

The reading remediation program of Pareja Integrated School: Its impact on the reading ability of the pupils

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ABSTRACT

Reading is fundamental and a complex process. With that in mind, this study analyzed the reading remediation program of Pareja Integrated School and its impact on the reading ability of the 45 pupils from grades 1-3. The study used a quantitative descriptive research design with a survey questionnaire as the data gathering instrument and utilized Fluency Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) to determine the reading competency of the participants. The study revealed that after modular distance learning, many students struggled with reading. The Remedial Reading Program of the school helped the students improve their reading skills since it provided them with the necessary support and guidance. Also, students were motivated and showed positive learning behavior toward the program, resulting in improved reading skills. The student's level of entry competency in reading was significantly different from the level of reading competency in the 2nd quarter after the pupils attended reading remediation. In conclusion, remedial classes at the school positively affected the reading skills of the students. It is recommended to support the remedial reading teacher by providing them with resources, seminars, workshops, and more time to plan the program.

Keywords: reading, remediation, reading ability of pupils

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a complex cognitive process that involves perceiving and comprehending written symbols to derive meaning from text. It requires interpreting contextual elements rooted in an author's ideas, emotions, or experiences, making it a multifaceted skill influenced by motivation, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. The brain plays a central role in orchestrating these strategies and mental activities, highlighting the cognitive demands of reading (Cadiz-Gabejan & Quirino, 2021). Teaching reading comprehension, therefore, presents

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a persistent challenge for both teachers and learners, as it remains one of the most intricate skills to master. Although reading is a daily necessity and a fundamental skill for personal growth and achievement, many learners continue to struggle with its acquisition during their formative years.

The difficulties in reading comprehension became more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies revealed that children demonstrated low English reading skills and that their interest in reading declined significantly (Qanash et al., 2020). Stanford researchers (2021) further noted that second and third graders lagged approximately 30 percent behind expected levels in reading fluency. Such disruptions underscore the fragility of literacy development, especially under conditions of educational and social instability. In the case of Pareja Integrated School, attempts to mitigate these challenges through short remedial reading sessions lasting only 15 to 20 minutes proved inadequate. The brevity of the intervention, combined with minimal parental support at home and teachers' demanding workloads, restricted its effectiveness. This reality was reflected in the results of the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT), which revealed poor reading skills among Grades 1 to 3 students.

The Philippine context further emphasizes the urgency of this problem. Large numbers of students fail to meet national and international benchmarks for literacy, with results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealing that approximately 80 percent of Filipino students did not reach the minimum proficiency level in reading. Such deficiencies in reading and comprehension skills adversely affect performance in other core subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science. Recognizing this, educators across the country have worked to provide remedial support, while the Department of Education (DepEd) has initiated several national programs to strengthen literacy. Former Secretary Leonor Briones (2019) underscored the mandate of schools to support students in achieving reading proficiency, promoting initiatives such as "Hamon: Bawa't Bata Bumasa" (3Bs). This program enhances the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), designed to help learners become proficient and independent readers.

Building on these efforts, current Education Secretary and Vice President Sara Duterte has pledged to prioritize literacy and numeracy programs. She emphasized aligning the curriculum with national and international standards, supported by research and consultation with specialists (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, n.d.). Among the proposed reforms is the streamlining of the curriculum for kindergarten through third grade, reducing the number of subjects from seven to five, thereby giving greater focus to foundational literacy and numeracy, especially for disadvantaged learners (Sthapak & Sawlani, 2024). These reforms highlight the government's recognition of literacy as the cornerstone of lifelong learning and academic success.

Given these pressing challenges, the present study seeks to refocus the reading remediation program at Pareja Integrated School and assess its impact on students' reading fluency. By grounding the intervention in Vygotsky's scaffolding theory, the study highlights the importance of guided support from teachers and parents in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Through structured and gradually diminishing assistance, learners are empowered to progress from dependence to independence in reading. The use of the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) in this context provides a systematic means of identifying entry-level reading skills, tailoring interventions under ECARP, and monitoring progress. In this way, the research aims not only to address immediate reading deficiencies but also to inform the development of an action plan that enhances long-term reading proficiency and nurtures students' learning behaviors, such as engagement, motivation, and confidence in literacy.

