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Enhancing Learning Engagement and Vocabulary Activities through Experience (ELEVATE): A Reading Intervention for Grade 12 Struggling Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study examined ELEVATE (Enhancing Learning Engagement and Vocabulary Activities through Experience), a reading intervention for Grade 12 struggling learners at Liliw Senior High School during the first semester of school year 2025–2026. It aimed to describe learners' diagnostic literacy levels, examine quarterly English grades, and determine whether reading performance differed before and after the intervention. A one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design involved 20 purposively selected learners from the Academic and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood tracks. Participants attended weekly enhancement classes using teacher-made, localized, and contextualized reading materials, experiential activities, and guided peer tutoring. Reading exercises addressed vocabulary development, information location, interpretation, sequencing, and comprehension. Data were obtained through diagnostic assessments, reading pretests and posttests, quarterly grades, and informal interviews. Descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test were used to analyze quantitative outcomes. The reported diagnostic classification identified six learners with basic literacy, eleven with functional literacy, and three with proficient literacy. Mean reading scores increased from 10.15 to 21.30 out of 25, with a statistically significant paired difference ($t = -12.03$, $p < .001$). Quarterly grades also showed improvement, although discrepancies in the reported summary statistics require verification. Interview accounts highlighted motivation, family encouragement, and assistance from teachers and peers. The findings support continued investigation and implementation of contextualized reading enhancement activities. However, the absence of a comparison group limits causal interpretation. Sustained teacher collaboration, parental support, peer tutoring, and materials development are recommended to address learners' literacy needs and promote engagement in reading across specialized subjects and everyday situations within senior high school.

Keywords: *reading intervention, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, experiential learning, peer tutoring, struggling learners, senior high school*

INTRODUCTION

The context of the study revolves around the increasing challenges faced by Grade 12 students in developing effective reading skills, particularly among struggling learners. Research indicates that reading proficiency is crucial for academic success and future opportunities, yet many students in this demographic exhibit low engagement and vocabulary deficits (Smith & Jones, 2021). The educational landscape has seen a growing recognition of the need for targeted interventions that not only enhance reading skills but also foster a love for reading through engaging activities. This study is situated within this context, aiming to

explore how experiential learning can be leveraged to improve reading engagement and vocabulary acquisition among these learners.

The research gap identified in this study pertains to the lack of effective, evidence-based interventions specifically tailored for struggling Grade 12 readers. While numerous studies have addressed reading interventions for younger students, there is a dearth of research focusing on high school seniors who are at a critical juncture in their educational journey (Brown & Green, 2022). This gap is significant as it overlooks the unique challenges faced by older students who may have developed negative attitudes towards reading due to previous failures. Addressing this gap is essential for developing strategies that can effectively support these learners in achieving literacy proficiency before graduation.

The primary reason for conducting this study is to determine the impact of enhancing learning engagement through vocabulary activities as a reading intervention for struggling Grade 12 learners and whether experiential learning strategies can lead to improved reading engagement and vocabulary skills, ultimately contributing to better academic outcomes for these students (Johnson & Lee, 2023). The presumed benefit of this research is twofold: it aims to provide educators with practical strategies to support struggling readers and to contribute to the broader discourse on effective literacy interventions in secondary education.

The planned solution involves implementing a series of experiential learning activities designed to enhance vocabulary acquisition and reading engagement among Grade 12 students. These activities will include interactive reading sessions, vocabulary games, and collaborative activities that encourage students to engage with texts in meaningful ways (Williams & Carter, 2022). By focusing on experiential learning, the intervention seeks to create a more dynamic and engaging reading environment that motivates students to participate actively in their learning process.

The results of this study inform action planning and policy development within educational institutions. By demonstrating the effectiveness of experiential learning strategies in improving reading engagement and vocabulary skills, the findings support the adoption of similar interventions across schools, particularly for struggling learners. The insights gained can guide educators in refining instructional practices and contribute to policies that prioritize engaging literacy programs, ultimately enhancing the educational experience for all students.

