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Instructional Strategies And Engagement Of Struggling Grade One Readers In The Division Of Batangas City

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Abstract

Reading is a foundational skill of learning; thus, instructional strategies are necessary to aid learners that are found to be struggling in this competency. One of the concerns of many teachers are to ensure that all learner is a reader. This study aimed to assess the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling grade one readers in the Division of Batangas City for the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to ascertain the utilization of instructional strategies on the five basic reading components while examined the extent of learner's engagement through their reading readiness, interest level, and prior knowledge. Additionally, the study determined whether significant correlation existed between the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling grade one readers.

The study employed descriptive quantitative method with 133 grade one teachers as respondents. Data were collected using a validated researcher-made survey questionnaire and analyze through frequency, percentage, and weighted mean. Pearson's r was applied to determine significant correlation between the usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers.

Findings revealed that varied instructional strategies in phonics and phonemic awareness are highly useful, while moderately useful in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The extent of engagement was found moderately engaged. The results indicated that there was a highly significant correlation between the usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement. Moreover, learner's lack of foundational skills, motivation, and parental involvement as the primary difficulties in teaching reading was strongly agreed. The findings suggest that useful instructional strategies positively contribute to the engagement of struggling readers in reading. The results served as the basis for proposing an intervention activity aimed to make Grade 1 struggling readers a fluent and competent readers and a lifelong independent reader.

Keywords: *instructional strategies, reading engagement, struggling readers.*

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Introduction

Reading is an essential skill in education that learners require to master for a better performance in all academic tasks. One of the major achievements of learners in early school years is the development of reading skills. Many of school activities done inside the classroom are related to reading. All learning areas are bound together for the development of reading skills. Reading is a foundational skill of learning. However, in many schools in elementary, learners are found to be struggling in this competency. Despite all the initiatives and efforts of the government to improve learner's reading abilities and to make every child a reader, many students still struggle to read. Addressing the concern on struggling readers is a timely movement to execute alternatives, programs, action plans and interventions.

Today, the development of reading skills among learners are a pre-requisite skill before the child goes to formal education. Children' journey toward independent reading starts long before they are given formal reading education in school and continues until they gained a strong foundation in reading. For most children, reading begins early as they explore various forms and prints with little literacy knowledge. They enter school with rich literacy experiences and already on their way of being a skilled reader. Some children, on the other hand, experience significant difficulty learning to read and struggle to perform at prescribe pace.

Oral language, phonemic awareness, phonology, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are the six areas that children need to be able to master in their quest to be skilled readers. They are not a distinct skill set and should be integrated into the day's reading chances, however teachers can emphasize certain elements at different times. The Department of Education (DepEd) consistently carries out its objective to create responsible, productive citizens with the skills and capacities necessary for lifelong learning to facilitate the implementation of the K–12 Basic Education Program. The goal of all schools in the nation is to assist students in improving their reading abilities so that they can become proficient readers (Dorado and Medina, 2022).

Many educational institutions and the government have struggled with the reading skills of many Filipino learners. Recent studies have revealed that many pupils require assistance with reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking skills, despite the Philippines' efforts to raise literacy rates. Addressing the concerns on struggling readers is a timely movement to execute alternatives, programs, action plans and interventions. Learners with poor reading abilities have a risk of academic regress and will continue to deteriorate the development of reading skills. If learners encounter difficulties in reading, then the teachers must also have faced difficulties in teaching. Therefore, ensuring that every learner is a reader challenges many teachers to teach learners the basic concepts of reading (Idulog, et. al., 2023).

In the latest findings of national assessments of student learning, the evaluations are still insufficient. The findings showed that many learners are still having difficulties meeting the requirements for early language development. A child showing difficulties to speak words at the expected age, having trouble forming sentences or following simple directions, and not using words, phrases, or gestures to communicate are the commonly signs observed that causes from

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hearing loss or oral impairments to cognitive conditions, brain injury or disorder, and lack of stimulation.

