



# EXTENDING READING IMPROVEMENT TO STRUGGLING READERS AMIDST COVID-19 OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS THROUGH TEACHER-PARENT READING INSTRUCTION PARTNERSHIP (OFFLINE PLATFORM)

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Completed 2021



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*E-Saliksik: the DepEd Research Portal is the official repository of education research in the Department of Education (DepEd). This research was funded by the Basic Education Research Fund.*

**Abstract**

Teachers are constantly searching for teaching strategies that would be effective for their learners this time of Covid-19 public health emergency. Thus, this study sought to improve the reading level of Grade four learners of Bangbangolan Elementary School for the school year 2020-2021 through Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call). The experimental design was utilized with an adopted reading level test as data-gathering tool. The quantitative data were treated using the mean score, percentage, paired and independent sample t-test. The research subjects were from Grade four Ladio (experimental group) and (control group), both with 7 learners. The t-test revealed that these two groups were of equal abilities at the beginning of the study, with a t-stat of  $0.22 < t\text{-crit of } 2.45$  at a 5% level of significance. After applying the intervention for 12 weeks, control group manifested poor reading level and experimental group showed high reading level based on their post test results; however, the experimental group attained a higher improvement compared to the control group, which used the Self-Learning Reading Materials, as shown by the t-stat of  $5.94 > t\text{-crit of } 2.45$  at the 5% level of significance. Hence, the Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call), used in this action research was an effective learning platform in improving the reading level of learners amidst Covid-19 public health emergency.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Reading Level, Teacher-Parent Partnership, Reading Instruction, Offline platform, Phone call

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First of all, this success is offered to the Almighty Father for His love, wisdom, guidance and blessings to the researcher.

The researcher sincerely acknowledges and appreciates the following people for their guidance and words of wisdom for the realization of this research study.

**Regional Research Committee** through **the Policy, Planning and Research Division (PPRD)**, for approving the research proposal;

**Dr. Rowena C. Banzon**, CESO V, Schools Division Superintendent of City of San Fernando La Union and **Dr. Edmund A. Cabusura**, SEPS-Planning & Research, **City of San Fernando La Union Research Committee**, for granting permission to the researcher to conduct the study;

**Dr. Lorena C. Salvador**, EPS in charge for monitoring and supervision, **Sir Rodrigo B. Panit, Jr. and Dr. Gay D. Danao**, School Heads of Bangbangolan Elementary School, City of San Fernando, La Union, for granting permission to the researcher to administer the questionnaire to the target respondents;

**Family, relatives and Mr. Ryanbille R. Cabading**, for all the affectionate support they provided for the completion of the study;

**Co-teachers and friends** for their compliments.

## **I. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE**

One of the most important goals in basic education is for all learners to be proficient readers. The foundation on their proficiency in reading already begins before entering school. Parents support the reading development through the use of conversations, storybooks interactions, and other literacy related activities that encourage active engagement. (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012) stated that reading as a “psycholinguistic guessing game” in which readers apply their previous knowledge to relate with a text and to connect these to new information found in the text in order to understand it.

Reading comprehension is a complex process that includes the reader, the text, and factors associated with the activity of reading. It is also a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text (Van den Broek & Espin, 2012; Eshiwani, 2012). Comprehension starts with higher levels of processing and continues to the application of the lower levels. It is the prime goal of reading and comprehension failures can lead to school failures. Despite the Philippines supposedly high literacy rate of 88.6 %, many Filipinos can barely read and write as cited by (Selangan, 2015). Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, making inference, and motivation. In addition, young students at risk of reading failure usually have weaker oral vocabularies than their peers and are more likely to have difficulty developing reading skills. “Indeed, one of the most enduring findings in reading research is the extent to which students’ vocabulary knowledge relates to their reading comprehension” (Biemiller, 2003).

