpha pupils were found to have a first-grade level reading comprehension and some with primer and pre-primer levels of reading comprehension performance. They are able to listen to and to read the text, but they have difficulties making meaning of it. With these, grade-school teachers are given the challenge to seek ways on how to develop and improve the pupils' reading comprehension skills. As teachers help young readers develop their comprehension skills, there is a higher probability for them to take a step ahead from the stage of learning to read to the stage of reading to learn.

There are different reading methods that can aid in reading comprehension of pupils, namely: oral reading aloud and silent reading. The first reading method is oral reading. According to Jacobs (2016), reading aloud is a form of communication between a well-equipped reader and a set of audience. It is the act of reading out loud any written text which mostly happens in situations such as: reading a report, reporting the minutes of a meeting, reading instructions, and reading something from a newspaper (Ninsuwan, 2015). It requires the reader to read in a slow pace, read the words in proper order, read without repetition, and read with the correct pronunciation of words (Jacobs, 2016). Furthermore, reading aloud has been found to have an association with literacy ability, especially to children. It helps them in: (a) letter recognition, (b) print and sound correspondence, (c) proper way of reading, (d) learning print concepts, (e)

written language registry, (f) structure of stories, and (g) syntax and grammar, which can aid them to succeed in reading (Batini et al., 2018). Wright (2019) emphasized that reading aloud is more than just saying words; it is the spoken words from written texts that give power and help the audience to connect what is in the written text to their own lives. Therefore, oral reading is a way of making sense and making meaning of what a person is reading (Goodman et al., 2016).

The second reading method is silent reading. Billah (2015) defined silent reading as a form of recreational or independent reading while the reader is in a relaxed mood. It is believed to improve an individual's understanding because it promotes deep concentration of reading a written text. It focuses more on the content of the text which they can apply in real life (Billah, 2015). To promote silent reading and make use of it in the classroom, SSR stands for Sustained Silent Reading and known as Self-Selected Reading (SSR) has been implemented. It is a school-based reading program where pupils voluntarily read silently within a given period. It assumes that pupils learn to read by reading constantly without requiring them to do so and help them develop a genuine love for reading (Ascencio, 2018; Nuha, 2019; Stone, 2013).

Teachers are concerned about which reading strategies could have a major impact on the reading comprehension of this generation of students in light of the research on reading techniques., and how can English teachers apply this technique to enhance their students' reading comprehension? These are the queries that our investigation sought to answer.

Generally, this study aimed to analyse the effects of reading methods on reading comprehension of Generation Alpha pupils. It specifically: (i) described the Generation Alpha pupils' attitude towards reading; (ii) analysed the difference in the pupils' reading comprehension scores between the oral and silent reading methods; (iii) discussed the reading method preference of the pupils; (iv) examined the challenges faced by Grade 2 school teachers in teaching reading and reading comprehension in English; and (v) recommended methods to improve reading comprehension of this generational group of pupils.

## Method

### Research Design

The study employed a classroom-based, causal-comparative design to analyse the effects of different reading methods on the reading comprehension of Generation Alpha pupils. A causal-comparative design, also known as *ex post facto* research, is a research design that seeks to find relationships between independent and dependent variables after an action or event has occurred (Salkind, 2010).

### Research Participants

Seventy-five (i.e., 38 girls and 37 boys) pupils from one of the private schools in the Philippines were chosen at random to participate in the study as respondents. The school was purposefully selected since reading is one of the main focus of its curriculum and is measured and strengthened through SRA Reading Laboratory, a reading program which employs a step-by-step procedure in developing one's reading comprehension. This is an independent work by the pupils (silent reading) and done once a week as part of the classroom routine. Aside from SRA Reading Laboratory, it also has Genuine Love for Reading (GLR), a form of teaching done when teacher does a story read aloud to the pupils and have them do small group activities that test their comprehension of the story.

