TRANSFORMING NON-READERS INTO INDEPENDENT READERS: BEST PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract:

This study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the best practices of elementary teachers in transforming non-readers into independent readers. Seven elementary teachers from different public institutions in Davao City, Philippines, shared their best practices through in-depth interviews. The results revealed three superordinate themes: Upon reflecting on their practices, the teachers acknowledged the vital role of parent-teacher collaboration; the teachers highlighted the importance of devoting time to reading through reading sessions and remediation; and the teachers emphasized the significance of boosting students' motivation through positive feedback and encouragement. This study underscored the pivotal role of parents and the need for their active involvement in supporting non-readers. It emphasized the significance of early identification and timely interventions tailored to the specific needs of non-readers, such as individualized instruction, small-group activities, or specialized reading programs. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of creating an engaging and motivating reading environment through positive and supportive activities to foster a love for reading among non-readers. The insights gained from this study contribute to the broader discourse on effective literacy practices in elementary education.

Keywords: non-readers, independent readers, IPA, reading teachers, Philippines

1. Introduction

The main objective of education is to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in a globalized and technologically advanced society. One of these skills they need is the ability to read, as it is an essential factor in success in various areas of life, including academics (Dorado & Medina, 2022; Yansyah, 2018). Fundamentally, reading is defined as comprehending, applying, assessing, reflecting on, and interacting

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with texts to realize one's goals, enhance one's intellect, unlock one's potential, and participate in society (OECD, 2021), and not merely the capacity to decode letters and words (Davis *et al.*, 2016; Dorado & Medina, 2022; Nurdianingsih, 2021; OECD, 2021). Several authors have defined reading as a primary tool for learning and a gateway to enhancing skills and knowledge across all disciplines (Davis *et al.*, 2016; Estrada, 2016; Libre III & Decano, 2021; Tomas *et al.*, 2021). It is a prerequisite skill that students need to learn to advance to the next level. Thus, facing reading challenges shapes how well they do in other fields of study, and failure to address these challenges hinders their access to the essential tools for further learning (Cadiz-Gabejan & Quirino, 2021; Davis *et al.*, 2016; Tomas *et al.*, 2021).

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' reading skills, but their task becomes particularly challenging when dealing with non-readers (Davis *et al.*, 2016). Each academic year, elementary teachers are confronted with the recurring concern of addressing the needs of non-readers, who present a range of difficulties. These difficulties include issues related to poor decoding skills, limited vocabulary, poor comprehension, lack of motivation, absence of parental cooperation, time constraints, scarcity of materials, and the need for teacher skill enhancement (Adao *et al.*, 2023; Libre III & Decano, 2021; Reyes *et al.*, 2023). Rupley *et al.* (2009) emphasized teachers' profound importance and influence on how much students learn. When students become independent readers, they gain access to a wealth of knowledge, expand their vocabulary, and develop better comprehension skills, enabling them to excel in various subjects and become lifelong learners. Consequently, if teachers fail to equip students with the ability to read, a generation of non-readers is quite likely, and this may be detrimental to the country's social, political, and economic well-being.

The predicament of teachers worldwide regarding non-readers has worsened based on reports from various academic institutions and organizations. UNICEF reported that 100 million additional students worldwide are experiencing reading challenges (Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics, 2021). From 460 million students in 2020, it increased to 584 million in 2021. The University of Virginia (2021) also noted a significant percentage of students who failed to reach the reading standard when comparing the reading scores from 2020 and 2021. It translates to 232,982 students scoring below the standard in 2021, a 25,765-student increase from 2020.

In the Philippines, findings from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) have shown quite a concerning trend of non-readers that elementary school teachers have to deal with. The regional office in Benguet had 301 non-readers, 99 of whom were grade 4 students, 118 were grade 5 students, and 84 were grade 6 students (Albano, 2019). Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) also documented the alarming reading situation in the Philippines. In the 2018 global survey called Program for International Student Assessment, the Philippines had one of the lowest average reading performance scores among PISA-participating countries. Compared to the international average of 487 points, Filipino students only attained 340 points, placing the Philippines last among 76

countries (PISA, 2021; OECD, 2022). Additionally, the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metric (2021) national report presented that the average scores of the Philippines in reading are below compared to other participating countries.

The abovementioned literature highlighted the critical issue of non-readers among elementary school students. To gain insights on how to address this problem, this study explored the practices of elementary teachers who have experienced success in transforming non-readers into independent readers, rather than asking random teachers about theoretically effective practices in teaching reading. Further, this employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to capture each participant's best practices in transforming non-readers into independent readers and to capture the common strategies that they used. Thus, purposely, this qualitative investigation sought answers about the best practices of elementary school teachers in transforming non-readers into independent readers.

2. Method

2.1 Research design

This study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA generates an account of lived experience in its terms rather than one dictated by pre-existing theoretical ideas, and it acknowledges that this is an interpretative attempt because humans are sense-making beings (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Eatough & Smith (2017) highlighted that it is dedicated to clarifying and explaining a phenomenon, but it is more interested in how this process sheds light on experiences as a person lives them. Rather than transcending the specific, it seeks to capture the texture and nuances of an experience.

2.2 Participants

The participants of this study were elementary public-school teachers from grades three to six in Davao City who have been teaching in a public institution for at least five years. Seven participants from various public elementary institutions in Davao City participated in the in-depth interview. Moreover, these teachers experienced handling non-readers and successfully transforming the latter into independent readers. It means that not all elementary teachers are qualified to participate in the study. The selection process involved a rigorous evaluation of the teachers' ability and track record to effectively transform non-readers into independent readers. Moreover, the performance of these teachers was recognized by their colleagues and superiors, who provided recommendations for their inclusion in this research endeavor.

