Improving Filipino GST Results through Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity Based on Phil-IRI Pre-Assessment

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ABSTRACT

This action research aimed to determine the effectiveness of the Peer Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity in improving the Filipino Graded Screening Test (GST) performance of Grade 7 learners at Kaysuyo National High School, based on the results of the Phil-IRI pre-assessment. The study employed a mixed-methods action research design, involving selected Grade 7 learners identified as struggling readers in Filipino. Quantitative data were gathered through pre-test and post-test GST scores, while qualitative data were obtained through learner interviews to capture their experiences and perceptions. Data analysis included the use of descriptive statistics, particularly the mean, and inferential statistics through a t-test for dependent samples to determine significant differences between test results, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses. Findings revealed that the learners' average pre-test performance was categorized under the Frustration Reader level; however, after the implementation of the Buddy Buddy Activity, their average post-test performance improved significantly to the Independent Reader level. Statistical results confirmed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that the intervention had a positive and meaningful impact on learners' reading performance. Qualitative interviews enriched these findings, revealing core themes such as learner motivation, peer support, and enhanced confidence. A study limitation section is acknowledged, noting the small sample, short duration, and absence of a control group. The study concludes that the Peer Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity is an effective strategy and recommends institutionalizing peer-assisted approaches while conducting further long-term research.

Keywords: Peer-Assisted Learning, Buddy-Buddy Activity, Filipino GST, Phil IRI, Reading Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success across subject areas. In the Philippine education system, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) serves as a diagnostic tool to assess learners' reading levels and provide a basis for intervention programs. At Kaysuyo National High School, recent Phil-IRI Graded Screening Test (GST) results revealed that a greater number of learners failed in Filipino compared to English this year. This disparity highlights an urgent concern, as mastery of Filipino reading skills is essential not only for language development but also for comprehension in other learning areas where Filipino is the medium of instruction.

Anchored on the Department of Education's Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), this study responds to the call for remediation and targeted intervention programs that address learners' academic needs in the wake of learning gaps heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The BE-LCP emphasizes flexible, inclusive, and learner-centered approaches, which align with the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity strategy. Moreover, the Revised K to 12 Curriculum underscores the importance of developing learners' language proficiency, critical thinking, and collaboration skills, which are directly supported by peer-assisted learning models.

The Buddy-Buddy strategy, a form of peer-assisted learning, pairs struggling readers with more proficient

classmates, fostering collaboration, social interaction, and active engagement with texts. This strategy not only supports struggling readers but also strengthens the skills of peer mentors. As such, it provides a low-cost, contextualized, and sustainable intervention aligned with DepEd's framework of delivering quality, accessible, and inclusive education.

Recent literature affirms the effectiveness of peer-assisted and contextualized interventions in literacy development. Serrano and Cruz (2021) found that structured peer tutoring significantly improved reading comprehension among Filipino learners at the frustration level, as peers provided immediate feedback and scaffolding. Building upon these findings, Garcia and Santos (2023) demonstrated that structured peer-assisted learning strategies consistently yield significant gains in both decoding skills and reading speed among secondary students. Furthermore, Del Rosario (2024) underscored that pairing struggling readers with proficient peers fosters mutual engagement, significantly enhancing vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension compared to traditional teacher-led remediation. Similarly, Garcia (2022) emphasized that the use of contextualized Filipino reading materials enhanced learner engagement, which in turn led to better comprehension and retention compared to generic texts. In the same vein, Villanueva (2023) demonstrated that peer collaboration strategies in reading resulted in measurable gains in fluency and comprehension, while also boosting learners' confidence and motivation. Internationally, Fuchs and Fuchs (2023) highlighted that Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) serve as high-impact, scalable tools for closing foundational literacy gaps in post-pandemic learning environments. Nguyen (2021) concluded that peer-assisted learning enhances not only reading outcomes but also collaboration and self-regulation skills among learners. Complementing these findings, UNESCO (2022) highlighted that post-pandemic recovery programs must prioritize foundational skills in reading, recommending peer-based and remediation programs as scalable and effective interventions. Collectively, these studies reinforce the value of adopting the Buddy-Buddy Activity as a classroom-based intervention to improve Filipino GST performance.