The respondents represented 81 per cent of the total Grade 2 pupil population enrolled in the private school for the school year 2018-2019. The sample size was determined using the Sample Size Calculator of qualtrics.com using 96 per cent confidence level and five per cent margin of error. The pupils were chosen randomly through draw lots of 75 number codes out of 96 number codes written on a sheet of paper. This was done after administering the reading comprehension tests to all Grade 2 pupils. The papers of the randomly selected pupils were the ones used for data analysis.

This group of Grade 2 pupils has an average age of seven to eight years of age. They were born between 2010 and 2011. They are Generation Alpha who belong to iGeneration, the first-ever group of

learners who grow up surrounded by technology (Jha, 2020). This generational group of Grade 2 pupils have a four-period reading class each week as part of the English curriculum of the school. They are exposed to different reading comprehension exercises such as: Genuine Love for Reading, a storytelling aloud practices with small group activities which address and seek to improve reading comprehension and SRA Reading Laboratory kit which addresses the reading comprehension needs of the students based on their reading capabilities. They also use English as their first language and use it in reading written texts and in oral communication.

In addition to pupils, the study also included four English teachers (i.e., two male and two female) who participated in the focus group discussion. The first teacher is a graduate of nursing and a licensed teacher teaching for almost 10 years. The second teacher is an teaching graduate major in English and a licensed teacher teaching for almost 10 years. The third teacher is a Mathematics and Science Teaching graduate and a licensed teacher teaching for three years. And lastly, the fourth teacher is a teaching graduate major in English and a licensed teacher teaching for three years.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For the recruitment of respondents, the researcher wrote a formal letter to seek permission to conduct the study. The researcher requested permission from the school to access the official list of the pupils. Verbal assent from the pupils and consent from the parents and teachers were requested. The consent form provided the description of the nature, purpose, form of participation of the child, risks (if there is any), benefits of the study, and privacy protection and confidentiality was also discussed with the participants. It was sent to the parents of each participant two weeks prior to the conduct of the study.

Consent forms were collected from the reading teachers a week after release. The majority of the parents gave their consent, while a few did not due to privacy concerns and special reasons such as their child's learning ability and behavioral concerns. With this, only the participants who gave informed consent were the ones included in the study.

### **Instruments**

The different two reading methods studied were silent and oral reading. Reading comprehension was determined from the pupils' scores on two reading comprehension tests taken from the two reading passages which were selected from Qualitative Reading Analysis 4.

The Grade 2 pupils read each passage using one of the two reading methods. They read passage one first, "Mouse in a House", which was followed by passage two, "Marva Finds a Friend". Passage one was read aloud, while passage two was read silently. This minimized the effect of passage difficulty or passage reading in order to measure the reading comprehension of the pupils.

After reading the two passages and answering the reading tests for the passages read, the pupils were asked to complete a feedback form about their preferred reading method between the two and the reason behind their choice.

A focus group discussion (FGD) with eight Grade 2 pupils was also done to let the pupils share their experience during the reading activity and to also share their thoughts about the reading methods used. It further supported the results from the feedback forms which they also answered. Another FGD with the English teachers was also conducted to ask for their personal experiences and the challenges they faced in teaching reading, the profiles of the pupils in terms of their general behaviour and attitude towards reading as well as their performance in reading comprehension activities in the class.

### ***Selection of Passages***

Two passages were selected from Level One narrative section of Qualitative Reading Inventory-4, fourth edition of Leslie and Caldwell (2006). It was piloted with approximately 1000 students and has a technical manual in its Section 16 that addresses alternate-form reliability, inter-scorer reliability, reliability of diagnostic judgments, concurrent validity, construct validity and classification validity (Leslie &

Caldwell, 2006). It focuses on assessment of specific questions regarding word identification, fluency, and comprehension which are made for Grade 1 and Grade 2 readers. Narrative passages were chosen since Grade 2 pupils are encouraged to develop a genuine love for reading through reading short stories. Each was followed by a reading comprehension test consisting of similarly formatted five-item multiple choice comprehension test, five-item sequencing of events list, and two-item short response tests that were valued at two points each for inferential and evaluative comprehension.

Passage one, *Mouse in a House*, contains 254 words and tells a story about a mouse who lives in a house owned by an old man. The second passage, *Marva Finds a Friend*, contains 264 words and tells a story about a lost cat who was found by a young girl.

