



Fostering reading level and story comprehension through MARITES (Marungko Approach Reading Intervention to Elementary Schoolers) with mentor-mentee arrangement

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ABSTRACT

Developing young learners' reading level and story comprehension is fundamentally crucial as this will soon have implications as the learners go to higher grade levels. The main aim of the study is to determine how effective Marungko Approach with Mentor-Mentee Arrangement is to the reading level and story comprehension of elementary schoolers. The researchers conducted a pre-reading test among the learners and the alarming result became the basis on the conceptualization of the study. A group volunteers, who were third year Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students, served as mentors to pupils and they were all oriented on how to conduct the Marungko Approach. The mentors met their mentees twice a week, on a 1-hour session. After the 6-week intervention, it was revealed that the learners have an improved reading level and story comprehension. Also, there was a rapport built by both parties. Mentors expressed their gratefulness in their early exposure to the field; while mentees stated that they now learned how to read and expressed their approval to the mentors' teaching strategies. The study recommends the use of Marungko Approach in teaching reading to elementary schoolers as it fosters learners' reading level and story comprehension. Moreover, mentoring proves to be of help during online learning. Lastly, it is highly recommended that teacher education institutions (TEIs) may ink agreements with DepEd schools to facilitate partnership and allowing their students to real-world exposure even before their internships.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important skill to be learned by a learner. This cognitive human skill has a crucial role to life and in present societies (Santos & De Vera, 2020). This makes reading a social activity other than being just cognitive psycholinguistic (Panganiban, Pampan, Mugol, 2019). In order for learners to discover new things and broaden their horizons, they have to learn to read (Pagcaliwagan, 2019). While reading serves as a labor process of giving meaning from prints (Laurente, 2021) and requires practice and effort (Wolf, 2008 in Laurente 2021), becoming an active reader and being motivated to reading help a learner appreciate the pleasure of reading (Laurente, 2021). As much as reading plays an important aspect in learning, approximately 250 million primary school-aged children in most developing countries found reading to be extremely difficult (Santos & De Vera, 2020). Fact is, more than half of second grade learners cannot read a single word, and in the third-grade learners, about 30 percent were zero-word readers (Education for All, 2014). This situation holds true in the Philippines' setting. The result of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2019 showed that Filipino learners around age of 15 had a rating of 340 point in reading comprehension, which was much lower than the 487 points as the average. This made the Philippines to be at the bottom of the ranking among the 79 countries. (Boltron & Ramos, 2021)

The Philippines' Department of Education (DepEd) has long been providing various initiatives to strengthen and develop the reading ability of Filipino learners (Santos & De Vera, 2020). Among these initiatives are "project D.E.A.R (Drop Everything and Read)", "Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP)", "Reading Assistance Program", and "Summer Reading Camp" (DepEd Memo 244 s. 2011). However, even if the Department provide a lot of program, the challenge will be left to the classroom teachers of the learners, since these teachers are the implementers of these programs and they are the ones who can track the improvement of the learners. The respondents of the present study also have a fair share to these reading struggles. DepEd Order # 70 s. 2011 emphasized Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) which tasks educator in making every learner a reader in accordance to their grade level. The teacher-researcher, after conducting a diagnostic test using ASER Tool, a reading tool provided by the Division Office, it was found that 18 out of 23 pupils needed remediation. This was an alarming result, and called for a need of an intervention.

In literature, one of the most common approaches used by researchers and teachers in promoting reading performance, ability, fluency and comprehension of learners is the Marungko Approach. This approach was first introduced by two Filipino teachers from De Los Santos Community School in Marungko, Angat, Bulacan, Philippines (Ali & Urbano, 1967). Marungko approach allows readers learn to read using the proper sequencing of letters and letter sounds from frequently recurring to the least one, in the Filipino language, instead of following the alphabet (De Belen, 2017).

The study of Santos and De Vera (2020) conducted to forty-one (41) Grade 1 learners through the use of Marungko Approach showed that the learners' level of reading performance can be categorized as very satisfactory with 16.629 as an overall weighted mean for reading context, reading comprehension, phonetic awareness and reading in isolation. Among the recommendations of the study is the usage of Marungko Approach as reading intervention and instruction to Grade 1 pupils. Yayen, C. (2018) studied the English reading comprehension skills and reading performance of grade one pupils within a Thai learning environment. The study used quasi-experimental research design with Marungko Approach as an intervention. Using t-test for two correlated samples, it was concluded that the approach used is effective in enhancing pupils' comprehension skills and reading ability. Given the documented effectiveness of Marungko Approach to pupils reading ability, this approach was considered by the researchers. Further, the researchers considered that mentoring during the time of pandemic could be of help for the pupils. Online mentoring is found to have positive effects to pupils' achievement during online learning (Travero & Rubin, 2021).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

With all of these, the present study aimed to foster Grade 2 pupils' reading level and story comprehension through MARITES (Marungko Approach Reading Intervention to Elementary Schoolers) with Mentor-Mentee Arrangement.

