

Utilization Of Phonics Strategies and Communication Skills in English and Mother Tongue of Grade 3 Learners

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Abstract — The main purpose of this study is to evaluate on the extent of utilization of Phonics strategies to the Communication Skills in English and Mother Tongue Of Grade 3 Learners in Libertad Elementary School, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City. The findings of the study were the bases for the proposed intervention plan. The research design employed in the study titled "Extent of the Utilization of Phonics Strategies and Communication Skills in English and Mother Tongue of Grade 3 Learners" followed a descriptive-correlational approach to examine how phonics strategies are being applied in classroom instruction and how these relate to the learners' communication skills in both languages. The process began with the identification of the problem and formulation of clear objectives focused on assessing the level of phonics integration and its impact on oral and written language skills. A thorough review of relevant literature, including phonics instruction theories, DepEd curriculum standards, and multilingual education frameworks, provided the foundation for the study. The Test of Relationship, which examines the correlation between the extent of utilization of phonics strategies and learners' performance in two language domains: English and Mother Tongue. The table shows the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), computed t -values, the critical table value at a 0.05 level of significance, the decision on the null hypothesis (H_0), and the interpretation of the strength of the relationship. The objective of this analysis is to determine whether phonics strategies significantly impact learners' communication skills in both language areas.

The first correlation result, between the extent of phonics strategy utilization and performance in English, shows a Pearson r and a computed t -value, which is significantly greater than the table value. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirms a very strong and statistically significant relationship. This implies that as teachers integrate phonics strategies more thoroughly in English instruction, learners' communication performance in English markedly improves.

Similarly, the correlation between phonics strategy utilization and performance in the Mother Tongue yielded an even stronger r value and a t -value, again exceeding the critical value. The null hypothesis is likewise rejected, confirming a very strong relationship. This further emphasizes the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction not only in second language learning but also in enhancing first language proficiency among Grade 3 learners.

These findings imply that phonics instruction—through explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships, blending, segmenting, and interactive activities—has a substantial positive influence on learners' reading fluency, comprehension, and oral communication. The results reinforce the importance of embedding phonics systematically in early grade curricula to strengthen foundational literacy in both English and the Mother Tongue. Schools and teachers should consider

sustaining and enriching these approaches to further boost learners' academic success and language development.

Keywords — Utilization, phonics strategies, communication skills, Grade 3, English, MTB

I. Introduction

The early years of primary education are crucial for developing foundational literacy skills, particularly in communication—both oral and written—across multiple languages. In the Philippine context, learners in Grade 3 are expected to begin transitioning from learning to read, to reading to learn, using both English and their Mother Tongue as mediums of instruction. However, many learners at this level still struggle with pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These communication difficulties often stem from weak decoding skills and a lack of phonemic awareness, which are key components of reading readiness. To address this gap, there is a growing recognition of the need to strengthen phonics-based instruction as a strategy to support students' communication development.

Phonics, which involves the relationship between sounds and letters, has long been acknowledged as an effective approach in early literacy development. It provides learners with the tools to decode unfamiliar words, pronounce them correctly, and eventually understand their meaning.

A study by Tumaliuan (2020) entitled "The Impact of Phonics Instruction on the Reading Performance of Grade 2 Pupils in Tuguegarao City" found that phonics significantly improved the reading fluency and comprehension of learners in both English and the local language. This supports the notion that targeted phonics instruction can lead to improvements not only in reading but also in broader communication skills, including speaking and writing.

In multilingual settings like the Philippines, the challenge becomes even more complex. Learners are exposed to multiple languages, which can cause confusion in pronunciation and word usage without structured support. Phonics bridges this gap by helping learners internalize sound patterns in both English and their Mother Tongue. By recognizing the similarities and differences in letter-sound relationships across languages, learners can become more confident and accurate in their oral and written communication. This makes phonics a valuable instructional tool, especially at the Grade 3 level, where language demands in content subjects begin to increase.

