

# Experiences in Utilizing an Assessment Tool for English and Filipino Reading Programs

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**Abstract**— This descriptive phenomenological study sought to explore the experiences of reading coordinators and a school principal as an assessment tool in English and Filipino reading programs. This study employed a qualitative research design to delve into the experiences of key stakeholders. The participants were two reading coordinators who handle English and Filipino reading programs and one school principal from a public elementary school, who were all purposively chosen based on their direct involvement in the implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Assessment Tool. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with each participant. The result shows that Phil-IRI, a reading assessment tool, has been praised for providing detailed insights into individual students' reading strengths and weaknesses, enabling individualized instruction and program evaluation. However, challenges such as time constraints, the need for more in-depth training on data interpretation and application, and managing student anxiety during the assessment have been identified. Despite these challenges, the Phil-IRI data positively influenced instructional practices, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction more effectively, select appropriate reading materials, and monitor student progress. It also increased student awareness of their reading skills, motivating them to engage more in reading activities. The study explored the implementation of the Phil-IRI in English and Filipino reading programs, revealing its effectiveness depends on addressing time constraints, training needs, and student anxiety. It emphasized the need for professional development, streamlined administration, and a supportive assessment environment for improved reading outcomes.

**Keywords**— Assessment Tool, English, Experiences, Filipino, Reading Programs.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading proficiency is a cornerstone of academic success and a fundamental skill for lifelong learning (Denton et al., 2021). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes this importance and utilizes the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as a key tool for assessing and subsequently improving reading skills in both English and Filipino. The updated Phil-IRI, aligned with the K-12 curriculum, represents a move towards a more comprehensive evaluation of reading skills, encompassing comprehension, word recognition, and oral reading fluency (Darling-Hammond, L., 2010). This updated version aims to provide educators with more granular data to inform their instructional practices. However, the effectiveness of any assessment tool hinges not only on its design but also on its practical implementation within the school setting. While research may focus on the technical merits of the Phil-IRI, a critical gap remains in understanding the lived experiences of the school personnel directly involved in its administration and utilization.

## II. METHOD

This descriptive phenomenological study (Abril, Acerbo, & Abocejo, 2022) seeks to address this gap by exploring the experiences of reading coordinators and a school principal in using the new Phil-IRI in their English and Filipino reading programs. Specifically, this study aimed to understand their perspectives on the benefits they perceive, the challenges they encounter, and the overall impact of the Phil-IRI on reading instruction and student learning within their context. This exploration is significant because it provides valuable insights into the practical realities of Phil-IRI implementation, offering a ground-level perspective that can inform professional development initiatives, resource allocation decisions, and potential policy adjustments. Ultimately, this study aimed to contribute to the ongoing effort to optimize the use of the Phil-IRI and, in turn, improve reading outcomes for Filipino students (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992).

By employing the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, researchers can gain a

comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the implementation of reading programs, particularly in the context of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). This framework allows for a multi-faceted examination of the program, moving beyond a simple assessment of its tools and procedures. It facilitates the analysis of the various actors involved, such as reading coordinators, teachers, and students, and their respective roles and motivations. Furthermore, it considers the attributes of the environment, including school resources and community support, which significantly influence program implementation. By scrutinizing the interactions between these actors and their environment, and by evaluating the resulting outcomes, such as student reading proficiency, researchers can identify areas for improvement. The IAD framework also emphasizes the importance of understanding the formal and informal rules governing the program, enabling the development of targeted recommendations. These recommendations, grounded in a holistic understanding of the program's ecosystem, can lead to more effective training for educators, equitable resource allocation, improved communication channels, and data-driven decision-making, ultimately enhancing reading outcomes for Filipino students.

