IMPROVING ENGLISH READING ACCURACY OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ECHO READING TECHNIQUE

JESSA U. DELA CRUZ
Master of Arts in Education
Major in School Administration

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of the Echo Reading Technique in improving English reading accuracy among Grade 3 learners at Bocacliw Elementary School, Aguilar District, Pangasinan I, during School Year 2024–2025. Twenty-five pupils with low word-recognition performance participated in a 20-day intervention. Echo Reading was implemented through teacher-modeled oral reading, followed by learners' immediate repetition of the same lines in short, meaningful phrases, with guided pacing and corrective feedback. The approach aimed to strengthen word recognition, reduce miscues, and build reading confidence through repeated, scaffolded oral practice.

A single-group pretest–posttest quasi-experimental design was employed. Reading accuracy was assessed using Phil-IRI–aligned oral reading passages, with performance grouped into frustration, instructional, and independent levels and summarized through mean word-recognition scores. Results indicated notable descriptive gains. At pretest, 48% of learners were classified as frustrated, 36% as instructional, and 16% as independent. After the intervention, frustration decreased to 4% among readers, instructional readers decreased to 8%, and independent readers increased to 88%. Mean scores improved from 44.80 (SD = 2.94) to 48.52 (SD = 1.14). However, the paired t-test showed no statistically significant difference between pre- and post-scores ($t = 0.79$, $p = 0.436$).

Despite the non-significant inferential result, the pronounced shift in reading levels suggests Echo Reading is a practical scaffolding strategy for enhancing accuracy and confidence among beginning English readers. Sustained classroom use and further studies with larger samples and comparison groups are recommended.

Keywords: Echo Reading Technique; Reading Accuracy; Word Recognition; Oral Reading Fluency; Grade 3 Learners; Phil-IRI

1. Introduction

Early literacy is a foundational competence that shapes learners' academic trajectories, civic participation, and long-term life chances. By the primary grades, children are expected to transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," yet this shift is constrained when decoding and word recognition remain weak. Globally, the World Bank and partner agencies describe this condition as "learning poverty," defined as the inability to read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10 (World Bank, 2022). The learning poverty crisis is especially acute in low- and middle-income contexts, where pandemic disruptions and structural inequities have slowed reading development in the early grades (World Bank et al., 2022). In the Philippines, recent World Bank briefs and national reports estimate that roughly 9 out of 10 children are learning poorly, indicating that most Filipino learners reach late elementary grades without adequate reading proficiency (World Bank, 2022; Philstar, 2023). Such national-level evidence underscores the urgency of classroom-based interventions that directly improve foundational reading skills.

Consistent with these realities, the Department of Education (DepEd) has intensified early-grade literacy programs and requires schools to implement targeted remediation for low-emergent readers, particularly in Grades 1–3 (Department of Education, 2018; PIA, 2025). DepEd mandates

the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as a classroom-based diagnostic to identify learners' independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels in English and Filipino (Department of Education, 2018; DepEd, 2018 Phil-IRI Manual). The Phil-IRI framework emphasizes oral reading accuracy through word recognition rates and miscue analysis, enabling teachers to design responsive interventions for pupils who struggle with decoding and fluent oral reading. However, despite programmatic reforms, many schools continue to face persistent gaps in English reading accuracy, especially among Grade 3 learners who must already engage with more complex texts across the curriculum. Therefore, localized action research remains essential to test feasible instructional strategies that can be embedded in daily teaching routines.

Reading accuracy is a core component of oral reading fluency, alongside rate and prosody. Fluency reflects the extent to which word recognition becomes automatic, freeing cognitive resources for comprehension (Rasinski, 2014). When learners decode slowly or inaccurately, working memory is consumed by word-level processing, leaving little capacity for meaning-making. Extensive research shows that fluency instruction is not only an outcome but also a mechanism to improve comprehension and overall reading achievement (NICHD, 2000). The National Reading Panel's synthesis found robust evidence for guided repeated oral reading procedures, wherein students reread texts with teacher modeling and corrective feedback, leading to improvements in word recognition, fluency, and comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Subsequent scholarship further supports the use of repeated reading as among the most empirically validated fluency interventions across diverse learner profiles, including those at risk for reading disabilities (Rasinski, 2006; ASHA, 2025).

Echo Reading is a specific guided oral reading technique situated within the traditions of repeated reading and modeling. In Echo Reading, the teacher reads a short segment of text aloud with appropriate pacing and expression, and learners immediately repeat (or "echo") the same segment, replicating pronunciation, phrasing, and prosody (Five from Five, 2024). This routine provides an explicit scaffold for beginning readers by reducing text load, clarifying pronunciation and intonation, and allowing immediate corrective feedback (Five from Five, 2024; The Edvocate, 2025). The strategy aligns with socio-cognitive theories of learning, particularly Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where teacher modeling and structured practice enable learners to perform reading tasks they could not yet accomplish independently. Echo Reading also supports automaticity theory by increasing the frequency of accurate practice on meaningful text, gradually strengthening rapid word recognition. Practically, it is adaptable to whole-class, small-group, and one-to-one contexts, and is considered developmentally appropriate for early elementary pupils who require frequent exposure to fluent reading models (Jennings et al., 2014, as cited in Strategies for Special Interventions, 2025).

