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Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino (BUKLAT): An Intervention to Improve Reading Skills of Grade 2 Learners

Jevelyn M. Beltran

Teacher III, Villafont Elementary School, Sibalom, Antique, Philippines

ABSTRACT:

This action research explored the lived experiences of six Grade 2 learners in a remote public elementary school in Antique, Philippines who participated in a culturally responsive reading intervention during School Year 2025–2026. The intervention locally named Project BUKLAT (*Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino*), which translates to life, roots, culture, strength, and wisdom integrated local language, culture, and community narratives through contextualized storybooks and a classroom reading corner to support learners identified as low-emerging and developing readers in Filipino based on Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment results. Data were gathered through learner interviews, researcher observations and journals, and focus group discussion with teachers, analysed through thematic analysis. The reported themes included initial reading difficulties, enhanced conceptual understanding, interactive learning, and learners' willingness to continue reading through the reading corner and home or peer practice. Learner accounts suggested more positive reading experiences and perceived improvement in word recognition, comprehension, confidence, and participation. The extent of change in each reading indicator should be confirmed using the completed before-during-after assessment records. An action plan was proposed to sustain and scale up the intervention.

Keywords: culturally responsive, reading corner, reading intervention, culturally-based materials, Grade 2 learners, action research, mother tongue, Philippines

1. Introduction

Access to relevant, interesting, and culturally appropriate learning materials is still a constant problem in many isolated and underprivileged Philippine schools. This study intends to address the particular issue of the restricted accessibility and availability of educational resources that are suited to the requirements and environment of students in underprivileged and remote locations. Low reading competence, disinterest, and insufficient support for independent learning are frequently caused by a lack of effective learning environments and locally relevant instructional resources. The Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA)'s Teaching and Learning theme area includes this topic, with a special emphasis on context-responsive and high-quality resource access (DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2016). This issue can be seen in the low reading engagement of students, the underutilization of libraries, and the excessive dependence on out-of-date textbooks. Both students who do worse academically and teachers who are limited in their ability to provide responsive and differentiated instruction are impacted. Since the beginning of blended learning during the epidemic, the issue has been apparent, and it is still evident in classrooms and school communities with inadequate infrastructure. This study seeks to address the issue of restricted accessibility and the availability of educational resources suited to the requirements and environment of students in underprivileged and remote areas.

In the early grades, particularly Grade Two, learner's transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," which makes this stage a critical turning point in literacy development (Snow, 2010). However, many Filipino learners struggle with reading fluency and comprehension, which impacts their performance across all subject areas (Department of Education (Department of Education, 2023). These challenges are often rooted in difficulties with word recognition, which hinders the development of fluency and comprehension skills, impacting their performance across all subject areas.

At Villafont Elementary School, the Classroom Reading Literacy Assessment was administered to 18 Grade 2 learners to evaluate their reading levels in both Kinaray-a (mother tongue) and Filipino. The assessment results revealed variations in learners' proficiency between the two languages, highlighting the need for a more targeted reading intervention. In Kinaray-a, 39% of learners are already reading at grade level, and only 17% remain in the low emerging category. In contrast, in Filipino, only 11% have reached grade level, while a significant 17% are still classified as developing readers. These findings suggest that learners are more confident and fluent in their mother tongue (Kinaray-a), while their Filipino reading skills lag behind. These policies, along with the school's improvement plan, underscore the importance of developing innovative and inclusive teaching strategies.

To address this gap, the researcher designed a culturally responsive intervention locally named Project BUKLAT (*Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas at Talino*), which translate to life, roots, culture, strength, and wisdom. This program aims to improve learners' reading abilities by integrating local language, culture, and meaningful reading activities. This project aligns with the Department of Education's Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs) initiative, which

emphasizes the importance of reading interventions in the early grades, and also supports the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers call to adopt innovative strategies for diverse learners.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which explains that learning is developed through social interaction and cultural context. When learners receive appropriate guidance and support within their Zone of Proximal Development, their learning becomes more effective. The study was likewise guided by the concept of scaffolding. Vygotsky posited that with the help of a more knowledgeable other, learners can accomplish tasks beyond their independent ability. Contextualized materials, reading corners, and collaborative reading activities help learners build confidence in their capacity to accomplish academic tasks. Through cultural relevance and social support, learners may develop stronger motivation, improved confidence, and more productive reading behaviours.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of Grade 2 learners and researcher before, during, and after the implementation of Project BUKLAT (Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas at Talino) intervention?
2. What changes in learners' reading skills are observed before, during, and after the implementation of Project BUKLAT (Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino) intervention?
3. How can Project BUKLAT (Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino) be used as intervention to enrich the reading skills of the Grade 2 learners?
4. What proposed plan of action should be undertaken to promote the sustainability of the utilization of Project BUKLAT (Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino) intervention?

4. Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Grade 2 learners and the changes in their reading skills before, during, and after the implementation of the intervention. The key data collection methods included observation, interviews, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Participants

The participants were six Grade 2 learners who were identified as low-emerging and developing readers in Filipino and Mother Tongue based on Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) results. Participants were selected through purposive sampling.

Intervention

The intervention utilized localized and culturally relevant reading materials that reflect learners' language, culture, and daily experiences. A reading corner was established as a learner-friendly space within the classroom, equipped with storybooks, picture books, flashcards, charts, and accessible book displays appropriate to learners' age and reading level.

Through regular use, the reading corner exposed learners to rich vocabulary and stories that improved word recognition, comprehension, and fluency, while promoting independent and peer-assisted learning. Strategies were differentiated based on reading profiles, wherein low-emerging and developing readers were provided with materials suited to their abilities. All materials were designed to be meaningful, culturally appropriate, and responsive to individual needs.

Data Gathering Methods

The following sources of data were utilized:

- Teacher-researcher observation checklist
- Teacher's journals
- Interview guide questions
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes from interview responses, observations, journal and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) data.

5. Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Limited Knowledge

The participants' answers show that their reading difficulties before intervention came from limited support and exposure at home, lack of practice, and poor comprehension. Their responses indicate limited vocabulary, low motivation, and unfamiliarity with reading tasks, which affected their comprehension in an enjoyable way.

"Hindi ako kamaan magbasa hay wara ako natudluan sa balay ni nanay." - Participant 1 [I do not know how to read because no one teaches me at home, mother.]

"Wara ako ti tyempo magbukas ka akon notebook." - Participant 2 [I do not have time to open my notebook.]

"Anu bay tana ra among!" - Participant 3 [What is this, indeed!]

"Anu ra haw maam?" - Participant 4 [What is this, ma'am?]

"Kis-a lang ako magskwela bay maam!" - Participant 5 [I only go to school sometimes, ma'am!]

"Hindi ako kainchindi ka mga nasulat diyan." - Participant 6 [I do not understand what is written there.]

The participants' answers show that their reading difficulties before the intervention came from challenges at home, in school, and in understanding texts. The lack of guidance, time to practice, and reading materials at home made it hard for them to develop basic reading skills. In class, they struggled with vocabulary and comprehension which led to confusion and low confidence in reciting. These responses indicate that without proper support and consistent exposure to reading, learners find it challenging to improve their literacy skills.

Changes in the Reading Skills Before, During, After Implementation of Project BUKLAT

This subsection addresses the second action research question by organizing the reported evidence on learners' reading skills across the three stages of the intervention. The manuscript identifies letter-sound recognition, word recognition, reading fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and reading comprehension as the reading indicators to be monitored. The findings below are based on the learner responses and observations already reported in this study. Since the manuscript does not present completed numerical ratings or consolidated pre-test and post-test scores, no numerical improvement is claimed here.

Before the intervention, the initial CRLA results identified the six purposively selected participants as low-emerging or developing readers in Filipino. The learner interviews also reflected difficulty recognizing and understanding written words, pronouncing unfamiliar words, and comprehending texts. Some learners expressed low confidence and hesitation when asked to read aloud. These responses describe the reading difficulties that Project BUKLAT was intended to address.

During the intervention, learners participated in guided reading, storytelling, picture-supported activities, word practice, and peer reading using culturally relevant materials. The reported responses suggest that familiar stories and visual materials helped learners engage with words and texts. Learners also described greater willingness to participate, answer questions, and practice reading with classmates. These observations indicate progress in reading engagement and opportunities to practice the targeted skills; they should not be treated as numerical evidence of proficiency gains.

After the intervention, learners reported that they could recognize more words, understand what they read, answer the teacher's questions, and read with less embarrassment. The manuscript also reports increased willingness to read aloud and share reading experiences with peers and family members. These learner accounts suggest positive perceived changes in word recognition, comprehension, confidence, and reading behavior.

To complete the comparison of reading skills, the researcher should consolidate the actual observation checklist or reading assessment records for each of the six participants at the before, during, and after stages. The results should identify the recorded level for each indicator—letter-sound recognition, word recognition, reading fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and reading comprehension—and explain which skills improved and which still require support. If the records use a rating scale, report the actual ratings or computed summaries and describe how they were calculated. No score should be estimated or reconstructed from interview statements.

Taken together, the qualitative evidence in the current manuscript indicates that Project BUKLAT was associated with more positive reading experiences and self-reported improvement among the participating learners. A definitive statement about the extent of change in reading proficiency should be based on the completed assessment records, alongside the interview and observation evidence.

