



Reading approaches utilized by elementary educators in enhancing learners' reading proficiency

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: September 05, 2025

Received in rev. form. October 15, 2025

Accepted: November 10, 2025

Published: December 15, 2025

Keywords: *Reading approaches, elementary educators, learners' reading proficiency, remedial interventions, reading instruction challenges.*

JEL Classification: I21

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the reading approaches utilized by elementary educators in enhancing learners' reading proficiency in the municipality of Laoag, Ilocos Norte. Utilizing a phenomenological research design, particularly descriptive phenomenology, it offers a detailed exploration of the lived experiences of 10 teachers from Laoag Central Elementary School. Data were collected using paper-and-pencil questionnaires and analyzed through thematic analysis to identify key themes and codes.

The findings indicated that educators adopt multiple approaches to enhance reading outcomes, including the use of structured reading programs, the provision of remedial sessions and targeted interventions, the reinforcement of foundational reading skills, and the strategic management of both time and educational resources. Despite these efforts, elementary educators face a range of significant challenges in their reading instruction. These include instructional burdens, resource constraints, learner-specific difficulties, and insufficient implementation of remedial programs. The study underscored the need for sustained institutional support, adequate training, and resource allocation to empower teachers in addressing the diverse and evolving literacy needs of their students.

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Introduction

Reading is the cornerstone of academic growth in elementary education, serving as both a gateway skill and a lifelong asset. When young learners struggle to read effectively, their learning across subjects can falter, causing a ripple effect that affects confidence, motivation, and future achievement. In the Philippine context, this impact is particularly significant: poor reading outcomes not only undermine performance in English but also contribute to declining scores in Mathematics and Science. In today's classrooms, educators deploy a variety of strategies—from phonics and shared reading to interactive read-alouds and structured literacy—to meet diverse learners' needs. These approaches are essential not just for decoding skills, but for building comprehension, fluency, and engagement (National Reading

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Panel, 2000; Rahman & Syafei, 2025). As an educator, I have observed how blending multiple approaches helps tailor instruction to students' readiness levels, prompting more individualized support. However, the process can be demanding, requiring constant adjustment and keen student monitoring to ensure each child progresses. (Frontiers in Education, 2025).

Despite the wide array of reading approaches available, a gap remains between recommended practices and their implementation in everyday classrooms. Many elementary educators, especially in under-resourced schools, face challenges in consistently applying these strategies due to factors such as limited training, large class sizes, and a lack of appropriate reading materials (Alcayde & Basilan, 2024; Tadlas & Segumpan-Salon, 2024). Existing studies have discussed effective reading approaches and systemic barriers to implementation; however, they have not fully explored how teachers themselves interpret, adapt, and apply these reading strategies within their unique classroom realities. Prior research often focuses on policies, theoretical models, or program evaluations, but little is known about teachers' lived experiences, their day-to-day instructional decisions, and how they navigate constraints while attempting to meet diverse learners' needs. This gap highlights the need to document the actual classroom practices of Filipino educators—what works, what does not, and what support systems remain lacking (Apiles, 2025; Bautista, 2025).

Given these challenges, it is crucial to understand how elementary educators in the Philippines interpret, adapt, and apply reading instruction strategies in their unique contexts. Documenting their experiences offers valuable insight into what works in real classrooms, what barriers persist, and how support systems can be improved. By focusing on the voices of classroom teachers, this study seeks to contribute practical, grounded knowledge that can guide policy and professional development efforts aimed at improving reading performance (Nimer & Napil, 2024). Exploring these day-to-day realities can reveal not only effective practices but also highlight systemic issues—such as inequitable resource distribution—that must be addressed to strengthen reading instruction nationwide (Bautista, 2025).

Moving forward, exploring educators' experiences with these approaches—balancing theoretical effectiveness with day-to-day realities—will be pivotal. Understanding how educators navigate resource limitations, varying student profiles, and curricular mandates will inform recommendations for policy, training, and curricular design. This research aims to amplify teachers' voices, uncover effective practices, and propose support structures that enhance reading instruction in Philippine elementary schools. This work seeks to bridge the gap between reading theory and classroom reality, helping educators overcome challenges and foster stronger reading outcomes for all learners (Alda & Gementiza, 2023).