Each year, managing struggling readers remains a challenge in my Grade one teaching practice. Teaching learners who struggle to read also have difficulties to connect with the lesson making them uninterested to learn. Additionally, every struggling reader have different learning needs making it difficult to teach them. Therefore, teaching struggling readers becomes time-consuming as different strategies are needed to consider. In addition, having insufficient understanding and skills in teaching reading becomes a barrier in bridging the gap to help struggling readers. Moreover, struggling readers in a class are often left unattended and neglected due to various demands of every learner. This dilemma is a matter of concern that needs to be urgently addressed.

At home, the researcher has niece and nephew who's also a struggling reader at their age, during our tutorial session they are seemed to be disengage and unable to keep up in the lesson. Most of the time, the researcher noticed that they are trying to mouth the words without making sound, and when they asked to repeat the words, they copied the same tone and pronunciation without understanding the meaning of the word. For this reason, their attention becomes short and lost focus resulting to get easily distracted by noise around them. With varied available materials and many ways of teaching approach, still it is challenging for the researcher to teach children without deep understanding of how to properly engage them considering their reading skills, and to provide appropriate support that would be the best tool of bridging the gaps in their foundational skills.

This study aims to determine the usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling grade one readers in the Schools Division of Batangas City for School Year 2025-2026. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of usefulness of instructional strategies for struggling readers as assessed by the teacher in terms of:
    1.1. Phonics;
    1.2. Phonemic Awareness;
    1.3. Fluency;
    1.4. Vocabulary;
    1.5. Comprehension?
2. How may the extent of engagement of struggling readers as observed by the respondents be assessed in terms of:
    2.1. Oral Reading Readiness;
    2.2. Level of Interest;
    2.3. Background Knowledge?
3. Is there significant relationship between the assessment on the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and on the extent of engagement of struggling readers?
4. What are the difficulties met by the teachers in teaching struggling readers?
5. Based on the results of the study, what reading intervention activity may be proposed?

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Literature Review

Technology, poverty, and a lack of passion and drive all hinder education in the Philippines, particularly when it comes to reading instruction. Many Filipinos struggle to learn to read, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Some families lack the financial resources necessary to send their children to school, as a result, the child grows up unable to read or write (Adapon and Mangila, 2020).

In the context of the study by Lara (2021), after defining the phrases "reading problem" and "struggling reader," an explanation of what a reader with difficulty is given. After considering the potential reasons of reading difficulties, the ways in which learning difficulties appear are explained. A description of the several kinds of reading difficulties follows below. There are four typical reading issues: low reading comprehension, low reading fluency, low vocabulary, and a bad attitude toward reading.

Moreover, Dorado and Medina (2022) outlined how children need to be able to use a mixture of the six components—oral language, phonological awareness, phonology, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—to be proficient readers. Therefore, with the goal to provide relevant learning that links to other circumstances, a systematic approach to explicitly teaching reading is required. They are not an individual skill set and should be incorporated into the day's reading chances, even though teachers may emphasize different elements at different times. The Department of Education (DepEd) consistently carries out its objective to create responsible, productive citizens with the skills and capacities necessary for lifelong learning to facilitate the implementation of the K–12 Basic Education Program.

Zhu, et. al., (2023) clearly explained that reading engagement has been a major focus of literacy study for many years. It is generally accepted to be a complex that involves emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. One of the most important indicators of learning outcomes is learning engagement.

Instructional strategies are a set of pedagogical approach that aims to tailor teaching methods, educational materials, and learners' engagement that will accommodate the diverse needs, abilities, and students' learning preferences in a classroom. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all strategy, differentiated instructional strategy modifies the method, material, and results according to the preparedness, interests, and strengths of each individual learner. The goal of this approach is to optimize each student's learning capacity by offering the right amount of assistance and challenge (Blessing, 2024).

This study presented the theoretical framework in a diverse array that aims to explain the connection of the study to the research goal and to support all the presented literatures and studies. It is agreed that the reading process in a complex task as it is bound together with other learning developments.

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Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a **descriptive quantitative method** to determine the usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling Grade 1 readers in the Schools Division of Batangas City. This method is more efficient for the study, as it can be applied within shorter duration of time, and it is easy to make comparisons of findings.

