

Effectiveness of Marungko approach on the English reading performance and comprehension skills of first grade Thai learners

Ceres P. Yayenⁱ
Sacred Heart College,
Chiang Mai,
Thailand

Abstract

This study investigated the English reading performance and comprehension skills of grade one learners in a sectarian basic education institution within a Thai learning environment covering the academic year 2017-2018. The researcher employed the Marungko approach, a method associated with phonics, as a learning intervention in improving the learners' English reading ability. The study made use of a quasi-experimental research design with pre-test and post-test assessment in the areas of phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, phonics and decoding; and (3) fluency and proficiency. Findings revealed that the reading performance and comprehension skills of the participants significantly improved after implementation of the Marungko intervention. There was a significant increase in the learners' reading ability and in their comprehension skills from the pre- to the post-test after subjecting the generated data to T-Test for two correlated samples. Henceforth, it is concluded that the Marungko approach is effective in enhancing English reading ability and comprehension skills among grade one Thai learners. The study also confirmed the arguments of the language acquisition theory and situated learning theory.

Keywords: Marungko approach, reading performance, comprehension skills, phonic, decoding, fluency, proficiency

1.0 Introduction

Education is an important facet in the life of every individual. People acquire their knowledge and skills through education. It is a process that requires commitment and responsibilities on the part of an educator to impart knowledge to the learners (Abocejo and Padua, 2010) and to find ways and methods of instruction in improving their learning abilities in different learning areas such as reading and writing.

Fernandez and Abocejo (2018) emphasized that education needs dedicated teachers who have concerns about the learning needs of their students. Teachers play vital role in the fulfilment of goals and objectives of the teaching-learning process (Ndungu, Gathu and Bomett, 2015). One of which they can contribute is the use of different teaching strategies and materials which could be beneficial to the learners (Eady and Lockyer, 2013).

The researcher, driven by the words from the Christian teaching, "... *whatever you do for one of the least...you did it for me...*" (Mathew 25:40) and strongly guided by the 'A New Way: The Spirituality of Unity' (Lubich, 2006) undoubtedly affirmed that her learners at the school where she teacher are neighbors to love. And her teaching profession is a concrete means in

ⁱCorrespondence email: serlpyayen@gmail.com

reaching out her neighbor's needs – her students' learning needs in English embedded in the Thai learning cultural context. Backed up by more than eight years of elementary teaching along Thai learning environment, the researcher is convinced of the important issue on reading and comprehensions skills development which must be inculcated to her learners.

Teaching different subjects using English language as medium of instruction to Thai learners is both complex and challenging. English, as a foreign language for Thai learners (Chuanchaisit and Prapphal, 2009), continuously need to be strengthened as a second language. Williams (as cited in Dornyei, 2006) claimed that learning a second language can implicate difficult skills or rules and even the language structure. The learning process affects social, cultural and personal behavior of the Thai learners (Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Accordingly, learning a foreign language requires educators to value and motivate the learners in order to achieve the desired learning objective (Songsiri, 2017).

Furthermore, knowing how to read a foreign language implies the social aspect of the learners (Burns, Dean, Foley, 2004). It can also have an impact of the learner's literacy concerns as a whole. Since reading connects different cognitive processes, the learning process can change the lives of the students towards forming in them a better understanding of humanity (Kemizano, 2007). Meanwhile, when a student finds difficulty in reading, all other academic areas may be negatively affected (Kameenui and Simmons, 1998). The ability to read has long been considered basic to the learning process. It is upon reading skills that one builds proficiencies in other academic areas (Alambro, 2008).

In Thailand, English language plays an important role in Thai education. The Ministry of Education had set up a Mini English Program (MEP) in leading schools per province to improve the English language proficiency among Thai students. It has become imperative to give attention in improving the ways of teaching English in Thailand (Noom-ura, 2013). The researcher argues that Marungko reading approach can enhance the reading performance and comprehension skills of Thai grade one students. In essence, improving the reading programs imperatively bring about substantial benefits to beginning readers.

1.1 Study objectives

This study determined the effectiveness of the Marungko approach in enhancing the reading performance and comprehension skills of the first grade Thai English learners. In the context of Marungko approach, the improvement in phonemic awareness and letter knowledge in the areas of guessing uppercase letters, sound recognition and lowercase letter recognition was also observed. The reading comprehension skills of the first grade Thai learners before and after using the Marungko approach in the areas of phonics and decoding (beginning sound letter, letter-pairing and sound blending, word recognition) and fluency and proficiency in sentence reading.