To ensure ethical standards were upheld, this study followed the principles outlined in the National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research 2017. The research considered various elements, including social value, informed consent, the vulnerability of research participants, the risk-benefit ratio, privacy and confidentiality of information, justice, and transparency, as specified by the PHREB-Philippine Health

Research Ethics Board (2017). To obtain ethical approval, the research proposal was submitted to the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC). The committee conducted a comprehensive review of the ethical aspects of the investigation, involving a full board assessment to ensure that the study adhered to the prescribed ethical guidelines and safeguarded the rights and welfare of the participants involved.

2.3 Data analysis

The analysis was conducted using the multi-stage approach of Smith *et al.* (2009). These are reading and re-reading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, and looking for patterns across cases. In the reading and re-reading, the researcher listened to the recorded interview of each participant while reading the transcription of that interview. This step allowed the researcher to understand how the participant engaged throughout the interview. Following the initial reading and listening to the transcript, the researcher read and re-read the transcription, allowing the researcher to engage with the information. The participant then became the focal point of the analysis.

The initial noting is designed to familiarize the analyst with the interview transcription and includes two rounds of coding. The analyst began the process with open coding and, in particular, noted comments about the participants' descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual language. Eventually, the analyst began to note comparisons and contrasts, nuances, and slight contradictions in what the participant said, thus beginning the second round of coding using the process of pattern coding. At this point, the analyst also critically examined the word choices and implicit meanings behind the statements made throughout the interview.

The next step is developing emergent themes, which in this study are referred to as personal experiential themes. As the researcher progressed towards this step, the reliance on the transcript was lessened as the focus now became reducing the data while maintaining the integrity of the complex information. The whole and the parts were examined, and a new map was then created by analytically examining the codes and data extracted in the previous steps of the analysis. The final step is looking for patterns across cases. In this step, the researcher looked for emerging patterns when comparing the transcripts. Examining similarities between the cases and making connections between each case allowed the analyst to develop a combined set of themes noted in each case.

3. Results

Table 1 presents a profile of seven teachers, detailing various aspects of their professional background. The table includes information on each teacher's district assignment, grade level taught, years of teaching experience, educational attainment, and current rank. The teachers come from three different districts and teach grades ranging from 3 to 6. Their teaching experience varies widely, from 8 to 31 years. Most of the teachers are pursuing or have completed master's degrees in fields such as Special Education, English, or

Educational Management, with one having a doctorate. Their ranks range from Teacher I to Master Teacher II, reflecting different levels of career progression within the education system.

Table 1: Participants' profile

Code	District	Grade Level	Years in teaching	Level of education	Rank
Teacher 1	1	6	25 years	MA – Sped (ongoing) AB Language & Lit	Teacher II
Teacher 2	3	5	15 years	MAEd – English (ongoing)	Teacher III
Teacher 3	3	4	16 years	MAEd – English (ongoing)	Teacher II
Teacher 4	1	6	16 years	Ed.D Educational Management	Master Teacher II
Teacher 5	2	3	11 years	MAEd – Educational Management (ongoing)	Teacher I
Teacher 6	2	3	31 years	MAEd – Educational Management (CAR)	Master Teacher II
Teacher 7	3	6	8 years	BEED – Generalist	Teacher I

Table 2: Best Practices of Elementary School Teachers

Participants	Personal Experiential Themes
Teacher 1	• Conduct regular assessments to continuously monitor student progress • Collaborate closely with parents and teachers to provide targeted support. • Select reading materials that are relatable and engaging to students. • Implement peer tutoring activities. • Conduct daily reading sessions before class • Emphasize the importance of motivation
Teacher 2	• Utilize dictionaries as learning tools to enhance vocabulary • Employ probing questions to enhance reading comprehension • Conduct a reading session during the first period • Involve parents in the reading process • Inspire students to realize the importance of reading
Teacher 3	• Administer personalized one-on-one remedial sessions • Select reading passages that align with the reading level • Conduct differentiated instruction to non-readers • Encourage parents to participate in teaching non-readers • Conduct reading sessions every day • Create a positive learning atmosphere to motivate students
Teacher 4	• Select materials that are appropriate for each student's reading level • Implement regular monitoring to provide timely and effective interventions • Support non-readers through the collaborative efforts of teachers and parents • Establish a dedicated time for reading every Monday • Provide encouragement and recognize students' improvement
Teacher 5	• Implement a daily routine of reading drills in the morning • Establish strategies for phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. • Apply differentiated instruction based on the level of the students.

	• Motivate students to read by utilizing a structured stage-based approach • Implement a point-based peer tutoring system to allow students to support each other • Collaborate with parents to monitor and track progress
Teacher 6	• Categorize students into groups based on their reading abilities. • Allocate time for reading for non-readers • Incorporate relevant words to build vocabulary and comprehension • Reinforce non-readers' progress through positive feedback • Establish a strong partnership with parents through Project Pair
Teacher 7	• Apply scaffolding to enhance vocabulary and comprehension. • Create a checklist to monitor student's progress • Acknowledge improvements in students by providing constructive feedback. • Establish collaboration between the student and teacher • Engage parents in the reading process to promote active involvement

Using thematic analysis, Table 2 revealed the personal experiential themes based on the best practices of each participant. These practices explain how the teachers successfully transformed non-readers in their classrooms into independent readers.