This action research is significant to various stakeholders in the school community. For the learners, the study offers direct benefits by enhancing their reading skills and boosting their confidence in Filipino through supportive peer interactions. For the teachers, it provides an evidence-based intervention strategy that can be used to address diverse reading levels within the classroom. The school administrators may also find value in the results, as these can serve as a basis for strengthening school reading programs and formulating literacy-focused policies. Likewise, parents and guardians can gain insights into the importance of peer support, which they can apply to reinforce literacy development at home. Finally, for future researchers, this study may serve as a foundation for further investigations into peer-assisted strategies in language and literacy, thereby contributing to the growing body of literature in the field.

In addition, this study focuses on the implementation of the Peer Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity as an intervention to improve the Filipino GST results of selected learners at Kaysuyo National High School, based on their performance in the Phil-IRI pre-assessment. The respondents are limited to Grade 7 learners identified as struggling readers in Filipino. The intervention was conducted during October 15 to November 15, 2025, specifically during lunch breaks for 30 minutes daily (Monday to Friday). Its effectiveness was measured through a pre-test and post-test comparison of learners' performance. The scope of the study is confined to the subject area of Filipino and does not extend to other learning areas.

Action Research Questions

This study, entitled "An Action Research on Improving Filipino GST Results through Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity Based on Phil-IRI Pre Assessment", seeks to determine the effectiveness of the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) strategy in enhancing learners' performance in Filipino. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Filipino GST performance of the respondents before the implementation of the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity as measured by a pre-test?

2. What is the Filipino GST performance of the respondents after the implementation of the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity as measured by a post-test?

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3. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the respondents after the implementation of the Buddy-Buddy strategy?

4. What are the observed challenges and benefits in using the Peer Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity in improving Filipino GST performance?

Hypothesis

This study is guided by this hypothesis:

1. There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the respondents in Filipino GST after the implementation of the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) strategy.

Proposed Innovation, Intervention and Strategy

This study introduces the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity as an innovative and low-cost intervention designed to improve the Filipino GST performance of Grade 7 learners at Kaysuyo National High School who were identified as struggling readers through the Phil-IRI pre-assessment. The intervention is anchored on the principles of collaborative learning, scaffolding, and contextualized literacy support, aligning with DepEd's BE LCP and the Revised K to 12 Curriculum's emphasis on learner-centered and inclusive approaches.

The innovation lies in the structured Buddy-Buddy pairing system, where each struggling reader (tutee) is paired with a more proficient peer (tutor). Unlike traditional remediation, this approach empowers learners to learn in a supportive, non-threatening environment, allowing peer tutors to provide immediate feedback, encouragement, and modeling of correct reading strategies. This strengthens not only the reading skills of the struggling learners but also the leadership, communication, and empathy of the peer mentors.

The intervention was conducted during October 15 – November 15, 2025, specifically scheduled during 30-minute lunch break sessions (Monday to Friday) to ensure that regular class hours are not disrupted. Each session involved structured activities such as guided oral reading, vocabulary building, comprehension checks, and reflective sharing. Contextualized Filipino texts, including short stories, articles, and passages relevant to the learners' environment, were used to make reading engaging and meaningful.

The strategy is organized into three key phases to ensure systematic implementation. The Preparation Phase involves identifying struggling readers and their peer tutors based on the results of the Phil-IRI, orienting the participants on their roles, and preparing contextualized reading materials that were used throughout the sessions. This is followed by the Implementation Phase, where daily Buddy-Buddy sessions are conducted focusing on paired reading, peer questioning, and feedback activities. To track progress, monitoring tools such as reading logs and session checklists were utilized. Finally, the Evaluation Phase centers on administering pre-tests and post-tests in Filipino GST, complemented by gathering qualitative feedback from both learners and teachers to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, as well as the challenges and benefits observed during its execution.

Methods

This action research aims to improve the reading proficiency of selected Grade 7 struggling readers in Filipino at Kaysuyo National High School through a peer-assisted strategy called the Buddy-Buddy Activity. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study outlines the participants, data collection tools, and analysis techniques to assess the effectiveness of peer tutoring in addressing reading challenges.

A. Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

The participants of this study were selected Grade 7 learners of Kaysuyo National High School who were identified as struggling readers in Filipino through the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) pre-assessment. These learners represent the focus group for the intervention, as their performance in the Filipino Graded Screening Test (GST) revealed greater reading challenges compared to English. In addition, a group of

peer tutors, composed of proficient readers in the same grade level were tapped to serve as partners in the Buddy-Buddy Activity.

B. Data Gathering Methods

Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A pre-test in Filipino GST was administered prior to the intervention to establish baseline performance, while a post-test was given after the completion of the Buddy-Buddy sessions to measure progress. To supplement test results, interviews with learners were conducted to gather qualitative feedback on the challenges and benefits experienced during the implementation of the strategy.

C. Data Analysis

Plan Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test, were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) to describe learners' performance before and after the intervention. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the results, an inferential statistical test such as the t-test for dependent samples was applied. Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through thematic coding. The "How" of your study. This should be detailed enough for someone else to replicate your work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered to determine the effectiveness of the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity in improving the Filipino Graded Screening Test (GST) performance of selected Grade 7 learners at Kaysuyo National High School.

Table 1. Pre – test in Filipino GST Performance

Respondents	**Pre-test Scores**	**Interpretation**
1	12	Frustration Reader
2	15	Frustration Reader
3	8	Frustration Reader
4	12	Frustration Reader
5	10	Frustration Reader
6	16	Instructional Reader
7	15	Frustration Reader
8	14	Frustration Reader
9	16	Instructional Reader
10	11	Frustration Reader
11	12	Frustration Reader
12	17	Instructional Reader
13	18	Instructional Reader

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14	17	Instructional Reader
15	11	Frustration Reader
16	16	Instructional Reader
17	18	Instructional Reader
Average	**14.00**	**Frustration Reader**

Legend:

0 – 15	Frustration Reader
16 – 27	Instructional Reader
28 – 40	Independent Reader

Table 1 shows that most respondents obtained scores ranging from 8 to 15, which fall under the Frustration Reader level. The computed average score of 14.00 indicates that, prior to the intervention, learners experienced significant difficulty in Filipino reading, particularly in comprehension and fluency. This result confirms the need for an immediate and targeted reading intervention.

Table 2. Post - test in Filipino GST Performance

Respondents	**Post-test Scores**	**Interpretation**
1	29	Independent Reader
2	28	Independent Reader
3	35	Independent Reader
4	33	Independent Reader
5	29	Independent Reader
6	17	Instructional Reader
7	19	Instructional Reader
8	33	Independent Reader
9	32	Independent Reader
10	32	Independent Reader
11	31	Independent Reader
12	31	Independent Reader
13	31	Independent Reader
14	33	Independent Reader

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15	30	Independent Reader
16	29	Independent Reader
17	29	Independent Reader
Average	**29.47**	**Independent Reader**

Legend:

0 – 15	Frustration Reader
16 – 27	Instructional Reader
28 – 40	Independent Reader

Table 2 indicates a substantial improvement in learners' reading performance after the implementation of the Buddy-Buddy Activity. The majority of respondents achieved scores within the Independent Reader level, with an average score of 29.47. This demonstrates that learners were able to read Filipino texts with minimal assistance, showing improved comprehension, accuracy, and confidence.

Table 3. The Difference between the Pre - test and Post - test results after the Implementation of the Buddy-Buddy Strategy

	t - value	**p - value**	**Interpretation**
Difference between the pre-test and post-test results after the implementation of the Buddy-Buddy strategy	**-10.4928**	**0.0000**	**Significant**

Legend: $p \leq 0.05$ Significant, $p > 0.05$ Not Significant

Table 3 presents the statistical analysis comparing pre-test and post test results. The computed t-value of -10.4928 and p-value of 0.0000 indicate a significant difference between the two sets of scores. Since the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The significant improvement supports the premise of peer-assisted learning as an effective intervention for struggling readers. This finding aligns with the study of Serrano and Cruz (2021), who reported that structured peer tutoring significantly enhanced reading comprehension among Filipino learners at the frustration level. Similar to the present study, their research emphasized that immediate feedback and guided support from peers contributed to measurable reading gains.

