

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates the background of the study stating the reasons and the importance of doing this research, statement of the problem, scope of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, benefits of the study for those who may concern, the definitions of terms, and the thesis overview.

1.1 Background of the Study

To be able to show good fluency and comprehension on reading, a child should have a strong phonological awareness as part of the listening skills which should be gained in his or her early childhood. Linse (2005, 25) described that the first base to acquire a language is related to the listening skills since listening has an obvious correlation to the speaking skills in which children practice to imitate the sounds when they speak. Furthermore, listening is the base for reading instruction because children practice to relate the sounds with the matching symbols when they “decode” the messages. Children also practice to develop their reading comprehension skills in their native language as well as in their second language. Accordingly, it is important for children to acquire their listening skills especially their phonological awareness to prepare their reading comprehension.

Kindergarteners are expected to acquire phonological awareness which includes word awareness, syllable awareness, rhyme awareness, and phonemic awareness after they have adequate instruction, practice, and exposure to many

literacy activities (Trehearne 2003, 118). As they develop this phonological awareness entirely, phonemic awareness plays a crucial role as “a successful predictor” of reading success which enables them to grasp the alphabetic coding as the foundation of reading skills. By having phonemic awareness, children will be able to hear, segment, and manipulate sounds in speech which can be seen, for example, in their ability to say the first sound in the word *cat*, to recognize the other sounds and to blend them (Winch et al. 2008, 26-27). Thus, children need an effective strategy to facilitate them to acquire phonemic awareness which directs their reading skills.

Phonological awareness which leads to reading skills can be developed by having a shared reading strategy as a pleasurable activity for children. Shared reading facilitates children to have fun and provides many opportunities to become aware of different points, such as finding the first letter of their name in the text, observing particular apostrophe, and getting prepared to understand the reason (Houk 2005, 115). It is an enjoyable activity for children when they read and listen to a good story in order to get some information from the story itself (Linse 2005, 72). Furthermore, children at the ages of three to five learn best through the spoken language since they like to hear a story (Murray & Christison 2011, 74). Shared reading is a great and fun activity for children to facilitate their phonological awareness and reading comprehension.

As an enjoyable activity, shared reading can be a good choice to facilitate the students' phonemic awareness for the students in the Kindergarten of Saint John's Catholic School, which can be implemented during their English lessons. This school is a formal education program, with Saint John's Curriculum which adapts

and applies best practice curriculum including the Phonics Methods, Montessori Approach, and Learning Area. Children learn through play and they should be encouraged to have willingness to learn, to be critical and creative thinkers, and also to be independent individuals within the Christian values framework.

Considering how complicated it seems related to the curriculum that is applied in the school, it is beneficial for the teachers to know, understand and apply the strategy of shared reading to be able to develop the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills. Thus, some research is needed to illustrate how to apply the shared reading strategy as a pleasurable and motivational activity for the students in the Kindergarten of Saint John's Catholic School to facilitate their phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills.

This research describes the applications of the shared reading strategy to facilitate the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills in the Kindergarten of Saint John's Catholic School. It demonstrates how to apply this strategy in the classroom, how well and how it has affected the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Reading has become a basic requirement for kindergarteners entering the primary level. By having shared reading activities, the students are stimulated to develop their phonemic awareness. This awareness is reflected on their abilities to identify and manipulate some parts of the spoken language. In this case, phonemic awareness plays an important role to enable the students to blend sounds as the foundations to be able to read words and understand what they read as well

(Winch et al. 2008, 26).

The initial class observations gave a picture of how the English lesson conducted in the classroom. The lesson started by singing the ABC song as the students gathered and sat down in the middle of the class with the letter U arrangement while the teacher placed herself as the center of the attention. The teacher led the song and pointed to the flashcards on the wall. When the teacher presented the pictures about the letters they learnt, the students seemed to follow the lesson by listening to the teacher and keeping focused. When it came to the sound introduction, they played by themselves and talked with classmates. Some students who sat far from the teacher or the pictures, they could not see clearly the texts on the pictures when they were asked to identify the letters. Not all students responded to the teacher's questions. Thus, the students did not participate optimally during the lesson.

