

Reading Readiness and Proficiency of Grade 6 Learners: Basis for Reading and Language Development Plan

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ABSTRACT

Reading readiness is the stage when a child is ready to begin learning to read. This is essential among elementary learners because it compasses the skills and experience that prepare them to engage with other related literacy skills. On the other hand, reading proficiency is the level at which a person can read and understand text. It is essential for academic success and meaningful participation in an increasingly information-driven society. The PHIL-IRI is important in identifying the level of the learner's proficiency in reading. This study aimed to (1) assess the level of reading readiness of Grade 6 learners at the beginning of the school year (BoY) based on Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) results; (2) evaluate the reading level proficiency of Grade 6 learners at the end of the school year (EoY) based on PHIL-IRI results; (3) assess if there is a significant difference in the reading proficiency levels of Grade 6 learners between beginning of the school year (BoY) and end of the school year (EoY) assessments; (4) evaluate the relationship between Grade 6 learners' reading readiness at beginning of the school year (BoY) and their reading proficiency at end of the school year (EoY) (5) develop a language instructional strategy framework to improve reading. Grade 6 learners from selected public elementary in the division of occidental Mindoro schools who completed both BOY and EOY PHIL-IRI assessments within the same school year were the participants of the study. They were selected through purposive criterion sampling. A secondary data obtained from the official PHIL-IRI results of the participating schools in the beginning of the school year and end of the school year were used. Descriptive, Chi-Square Test and Spearman Rank Correlation test were used. Descriptive statistics showed that at the beginning of the school year, most of the learners fall under frustration and instructional level, while at the end of the school year, independent level increased while frustration level decreased. The study also revealed that there is a significant difference on the proficiency of the learners in the beginning of the school and at the end of the school year. A significant relationship was also noted. An instructional intervention framework was developed to guide educators how to implement targeted teaching strategies to improve the reading proficiency of the learners.

Keywords: reading readiness, reading proficiency, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory, instructional intervention, reading proficiency

SDG: SDG 4: Quality Education

INTRODUCTION

Reading readiness is the stage when a child is prepared to begin learning to reading. This is essential among elementary learners because it compasses the skills and experience that prepare them to engage with other related literacy skills. On the other hand, reading proficiency is the level at which a person can read and understand text. It is essential for academic success and meaningful participation in an increasingly information-driven society. However, the national and international assessments continue to reveal gaps in comprehension and critical reading among Filipino learners. In 2018 PISA results, it was revealed that Filipino 15-year-olds learners obtained an average score of 340, which shows a significantly below average of 487 in the OECD, with only 19% reaching Level 2 proficiency—a standard reflecting basic comprehension (OECD, 2019). Likewise, the 2024 FLEMMS data shows that while 93.1% of Filipinos aged 10–64 are able to read and write, only 70.8% has the ability to understand and use simple written texts for practical purposes (PSA, 2025; DepEd, 2025).

In the elementary grades, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) functions as a measurement tool, categorizing learners into *Frustration*, *Instructional*, or *Independent* levels to assist teachers in reading instruction (DepEd, 2018). Nevertheless, most Grades IV–VI students remain classified at the Frustration or Instructional levels, which shows that there is a persistent gap in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension (Evangelista, 2022).

In the province of Occidental Mindoro, local research underscores these concerns. A study of Grade 10 learners in Magsaysay reveals that vocabulary limitations, difficulty identifying main ideas, and concentration problems were significantly associated with their low reading comprehension, with majority of the learners are also classified at the Instructional level via Phil-IRI profiling (Herrera et al., 2024). Moreover, regional literacy data from PSA shows that functional literacy in Occidental Mindoro is at 68.8%—below the MIMAROPA regional average of 70.7%—which indicates that localized reading comprehension challenges that mirror national trends (PSA, 2025).

To respond to these challenges, the current study employs on several theoretical frameworks that inform effective reading instruction. Schema Theory suggest that reading comprehension is strongly link on prior knowledge; thus, students with difficulty in reading have limited background knowledge to understand new textual information (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) stresses the important role of scaffolding and guided instruction to help learners transition from dependent to independent reading, which is necessary for learners that fall under Frustration and Instructional levels (Vygotsky, 1978). In the same manner, the Simple View of Reading underscore that comprehension results from the coordinates abilities in reading and language comprehension—both of which are measured by the Phil-IRI (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Lastly, the Differentiated Instruction Theory points out the importance of tailoring instructional tasks based on the readiness of learners, interests, and profiles, an approach that is in harmony with the diverse needs revealed by Phil-IRI assessments (Tomlinson, 2017). Together, these frameworks serve as designing an instructional strategy framework that deals with multiple challenges of reading proficiency among Grades VI learners.