Participants

This study used **random sampling** on the combined population of educators. The respondents of were 133 public elementary teachers, teaching grade one learners in the ten district of the Department of Education, School Division of Batangas City.

Research Instrument

A **researcher-made survey questionnaire** was designed and validated by research experts, school principals, and master teachers. The questionnaires served as the principal data collection tool in determining the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers. Complementary to the quantitative data, unstructured interview was also done to gather qualitative data.

The study adhered to rigorous ethical standards to protect the rights and well-being of all participants throughout the study. Furthermore, it strictly followed the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), ensuring that all personal and sensitive data were handled with transparency, security, and legal integrity.

Data Collection Procedure

The process of collecting data in this study was conducted through online platform. The researcher provided a google form link to be pass among the 200 participants with the aim of at least gathering 133 respondents as computed sample size. The data gathered from this research instrument was tailed and computed for interpretation according to the frequency of items chosen by the respondents.

Data Analysis

Frequency, percentage, and weighted mean were used to interpret the data gathered from a survey and interview. **Pearson's r** was conducted to measure and determine the significant relationship between the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers.

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Results

1: Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies

The level of usefulness of instructional strategies as assessed by the teachers in terms of phonics is highly useful with an overall mean of 3.53; as to phonemic awareness is highly useful with an overall mean of 3.58; as to fluency, it is moderately useful with an overall mean of 3.10; as to vocabulary, is moderately useful with an overall mean of 3.00; and as to comprehension, it is moderately useful with an overall mean of 3.07.

Table 2
Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies in terms of Phonics

	1.1 Phonics The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	blend or rhyme words	3.35	Moderately Useful
b.	say one-syllable words	3.73	Highly Useful
c.	pronounce words with digraphs	3.27	Moderately Useful
d.	syllabicate multi-syllable words	3.55	Highly Useful
e.	read words with short/long vowel sound	3.72	Highly Useful
	Composite Mean	**3.53**	**Highly Useful**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Useful; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Useful; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Useful; 1.00-1.49 Least Useful*

Table 2 presents a composite mean value of 3.53, verbally interpreted “Highly Useful”. This means that instructional strategies for struggling readers as to phonics are highly useful. These learners “say one-syllable word” was assessed with the highest weighted mean of 3.73; “read words with short or long vowel sound” was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.72; “syllabicate multi-syllable words” was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.55. However, these strategies are moderately useful on “blend or rhyme words” which was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.35; and “pronounce words with digraphs” which was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.27.

This result can be supported by the study of Guzman and Pinca-Atutubo (2023), the need to identify the underlying reason of reading difficulties to fully analyze the problem is necessary. Teachers need to go over how their learners’ reading skills have developed all the way back to the initial reading stage.

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Table 3
Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies in terms of Phonemic Awareness

	1.2 Phonemic Awareness The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	blend individual sounds	3.28	Moderately Useful
b.	break word into syllable	3.51	Highly Useful
c.	make new word from a word	3.22	Moderately Useful
d.	isolate a single sound within a word	3.33	Moderately Useful
e.	identify words begins with the same sound	3.58	Highly Useful
	Composite Mean	**3.58**	**Highly Useful**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Useful; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Useful; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Useful; 1.00-1.49 Least Useful*

This obtained a composite mean value of 3.38, verbally interpreted "Highly Useful". It means that instructional strategies are highly useful among struggling readers, learners "identify words begins with the same sound" was assessed with the highest weighted mean of 3.58; "breaks word into syllables" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.51.

However, these strategies are moderately useful according to learners for they "isolate a single sound within a word" which was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.33; "blend individual sounds" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.28; and "make new word from a word" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.22.

As revealed in the results, there is a statement in the study of Dorado and Medina (2020), that the child's ability to concentrate on a language's sounds is known as phonological awareness. This compasses syllable recognition, sound, rhyme, and rhythm. When children beat the sound of their name or things around them, for instance, awareness frequently starts with the rhythm.

