

Approaches Employed in Primary Grade Levels in Teaching Reading and Comprehension and its Challenges: A Literature Review

Jomar C. Abellana¹, Vengeline L. Navarro², Daneth Mae N. Uy³, Ariel O. Tinapay⁴

^{1,2,3}Talavera Elementary School, Talavera, Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines, 6038

⁴College of Teacher Education, Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges Inc, Bogo City, Cebu, Philippines, 6010

¹jomarabellana1997@gmail.com, ²navarrovengeline@gmail.com, ³danethmaeuy@gmail.com, ⁴arieltinapay288@gmail.com

Abstract— *The basis for academic success and lifelong learning is strong reading and comprehension abilities. The purpose of this research is to identify the most commonly used approaches in teaching reading and comprehension in primary grade level based on the existing academic literature. Since teachers are aware of the importance of early literacy development, they employ a variety of teaching techniques to meet the requirements and learning preferences of students. The study also intends to look on the Department of Education's initiatives and programs with regards to its goal that every child is a reader at his or her grade level. Finally, the research aims to look into the challenges encountered during the implementation of the approaches in teaching reading and comprehension in the primary grade level.*

Keywords— *Approaches, reading, comprehension, reading programs, primary, elementary, Department of Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent research from UNESCO Institute for Statistics showed that there was great progress has been made that more than 86 percent of the world's population know how to read and write compared to 68 percent in 1979. (UNESCO, 2019) Every school has long aspired to provide a high-quality education, especially when it comes to improving students' reading abilities. Most teachers find it difficult to give their utmost effort when teaching reading. It is quite demanding, and due to the restrictions and reality of classroom life, teachers frequently create mechanical instructions to enhance the educational experience. As a result, teachers must carefully plan out their lessons more. (Salvador & Villacorta, 2019)

One of the most functions of the teaching reading is arguably teaching a student to read. The ability to read opens up a world of chances and possibilities for kids, allowing them to develop, explore new worlds, and learn new ideas. It is critically important to improve young learners' reading comprehension and reading fluency since doing so will have an impact as they advance to higher levels. (Rubin & Traverro, 2022) Furthermore, even though teaching reading is a top priority, some educators who lack specialized training in the subject frequently need assistance. The good news is that educators can use a variety of reading instruction methodologies. (University of San Diego, 2023)

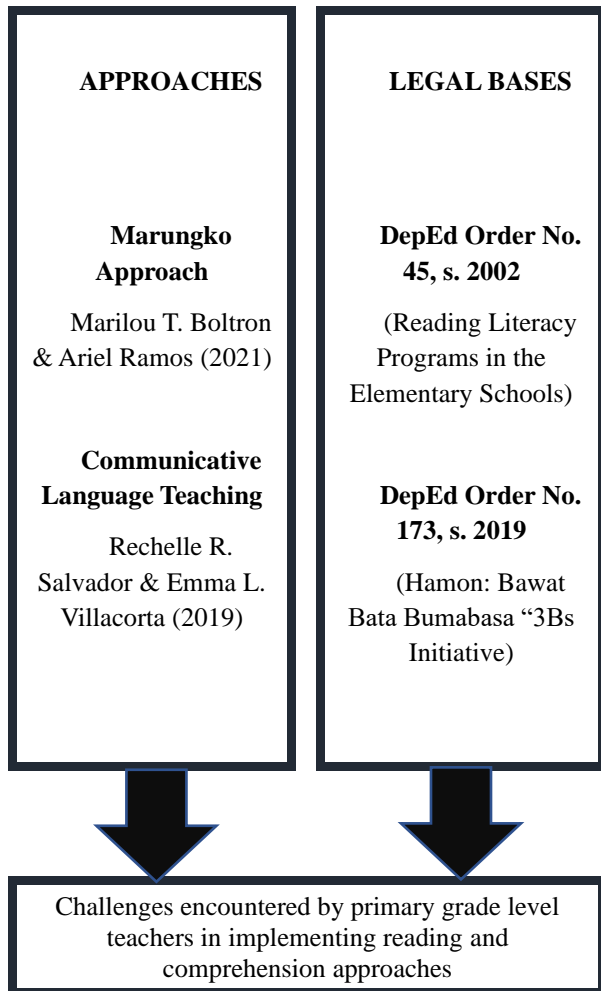
Reading intervention strategies are measures taken to assist pupils who are having some reading difficulties. There are a lot of reasons why students struggle in learning reading, but by

