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Research Article

Reading Partnership between Challenged and Knowledgeable (Repack) Readers to Improve Performance

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ABSTRACT

Reading has been capitalized in the education process. It has been put premium in the context of the learning recovery as the return of in-person of classes is observed. This action research aimed to examine the reading performance level of Grade One pupils of Camiing Elementary School before and after the employment of project RePACK (Reading Partnership between Challenged and Knowledgeable). This study further determined the aspects of the introduced intervention that facilitated their reading performance. The participants of the study were the 45 Grade one pupils of Camiing Elementary School School of Schools Division of Zambales in the school year 2022-2023. The data were gathered through a mixed method. The qualitative part employed thematic analysis to interpret the transcribed interviews. On the other hand, the quantitative one-group pretest-post-test design used the mean and paired sample t-test to measure the reading performance of the learners in the phases of treatment. The analysis of how the project RePACK facilitate their reading performance has emerged into two themes: availability of learning support, and access to reading resources. The level of learners' oral word recognition in the pre-intervention was found frustration and instructional in the post-intervention. Similarly, there was a leaped in progression of the reading comprehension of the leaners where they were marked frustration in the pre-test and independent in the post-test. Notably, there is a significant difference in the learners' reading performance level before and after the intervention. This outcome suggests that the project RePACK is effective in improving the reading performance of the learners. In this regard, school heads, teachers, and students are encouraged to adopt the intervention because of its efficacy.

Keywords: *Collaborative approach, Frustration, Independent, Instructional, Project REPACK, Reading partner, Reading performance*

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Introduction

Learning to read is crucial to a child's academic and later life success (Collier, 2019). The degree to which a child advances in these foundational and predictive skills is one of the best predictors (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017) of whether or not individual can function competently in school and go on to participate successfully in a knowledge-based society (Joynes et al., 2019).

In the current environment, educational institutions not only in the Philippines but around the world are facing significant problems in instructional progress especially in teaching reading and literacy (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). While the value of every learner's right to read has been a primary concern for reading teachers across the country, the consequences of school closure during pandemic have exacerbated existing literacy challenges and exponentially increased the disparity between children who receive reading support at home and those who do not (Gallagher et al., 2020).

Indubitably, the growing concern about the worsening handicap in the reading of many learners specifically in reading comprehension, posits one of the most challenges in terms of reading proficiency in the country today. According to Guillermo et al. (2020) the country outperforms the majority of the world's nations when it comes to literacy, one of the primary indicators of a country's overall competence (Alhumaid et al., 2022). There are more than one million pre-literates in the country and more than six million people are deemed illiterate (Alea et al., 2020).

Apparently, the impact of the learning loss is evidently manifested in the reading performance of the learners particularly in the oral word recognition and reading comprehension. During the recent reading assessment of Camiling Elementary School, results project a downward trend with 82% learning loss and only 37 total of Grade one students in the class show a passing literacy mark. Most students have difficulty in the accuracy of word sounds and recognition, and in answering the critical and evaluative questions. Majority even got imprecise answer for the literal question.

This implies that even at the low-level thinking skills, the reading performance of the Grade one students declined due to the learning loss caused by the pandemic. This plummeting result is alarming and raises very serious concerns. However, this should not come as a surprise when one considers that only school years ago, all institutions were closed for the academic year.

Regardless of the existing challenges, all these, in few manners, have shown exponential advantage as few learners have shown significant milestone in the development of reading ability. In this manner, the concept of literacy recovery recalls intensive reading support mechanisms. To provide balance and make use with this advantage, it is crucial to and engage learners reading practice to effectively navigate through the stages of literacy development (Rhew et al., 2021). Hence, it is strategic to maximize the use of all reading resources that can improve the reading performance of the learners, not only dependent on the teacher's remediation direct instruction but also through reading partners.

Over the years, the use of reading partners as an intervention for poor reading has gained popularity. This approach involves pairing struggling readers with more proficient readers to provide support, guidance, and individualized attention (Wang et al., 2017). The rationale behind this strategy is that struggling readers can benefit from the expertise and experience of a more proficient reader, who can provide targeted support and feedback to help the student improve their reading skills (Al-Batran et al., 2018).

Mounting research shows that reading partners can be effective in pumping students' reading performance and reading comprehension (Sumarsono et al., 2020). Baker et al. (2022) regarded the reading practice of reading partners includes two individuals reading a text together. The approach is generally employed in educational settings to assist learners in improving their reading abilities and comprehension. Explicitly, one student reads aloud a passage of literature while the other student follows along silently. The positions are then switched, with the second person reading aloud and the first person silently following

along. This reading back and forth continues until the text is finished (Hale et al., 2012).