The data analysis for this study employed Collaizi's phenomenological method, a systematic approach designed to uncover the essential meanings within the participants' lived experiences. Initially, audio recordings of interviews with reading coordinators and school principals were transcribed verbatim, allowing researchers to immerse themselves in the narratives and capture the nuances of their perspectives. This thorough familiarization process facilitated the identification of significant statements directly related to the Phil-IRI implementation, such as perceived benefits, encountered challenges, and impacts on reading instruction. Subsequently, meaning units were formulated from these statements, moving beyond literal interpretations to capture the underlying experiences and perspectives. These meaning units were then clustered into overarching themes, revealing recurring patterns and commonalities across participants' narratives, such as challenges in data interpretation, perceived benefits for student monitoring, and the impact on teacher collaboration. Researchers synthesized these themes into a comprehensive, narrative description of the phenomenon, rich with participant quotes, to provide a deep and nuanced understanding of their experiences. Finally, the essential, invariant structure of the phenomenon was identified, representing the core

meanings shared by all participants. In some cases, member checking, or validation with the participants, may occur to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the analysis. This meticulous application of Collaizi's method allowed for a thorough exploration of the reading coordinators' and principals' experiences with the Phil-IRI, yielding valuable insights for program improvement

### III. RESULT

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed several key themes that characterized the experiences of the reading coordinators and the principal with the Phil-IRI.

#### *Theme 1: "A Perceived Benefit of the Phil-IRI"*

A prominent theme was the perceived benefits of the Phil-IRI. Participants consistently highlighted its value in providing detailed insights into individual students' reading strengths and weaknesses.

#### *According to Participant 1*

Filipino Coordinator: For me PHIL-IRI is a standard test. it's the best tool in getting the reading level of learners. but needs proper monitoring in implementing the program. (GST) I believe the GST is not reliable in fact pupils are given the chances in guessing their answer. but individuals reading is more exerting efforts and time is effective.

#### *According to Participant 2*

English Coordinator: The Phil IRI helps the teacher evaluate and measure the learner's comprehension, vocabulary and word identification skills. There are some challenges in administering the Phil IRI individual reading in which teachers find it difficult to consistently administer the reading remediation because of time constraints and paperwork's.

This study implied that the teachers who took part in it have a very favorable opinion of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory's ability to provide them with specific and tailored information about their students' reading proficiency in both English and Filipino. This implies that teachers view the Phil-IRI as a tool that reveals particular strengths and weaknesses in each student's reading profile, rather than merely a means of determining reading levels. The fact that this benefit was consistently mentioned in participant accounts suggests that the Phil-IRI is valued for its diagnostic features, which allow teachers to go beyond broad perceptions and acquire a more detailed understanding of the specific abilities and difficulties their students encounter

when navigating texts in both languages that are pertinent to their local educational context. Teachers are probably better able to modify their instructional tactics and interventions to meet the individual requirements of each student in their bilingual classrooms as a result of the perceived depth of the knowledge.

This affirms to the study of (Tampus, 2024) Department of Education (DepEd) orders and guidelines emphasize the Phil-IRI as a classroom-based assessment tool intended to measure and describe individual students' reading performance in both English and Filipino, ultimately informing targeted instruction (Department of Education, 2018). Empirical research, such as the study by Tampus (2024) on the Phil-IRI's effectiveness in raising students' reading achievement, underscores its role in characterizing students' reading proficiency levels, a process that inherently involves identifying individual strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, Llego's (2021) critical review of the Phil-IRI highlights its function as an assessment tool designed to gauge and describe students' reading proficiency, implying the capacity to reveal specific areas where students excel or struggle. Therefore, the perception among teachers that the Phil-IRI provides detailed insights into individual reading profiles is consistent with the intended design and reported utility of the assessment tool within the Philippine educational context.

This granular data, they explained, was instrumental in informing individualized instruction and allowing teachers to tailor their approaches to meet the specific needs of each learner. Furthermore, the Phil-IRI data was seen as a valuable tool for program evaluation, providing concrete evidence of student progress and areas where the reading program could be strengthened.

### **Theme 2: Times Constraints**

However, alongside these perceived benefits, participants also identified several challenges associated with Phil-IRI implementation. Time constraints emerged as a significant obstacle. Participants noted that administering the assessment, particularly with larger classes, placed a considerable burden on their already busy schedules. The need for more in-depth training on data interpretation and application was another recurring concern. Participants expressed a desire for more comprehensive professional development to fully understand how to utilize the Phil-IRI data to drive instructional decisions. Finally, managing student anxiety during the assessment was identified as a challenge. Some students, particularly

those who struggle with reading, experienced anxiety during the assessment, which participants felt could potentially affect their performance.