Poor performance in reading has continued to be disappointingly poor in the African region and even English speaking countries, the major explanation lies with

the non-availability of appropriate instructional aids (Eshiwani, 2012). In addition, teachers rarely used the most appropriate instructional materials in teaching the subject. Most schools were reported to lack of necessary instructional materials for teaching the subject (Ruto & Ndaloh, 2013). Many students have difficulty comprehending what they read. Low reading skills affect both reading fluency and comprehension for elementary school students. Reading skills are foundational building blocks at this age and the earlier students with low reading skills receive interventions, the greater the interventions will impact the students' reading careers (Hausheer & Dumas, 2011). Knowing how to read words has ultimately little value if the student is unable to construct meaning from the text (Klinger & Boardman, 2007). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Assessment of Education Progress: Reading Assessments , 2012) revealed that 24% of eighth graders and 33% of fourth graders tested below basic in reading skills in 2011. Because comprehension is so complex and requires multiple cognitive skills and stored memory, several barriers to improving comprehension must be overcome. However, recent research indicates that composite executive function scores are statistically significant predictors of reading comprehension scores in pre-kindergarten through third grade as well (Rothlisberger, Neuenschwander, Cimeli, & Roebbers, 2013).

Dr. Yolanda Quijano, former director of the Department of Education, Bureau of Elementary Education revealed that reading problems are the main culprit for poor performance of pupils in the National Achievement Test (NAT). The nation's learners are incapable of reading within the expected level. Many of them fail to meet the required minimum mastery level of seventy-five percent (75%). The NAT had been posting disappointing results over the last six years in Mathematics, Science and English (<http://www.philstar.com/health-and-family/553720/how-do-filipino-students-rate-reading>, n.d.). This means that learners had not mastered the basic

competencies that will bring about functional literacy for all. Schools then have to do all means to let learners achieve complete range of skills and competencies from cognitive, affective to psychomotor which enable learners to develop their potentials.

Added to this dismal result, the district's PHIL-IRI result for the past three years is low. As reflected in the result, many learners can read words, however they can hardly understand and interpret what they have read. Few can answer comprehension questions as to what they had understood in the reading texts provided in their book exercises. The percentage of learners under frustration is 75.14%, the percentage of learners under instructional is 24.86% and there are no pupils who were under independent readers. This result of the conducted PHIL-IRI is very alarming that schools in City Schools Division should give immeasurable attention. Likewise in Bangbangolan Elementary School, the learners also show poor result in PHIL-IRI on its previous years which needs further intervention to help and strengthen the reading skills of the learners. Thus, starting it with the Grade four pupils might uplift their performance in reading as they go to higher levels later on.

However, solving this problem cannot already be done in a normal classroom set up since our country is experiencing a pandemic. This pandemic affects all sectors in our country and education sector is not exempted. Though the country is under a pandemic, the Department of Education insists that this pandemic is not a hindrance to let our children acquire quality education. According to Department of Education Secretary Leonor M. Briones that there are many learning modalities to be used to deliver instruction.

The aforementioned issues in low performance of learners in reading and the pandemic affecting the whole country motivated the researcher to conduct a study on extending reading improvement to struggling readers through teacher-parent reading instruction partnership.

## **II. Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy**

### **TEACHER-PARENT READING INSTRUCTION PARTNERSHIP (OFFLINE PLATFORM-PHONE CALL)**

The researcher and the School Head conducted a community-based parents' orientation following the minimum health protocols to meet all the parents and learners and discussed the result of the PHIL-IRI and it was found out the different reasons of poor reading performance of learners in reading such as; Learners lack vocabularies and comprehension skills, poor reading habits of learners and learners' disabilities; and parents were busy in their work, they also have limited knowledge about the lessons of their children that is why they cannot help them with their lessons and some do not mind their children's school performance.

Through the analysis of the reasons stated, the researcher, parents, and the School Head identify ways to improve the reading levels of the learners. Based on the open forum made, it can be concluded that the main reason why learners have poor performance in reading is the learners have poor comprehension skills because they have not mastered the different domains of literacy. In the endeavor to improve the reading levels of learners, a careful deliberation considering the factors that contribute to low performance of learners in reading, the researcher, parents and School Head agreed to have individualized instruction as appropriate intervention to solve the issues in reading because the country is under pandemic.

Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership is a strategy where the parent and teacher help one another in the conduct of the reading instruction to their children. The researcher adopted reading materials from the PHIL-IRI prescribed by the Department of Education. Before the scheduled reading time, the teacher had a home visitation to give the individualized reading materials with short orientation on what to do. Copies of the reading materials were given to the parents for follow-up purposes. During the intervention, the researcher conducted a reading session thrice

a week, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at an adjusted specific time via offline platform (Phone Calls). The parent and the learner sat together while the teacher listened to the reading session of the learner over the phone (loud speaker mode). The parent guided the learner while having a reading session at the same time the teacher guided and assessed the reading level of the learner from the given reading materials. The selected individualized reading materials were arranged by level of difficulties. Other reading materials were lifted from other resources used by the learners on their reading sessions. After every reading material, there are five comprehension questions answered by the learners. The questions were classified as literal, inferential and critical. This set up was done for three months or 12 weeks.

### **III. Action Research Questions**

This study aimed to improve the reading level of the struggling readers in Grade 4 through teacher- parent reading instruction partnership (offline platform via phone call).

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of the reading level of the struggling readers in Grade 4 in Bangbangolan Elementary School during the:
  - a. pretest?; and
  - b. post test?
2. Is there a significant difference in the reading level of the struggling readers in the pretest and post test?

### **IV. Action Research Methods**

#### **a. Participants and/or other sources of data and information**

The study was conducted at Bangbangolan Elementary School for the school year 2020-2021 under the New Normal Education. The respondents were the



fourteen (14) learners enrolled in Grade 4 – L who were experiencing difficulty in reading. There was only one section in Grade 4 during the said school year. Since there was only one section, it was divided into two groups, heterogeneous group was used as an experimental group, while the other group of parallel ability was used as the control group to ensure that these two groups were reliable participants for the research activity.

These two groups were of equivalent number before the intervention was applied because preliminary analysis of the pretest results of the two groups was conducted to show that the two groups were equivalent (p-value of 0.441 at 5% level of significance). The toss coin method was used to determine the experimental and control groups. The research subjects (experimental group) for the study were learners from Grade 4-Ladio with 7 learners while the control group was 7 learners from the same section. Moreover, data gathered based from the Learner Enrolment and Survey Form (LESF), BES adopted the printed Self-Learning Reading Materials to comply with the New Normal Education amidst Covid-19 pandemic (D.O. No. 12, s. 2020). Control group was given Self-Learning Reading Materials taken from PHIL-IRI for them to read using the conventional way of how to read, that is, the read and answer method; while the experimental group was given reading materials using the teacher-parent reading instruction partnership (Offline Platform-Phone Call). This class schedule was duly permitted by the school head for the sake of taking the research process in a right way.

The teacher researcher together with her School Head met beforehand with the parents of the learners who were to be participants in the study. After discussing the details of the planned conduct of the action research, the parents expressed their trust and support and gave their consent for the participation of their children. To safeguard the identity of the learners, their identity has been kept confidential and anonymous.

### **b. Data Gathering Methods and Research Instruments**

In determining the reading level of the struggling readers a 20-item reading level test adopted from the PHIL-IRI manual was used by the researcher.

The test did not undergo scrutiny and validation by persons competent in the field because the material used is prescribed by the Department of Education. The test material used in conducting the pretest and post test was the same and the test items were jumbled during the post test but of the same level of difficulty. The learners were given fifty (50) minutes to answer the comprehension test. After the test, the test materials were collected. The pretest result and post test were interpreted using the scales following the norms prescribed by the Department of Education.

### **c. Data Analysis**

In this study, the researcher used the pretest-post test quasi experimental control-group design. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2014), the pretest-post test control-group design is a traditional, classical design and it involves random assignment of participants to two groups. Both groups are administered both a pretest and a post test, but the treatment is provided only to the experimental group.

