
Effectiveness of Phonics Instruction in the Beginning Reading Performance of Grades 1 & 2 Pupils: Basis for Instructional Supervision

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ABSTRACT

Reading is the most essential skill learned by the pupils at an early grade and at an early age. That is why key stage 1 teachers must be innovative and creative in making their lessons enjoyable and meaningful to the pupils. Teachers must be versatile in shifting and integrating different teaching strategies and methods in teaching beginning reading. They must be creative in using learning resources which will capture the interest of the pupils to learn. Thus, this study was formulated to evaluate the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the beginning reading performance of the Grades 1 & 2 pupils and utilize the result in formulating instructional supervision plan which will assist the school administrators and mentors in providing appropriate technical assistance to the teachers. A quasi-experimental research design employing pre-test and post-test utilizing the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) as tools in evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. Simple percentage and t-test of mean difference were the statistical tools used to interpret the result of the study. The study revealed a significant difference in the performances of Grades 1 & 2 pupils before and after the integration of phonics instruction. The proper articulation of the sounds of the letters, appropriate strategy in blending to form a word and the varied and differentiated learning materials used, and the change in behavior of the pupils while learning the skills, contributed to the success in teaching beginning reading to the Grades 1 & 2 pupils making it an effective intervention to improve the beginning reading performance of the pupils.

Keywords — Effectiveness, Phonics Instructions, Beginning Reading Performance, Grades 1 & 2 Pupils, Instructional Supervision

I. INTRODUCTION

Early literacy begins to develop the moment the child is born. Parents and caregivers lay the foundation for children's reading success in infancy, as babies learn to recognize the sounds in their language and identify words within the speech stream. Practices such as reading books with babies, singing songs, drawing, and pointing out letters are important beginning steps in literacy development.

The development of reading begins through a gradual process called emerging literacy (The basics of teaching reading and writing, 2020). During this process, which begins at birth and continues through age eight, children learn to use language. Typically, language is first learned through oral forms, followed by written forms. Reading requires individuals to make meaning out of print (The basics of teaching reading and writing, 2020). Arguably the cornerstone

to academic success, the skill of reading is also crucial to social, economic, and emotional achievement in life (Maddox & Feng, 2013).

Teaching beginning reading is a rewarding yet challenging task for educators. There is an immense amount of pressure on teachers to continuously meet the educational standard, excel on tests, and bring the learners up to the grade level. Reading is arguably one of the most important predictors of academic success, and instructional approaches vary across the globe (The basics of teaching reading and writing, 2020). Some models focus more intensely on phonics, and others draw children's attention to the semantic and syntactic information of a given text. Teachers ultimately want to know the best and latest research on how the reading brain works, how to best support students in the learning process and potential challenges they may come across. All educators, especially primary grade teachers, need to be given the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to most effectively teach young children to read.

Moreover, teachers are exerting more efforts in formulating intervention activities to help the learners to learn to read. As children have been taught to read in many ways, teachers also have many ways in teaching beginning reading. The National Reading Panel Report (2000) decided that reading instruction needs to be woven into five critical pillars: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These pillars each intertwine with one another - reading cannot happen without one of them (National Reading Panel Report, 2000). For example, when children have difficulty reading words with the proper rate, prosody, and accuracy, they can have difficulty comprehending a text because of the cognitive load it takes to recognize words (Stevens, Walker, Vaughn, 2017). There are many different approaches to teaching each of these pillars of reading.

One of the approaches and strategies used by Grade 1 teachers in teaching beginning reading is through teaching phonics as one of the most important skills in reading. Phonics instruction is a method of teaching beginning reading that focuses on the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and the written symbols (graphemes) that represent them. It involves teaching students how to decode words by recognizing and using letter-sound correspondence.

In phonics instruction, learners learn the letter-sound correspondence. They are taught the sounds associated with individual letters and letter combinations. They will also learn to blend or combine individual sounds together to read words. They learn to break words into individual sounds, which helps with spelling. While phonics is important, learners also learn some words that do not follow regular phonetic patterns (often called sight words) as they occur frequently and are best learned by memorization.

Phonics instruction is typically systematic and sequential, starting with simple letter-sound relationships and gradually progressing to more complex ones. It is often part of a broader approach to teaching reading that may include activities to build vocabulary, comprehension skills, and fluency.

Effective phonics instruction is balanced with other elements of reading instructions, such as exposure to a wide range of texts, opportunities for writing, and explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. This comprehensive approach helps learners become proficient readers who not only decode accurately but also understand and enjoy what they read.

