

# SPELLING PATTERN IN SEQUENCE STRATEGY (SPSS) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPELLING DIFFICULTY

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study employing classroom-based action research is directed to assist selected pupils who are struggling in their spelling performance by applying a certain intervention called Spelling Pattern in Sequence Strategy as a viable mean to address the problem encountered in spelling. Moreover, this study used classroom-based action research design employing qualitative and quantitative approaches to uncover and describe the problem that the identified learners undergo pertaining to their spelling ability which is considered a vital skill in the language literacy. It was hence revealed in the study that conducting modified sequence and pattern strategy helped improve the spelling proficiency of the grade five pupils identified under frustration level of Armed Forces of the Philippines Logistics Command Elementary School (AFPLC E/S). Furthermore, the study indicated that gradual bridging is vital to equip learners with the necessary literacy skills and knowledge for them to cope with their spelling difficulty and that further trainings are essential for teachers to be more effective in dealing with this language literacy problem. Hence, pedagogical implications of this study revolve around spelling development skill vis-à-vis with the use of effective learning strategy to the selected grade five pupils in the classroom setting.

*Keywords: Spelling, Pattern, Sequences, Strategy, Difficulty*

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Ultimately, I offer my deepest thanks to almighty Father, the source of everything. His infinite wisdom and boundless grace have been my underlying foundation of this research journey. Indeed, to God be the highest glory and honor.

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## **I. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE**

I'm a Grade Five Language teacher and the concern about the poor spelling performance of some of my pupils has been a great dilemma in my class. I found it a significant thing to consider since it immensely affects their learning not just in English but also, in other subject areas. These five (5) identified learners can decode and read simple words and sentences in English but have tendencies to spell them incorrectly particularly in writing. Relatedly, it becomes a dilemma because these pupils are used in phonetic spelling which intends them to spell the words just exactly how they are sounded or said.

The issue is supported by the findings in the study "Letter Flip: On the Spelling Ability of Grade III Pupils," which emphasizes the prevalent struggle among modern pupils in accurately spelling words. Poor spelling stands out as a pervasive academic challenge persisting across generations. Similarly, in the study addressing the spelling difficulties of high school students in Iloilo City, a common flaw in written work is identified: the students' inability to spell common English words. The study attributes this problem to the nature of English as a language with imperfect and irregular orthography, borrowing and altering terms from various languages. The resulting difficulty arises from words not being spelled phonetically, leading to multiple spellings for the same sound and a single letter or combination representing various sounds. These inherent challenges contribute significantly to the overall difficulty of spelling in the English language (Apolog et al., 2017)

Further, in an ordinary class where English is taught, I also have personally noticed that the teachers handling grades four to six pupils have

been encountering recurrent problems using English as the medium of instruction. Considering that the said learners had very poor experience with English since they were exposed to Mother tongue for years in primary, it became noticeably hard for these learners to gain developed skills as far as the second language learning is concerned. And one of these common problems identified is their poor spelling ability. Moreover, several researchers have also highlighted these difficulties faced by learners with limited exposure to English during their early education. According to Smith and Johnson (2018), learners who have a substantial background in their mother tongue often struggle to attain proficiency in English, impacting various language skills. These challenges become particularly pronounced in the context of spelling, where the learners exhibit noticeable difficulties (Brown, 2017).

To give a detailed background of this problem; these identified learners who are struggling spellers aren't good in memorizing and retaining facts including even those symbols that represent words. C-V-C pattern reading of basic sight words and even simple recognition of letter sounds have remained a challenge for these learners who have poor phonemic and graphemic awareness. This is probably one of the reasons why they cannot master nor remember immediately the correct spelling more so when only list of isolated and random words is given during tests. Aside from that, when I conducted oral assessment in Phil IRI, I have found out that these pupils were able to read and understand simple passages but had extreme difficulty in writing down the texts as dictated. When the written outputs were checked, spelling errors were widely evident. I observed how these children struggle so hard every time they spell and transcribe words. And such problem gives a huge

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negative impact in their writing skill.

