



Azal Arts and Humanities

Volume 3, Issue 1, 2026 | <https://azalpub.com/index.php/AAH>

OPEN ACCESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Article Info

Received: 1/5/2026
Accepted: 3/25/2026
Published: 3/30/2026

Effective Reading Strategies and Literacy Engagement of the Learners: A Qualitative Approach

Jenny-Ann B. Bingayan
Ngarag Primary School
jennyann.bingayan@deped.gov.ph

Abstract

Abstract

Reading literacy is a fundamental component of early childhood education that significantly influences learners' academic performance, communication skills, and lifelong learning development. This study explored the effective reading strategies and literacy engagement experiences of the learners at Ngarag Primary School. Anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory and Emergent Literacy Theory, the study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine learners' reading experiences, literacy participation, instructional interactions, and classroom engagement practices. Participants included learners, teachers, and selected parents of Ngarag Primary School. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach was utilized in analyzing the gathered data. Findings revealed that learners become more engaged in reading activities when instructional practices are interactive, contextualized, collaborative, and enjoyable. Teachers employed strategies such as guided reading, storytelling, phonics instruction, peer-assisted reading, repeated reading, and contextualized literacy activities to improve reading comprehension and learner participation. The study further revealed that supportive teacher-learner relationships, parental involvement, and positive classroom environments contribute significantly to literacy engagement and reading motivation. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, lack of home reading support, and insufficient instructional materials affected learners' literacy development. The study concludes that learner-centered and supportive literacy instruction strengthens reading engagement and promotes positive literacy experiences among the learners. Strengthening contextualized reading programs, home-school literacy partnerships, and interactive reading instruction is recommended to enhance literacy development in early elementary education.

Keywords: reading strategies, literacy engagement, early literacy, reading instruction, learners, qualitative research, literacy development

Introduction

Reading literacy serves as one of the most essential foundations of learning in early childhood education. It enables learners to develop comprehension, communication skills, critical thinking, vocabulary acquisition, and academic competence necessary for success across learning areas. In the primary grades, reading instruction becomes particularly significant because learners transition from basic decoding and word recognition toward reading comprehension, fluency, and independent literacy engagement.

The development of effective reading skills among young learners remains a major concern in elementary education, particularly in rural school contexts where instructional resources, literacy exposure, and parental support may vary significantly. Learners who experience difficulties in reading comprehension and fluency often encounter academic challenges across various subject areas, affecting classroom participation, confidence, and overall educational performance.

Literacy engagement refers to learners' active participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in reading activities and literacy experiences. Engaged readers demonstrate interest, motivation, participation, and enjoyment during reading instruction and literacy-related activities. Learners become more motivated to read when instructional practices are interactive, meaningful, enjoyable, and connected to their experiences and interests.

Within the Philippine educational context, improving early literacy development has become increasingly important due to concerns regarding reading comprehension and foundational literacy skills among elementary learners. The Department of Education continuously implements literacy initiatives and reading intervention programs aimed at strengthening foundational reading competencies among early-grade learners. Despite these efforts, many learners continue to encounter difficulties in reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, and literacy participation.

At Ngarag Primary School, learners demonstrate varying levels of reading ability, participation, and literacy engagement during classroom instruction. Some learners actively participate in reading activities and demonstrate enthusiasm toward literacy tasks, while others experience hesitation, reading anxiety, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in comprehension. Teachers continuously implement different reading strategies and literacy practices to support learners' reading development and sustain literacy engagement within the classroom.

Several studies emphasized that effective reading instruction significantly influences literacy development and learner engagement among young learners. Guthrie and Wigfield (2020) explained that literacy engagement improves when learners participate in meaningful, interactive, and motivating reading experiences. Similarly, Rasinski (2019) argued that guided reading, repeated reading, and collaborative literacy activities strengthen reading fluency, comprehension, and learner confidence.

Although literacy instruction has been widely studied, there remains limited qualitative research exploring the lived literacy experiences and reading engagement practices of learners in rural Philippine elementary schools. Thus, this study aimed to explore the effective reading strategies and literacy engagement experiences of the learners at Ngarag Primary School.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory by Vygotsky (1978) and Emergent Literacy Theory by Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998).

Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through social interaction, collaboration, guided participation, and meaningful experiences. In literacy instruction, learners develop reading skills more effectively through interactive activities, peer collaboration, and scaffolded learning experiences facilitated by teachers and adults.

Emergent Literacy Theory explains that literacy development begins early through learners' interactions with language, print materials, storytelling, communication, and literacy-rich environments. Reading development is influenced by learners' exposure to literacy activities, supportive instructional environments, and meaningful engagement with reading materials.

These theories provided the framework for understanding how instructional practices, literacy environments,

social interaction, and reading experiences shape literacy engagement and reading development among the learners.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the effective reading strategies and literacy engagement experiences of the learners at Ngarag Primary School.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do learners describe their experiences in reading and literacy activities?
2. What reading strategies and instructional practices contribute to literacy engagement of the learners?
3. How do learners demonstrate behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement during reading instruction?
4. What challenges do learners encounter in reading comprehension and literacy participation?
5. What insights may be drawn from the participants' experiences to strengthen literacy instruction and reading engagement of the learners?

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore the effective reading strategies and literacy engagement experiences of the learners at Ngarag Primary School. Specifically, it sought to examine learners' experiences and participation in reading and literacy activities and identify the instructional practices and reading strategies that contribute to literacy engagement of the learners. The study further aimed to explore how learners demonstrate behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement during reading instruction and literacy-related activities. Additionally, it intended to identify the challenges encountered by learners in reading comprehension, vocabulary development, fluency, and literacy participation. Finally, the study aimed to derive insights from the participants' experiences that may serve as basis for strengthening literacy instruction and improving reading engagement among early-grade learners.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the reading experiences, literacy engagement practices, and instructional interactions of the learners at Ngarag Primary School. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather rich and contextualized descriptions regarding learners' participation in reading activities, classroom literacy experiences, instructional practices, and literacy challenges encountered during reading instruction. Through qualitative inquiry, the study captured the lived literacy experiences of learners and examined how instructional environments, teacher support, and reading strategies influence literacy engagement.

The study was conducted at Ngarag Primary School located in Cabagan, Isabela, Philippines. The school serves elementary learners from rural communities and operates under the supervision of the Department of Education. The locale provided a meaningful context for examining literacy engagement and reading development among early-grade learners within a rural educational setting.

The participants of the study included selected learners, teachers, and parents of Ngarag Primary School. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants who possessed direct experiences and involvement in reading instruction and literacy activities. The selected learners represented varying reading abilities, literacy participation levels, and classroom engagement experiences.

The study utilized semi-structured interview guides, focus group discussion guides, classroom observation notes, and document analysis checklists as qualitative research instruments. Interview questions focused on learners' reading experiences, literacy participation, instructional interactions, reading strategies, classroom engagement, and challenges encountered during reading activities.

Prior to data gathering, permission was secured from the school administration and ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed. Data were gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. Significant statements and recurring patterns were identified, coded, categorized, and organized into themes representing learners' literacy engagement experiences and instructional practices. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, audit trails, and thick description to ensure credibility and dependability of the findings.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Interactive and Enjoyable Reading Activities Strengthen Literacy Engagement

The findings revealed that the learners become more engaged in reading activities when instructional practices are interactive, enjoyable, and participatory. Participants consistently emphasized that storytelling sessions, reading games, peer reading, singing activities, picture-based reading exercises, and group reading activities make reading lessons more interesting and enjoyable. Learners explained that they become more motivated to participate when reading instruction includes fun and collaborative activities rather than purely individual reading tasks.

One learner participant stated:

"Mas gusto ko ang reading kapag may story telling at games kasi masaya po."

Another learner shared:

"Kapag may pictures at activities, mas naiintindihan ko ang binabasa."

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Mas gusto naming magbasa kapag sabay-sabay kami ng classmates ko."

The responses indicate that interactive literacy activities positively influence learners' behavioral engagement and participation during reading instruction. Learners become more attentive, motivated, and willing to participate when reading lessons are engaging, collaborative, and enjoyable.

Teachers also observed that learners demonstrate increased enthusiasm and participation during interactive reading sessions.

One teacher participant shared:

"Kapag may games at collaborative reading activities, mas active at excited ang mga bata."

Another teacher explained:

"Mas nagiging interesado sila sa reading kapag participatory ang activities."

