

# Unlocking Young Minds: Educators' Journeys with the Marungko Approach in Teaching Primary Learners

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**Abstract:** This study explored the experiences of educators used the Marungko Approach to teach early reading skills at Catumbalon Elementary School in Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines. This qualitative descriptive study focused on identifying the challenges teachers faced, the strategies they used to overcome these challenges, their perspectives on the approach's effectiveness, and its impact on the teaching and learning environment. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven purposively selected teachers directly applied the Marungko Approach in Grade 1 to Grade 3 classrooms. Findings revealed four main themes: challenges in implementation, strategies employed, perceived effectiveness, and influence on classroom dynamics. Challenges included learners' varied preparedness, difficulty maintaining interest, diverse reading abilities, and large class sizes. Educators viewed the Marungko Approach as effective in developing foundational reading skills, boosting learner confidence, and providing structured instruction. Furthermore, the approach enhanced learner engagement, encouraged interactive and collaborative learning, and positively influenced classroom dynamics. These factors contributed to a supportive and motivating learning environment. The study concludes that the Marungko Approach is a practical and adaptable method for improving early literacy. The study concludes that continuous teacher training, manageable class sizes, incorporation of interactive materials, and strengthened parent-teacher partnerships to improve reading instruction. The study recommends that teachers conduct diagnostic assessments, use interactive tools and technology, emphasized repetition, and promoted parental involvement. Overall, The findings provide valuable insights for educators, school administrators, and policymakers seeking to enhance early literacy programs and support students' reading development through effective teaching methods.

**Keywords:** Marungko Approach, Early Reading Skills, Teacher Experience, Challenges and Strategies, Effectiveness and Impact.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that supported all other learning and knowledge acquisition. It helped students think critically, use their imagination, and communicate effectively, allowing them to engage with various subjects like Math, Science, and Social studies. In the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Philippines was ranked 77th out of 81 countries. The country's performance was also below the global average across all assessed categories. Educators today used diverse teaching strategies to meet students' needs and encourage faster, more effective learning. Educators can address reading comprehension challenges at the foundational level by using

effective teaching approaches that develop essential skills, such as recognizing letter names and sounds, distinguishing initial sounds, reading familiar words, and fluently reading passages, ensuring a strong reading foundation before progressing to higher levels (Boltron & Ramos, 2022). Methods like the Marungko approach are designed to enhance literacy and make learning more engaging for young learners. Understanding these differences underscores the importance of adapting teaching approaches, such as Marungko, to ensure all students become confident, proficient readers.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, challenges, and strategies of educators who use

the Marungko Approach to unlock young minds. By exploring how educators implemented this method, the research highlighted the various difficulties they faced and the creative solutions they employ to enhance reading instruction. This study aimed to offer valuable insights into the practical application of the Marungko Approach, providing recommendations that can support and empower teachers in fostering foundational reading skills among their students.

The study was anchored on the Phonics Theory of Linnea Ehri (2001), which explains that reading development begins through understanding the relationship between letters and their corresponding sounds. The theory emphasizes that learners develop reading skills by mastering phonemic awareness, sound recognition, and word decoding. This theory is appropriate to the study because the Marungko Approach uses a phonics-based method in teaching reading, where learners are introduced to letter sounds before progressing to syllables, words, and sentences. Through repetitive practice, sound blending, and guided reading activities, learners gradually improve their reading fluency and comprehension. The theory supports the idea that systematic phonics instruction helps learners become confident and effective readers.

#### ➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The study entitled *Unlocking Young Minds: Educators' Journeys with the Marungko Approach in Catumbalon Elementary School* sought to answer the following questions:

- What challenges do educators face when implementing the Marungko Approach in teaching reading?
- What strategies do educators use to overcome the challenges in teaching reading using the Marungko Approach?
- What are the personal experiences and views of educators regarding the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in teaching reading ?
- How does the Marungko Approach impact the teaching and learning environment, as perceived by educators?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Marungko Approach was initially introduced in a public elementary school in Marungko, Angat, Bulacan, by Nooraihan Ali and Josefina Urbano in 1967. They described the method as "phono syllabic," focusing on teaching the correct pronunciation of individual sounds and blending these sounds into syllables and words (Santos, 2015). The Marungko Approach is a popular method for teaching reading in Filipino, widely implemented in public schools, private learning institutions, and home-based learning environments across the Philippines, it was recognized by the Department of Education as an effective teaching strategy (DepEd Tambayan, 2023).

The Marungko Approach sequences letters by sound rather than following the traditional alphabetic order, using localized songs and poems as teaching tools, it focuses on mastering one sound at a time before progressing to the next,

eventually combining sounds into words, phrases, and sentences (Cortez, 2023). Studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in improving reading skills, as shown by significant gains in students' pre- and post-test scores. The Marungko sequence is organized based on the frequency of letter usage in the Filipino language, starting with the most common letters and progressing to the least common.

Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer (2013) also added that unlike phonics instruction programs in English, where vowels are introduced after consonants, the Marungko Approach introduces vowels early in the sequence, alongside certain consonants. For instance, the sequence begins with the letters m, s, and a, and phonemic manipulation, such as blending letter sounds into words, is taught at this stage. Children are encouraged to form words using these letters, such as "masa" and "sama." As students progress, additional letters like i, o, b, e, and u are introduced, allowing them to read words like ube (purple yam), ubo (cough), uso (modern), and usa (deer). They then practice reading phrases (e.g., ang ubas sa mesa or grapes on the table) and eventually advance to sentences using these letter combinations, such as May ubas si Ela (Ela has grapes)

The Marungko Approach has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in developing early literacy skills among young learners. Research studies and educational reports consistently highlight its positive impact on reading fluency, phonemic awareness, and comprehension.

A study conducted by Alauya & Basmayor (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing the reading performance of Grade Four pupils at Pindulonan Elementary School in Bacolod Kalawi, Lanao del Sur. It examined the significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores following the implementation of the approach. Results showed a highly significant improvement in the posttest scores compared to the pretest scores, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach. The study concluded that reading is essential in all aspects of human activity, and the Marungko Approach is specifically designed to provide pupils with the necessary reading skills to enhance their performance.

A study was conducted at Matalam Central Elementary School in Matalam, Cotabato by Dimacial & Lumapenet (2023), evaluated the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing pupils' reading development. The results showed that the approach was highly practiced and had a significant impact on reading development. Specifically, phonics and word recognition were rated as outstanding, fluency and comprehension as very satisfactory, and vocabulary as satisfactory. Furthermore, the findings revealed a significant relationship between the use of the Marungko Approach and improvements in pupils' reading development, particularly in phonics, word recognition, and comprehension.

A study conducted by Mabuti, et.al. (2024) evaluated the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in teaching mother tongue-based language to Kindergarten students

through online classes in two public elementary schools. In the Cebu City Division, results revealed a significant improvement in reading for the experimental group compared to the control group, but no notable differences in writing or numeracy. Conversely, in the Lapu-Lapu City Division, the experimental group outperformed the control group in reading, writing, and numeracy. These findings suggest that integrating the Marungko Approach into online classes for mother tongue-based language instruction in Kindergarten is effective.

The studies collectively demonstrate the effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in enhancing reading skills across different educational contexts and grade levels. These findings affirm the Marungko Approach as an adaptable and impactful method for fostering reading development in diverse educational settings.

Phonological awareness is widely recognized as a foundational element of early reading development. It refers to the learner's ability to recognize and manipulate sound structures in language, including syllables, onset-rime patterns, and phonemes (Gillon, 2017). Research affirms that children who demonstrate strong phonological awareness in early grades are more likely to achieve reading fluency and comprehension in later schooling (Anthony & Francis, 2020). This suggests that literacy instruction must begin with explicit sound awareness activities, especially for learners with limited pre-literacy exposure.

A longitudinal study by Ozernov-Palchik and Gaab (2016) found that early phonological awareness significantly predicts reading success across languages, reinforcing the importance of stepwise phonics instruction. Their research emphasized that instructional frameworks focusing on sound-symbol correspondence such as Marungko help mitigate early reading difficulties and prevent long-term decoding problems. These findings align with the premise of the Marungko Approach, which prioritizes systematic sound introduction and blending to aid early literacy.

International literature supports the effectiveness of phonics-based instruction for beginning readers. According to Castles, Rastle, and Nation (2018), systematic phonics is one of the most evidence-based methods for teaching reading, as it builds decoding skills and automaticity. Their large-scale review of literacy interventions concluded that explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships accelerates word recognition and reading fluency, especially for struggling learners.

Similarly, Johnston and Watson (2020) demonstrated through long-term cohort studies that synthetic phonics programs significantly improve reading accuracy, spelling ability, and comprehension among primary learners. Their findings underscore the value of structured literacy approaches that follow a sequenced introduction of sounds—an instructional characteristic directly comparable to the Marungko Approach's sound order. The alignment between these international findings and the Marungko Approach

validates its pedagogical design within Philippine classrooms.

Cabardo (2020) investigated the role of structured phonics instruction in improving early-grade literacy performance and found that explicit, sequenced phonics activities significantly strengthened learners' decoding abilities. His study revealed that students exposed to systematic sound-symbol instruction-combined with guided oral reading tasks-performed better in word recognition than those taught through whole-language approaches. This demonstrates that structured phonics supports the foundational skills needed for reading fluency, directly aligning with the systematic sequencing emphasized in the Marungko Approach.

The National Reading Panel (2000) conducted an extensive review of phonics research and concluded that beginning readers must learn the alphabetic system, specifically letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns and apply these in reading; that systematic phonics instruction leads to significantly greater reading growth than unsystematic or absent phonics instruction, especially when introduced in kindergarten or first grade; and that systematic phonics programs, used effectively across ages, abilities, and socioeconomic groups over many years, demonstrate that phonics is a vital component of a successful reading curriculum

Students are more likely to become successful independent readers when they practice newly taught letter-sound relationships in connected text. Giving them immediate opportunities to apply these skills helps them use decoding strategies on unfamiliar words and strengthens their overall decoding ability (Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994; Cheatham & Allor, 2012).