3.1 Teacher 1
3.1.1 Conduct regular assessments to continuously monitor student progress
Teacher 1 underscored the significance of conducting frequent assessments to monitor and evaluate progress. She mentioned administering another test to evaluate any progress made by the students, aiming to determine whether they had become instructional or independent readers. In DepED, students are categorized as non-readers, frustrated, instructional, and independent readers, and the objective of Teacher 1 was to improve one level higher. Frustrated and instructional readers are still categorized as non-readers since achieving independence necessitates proficiency in decoding, comprehension, and fluency skills.

After these regular assessments, Teacher 1 highlighted that she continued to provide reading remediation for students who failed to reach the independent level. She asserted that, as a classroom adviser, since non-readers have already been determined, she is responsible for allocating time for these students. In grade 6, reading assessments are conducted every Friday at the start of the class, providing non-readers with reading passages. Additionally, she had a monitoring report to keep track of the non-reader's progress. This report served as a tool for documenting the students' abilities and evaluating their development over time. As part of the report, she included monthly updates on each student's progress, including milestones like the ability to read CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words.

3.1.2 Integrate a range of multimedia resources, including audio and visual aids
Teacher 1 recognized the value of visual aids in supporting the learning experiences of non-readers. In addition to utilizing printed passages, she incorporated educational videos into classroom lessons by accessing them through downloaded resources and displaying them on television. In her view, it is beneficial for non-readers to have

something to view and visualize. Moreover, she also stressed the importance of utilizing reading passages that included interactive components to further enhance their understanding. The non-readers found it easier to grasp concepts and engage with the material by providing visual content, such as reading passages and interactive activities.

3.1.3 Collaborate closely with parents and teachers to provide targeted support

Teacher 1 acknowledged that in transforming non-readers into independent readers, she needed the help of other teachers and parents. Schools can create a supportive learning environment that maximizes students' potential by fostering a strong partnership between parents and teachers. This collaborative approach also helps identify early intervention opportunities and implement effective interventions.

She pointed out the importance of assessing the students and determining if they need additional care or assessment. When she noticed that the student was not improving despite the intervention, she asked for assistance from SPED teachers. SPED teachers specialize in addressing the unique learning requirements of students with disabilities or special needs. These teachers possess specialized training and expertise in implementing individualized educational strategies to support students who may require alternative or modified instructional approaches. She reached out to SPED teachers to tap into their knowledge and experience working with students facing learning challenges.

In addition to SPED teachers, teachers from different grade levels provided reading assistance to students. She explained that teachers from another grade level were assigned to conduct reading sessions with non-readers. She noted that in their practice, it is not just the adviser who teaches the students to read. Other teachers from different grade levels visited the room and conducted reading sessions with the students. For instance, grade 6 teachers were assigned to grade 5. This arrangement enabled a wider pool of teachers to offer support to non-readers, which maximized available resources and ensured that students received additional help in developing their reading skills.

Teacher 1 also involved the parents in the process, emphasizing the necessity of their cooperation through monitoring, follow-up, and reading activities with their children. She stressed the importance of using video as evidence that the parents were engaged in reading with their children. She understood that the parents were in a position to assist the students beyond the classroom. Moreover, from the standpoint of Teacher 1, it is evident that not all parents possess the necessary knowledge and skills to assist their children in the reading process effectively. Recognizing parents' crucial role in a child's education, she organized an orientation program to bridge this gap. During this orientation, parents were provided with insights on how to assess their child's reading skills.

3.1.3 Select reading materials that are relatable and engaging to students

To enhance vocabulary and comprehension, Teacher 1 emphasized the significance of selecting appropriate materials that align with students' personal experiences. In her assessment, decoding skills alone are useless if students fail to understand the content

they are reading. Therefore, the materials chosen must be relatable to the students. When students are exposed to reading materials relevant to their own experiences, it becomes easier for them to make connections and understand the content. Teacher 1 was able to create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience through the use of materials that resonate with their lives, interests, and backgrounds.

3.1.4 Implement peer tutoring activities

Teacher 1 shared her implementation of peer tutoring in her classroom. As part of this initiative, she introduced a buddy system where students were paired up. Although she did not explicitly inform the students about the buddy system, she encouraged them to assist each other if needed. This approach aimed to boost the confidence of non-readers and ensure their inclusion within the group. To facilitate this, she paired independent readers with non-readers, allowing the former to provide support and guidance to the latter. This approach not only fostered an inclusive learning environment but also promoted mutual learning among students. The independent readers took on the role of mentors or tutors, offering guidance and assistance to their non-reading peers. Through this interaction, the non-readers received personalized support tailored to their needs, helping them develop their reading skills. Simultaneously, the independent readers strengthened their abilities by teaching and explaining concepts to others. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement that facilitated knowledge sharing and skill development among all students involved.

3.1.5 Conduct daily reading sessions before class

To enhance the reading skills of non-readers, conducting daily reading sessions for one to two hours proved effective for Teacher 1. She shared a story about a non-reader who could decode words but struggled to comprehend the meaning of what he was reading. In response, Teacher 1 implemented a reading remediation program every morning for a month. By the end of this period, the non-reader had transformed into an independent reader. Because of these daily reading sessions before the start of class, Teacher 1 consistently exposed the student to reading materials, which created a routine and aided the non-reader in developing a habit of engaging with the text.

