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Foundational Reading Skills and Reading Comprehension of Early-Grade Learners as a Basis for a School-Based Reading Intervention Program

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the foundational reading skills and reading comprehension of early-grade learners as a basis for developing a contextualized School-Based Reading Intervention Program. It employed a descriptive-correlational research design at Liburon Elementary School during School Year 2026–2027. Purposive sampling was utilized in selecting the participating sections, involving 220 learners from kindergarten to Grade Three and 12 teacher-raters. Data were gathered using an adapted teacher-rating questionnaire and analyzed through frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient. Findings revealed that learners frequently demonstrated foundational reading skills, with letter-sound knowledge emerging as their strongest competency, while oral reading accuracy and fluency required further strengthening. Reading comprehension was demonstrated inconsistently, particularly in inferential and evaluative comprehension. Significant positive relationships were established between all foundational reading dimensions and reading comprehension, with oral reading fluency demonstrating the strongest association. The study concluded that foundational reading competencies were closely associated with comprehension development, emphasizing the importance of integrated literacy instruction. Consequently, a contextualized School-Based Reading Intervention Program was developed to address identified reading difficulties. The study recommended its implementation through differentiated instruction, targeted remediation, teacher collaboration, parental involvement, and continuous progress monitoring.

KEYWORDS

Foundational reading skills, reading comprehension, letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding skills, oral reading accuracy, oral reading fluency

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1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most essential competencies developed during the first years of schooling because it allows learners to access information, participate meaningfully in classroom activities, and build knowledge across subject areas. Early reading development involves several interconnected skills, including letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding, oral reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Ehri (2022) emphasized that knowledge of letter-sound relationships, phonemic awareness, word reading, and phonics provides an important foundation for successful reading acquisition. Similarly, Piasta and Hudson (2022) explained that systematic knowledge of phonological awareness and phonics supports children in learning how written symbols represent spoken language. As learners acquire these skills, they gradually become more capable of recognizing words automatically, reading connected text accurately, and directing greater attention toward understanding meaning.

Research has increasingly demonstrated that foundational reading skills are closely connected with later reading comprehension. Hsu et al. (2023) described reading fluency as an important bridge between decoding and comprehension, indicating that efficient word reading supports learners in allocating cognitive resources to constructing meaning from text. Psyridou et al. (2023) likewise found developmental connections between reading fluency and comprehension across several grade levels. More recently, Cadime et al. (2024) reported that reading fluency plays an important role in explaining the relationship between cognitive-linguistic abilities and reading comprehension. These findings suggest that early reading instruction should not focus solely on recognizing words but should also strengthen accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading. When foundational skills remain weak, learners

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may expend excessive effort decoding individual words, which may interfere with their ability to understand ideas, make inferences, and evaluate information.

Foundational literacy has therefore remained an important concern in basic education systems. Recent systematic reviews have emphasized the effectiveness of explicit, structured, and multicomponent approaches in supporting learners who experience early reading difficulties. Hall et al. (2023), in a large systematic review and meta-analysis of reading interventions for elementary learners with or at risk for dyslexia, found that appropriately designed interventions can improve important reading outcomes. Kittle et al. (2024) similarly emphasized that evidence-based reading instruction for multilingual learners requires attention to decoding, language development, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension rather than reliance on a single instructional component. These findings are especially relevant to early-grade classrooms, where learners enter school with different levels of oral language, print exposure, phonological knowledge, and previous literacy experiences.

In the Philippine setting, concerns regarding foundational learning have likewise been documented. Igarashi and Suryadarma (2023) reported persistent gaps in foundational mathematics and reading skills among Filipino learners across generations, indicating that some students continue to struggle with competencies expected to have been mastered during the early grades. Barrot (2023) also noted that curriculum reforms in the Philippines continue to face challenges related to learning outcomes and the need to better prepare learners with fundamental competencies. Such concerns demonstrate that reading difficulties observed in later grades may have roots in earlier weaknesses in decoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Consequently, assessing these competencies during kindergarten and the primary grades is essential because early identification can allow schools to provide timely and developmentally appropriate support before learning gaps become more difficult to address.

Recent Philippine research also supports the importance of contextualized and systematic reading intervention. Mejala (2024) found that early language and reading interventions contributed to the reading skills of Grade One pupils in Zambales, highlighting the value of focused instructional support during the beginning stages of literacy development. Canuto et al. (2024) likewise demonstrated that repeated reading and the use of Big Books could enhance elementary learners' oral reading fluency. These findings indicate that early reading difficulties can be addressed through purposeful instructional strategies that provide learners with repeated opportunities to practice decoding, accurate oral reading, fluent text reading, and meaning construction. They also reinforce the need for teachers to base intervention decisions on specific reading competencies rather than treating reading difficulty as a single, undifferentiated problem.

