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INTERACTIVE TECHNIQUES IN PROMOTING BASIC LITERACY: NARRATIVES OF GRADE TWO TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT
This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and a proposed intervention program regarding interactive literacy activities among ten (10) purposively selected Grade Two teachers from the Talomo-West District, Division of Davao City. It examined their instructional experiences, classroom barriers, and coping strategies in implementing early literacy instruction. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed four major themes characterizing teachers' experiences: instructional adaptation strategies, resourcefulness and material innovation, collaborative and professional support, and classroom management and engagement strategies. Teachers demonstrated flexibility through differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and flexible pacing; creativity through material improvisation; collaboration through peer sharing and mentorship; and structured classroom management. Coping mechanisms reflected similar patterns, highlighting reliance on personal resourcefulness and peer networks to address diverse learner needs. Based on these insights, a school-based capacity-building program titled Empowering Grade 2 Teachers in Interactive Literacy Instruction was proposed to systematize basic early reading pedagogy.
KEYWORDS: *Interactive Techniques, Basic Literacy, Grade Two Teachers, Narrative Phenomenology, Early Reading Development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem and Its Setting

Promoting literacy among young learners is foundational because it underpins academic success, critical thinking, and lifelong learning capabilities. Grade Two represents a critical transitional juncture in early literacy development where learners shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn". However, early grade teachers continuously confront persistent instructional challenges, including diverse learner readiness levels, overcrowded classrooms, limited institutional materials, and lack of specialized professional development, which collectively hinder consistent literacy progress.

Interactive instructional techniques—such as storytelling, educational reading games, guided small-group reading, and collaborative literacy sessions—are recognized as highly viable vehicles for increasing student engagement and advancing foundational skills. While a large body of global empirical literature establishes the positive quantitative impacts of these interactive methods on child performance data, there remains a distinct scarcity of research focused directly on the classroom realities, narratives, and professional lifeworlds of the teachers executing these strategies.

Furthermore, localized qualitative accounts within public school contexts, particularly within the Division of Davao City, are scarce. Most existing literature relies heavily on student assessment data or macro-level program monitoring reports, missing the nuanced, adaptive instructional decisions that teachers make daily. This study addresses this knowledge gap by providing an in-depth, teacher-centered perspective on how Grade Two teachers design, modify, and implement interactive techniques amid real classroom constraints.

1.2 Global, National, and Local Literatures

Internationally, studies confirm the instructional utility of interactive literacy frameworks while highlighting systemic gaps in execution. In the United States, Calo (2023) demonstrated that structured dialogic reading frameworks substantially benefit instructional delivery during initial training, though long-term classroom adaptation among veteran teachers remains under-examined. In Australia, Pickering and Byrne (2023) argued that early-grades research frequently centers on monologic teacher-child exchanges rather than sustained dialogic interactions, thereby under-reporting the pedagogical agility required of teachers to facilitate complex language acquisition. Concurrently, global

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assessments by organizations such as UNESCO (2021) underscore that resource-constrained settings encounter extreme bottlenecks, including lack of access to multimodal texts, structural deficits, and inadequate specialized literacy training.

In the Philippines, early grade literacy instruction operates within complex structural parameters. Cabrera, Budao, and Canas (2020) highlighted that a congested curriculum, high student-to-teacher ratios, and deficient learning materials significantly degrade a teacher's capacity to implement student-centered literacy routines. Anagon (2024) observed that while initiatives like the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) program provide solid theoretical groundings, teachers frequently undergo pedagogical friction due to high assessment pressures and erratic material allocations. In rural and localized public schools, teachers are regularly forced to navigate a lack of grade-appropriate books and reading manipulatives (Alonzo & Garcia, 2024).

Locally, within the Talomo-West District of Davao City, primary grade classrooms present distinct literacy challenges. Teachers face students with wide gaps in reading fluency, word decoding, and comprehension skills, which are compounded by varied socio-economic backgrounds and inconsistent domestic reading support. Consequently, understanding how local Grade Two teachers sustain literacy engagement requires a detailed examination of their personal narrative experiences, professional resilience, and individual creative adaptations.

