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**EFFECTIVENESS OF LETTER SOUND AND OBJECT IDENTIFICATION AND LEARNERS' READING LEVEL**

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DOI: <https://doi-org/101555/ijrpa.7654>**ABSTRACT**

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Letter-Sound and Object Identification intervention and its relationship with the reading levels of 76 Grade 7 non-reader learners at Bangcud National High School, Malaybalay City Division, during the School Year 2025–2026. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected using a validated researcher-developed instrument. Statistical analysis included frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviations, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Findings revealed that letter-sound and object identification were perceived as highly effective across all components, including letter-sound recognition, object identification, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading fluency. Despite this high level of effectiveness, most learners remained at the instructional level, indicating that while they possess foundational skills, they still require substantial guidance to achieve independent reading proficiency. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between the intervention's effectiveness and the learners' reading levels, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This finding indicates that the intervention worked best for learners who already possess higher reading skills, meaning its benefits increased as the learners' initial reading proficiency rose. The study concludes that bridging the phonological-semantic gap through multimodal phonemic anchors is a potent catalyst for literacy recovery among adolescent non-readers. Results suggest that systematic, object-based instruction is essential for transitioning learners from frustration to mastery. It is recommended that school heads formalize letter-sound and object identification as a mandatory remedial program and that teachers institutionalize multisensory mapping to replace abstract drills. By integrating

culturally familiar objects into phonetic lessons, educators can provide the necessary scaffolding to accelerate students toward autonomous reading proficiency.

**KEYWORDS:** *Intervention, Letter-Sound Recognition, Object Identification, Grade 7 Non-Readers, Literacy Recovery, Multisensory Mapping, Bangcud National High School.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Direct observation indicates a worrisome number of learners, even within the Grade 7 level, who continue to grapple with fundamental literacy skills, which labels them as non-readers. This basic deficiency hinders their ability to access and interpret the curriculum across all academic disciplines, effectively creating an insurmountable barrier to their educational success. Without the capacity to decode written text and develop comprehension, these learners experience deep demotivation, substantial learning gaps, and an elevated risk of leaving school prematurely, which demands the prompt and focused development of efficient, evidence-based strategies, such as the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification initiative. Grade 7 non-readers experience social shame about illiteracy differently from younger children. This situation often manifests as behavioral challenges or a complete lack of engagement during classroom activities. This Matthew Effect, in which those with literacy skills improve while those without them fall further behind, suggests that by the time these individuals enter secondary school, the gap between their actual ability and the difficulty of their reading materials has widened into a massive chasm.

In relation to these academic challenges, the Philippine government guarantees the basic right to a high-quality education as defined in Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution, which seeks to defend and encourage the right of every citizen to excellence in learning at all levels. Additionally, the Department of Education consistently publishes directives to address foundational literacy issues. Reinforcing this necessity, recent investigations by Bautista and Santos (2022) and Mendoza (2023) emphasize that systematic phonetic methods and visual associations significantly improve learners' reading levels, providing a solid legal and scholarly basis for this investigation. This study aligns with the Department of Education's MATATAG Agenda, which emphasizes the path to recovery by mitigating learning setbacks. By applying the effectiveness of letter-sound and object identification, this inquiry fulfills the requirement to develop functionally literate Filipinos who can perform beyond basic decoding and meet the cognitive expectations of the secondary curriculum in the modern era.

While current academic sources advocate phonetics and sensory-based reading methods, a notable void exists regarding the practical use and statistical impact of a specific, original strategy, such as the effectiveness of letter-sound and object identification—which uniquely pairs phonetic sounds with visual recognition—among the particular group of Grade 7 non-readers. The majority of earlier research has focused on primary grades or general reading difficulties. A clear need exists to statistically determine whether this specific pairing has sufficient power to significantly accelerate the literacy development of older, deeply struggling non-readers, a group that researchers frequently neglect in basic literacy studies. The effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification concepts suggests that for more mature non-readers, abstract sounds often feel disconnected from their daily lives. By linking letter sounds to tangible object identification, the approach utilizes multisensory connections that avoid the mental exhaustion typically linked with traditional repetitive learning. This dual-coding method might offer the necessary mental shortcut for quick improvement in older learners.