Lee & Szczerbinski (2021) underscores that individuals of all ages and reading levels can benefit from paired reading, but struggling readers can benefit most. It gives individuals with the opportunity to practice their reading skills in a friendly setting while receiving comments and direction from a partner. In addition, reading partners can be an enjoyable and engaging activity that fosters a love of reading (Würthner, 2020).

Palmer et al. (2021) contends that reading partners can provide individualized attention and support that is tailored to the student's specific needs. Struggling readers often need extra attention and support to build their confidence and skills, and reading partners can provide this support through one-on-one tutoring, group reading activities, or mentorship programs.

Ultimately, reading partners can help struggling readers develop comprehension strategies (Møller et al., 2020). Comprehension is a critical component of reading, and struggling readers often struggle with understanding and remembering what they read (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). Reading partners can model and teach comprehension strategies, such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing, which can help struggling readers better understand and remember what they are reading (Collier et al., 2019).

In light of shred of evidences, this action research was conceived to improve the reading

performance of the Grade one students, particularly the proponent's class reading word recognition, comprehension through the reading partnering of challenged and knowledge through project RePaCK: **READING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CHALLENGED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE**. Further, this also delved to determine the effectiveness of the intervention made.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of Grade one learners reading performance before the reading intervention in terms of
 - 1.1. word recognition;
 - 1.2. reading comprehension?
2. What is the level of Grade one learner's reading performance after the reading intervention in terms of
 - 2.1. word recognition.
 - 2.2. reading comprehension?
3. Is there a significant difference between the level of Grade one learner's reading performance before and after the reading intervention?
4. How does project RePACK facilitate the reading performance of the Grade one learners?

Result and Discussion

Problem 1: What is the level of Grade one pupils' reading performance before and after the reading intervention in terms of oral word recognition and reading comprehension?

Table 1. Level of Oral Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension of Grade One

Assessment	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	MP	Level Description	MP	Level Description
Oral Word Recognition	56.67	Frustration	93.62	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	44.13	Frustration	82.22	Independent

Word Recognition: 98%-below-Frustration; 90%-96%-Instructional; 97%-100-Independent

Reading Comprehension: 58%-below-Frustration; 59%-79%-Instructional; 80%-100-Independent

Table 1 shows the mean percentage of the Grade one pupils in oral word recognition and reading comprehension in both phases, pre-test, and post-test. It can be gleaned from the table that in the pre-test, the mean percentage of oral word recognition is 55.67%, described

as frustration. This result implies that the Grade one learners struggle to correctly read the word lists and sight words in the reading passage appropriated to their grade level. El-Mowafy and Yang (2016) study shared a resemblance and surmised that when students

read at their frustration level, they had lower comprehension scores and reported feeling more negative emotions towards reading. Likewise, Manyeredzi and Mpofu (2022) argue that while some level of frustration is necessary for learning and growth, excessive frustration can have negative effects on reading development and should be minimized. Hence, project REPACK was employed.

Consequently, it can be noted that after the intervention, oral word recognition has leaped to a mean percentage of 93.62%, described as instructional level. This finding suggests that the Grade one pupils is able to read with support and guidance from a teacher and reading support within the project REPACK framework. This progression level of provides a balance between challenge and success, allowing the student to learn and grow while still feeling confident and motivated. Moreover, they are able to decode and recognize most of the words that require support and guidance from the teacher and reading support through the partnered reading approach under the project REPACK.

On the other hand, the reading comprehension level of the Grade one pupils in the pre-test was 44.13%, marked as frustration. This finding equates to the word recognition level. However, it can be noted that after the employment of the intervention, the reading comprehension level of pupils is 82.22%, labeled as independent. The findings further suggest that the Grade one pupils can read and comprehend texts on their own after the intensive reading intervention through project REPACK. Learners are typically able to decode words, understand vocabulary, and comprehend the meaning of the text without assistance following the step-by-step process.

The result basically implies that after the implementation of the intervention project REPACK, there was a progression of the

reading level of the Grade one pupils in oral word recognition and reading comprehension from the baseline of frustration to instructional and independent, respectively. Ilter (2017) emphasizes that moving students from frustration levels to instructional and independent reading levels is a critical goal for literacy instruction. This process involves providing appropriate support and grade passage level and instruction to help struggling readers develop the skills and strategies they need to read and comprehend texts on their own. These were evidently demonstrated in the project REPACK.