Table 4
Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies in terms of Fluency

	1.3 Fluency The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	read phrase clearly	3.13	Moderately Useful
b.	read with expressions	3.00	Moderately Useful
c.	increase speed and accuracy	3.14	Moderately Useful
d.	speak with clear pause or pace	3.06	Moderately Useful
e.	place vocal emphasis on words	3.19	Moderately Useful
	Composite Mean	**3.10**	**Moderately Useful**

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Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Useful; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Useful; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Useful; 1.00-1.49 Least Useful*

Results showed that there is a composite mean value of 3.10, verbally interpreted "Moderately Useful". This means that instructional strategies are moderately useful for learners "placing vocal emphasis on words" was assessed with the highest weighted mean of 3.19; "increasing speed and accuracy" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.14; "reading phrase clearly" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.13; "reading words with clear pause or pacing" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.06; and "reading with expressions" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.00.

As revealed in the results, instructional strategy can contribute to address readers as they encounter many unfamiliar or technical terms in the text to read or communicate effectively. For a text to be considered fluent, it must match the readers level of autonomous reading. For this reason, simple text at a self-directed level is necessary for beginning and struggling readers to increase their speed and accuracy (Dorado and Medina 2022).

Table 5
Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies terms of Vocabulary

	1.4 Vocabulary The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	write simple sentence	2.86	Moderately Useful
b.	used words in a sentence	3.09	Moderately Useful
c.	interpret meaning of words	3.08	Moderately Useful
d.	recognize details on the story	3.17	Moderately Useful
e.	explain the meaning of a word	2.80	Moderately Useful
	Composite Mean	**3.00**	**Moderately Useful**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Useful; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Useful; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Useful; 1.00-1.49 Least Useful*

Table 5 showed the strategies were verbally interpreted "Moderately Useful" as revealed on a composite mean value of 3.00. This means that instructional strategies are moderately useful for learners who can "recognized details on the story" which was assessed with the highest weighted mean of 3.17; "used words in a sentence" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.09; "interpret meaning of words" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.08; "wrote simple sentence" was assessed with the weighted mean of 2.86; and "explained the meaning of a word" was assessed with the weighted mean of 2.80.

As specified by Lai (2022), vocabulary is a significant in recognizing details from the text read, it plays an important role in reading as its limitation may affect comprehension. Effective instructional strategies can enhance learners' vocabulary through explicit instructions, which involves word games, graphic organizers, and contextual practice. This is manifested in

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how the teachers answered the specific items on the level of usefulness of instructional strategies as to fluency, which resulted in moderately useful.

Table 6
Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies in terms of Comprehension

	1.5 Comprehension The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	retell a simple story	3.06	Moderately Useful
b.	tell the outcome of the story	3.14	Moderately Useful
c.	make predictions about the story	3.14	Moderately Useful
d.	use personal perspective to relate	2.96	Moderately Useful
e.	sequence the story orally or visually	3.07	Moderately Useful
	Composite Mean	**3.07**	**Moderately Useful**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Useful; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Useful; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Useful; 1.00-1.49 Least Useful*

Results showed that there is a composite mean value of 3.07, verbally interpreted "Moderately Useful". This means that instructional strategies are moderately useful as the learners "make predictions about the story" and "tell the outcome of the story" which was assessed with the same highest weighted mean of 3.14; "sequence the story orally or visually" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.07; "retell a simple story" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.06; and "use personal perspective to relate" was assessed with the weighted mean of 2.96.

The level of usefulness as to comprehension is moderately useful, it is manifested in the study of Butterfuss, Kim, and Kendell (2020), that building an integrated mental image of the texts' content is necessary for reading comprehension. The reader, the text and the action are the three interconnected components of reading, and they are all placed within a larger sociocultural framework.

2: Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers

Teachers indicated the extent of engagement are **Moderately Engaged** as observed and assessed in terms of:

- Oral Reading Readiness: composite mean of 3.25
- Level of Interest: composite mean of 3.31
- Background Knowledge: composite mean of 3.14

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Table 7
Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers in terms of Oral Reading Readiness

	2.1 Reading Readiness The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	sing nursery rhymes	3.48	Moderately Engaged
b.	read words written around	3.13	Moderately Engaged
c.	recite the alphabet names	3.37	Moderately Engaged
d.	participate in the reading activities	3.27	Moderately Engaged
e.	follow instructions on word or symbol	2.98	Moderately Engaged
	Composite Mean	**3.25**	**Moderately Engaged**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Engaged; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Engaged; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Engaged; 1.00-1.49 Least Engaged*

The result showed a composite mean of 3.25, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Moderately Engaged." This means that there is an average extent of engagement of struggling readers with respect to oral reading readiness.

