



Article

DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEXTUALIZED SHORT STORY-BASED READING INTERVENTION MATERIALS

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop and validate a Contextualized Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Material for Grade 5 pupils at Balasi Elementary School to address declining reading proficiency, where most learners performed at frustration and instructional levels in the pre-test assessment. Using a developmental-descriptive research design under the Research and Development (R&D) approach, the study employed a modified ADDIE model focusing on analysis, design, and development phases. Six expert validators, composed of Grade 5 teachers and Master Teachers selected through purposive sampling, evaluated the material using a structured questionnaire adapted from the DepEd Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS). Weighted mean was used to analyze the data. Findings identified major reading difficulties in word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The developed material, which integrated contextualized short stories and comprehension-focused activities, obtained a weighted mean of 4.00 interpreted as Very Satisfactory. The study concluded that the material is highly valid, learner-centered, and effective in supporting reading proficiency development among elementary learners.

Keywords: reading intervention, short story-based material, reading proficiency, instructional material development, elementary literacy



1. Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that serves as the foundation for learning and academic success. However, global and national assessments reveal persistent challenges in reading literacy. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment 2018 showed that the Philippines obtained an average reading score of 340, significantly lower than the OECD average of 487, with about 80% of Filipino learners performing below the minimum proficiency level in reading (Paris (FR): OECD Publishing; 2019). Similarly, national assessments such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory consistently report high numbers of learners at the frustration and instructional levels, indicating serious gaps in foundational reading skills (Manila (PH): Department of Education, 2018). In response to this challenge, various reading interventions have been developed to assist struggling readers. One promising approach is the use of short stories, which provide engaging, context-rich texts that facilitate comprehension and critical thinking. This study focuses on the development and validation of a reading intervention using short stories tailored to the specific cultural, environmental, and lived context of learners in Apayao, particularly designed to connect with their local experiences and daily lives.

Several studies highlight the importance of targeted reading interventions and continuous monitoring of learners' progress. A study assessed students' comprehension of Philippine fables and found significant challenges in story comprehension, emphasizing the need for structured interventions that are implemented and evaluated across multiple periods (Federe L, Gomomid J, Jose M, Genelza G., 2023). This study served as the basis for an intervention program aimed at improving students' reading abilities. Similarly, another study explored the effectiveness of using short stories in improving students' reading comprehension and reported significant gains in students' ability to understand and interpret texts (Lutfia R, Nanda D, Fitria W., 2023). These findings support the value of sustained and repeated intervention efforts rather than one-time instructional approaches.

Among the different grade levels, research indicates that reading difficulties are most pronounced in the early elementary years, particularly in Grades 2 and 3. A study examined the reading performance of Grade 2 pupils using different teaching approaches and found that although some methods were effective, reading difficulties persisted across assessment periods (Mara J., 2024). In addition, another study assessed the reading comprehension of Grade 4 pupils and reported low performance levels prior to the implementation of instructional materials (Tabanera M, Barrios A., 2024). These findings suggest that reading difficulties often emerge early and may continue across grade levels if not consistently addressed.

Although earlier grades show the highest incidence of reading problems, learners in higher elementary levels, such as Grade 5, often continue to experience comprehension difficulties. This stage marks a critical transition where learners are expected to apply reading skills across content areas, moving fully into "reading to learn." When foundational skills such as vocabulary development and accurate word recognition remain weak, reading challenges persist and become more evident in complex texts. Therefore, Grade 5 pupils remain a critical group for reading intervention, particularly when reading difficulties have not been adequately addressed in earlier years.

A study emphasized the need for strategic reading interventions tailored to struggling learners through sustained and structured implementation (Pocan J, Bailon R, Pocan R., 2022). The study on left-behind learners in the Philippines revealed that one-size-fits-all strategies are ineffective, necessitating personalized reading interventions that allow learners to progress

gradually from frustration to independent reading levels. This reinforces the importance of developing specialized interventions, such as short story-based programs, that can be implemented and evaluated through repeated measures over time.