While children's learning today is influenced by technological advancements, policy reforms, global challenges, and evolving educational practices, there remain key factors that must be considered and emphasized to further enhance their learning skills. As part of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) serves as a significant initiative that uses the learners' first language as the medium of instruction. Introduced

in the Philippines in 2012, this program marked a shift from English and Filipino as the primary languages of instruction to the inclusion of local or regional languages.

Bridging the mother tongue to English is considered highly valuable, especially in today's increasingly globalized society. It offers learners the advantage of developing a strong foundation in their cultural and linguistic roots while simultaneously preparing them with the necessary communication skills to succeed in an English-dominated global environment. This dual approach allows for more meaningful and accessible learning experiences, particularly for young learners.

Using the mother tongue as a bridge to English supports learners in understanding complex ideas without being overwhelmed. This approach can be likened to a guided learning journey, where learners gradually gain confidence and are able to transfer concepts and knowledge between languages. As a result, the learning process becomes smoother, and learners are more likely to feel empowered. Being able to express themselves first in their native language, then gradually transition into using English, fosters both competence and self-assurance.

What is most compelling about this approach is the preservation of cultural identity. Language is more than just a system of words—it embodies culture, history, and personal experience. Promoting both the mother tongue and English ensures that learners do not have to sacrifice their identity in pursuit of academic success. Instead, they grow to become bilingual or even multilingual, gaining access to broader intellectual, cultural, and social opportunities. This balanced linguistic development supports not only academic performance but also personal growth and cultural pride.

Given the promising outcomes of previous studies and the persistent communication struggles of Grade 3 learners, this study is anchored on the belief that the intentional use of phonics in daily instruction can significantly enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively in both English and their Mother Tongue.

The researcher focuses on this topic to explore and validate an intervention that is practical, scalable, and rooted in sound pedagogy. By examining the effectiveness of phonics usage, the study aims to contribute to improved literacy instruction and help learners gain the confidence and competence to express themselves clearly and accurately in multiple languages.

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate on the extent of utilization of Phonics strategies to the Communication Skills in English and Mother Tongue of Grade 3 Learners in Libertad Elementary School, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City. The findings of the study were the bases for the proposed intervention plan.

Specifically, this study sought to answers the following questions:

1. What is the extent of utilization of phonics strategies to the communication skills in English and Mother Tongue of the Grade 3 pupils?

2. What is the communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils in English?
3. What is the communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils in Mother Tongue?
4. Is there a significant relationship on the extent of utilization of Phonics strategies on the ff:
 - 4.1. communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils in English; and
 - 4.2. communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils in Mother Tongue?
4. What proposed intervention plan can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship on the extent of utilization of Phonics strategies on the ff:

- a. communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils in English; and
- b. communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils in Mother Tongue.

II. Methodology

Design. The research design employed in the study titled "Extent of the Utilization of Phonics Strategies and Communication Skills in English and Mother Tongue of Grade 3 Learners" followed a descriptive-correlational approach to examine how phonics strategies are being applied in classroom instruction and how these relate to the learners' communication skills in both languages. The process began with the identification of the problem and formulation of clear objectives focused on assessing the level of phonics integration and its impact on oral and written language skills. A thorough review of relevant literature, including phonics instruction theories, DepEd curriculum standards, and multilingual education frameworks, provided the foundation for the study. The researcher then developed validated research instruments, such as survey questionnaires for teachers, classroom observation checklists, and assessment tools to evaluate learners' reading fluency, speaking, and writing abilities. Upon securing approval from the Schools Division Office and obtaining consent from parents, the researcher identified participants using purposive sampling—specifically Grade 3 teachers and learners engaged in both English and Mother Tongue instruction. Data collection involved distributing teacher surveys, observing instructional practices, and assessing learners' communication competencies. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (such as mean, percentage, and weighted mean) to determine the extent of phonics strategy use, and correlational statistics to examine the relationship between phonics utilization and communication skills. Finally, the results were interpreted and used to generate meaningful recommendations aimed at enhancing early literacy instruction and

