# Teaching Reading Strategies in Phonics

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*Abstract- This study aimed to determine the teaching reading strategies in phonics in Donsol East I District, Schools Division of Sorsogon, school years 2022-2023. The respondents of this study were 20 pupils and 5 teachers. The descriptive method was used in the study. Documentary analysis of pre and post-test results on phonics and performance along with an unstructured interview and the guide questions provided the data on teaching reading strategies used by teachers in improving the performance of learners in Phonics, and experiences of the teachers in the use of teaching reading strategies. The findings revealed that the results of the pretest of the learners under letter naming uppercase got 26.35%, interpreted as slightly mastered, while letter naming lowercase got 24.81%, letter sounding uppercase got 14.42, and letter sounding lowercase got 16.15% and interpreted as unmastered respectively; the most common teaching reading strategy used was Marungko; the performance level in the post-test in phonics under letter naming uppercase got 48.65% and letter naming lowercase got 40.20% were slightly mastered respectively while the performance level in letter sounding both uppercase and lowercase was 23.85% and 21.84%, unmastered respectively; there is a significant difference between the pre and post-test results of the pupils in letter naming and sounding for uppercase and lowercase and lack of training, insufficient materials, and poor study habits were identified and ranked experiences by the teachers in teaching reading in phonics. It was concluded that the respondents had difficulty in phonics, both in naming and sounding. Marungko is the most used teaching reading strategy in phonics. There is an increase in performance level but did not reach to achieve mastery level in phonics. Lack of training in teaching Reading, and poor study were the leading experiences of the teachers in teaching reading specifically in phonics. It was recommended that teachers need to focus on teaching phonics to ensure the learner's readiness for a more complicated skill in reading. This is also a need to enhance the use of Marungko as their main strategy in teaching reading; School heads may facilitate regular by means of local monitoring, feedback, coaching, and evaluation activities.*

*Indexed Terms- Marungko, Phonics, and strategy.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that must be mastered for better learning of other macro skills. But, this key skill has been a challenge among educators. Long before the pandemic, the poor reading performance of learners all around the world was already evident and brought effects on the continued progression of one country.

Thus, this health crisis has exposed educational performance to many inadequacies and inequities in the education systems worldwide. It has gotten worsened from face-to-face to access to the broadband and computers needed for online education, and the supportive environments needed to focus on learning, up to the misalignment between resources and needs (Suppasri,2021).

Since 2015, the Program International Student Assessment (PISA) released its stand on the literacy performance of pupils worldwide and noted a drastic decline in literacy skills while in 2018, the scores in reading did not show a significant rise over the years, despite heavy investment in education systems in some countries. It was highly mentioned in the report that there were countries that occupied the top ranking in reading such as China, Singapore, Macao, Hongkong, Estonia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, South Korea, and Poland (PISA,2019). In this case, Educational Agencies around the world advise every school must do more to increase reading proficiency and foster a natural interest in reading.

However, in the 2014 United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report as mentioned in Global Education Monitoring Report (2020), one in four young people from the 175 million youth in developing countries is unable to read a single sentence. These children who did not attain reading skills at the primary level were on a lifetime trajectory of limited educational progress and therefore limited economic and developmental growth.

For Southeast Asian countries importantly understood that Reading is a fundamental skill to fully engage in many areas of life, from education to employment and civics. There is strong evidence to show that the early acquisition of reading skills is one of the best predictors of later educational success that the essential processes need to identify in reading for beginners involved learning the alphabetic system, including, letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, and learning how to apply this knowledge in their reading(Evans & Hares, 2021 as mentioned in SEA-PLM, 2019). It is wise to concentrate on the development of the key skills so that other skills in reading have to be taught smoothly. Furthermore, teaching struggling readers who missed the key skills must be exposed to Phonics instruction which is effective for struggling readers in the early grades (Gilbas, 2000). The fact that there is a need to master a key skill such as phonics for every learner where all development of more complex skills emanates from, cannot be denied. Young children at risk of reading difficulty encounter impediments in understanding and using foundational skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Lara,2019).

The need to get to the root cause of reading difficulties to fully analyze the situation is highly determined. Educators must revisit the traces of developing reading comprehension skills for their learners down to the beginning reading stage. For it is believed that the vital element in the acquisition of this useful and advance information is the ability to decode and comprehend this information starting from the most basic reading competencies such as the ability to identify letter name, identify letter sound, discriminate initial sound, read familiar words and read oral passage. Since without truly developing these basic reading competencies then consequently, the rippling problematic effects may be seen (Bolton and Ramos, 2021).

Furthermore, in the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) launches several programs that mandate them to improve the reading performance of every pupil. One of its issuances is the DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019, known as Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa/3BS Initiatives which aims to strengthen the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP). Its goal is to equip learners with reading skills to make them proficient and independent readers in their grade level; Capacitate teachers to become effective reading teachers; and Nurture a culture of reading in schools, communities, and various levels of governance in the DepEd-central office, regional offices, and school's division offices. All schools are strongly encouraged to respond to it by intensifying their advocacy for reading and by pledging commitment to make every learner a reader at their grade level which means every school has to create and align its programs towards the promotion of the culture of reading as a key step in closing achievement gaps (DepEd Memorandum series of 2019_173-1).In Region V (Bicol Region), there were a series of tests on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) administered and revealed that the learners are considered "struggling readers" only after taking both English and Filipino tests among 18,143 of those in Grade 3 to 6. This data is an alarming reflection of the reading performance of the learners.

