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## *EFFECTIVENESS OF MARUNGKO APPROACH IN TEACHING STRUGGLING READERS IN GRADE 2*

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### ***ABSTRACT***

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in improving the reading performance of Grade 2 struggling learners at Airport Village Elementary School, Casisang, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, during the 2025–2026 school year. Using a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, and retention-test measures, the study involved 21 selected learners identified as struggling readers through the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA, 2020). The study compared the reading performance of learners in the Marungko group and a Non-Marungko group to determine the impact of the instructional approach. Findings revealed that learners in the Non-Marungko group initially performed at the full refresher and low emerging reader levels. They showed improvement in the post-test, progressing to moderate refresher and some to developing and high emerging readers; however, their reading performance declined in the retention test. In contrast, learners in the Marungko group demonstrated substantial improvement from pre-test to post-test, with most achieving transitioning reader status. These gains were largely maintained in the retention test, indicating sustained reading ability. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference in reading performance between pre-test and post-test scores for both groups, but only the Marungko group maintained their performance over time. The study concluded that while both approaches initially enhanced reading performance, the Marungko Approach was more effective in promoting long-term retention of reading skills. Recommendations include encouraging learners and parents to engage in regular reading practice at home, training teachers in the systematic implementation of the Marungko Approach, and exploring its long-term impact in future research. The findings underscore the importance of structured phonics-based instruction in developing confident and independent readers.

**KEYWORDS:** Marungko approach, Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) Struggling Readers.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is the foundation of academic success and lifelong learning, but many learners struggle with reading difficulties that hinder their academic progress. Basic reading skills still pose problems for many Grade 2 learners, especially at Airport Village Elementary School. The ability to identify the sounds corresponding to letters is still a challenge for some of them. For others, reading simple syllables is possible, but they are unable to combine them smoothly into words. These difficulties lead to the formation of gaps that keep getting wider as the lessons become more advanced. Traditional methods often provide insufficient support to struggling learners as they do not provide the necessary structured and steady support. Consequently, a large number of students lag behind their expected reading level. The Marungko Approach is a gradual method that might help cover these gaps, but its efficiency for Grade 2 struggling readers has not been completely studied yet. The current research intends to see if the Marungko Approach can significantly improve their reading performance when compared to traditional classroom instruction. This study assessed the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach as a strategy to improve the reading performance of grade 2 struggling readers of Airport Village Elementary School.

Reading is not only an important skill but also a central part of every child's learning journey. Nonetheless, according to a recent report, many Filipino students continue to be below the expected reading levels in the first few years of education (Basmayor & Alauya, 2023). If these reading problems are not tackled, they do not just go away but rather tend to affect the child's performance in other subjects and may even follow them as they get promoted to higher grades (Bernabe, 2024). This problem clearly shows the acute need for more efficient and better-targeted reading interventions in the early grades.

In the Philippines, one of the problems with the resetting of the educational system is that many Filipino children struggle with reading, which is particularly associated with low success, especially in public schools. The low achievement results are further attributed to the learners' underdeveloped reading abilities. For instance, the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric [SEA-PLM] showed that, in 2019, a percentage of Filipino fifth graders' performance displayed the least competency in three subject areas: mathematics, writing, and reading (Bernardo et al., 2022).

The Marungko Approach is a phonics-based method that first teaches letter sounds in a very simple and systematic way, then it proceeds to gradually build skills through syllables and words (Dimacial et al., 2023). The well-organized sequence gives the learners a chance to become skilled step by step. Besides, frequent practice is the way by which a good number of beginning readers come to possess the dual quality of confidence and accuracy (Vinuya, n.d.). However, the research conducted on the Marungko Approach is primarily focused on Grade 1. This leads to the question: What about the support that the method gives the Grade 2 learners who are still experiencing difficulties?