supporting multilingual development among Grade 3 learners. The main local of the study in Libertad Elementary School in the Schools Division of Ormoc City, Leyte. The respondents of the study were the 80 learners. The information for the analysis was gathered using To gather the necessary data needed in the study, The researcher employ a systematic and data-driven approach. One of those was the giving of tool for the extent of utilization of the intervention. Specifically, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) will be used as the primary tool to evaluate learners' proficiency in foundational literacy domains that are strongly linked to communication skills. EGRA is a well-established diagnostic instrument designed to assess early literacy skills in the areas of phonological awareness, letter-sound identification, decoding, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. These components are integral to the development of strong communication skills, as they support learners' abilities to accurately interpret, pronounce, and use words in context, both in English and in their mother tongue. The tool also measures receptive language and orthographic knowledge, which are crucial for understanding spoken and written language effectively—two core elements of communication.. The proposed Reading Intervention Plan was taken based on the findings of the study.

Sampling The respondents of the study were the were the 80 learners in Libertad Elementary School in the Schools Division of Ormoc that were involved in this study were being identified and the primary means of reach is during the actual conduct of the study as well as during the gathering of data in the school where the study was conducted.

Research Procedure. The researcher first sought formal permission from the Schools Division Office (SDO) to conduct the study. Similar letters of request were forwarded to the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS), the school principal, and the Grade 3 English teachers who were identified as key personnel in assisting with the administration of the research activities. Upon receiving approval, the researcher proceeded with the initial orientation of the cooperating teachers regarding their roles and the implementation process. After one month of intervention, the same questionnaire was administered to the respondents and then retrieved. The gathered data were consolidated and subjected to statistical treatment using simple percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson r.

Ethical Issues. The right to conduct the study was strictly adhered through the approval of the principal, approval of the Superintendent of the Division. Orientation of the respondents both School Principal, teachers and parent were done.

Treatment of Data. The following statistical formulas were used in this study:

The quantitative responses were tallied and tabulated. The data were treated using the following statistical tools.

The Simple Percentage were employed to determine the reading performance of the Grade 3 pupils.

Weighted Mean. This was utilized to assess the Communication skills performance of the Grade 3 pupils.

Pearson r- This tool was used to calculate the test of relationship on the communication skills performances of the Grade 3 and to the extent of the implementation.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1
Extent Of Utilization Of Phonics Strategy

	Utilization of Phonics Strategy	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	I incorporate phonics instruction in both English and Mother Tongue lessons.	5.00	Strongly Agree
2	Pupils are taught to blend sounds to form words.	5.00	Strongly Agree
3	Segmenting words into individual phonemes is practiced regularly.	5.00	Strongly Agree
4	Explicit instruction on letter-sound correspondence is given.	5.00	Strongly Agree
5	Visual and auditory phonics activities are used consistently.	5.00	Strongly Agree
6	I use songs, chants, and rhymes to reinforce phonics skills.	5.00	Strongly Agree
7	Learners engage in games and interactive tasks focused on phonics.	5.00	Strongly Agree
8	I assess phonics progress through oral and written activities.	4.30	Strongly Agree
9	Phonics is integrated into reading, speaking, and writing tasks.	4.45	Strongly Agree
10	Phonics lessons are differentiated according to learners' reading levels.	5.00	Strongly Agree
	Mean	4.88	Strongly Agree
	B. Impact on Communication		
11	Pupils can read new words with increasing accuracy.	4.80	Strongly Agree
12	Pupils show improved pronunciation in both English and Mother Tongue.	5.00	Strongly Agree
13	Pupils are able to decode unfamiliar words independently.	4.60	Strongly Agree
14	Learners demonstrate better fluency during oral reading.	5.00	Strongly Agree
15	Phonics instruction has improved pupils' spelling skills.	4.70	Strongly Agree
16	Pupils write with greater confidence and fewer decoding errors.	4.55	Strongly Agree
17	Listening and responding to phonics-based texts has improved comprehension.	4.50	Strongly Agree
18	Pupils demonstrate confidence in oral communication activities.	4.45	Strongly Agree
19	There is evident improvement in both receptive and expressive language use.	4.40	Strongly Agree