This study seeks to examine the reading proficiency of Grade VI learners using Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), and to utilize the research findings to develop a Language Instructional Strategy Framework align with these theoretical perspectives and responsive to local literacy needs, such as those in Occidental Mindoro. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) was the primary instrument used in the study.

Objectives

Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. Assess the level of reading readiness of Grade 6 learners at the beginning of the school year (BoY) based on Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) results.
2. Evaluate the reading level proficiency of Grade 6 learners at the end of the school year (EoY) based on PHIL-IRI results.
3. Assess if there is a significant difference in the reading proficiency levels of Grade 6 learners between beginning of the school year (BoY) and end of the school year (EoY) assessments.
4. Evaluate the relationship between Grade 6 learners' reading readiness at beginning of the school year (BoY) and their reading proficiency at end of the school year (EoY).
5. Develop a language instructional strategy framework to improve reading proficiency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Considering the nature of this study, a descriptive-comparative and correlational research design was employed to determine the reading proficiency of Grade 6 learners at the beginning and end of the school year

based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). To test whether there is a significant difference in reading proficiency levels between the beginning-of-the-year (BoY) and end-of-the-year (EoY), comparative study was used, while the correlational research was used to evaluate the relationship between initial reading readiness (EoY) and final reading proficiency.

The 3,131 Grade 6 learners from selected public elementary in the division of occidental Mindoro schools who completed both BoY and EoY PHIL-IRI assessments within the same school year were the participants of the study.

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) was the primary instrument used in the study. It was design by the Department of Education (DepEd) to assess learners' reading ability. The BoY PHIL-IRI results were utilized in the beginning of the school year and was used to determine the learners' initial reading readiness, whereas the EoY PHIL IRI results were used to determine the improvements in the reading proficiency of the participants.

A secondary data obtained from the official PHIL-IRI results of the participating schools in the beginning of the school year and end of the school year were used. Approval from the Division Office was sought to access the records. The data were consolidated, anonymized, and classified into three proficiency levels: Frustration, Instructional, and Independent for both beginning of the school year and end of the school year assessments.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to describe learners' reading readiness and proficiency levels. Chi-Square Test was used to test the significant difference in proficiency levels between beginning of the school year and end of the school year, while a Spearman Rank Correlation test was conducted to examine the proficiency level between beginning of the school year and end of the school year. Both tests were set at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Reading proficiency of grade 6 learners at the beginning of the school year

As it is presented in Table 1, the reading proficiency levels of Grade 6 learners at the beginning of the school year shows that a large proportion of the learners fell under the Frustration Level (52.25%), followed by the Instructional Level (34.08%), while only a few learners are identified as Independent Readers (13.67%).

Table 1. Level of reading proficiency of grade 6 learners at the beginning of the school year.

Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
Frustration	1,636	52.25%
Instructional	1,067	34.08%
Independent	428	13.67%
Total	3, 131	100%

The findings show that at the beginning of the school year, most of Grade VI learners struggles in reading. The findings also reveal that many of the learners fall under instructional level and independent level earned the lowest number. This implies that at the start of the year, most of the learners struggled with reading tasks appropriate to their grade level. Navarra (2023) found out that many grade six learners cannot independently decode and understand texts at their grade level and this was commonly observed at the start of the school year.

The findings are also in consonance with the findings of Galarse (2019) which revealed that learners who reach the intermediate grades without sufficient remediation often carry unresolved reading difficulties in the earlier grades. Similarly, the study of Suggate et al. (2023) also provides strong evidence that early skills gaps have long-lasting effects. According to him, when learners started school with low reading foundations mostly, they fail to catch up to their peers. This is the reason why they remain at the frustration level. Moreover, Biggozi, Tarchi, and Vagnoli (2017) also found out that learners who are low performer in lower grades are at risk of performing also below grade level expectations.

The findings of the study are also supported by the study of Plotado (2024) which stated that most learners fell under instructional and frustration level. In the study, he revealed that a significant number of learners were under frustration level, which shows that most grade six learners face serious problems in oral reading and requires intervention. On the same manner, majority of grade six learners achieve instructional level while minority achieve independent level. Tolibas (2025) also supported these findings, according to his study most of intermediate learners achieved frustration and instructional level. In the same way, Nopriani and Fetriani (2024) revealed that many learners fell within the lower two reading levels-frustration and instructional and indicated that these learners need for targeted teachers support.

Reading proficiency of grade 6 learners at the end of the school year

Table 2 reveals that the reading proficiency of Grade 6 learners has significantly improved by the end of the school year (EOY). It also shows that the percentage of learners under the Independent Level increased to 36.76%, meanwhile learners in the Frustration Level decreased to 28.46%. During this period, the proportion of learners in the Instructional Level (34.78%) remained almost the same as in the beginning of the school year (BoY) assessment. These findings imply that targeted interventions and classroom instruction helped learners progress in their reading skills over time.