As presented on Table 7, the learners are moderately engaged in "singing nursery rhymes" which was assessed with the highest weighted mean of 3.48; "reciting the alphabet names" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.37; "participating in the reading activities" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.27; "reading words written around" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.13; and "following simple instructions from written word or symbol" was assessed with the weighted mean of 2.98. One of the most essential goals of the early school years is learning to read, which is the process of comprehending written speech. The result on Table 7 wherein "sing nursery rhymes" was the highest weighted mean among the five items. This means that learners are moderately engage in activities accompanied with music.

As stressed out by Alsaadat (2020), reading readiness is considered as the developmental stage that varies among individuals, and readiness can be assessed by observing a child's level of print awareness, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, listening comprehension, and motivation to read.

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]Table 8
Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers in terms of Level of Interest

	2.2 Level of Interest The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	reads with a partner	3.31	Moderately Engaged
b.	joins reading session	3.28	Moderately Engaged
c.	listen when the teacher reads	3.37	Moderately Engaged
d.	visit school library to read books	3.02	Moderately Engaged
e.	pick up book from reading corner to read	3.54	Highly Engaged
	Composite Mean	**3.31**	**Moderately Engaged**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Engaged; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Engaged; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Engaged; 1.00-1.49 Least Engaged*

The result showed a composite mean of 3.31, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Moderately Engaged." This means that there is an average extent of engagement of struggling readers of the Grade 1 learners with respect to level of interest.

Indicator such as the learners "picking up book from the reading corner to read" is interpreted "Highly Engaged" which was assessed with the highest weighted mean value of 3.54. But they are moderately engaged on "listening when the teacher reads" which was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.37; "reading with a partner" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.31; "visiting school library to read books" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.02; and "joining the reading session" was assessed with the weighted mean of 3.28.

The extent of engagement of struggling readers in terms of their level of interest is often moderately engaged, the indicator stated on Table 8 "listen when the teacher reads" reflects learners' interest to read by listening to a story that teachers read. While "reads with a partner and joins reading session" proves that learners have a mixture of curiosity and hesitation toward reading activities. On the other hand, the indicator "pick up book from the reading corner to read" was assessed with the highest weighted mean of 3.53 (Highly Engaged). This means that some struggling readers show a genuine desire to improve their reading abilities, however their interest may waver when they encounter unfamiliar words, complex passages or texts that do not match their personal interest or reading level.

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Table 9
Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers in terms of Background Knowledge

	2.3 Background Knowledge The learners can…	**Weighted Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
a.	read basic sight words	3.39	Moderately Engaged
b.	identify the details of the story	2.91	Moderately Engaged
c.	match words with related pictures	2.90	Moderately Engaged
d.	relate words to their experiences	3.13	Moderately Engaged
e.	understand words and their meaning	3.33	Moderately Engaged
	Composite Mean	**3.14**	**Moderately Engaged**

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Highly Engaged; 2.50-3.49 Moderately Engaged; 1.50-2.49 Slightly Engaged; 1.00-1.49 Least Engaged*

The result showed a composite mean of 3.14, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Moderately Engaged." This means that there is an average extent of engagement of struggling readers of the Grade 1 learners with respect to background knowledge.

When it comes to prior knowledge, learners are found to be "Moderately Engaged" with a composite mean value of 3.14. This indicates that the learners are moderately engaging to "read basic sight words" which was assessed with the highest weighted mean value of 3.39; "understand words and their meaning" was assessed with the weighted mean value of 3.33; "relate words to their experiences" was assessed with the weighted mean value of 3.13; "recognize the details of the story" was assessed with the weighted mean value of 2.91; and "match words with related pictures" was assessed with the weighted mean value of 2.90.

