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FOUNDATIONS OF READING FLUENCY: LINKING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES, HOME ECOLOGY, ON PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Reading fluency is a fundamental component of early literacy influenced by instructional practices, home environments, and foundational language skills. This study examined instructional strategies, home ecology, and phonological awareness as predictors of reading fluency among Grade 1 pupils in Kalilangan East and West District, Division of Bukidnon, during School Year 2026–2027. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, pupils were selected through stratified random sampling. Adapted questionnaires assessed instructional strategies and home ecology, while Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) results measured phonological awareness and reading fluency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. Findings revealed that instructional strategies were implemented at a very high level, while home ecology was rated high. Pupils demonstrated moderate phonological awareness and were generally classified as developing readers, with reading speed needing improvement. The regression model significantly predicted reading fluency, explaining 56.7% of its variance after adjustment. Phonological awareness was the only significant positive predictor, whereas instructional strategies and home ecology showed no significant unique contributions. The study highlights the importance of strengthening phonological awareness through systematic sound-identification, blending, and segmentation activities. It recommends guided oral reading, repeated reading, differentiated instruction, and collaboration among teachers, parents, and school administrators to support pupils' reading development.

Keywords: *reading fluency, instructional strategies, home ecology, phonological awareness, Grade 1 pupils*

INTRODUCTION

Reading fluency is widely recognized as a vital component of early literacy development because it directly influences a child's ability to comprehend text and excel academically (Kim et al., 2021). Defined as a multifaceted construct, reading fluency involves accuracy in word recognition, reading speed, and prosody, which includes the expressive elements such as intonation, rhythm, and pacing (Kim et al., 2021). These dimensions serve as a critical bridge between foundational decoding skills—like phonological awareness and word recognition—and subsequent reading comprehension (Skibbe et al., 2020; Stekić et al., 2023).

Effective development of reading fluency is influenced by several key factors. Instructional strategies such as guided oral reading, repeated reading, and phonics-based approaches have been shown to foster automaticity in word recognition and improve fluency (Hudson et al., 2020; Zheng and Xiao, 2025). Concurrently, a rich home literacy environment, characterized by shared reading experiences, access to books, and active parental involvement, significantly promotes language development and reading achievement (Lee, 2023; Lapuhapu et al., 2024). Furthermore, phonological awareness, the capacity to identify and manipulate sounds in spoken language—is widely acknowledged as a foundational skill that positively impacts decoding, word recognition, and overall reading fluency (Siregar et al., 2023; Newbury et al., 2020).

Despite this strong evidence, many young learners, particularly those in rural and low-resource communities, continue to face significant challenges in acquiring adequate reading fluency (Zhang et al., 2024; Eborda et al., 2026). These challenges are often intensified by restrictions in access to quality instruction, literacy materials, and family support. Prior studies have, however, tended to investigate instructional approaches, home literacy practices, and phonological awareness independently, resulting in a fragmented understanding of how these variables collectively influence reading development (Hudson et al., 2020; Lee, 2023; Siregar et al., 2023). Importantly, the interplay of these factors within specific cultural and socioeconomic contexts such as the rural communities of Bukidnon remains underexplored.

This gap in literature underscores the need for localized research examining the combined impact of instructional methods, home literacy ecology, and phonological awareness on reading fluency in young learners. Such inquiry is especially timely given ongoing efforts to improve early literacy outcomes in underserved Filipino populations. This study draws upon three theoretical frameworks to inform its investigation: Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which highlights the role of social interaction and guided learning; Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1986), which situates literacy development within multiple environmental systems including family and community; and the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which articulates reading comprehension as a product of decoding and linguistic comprehension skills.

By focusing on Grade 1 pupils in selected public elementary schools in Kalilangan East and West District, Bukidnon, this study aimed to provide evidence-based insights

regarding how instructional strategies, home ecology, and phonological awareness collectively predict reading fluency. The findings will inform teachers, parents, and policymakers on targeted reading interventions, thereby addressing critical literacy disparities and fostering more equitable educational outcomes in rural Filipino settings.