Phonemic mastery is a key skill that enhances reading fluency by helping readers decode words efficiently. By developing phonemic awareness which is the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds in words where learners can link sounds to letters, blend them into words, and read accurately, smoothly, and expressively (Lindsey, 2024).

Degamo and Manalo (2022) examined the effects of phonemic mastery drills on the reading fluency of Grade 2 learners and reported considerable improvements in accuracy, pacing, and overall decoding proficiency. Their findings highlighted how repeated practice in blending, segmentation, and phoneme identification supported both struggling and average readers, particularly in developing automaticity. Because the Marungko Approach relies heavily on repetitive sound-based reinforcement, the results of this study help validate the approach's emphasis on mastery before progression.

Reyes and Abulon (2023) explored the application of multisensory phonics strategies in diverse classroom settings, observing that learners demonstrated higher engagement and better retention of phonics concepts when teachers incorporated visual aids, manipulatives, and kinesthetic

activities. Their research concluded that multisensory instruction provides learners with multiple pathways for processing letter–sound relationships, making phonics learning more interactive and effective. This resonates strongly with the Marungko Approach, which many teachers implement alongside multisensory activities to enhance literacy outcomes.

Literature suggests that learners enter school with varying degrees of readiness, influenced by socioeconomic conditions, home literacy practices, and early childhood education experiences. Snow and Matthews (2016) reported that early literacy gaps emerge as early as kindergarten, with students from low-literacy households displaying limited vocabulary, poor sound recognition, and weak print awareness. These disparities persist when teachers lack strategies for differentiated reading instruction.

In the Philippine context, Mata and Reyes (2021) found that many Grade 1 and Grade 2 pupils begin formal schooling without mastery of basic literacy skills, particularly in rural and public schools where print exposure is minimal. Their study revealed that insufficient foundational skills among early graders impede the smooth implementation of structured phonics methods. This supports the challenges reported by educators in your study, such as lacking letter-sound familiarity and low learner readiness, underscoring the need for preliminary diagnostic assessments.

Effective literacy instruction requires teachers to employ varied strategies tailored to learners' needs. Hammond et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of scaffolding, where teachers gradually release responsibility to students as they build reading proficiency. Through strategic repetition, modeling, and guided practice, teachers support learners in gaining confidence and fluency. Such strategies mirror those employed by teachers in the Marungko Approach particularly repetitive syllable drills, interactive sound exercises, and multisensory tools.

Another dimension of effective literacy instruction lies in teacher adaptability. Lourenço and Ferreira (2021) noted that teachers who adopt multimodal approaches combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities produce higher literacy gains among early learners. This is consistent with the use of letter blocks, games, and technology-based tools reported in your study. Moreover, differentiated instruction, such as grouping students according to reading levels, was found by Connor et al. (2018) to significantly improve reading outcomes, validating the grouping strategies employed by educators in your context.

Digital literacy tools have become increasingly integrated into reading instruction. According to Neumann and Neumann (2017), technology-enhanced phonics programs increase student motivation and engagement, especially when paired with interactive visuals and sound-based games. Their findings showed that digital flashcards, phonics apps, and animated syllable drills help reinforce sound recognition more effectively than traditional rote methods alone.

In the Philippines, a study by Datu and Valdez (2022) found that kindergarten and early-grade learners exposed to technology-supported literacy activities demonstrated improved phonemic awareness and reading confidence. This aligns with educators' experiences in your study, where interactive PowerPoint lessons, TV-based flashcards, and phonics videos enhanced learner engagement, particularly for easily distracted learners.

Extensive research highlights the role of family support in early literacy development. Sénéchal and LeFevre (2014) found that home literacy activities—such as shared book reading and letter-sound practice—substantially predict early reading success. Their Home Literacy Model suggests that parental involvement strengthens vocabulary, decoding skills, and reading motivation.

Locally, de Guzman and Junio-Sabio (2023) observed that teachers who actively collaborate with parents create stronger reading habits among learners. Their study emphasized home-based reading assignments guided by clear teacher instructions, echoing the approach used by educators in your study who send reading materials for parents to reinforce at home. This indicates that successful implementation of phonics approaches like Marungko is heavily supported by consistent practice in both school and home environments.

Research consistently shows that an engaging classroom environment directly influences literacy development. According to Guthrie and Klauda (2016), student motivation to read significantly increases when reading instruction is interactive, collaborative, and emotionally supportive. Activities such as peer reading, group games, and oral reading performances foster social learning and enhance reading confidence.

A more recent study by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2022) highlights how differentiated and collaborative classroom structures help address learning gaps by allowing peers to model reading behavior and support each other. This aligns with the positive classroom dynamics reported in your findings, where learners assisted classmates with reading tasks and displayed improved participation and enthusiasm. Cooperative learning and learner collaboration not only enhance reading outcomes but also promote a supportive classroom culture essential for early literacy success.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the implementation and outcomes of the Marungko Approach in promoting early literacy. Qualitative descriptive research provides data that captures the "who, what, and where" of events or experiences from a subjective viewpoint (Kim, et. al., 2017), this will focus on gathering detailed accounts of educators' experiences, challenges, and teaching strategies. Through an analysis of narratives and observations, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the approach's role in enhancing literacy skills within the context of Catumbalon Elementary School.

