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Enhancing the Reading Profile of Struggling Learners through Marungko Approach

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to enhance the reading profile of struggling learners through the Marungko Approach. This approach is based on phonics and highlights the relationship between sounds and letters, making it a valuable resource for early readers and those facing reading challenges. The research design employed was the one-group pretest-posttest design. A total of 23 struggling learners participated in the study, classified as emergent readers in grade 1 based on the results of a Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) conducted at Sto. Niño Integrated School, Sorsogon City. The study utilized the Wilcoxon signed rank test as a statistical treatment. Results revealed a significant improvement in post-test scores compared to pre-test results, indicating that the Marungko Approach effectively enhanced the reading profile of struggling learners. The finding suggests that utilizing the Marungko approach in reading intervention effectively supports struggling learners, leading to greater engagement and a more positive attitude towards reading.

Keywords: reading profile, struggling learners, Marungko approach

I.   INTRODUCTION

Literacy serves as the foundation for all academic knowledge and skills. Effective literacy education provides essential skills needed for success (Smith, 2023). According to the OECD (2019), reading literacy involves comprehending, assessing, utilizing, and interacting with written text. This enables individuals to actively engage in society, achieve their goals, and develop their knowledge and potential. In our rapidly changing society, cultivating fluent readers among learners is both a significant undertaking and an urgent necessity. As information becomes more widely available and technology advances, the demand for excellent literacy skills across various areas of life continues to grow. Proficiency in reading is crucial; however, many learners struggle to reach appropriate reading levels. This underscores the importance of prioritizing literacy education to ensure that individuals can thrive in an increasingly complex informational landscape, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

The state of illiteracy continues to be a significant issue in education worldwide. Before the pandemic, over 260 million children lacked foundational literacy skills. This number surged to 1.6 billion during the pandemic (Kay, 2024). Moreover, The State of Global Learning Poverty (2022) revealed that 85 percent of Filipino students are experiencing difficulty in reading simple texts. It also revealed that even before COVID-19, the world was already facing a learning crisis, with nearly 6 out of every 10 ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries unable to read and understand a simple story. And yet COVID-19 became a great contributing factor to learning losses that deepened the crisis. Furthermore, the 2022 results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicate that the Philippines' performance remains below the average of participating countries. The recent PISA results reflect similar average scores to those from the 2018 assessment across mathematics, reading, and science. Consequently, the Philippines ranked among the top six in the list of the ten worst countries for reading in the 2022 PISA results (OECD, 2023). These statistics highlight the persistent challenge of illiteracy and reveal a concerning trend in the Philippines, where educational outcomes have stagnated, contributing to the country's low ranking. The increase in illiteracy rates during the pandemic suggests a broader global crisis in education that needs urgent attention. Addressing illiteracy is crucial not only for individual development but also for the overall progress of nations. The ongoing challenges highlighted by the PISA results underscore the necessity for comprehensive educational reforms and targeted interventions to improve literacy skills and outcomes on a global scale.

The DepEd Order No. 27, s. 2022 aims for efficient evaluation that serves as a strategy for learning recovery and preparation for the baseline system assessment (DepEd, 2022). A specific tool that falls under this initiative is the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), designed for primary learners. This tool

helps teachers identify the reading profiles of their learners, allowing them to provide appropriate support and develop effective reading instructional strategies. Additionally, the CRLA addresses a critical gap in language assessment during the primary levels, particularly for learners transitioning to their Mother Tongue, as there were previously no standardized tools available for this purpose (Rakusin & Perez, 2020). By implementing these assessments, the educational system aims to enhance reading proficiency early on, which is essential for the overall academic success of learners and the improvement of literacy rates in the country.