As grades 1 & 2 teacher in many years, the researcher sees the importance of teaching phonics as the initial strategy in beginning reading. Thus, it is in this premise that the researcher decided to conduct this study to evaluate the

effectiveness of phonics instruction in the beginning reading performance of grades 1 & 2 pupils. A proposed instructional supervision plan was formulated based on the findings of the study.

It is in the rationale that the researcher who is currently a grades 1 & 2 teacher in the above mentioned local, would like to delve worthy research undertaking that will benefit herself, the school she is currently teaching and that of her Graduate Program she is enrolled at.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the beginning reading performance of Grades 1 & 2 pupils as basis for instructional supervision in Hibunaon Elementary School, Ormoc District IV, Ormoc City Division for School Year 2023-2024. The findings of the study were the basis for the proposed instructional supervision plan.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the performance of Grade 1 & 2 pupils before the utilization of phonics instruction in teaching beginning reading?
2. What is the performance of Grade 1 & 2 pupils after the utilization of phonics instruction in teaching beginning reading?
3. Is there a significant difference in the performance of Grade 1 & 2 pupils before and after the utilization of phonics instruction in teaching beginning reading?
4. What instructional supervision plan can be proposed based on the findings of this study?

II. METHODOLOGY

Design. This study employed the quasi-experimental research design utilizing the pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the beginning reading performance of Grade 1 & 2 pupils as basis for instructional supervision for School Year 2023-2024. Hibunaon Elementary School, Ormoc District IV, Ormoc City Division is the main locale of the study. The 30 Grades 1 & 2 pupils enrolled in the said locale are the main respondents of the study. The instrument to be used in this study is the tool in Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). The Department of Education (DepEd) employs the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) as a tool to evaluate the reading ability of students in the early grades. A student's ability to read fluently, comprehend what they have read, and successfully convey their information is assessed on the EGRA, a standardized reading test. There are 5 key components of early grades that EGRA measure. These are alphabetic principles, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The alphabetic principle includes letter name identification, letter sound identification, syllable reading, nonword decoding and dictation. Moreover, the skills measures under phonemic awareness are the initial sound identification and phoneme segmentation. For fluency it is the oral reading fluency is measured while on vocabulary, oral vocabulary, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. Lastly for comprehension, reading and listening comprehension is measured. This instrument is based on DepEd Order No. 57, series 2015, Utilization of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) Tools for System Assessment. This material is used to measure the pre-test and post-test performance of Grades 1 & 2 pupils in beginning reading. Moreover, the researcher prepared lesson plans for teaching beginning reading utilizing the phonics instruction as the strategy and learning materials and activities in the delivery of the lessons. This research focused on evaluating the effectiveness of phonics instruction in the beginning

reading performance of Grade 1 & 2 pupils as basis for instructional supervision through the pre-test and post-test and its significant difference. A Proposed Instructional Supervision Plan based on the findings of the study is the output.

Sampling. There are 30 Grades 1 & 2 pupils involved in this study. The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool and the implementation of the intervention were administered personally to each of the pupils during the assessment period following the prescribed health protocol.

Research Procedure. The researcher prepared the research design and tools utilized in the study. Approval and recommendation from the Panel of Examiner of the Graduate Studies was sought. A letter request to conduct this study was forwarded to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Upon approval, permission from the District Supervisor and School Head was secured before the actual gathering of data. Orientation of the participants and administration of the pre-test was done during the assessment period for the class after the approval of the permit from the parents of the respondents. Data privacy was emphasized also in the meeting. After accomplishing the pre-test, intervention was given within four weeks. Utilization of phonics instruction as a strategy in teaching beginning reading with appropriate and varied learning materials and activities highlight the provision of intervention in the delivery of the lesson in beginning reading to the Grades 1 & 2 pupils was emphasized in the study. After the four-week intervention, the post-test was administered. Results of the tests were collected. Data were tallied and submitted for statistical treatment. Analysis and Interpretation of Data. Making of Proposed Instructional Supervision Plan followed.

Ethical Issues. The researcher properly secured the permission to conduct the study from the authorities through written communication. In the formulation of the intervention materials that was used in the study, the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was avoided. The respondents' names and other personal data were not included in this study to protect their privacy. Participation of the respondents was also voluntary. Orientation was conducted for the respondents with their parents. In the orientation, issues and concerns were addressed and consent to be included in the study were signed. The researcher-maintained objectivity in analyzing and discussing the results. All authors whose works were mentioned in this study were properly quoted and were acknowledged in the reference.

