

## Research Article

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# GRIT AS FACTOR IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION IN FILIPINO: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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## Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate and determine the level and correlation of reading comprehension and grit of grade 4 to 6 students of Cebu Normal University-Integrated Laboratory School. This study was participated by 133 students who were chosen using complete enumeration sampling. Data on this study were analyzed descriptively and quantitatively using Pearson correlation tool. Results revealed that 43% of grade 4 to 6 students has unsatisfactory level of reading comprehension performance in Filipino which implies that they need to have intervention for improvement. In addition, reading comprehension of the students was greatly affected by the unfamiliarity of the language. On the other hand, 52% of these students have moderate level of grit and it has been influenced by their characteristic, attitude and culture. Moreover, it was also shown that grit had been positively significant in increasing the level of comprehension performance with the correlation value of 0.002698. Thus, it is recommended by this paper to have more studies on ways of improving level of comprehension and grit. In addition, integrative and holistic teaching are also recommended to focus not only the intellectual aspect of the students but also the behavioral aspects. Moreover, students are encouraged to read more reading materials written in Filipino language for them to be exposed in the said language. On the other hand, teachers must also seek help from the school registered guidance counselor to monitor the behavior of the students.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Correlational Study, Filipino Language, Grit, Reading Comprehension

## Introduction

Achievement is often measured through academic, standardized outcome-based tests, but this practice ignores a large part of the equation. Both cognitive and non-cognitive measures of student growth should be included to ensure effective instruction that can yield positive student reading achievement (Duckworth, 2009). For instance, grit plays a very important role in student's ability to pursue challenging goals with perseverance and passion dictates the quality and quantity of a student's academic involvement and can positively affect his or her academic performance.

Duckworth et al. (2007) highlighted that grit and perseverance were key notions for success. Perseverance has always existed as one of the main factors to attain academic achievement when combined with incentive which prompts people to fulfill their objectives in the face of despair and enables people to seize the biggest satisfactions of life (Singh, 2011). Grit has been weighed as consenting students to succeed in learning eagerly and exerting effort to this end. It was recognized that success would be obtained as a result of the above-mentioned factors and this was also established in implementations (Carroll, 1963). Grit is as important as intelligence in terms of academic achievement (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Understanding grit enables language teachers to understand why some language learners might be more successful than others providing a pattern for success and failure. It is the gritty language learners that “tend to display higher levels persistence upon encountering setbacks, and this leads to success” (Duckworth & Gross, 2014, p. 322). Having grit helps students to strive hard to comprehend and understand texts they are reading.

In other words, the language-learning ability requires focus, hard work, and persistence. Hence, it is particularly language teachers who should take the implications of grit research into consideration for more fruitful language teaching and learning processes. Understanding the vital role that grit has in overall success and the factors that connect grit to language learning should be of great interest and value to all language teachers. In summary, language teachers should consider how to foster grit in learners in order to be able to have more successful language learners (Keegan, 2017). It just simply means that in order for the students to increase their school achievements, they must also improve their ability to comprehend language.

Reading comprehension is very important in building a foundation of knowledge of every individual. The ability to comprehend written and spoken languages as well as to communicate ideas and concepts are vital in one’s growth and progress. Access to knowledge in the various disciplines is made possible through comprehension and communication and through the mastery of the several study skills, habits and attitudes, one can cultivate the eagerness necessary in the frequent persistence of knowledge (Shippen et al., 2010).

In Asian countries, China is on top followed by Singapore in terms of reading comprehension performance. On the other hand, Philippines is the lowest among Asian countries in reading comprehension according to the 2018 result of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The problem of reading comprehension in the Philippines as shown in the PISA 2018 result is not anymore new. In 2007, the Department of Education reported that 70% of the students have lower reading skills in relation to their grade level. Moreover, according to the article of Philippine Star (2011), Filipino doesn’t have enough reading skills and motivation. Moreover, it was also mentioned in the study of Cabardo (2015), the low performance of students in National Achievement Test was an indication of low reading comprehension skills of elementary and secondary students in the country.

The researcher himself have experienced and observed reading comprehension problems of his students. Students have low performance in the quizzes in Filipino subject due to student’s difficulty in comprehending the medium (Filipino language) used in the said subject. Other factors might also hinder their performance in the subject like culture, grit and other external factors.