Participants include Seven (7) educators from Catumbalon Elementary School. Purposive sampling is employed to select educators with relevant experience, ensuring that the data collected provides meaningful insights into the approach's application and impact.

#### IV. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Presented in this chapter are the themes from the findings gathered from the responses of seven (7) educators at Catumbalon Elementary School regarding their experiences with the Marungko Approach.

##### ➤ *Challenges of Educators Faced in Implementing the Marungko Approach in Teaching Reading.*

##### • *Theme 1: Challenges in Implementing the Marungko Approach*

This theme highlights the difficulties teachers face in applying the Marungko Approach. It reflects on learners' readiness, engagement, abilities, and environmental constraints that affect effective implementation.

##### ✓ *Subtheme 1.1: Insufficient Learners' Preparedness*

A key challenge in implementing Marungko is learners' varying preparedness, particularly their knowledge of basic letter sounds. Many Grade 2 students still struggle with foundational reading skills expected to have been acquired in Grade 1.

- *Participant 1: "Ang challenge? Seguro ang mga challenges kay sa akong grade 2 man ko so mao to siya kanang dili pa sila kabalo og sounds, dili pa sila ready" (The challenge? Maybe the challenges for me were since I am teaching Grade 2, so it was that they didn't know the sounds yet.*
- *Participant 3: "alang ni sa grade 2 no nga mga bata nga wala pagyud naka kat.on og pag basa sukad sa grade 1 so maong mag lisud silage apas sa lesson".( This is for Grade 2 children who still haven't learned how to read since Grade 1, so they struggle to catch up with the lesson*
- *Participant 4: pag try nako last year og marungko ang challenge gyd seguro nga akong ma ingun is naay bata nga kapilahun nimo shag balik bsag letter M ma limtan gyd niya pag ka ugma so naay gyuy bata nga ingun ana , so mao mn gyd na letter M mn gyd tas mo start perme naa gyuy bata nga ingun ana (when I tried Marungko last year, the real challenge I can say is that there are kids who, even if you repeat, for example the letter M, they really forget it by the next day. So there really are kids like that).*

The participants emphasize that many Grade 2 learners enter the classroom without the necessary letter sound knowledge, which is fundamental for Marungko. This unpreparedness causes difficulty in keeping pace with lessons and requires teachers to revisit basic concepts repeatedly. High student-to-teacher ratios restrict the ability to address

individual learner needs, thus posing a significant hurdle to the success of Marungko in crowded classrooms.

This aligns with global evidence showing that large class sizes that is often 30+ students, impede phonics instruction by reducing opportunities for individualized support and diagnostic feedback (Springer et al., 2024).

##### ✓ *Subtheme 1.2: Learners' Lack of Interest*

- *Participant 2: "Ang mga hagit sa pag tudlo usahay lisud kayo ang mga bata kay dali rana sila ma distract then wala silay klarong focus og kinahanglan daghan og damo pagid ka nga pasensya" (The challenges in teaching—sometimes it's really hard because the kids get distracted easily, and they don't have clear focus, and you really need to have a lot and even more patience.)*
- *Participant 3: "ang uban pud dili intiresado labi na kung pa balik balikon bitaw nimo og basa sa syllables nga kanang ilang na dunggan murag na sumhan na sila so mao na nga sa grade 2 dli nasya unta pwedi nga mag gamit og marungko kay grade 2 na pero kay sa mga naay mga bata nga kinahanglan pa og marungko nga approach sa pagpabasa labi natong mga slow learners so mao na nga gagamit gyud ko og marungko approach" (Others are also not interested, especially if you keep letting them read the syllables over and over—they seem to get bored. That's why in Grade 2, it shouldn't be that you're still using Marungko because it's already Grade 2. But since there are still kids who need the Marungko approach in learning to read—especially the slow learners—that's why I still use the Marungko approach.)*
- *Participant 6: Tinuod ang ilaha bitawng interest mubo ra kaayo tak.an (True, Their interest is really short)*
- *Participant 7: Difficulty to maintain the learners interest no, kanang usahay wala gyud silay interest isa gyud na sa mga challenges sa atoa nga mga teacher labi na sa amoa nga public school teacher mag lisud tag catch up ana nga mga butang (difficulty to maintain the learners' interest, right? Sometimes they really have no interest — that is one of the challenges for us teachers, especially for us public school teachers. It's hard to catch up with those kinds of things.) Participant 7 added : laziness sa bata ang pagka tapulan dli man gyud na normal man gyud na sa mga bata tapulan kay unsaman ganahan man sila mag sge nalang og dula (Third is the laziness of the children that is normal for kids because they want to just keep playing.)*

The challenge of sustaining learner interest affects the pace and success of Marungko. Teachers find it hard to engage students who are easily distracted or reluctant to participate, especially in large public school settings where resources for individualized attention are limited. Studies show that rote phonics practice can diminish learner engagement unless paired with interactive or multisensory methods (Malik et al., 2024) .