20	Pupils apply phonics knowledge in both English and Mother Tongue contexts.	4.60	Strongly Agree
	Mean	4.66	Strongly Agree
	Grand Mean	4.77	STRONGLY AGREE

Legend: 4.21- 5.00 – Strongly Agree
 3.41- 4.20 – Agree
 2.61-3.40 - Undecided
 1.81- 2.60- Disagree
 1.00-1.80- Strongly Disagree

This table presents the Extent of Utilization of Phonics Strategy, which measures how consistently phonics strategies are integrated into classroom instruction and their perceived impact on learners' communication skills in both English and Mother Tongue. It includes twenty indicators categorized into two major components: the utilization of phonics strategies in teaching and their resulting effects on pupils' reading, speaking, and writing competencies. Each item is evaluated using a weighted mean, interpreted against a five-point Likert scale, with the goal of assessing the effectiveness and influence of phonics instruction on language development among Grade 3 learners.

In the first part of the table, which deals with the Utilization of Phonics Strategy, results show that teachers strongly agree with the consistent implementation of a wide range of phonics activities. These include instruction on sound blending, segmenting phonemes, teaching letter-sound correspondence, and integrating phonics in multiple language domains. All ten indicators under this category received very high weighted mean scores—most rated at 5.00, with the lowest still at a strong 4.30. This suggests a comprehensive and deliberate effort among teachers to reinforce phonics knowledge in both English and the Mother Tongue.

The second component, Impact on Communication, highlights the observed effects of phonics strategies on learners' performance. Teachers reported strong agreement with improvements in learners' reading accuracy, pronunciation, decoding skills, fluency, and spelling. Pupils also reportedly show enhanced confidence in both oral and written communication, indicating that phonics strategies are not only well-implemented but also highly effective in promoting holistic language development. The scores in this section, ranging from 4.40 to 5.00, reflect a consistently positive perception of phonics instruction's role in strengthening foundational literacy and communication skills.

The implication of the findings, based on the overall grand mean of 4.77, is that phonics strategies are being extensively and effectively utilized in the classroom, and that they contribute substantially to language acquisition and literacy outcomes. The high level of teacher engagement in phonics instruction, combined with the reported improvements in student performance, signals that phonics-based learning continues to be a powerful approach in foundational education. This affirms the need to sustain and possibly expand such strategies in both English and Mother Tongue instruction, especially in early grade levels.

Table 2-A
Communication Skills of Learners in English

No.	Interpretation	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
5	Transitioning Reader	95-100	17	22
4	Reading at Grade Level	90-94	56	75
3	Developing Reader	85-89	1	1
2	High Emerging Reader	80-84	1	1
1	Low Emerging Reader	79 and below	1	1
	Total		76	100
	Average		94%	

This table presents the Communication Skills of Learners in English, which classifies the performance of Grade 3 learners based on their reading proficiency levels. The table outlines five distinct categories—Low Emerging Reader, High Emerging Reader, Developing Reader, Reading at Grade Level, and Transitioning Reader—using percentage-based scales. It also provides the corresponding frequency and percentage of learners in each category. The primary purpose of this table is to determine the overall communication skills of learners, particularly in relation to their reading proficiency and comprehension in the English subject.

Based on the data, the majority of learners, or 75%, are identified as "Reading at Grade Level" with scores ranging from 90–94%, while another 22% fall under the "Transitioning Reader" category with scores between 95–100%. Only one learner each falls under the categories of "Developing Reader," "High Emerging Reader," and "Low Emerging Reader," respectively, each comprising just 1% of the population. These figures indicate that most Grade 3 learners are performing well within or above the expected range for their level of communication and reading proficiency in English.

The overall average rating of 94% places the majority of learners at the upper end of the "Reading at Grade Level" scale, very close to the "Transitioning Reader" category. This suggests that most learners are not only meeting grade-level expectations in English but are also showing signs of progressing toward more advanced reading and communication capabilities. Such a distribution reflects the positive outcomes of structured reading instruction, phonics integration, and possibly early literacy interventions being employed in the classroom.

