



Teachers' Reading Strategies in Developing Elementary ESL Learners' Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the reading strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral reading fluency of learners in the First District of Camarines Sur, Bicol, Philippines. The descriptive method was used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, the extent of teaching reading strategies, and the perceived effect of the teaching strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral reading fluency. The correlational method was utilized to ascertain the relationship between the demographic profile and the extent of teaching reading strategies. 93 English Elementary teachers served as the respondents. Results disclosed that solitary reading, buddy reading, and group reading have a Very Large Extent in developing oral reading fluency. Accuracy, automaticity, and prosody proved to be highly effective in developing oral reading fluency among learners. Moreover, the extent of utilizing solitary reading, buddy reading, and group reading is not significantly correlated in terms of academic rank, years of teaching, and highest educational attainment of the teachers. The lack of significant correlation implies that the implementation of solitary, buddy, and group reading practices is likely more influenced by contextual and pedagogical considerations than by the demographic or educational attributes of the teachers. To further investigate, longitudinal studies or qualitative research might provide deeper insights into how teachers select and implement reading practices in response to evolving educational needs and environments. It may also be beneficial to explore how these reading practices affect student outcomes, as this could offer critical feedback for instructional improvement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a lifelong skill, and successful reading relies on the use of appropriate strategies. Reading is an essential ingredient for academic success; hence, not all students excel in reading. That is why effective strategies are vital for improving reading abilities. Teaching reading strategies are methods used by teachers to effectively guide students and achieve the goals of the teaching and

learning process. The teachers are greatly impacted by the students' limited ability to read. According to Abergos et al. (2024), many adolescents still struggle with overall reading fluency and have therefore been disadvantaged in the process of applying the increasingly sophisticated comprehension skills that complex text requires. Ineffective fluency strategies in previous schooling years may have contributed to this issue, as teachers have not utilized the most effective strategies in the classroom. Reading fluency is closely related to reading comprehension. Learner's struggles with reading fluency can be a significant barrier to overall reading comprehension and competency. According to Monida et al. (2024), It has been discovered that 90% of comprehension problems are the result of insufficiency in oral fluency.

Reading fluency is a critical component of literacy development, serving as the bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension (Bachtiar et al., 2024). Oral reading fluency, characterized by the ability to read text smoothly and accurately with expression, has garnered significant attention in educational research. Numerous studies have shown that fluent readers are better equipped to understand and engage with texts, which is essential for academic success across disciplines. As such, fostering oral reading fluency in learners, particularly in the early stages of literacy development, is a paramount objective for educators. Oral reading fluency entails establishing various aspects in a fixed time, such as the number of correct words, pauses, and repetition of words and phrases (Rasinki, 2014). However, reading fluency is the ability to read aloud a text accurately and at natural speed (Disalle & Rasinki, 2017). As a result, it is critical to emphasize that fluency is thought to be composed of three main components: accuracy, automaticity, and prosody (Baesa and Ocampo, 2023).

Teachers play a pivotal role in promoting oral reading fluency through targeted reading strategies. These strategies not only help students gain the technical skills necessary to read effectively but also contribute to their overall confidence and enjoyment of reading. Various instructional approaches, including repeated reading, guided oral reading, and peer-assisted reading, have been identified as effective for enhancing students' fluency. According to Francisco (2020), the characteristics of the teachers influence their abilities. Moreover, there is a substantial association between teacher capacity building and students' academic performance, as well as significant relationship between teachers' classroom management, teaching approach, and personality. Good strategies can not only engage students in learning, but they also boost self-esteem (Bachtiar & Puspitasari, 2024; Irasuti & Bachtiar, 2024).

However, despite the wealth of literature on effective reading instruction, there is a need to explore the specific strategies that teachers employ to foster oral reading fluency in diverse classroom settings. Thus, this study aims to investigate the reading strategies utilized by teachers to develop learners' oral reading fluency. By examining the methods and techniques implemented across various educational contexts, this research will provide insights into best practices in reading instruction. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the challenges educators face in promoting oral fluency and the resources they utilize to enhance their instructional approaches. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective literacy instruction, offering practical implications for teachers seeking to improve their students' reading outcomes.