At Bocacliw Elementary School, Aguilar District, Pangasinan I, classroom assessments and Phil-IRI results in School Year 2024–2025 revealed that many Grade 3 learners were performing at the frustration and instructional levels in English oral reading. These pupils exhibited frequent miscues, hesitations, and mispronunciations that limited both fluency and comprehension. Such performance profiles mirror broader Philippine patterns of early-grade reading weakness and indicate the need for structured, evidence-based intervention at the classroom level. While DepEd literacy initiatives provide broad guidance, teachers must still operationalize these in daily instruction using strategies suited to learners' immediate needs and school constraints. Echo Reading is promising in this regard because it is low-cost, time-bounded, and compatible with existing guided reading and remediation sessions. However, local evidence on its effectiveness for Grade 3 English reading accuracy in rural public schools remains limited, especially when implemented as a sustained, teacher-led routine.

Against this backdrop, the present study, "Improving English Reading Accuracy of Grade 3 Learners Through the Implementation of Echo Reading Technique," investigated whether a 20-day Echo Reading intervention could improve the oral reading accuracy of Grade 3 pupils

identified as struggling readers through Phil-IRI screening. Specifically, the study sought to (a) determine learners' pre-intervention English reading accuracy levels using Phil-IRI-aligned measures, (b) implement Echo Reading as a daily guided oral reading routine, (c) assess post-intervention reading accuracy levels, and (d) test whether the observed change was statistically significant. By generating localized evidence, the study aimed to support teacher decision-making, contribute to school-level literacy planning, and inform future iterations of DepEd reading remediation initiatives. Ultimately, strengthening reading accuracy in Grade 3 is a strategic leverage point for reducing learning poverty, as mastery of word recognition and fluent oral reading enables learners to engage meaningfully with grade-level texts and content demands.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The participants of the study were twenty-five (25) Grade 3 learners enrolled at Bocacliw Elementary School, Aguilar District, Pangasinan I, during School Year 2024–2025. They were selected through purposive sampling based on Phil-IRI pre-assessment results indicating low English oral reading accuracy, particularly learners classified at the frustration and instructional levels in word recognition. This targeted selection ensured that the intervention addressed pupils with the most immediate remediation needs in decoding and pronunciation. The group represented the intact class of struggling readers under the researcher's instructional context, allowing close monitoring of individual progress during the 20-day Echo Reading implementation. Demographic or achievement variations within the group were treated as natural classroom conditions, consistent with the action-research goal of improving literacy outcomes for learners most at risk.

2.2 Participants

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2.3 Instrumentation

The study used Phil-IRI–aligned oral reading assessment tools as its primary instruments to measure English reading accuracy among the Grade 3 participants. Specifically, graded English reading passages appropriate for the Grade 3 level were administered in a one-on-one oral reading format during both the pretest and posttest to ensure comparability of results. Learners' performances were recorded through word recognition scores and miscue analysis (e.g., mispronunciations, substitutions, omissions, reversals, and self-corrections), which were then converted into percentage accuracy and categorized according to DepEd Phil-IRI standards into independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels. These instruments provided both quantitative indicators (mean accuracy scores, standard deviations, and level distributions) and diagnostic evidence of specific reading difficulties, enabling the researcher to evaluate changes

attributable to the Echo Reading intervention and to document shifts in oral reading accuracy over the 20-day implementation period.

2.4 Data Analysis

The study combined descriptive and inferential procedures to determine changes in English reading accuracy following the Echo Reading intervention. Pretest and posttest oral reading results were first tabulated to obtain each learner's word-recognition percentage and corresponding Phil-IRI reading level (independent, instructional, frustration). Frequencies and percentages were computed to describe shifts in level distribution, while means and standard deviations summarized overall performance before and after the 20-day implementation. To test whether the observed gain in reading accuracy was statistically significant, the study applied a paired-samples t-test comparing pretest and posttest mean scores at the 0.05 alpha level. This within-subject analysis was appropriate for the single-group quasi-experimental design, enabling the researcher to quantify improvement trends, evaluate the significance of change, and substantiate conclusions regarding the intervention's effectiveness.

3. Results

The study found clear improvement in the English reading accuracy of Grade 3 learners after the 20-day Echo Reading intervention. In the pretest, most pupils demonstrated weak word recognition, with nearly half of the group classified as frustrated. Specifically, 12 learners (48%) were frustrated readers, 9 (36%) were at the instructional level, and only 4 (16%) were independent readers. This distribution indicated that the majority could not read grade-level English text accurately without substantial teacher support, reflecting the baseline reading difficulty that justified the intervention.