Despite the constant practice of spelling drills, children have been still getting low scores in their tests. I realized then that such skill was taught in a seemingly traditional way, following the paradigm of memorizing and learning only words in list without ensueing the proper spelling patterns and interrelating them into reading and writing across all subject areas. With this, I decided to change the style and looked for viable solutions to address such recurrent problem by means of applying and intensifying SPSS (Spelling Pattern in Sequence Strategy) for the children to improve their spelling ability. This belief was influenced by the claim that learning to spell is not solely about memorization but largely a result of developing cognitive strategies to navigate the complexities of the English language (Gentry, 2015).

In another perspective, Torgesen et al. (2018) posit that the inclusion of remedial written exercises in the assessment process provides a valuable and comprehensive perspective on learners' spelling abilities. These exercises not only serve as a real-time reflection of current spelling challenges but also offer a longitudinal view, allowing for an in-depth analysis of learners' progress in overcoming spelling difficulties over time. This underscores the importance of incorporating both immediate and longitudinal assessments to gain a holistic understanding of spelling proficiency and to inform targeted interventions for improvement.

Hence, to validate the weight of this language literacy problem, I gathered some reliable data from the learners' daily written assessment results in spelling as incorporated in their English lessons, test scores from

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their dictation drills which were reflected from the class record including their test results that were taken from their remedial written exercises which I been regularly conducting all through remedial periods. Formative and other types of assessment tools were also used to indicate such evidence of their low spelling performance. Aside from that, I also asked random questions and even conducted personal interviews to know the ground reasons of their spelling difficulty that have highly interfered their language learning.

Based on the said pieces of evidence conducted through series of pre-assessments, I then identified those learners who further needed intensive remediation and intervention. After which, I immediately called the attention of the parents and sent them a notification letter informing them of their child's academic performance.

From the said context, I found out that the most important and relevant issue that is needed to give focus is on how to mitigate this concern and eventually provide an effective intervention that will suitably address the learning need of my pupils in terms of improving their spelling ability and thereby giving follow up home activities for the parents to be done as a viable way to assist their child.

## **II. INNOVATION, INTERVENTION AND STRATEGY**

Generally, the pupils were provided with time to practice and learn spelling patterns in varied ways like practice tests and spelling game. Along these patterned practices was the application of ICT that served as a motivational factor to heighten their eagerness to learn. I used instructional materials with word lists that were grouped according to recognizable spelling patterns which further can help develop fluency in spelling. Such materials

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were applied for spelling pattern drills and games for reinforcement. It is believed that employing cooperative game and word play can fuel the child's motivation to learn more. So, prior to the giving of patterned word list, a video presentation was shown to allow these identified learners to be refreshed with their phonetic and phonemic knowledge.

Aside from that, word lists for spelling development were utilized and were compiled in their reading portfolio for their enrichment exercises to be done upon the conduct of reading remediation. And to intensify the means of addressing the problem; through home visitation, parents were personally asked for assistance to play an active role in the child's learning. So, every time, spelling activities were done in class, parents were given responsibility to do intensive review at home. Learning materials and pupil's tracking record were also brought at home for the parents to monitor and track the learning level of their child.

Through the tracking record, the parents can personally assess and measure the spelling competency level of their child which were retuned every Friday to be verified by the teacher. In this way, they can immediately see what needs to be learned more that will, thus, help their child cope with or make progress in spelling. When assessment was administered, an assignment was instantaneously given for respelling on the following day.

Furthermore, the planned intervention was conducted through video presentation to review their phonemic and graphemic awareness, spelling pattern drills in the form of games, tests and activities which were incorporated in their reading and writing lessons and parent's instructional assistance at home for their child's spelling competency. This was done by

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introducing the spelling pattern, choosing words for students to sort, encouraging students to discover the patterns in their reading and writing and thereby using reinforcement activities to help pupils relate the patterns to previously acquired word knowledge. Using instructional materials with word lists that were grouped according to recognizable spelling patterns can help overcome the spelling problem of the child. These materials were utilized in varied activities and were eventually used by the parents for follow up practice at home.