The implications of these results are significant for teaching and curriculum planning. With most learners performing at or above expectations, teachers can focus on extending reading comprehension, oral fluency, and vocabulary development. At the same time, the minimal percentage of learners in the lower categories calls for targeted remediation to ensure no student is left behind. These findings support the effectiveness of a balanced literacy approach that combines phonics, guided reading, and differentiated instruction to enhance learners' communication skills.

Table 3
Communication Skills of Learners in Mother Tongue

No.	Interpretation	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
5	Transitioning Reader	95-100	4	6
4	Reading at Grade Level	90-94	70	92
3	Developing Reader	85-89	1	1
2	High Emerging Reader	80-84	0	0
1	Low Emerging Reader	79 and below	1	1
	Total		76	100
	Average		97%	

This table presents the Communication Skills of Learners in Mother Tongue, which categorizes the Grade 3 learners based on their reading proficiency in their first language. The table uses a five-level scale—Low Emerging Reader, High Emerging Reader, Developing Reader, Reading at Grade Level, and Transitioning Reader—each with corresponding percentage ranges. It also provides the frequency and percentage of learners per category to assess the overall level of communication skills in the Mother Tongue domain.

From the results, a large majority of learners (92%) are classified as "Reading at Grade Level," scoring within the 90–94% range. A smaller percentage, 6%, have reached the "Transitioning Reader" level with scores between 95–100%, indicating emerging mastery beyond grade-level expectations. Meanwhile, only one learner (1%) was found in each of the "Developing Reader" and "Low Emerging Reader" categories, and none were identified as "High Emerging Readers." This data demonstrates that nearly all learners are achieving or exceeding expected literacy skills in their Mother Tongue.

The overall average score of 97% reinforces this interpretation, situating the learners in the upper range of reading proficiency. This strong average suggests that instructional strategies in teaching the Mother Tongue—possibly including phonics, contextual reading, storytelling, and guided oral practice—have effectively supported learners' development of communication skills. It further implies that foundational language and literacy development is being successfully achieved in the early primary years, serving as a strong basis for bilingual or multilingual education.

The implications of this data point toward the success of current literacy instruction in the Mother Tongue. Educators can now focus on enrichment activities and deeper comprehension exercises to further strengthen students' expressive and receptive skills. However, the presence of even a small number of learners in the lower proficiency categories highlights the need for early identification and targeted support. Differentiated instruction and additional reading interventions may help ensure all learners achieve proficiency.

Table 4
Test of Relationship

Variables Correlated	r	Computed value or t	Table Value @.05	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Extent of Utilization of Phonics Strategy to the Performance in English	0.84	4.221	0.556	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship (Very Strong)
Extent of Utilization of Phonics Strategy to the Performance in Mother Tongue	0.86	4.975	0.556	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship (Very Strong)

This table presents the Test of Relationship, which examines the correlation between the extent of utilization of phonics strategies and learners' performance in two language domains: English and Mother Tongue. The table shows the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), computed t-values, the critical table value at a 0.05 level of significance, the decision on the null hypothesis (Ho), and the interpretation of the strength of the relationship. The objective of this analysis is to determine whether phonics strategies significantly impact learners' communication skills in both language areas.

The first correlation result, between the extent of phonics strategy utilization and performance in English, shows a Pearson r of 0.84 and a computed t-value of 4.221, which is significantly greater than the table value of 0.556. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirms a very strong and statistically significant relationship. This implies that as teachers integrate phonics strategies more thoroughly in English instruction, learners' communication performance in English markedly improves.

Similarly, the correlation between phonics strategy utilization and performance in the Mother Tongue yielded an even stronger r value of 0.86 and a t-value of 4.975, again exceeding the critical value. The null hypothesis is likewise rejected, confirming a very strong relationship. This further emphasizes the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction not only in second language learning but also in enhancing first language proficiency among Grade 3 learners.