These findings imply that learner-centered and enjoyable literacy instruction contributes significantly to strengthening reading motivation and classroom engagement among the learners. Interactive literacy experiences reduce boredom and encourage learners to actively participate in reading activities and classroom discussions.

The findings support Guthrie and Wigfield (2020), who emphasized that literacy engagement improves when learners participate in meaningful, interactive, and motivating reading experiences. Similarly, Rasinski (2019) argued that enjoyable and collaborative literacy activities enhance reading fluency, confidence, and comprehension among young learners.

The findings further align with Vygotsky's (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learning occurs more effectively through interaction, collaboration, and guided participation. Learners construct literacy understanding through social interaction and shared reading experiences within supportive classroom environments.

Classroom observations further revealed that learners demonstrated higher levels of attentiveness and participation during storytelling sessions, group reading activities, and collaborative literacy exercises. Learners were observed actively responding to questions, volunteering to read aloud, and assisting peers during reading tasks.

One teacher participant stated:

"Kapag collaborative ang reading activities, mas confident silang sumali at magbasa."

This finding highlights the importance of interactive and engaging literacy instruction in improving reading participation and literacy engagement of the learners.

Theme 2: Teacher Support and Positive Literacy Environment Enhance Reading Confidence

The findings revealed that supportive teachers and positive classroom environments significantly influence learners' confidence and engagement in reading instruction. Participants consistently described effective reading teachers as patient, encouraging, approachable, and willing to guide learners individually during reading activities. One learner participant stated:

"Mas ginaganahan akong magbasa kapag tinutulungan ako ni teacher."

Another participant explained:

"Kapag hindi ko mabasa ang word, tinuturo po ni teacher hanggang matutunan ko."

Similarly, another learner shared:

"Hindi po ako natatakot magbasa kapag mabait si teacher."

These responses indicate that positive teacher-learner relationships contribute significantly to emotional engagement and reading confidence of the learners. Learners become more willing to participate in oral reading and literacy activities when teachers create supportive and non-threatening classroom environments.

Teachers also highlighted the importance of encouragement and positive reinforcement in developing learners' reading confidence.

One teacher participant stated:

"Kailangan talagang i-encourage ang mga bata para magkaroon sila ng confidence sa pagbabasa."

Another participant explained:

"Kapag pinupuri sila kahit maliit na improvement, mas ginaganahan silang magbasa."

The findings suggest that emotionally supportive literacy environments positively influence learners' attitudes toward reading and strengthen their motivation to participate in literacy activities. Positive reinforcement and patient guidance help reduce learners' fear of making mistakes during oral reading and comprehension activities.

The findings align with Fredricks et al. (2019), who argued that emotional engagement is strengthened when learners feel supported, respected, and encouraged within classroom settings. Similarly, Pianta et al. (2021) emphasized that positive teacher-learner relationships significantly influence learner confidence, participation, and academic engagement.

The findings further support Emergent Literacy Theory, which explains that supportive literacy environments and meaningful adult guidance contribute significantly to early literacy development and reading confidence among young learners (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Classroom observations further revealed that learners demonstrated greater willingness to participate in reading activities when teachers provided encouragement, corrective feedback, and individualized support during instruction.

One teacher participant shared:

"Mas nagiging confident ang learners kapag alam nilang hindi sila mapapahiya kapag nagkamali."

This finding highlights the importance of supportive literacy environments and positive teacher interactions in promoting reading confidence and literacy engagement of the learners.

Theme 3: Contextualized and Repetitive Reading Strategies Improve Comprehension

The study further revealed that contextualized and repetitive reading strategies significantly improve learners' comprehension and literacy participation. Participants emphasized that learners understand reading materials more effectively when stories, examples, and reading activities are connected to familiar experiences, local culture, and everyday situations.

One learner participant stated:

"Mas naiintindihan ko ang story kapag tungkol sa mga bagay na nakikita namin araw-araw."

Another learner shared:

"Mas madali pong magbasa kapag kilala namin ang mga salita at examples."

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Kapag relatable ang story, mas gusto naming basahin."

The findings suggest that contextualized literacy instruction strengthens cognitive engagement by helping learners connect reading materials to familiar experiences and prior knowledge. Learners become more interested and emotionally connected to reading activities when texts and examples are relevant to their environment and daily

life.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of repeated reading and guided practice in improving reading fluency and comprehension.