Learners' differing reading abilities create barriers in using Marungko effectively, especially when motivation is low and sound identification is weak. The following are the participants statements:

- Participant 5: *Number 1 is the main challenges implementing the marungko approach is the reading ability sa bata. kay dipindi man gud sa bata kay ang uban kay ang marungko sayon ra gyud siya pero kay ang bata dili siya intirisado wala gyud.( Number 1 is the main challenge in implementing the Marungko approach is the reading ability of the child. It depends on the child because for some, Marungko is really easy, but for the child who is not interested, they really don't like it)*
- Participant 5 added: *Then kung dili pud siya ka identify sa sounds mag lisud siya gihapon. (Then, if the child also cannot identify the sounds, they will still encounter difficulty.)*
- Participant 6: *ang mga challenges kanang mga bata nga slow learner, kinahanglan balik balikon gyud nimo, repeat and repeat kay ang ilang ahmm. Interest sap ag basa dali ma pul-an(The challenges are with the slow learners, you really have to repeat again and again, repeat and repeat because their interest in reading gets bored easily)*

The variance in learners' reading skills requires teachers to spend extra time on repetition and reinforcement. Low interest and inability to recognize sounds make the approach less effective unless adaptations are made. This is consistent with findings that students with inadequate phonemic foundation need repeated reinforcement before showing fluency gains (ResearchGate review, 2024).

#### ✓ Subtheme 1.4: Class Overpopulation

Large class sizes impede effective Marungko implementation by limiting teacher-student interaction and individual support. As participant 7 said:

- Participant 7: *ang large class size daghan kaayog mga bata ang ratio sa teacher dapat 1 is to 25 pero kay sa public school dili na nato na ma maintain kay tungod sa kadaghan nga population so ang akong klasi is naa nagyud siya sa 40 pupils so dako gyud kaayo siya nga klasi mao ng mag lisud gyud mi og implement aning marungko”( the large class size. There are so many kids. The teacher-to-student ratio should be 1 to 25, but in public schools, we can't maintain that because of the large population. So my class has about 40 pupils already. That's a very big class, so it's really hard for us to implement Marungko)*

High student-to-teacher ratios restrict the ability to address individual learner needs, thus posing a significant hurdle to the success of Marungko in crowded classrooms. Evidence suggests that class-size reduction in early grades significantly improves phonics and word-reading outcomes due to increased teacher contact time and differentiated instruction (Antoniou et al., 2024)

Educators reported that several challenges while applying the Marungko Approach notably the lack of learner preparedness, poor student interest, wide variability in reading abilities, and large class sizes. Many students arrived in school without pre-reading exposure, making even the basics of phonemic instruction difficult to grasp.

According to Bernabe (2024), the Marungko Approach can only succeed when learners have consistent exposure and readiness. Yet, in public schools where large class sizes persist, personalized instruction becomes challenging. In fact, as teachers in your study noted, some students forget even the simplest sounds like “M” despite repeated teaching. This issue is compounded when children lose interest due to boredom from repetitive drills. Boltron and Ramos (2022) emphasized that without differentiated support or engagement tools, struggling readers often remain behind. Overcrowding, lack of tailored attention, and insufficient early exposure are significant barriers that hinder the potential of the Marungko Approach.

These issues are consistent with findings that early grade classrooms, especially in resource-limited public schools, struggle with nonuniform learner readiness, making phonics-based approaches harder to implement successfully (Pagcaliwagan, 2022).

Large class sizes also hinder one-on-one instruction and remediation efforts, reducing the effectiveness of structured reading programs like Marungko (Bernabe, 2024).

#### ➤ Strategies that Educators used to Overcome the Challenges in Teaching Reading Using the Marungko Approach.

Teachers employ several strategies to address the challenges in Marungko implementation, focusing on learner assessment, engagement, repetition, technology use, and parental involvement.

##### • Subtheme 2.1: Diagnostic Assessments

- Participant 1: *mag conduct mi og kanang diagnostic no at first imo man gyud na silang asses kung unsa sila nga level so e asses nimo sya daan kung unsa siya nga level para ma address nimo kung unsa ang need sa bata unsa ba gyud sya beginner reader ba siya so lahi iyang activity lahi ang mga activities sa kanang average nga reader lahi pd ang sa fast readers (So we conduct a diagnostic, right. At first, you really have to assess them to know what level they are. So you assess them first to know what level they are, so you can address what the child needs whether they are really a beginner reader, so their activity is different, the activities for average readers are different, and also different for fast readers.)*
- Participant 3: *ang akong gi buhat gi bahin ang mga bata basi sa ilang level adunay grupo nga sa mga nakahibalo na og basa og aduna pd nga grupo nga ah kinahanglan pa og tabang so sa mga bata nga nag lisud akong pabalik balikon ang basic nga syllables(what I did was group the*

children based on their level. There's a group for those who already know how to read, and a group that still needs help. For those struggling, I keep repeating the basic syllables.

Diagnostic assessments have been shown to significantly improve reading outcomes by enabling targeted intervention for students at various developmental stages (Hernandez et al., 2023; Lee & Tan, 2022). Diagnostic assessments enable more focused and effective teaching by addressing learners' specific reading levels and needs. Classroom-based diagnostic grouping helps teachers address gaps in phonemic awareness more efficiently, as documented in multiple early literacy studies (Parkinson & Smith, 2021).

