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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Learning Skills Practices and Reading Strategy Engagement Among Grade 2 Learners: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

Learning skills and reading strategy engagement are essential components of literacy development among early-grade learners. This study explored the learning skills practices and reading strategy engagement experiences among Grade 2 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' literacy practices, classroom participation, instructional interactions, and engagement in reading activities. Participants included selected Grade 2 learners, teachers, and 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 develop literacy engagement through interactive reading activities, guided instruction, collaborative learning experiences, and supportive classroom environments. Teachers employed learning skills practices such as guided reading, repeated reading, peer-assisted learning, storytelling, vocabulary enhancement, and contextualized literacy activities to strengthen reading comprehension and learner participation. The findings further revealed that positive teacher support, home literacy assistance, and learner-centered instructional approaches contribute significantly to reading confidence and literacy engagement. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, insufficient home reading support, and varying learner abilities affected learners' literacy participation and reading development. The study concludes that learner-centered literacy practices and supportive learning environments strengthen reading strategy engagement and literacy development among Grade 2 learners. Strengthening contextualized literacy instruction, collaborative reading activities, and home-school literacy partnerships is recommended to improve learning skills and reading engagement in primary education.

Keywords: learning skills, reading strategies, literacy engagement, early literacy, Grade 2 learners, qualitative research, reading instruction

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INTRODUCTION

Reading literacy is one of the most important foundational skills developed during the early years of education. It enables learners to acquire comprehension abilities, vocabulary knowledge, communication competence, critical thinking, and academic readiness necessary for future learning. In the primary grades, learners gradually transition from basic word recognition and phonemic awareness toward reading fluency, comprehension, and independent literacy participation. Consequently, the development of effective learning skills and reading strategy engagement becomes essential in strengthening literacy development among young learners.

Learning skills practices refer to the strategies, habits, and approaches learners utilize in understanding, processing, and participating in classroom learning activities. In reading instruction, learning skills include guided reading, repeated reading, vocabulary building, peer-assisted learning, oral reading participation, and comprehension monitoring. These literacy practices help learners develop confidence, comprehension, fluency, and active engagement during reading activities.

Reading strategy engagement refers to learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in literacy instruction and reading-related activities. Learners who are actively engaged in reading demonstrate participation, interest, motivation, and persistence in literacy tasks. Reading engagement is strengthened when instructional practices are interactive, collaborative, contextualized, and meaningful to learners' experiences.

Within the Philippine educational context, literacy development remains a priority concern in elementary education due to persistent challenges in reading comprehension and foundational literacy competencies among early-grade learners. The Department of Education continuously implements reading intervention programs and literacy initiatives aimed at improving foundational reading skills among elementary learners. However, many pupils still encounter difficulties in vocabulary acquisition, reading fluency, comprehension, and literacy participation, particularly in rural educational settings where access to instructional resources and home literacy support may be limited.

At Ngarag Primary School, Grade 2 learners demonstrate varying levels of literacy participation, reading confidence, and engagement during reading instruction. While some learners actively participate in literacy activities and demonstrate enthusiasm toward reading tasks, others experience hesitation, reading anxiety, vocabulary limitations, and comprehension difficulties. Teachers continuously employ different literacy strategies and instructional approaches to improve learners' literacy engagement and strengthen reading development within classroom settings.

Several studies emphasized that effective literacy practices significantly influence learner participation and reading development. Guthrie and Wigfield (2020) explained that literacy engagement improves when learners participate in meaningful and motivating reading experiences. Similarly, Rasinski (2019) emphasized that repeated reading, guided reading, and collaborative literacy activities strengthen fluency, comprehension, and learner confidence among early-grade learners.

Despite the growing literature on literacy instruction, there remains limited qualitative research exploring the lived literacy experiences and reading strategy engagement of Grade 2 learners in rural Philippine elementary schools. Thus, this study aimed to explore the learning skills practices and reading strategy engagement experiences among Grade 2 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, guided participation, collaboration, and meaningful learning experiences. Literacy development occurs more effectively when learners engage in participatory reading activities, peer interaction, and scaffolded instruction facilitated by teachers and adults.