3.1.6 Emphasize the importance of encouragement to boost the morale of the students

Teacher 1 emphasized the significant role of encouragement in bolstering the morale and confidence of non-readers. She acknowledged that non-readers often experience low self-esteem and perceive themselves as inadequate. Teacher 1 offered uplifting words and gestures in her practice to create an environment where non-readers feel valued. Since she created an atmosphere of positivity, she was able to empower students to overcome challenges and develop a sense of self-worth.

3.2 Teacher 2

3.2.1 Utilize the dictionary as a learning tool to enhance vocabulary

Teacher 2 shared her strategy to enhance no-readers' vocabulary. She encouraged the non-readers to use the dictionary and search for the meaning of unfamiliar words on their own to be more engaged in the reading process. Once the non-readers found a word and read its meaning, she explained what it meant and provided examples. This step was crucial in reinforcing understanding and connecting the meaning of the words to their practical use. Providing examples helped them contextualize the word and made it relatable to them, which helped them build and retain the new vocabulary.

3.2.2 Employ guide questions to enhance reading comprehension

Teacher 2 highlighted a different approach to foster comprehension during the reading process besides using a dictionary. She used probing questions as a highly effective strategy. Instead of passively reading, non-readers were encouraged to participate by responding to questions. This interactive approach served as a means to gauge understanding and ensure comprehension. She used this strategy because there were instances in which frustrated and instructional readers appeared to be independent. However, they struggled when asked to demonstrate comprehension independently. It was common for non-readers to rely on surface-level reading skills, such as decoding words accurately, without fully comprehending the content.

3.2.3 Conduct a reading session during the first period

Teacher 2 recognized the gradual nature of the reading process, acknowledging that it cannot be acquired instantaneously. In her view, to apply the reading strategies to non-readers, there must be time to focus on reading only. So, she scheduled a regular reading session during the first period. It provided ample time for her to execute her strategies and gave time for the non-readers to concentrate on reading only. In her view, strategies for phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension enhancement are rendered ineffective without actual reading. She understood that it is through the act of reading itself that students can apply and internalize these strategies.

3.2.4 Involve parents in the reading process

Teacher 2 communicated with parents and conducted orientations to inform them about students' progress. Apart from orientation, parents were given reading materials tailored to the reading level of the student, and these reading materials were required to be given to the student to read at home. It served as a resource for enhancing reading skills outside the classroom. Furthermore, to ensure that the parents' guide the students with their reading assignments at home, Teacher 2 required that parents submit a video showing the latter's participation in assisting the students. Through the requirement of video submissions, Teacher 2 established an effective system for monitoring parental involvement in supporting their child's reading assignments at home.

3.2.5 Inspire students to realize the importance of reading

Teacher 2 conducted consultation meetings with students to promote and ignite their interest in reading. Through this interaction, she conveyed the significance of reading and highlighted the potential outcomes that could arise from neglecting this essential skill. Her intention behind this was to motivate and inspire the students to embrace reading as a fundamental aspect of their education and personal development.

3.3 Teacher 3

3.3.1 Administer personalized one-on-one remedial sessions

The effectiveness of Teacher 3 is because of the intensive one-on-one reading strategy. What set these sessions apart from other remedial programs was the involvement of the parents of non-readers. She called their parents, and they agreed that their child would receive reading lessons every day. Teacher 1 provided them [non-readers] with around 5 words per day, and the next day, she followed up individually to make sure they could read the given words. Recognizing the importance of a collaborative approach in supporting the students' reading development, Teacher 3 understood that parental involvement could significantly enhance the effectiveness of the remedial sessions.

3.3.2 Select reading passages that align with the reading level

Teacher 3 stated that selecting appropriate reading passages that align with each student's reading level is essential. In her experience, since some students in Grade 5 have a reading level equivalent to Grade 2, it is crucial to identify materials that suit their current level. Teacher 2 also used Phil-IRI materials designated for Grade 2. These materials are specifically designed to cater to the reading abilities and developmental stage of Grade 2 students. It ensured that students reading at a lower level received relevant content and targeted instruction to improve their reading comprehension and overall literacy skills. Teachers can create an inclusive learning environment that meets the individual requirements of all students, encourages student engagement, and facilitates progress toward higher reading proficiency by adapting reading materials to each student's reading level.

3.3.3 Conduct differentiated instruction to non-readers

It is important to recognize the challenges of non-readers in the classroom. One significant hurdle they face is difficulty keeping pace with lessons that rely heavily on reading. Teacher 3 acknowledged the challenges these students face when attempting to grasp the competencies being taught at their current level. To support their learning and ensure their engagement, she modified the difficulty level of the activities for non-readers. Some students cannot handle the competencies taught at their current level, so they need simpler activities. Additionally, instead of giving the non-readers 10 or 15 items like the instructional and independent readers, she reduced them to around 3-5 items.

3.3.4 Encourage parents to participate in teaching non-readers

Teacher 3 acknowledged parents' essential role in the reading process, understanding that they are her strongest partners in helping non-readers. She requested their support and together they worked collaboratively to teach the students how to read. Recognizing the significance of parental involvement, she took steps to establish a strong partnership with the parents of non-readers. She involved parents and ensured that the non-readers received the necessary guidance and support at school and home.

In addition to seeking assistance from the parents of non-readers, Teacher 3 also recognized the value of involving other parents in supporting these students' learning. Understanding the importance of a collaborative approach, the teacher invited the parents of other students to participate in reading sessions with the non-readers. She called for a meeting with the parents of kindergarten and grade 1 students because they are the ones who are usually present on their school premises. She oriented them and sought their assistance in teaching the non-readers. She scheduled them for specific times and identified which student they would accompany to the reading center.