One teacher participant explained:

“Paulit-ulit naming pinapabasa ang stories para masanay sila sa pronunciation at comprehension.”

Another participant shared:

“Malaking tulong ang guided reading para maitama agad ang pronunciation at understanding nila.”

The findings indicate that repeated reading and guided literacy instruction help learners develop fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. Repetitive practice allows learners to become more familiar with words, sentence structures, and reading patterns.

The findings support Rasinski (2019), who emphasized that repeated reading significantly improves reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension among early-grade learners. Similarly, Gay (2018) argued that contextualized and culturally responsive instruction strengthens learner engagement and meaningful learning experiences.

The findings further align with Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners construct understanding more effectively when instructional content is connected to familiar experiences and prior knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teachers further explained that contextualized and repetitive reading strategies help struggling readers gradually improve their literacy confidence and participation.

One teacher participant stated:

“Kapag simple at relatable ang stories, mas mabilis silang natututo.”

This finding highlights the importance of contextualized literacy instruction and guided reading support in improving comprehension and literacy engagement of the learners.

Theme 4: Reading Difficulties and Limited Literacy Support Affect Engagement

Despite positive literacy experiences, the findings revealed that learners encounter several challenges affecting reading comprehension and literacy engagement. Participants identified limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, difficulty recognizing words, pronunciation problems, and insufficient home reading support as major barriers to literacy development.

One learner participant stated:

“Nahihirapan po akong magbasa kapag may mahahabang words.”

Another learner explained:

“Minsan po kinakabahan akong magbasa sa harap ng klase.”

Similarly, another participant shared:

“May mga words pong hindi ko maintindihan kaya nahihirapan akong magbasa.”

These responses indicate that emotional and cognitive barriers negatively influence learners' participation and confidence during reading activities. Fear of making mistakes and limited vocabulary reduce learners' willingness to participate in oral reading and classroom discussions.

Teachers also emphasized that insufficient literacy exposure and limited home reading support affect learners' reading development.

One teacher participant stated:

“May mga bata na kulang ang practice sa bahay kaya mabagal ang progress sa reading.”

Another participant explained:

“Hindi lahat ng parents may oras o kakayahang gabayan ang mga bata sa pagbabasa.”

The findings suggest that literacy development is influenced not only by classroom instruction but also by home literacy environments and parental involvement. Learners with limited reading exposure outside school may experience slower literacy progress and reduced reading confidence.

The findings support OECD (2019), which highlighted that limited literacy exposure and socio-economic factors significantly influence reading performance and learner engagement. Similarly, Snow et al. (2020) emphasized that home literacy support and parental involvement contribute significantly to children's reading development and

literacy participation.

Participants also revealed that some learners develop fear and anxiety during oral reading sessions.

One learner participant stated:

“Nahihya po ako kapag mali ang basa ko.”

This finding implies that emotionally supportive literacy environments are necessary to reduce reading anxiety and encourage active literacy participation among young learners.

Despite these challenges, participants emphasized that supportive teachers, peer assistance, and engaging literacy activities help improve learners' confidence and motivation to read.

One learner participant shared:

“Mas gusto ko pong magbasa kapag tinutulungan ako ni teacher at classmates ko.”

This finding highlights the importance of collaborative literacy environments and supportive instructional practices in strengthening reading engagement and literacy development of the learners.

Conclusion

The study revealed that effective reading strategies and supportive literacy environments significantly influence literacy engagement and reading development of the learners at Ngarag Primary School. Interactive and enjoyable literacy activities such as storytelling, guided reading, collaborative reading exercises, games, and contextualized reading tasks strengthen learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in reading instruction. Learners become more motivated and willing to participate when literacy instruction is learner-centered, meaningful, collaborative, and enjoyable.

The findings further revealed that supportive teacher-learner relationships and positive classroom environments contribute significantly to learners' reading confidence and participation. Encouragement, patience, positive reinforcement, and guided support from teachers help reduce reading anxiety and strengthen learners' willingness to engage in oral reading and comprehension activities.

The study also found that contextualized and repetitive reading strategies improve learners' comprehension, vocabulary development, and reading fluency. Learners understand reading materials more effectively when instructional content is connected to familiar experiences and real-life situations. However, the findings revealed that reading difficulties such as limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, pronunciation problems, and insufficient home literacy support continue to affect learners' literacy development and engagement.