Treatment of Data. Simple Percentage was employed to evaluate the performances of grades 1 & 2 pupils in beginning reading before and after the implementation of phonics instruction in teaching the skills. **t-Test of Mean Difference** was used to determine the significant difference in the performances of grades 1 & 2 pupils in beginning reading before and after the implementation of phonics instruction in teaching the skills.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1

PRE-TEST PERFORMANCE OF GRADES 1 & 2 PUPILS IN BEGINNING READING

Score Range	Description	PRETEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	0	0
13-16	Very Good	0	0
9-12	Good	16	53
5-8	Fair	9	30
1-4	Poor	5	17
Total		30	100
Weighted Mean		7.70	Good

Table 1 presents the pre-test performance of Grades 1 & 2 pupils before the utilization of phonics instruction in teaching beginning reading. It was revealed on the table that among the 30 Grades 1 & 2 pupils, 5 or 17% got a score of 1-4 which is interpreted as poor. This means that these pupils possess difficulty in identifying the sounds of the letters of the alphabet. They are the beginners who were not able to perform well during their kindergarten period. They need special attention and assistance from the teacher in terms of learning phonics. Moreover, there are 9 pupils or 30% got a score of 5-8 which is interpreted as fair. This means that these pupils acquired knowledge in beginning reading but they cannot do independently the activities. This implies further support especially on teaching phonics and pupils need to master those before introducing blending of sounds. Further, there are 16 pupils or 53% got a score of 9-12 which is considered as good. This means that these pupils can master the sounds of the letters of the alphabet, they can blend or can read syllables and three-letter words but have difficulty in reading phrases and sentences. This implies additional efforts in teaching beginning reading. More reading materials and activities must be given to them to master all the skills in beginning reading. Based on the table, the pre-test performance of the Grades 1 & 2 pupils before the integration of phonics instruction in beginning reading, an average weighted mean of 7.70 was achieved and this is interpreted as good. This means that most of the Grades 1 & 2 pupils during the first quarter of school year 2023-2024 attained good performance in beginning reading. They acquire the pre-requisite skills in learning beginning reading. This implies additional support and attention to achieve the literacy goal by the end of the school year. Hence, integration of phonics instruction utilizing varied and differentiated reading materials and activities are to be used and focusing on teaching literacy must be of priority. Encouragement of attendance of pupils in school is one of the aims of the teacher because if these pupils keep on making absences, the efforts of the teacher in the implementation of the intervention is of waste. That is why, the teacher must be creative and resourceful in crafting learning materials which can be used by the pupils and their classroom must be creatively structured and nurturing to motivate them to be in school everyday. Wilson (2012) explains that decoding skills enable readers to read fluently, which bridges phonics to comprehension. This supports readers as they apply meaning to text, which aids in comprehension (Wilson, 2012). Furthermore, Maddox & Feng (2013) recommend that literacy should integrate both phonics and whole language into one approach; however, they recommend that the greater emphasis lies on phonics development. According to Noltemeyer et al. (2013), mixed method reading instruction integrates instruction that addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

TABLE 2
POST-TEST PERFORMANCE OF GRADES 1 & 2 PUPILS IN BEGINNING READING

Score Range	Description	POST TEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	25	84
13-16	Very Good	3	10
9-12	Good	1	3
5-8	Fair	1	3
1-4	Poor	0	0
Total		30	100
Weighted Mean		18.30	Excellent