This study aims to identify the root cause of poor performance in reading specifically in phonics and identify the teaching reading strategies that would partake in providing solutions to the difficulties and problems encountered among reading teachers in making the learners read and comprehend.

## II. METHODS

• Research Design

This study determined the different teaching reading strategies in phonics for SY 2022-2023. Descriptive research was used to describe the responses of the respondents to the questions raised in this study. A

combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was also utilized.

The primary source of data was the answers of the respondents in the unstructured interview. In determining, the common answers from the teachers, an interview schedule was used. The respondents who are currently teaching reading from Grades 4 within Donsol East District 1. The data were gathered and analyzed through the appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, weighted mean, percentage, and ranking used for the interpretation of results.

• The Sample

There were 25 respondents comprising 5 teachers, and 20 struggling readers of Donsol East I District who are currently teaching and enrolled in SY 2022-2023 respectively. The teacher-respondents were currently teaching reading specifically phonics, four of them were new in the service while the other one is a seasoned teacher.

A total enumeration was adopted by the researcher for the reason that she is currently teaching in the Donsol East District since she is presently residing support was easy to establish with the respondents. The interview schedule was used to gather data on teaching reading strategies in phonics and the experiences of teachers in teaching reading.

• The Instrument

The instruments used in this study were the pre and post-test results of the Donsol East District in reading by the pupil-respondents, SY 2022-2023. These were aided by the use of the teacher-made guide questions to solicit the different teaching reading strategies and experiences of the teachers.

Also, he modified the Catch Them Early Tool (CTE) was used to get the pre and post-test results. It is composed of 26 items per sub-skill in phonics such as letter naming and sounding both upper and lower case.

The interview schedule on the other hand had been used to determine the responses of the teachers in the identification of strategies and their experiences in teaching reading. The interview schedule was used. It has three important parts, the opening statement to set the mood of the interview, followed by a series of questions, and the last was the concluding statement. This was submitted to the thesis adviser for establishing the direction of the questions. Panel members made some suggestions for the instruments. The Dean of the Graduate School approved to conduct the unstructured interview.

The guide questions underwent a dry run in order to determine the weaknesses and strengths of the questions. This was conducted on some reading teachers in other schools in Donsol East I District who are not identified as teacher-respondents, in the last week of 1st week of October after the approval of this proposal. After determining the content of the questions, the revision was done. The interview schedule was utilized by the researcher in gathering the data.

• Data Gathering Procedures

A letter of permission was constructed by the researcher for her to access the pre and post-test results in the District Office of Donsol East I. It was addressed to the Public-School District Supervisor and sent on October 4, 2022. After securing approval from the PSDS, the researcher was permitted to scan and review the requested files.

The combined data from the District office and the structured interview and the interview schedule were organized, tabulated, and consolidated. After which it was analyzed, and finally interpreted.

• Data Analysis Procedures

The data gathered were treated using frequency count, percentage, and ranking to analyze and interpret the strategies in teaching reading and the experiences of teachers in using these strategies.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result of the Pre-test of Learners in Phonics. The results of the pre-test in phonics are revealed in table 1

Table 1 shows the scores of the learners in phonics under the letter naming in upper and lower case in Pre-test. The letter naming uppercase got 26.35 % interpreted as slightly mastered while the letter naming lowercase got 24.81% unmastered.

Table 1
LETTER NAMING AND SOUNDING UPPER AND LOWERCASE

| | Letter Naming | | Letter Sounding | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Uppercase | Lowercase | Uppercase | Lowercase |
| Average | 26.35 | 24.81 | 14.42 | 16.15 |
| Description | Slightly mastered | Unmastered | Unmastered | Unmastered |

The data means that the learners did not master the letter naming in uppercase and lowercase considering their grade level it is expected that they already have mastered the letter names since it is a foundational skill in reading. Also, when the teachers did not give proper attention to the development of this skill it may be a strong indication that learners may have struggled in reading. On the other hand, the mastery of letter naming in lowercase is as vital as the uppercase. Although, in this result, the letter name in the upper case of learners got a higher score than the lower case. This goes to show that the result signifies the different backgrounds of the learners, as well as the absence of their knowledge in decoding learning the letter naming upper and lower cases which is a strong predictor of success in reading.

2. Teaching Reading Strategy employed to improve the level of Performance of learners in Phonics.

The result of the unstructured interview shows the common teaching reading strategies used by teachers in teaching phonics. It shows that Marungko ranked 1st as the preferred phonics by the teachers, and other which is conventional strategy ranked 2nd. The data means that Marungko is a viable strategy for teachers in the improvement of mastery in phonics. In the general interview, according to the teacher-respondents, Marungko is the most convenient strategy for them where learners can easily familiarize the sounds of the letters or words.