Short stories have been identified as effective tools for enhancing reading motivation and comprehension. A study demonstrated that short stories significantly improved students' motivation and reading skills, reporting a 39.13% increase in reading scores after intervention (Pratiwi N, Putri A, Suhadi S., 2020). Another study also found that short stories enhanced students' engagement and interaction with texts, leading to improved comprehension outcomes (Jeni R., 2020). These findings support the use of short stories in interventions that require repeated exposure and assessment to capture meaningful learning gains.

Another crucial aspect of reading intervention is the readability of instructional materials. A study analyzed the readability levels of short stories used in language learning and emphasized the importance of matching text difficulty with students' reading abilities (Rosemarie P, Santos L, Cruz M, et al., 2023). Appropriately leveled materials are essential in longitudinal or repeated-measure interventions, as they allow learners to build skills progressively without cognitive overload.

Effective reading interventions also incorporate instructional tools that promote sustained student engagement. A study developed flashcards to support Grade 5 students in writing short stories, demonstrating the effectiveness of interactive learning aids. Similarly, another study created game-based instructional materials for Grade 2 learners, reinforcing the idea that enjoyable and interactive activities contribute to consistent learning improvements across instructional periods (Manila (PH): Department of Education; 2016).

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) serves as a valuable tool for assessing students' reading proficiency over time. This diagnostic approach allows educators to monitor learners' progress through repeated assessments, providing data that guide the refinement of reading programs. According to DepEd's Every Child A Reader Program, literacy improvement is a national priority, highlighting the need for validated interventions that address persistent comprehension difficulties across grade levels (Manila (PH): Department of Education; 2020).

Given the significant role of reading comprehension in academic achievement, the development and validation of an effective reading intervention are crucial. This study aims to create a structured reading intervention using short stories that can be implemented and evaluated through repeated measures to determine its effectiveness over time. The intervention was validated by subject teachers to ensure its alignment with learners' instructional needs and reading levels.

Through addressing persistent reading difficulties among elementary learners, particularly in Grade 5, this research contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen literacy education. The findings provided educators with evidence-based strategies for implementing and evaluating short story-based interventions, supporting struggling readers in developing the skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Methodological Research design, specifically categorized under Research and Development (R&D). According to Seels and Richey, developmental research was the systematic study of designing, developing, and evaluating instructional programs, processes, and products that had to meet criteria of internal consistency and effectiveness. Given that this research did not entail classroom implementation, the researcher adopted a modified ADDIE Model, focusing primarily on the Analysis, Design, and Development phases. The process began with the Analysis of the learners' reading difficulties and interests, followed by the Design of instructional objectives and story selection. The Development phase involved the actual construction of the short story-based material, which was then subjected to a rigorous Evaluation through expert validation. This design ensured that the final output was a technically sound, pedagogically appropriate, and content-validated instructional material, ready for future implementation and effectiveness testing.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Balasi Elementary School, located in Balasi, Flora, Apayao.

2.2 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were six (6) validators comprising of three Grade 5 teachers and three Master teachers, purposively selected for their expertise in instructional material evaluation and reading instruction. They assessed the developed reading intervention using short stories in terms of content relevance, readability, and effectiveness, with no learner participants involved since the study is limited to material development and validation.