### ***Feedback Form***

The feedback form was a sheet of paper given to each pupil after completing the two reading tests. It has four questions that asked the pupils to write down whether the reading method they used helped them in their comprehension, to rank the two reading methods based on which reading method they prefer and find helpful, and to explain briefly the reason for their choice. The feedback form helped to understand the effects of the reading methods, to determine the reading method preferred by the pupils, and to determine which reading method was found useful by the pupils in understanding a given text. Below are the four questions that were asked in the feedback form:

1. Did oral reading help you better understand the story, *Mouse in a House*? Yes or No
2. Did silent reading help you better understand the story, *Marva Finds a Friend*? Yes or No
3. Which reading method helped you better understand the stories? Rank the two reading methods used with 1 being the most helpful to you and 2 being the least helpful. \_\_\_\_ Oral Reading  
\_\_\_\_ Silent Reading
4. Explain your answer in number 3. Why do you think your chosen no. 1 is the most helpful to you in understanding the story?

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected consist of the comprehension scores of the students which were taken from the reading comprehension tests designed for each of the two reading passages, from the feedback forms, from the FGD of both the pupils and the teachers. A paired t-test was used to test the differences in the pupils' reading comprehension between the reading methods. The mean score for each reading method was used to test the differences in the pupils' reading comprehension. To ascertain which approach the students preferred, the percentages of their answers on the feedback form were also computed. The reasons behind their preference for the reading method they had selected were cited using a descriptive analysis. Focus group notes from students and interview notes from teacher interviews were analyzed using a qualitative method known as thematic analysis.

## **Findings**

### **Generation Alpha Pupils' Attitude towards Reading**

Results of the FGD conducted with the English teachers provided the following five themes to describe the Grade 2 pupils in terms of their attitude towards reading:

#### ***Excitement, curiosity, and impatience towards reading***

Teachers agreed that pupils show curiosity and excitement when presented with something new. They scream and shout out of joy that they will learn a new thing. On a positive note, this excitement and curiosity allow the pupils to explore and discover.

#### ***Love to read, but struggle in comprehension***

Reading, simply reading, is not a major problem for most of the Grade 2 pupils. Teachers agreed

with this. However, they observed that pupils do know how to read words, sentences, and even short stories, but find it difficult to make meaning out of the text they read. They are known to be “word callers” who can read whole words yet struggle with comprehension skills. When asked to analyse and discuss about the text, they have trouble to explain, thus leading to poor performance in reading comprehension exercises. Reading comprehension can be categorized into three areas: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension. Literal comprehension is the one found by the Grade 2 pupils to be the easiest among the three. It is the lowest among the comprehension skills. Pupils are tasked to note details and sequence events which is considered a lower level of comprehension. When it comes to the other two areas, the pupils find it difficult to meet the expectations. Moreover, teachers observed that they do better in literal comprehension in English than in Filipino or vernacular because the Filipino language is not their mother tongue.

#### *Love listening to stories, rather than reading the story by themselves*

Teachers agreed that the majority of the pupils like listening to stories, rather than reading the stories on their own. They show interest on how the teacher animates the story through facial expressions and change of tone of voice while reading. When stories are read aloud to them, it was observed that they were able to retain information about the story and get high scores on the reading test given after story reading. However, when asked to read on their own, they easily get distracted, and they tend to be always in a hurry leading to poor comprehension of the story read. Aside from distraction and rush, one factor that affects the pupils’ independent reading was their own reading skill. They still find difficulty in reading some words; thus, they lose confidence, or if not, they do not fully understand the story. Furthermore, some pupils tend to just skim the text and just look for answers which leads to missing the whole sense and purpose of the text. This is the importance of listening that teachers must take into account given that listening is the first language skills that children develop and is the most commonly used form of communication (Alkaaf & Al-Bulushi, 2017).