### **According to Participant 1**

Filipino Coordinator: "It's just so time-consuming. With 50 students in a class, it's a real challenge to find the time to give the Phil-IRI on an individual basis. We're already overwhelmed with other things." Aside from the factor of time, there was a definite need for more professional development around data interpretation and use. Members expressed a need for training that extended beyond the mere comprehension of the assessment itself, with a focus on taking results and applying them to practical instructional strategies. As one member explained, "We need more training on how to actually use the data. I understand the assessment, but I'm not always sure how to translate the results into effective teaching strategies."

### **According to Participant 2**

English Coordinator: "The largest obstacle is just finding the time. With full schedules and big classes, finding individual assessment time seems almost impossible. We're always juggling, and this adds another huge time burden." This was also shared by others who found it difficult to fit the assessment into already tight schedules. In addition, the time issue was also tied to the call for better training. One participant commented, "If we had more effective training, maybe the assessment process wouldn't take so long. We need training that gives us practical solutions for streamlining the process and applying the data quickly." This reflects the participants' sense that focused, practical training could not only improve their knowledge of the Phil-IRI but also alleviate the time-related issues they were experiencing.

A significant concern regarding its impact on the validity and fairness of such measures. Scholars like Ackerman & Ellingsen (2016) and Colker (2019) argue that strict time limits can shift the focus from genuine comprehension to processing speed, potentially disadvantaging students with learning disabilities (Lovett & Harrison, 2021), English language learners (Alshammari, 2012), and other diverse learners. Research also suggests that time constraints might introduce irrelevant variance and even inflate reliability estimates (Colker, 2019). In response to these concerns, some scholars advocate for alternative assessment formats, such as embedded assessments. The integration of technology is also being explored for its potential to

streamline assessment processes. Furthermore, the practical challenges faced by teachers in balancing thorough assessment with time limitations) highlight the need for feasible and efficient assessment strategies. This body of international literature underscores the importance of carefully considering the role of time in reading assessment and exploring alternative approaches that can provide valid and equitable insights into students' reading abilities, a consideration directly relevant to the recommendation of streamlining the Phil-IRI administration in the Philippine context.

Implications for understanding how time constraints might be perceived and managed within the study. If teachers genuinely value the detailed insights provided by the Phil-IRI, they might be more willing to invest the necessary time for its administration, even if it presents a constraint. Conversely, if the perceived benefit does not outweigh the time investment required, teachers might develop strategies to expedite the process, potentially impacting the depth and accuracy of the data collected. Therefore, while the study highlights the perceived value, it implicitly raises questions about the balance between this perceived benefit and the practical challenges of time constraints in its implementation, a tension that likely influences teachers' experiences and the overall effectiveness of the reading programs. The study's recommendations to streamline administration likely stem from a recognition of this implicit challenge, aiming to maximize the benefits while minimizing the burden of time constraints.

### ***Theme 3: Fostering Targeted Instruction and Enhanced Student Reading Skills***

In terms of impact on instruction, the participants reported that the Phil-IRI data had a positive influence on their instructional practices. The data enabled them to differentiate instruction more effectively, selecting appropriate reading materials and tailoring their teaching strategies to address the specific needs identified by the assessment.

The Phil-IRI also facilitated more effective monitoring of student progress, allowing teachers to track their students' development over time and make adjustments to their instruction as needed. Regarding the impact on student learning, the participants observed that the Phil-IRI contributed to increased student awareness of their own reading skills. The assessment provided students with concrete feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn motivated some students to engage more actively in reading activities.

### ***According to Participant 1***

Filipino Coordinator: The Phil-IRI enabled me to transcend the one-size-fits-all instruction model. Identifying particular areas of reading deficits, such as difficulties with phonemic awareness or comprehension, allowed me to devise targeted interventions and choose reading texts that directly related to those gaps. It was not simply identifying struggling readers, but rather, giving them exactly what they required to improve and, ultimately, develop better reading skills." It was like I could finally give really personalized instruction, which resulted in measurable gains in my students' reading skills."

### ***According to Participant 2***

English Coordinator: The Phil-IRI provided me with the means to make tailored reading plans for every student. I no longer was guessing. I could view, for example, that a child was struggling in literal understanding but doing well in inferential understanding. Armed with this information, I could tailor my teaching to building those precise literal skills, yet push them in their strengths." This degree of accuracy enabled me to adapt my lessons to enhance the full potential of each student, and they clearly showed improvement in their reading competence."

