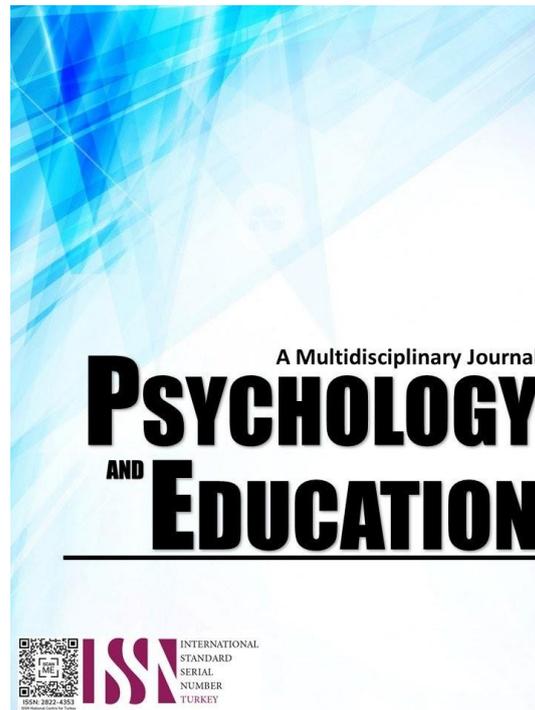


**PROJECT RISE (READING THROUGH INTERACTIVE  
AND STRATEGIC EXERCISES): A READING  
INTERVENTION PROGRAM TO IMPROVE  
THE COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF  
STRUGGLING READERS AT TUHIAN  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL**

2023

Volume: 13

Pages: 889-895

Document ID: 2023PEMJ1217

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8375257

Manuscript Accepted: 2023-22-9

## Project Rise (Reading Through Interactive and Strategic Exercises): A Reading Intervention Program to Improve the Comprehension Skills of Struggling Readers at Tuhian Elementary School

Aizel V. Marciano\*

*For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.*

### Abstract

This study determined the effectiveness of Project RISE in improving the comprehension skills of Grades 5 and 6 struggling readers at Tuhian Elementary School. True experimental research design was utilized in this study. Specifically, pretest posttest control group design was employed to demonstrate causality between the intervention and an outcome. The respondents involved 28 Grades 5 and 6 struggling readers who comprised the control and experimental groups, which were formed through random sampling. In connection, the reading performance of the respondents in both groups was assessed using the standardized passages from Phil-IRI at two points of the experimental study: one was before the treatment (pretest) and the other one was after the treatment (posttest). The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted using weighted means. In connection, a test of normality of data was conducted using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The results provide good evidence that the data are normally distributed. Thus, independent t-test, as a parametric test, was utilized to statistically treat the data. Meanwhile, Lavene's test for equality of variance was employed to test the variances of pre-test scores both in control and experimental groups. The results suggest that there is no difference between the variances of both groups, which means that there is homogeneity before employing Project RISE in the treatment group and teacher-led reading approach in the control group. The study revealed that there was no significant difference between the pretest scores of control and experimental groups in terms of comprehension, which indicate that there was homogeneity before utilizing Project RISE. On the other hand, after the treatment, there was a significant difference between the posttest scores of the two groups. Therefore, there was a marked improvement in the reading performance of the respondents. This demonstrated that the respondents' comprehension skills have improved. The study focused on determining the effectiveness of Project RISE as a reading intervention program to enhance learners' comprehension skills and limited to 28 respondents who comprised the control and experimental groups. Since the findings revealed that Project RISE, as a reading intervention program that provides explicit instruction within mixed-ability cooperative learning groups is effective, it can be used or adopted by other schools to enhance learners' comprehension skills.

**Keywords:** *intervention program, struggling readers, comprehension, project RISE*

### Introduction

Reading is considered as the primary tool to learning. It is a foundation of all academic learning; hence, it plays a crucial role in the learners' academic achievement in school so as in their future lives. In regard, most of all cognitive activities of the learners inside the classroom or even around the community require the ability to read, comprehend, and think. Reading involves sensation, perception, comprehension, application, and integration which are a basic tool for learning. As pupils read, they learn word meanings and acquire knowledge that enable them to read more challenging texts. Moreover, it provides the readers with the opportunity to engage in and practice the kind of thinking that readers do, such as asking questions, setting purposes, and making predictions (Gelzheiser et al., 2019, p. 270).