Literature review

This section reviews past studies and theories related to reading instruction. Reviewing these studies helps provide a strong background for understanding the current practices and challenges of teachers in teaching reading effectively.

Reading approaches & strategies in elementary education

Reading approaches and strategies help young learners develop essential skills like comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Common approaches include phonics, guided reading, and interactive activities that make reading fun and meaningful. These strategies aim to build a solid foundation for lifelong learning and academic success. Improving reading proficiency remains a major priority in the Philippine educational system, with numerous reading strategies being employed to support the development of elementary students' literacy skills. The Department of Education (DepEd) has launched various programs targeting the enhancement of reading performance, reflecting current instructional practices and the challenges teachers encounter (DepEd Order No. 74, s. 2020). One of the primary tools used to assess reading levels is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), which guides teachers in identifying struggling readers and informing appropriate interventions and remediation programs.

Additionally, the Marungko Approach remains a popular method, especially in early grade levels, focusing on linking sounds to letters and recognizing words. This approach focuses on phonics, word recognition, and interactive learning—has proven effective in experimental studies, enhancing foundational reading skills (Casupanan & Fastidio, 2024). This method is incorporated in DepEd Order No. 74, s. 2020, which endorses inclusive reading strategies.

Moreover, educators today frequently utilize the Bottom-up Approach, a method emphasizing precise perception, phonemic awareness, and the identification of text segments such as words, spelling patterns, and other linguistic elements (Nadea, Jumariati, & Nasrullah, 2021). Readers build understanding incrementally, starting with the smallest units like letters and sounds and layering these meanings to form larger structures, such as words, sentences, and ultimately full texts. The Bottom-up Approach helps learners develop word recognition skills before they can comprehend entire passages. It allows them to focus on decoding and accuracy, which are crucial for building confidence in early reading. The brain orchestrates this decoding process, enabling more efficient reading by integrating word meanings into coherent phrases and paragraphs (Nadea et al., 2021). Students report that these strategies significantly enhance their concentration while reading (Nadea et al., 2021).

Another important initiative is the Bawat Bata Makabasa program. In May 2025, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched the Bawat Bata Makababasa Program (BBMP), a phonics-based summer initiative under DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2025, aimed at bolstering early literacy development among Grades 1–3 struggling readers. This 20-day tutorial program emphasizes phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, complemented by nutrition and vision screening, and encourages active participation from parents and communities to support learners in achieving grade-level reading proficiency (Sevillano, 2025; DepEd, 2025). This approach encourages the use of multisensory teaching methods and community engagement to reinforce basic reading skills.

The Literacy Remediation Program (LRP) is a structured, evidence-based intervention designed to support struggling readers, particularly in early elementary grades. According to Cayabyab et al. (2023), programs—featuring regular phonological reinforcement, progress monitoring, and tailored instructional shifts—significantly improved word-recognition and decoding skills among Grade 2 students.

Nationally, DepEd reinforced this approach through DepEd Memorandum No. 034, s. 2025, which introduced weekly Check-in Assessments, Remediation Activity Sets, and data-driven instructional adjustments for grade-level reading gaps. These weekly assessments ensure that remediation is responsive and teacher-guided, linking directly to DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2021 under the BE-LCP, which mandates education resources, monitoring tools, and funding to institutionalize these interventions across the country.

One notable strategy is the Accelerated Reading Approach for Learners (ARAL Program), designed to rapidly improve reading fluency through intensive literacy activities and weekly check-in assessments. Under DepEd Order No. 018, s. In 2025, schools are instructed to “administer and record weekly Check-in Assessments, analyze learner progress, and adjust instructional approaches accordingly,” ensuring a data-driven cycle of monitoring and instructional adaptation. This structured approach supports robust literacy development by providing timely feedback, targeted intervention, and continuous adjustment—fostering student engagement and accelerating reading proficiency among learners.