3. Performance level of the learners in the Post-test in Phonics. The results were reflected in table 2.

Table 2 presents the performance of the learners in the post-test of letter naming uppercase in phonics got 48.65 % while lowercase got 40.20 % and interpreted as slightly mastered respectively. able 2 presents the performance of the learners in the post-test of letter naming uppercase in phonics got 48.65 % while lowercase got 40.20 % and interpreted as slightly mastered respectively.

Table 2
LETTER NAMING AND SOUNDING UPPER AND LOWER CASES

| | Letter Naming | | Letter Sounding | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Uppercase | Lowercase | Uppercase | Lowercase |
| Average | 48.65 | 40.20 | 23.85 | 21.84 |
| Description | Slightly mastered | Slightly mastered | Unmastered | Unmastered |

This data means that learners were able to have a little increase in their knowledge of letter naming in both upper and lower case after the conduct of the intervention. Although, there was an increase but still slightly mastered which means that the learners developed their initial understanding of the symbolic nature of the Also, despite the increase in performance of the learners in letter naming uppercase still they did not meet the mastery. Although there were learners who manifest mastery

under this skill, the result did not pull up their overall performance. Likewise, the researcher observed common lapses and gaps among learners during the application of the intervention such as having unfamiliarity with letters and sounds that resulted in their difficulty in naming letters in uppercase. But given the fact that there were learners that were able to achieve mastery, this means that the strategy used was effective but needs to be improved and enhanced in some manners.

4. Difference between the results of the Pre and Postests.

Table 3 presents the difference between the pre and post-tests results of the pupils in letter naming and letter sounding for uppercase and lowercase. It can be gleaned from the table that the computed t in letter naming for uppercase is 8.08. This value is greater than the tabular value of 2.021 when the degree of freedom is 38 at a .05 level of significance.

Table 3
Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test results of the Pupils

| Statistical Bases | Statistical Analysis | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Letter naming Uppercase | Letter naming Lowercase | Letter Sounding Uppercase | Letter Sounding Lowercase |
| Df | 38 | 38 | 38 | 38 |
| Level of Significance | .05 | .05 | .05 | .05 |
| Tabular Value | 2.021 | 2.021 | 2.021 | 2.021 |
| Computed t | 8.08 | 7.05 | 4.71 | 4.19 |
| Decision on Ho | Reject | Reject | Reject | Reject |
| Interpretation | Significant | Significant | Significant | Significant |

Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and therefore, there is a significant difference between the pre and post-tests results of the pupils in letter naming for uppercase. This means that the use of Marungko as a teaching reading strategy in phonics, and letter naming uppercase is effective. Likewise, the computed t in letter naming for lowercase is 7.05. This value is also greater than the tabular value of 2.021 when the degree of freedom is 38 at .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and therefore, there is a significant difference between the pre and post-tests results of the pupils in letter naming in terms of lowercase.

5. Experiences of teachers in the use of teaching reading strategies.

Thisreveals the teachers' experiences during the implementation of teaching reading strategies.

• Lack of training. Teaching reading is the top concern of teachers. Only one (1) of them had

undergone reading-related training but it was a decade ago, and most of them were not able to attend any reading-related training, especially in phonics.The data means that teachers' difficulty in teaching reading resulted in learners' difficulty in identifying sounds which has bearing on their lack of training in phonics. The results imply that teachers may show their initiative by providing themselves with pre or in-service training on Marungko or other strategies that may help learners confident in developing the learners' retention of sounds and naming letters and words.

• Insufficient materials. Instructional materials serve as a guide in sounding out the letters since it is their top unmastered key skill.

• Poor study habits. Another on the list of teachers' experiences was the poor study habits of the learners, most of them experience this gap. One of the respondents sighs with disappointment, they said "I know I have done my part, on day 1 teach

the lesson learners to know it but when the days pass, they also forget the lesson", this means that since their familiarity with the sounds is not stable this makes them repeat the same lesson all over again.

These experiences were the reasons for the minimal increase shown in the pre and post-test since learners could not finish the entire set of their lessons.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The respondents were having a difficulty in phonics, both in letter naming and sounding.
2. That Marungko is the most used and effective teaching reading strategy in phonics.
3. That increase in performance level is far not enough to achieve mastery level in phonics.
4. That there is a significant difference between the pretest and post-test results of the pupils in letter naming for uppercase and lowercase.
5. That both the lack of training in Teaching reading and insufficient materials were the leading experiences by the teachers in teaching reading specifically in phonics

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the foregoing findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were presented:

- Teachers need to focus on teaching phonics to ensure learners' readiness for more complicated skills in reading.
- The teachers need to use Marungko together with the other strategies as their main strategy in teaching reading in enhancement of the reading capacity of the learners.
- The school heads may design regular monitoring, feedback, coaching, and evaluation activities for teachers to facilitate the Reading strategy.
- Future researchers need to conduct a similar study on teaching phonics using Marungko in other divisions and regions for validation.

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