To further describe the profile of the pupils, the following themes identified the pupils’ attitude towards reading:

#### *Love to read*

It is apparent that the pupils like reading. They believe that reading is a key to gaining more knowledge which will make them smarter. It was also mentioned that reading allow them to be aware of what is happening around them. They also find reading as a fun activity to do and a way to make themselves feel good.

Moreover, pupils are fond of reading interactive books and chapter books that tackle their varied interests, such as: school life as shown in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinne, fairytale books, and history books. In fact, this generation of pupils being ‘digital natives’ are the most materially endowed and technological-infused demographic up to date (McCrinkle, 2016). They also find these books to be somehow touching their feelings and emotions. This helps them as Generation Alphas are super direct and confident about expressing themselves and their opinion (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2022).

#### *Thought of answering reading comprehension exercises is scary*

Most of the pupils verbalized that answering tests after reading a story is scary. This is due to their fear of getting a bad grade. They are anxious that they may get a wrong answer. They are not confident enough that they will do well. Much of this anxiety undoubtedly comes from their millennial parents who strive for perfection (Breckenridge, 2021).

This is supported by Guzman (2013) who found varying attitudes towards reading among grade school pupils. The pupils showed slightly positive feeling towards reading, but also had negative opinions toward it. They like reading and feel happy when they do it but consider the activity a form of work than fun which makes them behave negatively toward academic reading. They view it as an activity of those pupils who just want to get good grades.

The result of the FGD supports the premise of the study that pupils can read words and stories and have a positive attitude towards reading, but they do struggle in comprehension which was further verified by their SRA placement test results. Most of them were placed in the pre-primer and primer level characterized by picture to word recognition, while the remaining ones were in First Grade reading comprehension level characterized by simple and short comprehension texts focusing mainly on vocabulary building and literal comprehension. Furthermore, their performance in reading comprehension exercises can also be attributed to their general observable behaviour of impatience and lack of interest in doing independent reading.

### *Effects of reading methods on pupils' reading comprehension*

Results of paired t-test revealed significant differences in the pupils' performance in reading comprehension between silent reading and oral reading methods (Table 1). In particular, pupils performed better when they read silently (10.51 +/- 2.04) as opposed to when they read out loud (9.71 +/- 2.41). A statistically significant increase of 0.80 (95 per cent CI, 1.37 to 2.97 points indicates that silent reading helped pupils better understand reading passages. The t-statistic was 2.71, with  $df=74$  ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 1.** Pupils' reading comprehension differences between silent reading and oral reading

	Silent Reading	Oral Reading
Mean	10.5	9.71
Variance	4.17	5.83
Observations	75	75
Pearson Correlation	0.35	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	74	
t Stat	2.71	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.66	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00	
t Critical two-tail	1.99	

### *Reading method preference among Generation Alpha pupils*

The following discussions were based on the data obtained from the feedback forms. The results were presented according to each preferred reading method. Result showed that most of the pupils preferred silent reading. Fifty-six pupils or 75 per cent of them responded that they preferred silent reading because it helps them understand the story better, remember words, and avoid distracting other readers. They also perceived silent reading as a quiet and peaceful way to read. This shows that pupils prefer a quiet environment whenever they read. This generation of learners love open-book environment as they are connected to a borderless world, they are really consumers of information. Other cited reasons include: (i) silent reading helps in keeping their focus and concentration; (ii) an aid to read a given text faster; (iii) to understand the text and words easier; and (iv) to read properly. While reading better, hearing oneself when reading, not getting confused, correcting mistakes through repetition, not getting shy, not getting disturbed, and not making much noise were less cited reasons why pupils prefer silent reading.

The pupils agreed that silent reading works well for them. They prefer such reading method for a variety of reasons. First, they like it, because they do not need to talk, and they do not have to shout. Second, they like silence when they read because it makes them concentrate more and it does not lead them to confusion. Third, they get to be more focused on the words that they are reading. And lastly, they are able to read faster when they read silently. All these reasons contribute to better understanding the story compared to when they read out loud.