METHODS

Pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was utilized in the study. In this design, pupils are assessed twice. The responses are accumulated in the pretest, and again in the posttest after completion of the treatment (Thyer, 2010). This was found to be appropriate in the study since it only deals with one group, and the improvement of the group.

The researchers conceptualized the study after conducting the pre-reading test using the ASER Reading Tool. Table 1 below shows the description of the ASER Tool Reading Level Comprehension. This tool is adapted from the Division office of DepEd-Cagayan de Oro. The learners are already on the second grade, and were already expected to be at least on the paragraph level. The initiative Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) of DepEd tasks educators in making every learner a reader at their own grade level (DepEd Order # 70 s. 2011). However, the pre-reading activity showed otherwise. There was a total of 18 pupils who should be subjected for remediation, 14 of which were on the Word Level, 2 Letter Level, and 2 Beginners Level. These 18 Grade 2 learners enrolled in the school year 2021-2022 in an elementary school in Division of Cagayan de Oro served as the respondents of the study. Table 2 below displays the score distribution of the pupils' reading level upon the conduct of the pre-test.

Table 1. ASER Tool Reading Level Comprehension Description

Level	Description
Beginner Level	Cannot recognize 4 out of 5 letters chosen
Letters Level	Correctly recognizes at least 4 out of 5 letters with ease
Word Level	Reads at least 4 out of 5 words with ease
Paragraph Level	Reads the paragraph text like she is reading a sentence, rather than a string of words Reads the paragraph text fluently and with ease, even if she is reading slowly Reads the paragraph text with 3 or less mistakes
Story Level	Successfully completes paragraph level Reads the story text like she is reading sentences, rather than a string of words Reads the story text fluently and with ease, even if she is reading slowly Reads the story text with 3 or less than 3 mistakes Answers 4 out of 5 questions (below) correctly

Table 2. Pre-Test Reading Level Result of the Learners

Reading Level	No. of Identified Pupils	Percentage
Beginner Level	2	8.70%
Letters Level	2	8.70%
Word Level	14	60.87%
Paragraph Level	4	17.39%
Story Level	1	4.34%
TOTAL	23	100%

Noting the importance of mentor-mentee relationship in teaching reading, the teacher-researcher asked volunteers from a State College where they served as part-time instructor. These volunteers were third year Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students who took this as an opportunity to be exposed to the field. There were 9 volunteers, and they served as mentors of the learners. Each mentor had 2 mentees. The lead

researcher conducted an orientation to these mentors, and introduced to them the approach to be used, prior to the implementation.

The mentors met their mentees twice a week, on a 1-hour session. After the 6-week intervention, the teacher-researcher conducted the post-reading test using the same tool. The scores were tallied and compared to learners' pre-test. A semi-structured interview was also conducted to both the mentor and the mentees to validate the result. Table 3 portrays the 6-week intervention conducted by the BEED students who served as mentors.

Table 3. The 6-Week Marungko Approach Intervention with Mentor-Mentee Arrangement

Week	Activity
Week 1	Review on the reading of alphabets and their sounds
Week 2	Blending of 1 consonant and 1 vowel Reading of CVC (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) Word Pattern
Week 3	Mastering in the reading of CVC words
Week 4	Reading of Phrases
Week 5	Reading of simple sentences with comprehension questions Reading of sentences with comprehension questions
Week 6	Reading of short paragraphs

Descriptive statistics, specifically, frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation were utilized for data presentation. Moreover, to test if Marungko approach fostered the reading level and story comprehension of the learners, t-test for dependent samples was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the implementation of the intervention, the following results were gathered.