### **III. ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions that guided this study are the following:

- a. What is the literacy level of the grade five pupils on their spelling skill?
- b. What strategy does the teacher use to cope with the spelling problem?
- c. What insight can the teacher share to the academe in general?

Moreover, these learners often make mistakes in spelling even in simply transcribing three letter words in English which caused their decreased learning performance. Their reading and writing skills are largely affected because of their insufficient spelling ability which is considered as a foundation of language learning. It has become a great challenge on my part as their language teacher since it is believed that a child cannot learn how to read and write well if spelling is not adequately developed in the early years.

This made me decide to delve into this research study that will address their spelling problem by employing a strategy emphasizing the use of common spelling patterns through this spelling intervention program called SPSS

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(Spelling Pattern in Sequence Strategy) of which I believe will increase the motivation and the performance level of the pupils in terms of their spelling ability. This intervention was anchored in the belief affirmed by Gagen (2013) in her reading article on the effectiveness of spelling instruction and the tools to achieve reading success. It was emphasized clearly in her study article that by learning the ways of which certain patterns are used in words and by practicing these common patterns can help students develop their spelling. And since most spelling follows expected patterns, learners in the early years would be able to easily develop their spelling skill (Gagen, 2013).

#### **IV. ACTION RESEARCH METHODS**

##### **a. Research Design**

I primarily used classroom-based action research design employing qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is because, I intended to uncover and describe the problem that the identified learners have undergone pertaining to their spelling ability which is considered a vital skill in the language literacy.

Furthermore, the rationale of using such designs is to have an in-depth narrative description on the viable solutions to assist the child in coping with their spelling difficulty. It is my primal objective as a researcher to collate first-hand information to bring out truths and facts in this study.

##### **b. Participants, Other Sources of Data and Information**

This action research was conducted mainly to aid grade five pupils with spelling difficulty using SPSS (Spelling Pattern in Sequence Strategy) in facilitating and improving their competence in spelling. Hence, this research study only focused on this feasible and practical intervention which is

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presumed to be a better aid to help learners with spelling difficulty.

Purposive sampling was used in this study. In this regard, only the five (5) identified learners described as the research subject were involved. They were purposely selected because of the characteristics specified in the problem rationale. However, the intervention was applied to all learners in the class, but the focus of this action research was only intended for the learners identified with spelling difficulty.

Pupils' motivation was also limited only to the said viable spelling intervention and a follow up spelling remediation conducted by the parents at home for follow up assistance. Further the said procedure was merely conducted within the timeline set for this study. Moreover, the data was collected during the regular class schedule.

Finally, due to time restraint and some other limitations, the results of this study will unlikely become a general basis for results. I further believe that a conduct of a larger study scale of the same specific topic in the future will be very helpful in the improvement the spelling skill of the primary grade learners.

### **c. Data Gathering Methods**

I primarily use classroom-based action research design employing qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is imperative to always ensure the adequacy and safeguard the accuracy of the data gathered and analyzed. So, all the information gathered were fairly and honestly treated and recorded to value the sense of integrity of the data result in terms of the agreements, objectivity, and bias-free judgments. Further, securing the importance of consistency was also upheld by having a prolonged engagement during the

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conduct of the proposed intervention with the same participants within the set time and by confirming truths in the data gathered through the checking and rechecking process.

Further, it was made sure that the data gathered was not contaminated by biases and personal judgments in relation with the topic of the study. It is because I, as the researcher her of this study, should act as the data gatherer though I can also be involved like the participants in this study. Lastly, it should bear in mind that the findings of this research were the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of personal predispositions and preconceptions.

Consequently, participants should as well be made aware of where and for how long their data will be stored and how the data will be treated. In addition, securing utmost compliance to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 10173, known as the “Data Privacy Act of 2012”, was followed. There’s a need to ensure the safety of the personal information of the participants. Thus, utmost care was taken to safeguard anonymity of the data sources and the identification of any personal information shared or read.