Ways that PROJECT BUKLAT enhances the Reading Skills of the Grade 2 Learners

To ascertain the contribution of the Project BUKLAT as an intervention to enrich the Reading skills of the Grade 2 learners, the participants were interviewed and data gathered from them were organized to create themes. The themes were interpreted by the researcher to deepen the context on how the learning intervention can be used to help the learners enhance their critical thinking skills.

Theme 2: Enhanced Conceptual Understanding

This theme reflects how the use of the Project BUKLAT (Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino) significantly improved the Grade 2 learners' reading skills by allowing them to learn using cultural concepts within their localities. Prior to the intervention, many students struggled with understanding in reading such as CVC, pronunciation, comprehension and applying their learnings to real situation. However, through hands-on use of reading materials inside the classroom, learners were able to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications.

The visual and tactile part of the Project such as reading inside the classroom while having it inside the school enables them to explore their localities using reading materials prepared by the teacher. This multisensory reading approach led to better retention, improved comprehension, and a more meaningful learning experience. It also helped the subject more interactive, fun and enjoyable.

In addition, the theme demonstrates how integrating visual and practical tools in reading instruction can transform passive learning into active discovery, encouraging deeper understanding, inquiry-based thinking, and confidence in performing reading tasks.

"Nakabulig gid kay kamaan ron ako magbasa kag makilala ko ron ang mga tinaga." [It really helped because now I know how to read and I can recognize the words.] – Participant 1

"Sa akon tana ma'am, nakabulig gid ang Project BUKLAT kay hinay gid man ko magbasa kay namayha ako basi sala akon pamasa kag kadlawan ako ka mga classmate ko ma'am." [In my case Ma'am, Project BUKLAT really helped because I was slow in reading and I was shy that I might read incorrectly and my classmates would laugh at me.] – Participant 2

"Kato ma'am, galuya ko magbasa kay urihi ko pirme sa mga classmates ko. Pero nakabulig gid ang Project BUKLAT kay nag-sagad run ko kay kamaan run ko mag-intiende sa amat-amat lang." [Before Ma'am, I was lazy to read because I was always left behind by my classmates. But Project BUKLAT really helped because I improved as I slowly learned to understand.] – Participant 3

"Kato ma'am, namayha ko magbasa sa atubang hay basi magsala ang pagbasa ko. Pero kadya mas isog run ko magbasa kay kamaan run ko tungod sa Project BUKLAT." [Before Ma'am, I was shy to read in front because my reading might be wrong. But now I am braver to read because I have learned through Project BUKLAT.] – Participant 4

"Huod ma'am hay daw dya lang sa palibot ko ang nabasa ko." [Yes Ma'am, because what I read is just around my surroundings.] – Participant 5

"Nakabulig gid eh ma'am ang napabasa mo ma'am kay naintindihan ko ron ang nabasa ko." [It really helped Ma'am, what you made me read, because I now understand what I have read.] – Participant 6

Based on the participants' responses, Project BUKLAT helped them understand and remember words because the materials were connected to their culture and environment. The use of visual and tactile materials made learning more engaging and less confusing for them. Thus, this shows that when reading materials are contextualized, learners can better grasp context and apply them.

Theme 3. Interactive Learning

Project BUKLAT is an interactive learning intervention that uses learner-centered activities, teamwork, and active participation to enhance the reading abilities of six second-graders. In a special reading area, students participate in storytelling, guided reading, word games, picture discussions, peer reading, and practical literacy exercises rather than passively receiving instruction. By combining well-known tales, regional customs, commonplace experiences, and community contexts, the use of culturally based reading materials enhances the significance and relevance of the educational process. Students' interest, motivation, comprehension, and reading confidence all rise as a result of this familiarity. Students create meaning, hone their critical reading abilities, and take an active role in their own education through ongoing engagement with peers, teachers, and culturally appropriate texts. Thus, by encouraging participation, teamwork, and contextualized literacy development, Project BUKLAT is a prime example of interactive learning.

"Nasadayahan ako hay imaw kami ka akon miga magbasa." [I am happy because I am with my friends in reading.] – Participant 1

"Naintindihan ko run akon nabasa kag gina istorya ko diya sa akon imaw." [I now understand what I read and I share it with my friends.] – Participant 2

"Wara ron ako natuyo sa klase namun kay ma'am." [I am no longer sleepy in our class with Ma'am.] – Participant 3

"Dasig ron ako magbasa kag makasabat ron ako ka mga pamangkot ni ma'am kanakon." [I can now read fast and I can answer Ma'am's questions to me.] – Participant 4

"Wara ron ako namayha magrecite." [I am no longer shy to recite.] – Participant 5

"Nagabulig ako sa akon klasmeyt magbasa." [I help my classmate to read.] – Participant 6

Project BUKLAT made reading more engaging because it used activities such as storytelling, games, and peer reading instead of traditional lectures. The learners became more confident and motivated since they were able to participate actively and work with their classmates. The use of culturally appropriate materials helped them understand and relate to their stories so they were no longer afraid to read or recite in class. This shows that interactive and collaborative learning improved both the learners' skills and attitude toward reading.