Furthermore, educators report persistent challenges in implementation, such as large class sizes and limited time for remediation—issues highlighted in a press release from August 29, 2024, regarding the literacy recovery plan.

In conclusion, the reading strategies endorsed by DepEd—including the Marungko Approach, Bottom-up Approach, Bawat Bata Makabasa, Literacy Remediation Program, and ARAL Program—offer a range of methods to improve reading skills among elementary students. The Phil-IRI assessment plays a vital role in identifying reading levels and guiding these interventions. Nonetheless, limited resources and various classroom challenges frequently hamper the effective application of these approaches.

Challenges faced by teachers using different reading approaches in the classroom

In investigating the persistent difficulties students encounter in reading comprehension and the strategies educators employ to address these issues, the literature identifies several key challenges and corresponding instructional responses. According to Lu (2022), there is an inadequacy in understanding reading, as many students still struggle with making inferences, determining the main idea, and finding references in texts—issues stemming from a lack of comprehension strategies and poor concentration. Compounding this, difficulty in attending to students’ needs leads to communication problems, where even minor distractions can result in careless reading and misunderstanding. Additionally, underdeveloped sound and word recognition is a significant concern, with pupils showing a lack of skill in blending sounds and signs of interference in fluency. To address these challenges, educators—particularly master teachers—employ several reading comprehension strategies, including helping students make sense of texts by relating new information to past experiences, providing frameworks for learning, focusing learners’ attention, setting reading purposes, monitoring comprehension, adjusting reading rates to match text difficulty, and "fixing" comprehension problems as they arise (De Ocampo, Tosino, & Martir, 2024).

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to explore the reading approaches utilized by elementary educators in enhancing learners' reading proficiency. It is specifically sought to answer the following problems:

1. What are the reading approaches utilized by elementary teachers in enhancing learners' reading proficiency?
2. What are the challenges encountered by elementary educators in using different reading approaches in teaching?

Research methodology

This section presents the research design, the data presentation analysis, which includes the locale of the study, population and sampling, data gathering instruments, and data analysis.

Research design

This study utilized a phenomenological research design, specifically focusing on descriptive phenomenology to deeply understand the lived experiences of elementary educators in implementing reading approaches aimed at enhancing reading proficiency. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of the difficulties teachers face and the strategies they employ to address these challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Locale of the study

The research was centered in Laoag Central Elementary School, a school within the Schools Division of Laoag City, involving elementary school educators. By concentrating on this specific locale, the research aimed to explore the teaching approaches used by these educators and to evaluate how these strategies contributed to enhanced reading proficiency.

Population and sampling

The research examined the reading approaches and methods used by elementary school educators in the City of Laoag under the Schools Division of Laoag City. This specific group was chosen to gain a focused and contextual insight into the challenges encountered by educators. The sample size of 10 enabled a thorough phenomenological investigation of both personal and shared experiences, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the techniques these educators employed to enhance reading proficiency.

Data gathering instrument

This study used a paper-and-pencil questionnaire to gather detailed information about the reading strategies and challenges faced by elementary school educators in enhancing reading proficiency. The questionnaire included open-ended questions, giving teachers the chance to share their own experiences and thoughts. These questions focused on important topics such as teaching methods, classroom activities, reading difficulties, and ways to support struggling readers.

Data analysis

The data from the paper-and-pencil questionnaires were studied using thematic analysis. This method helped the researcher find patterns and common ideas in the educators' answers. First, the responses were carefully read, and important words or phrases were highlighted. These were grouped into themes that showed the teachers' reading approaches and challenges. The process followed the steps of Braun and Clarke (2006).

Ethical standard

The study followed ethical rules to protect the teachers who participated. The researchers explained the study's purpose clearly before collecting any information. All answers were kept private, and no names were used to protect the teachers' identities. The data were stored safely and only used for this research. Approval was given by the school head before the study started.

