

"Bridging the Gap: Perception on MARUNGKO Approach and Traditional Approach for Struggling Readers"

Ariana L. Castillo., Janica May M. Ballesteros., Ariane R. Gasgonia., Jayza Annie T. Juavan., Lea D. Oracion., Leah E. Perez

Laguna University, College of Education

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ABSTRACT

The persistent challenge of low reading literacy among Filipino students, evidenced by the 2022 PISA results (77/81 nations), underscores an urgent need to address struggling readers in early grades. Despite national policies, the efficacy of various pedagogical approaches in foundational literacy remains an area requiring further exploration. This study aimed to bridge this gap by examining primary teachers' perceptions of the MARUNGKO Approach (MA) and the Traditional reading approach (TR) in teaching struggling readers at Bubukal Elementary School, exploring their understanding, perceived impact on student engagement and skill development, advantages, challenges, and recommendations. A descriptive research design was employed, utilizing a researcher-made questionnaire administered via Google Forms to five primary teachers (Grade 1-2) at Bubukal Elementary School, all experienced in both methods. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to identify recurring themes and patterns in teachers' perceptions. Findings consistently showed teachers perceived the MA as highly effective for developing foundational literacy, phonological awareness, decoding, and blending, significantly boosting student interest through its systematic, phonetic, and multi-sensory nature. Conversely, the TR was valued for broader vocabulary exposure and contextual understanding but seen as less effective for engaging struggling readers and systematically building core decoding skills. Teachers identified the need for specific training and materials as a challenge for MARUNGKO, while maintaining engagement and addressing individual learning gaps were challenges for the Traditional method. A hybrid approach, integrating MARUNGKO's systematic phonics with the contextual richness of Traditional methods, was consistently recommended. These findings underscore the critical role of structured, phonics-based instruction in enhancing foundational literacy among early-grade struggling readers. The study implies a need for policy and pedagogical refinements advocating for the strategic integration of the MA within a broader literacy framework, targeted professional development for teachers, and adequate resources to foster a balanced literacy approach, ultimately improving national reading literacy outcomes for Filipino students.

Keywords: MARUNGKO Approach, Phonological awareness, Traditional Reading Approach, Hybrid approach,

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a process of deriving meaning from a context, words, or even symbols. It shapes a child's ability to learn, communicate, and succeed in life. Through reading, individuals can have a deep understanding that connects with their prior knowledge that leads to opening of new ideas, perspectives, and information. In today's generation, specifically in elementary level, teaching reading is one of the most important skills the teacher should impart towards the students. It is the prerequisite of all learning areas. However, many learners struggle to develop strong reading abilities, making early literacy instruction crucial for educators. Learners' ability to acquire reading skills has been a great challenge for teacher from across all grade levels of all ages. One of the most relevant problems of teachers nowadays is students' poor reading performance, which often results in weak academic outcomes. This is due to some reasons such as the rapid advancement of technology wherein learners choose to spend their time using technology than reading a textbook or dictionary.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has been actively working to improve the reading skills of Filipino learners. Among these initiatives are “Project D.E.A.R (Drop Everything and Read)”, Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP)”, the “Reading Assistance Program. These initiatives aim to encourage students to read more and develop their literacy skills. According to DepEd Order No. 70, s. 2011, under Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP), educators are tasked with ensuring that every learner becomes a reader in accordance with their grade level. Furthermore, the department encourages many schools to strengthen their school-based reading program to ensure that the goal is being attained.

The most common approaches used by researchers and teachers in supporting and promoting the reading performance of learners is the MARUNGKO Approach and Traditional Approach. Both approaches aim to support struggling readers, yet their effectiveness varies depending on the learners' need, environments, and instructional techniques. The MARUNGKO Approach is a phonics-based reading method that introduces letter sounds and starts with the most used Filipino phonemes before blending them into syllables and words. This approach allows readers to learn reading using the proper sequencing of letters and letter sounds starting with the familiar ones such as m, s, a, i, o. On the other hand, Traditional Approach often follows the traditional alphabetical order and whole-word approach, where students are introduced to words and sentences before mastering phonics. This method relies on repetition and context-based learning to build reading fluency and comprehension. While both approaches aim to improve literacy, their effectiveness and perception in supporting struggling readers remain an important area of study. Through gathering real experiences and insights, this study highlighted which approach better helps learners address reading difficulties.

Background of the Study

The 2022 results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) underscored a critical challenge facing the Philippine educational system: reading literacy. Filipino students demonstrated significantly lower reading scores compared to the OECD average, highlighting the urgent need for targeted and effective interventions. The Philippines ranked 77th out of 81 participating countries, gathering a score of 370 which is 120 points less than the average score. This performance has prompted a renewed focus on re-evaluating and strengthening reading instruction strategies across the nation. In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) has consistently prioritized initiatives aimed at improving reading outcomes, issuing memoranda and directives, such as DepEd Memorandum NO. 431, S. 2023, mandating literacy and numeracy intervention programs. These policies reflect a commitment to equipping all Filipino learners with the foundational reading skills that are crucial for the students' academic success and beyond.