Research conducted in the past demonstrated the need of a certain degree of grit and perseverance for improving reading comprehension performance or degree (Rogers et al., 2004). The grit which is exhibited through perseverance showed by students appear as the most effective non-cognitive factors in school success despite socio-economic conditions, family culture and pressure exerted on the students by the school and teachers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980).

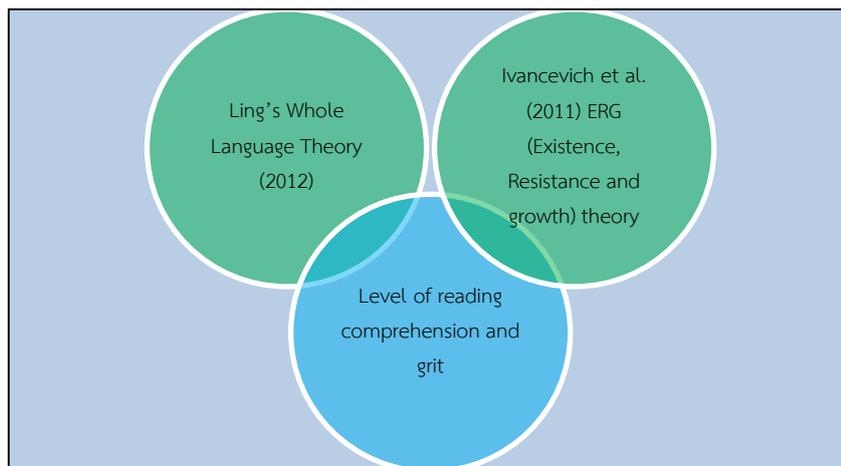
Personality traits, as one of the self-factors, are among vital psychological factors which affect second or foreign language acquisition and understanding (Cook, 2001). The most successful students with high academic success have a set of characteristics which other students, including those with high IQs, do not possess. Grit, among these behavior traits, has recently attracted the attention of many educators and institutions, such as the U.S. Department of Education (2013). Grit is considered to be one of the vital traits a learner should possess in order to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (U.S. Department of Education 2013; Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015). Therefore, understanding the role of grit in overall success and the factors that relate grit to language learning and comprehension should be on the research agenda of language teachers (Keegan, 2017). Grit is critical for all individuals, regardless of their levels, ages, abilities, and it has a value in all educational contexts, including Filipino as a second or foreign language since becoming proficient in the target language is closely related to setting long-term goals, so language learners should be informed that achieving language proficiency is a demanding goal that may take years to achieve. In contrast, being a talented and gifted language learner is not solely a probable predictor of success (Keegan, 2017).

Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate and determine the level and correlation of reading comprehension in Filipino and grit of Grade 4 to 6 students of Cebu Normal University-Integrated Laboratory School.

## **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

This study is anchored in Ling's Whole Language Theory (2012) and Ivancevich et al. (2011) ERG (Existence, Resistance and growth) theory. The whole language theory believes that reading instruction is more effective if it emphasizes the whole word or entire text and it considers students as center in the teaching-learning process. In addition, this theory helps the teacher in resolving the problem of their students in terms of learning the grammar, proper pronunciation of words and improving the level of understanding of the students. The specific pattern of learning is anchored on understanding the written text and combining the different elements of language and reading. Reader must see language elements as a whole. Meanwhile, Ivancevich et al. (2011) ERG (Existence, Resistance and growth) theory focuses on the self-regulatory skills of students that include grit and perseverance of students in dealing with difficulties in school and at home. This theory is anchored on analyzing the intrinsic factors that motivates someone to do something. It believes that understanding individuals characteristic is important in improving their performance in the environment they belong.

In this study, student's level of comprehension and grit are measured in the environment where they are learning and interacting with their classmates. Aside from it, the relationship of the mentioned variables is also measured as seen in the diagram below.



**Figure 1** Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

## Research Objectives

This study aimed to evaluate and determine the level and correlation of reading comprehension in Filipino and grit of Grade 4 to 6 students of Cebu Normal University-Integrated Laboratory School (CNU-ILS). The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the level of reading comprehension in Filipino Language of the students.
2. To determine the level of grit of students.
3. To determine the correlation between the level of reading comprehension and grit of students.

