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## Reading Performance of Grade I Learners through Targeted Early Reading Interventions

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of various reading approaches on the reading performance of Grade I pupils in the San Miguel District, Bohol, Philippines. The primary objective is to examine how different teaching interventions influence reading skills, specifically phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, and fluency. The research employs a descriptive design, utilizing a quantitative method that includes pretest-posttest assessments to 515 grade 1 pupils and a survey questionnaire administered to 27 Grade I teachers. The study used the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool to evaluate the students' reading abilities before and after the intervention. The study results show a noteworthy advancement within the pupils' reading performance over different components, such as introduction to print (expanded from 58% to 94.5%), letter title information (expanded from 12% to 76.2%), and reading comprehension (expanded from 1.6% to 44.3%), after the implementation of the interventions. It was found that the reading strategies used by the teachers positively impacted the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils, as the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating the differences between reading intervention and reading performance. However, it was established that there is no significant association between pupil score gain and the frequency of use of the various reading interventions. Based on these results, the study recommends the continued use of diverse reading interventions and the integration of other teaching technologies.

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### 1. Introduction

Reading is the foundation of academic success and individual advancement, especially within the early years of education. Learning to read, write, and do math is crucial for a child's success in school and life. (Librea et al., 2023). Furthermore, acquiring reading literacy skills is important for every learner because this will help almost every aspect of our lives (Keyser, 2021). Words help create people, families, relationships, and even teamwork between countries (Cabalo & Cabalo, 2019). Reading is important because it helps people understand messages and information. Besides getting information, we can also understand what we read and learn things that will help us in the future (Pin, 2023). It can also stimulate mental, reduce stress, increase vocabulary, and expand thinking (Pradani, 2021).

Literacy acquisition remains a significant challenge in the Philippines, as in many other countries, especially in rural areas where resources and support are often limited. The challenge is visible in the low reading proficiency rates among Grade I pupils, which, according to national assessments, places the country among the lowest performers in

global literacy standards (UNESCO, 2017). The educational system struggles to help students become good readers. The Philippines did poorly in reading skills and ended up being ranked the lowest in the world, which shows that schools are not helping students become knowledgeable and skilled individuals. One of the researchers has been a first-grade teacher for many years and has faced difficulties teaching reading at school. She has implemented various reading interventions, but reading problems persist in some students.

Given these challenges, early reading instruction is essential to ensure success in reading and continued learning. Grade I is a critical year for establishing literacy skills, and interventions at this stage are essential for addressing gaps in reading proficiency (Alber-Morgan et al., 2007). While various reading strategies have been proposed to improve early literacy, there is limited research on the specific approaches that best support struggling readers in the Philippine context (Luciano et al., 2020). This problem highlights the need for targeted studies that explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods in improving reading outcomes in the country.

This study examines the impact of various reading interventions on the reading performance of Grade I pupils in the San Miguel District of Bohol, Philippines. The study aims to provide helpful information for developing more successful early-grade reading programs. In light of the above, the researchers needed to seek findings to establish the reading approaches the Grade One teachers applied to enhance the pupils' reading performance.

### ***1.1 Research Questions***

1. What is the reading performance of the Grade I pupils before and after the Early Grade Reading Assessment?
2. What is the frequency of usage of reading interventions employed by the teacher-respondents?
3. Is there a significant difference in the reading performance of the Grade respondents before and after the use of reading interventions?
4. Is there a significant relationship between pupil score gain and teachers' frequency of use of the reading approaches?

### ***1.2 Research Hypothesis***

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

1. There is no significant difference in the reading performance of the Grade 1 pupils before and after the use of reading interventions.
2. There is no significant relationship between pupil score gain and teachers' frequency of use of the reading interventions.

## **2. Literature Review**

**Reading and its Importance.** Academic successes and life learning are founded on readings. Reading is an essential tool in learning, not just in school but also in real life (Echaure & Torno, 2017). Children must use this skill in early grades to know the meaning of written and printed material and facilitate language acquisition, communication, and the exchange of ideas and information (Phala & Hugo, 2022). The children can learn from school by reading well (Luciano et al., 2020). Reading difficulties can create challenges in school, resulting in learners being stigmatized in the classroom (Haile & Mendisu, 2023). Koda and Zehler (2008) affirmed that it is a vital component of academic learning that helps the reader be a learned one in the broader community. If a child is deficient in Reading, he encounters difficulty in all subject areas.