Proposed Plan of Action to Promote the Sustainability of the Utilization the PROJECT BUKLAT

To ensure that the Project BUKLAT will serve its purpose for mores set of leaners, the participants were asked about their plan to sustain the use of the learning intervention to help them develop their critical thinking skills. Their responses were noted and organized and a theme was generated and interpreted. Through this, it can suggest ways to the teachers on its sustainability in the classroom or school. The following theme emerged from the data:

Theme 4: Continued Use of the Reading Corner to Improve Reading Skills

The learners expressed their intention to continue using the Project BUKLAT reading corner even after the intervention. They recognized that regularly reading culturally relevant materials helped them become more confident, fluent, and interested in reading. Their responses suggest that maintaining access to the reading corner will encourage continuous practice and support the development of lifelong reading habits.

"Padayon ako nga magabasa sa reading corner." [I will continue to read in the reading corner.] – Participant 1

"Gusto ko pa gid magbasa kang mga istorya." [I still want to read more stories.] – Participant 2

"Mabalik ako sa reading corner para magpraktis magbasa." [I will return to the reading corner to practice reading.] – Participant 4

Learners were motivated to continue reading since the reading corner is culturally designed materials and accessible to them. The learners developed their independence, love for reading and responsibility in their reading habits because they wanted to practice even without teacher supervision. Maintaining the reading corner is important to sustain the gains in fluency, confidence and interest in reading.

Theme 5: Sharing Reading Experiences with Peers and Family

Three participants shared that they would continue practicing reading at home and with their peers or family members. Their responses suggest that Project BUKLAT promotes literacy beyond the classroom by encouraging family involvement and peer support, which are essential for sustaining reading development.

"Basahan ko ang akon libayon sa balay." [I will read to my younger sibling at home.] – Participant 3

"Mabasa kami kang akon mga migo." [My friends and I will read together.] – Participant 5

"Mapraktis ako sa balay kag magpabulig sa akon ginikanan." [I will practice at home and ask help from my parents.] – Participant 6

The reading intervention extended beyond classroom because the learners chose to practice reading at home with family members and Project BUKLAT is an evidence of this based on learners' responses. The learners developed confidence and independence because they were supported by their peers and parents. This shows that family involvement and peer collaboration strengthened the learners' reading habits and motivation. This is supported by Cummins (2014), who stated that involving family and community in literacy activities improves learners' engagement and comprehension.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. **Learners' experiences:** The reported learner responses indicate that Project BUKLAT provided a more engaging and supportive reading experience. Learners described initial reading difficulties and later expressed greater confidence, willingness to participate, and interest in continued reading practice.
2. **Changes in reading skills:** The qualitative evidence suggests perceived progress in word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, and reading confidence. However, the extent of change in the five targeted reading indicators should be established through the actual completed assessment records. The results should not be described as statistically significant unless an appropriate statistical analysis supports that claim.
3. **Contribution of the intervention:** Contextualized reading materials, the reading corner, guided reading, storytelling, and peer-supported activities appear to have helped make reading more meaningful and participatory for the six learners. Project BUKLAT may be used as a supplementary literacy intervention, with activities differentiated according to learners' needs and progress.
4. **Sustainability:** The learners' stated intention to continue using the reading corner and to practice with peers and family members provides a basis for sustaining Project BUKLAT. Continued implementation requires accessible materials, scheduled reading opportunities, family and teacher involvement, and regular review of learners' progress.

7. Recommendations

1. **For Teachers:** Continue using Project BUKLAT (Buhay, Ugat, Kultura, Lakas, at Talino) strategies, including the reading corner and culturally relevant materials, to support early literacy. Observe learners' individual progress and provide additional support for those who need it.
2. **For School Administrators:** Support the maintenance and expansion of reading corners by providing resources and space. Include Project BUKLAT as part of school literacy programs to sustain its benefits.

3. **For Parents:** Encourage children to read at home and support their interest in books. Reinforce the reading habits learned during the intervention.
4. **For Future Researchers:** Conduct similar studies with a larger number of learners to further validate the effectiveness of Project BUKLAT. Explore ways to integrate digital literacy or interactive reading tools alongside the program.

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