This hypothesis was tested in the study. HO There is no significant correlation between the levels of reading comprehension in Filipino and the level of grit of CNU-ILS students.

## Research Methodology

### Research design

This study utilized the descriptive-analytic and quantitative method to determine the level and relationship of comprehension and grit of students. Formal ethics approval for this study was obtained from the Cebu Normal University Research Ethics Committee (REC) where the research was conducted.

### Respondents of the study

This study was participated by 133 (36 from grade 4, 50 from grade 5 and 47 from grade 6) students of Cebu Normal University-Integrated Laboratory School (CNU-ILS). Complete enumeration was the sampling method used in this study.

The participants of the study were chosen based on the following inclusive criteria: a) students who use Filipino language and other languages; b) grade 4 to grade 6 students because this stage is considered to be the foundation stage of learning where an individual can start think abstract ideas (Center for Development of Human Services, 2002); c) no medical condition; d) willing to participate in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study were adapted from different researchers. Thus, these instruments are already tested and validated.

In measuring the reading comprehension of the students, Philippine – Informal Reading Inventory Group Screening Test (Phil-IRI-GST, 2018) of Department of Education was used in this study. The Phil-IRI is an informal reading inventory consisted of graded passages intended to determine the individual student's performance in reading comprehension. This kind of assessment aims to find the student's reading comprehension performance. The data from these measures could be used to design or adjust classroom, small group or individualized instruction to fit the students' needs and abilities. The Phil-IRI is not the sole assessment tool that provides the holistic reading performance of the students; it only provides an approximation of the students' abilities and could be used in combination with other reliable tools of assessment. The data shall also serve as one of the bases in planning, designing/redesigning the reading programs or activities in the school to improve the overall school reading performance. On the other hand, the level of grit of students was measured using Duckworth Short Grit Scale of Duckworth and Quinn (2009). This instrument Grit Scale measures trait-level perseverance and passion for long-term goals. The Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) retains the 2-factor structure of the original Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007) with 4 fewer items and improved psychometric properties.

### **Data gathering procedure**

Before the data gathering started, the researcher obtained Approval Certificate from the Cebu Normal University Research Ethics Committee (REC) where the research was conducted. Letter of permission to conduct the study was also given to the supervisor and dean of the mentioned institution. Then, consent and assent letters were distributed to the students and their parents. After obtaining all the permits, the researcher already conducted the reading comprehension test using the Philippine – Informal Reading Inventory Group Screening Test (Phil-IRI-GST, 2018) and grit survey using Duckworth Short Grit Scale during the convenient time of the students. Students were guided in answering the Duckworth Short Grit Scale. Students were also interviewed after answering all the instruments. Analysis of data was done after the giving of test to the students.

### **Data analysis**

In determining the level of reading comprehension of students in Filipino, the following guide were used based on the PHI-IRI 2018 manual: a) scores more than 70% (14 and above) (satisfactory performance), b) scores less than 70% (unsatisfactory performance). Those who got scores more than 70% (14 below) will no longer undergo extra assessment. On the other hand, students who got scores less than 70% are obliged to have different reading intervention program. If the child's raw score in the group screening test is 0-7, he/she must be given a passage that is 3 grade levels below his current level. In addition, if the child's raw score in the group screening test is 8-13, he/she must be given a passage that is 2 grades below his/her current level.

In interpreting the Duckworth Short Grit Scale, the following guide are used: a) For questions 2, 4, 7 and 8 assign the following points: 5 = Very much like me, 4 = Mostly like me, 3 = Somewhat like me, 2 = Not much like me, and 1 = Not like me at all; b) For questions 1, 3, 5 and 6 assign the following points: 1 = Very much like me, 2 = Mostly like me, 3 = Somewhat like me, 4 = Not much like me, and 5 = Not like me at all. After tallying all

the scores, average of overall scores to all items of each student was computed (in an average range between 1 and 5) and evaluated based on following interpretation guide of Duckworth and Quinn (2009): 1) 4.50 - 5.00 – very high or extremely gritty, 2) 3.50 - 4.49 – high, 3) 2.50 - 3.49 – moderate/average, 4) 1.50-2.49 – low, 5) 1-1.49 – very low or not at all gritty.