Literacy prepares children for adult life and ensures that the child can work in the future. Studies have shown that literate children have better mental development than their age mates who are not (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018). Literacy enables adults to support their children's literacy needs, read newspapers or magazines, join political debates, and contribute positively to societal development. Literacy, therefore, lifts one off the life of dependency and makes one an effective citizen.

The ability to recognize, comprehend, interpret, create, communicate, and compute with printed and written materials in a variety of contexts is known as literacy. According to UNESCO (2017), literacy is a continuum of learning that empowers people to reach their objectives, grow in knowledge and potential, and actively engage in their local community and larger society. Moreover, literacy is much more than just reading and writing. It is the ability to use several core skills, including decoding, comprehension, writing, and speaking. Education professionals agree that a

balanced approach to literacy is the most effective way to teach children how to read and write (del Campo & Stewart, 2023).

Reading Processes. Reading involves sensation, perception, comprehension, application, and integration (Tomas et al., 2021). Armbruster et al. (2001) emphasized five significant areas of reading instruction to teach children how to read successfully. These include text comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonics, and phonemic awareness. According to Lumay (2018), reading is a complicated process that calls for mastering five essential reading skills to read with confidence: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. One of the critical components in attaining reading success, for both with and without disabilities, is the ability to read fluently (Alber-Morgan et al., 2007).

The complexity of the reading process is a challenge for the learners and teachers who are giving the instruction. Scientific society has reported and addressed some of the reading-related issues of learners at various levels. The study of Kavani and Amjadiparvar (2018) also cited that 22% of Iranian students have serious problems comprehending texts at even a basic level. Luciano et al. (2020) noted the project's findings implemented by DepEd in the San Miguel North District of Bulacan, in which 8 out of 19 schools in the district regarded reading difficulties in English for Grade III as a primary concern. Based on the findings of the study conducted by Tomas et al. (2021) in the 10-school district of DepEd Division of Aurora, Baler for Grades 1 to 7, 47% and 73% of 4216 learners fall under "Frustration Level" on the reading ability in Filipino and English, respectively. These reports validate the latest 2018 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results that 80% of 15-year-old Filipino students did not meet the reading proficiency level.

Teaching Reading Interventions (strategies). In a first-grade classroom, simple drill and recall activities must be more stimulating to hold students' attention for an extended period. Other tasks could be more challenging for first-grade students, such as sounding out letters as one reads text (Evans et al., 2020). According to Park and Lombardino (2013), decoding abilities are essential in the early reading stages when pupils learn to read and require one-on-one teacher instruction. Word recognition is a fundamental skill for reading comprehension, and phonological awareness is necessary for word recognition. Letter naming knowledge has provided access to phonemic knowledge about the letter in the initial or final positions of words (Paige et al., 2018). In addition, decoding isolated words, such as sight, high-frequency, and irregular words, is paramount. Mastering previous knowledge allows for accurate word identification, which happens instantaneously (Rasinski, 2014).

The learner must match letters with sounds in a predetermined order using phonics, the primary technique connected to the bottom-up approach to reading. This perspective holds that reading is a linear process in which readers decode a text word by word, combining the words to form phrases and sentences (Kucer, 1987). An essential first step in learning to read is phonological reading theory, which is based on identifying letters and their distinct sounds. Preliminary empirical review revealed that phonological awareness was crucial for early reading development, serving as a foundation for decoding skills and overall literacy (Nkurunziza, 2024).

Adequate reading comprehension requires accurate reading skills such as word identification, decoding, and adequate fluency and automaticity. Students who lack key reading skills have difficulty reaching the reading stage, which is required to read texts fluently and automatically, allowing them to comprehend a text easily (Clemens et al., 2017). According to Anderson-Inman and Horney (2007), content-area texts can improve reading comprehension by using technology to have texts read aloud. They will provide an accurate visual image and make learning easier for the student. Elder-Hinshaw (2006) states that computer technology helps teachers have access to the general curriculum, which motivates and encourages students to read. However, from the start of the year of using the mother tongue as an instruction about reading comprehension levels of Grade I learners, only a few were independent readers.