Results and discussion

This section outlines the results of a structured survey conducted with elementary teachers at Laoag Central Elementary School, under the Schools Division of Laoag. The findings are organized around the main themes that emerged from the paper-and-pencil questionnaire.

Problem 1: What are the reading approaches utilized by elementary teachers in enhancing learners' reading proficiency?

Table 1. Reading approaches utilized by elementary educators

Themes	Contributing Sub- Themes	Frequency
Theme 1: Structured reading programs and approaches	• Phil-IRI assessment tool • Marungko approach • Bottom-up approach • Read Bright- Read Right or TULAY (Tunay na Mahalaga ang Pagbabasa, Layuning Mapaunlad ang Sarili)	• 1 • 3 • 1 • 2
Theme 2: Remediation and supportive interventions	• Remedial after class • Teach by reading level • Paired reading sessions • Practice reading drills • Repeated text reading • Guided reading • Shared reading • Read Alouds	• 10 • 7 • 3 • 3 • 3 • 8 • 5 • 4

Theme 3: Foundational reading skills development	• Introduced First the Basics • Unang Hakbang sa Pagbabasa & First Fry Words • Ask questions before, during, and after reading • Unlocking of difficulties	• 5 • 6 • 6 • 8
Theme 4: Learning environment & resources	• Reading Pantry • Reading Corners • DEAR (Drop everything and read)	• 4 • 4 • 3

Source: Research data gathered from teachers interviews from *Laoag Central Elementary School* (2025).

Theme 1: Structured reading program & approaches

One prevailing theme from the educators' responses is the use of structured reading programs and classroom-specific approaches. These include both nationally recognized programs and locally developed initiatives aimed at enhancing students' reading proficiency. For example, educators implement the Marungko Approach, the bottom-up approach, and the Fuller Approach. Educators noted that these programs serve as frameworks that provide step-by-step guidance, helping learners progress systematically from decoding words to developing comprehension skills. What makes these approaches effective, according to many participants, is not only their structured design but also their adaptability to the learners' varying needs. When carefully implemented, these methods allow teachers to monitor progress more closely, identify specific areas of difficulty, and tailor instruction accordingly—thereby ensuring that even struggling readers are given the chance to improve steadily over time.

“At Laoag Central Elementary School, we support numerous reading initiatives. In English, we used ‘Read Bright,’ and in Tagalog, our program is called ‘Tulay: Tunay na Mahalaga ang Pagbabasa, Layuning Mapaunlad ang Sarili’ (P1)

Additionally, students are provided with generous time after class to explore words and phrases. This post-class reading time fosters extensive reading, which research shows improves vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension (Suk, 2016). The educators emphasized that while reading programs and extended practice time are vital, their effectiveness ultimately depends on consistent implementation and genuine engagement from both learners and their families. The collective efforts of teachers, students, and parents create the foundation for literacy growth. As such, the findings highlight that structured program, when paired with dedicated practice and reinforced at home, can significantly bridge reading gaps. Therefore, strengthening these complementary factors remains essential to sustaining long-term reading success.

Theme 2: Remediation and supportive interventions

Educators exhibit great patience when helping students comprehend their reading materials. They implement various strategies and differentiate activities tailored to each student's level. Before offering any intervention, teachers first assess the learners to identify the specific support needed. Although many interventions exist, remedial sessions after class are the most mentioned by teachers as these provide

focused, one-on-one or small-group opportunities to address specific weaknesses. Teachers shared that these interventions are not merely extensions of regular lessons, but personalized sessions designed to boost students' confidence and motivation. This reflects the understanding that literacy growth is not achieved overnight but through consistent practice and patient guidance. Recent studies also confirm that targeted after-school reading interventions effectively improve literacy skills in struggling readers (Roberts et al., 2018), further supporting the approaches described by participants.