the help of specific intervention strategies, teachers can help these students struggling in reading improve their reading skills. Students frequently have trouble decoding words, poor comprehension skills and low reading fluency. Reading intervention strategies are important and helpful in today's new way of teaching reading to students. Teachers can assist these pupils in developing their reading abilities and becoming effective readers by utilizing specific interventions that are suited to the needs of the individual students. Numerous programs have been put in place in the Philippines to boost students' reading abilities. One of the Department of Education's primary priorities is to improve literacy. This is based on the department's flagship initiative, "Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP)," which seeks to develop reading and writing proficiency in every Filipino child at grade level (DepEd Order Number 14, 2018). (Librea et al., 2023)

According to the 2019 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) results, 91.6 percent of Filipinos aged 10 to 64 were functionally literate. This amounts to around 73.0 million people out of 79.7 million people in the same age range who are regarded as functionally literate. (Mapa, 2020) Despite these findings from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Philippine Statistics Authority, there are still 763 million adults around the world who cannot read or write, with women making up two-thirds of this group. Additionally, 250 million young people around the world are failing to achieve basic reading. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, there was a learning gap that resulted to 617 million children and teenagers were not able to reach the minimum reading levels. (UNESCO, 2019)

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the most commonly used strategies for teaching reading and comprehension in primary level, based on existing academic literature?
- What challenges do primary grade level teachers commonly encounter when implementing reading strategies?



III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is anchored on the following approaches: Marungko Approach and Communicative Language Teaching. In addition, this is also based on the following legal bases: DepEd Order No. 45, s. 2022, Reading Literacy Programs in the Elementary School and DepEd Order No. 173, s. 2019 otherwise known as “Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa, 3Bs Initiative”.

IV. DISCUSSION

Approaches And Legal Bases

Two Filipino teachers in 1967 namely, Nooraihan Ali and Josefina Urbano at the De Los Santos Community School in Marungko, Angat, Bulacan, Philippines were the first to be introduced to the Marungko approach, which is connected to phonics. Laud-Reyno (2014) noted that children are trained to be familiar with the letter sounds of the Filipino alphabet because of this reading strategy. As a result, according to Talley (2017), this was accepted as a Philippine program for phonics instruction designed to enhance the comprehension abilities of beginning readers using the necessary materials.

Using the Marungko reading teaching approach, a study by Boltron and Ramos (2021) sought to identify potential solutions that would be appropriate for solving the problem of

reading illiteracy. The Marungko approach aims to give students in the primary grade the reading abilities they need to raise their reading performance.