Research Questions

This study intended to determine the relationship of parental involvement and home learning environment with reading fluency of grade 1 pupils.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the teachers' self-report of their instructional strategies in reading fluency?
2. What is the parent participants' self-report of their home ecology considering:
    - 2.1 physical and environmental support;
    - 2.2 home literacy activities; and
    - 2.3 parent- child interactions?
3. What is the participants' level of phonological awareness?
    - 3.1 Letter Sounds
    - 3.2 Rhyming
4. What is the reading fluency of the young learners in terms of:
    - 4.1 accuracy;
    - 4.2 speed; and
    - 4.3 prosody?
5. Do instructional strategies, home ecology, and phonological awareness significantly predict the reading fluency of young learners?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the levels of instructional strategies, home ecology, phonological awareness, and reading fluency among Grade 1 learners and examine their relationships and predictive influence on reading fluency without manipulating the variables. As explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018), quantitative research uses numerical data and statistical analysis to investigate research problems, making it appropriate for measuring the study variables and determining their relationships and predictive effects.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of this study consisted of Grade 1 learners enrolled in selected public elementary schools in Kalilangan East and West Districts, Division of Bukidnon, during the school year 2026–2027, with their respective teachers and parents or

guardians providing information on instructional strategies and home ecology. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula with a 0.05 margin of error, a sample of 110 participants was determined from the total population of 151 Grade 1 learners, and stratified random sampling was employed to ensure appropriate representation of the target population.

Research Instruments

The study utilized three research instruments to measure the variables: adapted questionnaires for instructional strategies and home ecology, and the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) for phonological awareness and reading fluency. The instructional strategies questionnaire consisted of 30 items was based on the National Reading Panel (2000) recommendations, while the Home Literacy Environment Questionnaire consisted of 35 items was adapted from Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002); both questionnaires used a 5-point Likert scale and underwent expert validation and reliability testing.

The Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) results, obtained from the learners' advisers, were used to assess Grade 1 pupils' phonological awareness and reading fluency. Phonological awareness was measured through letter-sound and rhyming tasks, while reading fluency was assessed in terms of accuracy, speed, measured by words correct per minute (WCPM), and prosody, including expression and attention to punctuation.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher secured ethical approval from the Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee and written permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Bukidnon, the Public Schools District Supervisors of Kalilangan East and West Districts, and the participating school heads. Written informed consent from parents or legal guardians and teachers, along with age-appropriate assent from the Grade 1 pupils, was obtained before data collection.

Data collection was conducted during the first term of School Year 2026–2027. The researcher supervised the administration and retrieval of the questionnaires, checked the completeness of responses, and encoded and verified the data before statistical analysis. Throughout the process, the study adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report—respect for persons, beneficence, and justice—to protect the welfare, rights, and dignity of all participants.

Statistical Analysis of Data

Statistical analysis involved descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, to summarize the levels of instructional strategies, home ecology, phonological awareness, and reading fluency. Inferential statistics, including correlation and multiple regression analyses, were performed using appropriate software to determine the relationships among variables and assess their predictive contributions to reading fluency. The regression analysis specifically examined whether instructional

strategies, home ecology, and phonological awareness significantly predicted learners' reading fluency, with significance tested at the 0.05 level. This comprehensive analysis provided evidence-based insights into the factors influencing early literacy development among the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' self-report of their instructional strategies in reading fluency

The table 1 shows that instructional strategies were implemented at a Very High level *(M = 4.56, SD = 0.51).* More than half of the participants (56.36%) reported very high implementation, followed by 36.36% who reported high implementation and 7.27% who reported moderate implementation. No participants reported low or very low implementation.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of the participants Instructional Strategies

Range	Description	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
4.51 – 5.00	Always	Very High	62	56.36
3.51 – 4.50	Often	High	40	36.36
2.51 – 3.50	Sometimes	Moderate	8	7.27
1.51 – 2.50	Rarely	Low	0	0.00
1.00 – 1.50	Never	Very Low	0	0.00
	Total		**110**	**100.00**
	Mean		**4.56**	
	SD		**0.51**	
	Interpretation		**Very High**	

The highest-rated indicator was connecting vocabulary instruction to pupils' real-life experiences *(M = 4.75, SD = 0.51),* followed by immediately correcting decoding errors and providing reading materials suited to pupils' needs (*both M = 4.71).* These findings highlight teachers' emphasis on meaningful vocabulary learning, timely feedback, and differentiated instruction. Zhou et al. (2023) similarly emphasized the positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading fluency.