"I give 20 minutes remedial after class. This offers after-school reading support, targeting struggling readers and aiming to build strong and confident learners." (P2)

"I can help them by providing regular reading practice with consistent and varied activities for fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This keeps the children interested and helps them become more fluent, expand their vocabularies, and deepen their comprehension, which leads to a solid foundation for lifelong reading success." (P5)

"The teaching approaches I used were guided reading, shared reading, and read alouds. I help my pupils improve their reading skills by using guided reading for fluency and vocabulary, games for word knowledge, and asking questions to build comprehension." (P 10)

This aligns with findings that repeated, varied reading practice enhances fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Lee & Yoon, 2017). Guided reading and vocabulary games are effective tools for building reading proficiency (Roberts et al., 2022).

Theme 3: Foundational reading skills development

Foundational reading instruction begins with explicit, systematic phonics to establish strong decoding skills, then advances toward comprehension through contextualized and interactive methods. This approach aligns with research indicating that structured phonics instruction, when paired with visual aids and interactive word games, enhances both decoding and vocabulary acquisition (Weerasinghe et al., 2022). Educators also emphasized that phonics alone is insufficient; it must be integrated with vocabulary support, contextual reading activities, and comprehension strategies that help students apply what they learn in meaningful ways.

"I introduced first the basics, followed by reading materials such as Unang Hakbang sa Pagbasa and the First 100 Fry Sight Words in English. To support vocabulary development, I use a variety of strategies, including visual aids like pictures, the use of context clues, and interactive word games." (P4)

Most respondents said that the approach they use in their classrooms involves unlocking of difficulties and vocabulary as a precursor to reading. This strategy helps learners access the text more confidently and prepares them for deeper comprehension. To develop reading comprehension, educators employ guiding questions before, during, and after reading, aligning with best practices like reciprocal teaching that engage students in inference and vocabulary development (Young, 2023). They further reinforce

skills through targeted comprehension exercises, vocabulary unpacking, and helping learners navigate challenging texts to bolster both decoding and meaning making (Day et al., 2024).

Theme 4: Learning environment & resources

Educators today is remarkably resourceful and imaginative in addressing their students' learning needs. They go beyond conventional methods, designing creative and supportive environments that foster literacy development both inside and outside the classroom. Many teachers explained that part of nurturing young readers is making reading a visible, accessible, and enjoyable daily habit rather than a task limited to formal lessons. By creating spaces and routines that encourage learners to interact with books freely, teachers cultivate a culture of reading that motivates students to practice independently.

“Our school has set up designated reading pantries and reading corners that are open and accessible to all learners during their free time. (P6)

We also implement the DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) program as part of our daily routine, encouraging students to take a break from regular activities and spend time reading independently.” (P6)

Research shows that classroom reading corners and pantries—when thoughtfully arranged and consistently stocked significantly increase students’ reading engagement, confidence, and independent reading habits (Barrett et al., 2017; Woga et al., 2025). For example, a Philippine classroom “reading pantry” offering easy book access and comfortable seating increased student visits and comprehension reflections among over 1,000 learners. These practices have a direct, positive impact on students’ academic performance. According to Latifah, Samosir, and Sa’diyah (2024), the use of classroom reading corners improves students’ literacy culture, helping them become more confident and fluent readers. Increased access to age-appropriate books and the freedom to choose what to read contributes to better comprehension, critical thinking, and sustained attention—all essential for success in other subjects as well.

Problem 2: What are the challenges encountered by elementary educators in using different reading approaches in teaching?

Table 2. Challenges in Using Different Reading Approaches in the Classroom

Themes	Contributing Sub- Themes	Frequency
Theme 1: Instructional challenges	• Giving differentiated reading materials	• 2
	• Using differentiated instruction	• 4
	• Dealing with learners one at a time	• 5
	• Some pupils need more attention	• 5
	• Letting them stay after class	• 7
	• Overlapping activities and report work	• 6

Theme 2: Resource constraints	• Lack of resources • Class size with different level of reading skills • Limited time and materials • Overlapping activities	• 10 • 9 • 8 • 7
Theme 3: Learner-specific factors	• Child interested to read • Level of proficiency • Diverse students	• 9 • 5 • 10
Theme 4: Non-compliance with remedial education programs	• Parents are not cooperative • Struggling readers missed classes	• 2 • 5

Source: Research data gathered from teachers interviews from *Laoag Central Elementary School* (2025).