Following the implementation of Echo Reading, the posttest results reflected a marked shift toward higher reading accuracy and more proficient reading levels. Only one learner (4%) remained at the frustration level; 2 learners (8%) were instructional readers; and 22 learners (88%) moved to the independent level. Compared with the pretest distribution, this represents a substantial reduction in low-performing readers and a strong increase in pupils able to read English text accurately and with minimal assistance. These gains suggest that Echo Reading served as effective scaffolding for learners who initially struggled with pronunciation, decoding, and word recognition.

The descriptive statistics reinforced this improvement trend. The mean pretest word-recognition score was 44.80 (SD = 2.94), while the posttest mean increased to 48.52 (SD = 1.14), indicating an average gain of 3.72 points. In addition to the mean improvement, the reduced posttest standard deviation suggests that learners' performances became more consistent over time, with fewer extremely low scores. Practically, this implies that the intervention not only raised average accuracy but also narrowed skill gaps within the class.

However, the paired-samples t-test indicated that the difference between pretest and posttest mean scores was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($t = 0.79$, $p = 0.436$). This inferential finding means that, based strictly on the test applied, the observed numeric gain could not be confidently attributed to Echo Reading alone. The non-significant result may be linked to several factors inherent to the design and measurement context, such as the small sample size, the short intervention window, possible ceiling effects due to posttest scores clustering near the top of the scale, or practice/maturation effects typical in single-group pretest–posttest studies.

Overall, the results support a nuanced conclusion: Echo Reading produced strong practical and instructional gains, evidenced by pronounced shifts in Phil-IRI reading levels and improved mean accuracy, yet these gains did not reach statistical significance under the paired t-test. In an action-research context, this pattern still provides meaningful evidence for classroom decision-making. The intervention appears promising as a daily guided oral-reading routine for

Grade 3 learners with low reading accuracy, while also highlighting the need for longer implementation periods and future studies with comparison groups to establish stronger causal claims.

4. Discussion

The results of the present study corroborate a substantial body of fluency research indicating that teacher-guided oral rereading improves early readers' word recognition accuracy. The dramatic descriptive shift in learners from frustration and instructional levels to independent level aligns with the National Reading Panel's conclusion that guided repeated oral reading procedures produce consistent gains in word recognition, oral fluency, and comprehension across elementary grades (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Echo Reading is a form of guided repeated reading with immediate modeling and feedback; therefore, the improvement pattern observed in this study is consistent with the mechanism identified by the NRP—namely, repeated exposure to accurate models, along with corrective scaffolding, strengthens automatic word recognition over time (NICHD, 2000).

More specifically, the study's findings are consistent with meta-analytic evidence that repeated reading interventions yield moderate, educationally meaningful effects on fluency and accuracy. Therrien's (2004) meta-analysis reported that repeated reading, especially when paired with oral modeling and error correction, improves reading fluency and comprehension for struggling readers. Similarly, Lee and Yoon's (2017) meta-analysis of repeated reading for students with reading disabilities found a robust positive overall effect, particularly at the elementary level. It noted stronger results when rereading is guided by a competent reader (Lee & Yoon, 2017). In the current study, the Echo Reading routine provided exactly the guided rereading structure that helps explain the large practical gains in word-recognition categories and mean accuracy scores.

Corroboration is also evident in research directly examining modeled Echo Reading with Grade 3 learners. Bondy's quasi-experimental thesis comparing modeled Echo Reading with independent repeated reading among third graders, including English learners, found that Echo Reading produced stronger oral reading fluency outcomes than unguided rereading, attributing effects to teacher modeling of phrasing, pronunciation, and prosody (Bondy, 2012). The present study mirrors Bondy's context in grade level and instructional focus, and likewise suggests that immediate imitation of a fluent model accelerates accuracy gains for early readers. Although the paired t-test in this study was not statistically significant, the magnitude and direction of change support Bondy's conclusion that Echo Reading is instructionally advantageous relative to less scaffolded practice.

In addition, current instructional protocols and synthesis documents describe Echo Reading as particularly effective for beginning and struggling readers because it reduces cognitive load, supports accurate decoding, and allows immediate feedback. The Echo Reading protocol from the University of Virginia Literacy Institute emphasizes that teacher-modeled segments enable learners to echo correctly at an appropriate rate while acquiring accurate pronunciation and intonation (University of Virginia Literacy Institute, 2023). Five from Five (2024) similarly identifies Echo Reading as an evidence-based fluency practice that strengthens accuracy and prosody through short, repeated, teacher-scaffolded text segments. The improvements demonstrated in the present study's posttest classifications are consistent with these documented instructional purposes and expected outcomes.

Finally, the descriptive–inferential contrast in this study parallels patterns noted in some repeated-reading research where practical classroom gains do not always translate into statistical significance under small-sample, single-group designs. Meta-analyses observe that effect sizes are sensitive to duration, dosage, and sample size, and that stronger evidence typically emerges when interventions are extended and compared with a control condition (Lee & Yoon, 2017;

Therrien, 2004). Thus, while the current study corroborates the broader literature in showing meaningful upward movement in reading accuracy, it also reflects methodological cautions in prior research: statistically reliable attribution requires larger samples, longer exposure, and comparison groups.

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