Despite national efforts, a persistent challenge remains: the high number of struggling readers in the early grades, particularly within the primary level. Schools like Bubukal Elementary School exemplify this issue, where a recent assessment identified a significant portion of primary students in need of intensive reading intervention. While tools like the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) help identify literacy gaps, the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches in addressing the specific needs of struggling readers, especially in foundational literacy, remains a key question.

This study aimed to address this gap by exploring the perceptions of educators regarding two reading approaches, the MARUNGKO approach and the Traditional reading approach. This research shifted the focus from purely outcome-based comparisons to examining how teachers perceive the strengths, weaknesses, and applicability of each approach in supporting struggling readers. By understanding these perceptions, this study sought to provide valuable insights into how to effectively bridge the gap between current reading instruction and the specific needs of struggling learners at Bubukal Elementary School. This exploration of perceptions will inform discussions on how to optimize reading instruction and contribute to improved literacy outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to compare the perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach in teaching reading to struggling readers, as perceived by teachers.

Specifically, it sought to adhere to the following objectives:

1. To explore teachers' understanding and familiarity with the MARUNGKO approach and the traditional approach in early reading instruction.
2. To analyze and compare the perceived impact of each approach on students' interest in reading.
3. To compare teachers' perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO approach and the traditional approach in developing early literacy skills among learners.
4. To identify the advantages and challenges teachers encounter when using the MARUNGKO approach versus the traditional approach.
5. To gather recommendations from teachers for improving reading instruction based on their experiences with both approaches.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO Approach and Traditional approach when teaching reading to struggling readers.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to compare the perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach in addressing the needs of struggling readers, as experienced by teachers at Bubukal Elementary School. By examining the key differences, challenges, and perceived impacts of these approaches, the study aims to generate insights that can inform educational policy, classroom practice, and community action, ultimately contributing to improved literacy outcomes and greater educational equity.

Policy:

This study provides policymakers, evidence-based insights that can inform the development and refinement of early literacy policies. By comparing the perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approaches, the research offers data to guide decisions about curriculum design, resource allocation, and the prioritization of reading intervention programs. The findings may highlight the need for targeted support for phonics-based instruction, such as the MARUNGKO Approach, especially for students who are at risk of falling behind in reading. Such evidence can be instrumental in advocating for policies that address the diverse needs of struggling readers across different contexts.

In addition, the study underscores the importance of inclusive and adaptive educational policies that ensure all learners have access to effective reading instruction. By showcasing the potential benefits and challenges associated with each approach, the research can support the case for increased investment in teacher training and professional development focused on early literacy. Policymakers can use these insights to design comprehensive support systems that not only improve reading outcomes but also address the underlying factors contributing to reading difficulties, thereby promoting educational equity and long-term academic success.

Practice:

For teachers, this research serves as a valuable resource for enhancing instructional practice. By analyzing the perceived strengths and limitations of both the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approaches, the study equips educators with practical knowledge to make informed decisions about their teaching strategies. The findings can help teachers identify which methods are most effective for different types of learners, enabling them to tailor their instruction to better meet the needs of struggling readers. This, in turn, can lead to more engaging and supportive classroom environments where all students have the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills.

Moreover, the study highlights the significance of ongoing professional development and collaboration among educators. By sharing best practices and insights gained from the research, teachers can work together to refine their approaches and advocate for the resources necessary to support struggling readers. The research also encourages educators to be proactive in seeking out training opportunities and instructional materials that align with evidence-based practices. Ultimately, empowering teachers with knowledge and support will contribute to improved reading outcomes and greater confidence in addressing literacy challenges in the classroom.

Social Action:

This research has the potential to inspire broader social action aimed at improving literacy rates and educational equity. By highlighting the impact of effective reading interventions on struggling readers, the study can encourage parents, community leaders, and organizations to become active partners in supporting early literacy initiatives. Increased community involvement can take many forms, such as volunteering in reading programs, providing resources for schools, or advocating for literacy-focused projects within local communities.

Additionally, the study can contribute to cultural shift in how reading and literacy are valued in society. By raising awareness about the challenges faced by struggling readers and the importance of early intervention, the research can motivate individuals and groups to champion literacy as a fundamental right and a key driver of personal and societal development. This collective effort can help create a more literate and empowered population, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and broader opportunities for all.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study aimed to understand the perceptions of Grades 1-2 teachers at Bubukal Elementary School regarding the effectiveness of the MARUNGKO Approach compared to traditional reading approach for struggling readers. Utilizing a questionnaire distributed to these teachers, the research endeavors to capture and compare their experiences and perceptions about the two approaches in addressing reading difficulties in early grades. Data collection is planned to occur over a period of one to two weeks. While the study offers valuable insights into the perspectives of teachers at Bubukal Elementary School, several limitations must be acknowledged.