On the other hand, most of them agreed that they get lost in words or miss some words whenever they read aloud, thus leading to poor comprehension. Elaborating on the pupils' reading method preference, most pupils agreed that silent reading was the most preferred reading method with oral reading as the second. This result shows that most pupils believe that silent reading is an effective method for understanding the reading passages. Likewise, silent reading also aids in increased listening, word

recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. It is also observed as similarly effective as guided repeated oral reading in developing fluency and comprehension (Gray, 2012). Schimmel and Ness (2017) also found in their study involving fourth graders that silent reading has a strong impact in retell measures specifically for narrative passages which support the claim of the pupils that this reading method helps them remember the words from the text they read. Contrariwise, only 19 pupils or 25 per cent of the Grade 2 pupils preferred oral reading because it serves as an aid for them to hear and listen to and further understand the story.

### ***Challenges faced by English teachers in teaching reading and reading comprehension***

The Grade 2 teachers have identified a variety of challenges that they encounter when teaching reading. One of which is the comparison on how they learned how to read and comprehend when they were still young and the way that pupils are learning today. The difference in approach due to changing times has been identified as a challenge since teachers expect that their pupils will learn in the same way that they learned during their time. Due to this, frustrations that hinder learning arise. According to Lee and Schallert (2016), teaching has changed significantly through the years. Schools today are far different from the schools in the past. The changes had effects on opportunities and challenges in teaching, likewise on the attitude, knowledge and sets of skills to be taught and developed. It had a great effect on what teachers at present should do taking into consideration the generation of learners today and the new trends in education, such as: increase in diversity of learners, increase in instructional technology, greater accountability in education, and increased professionalism of teachers.

The second challenge is teaching the children “syntax” which is defined as the arrangement of words or phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language or simply a set of rules followed within a certain language. Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) found in their study involving English as Foreign Language (EFL) students that both teachers and students encounter difficulties in teaching and learning syntax or grammar, with students experiencing the greater difficulty. Perceived difficulties are explicit grammar teaching, transfer of declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge, use of grammatical terminology, error correction, problem-solving activities, use of authentic texts for grammar instruction, and use of spoken and written communication activities.

The third challenge is the difference in terms of age among the pupils in the grade level. Some are too young, and some are just on level which makes it difficult to address the age- appropriateness of the materials being used in teaching reading. This also relates to the developmental stages that each child undergoes as s/he grows up and each differs based on his or her age. Children do not learn at the same pace and same way, some are fast, and some are slow, some are independent, some need guidance as how naturalists view learning and learners who have their own timetable for learning (Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2020).

Lastly, the varied preferences of the pupils. Some like to watch, some like to play, and some like to read. Therefore, those who like reading are the ones easier to teach, while those who are not become very challenging because of their lack of interest. Moreover, they only read what they like and lose interest on those that are required. Thus, this limits them to learn more reading and reading comprehension skills (Bećirović et al., 2018).

### ***Methods on improving reading comprehension: suggested sustained silent reading programs***

Based on the results of the study, different teaching methods involving silent reading were hereby suggested to improve reading comprehension:

*SRA Reading Laboratory.* This is a sustained silent reading activity. This can help the pupils improve their comprehension through the different power builders fit for the reading level of each pupil. Through this, pupils are trained to develop the habit of reading independently, answer comprehension questions on their own, and check their own answers and find out where mistakes are made which can help them to evaluate their own performance. SRA Reading Laboratory enables pupils to employ different reading comprehension strategies such as: surveying, using context clues, questioning and reading, and using background knowledge which develop reading proficiency (Nabor & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2022).



*Genuine Love for Reading (GLR) through the 4-pronged Approach.* This approach can be done in a more consistent manner through a week-long encounter. A short story integrated to various lessons in different subjects will be introduced during the start of a unit for a grammar lesson and will read aloud. This will allow pupils to read the story properly because of the pattern of reading observed from the teacher. After which, the pupils will be tasked to do silent reading of the same story and will be asked to answer literal comprehension questions which mainly consist of the story elements and sequencing, both comprehension skills. In another session, pupils will take on different activities to develop their inferential and evaluative comprehension. GLR is a good way to develop vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills (Palasan, 2018).