These findings imply that phonics instruction—through explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships, blending, segmenting, and interactive activities—has a substantial positive influence on learners' reading fluency, comprehension, and oral communication. The results reinforce the importance of embedding phonics systematically in early grade curricula to strengthen foundational literacy in both English and the Mother Tongue. Schools and teachers should consider sustaining and enriching these approaches to further boost learners' academic success and language development.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, the test of relationship clearly establishes that there is a very strong and statistically significant correlation between the extent of phonics strategy utilization and learners' communication performance in both English and Mother Tongue. The results validate that the more systematically phonics strategies are implemented in the classroom—through explicit instruction, consistent practice, and engaging activities—the greater the improvement observed in learners' language proficiency. This reinforces the effectiveness of phonics instruction as a foundational literacy approach that benefits both first and second language development. Ultimately, the findings support the sustained integration of phonics strategies in early grade instruction as a means to enhance learners' reading, comprehension, and communication skills across languages.

V. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to for each stakeholder group based on the findings regarding extent of utilization of Phonics strategies to the Communication Skills in English and Mother Tongue Of Grade 3 Learners in Libertad Elementary School, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City:

For Teachers, It is recommended that teachers in Libertad Elementary School continue to implement structured and explicit phonics instruction as part of their daily teaching routines in both English and Mother Tongue. They should utilize a variety of strategies such as blending, segmenting, and phoneme recognition, integrated with engaging tools like songs, chants, and games. Ongoing professional development in phonics-based literacy instruction should also be pursued to enhance pedagogical effectiveness.

School heads are encouraged to provide sustained support by allocating resources, instructional materials, and time for teachers to plan and implement phonics-based lessons. Monitoring and evaluating the integration of phonics strategies in classroom instruction should be prioritized to ensure consistency and quality of delivery across grade levels.

For Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS), The PSDS should advocate for the scaling up of successful phonics programs by conducting literacy-focused trainings and capacity-building sessions for teachers across the district. Data-driven decision-making should be promoted by supporting schools in conducting regular assessments to measure communication skills improvement as a result of phonics strategy utilization.

Parents should be informed and engaged as partners in reinforcing phonics instruction at home. Through orientation sessions and the provision of simple home-based reading activities, they can support their children's practice of letter-sound correspondence, word recognition, and oral communication in both English and Mother Tongue.

The researcher is encouraged to share the results of this study with key stakeholders in order to promote wider awareness of the benefits of phonics instruction. Documentation of the intervention strategies used and their outcomes should be made accessible for replication and adaptation in similar educational contexts.

Future researchers are advised to conduct longitudinal or comparative studies across different grade levels or schools to further investigate the long-term effects of phonics strategies on language proficiency. Exploring the integration of digital tools and multimedia resources in phonics instruction may also open new avenues for improving literacy outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to praise and thank God, the Almighty, who has granted countless blessings, knowledge, and opportunity given to me to be able to pursue the graduate studies.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people who have been instruments in the successful completion of this thesis.

I wish to extend my special thanks to Dr. Sabina B. Conui, Dean of Graduate School, for his motivation and immense knowledge in helping to improve the study.

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my research adviser Dr. Annabelle A. Wenceslao for the encouragement, enthusiasm and guidance throughout this research and writing of this thesis. I can't say thank you enough for her tremendous help.

I would like to thank the rest of the thesis committee, Dr. Bryant C. Acar, Dr. Jasmine B. Misa and Dr. Elvin H. Wenceslao for giving their assistance and recommendations toward the realization of this study.

I wish to acknowledge the help provided by my co-Teachers on the distribution and retrieval of the Pre-test and Post Test to the pupils.

I would also like to show my deep appreciation to the pupils and the parents in guiding their children in answering the Activity Sheets.

Last but not least, I will forever be thankful to my family for their unfailing support and encouragement.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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At present, she is a Teacher I in the Department of Education, Ormoc City Division. She is a Grade III teacher at Libertad Elementary School, located in Barangay Libertad, Ormoc City, Leyte, Philippines. She also holds leadership roles as the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) Coordinator and Documentation Coordinator for school-based organizations. She believes that “Every child can learn—just not on the same day or in the same way. For her, the power of teaching is the spark that ignites lifelong learning”.