Theme 1: Instructional challenges

Educators face significant challenges in managing diverse classrooms, where learners often display varying levels of reading ability, motivation, and confidence. Addressing these differences requires individualized attention, which demands additional time, preparation, and creativity from teachers. In many cases, teachers must balance between supporting struggling readers and ensuring that advanced learners remain engaged, which creates constant tension in instructional planning. One common strategy used to manage these challenges is providing individual support and integrating peer-assisted activities. This approach aligns with the findings of Dhakal (2021), who emphasized the importance of peer tutoring as a practical strategy to meet the varied needs of students in reading instruction.

"I deal with learners one at a time, so I let them stay after class in the afternoon and promote peer tutoring during free time." (P7)

"I give more time to those who belong to the low level, offering differentiated reading materials and instructions to cater to diverse learners." (P8)

This practice is supported by research indicating that differentiated instruction, such as offering varied reading materials and flexible grouping, can enhance student motivation and achievement (Bondie & Zusho, 2018). Implementing differentiated instruction can be challenging for educators due to overlapping responsibilities and time constraints. A study by Aldossari (2018) identified several barriers to effective differentiation, including time limitations, lack of resources, and insufficient administrative support. These challenges can hinder teachers' ability to plan and execute differentiated lessons effectively.

Theme 2: Resource constraints

One of the most emerging themes from my respondents is the impact of time and resource limitations on the implementation of effective reading instruction. Educators repeatedly highlighted that while they are eager to apply varied and creative approaches to strengthen reading skills, the constraints of their schedules, the lack of instructional materials, and the pressure of handling multiple responsibilities often

prevent them from doing so. The competing demands of preparing lessons, fulfilling non-teaching tasks, and managing large class sizes make it difficult to provide individualized attention, particularly to struggling readers who require more time and remediation.

“It’s difficult for me to use different reading approaches in my classroom because of limited time and materials. Sometimes I must attend to other obligations like coaching. Preparing materials also requires money, time, and effort, and I still have other subjects to focus on.” (P8)

“Time is a necessity because some pupils are very shy to read in front of their classmates, so individual reading is needed... but it’s only during my vacant period, which is very limited time to teach the slow readers.” (P3)

“It’s hard for me to implement different approaches because of the class size, and I often can’t address the needs of struggling readers. To manage, I pair them up—one good reader with one slow reader. Some students need more support, while others are already ahead, and I just don’t have enough time to meet each of their individual needs. Most of the time, I end up rushing my reports or juggling activities just to keep up. Reading remediation also requires a lot of time, which I don’t have during regular class hours.” (P4)

These concerns reflect what Hagid and Apostol (2024)-emphasized that educators in resource-limited Northern Luzon schools often face limited teaching time, lack of supplementary materials, and overlapping responsibilities, which hinder the comprehensive implementation of reading strategies. The findings also underscore the reality that reading instruction does not happen in isolation; it is interconnected with educators’ workload, institutional support, and classroom context. Without adequate time, resources, and systemic interventions, even the most motivated teachers struggle to deliver sustained and individualized reading programs. This suggests that improving reading outcomes requires not only teacher effort but also structural solutions such as reducing class sizes, providing dedicated remediation periods, ensuring access to learning materials, and lessening administrative burdens.

Theme 3: Learner-specific factors

A prominent theme that emerged from the responses was the role of learner-specific factors in overcoming challenges when using varied reading approaches in the classroom. Educators highlighted that students’ individual interests, motivation, and confidence levels significantly influence how they engage with reading tasks. For many educators, fostering a supportive environment that encourages learners to read willingly is just as important as teaching reading skills themselves. They observed that children who demonstrate enthusiasm and intrinsic motivation toward reading often progress more quickly, whereas those with low interest or limited confidence require more encouragement and scaffolding. This places additional responsibility on teachers to exercise patience, creativity, and perseverance, as they must not only deliver instruction but also nurture learners’ attitudes toward reading.

