

Punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency: A correlational study

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Abstract

Aim: This study examined the level of punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency among Grade 7 learners and determined whether a significant relationship exists between these two literacy variables. The study aims to provide insights that may support the integration of punctuation instruction in reading and writing lessons to enhance classroom literacy instruction.

Methodology: A quantitative correlational research design was employed involving 95 Grade 7 learners from Aritao National High School. Data were collected using a researcher-developed punctuation proficiency activity called *Punctuation Quest* and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) for oral reading fluency assessment based on the learners' beginning-of-school-year results. Descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, and percentage, were used to determine the levels of punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency, while Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Results: The findings revealed that the learners demonstrated an overall proficient level of punctuation proficiency, although difficulties were observed in the use of less frequently used punctuation marks. In terms of oral reading fluency, nearly half of the learners were at the independent level, while the remaining respondents were categorized at the instructional and frustration levels. Statistical analysis further revealed a weak but significant positive relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency.

Conclusion: The study concludes that punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency are interconnected aspects of literacy development. Although punctuation proficiency alone does not determine reading fluency, it supports learners' ability to read with appropriate pausing, intonation, and expression. The findings suggest that integrating explicit punctuation instruction into reading and writing activities may contribute to improved literacy outcomes and more effective classroom teaching strategies.

Keywords: oral reading fluency, punctuation proficiency, Phil-IRI, literacy development, writing instruction, reading intervention

INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing are foundational literacy skills that enable learners to access knowledge, communicate ideas, and participate meaningfully in academic and social contexts. Globally, literacy remains a critical concern as international assessments continue to reveal gaps in students' reading performance, particularly in fluency and comprehension. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicate that a significant proportion of learners worldwide struggle to read with sufficient accuracy, speed, and expression to support comprehension, underscoring the need to strengthen foundational reading skills (OECD, 2023). Among the key components of reading, oral reading fluency—defined by accuracy, rate, and prosody—has been consistently identified as a strong predictor of comprehension and overall reading achievement (Rasinski et al., 2015; Paige, 2014).

At the same time, global research has emphasized that reading does not function independently from writing. Writing mechanics, particularly punctuation, play a crucial role in shaping how written language is interpreted and orally rendered. Recent studies have shown that punctuation serves as a visual cue that guides syntactic parsing, prosody, and meaning-making during reading (Dolean et al., 2023; Ardanouy et al., 2025). Learners who demonstrate stronger punctuation awareness tend to read aloud with more appropriate pausing, intonation, and phrasing, which

are essential elements of fluent reading. Despite this growing body of literature, punctuation remains an underexplored variable in studies of oral reading fluency, especially at the secondary level.

Current trends in education further complicate literacy development. The widespread use of digital communication and social media has influenced students' language practices, often resulting in reduced attention to formal writing conventions such as punctuation and capitalization (Baron, 2011). Several recent studies have reported a decline in students' mastery of writing mechanics, with punctuation errors ranking among the most frequent difficulties in learners' written outputs (Apuhin et al., 2023; Ivanova et al., 2025). These difficulties not only affect writing quality but may also interfere with learners' ability to read texts fluently and expressively.

In the Philippine context, literacy challenges are particularly evident. National and international assessments consistently show that Filipino learners perform below global benchmarks in reading. The PISA 2018 and 2022 results revealed that the majority of Filipino students failed to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading literacy, indicating persistent difficulties in comprehension and fluency (OECD, 2023). Supporting these findings, recent reports from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and results from the 2023 National Achievement Test (NAT) indicate alarmingly high percentages of learners who are classified as not proficient or nearly proficient in reading. These trends highlight an urgent need to reexamine foundational literacy skills, including those that support oral reading fluency.