In determining the relationship between the level of reading comprehension and level of grit of students, Pearson correlation tool was used in the study. This is a tool that determines the relationship of two variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient is the test statistics that measures the statistical bond, or association, between two continuous variables. It is known as the best method of measuring the association between variables of interest because it is based on the method of covariance. It provides data about the degree of the association, or correlation, as well as the path of the relationship (Schober et al., 2018).

## Results and Discussion

This part presents and discusses the findings of the study which include the following: level of reading comprehension, level of grit and correlation of reading comprehension and grit.

### Level of Reading Comprehension in Filipino

**Table 1.** Performance of students in Reading Comprehension Test in Filipino

Grade Level	No. of Respondents	PERFORMANCE	
		Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
4	36	10	26
5	50	12	38
6	47	35	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>57 (43%)</b>	<b>76 (57%)</b>

LEGEND:  
 Total Score: 20/20  Unsatisfactory = Score <14 o 70%  
 Satisfactory = Score ≥14 o 70%

Reading comprehension is one of the factors that affects the academic performance of the students. In this part, the level of comprehension in Filipino of the student was measured using the PHI-IRI GST (2018) and the summary of the result can be shown in Table 1. It has been found out that 76 or 57% of the students performed satisfactorily. On the other hand, 57 or 43% of the students unsatisfactorily performed in the given evaluation. It only showed that 43% of the population needed to have additional reading intervention since they got scores below the standard or passing mark. Aside from this, it has been observed that most of the students who performed unsatisfactorily were coming from the grade 6 section. It implies that level of difficulty of the reading texts increases as the grade level also increases.

In the interview conducted, most of the grade 6 students found the test difficult because of the language barrier. Most of these students are using English as their main language in communicating. Filipino is just their second language. Thus, Familiarity of words hampered them in understanding the reading selection properly. It implies that

there are language skills that they must develop for the improvement of their comprehension in Filipino. Aside from it, the researcher himself have directly witnessed the struggles of these students in comprehending the texts written in Filipino and these can be observed to their class standing or performance. Other teachers also observed the same dilemma.

According to the article of Philippine Star (2010), the content, vocabulary and concept of every subject increases its difficulty as the grade level increases in the Philippine Educational System. Therefore, student's comprehension skill must improve and develop from time to time. This is also the observation of Dewitz and Dewitz (2003) wherein they said that comprehension of students is affected by the kinds of text, way of reading, level of difficulty of the text and the prior knowledge of an individual. Bolton (2007) added that prior knowledge helps in effective comprehension.

Alber-Morgan et al. (2007) theorizes that students who have difficulty in comprehending the text and those who have problem in identifying words, comprehension and motivation usually avoid reading. Moreover, Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2004) said that inability to recognize words is a problem in reading comprehension.

According to Tupe and Padilla (2011), students have three obstacles in understanding the language namely: a) multilingualism; b) complexity of reading process; c) differences of every individual's level of reading skill.

It is important that the problem in reading comprehension must be resolved because this is one of the foundations of learning. Tupe and Padilla (2011) formulated that comprehension is an important aspect of an elementary students to develop for it builds a strong foundation before their secondary level.

### Level of Grit

**Table 2.** Level of Grit of students

Grade Level	No. of respondents	INTERPRETATION				
		Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
4	36	0	3	24	6	3
5	50	0	6	26	17	1
6	47	0	11	19	17	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20 (15%)</b>	<b>69 (52%)</b>	<b>40 (30%)</b>	<b>4 (3%)</b>

#### LEGEND:

Overall Average: 5/5

◆ Very High = 4.50-5.00 ◆ High = 3.50-4.49 ◆ Moderate = 2.50-3.49

◆ Very Low = 1.00-1.49 ◆ Low = 1.50-2.49

Grit is a student's ability to pursue challenging goals with perseverance and passion dictates the quality and quantity of a student's academic involvement and can positively affect his or her academic performance.