1.2 Hypotheses

This study tested two null hypotheses of (1) no significant improvement in the reading performance of grade 1 Thai learners after using the Marungko approach in terms of phonemic awareness and letter knowledge; and (2) is no significant improvement in the reading comprehension skills of the grade 1 Thai learners after using the Marungko approach in the areas of phonics and decoding and fluency and proficiency.

2.0 Literature Review

In the Philippines, Marungko Approach is also associated with phonics. It was first introduced to a two teachers in De Los Santos Community School in Marungko, Angat, Bulacan, Philippines (Ali and Urbano, 1967). In this approach, the first thing that children knew the letter sound of the Filipino alphabet which was called the “*Mastery of Sounds of Letters*” (Laud-Reyno, 2014). It was adopted as an explicit phonics instruction program in the Philippines, which is designed to prepare beginning readers the necessary materials to improve the reading comprehension skills (Talley, 2017).

It also seeks to develop a training model to enhance teacher’s ability in the teaching reading in particular grade one (Bustos-Orosa, Ferrer, 2013). De Belen (2017) stressed that beginning reading is important in grade one. The teachers are obliged, as their profession demands, to plan and provide effective reading program (Edelman, 2017) for the development of the reading skills of the learners.

Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer (2013) noted that in most public schools in the Philippines, for instance, Mananao Elementary School in San Manuel, Isabela, Philippines, they use Marungko approach as an alternative reading method for beginning readers, instead of using Cartilla method which is originated from Spanish instruction. Marungko approach is a “*phono syllabic*” method (Flores, 2014). The letter-sounds are taught in correspondence to the phonemic level. There is a specified common and familiar pattern of letters that are taught such as m, s, a, i, o, b, e, u...based from the Filipino language, in order to help the to organize their thoughts and ideas (Faustino, Santos, Distajo, and Ladia, 2013).

When certain patterns of letter sounds are already taught; the phonemic manipulation of blending sound letters is presented to create words. They are encouraged to produce words using the letters that are learned from the pattern of letters (e.g. “*masa*”, “*sama*” etc.). Then they are asked to read the different words that are produced (e.g. ube - purple yam, ubo - cough). The words that are produced can be combined to create phrases or sentences (e.g. May ube sa mesa). Afterwards, they can read the phrases/sentences (Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer, 2013). Even though, Marungko approach is already used in many local educational institutions in the Philippines, but there is no extensive literature related to it. However, Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer (2013) affirmed that this approach had contributed in the literature of the reading instructional program of their study.

On the other hand, phonics is a method of teaching children to read based on the principle of the alphabet in which the principal element is the teaching of correlating sounds or pronunciation between the letters or groups of letters they represent (Adams, 1994). Phonics education aims to teach to read words in or out of text. Readers can access a number of methods to read the words (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl and Willows, 2001). But, these methods require understanding of the alphabetic system. Through phonics education, the pupils have the basis on how words are produced and the organized rules to use when decoding uncommon words.

In general, people would think that readers learned through read sight words, where the readers learnt by heart the visual figures or anything they see. At present, learning sight words is determined upon the application of corresponding grapheme phoneme. These connect the words in memory for speed reading (Ehri et al., 2001). Accordingly, to be a skilled reader of sight words it is necessary to acquire knowledge on phonemic segmentation, correlation of letter-sounds, and the complete spelling of the words in relation to their pronunciation and their meanings. (Ehri et al., 2001; Perfetti, Landi and Oakhill, 2004)

Phonics taught in beginning readers were better at comprehending what they read than the non-phonics taught children. In this study, the researcher decided to apply the Marungko approach in a Thai instruction environment specifically to the grade 1 learners of Sacred Heart in Chiang Mai. However, the mode of instruction is a bit varied from the beginning in the Philippines. The Marungko approach is used to address the concerning issues in improving the reading comprehension skills of the beginning (Department of Education, 2017).