Table 4. Post-Test Reading Level Result of the Learners

Reading Level	No. of Identified Pupils	Percentage
Beginner Level	0	0%
Letters Level	0	0%
Word Level	2	11.11%
Paragraph Level	10	55.56%
Story Level	6	33.33%
TOTAL	18	100%

Table 4 portrays that more than half of the pupils were under Paragraph Level, which was appropriate for them. It is remarkable that 6 pupils were under Story level, the highest level in ASER Tool. This improvement can be attributed to the intervention implemented. Peñol (2019) who also used Marungko approach materials in a study showed that the intervention used led to gradual elevation of learners' skills.

However, as shown, there were still 2 pupils who were in Word Level. Upon talking to the mentors, the lead-researcher found out that these pupils were not consistent in joining the session due to financial and family problems. Study home has a significant role of pupils' reading success. Family's reinforcement is a driving for pupils in achieving their goals in reading (Pagcaliwagan, 2019).

Table 5. Pupils' Pre and Post-Test Scores in the Story Comprehension Test

	N	mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Pre-test	18	1.28	0.9583	Frustration
Post-test	18	3.72	0.8264	Independent
Legend:	Mean Score	Description		
	0.00 - 1.66	Frustration		
	1.67 - 3.33	Instructional		
	3.34 - 5.00	Independent		

Moreover, the pupils' story comprehension was measured using a 5-item question from the ASER Tool. The questions were based on the story the pupils read. Table 4 displays the pupils' scores.

Table 5 posits that during the pre-test, the mean score was 1.28, making them categorized under frustration. Moreover, the standard deviation of 0.9583 shows how scattered their scores were. Pupils' pre-test result is very common among elementary learners. In the study Anis (2019) conducted to grade 5 pupils, pre-test results show that when it comes to comprehension, pupils were also in frustration level. This same report was posited by Luistro (2019) who claimed that one of the problems of Grade Five pupils in their school was that they can read but had a hard time to comprehend.

Opposite from pre-test result, the post-test has mean of 3.72, which in turn considered learners independent. The post-test standard deviation of 0.8264 is much lesser than the pre-test standard deviation. This means that post-test scores were less scattered than pre-test scores. Reading comprehension has been noted as a difficult part in English, but being the ability to read and understand what is being read (Agojo, 2019), it is a must that pupils learn this skill.

Table 6. Paired t-test of Pupils' Story Comprehension Test

Paired	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test- Post-test	2.444	1.423	17	0.000*

Note. *p<0.05

Table 6 portrays the paired sample t-test on the story comprehension of pupils before and after the implementation of the Marungko Approach with mentor-mentee arrangement. It can be gleaned that a significant difference between the pre and post-test is evident. This means that the approach used provided a positive effect to the pupils' reading level and story comprehension.

This result is in consonance to the study of Boltron and Ramos (2021) which showed a significant difference between the pre and post-tests level of Grade 1 learners reading competencies. A similar result is given by Santos and De Vera (2020) which revealed that Grade 1 learners reading performance using Marungko approach was found to be very satisfactory. This approach provides an effective strategy in improving pupils' reading performance of beginning reading stage which in turn is very crucial for enhanced reading comprehension skills necessary for higher level learning (Boltron & Ramos, 2021).

Aside from this result, the researchers conducted an informal interview to the mentors and mentees to report their experience in the intervention.

Table 7. Mentors' and mentees' perceptions on the intervention

Area	Theme	Indicators
7.1. Mentors' perception on the intervention	7.1.1. Mentors experienced early exposure to the field.	• Thankfulness for the opportunity to be immersed in the teaching field
	7.1.2. Mentors expressed sense of	• Gratitude to be able to help a learner

fulfillment after helping learners.

7.2. Mentee's perception on the intervention

7.2.1. Learners developed the desired learning.

- Development of story comprehension and improvement of reading level

7.2.2. Learners appreciated their Mentors' strategies.

- Appreciation to strategies the mentors used

7.1.1 Mentors experienced early exposure to the field.

Mentors mentioned that they are thankful that they have been exposed to the teaching field. Moreover, they are thankful to the main researcher for them to be immersed to the field they want to be in especially during online learning. They considered the experience as an eye-opener. Below are the responses of the mentors:

"Nice kayo sya nga experience kay na-expose nako sa field as early as now." [The experience was very nice especially I got exposed to the field as early as now.] (M1)

"It allowed me to be immersed in the field I want to be in." (M3)

"I am very grateful to Dr. Nancy because she made us part of this activity. It was an eye-opening experience especially with the challenges during the online learning." (M4)