Newman-Gonchar et al. (2018), the findings from a meta-analysis of 33 rigorous high-quality studies indicate that reading interventions are generally effective for students in Grades 1 to 3 and benefit students more in foundational

reading skills than reading comprehension. Because so many interventions are similar, and virtually all are effective in word reading, there is a decent array to choose from. Standard features are explicit instruction, modeling, feedback, and inter-active small-group instruction. Llego (2022) stated that reading intervention strategies can benefit struggling readers. It is important to find the right approach for each student and provide lots of support to help them improve. Teachers and parents should work together to choose the best intervention strategy and continue to offer encouragement as the student progresses.

Keller et al. (2019) reported significant, positive effects for unstandardized reading outcomes for an intervention package that included computerized and researcher-provided instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, text reading strategies, and mindfulness training. According to Lazar (2020), the close reading program teachers provided small group instruction with grade-level and independent reading-level text. Additionally, students are taught close reading strategies to increase comprehension of complex text, as they would encounter on the state reading assessment. Graham et al. (2018) recently discovered that while early-grade reading interventions are not always successful, they are consistently effective. Early-grade reading interventions rarely result in fluency over a brief period and are not always guaranteed to improve reading. Nonetheless, they are a dependable way to achieve notable literacy gains quickly.

### **3. Methodology**

**Research Design.** The study mainly uses a descriptive research method. A survey questionnaire was used to determine how often teachers use different reading methods. Moreover, the study employed a pretest-posttest pre-experimental design to measure the Grade 1 respondents' reading performance. The researchers also used the results of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tools to measure students' reading performance. In line with the DepEd Order No. 57, s. 2015, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Tool for System Assessment was utilized to check and evaluate how well mother tongue-based multilingual education is implemented in schools. This helps ensure that this kind of education is done well (deped.gov)

**Participants.** The study included 515 grade 1 students from the San Miguel District in Bohol, Philippines. Also, 27 Grade I teachers who matched the number of students in each class were chosen to participate in the study. The participants are the complete enumeration of the group. The study was conducted in all San Miguel District, Bohol, Philippines elementary schools.

**Instruments.** The study utilized two instruments. The first was the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool; the Grade 1 teacher individually administered an oral assessment to every pupil in the assigned section to assess foundational literacy skills. The Department of Education of the Philippines adapted it following international standards—the same tool used in pretest and posttest reading assessments. The researchers got permission from the Department of Education in Bohol to use the students' EGRA scores. The second tool is the self-developed questionnaire. After conducting the EGRA pretest, all Grade I teachers were asked to submit the list of reading approaches in each sub-test that the teachers employ to address the reading gap to the district MTB coordinator for consolidation. The researchers used the consolidation of reading approaches to conduct the study. The researchers requested that the participants complete the informed consent form to uphold ethical standards. The researchers also guarantee confidentiality and anonymity.

**Procedure.** Through written communication, the researchers asked the Schools Division Superintendent, Division of Bohol, for permission to conduct the study in all elementary schools in the district of San Miguel. Upon approval, the researchers prepared another letter attached to the superintendent's endorsement. The letter was addressed to the school administrators, informing them to conduct the study with the Grade I teachers as the research respondents. The researchers asked permission from the principals to obtain the secondary data, which were the early grade reading assessment (EGRA) results. Moreover, the researcher guaranteed the respondents the confidentiality of the data to encourage them to provide truthful and objective answers to each item.

The researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to explain their purpose and the Importance of the study. The researchers made arrangements for the teacher respondents to answer the questionnaire. The data were then tallied, tabulated, and interpreted. The teaching approaches adopted by the teachers were summarized using a weighted mean based on the frequency of introduction to the pupils. The means of two related groups (pretest and posttest) were compared using the paired samples t-test, also called the dependent t-test, to see if there was a

statistically significant difference between them. The relationship between student score gain and the frequency of use of different reading interventions was assessed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ); additionally, the t-test was used to determine if the observed correlation is statistically significant.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1 Grade 1 Reading Performance

Table 1 presents the reading performance of the Grade I pupils before and after the assessment. The Pretest result reveals that most participants have difficulty with reading comprehension, with a 1.6 score. It also shows that most participants are ranked as non-readers, as the score is low. On the post-reading assessment, more Grade 1 pupils are in the readers category. However, most are still struggling with comprehension and oral passages. Based on the results, the high proportion of readers increased after five months of reading interventions.

Table 1  
Pupils' Reading Performance Before and After AGRA Assessment

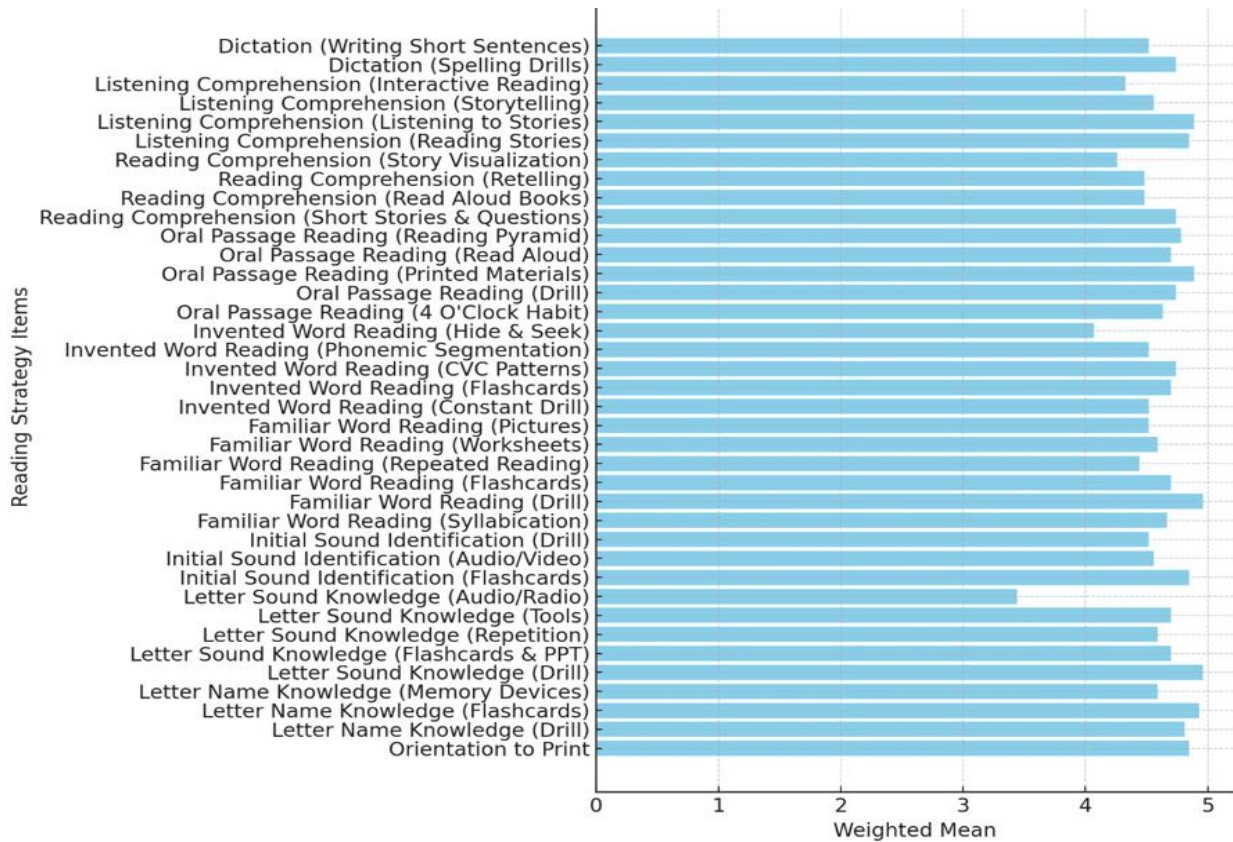
| Reading Components           | Reading Performance |            |       |          |            |       |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-------|----------|------------|-------|
|                              | Pretest             |            |       | Posttest |            |       |
|                              | Reader              | Non-reader | Score | Reader   | Non-reader | Score |
| Orientation to Print         | 297                 | 215        | 58.0  | 484      | 28         | 94.5  |
| Letter Name Knowledge        | 61                  | 451        | 12.0  | 390      | 122        | 76.2  |
| Letter Sound Knowledge       | 60                  | 452        | 11.7  | 400      | 112        | 78.1  |
| Initial Sound Identification | 350                 | 162        | 68.4  | 484      | 28         | 94.5  |
| Familiar Word Reading        | 28                  | 484        | 5.5   | 337      | 175        | 65.8  |
| Invented Word Reading        | 10                  | 502        | 2.0   | 275      | 237        | 53.7  |
| Oral Passage Reading         | 29                  | 483        | 5.7   | 260      | 252        | 50.8  |
| Reading Comprehension        | 8                   | 504        | 1.6   | 227      | 285        | 44.3  |
| Listening Comprehension      | 321                 | 191        | 62.7  | 468      | 44         | 91.4  |
| Dictation                    | 19                  | 493        | 3.7   | 344      | 168        | 67.2  |