One limitation is that the scope of the study is limited to a small sample of teachers within a single elementary school. This restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts, grade levels, or student populations. The experiences and perceptions of teachers at Bubukal Elementary School may not be representative of teachers in other schools with different student demographics, resource availability, or professional development opportunities. Additionally, the reliance on a questionnaire-based survey may limit the depth and nuance of the data collected. While questionnaires allow for efficient data gathering, they may not fully capture the complexities of teachers' experiences and beliefs. Lastly, as the time frame for this study to be conducted, the month of May is the time for the teachers' vacation. With the declaration that teachers must be "uninterrupted" during this time, some of the respondents might not be able to answer the given questionnaire.

Definition of Terms

CRLA- Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment a tool developed by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines to assess early-grade literacy. It is designed for students in Grades 1 to 3 and helps educators quickly evaluate reading abilities, allowing them to tailor instruction based on individual learner needs.

DepEd- The Department of Education of the Philippines. It is the government agency responsible for basic education in the country, including curriculum development, teacher training, and the implementation of educational programs and policies, including literacy initiatives.

Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP)- A comprehensive program by DepEd designed to ensure that all Filipino children become functionally literate by the end of Grade 3. It encompasses various strategies, interventions, and resource development efforts to enhance reading instruction and address reading difficulties.

Literacy- The ability to read and use information in various contexts. It encompasses not only decoding skills but also critical thinking, comprehension, and the ability to communicate effectively through written language.

MARUNGKO Approach- is an innovative method for teaching reading, specifically designed for Filipino children. This phono-syllabic method focuses on the mastery of individual letter sounds and their blending into syllables and words.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)- While not directly related to specific programs in the Philippines, the OECD is important in the broader context of education. It is an international organization that works to build better policies for better lives. In the context of education, the OECD conducts international assessments like PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) that compare education systems and student performance across countries, providing valuable data and insights into literacy levels and educational effectiveness.

Perception- The understanding, interpretation, and belief held by individuals (likely educators, parents, and possibly the struggling readers themselves) regarding the effectiveness, benefits, and drawbacks of both the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach in addressing the reading difficulties of struggling readers.

Phonics-based approach- a method that teaches children how letters relate to sounds.

PISA- Program for International Student Assessment an international assessment that measures the reading, mathematics, and science literacy of 15-year-old students, providing insights into how well the Philippine education system prepares students for real-world challenges by comparing their skills against other participating countries. Its primary objective is to identify strengths and weaknesses in the education system to inform policy changes and improve student learning outcomes.

Project D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read)- A nationwide initiative promoted by DepEd that encourages students and school personnel to dedicate a specific time to independent reading. It aims to cultivate a love for reading and improve reading comprehension by making reading a regular practice.

Reading- The process of decoding written symbols to construct meaning. In the context of struggling readers, it refers to their ability (or lack thereof) to accurately and fluently decode text and comprehend its meaning.

Reading Assistance Program- A targeted intervention designed to provide additional support and instruction to students who are struggling with reading. These programs often involve individualized or small-group instruction, focusing on specific reading skills such as phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

Struggling Readers-These are students who experience significant difficulty in reading compared to their peers.

Traditional Reading Approach-This typically refers to methods that often emphasize rote memorization of letters and words, and the look-and-say method (whole-word recognition).

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research method used to examine the effectiveness of the MARUNGKO Approach and Traditional Approach in supporting struggling readers. Through gathering insights and perception on both teaching approach in reading from Grade 1-2 teachers of Bubukal Elementary School, this study aimed to compare the perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach in teaching reading to struggling readers, as perceived by teachers.

Research Design

This research aimed to investigate primary teachers' perceptions at Bubukal Elementary School regarding the MARUNGKO and Traditional approaches to reading instruction. To achieve this, a descriptive research design

was employed, this design allowed the researcher to look for patterns, similarities, and differences in teachers' answers, giving a clearer understanding of how these reading methods are viewed and used in the classroom. Data was collected via questionnaires administered to teachers to explore and compare their perceptions of each approach and its effectiveness in addressing the needs of struggling readers.