*Drop Everything and Read Time.* This is a sustained silent reading activity in which pupils are encouraged to bring their favourite book. Studies show that reading preference has a great impact on improving one's reading ability (Bouchamma et al., 2013; Nurhalimah, 2018; Safitri, 2020). To have a deeper experience, the pupils can share to class their learnings from the reading material they read. They can also make up their own comprehension questions that their classmates can answer. In this activity, pupils with different reading abilities can be catered and can freely read on their own without judgment. It encourages pupils to do independent reading and to reflect on what they have read.

To further strengthen the time used in this activity, Serravallo (2017) suggested some activities that can address the issue of student engagement and motivation during DEAR time. First, a whole-class or small group lessons that offer strategies for focus and attention. And second, book talks to recommend and make the pupils interested to seek more authors or genres which can be integrated to the classroom activities. Integration of stories in daily life, be it at home or in school can be done using silent reading techniques. Through this, pupils will get more exposed to different forms of text, make connections, and make meaning of the text and make meaning of the world around them.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

For Alpha children, knowledge is acquired by doing and experiencing (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2022). These enable them to seek for materials that would help them learn reading skills, especially if the ones presented to them are their favourites or interests. They do not stop until their needs are fulfilled. However, these immediately go away and are replaced by impatience. Due to their high emotions, they tend to seek for the ending and lose interest in experiencing the process from beginning until the end. When reading content is offered, they expect an immediate result because they seek instant gratification. Thus, the purpose of the material is defeated and just turns into waste. Objectives are not fully met leading to non-mastery of the material or the skill which teachers want them to have. These characteristics may be attributed to their age level and their generation. This is particularly true to the Generation Alpha as they have grown up with iPads in hand and never live without a smartphone and the ability to transfer a thought online in seconds (McCrindle, 2016). They are considered to be the most transformative generation ever (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017). And with this, they are known to be the generation who likes outcomes to be as fast as the blink of an eye, because they grew up in a fast-paced world reinforced by gadgets, media, and internet, also known as the digital natives (McCrindle, 2016). Although they absorb tons of new information every day, i-generation struggle with content-area reading for many reasons such as the challenges of vocabulary, density of information, concepts, unfamiliar structures among others (Akhavan, 2014).

According to Tovani (2023), reading a text is both an interactive and complex process which involves decoding, word recognition, encoding, and information retrieval. True competent readers can attune themselves to a variety of sources of information to make meaning out of the text they read which is the most important among all the reading skills. These readers are able to bring out a reader's rudder which is a metacognitive component of reading comprehension characterized by the reader's ability to assess how well he/she reads. Oftentimes, pupils lack reader's rudder because teachers misalign reading assessments to comprehension skills being assessed.

Pupils may know how to read, but in order to achieve comprehension, they must develop the

following: text structure understanding, vocabulary comprehension, use of prior knowledge, and ability to focus on comprehension (Moore, 2014; Sanford, 2015; Syahfutra, 2017) rather than decoding, and the value placed on completing the task. In terms of the methods, silent reading had the greater positive effect on the comprehension performance between the two reading methods used (Ali, 2012; Bacus et al., 2015; Suk, 2017). As found in literature, students exposed to silent reading techniques and who often do sustain silent reading are able to improve their vocabulary and fluency, therefore improving comprehension. Moreover, they are able to recall properly which also reinforces comprehension (Noland, 2014).

These results support the study of Fraumeni-McBride (2017) who found that students had higher comprehension levels both when they could choose their own books and when they read silently. Silent reading was found effective in increasing students' reading attitudes and other areas of students' reading achievement (Cho, 2017; Nabor & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2022). This study indicates that silent reading helps the pupil's reading comprehension by enabling the pupil's ability to concentrate and make meaning of the words that they read.

Despite some studies conducted that showed the significant positive effects of reading aloud on the reading comprehension of elementary stage students (Al-Mansour, 2011), this study showed that silent reading can also be a good method to improve the pupils' reading comprehension. Silent reading which is often considered as a form of school-based recreational reading and a tool where students learn to read by reading silently, was more often cited by the pupils in this study as a way to understand the story better not only read better and as a tool to remember words, furthermore, to show respect to other readers.