3.3.5 Conduct reading sessions and peer tutoring every day

Teacher 3 dedicated specific time to conduct reading sessions, particularly designed for non-readers. Specifically, first thing in the morning, before they go home for lunch, or after three in the afternoon. However, she shared that sometimes, she is occupied by other work, like making matrices and writing proposals. Recognizing the importance of consistent support, she delegated the task to independent readers when unavailable. It ensured that the non-readers felt valued and prioritized in their reading development. Involving independent readers fostered a sense of responsibility and empowerment among these students, as they can assist their peers (non-readers) in their reading process. Despite the support from other students, she mentioned that she was always the last one to personally guide and evaluate the non-readers. She ensured to encourage them to read by spending time with them so that they could feel that they were being monitored.

3.3.6 Create a positive learning atmosphere to motivate students

Teacher 3 emphasized the importance of avoiding discrimination in the classroom, considering the varying levels of intellect among the students. She asserted that no student should ever experience bullying or mistreatment due to their inability to read. Instead, her approach focused on offering support and assistance to non-readers. She gave the students ten words per week in her spelling exercises and ensured that everyone got all the words correctly by the end of the week. If some students still had not gotten all the word, she and other independent students helped them until they got it right.

3.4 Teacher 4
3.4.1 Select materials that are appropriate for each student's reading level

Teacher 4 determined the reading materials that correspond to the reading levels of non-readers. It is significant because matching reading materials to students' reading levels is

essential to their development as readers. She noted that after conducting an assessment, she identified the materials that non-readers may use. She added that materials should not be too easy because there would not be much to learn, and it should not be too difficult because students would lose interest in reading. If materials are too simple, students may become bored and not be challenged to develop their skills. Alternatively, if materials are too complicated, students may become frustrated, struggle to comprehend the material and develop negative attitudes toward reading. Additionally, due to the student's inability to keep up with the regular class pace, she dedicated her free time to conducting reading sessions. To cater to their needs, she opted for visually engaging books, featuring vibrant colors and pictures rather than text-heavy content.

3.4.2 Implement regular monitoring to provide timely and effective interventions

Teacher 4 implemented regular monitoring, which enabled her to design interventions. As she sees it, the monthly progress report was a key tool in her monitoring process. This report allowed her to track the improvement patterns in her students' performance over time. She identified the trends and assessed the effectiveness of the reading intervention she had implemented through a comparison of data from each report. She noted that it was very useful because she conducts interventions and monthly assessments. It allows her to adjust her interventions based on the gathered data.

3.4.3 Support non-readers through the collaborative efforts of teachers and parents

Teacher 4 shared the collaborative efforts of teachers and parents to address the problems of non-readers, which are Pull-out Remedial Sessions, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and the Parents' Assistance in Reading Program. This combined efforts of teachers and parents through Pull-out Remedial Sessions, DEAR, and the Parents' Assistance in Reading Program create a comprehensive approach to address the challenges faced by non-readers.

In Pull-out remedial sessions, she highlighted the importance of master teachers. She pointed out that a master teacher was assigned to a non-reader student during the teacher's free time. The teacher, equipped with specialized instructional techniques and resources, worked closely with these students to address their specific needs and bridge any learning gaps. This one-on-one approach allowed the teacher to provide personalized support to the non-readers.

She also highlighted the "Drop Everything and Read" program at 3 o'clock, where everyone stopped what they were doing and read. This program promoted a culture of reading within the school and provided dedicated time for students to practice their reading skills. Further, this initiative is an engaging approach where students and teachers set aside a designated time during the school day to immerse themselves in the world of books.

Further, the school had a "Parents' Assistance in Reading" program. Teacher 4 invited parents of non-readers to attend a training session where they learned how to assist their children. This approach recognized the important role that parents play in

supporting their children's reading development and empowered them with the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. Through this program, parents are provided with guidance and resources to support their children's reading skills at home effectively.

3.4.4 Establish a dedicated time for reading every Monday

Teacher 4 recognized the challenges of handling a large number of students and devised a strategic approach to support non-readers during regular class hours. Her strategy involved simplifying activities for non-readers to create an inclusive environment that catered to their needs. To enhance the reading skills of non-readers, she designated Mondays exclusively for reading, which allowed them to have dedicated time to focus solely on this skill. During her English class, she conducted reading exercises every Monday, starting with the most basic level and utilizing literal and explicit questions and answers. Over time, she gradually increased the difficulty and complexity of the exercises.

3.4.5 Provide encouragement to non-readers

Teacher 4 stressed the vital role of encouragement in the reading process. She pointed out the unfortunate reality that many non-readers are often ignored and neglected in their homes, desperately longing for attention and validation from their parents. As teachers, who are often seen as second parents, it is our responsibility to encourage these students and assist them in overcoming their challenges. She also said that a simple message like "you are doing good" can profoundly impact these students, instilling a sense of belief in their abilities and motivating them to persevere through their challenges. As we strive to cultivate a nurturing and empowering learning environment, our words of encouragement can transform these students' lives and ignite their passion for reading and learning.

3.5 Teacher 5
3.5.1 Implement a daily routine of reading drills in the morning

Teacher 5 recognized that transforming a non-reader into an independent reader is gradual, requiring both time and consistent effort. Additionally, being responsible for teaching other subjects, she understood the importance of allocating dedicated time specifically for reading instruction. To address this, she implemented a practice of dedicating specific time in the mornings solely for reading activities. Through this designated time, Teacher 5 ensured she could provide non-readers with the necessary attention and support. This focused reading session allowed her to create an environment conducive to developing their reading skills. During this dedicated time, she could focus exclusively on reading instruction, employing various strategies, techniques, and resources tailored to the specific needs of her non-readers.