Specifically, it aims to describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of academic rank, years of teaching, highest educational attainment; determine the extent of teaching reading strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral fluency of the learners along solitary reading, buddy reading, group reading; determine the perceived effect of the teaching strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral reading fluency of the learners along accuracy, automaticity, prosody, and analyze the significant relationship between the demographic profile and the extent.

In light of the growing emphasis on literacy in education policy and practice, understanding the nuances of how teachers support oral reading fluency is not only timely but essential. By centering the experiences and strategies of educators, this study aspires to inform teacher training,

curriculum development, and instructional resources, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to thrive as fluent and engaged readers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Oral Reading Fluency

According to the Canuto et al. (2024), oral reading fluency is characterized by three primary components: accuracy, speed, and prosody. Accuracy refers to the correct pronunciation of words; speed indicates the rate of reading; and prosody involves the rhythm, phrasing, and expression of the reader. These components collectively contribute to a reader's overall fluency and are crucial for effective reading comprehension. Oral reading fluency (ORF) is recognized as a critical component of reading proficiency, manifesting in the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (Rasinski et al., 2016). The development of ORF is crucial in ensuring that learners can engage meaningfully with texts, facilitating comprehension and overall literacy growth.

Research highlights that fluency is not merely an endpoint but a gateway to deeper understanding and interpretation of texts (Armea et al., 2022). Fluent readers demonstrate better comprehension skills than non-fluent readers, as they can allocate cognitive resources to making inferences and connecting ideas rather than focusing solely on decoding each word.

ORF is typically assessed through various standard measures, including timed readings of passages followed by scoring based on accuracy and speed. The DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment is one widely used tool that measures students' fluency through oral reading tasks. Several studies (Orejuela et al, 2022) emphasize the reliability and validity of ORF measures in predicting reading proficiency.

Numerous factors influence oral reading fluency, including background knowledge, familiarity with text, and instructional practices. Research by Abrera et al. (2024) highlights the role of phonemic awareness and vocabulary knowledge as foundational skills that enhance ORF. Furthermore, socioeconomic status and access to literacy resources significantly impact children's reading fluency development (Miller & Chisholm, 2015).

Oral reading fluency plays a pivotal role in the literacy development of children. It encompasses more than just reading quickly; it includes accuracy and expression, which are vital for comprehension. The growing body of research underscores its importance and provides insights into effective instructional strategies and interventions. Continued research is needed to explore innovative approaches and further refine our understanding of how best to support fluency development in diverse student populations. Future studies should also consider the impact of technology and digital reading platforms in promoting oral reading fluency.

2.2 Teacher-Utilized Reading Strategies

Reading is a foundational skill critical for academic success and lifelong learning. Effective reading strategies employed by teachers play a vital role in enhancing students' comprehension, engagement, and motivation. This review synthesizes research findings on various reading strategies utilized by educators, their effectiveness, and their impact on student performance.

Research indicates that explicit instruction in reading strategies, such as summarizing, questioning, and predicting, significantly improves students' comprehension skills (Duke & Pearson, 2022).

Teachers typically model these strategies through think-aloud protocols, allowing students to observe the cognitive processes involved in reading. Meanwhile, guided reading involves small-group reading sessions where teachers provide targeted support based on students' reading levels. Research by Fountas and Pinnell (2019) highlights its effectiveness in differentiating instruction and fostering independent reading skills.

Numerous studies indicate that students exposed to teacher-utilized reading strategies experience significant gains in reading comprehension scores (Hattie, 2019). Effective strategies help students decode text, make inferences, and engage critically with materials. Teachers employing diverse strategies tend to increase student motivation and engagement in reading. Strategies that

incorporate choice, such as reading self-selected texts or participating in literature circles, have been particularly effective (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2020).