2.3 Research Instruments

The validation process relied on the evaluators' ratings and written feedback gathered through a structured validation tool. The data collected were used to determine the validity of the developed short story-based reading intervention materials. The instrument for data collection includes:

- **Validation Form** – The select instructional material validators and Grade 5 subject teachers evaluated the developed contextualized short story-based reading intervention materials using a structured rating scale focusing on content quality, instructional quality, language and readability, design and layout, and alignment with learning competencies. This validation form was adapted from the DepEd Learning Resource Evaluation Rating Sheet (LRMDS), an official evaluation tool used by the Department of Education to assess instructional materials. The instrument utilized a four-point rating scale ranging from 4 (Very Satisfactory) to 1 (Poor).
- **Qualitative Comments and Suggestions** – The evaluators were provided with space to write brief comments and recommendations to further improve the developed short story-based reading intervention materials. This component allowed the collection of qualitative feedback to support the refinement and enhancement of the intervention materials based on expert judgment.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

- **Identification of Reading Difficulties through Phil-IRI** – The researcher utilized the results of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) administered to Grade 5

pupils of Balasi Elementary School during the School Year 2025–2026. The Phil-IRI results served as the primary basis for identifying specific reading difficulties of the learners, particularly in terms of word recognition, comprehension levels, and common reading miscues such as substitution, omission, insertion, and mispronunciation. These identified difficulties guided the development of the intervention materials.

- **Development of Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Materials** – The researcher developed a contextualized short story-based reading intervention materials intended to address the reading difficulties among Grade 5 pupils, particularly in terms of vocabulary development and miscues.
- **Validation of the Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Materials** – The developed contextualized short story-based reading intervention materials were submitted to six (6) Instructional Material validators.
- **Collection and Analysis of Validation Results** – The accomplished validation forms were collected, and the evaluators’ ratings and comments compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to determine the validity of the developed reading intervention materials in terms of content relevance, readability, and effectiveness.

3. Results and Findings

Table 1. Specific reading difficulties identified among the Grade 5 pupils that the intervention material aims to address

Reading difficulties	Manifestations
1. Word Recognition and Decoding Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent mispronunciations, substitutions, and omissions. • Reliance on guessing rather than phonics rules. • Hesitation with multisyllabic words.
2. Limited Reading Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow, halting, word-by-word reading. • Lack of proper intonation, stress, and phrasing (monotonous reading). • Ignoring punctuation marks.
3. Limited Vocabulary Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to identify meanings of unfamiliar or grade-level words. • Failure to use context clues effectively. • Surface-level word recognition without deep understanding.
4. Difficulty in Reading Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to identify main ideas or recall specific details. • Failure to make inferences or synthesize information. • Fragmented understanding of the text.

Table 1 presents the specific reading difficulties identified through the results of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) administered to the Grade 5 pupils of Balasi Elementary School during the School Year 2025–2026. The findings were based on the learners recorded reading miscues, oral reading performance, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary understanding, and comprehension levels observed during the Phil-IRI assessment. The results reveal four major areas of concern: word recognition and decoding gaps, limited reading fluency, limited vocabulary development, and difficulty in reading comprehension. These findings reflect the persistent literacy challenges highlighted in both global and national contexts and further support the need for targeted reading interventions among intermediate learners.

The first identified difficulty is word recognition and decoding gaps, as reflected in the Phil-IRI results through frequent mispronunciations, substitutions, and omissions, as well as learners' reliance on guessing rather than applying phonics rules. Learners also demonstrated hesitation when reading multisyllabic words, indicating weak phonemic awareness and insufficient mastery of sound-symbol relationships. These findings suggest that learners have not yet achieved automatic word recognition, which is expected at the Grade 5 level. This supports the findings of Ehri (2005), who emphasized that automatic word recognition is developed through strong decoding skills, and without this, learners struggle to read accurately and efficiently. Similarly, the National Reading Panel (2000), highlighted that systematic phonics instruction is essential in addressing decoding difficulties, particularly among struggling readers.

The second difficulty identified from the Phil-IRI oral reading assessment is limited reading fluency, characterized by slow, halting, and word-by-word reading, as well as lack of proper intonation, stress, and phrasing. Learners were also observed to ignore punctuation marks, resulting in monotonous reading. These manifestations indicate that learners have not developed reading automaticity, which affects their ability to process text meaningfully. Rasinski (2010) explained that fluency is a critical component of reading that bridges decoding and comprehension, and learners who lack fluency often struggle to understand texts. In addition, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) noted that fluent readers demonstrate speed, accuracy, and expression, which are essential for effective comprehension.