3.5.2 Establish strategies for phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and reading comprehension

For students who have faced challenges in recognizing sounds, syllables, and words, Teacher 5 adopted a targeted approach, emphasizing the importance of vowels and their combination with specific consonants. While she did not explicitly label the strategy, she specifically highlighted the blending of vowels with consonant letters such as "m," "s," and "t." Teacher 5 further revealed that she acquired this effective technique from a former colleague who had been teaching kindergarten. This colleague's students displayed impressive reading abilities, prompting Teacher 5 to incorporate the same strategy in her classroom. She aimed to enhance her students' reading skills and empower them to overcome sound recognition and decoding difficulties, and this was achieved by focusing on this vowel-consonant blending technique.

In addition to focusing on improving sound recognition and decoding, Teacher 5 also took measures to enhance her students' vocabulary. She emphasized the significance of incorporating words within the classroom environment to foster mastery. She implemented a strategy where she identified specific words and provided detailed explanations to her students. This approach aimed to deepen their understanding and facilitate their usage of these words in various contexts.

To further develop comprehension skills, she employed stories from Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory) as a resource. She utilized these stories to engage her students and then employed a range of WH questions to assess their comprehension. Teacher 5 encouraged critical thinking and encouraged her students to analyze and interpret the content by asking questions related to the stories.

3.5.3 Apply differentiated instruction based on the level of the students

Recognizing the diverse reading levels within her classroom, Teacher 5 implemented differentiated instruction to cater to the individual needs of her students. She understood that each student possessed unique strengths and areas for improvement, which required personalized approaches to support their reading development. To address this, she organized the students into groups based on their reading levels. She ensured that each group received activities and materials tailored to their levels by grouping students according to their reading abilities. Students in lower reading levels were given tasks and resources appropriate to their current skills. On the other hand, those at higher levels were offered more advanced activities to enhance their reading proficiency further.

3.5.4 Motivate students to read by utilizing a structured, stage-based approach

Teacher 5 shared that implementing a reward system for students upon completing reading activities proved to be highly effective in motivating them. She gave the students praise like "very good" or stars to motivate them. This positive reinforcement strategy boosted their confidence, encouraged active participation, and enhanced their overall reading skills. In addition, she incorporated leveled reading passages as another motivational tool. The availability of appropriately leveled materials fostered a growth

mindset and allowed students to enhance their reading skills while maintaining a sense of challenge.

3.5.5 Implement a point-based peer tutoring system to allow students to support each other

Recognizing that students had varying reading levels, Teacher 5 implemented a peer tutoring system to foster a supportive learning environment. This involved pairing independent readers with non-readers, allowing the former to assist and guide their peers. She added that additional points were given to the independent readers who assisted in the reading process. This peer tutoring initiative not only bridged the gap between students with different reading abilities but also promoted a sense of camaraderie and teamwork within the classroom.

3.5.6 Collaborate with parents to assist, monitor, and track progress

One of the practices of Teacher 5 was to discuss the reading situation of the students with their parents. She called the parents to discuss their child's level and progress. Additionally, she provided reading materials for the students to practice reading at home, which involved the parents in this process. The parents were responsible for ensuring that the students completed their reading activities at home. The reading materials included spaces for both the teacher and parents to sign. Following the child's completion of reading the materials, Teacher 5 will affix her signature. Similarly, when the child reads the same materials to their parent at home, the parent will also provide their signature. In her view, this involvement is considered crucial because education is a shared responsibility between teachers and parents. Teacher 5 created a collaborative environment where both teachers and parents participated in the reading process through establishing an open line of communication.

3.6 Teacher 6
3.6.1 Categorize non-readers into groups based on their reading abilities

Teacher 6 implemented an approach to transform non-readers into independent readers by first categorizing the non-readers. This categorization involved dividing the students into four distinct groups based on their reading levels. She noted that although they are all non-readers, they still have different reading levels. Group 1 cannot recognize sounds and letters; Group 2 can identify letter sounds; Group 3 can read simple words; and Group 4 can read simple sentences. This categorization strategy allowed Teacher 6 to tailor her instruction to the specific needs of each group, which ensured that they received appropriate support and guidance to enhance their reading skills.

3.6.2 Allocate time for reading

Teacher 6 strongly advocated for giving reading greater emphasis and treating it as a separate subject in the curriculum. From her perspective, reading is the gateway to acquiring other forms of knowledge and deserves special attention. However, since this

was not the case, Teacher 6 took it upon herself to address the issue of non-readers by allocating dedicated time for reading in her classes. She believed that by providing this focused time, non-readers would have the opportunity to enhance and improve their reading skills. Teacher 6's decision to allocate specific time for reading allowed her to tackle the challenges faced by non-readers head-on. She created an environment where students could concentrate solely on developing their reading abilities.

3.6.3 Incorporate relevant words to build vocabulary and comprehension

Teacher 6 accentuated the importance of using relatable words with non-readers. She noted that when choosing words from the story, they should be relatable and useful to them [non-readers]. She asserted that non-readers could easily forget what they have learned if they read words unrelated to their daily lives. It is based on her experience during her reading recovery programs. To solve this problem, she chose words that could be found inside the classroom, such as window, table, chair, wall fan, stand, and ceiling fan. Once they knew how to identify these objects, she gave them sentences to read containing those words, which enhanced their vocabulary and comprehension. For her, using relatable words helped students make connections between new concepts and their existing knowledge. It allowed them to relate the information to their lives and experiences, making learning more meaningful and memorable.

