

# Improving Pupils' Grammar and Oral Language Development and Transfer Stage Using the Strategies of the Four-Pronged Approach

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## ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study investigated the effectiveness of the Four-Pronged Approach's components Grammar and Oral Language Development (GOLD) and Transfer Stage (TS) in improving reading outcomes among Grade 5 pupils. Fifth graders were divided into an experimental group, which received instruction emphasizing GOLD and TS through grammar, oral language, and phonemic awareness activities, and a control group, which continued with regular instruction. Pre- and post-tests assessed grammar/oral proficiency and reading transfer skills over 78 instructional sessions across three months. Results showed that the experimental group had statistically significant gains in TS ( $p < .01$ ), indicating enhanced ability to apply decoding, phonemic awareness, and reading skills across contexts. Gains in GOLD were positive but did not reach statistical significance, likely due to higher baseline performance. Comparison with earlier studies (e.g., Baog et al., 2023; Cullamar & Maghuyop, 2024; Gibbs et al., 2024) suggests that targeted phonemic and oral language interventions produce reliable improvements in vocabulary, listening comprehension, decoding, and oral expression among learners at risk. Implications include integrating GOLD and TS-focused activities into daily instruction and prioritizing early, scaffolded exposure to phonemic awareness for robust reading transfer.

**Keywords:** English as a Second Language, Four-Pronged Approach, Grammar and Oral Language Development, Transfer Stage

## INTRODUCTION

Reading remains one of the most vital foundations for lifelong learning, academic success, and participation in a literate society. As the primary means through which learners acquire, process, and communicate information, reading proficiency is essential not only for understanding texts but also for fostering higher-order thinking, language development, and overall academic achievement. However, despite ongoing efforts by educators and policymakers, reading difficulties persist among Filipino learners, as reflected in various national and international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), where Filipino pupils continue to perform below expected proficiency levels. These results underscore the urgent need for effective, research-based reading interventions that target the foundational and higher-order components of literacy.

Reading is not a single skill but a complex, multifaceted process involving decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, and oral language. Research has consistently shown that weaknesses in phonemic awareness and oral language often hinder learners' ability to decode and comprehend text (Murphy, 2021; Rehfeld et al., 2022). In the Philippine context, these challenges are further complicated by multilingualism, where children must navigate learning in multiple languages while mastering the fundamentals of reading (Abdon & Barrios, 2022; Mohohlwane et al., 2023). Such linguistic diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for literacy instruction, particularly in designing approaches that promote skill transfer across languages and contexts.

To address these challenges, educators have increasingly turned to integrated and balanced reading programs that combine code-based instruction (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics) with meaning-based activities (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, oral expression). This shift from isolated skill teaching toward integrated literacy

development aligns with current empirical evidence that emphasizes explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, coupled with meaningful opportunities for application and transfer (Baog et al., 2023; Pascual, 2025).

Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of the Four-Pronged Approach in improving reading and oral language skills among Filipino learners. Specifically, it investigates whether the implementation of this approach enhances learners' GOLD and TS competencies compared with regular classroom instruction. In doing so, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting integrated literacy interventions and provide a pedagogical framework for reading instruction responsive to the linguistic realities of the Philippines.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent syntheses emphasize that systematic instruction in the alphabetic code (phonics and phonemic awareness) is essential for early reading, but must be embedded in meaningful, language-rich experiences to develop comprehension and transfer (Rehfeld et al., 2022; Sangers et al., 2025). This integrated, balanced approach moving beyond the “reading wars” supports the foundation of the Four-Pronged Approach's focus on both form and meaning (Mejala, 2024; Murphy, 2021).

Phonemic awareness (PA) remains one of the strongest predictors of early reading success. Meta-analyses confirm that explicit PA training especially when combined with grapheme instruction produces significant gains in decoding and word recognition (Rehfeld et al., 2022; Murphy, 2021). Local studies in the Philippines echo these findings: phonemic-awareness strategies significantly improved Grade 2 learners' reading proficiency (Baog et al., 2023), and contextualized, play-based phonemic-awareness activities enhanced kindergarten learners' early literacy (Pascual, 2025). Similarly, manipulative tools that target phonological awareness have been shown to help struggling Grade 4 readers (Cullamar & Maghuyop, 2024). These results validate the **Transfer Stage (TS)** of the Four-Pronged Approach, which emphasizes phonemic decoding and application.

Oral language development, vocabulary, syntax, and discourse strongly predict later reading comprehension (Yu et al., 2023). Interventions that integrate oral language with text-based instruction improve both comprehension and expressive language (Sangers et al., 2025). Locally, communicative competence studies among Filipino learners show that oral practice strengthens grammar, discourse, and sociolinguistic skills (Bautista & Del Valle, 2023), supporting the **GOLD** (Grammar and Oral Language Development) and **CT** (Critical Thinking) components. Grammar instruction, when contextualized within authentic oral and written communication, yields better retention and transfer (Sahagun, 2022).

Language transfer studies highlight that literacy skills developed in one language can support another especially when instruction connects home and school languages. Experimental studies in South Africa showed that reading skills transfer more effectively from home language to a second language with consistent, explicit instruction (Mohohlwane et al., 2023). In the Philippines, phonological-awareness interventions in the mother tongue also improved English reading skills (Abdon & Barrios, 2022), reinforcing the Four-Pronged Approach's principle of integrated transfer through **TS**.

Integrated reading-writing programs further strengthen both decoding and comprehension (van der Sande et al., 2023). Instruction linking reading with writing using texts as models or teaching spelling alongside phonics supports word recognition and fluency (Rehfeld et al., 2022). This aligns with GOLD's aim to teach grammar and oral language meaningfully. Local evidence also shows that learners who engage in communicative, contextualized activities develop stronger confidence and reading interest (Leaño et al., 2022; Mejala, 2024).

