



READING BUDDIES PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING STRATEGY: ITS EFFICACY IN ENHANCING GRADE 2 STRUGGLING LEARNERS IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the efficacy of the reading buddies peer-assisted learning strategy in enhancing the reading performance of Grade 2 struggling learners in public elementary schools. The findings served as a basis for the preparation of supplementary material to improve reading performance. The study was conducted in school year 2025-2026, employing the experimental method of research, utilizing a pretest-post-test control group design. The subjects included 60 Grade 2 learners: 30 in the experimental group and 30 in the control group, alongside five jurors who evaluated the output of this study.

In the process, a pre-test was administered prior to the learning intervention to the two groups, wherein their results fall under average mastery: 40.30 for experimental and 43.03 for control. Experimental group was treated with Reading Buddies peer-assisted learning, and the control group was provided with structured activities. A post-test parallel to the pre-test was administered after the treatment and revealed that both groups have average mastery: 56.87 for experimental and 47.53 for control. Test on the significant difference of the post-test results were conducted using a t-test for correlated samples. The computed t-

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values of 0.630, 1.002, and 0.174 for Phonological Awareness, Grammar Awareness and Oral Language Fluency, respectively, were all less than the tabular t-value of 2.002 at the 0.05 level of significance with 58 degrees of freedom. The null hypotheses were accepted. Along with Vocabulary Development, the computed t-value of 2.807 is greater than the tabular t-value of 2.002 at the same level of significance and degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis along this variable is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the post-test performance level of the grade 2 pupils in the experimental and control groups. The reading buddies peer-assisted learning had improved the reading performance of the learners on the Vocabulary Development only. The supplementary material was also prepared to assist the learners in developing their reading ability. Jurors evaluated and determined its age-appropriateness and relevance as a useful tool in teaching and learning.

Based on these findings and conclusions, this study recommends that teachers should provide daily explicit phonics instruction using decodable texts, paired with small-group repeated oral reading practice and weekly progress monitoring to tailor support and to address the lack of proficiency identified in the pre-test data. Professional development workshops on structured literacy can also help teachers of Grade 2 learners deepen their skills in explicit phonics instruction, guided reading groups, and data-driven differentiation strategies tailored to the learners' individual needs. Further research on the same topic is suggested with a longer period of implementation.

Keywords: reading buddies, struggling, enhance/enhancing grade 2, strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a critical foundation of learning and a vital tool for acquiring new knowledge. It reinforces all other forms of learning and is essential for success in life. The capacity for reading and comprehension is of great consequence for cognitive, affective, and social development (Kirsh 2019).

The Philippines currently faces challenges with literacy rates. In the 2018 and 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), scores of Filipino learners were below the world average. In 2022, just 24 percent of students aged 15 were able to read at Level 2 or better—evidence that there are serious problems with this education system. The Department of Education has launched several targeted programs such as the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), Catch-Up Fridays, Brigada Pagbasa, and the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program under Republic Act No. 12028 (Republic of the Philippines, 2023).

The Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy provides opportunities for learners of differing reading levels to interact and assist each other in achieving a common learning goal. This methodology is rooted in Vygotsky's theory of social development, which emphasizes the role that interactions with others play in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Bandura (1960), people learn social behaviors by watching, copying, and modeling what others do and respond to. Evidence from Biemiller (2019) and Elbaum et al. (2019) suggests that peer-assisted learning can also have a positive impact on reading fluency and comprehension in this context.

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This study assessed the effect of the Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy on both reading fluency and comprehension skills. The research sought to determine whether the implementation of paired learners' reading sessions, conducted in a structured manner, results in significant improvements in oral fluency, comprehension capabilities, and essential language proficiencies.

In addition, this study aimed to provide practical and adaptable strategies for Key Stage 1 classrooms, focusing on pre- and post-test reading performance, peer-assisted learning activities, group differences, and supplementary materials to address common literacy challenges among Filipino Grade 2 learners. Ultimately, it seeks to help address the persistent literacy difficulties faced by many Filipino children.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subjects of the study were the 60 Grade 2 learners from a public elementary school and 5 reading experts as jurors.