Additionally, teacher 6 underscored that classroom activities that require the students to recite also contributed to the vocabulary enhancement of non-readers. In this strategy, she wrote the words on the blackboard and pointed to each word. Then the students created an action. She then asked the students, "What are you doing?" while pointing to the word on the board. For example, "What are you doing?" they responded with "clapping." Another example is when she pointed out the word "dance" and asked them, "What are you doing?" they responded with "dancing." She justified that through these activities, the vocabulary of non-readers is unconsciously building since the moment non-readers come across these words, they already have an idea of what they mean.

3.6.4 Reinforce non-readers' progress through positive feedback

Teacher 6 ensured that the progress of non-readers was acknowledged. She shared an inspiring conversation with one of the non-readers, "Before you could not identify sounds, but now you can do it independently." This simple yet powerful statement demonstrated the development the non-reader had achieved. She added that positive feedback and highlighting the non-readers' improvement motivated them to improve in class. She remarked that teachers would be amazed at how motivation could shape the reading development of these non-readers through appreciation and encouraging words.

3.6.5 Establish a strong partnership with parents

Teacher 6 had a program called "Project Pair," which means Parents' Assistance in Improving Reading. This program aims to train parents and provide them with the

knowledge and skills necessary to assist non-readers. This program was a whole-day seminar, not just a regular one. During this seminar, she conducted demonstrations and provided materials. She remarked that the most crucial aspect parents can assist is imparting basic knowledge to their children. She established a strong partnership and collaboration with parents through this program. Although not all parents participated in the training since some were not independent readers, this program was not limited to teaching non-readers, and she acknowledged this limitation. She said we cannot expect a hundred percent success because some parents don't know how to read.

In addition to the responsibilities above, parents participating in this program are also assigned the task of home follow-up. Teacher 6 emphasized the importance of continuing reading activities at home to reinforce the skills learned at school. To facilitate this, she thoughtfully prepared a comprehensive system for follow-up activities, which enabled parents to monitor and track their children's progress easily.

3.7 Teacher 7
3.7.1 Apply scaffolding to enhance vocabulary and comprehension
When Teacher 7 was asked about her teaching strategy for non-readers' vocabulary enhancement, she mentioned the importance of unlocking difficulties. Her strategy was to provide stories to students and ask them to underline the difficult words. In addition, she explained the meanings of those words to help them better comprehend the story and improve their vocabulary. It enabled students to understand the stories better and improved their vocabulary. Through this approach, she guided the non-readers toward overcoming reading obstacles and expanding their word knowledge.

3.7.2 Create a checklist to monitor students' progress
Teacher 7 shared her practice of monitoring the progress of non-readers. Given the substantial number of students she taught across various subjects, effective monitoring was crucial to ensure that she could keep track of their reading development. To achieve this, she implemented a checklist system to record the accomplishments of each non-reader. For example, student 1 can read all the CVC words. Checking the progress allowed her to assess the reading level and the improvements of non-readers. Through consistent checking, she assessed their reading abilities. This assessment helped her identify areas that required further support and determine appropriate interventions. She added that those students who needed support were closely monitored and went through one-on-one reading sessions. The information in the checklist led her to have reading sessions until they could reach their goal.

3.7.3 Acknowledge improvements in students through constructive feedback
Teacher 7 strongly emphasized the power of positive feedback in the reading process. She believed encouraging and affirming feedback to non-readers was vital in fostering their confidence and motivation. She shared that the students were happy when they were told their reading skills improved. During one-on-one consultations, she

highlighted their strengths and specific areas of growth to the students, reinforcing their achievements and building their self-esteem. Focusing on the positive aspects of their reading abilities instilled a sense of pride and belief in her non-readers' potential.

3.7.4 Engage parents in the reading process to promote active involvement

Teacher 7 emphasized that the parent's role is to ensure that non-readers receive consistent support and reinforcement at school and home. Teacher 7 provided reading passages to the parents and required them to have a reading session with the students at home. She mandated a minimum of 30 minutes to an hour daily for these reading sessions and follow-up activities. This routine encouraged parents to participate in their child's learning process actively, fostering a collaborative environment between school and home. This dedicated time devoted to reading sessions reinforced the lessons taught in the classroom and allowed parents to witness their child's progress firsthand. Moreover, she understood that non-readers did not have study habits at home. They focused on games and gadgets, resulting in poor retention of what they learned from school. The non-readers were focused on improving their reading skills since they minimized distractions. Parents need to be involved in the reading process and provide a conducive learning environment at home.

Table 3: Shared approaches that the elementary teachers employ in their instruction

Superordinate Themes	Upon reflecting on their practices,
	the teachers acknowledged the vital role of parent-teacher collaboration
	the teachers highlighted the importance of devoting time to reading through reading sessions and remediations
	the teachers emphasized the significance of boosting students' motivation through positive feedback and encouragement

Based on the personal experiential themes of the best practices of each participant, three (superordinate themes emerged: Upon reflecting on their practices, the teachers acknowledged the vital role of parent-teacher collaboration, the teachers highlighted the importance of devoting time to reading through reading sessions and remediations, and the teachers emphasized the significance of boosting students' motivation through positive feedback and encouragement.

4. Discussion

This section presents the discussion and implications. It seeks to unite the results of the individual participants presented in the previous section with a literature review.