New references are advocating that even the older struggling readers can get the benefit from teaching phonics in a well-structured way. The ability to decode and the skills associated with sound-symbol connection are still prerequisites for oral fluency and text understanding, even in the second grade and beyond (Cabañero et al., 2024; Casupanan & Fastidio, 2024). Moreover, consistently using phonics in teaching has been associated with helping early-grade learners to become more motivated, to get more involved, and to improve their reading accuracy (Bernabe, 2024). Such results, therefore, indicate the probability of a positive impact if the Marungko Approach is used with Grade 2 students who require additional help in reading.

This study has been designed to find the answer to and deal with these questions by investigating if the Marungko Approach can lead to significant improvement in the reading performance of Grade 2 struggling learners. A quasi-experimental design is utilized wherein the pre-tests and post-tests are conducted for both the Marungko Approach group and the traditional method group to compare their reading performance (Chiang et al., 2015). The study's main objective is to provide practical evidence through the progressive comparison that will ease the decision-making of teachers, school authorities, and curriculum developers regarding the adoption of strategies best suited for early reading development.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This study is anchored on three foundational learning theories: Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Skinner's Behaviorist Theory, and Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory. These frameworks support the pedagogical strategies embedded within the Marungko Approach.

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, people learn through observation, imitation, and modelling others. Bandura elaborated that the learners may learn a new behaviour by looking at other people's actions while such behaviours are reinforced (De La Torre, 2025). In the Marungko Approach, teachers have to dramatize their blending of letter

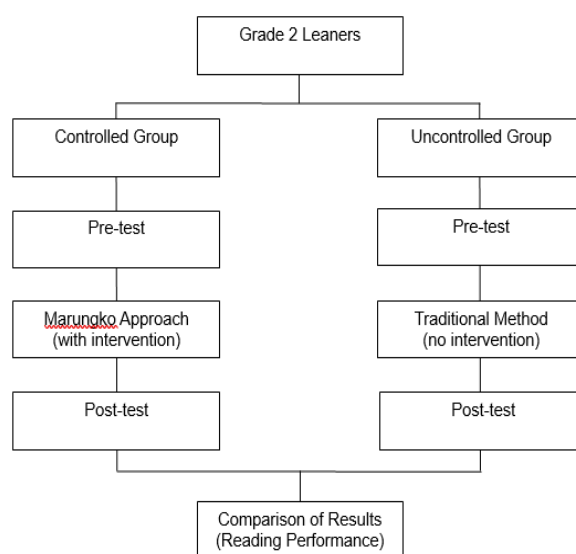
sounds into syllables and words so that students can imitate and practice this. This method encourages active participation and helps learners who need to see reading skills modelled very clearly and consistently.

B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory emphasizes reinforcement and repetition in the learning process. Skinner argued that students will learn the behaviours that he wants in response to the rewards or reinforcements received by them (Admin, 2023). The Marungko Approach employs a procedure of repeatedly practicing letter sounds, blending exercises, and positive reinforcement to affirm good reading habits. For struggling learners, this reinforcement builds up confidence and retention of the basic reading skills.

The Cognitive Development Theory of Jean Piaget deals with the processes through which children develop knowledge based on their maturity stage. Generally, the Grade 2 learners are on the concrete operational stage and learn best through organized and experiential activities (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). The Marungko Approach is in accordance with it in that it breaks down reading tasks into simple steps and follows concrete ways compatible with the learners' developmental capacities. This sequentially enables learners to understand how sounds are put together to form words.

These three theories, combined with the above, give us an understanding of how modelling, reinforcement, and instruction can facilitate learning through their age-appropriateness. They are therefore an excellent grounding for the application of the Marungko Approach to improve the reading attainment of struggling Grade 2 learners.