To promote teaching reading successfully, we have to consider how beginning readers learn. The development of reading comprehension skills in the beginning readers is significantly important because it is a foundation of learning other academic areas in the classroom. As researchers claim, “*the child who learns to read well will very likely encounter less difficulty in all academic subjects*”. When a student has difficulty in reading, in general, all academic areas are influenced (Jeon, 2012; Kameenui and Simmons, 1998).

2.1 Theoretical background

This study is anchored its theoretical framework on the Theory of Language Acquisition advocated by Chomsky (as cited in Barman, 2012) which put forward that children are born with intrinsic knowledge of the system of ‘Language or Language Acquisition Device’ (LAD). In this way, whatever language children need to learn and the accompanying grammar can be decoded by them. This theory further explains how children are often applying grammatical rules which they have heard, sometimes wrongly, because they have not yet learned exceptions to these rules (Kemizano, 2007).

The theory also claims that, to help the learners acquire the necessary elements in reading comprehension skills, there’s a need for them to be exposed to a motivating environment that allow them develop better language acquisition. Firstly, this environment is at home where parents or caregivers spend time with them communicating, telling stories, and singing songs and sharing rhymes with their young children. This exposure is important to enhance the reading development of the young. However, in Thailand, this could not be a real case because English language is not normally used at home (Chanasakulniyom, 2010).

This study also considers the theory of Situated Learning advocated by Lave and Wenger in 1991. This theorists contend that social interaction and collaboration form part as learning requirements for children giving emphasis on the interaction with the environment in the child’s language development. Meanwhile, Lave and Wenger (1991) noted that learning typically happens through the activities, through context and culture in which it occurs and emphasized that social interaction is a critical element of situated learning and the learners become part of a community of practice where certain beliefs and behaviors can be acquired.

Moreover, if this Situated Learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is applied in the field of reading, it would allow educators to understand the importance of using interactive methods which progress the collaborative social interaction within’ needs especially in their struggle to improve and develop reading skills. This theory can further bring in the focus of educational institutions to apply situated learning theory and a general theory of knowledge acquisition. It can allow educational institutions teach activities that are more focused to problem-solving skills. It could further support educators know the progress of reading skills in the communities, that could be one way of preparing children with problem-solving skills since development of reading skills is a key to success in all educational areas (Kemizano, 2007).

Furthermore, Zygouris-Coe (2001) agrees that in learning to read, one of the factors to determine children’s success in their reading ability is the use of their knowledge in recognizing the sound structure of a language, that is, phonemic awareness. Children have knowledge of the

alphabetic principle and the corresponding symbol-sound and have the ability to know and sound out combined letters or words (Adams, 1994; Ehri et al., 2001). This study underlines the correlation of phonemic awareness and the knowledge of alphabetic principle to word reading development of the, the phonics teaching programs and the Marungko approach.

The researcher believes that phonics instruction through Marungko approach is useful for beginning readers because it can help the acquire a stable comprehension of the principle of the alphabet and corresponding letter-sounds. These can lead them to practice in observing carefully the spelling of the words they encounter. Moreover, should also be taught different ways in 'knowing how and when' during their text reading through modelling, guided practice, and demonstration. As study reveals, when phonics education is supplemented by rich and different opportunities for to exercise their knowledge and receive feedback on applying what they learnt, improved results can be obtained.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 outlines the conceptual flow where the effectiveness of the Marungko approach is tested in the study. There are two key variables considered in the quasi-experimental study, the reading performance and reading comprehension. Pre-tests were implemented to research participants before the start of each lessons pertaining to the sub-variables, these were in the areas of (1) reading performance: (1.1) phonemic awareness and letter knowledge comprising uppercase recognition, letter recognition and sound and lowercase recognition; (2) reading comprehension comprising (2.1) phonics and decoding which with sub-variables consisting of beginning sound letter recognition, letter-pairing and sound blending, and word recognition; (2.2) fluency and proficiency which included sentence reading. The dependent variables are the reading performance and reading comprehension of the grade 1 learners delineated into in three sub-variables of phonemic