The third difficulty identified through the learners' responses during the Phil-IRI assessment is limited vocabulary development, as evidenced by learners' inability to identify meanings of unfamiliar or grade-level words and failure to use context clues effectively. Many learners demonstrated only surface-level word recognition without fully understanding meaning, leading to incomplete or inaccurate interpretation of texts. This indicates insufficient vocabulary knowledge necessary for comprehension. Beck et al. (2013) emphasized that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, as it directly influences learners' ability to construct meaning from text. Furthermore, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) stated that comprehension is largely dependent on readers' vocabulary and background knowledge, reinforcing the importance of explicit and contextualized vocabulary instruction.

The fourth and most dominant difficulty identified from the Phil-IRI comprehension results is reading comprehension, as learners showed inability to identify main ideas, recall details, make inferences, and synthesize information. The findings revealed fragmented understanding of texts, which is often a result of weaknesses in decoding, fluency, and vocabulary. This confirms that comprehension difficulties are multifaceted and cannot be addressed independently. Snow (2002) explained that reading comprehension requires the integration of multiple reading components, including decoding, vocabulary, and higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) emphasized that comprehension occurs through active interaction between the reader and the text, requiring both cognitive and linguistic competencies.

Overall, the findings derived from the Phil-IRI assessment indicate that the reading difficulties of Grade 5 learners are both foundational and higher-order in nature and are highly interconnected. Weaknesses in decoding and fluency hinder reading efficiency, while limited vocabulary restricts meaning-making, ultimately leading to poor comprehension. These results affirm that reading difficulties persist across grade levels when not addressed early, as emphasized in prior studies on reading performance and intervention needs. These findings provide a strong empirical basis for the development of the short story-based reading intervention material.

Table 2. Core components and features of the Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Material

Core Component	Key Features	Purpose and Instructional Impact
1. Contextualized & Culturally Relevant Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settings and characters based in Barangay Balasi, Flora, Apayao. Integration of local traditions and daily experiences. Logical narrative progression and clear structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances engagement by connecting text to prior knowledge. Reduces cognitive load/barriers associated with unfamiliar contexts. Strengthens cultural identity and community pride.
2. Structured Comprehension Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple-choice format. Tiered levels: Literal, Inferential, and Evaluative. Systematic progression from simple to complex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaffolds the reading process for struggling learners. Encourages Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Builds learner confidence through gradual challenges.
3. Integrated Vocabulary in Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural embedding of local terms (e.g., <i>pako</i>, <i>aba</i>, <i>bukasít</i>, <i>parya</i>). Repeated exposure to target words across different stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops the ability to use context clues instead of rote memorization. Promotes long-term retention and flexible word use. Bridges the gap between local dialect/culture and formal literacy.
4. Explicit Comprehension Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy-based tasks: predicting, summarizing, and identifying cause-and-effect. Alignment with grade-level objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifts focus from mechanical decoding to meaning-making. Provides a holistic approach to reading development. Equips learners with transferable active reading strategies.
5. Values Integration & Reflective Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated "Lesson of the Story" section. Themes of environmental responsibility, cooperation, and kindness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages meta-cognitive reflection and personal growth. Helps learners synthesize the "big idea" or main message of a text. Supports affective development alongside academic skills.

Table 2 presents the core components and features of the contextualized short story-based reading intervention material, including contextualized and culturally relevant stories, structured comprehension questions, integrated vocabulary in context, explicit comprehension focus, and values integration with reflective learning. These components were designed to address the identified reading difficulties of learners while promoting holistic reading development through culturally grounded and meaningful learning experiences.