Research Locale

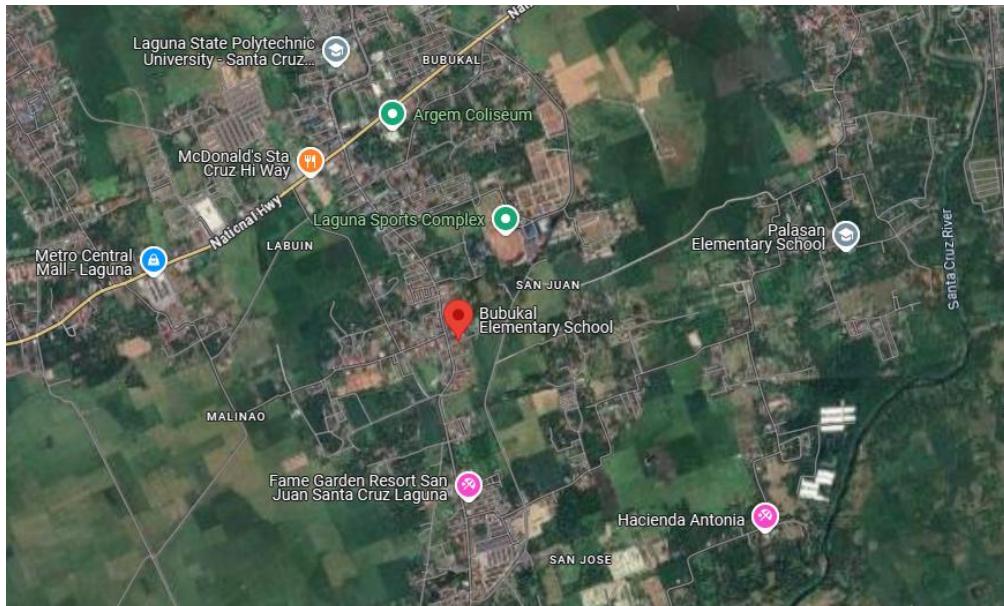


Figure 2 Google Street Map of the Research Locale

Note. Adapted from Google Maps (n,d).

Figure 2: Google Street Map

This research was conducted at Bubukal Elementary School, located in Brgy. Bubukal Santa Cruz, Laguna. Bubukal Elementary School is a public elementary school catering to the educational needs of the community within its vicinity. The school serves as the primary educational institution for children in the area, providing instruction from kindergarten to Grade 6. This study focuses on struggling readers in Primary Grades.

The total teacher population across the three grade levels of interest is 5, comprised of four in Grade 1, and one in Grade 2. The experiences of the teachers in using MARUNGKO Approach and Traditional Approach makes the teachers from BES the best suitable respondents for this study. The findings of this study were relevant to the school and may inform future reading intervention strategies.

Population of the Study

This study's respondents were 5 teachers of primary grade in Bubukal Elementary School experience teaching reading using the MARUNGKO approach and traditional approach. The respondents include four Grade 1 teachers, four Grade 2 teachers, and four Grade 3 teachers.

Research Instrument

The primary research tool for this study was a questionnaire made by the researchers to gather feedback from Grade 1 to 2 teachers at Bubukal Elementary School about their perceptions of the MARUNGKO Approach and traditional reading approaches for struggling readers. This measure was chosen for gathering teacher's perspectives on the effectiveness and appropriateness of each technique in promoting the reading development in their students. The teachers answered open-ended questions which is divided four parts with the topics, benefits and limitations of each method, observations of student participation, and the overall impact on reading skills. The research intended to bridge the gap in knowing how educators perceive the MARUNGKO Approach in comparison to standard education.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers prepare a validated questionnaire to be ask to the teachers of Bubukal Elementary School to gather teachers' perceptions of the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach for struggling readers. After securing approval from school authorities, the questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms sent to the messenger account of selected Grade 1–3 teachers of Bubukal Elementary School with experience in either or both approaches specifically in students labeled as struggling readers. The respondents have the freedom to answer the questionnaire within the time range. The researchers will ensure the confidentiality of the teachers' responses. After gathering the data, the researchers will now organize the data in preparation for analysis to determine overall perceptions.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data collected from teachers' questionnaire responses. This method was selected for its ability to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories, providing a systematic yet flexible approach to interpreting teacher perceptions of the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach for struggling readers. The analysis in this study followed the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive examination of the data.

First, familiarization with the data was achieved by repeatedly reading all completed questionnaires, allowing the researchers to develop a thorough understanding of the teachers' experiences and insights regarding both reading approaches. Next, initial coding was performed systematically, highlighting meaningful statements and responses related to effectiveness, challenges, student engagement, and instructional strategies. These codes were then organized into broader themes that reflected significant patterns in the data, such as "Perceived Effectiveness," "Implementation Challenges," "Student Motivation," and "Recommendations for Improvement."