Beyond the theoretical gaps, conducting this study is vital because the results will yield evidence-based information on a functional, expandable remedy for a major educational emergency. An intervention, statistically valid and centered on letter-sound and object identification, can become a permanent part of schools and receive a recommendation from the Department of Education as a standard remedial framework, directly benefiting thousands of older non-readers nationwide. This inquiry is essential for equipping teachers with a reliable resource, thereby protecting the academic futures of Grade 7 learners whose educational paths are currently threatened by an ignored, basic reading shortfall, while also improving academic results and opportunities for lifelong development.

Ultimately, this investigation examined the hidden crisis in the classroom. Neglecting to provide support during this final stage of basic schooling risks producing a workforce that lacks functional literacy, thereby slowing the nation's economic growth. The effectiveness of the letter-sound and object identification project goes beyond a simple remedial instrument; it serves as a critical safeguard of every learner's right to achieve a self-reliant and respectable future.

### ***Theoretical Framework of the Study***

The study on the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification strategy on the reading level of Grade 7 non-readers was based primarily on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). This psychological framework posits that individuals acquire

knowledge through observing others, imitating specific models, and gradually developing self-assurance through repeated successful encounters. The intervention used in this research aligns perfectly with this perspective because Grade 7 non-readers gain mastery by observing teachers or more capable peers produce the correct phonemes and connect these auditory cues with physical items. As these learners witness their peers' success, their personal self-efficacy strengthens significantly, inspiring renewed belief in their capacity to master literacy skills. The successful outcome of this intervention relies on the continuous interplay among behavior (including skill acquisition), the school environment (organized materials), and cognitive factors such as memory and personal confidence.

In addition to the cognitive principles, this research incorporates the Sociocultural Theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky in 1978, which argues that intellectual growth occurs primarily through social engagement and cultural participation. A central concept of this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development, which represents the critical distance between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with strategic support from teachers or more advanced classmates. By focusing on this developmental space, the intervention provides the scaffolding needed to bridge the foundational literacy gap that older non-readers often face in traditional classroom settings. This social approach to learning ensures that the acquisition of phonetic skills is not an isolated task but a shared experience that encourages cognitive growth within the specific cultural context of the schools.

Furthermore, the learners' reading level within the Grade 7 non-reader population serves as the primary dependent variable in this academic inquiry. Any measurable advancement in learners' reading levels indicates that participants have successfully transitioned from their initial developmental phase to a more advanced stage through the systematic application of the research strategy. This growth provides empirical evidence that the instructional intervention helped them internalize essential literacy skills and make tangible progress within their individual Zone of Proximal Development. Such progress demonstrates that even deeply entrenched reading difficulties can be mitigated when the instructional approach targets the specific social and developmental needs of the individual.

Finally, the schematic diagram of the research illustrates the relationship between the independent variables, which include letter sound recognition, object identification, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading fluency, and the overall outcome. These factors appear on the left side of the model to represent the core components of the letter-sound and object-identification strategies' effectiveness. At the same time, the learners' reading levels of the Grade 7 participants are positioned on the right as the effect. This

inquiry intends to rigorously analyze how these specific instructional elements influence the literacy development of non-reader learners who have previously struggled in conventional academic environments. Through this structured analysis, the researcher seeks to validate a pathway for rapid remedial progress in secondary education.

### ***Significance of the Study***

This study was of substantial importance to a wide range of stakeholders within the academic environment. By examining the effectiveness of letter-sound and object identification, the research seeks to offer evidence-based solutions to the persistent challenge of illiteracy in secondary education. The results aim to influence educational practices and policies, ensuring that foundational skills receive the attention they need to support long-term academic success.

For learners, the primary participants and beneficiaries of this study were the non-readers themselves. By establishing the effectiveness of letter-sound and object identification strategies, this study could equip them with a focused, efficient method to refine their basic literacy skills. This improvement would subsequently boost their academic achievement across all subject areas and encourage a more optimistic and engaging classroom experience.

For teachers, the conclusions would offer deep insights and practical support, particularly for Grade 7 teachers who manage learners who cannot yet read. Should the data confirm the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification strategy, teachers could adopt or modify this pedagogical resource to address reading gaps. Such an approach yields more impactful teaching methodologies and superior outcomes in learners' reading levels.

To the school heads, this study would provide concrete evidence concerning the success of a particular remedial reading framework. Such data could guide school-level leadership decisions on curriculum design, literacy funding allocation, and teacher professional development to address reading challenges. Furthermore, these findings could help administrators create comprehensive literacy initiatives that encompass the entire campus.

To the DepEd Malaybalay City Division, the outcomes of this study would contribute to a more expansive comprehension of successful literacy interventions for non-reader learners at the division level. The study provides a legitimate basis for suggesting and launching similar evidence-based reading programs in other schools in the region. Ultimately, this effort supports the goal of raising learners' overall reading level across the division.