To effectively address poor reading performance among learners, it is crucial to identify the root causes of their challenges. Kreitz (2015) highlights that several factors can hinder a learner's ability to read, including difficulties in social development, emotional and behavioral issues, and cognitive delays. Additionally, Maffea (2020) notes that insufficient resources in classrooms can prevent learners from achieving their full potential due to a lack of necessary support. Understanding these underlying issues is vital, as they not only affect reading skills but can also impact overall learning and development. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of literacy challenges, educators can implement targeted interventions that cater to individual needs. Addressing these literacy challenges is essential to ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to maximize their potential and overcome obstacles to their education.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is actively working to enhance the reading performance of Filipino learners. The agency places a high priority on establishing a strong literacy foundation among students, which is crucial for overall academic success. This commitment is demonstrated through various reading programs, including the recently launched "Catch-Up Fridays," which began in January 2024, in line with DepEd Memorandum No. 1, s. 2024 (DepEd, 2024). By focusing on literacy, the DepEd acknowledges that reading skills are fundamental to learners' future learning and achievements. The introduction of specific programs like Catch-Up Fridays indicates a proactive approach to r addressing learning gaps that may have developed during the academic year. This initiative aligns with the broader goal of improving the overall quality of education in the Philippines, as literacy is a key component that impacts learner's performance across all subjects.

As such, it is essential to consider that the journey in reading is a continuous process that requires ongoing support, assessment, and adaptation to meet the unique needs of every individual. The immediate response to the reading status of learners will positively change their reading ability. According to Smith (2015), it is essential to implement intervention programs to help struggling readers become good readers and to determine which instruction is most appropriate for them. Moreover, Richard-Tutor et al. (2016) highlight those tailored interventions, which are responsive to the unique requirements of each individual, can greatly impact students' learning outcomes. In fact, Bernarte & Digo (2024) created a multimodal reading model to assist teachers in conducting interventions using various reading aids to improve the reading skills of the learners. Addressing literacy gaps through relevant and specific reading intervention strategies is crucial for enhancing the quality of education. These strategies not only help in developing good readers but also equip learners with essential knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the 21st century. Ultimately, focusing on individual support and intervention in reading fosters a more effective educational environment that enables all learners to succeed and become proficient readers.

Reading intervention is essential for supporting the academic success of struggling learners. The DepEd Philippines launched an initiative titled *"Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumasa"* through DepEd Order No. 173, Series of 2019. This program aims to enhance literacy among Filipino learners, specifically targeting learners in Grades 1 to 3 to help them become independent readers. The initiative seeks to address the need for more effective reading programs to improve literacy rates in the country (DepEd, 2019). Moreover, DepEd Order No. 45, Series of 2002, mandates a school-based reading program for elementary schools, focusing on early assessment, diagnosis of reading difficulties, and providing targeted intervention to improve reading comprehension. This was introduced to ensure that no child would be left without basic literacy skills at the end of the school year (DepEd, 2002). As such, educators should approach struggling readers as opportunities to explore effective teaching methodologies, rather than viewing them as burdens. The progress of these students in reading is greatly influenced by their learning strategies and the teaching approaches employed (Pocaan et al., 2022). Implementing reading interventions through various approaches can enhance student learning across diverse settings, providing essential support for struggling learners (Galilea et al., 2023). Therefore, implementing targeted reading interventions is crucial in creating equitable opportunities for all learners, ultimately leading to improved literacy rates and academic success among Filipino learners.

Meanwhile, the Marungko Approach is a reading method specifically designed to aid beginning readers. This approach focuses on the early reading needs of learners by helping them understand the relationship between letters and sounds. This understanding enables quick word recognition (Santos & De Vera, 2020). When applied in teaching and supplemented with multimedia tools during the initial reading stage, the Marungko Approach aids in acquiring essential reading competencies (Ubagan & Osias, 2024). The approach has been recognized as an effective means of improving reading performance in the early stages of learning.

Establishing a solid foundation in reading is crucial for developing skills that enhance reading comprehension, which is vital for success in higher levels of education (Boltron & Ramos, 2021). By emphasizing early reading skills and their importance in recognizing words quickly, the Marungko Approach supports learners in building a foundation for future academic success.

At Sto. Niño Integrated School, first graders from diverse backgrounds are struggling with reading. This situation is common as they are just beginning their formal literacy education. Many of these learner's experience difficulty in recognizing the sounds of each letter, leading to a lack of confidence and the belief that reading is too difficult. This hesitation becomes a challenge that often hinders their ability to read words and comprehend, resulting in a low reading profile. These challenges highlight the need for the Marungko Approach as an early reading instruction and intervention for Grade 1 learners. This makes the researchers motivated to conduct the study to enhance the reading profiles of the learners.