Written texts are intended as communication between an author and reader. For that to be accomplished, the reader must have constructed meaning with the

composition, grasping ideas and information, analyzing, and evaluating content for accuracy, and making connections with background knowledge and life experiences — including social, cultural, educational, and other demographics — to reach between and beyond lines to detect stated and implied meanings. Understanding (i.e., comprehension) will vary as readers dig for information in a text and synthesize it with personal schema in the process of constructing meaning. Reading is characterized by understanding; although it is labeled in different ways (e.g., comprehension, meaning making), success with this language process requires that one fully comprehends the message expressed, interprets between and beyond the lines of text, and constructs personal meaning with the text (e.g., elaborating and extending). All that it requires makes reading a cognitively complex activity. Initially, it involves decoding words, but reading also requires thinking about messages built with them (Ceprano, 2017). So that, reading proficiency is acknowledged as a major indicator of whether a learner will achieve the

competence needed to achieve academic success.

Meanwhile, the study of Cicerchia (2016) found out that there is a lot going on in reading, from letter and word recognition to understanding meaning at the phrase, sentence, and paragraph level. When a beginner reader encounters vocabulary, they do not know or do not recognize due to inaccurate decoding, they are likely to skip ahead. The more blanks in a line of text, the harder it is to make meaning and the more cognitively challenging and frustrating the reading task becomes. And so, low level comprehension can result when a learner struggles with decoding, has a limited vocabulary, or attempts to read a text that is at too high of a level. The more learners read, the more they encounter unfamiliar terms. Quite often the context in which these new words are found give them all the clues they need to guess at meaning.

In the same line, some important skills to be a better reader include word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition is the act of seeing a word and recognizing its pronunciation immediately and without any conscious effort. If reading words requires conscious, effortful decoding, little attention is left for comprehension of a text to occur. Since reading comprehension is the goal in teaching children to read, a critical early objective is to ensure that they can read words with instant, automatic recognition (Garnett, 2011). In connection, reading comprehension is a critical learning skill for the learners (Clarke et al., 2013), as it is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. In conjunction, the study of Mcpherson (2015) revealed that word recognition and comprehension are interrelated in the sense that when learners read meaningful materials, their understanding of what they are reading would help them decode unfamiliar words. That is why, learners need these skills to successfully accomplish the educational goals and expectations, which are required in the classroom setting.

On the other hand, many learners fail to achieve grade level reading; for, they encounter difficulties mastering the above-mentioned reading skills. They cannot perform reading at the level expected of their grade, resulting in anxiety and depression throughout their schooling. They are usually stereotyped as unsuccessful throughout their formal education. Such results in adoption problems in their classes (Bender, 2012). In regard, Claessen et al. (2020) concurred that reading difficulties are present in the world. The status of majority of learners' reading performance is far from those outlined by Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). As a matter of fact, in the global context, South African learners' reading levels

have been under scrutiny due to their poor performance in comparison with their counterparts in other countries (Rule & Land, 2017; Spaul, 2016; Willenberg, 2018). Meanwhile, in the national context, the results from PISA 2018 revealed that reading is among the areas that learners in the Philippines scored lower than those in majority of the countries and economies that participated in PISA 2018. The country's average reading score was 340 score points, on a par with that of the Dominican Republic. In connection, the Philippines shared a significant rate of low performers among all PISA participating countries. That is, 80% of the Filipino learners did not reach the minimum level of proficiency in reading. Their poor scores in English, Mathematics, and Science are attributed to the learners' lack of ability in basic reading and comprehension. This suggests that the problem of non-reading lies at the heart of why the Philippines is so uncompetitive in the world economy and why so many of our people continue to live in poverty or barely escape it.