To address reading difficulties, the Department of Education (DepEd) mandates the use of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), a standardized tool used to assess learners' reading levels and guide interventions. Moreover, the passage of Republic Act No. 12028, also known as the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act of 2024, reflects the government's intensified efforts to remediate learning losses in basic literacy. While these initiatives primarily focus on reading accuracy and comprehension, writing skills—particularly punctuation proficiency—receive comparatively less systematic attention. Unlike reading, writing lacks standardized national assessment tools comparable to Phil-IRI, resulting in limited empirical data on students' writing mechanics and their possible relationship to reading performance.

Classroom-based and local studies in the Philippines consistently report that secondary learners experience persistent difficulties in punctuation usage, especially with apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, parentheses, and ellipses (Apuhin et al., 2023; Uka et al., 2023). These errors suggest gaps in learners' understanding of how punctuation functions to clarify meaning and structure text. From a reading perspective, failure to recognize punctuation cues during oral reading often leads to monotonous delivery, improper pausing, and reduced comprehension—characteristics commonly observed among learners at the instructional and frustration levels in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) assessments (Bermudez et al., 2023).

Although international studies have begun to establish links between punctuation awareness, prosody, and reading comprehension (Dolean et al., 2023; Ryken et al., 2025), there remains a notable research gap in the Philippine setting. Specifically, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that directly examine the relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency among Grade 7 learners who are second-language users of English. Most local research has treated reading and writing as separate domains, focusing either on reading comprehension or writing errors, without exploring how writing mechanics such as punctuation may influence oral reading performance.

Given these gaps, the present study is necessary and timely. It seeks to determine the level of punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency of Grade 7 students at Aritao National High School and to examine the relationship between these two variables. By adopting a correlational approach, this study differs from prior works by directly linking a specific writing mechanic—punctuation proficiency—to oral reading fluency as measured by Phil-IRI. The findings aim to provide empirical evidence that can inform integrated reading and writing instruction, contribute to localized literacy research, and support the development of more comprehensive and responsive literacy interventions in Philippine secondary schools.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Punctuation plays a vital role in reading fluency by providing visual cues to readers, thereby supporting smooth oral reading and improved comprehension. Without mastery of marks like commas, periods, and question marks, readers often exhibit word-by-word delivery, disrupted rhythm, and poor prosody. These reading issues are very common in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts.

Global Empirical Evidence

Across different countries, several studies have consistently shown that punctuation is not just a writing skill, it plays a crucial role in reading fluency and comprehension, especially for learners of English as a second language, ESL. Many learners struggle with punctuation, and this often leads to unclear writing and disrupted reading flow.

For instance, Thy and Nuong (2025) found that punctuation errors significantly reduce clarity and expression in writing. These errors also affect oral reading, as they interrupt the natural phrasing of sentences. When punctuation is used incorrectly or ignored, readers tend to pause at the wrong places or fail to express the intended meaning of the text.

Similarly, punctuation supports reading comprehension through prosodic cues, such as pauses and intonation. In a study involving Spanish secondary students aged 12 to 18, Soriano et al. (2022) observed that students' accuracy in using commas improved over time, from 54.5% in the early years to 80.9% in later years. This improvement was moderately associated with better reading comprehension ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$). The study suggests that students who understand texts well are also more capable of using punctuation correctly, which in turn helps them interpret sentence structures more effectively.

Other researchers have also emphasized the connection between punctuation, prosody, and comprehension. Paige et al. (2014) highlighted that prosody, how a text is read with proper rhythm and expression, predicts reading comprehension across different grade levels. Dolean et al. (2023) further supported this by showing that students who can recognize punctuation and capitalization errors tend to have better reading comprehension, as they are more sensitive to prosodic features.

In the same way, Ryken et al. (2024) explained that punctuation awareness strengthens the relationship between prosody and comprehension. Their findings revealed moderate correlations between punctuation knowledge and both word reading and comprehension, $r \approx 0.34$ to 0.38 . This means that learners who are more aware of punctuation tend to read more fluently and understand texts better.

