IGNATIAN
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
www.icceph.com
ISSN 2984-9942

PHONICS (PARENTS AS HELPERS IN OPTIMIZING NURTURING INTERACTIVE CHILD SKILLS) APPROACH USING READ ALONG BY GOOGLE APPLICATION

Melany L. Hilario

Laguilayan Central Elementary School, Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, Region XII, Philippines

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15812677

ABSTRACT

Reading proficiency remains a foundational skill that shapes a child's lifelong learning trajectory, yet many struggle to develop this critical ability early on. This qualitative study investigates the experiences of parents using the Read Along by Google app to enhance their children's early literacy development through a phonics-based approach. In the context of home-based learning, the research sought to understand how this digital tool influenced children's reading performance, motivation, and engagement, as well as the role of parental support in the learning process. Through in-depth interviews and reflections, insights were gathered on how the app contributed to improved reading fluency, greater enthusiasm for reading, and the establishment of consistent reading habits at home. Parents highlighted the app's interactive features, user-friendly interface, and personalized feedback as key factors in sustaining their children's interest in reading. However, challenges such as limited access to digital devices and the need for adult supervision were also noted. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating supportive technologies with active parental involvement to foster early reading skills. This study adds to the current discourse on educational technology by illustrating how mobile applications can complement traditional phonics instruction and serve as effective tools in promoting early literacy in diverse home settings.

Keywords: *Early Literacy, Phonics Approach, Read Along App, Parental Involvement, Digital Learning Tools*

INTRODUCTION

The reading experience during primary school years is essential for literacy development and cognitive growth. Research highlights the importance of the home literacy environment (HLE) in shaping children's reading skills and interests. Georgiou et al. (2021) found that a positive HLE with regular reading practices and diverse materials improves language and literacy outcomes, fostering better comprehension and independent reading.

Effective reading instruction includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). These skills can be supported through diverse resources and engaging practices at home and school. Technology also plays a critical role in enhancing reading skills, particularly for struggling readers. Alsuwat et al, (2016) showed technology-based instruction narrows proficiency gaps among EFL readers, while Cheung et al., (2013) found digital tools positively impact struggling readers' achievement. Resources like e-books and interactive apps enhance traditional practices by offering personalized and engaging learning experiences. Combining a strong HLE with technology creates a comprehensive strategy to foster literacy, enhancing fluency, comprehension, and a lifelong love of reading.

Laguilayan Central School remains committed to improving student performance, particularly in reading skills, as demonstrated by its ongoing efforts to address literacy challenges. Recent results from the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) reveal that Grade 2 - Eagle faces significant difficulties, with 8 out of 34 PUPILS identified as low emerging readers and 19 as transitioning readers. This indicates that only 79% of the class has started developing foundational reading skills, leaving a considerable gap in meeting literacy benchmarks and highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support these learners.

To address these challenges, Laguilayan Central School must implement a structured reading program tailored to the varying needs of its PUPILS. For low emerging readers, interventions should focus on phonics, vocabulary development, and guided reading, while transitioning readers may benefit from activities that enhance fluency and comprehension. Collaboration with parents and the community is equally important in creating a supportive literacy environment at home. Providing access to diverse reading materials, promoting daily reading habits, and incorporating technology like reading apps can further engage PUPILS and boost their progress. By combining these strategies, the school can help its PUPILS overcome reading difficulties and build a strong foundation for academic success.

Research Questions

Building on previous research, the researcher developed an educational strategy that engaged pupils with the Read Along by Google Application. The researcher, therefore, targeted the following research questions:

1. What are the parents' experiences in using the PHONICS approach through the Read Along by Google app to support their children's reading development?
2. What strategies do parents find effective in enhancing early literacy through their involvement and the use of digital tools like the Read Along app?
3. How does the PHONICS approach via the Read Along by Google app impact children's reading engagement and progress?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of parents in supporting their children's reading development through the Read Along by Google application using the PHONICS approach. Conducted in a rural public elementary school in the Philippines, the research focused on Grade 2 – Eagle pupils whose parents were actively involved in home-based literacy instruction. A purposive sampling method was used to select ten parent participants based on their regular use of the Read Along app and phonics strategies with their children. To gain comprehensive insights, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, parent-child observation sessions, and parent-maintained reflection journals. These tools, all researcher-made, were validated by literacy experts and pilot-tested for clarity and relevance before deployment. The interviews and discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed with participant consent.