Moreover, the identity of research participants was always protected through anonymity or confidentiality, unless research participants clearly agree to, or request the publication of their personal information. Anonymity entails that there is no way to identify a person from the ensured information provided by keeping personal details separate from survey responses or any data gathering instrument whereby participants not sharing their names with researchers (Halej, 2017).

According to Yin (2003) as cited by Burton (2013), gathering data using

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multiple sources can help facilitate a deeper understanding and can provide consistent interpretation of results in a wider spectrum of the study. Hence, the process of triangulation was further applied in this study (Burton, 2013).

Consequently, I made sure in this study that the intervention will not cause any harm to anybody in my classroom. Though informed consent was not completely secured at the outset, the data and information gathered were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Moreover, for the generation and analysis and for the purpose of gaining a thorough understanding of pupils' learning problem on spelling, I gathered reliable data from their daily written assessment results in spelling as incorporated in their English lessons, test scores from their dictation drills which were reflected from the class record, including their test results that were taken from their remedial written exercises and conducted remedial periods. Formative and other types of assessment tools were also used to indicate such evidence of their low spelling performance. Two methods were employed for the purpose of gaining a thorough understanding of this study. The said tools were triangulated with pre and post-tests, personal interviews and focus group discussion to know the ground reasons of their spelling difficulty which highly interferes their language learning.

For the instrumentation, after conducting series of assessments, learners were labelled as advanced, instructional and poor spellers based on the severity and number of errors made in the tests. Pre-test, teach, test procedure was applied for the pupils to be able to track their learning and improve their spelling skill. Further, learners in the poor level were selected to undergo the spelling remediation through SPSS (Spelling Pattern in Sequence

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Strategy). Parents were also notified to help their child and conduct learning assistance in spelling at home. Tracking and progress report were returned every week to the teacher for monitoring and verification.

#### **d. Data Analysis**

According to Noble and Smith (2013), the process of data analysis is to assemble and or reconstruct the data gathered in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion in a way that is transparent, rigorous and thorough while remaining true to participant's account. Further, documenting the movement from unit of data to final themes allows for transparency for data analysis. Qualitative research is therefore complex in nature since it needs to produce large amounts of data and part of its complexity is the data analysis which requires the researcher with expertise, vision and veracity.

Thus, the data gathered were treated using appropriate descriptive statistics and shall be presented both in textual, tabular, and graphical form. This is because I intended to explore and describe the problem and viable solution to help the learners improve their spelling skill. Moreover, interview, observation data and series of pre-test-teach-post-test were applied as major gathering instruments to measure their spelling skill.

### **V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION**

Five pupils in my English class were diagnosed to have been struggling in their spelling and writing skills which in turn also has greatly affected their decoding ability and comprehension skill both in spoken and written English instructions. Since, spelling is intimately interwoven into learners' reading and writing across learning areas, it has become indeed a great challenge to

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strategize an effective program intervention that could address the problem and that could eventually help the learners be able to cope with their spelling difficulty. Such poor spelling performance was recorded and reflected on their Phil IRI results and daily assessment routine I had administered as their English subject teacher and class adviser.

Table 1. Pre-sessment Results of the three identified pupils of grade five

PRETEST	SUCCESSIVE TRACKING OF RESULTS TOTAL NUMBER/SCORE OF WORDS CORRECTLY SPELLED BY THE PUPILS (10 ITEMS)						
	1 <sup>ST</sup> Assess- ment	2 <sup>nd</sup> Assessm- ent	3 <sup>rd</sup> Assessm- ent	4 <sup>th</sup> Assessmen- t	5 <sup>th</sup> Assessmen- t	6 <sup>th</sup> Assessmen- t	7 <sup>th</sup> Assessm- ent
PUPIL 1	3	1	5	0	4	4	0
PUPIL 2	3	0	2	0	4	2	1
PUPIL 3	1	3	3	2	5	2	3
PUPIL 4	2	3	2	1	3	3	2
PUPIL 5	0	2	4	2	4	2	1