The findings show that the intervention was helpful, especially for non-readers, who saw a significant improvement in all component scores. The significant improvements in foundational reading skills like letter knowledge and word reading show how important early literacy interventions are in teaching reading (Lane et al., 2025). However, it takes more time to develop more sophisticated skills, like reading comprehension or letter knowledge (Idulog et al., 2023).

##### 4.2 Teaching Reading Interventions

Figure 1 shows the intervention employed by teachers in teaching reading. The result reveals the diversity of teaching intervention used. Most teachers have scored high in "Constant drill on producing the correct letter sounds and drill on reading simple words, with a weighted mean score of 4.96, described as always. Rahn et al. (2015) examined the effects of incremental rehearsal (IR) on letter-sound expression for kindergarten and first-grade English learners, and the results indicated significant improvements in letter-sound fluency. The National Reading Panel (2000) reviewed 38 studies on phonics instruction and found that teaching children the relationship between letters and spelling patterns improved reading achievement.

Figure 1  
Frequency of Usage of Teaching Reading Interventions by Grade 1 Teachers



The interventions employed by Grade 1 teachers in teaching reading are heavily focused on repetition and multisensory learning, which are essential for developing foundational literacy skills. The high usage of interventions like constant drills for letter names and sound knowledge (with weighted means ranging from 4.59 to 4.96) shows that teachers are committed to helping students recognize and recall letters and sounds quickly. Teachers use memory devices such as pictures, keywords, rhymes, and actions to support retention. These methods ensure that students build a strong phonetic foundation. However, the audio/radioactivity at home (with a lower mean of 3.44) is used less frequently, even though it could provide valuable reinforcement outside the classroom.

**4.3 Impact of Reading Interventions on Performance**

Table 3 shows that the proportion of reader pupils using the EGRA tool during post-reading assessment was significantly higher than pre-reading assessment. The statistical treatment used in this table is the paired samples t-test; this test compares the means of two related groups (pretest and posttest) to determine if there is a significant difference between them.

Table 3  
The significant difference in the Reading Performance and Reading Interventions

| Component            | Variable | Mean   | Standard Deviation | t       | 2-Tailed test (df=511, α=0.05) Critical Value | p-value | Interpretation |
|----------------------|----------|--------|--------------------|---------|---|---------|----------------|
| Orientation to Print | Pretest  | 2.054  | 1.217              | -17.097 | ±1.965  | 0.000   | Significant    |
|                      | Posttest | 2.947  | 0.330              |         |   |         |                |
|                      | Pretest  | 16.887 | 18.773             |         |   |         |                |