Learner's prior knowledge contributes to presentation of visual reading materials or reading text with connection to their experiences. Learners get motivated to actively engage in reading activities as they were able to connect familiar concepts but met difficulties when texts required prior experience they lacked. Teachers play a vital role in sustaining learners' engagement in reading through varied meaningful strategies and activities which involves practices that focuses on foundational skills in reading (Hinckley, 2024).

3: Relationship Between the Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies and on the Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers

Pearson's r revealed a **highly significant positive correlation** between the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers at 0.01 level of confidence as to reading readiness, level of interest and background knowledge.

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Table 10
Relationship between the Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies and the Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers in terms of Oral Reading Readiness

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Conclusion
Phonics	0.707*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Phonemic Awareness	0.707*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Fluency	0.707*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Vocabulary	0.753*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Comprehension	0.366*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation

Legend: **Significant at .05 level (p<.05)*

Table 10 reveals that there is a correlation coefficient of 0.713 with a p-value of 0.000 (.000<.05). Since the p-value of 0.000 is lesser than the alpha at .05 level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a highly significant positive correlation between the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers as to oral or reading readiness.

On reading readiness, oral reading skills such as phonics and phonemic awareness are exercised through hearing, identifying, and manipulating individual sounds in words. Learner's oral reading readiness strengthens their ability to pronounce words correctly. Oral reading reflects a learners fluency level. While vocabulary affects how learners will read and understand the words aloud. Research shows that fluent oral reading strongly predicts reading comprehension.

Table 11
Relationship between the Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies and the Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers in terms of Level of Interest

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Conclusion
Phonics	0.689*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Phonemic Awareness	0.689*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Fluency	0.689*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Vocabulary	0.568*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Comprehension	0.526*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation

Legend: **Significant at .05 level (p<.05)*

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In terms of the correlation, Table 11 shows that there is a correlation coefficient of 0.719 with a p-value of 0.000 (.000<.05), warranting the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is a highly significant positive correlation between the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers as to level of interest. As outlined by Gulay and Pontillas (2024), stated that reading motivation and engagement are crucial factors for developing good literacy skills. This means instructional strategies in reading should be incorporated of varied access to a range of engaging reading materials that encourage struggling readers to actively engage in regular reading activities, participate in reading competitions, and join reading sessions.

Table 12
Relationship between the Level of Usefulness of Instructional Strategies and the Extent of Engagement of Struggling Readers in terms of Background Knowledge

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Conclusion
Phonics	0.518*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Phonemic Awareness	0.518*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Fluency	0.518*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Vocabulary	0.532*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation
Comprehension	0.525*	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant, Positive Correlation

Legend: **Significant at .05 level (p<.05)*

Table 12 indicates that there is a correlation coefficient of 0.748 with a p-value of 0.000 (.000<.05). Since the p-value of 0.000 is lesser than the alpha at .05 level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a highly significant positive correlation between the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and the extent of engagement of struggling readers as to background knowledge.

Background knowledge is deeply connected to all reading components; enhances sound sensitivity (phonemic awareness); supports words recognition and decoding (phonics); enables faster and smoother reading (fluency); expands word meaning (vocabulary); improves interpretation and reasoning (comprehension). Therefore, background knowledge acts as the foundation on which all reading skills are built.

4: Difficulties Met by the Teachers in Teaching Reading

Table 13 presents the result depicts the challenges encountered by teachers in teaching struggling readers during reading sessions, as perceived by respondents.