Table 2. Level of reading proficiency of grade 6 learners at the end of the school year.

Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
Frustration	891	28.46%
Instructional	1,089	34.78%
Independent	1,151	36.76%
Total	3, 131	100%

The findings indicate that at the end of the school year, there is an increase in the number of learners under independent level which suggest that the remediation strategies and constant support are effective. Meanwhile, there is a decrease in the number of learners in frustration level which shows that the intervention can surely reduce the number of learners who faced challenges in reading. However, the instructional level remained unchanged which showed improvement but were not able to achieve independent level. According to Cubillas et al. (2019), directed intervention reduce the proportion of learners who struggles in reading, increase those in independent level while remain stable in instructional level as learners transition gradually. In the same manner, the study of De Robles (2023) supports the idea that interventions lessen number of learners under frustration levels. The results of the study of Therrien and Kubina (2021) supports the argument that interventions targeting the struggling readers must combine fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary practice to ensure help the learners.

Furthermore, the study of Cellar (2024) supports the finding of the study as it revealed that after the targeted, structured interventions the number of struggling students in reading decreased. According to Arca (2024), addressing the reading difficulties can improve literacy. The study of Romey and Zabala (2023) also showed that targeted, engaging interventions can improve reading performance. Upper-grade interventions reduced the frustration level among learners and can help achieve independent reading skills in Grade 5-6 (Bencito et al., 2024).

Difference between reading proficiency of grade 6 pupils at the beginning and end of the school year

Shown in Table 3 the results of the Chi-Square Test of Independence to determine if there is a significant difference between the reading readiness of the participants the beginning of the school year (BoY) and the proficiency of the participants at the end of the school year (EoY). The computed χ^2 value of **216.55** with a p-value of **0.000** shows that there is a significant difference between readiness of the learners in the beginning of the school year and their proficiency at the end of the school year (EoY).

Table 3. Difference between reading proficiency of grade 6 pupils at the beginning and end of the school year.

Variables	X ²	p-value	Interpretation
Beginning of School Year End of the school Year	216.55	.000	Significant

Legend: $p\text{-value} < 0.05 = \text{significant}$

The findings indicate that there is a significant difference between the reading readiness in the beginning of the school year and the proficiency level of the learners at the end of the school year. This reveals that learners' reading proficiency significantly improved across the school year. Studies revealed that learners often begin the school year with lower reading ability, and some learners lose their academic skills over long period of vacation, particularly their reading abilities (Borman & Dowling, 2006). The report of NEAP indicates that most of the students start the school year below proficiency levels (Schwartz, 2025). However, after given interventions studies showed that there is a significant improvement in reading proficiency from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year (Hovanetz, 2025). The study of Nones (2025) strongly support that there is a significant improvement in reading abilities of learners over the school year. Results indicated that learners initially showed frustration level of reading proficiency and achieved independent level overtime. Gowon and Owolabi (2020) support these findings as his study revealed a significant difference between the reading proficiency of the learners between beginning and end of the school year. Nopriani and Fetriani (2020) also revealed that there is a significant difference on the reading proficiency of the learners because there is a progression from frustration or instructional level to independent level.

Relationship between reading proficiency of grade 6 pupils at the beginning and end of the school year

To determine if there is a significant relationship between the reading readiness of the learners in the beginning of the school year and their proficiency at the end of the school year, Spearman Rank Correlation was used.

From the Table 4, it highlights the correlation between learners' reading readiness at the beginning of the school year (BoY) and their reading proficiency at the end of the school year (EoY). The computed r (0.483) with $p\text{-value}$ (**0.000**) indicates a moderate positive relationship. This means that learners who started with higher reading readiness at the beginning of the school year (BoY) are more likely to achieve higher proficiency at the end of the school year (EoY).

Table 4. Relationship between reading proficiency of grade 6 pupils at the beginning and end of the school year.

Variable	r	p-value	Interpretation
Beginning of School Year End of the school Year	.483	.000	Significant

Legend: $p\text{-value} < 0.05 = \text{significant}$

The findings of the study reveals that there is a significant relationship on the reading readiness of the learners and their reading proficiency between at beginning and at the end of the school year. Some studies support the findings, Villalva (2023) found out that there a significant relationship in the reading proficiency of the learners between the beginning and end of the school year. The study also revealed that learners who begin with higher reading proficiency tend to have achieve higher proficiency at the end of the school year. The study of Cabardo (2025) also complements the study by showing that when students start with higher proficiency level tend to have higher proficiency level at the end of the school year. Casingal (2022) also emphasized that there is a strong relationship between the initial reading competence and the final reading proficiency.