1.3 Research Questions

This inquiry aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Grade 2 teachers in promoting basic literacy through interactive techniques?
2. How do Grade Two teachers cope with the challenges encountered in promoting basic literacy through interactive techniques?
3. What intervention program on interactive activities can be proposed to promote basic literacy based on the findings of the study?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is theoretically anchored on several core educational and cognitive psychology frameworks:

- **Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1972):** This theory asserts that children actively construct meaning through direct, hands-on interaction with their educational environment. Interactive literacy techniques capitalize on this by positioning readers as active knowledge-makers during games and group storytelling.
- **Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978):** Vygotsky introduces the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and stresses the imperative of scaffolding. Grade Two teachers optimize literacy growth by breaking down complex linguistic exercises into manageable, structured segments, adjusting guidance as learners gain independence.
- **Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977):** Bandura underlines that behavioral and cognitive acquisition occurs via social modeling, imitation, and active collaboration. This supports the use of peer-assisted reading, oral read-alouds, and group interactions within the classroom.
- **Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988):** This theory contends that instructional delivery must respect working memory constraints. It validates teachers' efforts to simplify reading components, utilize visual cues, and scaffold materials to minimize cognitive overload among early readers.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to investigate the central phenomenon of promoting basic literacy through interactive techniques. Phenomenology was selected because it allows for the deep exploration, documentation, and interpretation of the lived experiences of individuals who have directly encountered a specific phenomenon. By centering on the subjective narratives of classroom practitioners, this design illuminated how instructional strategies are contextualized, adjusted, and executed amidst real-world educational constraints.

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2.2 Participants and Sampling Design

The participants comprised ten (10) Grade Two teachers currently employed in public elementary schools within the Talomo-West District, Division of Davao City. Non-probability purposive sampling was utilized to ensure that the selected informants possessed the exact professional backgrounds necessary to provide detailed, information-rich testimony regarding early literacy practices.

The inclusion criteria mandated that all participants:

1. Held a permanent *plantilla* position ranging from Teacher I to Teacher III.
2. Possessed a minimum of three (3) consecutive years of teaching experience specifically at the Grade Two level, ensuring deep familiarity with the developmental stages of early learners.
3. Had undergone formal institutional training in the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) program.
4. Consistently utilized interactive literacy modalities (e.g., guided reading, educational games, digital storytelling) in their standard teaching routines.

2.3 Research Instrument and Data Gathering Procedure

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured in-depth interview (IDI) guide. The interview guide was validated by a panel of educational research experts to guarantee content appropriateness, clarity, and adherence to qualitative research parameters. Questions focused directly on instructional practices, specific interactive tools utilized, encountered barriers, adaptive strategies, and personal educational insights.

Prior to formal data collection, administrative clearances were secured from the Graduate School of The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc., the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao City, and respective public school principals. Formal ethics clearance was obtained to protect participant rights. The interviews were conducted in comfortable, non-threatening professional spaces or via secure digital channels depending on participant convenience. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, was audio-recorded with explicit consent, and was transcribed verbatim for analysis.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected narrative transcripts were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis following a inductive approach. The data analysis pipeline involved:

1. *Familiarization:* Immersion in the verbatim transcriptions through repeated reading.
2. *Initial Code Generation:* Coding text segments related to experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms.
3. *Searching for Themes:* Clustering codes into broader semantic categories.
4. *Reviewing and Defining Themes:* Refining themes against the total dataset to construct a coherent analytical framework.
5. *Member-Checking:* Returning summarized findings to the participants to ensure accurate representation of their professional insights.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

To safeguard the integrity of the research process and protect participants, strict ethical protocols were maintained. Informed consent was obtained from each informant prior to the interviews, clearly stating the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Absolute privacy and confidentiality were upheld by removing identifying institutional data and utilizing alphanumeric pseudo-codes (e.g., IDI-I10) for all narrative excerpts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis generated four major, overarching themes describing the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of Grade Two teachers in promoting basic literacy through interactive techniques. These themes, along with their corresponding sub-themes, are summarized in Table 1.

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Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes on Teachers' Lived Experiences and Coping Mechanisms

Major Themes	Core Sub-themes & Instructional Focus
1. Instructional Adaptation Strategies	• Differentiated instruction based on learner readiness • Scaffolding and chunking complex reading tasks • Flexible instructional pacing
2. Resourcefulness and Material Innovation	• Handcrafted and improvised reading manipulatives • Multimodal visual aids and big books • Localization and contextualization of learning content
3. Collaborative and Professional Support	• Peer sharing within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) • Mentorship and instructional coaching • Integration of open-source digital literacy platforms
4. Classroom Management and Engagement	• Establishing consistent, highly structured daily routines • Gamified literacy tasks and token reinforcement • Managing behavior during high-energy interactive activities

3.1 Theme 1: Instructional Adaptation Strategies

Grade Two teachers consistently emphasize that entering a public school classroom requires high instructional flexibility. Classrooms are highly heterogeneous, with reading abilities ranging from rapid decoding to non-reader status. Consequently, teachers construct diverse adaptation strategies, primarily utilizing differentiated instruction, explicit scaffolding, and flexible pacing.