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Table 13
Difficulties Met by the Teachers in Teaching Reading as to Reading Readiness, Level of Interest and Background Knowledge

	The teacher is challenge on…	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretations
1.	insufficient reading materials	3.0121	Agree
2.	utilization of technology in reading	3.1288	Agree
3.	learner's lack of foundational skills	3.5500	Strongly Agree
4.	integration of reading in subject areas	3.0379	Agree
5.	language barriers on reading materials	3.0348	Agree
6.	low class participation	3.3106	Agree
7.	learner's lack of motivation	3.5140	Strongly Agree
8.	time to teach after class hours	3.2348	Agree
9.	learner's poor focus or concentration	3.2033	Agree
10.	boredom of learners in reading sessions	3.2208	Agree
11.	diverse cultural background	2. 0055	Agree
12.	lack of parental involvement	3.5009	Strongly Agree
13.	inadequate support from school	2.6364	Agree
14.	learner's physical disabilities	2.9015	Agree
15.	deficiency of child's reading development	3.1667	Agree

Legend: *3.50-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49 Agree; 1.50-2.49 Disagree; 1.00-1.49 strongly Disagree*

As observed, the indicators listed in the table obtained the average votes agreed by the respondents making these indicators the reflection on the challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching reading.

The difficulties met by the teachers in teaching struggling readers as to reading readiness is "lack of foundational skills" strongly agreed by majority with highest weighted mean of 3.55; as to level of interest is "learner's lack of motivation" strongly agreed with second highest

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weighted mean of 3.51; and as to background knowledge is "lack of parental involvement" strongly agreed by majority with the highest weighted mean of 3.50.

These three leading primary problems encountered by majority with a highest mean value obtained of above 3.50 indicates that teachers are challenged by these indicators in teaching reading with struggling Grade 1 readers. It is strongly agreed that foundational skills encompass the knowledge and abilities necessary to support successful reading. Moreover, it is also strongly agreed that the importance of parental involvement predicts early reading acquisition, and lack of learner's engagement limits literacy development.

The three components on the extent of engagement of struggling readers mainly reading readiness, level of interest and background knowledge are interconnected factors that decide how well a learners can learn reading. Reading success may be hampered by a weakness in one area that has a detrimental effect on the others.

5: Proposed Reading Intervention Activity

The reading intervention activity focuses on the five reading components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension and designed to be engaging for the struggling readers. It was presented to the school where the researcher is affiliated. It was validated by the master teachers, and approved by the school principal, and the head teacher. This activity was drawn-out from the results of the study conducted to provide reading intervention for struggling readers.

Title: Project R.E.A.D (Reading Engagement and Activity Development for Grade 1)
Objectives:
1. Build decoding skills, enabling learners to identify, blend, segment, and apply specific letter sounds or pattern to read and write simple words accurately.
2. Develop oral skills with individual speech sound, to identify, blend, segment, isolate, or manipulate sound in spoken word.
3. Engage students in reading with accuracy with a target speed, appropriate expression, and phrasing.
4. Enabling learners to understand, use, and apply new words effectively across various contexts.
5. Actively engage learners to understand, analyze, and connect with a text.
Methods:
The following strategies will be used and carried out during the project's implementation.
1. Daily reading activities such as:
a. Monday – Sounds Recognition Day. A day to recognize letter and its sound, singing the sound, play with letters, match letters.
b. Tuesday – A Day Play with Words. A day to play with words, pronounce words correctly, match words, or spy the first letter sound or blend, syllable clap, sing nursery rhymes, sound walk, mystery bag of letters.
c. Wednesday – Word-a-Day-Challenge. A day to explore new word, learn new words meaning, define or relate words to learners' surroundings.

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d. Thursday –Race Reading Day. A day to roll dice with words, phrase or sentence and read them accurately with target speed, scoop phrases and read, rapid drill practice using flashcard of sight words or vocabulary words.
e. Friday – Comprehend with Me. A day to incorporate storytelling with lesson, reading story, sequencing, role play, I Wonder…Question Jar' Story Detectives, and Five-Finger Retell.
2. Use of digital tools like online reading logs and digital reading resources.
3. Provide instructional reading materials for hands-on-practices.
4. Conduct of collaborative feedback every week to assess learners' improvement.
5. Continuous monitoring of reading progress through regular assessments and interactive tasks.

The "Sound Recognition Day on Monday", has 48 out of 133 teachers used strategies for phonics development, they favored it having a percentage of 35%; 29 has been favored of using "A day Play with Words on Tuesday" having a percentage of 22%; 22 favored the "Word-a-Day Challenge on Wednesday" as useful reading activity having a percentage of 17%; 18 favored "Race Reading day on Thursday" with percentage of 14%; and lastly, there are 16 participants who favored " Comprehend with Me on Friday" with percentage of 12%. All in all, the frequency sums up to 133 participants having overall percentage of 100%.