Findings show that most of the CNU-ILS students have moderate level of grit. This is indicated by the 69 students or 52% of the population as shown in Table 2. It implies that most of the students in CNU-ILS have average level of effort and perseverance in achieving their long-term goal in life and this level of grit can be affected by the struggles they might be encountering along the way as they try to achieve their goals. The level of grit of

these students are not high or very high because these students belong to the Generation Z (students who were born from 1996-2010) wherein they are characterized by the following: they want tasks that are easy to do, they love instant things, they don't want to do complicated tasks, they don't have focus and they want to do tasks that involve modern technology or multimedia (Jenkins, 2015). These characteristic have been directly observed by the researcher himself to the CNU-ILS students wherein they easily get distracted and they have very short-attention span in listening, reading and even in doing their classroom tasks. They don't have that high level of interest and perseverance in accomplishing the task most especially in answering Filipino activities. They always say "We can't understand Filipino or We don't know Filipino." This implies their lack of grit in achieving or accomplishing a task that includes reading. Students with low level of grit are the students who easily give up in doing a task most especially when they find it difficult.

Duckworth et al. (2007) stated that grit is important in the success of a person. The high level of grit can be used by a student in doing complex tasks with clear instructions. High level of perseverance and intensive practice are needed in the success of accomplishing a certain task or competency (MacNamara et al., 2014). Credé and Phillips (2011) added that grit is an important predictor of individual's skill in improving and finishing exercises that develops the creativity and resiliency. Moreover, it is very important that tasks must have clear objectives and students will be guided in doing it.

According to Karabenick (2003), student's performance might be affected by the level of grit of an individual. Having too much or too high level of grit is not anymore helpful to an individual most especially when doing a difficult task because this lead a person to do the task on his or her own and he or she will no longer interact or reach out to other people for help or for other ideas which may cause him or her more time in accomplishing it (Lucas et al., 2015).

The level of grit of a people vary depending on their culture, characteristics and experiences. Improving the level of grit at an early age is very important because this will change their view, perception, and accepting different tasks in school and at home.

### Reading Comprehension in Filipino and Grit correlation

**Table 3.** Reading Comprehension in Filipino and Grit correlation

	Reading Comprehension and Self-esteem
Coefficient (r):	0.30
N:	133
T statistics:	3.058496
DF:	131
p value:	0.002698
Interpretation	Significant

Findings show that there is a significant correlation between the level of reading comprehension and grit of CNU-ILS students. Therefore, HO is rejected. This is shown in the p value = 0.002698. The numbers on table 3

show that reading comprehension and grit have moderate positive correlation. This means that if grit increases, there will be a moderate increase in the reading comprehension performance of student. But reading comprehension has also other factors that are not being included in this study. Thus, the result of this paper implies only that grit is one of the important factors or an additional factor to be considered in improving reading comprehension performance of students in Filipino. It also means that if students will encounter difficult words in the text they are reading, they will find way to know the meaning of these words for better understanding of the entire reading selection/text. It indicates that students should develop his or her grit for them to have the drive to increase their level of learning about the language processes. This tells us that grit will enable the student to face and overcome the struggles and difficulties of a certain task (Duckworth et al., 2007). According to DeMaiolo (2017), students who have grit find way to finish what they have started, focus on their goals, persevere to be successful even though they have experienced failures and remain resilient. Therefore, understanding the role of grit in overall success and the factors that relate grit to language learning and comprehension should be on the research agenda of language teachers (Keegan, 2017).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study evaluated and determined the level and correlation of reading comprehension and grit of CNU-ILS students. Findings revealed that 43% of CNU-ILS students' have unsatisfactory level of reading comprehension performance in Filipino and 52% of them have moderate level of grit. It is also shown that the comprehension of the students was affected by lack of familiarity of the language structure and vocabularies of Filipino Language. Moreover, data also revealed that the level grit of students is affected by their characteristic, attitude and culture. The results also showed that grit had been positively significant in increasing the level of comprehension performance of CNU-ILS students. This implies that grit is considered to be a factor in improving student's comprehension through giving a clear instruction of the task and giving sufficient guidance to the students.

With the study results showing that grit has potential in improving the reading comprehension performance of students, the researcher recommends further research on ways of improving level grit and reading comprehension of students. It is also recommended by the researcher to have integrative or holistic way of teaching in the class wherein grit and reading comprehension of the students could be measured. Moreover, students are encouraged to read more reading materials written in Filipino language for them to be exposed in the said language. On the other hand, teachers must seek help also from the school registered guidance counselor to monitor the behavior of the students.

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