In regard to the local context, based on the researcher's experiences, majority of the learners encounter difficulties following simple instructions. More often, they cannot decode the printed materials, which adversely affects their academic performance. This means that they have low level reading skills; for, they cannot comprehend the meaning of the simple words, or they do not even recognize the words. In connection, the researcher's analysis of the results of Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) pre-test in English for the SY 2022-2023 revealed that majority of Grades 5 and 6 learners' reading performance in terms of comprehension was below the reading competency standard.

Accounting to this problem, the study conducted by Delfin (2017) found out that there are different ways that can be effective remedies for reading difficulties. In regard, the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched the Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs Initiatives), in order to intensify the advocacy for reading and by pledging commitment to make every learner a reader at his/her grade level. The learners reading difficulties in reading and learning could serve as a basis for a strategy-based program to be designed for them to have better reading skills. Hence, this study was conducted, which primarily aimed to determine the effectiveness of Project RISE, as a reading intervention program suited to enhance struggling readers' reading performance in terms of word recognition and comprehension. Further, Project RISE is a multiple strategy program intended to enhance struggling readers' reading performance in



terms of word recognition and comprehension. It provides explicit instruction to learners using interactive and strategic strategies as well as facilitates peer-mediated learning within cooperative learning groups, which characterized by a combination of three effective techniques in reading instructions namely interactive reading, reciprocal teaching, and strategic reading.

### Research Questions

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of Project RISE in enhancing the reading performance of Grades 5 and 6 struggling readers at Tuhian Elementary School. Specifically, this sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the reading performance of the respondents both in control and experimental groups before and after the implementation of Project RISE in terms of word recognition and comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference in the mean scores between the control and experimental groups before the implementation of Project RISE in terms of comprehension?
3. Is there a significant difference in the mean scores between the control and experimental groups after the implementation of Project RISE in terms of word recognition and comprehension?
4. Based on the results of the study, what implications on providing reading intervention can be derived?

### Literature Review

#### Components of the Program

Project RISE is a multiple strategy program intended to enhance struggling readers' reading performance in terms of word recognition and comprehension. It provides explicit instruction to learners using interactive and strategic strategies as well as facilitates peer-mediated learning within cooperative learning groups, which characterized by a combination of three effective techniques in reading instructions namely interactive reading, reciprocal teaching, and strategic reading.

**Interactive Reading.** Interactive reading is an engaging instructional activity, which incorporates teaching by engaging and guiding learners on appropriate strategies for competency in reading fluency and comprehension (Merga, 2017). Through interactive practices, the teacher is able to understand how individual learner interrelates though processes with

information in the text. In essence, the process of reading entails learners dynamically receiving and interpreting information by engaging existing background knowledge, information in the text and context of reading to be successful in arriving at the conveyed meaning of a text. However, Maingi (2015) observed learner's failure to achieve reading skills was a result of underutilizing reading strategies. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), in a study on strategies for improving reading skills, affirmed that learners require an interactive practice to come up with meaningful depiction of literary texts.

Kibui (2012) acknowledged that interactive reading employs progressive discourse interaction where quick and natural access to word recognition as well as communication skills is experienced for successful construction of word meaning. This rapid interaction enables learners to be regarded fluent readers and experts in interpretation skills. However, Kabita (2015) observed that teachers did not have tangible basis for instructing reading. On the other hand, Yusuf (2015) observed significant outcome on learner achievement in reading comprehension after engaging in interactive reading. Therefore, due to the essential role played by reading on academic success, learners require reading approach that is interactive through read aloud, repeated, shared, and guided reading to interpret and infer meaning at the same time recognize and decode words.

**Reciprocal Teaching.** Reciprocal teaching is an instructional method based on modeling and guided practice. It is a dialogue taking place between the teacher and learners that results in learning how to construct meaning when they are placed in a must-read situation. It provides an environment in which learners, with the assistance of the teacher or more knowledgeable peers, become increasingly proficient at applying comprehension strategies while reading text passages. In other words, reciprocal teaching is an instructional style that was originally developed for struggling readers. It is in a category called interactive learning, a style in which teachers and learners take turns sharing information and leading discussion (Salehi & Vafakhah et al., 2013).