To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the findings, the identified themes were reviewed and cross-checked against the original data. Each theme was then clearly defined and named to encapsulate its core meaning and relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the findings were synthesized into a cohesive narrative, offering a structured and insightful account of teachers' perceptions, perceived benefits and limitations, and practical recommendations for supporting struggling readers through both the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approaches.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings derived from a qualitative analysis of the questionnaires given to the respondents, offering a comprehensive examination of their experiences with both the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approaches to reading instruction. This chapter details the systematic process of data analysis, from initial familiarization and coding to the identification of key themes related to effectiveness, challenges, engagement, and instructional strategies. The resulting narrative provides a structured and insightful account of teachers' perceptions, perceived benefits and limitations, and practical recommendations for supporting struggling readers through both approaches.

Table 1 *Understanding and Familiarity in MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach*

Theme	Code
Structured Approach of the Traditional Method	Explicit instruction Systematic phonics-based instruction
Foundational Focus of MARUNGKO Approach	Sound based approach Systematic phonemic approach
Strategies in MARUNGKO Approach	Multisensory phonemic instruction (use of songs, gestures, visuals, and word-building games.)

Note. This table presents the understanding and familiarity of the teachers in MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach. (Structure, Foundation, and Strategies)

Structured Approach of the Traditional Method

The findings highlight key differences between the traditional approach and the MARUNGKO approach in reading instruction. The Traditional Approach emphasizes explicit and systematic phonics-based instruction, suggesting a highly ordered progression through reading skills.

"This approach typically involves explicit instruction, systematic phonics and a focus on mastering foundational skills before moving to more complex reading task." -R1

"Using BA BE BI BO BU" -R2

"Traditional Approach is explicit, systematic, and skills-based, prioritizing phonics and decoding as the foundation of reading development. It's often contrasted with more meaning-centered or whole language approaches." -R3

"It emphasizes a structured, teacher-led method focused on the systematic teaching of foundational skill. The core of the traditional approach is explicit, where children are taught the relationship between letters and sounds." -R4

"The traditional approach in early reading instruction emphasizes or focusing on sound-letter relationships and decoding skills and prioritizing correct pronunciation and word recognition" -R5

Foundational Focus of MARUNGKO Approach

In contrast, this centers on a sound-based, systematic phonemic approach, emphasizing the individual sounds within words as the building blocks of reading. "Strategies in MARUNGKO Approach" further clarifies this difference by detailing the use of multisensory phonemic instruction, which leverages songs, gestures, visuals, and word-building games to engage learners.

"A reading instructional method developed. It's help learners read and understand texts more effectively." -R1

"Sounding letter systematically" -R2

"MARUNGKO Approach emphasis begins with listening and speaking, then moves to reading and writing. This approach is effective in developing phonemic awareness." -R3

"MARUNGKO approach starts by teaching letter sounds rather than letter names." R4

"This approach aims to develop reading skills in a systematic and engaging way, building on the learner's existing language knowledge." R5

Strategies in MARUNGKO Approach

The MARUNGKO Approach's effectiveness is significantly enhanced by its incorporation of multisensory instruction. By engaging visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses, the approach strengthens phonemic awareness, enhances memory retention of letter-sound correspondences, makes learning more enjoyable and engaging for young children, and caters to different learning styles. According to Boltron and Ramos (2021), this deliberate connection of multisensory activities to phonetic elements taught within MARUNGKO, such as using hand gestures for vowel sounds or word-building games with letter tiles, reinforces specific sounds and letter combinations, ultimately improving decoding skills and reading fluency in the early stages of literacy development.

"PHONEMIC AWARENESS, CONTEXTUAL READING" -R1

"Sounding letters" -R2

“Begin with oral phonemic awareness. Use songs, chants, and games to help students recognize and articulate the sounds of each letter. For example: Clapping games or mimicking environmental sounds that match the target letter sound.” -R3

“Multisensory Activities such as visuals, gestures, and songs to associate sounds with letters, it includes tactile activities like tracing in sand or on paper while saying the sounds.” -R4

“Here are some strategies that I employ when integrating the MARUNGKO Approach into my reading instruction: Sound-letter relationships Word building Reading practice” -R5

Table 2 Perceived Effectiveness of the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach

Theme	Code
MARUNGKO as Effective and Engaging	Support beginning readers Support sound blending and decoding Builds Confidence
Traditional Approach as Foundational but Rigid	Lacks inclusivity and adaptability
Mixed Application Based on Learner Need	Integrate both approach

Note. This table presents the perceived effectiveness of the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach.

MARUNGKO is Effective and Engaging

The findings suggested that the MARUNGKO approach is indeed an effective and engaging method for supporting beginning readers. Its effectiveness stems from its explicit focus on teaching basic sounds and then systematically building words through sound blending and decoding. This structured approach provides considerable support, particularly for struggling readers, as it breaks down the complex task of reading into manageable steps. As stated by a previous study made by Elli and Digo (2025), mastering these foundational skills, children gain confidence in their ability to decode words, fueling their motivation and engagement with reading. This, in turn, can lead to improved reading fluency.