Moreover, Smekens (2023) and Soriano et al. (2022) argued that punctuation should not be taught only as a writing skill but also as a reading tool. Punctuation marks guide readers on when to pause, change tone, or emphasize certain parts of a text. For example, a period signals a full stop, requiring a longer pause, while question marks and exclamation points influence how a sentence should be expressed. These features are essential for developing expressive and meaningful oral reading.

Philippine Context

In the Philippine setting, the challenges related to punctuation and reading fluency are even more evident. National and regional data show that many students struggle with basic reading skills, including proper use and interpretation of punctuation.

According to Phil-IRI data cited by Consortium Academia (2023), around 80% of Grade 7 students fall under the frustration level in oral reading, particularly in word accuracy. One contributing factor is poor prosody, which is often linked to students' inability to recognize or apply punctuation marks correctly. For example, students frequently ignore commas, resulting in run-on sentences and loss of meaning.

Even in silent reading, punctuation remains important. Drury et al. (2016) emphasized that punctuation helps readers process texts more efficiently by guiding their understanding of sentence structure and meaning. However, large-scale assessments such as the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM, 2025) reveals that reading performance in the Philippines has remained stagnant. According to the report, Filipino Grade 5 students achieved an average reading score of only 289.5, with 27% classified as having 'very low proficiency' (emergent readers) and nearly half (47–52%) performing below basic comprehension levels.

Further studies highlight how limited knowledge of punctuation affects reading performance. Bermudez et al. (2023) found that poor understanding of punctuation disrupts students' reading speed, pauses, and expression. Meanwhile, data from the National Achievement Test cited by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2023) showed that 98.64% to 99.53% of students were classified as not proficient under the standard 75% cut-off, pointing to serious gaps in foundational literacy skills, including punctuation.

At the local level, Batuna (2023) observed common reading miscues among students in Grades 3 to 7, such as mispronunciation and repetition, which are often linked to neglect of punctuation. Among grade 7 students, Casas et al. (2025) observed common reading miscues, such as monotonous reading and unnatural phrasing, which are often linked to neglect of punctuation. Specifically, learners admitted to skipping punctuation cues and reading continuously without pausing at commas or periods. Despite these findings, many studies in the Philippines still focus more on punctuation as a writing skill rather than as a component of reading fluency. For example, studies by Apuhin et al.

(2023), Arcilla et al. (2025), Comeo (2025), Dela Cruz and Angel (2025), and Uka et al. (2023) mainly associate punctuation errors with writing clarity and academic performance in secondary and tertiary levels.

This suggests that the relationship between reading and writing, particularly how punctuation influences both, remains underexplored. Supporting this, recent improvements in Phil-IRI tools emphasize syntactical awareness, such as sentence combining, as a predictor of reading fluency in junior high school. The updated tool has shown strong reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.82), further highlighting the importance of language structures, including punctuation, in literacy development (Soria & Borja, 2024).

Research Gap

While global studies confirm moderate correlations between punctuation awareness, prosody, and reading comprehension ($r = 0.33-0.38$), Philippine research remains limited, focusing mainly on writing skills or early grade reading (Figuerras, 2025; Joseph et al., 2023; Sanchez et al., 2022). This leaves a significant gap in understanding how punctuation proficiency directly influences oral reading fluency among Grade 7 learners, particularly in rural public schools where persistent deficits are reported through Phil-IRI assessments.

To date, no local study has quantitatively examined the relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency, including prosodic features. Thus, this study addresses this gap by determining the correlation between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency using Phil-IRI-based measures. This study will also benefit the researchers, particularly curriculum makers in the Department of Education, by providing insights that can enhance literacy development and inform programs focused on improving reading skills.

Theoretical Foundations

This study is anchored on the Implicit Prosody Hypothesis and Automaticity Theory. The Implicit Prosody Hypothesis (Frazier et al., 2006) explains that punctuation guides prosodic features, such as pauses and intonation, which help readers process sentence structures and read meaningfully. Automaticity Theory (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008) posits that mastery of punctuation reduces cognitive load, allowing fluent reading without word-by-word decoding. Evidence shows that automatic use of language cues, including punctuation, significantly improves reading rate and oral fluency (Roembke et al., 2021). Together, these theories justify how punctuation proficiency supports prosodic and fluent oral reading.