In connection, Al-Sarayreh (2013) states that reciprocal teaching method helps in developing thinking skills through the training of the four comprehension strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. Predicting involves combining the learners' prior knowledge and new knowledge or information. Questioning involves identification of information, themes, and ideas that

are important to warrant further consideration. In this case, questioning is used to monitor and evaluate the construction of meaning. Clarifying identifies the unclear, difficult, or unfamiliar aspects of a text. These aspects may include sentence or passage structure, unfamiliar vocabulary, unclear references, or obscure concepts. Summarizing is the process of identifying the important information, themes, and ideas within the text and integrating them into a clear and concise statement that communicates the essential meaning. The reading intervention program which focuses on the application of educational video and reciprocal teaching would be more competent when it is strategically planned.

**Strategic Reading.** Reading is strategic because several skills and processes are needed on the part of the reader to organize and mentally summarize information, monitor and repair comprehension breakdowns, and match comprehension output to the goals of the reader. Researchers dealing with reading instruction acknowledge the centrality of strategy use and the development of strategic reader for comprehension. Strategic readers know a set of effective strategies and utilize them without continuously needing to move to a level of conscious problem solving (Grabe, 2009). As such, strategic reading instruction is the actual execution of reading strategies to reach the goal of reading comprehension.

## Methodology

### Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

This study utilized true experimental research design in order to demonstrate causality between the intervention and an outcome. Specifically, pretest posttest control group design was employed in order to determine the effectiveness of the treatment in enhancing the comprehension skills of the respondents. Two groups were the samples of the study, which designated as control and experimental. They were observed at two points of experimentation: one was before the treatment (pretest) and the other one was after the treatment (posttest). Traditional way of teaching reading that primarily involved teacher-led reading approach was implemented in the control group. Conversely, the treatment group experienced the utilization of Project RISE in reading instruction.

The study was conducted at Tuhian Elementary School where the researcher is currently teaching. This research locale was chosen because of the alarming

results of the reading assessment conducted using Phil-IRI pre-test in English for the SY 2022-2023. The respondents involved 28 randomly selected Grades 5 and 6 learners. The researcher utilized standardized passages from Phil-IRI to determine the individual learner's reading performance in terms comprehension in both control and experimental groups. In the chosen passages, 20 questions with varying difficulty were used in the pretest and posttest. They were categorized as literal, interpretive, critical, and applied to measure the respondents' comprehension.

### Data Collection

The data collection procedure was divided into three parts of the experimental study. First, the pretest was given to both groups. The respondents were asked to read the standardized passages from the Phil-IRI. Then, they were asked to answer 20 questions. It was done in order to find out the pretest scores as well as for the researcher to verify that there was no significant difference between the groups before the implementation of the program. The second part of the procedure was the utilization of Project RISE in the treatment group and a teacher-led reading approach in the control group. Finally, using the same reading tool, the respondents took the posttest in order to measure their reading achievement after the treatment was applied.

The data gathered were analyzed and interpreted using weighted mean. In connection, a test of normality of data was conducted using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. Since the computed p-values ( $p=0.45>0.05$ ), ( $p=0.29>0.05$ ), ( $p=0.26>0.05$ ), ( $p=0.29>0.05$ ) are greater than 0.05, these provide a good evidence that the data are normally distributed. This suggest that independent t-test, as a parametric test, can be utilized to statistically treat the gata. Meanwhile, Lavene's test for equality of variance was employed to test the variances of pre-test scores both in control and experimental groups. In regard, based on the computed data, the p-value ( $p=0.90>0.05$ ) is greater than 0.05. This suggests that there is no significant difference between the variances of the control and experimental group, which means that there is homogeneity of performance before employing Project RISE in the treatment group and teacher-led reading approach in the control group.

### Ethical Issues

The researcher first asked the permission of the school head that the action research will be conducted. Afterwards, the researcher informed the parents of the



respondents who will be the respondents of this study. In order to safeguard the rights of the respondents, this research work observed certain measures. First, informed consent was required. Second, this study guaranteed confidentiality. All the gathered data were treated with utmost secrecy and will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Reading Performance of the Respondents Before and After the Implementation of Project RISE in terms of Comprehension*

Group	Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	Pretest	9.64	1.15
	Posttest	16.29	1.07
Experimental	Pretest	9.93	1.21
	Posttest	18.29	1.44

The reading performance of the respondents in control and experimental groups before and after the implementation of Project RISE in terms of comprehension is presented in Table 1. As shown, based on the results of the posttest, there is a mean gain of 6.65 in the control group and 8.36 in the experimental group. However, the standard deviation of scores were reduced by 0.8 and 0.23 respectively. The data demonstrate a positive effect of Project RISE in enhancing the comprehension skills of the respondents. Likewise, the teacher-lead reading approach utilized in the control group also improved learners' reading achievement. However, as shown in the table, the use of Project RISE is better than the traditional way of reading instruction.