“MARUNGKO approach is highly effective in developing early reading skills particularly in foundational reading competencies.” -R1

“In my opinion, the MARUNGKO Approach is highly effective in developing early reading skills, particularly in the Filipino language and among beginner readers in the early grades (Kinder to Grade 1). Its effectiveness stems from its focus on phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, and progressive skill-building—all of which are proven to be critical foundations for literacy.” -R3

“In my opinion, the MARUNGKO approach is highly effective in developing early reading skills, especially for beginning readers in Filipino language context. Its strength lies on its phonem-based progression, which help learner understand the relationship between sounds and letters.” -R4

Traditional Approach as a Rigid Foundational Method

Findings revealed that a traditional approach to reading, while foundational, often proves rigid and lacks inclusivity and adaptability. This stems from its focus on standardized methods and a fixed curriculum, potentially neglecting diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual needs of students. This is not ideal for a strategy in teaching, especially in primary grades as stated in a previous study (Kaufman & Killen 2022).

“Traditional methods rarely accommodate different learning styles or address the needs of struggling readers, visual learners, or those with learning disabilities.” -R2

“Lacks inclusivity and adaptability” highlights how this approach can marginalize students who don't fit the prescribed mold. For example, students with learning disabilities, or those who learn best through kinesthetic or visual methods may struggle to thrive in a system that prioritizes rote memorization and a uniform pace.

This can lead to disengagement, frustration, and ultimately, hinder reading comprehension and overall academic success for a significant portion of the student population. The research thus emphasizes a need for more flexible and responsive reading instruction that acknowledges and caters to the diverse needs of all learners.

Mixed Application Based on Learner's Need

The findings suggested MARUNGKO and Traditional approaches as a blended approach is often seen as optimal. Rather than adhering strictly to one methodology, educators recognize that individual learners benefit from different strategies and paces.

"We need to look at both its strengths and limitations based on key literacy development criteria, such as phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension, and learner engagement." -R4

Integrating the systematic phonetic emphasis of the MARUNGKO approach, especially for struggling readers, with the broader contextual understanding and vocabulary development often facilitated by traditional methods, caters to a wider range of learning styles and needs. This mixed application allows teachers to leverage the strengths of each approach, addressing foundational reading skills while simultaneously fostering comprehension and a love of reading. Therefore, the perceived effectiveness lies not in choosing one over the other, but in skillfully combining them to create a more personalized and adaptable learning experience.

Table 3 Advantages and Challenges of the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach

Theme	Code
Strengths of MARUNGKO Approach	Improved reading skills Develop phonemic awareness
Strengths of Traditional Approach	Structured routine Supports memorization and order.
Challenges in MARUNGKO Approach	Ineffective for teaching English Difficulty in distinguishing similar sounds Implementation
Challenges in Traditional Approach	Rote memorization Lack of interaction One size fits all instruction

Note. This table presents the advantages and challenges of both the MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach.

Strengths of MARUNGKO Approach

Findings indicated that the MARUNGKO Approach demonstrates strengths in two key areas: improved reading skills and the development of phonemic awareness.

"Emphasizes teaching letter sounds first, not letter names, which helps children develop strong phonemic awareness—crucial for decoding words. Introduces sounds and letters in a logical, easy-to-learn order, starting with common and easy sounds." -R3

Studies consistently highlight that students taught using the MARUNGKO Approach exhibit significant improvements in their reading abilities compared to those taught using traditional methods (Cane et al., 2025). This improvement stems from the method's systematic and sequential introduction of letter sounds. Furthermore, the approach is shown to effectively develop phonemic awareness, the ability to hear and manipulate individual sounds in words. This crucial skill is foundational for reading success, allowing students to decode words more easily and ultimately comprehend text more effectively. The emphasis on phonics and structured progression are central to these observed strengths.

Strengths of Traditional Approach

Findings indicated that a structured routine, a key component of the traditional approach, significantly aids in memorization and understanding of order.

"Lessons follow a clear, consistent routine (alphabet drills, copying, memorization), which can provide stability and order for young learners." -R3

“Follows a clear, consistent routine- alphabet first, then syllables, then words - which can help students feel secure and organized in their learning.” -R4

The predictability and repetition inherent in established routines create a supportive environment for learning and retention. Studies have shown that when information is presented within a familiar and predictable framework, learners are better able to encode, store, and retrieve that information (Crespo & Recario, 2024). This is particularly true for rote memorization tasks and for grasping sequential concepts where order is critical. The structured nature of traditional approaches, therefore, leverages the cognitive benefits of routine to enhance learning outcomes in these specific areas.