The first component, contextualized and culturally relevant stories, reflects the learners' local environment, traditions, and daily experiences in Barangay Balasi, Flora, Apayao. This is evident in the story excerpt: "*Balasi* is a small barangay in the municipality of Flora in Apayao. The houses are surrounded by tall trees, green mountains, and clear rivers. Some people gather food from nature such as *pako*, *aba*, and *bukasít*." The inclusion of familiar places, cultural practices, and indigenous terms allows learners to connect prior knowledge with the text, thereby increasing engagement and comprehension. The stories also integrate local cultural elements such as weaving *bigao*, gathering vegetables and shells, and preserving community traditions, which strengthen learners' sense of identity and belonging. This supports Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of cultural context and social interaction in learning. Similarly, studies reveal that culturally relevant reading materials improve learner motivation, participation, and comprehension (Guthrie JT, Klauda SL, Ho AN., 2017).

The second component, structured comprehension questions, includes multiple-choice questions progressing from literal to inferential and evaluative levels. For example, the material

includes literal questions such as: “Who is Lola Minda in the story?” with the correct answer, “An elderly woman who weaves *bigao*.” Inferential questions include: “What can be inferred about Lola Minda’s feelings toward her work?” while evaluative questions include: “What might happen if the younger generation ignores traditions like weaving *bigao*?” This progression allows learners to move from simple recall of information toward deeper interpretation, analysis, and critical thinking. The comprehension questions are likewise grounded in contextualized experiences, such as asking learners why the author included details about “*pako*,” “*aba*,” and “*bukasít*” in the story. Such questioning strategies scaffold learning and promote higher-order thinking skills. This aligns with Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy, which highlights the development of cognitive skills from knowledge recall to critical evaluation (Anderson LW, Krathwohl DR., 2001).

The third component, integration of vocabulary in context, embeds unfamiliar or target words within meaningful and authentic sentences. For instance, the story states: “Some people gather food from nature such as *pako*, a wild fern used as a vegetable, *aba*, a root crop vegetable, and *bukasít*, small river shells collected from the river.” Instead of presenting vocabulary words in isolation, the material allows learners to encounter them naturally within the flow of the narrative. Learners are therefore able to infer meanings using context clues and surrounding details. Similar contextualized vocabulary exposure is also observed in other stories through terms such as “*alíngo*,” “*asar*,” “*pana*,” and “*bigao*.” Repeated exposure to these culturally familiar and localized words strengthens vocabulary retention, comprehension, and flexible word use. This supports the findings of Beck et al., 2013 who emphasized that contextualized vocabulary instruction enhances comprehension and long-term retention.

The fourth component, explicit comprehension focus, emphasizes strategy-based tasks such as predicting, summarizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, and drawing conclusions. This is illustrated in the narrative statement: “They realized that the traditions of their community were not just stories from the past. They were living practices that connected them to their people, their culture, and their future.” Based on this excerpt, learners may be asked to summarize the story, explain its main idea, or identify the importance of preserving traditions. Additional comprehension and thinking tasks, such as predicting what might happen if younger generations forget their traditions, further encourage active thinking and meaning-making. Such explicit comprehension instruction develops learners’ ability to process information deeply rather than merely decoding words mechanically. Research shows that strategy-based reading instruction significantly improves reading comprehension and learner engagement.

The fifth component, values integration and reflective learning, is highlighted in the “Moral of the Story” sections included at the end of each reading text. One example state: “Respecting and preserving cultural traditions help communities remain strong and united.” This is reinforced through reflective comprehension questions such as: “What does the children’s promise to Lola Minda show?” with the answer emphasizing the learners’ role in continuing and preserving culture. Other stories likewise emphasize values such as cooperation, kindness, environmental responsibility, respect for elders, and appreciation of community traditions. These reflective activities encourage learners not only to understand the content cognitively but also to internalize positive attitudes and values presented in the stories. Integrating affective learning with reading instruction promotes deeper engagement and more meaningful understanding of texts (Vygotsky LS., 1978).