For curriculum developers, specific data on the components of the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification letter-sound strategies, such as phonemic awareness and

vocabulary development, could guide the creation and improvement of instructional materials. These findings enable the design of reading modules that address the unique needs of struggling learners. Such tailored resources ensure that the secondary curriculum remains accessible to those who previously lacked foundational skills.

For parents/guardians, visible advancement in learners' reading levels can lead to greater family involvement and advocacy for their children's education. Witnessing measurable growth in their children's academic capabilities often inspires parents to provide more robust support at home. This strengthened partnership between the home, and the school creates a more holistic environment for the learner's development.

For future researchers, this would serve as a fundamental academic resource for subsequent studies in remedial reading, particularly regarding adolescent non-readers. The data provided here may spark additional investigations into the enduring impacts of these strategies, the adaptation of these methods across age groups or environmental settings, or the comparative analysis of this intervention with other established reading models.

### ***Definition of Terms***

To ensure a shared comprehension between the researcher and the audience, the following concepts were defined operationally as they pertain to this investigation.

*Letter Sound Recognition.* Letter Sound Recognition describes participants' ability to accurately articulate the fundamental phoneme associated with a specific printed character or grapheme when presented on a digital monitor or a physical card. The researcher evaluates this variable by calculating the sum of accurate phonetic responses generated within a sixty-second interval during the oral diagnostic and summative evaluations.

*Object Identification.* Object Identification involves the participants' ability to accurately identify, indicate, or characterize a physical item that begins with the specific phonetic sound instructed as part of the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object identification strategy. It is quantified by the accuracy percentage achieved in a specialized matching evaluation administered to learners upon completion of each instructional module during the research period.

*Phonemic Awareness.* Phonemic awareness relates to participants' proficiency in handling individual phonemes within verbal language in the absence of written text. The study specifically quantifies this skill through results on assessments that require blending, separating, and removing basic sounds, which are graded using a formal phonological evaluation tool.

*Reading Fluency.* Reading Fluency refers to the ability of the participants to interpret continuous passages with both velocity and precision. The researcher measures this as the number of words read accurately within one minute, determined by deducting any verbal mistakes from the total word count during a structured oral assessment using materials suited to the learners' specific grade level.

*Reading Levels among Learners.* Reading Levels among Grade 7 Non-Reader Learners refers to the comprehensive literacy proficiency of Grade 7 learners who begin the study as non-readers. The researcher gauges the learners' reading level by analyzing shifts in their standardized literacy marks, which are derived from a composite score from a formal, norm-referenced evaluation conducted within the schools.

*Vocabulary Development.* Vocabulary Development involves the mastery and understanding of word meanings attained by participants, specifically focusing on the selected vocabulary words that teachers introduce and explain during the implementation of the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object identification strategy. This growth reflects the expansion of learners' linguistic bank as they progress through the remedial intervention.

## **The Methodology**

This study used a descriptive-correlational research design. It delved into the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification strategy and the reading levels of Grade 7 non-reader learners at Bangcud National High School, Malaybalay City Division, SY 2025-2026. Data on the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification strategy were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire and reading levels among Grade 7 non-reader learners were based on their Phil-IRI Results during the School Year 2025-2026.

## **Research Locale**

The researcher conducted this investigation at Bangcud National High School, located in Barangay Bangcud within the South Highway District of the City of Malaybalay, Bukidnon. This public secondary school belongs to District VII of the Malaybalay City Division in Region X, Northern Mindanao, Philippines. The school meets the educational needs of the adolescent population in its local community and in surrounding rural and developing areas. Barangay Bangcud is strategically positioned in the South Highway District of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, serving as an urbanizing gateway between the city proper and the neighboring City of Valencia. For accessibility, the locale is situated approximately 19 kilometers south of the Malaybalay city center and roughly 120 kilometers from the

Laguindingan International Airport, the primary aviation hub in Northern Mindanao, requiring a travel time of approximately two to three hours via the Sayre Highway.

The residents of Bangcud comprise a diverse population of approximately 5,771 individuals, characterized by a blend of indigenous ethnic groups and migrant settlers who contribute to a vibrant local culture. The community's economy is primarily anchored in agriculture, with the vast majority of households engaged in the production of staple crops such as sugarcane, maize, and rice, alongside a growing commercial sector driven by its location as a major highway crossroads. Governance in the locality is administered by the Sangguniang Barangay, headed by the Barangay Chairman and a council of elected officials who oversee the implementation of local policies, public safety, and social services. The presence of established academic institutions, specifically Bangcud Central School and Bangcud National High School, underscores the community's commitment to educational development, making it a fitting environment for research focused on learner outcomes and instructional interventions.