Emergent Literacy Theory explains that literacy development begins during early childhood through interactions with language, storytelling, print materials, communication, and literacy-rich environments. Learners gradually

develop literacy competence through meaningful reading experiences, guided instruction, and exposure to reading activities within supportive educational and home environments.

These theories provided the framework for understanding how literacy practices, instructional interactions, classroom environments, and reading strategy engagement influence literacy development among Grade 2 learners.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore the learning skills practices and reading strategy engagement experiences among Grade 2 learners at Ngarag Primary School. Specifically, it sought to examine learners' experiences and participation in reading and literacy activities and identify the learning skills practices and instructional strategies that contribute to literacy engagement among Grade 2 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 learners' experiences that may serve as basis for strengthening literacy instruction and improving reading strategy engagement among early-grade learners.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the learning skills practices and reading strategy engagement experiences among Grade 2 learners at Ngarag Primary School. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather rich and contextualized descriptions regarding learners' literacy participation, reading experiences, instructional interactions, classroom engagement, 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 literacy practices influence reading strategy 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 Grade 2 learners, teachers, and parents of Ngarag Primary School. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants who possessed direct experiences and involvement in literacy instruction and reading 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, learning skills practices, reading strategies, classroom engagement, and challenges encountered during literacy 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 throughout the study. 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 learning skills 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 Literacy Activities Strengthen Reading Engagement

The findings revealed that Grade 2 learners become more engaged in reading instruction when literacy activities are interactive, collaborative, and enjoyable. Participants consistently emphasized that storytelling, reading games, group reading activities, peer-assisted reading, singing activities, and picture-based exercises make literacy instruction more meaningful and interesting. Learners explained that they become more motivated to participate when classroom reading activities involve interaction, enjoyment, and collaboration with classmates.

One learner participant stated:

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

Another learner shared:

“Kapag may group reading, mas natututo po kami kasi nagtutulungan kami.”

Similarly, another participant explained:

“Mas naiintindihan ko po ang binabasa kapag may pictures at activities.”

These responses indicate that interactive literacy instruction positively influences learners’ behavioral engagement and classroom participation. Learners become more active, attentive, and enthusiastic during literacy instruction when reading activities are participatory and enjoyable. Collaborative reading tasks also help learners gain confidence and reduce fear during oral reading activities.

Teachers likewise observed that learners demonstrate greater participation and enthusiasm during interactive literacy sessions.

One teacher participant shared:

“Kapag collaborative at enjoyable ang activities, mas excited at active ang mga bata sa reading.”

Another participant explained:

“Mas nagiging interesado sila kapag hindi puro lecture ang reading instruction.”

The findings suggest that learner-centered and participatory literacy instruction contributes significantly to improving literacy engagement and reading motivation among Grade 2 learners. Interactive reading activities create positive literacy experiences that encourage learners to participate more actively in classroom discussions and reading tasks.

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 collaborative literacy activities strengthen reading fluency, confidence, and comprehension among young learners.

The findings further align with Vygotsky’s (1978) Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners develop understanding more effectively through interaction, collaboration, and guided participation. Literacy learning becomes more meaningful when learners actively engage with peers, teachers, and reading materials within supportive classroom environments.

Classroom observations further revealed that learners demonstrated higher levels of attentiveness, oral participation, and classroom interaction during storytelling sessions, reading games, and collaborative literacy activities.

One teacher participant stated:

“Kapag masaya ang reading activities, mas nagiging confident silang magbasa at sumagot.”

This finding highlights the importance of interactive and enjoyable literacy instruction in strengthening reading strategy engagement and literacy participation among Grade 2 learners.