Conceptual Framework

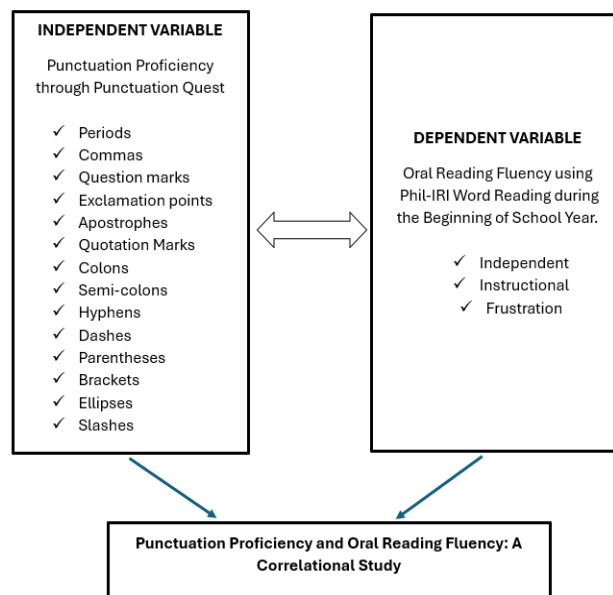


Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency. Punctuation proficiency serves as the independent variable and refers to students' proper use of punctuation marks such as the period, comma, question mark, exclamation point, apostrophe, quotation marks, semicolon, hyphen and dash, parentheses and brackets, and ellipses, as measured through the Punctuation Quest activity. Oral reading fluency is treated as the dependent variable and is measured using the Phil-IRI Word Reading results, categorized into independent, instructional, and frustration levels. The framework assumes that students' level of punctuation proficiency is significantly associated with their oral reading fluency.

Statement of the Problem

Punctuation is a critical component of written language that contributes not only to clarity in writing but also to reading comprehension and oral reading fluency. Despite its importance, many learners experience difficulty in using punctuation marks correctly, which may hinder their ability to read accurately and fluently. Punctuation errors can disrupt the flow of sentences, alter meaning, and reduce overall comprehension, suggesting that punctuation proficiency may be associated with oral reading performance.

At Aritao National High School, Grade 7 learners demonstrate varying levels of punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency. Punctuation proficiency is assessed through the researcher-developed activity called *Punctuation Quest*, which evaluates students' ability to correctly use punctuation marks such as periods, commas, question marks, exclamation points, apostrophes, quotation marks, semicolons, hyphens, parentheses, and ellipses. Oral reading fluency, on the other hand, is measured using the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), which classifies learners into independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels.

Given these conditions, it is important to determine the level of punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency among the learners and to examine whether a significant relationship exists between these two variables. Understanding this relationship may provide valuable insights for designing instructional strategies that integrate punctuation instruction with reading development, thereby improving students' overall literacy skills.

General Objective

To determine the relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency among Grade 7 learners as a basis for improving literacy instruction.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the level of punctuation proficiency of the respondents in terms of their proper use of punctuation marks.
2. To identify the level of oral reading fluency of the respondents based on their word reading performance.
3. To examine whether a significant relationship exists between the respondents' punctuation proficiency and their oral reading fluency.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of punctuation proficiency of the respondents?
2. What is the level of oral reading fluency of the respondents?
3. Is there a significant relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency among the respondents.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency. A correlational design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to determine whether and how strongly the two variables are related without manipulating them. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship, showing whether higher punctuation

proficiency corresponds to greater oral reading fluency. This approach provides an objective, data-driven way to identify patterns and draw conclusions about the association between the variables.