**Flow Chart**



**Figure 1. The flow chart shows the relationship between the controlled and uncontrolled groups.**

### ***Statement of the Problem***

This study examined how effective the Marungko Approach is in improving the reading skills of Grade 2 struggling learners compared to the traditional method. It aimed to find out whether there is a difference in reading performance between the Controlled Group and the Uncontrolled Group after using the Marungko Approach.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of reading performance of the Controlled and Uncontrolled Groups using the traditional method?
2. What is the level of reading performance of the Controlled and Uncontrolled Groups after the intervention using the Marungko approach?
3. Is there a significant difference between the post-test results of the Controlled and Uncontrolled Groups in terms of reading performance?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study looks at how well the Marungko Approach helps struggling Grade 2 learners improve their reading skills. The results could benefit the following groups.

For learners, this study can be a great help for those who find it hard to read. A clearer and more supportive approach would enable the struggling learners to improve their reading skills. The Marungko Method can play an important role in helping them gain self-esteem while learning the sounds of letters, decoding words, and reading more fluently. When reading skills are improved, students are less likely to understand their lessons and take part in class activities.

For the teachers, this study offered a clear and organized reading strategy to support struggling readers. It helps them create focused activities on letter-sound recognition, syllable blending, and decoding. These skills are essential for early reading development.

For the school administrators, the findings may help school leaders and reading coordinators choose effective reading interventions. It can also assist in planning school programs that address the specific reading needs of learners.

For the curriculum developers and educational leaders, this study encourages using phonics-based methods, like the Marungko Approach, in reading instruction. It may also improve training programs that help teachers support non-readers and slow readers.

For the parents and guardians, this study highlights how early reading support can help children progress. It can guide parents in understanding how to be involved in their child's reading growth at home.

And lastly, for future researchers, this study may serve as a resource for those interested in phonics-based reading strategies. It could also motivate more research comparing the Marungko Approach with other methods in different grade levels or school settings.

### ***Delimitation of the Study***

This study focused on finding out how effective the Marungko Approach is in improving the reading performance of Grade 2 struggling learners. It is limited to 40 selected Grade 2 learners from Airport Village Elementary School during the school year 2025–2026. These learners are identified as emerging or slow readers. The study uses a quasi-experimental design with two groups, a Controlled Group and an Uncontrolled Group, each made up of 20 respondents.

The Controlled Group was taught using the Marungko Approach, while the Uncontrolled Group continues with the traditional method. Both groups take a pre-test and a post-test to measure their reading performance before and after the intervention. The study focuses only on specific reading skills such as letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and word decoding. This study does not include other factors that may affect the learners' reading performance, such as home literacy, parental support, and socioeconomic background. The results are limited to the participants of this study and may not apply to all Grade 2 learners or schools with different situations.

### ***Review of the Literature***

#### ***The Importance of Early Literacy and Its Challenges***

Early literacy is the foundation of children's learning and their understanding of their surroundings. Kwan (2024) illustrated that the children who receive early exposure to reading and language-based activities gradually become good at comprehension and reasoning. Voyager Sopris Learning (2023) informed that early literacy experiences are like providing nutrition to the brain and helping the child to grow from merely recognizing sounds to grasping the meaning of texts. Learning Without Tears (2021) stressed that the mastering of letter-sound recognition and the acquisition of beginning decoding skills are to be conducted during the very first years of schooling. Feruzi (2021) indicated that reading fluency comes about through children's decoding practice that eventually becomes automatic due to its repetition. Lu (2024) asserted that, apart from being ready for school, strong literacy skills at a young age also bear the country's long-term growth.

The Philippines' early literacy issue is still very much alive. The early literacy issue is still very much alive in the Philippines. As per the report by BINHI (2025), the reading level of 90% of the children studying in Grade 3 is lower than what they should normally achieve, and this is during the period of reading crisis all over the country. A similar conclusion was reached by Avergonzado and Polinar (2025), who reported that even after being taught in the classroom, a lot of first graders, for instance, still have difficulty recognizing sounds and blending them together, which are the most rudimentary of skills. The situation has been observed by Casinto (2025), who found some classrooms in the lower grades without well-organized, continuous, and directed reading programs. Cerezo et al. (2025) pointed out that not only poor teacher education and few reading interventions are some of the major factors hindering the progress of the students. UNESCO (2017) cautioned that when the gaps in literacy are not taken care of during the early years, the children might carry the difficulty in reading till the higher grade levels, which will amplify their reading problems.