II.   OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to enhance the reading profile of struggling learners through the Marungko Approach in Sto. Niño Integrated School, Division of Sorsogon City for the school year 2023-2024. It specifically describes the Marungko Approach as a reading intervention, discusses the reading profile of the learners in the pretest and posttest, and explains the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing the reading profile of struggling learners.

III.   METHODOLOGY

The study employed a One-Group Pre-Post Test Design where a single group is measured before and after the intervention to achieve the objectives set for this study. The participants in this study were 23 struggling learners from Sto. Niño Integrated School was identified as an emerging level based on their pre-test results from the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), which served as the assessment tool for this study. The CRLA is a standardized literacy assessment tool used by the Department of Education (DepEd) to evaluate reading levels among primary learners. Learners with an emerging reading profile were chosen because they require structured intervention and support to achieve a reading level appropriate for their grade. Additionally, this study utilized Marungko Approach as a primary instrument during the conduct of the reading intervention. Furthermore, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test is the statistical treatment used by the researcher to analyze the pretest and post-test results of grade one learners to determine if there is a significant difference in the learners' reading profile on the use of the Marungko Approach.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the Marungko Approach as a reading intervention, the reading profile of the learners before and after the reading intervention, and the effectiveness of the reading intervention.

1. **Marungko Approach as Reading Intervention**

Conducting classroom reading interventions has an immediate and significant impact on learners. Early identification of reading difficulties allows for timely intervention, preventing the development of more severe issues later on. These interventions provide personalized support tailored to individual needs, fostering a supportive learning environment that builds confidence and strengthens the relationship between teachers and learners. According to Voyager Sopris Learning (2024), reading interventions involve explicit instruction and supportive scaffolding, using a targeted and direct approach to reading. These programs delve into the five vital components of reading: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The early identification of reading difficulties is crucial, as it enables teachers to address issues before they escalate. By concentrating on the essential components of reading, these programs ensure that learners receive comprehensive support. Implementing effective reading interventions is essential for fostering literacy skills and creating a foundation for future academic success, ultimately benefiting the whole education system.

The reading intervention using the Marungko Approach was implemented over almost two months, with two sessions held each day to optimize learner engagement and retention. Each session was scheduled for 20 minutes in the morning following class and 30 minutes in the afternoon. This structure allowed for frequent, short sessions spread over a longer period, which aligns with several educational theories emphasizing that shorter sessions are effective. The decision to implement shorter sessions was influenced by both the limited time available and the principles of Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) established by John Sweller in 1990 as mentioned in the study by (Lopez, 2024). This theory asserts that working memory has a limited capacity; when it becomes overloaded, learning efficiency decreases. Additionally, Ebbinghaus (1985) focuses on short and focused learning modules, delivering concepts in a chunk. Therefore, integrating this microlearning to CLT through a short session by chucking the needed information and skills helps learners optimize learning

experiences, leading to better knowledge and retention. According to the study, microlearning modules were highly effective, improving knowledge retention, engagement, and learning outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of balanced instructional design aligned with cognitive load principles, with microlearning emerging as a potent tool for efficient learning. By applying these theories, the Marungko Approach not only adheres to research-backed educational strategies but also enhances learning outcomes by accommodating the cognitive needs of learners.

The low reading performance observed in struggling learners during the pre-test highlighted the need for support and intervention to improve their reading skills. Significant progress has been made through targeted interventions for struggling learners. While the extent of improvement varies among individuals, each learner has shown noticeable differences in their reading capabilities. The Marungko Approach has likely contributed to these enhancements by providing a structured method for letter recognition and blending. Observations from the reading intervention indicated that learners enjoyed the process of sounding out letters repeatedly. The Marungko method introduces letters in order of frequency, beginning with the most commonly used. When vowels were introduced alongside consonants like M, S, and A, learners became more motivated as they could blend these letters to form simple words. Once they mastered these letters, the teacher gradually introduced additional ones based on Marungko's sequencing. The Marungko Approach demonstrated that this phonics-based method is suitable for learners. According to Laud-Reyno (2014), the Marungko Approach helps learners recognize the letter sounds of the Filipino alphabet. This approach has been adopted as a phonics teaching program in the Philippines, aimed at enhancing the comprehension skills of beginning readers by providing necessary resources (Talley, 2017).