4.1 Upon reflecting on their practices, the teachers acknowledged the vital role of parent-teacher collaboration

The results of this study reinforced the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in the reading process. Teachers acknowledged that parents must play an

essential role in transforming non-readers into independent readers. This is consistent in the study of Clinton and Hattie (2013), where parents can be involved through follow-ups with their students' subject teachers to identify areas where the children are facing challenges. Fisher & Lerner (2014) added that parents go to the extent of contacting the teacher when students fail, thus building and strengthening the teacher and parent relationship, which would show their commitment to their children's learning.

Additionally, this aligns with Social Development Theory by Vygotsky (1878), which emphasized the role of social interaction in cognitive development. This theory states that individuals learn and develop through interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers and parents. Active involvement of teachers and parents is crucial for fostering and sustaining students' reading habits, with parents playing a significant role in influencing students' development of reading skills and basic literacy (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020; Usca *et al.*, 2016; Vasylenko, 2017). Moreover, Geske and Ozola (2009) and Marasigan *et al.* (2019) revealed that students achieved higher reading achievements when parents were involved in the reading process.

However, studies also found that parental involvement is a challenging endeavor for some parents since they, too, need to gain the competence to be part of the reading process. Parents usually find it difficult to teach their children to read because some of them struggle to read the text (Laurito, 2022). Cooper *et al.* (2000) underscored that helping with homework might interfere with learning if parents are not sufficiently equipped to help, if they are too eager (which affects the self-confidence of their child), or if their instruction is very different from the instruction of the teacher. To fill this gap, the teachers conducted orientation and programs to provide parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to assist and monitor the students. One of the more mainstream or traditional forms of communication with parents, parent-teacher conferences can be a simple way to meet the parents. Moreover, in support of the practices of the teachers in this study, Tinapay *et al.* (2021) recommended that institutions should provide orientations for parents about the importance of their involvement in the reading process and should conduct workshops for parents that will give them insights about the proper strategies that they may be used in guiding their children to achieve independent level.

4.2 Upon reflecting on their practices, the teachers highlighted the importance of devoting time to reading through reading sessions and remediations

The results of this study proved that to transform non-readers into independent readers, there has to be a time that focuses on reading. It supports the study of Emefa *et al.* (2020), who recommended that teachers allocate more reading time. During this time, the teachers can provide guided reading to a small group of students. Guided reading is an instructional approach often used in elementary classrooms designed to promote independent reading. It provides an opportunity for teachers to support small groups of children within the same reading levels. The texts are carefully matched to the children so they can successfully apply their strategies to overcome the challenges in the text and read it independently (Young, 2019).

Additionally, the results of the study suggest that teachers were conducting one-on-one reading sessions with non-readers on a different schedule, focusing solely on reading, as stated by Teacher 3. This approach supports Neitzel *et al.* (2021), as cited by Miles *et al.* (2022), who highlighted the effectiveness of individual instruction in the reading process, stating that it is more effective than group instruction. In the study of Adapon and Mangila (2020), the Department of Education-Zamboanga del Sur also implemented a program that provided students with one-on-one reading assistance. This program, called The Care for the Non-Readers (CNR) Program, was implemented during the 2013-2014 school year. It is a division-wide reading initiative that offers beginning and developmental reading sessions aimed at giving pupils and students who struggle with reading and writing the opportunity to catch up through specialized one-on-one reading assistance from a reading teacher. The study concluded that the program was very effective in enhancing the reading levels of students.

4.3 Upon reflecting on their practices, the teachers emphasized the significance of boosting students' motivation through positive feedback and encouragement

This superordinate theme aligns with one of the effective practices for teachers in handling non-readers, as identified in the study conducted by Davis *et al.* (2016). The study revealed that moving away from traditional teaching methods and encouraging learners to engage in more creative and meaningful activities is an effective approach. The teachers in the study implemented encouragement and positive feedback to motivate students as part of their best practices. They acknowledged that even the most effective strategies would not fulfill their intended purpose without motivation. Motivation is considered an essential factor in enhancing reading comprehension (Ahmadi, 2017; Emefa *et al.*, 2020). This is consistent with the study of Jukes *et al.* (2017), which stated that for students to be guided in the right direction, they need an extra push.

Several studies reported that a lack of motivation is detrimental to the reading process. Vasylenko (2017) emphasized that by the end of first grade, most children face substantial decreases in their motivation to learn to read if they cannot master reading skills and keep up with their peers. The lack of motivation to read is a common factor contributing to readers' struggles and low achievement. When students lack motivation, they tend to spend less time engaging in reading activities, resulting in slower progress than their peers with stronger reading motivation (Le Cordeur, 2011). Adapon and Mangila (2020) added that this issue is particularly evident in the Philippines, where education is hindered by a general lack of motivation and inspiration, especially in reading education. Educators have observed that children today often show little interest in reading books, novels, and other materials, and their reading interests are often diverted towards less meaningful or nonsensical activities, which is especially noticeable among younger children aged five and above.

4.4 Implications for educational practice

The findings of this study have significant implications for educational practice, particularly in addressing the needs of non-readers. Teachers can implement several best practices in this study. This study highlights the importance of parents, who are essential partners in supporting non-readers. Teachers should engage parents in their students ' reading journey by providing regular updates on progress, sharing strategies for at-home support, and encouraging parent-child reading activities. Additionally, this study emphasizes the importance of engaging and motivating activities to enhance the reading experience for non-readers. Creating a positive and supportive reading environment can foster a love for reading and encourage non-readers to become more engaged in reading tasks.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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