The Marungko Approach has recently been utilized as a substitute for a beginning reading curriculum in most public schools in the Philippines. Letter-sound correspondence is taught at the phonemic level in the Marungko Approach. The students must be taught the letters and letter sounds in a specific order. The letters in the Marungko sequence are listed from most to least frequent in the Filipino language. The Marungko method teaches letter-sounds in the following order: m, s, a, i, o, b, e, t, k, l, y, n, g, ng, p, r, d, h, w, c, f, j, q, v, x, z. The Marungko Approach introduces vowels at the beginning of the sequence alongside some consonants, in contrast to English phonics education programs that introduce vowels after the consonants. For instance, the alphabetical order begins with the letters m, s, and a. At this stage, phonemic manipulation, the merging of letter sounds into words is taught. Then, students are urged to create words using these three (3) letters (e.g., "masa," "sama," etc.). For instance, pupils are instructed to read the words ube (purple yam), ubo (cough), uso (modern), and usa (deer) after learning the letter sounds of m, s, a, i, o, b, e, and u. Following the reading of words, children read phrases made up of these letters (for example, ang ubas sa mesa, "grapes on the table") before moving on to sentences made up of letter combinations (for example, "May ubas si Ela," "Ela has grapes."). Additionally, this approach emphasizes the need of sounding out or deciphering as a method of reading instruction. As a result, with this approach to reading, the alphabets are spoken rather than read. The method involves showing the letter, naming it in front of the class, pronouncing it correctly, having the students write the letter repeatedly on the floor, in the air, or on their desks, showing the students pictures whose names begin with the letter being introduced, and having the students say the first letter of each picture. (Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer, 2013)

According to Flores (2014), the Marungko method is a "phono-syllabic" approach. According to Yayen (2018), the letter-sounds are taught in accordance with the phonemic level, when specific patterns of letter sounds are previously taught, the phonemic manipulation of blending sound letters into words is offered, and the students are encouraged to make words using the letters they have learnt from the pattern of letters. The students are then instructed to read the various words that are generated. According to Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer (2013), the words that were eventually produced can be combined to make units of thought in the form of phrases or sentences that will subsequently be read by the students.

An effective substitute for teaching beginning readers the micro-reading skills is the use of the Marungko Approach. This gives teachers of beginning readers a way to eventually turn their students into successful readers. Additionally, by applying the Marungko Approach at the early reading stage, these abilities can be strengthened and made solid bases for more advanced reading abilities. In this way, students will have the necessary reading comprehension abilities, which are essential for every productive person. The learners ultimately

become great assets of the nation since they have acquired the highest level of comprehension skills. (Boltron and Ramos, 2021)

Through the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), reading can be meaningful and enjoyable. Because classroom performance is not only managed by the teacher but also by the students in CLT, learning is more student-centered. Games, role plays, and discussions in groups are designed to simulate real-life communication situations and provide students a chance to practice speaking and listening to one another. The teacher's primary responsibility is to facilitate language learning by setting up a supportive atmosphere for it. Regarding textbooks, emphasis is placed on authentic materials that a learner could come across in everyday life, such as menus, timetables, letters, newspapers, advertising, and the like. (Salvador and Villacorta, 2019)

Using task-based activities that encourage language learners to negotiate using whatever resources they have at any given level of language competency, CLT aims to facilitate meaningful communication between students and instructors, primarily in the target language, according to Weatherman (2013).

Munera's (2014) study, which said that the main goal of CLT is to assist students attain native-like pronunciation or faultless grammar, provided support for this. This implies that the development of a learner's communicative skill is how the success of learning a foreign language is determined. Some speaking exercises let students recite dialogue from textbooks or are made to help them practice speaking in particular ways. Although there is a role for these passive speaking techniques, active speaking ought to be promoted. Active speaking entails encouraging pupils to reflect as they develop their responses.

Regarding their roles in the learning process, students in communicative language classrooms are described in Viet Thue Assignment (2015) as active learners. The responsibilities that teachers and students must play in a CLT class must be extremely collaborative and engaging. Furthermore, to create a helpful and productive learning environment, teachers and students must understand their respective roles and adapt them appropriately to the various teaching and learning methods.

According to Salvador and Villacorta (2019), that there are seven strategies employed in CLT, namely: information gaps, games, language exchange, role plays, interviews, pair work and learning by teaching.

Informational gaps in the curriculum provided a chance for classroom-based natural learning. Instead of sticking to the lesson's goal selection, students were quite eager to use language and grammar that they were already familiar with. In the current study, an information gap activity required students to chat to one another to find the knowledge they needed to complete the task. The technique offered a chance for prolonged speaking practice, resembled real conversation, had high motivation, and called for supporting abilities like meaning clarification and rephrasing. Draw, notice the difference, jigsaw reading and listening, and split dictations are examples of common information gaps exercises.