“The child’s interest in learning or reading is very important. That’s why, as a teacher, patience and motivation are essential qualities that guide my practice. (P9)

“Having pupils with a wide range of reading abilities in a single class—from beginners to proficient and struggling readers—makes it difficult to use a one-size-fits-all method.” (P10)

They emphasized that such diversity requires careful differentiation, which is both time-consuming and demanding. These observations reflect the findings of Graham et al. (2023), who noted that teachers often struggle to adapt instruction to diverse learning needs due to time constraints and resource limitations which mirrors the experiences of the respondent. Moreover, managing learner-specific differences is not limited to instructional strategies but extends to building resilience, motivation, and confidence among students. Without proper support, struggling readers are at risk of disengagement, which may further widen the gap between them and their peers. Thus, teachers are compelled to strike a delicate balance, maintaining the motivation of advanced learners while providing intensive support to those who lag behind.

Theme 4: Non-compliance with remedial education programs

Another key insight drawn from my participants focuses on the lack of parental cooperation, which many teachers view as a serious barrier to reading improvement. This issue emerged repeatedly in their accounts, suggesting that no matter how well-structured the school-based interventions are, their success is still largely dependent on the support and involvement of families at home. Educators emphasized that without reinforcement of reading habits outside the classroom, their efforts often fall short, especially for struggling readers. Several participants pointed out that reading development is not just the responsibility of educators but a shared duty that requires parents’ consistent guidance, encouragement, and accountability. Thus, the absence of parental collaboration creates a gap that makes it difficult to sustain the progress achieved during lessons and remedial sessions.

“Parents of the struggling readers aren’t that cooperative.” (P6)

They feel ashamed if their kids are asked to stay and attend remedial classes. The challenge for us is that these same struggling readers are the ones who frequently miss class, and it seems like their parents aren’t even concerned about it.” This observation aligns with Rosano and Conjunta (2025), who found that parental disengagement—particularly feeling ashamed of remedial programs—frequently leads to inconsistent student attendance and diminished effectiveness of reading interventions

The results of this study reveal that elementary educators implement a wide variety of structured reading programs to enhance literacy development among their students. Programs like the Marungko Approach, and school-specific interventions such as “Read Bright Read Right” or “Tulay: Tunay na Mahalaga ang Pagbabasa, Layuning Mapaunlad ang Sarili” were often mentioned. These approaches are often paired with post-class reading sessions and guided instruction, allowing teachers to support both fluent and struggling readers. Teachers use strategies like guided reading, read-alouds, and practice reading drills to make reading more engaging and personalized. This aligns with Ramsa and Rawian (2021), who emphasized that systematic guided reading strategies help educators adapt reading instruction to students’ individual needs, strengthening their comprehension skills through scaffolded and level-appropriate instruction.

Beyond formal instructional techniques, teachers also create enriching and student-friendly learning environments to promote independent reading. Reading corners, pantries, and designated reading times like DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) were commonly implemented. These spaces not only provide access to age-appropriate books but also encourage children to read for pleasure during their free time. Such practices have been shown to significantly improve reading motivation and literacy culture in classrooms. Ramsa and Rawian (2021) highlight that the success of guided reading and similar strategies relies heavily on supportive reading environments that are rich in resources and flexible enough to accommodate different reading levels and interests.