Theme 2: Guided Reading and Repetitive Practice Improve Literacy Skills

The study further revealed that guided reading and repetitive reading practices significantly improve learners’ reading comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. Participants explained that repeated reading activities and teacher-guided instruction help them become more familiar with words, sentence structures, and

pronunciation patterns.

One learner participant stated:

"Mas natututo po akong magbasa kapag paulit-ulit naming binabasa ang story."

Another participant shared:

"Kapag ginaguide kami ni teacher habang nagbabasa, mas naiintindihan ko po."

Similarly, another learner explained:

"Mas gumagaling po akong magbasa kapag lagi akong nagpapractice."

The findings indicate that repetitive reading and guided literacy instruction strengthen learners' cognitive engagement and reading competence. Repeated exposure to reading materials helps learners improve fluency, word recognition, and comprehension while reducing reading hesitation and anxiety.

Teachers also highlighted the importance of guided reading instruction in supporting struggling readers and improving literacy participation.

One teacher participant stated:

"Malaking tulong ang guided reading para maitama agad ang pronunciation at comprehension nila."

Another participant explained:

"Kailangan talaga ng repetitive practice para masanay sila sa pagbabasa."

These responses imply that guided instruction and repeated literacy exposure help learners gradually develop reading confidence and comprehension skills. Teacher scaffolding and individualized reading support contribute significantly to literacy development among early-grade learners.

The findings support Rasinski (2019), who emphasized that repeated reading improves reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development among young learners. Similarly, Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) explained that literacy competence develops gradually through repeated interaction with language, print materials, and guided literacy experiences.

The findings further align with Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners develop understanding through scaffolded instruction and guided participation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teachers further revealed that learners who regularly participate in guided reading sessions demonstrate greater improvement in oral reading confidence and comprehension.

One teacher participant shared:

"Kapag regular ang practice at guidance, mas mabilis ang progress nila sa reading."

This finding highlights the importance of repetitive literacy practice and guided reading instruction in improving literacy skills and reading strategy engagement among Grade 2 learners.

Theme 3: Supportive Teacher and Home Literacy Environments Enhance Reading Confidence

The findings revealed that supportive teachers and positive home literacy environments significantly influence learners' reading confidence and literacy engagement. Participants consistently described effective reading teachers as patient, approachable, encouraging, and supportive during literacy instruction.

One learner participant stated:

"Mas ginaganahan po 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 supportive si teacher."

These responses indicate that supportive teacher-learner relationships strengthen learners' emotional engagement and reading confidence. Learners become more willing to participate in oral reading and classroom discussions when they feel emotionally safe and encouraged by teachers.

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

One teacher participant stated:

"Kailangan talagang purihin at i-encourage ang mga bata para magkaroon sila ng confidence."

Another participant explained:

"Kapag supportive ang environment, mas gusto nilang sumali sa reading activities."

The findings suggest that emotionally supportive literacy environments positively influence learners' motivation and literacy participation. Positive teacher interactions reduce reading anxiety and help learners become more comfortable during oral reading and comprehension activities.

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

The findings further revealed that home literacy support contributes significantly to learners' reading development and engagement.

One parent participant stated:

"Kapag may oras kami na magbasa kasama ang bata, mas nagiging interesado siya sa reading."

Another parent explained:

"Kailangan talagang gabayan sila sa bahay para mas ma-practice ang pagbabasa."

These findings imply that literacy development is strengthened through collaborative home-school literacy support systems. Learners who receive reading guidance and encouragement both at school and at home demonstrate greater literacy confidence and participation.

The findings support Snow et al. (2020), who emphasized that parental involvement and home literacy environments significantly influence children's literacy development and reading participation.

Theme 4: Reading Difficulties and Limited Vocabulary Affect Literacy Participation

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 unfamiliar words, pronunciation problems, and low confidence as barriers to literacy participation.

One learner participant stated:

"Nahihirapan po akong magbasa kapag may mahahabang salita."

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

Teachers also emphasized that varying learner abilities and insufficient literacy exposure affect reading development.