This study utilized an experimental method of research with a pre-test and post-test design to determine the effectiveness of the Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy in enhancing Grade 2 struggling learners in public elementary schools.

Experimental research is a scientific method that helps prove the relationship between dependent and independent variables. This type of research is used to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the variables and to test hypotheses. In a typical experimental research design, the independent variables are manipulated to assess their influence on the

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dependent variables (Sreekumar, 2024). This method is the most appropriate for this study, as the researcher is required to conduct an investigation that will prove which of the two strategies is more effective, the reading buddies peer-assisted learning given to the experimental group or the structured reading activities given to the control group.

The pre-test and post-test control group design is one of the most powerful and widely used experimental designs in social science research. It allows researchers to measure change over time while also ruling out alternative explanations for that change. This design combines the strengths of pretesting with the rigor of control groups and random assignment, which helps establish causal relationships (McKee, 2025). This design is employed as the study requires pre- and post-tests for the two groups, the Grade 2 learners in the experimental and in the control group, to measure the effectiveness of the two teaching strategies. This research design is appropriate because the study examines the effect of the Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy, and it demonstrates that when proficient readers are paired up with struggling partners for reading, they improve in comprehension skills and motivation by regularly receiving favorable models from other learners, as well as help.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Testing the significant difference is a core component of inferential statistics and hypothesis testing. This helped the researcher draw a reliable conclusion about the experiment conducted.

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Using a t-test for a two-sample mean test, the computed t-values of 0.630, 1.002, and 0.174 along Phonological Awareness, Grammar Awareness, and Oral Language Fluency, respectively, were less than the tabular t value of 2.002 at the 0.05 level of significance with 58 degrees of freedom. The null hypotheses along these variables were accepted. There is no significant difference in the post-test reading performance levels of the grade 2 struggling learners in the experimental and control groups in the three aspects. This means that both the experimental and control groups have achieved the same level of performance. Further, the data shows that in terms of effectiveness, the reading peer-assisted learning activities and structured learning activities are the same.

Having the same test used in Vocabulary Development, the computed t value of 2.807 is greater than the tabular t- value of 2.002 at 0.05 level of significance with 58 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This concludes that there is a significant difference in the post-test reading performance levels of the grade 2 struggling learners in the experimental and control groups. This means that the reading peer-assisted learning activities are much better than structured learning activities in Vocabulary Development.

The data implies that the intervention effectively enhances vocabulary through explicit, context-based, and interactive strategies, while gains in phonological skills, grammar, and fluency were limited, likely due to the need for longer-term practice and repeated oral engagement.

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The results of this study, which indicate a significant improvement in Vocabulary Development among struggling learners in Grade 2, strongly support the findings of Hasnani and Ismail (2020) and Piator and Villocino (2024) whose investigation on the use of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) with learners in Grade 2 increased significantly in reading scores. It agreed on the idea that the strategy led to peer modeling, active participation, and interactive practice, and ultimately improved vocabulary and reading skills among this age group significantly.

Similarly, this corroborated the finding of Piator and Villocino (2024), who made use of a sample of Grade 5 pupils and found out that learners who received PALS instruction outperformed children in traditional instruction settings to a large degree, with many of the gains attributed to the interactive environment in addition to immediate feedback and reading for increased amounts of time. Combined, these studies lend both methodological and age-specific support that demonstrates the efficacy of structured, peer-assisted, and interactive strategies in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and overall reading performance success for young learners.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers extend the duration and intensity of interventions to allow phonological and grammar gains to consolidate. Incorporating repeated oral activities, such as read-aloud and dialogues, can enhance fluency, while multimodal vocabulary strategies—including visuals, games, and synonyms—can reinforce word acquisition. Additionally, ongoing professional development in scaffolding techniques and data-driven instruction can equip teachers to better address learners’

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individual needs. Future research may investigate the long-term effects of such interventions and determine the most effective combination of strategies for improving all aspects of language development among struggling learners. This is an indication of the importance of continued, systematic practice in developing basic reading skills. To improve the effectiveness of Reading Buddies, it is recommended that peer-assisted reading sessions be extended and involve particular activities relating to syllable stress, rhyme, and expressive reading.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The pre-test reading performance level of the Grade 2 learners in experimental and control groups showed average mastery.
2. The Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy implemented in the experimental group in 23 sessions formed on identification of sounds, building vocabulary skills, correct grammar usage and comprehension skills.
3. The control group participated in structured reading activities in 23 sessions contained developmental skills on phonological awareness, vocabulary development, grammar awareness, and oral language fluency.
4. The post-test reading performance level of Grade 2 learners in the experimental and control groups showed both average mastery, which is the same as the pre-test reading performance level of Grade 2 learners.