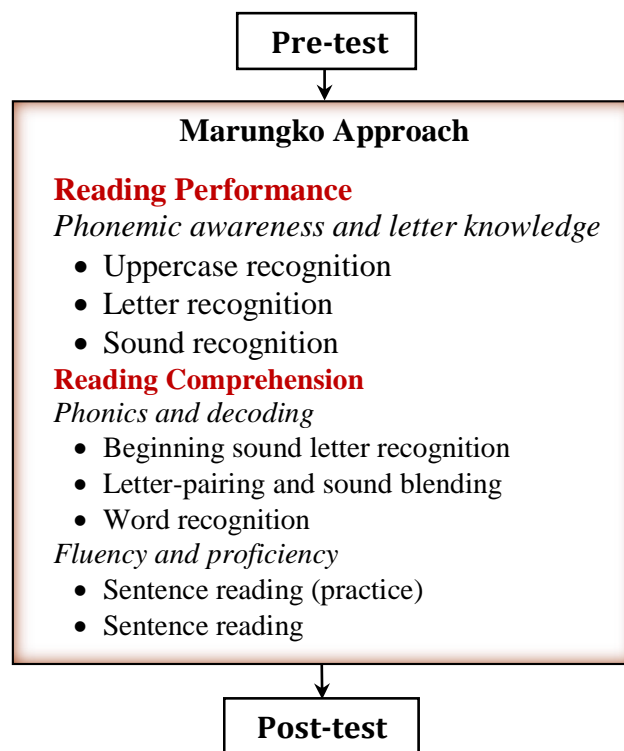


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

awareness and letter knowledge, phonics and decoding and the last were reading fluency and proficiency.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design following descriptive method in the analysis of data. Quasi-experimental since there was no control group. All of the thirty-five grade five Thai English class learners were exposed to the intervention (or treatment) which is the Marungko reading approach. Descriptive method because, according to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2011), the study made use of description, recording, analysis, and interpretation of the present nature, composition or processes of phenomena. The focused is on the prevailing conditions, or how a person, group, or thing behaves or functions in the present. The method is used because the concern of the present study was the enhancement of the reading performance and comprehension skills using Marungko reading approach.

3.2 Research locale

The study was implemented in the Sacred Heart College, Chiang Mai, Thailand. It is a private school and one of the first Catholic schools in the province of Chiang Mai in the northern part of Thailand. Sacred Heart College caters learners range from pre-school up to college level. From the previous years, the school had created an English Program (EP) that lasted for about 12 years in which all subjects, except Thai language, were taught in English. However, for some reasons, the English Program was altered to Intensive Program (IP) where only three major subjects (Mathematics, Science, and English) are taught in English in a Thai classroom. The researcher had chosen this institution because she works here for more than eight years now.

3.3 Research participants

The participants of this study were the thirty-five grade 1 Thai learners enrolled in the academic year 2017-2018 under the intensive program of a private basic education institution. Twenty-three of them are girls and twelve are boys. They belonged to the age bracket six and a half, seven and eight years of age. They came from diverse culture, economic status, and religious affiliations, but the majority are Buddhists.

3.4 Research instrument

A test questionnaire adapted from “*Make, Take, and Teach*” by Van Alst (2014) formed the basis for the pre-test and post-test assessments of the level of the reading performance and comprehension skills among thirty-five Thai grade 1 learners as the entire population group. No sampling was done on the learners, instead the study made use of complete enumeration.

The tests consisted of the reading performance and reading comprehension. The reading performance included phonemic awareness and Letter knowledge with focus on the uppercase guessing test (consist of 26 items), sound recognition test (an individual oral test which consists of 26 items), and lowercase recognition test (written test consists of 26 items). The reading comprehension involved phonics and decoding (beginning sound letter recognition test [20 items]; letter-pairing and sound blending test [20 items], word recognition test [20 items], fluency and proficiency involving sentence reading test [20 items]).

The researcher also made use of computer, camera, flashcards, video, and pictures for the activities performed to reinforce the understanding of the concept by the learners. In this way, gathering and interpretation of data were reliable.

3.5 Research procedure

The researcher engaged the IP (Intensive Program) grade 1 Thai learners of Sacred Heart College in Chiang Mai, Thailand enrolled in the academic year 2017-2018 as the subject for the research. The study was conducted in a three-month period started from the second week of May to the second week of August 2017 to ensure mastery of reading skills.