In answering problem 1 an adopted 20-item reading level test from PHIL-IRI was utilized. Input variables using quantitative techniques such as frequency count, mean, averages and percentages was used in this study. For problem 2, the significant difference of the pretest and post test, independent t-test, and paired t-test was used. The following formula of independent t-test was used.

$$t = \frac{\sum D}{\sqrt{\frac{N \sum D^2 - (\sum D)^2}{N-1}}}$$

Where:  $\sum D$  = sum of all the differences in pre and post test

$N$  = number of paired observation

The respondents' answer were decoded and transcribed.

In determining the reading levels of the struggling readers, the researcher used the norms in the PHIL-IRI Guide prescribed by the Department of Education as shown below:

Statistical Range	Percentage Mean	Descriptive Reading Level
3.10-4.00	76.00%-100.00%	Independent
2.10-3.00	51.00%-75.00%	Instructional
1.10-2.00	26.00%-50.00%	Frustration
0-1.00	0.00-25.00%	Non-reader

## V. Discussion of Results

### Reading level of the Two Groups Before and After the Intervention

Table 1. Mean and Mean Difference of Pretest and Post test Results

	N	Pretest	Post test	Difference
New Normal Education				
Method (Self-Learning	7	2.20 (55.00%)	1.90 (47.50%)	-0.3
Reading Modules)		(Instructional)	(Frustration)	(-7.50%)
(Control Group)				
Teacher-Parent Reading				
Instruction Partnership-	7	2.22 (55.36%)	3.49 (87.14%)	1.27
Phone Call		(Instructional)	(Independent)	(31.78%)
(Experimental Group)				

Table 1 shows the reading level of Grade 4 learners before and after the implementation of the intervention. The table discloses that the mean score obtained by the control group during the pretest was 2.20 which describes as Instructional and

1.90 during the post test which means Frustration. On the other hand, the mean score obtained by the experimental group during the pretest was 2.22 which describes as Instructional and 3.49 in the post test which means Independent. Moreover, the mean difference between the pretest and post test of the control group was -0.3, while for the experimental group was 1.27.

The results of the pretest of the two groups which are 2.20 and 2.22 mean score that fall under Instructional imply that both groups are struggling in their reading level that the teacher needs to be creative in providing the best appropriate reading intervention in the midst of Covid-19 public health emergency to continuously fulfil the Department of Education mandate by making every learner a proficient reader. Moreover, Grade 4 learners was the transition stage from Iloko Medium of Instruction (K-Grade 3) to English Medium of Instruction (L3) that they possess limited vocabulary knowledge and struggle to master reading for academic knowledge. Reading for academic purposes requires learners to possess substantial vocabulary and undergo best appropriate reading intervention to improve their reading ability and to master the necessary knowledge. Correspondingly, this phenomenon may account as one of the contributors of learner's difficulty in understanding the words which indicate their low reading level.

The results of the study is also parallel to the study of Ahmed which was mentioned by Cabading (2017) that problems in reading level arise when there are many difficult words to learn that learners cannot remember for long and depend too much on the online resources.

Moreover, the results of the study Jalongo (2015) is the same with the result of the study which implied that the learners have limited vocabulary knowledge and when they have not learned and mastered techniques and strategies for inferring the meaning of unknown words, they will experience struggle in comprehending both oral and written tasks. Thus, there is a need for mastery of vocabulary through context

clues for pupils to understand better whatever readings they are required to comprehend.

In addition results agree with the findings of Ahmed (2014), which she recommended that learners need to be exposed to different teaching methods and strategies in reading to uplift their performance and enhance their confidence to read independently.