Meanwhile, the lowest-rated indicators were asking pupils to summarize or retell stories *(M = 4.29),* providing paired or partner reading *(M = 4.33),* and explicitly teaching letter–sound relationships *(M = 4.36).* Despite having lower mean scores, these strategies were still practiced often. Overall, the findings suggest that teachers consistently implement instructional strategies to support reading development, while further strengthening explicit letter–sound instruction, retelling activities, and paired reading may help address learners' varied literacy needs.

Parent participants' self-report of their home ecology considering; physical and environmental support, home literacy activities, and parent- child interactions

Table 2 shows that the participants' level of home ecology was High *(M = 3.98, SD = 0.54),* indicating that children generally experience a supportive home environment for literacy development. Parent–Child Interaction obtained the highest mean *(M = 4.24, SD = 0.68),* followed by Home Literacy Activities *(M = 3.99, SD = 0.58*), while Physical and Environmental Support received the lowest mean *(M = 3.85, SD = 0.58).* All three dimensions were interpreted as High.

Table 2
Summary Table of the Participants' Level of Home Ecology

Home Ecology	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Physical and Environmental Support	3.85	0.58	High
Home Literacy Activities	3.99	0.58	High
Parent-child Interaction	4.24	0.68	High
Overall	**3.98**	**0.54**	**High**

The findings suggest that parents provide literacy support primarily through positive interactions, encouragement, and home reading activities. This is consistent with Romero-González et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of the home literacy environment in supporting children's reading performance and motivation. However, the lower rating for Physical and Environmental Support suggests an opportunity to improve access to reading materials and create more conducive spaces for literacy activities. Overall, strengthening existing parental involvement and improving the home learning environment may further support children's literacy development.

Participants' level of phonological awareness in terms of letter Sounds and rhyming

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Phonological Awareness

Score Range	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
16.00 – 20.00	Outstanding	0	0.00
12.00 – 15.99	Very Good	0	0.00
8.00 – 11.99	Good	88	80.00
4.00 – 7.99	Fair	22	20.00
0.00 – 3.99	Poor	0	0.00
Total		**110**	**100.00**
Mean		**8.55**	
SD		**1.30**	
Interpretation		**Moderate**	

Table 3 shows that the participants' level of phonological awareness was Good *(M = 8.55, SD = 1.30).* Most pupils (80%) belonged to the "Good" category, while 20% were

classified as Fair. No participants reached the Outstanding, Very Good, and Poor categories.

These findings indicate that although most Grade 1 pupils have developing phonological awareness skills, some still require additional support. This is consistent with Míguez-Álvarez et al. (2022) and Ergül et al. (2022), who highlighted the relationship between phonological awareness and reading achievement. Overall, the results emphasize the need for explicit and continuous practice in rhyming, sound segmentation, blending, and letter–sound relationships to strengthen pupils' foundational literacy skills and support the development of reading fluency.

Reading fluency of the young learners in terms of accuracy, speed, and prosody

The summary table 4 indicate that students are generally classified as Developing Readers, with an overall mean fluency score of 109.54 *(SD = 14.59).* Specifically, pupils demonstrated stronger skills in reading accuracy *(mean = 69.41, SD = 9.71)* and prosody *(mean = 2.95, SD = 0.92),* both interpreted as proficient in these components. However, their reading speed was comparatively lower *(mean = 37.17, SD = 4.61),* categorized as slow, which may hinder overall reading fluency.

Table 4
Summary Table of Reading Fluency

Reading Fluency	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Accuracy	69.41	9.71	Accurate
Speed	37.17	4.61	Slow Rate
Prosody	2.95	0.92	Expressive
Overall	**109.54**	**14.59**	**Developing Reader**

The findings suggest that while students have mastered word recognition and expressive reading, their automaticity in reading connected texts needs further development. Implications point to the importance of sustained, targeted instruction—such as repeated reading and guided oral reading—to enhance reading rate without compromising accuracy and prosody. Regular assessment and differentiated activities are recommended to support balanced growth across all fluency components and improve overall reading proficiency.