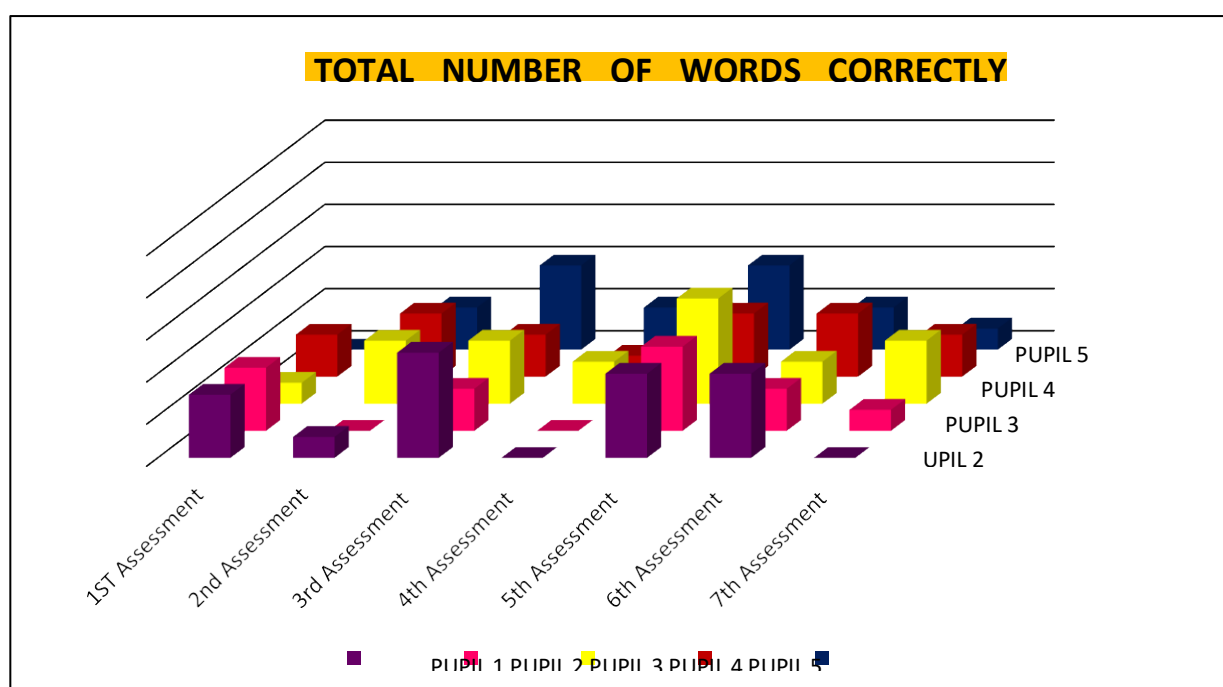


Table 1 showed the pre-test results of the five identified pupils. The graph above displays their poor performance before the intervention was taken place.

This explicit sequential teaching and learning of spelling words is believed to be a systematic program for these identified struggling spellers to gradually be able to master in a gradual process the so-called basic patterns and principles of spelling words and rules in English. For that context, I decided to implement this program in four successive weeks.

Consequently, these five identified pupils received a systematic instruction of learning to spell that moves along a continuum from the easiest sound /spelling patterns to the most difficult. So, these words of common features were grouped together in sequence of phonics elements for teaching sound out words such as words with short vowel sounds, consonant blends, digraphs, long vowel, final e, long vowel digraphs, other vowel patterns and syllable patterns.

The implementation of a systematic and sequential teaching approach in spelling aligns with established educational principles. According to Matthews (2013), adopting a gradual and structured process is essential for learners struggling with spelling difficulties. The systematic program employed in this action research, spanning four successive weeks, reflects a strategic effort to help identified struggling spellers master basic spelling patterns and rules in English. The approach, progressing from easier to more complex sound/spelling patterns, is consistent with insights from Restrepo (2013), who highlights the importance of organized and sequenced spelling instruction. This external perspective reinforces the rationale behind the structured teaching method applied in the action research, providing additional support for its efficacy (Matthews, 2013; Restrepo, 2013).