- *Subtheme 2.2: Use of Interactive Tools*

✓ *Participant 2: sa akong pag gamit sa marungko nag intervention ko og mga blocks ahh letter blocks kanang ga game sila pina ag isa katong mga blocks nga mga letter akon sila ipa kanang ipa letter sounds tapo ako dayun silang ipa paris sa vowels ako dayun ipa basa sa ilaha effective ni siya tungod kay gipa agi nako siya sa game nga strategy. (Hmmm... in my use of Marungko, I did an intervention using blocks, letter blocks, like they play a game using those blocks with letters. I let them do letter sounds, then I let them pair them with vowels, then I let them read. This is effective because I used a game strategy.)*

Engaging learners through tactile and game-based activities increases motivation and supports learning of letter sounds and word formation. Hands-on manipulatives and gamified phonics activities have been found to significantly boost sound-letter correspondence skills and student motivation (Chang et al., 2024). Research indicates that multisensory phonics approaches with tactile and visual materials will enhance retention and decoding among kindergarten and early grade students (Gumanoyskietal, 2022)

✓ *Participant 4: power of repetition gyd sha, balik balik gyd kay dili gyd sha mka proceed sa next nga kuan kay naa may in ana kinahanglan balikbalikun gyd nimo sya (It really is the power of repetition, repeating again and again because they really can't proceed to the next one if there are kids like that. You really have to keep repeating it.)*

Consistent repetition reinforces learning, helping slow learners to retain and apply new skills before moving forward. Consistent repetition has been shown to significantly improve phonological retention and reading fluency among early-grade learners (Thompson & Olivares, 2023). Empirical studies indicate that structured repetition in phonics lessons leads to higher accuracy and confidence in decoding tasks (Rodriguez & Kim, 2022).

- *Subtheme 2.4: Use of Technology*

✓ *Participant 5: So mao nato first ahmm padad.an nako sila og katong mga gipang print out nako ipadala sa ilaha dayun mag flash og sounds sa tv.( So that's why first, I will give them the printed materials I prepared and send it to them, then flash the sounds on the TV.)*

✓ *Participant 7: okay ang among mga strategies nga ginagamit is isa is ang technology which is ang power point na mga interactive activities among gina buhat kay mas ma ing ganyo ang mga bata sa interactive activities (Okay, our strategies that we use one is technology, which is PowerPoint with interactive activities that we make, because the children are more encouraged by interactive activities,)*

- *Subtheme 2.5: Parental Involvement*

Parental involvement is recognized as a vital support mechanism for learner progress.

✓ *Participant 5: e call pd nako ang attention sa paren,t nga mag tinabangay para makahibalo gyud pud. . (I will also call the attention of the parents to work together so the children can really learn)*

✓ *Participant 6: gina involve nako ang parent tagaan nko sila og balasahon dayun ipa gina instruct gyud nako ang parent nga tabangan gyud nimo ang mga bata pabasahon with the help with the parent or kung dili kabalo mo basa ang parent either iyang brother, iyang sister, iyang father(I involve the parents, I give them reading materials and I really instruct the parents to help the kids read, with the help of the parents. If the parents can't read, then either their brother, sister, or father helps)*

Active parental support reinforces classroom learning and promotes reading practice outside school. Educators adapted to these challenges using proactive and context-based strategies and these include diagnostic assessments to group students by ability, interactive tools like letter blocks and games, repetitive practice, integration of technology like PowerPoint and phonics games, and strong collaboration with parents for at-home practice.

Dimacial & Lumapenet (2023) highlighted that interactive teaching tools significantly improve learner attention and literacy outcomes. Likewise, your participants observed increased participation and retention when learners were exposed to digital resources and educational games. Parental involvement was also a strong theme. Teachers sent home printed reading materials and encouraged older family members to assist the learners in reading. This approach echoes findings from Van Steensel et al. (2011), who found family-based literacy programs significantly boost early reading development through consistent reinforcement beyond the classroom.

Recent studies support this, noting that digital tools, especially phonics games and letter-sound apps that leads to

higher literacy engagement and retention in early readers (Day et al., 2024).

Additionally, home-based reading activities, supported by teacher-provided materials, have been shown to significantly accelerate phonemic awareness and vocabulary development among early-grade learners (Pagcaliwagan, 2022).

➤ *Personal Experiences and Views of Educators Regarding the Effectiveness of the Marungko Approach in Teaching Reading.*

• *Theme 3: Effectiveness of the Marungko Approach*

This theme reflects on the observed effectiveness of Marungko in enhancing early literacy, improving student performance, and boosting confidence.

✓ *Subtheme 3.1: Early Literacy*

Marungko facilitates early literacy by making letter sounds and simple words easier to learn.

▪ Participant 2: *effective siya sa mga gagmay nga mga bata tungod kay mas sayon nila nga dali nila masabtan tungod sa letters sounds og dali nila makat. onan ang mga simple nga mga words sama sa masa, mama, bata. (It is effective for small children because it's easier for them to understand through letter sounds, and they can easily learn simple words like masa, mama, bata.)*

▪ Participant 4: *sa akoah dali gyd sha gamitun kay katung uban nga mga bata nga ge gamitan og marungko ahm fast or dali ilang retention, pspas sila na ka tuon (For me, it's really easy to use because those other children who were taught using Marungko, uhm, their retention was fast or easy—they learned quickly)*

The approach is particularly helpful for young learners in quickly grasping phonics and basic vocabulary, facilitating smoother literacy development. Research shows that structured phonics programs significantly enhance early literacy skills, enabling learners to acquire letter-sound correspondence and basic vocabulary more effectively than unstructured methods (Peterson & Albright, 2022).