### ***Respondents of the Study***

The participants in this investigation were the identified Grade 7 non-reader learners and the teachers from Bangcud National High School in the Malaybalay City Division during the 2025-2026 academic year. These individuals served as the central respondents in the study on the effectiveness of letter-sound and object identification on learners' reading level, as they were the primary practitioners and vital sources of information throughout the research period. Their involvement ensured that the data gathered came directly from those most involved in the school's daily educational activities.

These teachers possess immediate, specialized knowledge of the specific literacy gaps of the targeted Grade 7 non-readers. They are responsible for administering the diagnostic and summative assessments that measure the primary research variable. By leveraging their professional expertise, the study successfully captured the nuances of the learners' reading challenges. This direct connection between the instructors and the participants enabled a more precise evaluation of the instructional intervention in the schools' actual classroom environments.

### ***Sampling Procedure***

This research used purposive sampling to identify and select participants. This specific technique was considered the most suitable approach because it enabled the researcher to

focus on specific groups that maintain a direct connection to the investigation's goals, ensuring that the collected information remains detailed and relevant to the unique school environment. By selecting participants based on specific requirements rather than random chance, the researcher ensured that the data accurately reflected the needs of the target population.

The group of participants comprised two complete Grade 7 sections from Bangcud National High School. Specifically, the inquiry included 37 learners from the Grade 7-Aquarius section and 39 learners from the Grade 7-Gemini section, yielding a comprehensive sample of 76 respondents. These specific groups were chosen based on their initial literacy categorization, determined from the preliminary reading evaluation. This targeted selection ensures that the effectiveness of letter-sound and object identification can be measured among individuals who most need a boost in their reading level.

### ***Research Instrument***

The researcher personally crafted the instrument for this study. The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I was about the effectiveness of the Letter Sound and Object Identification strategy in terms of letter-sound recognition, object identification, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading fluency.

Standardized or validated reading assessment tools were used to measure the five dimensions of reading effectiveness: letter-sound recognition, object identification, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading fluency. The intervention comprised specifically designed materials for letter-sound and object identification.

Part II was designed to gather information on the reading level of Grade 7 non-reader learners at Bangcud National High School, Malaybalay City Division, SY 2025-2026.

### ***Scoring Procedure***

The data were interpreted using the rating scales below. For the level of effectiveness in letter-sound and object identification, the mean was interpreted using a Five-Point Likert Scale shown below.

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Qualitative Description</b>	<b>Qualitative Statement</b>
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very Highly Effective	Effectiveness was observed in 9-10 out of 10 situations.
4	3.40-4.19	Agree (A)	Highly Effective	Effectiveness was observed in 6-7 out of 10 situations.

3	2.60-3.39	Neutral (N)	Moderately Effective	Effectiveness was observed in 4-5 out of 10 situations.
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree (D)	Less Effective	Effectiveness was observed in 2-3 out of 10 situations.
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Agree (SA)	Not Effective	Effectiveness was observed in 0-1 out of 10 situations.

The reading level of the learners was Based on Phil-IRI English rating scale shown below:

<b>Oral Reading Accuracy</b>	<b>Comprehension</b>	
Independent Level	98%-100%	90%-100%
Instructional Level	95%-97%	75%-89%
Frustration Level	90% or below	below 50%

### ***Data Gathering Procedure***

The researcher carried out this investigation in strict adherence to a structured sequence of administrative and academic steps. Initially, the researcher secured the formal endorsement and approval letter from the Dean of the Graduate School. This document was subsequently presented to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Malaybalay City Division to obtain the necessary authorization. Once the researcher received official approval, permission from the Public Schools District Supervisor was requested to ensure full coordination at the district level. Following this, the researcher coordinated with the school heads of the participating schools to obtain permission to conduct data collection activities on their respective campuses. After completing these administrative requirements, the researcher distributed the necessary instruments to the selected respondents.