One of the other factors affecting children's early reading performance is emotional barriers. According to Dawang et al. (2025), reading anxiety is a major reason for the loss of a learner's confidence, and thus, they will not participate in reading tasks, which eventually leads them to lower comprehension. A similar view has been expressed by Kids First (2025), who have argued that, besides imparting the necessary technical skills, the early literacy instruction should also be aimed at boosting the child's confidence and motivation levels. However, on the contrary, Muhammad et al. (2025) have pinpointed the situation of learners with developmental or learning needs in the inclusive classrooms where they often lack the necessary support, which eventually prolongs their literacy growth and is one of the factors creating the learning gap.

### ***Phonics-Based Approaches in Early Reading Instruction***

Phonics instruction is one of the most important parts of learning how to read. It is based on the notion of the correlation between letters and sounds, which enables the learners to get the words and read well. Dilgard et al. (2022) characterized systematic phonics as providing clear and repeated opportunities for children to practice decoding and word recognition. They also pointed out that not only are well-trained teachers and structured materials the two factors that contribute to successful phonics instruction, but they also work together. In the same way, Buckingham (2020) emphasized the need for phonics to be the mainstay in science-based reading programs since it is a strong support for struggling readers to acquire literacy skills from an early age.

There are many research studies that have demonstrated that phonics teaching is indeed a powerful tool for kids' reading acquisition. To illustrate, Shenoy and colleagues (2024) reported that phonics instruction influenced kindergarteners' sound recognition, letter blending, and reading of simple words in India positively. Similarly, Indriani et al. (2025) found that preschool children in Indonesia who were taught phonics became better readers and also more self-confident in the classroom. Thus, these results affirm that phonics is effective in a variety of settings and is especially beneficial for very young readers, gaining the essential skills required for fluency.

Phonics is a very common method, but it is still debated whether it is the best method in all cases. Bowers (2020) raised the question of whether phonics should be employed in every instance, implying that its good points might depend on the characteristics of the learners and the pedagogy of the teachers. On the other hand, Buckingham (2020) was convinced that the support for phonics is still powerful and that it continues to be one of the finest ways to prepare kids for reading. In line with this, Bullos et al. (2025) were in favor of integrating more phonics training into the reading programs of the country, such as the Philippines' National Reading Program, to aid the early reading performance of children in the schools.

### ***The Marungko Approach***

The Marungko Approach is a phonics-based reading method developed in the Philippines that aims to teach children how to read. Its main emphasis is on the first teaching of letter sounds, then moving on to their grouping into syllables, words, and sentences, eventually. Alumno et al. (2024) have said that the Marungko Method introduces the letters in a manner considering the sound difficulty and starting from the easiest to hardest. This way, the children will be able to have a gradual learning experience. Almost like that, Basmayor and Alauya (2023) called it a very gradual teaching method that eventually allows non-readers to develop self-esteem and comprehension of the word formation process.

The effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing early reading has been substantiated by a number of studies. As reported by Boltron and Ramos (2021), the students practicing this method surpassed the others in reading fluency and word recognition, those being the ones under the traditional methods. On the other hand, Bernabe's (2024) report highlighted that the First Graders with the Marungko Approach were reading half the time in the tests and had grown in errorless word recognition, which eventually resulted in their being willing to take part in the class discussions. Equally, Balgua et al. (2022) showed that the practice of using reading modules based on the Marungko method allowed the children in

Zambales to get to know their lessons more quickly and to be more participative during classes. The results of the research indicate that the Marungko Approach is not merely a reading skill-enhancing tool but also a reading habit-forming one.