Statement of the problem

This study investigated the reading remediation program and its impact on the reading ability of the pupils of Pareja Integrated School. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following sub questions:

1. What is the entry-level competency of the pupils in reading?
2. What is the level of reading competency of the pupils in the second quarter?
3. What pupils' attitudes towards the remediation reading program have been observed in terms of acceptance of the program, interest to learn, and observed reading improvement?
4. Is there a significant difference between the entry-level reading competency and the second-quarter reading competency?
5. On the basis of the findings of the study, what action plan can be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to examine the Reading Remediation Program and its impact on the reading abilities of pupils at Pareja Integrated School. The design facilitated the collection, description, analysis, and interpretation of data, allowing the researcher to determine the entry-level competency of the pupils in reading, their level of reading in the second quarter, and their learning behavior throughout the remediation program. The research was conducted at Pareja Integrated School, located in Pareja Subdivision, Barangay Bayanihan, Capitol-Bonbon Road, Butuan City, Agusan del Norte. The area is home to several other educational institutions, such as the Philippine Electronics and Communications Institute of Technology, Rainbows Speechworld Learning Center, Matin-ao Elementary School, and Good Shepherd Christian Academy. As of the academic year 2022–2023, Pareja Integrated School had a total enrollment of 429 students from Kindergarten to Grade 6, with 226 male and 203 female pupils. The map of the research locale is provided as Figure 2 in the succeeding section.

The respondents of the study were Grade 1 to Grade 3 pupils enrolled during the school year 2022–2023. A purposive sampling technique was used, which involves the intentional selection of participants for a specific purpose rather than proportional representation. This method is particularly effective for reaching a targeted group but may overrepresent subgroups that are more readily accessible (Oribhabor & Anyanwu, 2019). In this case, the respondents were specifically identified as non-readers or struggling readers based on the results of the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) administered during the initial phase of the study. A total of 45 pupils were included as respondents, with 17 from Grade 1, 15 from Grade 2, and 13 from Grade 3. These learners were provided with reading remediation and were also asked to complete a questionnaire to assess their attitudes and behaviors toward the program. The distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1, which identifies the population (N) and the actual number of respondents (n) across grade levels: 62 Grade 1 pupils with 17 respondents, 50 Grade 2 pupils with 15 respondents, and 55 Grade 3 pupils with 13 respondents, summing to 167 total pupils and 45 respondents selected for the study.

Two instruments were used in this investigation. The first was the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT), which measures reading competencies ranging from letter identification, phonemic awareness, and basic sight words to comprehension skills. This tool was

originally used during Brigada Pagbasa to determine the literacy levels of pupils. The second instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire designed to evaluate pupils' attitudes toward the Reading Remediation Program, specifically their acceptance of the program, interest in learning, and perceived improvement in reading. In terms of validity, the FLAT did not undergo additional testing, as it had already been validated by Department of Education personnel and subjected to quality assurance. The researcher-made questionnaire, however, was validated by three experts: a master teacher specializing in reading, an Education Program Supervisor in English who also served as Division Reading Coordinator, and a professor from higher education with specialization in reading. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding values of 0.73 for acceptance of the program, 0.75 for interest to learn, and 0.82 for observed improvement. These values were interpreted as "acceptable" for the first two domains and "good" for the last, confirming the tool's reliability for data collection.

The data gathering procedure was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher sent a formal communication to the school principal to request permission to administer the FLAT to Grade 1, 2, and 3 students for baseline assessment of their reading competencies. After securing approval, the assessment was conducted to identify non-readers and struggling readers. In the second phase, which was undertaken during the second quarter of the academic year, another formal letter of request was submitted to the school principal, followed by written correspondences to parents and guardians to obtain consent for pupil participation. Once approval was granted, the researcher developed and distributed the validated questionnaire among the respondents. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Participation was strictly voluntary, and respondents were assured of privacy and confidentiality, with no identities disclosed. The primary purpose was to assess reading competencies and evaluate pupils' attitudes toward the remediation program.