Table 1. Schedule of research activities and time frame

| Activity | Time Frame |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Reading performance</i> <i>Phonemic awareness and Letter knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-test • Uppercase recognition • Letter recognition • Sound recognition • Post-test | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 hours over 2 weeks |
| <p><i>Reading comprehension</i> <i>Phonics and Decoding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-test • Beginning sound letter recognition • Letter-pairing and sound blending • Word recognition • Post-test <p><i>Fluency and Proficiency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-test • Sentence reading (practice) • Sentence reading • Post-test | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 hours over 2 weeks • 12 hours over 4 weeks • 6 hours over 2 weeks • 6 hours over 2 weeks |

The researcher made a request from the Director of the school to conduct the study. After acquiring a favor from the school Director and being assured of a close collaboration with the Thai homeroom teachers of the two classes, she carried on with her study. The procedure initiated by giving an orientation to the learners about the research to be done. Then a general data form was distributed to gather personal information of the respondents. They were asked to check the box of the corresponding details assisted by their homeroom teachers. The study was conducted for a three-month lesson within the covered areas as indicated in Table 1.

3.6 Statistical treatment

This research utilized the descriptive statistical treatments such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD) and inferential statistical tests such as t-test of independent and T-test correlated samples in analyzing and interpreting the generated data (Abocejo and Pañares, 2014).

All calculations were carried out using MS Excel for Windows and Minitab version 17 free trial statistical softwares.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Profile in reading performance of the grade 1 Thai learners

Table 2 shows the profile of the grade 1 Thai learners in the reading performance of phonemic awareness and letter knowledge from the pre- to the post test. The grade 1 Thai learners manifested very satisfactory reading performances for both uppercase guessing and lowercase recognition, while poorly performing in sound recognition at the pre-test level. This is understandable since, in the pre-test, the Thai English learners were not yet exposed to any lecture nor intervention.

The SD were also high in the pre-test (Table 2) indicating large variability or spread of Thai English learners' scores about the mean. This goes to say that the scores in the pre-test were heavily dispersed from the mean, some learners getting very low scores while others getting high scores. Many of the individual scores deviated far from the mean score in each of the three areas.

Table 2. Grade 1 Thai learners' reading performance on phonemic awareness and letter knowledge (N=35)

| Area | Test | Items | WM | SD | Description |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|-------------------|
| Uppercase Guessing | Pre-Test | 26 | 19.31 | 6.23 | Very Satisfactory |
| | Post-Test | 26 | 24.89 | 1.91 | Outstanding |
| Sound Recognition | Pre-Test | 26 | 10.40 | 9.21 | Poor |
| | Post-Test | 26 | 21.91 | 3.87 | Very Satisfactory |
| Lowercase Recognition | Pre-Test | 26 | 19.26 | 7.07 | Very Satisfactory |
| | Post-Test | 26 | 25.83 | 0.62 | Outstanding |

N-number of cases of participants WM-weighted mean SD-standard deviation

| Ranges for the WM | Description |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 00.00 - 06.99 | Needs Improvement |
| 07.00 - 12.99 | Poor |
| 13.00 - 17.99 | Satisfactory |
| 18.00 - 22.99 | Very Satisfactory |
| 23.00 - 26.00 | Outstanding |

At the post test-level, after implementation of the Marungko approach, the Thai English learners' performance substantially improved to outstanding for both uppercase guessing and lowercase recognition, while attaining very satisfactory level for sound recognition. These results indicate that most of the learners have gained knowledge of the uppercase and lowercase of the alphabet, attributable to their exposures to the Marungko approach implemented in the classroom.

Accordingly, the SD of the scores visibly narrowed down to 1.91 for uppercase guessing, 3.87 for sound recognition and 0.62 for lowercase recognition, revealing less dispersed scores about the mean at the post test level. These also indicate that almost all Thai English learners obtained scores which are close to the mean in the post test, with less variability above and below the mean score. This result (of improved performance) suggests further that most of the Thai English learners were able to grasp the lesson imparted to them using the Marungko approach. These results confirmed the previous study of Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer, (2013) where they affirmed that Marungko approach had contributed in the literature of the reading instructional program of their study.