✓ *Subtheme 3.2: Student Improvement*

Marungko supports learner progress through structured and stepwise reading instruction.

▪ Participant 3: *so effective kaayo siya no sa pag tabang sa mga bata nga ga lisud og basa dira man gud sa marungko approach naay mga structured steps (So it's very effective in helping children who are struggling to read because in the Marungko Approach, there are structured steps)*

▪ Participant 3 added: *Bisan sailing mga classmate dli na sila maulaw kay kabalo naman sila og basa (Even with their classmates, they won't be embarrassed anymore because they already know how to read.)*

▪ Participant 6: *basta I monitor lang gyud nimo every now and then kay kung imong pasagdan malimtan naman na nila labi na kay naay gadgets o dli nana sila sa balay usahay gni kanang gina hatag nako nga basahon inspection oy na lukot lukot raman lage ni wala man gi basa naa ras bag. (As long as you monitor them every now and then, because if you just let them be, they will forget it, especially now that there are gadgets or they're not even at home. Sometimes, the reading material I give them is all crumpled — "Oh, this hasn't even been read, it's just in the bag.")*

Structured Marungko steps help learners build confidence and improve steadily, though consistent monitoring is necessary to maintain gains. Longitudinal studies of tiered phonics approaches demonstrate that students exhibit sustained reading improvements when instruction progresses systematically and is coupled with regular formative assessments (Nguyen & Hart, 2023).

▪ Participant 7: *effective siya kay ang naka nindot sa marungko kay from basic siya nga sound kay in. ana man gyud na diba nga pag basa from basic, from vowel bisan unsa nga approach mag sugod gyud siya sa sound sa vowel (It is effective because what's nice about the Marungko is that it starts from the basic sound because that's really how reading begins, right? From the basics, from the vowels. Whatever approach you use, it really starts with the vowel sounds)*

Starting with basic vowel sounds allows learners to develop strong phonemic awareness, which is critical for reading fluency. Teachers unanimously reported that the Marungko Approach is effective in building foundational literacy skills, especially in improving phonemic awareness, basic sound recognition, and word formation. Through structured and gradual instruction, students who previously struggled became more confident and fluent readers. Recent studies support these observations. For example, Alayua & Basmayor (2023) documented statistically significant improvements in reading performance after Marungko implementation, while Mabuti et al. (2024) found it effective even in online mother tongue instruction among Kindergarten learners.

The structure of the Marungko Approach, starting from basic vowel sounds and progressing to syllables and sentences, helps young learners master literacy systematically, as Bernabe (2024) affirmed, the method significantly enhances word recognition and fluency when used consistently.

Other field-based studies also confirm that systematic phonics instruction, like that in the Marungko Approach, improves decoding and fluency scores significantly even among students in marginalized areas (Cabañero et al., 2024). The strength of the approach lies in its progressive layering, from letter sounds to sentence reading, which allows gradual mastery and boosts learner confidence (Villa, 2020).

➤ *The Marungko' Approach that Impact the Teaching and Learning Environment, as Perceived by Educators*

• *Theme 4: Impact on the Teaching and Learning Environment*

The use of Marungko positively affects learner engagement, interactive learning, participation, and collaborative learning within the classroom.

✓ *Subtheme 4.1: Learner Engagement*

Marungko increases learner engagement through the integration of games and technology.

- *Participant 1: kanang naa gyud siyay influence og kanang impact sa akong pag tudlo in reading so mga bata mas engage ang mga bata dayun ahh kanang malingaw sila kay integrate ang games and technology sa imong ahmm reading lesson (yes, it really has influence and impact on my teaching in reading. The children are more engaged, and they enjoy it because games and technology are integrated into the reading lesson.)*

Interactive elements make reading lessons enjoyable, which helps sustain student focus and participation. Studies have found that game-based phonics activities significantly enhance student attention and enjoyment in early literacy classrooms (Kim & Zhou 2023).

✓ *Subtheme 4.2: Interactive Learning*

Songs, dances, and games create a lively and motivating learning atmosphere.

- *Participant 2: Mas interactive og lingaw ang mga bata sa ilang klasi pina agi nagyud sa mga kanta, sayaw, mo dali sila mo participate kay dali man gud na sila ma kanang mawala ilang gana ba kung dli nimo ipa ag isa games(The class becomes more interactive and fun for the kids through songs, dance they participate more quickly because they easily lose interest if you don't go through games.*

Incorporating fun activities keeps students interested and eager to participate, improving learning outcomes. Research indicates that multisensory approaches like including music and movement can boost vocabulary acquisition and retention in young children (Alvarez & Chen, 2021).