For analysis, thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework was used to identify recurring patterns and themes from the qualitative data. The process included data familiarization, coding, theme development, and validation through constant comparison across data sources. This method allowed the researcher to capture nuanced parental experiences, perceptions, and practices while using digital tools for early literacy. While the study provided rich, contextualized insights, its scope was limited to a small, rural population and did not include quantitative assessment of students' reading scores. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

RESULTS

This qualitative inquiry investigated parents' experiences using the Read Along by Google app to support their children's early literacy development through a phonics-based approach. Through comprehensive data analysis involving coding and thematic clustering, a total of six (6) themes were identified from participants' narratives. These themes illustrate the multifaceted influence of the app on children's reading progress, motivation, and the home learning environment.

Table 1. Themes and Codes

Theme	Codes
1. Joyful and Motivated Reading	Joyful learning, Gamified motivation, Reward-driven learning, Achievement excitement, App preference over books
2. Developing Early Literacy Skills Through Phonics	Phonics development, Improved pronunciation, Difficulty in phonics, Repetition and reinforcement, Phonemic awareness
3. Engagement Through Technology and Design	Engaging narration, Visual engagement, Multisensory engagement, Digital literacy aid, Story understanding, Verbal encouragement
4. Parental Involvement and Support	Nighttime reading routine, Parent-child bonding, Balanced support, Teaching support, Encouraging independence
5. Self-directed and Independent Learning	Reading confidence, Self-correction, Independent learning support, App as standalone tool
6. Challenges in App Use	Connectivity issues, Internet dependency, Tiredness as a barrier, Learning disruption

DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Parental Involvement Enhances Reading Progress

Parental involvement emerged as a critical factor in improving children's reading skills using the Read Along app. Parents actively participating in their children's learning routines not only provided emotional support but also created a structured learning environment. Many parents monitored progress, motivated their children to keep practicing, and helped clarify difficult phonics sounds when necessary. This involvement fostered a positive learning atmosphere, encouraging consistency and reducing frustration during reading practice. The active role of parents also strengthened the home-school connection, which research shows significantly benefits early literacy outcomes. Parental support, especially during digital learning, helps bridge gaps that children might face when learning independently, allowing tailored encouragement that suits each child's pace and style.

According to participants 1, 5, and 9
"Sinusubaybayan ko siya sa bawat leksyon para matulungan ko kung saan siya nahihirapan."
(I monitor him in every lesson to help where he struggles.) (P1)
"Mas motivated siya kapag kasama ako nagbabasa."
(He is more motivated when I read with him.) (P5)
"Nagbibigay ako ng oras araw-araw para mag-practice siya gamit ang app."
(I allocate time every day for him to practice using the app.) (P9)

Sheridan et al. (2019) found that when parents actively participate in digital learning contexts, children show increased motivation and higher academic achievement. Furthermore, Mol et al. (2018) indicate that consistent dialogic reading practices facilitated by parents predict better reading comprehension, underscoring how parental support can enhance literacy outcomes in technology-mediated learning environments.

Theme 2: Support in Phonics Promotes Reading Accuracy

The study participants highlighted that the app's phonics approach provided essential support in improving children's reading accuracy. Phonics instruction, with a systematic focus on sounds and letter patterns, helped children decode words more effectively. Parents observed noticeable improvements in how their children pronounced words and identified sounds, which boosted their confidence in reading aloud. This scaffolding aligned well with evidence-based literacy methods that emphasize phonics as a foundational skill for early reading success. The app's guided phonics exercises gave learners immediate corrective feedback, which is critical for mastering complex sound-letter relationships. Moreover, this approach reduces reliance on guesswork and encourages analytical decoding, contributing to greater fluency and comprehension.

