

IMPROVING READING FLUENCY AND AUTOMATICITY THROUGH A COLOR-CODED VOWEL SOUND STRATEGY

by:

Ricardo Jr. G. Vidal

Teacher II, Antonio G. Llamas Elementary School

Reading fluency and automaticity are essential skills for developing readers, as they enable accurate, rapid, and expressive reading. Fluency not only supports comprehension but also enhances a student's confidence and overall enjoyment of reading. However, many struggling readers face challenges in decoding, particularly when it comes to recognizing and pronouncing vowel sounds, which can be inconsistent and confusing in the English language. A promising approach to address this issue is the use of a color-coded vowel sound strategy. This technique assigns specific colors to different vowel sounds, helping students identify and decode words more easily and efficiently.

The Official Website of DepED Division of Bataan

Reading proficiency in the Philippines remains a critical concern in education. Many high school graduates enter the workforce or pursue college education lacking sufficient reading skills. The situation is even more alarming in elementary education, where some Grade 3 students still read at a Grade 1 or even kindergarten level. A large percentage of students fall into the frustration level of reading, with only a small number classified as independent readers.

Reading difficulties are widespread and often linked to long-term poor academic performance. Research indicates that issues with reading skills begin early in a child's development, and if not addressed promptly, they become increasingly difficult to resolve. These challenges typically involve weaknesses in areas such as word lists, passage reading, miscue analysis, word recognition, and decoding. Additionally, the inability to efficiently identify words can significantly hinder comprehension.

The Philippines had a high literacy rate of 99.27 percent in 2021, which is impressive. However, in 2022, the World Bank classified 90 percent of Filipino children aged 10 as "learning poor," which means they could not read and comprehend a basic paragraph at that age. According to the World Bank, "learning poverty" is defined as the inability to read and grasp fundamental information by the age of ten. This raises an important concern: simply teaching core abilities like reading, writing, and mathematics is insufficient; students must also learn to understand what they read.

Implementing targeted interventions to address pupils' reading difficulties is crucial. Effective strategies include explicitly teaching vocabulary, fostering independent word-learning skills such as morphological analysis, increasing opportunities for students to use new words in discussions and writing, and creating a stimulating, language-rich environment with vibrant reading materials (Elleman, Oslund, Griffin,. Additionally, research by Bo Chang and Renmeiu (2022) highlights the significant role of color in enhancing learning. Using colors can capture students' attention, boost motivation, and facilitate easier comprehension.

In this strategy, each vowel sound or vowel team is assigned a specific color. For example, short vowels might be marked in red, long vowels in blue, and vowel combinations like diphthongs could be highlighted in green or other colors. When students encounter these words in reading exercises or practice materials, the color cues act as a guide, helping them to quickly and accurately decode the word. This reduces the cognitive load associated with decoding unfamiliar words, allowing students to focus more on comprehension and less on figuring out individual sounds. As a result, they begin to read with greater speed and accuracy, essential components of fluency.

The benefits of the color-coded vowel sound strategy are significant. First, it enhances decoding skills by providing a clear and consistent way to differentiate between various vowel sounds, making it easier for students to recognize patterns in words. Second, it improves reading fluency by allowing students to process words more

automatically, without frequent pauses to decode unfamiliar words. Third, it builds confidence, as students experience success in reading more smoothly and independently. Finally, the strategy promotes multisensory learning by engaging visual, cognitive, and kinesthetic pathways, which reinforces learning and retention.

In conclusion, the color-coded vowel sound strategy is an effective tool for improving reading fluency and automaticity, particularly for struggling readers. By simplifying the often-complex task of decoding vowel sounds through visual cues, this approach not only enhances reading skills but also fosters confidence and enjoyment in reading.

References:

Estremera, I. (2020). Factors Affecting the Reading Comprehension of Grade Six Pupils in the

City Division of Sorsogon, Philippines as Basis for the Development of Instructional Material. Retrieved on January 7, 2020

Hall B. (2019). Home reading environment and brain activation in preschool children listening to stories.

Pavilario, M. C. (2020). Contextual Variables Affecting Frustration Level in Reading: An Integral Inquiry. *International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences*, 12(5), 639-645.

Lu B.J, (2024). Literacy important for PH development.

Chang, B. et.al (2018). "The Impact of Colors on Learning,"