A game is simply a type of play that engages learners and stimulates their senses, all the elements that teachers want students to experience in the classroom. One of the CLT strategies, it is a fantastic tactile tool for igniting students' interest in learning. It also heightens interaction by fostering one-of-a-kind learning opportunities and provides opportunities for various forms of collaboration. In the present study, the games consumed twenty minutes and the discussion proper consumed twenty minutes.

The students can communicate with one another by acting out and explaining the readings they have done through language exchange. In this study, charades and the use of forbidden terms were some of the language exchange activities that the students engaged in.

Through controlled interactions with other students, role play is a technique that enables students to explore actual situations to gain experience and test out various tactics in a safe setting. Students can either play a role that is similar to their own or the opposite part of the dialogue, depending on the focus of the exercise. Role plays were performed to help the students gain and be encouraged to build an awareness of the problem from the opposite point of view to create the opportunity of major learning.

Reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills can all be developed through interviews. Students pay close attention to the speaker's main points as well as the details that support them while they ask questions and take notes. Additionally, this will assist students improve their understanding abilities. The value of interviews was established by demonstrating the connection between interviewer and interviewee. An interview can gather more pertinent data that will be useful for the reading comprehension test. Interviews were conducted to broaden the scope of the students' learning and to urge them to create two-way communication.

Playing games and rehearsing model dialogues in reading and language are both excellent uses of pair work. Individual students receive a lot of speaking time when working in pairs. When students complete exercises together, they frequently feel more confident than when they do so when working alone.

Through learning by teaching, students were able to plan and deliver a lesson or a portion of a lesson. It should not be mistaken with student presentations or lectures because students not only impart certain duties to their peers, but also select their own teaching strategies for doing so. Teaching others about the subject or a selection is a good technique to aid in their learning. This compels the student-teacher to review the subject and helps him retain it. Explaining the subject to their peers who are struggling with the lessons is one informal teaching strategy.

According to the findings of Salvador and Villacorta's (2019) study on the relationship between communicative language teaching and students' reading comprehension, results showed that there is a highly significant connection between the role-playing technique and students' reading comprehension.

The DepEd Order No. 45, s. 2002 (Reading Literacy Program in the Elementary Schools) stated that no student

would be promoted to the next higher grade unless they showed mastery of fundamental reading skills at that grade level, ensuring that every child is a successful reader by the end of Grade III is one of the Department of Education's key goals (Dep. Ed Order No. 45, s. 2002). The department has implemented the "Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP)" and to support it, PHILIRI (PHILIPPINE INFORMAL READING INVENTORY) and other reading initiatives were developed. These initiatives aim to assess students' reading proficiency levels and help them become independent readers. In support of the E.C.A.R.P., the department released Dep. Ed Memo. No. 37, s. 2010, (Guidelines for the Use of Downloaded Funds in Support of the National Implementation of Every Child A Reader Program) to help with the implementation of the program's numerous activities.

The policy also states that every encouragement and support should be given to help the students learn to read. Schools are therefore required to create a School-Based Reading Program that includes assessing students' reading proficiency, identifying those who require further reading instruction, and implementing effective strategies to increase reading comprehension. It is intended to provide primary school students with strategic reading and writing abilities to help them become young readers and writers who are independent. Additionally, it offers instructors a full year of training to help them become independent thinkers with a variety of skills. Therefore, it is intended that no student should advance to the next grade level before demonstrating mastery of the fundamental reading abilities for that grade level. Because of the DepEd's "No read, no move" policy, teaching students to read should be everyone's top priority, especially in the primary grades. (Merto, 2019)