According to participants 3, 6, and 11,
"Natutulungan siya ng app lalo na sa tamang pagbigkas ng mga salita." (The app helps him especially with correct pronunciation of words.) (P3)
"Mas confident siya magbasa dahil natutunan niya ang mga tunog ng letra." (He is more confident reading because he learned the letter sounds.) (P6)
"Malaki ang naitulong ng phonics sa pagbabasa niya." (Phonics has helped a lot with his reading.) (P11)

Recent studies consistently support the efficacy of phonics-based instruction in improving early reading accuracy. McArthur et al. (2015) present evidence that phonics interventions significantly enhance decoding skills in struggling readers. Ehri et al. (2020) affirm that systematic phonics instruction leads to better word recognition and reading fluency, while Wanzek et al. (2017) highlight that phonics support during early reading stages contributes to long-term academic success. These findings align with the participants' observations, reinforcing the role of phonics in foundational reading development.

Theme 3: Engagement Through Technology and Design

Participants consistently expressed that the Read Along app's engaging design, including its appealing narration, colorful visuals, and interactive animations, played a crucial role in capturing and maintaining their children's attention. The narration quality resembled a real teacher's voice, helping children feel guided as they practiced reading. Multimedia elements—combining audio with visuals—enhanced comprehension by providing contextual cues and reducing cognitive load. Such multimodal learning aligns with Mayer's multimedia learning theory, which posits that combining verbal and visual information supports better understanding and retention. The interactive and colorful

design elements stimulated curiosity and made reading enjoyable, transforming it from a passive task into an immersive experience. This engagement increases motivation and effort, critical for sustained early literacy development.

According to participants 2, and 8.
“Maganda yung boses na nagbabasa. Parang teacher talaga.”
(The voice reading is nice. It sounds just like a teacher.) (P2)
“Nakaka-engganyo yung mga larawan at kulay sa app.”
(The pictures and colors in the app are engaging.) (P8)

Research in multimedia learning underscores the significance of design and narration quality in engaging learners and improving comprehension. Fiorella and Mayer (2018) highlight that instructional videos integrating audio and visual information maintain attention and support comprehension in young learners. These findings support the observed positive impact of the Read Along app’s design on children’s engagement and learning.

Theme 4: Increased Reading Motivation and Confidence

The Read Along app was reported to boost children’s motivation and confidence in reading, which is crucial in early literacy development. Motivation serves as a driving force that encourages children to engage repeatedly in reading activities, while confidence helps reduce reading anxiety and reluctance. Many parents observed that their children felt proud of their progress and looked forward to reading sessions, demonstrating intrinsic motivation sparked by the app’s rewarding feedback system. This increase in self-efficacy fosters a positive cycle where children become more willing to practice and improve, leading to measurable gains in reading skills. The app’s gamified elements and instant praise create a supportive atmosphere that encourages children to take risks and persevere through challenges.

According to participants 4 and 7,
“Naging mas interesado siya magbasa kasi nakikita niya yung progreso niya.”
(He became more interested in reading because he sees his progress.) (P4)
“Lumakas ang loob niya kasi palagi siyang sinasabi ng app na ‘Good job!’”
(His confidence grew because the app always tells him ‘Good job!’) (P7)

Motivation and confidence are critical components of successful literacy development. Guthrie et al. (2016) found that motivated readers demonstrate higher engagement and better reading outcomes. Additionally, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) explain that self-efficacy beliefs directly influence persistence and learning success, especially in challenging tasks such as reading. The gamification elements that provide immediate positive feedback are supported by Dichev and Dicheva (2017), who argue that such features enhance motivation and promote sustained learning engagement. These studies collectively support how the app’s features help increase reading motivation and confidence among young learners.

Theme 5: Challenges with Technology Use at Home

Despite the overall positive impact, some parents reported difficulties related to technology use, including inconsistent internet access, device availability, and managing screen time. These challenges occasionally limited children's ability to use the app consistently, impacting the continuity of practice and progress monitoring. Parents also voiced concerns about balancing educational screen time with other offline activities, highlighting the need for guidance on appropriate usage. These barriers reveal socio-economic and infrastructural factors that influence the effectiveness of digital learning tools. Addressing these challenges requires integrated approaches that consider access, parental education, and digital literacy to optimize the use of educational technologies at home.