Reading Readiness and Proficiency Program to enhance reading proficiency of learners

The findings reveal that a number of grade six learners remain in frustration and instructional levels. Although, there is improvement in reading proficiency levels, a number of students fall under independent level show

gaps in reading performance. In some studies, similar trend was observed. The study of Nala (2022) revealed that limited home reading materials and low reading proficiency are biggest contributory factors for learner's reading problems.

Pocan et al. (2022) found out that the PHIL IRI intervention helped learners facing challenges in reading to improve their performance. Likewise, Camocamo and Ong (2023) also found out that reading programs that are contextualized enhance the performance of learners. In addition, intervention programs like scheduled reading activities foster better engagement among learners (Ibo & Mangarin, 2023).

Reading Readiness and Proficiency Program

The findings show that a number of grade six learners remain at frustration and instructional levels based on the PHIL-IRI assessment. While there is a significant improvement, a number of learners who achieve frustration and instructional level indicate persistent gaps in reading proficiency.

Reading Readiness and Proficiency Program for Grade 6 Learners

Rationale:

Reading is important as it is the foundation of all learning. Many Grades 6 pupils have problem with vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension. This hinders academic success in their learning. This program aims to strengthen the reading readiness and develop the reading proficiency of the learners.

General objective:

To improve the reading proficiency of Grade 6 pupils.

Specific objectives

By the end of the program, learners will be able to:

1. Decode and recognize words accurately and fluently.
2. Use an expanded vocabulary in reading and communication.
3. Demonstrate comprehension of grade-level texts through discussion and written responses.
4. Analyze texts to identify main ideas, details, inferences, and author's purpose.
5. Exhibit confidence and interest in independent reading.

METHODOLOGY

The program uses a progressive and learner-centered approach, integrating:

- a. Phonics-based instruction for decoding and pronunciation
- b. Guided and shared reading for comprehension and fluency
- c. Vocabulary enrichment activities using contextual learning
- d. Critical reading strategies for higher-order thinking
- e. Interactive activities such as group discussions, paired reading, and performance tasks

Program structure:

Skills	Week	Focus Area	Key Activities	Expected Outcomes
Reading Readiness	1	Phonemic awareness & decoding	Word games, syllable drills, echo reading	Recognize and decode multisyllabic words
	2	Sight words & pronunciation	Flashcards, oral drills, tongue twisters	Improve pronunciation and sight word recall
	3	Listening comprehension	Audio stories, retelling, comprehension Q&A	Understand basic spoken and written texts
	4	Reading fluency	Paired/choral reading, timed readings	Read short texts fluently and accurately
Vocabulary & Comprehension	5	Vocabulary building	Word journals, context clue exercises	Use new words in reading and writing
	6	Main idea & supporting details	Highlighting, paragraph analysis	Identify key ideas and details in a text
	7	Sequencing & summarizing	Story maps, timelines, summaries	Retell and summarize stories logically
	8	Integrating fluency & vocabulary	Reading drills with comprehension tasks	Read and understand longer passages
Critical Reading & Analysis	9	Making inferences	“Think aloud” strategy, inference questions	Draw conclusions beyond explicit text
	10	Comparing texts	Venn diagrams, text comparison	Identify similarities and differences between texts
	11	Author’s purpose, tone, and bias	Text analysis, discussion	Evaluate author’s intent and perspective
	12	Culminating evaluation	Reading comprehension test, vocabulary quiz, reflection	Demonstrate full reading proficiency

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that the reading proficiency of Grade six learners, as measured by Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI), shows a relationship between the reading proficiency of the learners in the beginning and end of the school year. In the beginning of the school year, it is indicated that most of the learners were at the frustration or instructional level. This shows a baseline challenge in reading fluency and comprehension of the learners. Following interventions help in improving their performance, which showed notable increase in independent level. These findings suggest that earlier identification of reading performance of learners through the PHIL-IRI provides insights to tailor instruction and predict growth the school year. The study also highlights the significant relationship between the learners’ initial reading proficiency and their final performance, which show that early intervention can contribute to later achievement. While individual instructional strategies can help, the overall combination of assessment, intervention and continuous monitoring can help gain reading proficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the study recommends that reading interventions should be tailored according to the initial proficiency level of the learners, with remedial programs design to address specific needs in decoding, fluency and comprehension. In addition, the integration of technology should be expanded to provide continuous monitoring, feedback and individualized practice opportunities. Likewise, parental involvement should be enhanced for them to be encouraged to enhance programs that promote the reading activities of learners at home. Finally, the school should establish a system of ongoing evaluation to monitor the reading abilities of learners to ensure that the interventions are responsive to their needs.

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