The Department of Education published Memorandum No. 173, Series of 2019 on "Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (A 3B's initiative)" in which it outlines how it continuously carries out its mandate to produce accountable, productive citizens who are outfitted with crucial competencies and skills for lifelong learning. Schools must take responsibility for it. To make every learner a proficient reader, reading instruction is being provided to students nationwide. There are several methods that schoolteachers can support children's reading readiness. Making reading enjoyable for them is a popular and successful strategy. It can be accomplished by singing, talking about the narrative, reading to the kid, and letting the child read the story aloud to the teacher. It can also be accomplished by encouraging the child, regardless of how stupid the child's reading sound may appear, and by playing games that test the child's word pronunciation. Playing a game of this nature will sharpen the child's memory and aid in word distinction. (Alauya and Basmayor, 2023)

Additionally, reading comprehension instruction is important for teaching reading. For no other reason than that without comprehension, even when a child can read, in the lack of comprehension, s/he is still regarded as a struggling reader. Teachers must emphasize specific comprehension strategies, such as identifying story structure, monitoring comprehension, connecting to prior knowledge, predicting, asking, and answering questions, creating mental images, and

summarizing, in order to maintain students' ability to visualize reading comprehension. These do in fact provide a route. Accordingly, teachers must provide reading assessment to meet the needs and expectations of all students, especially those who struggle with reading and require ongoing reading remediation to become proficient readers anchored in accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. (Merto, 2019)

Challenges

A study of Librea et al., 2023 on the factors that affect the low reading literacy skills in Philippines' elementary schools which could be considered as the challenges in implementing the various reading programs. Researchers produced codes were analyzed using thematic analysis in seven themes. The constructed codes are the following: (1) lack of mastery of reading elements; (2) inclusion of learners-at-risk; (3) lack of reading enthusiasm; (4) teachers' incompetence; (5) shortage in reading materials and facilities; (6) parental involvement; and (7) students' health.

1) Lack of Mastery of Reading Elements

Young learners' fluency can be increased by reading proficiency, but comprehension is unaffected. Sensation, perception, comprehension, application, and integration are all involved in the intricate process of reading. An individual's reading ability is significantly influenced by their vocabulary, decoding speed, and oral skills. Lack of proficiency in reading components like phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonics, weak word recognition and vocabulary, lack of fluency abilities, and inability to comprehend what is being read are all ascribed to poor reading skills. (Gilakjani et. al, 2016)

2) Inclusion of Learners-at-Risk

Learners-at-risk are individuals who are more likely to experience academic failure or leave school. Schools frequently place at-risk students in regular classes without addressing their reading needs, which results in an increase in struggling readers. Poor reading abilities are influenced by the presence of learners-at-risk, nonreaders, LSEs, and frequent absences. The ability to read is crucial for academic success, and fostering reading environments that are tailored to individual requirements can assist in overcoming these difficulties. These difficulties can be overcome by using the proper methodology, instructional techniques, and individual variations. (Tomas et. al., 2021)

3) Lack of Reading Enthusiasm

The majority of Filipino students struggle with reading comprehension, which is essential for their growth and success. Young readers frequently lack motivation, which results in low self-esteem and unwillingness to assistance. The environment has an impact on reading as well since some children don't have the opportunity to explore the world of words and books, which decreases their enthusiasm in learning. Weaker performance in Science, Math, and English is a result of subpar reading and understanding abilities. Learners cannot acquire efficient reading skills if they lack desire and enthusiasm in reading. (Tomas et al., 2021)

4) Teachers' Incompetence

Although teachers play a significant part in the educational system, their use can impede reading literacy (Cabalo & Cabalo, 2019). The Department of Education introduces numerous initiatives, however their execution may be hampered by teachers' short cuts and a lack of connections between prior knowledge and new abilities. Reading literacy is influenced by experience as well because inexperienced teachers frequently don't know how to educate. With practice, teachers become more effective, and the range of their tools relies on their degree of education. (Cabalo & Cabalo, 2019) Reading interventions do not go beyond schools, and it is frequently difficult to track students' development. Teachers must be qualified specialists, receive ongoing training, be driven to improve, let children read on their own, and use accessible tools and resources to increase reading literacy. (Mule, 2014).