Challenges in MARUNGKO Approach

Findings indicated that the MARUNGKO Approach, while effective for teaching Filipino literacy, faces several challenges when applied to English language instruction. One significant issue is its ineffectiveness in teaching English. Some studies have proven that MARUNGKO Approach can be effectively used in teaching reading in English (Casupanan & Fastidio, 2024).

“The MARUNGKO Approach is designed specifically for Filipino language phonics. Teaching English or other languages with irregular phonics rules can be difficult using this method alone.” -R3

The approach, designed specifically for the phonological structure of Filipino, struggles to address the more complex and nuanced sounds of English.

Furthermore, the method presents difficulty in distinguishing similar sounds that are common in English but less prominent or absent in Filipino.

“Some learners, especially very young or struggling readers, find it hard to distinguish similar sound (e.g. m, vs, n, or s, vs, sh)” -R4

This stems from the approach's reliance on simplified syllable structures that can blur the distinctions between phonemes crucial for English comprehension and pronunciation.

Finally, the implementation of the MARUNGKO Approach in English contexts can be problematic as teachers may lack the training and resources necessary to adapt the method effectively for a different language system.

“Challenges in its implementation” -R1

These challenges highlighted the limitations of directly transferring a literacy approach designed for one language to another with a distinct phonological and grammatical structure.

Challenges in Traditional Approach

Findings indicated that reliance on rote memorization hinders deepened understanding and the ability to apply knowledge in novel situations. Students often struggle to retain information learned through memorization alone, and this approach often fails to cultivate critical thinking skills.

“Learned often memorize letter names without understanding their sounds, making it hard for them to decode or read simple words.” -R4

Furthermore, studies revealed that a lack of interaction in the classroom, both between students and between students and the instructor, diminishes engagement and limits opportunities for collaborative learning and peer support.

“Limited Student Engagement Slow Development of Reading Fluency One-Size-Fits-All Instruction Overemphasis on Letter Names” -R3

The one-size-fits-all instructional model, where the same material and pace are applied to all learners, is found to be ineffective in addressing the diverse learning needs and styles of students. This can lead to

disengagement, frustration, and ultimately lower academic achievement for many learners who are not well-served by this uniform approach. Overall, the research underscores the need for a shift towards more interactive, personalized, and conceptually focused learning environments.

Table 4 Recommendations from teachers who integrate both approaches.

Theme	Code
Improving Traditional Approach	Interactive Strategies Trainings Updated materials
Strengthening MARUNGKO Approach	Print materials Standards for teaching English Parental Involvement
Suggested Practices for Teachers	Combination of both approach Customize strategy depending on student feedback

Note. This table presents recommendations from teachers who integrate both approaches.

Improving Traditional Approach

Findings consistently point towards the benefits of modernizing and enhancing established methods. The implementation of "Interactive Strategies," suggests a shift from passive learning or execution to more engaging and participative approaches. A study shows that interactive strategies in teaching can help make students motivated and have a more meaningful learning (Roldán et al., 2021). Supporting this transition requires "Trainings" to equip individuals with the necessary skills to utilize new technologies and strategies effectively.

"Add engaging, hands-on learning experiences like clapping syllables, using manipulatives, and interactive games to boost student engagement and cater to different learning styles." - R3

"We need to address several common challenges and provide targeted supports that can modernize and enhance its impact without losing its structure." - R4

"Ensure access to high-quality instructional materials that align with the traditional approach" - R5

Last, the content of these trainings, as well as supporting documentation and resources, must be updated, reflecting the latest best practices, technological advancements, and evolving knowledge in the field. The overarching implication is that while traditional approaches may hold inherent value, they often benefit significantly from strategic integration with modern tools, techniques, and actively engaging methods, provided that adequate training and updated resources are available to facilitate effective implementation.

Strengthening MARUNGKO Approach

Findings suggested that strengthening the MARUNGKO Approach can be beneficial. When it comes to helping kids learn to read, printed materials are important. Studies show that having good books and worksheets specifically designed for the MARUNGKO method makes a difference.

"It should be printed as a reading book for easy access." - R5

Also, even though we're talking about MARUNGKO, it's important to remember standards for teaching English too. Kids need a strong base in their native language, but learning English is also important for their future.

"Since MARUNGKO is tailored to Filipino phonics, adding guidelines or modules for teaching English reading skills would support bilingual learners and help with language transfer." - R3

"Teacher training Supplementary materials Assessment tools Parental involvement" - R1

Finally, the research highlighted that parental involvement is key. When parents are involved and support what their kids are learning at school using MARUNGKO principles, the kids tend to do much better. So, having the

right materials, considering English standards, and getting parents involved all help make the MARUNGKO approach even more effective.