Targeted reading strategies are crucial in addressing achievement gaps among students of varying backgrounds. Struggling readers benefit from tailored approaches, and research shows that such interventions can lead to noticeable improvements in literacy skills (Ocampo, 2024). While numerous strategies have proven effective, teachers often face challenges in their implementation. Limited time, lack of resources, and varying student needs can hinder the adoption of comprehensive reading strategies (Ocampo, 2018). Professional development and ongoing support are critical for teachers to effectively implement these strategies in diverse classrooms.

The literature underscores the importance of teacher-utilized reading strategies in developing proficient readers. As educators continue to explore and adopt various approaches, the imperative remains to tailor strategies to meet the unique needs of their student populations. Ongoing research and professional development are essential for equipping teachers with the skills necessary to foster a love for reading and enhance literacy across all student demographics.

3. METHOD

In this research study, a mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both descriptive and correlational methodologies to effectively explore and analyze the effectiveness of teaching reading strategies by English elementary teachers and their impact on developing oral reading fluency among students. The descriptive method was primarily utilized to capture and outline the demographic profile of the respondents as well as to measure the extent of reading strategies employed by the teachers. This method is effective for summarizing large amounts of data and providing a clear overview of the characteristics of the target population. The demographic characteristics of the 93 English elementary teachers, such as age, years of experience, educational qualifications, and training in reading instruction, were gathered using a structured questionnaire. This information allowed for a better understanding of the diverse backgrounds of the respondents and laid the foundation for exploring potential correlations. The research instrument also included items designed to assess the frequency and types of reading strategies employed by these teachers. Respondents were asked to rate the extent of their use of each strategy on a Likert scale, providing quantifiable data for analysis. The study captured teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategies in developing students' oral reading fluency. Responses included qualitative feedback through open-ended questions that supplemented the quantitative data.

Meanwhile, to explore the relationships between various factors, particularly the demographic profile of the teachers and the extent of teaching reading strategies, the correlational method was applied. This method enables researchers to determine whether specific teacher characteristics are associated with the degree to which they implement reading strategies. Pearson correlation coefficient had been employed to highlight the significant associations between demographic variables and the frequencies of different reading strategies used in teaching. The results of the correlational analysis helped to identify whether certain demographic factors influenced the extent of strategy implementation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of paper presents the data gathered and its interpretation comprised of four parts: the demographic profile of the teachers in terms of academic rank, years of teaching, and highest educational attainment, extent of teaching reading strategies utilized by the teachers in developing in developing oral fluency of the learners along solitary reading, buddy reading, and group reading,

perceived effect of the teaching strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral reading fluency of the learners along accuracy, automaticity, and prosody, and relationship between the demographic profile and the extent of teaching reading strategies utilized by the teachers.

The demographic profile of the respondents provides essential context for evaluating the results of the study regarding the teaching strategies employed for developing oral reading fluency. Presented in Table 1 is the demographic profile of the teacher respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Rank		
Teacher I	50	55.56
Teacher II	8	8.89
Teacher III	26	28.89
Master Teacher I	3	3.33
Master Teacher III	3	3.33
Total	90	100
Years of Teaching		
Less than 3 Years	16	17.78
3 to 6 Years	20	22.22
6 to 10 Years	20	22.22
11 Years and above	34	37.78
Total	90	100
Highest Educational Attainment		
College Graduate	19	21.11
With Master's Units	62	68.89
Master's Graduate	7	7.78
With Doctoral Units	2	2.22
Total	90	100

As gleaned on the table, a majority (55.56%) of educators are classified as Teacher I, indicating that a significant proportion are relatively new to the teaching profession. This could mean that many educators are still in their initial learning phases, which might affect classroom management, curriculum delivery, and overall teaching effectiveness. Teacher III holds 28.89% of the ranks, suggesting a moderate representation of experienced teachers. The smaller percentages of Teacher II and Master Teacher ranks suggest that advancement in educational hierarchy may be limited, perhaps tied to factors like availability of positions, professional development opportunities, or existing educational frameworks.