4.2 Profile in reading comprehension skills of the grade 1 Thai learners

Table 3 demonstrates the profile of the grade 1 Thai learners in the reading comprehension of phonics and decoding. Based on the findings, the pre-test results in the three areas (beginning letter sound, letter-pairing and sound blending, and word recognition) manifested very satisfactory performance. This could be attributable to the acquired knowledge from the two week exposures in the previous activities of phonemic awareness and letter recognition. With respect to SD, the pre-test scores were still spread about the mean as indicated by large SDs of 3.86 (beginning sound

Table 3. Grade 1 Thai learners' reading comprehension skills in phonics and decoding (N=35)

| Area | Test | Items | WM | SD | Description |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|-------------------|
| Beginning Sound Letter Recognition | Pre-test | 20 | 15.54 | 3.86 | Very Satisfactory |
| | Post-test | 20 | 19.26 | 1.22 | Outstanding |
| Letter-pairing and Sound blending | Pre-test | 20 | 14.46 | 3.66 | Very Satisfactory |
| | Post-test | 20 | 19.26 | 1.09 | Outstanding |
| Word recognition | Pre-test | 20 | 14.11 | 3.80 | Very Satisfactory |
| | Post-test | 20 | 18.91 | 1.48 | Outstanding |

N-number of cases of participants WM-weighted mean SD-standard deviation

| Ranges for the WM | Description |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 00.00 - 06.99 | Needs Improvement |
| 07.00 - 12.99 | Poor |
| 13.00 - 17.99 | Satisfactory |
| 18.00 - 22.99 | Very Satisfactory |
| 23.00 - 26.00 | Outstanding |

letter recognition), 3.66 (letter-pairing and sound blending) and 3.80 (word recognition). This translate to the fact that learners' scores were dispersed from the mean of 15.52, 14.46 and 14.11 in that order, where some learners score far below the mean while some scored above the mean.

On the other hand, the participants' performance improved to outstanding in the three areas at the post test. These results indicated that their ability to comprehend of the concepts in those areas has improved after being exposed to the Marungko approach of teaching reading comprehension skills in phonics and decoding. These could also imply that the learners were able to assimilate the sound recognition of the letters and were able to blend the sounds and read the word as how it was done by the facilitator after using the Marungko intervention.

All of the three areas exhibited contraction of the SD values to 1.22 (beginning sound letter recognition), 1.09 (letter-pairing and sound blending) and 1.48 (word recognition) suggesting that individual scores were already close about the mean after the Marungko intervention. In other words, each Thai English student obtained scores which closely converged towards the mean in each area with outstanding performance level. This further proves that the Marungko approach had substantial contribution in the improvement of learners' performance in reading comprehension skills.

Moreover, the result revealed that the pre-test in the sentence reading of the participants was very satisfactory. This is an indication that the participants' have gained knowledge from the previous four weeks activities in reading, phonics and decoding. With SD recorded at 3.28, it can be deduced that the scores were widely scattered about the mean, with some learners getting scores far below and above the mean.

Notably, after the Marungko intervention, the post-test performance reach outstanding level showing that the participants' ability to comprehend the reading sentence has improved from

the pre-test to the post-test. This also suggests that they have performed substantially higher reaching above average expectations in the post test.

Table 4. Grade 1 Thai learners' reading comprehension skills in fluency and proficiency (N=35)

| | Test | Items | WM | SD | Description |
|------------------|-----------|-------|-------|------|-------------------|
| Sentence reading | Pre-test | 20 | 16.20 | 3.28 | Very Satisfactory |
| | Post-test | 20 | 19.23 | 1.40 | Outstanding |

N-number of cases of participants WM-weighted mean
SD-standard deviation

| Ranges for the WM | Description |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 00.00 - 06.99 | Needs Improvement |
| 07.00 - 12.99 | Poor |
| 13.00 - 17.99 | Satisfactory |
| 18.00 - 22.99 | Very Satisfactory |
| 23.00 - 26.00 | Outstanding |

Moreover, the result revealed that the learners' performance was fortified by the previous lessons/activities following the Marungko approach enabling them to reach the highest scale. Looking into the SD of the scores, the post-test level was reduced to 1.4 only, indicative of the post-test scores now converging close to the mean. This suggests that almost all of the Thai English learners got perfect in the 20 item post-test, with only few learners who obtained scores below the mean of 19.23. This impressive performance strongly suggests high improvement in the post test examination indicating high acquisition of knowledge along reading comprehension skills in fluency and proficiency employing the Marungko approach.

4.3 Improvement in reading performance of grade 1 Thai learners after using the Marungko approach

In all areas under study, there were significant improvements in the reading performance of grade 1 Thai learners after they have been exposed to Marungko approach (Table 5). A pre-test was administered in each area of the phonemic awareness and letter knowledge before the exposure.