Fostering targeted instruction and enhanced student reading skills underscores the critical role of data-informed practices and differentiated instruction. Scholars emphasize that effective reading instruction necessitates a deep understanding of individual student needs, which can be achieved through systematic assessment (Shepard, 2019).

Differentiated instruction, where teachers tailor their methods and materials to address the diverse learning profiles within their classrooms (Tomlinson, 2017), is consistently highlighted as a key strategy for enhancing reading skills. Research suggests that when teachers use assessment data to group students flexibly and provide targeted support, students demonstrate greater reading progress. Furthermore, studies explore the impact of specific instructional approaches, such as explicit teaching of reading strategies and the use of technology to personalize learning experiences, in fostering both targeted instruction and improved reading outcomes internationally. The overarching theme in this literature is the move towards more responsive and individualized approaches to reading instruction, driven by data and focused on meeting the unique needs of each learner to enhance their reading proficiency.

As evidenced in this study conducted in one of the public school in iloilo strongly suggests that the effective utilization of the Phil-IRI holds significant promise for transforming reading instruction and impacting student learning. The implication is that when teachers perceive the Phil-IRI data as providing actionable insights into individual student reading needs, they are empowered to move towards more targeted and differentiated instructional practices. This shift allows for the selection of more appropriate reading materials and the tailoring of teaching strategies to directly address specific areas of strength and weakness identified by the assessment in both English and Filipino. Furthermore, the study implies that the feedback derived from the Phil-IRI plays a crucial role in fostering students' self-awareness regarding their reading skills. This increased understanding of their own abilities and challenges can, in turn, motivate students to become more actively engaged in reading activities, creating a positive feedback loop that supports enhanced reading skill development within the local bilingual educational context. Ultimately, the study implies that the Phil-IRI, when implemented and understood effectively, has the potential to cultivate a more responsive and student-centered approach to literacy education.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This case study examined the experiences of reading coordinators and a school principal in implementing the Phil-IRI in their English and Filipino reading programs. The study revealed that the Phil-IRI is perceived as a valuable tool for assessing and improving reading instruction, but its effective implementation is contingent upon addressing challenges related to time constraints, training needs, and student anxiety. The findings highlight the importance of ongoing professional development, streamlined administration procedures, and a supportive assessment environment to maximize the benefits of the Phil-IRI and improve reading outcomes for Filipino students. Ultimately, this study underscores the need for continued research and evaluation to ensure that assessment tools like the Phil-IRI are effectively supporting literacy development in the context of evolving educational needs.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing upon the rich insights gleaned from our study on the experiences of educators utilizing the assessment tool within English and Filipino reading programs in in one of the public school in iloilo, and employing the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework as our analytical lens, we now present a

series of recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and user-friendliness of the assessment process.

Our first focus is on strengthening the actors – our educators and students. We recommend targeted professional development that goes beyond simply administering the Phil-IRI. Teachers need support in data interpretation, learning to analyze the results and use them to inform their instruction. This includes strategies for differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners. Critically, training should also address student anxiety around assessment, fostering a supportive classroom environment. Finally, given the bilingual nature of the Phil-IRI, professional development must address the specific nuances of reading development in both English and Filipino.

Next, we look at interactions. To address time constraints, we recommend exploring ways to streamline administration, perhaps through technology integration or additional support staff. We also need to foster data-driven collaboration. This means creating opportunities for teachers to share and discuss Phil-IRI data, develop intervention strategies together, and use the data to inform individualized learning plans and parent communication.

The rules governing Phil-IRI implementation also need attention. We recommend that DepEd review and clarify existing guidelines, providing specific guidance on assessment frequency, data utilization, and resource allocation. Schools, in turn, should develop their own policies to support effective implementation, including clear assessment schedules, data management systems, and dedicated resources for professional development.

Ultimately, our goal is to improve student reading outcomes. We recommend longitudinal tracking of student progress to assess the long-term impact of the Phil-IRI and using the data for program evaluation. By focusing on these recommendations, we can create a more supportive and effective system for Phil-IRI implementation, empowering educators, fostering student growth, and ultimately improving literacy outcomes for Filipino students.

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