With the results, it showed that the predominance of Teachers I can be interpreted in multiple ways. On one hand, it indicates a fresh influx of educators who may bring new ideas and enthusiasm to the classroom. On the other hand, it could also point to challenges in retention and career progression within the teaching profession. The notable number of mid-career educators suggests there may be opportunities to leverage their experiences in peer mentorship or leadership roles, which could foster a culture of continuous improvement in pedagogical practices.

The results further disclosed a diverse range of teaching experience exists among respondents. Approximately 37.78% of teachers have over 11 years of experience, which could be a stabilizing

force within the educational institution. Their established expertise might positively influence novice teachers through mentorship and support. The data also shows that there is a significant population of teachers in the mid-career stage (22.22% in the 3 to 6 and 6 to 10 years categories). This group may be looking for career progression opportunities, which could enhance their motivation and effectiveness in teaching.

In terms of educational attainment, the high percentage of educators with postgraduate education (68.89%) suggests a strong emphasis on furthering education and professional growth. This level of educational attainment could lead to improved pedagogy, as educators may possess enhanced skills and knowledge in their subject areas. However, only a small percentage holds advanced degrees (7.78% with a Master's and 2.22% with Doctoral units). This indicates a potential gap in leadership and highly specialized positions in the educational landscape.

The emphasis on postgraduate education among teachers may enhance instructional quality; however, it also raises questions about how these credentials are utilized in practice. For instance, if the majority of teaching staff lacks doctoral-level qualifications, this could impact the depth of research-based education practices in the institution.

Meanwhile, Table 2 shows the extent of teaching reading strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral fluency of the learners.

Table 2. Extent of Teaching Reading Strategies utilized by Teachers in Developing Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)

Strategy	Weighted Mean (WM)	Rank	Interpretation
Solitary reading	4.53	2	Very Large Extent
Buddy reading	4.47	3	Very Large Extent
Group reading	4.54	1	Very Large Extent
Overall Mean	4.51		Very Large Extent

As seen in the table, group reading had the highest weighted mean 4.54 and was ranked number one interpreted as a Very Large Extent. Solitary reading came in second with a weighted mean 4.53 interpreted as a Very Large Extent also while buddy reading followed closely behind with a weighted mean of 4.47 interpreted as a Very Large Extent too. In findings, there is an overall mean score for all three strategies combined which is 4.51 indicating that all three methods were utilized to a very large extent. This average score across all three strategies highlights a strong preference for collaborative and semi-collaborative reading methods. The marginal differences in weighted means indicate that all three strategies are valued highly, which can guide educational practices and reading programs.

The highest-rated strategy indicates that participants likely value collaborative learning and the benefits of discussing texts in a group setting. Group reading can foster comprehension through dialogue and shared insights, allowing students to build on each other's ideas and perspectives. The study of Ocampo (2018) supports the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in educational settings. He emphasized the importance of social interactions in learning. Activities that encourage students to discuss texts and share insights can enhance comprehension and retention. Gee (2018) has reiterated the benefits of cooperative learning, including improved academic achievement and interpersonal relationships.

The Solitary Reading rated very high as well, which suggests that many participants appreciate the opportunity for personal reflection and individualized pace in reading. Solitary reading often allows students to process information independently, leading to deeper understanding and retention of material. Such a finding is supported by Doubet and Southall (2018), who stated that solitary reading provides students with the opportunity to process information at their own pace. This individualized approach allows readers to pause, reflect, and revisit challenging concepts, enhancing comprehension. Swanson et al. (2016) added that when reading alone, students are more likely to engage in metacognitive strategies, such as self-questioning and summarization. This self-directed reflection helps them evaluate their understanding and identify areas that require further exploration.