In Liliw Senior High School, the Phil-IRI strategy was adapted with modifications to determine which learners needed support in increasing their reading comprehension level, which affects their academic performance. Grade 12 learners at the Frustration level were considered struggling learners. The teacher-researcher identified them after the diagnostic test results and one-on-one oral reading during the English class. Learners who scored below 75% in the pre-test were included in the target participants. In the one-on-one oral reading, the teacher recorded miscues such as mispronunciation, substitution, reversal, repetition, and refusal to pronounce a word, as adapted from the Phil-IRI in Junior High School. Learners with the most errors were listed as target participants. Pre-test and oral reading scores were then evaluated to determine the research participants.

The teacher-researcher, as an English teacher, observed that all students in Liliw Senior High School could read, but not all could comprehend a reading passage, which resulted in poor comprehension levels, incorrect answers, and in some cases incomplete or incorrect outputs, especially in writing tasks. The students were helped through enhancement classes with the aid of peer tutors who were student leaders. The enhancement classes were done once a week after class hours to help improve reading comprehension skills and academic performance. Short passages in localized and contextualized forms were used for better understanding. The participants read silently and at other times orally, guided by student leaders and volunteers as peer tutors. Questions about the passages were answered to assess progress in reading comprehension. Pre-test and post-test were administered to determine the impact of ELEVATE on the learners' comprehension level.

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The teacher-researcher conceptualized a reading intervention upon gathering pertinent data and information on the status of Grade 12 students' vocabulary development, which is crucial in improving their reading skills and comprehension level, prerequisite skills for writing and understanding academic texts.

Research Objectives

The study sought to describe diagnostic literacy levels, examine first and second quarter grades in English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP), and determine whether pretest and posttest scores differed significantly following ELEVATE.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design, supplemented by qualitative accounts of learners' experiences.

Participants and Sampling

The target participants were Grade 12 students from the Academic track (ABM and STEM strands) and the TVL track (HE strand) whom the teacher-researcher handled for the school year 2025-2026 at Liliw Senior High School, Liliw Sub-office, Division of Laguna. They were identified as struggling learners in the context of vocabulary acquisition and reading engagement based on the results of the Diagnostic Test and the Oral Test.

The study utilized purposive sampling, as the participants were selected in a non-random manner and identified based on the results of the diagnostic assessment. A pre-test was administered in an actual, face-to-face examination. The results were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The study involved 20 students selected based on their performance in previous assessments, which indicated difficulties in reading comprehension and vocabulary usage. These participants came from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of prior academic achievement and different socio-economic statuses. This method was appropriate as it allowed the inclusion of individuals most likely to benefit from the reading intervention being studied. The rationale for including these specific participants is grounded in the need to address the educational challenges faced by struggling learners, who are often at a disadvantage in terms of academic success and future opportunities. By focusing on this group, the study aimed to explore the effectiveness of enhanced learning engagement and vocabulary activities as a reading intervention, contributing valuable insights into educational practices that can support these learners.

Intervention

ELEVATE used localized and contextualized reading materials aligned with learners' tracks and strands. Weekly enhancement classes were conducted after regular class hours with the assistance of student leaders as peer tutors.

The ELEVATE strategy focused on vocabulary development from different focus skills, with the conduct of enhancement classes with the help of student leaders who served as peer tutors. Each session for silent reading, oral reading, and tasks such as sequencing and finding information from the text required the learners' analysis and comprehension, which helped stimulate their understanding and increase their thinking ability. The teacher and peer tutors guided the struggling learners throughout the learning process.

The enhancement classes motivated students to learn and develop independent skills, enabling them to comprehend articles of various genres from different focus skills and to face challenges in real-life situations when dealing with different subjects in Senior High School. The enhancement classes through ELEVATE put the students' responsibility in their own work.

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The enhancement classes covered only the first semester of the school year 2025-2026 for the selected Grade 12 learners under the supervision of the English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) teacher, to monitor students' understanding and development of self-regulated learning with assistance from peer tutors from different Grade 12 sections who guided their schoolmates to comprehend the reading materials.