Population and Sampling

Table 1. *Punctuation Restoration Proficiency Scale*

Total Punctuation Marks: 10 items each punctuation mark (Periods, commas, question marks, exclamation points, apostrophes, colons, semi-colons, parentheses, ellipses, brackets, hyphens, dashes, slashes, quotation marks)		
Level	Score Range	Description
Advanced	9-10	Correctly uses almost all punctuation marks; shows strong mastery
Proficient	5-8	Correct use of most punctuation marks with minor errors
Developing	0-4	Many errors; limited understanding of punctuation rules.

The study targeted all 95 Grade 7 students of Aritao National High School during the 2025–2026 academic year. The study employed a census sampling, in which all 95 Grade 7 students were included as respondents, eliminating the need for sample selection. It also focused exclusively on Grade 7 learners.

Instruments

The study utilized a researcher-developed activity called Punctuation Quest. In the *Punctuation Quest* activity, students are given a story entitled "*The Day Words Came Alive*" in which all punctuation marks are omitted, and they are required to correctly supply the punctuation throughout the story. Punctuation Quest is an activity designed to help researchers analyze and determine students' punctuation proficiency. This activity was developed to achieve the objectives of the study and underwent a thorough review, verification, and approval process. It was evaluated verbally by three master teachers in the subject area and approved by the researchers' advisers through face-to-face consultations. These validators, experts in educational research and assessment, ensured through verbal consultation that the activity was aligned with the study objectives, accurate in content, and appropriate for the students' grade level, supporting its validity. Their feedback was incorporated. An objective approach was used to assess the students' punctuation skills based on the scale provided below.

Data Collection

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Department Head of the subject area and the school head, and the Grade 7 English teachers were informed. Parents of the participants were provided with informed consent before the administration of the activity. The Punctuation Quest activity was then administered during the English class, following standardized procedures. After completion, the responses were systematically checked by the researchers, and the data were prepared for statistical analysis using the established scoring scale.

Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the levels of punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency. Specific measures, including mean, frequency, and percentage, were applied, while Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to examine the relationship between punctuation errors, punctuation proficiency, and oral reading fluency. The use of these statistical measures allowed for a comprehensive and accurate examination of the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Approval was obtained from the school head and the department head before conducting the research, and informed consent was secured from the parents of the respondents. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no form of coercion, and the respondents participated willingly. The anonymity of all participants was ensured, and personal information, including names, was not disclosed. Collected data were handled securely and used solely for research purposes to maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2

Level of Punctuation Proficiency of the Respondents

Punctuations	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Periods	9.05	Advanced
Commas	5.07	Proficient
Question Marks	9.35	Advanced
Exclamation Points	7.81	Proficient
Apostrophes	4.60	Developing
Quotation Marks	4.49	Developing
Colons	8.34	Proficient
Semi-colons	6.94	Proficient
Hyphens	4.20	Developing
Dashes	5.93	Proficient
Parentheses	3.14	Developing
Brackets	2.38	Developing
Ellipses	4.28	Developing
Slashes	8.68	Proficient
Overall Mean	6.02	Proficient

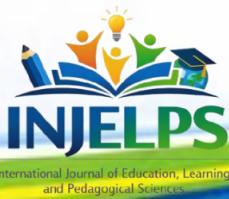
Mean Range: 8.50-10.00 – Advanced; 5.00-8.49 – Proficient; 0 – 4.99 – Developing

As gleaned in Table 2, the respondents obtained an overall mean of 6.02, which falls under the Proficient level. This indicates that, in general, the respondents demonstrate an acceptable understanding and use of punctuation marks, though there is still room for improvement in certain areas.

Among the punctuation marks assessed, question marks ($M = 9.35$) and periods ($M = 9.05$) were at an Advanced level, suggesting strong mastery of these commonly used punctuation marks.

This pattern indicates that learners have already internalized fundamental sentence-boundary conventions, which are essential for both written clarity and reading comprehension. Several punctuation marks were interpreted as Proficient, including commas, exclamation points, colons, semi-colons, dashes, and slashes. While learners demonstrate general competence in these areas, their performance suggests partial mastery, particularly in contexts requiring more complex grammatical judgment such as clause separation and emphasis. On the other hand, apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, parentheses, brackets, and ellipses were interpreted at the Developing level.