Table 2 provided the post-test performance of Grades 1 & 2 pupils after the utilization of phonics instruction in teaching beginning reading. It was revealed on the table that among the 30 Grades 1 & 2 pupils, 1 or 3% got a score of 5-8 which is fair. This means that the pupil, despite the intervention provided to him/her, fair performance is attained. The pupil makes satisfactory progress in their reading skills when phonics instruction is integrated effectively into their learning. Fair performance in beginning reading implies that pupils are given the support and instruction they need to succeed in learning to read but they still need to master the skills for them to be independent in doing their tasks. They need a supportive environment, and appropriate learning resources to help him/her improve reading performance. Moreover, the table also shows that there is 1 pupil or 3% got a score of 9-12 which is interpreted as good. This means that after the integration of phonics instruction, the pupil demonstrates a high level of proficiency in reading skills. This implies that the pupil has developed a strong foundation in reading skill that will serve him/her well as he/she continues to advance in his/her reading abilities. The pupil can understand and interpret what he/she reads showing that it is not only on decoding words but also grasp the meaning of those. Further, there are 3 or 10% got a score of 13-16 which is interpreted as very good. This means that after the integration of phonics instruction, the pupils were able to achieve a very good performance in their reading abilities. This implies that these pupils can independently work the activities in reading. They can read better, especially on simple words and with little understanding of the words read. Finally, the table shows that there are 25 or 84% got a score of 17-20 which is interpreted as excellent. This means that these pupils have not only mastered the skills of reading but have also developed a deep and nuanced understanding of language and text, setting a strong foundation for their academic success. This implies an effective intervention on the integration of phonics instruction in beginning reading. The activities and materials provided to the pupils make them independent readers and creatively read the text and passages, using their reading skills to explore new ideas, perspectives, and genres of literature. The performance of the Grades 1 & 2 pupils after the integration of phonics instruction in beginning reading got a weighted mean of 18.30 which is interpreted as excellent. This means that these pupils demonstrate exceptional proficiency and mastery in reading skills. This implies success in reading at their levels through the integration of phonics instruction. Phonics instruction shapes readers foundationally as it develops phonemic awareness and decoding skills (Sonnenschein et al., 2010). Wilson (2012) explains that decoding skills enable readers to read fluently, which bridges phonics to comprehension. This supports readers as they apply meaning to text, which aids in comprehension (Wilson, 2012). Effective phonics instruction takes individual needs of students into account and addresses them at an individual, personal level (Sonnenschein et al., 2010). Differentiation, accommodation, and modification are at the heart of successful instruction. Different viewpoints and ideas exist about when phonics instruction is most appropriate for readers (Tracey, 2017). Phonics instruction is generally geared toward early learners because it has been proven to be preventative, rather than a cure. It is a time-sensitive skill (Tyler et al., 2015). This explains why Reutzel et al. (2014)

find value in providing simple instruction to early learners, recommending that phonics instruction be completed in the primary grades.

TABLE 3

**TEST OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SCORES IN THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST
PERFORMANCE OF GRADES 1 & 2 PUPILS IN BEGINNING READING**

Aspects	Test Scores		Computed T	Critical T	Decision	Interpretation
	Pre	Post				
Grades 1 & 2 Pupils in Beginning Reading	7.70	18.30	1.632	0.732	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 3 presents the test of difference in the performances of Grades 1 & 2 pupils in beginning reading before and after the integration of phonics instruction. The pre-test performance of 7.70 had increased to 18.30 after the integration of phonics instruction which resulted in a computed value of t of 1.632 which is greater than the critical value or t of 0.732, so null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the performances of Grades 1 & 2 pupils before and after the integration of phonics instruction. This implies that the proper articulation of the sounds of the letters, appropriate strategy in blending to form a word and the varied and differentiated learning materials used, contributed to the success in teaching beginning reading to the Grades 1 & 2 pupils making it an effective intervention to improve the beginning reading performance of the pupils. The effectiveness of phonics instruction not only showed improvements in early literacy for students, but significantly in students who are English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (National Reading Panel, 2020). Aside from that, through the integration of phonics instruction where pupils are engaged in every activities especially in the production of sounds to blending and reading of words, phrases, sentences, and stories, they were excited and motivated to be present in the school and they do not miss any of the lessons delivered by the teacher.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed a significant difference in the performances of Grades 1 & 2 pupils before and after the integration of phonics instruction. The proper articulation of the sounds of the letters, appropriate strategy in blending to form a word and the varied and differentiated learning materials used, and the change in behavior of the pupils while learning the skills, contributed to the success in teaching beginning reading to the Grades 1 & 2 pupils making it an effective intervention to improve the beginning reading performance of the pupils.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Utilize the proposed improvement plan formulated.
2. Implement the intervention mentioned to help the beginning reading performance of pupils be continually sustained.
3. The Department of Education may fully support the continuing professional development of students based on the principle of lifelong learning and DepEd's commitment to the development of teachers' potential for their success in the curriculum.
4. Conduct relevant trainings and seminars to the elementary teachers to help empowered and sustained their knowledge in beginning reading.
5. Teachers must be patient enough in extending extra time to make all pupils independent readers.
6. School heads must design appropriate professional development for the teachers to improve their teaching strategies, methods, techniques, and approaches in teaching beginning reading.
7. School heads must provide adequate and appropriate materials for the construction of learning resources to be used by the pupils in the class.
8. School heads must motivate all teachers to achieve the desired reading goals of every learner through giving awards and rewards.
9. Teachers and school heads must encourage the participation of stakeholders in achieving reading goals of the pupils, and
10. Future researchers should replicate this study to include different locales and include different variables aside from the mentioned in this study.

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