5) Shortage in Reading Materials and Facilities

In order to encourage students to improve their English reading skills, research suggests that teachers should make connections between independent reading and daily living. This is especially important in a safe and welcoming reading environment with comfortable seats and plenty of reading chances. For beginning readers and nonreaders, however, there aren't enough picture books and stories in many schools. The lack of English reading competency may be attributed to a lack of financing or a lack of textbooks, but it is important to stress the value of practice and a variety of English materials to avoid boredom and advance reading skills. (Tomas et al., 2021)

6) Parental Involvement

Due to the fact that they act as role models for their children, parents have a significant influence in their development, added to the time of epidemic and viewed as an unprecedented occurrence, many educational institutions were unprepared for the subsequent events, producing much uncertainty and disruption. (Tinapay & Tirol, 2021) Parental involvement in a child's reading development can have a big impact on the child's interest in and attitude toward reading, which improves reading proficiency. Poor reading abilities can be influenced by factors like lack of follow-up, reading attitude, and family literacy environment. More parental involvement in their kids' reading education can result in high-quality learning opportunities and improved reading skills. A child's ability to read is significantly influenced by their home literacy environment, which includes shared reading habits, exposure to books, and technological literacy. (Mudzielwana, 2014).

7) Students' Health

Having all the socioemotional, physical, and cerebral prerequisites for reading means being prepared to read. Children with mental imbalances may have trouble understanding and remembering what they read. Their mental health may be impacted by elements like poverty, dysfunctional homes, heredity, and bullying. The learning process and reading development of young children depend greatly on their physical and mental health. For effective learning and good advancement, health problems that affect reading abilities must be addressed. (Putri, 2013)

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the approaches employed in teaching reading and comprehension to primary grade level play a vital role in shaping a student's foundational literacy skills. Education professionals work to develop stimulating and efficient learning settings that accommodate different learning preferences and needs. A complete educational experience that fosters the development of both decoding and comprehension abilities uses phonics-based approaches, whole language strategies, and balanced literacy procedures.

Primary learners gain crucial decoding abilities through phonics training, which helps them understand the connection between letters and sounds. Early grade readers gain self-assurance from this technique and are given the freedom to work through challenging terms on their own. The context and significance of texts are emphasized in whole language approaches, which foster a love of reading and an awareness of the larger communication process.

By using comprehension techniques like anticipating, summarizing, asking questions, and connecting, we can develop our critical thinking and metacognitive abilities. With the help of these techniques, students may more easily decipher texts, draw conclusions, and connect what they learn to their own lives and the larger community.

The uniqueness of each student's educational journey must be acknowledged by teachers, who must modify their teaching strategies to accommodate a range of learning styles and level of understanding. The most advantageous outcomes are produced by a combination of approaches catered to students' varied talents, which is something that must be understood because no single strategy is inherently superior. Teachers can improve students' learning experiences by using technology, interactive activities, and real-world contexts. This fosters not only reading competency but also analytical and critical thinking abilities.

Additionally, these strategies are more successful when teachers, parents, and communities work together to support young learners as they develop their reading skills and confidence.

The methods used to teach reading at the primary school level will evolve along with educational research. Continual evaluation, adaptation, and a dedication to evidence-based approaches are still essential for improving and modernizing teaching strategies. The ultimate objective is to provide young students with the knowledge and excitement necessary to explore the world through written word, laying a strong foundation for success and lifelong learning.

In order to establish a solid foundation in literacy, the primary grade level approaches to teaching reading and comprehension should be seen as a dynamic combination of strategies. By using these many strategies, educators help the developing minds of their students develop a deep love of reading, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

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