These punctuation marks typically require higher-level syntactic awareness and contextual decision-making, which may explain the learners' difficulty in applying them accurately. This finding is supported by Thy and Nuong (2025), who reported that students often demonstrate moderate understanding but struggle with correct application.



This gap between recognition and application highlights a need for instructional approaches that move beyond identification tasks toward guided and contextualized use. Similarly, McNaught and Shaw (2016) identified frequent errors in apostrophe use and clause punctuation.

In summary, while respondents demonstrate overall proficiency, specific areas—particularly less frequently used punctuation marks—require targeted intervention. The findings suggest that punctuation instruction may be more effective when embedded in authentic reading and writing tasks rather than taught as isolated rules. Strategy-based instruction, including sentence combining, guided writing, and error analysis, may support deeper understanding and transfer of punctuation skills. Furthermore, the results imply a need for curriculum enhancement that ensures progression from basic to complex punctuation skills, as well as alignment with literacy competencies in the K–12 curriculum. Ultimately, improving punctuation mastery supports clearer written communication and contributes to overall literacy development.

Table 3

Level of Oral Reading Fluency of the Respondents

Level of Oral Reading Fluency	Frequency	Percentage
Independent Level	45	47.37
Instructional Level	26	27.37
Frustration Level	24	25.26
OVERALL TOTAL	95	100

The Phil-IRI categorizes reading levels as Independent, Instructional, or Frustration to guide instruction and intervention. The distribution of results indicates that although a substantial proportion of learners can read independently, a greater combined percentage remains at the Instructional and Frustration levels, signaling a need for sustained instructional support. Learners at the Independent level demonstrate fluency and comprehension, while those at the Instructional level benefit from guided support. Students at the Frustration level experience significant difficulty and require intensive intervention. Rather than merely reflecting performance levels, these results highlight a critical instructional concern—more than half of the learners are not yet fully independent readers.

The findings are consistent with Binaloga (2024) and Cabardo (2015), who reported similar trends in reading performance. These patterns suggest that reading fluency challenges persist across contexts and may be influenced by multiple learner and environmental factors. The results also align with national and international assessments such as PISA, which indicate gaps in reading proficiency among Filipino learners. This reinforces the urgency of strengthening foundational literacy instruction, particularly in developing fluency as a bridge between decoding and comprehension.

Overall, while some learners demonstrate independence, many require additional support. These findings highlight the importance of differentiated instruction, where teaching strategies are adjusted based on learners' proficiency levels. Interventions such as guided oral reading, repeated reading, and prosody-focused instruction may be particularly effective in improving fluency. At the institutional level, the results suggest the need for systematic reading programs and early identification mechanisms to support struggling readers.

Table 4

Significant Relationship Between Punctuation Proficiency and Oral Reading Proficiency

Correlations			
		Punctuation Proficiency	Oral Reading Proficiency
Punctuation Proficiency	Pearson Correlation	1	.227*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	95	95

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results revealed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading proficiency ($r = 0.227$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that punctuation proficiency contributes to oral reading performance, but only as one of several influencing factors. While punctuation proficiency appears to support reading development, the weak correlation suggests that other variables also play a substantial role. These variables may include decoding skills, vocabulary knowledge, phonological awareness, and comprehension ability, which collectively influence reading fluency.

Supporting studies highlight the role of punctuation in guiding prosody and meaning-making during reading. Learners who understand punctuation cues are better able to apply appropriate pauses, phrasing, and intonation, which enhances both fluency and comprehension. However, the weak strength of the relationship suggests that punctuation should not be treated as a standalone determinant of reading success but rather as a complementary component of literacy development. The results imply that punctuation instruction remains important. Integrating punctuation awareness into reading instruction may help learners connect written symbols with oral expression, thereby improving reading performance. At the same time, a holistic approach to literacy instruction that includes phonics, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies may be necessary to produce more significant gains in oral reading fluency.