Introducing the sounds of letters first helps learners develop confidence in reading, leading to simultaneous reading and comprehension. The Marungko Approach is an effective strategy for creating confident and independent readers. This method positively impacts learners' reading skills and enhances their overall reading profiles. Based on the observation during the reading implementation, the learners are actively focused and engaged in the reading activities that results in requesting more reading materials. The excitement felt by these learners urges them to think and read fast. This intervention mode develops the learners ability to read and to realize that reading is a fun activity. This intervention developed and activated the learner's senses, enhancing their sensory awareness and engagement with the learning materials. The teacher's observations underscore the potential of the Marungko Approach in reading interventions. The effectiveness of Marungko is supported by the significant improvement in learners' decoding skills, which facilitates to greater ease in reading. This aligns with the study by Boltron and Ramos (2021), which demonstrated that the Marungko Approach effectively develops foundational reading competencies, such as identifying letter names and sounds, discriminating initial sounds, reading familiar words, and reading oral passages before progressing to higher levels. Additionally, a study by Alauya and Basmayor (2023) further affirms the Marungko Approach's effectiveness in enhancing beginning reading performance among learners.

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2. Reading Profile of Learners before and after Intervention

The learners' reading profile was determined through the Modified Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) which comprises two parts. Part 1 assessment evaluates learners' phonemic awareness, ability to identify rhyming words, and sentence reading, while Part 2 assessment measures fluency and comprehension. The CRLA assessment of grade 1 has a developmental progression in reading profile; namely, emergent is the lowest reading profile, next is developing, then transitioning, and at grade ready is the highest reading profile. The changes in the performance of struggling learners in the pre-test and post-test determined the enhancement of their reading profiles. Analyzing the changes in reading scores reveals the programs' impact on the learners.

Table 1 reveals that Grade 1 learners numbered 1 to 23 had an Emergent reading profile in the pretest. This means that learners in both assessments, parts 1 and 2, have a reading level of Full Refresher and Full Intervention. However, the reading intervention led to a significant improvement in their post-test results as shown in the same table. Notably, three learners (6, 15, and 20) improved their reading profile to Grade Ready, six (5, 8, 17, 19, 22, and 23) are transitioning, and the rest are now Developing.

Learners No.	Pre-Test Score		Reading Profile	Post-Test Score		Reading Profile
	Part 1	Part 2		Part 1	Part 2	

Table 1: Reading Profile of Primary Learners in the Pre-test and Post-test

As reflected in the table along the pre-test, most of the learners obtained zero scores in the part 2 assessment. This means that during the pre-test, most of the learners are experiencing difficulty in recognizing

letters and sounds; therefore, the learner hardly finishes the assessment. The learners did not attain the score needed to proceed with the part 2 assessment. Obtaining a low score in part 1 showed that learners have difficulty in reading. These learners have not yet developed the foundation skills needed in reading. This finding is parallel with the results obtained from a study conducted by Zapanta (2023) using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment tool. The assessment was carried out by teachers in the early grades indicated that many learners are experiencing frustration with reading. Most of these students fall into the "full refresher" category, which corresponds to an emergent reading profile. The results were quite low, as many learners struggled to recognize even the most basic reading skills. This suggests that students have significant difficulties with letter and sound recognition.