One teacher participant stated:

"May mga learners na kulang talaga ang vocabulary kaya hirap silang umintindi ng stories."

Another participant explained:

"Hindi lahat ng bata ay may sapat na practice sa pagbabasa sa bahay."

The findings suggest that literacy development is influenced by both classroom instruction and external literacy experiences outside school. Learners with limited reading exposure and vocabulary support may experience slower progress in comprehension and fluency.

The findings align with OECD (2019), which highlighted that literacy exposure and socio-economic factors significantly influence reading engagement and literacy performance. Similarly, Snow et al. (2020) emphasized that consistent literacy exposure and supportive reading environments contribute significantly to children's reading development.

Participants also revealed that reading anxiety negatively affects literacy participation.

One learner participant stated:

“Nahihya po ako kapag mali ang basa ko.”

This finding implies that emotionally safe literacy environments are necessary to reduce reading anxiety and encourage learners to participate actively in literacy instruction.

Despite these challenges, participants emphasized that supportive teachers, collaborative literacy activities, and repeated reading practice help improve learners’ confidence and reading participation.

One learner participant shared:

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

This finding highlights the importance of collaborative and supportive literacy environments in strengthening literacy engagement and reading strategy participation among Grade 2 learners.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that learning skills practices and reading strategy engagement significantly influence literacy development and reading participation among Grade 2 learners at Ngarag Primary School. Interactive and enjoyable literacy activities such as storytelling, reading games, guided reading, peer-assisted learning, and collaborative reading tasks strengthen learners’ behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in literacy instruction. Learners become more motivated and willing to participate when literacy instruction is learner-centered, contextualized, participatory, and enjoyable.

The findings further revealed that guided reading and repetitive literacy practices contribute significantly to reading comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and reading confidence. Supportive teacher-learner relationships and positive classroom environments help reduce reading anxiety and encourage learners to participate actively in oral reading and literacy activities.

The study also found that home literacy support and parental involvement positively influence learners’ reading motivation and literacy participation. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, pronunciation difficulties, varying learner abilities, and insufficient home reading exposure continue to affect literacy engagement and reading development among learners.

Overall, the study concludes that effective literacy instruction requires supportive learning environments, interactive literacy activities, guided reading support, and collaborative home-school literacy partnerships to strengthen reading strategy engagement and literacy development among Grade 2 learners.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

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

Educational Implications

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

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

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

Pedagogical Implications

The findings imply that teachers play an important role in shaping learners' reading confidence, literacy attitudes, and engagement. Teachers should demonstrate patience, encouragement, empathy, and responsiveness in supporting struggling readers and reducing reading anxiety.

The study also highlights the importance of guided reading and differentiated literacy instruction. Teachers may utilize contextualized stories, repetitive reading strategies, visual aids, and collaborative reading activities to improve learners' comprehension and literacy participation.

Furthermore, the findings imply that positive reinforcement and supportive teacher-learner relationships strengthen emotional engagement and learner confidence during literacy instruction.

Implications for Parents and Home Literacy Support

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

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 intervention programs and reading development initiatives. Schools may strengthen literacy instruction by providing adequate reading materials, contextualized literacy resources, teacher training programs, and instructional support systems that promote literacy engagement among learners.

Educational institutions may also strengthen reading remediation programs focusing on vocabulary development, comprehension support, fluency enhancement, and literacy participation among struggling readers.

Implications for Future Research

The findings highlight the need for future studies exploring literacy engagement and learning skills practices across different educational contexts and learner populations. Future researchers may conduct comparative studies involving urban and rural schools to examine differences in literacy instruction and reading engagement practices.

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

The study emphasizes that strengthening literacy engagement among Grade 2 learners requires collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, school leaders, and educational institutions. Interactive instruction, guided literacy support, supportive learning environments, and strong home-school partnerships are essential in promoting meaningful literacy experiences and improving reading development among young learners.

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