To be more specific, the result shows the distribution of respondents regarding the proposed reading intervention activity to engage struggling readers in reading. Evidently, most (35.16%) of the teachers are supportive of the proposed enhanced reading activity on phonemic awareness activity. With the evident issue of the problems relating to the difficulties in reading, the teachers approve of certain proposed enhanced reading activities to improve reading abilities and engage learners. The most favored one is the phonemic awareness activity which is game based. This activity will help learners to enhance their decoding skills to recognize, hear, move, or alter phonetic elements in spoken speech.

On the other hand, 21.96% of the teachers are supportive of the proposed enhanced reading activity on playing with words and making reading fun using decoding games, word search bingo, syllable clap, sing nursery rhymes, sound walk, mystery bag with words. Additionally, 16.66% support the vocabulary development activity with game-based strategies such as challenges on learning new words and word meanings. While 13.63% showed support on fluency improvement through "Race Reading Day" with activities focus on reading speed, accuracy and understanding. Finally, 12.12% of the teachers are supportive of the proposed enhanced reading activity on comprehension using digital storytelling, role play, sequencing, five-finger retell and story detective strategies to improve students' reading understanding.

Discussion

The findings revealed that instructional strategies are useful and can contribute to address reading difficulties among struggling readers. The level of usefulness of instructional strategy in terms of phonics, and phonemic awareness was found highly useful, while fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension were found moderately useful. The extent of engagement of struggling readers as assessed by the respondents was found moderate. This is supported with recent studies that by providing useful instructional strategies with varied reading materials that aligns with the

reading capability, interest, and prior knowledge of struggling readers, the development on the components of reading skills is possible (Gulay & Pontillas, 2024; Hinckley, 2024).

There is a highly significant relationship between the assessment on the level of usefulness of instructional strategies and on the extent of engagement of struggling readers. The five components of reading are interconnected and related, improvement in one skill significantly affects overall reading development. The primary difficulties met by the teachers in teaching struggling readers are learner's lack of foundational skills, lack of motivation, and lack of parental involvement. The results emphasized the perspective of a teachers on the difficulties met in teaching reading by providing data to better understand how to effectively use instructional strategies and how to positively engage struggling readers while dealing with obstacles in teaching reading.

The findings support the study of Main (2023) on the theories of reading, the constructivist, interactive, transactional, and sociocultural theory reinforce the idea that reading success is a combination of technical decoding skills and a supportive, engaging environment. The proposed intervention activity aims to offer a systematic daily routine along with varied instructional strategies for reading development, which are crucial in long-run literacy development.

The delimitation of the study includes a sample population size of 133 teachers in the Division of Batangas City at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Only Grade 1 teachers in the Division of Batangas City are asked to participate and comply. Substitute teachers who are teaching the same grade level and teachers in different grade levels are not included in this study.

Conclusion

The study concluded that instructional strategies in reading incorporated with varied range of engaging activities in the five reading components encourages struggling readers to actively engage in regular reading activities, participate in reading competitions, and join reading sessions. By providing useful instructional strategies with varied reading materials that aligns with the readiness, interest, and prior experiences of struggling readers, the development of reading skills is possible.

This study showcased the usefulness of instructional strategies in the five components of reading and explored the extent of engagement of struggling readers as assessed in terms of readiness, interest, and background knowledge. It showed the primary difficulties encountered by the teachers in teaching reading relies on the foundational skills, motivation, and parental involvement.

It emphasized the role of educational leaders, teachers, and parents to collaborate in overcoming the challenges related to reading difficulties of grade one readers in the Division of Batangas City.

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This study suggests in-depth evaluation for approval to combined into an existing reading program. Educational leaders, teachers, and parents may help hand in hand in overcoming the encountered challenges in relation to reading. The future researchers may use the result as a springboard in conducting a similar study to ensure a comprehensive data.

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