Following data collection, results were systematically organized, tallied, consolidated, and prepared for analysis. The responses to the questionnaire were quantified using a three-point scale, with mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 3.00 interpreted as "Highly Accepted," scores between 1.50 and 2.49 as "Moderately Accepted," and scores from 1.00 to 1.49 as "Not Accepted." These descriptors helped measure the acceptability of the remediation program. For statistical treatment, frequency counts were used to describe the distribution of samples, while percentages provided a means of comparing magnitudes and relationships between groups. The mean and standard deviation were applied to determine average performance levels in reading competencies and in pupils' attitudes toward the program. Finally, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was employed to test for significant differences between entry-level reading competency and second-quarter results, ensuring rigorous evaluation of program impact.

Through these methodological steps, the study ensured a comprehensive and systematic approach to evaluating the Reading Remediation Program at Pareja Integrated School. The combination of validated tools, purposive sampling, ethical safeguards, and robust statistical analysis provided a solid foundation for generating credible findings and formulating an evidence-based action plan for enhancing pupils' reading skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The assessment of entry-level competency in reading revealed that a majority of pupils began at the lower stages of reading proficiency, specifically at the letter, word, and sentence levels. Out of 45 learners, 7 or 15.6 percent were at the letter level, 20 or 44.4 percent were at the

word level, and 18 or 40.0 percent were at the sentence level. However, in the second quarter, notable improvements were recorded as no pupils remained at the letter and word levels, and only six or 13.3 percent remained at the sentence level. Learners significantly progressed to higher reading competencies, with 12 or 26.7 percent at the paragraph level, 18 or 40.0 percent at the story level, and 9 or 20.0 percent reaching the story level with comprehension. No pupils were assessed at the local material level with comprehension during either assessment. These results suggest that the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) effectively enhanced pupils' reading proficiency, transitioning them from basic recognition skills to more advanced levels of comprehension. Learners who were initially categorized at letter, word, and sentence levels shifted significantly towards paragraph, story, and comprehension levels, indicating that the implementation of ECARP at Pareja Integrated School successfully improved reading competencies.

The effectiveness of the ECARP program is reinforced by previous research. Rubin and Traverro (2022), in their study on fostering reading level and story comprehension through the Marungko Approach with mentor-mentee arrangements, confirmed that such interventions have a substantial positive impact on pupils' reading proficiency and comprehension. Similarly, De La Torre (2021) found that teaching context clues under ECARP significantly improved the reading performance of Grade IV pupils, with the experimental group demonstrating greater improvement than those taught with traditional methods. These findings imply that the ECARP program, as a flagship initiative of the Department of Education, should be consistently implemented nationwide to address reading deficiencies and ensure that all learners acquire fundamental literacy skills. The results at Pareja Integrated School support this, as the program's integration showed significant gains in learners' performance.

The attitudes of pupils towards the remediation reading program were evaluated in terms of acceptance, interest to learn, and observed improvement. Results on acceptance showed that pupils responded very positively to their participation. The indicator with the highest mean was parental awareness of attendance in the program, with a weighted mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 0.288, indicating that parents actively monitored and supported their children's involvement. Pupils also reported high acceptance of attending the sessions with a mean of 2.84 and a standard deviation of 0.475, liking the schedule with a mean of 2.84 and a standard deviation of 0.475, and enjoying the company of peers who attended the program with a mean of 2.80 and a standard deviation of 0.505. They also acknowledged that they liked attending sessions with a mean of 2.84. The overall acceptance recorded at a mean of 2.83 and a standard deviation of 0.261 was interpreted as "Very Much." This aligns with Yulianti et al. (2019), who emphasized that parental engagement contributes significantly to children's reading development, particularly when families dedicate time to shared reading activities. Likewise, Inoue et al. (2018) noted that parental instruction and shared book reading indirectly enhanced reading fluency and comprehension, underscoring the critical role of parents in extending literacy support at home.

Although the overall acceptance score was high, the lowest-rated indicator was pupils' awareness of why they attended the reading program, which had a mean of 2.73 and a standard deviation of 0.447. This suggests that some pupils were not fully oriented about the program's purpose, possibly due to teachers' efforts to avoid stigmatization of struggling readers by presenting the sessions as routine activities. Cabalo and Cabalo (2019) stressed that reading proficiency depends on multiple factors, including home environment, instructors, and pupil

motivation, which suggests that orientation and motivation strategies should be included to strengthen program outcomes. Albrecht and Karabenick (2018) further emphasized that students perform better when they understand the relevance of school activities to their personal growth, suggesting that orientation on the program's objectives would enhance student motivation and accountability.