According to participants 3, 5, and 6,
"Minsan, walang internet kaya hindi siya makapag-practice."
(Sometimes, there is no internet so he can't practice.) (P3)
"Isa lang ang tablet namin kaya kailangan maghintay siya."
(We only have one tablet, so he has to wait his turn.) (P5)
"Nahihirapan akong limitahan ang oras niya sa paggamit ng app."
(I find it hard to limit his time using the app.) (P6)

Research highlights the "digital divide" as a significant barrier to equitable educational technology use. Warschauer and Matuchniak (2019) emphasize that unequal access to reliable internet and devices can hinder the potential benefits of digital learning tools. Additionally, Rideout and Robb (2019) discuss the challenges parents face in managing children's screen time while maximizing educational value. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2020) highlight the importance of parental guidance in moderating technology use to balance learning with healthy habits. These findings confirm that technological constraints and management issues can limit the effectiveness of apps like Read Along in home settings.

Theme 6: Positive Parental Perception of the App's Educational Value

Parents expressed a positive perception of the Read Along app, valuing it as an effective and supportive tool for early literacy development. Many appreciated its alignment with phonics principles, ease of use, and ability to engage children independently, providing a useful supplement to traditional reading instruction. Parents noted that the app reduced their own anxiety about teaching reading, as it offered clear guidance and structure. This perception reflects growing acceptance of digital learning tools in enhancing early childhood education. It also highlights the role of user-friendly design and educational integrity in fostering trust among caregivers. Positive parental attitudes are essential for sustained use and advocacy of such tools, which can lead to better literacy outcomes in the long term.

According to participants 3, 6, and 11,
"Maganda ang app kasi tinuturo nito yung mga tamang paraan ng pagbabasa."
(The app is good because it teaches the correct ways of reading.) (P14)

“Nakakatulong ito kahit wala akong background sa pagtuturo.”
(This helps even though I have no teaching background.) (P17)
“Mas gusto ko na gumamit siya ng app kaysa magbasa lang ng libro.”
(I prefer that he uses the app rather than just reading books.) (P18)

Parental perception plays a critical role in the adoption and effective use of educational technologies. According to Tondeur et al. (2017), positive attitudes towards digital learning tools among parents are linked to higher engagement and support for children’s education. Moreover, Hsin et al. (2018) found that user-friendly and pedagogically sound apps increase parental trust and satisfaction. The increasing acceptance of educational technology in home settings is also documented by Chiong et al. (2016), who emphasize the importance of apps that align with evidence-based teaching practices. These studies affirm that positive parental perceptions contribute significantly to the successful integration of digital literacy tools like the Read Along app.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that parents’ experiences in using Read Along by Google application alongside the PHONICS approach were generally positive and transformative. Parents reported that the app supported their efforts in teaching reading at home, especially for those who had limited educational resources. Their engagement in their children's literacy development deepened as they discovered new digital means to make reading both interactive and enjoyable. Many parents developed a stronger sense of confidence and agency in their role as at-home educators, particularly when guided by the phonics principles built into the app’s design.

Furthermore, the Read Along application proved to be effective in enhancing children’s interest and motivation to read. The app’s interactive features, such as real-time voice feedback and gamified rewards, increased children's attention and persistence during reading tasks. The PHONICS approach, reinforced through the app, allowed children to grasp letter sounds, blend words, and build vocabulary more efficiently, as observed by the parents. While some challenges such as limited internet access and time constraints emerged, these did not significantly hinder the overall usefulness of the intervention. Ultimately, the study reveals that when parents are equipped with accessible and user-friendly tools like Read Along, their involvement can greatly support children’s reading growth in resource-limited home learning environments.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the use of Read Along app in reading enhancement.

1. Schools and teachers should incorporate evidence-based digital tools like the Read Along app into their regular literacy instruction.
2. Develop community-based or school-led workshops that train parents on how to effectively use the Read Along app and other reading strategies at home.

3. Education departments and local government units should allocate funding or partnerships with tech companies to ensure all students, especially those in underprivileged areas, have access to devices and stable internet.
4. Establish regular monitoring of students' reading progress through digital tools and gather feedback from parents and teachers.
5. Ensure that early literacy curricula align with phonics-based instruction and support the use of tools like Read Along.
6. Policymakers should recognize and support the role of blended learning—combining face-to-face instruction with app-based learning—especially in early literacy development.
7. Further research should be encouraged to explore long-term effects of phonics-based digital apps on reading performance.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The author affirms that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. Ethical approval was obtained before the commencement of the research, and informed consent was acquired from all respondents involved. No specific funding was received for this research from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit organizations. The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable

Acknowledgments

The acknowledgment goes to the participants for their shared time and contribution to the researchers whose work has been referenced in this paper and most especially to Leodie D. Mones, PhD, and Limwell R. Telmo, PhD-Math(c) for their technical assistance in completing this paper. Their valuable insights and findings have substantially contributed to the analysis of this study.