Furthermore, table 1 also revealed that there is a decrease of mean score of the control group during the pretest which was 2.20 and post test which was 1.90 indicating their reading level description was from Instructional to Frustration respectively. This implies that Self-Learning Reading Materials under the New Normal Education modular distant learning modality cannot fit with the learning strategy needed by the learners in improving their reading level. With the learning modality set by the Department of Education the teacher-researcher is having hard time to give each one equal and undivided attention in improving their reading level. It also denotes that the teacher-researcher also struggle to reach out to all of her learners but fall short because economic and social factors stand in her way. With the current setup, Department of Education has for the teacher-researcher and learner-respondents, results of the study affirmed that the possibility of anyone genuinely learning anything is low because modules are not substitutes for teachers and lessons are limited to what is written on paper. Without another more knowledgeable person who can explain these complicated concepts written in the printed Self-Learning Reading Materials, the learners will definitely have difficulty absorbing their lessons and cannot improve their reading level.

Results of the study contradict with the results of Sadiq (2014) which reveals that modular teaching is more effective in teaching learning process as compared to ordinary teaching methods. Because in this modular approach the students learn at their own pace, it is free self-learning style in which immediate reinforcement,

feedback is provided to practice exercise, which motivate the students and create interest in them. It helps to maximize the chances of student participation in classroom in respect to fulfill the given tasks at the spot so the students feel free to learn in their own style.

Furthermore, results of the study is not also similar with the findings of Padmapriya (2015) which stated that students treated with modular approach achieved higher mean scores than those students taught through activity oriented method. The study reveals the effectiveness of self-instructional module on achievement among secondary school students and the administrators must take necessary steps to give special training to teachers in developing modular packages.

It can also be gleaned in Table 1 that there was a higher difference in the mean scores of the experimental group that used Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) during the pretest and post test. Hence, this implies that the reading level of Grade 4 learners under experimental group improved through Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) as the main strategy employed by the researcher. With the current set up of the Department of Education under New Normal Education Modular Print Distant Learning Modality amidst Covid-19 public health emergency, improving reading level of learner is made possible because this Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) augmented the Printed Self Learning Modules learning modality set by the Department of Education wherein the learner can hear the actual voice of the teacher vice versa with the special monitoring of learners' parent while doing the reading intervention via phone call. In this manner learners successfully learn through their auditory senses and they are given the opportunity to hear information presented to them vocally, Fleming (1992).

The finding of this study is analogous to the study of Barredo (2015) where she found out that post test indicated that students improved in their percentage of mastery since intervention materials were given to them after the pretest.

Cabading (2017) has additional comparable finding where he discovered that intervention materials added to better learning of the ideas among learners. Besides, the finding of the investigation is likewise similar to the discoveries of Gultiano (2012) where she discovered that intervention materials added to better learning of the ideas among learners since the mean of scores in the post test improved.

### **SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE OF THE SCORES IN THE PRETEST AND POST TEST**

Table 2 presents the results of the comparison of the pretest and post test data of the two groups. It was found out that there was no significant difference between

Table 2. Independent Sample T-test on the Significant Difference Between the Performance of the Two Groups in the Pretest and Post test

Test		Mean	Mean Difference	t-stat	df	t-crit
Pretest	Control	10.86				
	Experimental	11.29	-0.43	0.22	6	2.45
Post test	Control	8.86				
	Experimental	16.29	-7.43	5.94	6	2.45

the pretest results of the control and experimental groups, as shown by the computed t-stat of  $0.22 < t\text{-crit of } 2.4$ . Meanwhile, the post test results of the two groups were found to be statistically different with a computed t-stat of  $5.94 > t\text{-crit of } 2.45$ .

Based on Table 2, the pretest results of the two groups manifested no significant difference, which implies that the two groups were of equal abilities in terms of background knowledge of the learning competencies covered in this study. Moreover, only the difference in the pretest and post test of the experimental group manifested a significant difference. Thus, this significant difference may be said to be an effect of the intervention used, which was the Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction

Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call). This implies that learners learn best when the approaches used in the learning environment are relevant to them, when they realize that what they are learning is related to things relevant to them, and when they are able to communicate their results effectively. Moreover, using the Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) is of great help in improving the reading level of the learners amidst Covid-19 public health emergency. In like manner, the intervention of the study improved the reading level of the learners.