In terms of interest to learn, pupils demonstrated a very positive attitude, with the overall weighted mean at 2.87 and a standard deviation of 0.234, interpreted as "Very Much." The highest mean score, 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.208, was observed in the indicator reflecting pupils' willingness to improve their reading ability. Respondents also reported high engagement in activities and preparation for sessions, with a mean of 2.93 and a standard deviation of 0.330, timeliness in attending sessions with a mean of 2.82 and a standard deviation of 0.490, and enjoyment of the program's activities with a mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 0.288. However, the lowest-rated indicator was pupils' awareness of their reading ability, which had a mean of 2.73 with a standard deviation of 0.539. This suggests that some learners were unaware of their current literacy level, although they still demonstrated strong interest in improving. Zur et al. (2022) revealed that students' motivation and effort to read were highly influenced by appropriate guidance and materials suited to their developmental stage. Starke (2020) also highlighted that exposing children to a variety of reading materials and genres helps sustain their interest and engagement.

Observed reading improvement was also highly evident among pupils, with an overall mean of 2.74 and a standard deviation of 0.374, interpreted as "Very Much." The lowest-rated indicator was learning something from the sessions, with a mean of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 0.609, suggesting that while pupils benefitted from the program, some perceived the gains less strongly compared to other aspects. The highest-rated indicator was pupils' confidence in reading materials after attending sessions, with a mean of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 0.318, indicating that the program boosted not only reading skills but also self-esteem. Other indicators such as reading words correctly (mean 2.82, SD 0.387), understanding what is read (mean 2.67, SD 0.603), and improving reading speed (mean 2.67, SD 0.477) also scored highly. These findings suggest that the reading remediation program provided significant benefits across multiple aspects of literacy development. According to Sudhakar (2018), remedial classes help bridge cognitive gaps, while Mullis and Martin (2019) noted that low self-esteem often correlates with poor reading achievement, implying that improvements in reading proficiency can also enhance confidence. Asio and Jimenez (2020) supported this by concluding that remediation programs positively affect academic performance, self-confidence, and motivation.

The results of the Wilcoxon signed rank test revealed a significant difference between the pupils' entry-level reading competency and their second quarter reading competency. The test produced a Z-value of -6.040 and a p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that pupils significantly improved their reading skills after participating in the remediation program. These results reinforce the effectiveness of ECARP as an intervention strategy, confirming that structured and sustained reading activities can lead to meaningful literacy gains. The findings echo the conclusions of Asio and Jimenez (2020), who asserted that appropriate reading interventions substantially enhance both skills and learning behavior.

Based on the findings of the study, an action plan for the implementation of Project ECARP was developed. The plan emphasizes the early identification of learners with reading deficiencies through the administration of the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool among

Grades 1 to 3. Identified learners are then targeted with specific interventions, such as Project DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) combined with home reading activities, regular follow-up with parents, and structured comprehension check-ups. The timeline for these activities spans from the opening of classes in August through December, with continuous monitoring and reinforcement provided by teachers, reading coordinators, parents, and school administrators.

The plan also incorporates orientation sessions for parents and learners to explain the objectives of the remediation program, peer tutoring and socialization activities using game-based strategies, and differentiated instruction to cater to varying reading levels. It specifically includes an orientation among parents or guardians and learners on the objectives of the program in August, the conduct of FLAT assessments during the opening of classes, and the identification of learners with reading deficiencies in the first week of August. Implementation of Project DEAR and home reading activities were scheduled from August to October, while comprehension check-ups with home follow-ups were to run from August to November. Peer tutoring, game-based activities, and differentiated instruction were included from August through November, while showing results of assessments and communicating outcomes to parents were set from October to November. Meetings or home visitations, coupled with rewards for punctuality, were scheduled from November to December.