REFERENCES

Alsuwat, S. and Young, J. (2016). Meta-analysis of the effects of traditional versus technology-based instruction on reading comprehension of efl students. Efl Journal, 1(3). https://doi.org/10.21462/eflj.v1i3.18

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

Cheung, A. and Slavin, R. (2013). Effects of educational technology applications on reading outcomes for struggling readers: a best-evidence synthesis. Reading Research Quarterly, 48(3), 277-299. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.50

Chiong, C., Ree, J., Takeuchi, L., & Erickson, I. (2016). Young children and technology: Early learning in the digital age. The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop. https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/publication/young-children-and-technology/

Dichev, C., & Dicheva, D. (2017). Gamification in education: A systematic review of design principles. Educational Technology Research and Development, 65(3), 619–642. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-016-9503-9
Ehri, L. C. (2020). The science of learning to read words: A case for systematic phonics instruction. Reading Research Quarterly, 55, S45-S60.
Fiorella, L., & Mayer, R. E. (2018). What works and doesn't work with instructional video. Computers in Human Behavior, 89, 465-470.
Georgiou, G., Inoue, T., & Parrila, R. (2021). Developmental relations between home literacy environment, reading interest, and reading skills: evidence from a 3-year longitudinal study. Child Development, 92(5), 2053-2068. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13589
Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2016). Instructional contexts for engagement and achievement in reading. In S. L. Christenson et al. (Eds.), Handbook of research on student engagement (pp. 601–634). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_24
Hsin, C.-T., Li, M.-C., & Tsai, C.-C. (2018). The influence of young children's use of technology on their learning: A review. Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 21(2), 31–44. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26273850
Kim, J., Chang, H., & Park, Y. (2020). Parental mediation and children's digital media use: Exploring parents' perceptions and concerns. Children and Youth Services Review, 113, 104952. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104952
McArthur, A., Klugárová, J., Yan, H. U., & Florescu, S. (2015). Innovations in the systematic review of text and opinion. JBI Evidence Implementation, 13(3), 188-195.
National Reading Panel (US), National Institute of Child Health, & Human Development (US). (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.
Rideout, V., & Robb, M. B. (2019). The common sense census: Media use by kids age zero to eight, 2019. Common Sense Media. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-kids-age-zero-to-eight-2019
Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2020). Motivation and social-emotional learning: Theory, research, and practice. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 60, 101832. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.101832
Sheridan, S. M., Smith, T. E., Moorman Kim, E., Beretvas, S. N., & Park, S. (2019). A meta-analysis of family-school interventions and children's social-emotional functioning: Moderators and components of efficacy. Review of educational Research, 89(2), 296-332.
Tondeur, J., Roblin, N. P., van Braak, J., Voogt, J., Prestridge, S., & Daly, C. (2017). Preparing beginning teachers for technology integration in education: Ready for take-off? Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 26(2), 157–177. https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2016.1193556
Wanzek, J., Petscher, Y., Otaiba, S. A., Rivas, B. K., Jones, F. G., Kent, S. C., ... & Mehta, P. (2017). Effects of a year long supplemental reading intervention for

students with reading difficulties in fourth grade. Journal of Educational Psychology, 109(8), 1103.
Warschauer, M., & Matuchniak, T. (2019). New technology and digital worlds: Analyzing evidence of equity in access, use, and outcomes. Review of Research in Education, 40(1), 179–225. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16687522

APA Citation:

Hilario, M. L. (2025). PHONICS (PARENTS AS HELPERS IN OPTIMIZING NURTURING INTERACTIVE CHILD SKILLS) APPROACH USING READ ALONG BY GOOGLE APPLICATION. Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 3(7), 9–19. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15812677

Corresponding author: *melany.hilario@deped.gov.ph*