Instruments and Data Gathering Procedure

A systematic approach to data collection was essential in conducting this research. The procedures involved a mixed-method approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected through pretest and posttest scores to measure improvement in vocabulary and reading engagement, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions with students to gain insights into their experiences and perceptions of the intervention.

The pretest and posttest scores provided measurable evidence of changes in vocabulary knowledge and engagement levels, while qualitative methods enriched the findings by capturing the students' voices and experiences. Data were gathered at two points: before the intervention began (pretest) and immediately after its completion (posttest), ensuring a clear comparison of results.

The types of data gathered included quantitative data from standardized vocabulary tests and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were collected through a vocabulary assessment administered before and after the intervention, while qualitative data were collected through interviews conducted after the intervention to explore students' engagement and perceptions. The chosen methods were aligned with the research questions, which focused on understanding how the reading intervention affected students' vocabulary acquisition and engagement. The research instrument for the quantitative data was a validated vocabulary test appropriate for measuring the specific learning outcomes targeted by the intervention.

The researcher used teacher-made, localized, and contextualized materials based on the learning competencies to gauge the level of comprehension of the Grade 12 struggling learners through a pre-test and post-test. A post-test was administered after the enhancement classes. The results were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test were compared. A t-test was used to determine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought parental permission through letters and oriented parents, learners, and peer tutors about the objectives of ELEVATE.

Statistical Treatment of Data

A quantitative research method was employed in analyzing the data collected for this study. The data were organized systematically, beginning with the coding of responses and categorization of variables relevant to learning engagement and vocabulary acquisition. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data and provide an overview of the students' performance. Inferential statistics, specifically paired t-tests, were conducted to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference in the performance of struggling learners before and after the reading intervention. The interpretation of results focused on identifying significant changes in vocabulary skills and engagement levels, reported in a clear and concise manner using tables and graphs to illustrate findings effectively.

The selected quantitative method of data analysis was appropriate given the nature of the data collected, which consisted of measurable outcomes related to vocabulary and engagement. This method aligns well with the research questions aimed at assessing the impact of the reading intervention on struggling learners, allowing for objective conclusions based on statistical evidence.

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RESULTS

Diagnostic Literacy Levels

Table 1. *Diagnostic Test Scores and Reported Literacy Levels*

Research Participants	Score	Literacy Level
Student 1	4	Functional
Student 2	2	Basic
Student 3	3	Basic
Student 4	6	Basic
Student 5	6	Functional
Student 6	5	Functional
Student 7	7	Proficient
Student 8	4	Basic
Student 9	5	Functional
Student 10	6	Functional
Student 11	5	Functional
Student 12	2	Basic
Student 13	2	Basic
Student 14	4	Functional
Student 15	7	Proficient
Student 16	4	Functional
Student 17	6	Functional
Student 18	7	Proficient
Student 19	6	Functional
Student 20	5	Functional

Score Range	Proficiency Level	Descriptive Interpretation
0–3	Basic	Can read, write, and compute.
4–6	Functional	Has the ability to understand and apply reading skills.
7–8	Proficient	Can draw inferences, predict outcomes and events, identify messages, draw conclusions, and surface and refine underlying themes.
9–10	Advanced	Can comprehend complex texts, analyze information, and engage in different reading activities.

Table 2. *Summary of Diagnostic Literacy Levels*

Research Participants	Basic Literacy	Functional Literacy	Proficient Literacy	Advance Literacy
20	6	11	3	0
Total	6	11	3	0

The reported classifications were six basic, eleven functional, and three proficient learners. Two individual classifications (Students 4 and 8) do not match the stated score ranges; the original classifications are retained pending verification.