Meanwhile, post-test results showed that the learners already had scored in the part 2 assessment. It was also revealed that learners got high scores in the part 1 assessment, which automatically helped learners proceed to the part 2 assessment. It is worth noting that the learners have improved in their reading performance, which was reflected in their reading profile. In addition, the post-test results imply that the learner can now read more passages, commit fewer mistakes, and answer several questions with correct answers, which was evident in the part 2 assessment result. This means that the learner can now read and comprehend the story. Likewise, it can be gleaned that there is a significant change in their post-test reading profile. From emergent, these learners are now in development, some are in transitioning and others are in an 'at grade-ready' reading profile. These reading behaviors and changes can be attributed to the reading method implemented during the reading intervention. The current study is similar to the article along the effectiveness of CRLA in bridging the gap in reading level and academic performance of grade one pupils in the mother tongue (Effectiveness of CRLA, 2023). The study analyzes the result of CRLA which revealed a decline in learners' reading profiles. In response to this low reading proficiency exacerbated by the pandemic, teachers implemented intervention strategies designed to enhance the students' reading levels. By the end of the school year, significant improvements in the learners' reading abilities were observed as a result of these interventions. Therefore, the targeted interventions by the teachers contributed positively to the students' progress in their reading profiles.

The above result demonstrates the significant impact of implementing the Marungko approach in the reading intervention for grade 1 learners. This result matched what Jaranilla & Dacanay (2024) found when they compared different reading approaches. They found that the Claveria approach made 38.5% of learners' independent readers, while the Marungko approach made 42%. The study suggests that educators can choose between different approaches, such as Marungko and Claveria, considering resource availability, pedagogical preferences, and contextual considerations. Notably, the absence of non-readers in both approaches indicates that all pupils have begun developing foundational reading skills, which highlights their progress in literacy development. Following the introduction of the Marungko approach to beginning reading the results in the study of Boltron & Ramos (2021), revealing that the learners exhibited a remarkable transformation in their reading competencies, elevating them from an average level to an impressive above-average standard. This progress was evident across several vital aspects of reading, including the ability to identify letter names, recognize letter sounds, identify initial sounds, read familiar words, and read oral passages. Furthermore, according to the findings of Tamba & Garces, (2024), Marungko Approach is among the best strategies for teaching beginning reading. Instructors are encouraged to implement this method for Grade 1 learners and for those struggling with reading in other grade levels. This approach is particularly beneficial for beginning readers. The use of the Marungko approach in reading intervention can lead to improvement in teaching reading and literacy development of the learners. This approach captures the interest and learning style of the learners, encouraging them to become independent and confident readers.

3. **Effectiveness of the Reading Intervention**

To describe the effectiveness of the reading intervention, the pre-test performance of grade 1 learners was subjected to a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to test the difference. Table 2 shows the difference in the pretest and posttest performance of grade 1 learners.

Table 2: Difference between the pre-and post-test performance of the grade one learners

Statistical Bases	Part 1	Part 2
Computed t-value	228.5	528
Decision on Ho	Reject	Reject
Conclusion	Significant	Significant

Note α = 0.05   *critical value =* 73   *n=3*

The analysis of the assessment results indicates that the reading intervention using the Marungko Approach significantly improved learners' reading profile. The computed t-values for both parts of the assessment were greater than the critical value of 73 at a 0.05 level of significance. This leads to the rejection of the null hypotheses, indicating a significant difference between learners' performance in the pretest and post-test. Specifically, the scores in the post-test were higher than those in the pretest, suggesting a substantial improvement in the learners' reading profile. The increase in post-test scores reflects the effectiveness of the reading intervention implemented through the Marungko Approach. This approach was tailored to meet the learners' needs, ensuring its continued impact throughout the intervention process. Research supports these findings; Graham et al. (2018) showed that reading interventions can enhance reading performance. Moreover, Wanzek et al. (2018) found that early reading interventions significantly benefitted struggling readers in kindergarten through third grade. In addition, Lovett et al. (2017) revealed that early intervention was particularly advantageous, resulting in improvements almost twice as significant as those seen in children who received later intervention.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that reading intervention using the Marungko Approach is a promising strategy for supporting struggling learners. Achieving non-emergent reading profiles and the increase in post-test scores indicate that the Marungko Approach effectively improved the reading profile of learners. Implementing the Marungko Approach as a reading intervention can significantly contribute to the successful implementation of the reading program. Therefore, it is recommended that reading intervention be integrated into regular classrooms to ensure that all learners will benefit from the effective practices. Schools should also have continuous monitoring and assessment on the use of the Marungko Approach, and DepEd should provide training on effective reading intervention strategies. Moreover, future researchers may evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the reading intervention and how this intervention meets the needs of diverse learners.

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