"Thankful ko kang Dr. Nancy kay gitagaan kog opportunity nga ma-experience ang real scenario sa field." [I am thankful to Dr. Nancy for giving me the opportunity to experience the real scenario in the field.] (M2)

7.1.2. Mentors expressed sense of fulfillment after helping learners.

Further, the mentors expressed that they are fulfilled that they were able to help the learners. A participant even stated that she feels that she is now ready to teach. The responses of the mentors are shown:

"Feeling na gyud nako nga maestra nako. Lami kayo sa feeling nga nakatuon ang bata tungod sa akong pag tudlo. Maong kada session gyud namu, ga prepare gyud ko. Salamat kayo sa experience Ma'am." [I feel like I am now ready to be a teacher. It's an overwhelming feeling when the pupil has learned the things I taught. That's why I always prepare every session. Thank you so much for the experience Ma'am.] (M1)

"Happy kaayo ko nga nkatabang ko sa improvement sa usa ka learner." [I am very happy that I was able to help in the learning improvement of the learner.] (M3)

When it comes to learners' comprehension level, close supervision and monitoring help in ensuring the effectiveness of implemented reading programs (Maala, 2019). In the context of the present study, the mentors were able to monitor the progress of the learners.

7.2.1. Learners developed the desired learning.

On the other hand, the learners expressed their gratefulness to the mentors who helped them develop learning, specifically, on their reading level and story comprehension. A learner even stated that she now misses her mentor. The learners mentioned:

"Daghan kaayo kog natun-an kang Teacher A. Mingawon kos iya." [I learned a lot from Teacher A. I now miss her.] (L1)

"Kabalo nako og basa. Salamat kang Teacher C." [I now know how to read. Thanks to Teacher C.] (L2)

Learners' sense of gratitude towards their mentors who helped them learn is in consonance to the study of Peñol (2019) who also used Marungko approach materials in a study. The study showed that learners appreciated that they learned how to read new words and eventually understand them. Pupils' behavior towards the intervention

program plays a vital role to the program's success (Pagcaliwagan, 2019). Whenever the learner appreciates their mentors, a positive attitude towards the program is evident.

7.2.2. Learners appreciated their Mentors' strategies.

Moreover, the learners expressed their appreciation to the strategies used by the mentors. Learner 3 loved the reward system initiated by his mentor while learner 4 appreciated the singing motivation she did together with her mentor. The learners stated:

"Ganahan kayo ko kang Teacher J kay tagaan ko niya'g prize pag-maka-answer ko, maong dghan ko gakatun-an." [I really liked Teacher J because he gives me prizes whenever I was able to answer his question, that's why I learned a lot.] (L3)

"Excited ko kada sabado kay bootan kayo akong teacher. Mag kanta kanta pami ayha magsugod." [I am excited every Saturday because my Teacher is so kind. We sing songs before starting the lesson.] (L4)

Providing rewards to learners has been proven as a tool to improve students' performance (Yahaya, 2022). This is anchored to operant conditioning which motivates students to perform better (ibid). This is backed up by Danna (2020) who stipulated that reward systems are important keys in improving students' academic achievements. McClean (2016) also mentioned that rewards serve as extrinsic motivation that lead to students' participation. However, Yahaya (2022) warned of the possible harmful effects of rewards and praises especially when a task is already interesting in itself.

From Table 7, it can be inferred that a rapport was built between the mentors and the mentees. Mentoring showed to be of help during online learning. The mentor-mentee arrangement has always been found to help improve learners' achievements. The study of Travero and Rubin (2021) showed that e-mentoring helped students improve their achievement in Grade 2 Mathematics. E-mentoring provides a closer step for educational development (Williams, Sunderman & Kim, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the findings of the study, it is deemed that Marungko Approach, coupled with mentor-mentee arrangement significantly fosters pupils' reading level and story comprehension. As much as Marungko approach has always been proven to foster reading performance of learners, mentoring proves to be of help during online learning as it builds rapport between mentors and mentees.

Hence, the researchers recommend that elementary teachers should venture on strategies that will enhance pupils' reading level and story comprehension since reading is a very crucial aspect of learning. Moreover, Marungko Approach may be used in teaching reading to elementary schoolers as it fosters learners' reading level and story comprehension. Further, mentoring may be coupled to Marungko approach and other strategies to assure pupils' learning. Lastly, teacher education institutions (TEIs) may ink agreements with DepEd schools to facilitate partnership and allowing their students to real-world exposure even before their internships.

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