Suggested Practices for Teachers

Findings suggested that teachers shouldn't stick to just one way of teaching. Instead, the best approach seems to be using a combination of different teaching methods.

"MARUNGKO Approach and traditional approach" -R5

But, and this is key, teachers need to customize how they teach based on what they're hearing from their students. In other words, pay attention to student feedback – are they understanding the lessons? Are they engaged? If not, teachers should be flexible and adjust their strategies to better meet student needs. A "one-size-fits-all" approach doesn't work; teachers need to adapt and respond to the students in their classroom.

"Integrate the best practices from each approach in teaching reading to the learners" - R3

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarized the findings, draw conclusions, and derives recommendations based on the results of the study. The primary objective of the study is to gather teachers' perceptions involving MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach particularly in supporting struggling readers in Bubukal Elementary School, Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Summary of Findings

Based on the data collected, gathered, analyzed, and interpreted. The researchers came up with the following results presented in accordance with the research questions formulated in the objectives of the study.

1. Understanding and Familiarity in MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach

The study evaluated the teachers' perceptions based on their understanding and familiarity in MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach for struggling readers. The findings revealed that most of them understand Traditional Approach as explicit, and systematic phonics-based instruction focusing on sound letter relationships. Along with it, the study highlighted the use of multisensory activities as a good strategy to make learning reading engaging for young children.

2. Perceived effectiveness of MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach

The study evaluated teachers' perceptions based on the perceived effectiveness of MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach. Based on the findings, MARUNGKO Approach found effective and engaging approach especially for beginning readers in early grades. In contrast, traditional approach sees as rigid foundational method. Based on the findings, this approach doesn't really cater the diverse needs of all learners. Moreover, findings suggested combining both approaches promotes inclusivity for struggling readers.

3. Advantages and Challenges in MARUNGKO and Traditional Approach

The MARUNGKO approach effectively improves reading skills and phonemic awareness by teaching letter sounds before names. The Traditional Approach fosters a supportive learning environment through clear routines. However, MARUNGKO struggles with English instruction, and the Traditional Approach limits student interaction due to rote memorization and standardized teaching.

4. Recommendations from teachers' who integrate and implement both approach

Teachers perceive a need for interactive strategies, training, and updated materials to enhance traditional teaching. For the MARUNGKO Approach, specific printed materials and English teaching guidelines for early

grades are recommended. Overall suggestions include parent involvement, combining both approaches, and adapting strategies based on student feedback.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed a significant difference between the MARUNGKO Approach and the Traditional Approach in addressing the needs of struggling readers. The data suggests that the MARUNGKO Approach is more effective in improving reading performance, particularly due to its structured, phonics-based methods and contextual learning strategies. As a result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference is rejected. This outcome emphasizes the importance of implementing more responsive and engaging reading interventions, such as the MARUNGKO Approach, especially for learners who face difficulties in literacy acquisition.

Recommendations

For Educators/Teachers

The findings clearly suggest that embracing a blend of the MARUNGKO and Traditional approaches can be profoundly beneficial for struggling readers.

- 1. Integrate and Enrich-** Do not abandon traditional phonics; instead, enrich them with the engaging and systematic elements of MARUNGKO.
- 2. Go Multisensory-** Incorporate more multisensory activities (such as games, chants, and visual aids) to make learning enjoyable and effective, particularly for young learners.
- 3. Individualize-** Remember that one size doesn't fit all. Tailor your approach based on student feedback and individual needs.

For Policy Makers

It is time to consider investing in resources and training that support the integration of MARUNGKO principles into early literacy programs.

- 1. Invest in Resources-** Provide teachers with access to updated and age-appropriate materials specifically designed for the MARUNGKO Approach, especially in English literacy.
- 2. Support Training-** Offer comprehensive training to support the effective integration of MARUNGKO principles into early literacy programs.
- 3. Encourage Parental Involvement-** Consider initiatives that encourage and support parent-led literacy activities at home.

For Future Researchers

This study has highlighted the potential of the MARUNGKO Approach, but there is still much to explore to solidify its application and efficacy.

- 1. Quantitative Studies-** Conduct quantitative research exploring the difference between the MARUNGKO Approach and Traditional Approach based on student's pre-test and post-test results following an intervention.
- 2. Long-Term Effects-** Investigate the long-term effects of integrated MARUNGKO and Traditional methods on reading comprehension and overall academic achievement.
- 3. Adaptation Studies-** Conduct studies on how to effectively adapt the MARUNGKO Approach for English language instruction, addressing the challenges of differing phonetics.
- 4. Comparative Research-** Consider comparing the MARUNGKO Approach with other existing reading methodologies.

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