Overall, the components of the short story-based reading intervention material demonstrate a comprehensive and integrated approach to reading instruction. Through the combination of contextualized stories, structured comprehension questioning, vocabulary development, explicit comprehension strategies, and values formation, the material effectively addresses learners’ reading

difficulties while fostering culturally responsive, meaningful, and learner-centered reading experiences.

Table 3. Summary of the Level of Validity of the Developed Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Material as Evaluated by Experts

Criteria	Overall Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Content Quality	4	Very Satisfactory
Instructional Quality	4	Very Satisfactory
Language and Readability	4	Very Satisfactory
Design and Layout	4	Very Satisfactory
Alignment with Learning Competencies	4	Very Satisfactory
Overall Weighted Mean	4	Very Satisfactory

Table 3 displays the weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of the experts' level of validity of the developed materials as evaluated across content quality, instructional quality, language and readability, design and layout, and alignment with learning competencies. The overall weighted mean of 4.00, interpreted as Very Satisfactory, indicates that the expert validators found the developed contextualized short story-based reading intervention materials to be highly valid in all evaluated criteria.

The finding means that the developed materials are appropriate, well-structured, and suitable for Grade 5 learners in terms of content, instruction, language use, presentation, and curriculum alignment. It implies that the short story-based reading intervention materials effectively support reading development by integrating meaningful content, engaging instructional features, clear language, and organized design that facilitate learners' comprehension and participation. This is supported by studies which emphasized that effective instructional materials must be relevant, engaging, and responsive to learners' needs to promote meaningful learning experiences (Anderson LW, Krathwohl DR., 2001).

The highest rated criteria include content quality, instructional quality, language and readability, design and layout, and alignment with learning competencies, all with an overall weighted mean of 4.00, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. This means that the experts consistently affirmed all aspects of the developed materials, reflecting uniform agreement on their quality and effectiveness. It implies that the materials are comprehensive, learner-centered, instructionally appropriate, and aligned with curriculum standards, making them suitable for use in reading intervention. Research indicates that high-quality instructional materials integrate content relevance, clear instructional structure, and appropriate language to support learner achievement and engagement.

Validators achieved perfect consensus across all LRMS domains, showing outstanding agreement. This means that the evaluators demonstrated consistent agreement across all evaluation areas. It implies that the developed materials meet the required standards in all dimensions without any identified weaknesses, ensuring their reliability and applicability in classroom instruction. Consistency in expert evaluation reflects strong material design, as balanced instructional components contribute to overall effectiveness and usability (Tomlinson B., 2013).

These findings are further supported by studies which highlighted that reading materials must integrate content, language, and instructional support to effectively develop comprehension skills among learners (Snow CE., 2002). Similarly, research shows that well-structured, readable, and visually organized materials enhance learner engagement, understanding, and retention of

information (Mayer RE., 2009). These studies affirm that the overall quality and validity of instructional materials depend on the integration of multiple components, all of which were achieved in the developed short story-based reading intervention materials.

4. Conclusions

The study revealed that Grade 5 pupils at Balasi Elementary School have interconnected reading difficulties in word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. The study found that the Contextualized Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Material is appropriately designed with contextualized stories, structured comprehension questions, integrated vocabulary, explicit comprehension strategies, and values integration to address learners' reading needs. The study further revealed that the developed material is highly valid and suitable for instructional use based on its Very Satisfactory evaluation across all criteria.

5. Recommendations

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

1. Teachers may utilize the Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Material to address learners' difficulties in word recognition and decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.
2. The Short Story-Based Reading Intervention Material may be implemented in classroom instruction to provide structured, contextualized, and skills-based reading support for Grade 5 learners.
3. School administrators may adopt the developed material as a supplementary instructional resource due to its established high level of validity across all evaluation criteria.
4. Future researchers may conduct experimental studies using pre-test and post-test design to determine the effectiveness of the material in improving learners' reading performance.

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