In a cooperative effort with the academic staff, the researcher identified the Grade 7 non-reader learners by reviewing the existing school records from the Phil-IRI preliminary evaluations. All identified individuals participated in a diagnostic pre-test using the selected literacy assessment tools to determine their initial learners' reading level across the targeted domains. The effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification strategy was then put into practice over a defined timeframe, either during the standard schedule or as an additional remedial project. Trained personnel ensured the intervention was delivered consistently and precisely. Upon the conclusion of the program, the same assessment tools were used as a summative post-test to quantify improvements in learners' reading levels.

### ***Statistical Treatment of Data***

The following statistical tools were used in this study:

Descriptive statistics, means, and standard deviations, were used to determine the level of effectiveness of the letter sound and object identification Letter Sound and Object Identification strategy

Frequency counts and percentages were used to determine the reading level of Grade 7 non-reader learners.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the significant relationship between the effectiveness of the Letter-Sound and Object-Identification strategy and reading levels. The level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

### ***FINDINGS***

The following significant results emerged from the study:

The respondents Strongly Agreed that the letter sound and object identification strategy was very highly effective in terms of letter sound recognition, object identification, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, and reading fluency

The reading level of the Grade 7 non-reader learners at Bangcud National High School, Malaybalay City Division, SY 2025-2026, remained at the Instructional Level.

There was a significant relationship between the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object identification strategy and the reading level of Grade 7 non-reader learners in Bangcud National High School, Malaybalay City Division, SY 2025-2026.

### ***CONCLUSIONS***

Based on the evidence gathered throughout this investigation, the study reached the following conclusions:

The researcher concludes that the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object identification strategy remains very high across all literacy components, confirming that multisensory and item-based techniques remain vital for adolescent non-readers in schools. This finding underscores the importance of closing the gap between sounds and meanings through concrete phonetic anchors as the most powerful catalyst for advancing learners from basic sound recognition to independent reading proficiency. Because the intervention consistently achieved such high ratings, it demonstrates that teachers can successfully use these tangible tools to transform abstract linguistic concepts into an understandable reality for individuals who previously struggled with traditional methods.

Furthermore, the data reveals that the vast majority of Grade 7 non-readers currently function at the instructional level, indicating that, while these individuals possess foundational potential, they still lack the autonomy necessary to navigate the standard secondary curricula. This situation underscores the critical realization that these learners reside in a teachable middle ground, which creates a mandate for sustained, guided interventions to build skills such as letter-sound and object identification and to close the existing gap toward self-sufficient literacy. Since these individuals have not yet reached the frustration level, schools must prioritize structured support and scaffolding to ensure that this large group of learners successfully transitions into independent readers who can handle more complex academic tasks.

Ultimately, the strong correlation between implementing the strategy and improved learners' reading levels demonstrates that direct, targeted training in both phonetics and semantics is responsible for the observed growth in literacy. This evidence leads to the final realization that systematic and multimodal instruction does not merely serve as a supplementary activity but is an essential, evidence-based requirement for moving Grade 7 non-readers from a state of frustration to measurable reading mastery. By rejecting the null hypothesis, the study confirms that the effectiveness of letter-sound and object-identification strategies provides a reliable framework for teachers to use when they aim to elevate literacy standards and ensure the long-term academic success of the individuals under their care.

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

Based on the findings and conclusions gathered from this study, the researcher proposes the following recommendations for implementation and future study in schools:

The researcher recommends that teachers recognize and adopt the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object identification framework by integrating culturally familiar items as phonetic anchors within every literacy lesson. By prioritizing multisensory mapping over abstract drills, these individuals can successfully bridge the gap between sounds and meanings, ensuring that phonemes remain meaningfully connected to real-world concepts and accelerating the transition to independent reading. This approach allows teachers to transform the classroom into a dynamic space where learners can anchor their developing skills in tangible reality, thereby increasing learners' overall reading levels across different districts.

Furthermore, learners may actively engage in guided reading sessions and utilize the provided materials to practice connecting vocal sounds with physical items. By consistently participating in these structured activities, individuals can build the confidence and mental

stamina to move from needing help to independent reading. Such sustained effort ensures that learners eventually master the complex texts required in high school, enabling them to overcome prior literacy barriers and meet the academic standards set by their schools.

Ultimately, school heads may recognize and support the effectiveness of the letter-sound and object-identification strategy as a mandatory remedial program for all incoming seventh graders. By providing specialized training and the necessary funding for localized, multimodal reading materials, administrators can institutionalize an evidence-based framework that successfully transitions struggling individuals into proficient readers. This administrative support ensures that learners' reading levels improve consistently, guaranteeing long-term academic success across the entire secondary curriculum for everyone involved in the educational process.

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