The findings can be supported by the statement of Clarke et al. (2013) that reading programs, in general, are organized and systematic as it provides whatever means are necessary for learners to learn to read as for their capacities enable them. As an instructional program, it has an overall goal of reading instruction to help pupils become able and diversified readers, as their capabilities, the available facilities, and the instructional program permit. It is more effective to intervene early with struggling readers than it is to try to catch them after they have experienced long-term reading failure. Thus, school must provide appropriate, timely, intensive, and systematic intervention for those learners who need it.

Table 2. *Significant Difference Between Control and Experimental Groups Before the Implementation of Project RISE in Terms of Comprehension*

GROUPS	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	critical value	p-value	Decision	Impression at a 05 level of significance
Control	9.64	1.15	23	-0.89	2.07	0.38	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Experimental	9.93	1.21						

Presented in Table 2 is the significant difference between the pretest scores of the control and experimental groups in terms of comprehension before the implementation of Project RISE. As illustrated, the computed t-value of -0.89 is lesser than the critical value of 2.07. This suggests that the null hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted, which means that there is no significant difference between the pretest scores of both groups. In connection, the results concurs that there is homogeneity before utilizing the treatment, which means that at the start of the experimentation, both groups have the same level of reading performance in terms of comprehension.

Table 3. *Significant Difference Between Control and Experimental Groups After the Implementation of Project RISE in Terms of Comprehension*

GROUPS	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t-value	critical value	p-value	Decision	Impression at a 05 level of significance
Control	16.29	1.07	23	-3.89	2.06	0.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Experimental	18.29	1.44						

Discloses in Table 3 is the significant difference between the post-test scores of the control and experimental groups in terms of comprehension after the implementation of Project RISE. As shown, the computed t-value is greater than the critical value of 2.07. The value falls under the area of rejection. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the posttest scores of both groups. In regard, the results imply that the use of Project RISE in the treatment group is helpful in enhancing the respondents' reading comprehension skills. Meanwhile, the teacher-led reading approach utilized in the control group also improved the respondents' reading achievement.

The results can be supported by the study of Talain (2021), which revealed that after the implementation of the treatment, there was a significant difference between the progress of control and experimental

groups regarding word recognition and comprehension. The results demonstrate a positive effect of Project EARES on addressing the difficulties in reading skills. Moreover, the results implied that the use of the intervention program in the treatment group is more effective than the use of teacher-led reading approach, which was utilized in the control group.

Moreover, the results are closely related to the findings of the study conducted by McCown (2013), which revealed the impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) as an intervention tool on reading comprehension for heterogeneous group of fourth grade learners. In comparison to a control group, learners in the CSR classrooms made greater gains on the Gates- MacGinitie Reading Test, particularly, the low- achieving learners. study undertaken by personal as well as group evaluation.

In the same light, the study undertaken by Gani et al. (2016), found out that the learners who were taught reading using CSR achieved better comprehension than those who were taught using the non-CSR approach. The results of the questionnaire further showed that more than 80 percent of the learners gave vastly positive responses in relation to CSR classroom implementation.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: (1) Before the implementation of the intervention program, the reading performance of the respondents in both groups matches. On the other hand, after the implementation of Project RISE, there was a marked improvement in both groups, which means that the comprehension skills of the respondents have improved. (2) Before the implementation of Project RISE as a reading intervention program, there was a homogeneity between the reading performance of the respondents in the control and experimental groups in terms of comprehension. (3) After the implementation of Project RISE, the reading performance of the respondents in the experimental group in terms of comprehension who received reading instruction with the use of Project RISE as an intervention program demonstrate better improvement than the respondents in the control group who were taught using the traditional method. (4) The utilization of Project RISE as a reading intervention program that provides explicit instruction in metacognitive strategy within mixed-ability cooperative learning group is an effective tool in enhancing learners' comprehension skills, which can result to the improvement of

reading performance.