The Buddy reading, although slightly lower than the other two methods, buddy reading is still seen as valuable. This method combines elements of both solitary and group reading, enabling peer support and reducing feelings of isolation while reading. While buddy reading might show slightly lower efficacy compared to more structured reading methods, its benefits—ranging from social interaction and motivation to improved comprehension and skill development—reinforce its value in educational settings. The study of Sturtevant (2016) coalesces with the current findings as he pointed that buddy reading encourages students to engage with one another, providing mutual support and motivation. This peer interaction can enhance engagement and interest in reading, ultimately leading to improved comprehension and retention of material. It is also supported by the Vygotsky's Social Learning Theory that emphasizes the importance of social interactions in learning. Buddy reading aligns with this theory as it allows more proficient readers to assist those who may struggle, facilitating collaborative learning.

In Table 3, it shows the perceived effect of the teaching strategies utilized by the teachers in developing oral reading fluency of the learners.

Table 3. Perceived Effect of Teaching Strategies Utilized by Teachers in Developing Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)

Strategy	Weighted Mean (WM)	Rank	Interpretation
Accuracy	4.57	1	Highly Effective
Automaticity	4.40	2	Highly Effective
Prosody	4.39	3	Highly Effective
Overall Mean	4.40		Highly Effective

The analysis of the perceived effectiveness of teaching strategies utilized by teachers in developing Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) provides valuable insights into how different strategies impact students' reading abilities. The results indicate that all measured strategies—accuracy, automaticity, and prosody—received high weighted means and are perceived as highly effective. As shown in the table, accuracy yielded a weighted mean of 4.57 (Rank 1; Highly Effective), automaticity yielded a weighted mean of 4.40 (Rank 2; Highly Effective) and last the prosody yielded a weighted mean of 4.39 (Rank 3; Highly Effective).

The accuracy, which refers to the ability to read words correctly without errors, ranked highest among the strategies. This suggests that teachers place significant emphasis on ensuring that students can recognize and produce words accurately. Given the importance of accuracy in early reading development, it may be beneficial for teachers to incorporate more targeted instruction focused on phonemic awareness and decoding skills. Activities such as repeated reading and word recognition exercises could enhance students' accuracy levels.

Meanwhile, automaticity relates to the ability to read with speed and efficiency, which complements accuracy. Ranking second indicates that teachers recognize the necessity of helping students transition from laborious decoding to fluent reading. Instruction that encourages repeated exposure to texts can aid in building automaticity. Strategies such as timed readings, practice with high-frequency words, and the use of engaging texts can help students read more fluidly, thereby enhancing their overall reading fluency.

The prosody encompasses the rhythm, intonation, and expression in reading. While it ranked third, a high mean score indicates that teachers view prosody as a crucial component of fluent reading that contributes to comprehension and engagement. Integrating expressive reading activities, such as reader's theater, poetry reading, or guided oral reading with modeling, can develop students' prosodic skills. This also encourages a love for reading and improves comprehension by making reading events more engaging.

The findings illustrate a nuanced understanding of the components of oral reading fluency, highlighting that accuracy is foundational, while automaticity and prosody enhance the overall fluency experience. Such findings are in relation with the study of Wineburg et al. (2022) who affirmed that improving accuracy can lead to greater automaticity, which in turn can empower students to focus on prosody. Thus, a holistic approach that incorporates all three strategies is likely to yield the best outcomes for developing ORF. Willinsky (2017) pointed out that teachers may benefit from professional development that equips them with a repertoire of instructional strategies aimed at promoting all three aspects of fluency. Research has indicated that balanced literacy frameworks, which intertwine phonics, fluency, and comprehension strategies, are effective. Torgesen et al. (2017) mentioned that the emphasis on these strategies reflects a broader trend towards student-centered teaching, where teachers adapt their instruction to meet the specific needs of learners. Employing varied instructional methodologies (e.g., differentiated instruction, formative assessments) enables teachers to support students at different levels of reading proficiency.