Predictive Influence of Instructional Strategies, Home Ecology, and Phonological Awareness on Reading Fluency

Table 5
Regression Analysis of Instructional Strategies, Home Ecology and Phonological Awareness on Reading Fluency

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		β	95% CI		t	p
	B	SE		Lower	Upper		
Constant	10.35	4.25		1.33	17.98	2.526*	0.013
Instructional Strategies	0.03	0.63	0.003	-1.22	1.30	0.052	0.958
Home Ecology	0.53	0.66	0.059	-0.73	1.80	0.928	0.355
Phonological Awareness	2.79	0.23	0.749	2.37	3.30	11.669*	<.001
Model Summary							
$R=0.761$ $R^2=0.579$ Adj $R^2=0.567$ $F(3,106)=48.601$* $p<.001$							

*Note. B = unstandardized beta coefficient, SE = standard error, β = standardized beta coefficient, 95% CI = 95% confidence interval, t = t statistic, p = probability value. *Significant at 0.05 two-tailed alpha level.*

Model Equation: RF = 2.79PA + 10.35

Legend: RF = Reading Fluency, PA = Phonological Awareness

The multiple regression analysis result in table 5 revealed that the overall model significantly predicted reading fluency, $F(3, 106) = 48.60$, $p < .001$, with $R = .761$, $R^2 = .579$, and adjusted $R^2 = .567$. The three predictors collectively explained 56.7% of the variance in reading fluency. Phonological awareness emerged as the only significant positive predictor ($\beta = .749$, $t = 11.67$, $p < .001$), with a one-unit increase associated with an estimated 2.79-point increase in reading fluency, holding the other predictors constant. In contrast, instructional strategies ($\beta = .003$, $p = .958$) and home ecology ($\beta = .059$, $p = .355$) did not make statistically significant unique contributions to the model.

These findings highlight the importance of phonological awareness in predicting reading fluency among Grade 1 pupils and support the integration of explicit sound-identification, blending, and segmentation activities into early literacy instruction. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected for phonological awareness but not rejected for instructional strategies and home ecology. However, the findings indicate predictive relationships rather than causal effects.

Conclusions

The study concludes that Grade 1 pupils experienced favorable literacy conditions, characterized by a Very High level of instructional strategies and a High level of home ecology. However, their reading fluency remained at the Developing Reader level, while phonological awareness was Moderate, indicating the need for continued literacy support and targeted interventions.

Multiple regression analysis identified phonological awareness as the only significant positive predictor of reading fluency, with the model explaining 56.7% of the variance after adjustment. Instructional strategies and home ecology did not demonstrate significant unique contributions when the other variables were controlled. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening foundational sound-processing skills through explicit phonological awareness activities, alongside sustained teacher-led instruction, parental support, guided oral reading, and repeated reading exercises. Further research should examine additional factors that may influence reading fluency among young learners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Teachers may implement systematic phonics and phonological awareness activities to develop pupils' foundational reading skills. Use repeated reading, guided oral reading, and teacher modeling to improve reading accuracy, speed, and prosody. Conduct regular assessments and provide differentiated instruction and individualized reading interventions. Integrate vocabulary and contextualized reading activities to enhance word recognition and reading confidence.

Parents and guardians may establish daily reading routines, engage children in shared reading using age-appropriate materials, and practice letter sounds, rhyming words, and simple words through enjoyable activities. They may also provide encouragement and positive feedback while accessing supplementary reading materials through schools, libraries, and community resources to strengthen children's literacy skills and reading confidence.

School administrators may provide adequate literacy materials, implement targeted reading interventions, and conduct teacher training to strengthen phonological awareness instruction and reading fluency strategies. They may also strengthen school-home partnerships and regularly evaluate reading programs based on pupils' assessment results and progress.

Reading Coordinators and the Department of Education may develop targeted reading programs, provide teacher training and assessment tools, and ensure equitable access to age-appropriate reading materials. They may also strengthen progress monitoring, program evaluation, and parent-community partnerships to improve learners' reading fluency and early-grade literacy outcomes.

Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger samples and diverse grade levels, schools, and districts while exploring additional learner-related and environmental factors that influence reading fluency. They may also examine the effectiveness of phonological awareness interventions through experimental or

longitudinal designs and use qualitative methods, classroom observations, and alternative assessment tools to gain deeper insights into reading development.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study strictly followed the Belmont Report's ethical principles of Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice. Written informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, assent from pupils, and consent from teachers, ensuring participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw without penalty. Data collection was conducted non-invasively to minimize risks, and confidentiality was maintained through coding and secure data handling. The study aimed to benefit educational stakeholders by enhancing literacy instruction while protecting participant privacy and data integrity. Equity was upheld by including all eligible Grade 1 pupils regardless of background. Necessary approvals from educational authorities were secured, ensuring compliance with institutional policies. This ethical adherence reinforces the study's validity and stakeholder trust.

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