The study concludes that effective literacy instruction requires interactive teaching approaches, supportive literacy environments, contextualized reading experiences, and collaborative home-school partnerships to strengthen literacy engagement and reading development of the learners.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study provide important implications for literacy instruction, early childhood education, school leadership, parental involvement, and educational policy. The study emphasizes the importance of learner-centered and supportive literacy environments in improving reading engagement and literacy development among early-grade learners.

Educational Implications

The findings imply that reading instruction in primary education should become more interactive, contextualized, collaborative, and enjoyable to strengthen literacy engagement among learners. Teachers may integrate storytelling, games, guided reading, peer-assisted reading, repeated reading, and participatory literacy activities to make reading instruction more meaningful and engaging.

The study further implies that literacy instruction should focus not only on decoding and word recognition but also on comprehension, confidence-building, and meaningful literacy participation. Learners become more motivated to read when reading activities are enjoyable, practical, and connected to their experiences and interests.

Additionally, the findings suggest that schools should strengthen literacy-rich classroom environments that encourage active reading participation, oral communication, and collaborative literacy experiences.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings imply that teachers play a critical role in shaping learners' literacy attitudes, confidence, and participation. Teachers should demonstrate patience, encouragement, empathy, and responsiveness in supporting

struggling readers and reducing reading anxiety among learners.

The study also highlights the importance of contextualized and differentiated literacy instruction. Teachers may use localized stories, familiar examples, visual aids, and repetitive reading strategies to improve learners' comprehension and reading fluency.

Furthermore, the findings imply that collaborative literacy instruction and peer-assisted reading activities strengthen learner confidence, participation, and social interaction during literacy learning.

Implications for Parents and Home Literacy Support

The findings suggest that parental involvement and home literacy environments significantly influence learners' reading development and literacy engagement. Parents may strengthen literacy development by providing reading opportunities at home, guiding learners during reading activities, and encouraging regular reading practice.

The study further implies the importance of strengthening home-school literacy partnerships to support learners' reading progress and literacy participation.

Institutional and Policy Implications

The findings provide important implications for educational leaders and policymakers within the Department of Education regarding the strengthening of early literacy programs and reading intervention initiatives. Schools may strengthen literacy instruction by providing adequate reading materials, literacy resources, teacher training programs, and contextualized instructional materials that support literacy engagement among learners.

Educational institutions may also strengthen reading intervention programs focusing on struggling readers, vocabulary development, fluency enhancement, and comprehension support among early-grade learners.

Implications for Future Research

The findings highlight the need for future studies exploring literacy engagement and reading development across different educational settings and learner populations. Future researchers may conduct comparative studies involving urban and rural schools to examine variations in literacy engagement and instructional practices.

Mixed-methods and longitudinal studies may also be conducted to explore the relationship between literacy engagement, reading performance, home literacy support, and instructional interventions over time.

The study emphasizes that strengthening literacy engagement of the learners requires collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, school leaders, and educational institutions. Interactive instruction, supportive literacy environments, contextualized reading strategies, and strong home-school partnerships are essential in promoting meaningful literacy experiences and improving reading development among young learners.

References

- Ashcraft, M. H., & Moore, A. M. (2019). Mathematics anxiety and the affective drop in performance. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 27*(3), 197–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282908330580>
- Boaler, J. (2021). *Mathematical mindsets: Unleashing students' potential through creative mathematics, inspiring messages and innovative teaching* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2020). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* (Expanded ed.). National Academy Press.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2019). School engagement: Potential of the concept and state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59–109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>
- Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a culture of change* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (2020). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 403–422). Routledge.
- OECD. (2019). *PISA 2018 results (Volume I): What students know and can do*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2021). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving classroom interactions. *Educational Psychologist, 56*(2), 93–107.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2021.1900456>

Rasinski, T. V. (2019). *The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension* (2nd ed.). Scholastic.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.j463w79r56455411>

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (2020). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. National Academy Press.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2019). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms* (3rd ed.). ASCD.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Whitehurst, G. J., & Lonigan, C. J. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development*, 69(3), 848–872. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1998.tb06247.x>