3.1.1 Differentiated Instruction

Teachers do not deliver reading lessons in a single format; they deliberately modify content complexity, process steps, and expected outputs. For advanced readers, comprehension tasks are expanded, while struggling readers receive focused decoding drills and simplified vocabulary matching games.

Informant 10 articulated this reality:
"Nagagamit ko og differentiated instruction ug nagahatag ko og simplified tasks para sa struggling learners." (I use differentiated instruction and give simplified tasks for struggling learners.) (IDI-I10)
Similarly, Informant 8 highlighted the use of visual differentiation:
"Nagagamit ko og differentiated instruction ug nagahatag ko og visual aids para mas masabtan sa mga bata." (I use differentiated instruction and provide visual aids to help students understand better.) (IDI-I8)

This approach aligns with Tomlinson's (2017) differentiation model, which notes that adjusting content based on student readiness optimizes participation and prevents academic frustration in mixed-ability classrooms.

3.1.2 Task Scaffolding and Chunking

To prevent cognitive overload, teachers break down complex reading tasks into smaller parts. A standard reading comprehension task is chunked into letter-sound recognition, localized syllable blending, whole-word decoding, and guided sentence reading. This active scaffolding allows teachers to work within each child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as conceptualized by Vygotsky (1978), providing necessary support until the learner achieves independent mastery.

3.2 Theme 2: Resourcefulness and Material Innovation

A central theme in teachers' experiences is the persistent lack of institutional reading resources. Public school classrooms often lack ready-made phonics kits, structured big books, or sufficient learning materials. To keep lessons interactive, teachers rely on personal creativity and resourcefulness to build instructional materials.

3.2.1 Material Improvisation and Repurposing

Teachers spend significant time outside of class hours crafting flashcards, syllable wheels, and tactile reading boards from cardboard, recycled paper, and local items. These materials are essential for tactile learning during interactive games.

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Informant 10 noted the extra effort required:
"Sometimes I cannot immediately give the planned activity because I need to improvise due to lack of materials." (IDI-I10)

This resourcefulness helps sustain student attention during literacy routines. However, as noted by Cabrera et al. (2020), a heavy reliance on individual teacher funding and personal time can create inequities across classrooms, emphasizing the need for institutional resource allocation.

3.2.2 Multimodal and Visual Aids
Recognizing that Grade Two learners respond strongly to sensory stimuli, teachers construct big colorful books and dynamic visual banners. This strategy aligns with Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which emphasizes that concrete, hands-on visual media support memory retention and help young learners build strong connections between words and meanings.

3.3 Theme 3: Collaborative and Professional Support
Rather than working in isolation, Grade Two teachers actively utilize collaborative networks, professional learning communities, and open-source digital spaces to navigate instructional challenges.

3.3.1 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
The institutional use of school-based Learning Action Cells (LAC) sessions and informal grade-level meetings provides essential spaces for collaboration. Teachers use these opportunities to share successful reading lesson plans, discuss effective interventions for struggling students, and coordinate material production.

Informant 10 shared:
"Collaboration with other teachers and use of online teaching resources help me." (IDI-I10)
This collaborative behavior aligns with DuFour and Eaker's (2009) Professional Learning Community framework, which demonstrates that shared teacher responsibility and collaborative inquiry consistently enhance instructional quality and student outcomes.

3.3.2 Mentorship and Digital Content Sourcing
Experienced teachers provide instructional coaching to newer colleagues, helping them refine their classroom pacing and management during high-energy interactive routines. Additionally, teachers actively use online platforms to source open-access phonics worksheets, educational video clips, and digital children's stories. This digital resource-sharing helps reduce lesson preparation burdens and introduces diverse, multimedia content to the classroom.

3.4 Theme 4: Classroom Management and Engagement Strategies
Interactive literacy instruction inherently increases classroom energy. Moving away from traditional lectures toward interactive games, peer reading, and oral storytelling requires strong classroom management to maintain focus and order.

3.4.1 Structuring Routines
Teachers use structured transitions and clear procedures to keep activities organized. For example, explicit auditory signals (such as specific hand-clapping patterns or short transitional songs) are used to move students smoothly from large-group listening into small-group reading pairs without disrupting instructional flow.
Informant 10 highlighted the challenge of maintaining attention:
"Students easily get distracted during activities, so I have to keep them focused." (IDI-I10)

3.4.2 Gamified Learning and Token Systems
To maintain engagement, teachers build gamified elements—such as "Word Bingo," syllable-matching races, and reading tracking charts—into daily lessons. These are combined with positive reinforcement token systems, where students earn stickers or small rewards for completing reading tasks. This approach matches Bandura's (1986) reinforcement concepts, showing that clear motivators and visible progress markers encourage early readers to participate confidently in challenging language exercises.