These findings are equally supported by Takasu et al. (2016) study that underscores explicit instruction as well as modeling of successful reading skills provided in the reading assistance intervention can help learners improve their reading level. He contends that partnered reading support has demonstrated facilitation on reading skills such as decoding, assessing comprehension, and vocabulary expansion and then urges students to apply these strategies on their own.

Similarly, the guided reading practice in the project REPACK is where a teacher or another adult and a small group of students are working together to read a text in an extensive reading setup. Sioringas and El-Ahmad et al (2019) mentioned that the reading support is there to help and provide direction whenever it's required, and they also work with the class to build efficient reading strategies. This can be an efficient method for helping pupils progress from the level of annoyance to the level of teaching and then ultimately to the level of independence.

Problem 2: Is there a significant difference between the level of Grade one pupils' reading performance before and after the reading intervention?

Table 2. Test of Significant Difference on Students' Level of Reading Performance

Phase	n	mean	variance	df	t-stat	Critical value	p-value
Pre-Test	45	50.40	209.05	44	16.97	1.67	0.003
Post-Test		88.22	6.67				

*Significance at 0.05 level

Table 2 displays that the t-stat is bigger than the critical value of 1.67 after the treatment. Furthermore, it illustrates the epochal divergence that exists between the means of the pre and post-implementation of the intervention from 50.40 to 88.22. Similarly, the table also poses a remarkable increase in the post-intervention weighted mean, which roughly almost doubled the pre-intervention weighted mean. This projects that the Grade one reading performance in the pre-intervention is frustration to instructional and independent levels. Clearly, this indicates that the employment of the project REPACK is essentially effectual to the improvement of the reading performance of the student.

Moreover, the utilization of the intervention yielded a p-value of 0.003 which is less than the significance level. Hence, there is a significant difference in the Grade one pupils' level of reading performance both prior to and subsequent to the application of the project REPACK.

Problem 3: How does project REPACK facilitate the reading performance of the Grade one pupils?

Horizontalization, clustering, and convergence are the three established processes that were followed in order to identify the themes. Horizontalization was achieved through identifying and emphasizing the views, opinions, and feelings of the Grade one learners. For the sake of a more thorough examination, these were grouped together.

The analysis on how the project REPACK facilitate their reading performance has emerged into two themes: availability of learning support, and access to reading resources.

Theme 1: Appropriation of Reading Level

Most of the participants in this study reported that through the project REPACK, availability of the learning supports was noted and facilitated their improvement to reading:

With the availability of reading material befitting to my level, it makes me sure and at ease to accomplish the reading materials (P2).

The reading sheets were accomplished by ensuring that someone from the family and the

community can help me in my reading activity and that they are from easy to difficult. Slowly, I have progressed to improve my reading (P3).

I now confidence to read because of the friendly level reading, available to help in improving my reading performance. They taught how to read the difficult words and understand the story (P4).

Wiegers et al. (2021) mentioned that the appropriation of reading support befitting to the grade level is essential for ensuring that all pupils have the chance to acquire excellent reading skills. Reading is a crucial ability for academic achievement and personal development. Children who struggle with reading may fall academically behind their peers, which can have lasting effects on their educational and employment chances.

This reading support can take various forms, such as individualized tutoring, classroom instruction, access to reading materials, and technology-based aids (Tomas et al., 2021). Schools and families can help students overcome reading difficulties and build strong reading skills by offering reading support.

Theme 2: Access to Reading Resources

Based on the responses, most participants highlighted that they got engaged in reading activity through the availability of the access to reading resources given by the partners:

I can now access reading materials at school with my partners. I enjoy reading and learning more (P1).

Here in our house, we start to collect the book and other reading materials. I love to read and my parents also guide us. Sometimes we use the tablet to access other reading activities online (P5).

This theme result is faithfully included in the vast articles of education which consistently ingeminates that access to reading resources can improve learning reading performance (Liu et al., 2022) underscores that access to reading materials is vital to guaranteeing that all persons have the chance to acquire strong reading skills. Further, Allcott et al. (2024) elaborates that access to reading re-

sources includes physical books, e-books, audiobooks, and online resources, among others. Hence, individuals can locate reading materials that match their interests and reading levels if they have access to a variety of reading resources, which can make reading more pleasurable and help them develop a love of reading.

Same backing proposed by [[14] that schoolchildren who have access to books both at home and in school are more likely to develop proficient reading abilities and a love of reading. In addition, students with access to reading resources are more likely to achieve academic success and have better long-term educational and professional results.

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