The high perceptions of effectiveness of the strategies for developing Oral Reading Fluency underscore their importance in reading instruction. While accuracy, automaticity, and prosody each play critical roles, their complementarity reinforces the need for comprehensive teaching approaches. Meanwhile, Table 4 discloses the relationship between the demographic profile and the extent of teaching reading strategies utilized by the teacher

Table 4. Relationship between Demographic Profile and Extent of Teaching Reading Strategies

Strategy		Profile		
		Academic Rank	Years of Teaching	Highest Educational Attainment
Solitary Reading	Pearson Correlation	.110 ^{ns}	.062 ^{ns}	-.044 ^{ns}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.263	.532	.619
	N	90	90	90
Buddy Reading	Pearson Correlation	.046 ^{ns}	.174 ^{ns}	.046 ^{ns}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.630	.072	.591

	N	90	90	90
	Pearson	-.029 ^{ns}	-.039 ^{ns}	-.156 ^{ns}
	Correlation			
Group	Sig. (2-	.777	.700	.086
Reading	tailed)			
	N	90	90	90

Data revealed that the extent of utilizing solitary reading strategies is not significantly correlated with the profile of the teacher along academic rank ($r=.110$, $p>0.05$), years of teaching ($r=.062$, $p>0.05$), and highest educational attainment ($r=-.044$, $p>0.05$). Since all the p values are greater than 5% level of significant, the researchers failed to reject the null hypothesis and interpreted it as not significant. This finding is also true along with the extent of utilizing buddy reading which found not significantly correlated with academic rank ($r=.046$, $p>0.05$), years of teaching ($r=.174$, $p>0.05$), and highest educational attainment ($r=.046$, $p>0.05$) of the teachers. Furthermore, these findings are the same with extent of utilizing group reading which found not significantly correlated with academic rank ($r=-.029$, $p>0.05$), years of teaching ($r=-.039$, $p>0.05$), and highest educational attainment ($r=-.156$, $p>0.05$).

The lack of correlation across various teacher profiles suggests that factors such as academic rank, experience, and education level do not influence the way reading strategies are utilized in the classroom. This could imply that these strategies may be driven more by individual teaching styles, classroom dynamics, or institutional priorities rather than measurable teacher attributes. These findings may indicate a need for more targeted professional development that focuses not just on teachers' qualifications and experience, but also on their pedagogical approaches. If a teacher's rank or experience does not equate to the effectiveness of reading strategies implemented, then professional development should emphasize innovative and evidence-based practices regardless of a teacher's profile.

Further exploration into factors that might better explain the utilization of reading strategies is warranted. Potential influences include pedagogical philosophies, school culture, available resources, training in specific reading strategies, and student demographics. Understanding these dimensions could uncover why certain strategies are favored across the board, irrespective of teacher profiles.

4. CONCLUSION

The study reveals significant insights about the teaching profession and reading strategies. It shows that a high number of Teacher I suggests either a high turnover among early-career educators or a significant influx of new teachers. Despite this, the presence of many experienced teachers indicates a strong foundation within the teaching community. The distribution of teachers across various experience levels reflects a broad range of expertise, which benefits the educational environment. Although many teachers hold Master's degrees, doctoral degrees are less common, indicating that while advanced education is valued, it is not as widespread due to its demands. The research highlights the effectiveness of various reading strategies for improving students' oral reading fluency. However, these reading strategies are not significantly influenced by teachers' academic qualifications, years of experience, or educational background. The disconnect between teacher qualifications and the actual strategies employed in reading instruction raises important questions about how educational institutions can cultivate environments that support effective teaching practices regardless of a teacher's rank or experience. Further research into the qualitative aspects of

teaching—such as classroom interactions and student engagement—may yield insights into optimizing reading strategy utilization that transcends traditional metrics of teacher success. Educators should embrace these findings to enhance their instructional practices, ensuring that all students are equipped with the skills necessary for successful reading experiences. Future research could explore the long-term effects of these strategies on student outcomes and identify best practices for integrating them into diverse classroom environments.

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