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4. Proposed Intervention Program

To address the challenges identified in this study—such as resource constraints, learner diversity, and classroom management difficulties—the following school-based capacity-building framework is proposed.

4.1 Program Profile

- **Title:** Empowering Grade 2 Teachers in Interactive Literacy Instruction: A School-Based Capacity-Building Program for Early Reading Development.
- **Rationale:** Findings indicate that while teachers are highly creative and adaptive, their strategies often depend on individual initiative and personal funds, leading to varied implementation across classrooms. This program aims to provide a standardized, school-supported framework to strengthen instructional consistency and quality.
- **Target Participants:** Public Grade Two elementary school teachers, reading coordinators, and instructional leaders.

4.2 Action Matrix and Implementation Plan

The proposed capacity-building activities are structured into distinct modules designed for implementation over consecutive professional development sessions, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Capacity-Building and Classroom Application Activities Matrix

Phase / Focus Area	Specific Objectives	Proposed Strategies / Activities	Expected Output
Phase 1: Pedagogical Foundations	Strengthen teachers' knowledge of interactive reading frameworks.	• Workshops on advanced storytelling and dialogic reading . • Phonics and syllable-blending instructional training.	Standardized interactive reading lesson designs.
Phase 2: Material Development	Institutionalize the creation of localized literacy materials.	• Material modification workshops using cost-effective resources . • Building shared digital resource folders for open-access worksheets.	A school-based repository of literacy kits and big books.
Phase 3: Classroom Management	Improve management techniques for interactive environments.	• Micro-teaching sessions focused on group transitions . • Training on token economies and positive behavior support.	Classroom transition protocols and engagement guides.

4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

To ensure program sustainability, progress will be monitored through a structured evaluation loop:

1. *Formative Assessment:* School heads and reading coordinators will conduct regular classroom walk-throughs using standardized observation tools to assess the use of interactive strategies.
2. *Peer Feedback:* Teachers will participate in monthly peer observation sessions within their Learning Action Cells (LAC) to share feedback and address challenges.
3. *Outcome Tracking:* Student reading development will be monitored quarterly using localized assessment tools to measure the program's impact on foundational literacy skills.

5. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This phenomenological study examined the professional experiences of Grade Two teachers implementing interactive literacy techniques in the Talomo-West District, Division of Davao City. The findings revealed that early grade literacy instruction requires continuous adaptation, creativity, and resilience. Teachers regularly modify their lessons through differentiated instruction, careful task scaffolding, and flexible pacing to accommodate diverse learner readiness levels.

To address persistent resource shortages, teachers demonstrate strong personal resourcefulness by crafting their own visual aids and reading manipulatives. They also reduce professional isolation by actively participating in peer-sharing networks, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative lesson planning within Professional Learning Communities. Finally, teachers manage the high energy of interactive learning by establishing structured classroom routines and using gamified engagement strategies. While effective, these coping mechanisms often depend on individual initiative, highlighting the need for systematic institutional support.

5.2 Implications for Practice and Educational Management

The findings offer clear insights for educational management and classroom practice:

- *For Classroom Practice:* Instructional flexibility should be recognized as a core pedagogical competency. Early grades teachers should continue to refine their differentiation strategies, moving from intuitive adaptations toward systematic, data-driven reading routines.
- *For Institutional Management:* School leaders must address systemic resource gaps rather than relying solely on teacher resourcefulness. Educational budgets should prioritize providing standardized, contextually relevant reading books and early literacy materials.
- *For Professional Development:* Training initiatives should move away from broad theoretical lectures and focus on practical, school-based capacity-building programs. These programs should combine literacy instruction training with specific classroom management strategies to help teachers maintain organized, engaging learning environments.

5.3 Future Directions and Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Adopt the Proposed Intervention:** School administrators should formalize and implement the proposed program, *Empowering Grade 2 Teachers in Interactive Literacy Instruction*, to provide structured institutional training on early reading pedagogy.
2. **Strengthen Professional Learning Communities:** Schools should institutionalize weekly or monthly peer-coaching and collaborative planning sessions within grade-level bands to reduce professional isolation and facilitate material sharing.
3. **Enhance Institutional Resource Allocation:** Education policymakers should focus on distributing durable reading toolkits, phonics games, and digital learning materials directly to primary classrooms to minimize reliance on teacher-funded materials.
4. **Expand Research Scope:** Future researchers should conduct quantitative or mixed-methods studies to evaluate the empirical impact of the proposed capacity-building framework on student reading fluency and comprehension scores across a wider range of schools.

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