### ***Research Methodology***

#### ***Research Design***

This study uses a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test setup to see how effective the Marungko Approach is in improving the reading performance of Grade 2 struggling learners (Chiang et al., 2015). It involves two groups, a Controlled Group and an Uncontrolled Group. Both groups take a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after to check their reading progress. The Controlled Group is taught using the Marungko Approach, while the Uncontrolled Group continues with the traditional way of teaching. The intervention runs for eight weeks with daily reading sessions following the Marungko lessons from Aralin 1 to Aralin 26.

#### ***Research Locale***

The research will be conducted at Airport Village Elementary School, which is located in Casisang, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. Casisang is a barangay that has both urban and rural characteristics, providing interesting opportunities for students. The school serves learners from varying socioeconomic statuses and factors, with students having limited access to literacy resources that are available in school. The community is very supportive of educational initiatives, and the school has basic amenities to accommodate the study of the Marungko Approach.

#### ***Findings***

All of the learners who were in the Non-Marungko group were at the full refresher level in their level of reading performance, and the majority of them were low-emerging readers in the pretest. The majority of the learners improved in the posttest and became moderate refresher, and a few became developing readers and high emerging readers. In the retention test, the learners were in the moderate refresher and became high-emerging readers.

The majority of the learners in the Marungko group were in the full refresher level and low emerging level in the pretest. Although some were in the light refresher and developing readers. All learners improved in the post-test to light refresher, and most of them were classified as transitioning readers. But there were a few who were developing readers. The

learners improved their reading ability in the retention test. Some of them developed and became transitioning readers.

Under the Marungko group, there is a significant difference in the reading performance in the pre-test and post-test, but not in the retention test. Learners' scores were maintained in the retention test. Under the Non-Marungko group, there is a significant difference in the reading performance between the pre-test, post-test, and retention test. Learners improved in the posttest but lowered their scores in the retention test.

### ***CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

The following conclusions were formed out of the findings of the study:

The learners' reading ability in the Non-Marungko group is an effective approach, but the learners' reading ability declined and cannot be sustained by this approach over time.

The learners' reading ability under the Marungko group dramatically improved in the post-test and was sustained in the retention test. Therefore, Marungko's approval was an effective strategy, and the effect can be sustained over time.

The study indicates that the Marungko group achieved significant improvement in reading performance from the pre-test to the post-test, and these gains were largely maintained in the retention test, demonstrating the durability and effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in sustaining reading skills. In contrast, the Non-Marungko group also showed significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test; however, their reading performance declined in the retention test, suggesting that the instructional gains were not fully retained over time. These results highlight that while both instructional approaches can enhance reading performance initially, the Marungko Approach is more effective in promoting long-term retention of reading skills among learners.

Learners and Parents are encouraged to regularly practice reading at home, even after classroom instruction, to strengthen and maintain their reading skills. Parents may actively support their children's reading development by providing age-appropriate reading materials, engaging in reading activities together, and offering positive reinforcement to build confidence and motivation.

#### **Sustain the Use of the Marungko Approach in Reading Instruction**

Based on the significant improvement in learners' reading performance from pretest to posttest and retention test, it is recommended that the Marungko Approach be continuously

used in teaching beginning reading, particularly for struggling learners, to strengthen phonemic awareness and long-term reading retention.

Teachers and School Administrators may implement the Marungko Approach systematically, as it has been proven effective in improving reading performance and ensuring long-term retention of reading skills. School administrators are encouraged to provide training and professional development for teachers on Marungko. Schools should consider monitoring and evaluating learners' reading progress regularly, using post-tests and retention assessments, to identify students who need additional support and to maintain the gains achieved through instruction.

Future Researchers are encouraged to explore the long-term impact of the Marungko Approach across different grade levels, including higher grades where reading difficulties may persist. Further studies could investigate additional strategies to sustain gains among learners using non-phonics-based approaches, comparing their effectiveness with the Marungko Approach.

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