The interventions were supported through Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds, with resource materials such as storybooks, charts, instructional materials, DepEd TV resources available on YouTube, projectors, SMART TVs, and other utilities being utilized. Teachers, learners, principals, reading coordinators, peers, and parents were identified as the main stakeholders responsible for implementation. Expected outcomes include that 0 out of 6 pupils in the sentence level will improve to comprehension level, 0 out of 12 pupils in the paragraph level will improve to comprehension level, and 0 out of 18 pupils in the story level will improve to comprehension level, alongside 45 out of 45 pupils and 100 percent of parents being fully oriented and informed about the program. Additional expected outputs include 100 percent participation of learners in peer-based socialization activities, 100 percent of learners arriving on time, and 100 percent of learners improving in reading levels in terms of both speed and comprehension, ultimately enjoying and engaging in reading activities.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on the reading remediation program of Pareja Integrated School and its impact on the reading ability of pupils, anchored on Vygotsky's scaffolding theory. Using a quantitative descriptive survey method, with validated and reliability-tested instruments, the study described the entry-level reading competency of pupils, their reading competency in the second quarter, the extent of manifestation of their learning behaviors in terms of acceptance, interest, and observed improvement, and the significant difference between entry-level and second-quarter reading competency.

The findings revealed that the initial assessment of the 45 respondents using the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) indicated that 7 pupils were in the letter level, 20 were in the word level, and 18 were in the sentence level, while none were at the paragraph, story, or comprehension levels. After the implementation of the reading remediation program, substantial progress was noted. In the second quarter, 18 pupils reached the story level, 9 achieved the comprehension level, 12 were in the paragraph level, and 6 remained in the

sentence level, with no pupils identified at the letter or word level. These results clearly show that the reading remediation program facilitated considerable improvement in reading proficiency.

The findings also highlighted positive attitudes among pupils toward the program. In terms of acceptance, the overall weighted mean was 2.83 with a standard deviation of 0.261, interpreted as highly accepted, suggesting that both parents and pupils recognized the importance of the intervention. With respect to interest to learn, the respondents obtained an overall weighted mean of 2.87 and a standard deviation of 0.234, further indicating that pupils were strongly motivated and engaged in the sessions. Observed reading improvement was also confirmed with a mean of 2.74 and a standard deviation of 0.374, reflecting that pupils learned and benefitted from the program, thereby demonstrating that the reading remediation developed by the Department of Education effectively improved literacy skills.

The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test further confirmed these findings, yielding a Z-value of -6.040 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicated a statistically significant difference between the entry-level and second-quarter reading competency levels of the pupils, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The result validated that the intervention had a measurable positive impact on pupils' literacy. From these findings, a supplementary action plan was developed to further enrich pupils' reading levels under the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP). The plan integrated the study's results with strategies, assigned responsibilities, and expected outcomes to ensure sustained and systematic literacy improvement.

From these results, it can be concluded that the reading skills of Grade 1 to 3 pupils at Pareja Integrated School were relatively deficient prior to intervention, as indicated by their initial placement in the letter, word, and sentence levels. The adoption of ECARP as a reading remediation program led to notable improvements, with pupils advancing to higher reading competencies such as paragraph, story, and comprehension levels. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that pupils expressed positive learning behaviors, as evidenced by their acceptance of the program, their strong interest to learn, and their recognition of observed improvements in their reading abilities. Overall, the findings affirm that ECARP is an effective intervention to enhance reading proficiency among struggling learners.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations were put forward. For school administrators, it is recommended that ECARP be institutionalized and integrated into the school improvement plan and annual improvement plan to ensure continued funding and sustainability. Mechanisms should be developed to build linkages and networks with stakeholders for effective program implementation, while parents should be oriented and motivated to support the program at home. For reading coordinators, the study suggests using the FLAT as a tool to assess reading levels, identify strengths and weaknesses, and track progress. Early identification of learning needs from Grades 1 to 3 is also recommended to provide level-appropriate reading materials. For teachers, pre-assessments are encouraged to tailor strategies to pupils' literacy levels, while educators in higher grade levels should also adopt similar approaches, as reading difficulties can persist beyond the early years. Teachers should also promote mechanisms that ensure parental guidance and monitoring of reading activities at home. For parents, it is vital to sustain their support by encouraging participation in reading programs, conducting follow-up activities after remedial sessions, and serving as tutors at home to reinforce skills. Finally, for future researchers, it is recommended to extend investigations beyond literacy to include numeracy and explore other dimensions of learning remediation to broaden the scope of interventions that can improve student performance.

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