Moreover, the results corroborate the findings of Garcia (2022), which highlighted that contextualized Filipino reading materials, when paired with interactive strategies, increased learner engagement and comprehension. In the Buddy-Buddy sessions, learners were exposed to familiar and meaningful texts, allowing them to activate prior knowledge and better understand the reading materials, thereby improving their post-test performance.

The statistically significant outcome is also consistent with Villanueva (2023), who found that peer collaboration strategies improved reading fluency and comprehension while enhancing learners' confidence and motivation. The present study similarly observed that learners became more confident and motivated to read Filipino texts when supported by a peer mentor in a non-threatening environment.

Beyond the local context, the findings resonate with Nguyen (2021), who concluded that peer-assisted learning positively affects academic outcomes and self-regulation skills. The significant difference in pre-test and post-test results suggests that learners developed greater independence in reading, as reflected by their movement from frustration and instructional levels to the independent reading level.

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The results reinforce the recommendations of UNESCO (2022), which emphasized the importance of remediation and peer-based interventions in addressing learning gaps intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The effectiveness of the Buddy-Buddy Activity demonstrates that low-cost, scalable, and learner-centered strategies can significantly improve foundational reading skills, particularly in Filipino, where learners at Kaysuyo National High School initially exhibited greater difficulty compared to English.

To enrich the quantitative findings, a thematic analysis of the learner interviews was conducted, revealing key insights into the qualitative impact of the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity. The first major theme, Peer Support and Guided Learning Scaffolding, highlighted that learners benefited significantly from having a dedicated peer tutor who provided immediate guidance and non-judgmental assistance. This sentiment was echoed by Learner 3, who shared, "Mas madali po matuto kasi kapag hindi ko alam ang salita, agad na ipinapaliwanag ng buddy ko nang walang takot." Furthermore, under the second theme, Improved Reading Skills, Fluency, and Accuracy, participants noted noticeable progress in identifying reading errors, deciphering unfamiliar words, and improving their reading pace. Learner 8 reflected on this improvement, stating, "Dati po mabagal ako magbasa at paulit-ulit, pero nung nag-Buddy-Buddy kami, natuto akong magbasa nang mas mabilis at tama ang bigkas."

The qualitative data also revealed broader affective and social benefits. As captured in the third theme, Increased Confidence and Reduced Anxiety, reading alongside a peer reduced intimidation compared to reading directly in front of a teacher, thereby fostering stronger learning motivation. Learner 11 illustrated this shift in confidence, noting, "Dati nahihiya akong magbasa sa harap ng klase kasi natatakot akong magkamali. Nung kasama ko na ang buddy ko, nawala ang hiya ko." In line with these interpersonal dynamics, the fourth theme, Development of Social Skills and Peer Collaboration, showed that the activity enhanced social bonds, mutual respect, and cooperative learning between tutees and tutors. Finally, the fifth theme, Need for Tailored Mentor Training and Pairing, underscored operational considerations. Because some learners required greater individual support, a significant responsibility was placed on the peer tutors, highlighting the vital need for structured mentor training and continuous teacher monitoring to ensure the strategy's ongoing success.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Grade 7 learners initially demonstrated low Filipino reading proficiency, as reflected by their frustration-level pre-test scores.

2. The Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity significantly improved learners' Filipino GST performance.

3. Peer-assisted learning created a supportive and motivating environment that enhanced learners' confidence and engagement in reading.

4. The Buddy-Buddy strategy proved to be an effective, low-cost, and learner-centered intervention aligned with DepEd's literacy goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Schools should institutionalize the Peer-Assisted (Buddy-Buddy) Activity as part of their regular reading remediation programs.

2. Filipino teachers are encouraged to adopt peer-assisted strategies to address varied reading levels inside and outside the classroom.

3. School administrators may allocate time and resources to support structured peer tutoring sessions.

4. Parents and guardians should be oriented on the importance of peer support to reinforce reading practice at

home.

5. Future researchers may conduct similar studies using a larger sample size or apply the strategy to other learning areas.

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