As the teacher applied the phonics method, the students had to recognize each letter and its sound. The teacher facilitated the students' phonemic awareness by introducing a letter and its sound then asked the students to mention any words with a letter or sound they learnt. In this case, the students tried to identify and produce each sound even when they did not know the meanings of the words they read. Through this method, the teacher also tried to facilitate the students' pre-reading skills by asking the students to observe the pictures in the book and encouraging them to name the pictures. However, students did not get the opportunity to explore many aspects of the books and to express their own views based on the perspectives they experienced in the book.

The phonics method applied could be a reason which caused the problem in the classroom. This methods emphasized the students to be able to identify letters and sounds directly without their contextual meanings since they learnt each single letter and sound and then blended them to form a word. The students might have got bored easily as they had a short attention span so that they tended to talk and play with their classmates next to them. Another reason could be the students' interests toward the learning activities. The monotonous activites might have brought boredom to the students. Moreover, they sometimes did not know what they read.

Furthermore, the initial observations have indicated that some students found some difficulties in identifying sounds and reading words. The reason of this failure was possibly because the students did not experience any language activities which supported and gave a chance for them to identify and manipulate some parts of the spoken language and to read words.

Therefore, a strategy to facilitate their phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills was needed. Shared reading could be applied and the researcher described the implementations of this strategy toward the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills as well as the factors which facilitated the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This research was conducted to examine how the shared reading strategy facilitated the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills as perceived by the teachers and students in the English lessons of the Kindergarten of Saint

John's Catholic School.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study and the observations that have been conducted, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

- 1) How can the shared reading strategy be implemented?
- 2) How can the shared reading strategy facilitate the students' phonemic awareness?
- 3) How can the shared reading strategy facilitate the students' pre-reading skills?
- 4) What factors have influenced the implementations of the shared reading strategy?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

There are several objectives of this research which can be portrayed as follows:

- 1) To describe the implementations of the shared reading strategy to facilitate the students' phonemic awareness.
- 2) To describe the implementations of the shared reading strategy to facilitate the students' pre-reading skills.
- 3) To investigate how the shared reading strategy facilitates the students' phonemic awareness.
- 4) To explore how the shared reading strategy facilitates the students' pre-reading skills.

- 5) To determine the factors which influence the implementations of the shared reading strategy toward the students.

1.6 Benefits of the Study

There are some benefits which can be obtained by doing this research:

- 1) For the researcher

The researcher had an experience to apply the shared reading strategy and to know the implementations of the shared reading strategy to facilitate the students' phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills. The researcher also knew some factors influencing the shared reading strategy which should be responded properly to support the students learning process.

- 2) For teachers and parents

Teachers and parents may apply this shared reading strategy to facilitate and guide their children's phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills.

- 3) For the students

The students experienced motivational and enjoyable activities which facilitated them to develop their phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills.

1.7 Thesis Overview

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One presents the background of the study, followed by statement of the problem and scope of the study. The research questions are formulated to meet the objectives of the study. Definitions of terms are discussed which continued by thesis overview.

Chapter Two contains the review of related literature concerning the phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills. It also describes how the shared reading strategy can be implemented to facilitate phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills, followed by relevant research results which support the implementations of the shared reading strategy. The conceptual framework is offered at the end of Chapter Two.

Chapter Three introduces the methodology in conducting the action research followed by the description of research setting and subjects. The procedure of conducting this study is presented in detail to illustrate the two cycles as the most important parts in this study. The next sub-section shows how to collect and analyze the data.

Chapter Four describes the implementations of the shared reading strategy and the changes in the class activities that have been conducted. It also illustrates how the shared reading strategy facilitates phonemic awareness and pre-reading skills continued by each change happened in Cycle One and Two. The last part of this section portrayed the factors influencing the implementations of the shared reading strategy.

Chapter Five shows conclusions drawn from the findings continued by the implications of the study. Some suggestions are offered for the school and teachers. It also discusses the limitations of the study and the last part presents suggestions for further study.