|                         |       |          |        |        |         |        |       |             |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|--------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------------|
| Book and Knowledge      | Print | Posttest | 55.967 | 23.372 |         |        |       |             |
| Letter Knowledge        | Sound | Pretest  | 17.570 | 17.920 | -45.105 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 57.428 | 22.992 |         |        |       |             |
| Initial Identification  | Sound | Pretest  | 6.146  | 3.607  | -20.968 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 9.240  | 2.019  |         |        |       |             |
| Familiar Reading        | Word  | Pretest  | 2.785  | 7.859  | -40.044 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 26.209 | 13.589 |         |        |       |             |
| Invented Reading        | Word  | Pretest  | 1.551  | 5.539  | -34.960 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 21.797 | 13.742 |         |        |       |             |
| Oral Passage Reading    |       | Pretest  | 1.352  | 5.489  | -32.084 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 24.541 | 16.705 |         |        |       |             |
| Reading Comprehension   |       | Pretest  | 0.082  | 0.490  | -28.687 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 2.201  | 1.709  |         |        |       |             |
| Listening Comprehension |       | Pretest  | 2.510  | 1.803  | -18.752 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 3.828  | 1.390  |         |        |       |             |
| Dictation               |       | Pretest  | 0.543  | 2.056  | -30.930 | ±1.965 | 0.000 | Significant |
|                         |       | Posttest | 5.615  | 3.484  |         |        |       |             |

The table compares the pretest and posttest scores for various components of reading performance, and the t-values, p-values, and critical values are provided. The null hypothesis (no difference between pretest and posttest) is rejected when the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant. This indicates that the number of Grade 1 pupils in a "reader" category had increased after using the employed interventions. The findings also show that Grade 1 students' reading performance is successfully raised by the teachers' use of reading intervention. The outcome demonstrates that the reading intervention used in this study was very successful in raising the literacy levels of first-graders in every area. All things considered, the data shows how well the reading intervention works to help young students develop their foundational literacy skills.

#### **4.4 Pupils' Score Gain and Teachers' Use of Reading Interventions**

Table 4 presents the relationship between pupil score gain and the frequency of teachers' use of teaching reading approaches. The relationships between pupil score gain and the frequency of use of the various reading approaches are not statistically significant based on the comparison between the computed t-values and the tabulated t-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis (that there is no significant relationship) is accepted for all reading approaches listed in the table. Hattie (2009) found that many commonly used educational strategies show weak or moderate effects on student performance, and it is common in educational research to find weak correlations, even with widely used teaching methods.

Table 4  
Pupils' Score Gain and Teachers' Frequency Use of the Reading Interventions

| Reading Interventions        | Computed r | Computed t | Degrees of freedom | Tabulated t $\alpha = 0.05$ | Interpretation  |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Book & print Knowledge       | 0.352      | 1.883      | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Letter Name Knowledge        | 0.203      | 1.036      | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Letter Sound Knowledge       | -0.081     | -0.405     | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Initial Sound Identification | 0.229      | 1.175      | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Familiar word reading        | 0.262      | 1.356      | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Invented word decoding       | 0.104      | 0.523      | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Oral Passage Reading         | -0.251     | -1.299     | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Reading Comprehension        | -0.007     | -0.036     | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Listening Comprehension      | 0.005      | 0.023      | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |
| Dictation                    | -0.242     | -1.248     | 25                 | $\pm 2.060$                 | Not Significant |

## 5. Conclusions & recommendations

In conclusion, this study shows that the reading skills of Grade 1 pupils in San Miguel District improved after using different reading interventions. Teachers regularly used methods like teaching letter sounds, reading familiar words, and practicing reading aloud, which helped students become better readers. However, the study also found that just using these methods more often didn't necessarily lead to bigger improvements. This means that it's not just the number of times the methods are used that matters, but also how well they are applied and the quality of teaching.

It is then recommended that teachers should continue using a variety of methods, like reading aloud and practicing letter sounds. They can also include more technology, such as videos and educational apps, to make learning fun. Struggling readers need extra help, like one-on-one lessons, to catch up. Setting specific times for reading practice will ensure students get enough practice. Teachers also need regular training to use the best intervention for teaching reading. Finally, schools should regularly assess students' progress to make sure everyone is improving and adjust teaching methods as needed.

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