This is in support of the finding of Resha, Said and Waris (2015) that there was a significant difference between the result in the pretest and in the post test of the experimental group after using the intervention.

Moreover, the findings of the study run parallel with the findings of Baraceros (2008), where he found out that reading level of the learners was high when using intervention materials which is linked to the learning competencies that need to be improved. Nonetheless, this is affirmed by the findings of the study since the learners easily grasped the meaning of the words using the stated intervention materials.

Another, this finding affirms the study of Cakir (2017) showing that there was a statistically significant difference between groups at the end of a twelve-week treatment process. Subsequently, the experimental group learners in the study of Li and Suwanthep (2017) significantly developed in terms of fluency, coherence, lexical resource, grammar, pronunciation, accuracy skills and reading skills. This finding confirms the study of Tahir (2015) that there was a highly significant difference between the students' speaking and reading skills in pretest and in the post test after the treatment.



## **VI. Reflection**

Based on the findings obtained by the researcher, it is hard to absorb new information when no one is there to guide learners when the lessons become too much. In most middle-class homes where at least one person has access to data or an internet connection, this might not pose much of a problem. Additionally, at least one person in middle-class families has attended college. This means they have access to education and resources. But this may not be the case for lower-income families in Bangbangolan Elementary School. In families where both parents are absent, trying to make ends meet, and no one has gone to college because of poverty, modular learning might not work at all. Lessons are limited to what is written on paper. Without another more knowledgeable person who can explain these complicated concepts, the learners will definitely have difficulty absorbing their lessons. With the current setup that the Department of Education has for its teachers and students, the possibility of anyone genuinely learning anything is low as clearly shown in the results of the pretest of the control and experimental group of the study.

Moreover, using Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) was effective in enhancing the reading level of the target learners in Grade 4 as it has significantly increased the difference in the pretest and post test results of the experimental group after the intervention was applied, as well as, enriched the interest of learners in the reading intervention and maximized learners participation, critical thinking and self-assessment. Furthermore, it has given the researcher new insight into the teaching-learning process and inspired her to always give her best when delivering lessons even in the midst of COVID-19 public health emergency.

The Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) used in this action research was an excellent strategy improving reading level amidst pandemic. It motivated the learners to regulate and manage their own

learning styles, and thereby to create an interest and attitude towards reading and other lessons as they are free to learn at home together with their teacher and parent partnership. Furthermore, The Teacher-Parent Reading Instruction Partnership (Offline Platform via Phone call) helps learners to improve their reading level as well as simplify the teacher's work.

## **VII. Action Plan**

The researcher will ask permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of City Schools Division of San Fernando, Division Supervisor in charge of early language, literacy and numeracy, and the school administrator of Bangbangolan Elementary School to share the result to the teachers of Bangbangolan Elementary School as well as in the Division level. The results will help other English teachers to enhance their learning modality this time of pandemic. The results will also be known by the parents of the learners to be able to help their children in continuously improving the reading level of their children.

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## APPENDIX G FINANCIAL REPORT

### BASIC EDUCATION RESEARCH FUND (BERF) 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT As of April 28,2021

Grant Received		30,000.00	
Expenses			
	Supplies and Materials (Folders/ Clips/ Envelopes/ Coupon Bond)		1,500.00
	Communication Expenses/Load		9,000.00
	Travel Expenses/Fare/Transportation of the Researcher during the Conduct of the Research		3,000.00
	Meals and snacks during the conduct of the research		4,000.00
	Wifi/Internet Load		4,000.00
	Photocopy of Reading Materials		1,500.00
	Freight Cost of the Deliverables		500
	Dissemination of Findings and Results (materials used and snacks of participants)		4,000.00
	Printing and binding of the Action Research Manuscript		2,500.00
Total (in peso)		30,000.00	

Balance

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Prepared  
by:

**AYESSA M. LADIO**  
Researcher