In light of the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are offered: (1) Learners who experience difficulties in mastering comprehension skills must be provided with an intervention program, which is timely, appropriate, organized, and systematic. (2) Teachers may consider the utilization of Project RISE as an intervention program in order to improve learners' reading performance in terms of comprehension. (3) School administrators must encourage the utilization of reading intervention program, which is intensive and parallel to the needs of the learners who encounter difficulties in mastering reading skills to achieve reading competency standards (4) Future researchers may examine which elements of Project RISE are more beneficial and whether there are elements that can be enhanced in ways to demonstrate more effective impact for all learners.

## References

- Al- Sarayreh, A. M. (2013). Effective use of reciprocal teaching strategy in the development of academic achievement and skill of solving problems in geography for sixth-grade female student in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 5(4), 424-433.
- Ceprano, M. (2017). Reading with understanding: A global expectation. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 9(1), 4. <https://scholar.google.com>.
- Cicerchia, M. (2016). The common reading problem for students. <http://www.readandspell.com/us/common-reading-problem> s.
- Clarke, P. J., Truelove, E., Hulme, C., & Snowling, M. (2013). *Developing reading comprehension*. Wiley- Blackwell.
- Claessen, M., Dzidic, P., Boyes, M., Badcock, N., Nayton, M., & Leitao, S. (2020). Educators' perceptions of the impact of reading difficulties for young people. *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, 25, 51-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404158.2020.1734952>
- Delfin, D. A. (2017). Cebuano and English oral reading fluency among beginning readers. *International Journal of Linguistics and Education*, 2(1), 1-5. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ij/e>.
- Garnet, K. (2015). *Fluency in learning to read: Conceptions, misconceptions, learning disabilities, and instructional skills*. Brookes Publishing.
- Gilakjani, A.P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2016). How can students improve their reading comprehension skills? *Journal of Studies in Education*, 229-240.
- Grabe, N. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gelzheiser, L. M., Scanlon, D. M., Flynn, L. H., & Connors, P.



- (2019). Comprehensive reading intervention in Grades 3-8. The Guilford Press. 123-135. <https://www.horizons.literacyon.com>.
- Kabita, D.N. (2015). Instructional strategies used to enhance reading comprehension among primary school pupils: A study of Starehe Sub-County [Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, Moi University].
- Kibui, A.W. (2012). Reading and comprehension in the African context: A cognitive enquiry. Zapf Chancery Publishers.
- Mcperson, K. (2015). The importance of word recognition in improving literacy. <https://medium.com/@22committed/the-importance-of-word-recognition>.
- Merga, M. (2017). Interactive reading opportunities beyond the early years: What educators need to consider. Australian Journal of Education, 61(3), 328–343.
- Rule, P. & Land, S., 2017, 'Finding the plot in South African reading education'. Reading & Writing 8(1), 121 <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v8i1.121>
- Salehi, M., & Vfakhah, S. (2013). A comparative study of reciprocal teaching only (RTO) and explicit teaching of strategies before reciprocal teaching (ET-RT) on reading comprehension of EFL learners. Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Science. 5(12), 123-135. <https://www.horizons.literacyon.com>.
- Spaull, N., 2016, 'Disentangling the language effect in South African schools: Measuring the impact of "language of assessment" in grade 3 literacy and numeracy'. South African Journal of Childhood Education, 6(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v6i1.475>
- Talain, A., A. (2021). Project Educational Video-Assisted Reciprocal and Strategic Reading (Eares): An intervention program to address difficulties in word recognition and comprehension among Grade 6 pupils. IOER Multidisciplinary Research Journal, 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5594710>
- Willenberg, I. (2018). South Africa's reading crisis: Focus on the root cause, not the peripherals. [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)

### Affiliations and Corresponding Information

**Aizel V. Marciano**

Cutcutan Elementary School

Department of Education – Philippines