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So, every day, these pupils religiously followed a certain routine. Since, elementary pupils are believed to be visual learners, the first routine was done through watching video. I let them watch a video about a certain phonetic sound with applied spelling principle. As they watched closely to the video, they were asked to sound out the given words mentioned. Then, I let them internalize a spelling rule based on the video presented. After which, a spelling card with the given set of words was provided to be read and practiced individually and by grouped. I believe that employing cooperative game and word play can fuel the child's motivation to learn more. So, spelling pattern drills will be in the form of game test to reinforce learning and leverage their level of interest.

A parent's instructional assistance at home was also employed in this intervention to have an intensive follow up with their child's spelling competency. In this way, the parents were given responsibility to attest the spelling performance of their child. A bring home activity paper was given to the child. As a confirmation that parental assistance was done at home, these identified pupils were encouraged to record through video their home activity. Parents were also required to affix their signatures and record the scores in the scoring sheet provided which was also compiled in their individual portfolio. In this way, collaborative partnership was visibly exerted and manifested both by the teacher and the parents which was believed to have gained a positive effect on the child's learning performance. To intensify the means of addressing the problem; through home visitation, I as well personally asked for assistance and follow up from the parents to play an active role in the child's learning. So, every time, we do spell activities in class,

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parents were given responsibility to do intensive review and activity at home. Learning materials and pupil's tracking were also brought at home for the parents to monitor and track the learning level of their child.

Through the tracking record, the parents can personally assess and measure the spelling competency level of their child which will be retuned every Friday to be verified by the teacher. In this way, they can immediately see what needs to be learned more that will, thus, help their child cope with or make progress in spelling. When assessment is administered, an assignment is instantaneously given for respelling on the following day. Aside from that, word lists for spelling development were compiled in their reading portfolio for their enrichment exercises to be done upon the conduct of reading remediation.

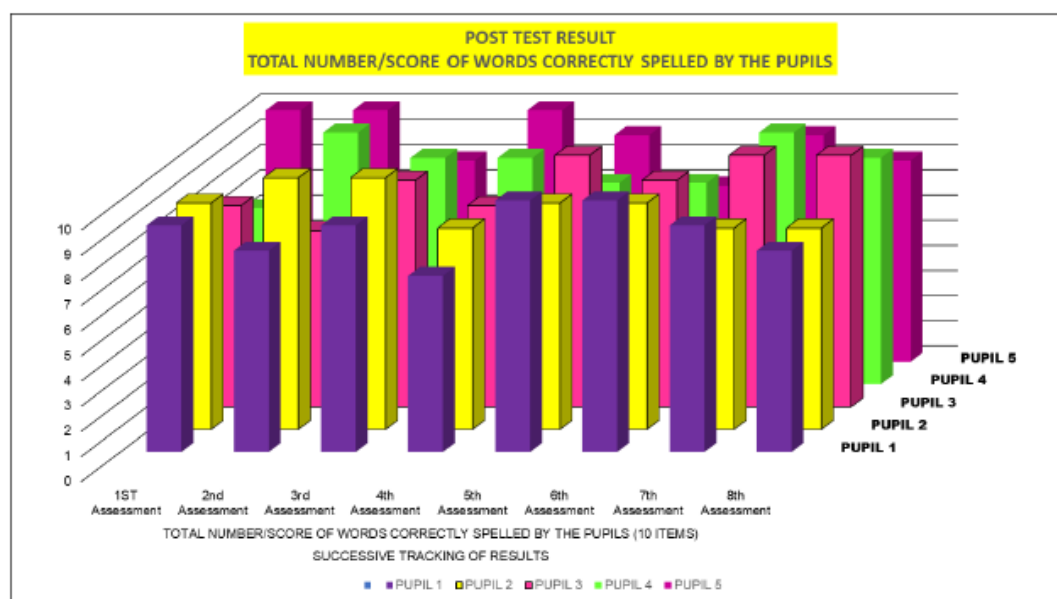
The following day would be drills of the spelling pattern, choosing words for students to sort, encouraging students to discover the patterns in their reading and writing and thereby using reinforcement activities to help pupils relate the patterns to previously acquired word knowledge. Using instructional materials with word lists that were grouped according to recognizable spelling patterns is believed to have helped overcome the spelling problem of the child. These materials will be utilized in varied activities and will be eventually used by the parents for follow up practice at home.