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5. There is no significant difference in the post-test reading performance level of the Grade 2 learners in the experimental and control groups along Phonological Awareness, Grammar Awareness and Oral language Fluency.

6. The supplementary learning material in reading is prepared to improve the reading skills of the Grade 2 learners.

7. The supplementary learning activity as intervention material was evaluated by the jurors and considered outstanding and acceptable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The poor performance on the pre-test indicates that a tailor-made reading instruction program can be adopted for Grade 2 students who are struggling learners.

2. Educators may provide engaging lesson exercises for reading skills instructions.

3. Develop learners' understanding and application of reading skills by consistently integrating collaborative learning and peer-assisted activities in reading sessions and activities.

4. Track learners' progress and continuously implement consistent assessment and monitoring.

5. Ensure the continuity of development efforts from one grade level to the next by maintaining and utilizing a shared school-wide database that tracks learners' reading skills and progress.

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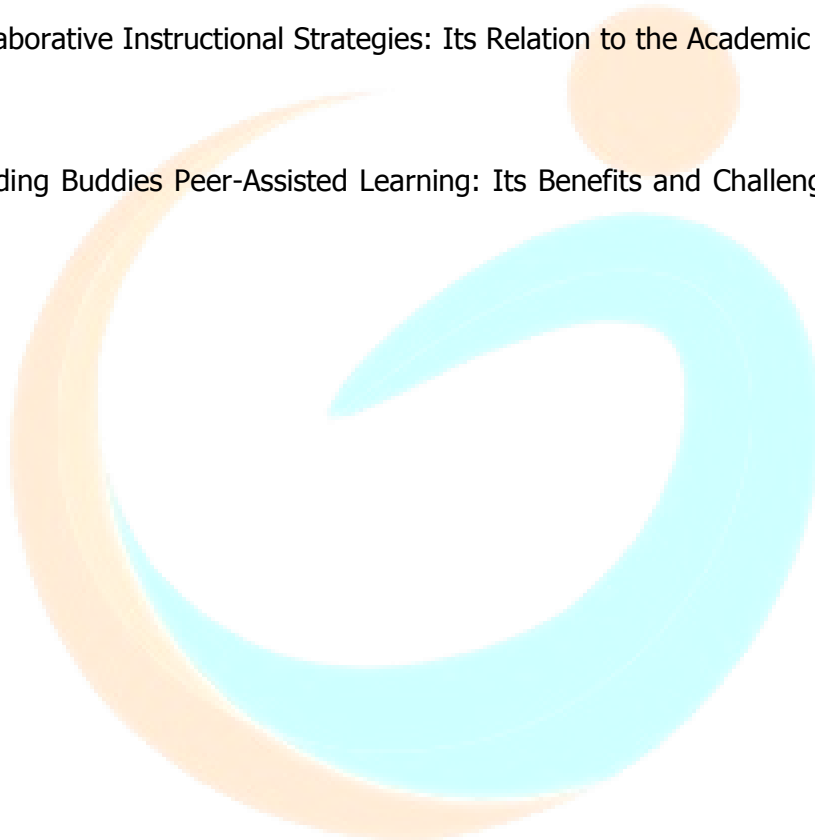
6. Improve reading skills by incorporating interdisciplinary reading activities that integrate the reading buddies peer-assisted learning strategy with other subjects.

7. Further research may be conducted on the following:

a. Utilization of Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy in Enhancing Comprehension Skills of Key Stage 2 Learners

b. Collaborative Instructional Strategies: Its Relation to the Academic Performance of the Learners

c. Reading Buddies Peer-Assisted Learning: Its Benefits and Challenges to Teachers and Learners



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