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Quarterly Performance in EAPP

Table 3. *First and Second Quarter Grades of the Participants*

Research Participants	First Quarter	Description	Second Quarter	Description
Student 1	81	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 2	82	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 3	81	Satisfactory	80	Very Satisfactory
Student 4	82	Satisfactory	85	Satisfactory
Student 5	82	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 6	81	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 7	83	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 8	80	Satisfactory	80	Satisfactory
Student 9	82	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 10	81	Satisfactory	85	Satisfactory
Student 11	82	Satisfactory	82	Satisfactory
Student 12	82	Satisfactory	85	Satisfactory
Student 13	82	Satisfactory	85	Satisfactory
Student 14	81	Satisfactory	86	Satisfactory
Student 15	80	Satisfactory	80	Satisfactory
Student 16	80	Satisfactory	82	Satisfactory
Student 17	81	Satisfactory	86	Satisfactory
Student 18	83	Satisfactory	88	Satisfactory
Student 19	82	Satisfactory	85	Very Satisfactory
Student 20	80	Satisfactory	85	Satisfactory

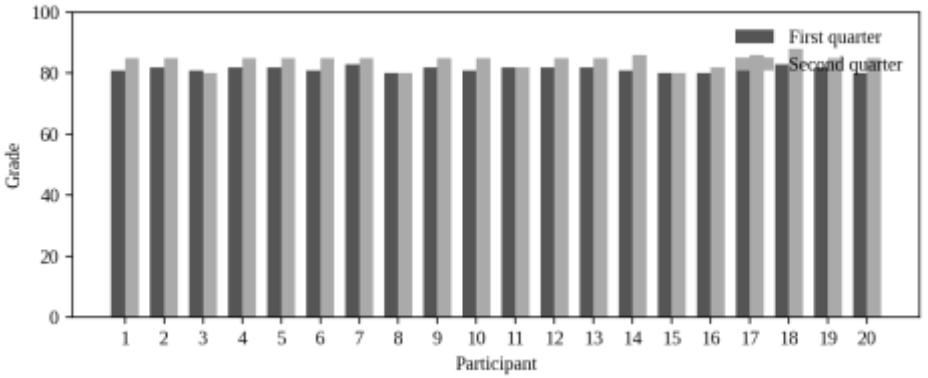


Figure 1. *First Quarter and Second Quarter Grades (redrawn from individual grades in Table 3)*

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Table 4. *Reported Mean Performance in the First and Second Quarters*

Grading Scale	First Quarter		Second Quarter	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
90-100	0	0	0	0
85-89	0	0%	15	75%
80-84	20	100%	5	25%
75-79	0	0	0	0
74 and below	0	0	0	0
Total	20	100%	20	%
Mean	81.40		83.65	
% of Gain	2.25 %			
SD	0.781		0.64	
Description	Satisfactory		Very Satisfactory	

The source reports means of 81.40 and 83.65. Recalculation from the individual grades in Table 3 yields 81.40 and 84.20, respectively. The reported summary and individual grade descriptions require author verification; the second-quarter mean is below the stated Very Satisfactory threshold of 85.

Reading Performance Before and After ELEVATE

Table 5. *Individual Pretest and Posttest Scores*

Student	Pre-Test Scores	Post-Test Scores
1	7	22
2	6	23
3	9	20
4	12	20
5	12	25
6	9	22
7	14	22
8	11	16
9	7	24
10	6	23
11	9	19
12	8	21
13	10	19
14	7	24
15	12	21
16	12	24
17	10	22
18	15	19
19	14	20
20	13	20

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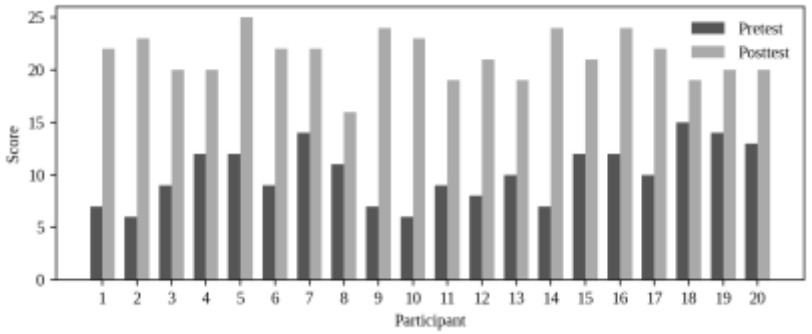