However, the effectiveness of these reading approaches is frequently hindered by systemic challenges. Educators cited time constraints, large class sizes with different level of reading skills, limited instructional materials, and lack of parental cooperation as recurring obstacles. Many educators shared that they often juggle overlapping responsibilities and struggle to provide consistent remediation to learners who need it most. Additionally, some parents reportedly resist remedial programs out of embarrassment or lack of awareness, affecting student attendance and progress. These challenges suggest that while educators are doing their best to implement effective approaches, more institutional support and family engagement are essential for achieving long-term literacy improvement.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the reading approaches utilized by elementary educators and the challenges they encounter in enhancing learners' reading proficiency. The findings revealed that teachers employ a wide range of approaches, combining nationally recognized methods such as the Marungko, Fuller, and bottom-up approaches with school-based initiatives like Read Bright and Tulay. These structured programs are complemented by remediation sessions, guided and shared reading, phonics-based instruction, vocabulary-building strategies, and supportive environments such as reading pantries and the DEAR program. Collectively, these practices demonstrate that educators are resourceful and adaptive, consistently creating literacy-rich opportunities that nurture decoding, fluency, comprehension, and engagement.

However, the results also show that despite these efforts, teachers face recurring challenges that hinder the full implementation of reading interventions. Time constraints, large class sizes, and insufficient resources limit the extent to which they can provide individualized support. Learner-specific differences further demand patience, differentiated instruction, and ongoing motivation. Most critically, parental disengagement and non-compliance with remedial programs significantly weaken the impact of classroom interventions, as reading progress cannot be sustained without reinforcement at home. These findings highlight that while teachers are at the forefront of literacy development, systemic and contextual barriers remain pressing concerns.

Based on these results, several recommendations can be made. First, schools and policymakers should strengthen teacher support by reducing class sizes, allocating dedicated time for remediation, and ensuring adequate reading resources. Second, professional development programs must continue to

equip teachers with differentiated instructional strategies, evidence-based reading interventions, and classroom management tools to address diverse learner needs. Third, strong school–home partnerships should be fostered through sustained parent engagement programs that reduce the stigma of remedial education and promote shared responsibility for literacy. Finally, investing in community-based literacy initiatives, such as reading corners and pantries, can extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom. By addressing both instructional and systemic challenges, these coordinated efforts can create a more supportive environment where every child, regardless of background or ability, has the opportunity to achieve reading success.

Contribution of the study: This study contributes to the growing body of literature on reading instruction by providing a contextualized understanding of how Filipino elementary educators interpret, adapt, and implement reading strategies in real classroom environments. It provides empirical evidence on teachers' lived experiences, highlighting the instructional adjustments and decision-making processes that previous research has often overlooked. The study also identifies systemic barriers that shape literacy outcomes, offering relevant insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and school administrators.

Theoretical implications: The findings extend theoretical discussions on differentiated instruction, sociocultural perspectives of literacy, and the interplay between instructional design and classroom ecology. By illustrating how teachers navigate resource constraints and diverse learner profiles, this study supports the need for more context-responsive literacy frameworks that integrate theory with practical classroom realities.

Practical implications: Practically, the study underscores the importance of sustained teacher training, resource provision, and collaborative school–home partnerships in improving reading outcomes. It offers actionable recommendations that schools can integrate into their literacy programs, particularly in under-resourced settings, and serves as a guide for designing teacher-support interventions that are grounded in everyday classroom challenges.

Limitations of the study: While the study provides valuable insights, its findings are limited by its sample size and geographic focus, which may not fully represent all regions or school contexts in the Philippines. The reliance on self-reported experiences may also introduce subjective bias. Additionally, the study does not measure student reading outcomes directly, limiting its ability to establish causal relationships between instructional strategies and learner performance.

Recommendations for future research: Future studies may expand the sample to include multiple regions, school types, and grade levels to strengthen generalizability. Longitudinal research could explore how teacher practices evolve over time and how this influence student reading development. Investigating the perspectives of learners and parents may also offer a more holistic understanding of the literacy ecosystem. Further research on the effectiveness of specific intervention models or technology-assisted reading programs is also encouraged.

Author's contribution: The author conceptualized the study, designed the research instruments, collected and analyzed the data, and prepared the manuscript for publication.

Ethical review statement: This study was reviewed and approved by the school head and complied with ethical standards for educational research. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent. No identifying information was collected to ensure confidentiality.

Funding statement: This research received no external funding and was fully supported by the researcher.

Conflict of interest statement: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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