Finally, effective reading interventions share three characteristics: sufficient dosage, explicit learning targets, and guided feedback (Rehfeld et al., 2022; Murphy, 2021). When code instruction (phonemic awareness and phonics), oral-language enrichment, and transfer activities are combined such as in the Four-Pronged Approach (GLR → CT → GOLD → TS), they create cumulative and sustained literacy growth (Sangers et al., 2025; Pascual, 2025; Baog et al., 2023).

In summary, both international and Philippine studies converge on the value of balanced, integrated literacy instruction. Yet few have tested a structured classroom model that systematically applies these prongs in sequence. The present study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of the Four-Pronged Approach in improving Grammar and Oral Language Development (GOLD) and Transfer Skills (TS) among learners in a Philippine classroom setting.

## Methods

This study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design to assess the effectiveness of the Four-Pronged Approach in enhancing Grade 5 learners' reading, grammar, and oral language competencies. Two groups were formed: the experimental group, which received instruction based on the Four-Pronged Approach, and the control group, which followed the regular English curriculum. This design allowed for comparison of learning outcomes before and after the intervention.

The study was conducted at Mindanao State University – Integrated Laboratory School, Marawi City, Philippines. A total of 44 fifth-grade pupils participated and were divided equally between the experimental and control groups, ensuring comparable baseline performance based on pretest scores. The experiment ran for three months with 78 instructional sessions, conducted one hour daily (7:30–8:30 a.m., Monday to Friday).

The instructional plan incorporated the four components of the Four-Pronged Approach: Genuine Love for Reading (GLR), Critical Thinking (CT), Grammar and Oral Language Development (GOLD), and Transfer Stage (TS). This study primarily focused on the GOLD and TS components. Activities included collaborative discussions, guided reading, writing tasks, and Think-Pair-Share exercises following the SQ3R strategy (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review). Lessons were designed to be interactive, contextualized, and learner-centered.

A pretest was administered to both groups to establish baseline performance. The experimental group then received instruction based on the Four-Pronged Approach, while the control group continued using the regular curriculum. After three months, both groups took a posttest consisting of parallel items to measure progress in GOLD and TS skills. All sessions were teacher-facilitated under controlled classroom conditions to ensure instructional consistency.

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean and standard deviation described overall performance, while t-tests and z-tests determined significant differences between pretest and posttest results. A significance level of  $p < .01$  was used to test hypotheses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results revealed that both groups demonstrated Above Average performance in GOLD but Below Average in TS, indicating limited ability to transfer learned reading and language skills. The experimental group recorded a z-value of  $-4.75$  for GOLD and  $4.15$  for TS, while the control group obtained  $-0.75$  and  $2.74$ , respectively. These findings affirm that while students possess foundational grammar and oral skills, they struggle to apply these competencies in authentic contexts a challenge observed in other multilingual settings (Murphy, 2021; Rehfeld et al., 2022). Research indicates that transfer skills are strengthened when language instruction connects meaningfully with real-life communication (Mohohlwane et al., 2023).

Following the intervention, the experimental group showed marked improvement in both GOLD (A.M. = 22.18;  $z = -20.54$ ) and TS (A.M. = 5.54;  $z = -8.67$ ), signifying enhanced proficiency and transfer of learning. In contrast, the control group's gains were minimal (GOLD A.M. = 17.55; TS A.M. = 2.41). The results validate that the Four-Pronged Approach effectively promotes literacy through a balance of code-based (grammar, decoding) and meaning-based (comprehension, oral expression) instruction. This aligns with Loewen et al. (2009) and Yu et al. (2023), who found that integrated language instruction enhances fluency, comprehension, and communicative competence.

The experimental group's mean gain was higher for both subskills 2.36 in GOLD and 2.73 in TS with

statistically significant differences ( $p < .01$ ). Meanwhile, the control group showed negligible or declining gains. These findings echo Márquez et al. (2009), emphasizing that transfer learning occurs when learners actively apply and reflect on acquired knowledge.

Posttest results revealed significant differences between groups: GOLD ( $t = 5.09$ ) and TS ( $t = 2.90$ ) exceeded the critical value (2.704), confirming that the Four-Pronged Approach was more effective than traditional instruction. Learners under this model demonstrated higher engagement, better comprehension, and improved oral fluency.

## CONCLUSION

The study established that the Four-Pronged Approach significantly enhances learners' grammar, oral language development, and transfer of reading skills. Pupils exposed to this framework outperformed those under regular instruction, confirming the approach's effectiveness in promoting integrated literacy learning. By combining motivation (GLR), comprehension (CT), language accuracy (GOLD), and skill application (TS), the approach fosters not only cognitive growth but also communicative confidence key components of functional literacy in the 21st century classroom.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Administrators: Institutionalize a comprehensive literacy program grounded in the Four-Pronged Approach to support reading and language development across grade levels.
2. For Teachers: Incorporate interactive, learner-centered activities (e.g., SQ3R, Think-Pair-Share, guided discussions) to reinforce GOLD and TS. Continuous professional training in integrated reading instruction is recommended.
3. For Parents and Guardians: Encourage home-based reading routines and oral storytelling to strengthen children's interest and vocabulary development.
4. For Learners: Engage in self-directed reading and speaking tasks that integrate grammar and comprehension for deeper understanding and expression.
5. For Future Researchers: Conduct longitudinal and mixed-method studies to further explore the impact of the Four-Pronged Approach across diverse language contexts and grade levels.

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