Figure 2. *Pretest and Posttest Scores*

Table 6. *Reported Frequency Distribution of Pretest and Posttest Scores*

	Pre-Test			**Post -Test**	
Score	**Number of Responses**	**Percentage**	**Score**	**Number of Responses**	**Percentage**
24-25	0	0%	24-25	4	20%
22-23	0	0%	22-23	6	30%
20-21	0	0	20-21	6	30%
18-19	0	0	18-19	3	15%
0-17	20	100%	0-17	1	5%
Total	20	100%		20	100%
Interpretation	Poor		Very Good		

All 20 individual scores increased. The source reports 19 learners scoring at least 18 in the posttest. The reported frequency distribution should be verified against the individual scores, and the reported Very Good label does not satisfy the source's stated 90% criterion for scores of 22–23.

Significance of the Difference Between Pretest and Posttest Scores

Table 7. *Paired-Samples t-Test of Pretest and Posttest Scores*

T Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Scores	**Post Test Scores**
Mean	10.15	21.3
Variance	7.818421053	4.957894737
Observations	20	20
Pearson Correlation	-0.354203007	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	19	
t Stat	-12.02795575	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.24551E-10	
t Critical one-tail	1.729132793	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.49102E-10	
t Critical two-tail	2.093024022	

The mean increased from 10.15 to 21.30. The paired t-test yielded $t(19) = -12.03$, with a two-tailed p-value of 2.49×10^{-10}. The null hypothesis of no difference was rejected. The negative correlation ($r = -0.35$) indicates a negative relationship between paired scores, not a positive relationship.

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DISCUSSION

Reading Development and Academic Performance

The increase in reading scores following ELEVATE suggests that the enhancement classes provided opportunities to practice vocabulary and comprehension through meaningful reading tasks. The individual quarterly grades also indicate higher performance for most learners, but the inconsistencies in the summary statistics prevent a definitive interpretation of the reported quarterly performance classifications. The source does not supply a complete inferential test for quarterly grades.

Engagement and Collaborative Support

Likewise, the intervention program made the teacher researcher realized that collaborative effort from teachers, advisers, and schoolmates really matter. Student leaders were able to show their compassion to their classmates by being the peer tutor and assisted the struggling learners during the enhancement classes really fulfilled their responsibilities as good leaders. Teachers and advisers showed support to the implementation of the reading intervention through ELEVATE by their reminders to attend the program and by giving some of their time to let the struggling learners read and answer questions under their guidance.

In addition, the enhancement classes with the use of contextualized and localized materials encouraged the struggling learners to learn a certain focus skill that produced a positive result . Likewise, it helped the teacher to become more effective facilitator of the teaching learning process and tapped the school organizations to support the ELEVATE .

Informal interviews and the researcher's reflection identified motivation, willingness to learn, family guidance, and support from teachers, advisers, and classmates as perceived contributors to reading development. These accounts complement the observed test score changes but do not establish independent effects of each factor.

Limitations

The study was limited to a purposively selected group of 20 learners in one school and one semester. Without a comparison group, the observed improvements cannot be attributed exclusively to ELEVATE. The manuscript includes inconsistencies in diagnostic classifications, grade summaries, and performance labels, which require verification. Although one intervention paragraph refers to ten learners, the methods and individual results document 20 participants.

CONCLUSION

The participating Grade 12 learners demonstrated significantly higher reading scores after ELEVATE, with a mean increase of 11.15 points. The individual quarterly grades also suggest improvement during the implementation period. The results support continued use and evaluation of localized reading activities and peer tutoring, within the limitations of the study design.

Recommendations

English teachers should continue developing localized and contextualized reading materials aligned with learners' tracks, strands, and least mastered competencies. Teachers and advisers should coordinate to encourage regular attendance at enhancement classes and incorporate engaging activities, including appropriate offline applications.

Parents should encourage learners to read at home for 10–15 minutes when possible and support consistent participation in enhancement classes. Student leaders should be encouraged to serve as peer tutors and suggest relevant topics and activities for reading materials.

The school may sustain ELEVATE through diagnostic and oral assessments, parental permission, orientation, enhancement classes, and pretest and posttest monitoring. Future evaluations may use a comparison group and verify the scoring classifications and quarterly grade summaries before publication.

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