This intervention lasted for a month having two assessments per week for a total of eight (8) in which these learners underwent the same routine implemented in the process. After conducting the said intervention program, spelling skill of these five identified pupils have been improved. Their gradual improvement was revealed in the post-test result as shown below

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Table 2. The Post-Assessment results of the five identified learners

PRETEST	SUCCESSIVE TRACKING OF RESULTS TOTAL NUMBER/SCORE OF WORDS CORRECTLY SPELLED BY THE PUPILS (10 ITEMS)							
Identified Pupils	1 <sup>st</sup> Assessment	2 <sup>nd</sup> Assessment	3 <sup>rd</sup> Assessment	4 <sup>th</sup> Assessment	5 <sup>th</sup> Assessment	6 <sup>th</sup> Assessment	7 <sup>th</sup> Assessment	8 <sup>th</sup> Assessment
PUPIL 1	9	8	9	7	10	10	9	8
PUPIL 2	9	10	10	8	9	9	8	8
PUPIL 3	8	7	9	8	10	9	10	10
PUPIL 4	7	10	9	9	8	8	10	9
PUPIL 5	10	10	8	10	9	7	9	8



It was displayed in Table 2 the detailed presentation of the pupils' performance after the intervention was conducted. This clearly indicates that the identified pupils were able to cope with their spelling difficulty and have improved their spelling skill which signifies that using the simple sequence of spelling patterns with implied phonemic awareness and phonics instructions can have a positive impact on spelling proficiency in the primary grade.

In alignment with the outcomes presented in Table 2, the improved spelling performance of the identified pupils post-intervention resonates with Gagen (2013) theory which emphasized the efficacy of explicit spelling instruction and the use of phonemic awareness and phonics strategies. Accordingly, integrating a systematic approach to spelling patterns can significantly contribute to spelling skill development in primary grade learners. This reinforces the internal results, affirming that the utilized methodological approach aligns with established educational principles. The positive impact observed in the pupils' spelling proficiency is thereby supported by broader research, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effectiveness.

### **Reflection**

I realized a lot of things as I delved on the spelling problem of my pupils and how these school children were trying hard to overcome this difficulty that greatly impinges their capability to learn more other language skills apart from spelling. As a language teacher, it is indeed indispensable to determine the root causes of these literacy problems and understand how these existing dilemmas interfere the child's capability to learn more. For many years that I've been teaching spelling merely in a traditional way, I realized how such method became so tedious, boring, and ineffective to my pupils. So, being able to introduce this kind of spelling intervention made me understand that pattern knowledge has a significant factor in developing the spelling ability of my pupils and that it enabled them to investigate and comprehend the underlying patterns in words in an inductive and cohesive manner. It did guide them to discover how English language follows expected patterns and

thereby helped them build knowledge that can be applied both in reading and spelling.

Aside from that, I also realized that simple methods of teaching that will measure their management and coping strategies would become very effective only when the teacher is willing to expand and provide extra effort, time and opportunities to help learners cope with their struggle in spelling. ICT integration in teaching and learning can greatly upkeep and enhance the methods of teaching and learning. Computer generated learning materials such as video presentations could also help deliver wide range of virtual learning platforms and could cater the learning needs of the new breed of young learners in the millennial generation. With this, we are not only assisting them to learn faster but we are also getting their interest to delve into the language. In consonance with the claims of Gagen (2013) and Restrepo (2013), this intervention, as affirmed in this research study, poses positive implication in helping the children be able to develop their spelling ability in a gradual process.

## **VI. ACTION PLAN**

In the learning context, the result of this research study will serve as a guide for the teachers, school administrators and community stakeholders who may have in one way or another encountered similar problem and concern in terms of their child's learning. Apart from that, this will also serve as a driving tool to provide opportunities and recommended ways to strengthen the language program and execution of the academic policy of the learning institution all for the betterment of the school children.

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