Moreover, sustained silent reading (SSR) can propel pupils to read because it was found to have a positive influence on pupils' reading involvement by increasing it and it makes pupils place a high value on the importance of reading (Bacus et al., 2015). This is supported by a study conducted by Krashen and Mason (2017) where students exhibited better reading comprehension and vocabulary growth and developed positive attitude towards reading after exposure to sustained silent reading programs. The positive effects are even more strengthened when students are allowed to choose their own reading materials (Bouchamma et al., 2013; Nurhalimah, 2018; Safitri, 2020).

Addressing the objectives of the study in sequence, it can be concluded that teaching reading and reading comprehension to Generation Alpha pupils is quite a challenging task due to a variety of factors affecting it. However, pupils showed fondness over reading and show enthusiasm towards learning new things through stories read-aloud to them and through stories they independently read. Though there is an observed fondness over reading, pupils were observed to be struggling in comprehension. They find it difficult to make meaning out of the texts they read.

Teachers can take from these results that despite the comprehension performance differences using the two reading methods, most pupils in fact find silent reading to be beneficial to them. Although such finding may be individually specific, there is now a bigger venue for teachers and curriculum developers to devise or create teaching strategies and methodologies using silent reading method that would address the reading and reading comprehension needs of the pupils. Additionally, pupils should use silent reading method when reading different kinds of texts in order to maximize its positive effects and improve their comprehension performance.

Truly, reading comprehension has been an essential skill that each pupil needs to achieve success in reading and have a better understanding of the world around him/her. It allows an individual to make meaning and make sense of each word in a text and make sense of what is happening. Therefore, at a very young age, it should be developed and improved and be given priority in each classroom. According to English teachers and educational institutions teaching reading comprehension to young children as early as primary school is one of the reading curriculum's main goals.

Reading comprehension success is achieved through practice supported and guided by methods and strategies aligned with the needs of the learners (Guieb & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2017; Lopez & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2022; Nobles & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2020). Using silent reading techniques may not directly affect

the pupils' reading comprehension skills, but the way it enhances focus and concentration may help pupils better understand the text they are reading and make meaning and connections out of it.

Strengthening silent reading classroom practices such as SRA Reading Laboratory, GLR, and Drop Everything and Read time (DEAR), likewise providing a variety of reading materials in the classroom where pupils can choose from should be done. Moreover, exposing children to stories at an early age and making reading materials available for them should be prioritized to support the development of each child's comprehension ability. A solid home-school collaboration is greatly needed to establish a firm reading foundation for all pupils given that teachers and parents are all reading teachers.

Furthermore, the study's conclusions might add to the body of knowledge already available on early childhood education, particularly in terms of suggesting strategies for improving primary pupils' reading comprehension. This necessitates ongoing assistance from educational leaders and legislators in regard to teacher preparation for creating and implementing innovative teaching strategies based on the interests and need of the learners.

This study focused on two reading methods only: reading aloud and silent reading and the effects of each to reading comprehension of Grade 2 pupils in a private school in the Philippines. It did not determine the specific effect of each method, rather it determined if there is a relationship between reading comprehension and each reading method. It is advised that future researchers carry out additional research on the methods and strategies to enhance basic education students' reading comprehension in light of the study's limitations. The efficacy of each reading method will be examined using bigger sample sets and additional statistical testing. Additionally, it is advised to look into the efficacy of the existing classroom practices like the GLR and SRA Reading Laboratory, which both employ sustained silent reading to reading comprehension. The future researchers should also look into the distinctions between reading comprehension and listening comprehension and how they affect pupils' comprehension abilities.

Given the diversity and the generation of children at present, there are a lot of strategies to explore and apply which will tailor fit the needs of the pupils. A teacher who is willing and who is devoted to making the pupils learn will most likely succeed to develop the reading and reading comprehension skills of his/her pupils. Teaching reading is a challenge, but with the proper alignment to learner context, needs, and appropriate teaching methods given the pupils' reading preference, success in reading comprehension can be achieved.

## Declarations

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