✓ *Subtheme 4.3: Active Participation*

- *Participant 2: Sa unsang paagi mas suod ang relasyon sa mga bata og mag tutudlo kung naa silay kompyansa nga aa kanang mo ingon maam kabalo nako mo basa ani. (In any way is the relationship between the kids and the teacher closer, it's when they have confidence, like when they say, "Ma'am, I already know how to read this.")*
- *Participant 5: Maka build sa kompyansa ang pag kahibalo og basa (It builds confidence when they learn how to read.)*

Confidence in reading strengthens teacher-learner relationships and encourages active class participation. Evidence suggests that improved reading confidence correlates with greater oral participation and positive student-teacher interactions in early grade settings (O'Reilly et al., 2022).

✓ *Subtheme 4.4: Collaborative Learning*

Peer and group learning promote support and improvement among learners.

- *Participant 3: So mas kusog na ang pakig uban sa mga bata og mag tutudlo ang mga bata mo tabang sa ilang kauban sa pag basa mao nay gi ingon nga peer reading og makita nimo nga ganahan gyud na sila mo tabang sa ilang classmate so ang mga ginikanan usahay mo tug.an nga ilang mga anak mag basa basa nalang gani sa ilang balay bisan walay assignment(So the interaction between the children and the teacher becomes stronger, and the children help their classmates with reading. That's what is called peer reading, and you can see that they really like helping their classmates. Sometimes the parents confess that their children read even at home, even without assignments)*
- *P6: kanang kuan gyud ka syempre kanang mga slow (learners) unsay kuan tawag ani strategy para ma pa taas nimo ang reading sa bata, collaborative learning (Like, of course, especially for the slow (learners), what do you call this strategy to improve the reading of the child— collaborative learning)*
- *P 7: Collaborative learning game based samot ng individual nga katong mga bata nga tutukan ga one on one gyud ko(Collaborative learning, game-based, especially individual, where I really focus one-on-one)*

Collaborative learning techniques enable students to support each other, especially slow learners, which fosters a cooperative and effective learning environment. The Marungko Approach was also found to significantly enhance classroom dynamics. Teachers reported increased learner engagement, active participation, peer learning, and improved student-teacher relationships and by using songs, games, and visual materials, educators created an interactive and motivating environment where learners were eager to read.

Cortez (2023) emphasized that integrating game-related reading strategies helps maintain learner interest and sustains attention spans. Meanwhile, Dimacial & Lumapenet (2023) found that Marungko classrooms often foster cooperative learning atmospheres, where peer tutoring and group reading activities build learner confidence

Moreover, collaborative learning was a notable output of Marungko-based instruction. As teachers in your study explained, confident readers often mentored slower ones, which not only improved academic outcomes but also strengthened classroom relationships which is a direct

reflection of Slavin's (2010) findings on the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

Recent studies have found that classrooms using structured phonics alongside gamified reading tools experience stronger student engagement and improved reading behavior (Lampropoulos et al., 2022). Cooperative learning structures, such as peer-assisted reading, have been shown to be particularly effective in early literacy settings by promoting both social interaction and academic success (Guzman & Pinca-Atutubo, 2023)

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

➤ *Based on the findings, the following conclusions and recommendation are drawn:*

- The personal experiences of educators revealed that the Marungko Approach is highly effective in fostering foundational reading skills. Its structured phonics-based methodology supports learners in decoding words through letter-sound associations, which is critical in early literacy acquisition as it enhances early literacy by focusing on sound recognition and structured, stepwise instruction that builds learner confidence and improves reading performance. Phonics instruction has been widely recognized as an effective approach in developing reading fluency and accuracy among beginning readers
- The Marungko approach positively impacts the teaching and learning environment by increasing learner engagement, promoting interactive and collaborative learning, and strengthening student-teacher relationships. Engaged learners are more likely to sustain attention and show motivation in literacy tasks, contributing to better learning outcomes.
- The Marungko Approach remains a valuable teaching method for early literacy development. It offers practical benefits and adaptable strategies that help educators address classroom challenges while nurturing students' reading skills. Its flexibility allows teachers to modify lessons based on learner needs, making it suitable for diverse educational settings.

➤ *In Light of the Conclusion, the Following Recommended:*

- Schools and education stakeholders should provide ongoing professional development and training for educators focused on the Marungko Approach, with special emphasis on handling learners' varying preparedness and engagement levels.
- Educators must continue utilizing diagnostic assessments to identify students' reading levels and tailor instruction accordingly, ensuring that teaching strategies meet diverse learner needs. Incorporate more interactive and multisensory teaching tools such as letter blocks, games, and technology-based resources to sustain student interest and motivation.
- Promote strong collaboration with parents by providing them with reading materials and guidance, enabling them to support their children's reading practice at home.

- Create a dynamic and engaging classroom atmosphere by integrating songs, dances, and games related to Marungko lessons to increase learner participation and enthusiasm.
- Foster stronger student-teacher relationships by promoting confidence-building activities, which can positively influence classroom dynamics and learning outcomes.
- Further studies could explore the long-term impact of the Marungko Approach on students' literacy development beyond early grades and compare its effectiveness with other phonics-based methods. Investigate the experiences of other stakeholders such as parents and school administrators to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the approach's overall impact.

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