Conclusions

This study examined the level of punctuation proficiency, the level of oral reading fluency, and the relationship between these variables among Grade 7 students of Aritao National High School. Based on the findings, several important conclusions were drawn. First, the respondents demonstrated an overall Proficient level of punctuation proficiency, indicating an adequate understanding of punctuation rules. Learners showed strong mastery of commonly used punctuation marks, particularly periods and question marks, which were at the Advanced level. However, punctuation marks such as apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, parentheses, brackets, and ellipses were at the Developing level. This pattern suggests that while learners have acquired foundational punctuation skills, they encounter difficulty with more complex and less frequently used punctuation marks that require higher-level syntactic awareness and contextual application. Second, in terms of oral reading fluency, fewer than half of the respondents reached the Independent level, while the majority were classified under the Instructional and Frustration levels. This indicates that a substantial proportion of learners are not yet fully independent readers and continue to require guided instruction or targeted intervention to achieve fluency and comprehension. These findings are consistent with broader literacy trends highlighting persistent challenges in reading proficiency among Filipino learners. Third, the study revealed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency. This suggests that students with higher punctuation proficiency tend to demonstrate better oral reading performance. Although the relationship is weak, it confirms that punctuation awareness contributes to reading prosody by guiding pausing, phrasing, and intonation during oral reading. At the same time, the weak correlation indicates that oral reading fluency is influenced by multiple factors beyond punctuation, including vocabulary knowledge, decoding skills, phonological awareness, and comprehension ability.

Overall, the findings confirm that punctuation proficiency and oral reading fluency are interrelated components of literacy development.

The study contributes to teaching and learning by emphasizing the integration of punctuation instruction into reading activities, highlighting its role not only in writing accuracy but also in supporting expressive and meaningful reading. In terms of curriculum development, the results support the need for a more integrated literacy approach that connects reading and writing competencies within classroom instruction. From a pedagogical perspective, the study underscores punctuation awareness as a factor influencing oral reading prosody, suggesting its value in enhancing learners' overall reading performance.

While punctuation alone does not determine oral reading fluency, it plays a supportive role in helping learners read with clarity and expression. These results underscore the importance of integrating punctuation instruction into reading and writing lessons rather than treating these skills as separate or isolated components of language instruction.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

For English Teachers

English teachers may provide explicit and systematic instruction on punctuation marks, particularly those identified at the Developing level. Punctuation may be taught not only as a writing convention but also as a reading aid that supports proper pausing, intonation, and expression. Integrating punctuation-focused activities into reading and writing tasks may enhance learners' overall literacy development.

For Reading and Writing Instruction

Schools may adopt an integrated literacy approach that connects reading fluency with writing mechanics. Instructional strategies such as oral reading with punctuation cues, sentence-combining exercises, and error analysis tasks may help learners understand how punctuation contributes to meaning and comprehension.

For Intervention Programs

Learners at the Instructional and Frustration levels may receive targeted reading interventions. These interventions may include guided oral reading, repeated reading, and prosody-focused activities that emphasize the functional role of punctuation in reading fluency.

For Curriculum Planners and School Administrators

Curriculum planners and school administrators may strengthen the alignment between reading and writing competencies within the K–12 and MATATAG curricula. Professional development programs may be provided to equip teachers with research-based strategies for integrating punctuation instruction into authentic literacy practices.

For Learners

Learners may be encouraged to engage in purposeful writing and reading activities that develop punctuation awareness. Practicing self-editing and peer-editing may support greater accuracy and reflection in both writing and oral reading.

For Future Researchers

Future researchers may investigate additional factors influencing oral reading fluency, such as vocabulary, decoding skills, and comprehension strategies. Studies using experimental or mixed-method designs, larger samples, and diverse contexts may further validate and extend the findings of this research.

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