Table 5. Significant Improvement in reading performance of grade 1 Thai learners in terms of phonetic awareness and letter knowledge (N=35)

| Area | Test | WM | SD | T-value | p-value |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|------|---------|---------|
| Uppercase Guessing | Pre-Test | 19.31 | 6.23 | 7.31** | 0.00 |
| | Post-Test | 24.89 | 1.91 | | |
| Sound Recognition | Pre-Test | 10.40 | 9.21 | 11.42** | 0.00 |
| | Post-Test | 21.91 | 3.87 | | |
| Lowercase Recognition | Pre-Test | 19.26 | 7.07 | 5.89** | 0.00 |
| | Post-Test | 25.83 | 0.62 | | |

N-number of cases of participants WM-weighted mean
SD-standard deviation

** - highly significant at 0.01 level of significance

After two weeks of implementation of the reading approach, a post-test was administered to the participants. It was very notable the result of sound recognition where mean performance improved from 10.40 in the pre-test to 21.91 in post-test. Inferentially, post-test performances in all areas registered significant increased where the resulting p-values were at zero indicating a very

high improvement from pre-to the post using 0.01 level of significance where the null hypothesis of no significant improvement was rejected.

This could imply that the grade 1 Thai learners were able to master uppercase guessing, sound and lowercase recognition. They were able to internalize the learning process following the Marungko approach; hence they were able to highly perform in the post test. These results confirmed the findings of the precious study conducted by Bustos-Orosa and Ferrer (2013). In their study reveals that using Marungko approach, the had no difficulty in decoding or deciphering the words.

4.4 Improvement in reading comprehension skills of grade 1 Thai learners after using the Marungko approach

Likewise, Table 6 shows that in all areas, there were highly significant improvements in the reading comprehension of grade 1 Thai learners after they have been exposed to Marungko approach. Prior to the implementation of the reading approach, pre-tests were administered in different areas of phonics and decoding, fluency and proficiency. The post-tests of beginning sound letter and letter-pairing and sound blending were given to participants after two-week exposure to the reading approach. Then the post-test of word recognition was provided to the

Table 6. Improvement in reading comprehension skill of grade 1 Thai learners in the areas of phonics and decoding and fluency and proficiency (N=35)

| Area | Test | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|------|---------|---------|
| Beginning Sound Letter Recognition | Pre-test | 15.54 | 3.86 | 7.17** | 0.00 |
| | Post-test | 19.26 | 1.22 | | |
| Letter-pairing and Sound blending | Pre-test | 14.46 | 3.66 | 7.41** | 0.00 |
| | Post-test | 19.26 | 1.09 | | |
| Word recognition | Pre-test | 14.11 | 3.80 | 9.01** | 0.00 |
| | Post-test | 18.91 | 1.48 | | |
| Sentence Reading | Pre-test | 16.20 | 3.28 | 10.70** | 0.00 |
| | Post-test | 19.23 | 1.40 | | |

N-number of cases of participants WM-weighted mean SD-standard deviation
** - highly significant at 0.01 level of significance

participants after four weeks of exposure to the reading approach.

Likewise, the inferential statistical analysis of the post-test performances in all areas recorded significant increased as suggested by the p-values of zero reflecting a very high improvement from pre- to post-test at 0.01 level of significance. In effect, the null hypothesis of no significant improvement was rejected.

This finding implies that the grade 1 Thai learners were able to master beginning letter sound, letter-pairing and sound blending, word recognition and sentence reading. They were able to internalize the learning process following the Marungko approach, hence they were able to highly perform in the post-test.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study, it is concluded that the Marungko approach is proven effective in the enhancement of the reading performance and comprehension skills of grade 1 Thai

learners of the Sacred Heart College. The grade 1 Thai learners exposed to the Marungko approach substantially improved their levels of reading performance, harnessed their comprehension skills, phonemic awareness and letter knowledge.

Grounded on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the researcher recommends that (1) teachers should emphasize to the learners the value and love for reading as it hones their academic competencies both in oral and writing, (2) administration may conduct a “*Teaching Reading Seminar-Workshop*” specifically to beginning teachers so that they can be updated with the new trends in teaching reading thereby develop their knowledge and capabilities.

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