Reading comprehension requires abilities beyond accurate word recognition. Learners must identify directly stated information, connect ideas, generate inferences, make predictions, evaluate actions or messages, and relate texts to previous knowledge and personal experiences. Hwang et al. (2023) emphasized the value of strategically designed read-aloud activities in supporting inference-making among primary-grade learners. Peng et al. (2024), through a network meta-analysis of reading comprehension interventions, further demonstrated that explicit comprehension strategies can improve outcomes among struggling readers. Pulles et al. (2022) also showed that classroom discussion around texts can provide opportunities for learners to integrate information and evaluate ideas. These studies suggest that comprehension should be taught deliberately alongside decoding and fluency, particularly among young learners who may be capable of reading words but still experience difficulty constructing deeper meaning from text.

Fluency is particularly important because it links accurate word reading with comprehension. Maki and Hammerschmidt-Snidarich (2022) found that appropriate fluency intervention dosage can contribute to improved reading outcomes, while Hindin and Steiner (2024) emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for repeated reading practice to build fluency. More recent evidence from Leachman et al. (2025) indicates that the relationship between text reading and comprehension varies according to developmental stage, orthographic characteristics, and the way reading skills are measured. Meggiato et al. (2025) likewise identified a consistent relationship between reading fluency and comprehension across the literature. These findings highlight the importance of examining both foundational reading and comprehension skills within the same investigation because learners may demonstrate different patterns of strengths and weaknesses across these related areas.

The Philippine Department of Education has continued to strengthen learning recovery efforts that emphasize assessment, targeted intervention, and support for learners who have not yet attained expected competencies. The implementation of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program in Reading for Key Stages 1 to 3 reflects the need for systematic reading support based on identified learning needs (Department of Education, 2025). Such initiatives underscore the importance of reliable school-level evidence. While national and division-level assessments can identify broad patterns of learning difficulty, individual schools still require localized information regarding the particular skills learners can and cannot consistently demonstrate. This information can guide teachers in selecting appropriate activities, grouping learners according to needs, monitoring progress, and designing intervention programs responsive to actual classroom conditions.

At Liburon Elementary School, a school-specific assessment was therefore necessary to determine the reading competencies of learners from kindergarten to Grade 3. Reading difficulties may appear in different forms. Some learners may recognize letters and familiar words but experience difficulty decoding unfamiliar words. Others may read words accurately but struggle with appropriate pacing, phrasing, and expression. Some may demonstrate adequate oral reading but encounter difficulty recalling information, drawing inferences, making judgments, or explaining the meaning of a passage. These variations cannot be adequately understood

through a general reading score alone. A multidimensional assessment of letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding skills, oral reading accuracy, oral reading fluency, and comprehension provides a clearer description of learners' strengths and priority needs.

A research gap therefore existed in the limited school-based evidence examining these foundational reading dimensions together with literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension among early-grade learners at Liburon Elementary School. Although recent studies have examined reading intervention, fluency, decoding, and comprehension separately, fewer localized investigations assess these competencies simultaneously and determine the relationships among them within one school context. Lane et al. (2025) demonstrated that systematic instruction in foundational reading skills can strengthen early literacy development, while Zhao et al. (2025) showed that fluency and comprehension may influence one another across different stages of reading development. Examining these competencies together can therefore provide a stronger empirical basis for identifying intervention priorities and designing instruction suited to learners' developmental needs.

Hence, the present study assessed the foundational reading skills and reading comprehension of 220 early-grade learners at Liburon Elementary School, Department of Education–Schools Division of Carcar City, during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, it examined learners' letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding skills, oral reading accuracy, and oral reading fluency, together with their literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension. It also determined the significant relationships between foundational reading skills and reading comprehension. The findings were intended to identify specific literacy strengths and difficulties and to provide an empirical basis for developing a contextualized School-Based Reading Intervention Program responsive to the identified needs of kindergarten to Grade 3 learners.

2. Literature Review

Foundational reading skills provide the essential processes through which early-grade learners move from recognizing print to reading words and connected text accurately and efficiently. Letter-sound knowledge is particularly important because it enables learners to connect graphemes with their corresponding speech sounds, providing the basis for decoding unfamiliar words and developing automatic word recognition. Ehri (2022) emphasized that phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, phonics, and orthographic mapping are closely involved in learning to recognize written words accurately. Similarly, Bear (2022) explained that emergent and beginning literacy develops through systematic experiences with sounds, letters, words, and meaningful print. Evidence from early-literacy interventions also supports explicit instruction in phonological awareness and word-level skills. Bennett et al. (2023) found that structured phonological-awareness activities improved preschool children's foundational literacy abilities, while Gillon et al. (2022) reported positive outcomes from systematic Tier 1 and Tier 2 literacy support that incorporated phonological awareness and word-reading instruction. Dilgard et al. (2022) likewise stressed the importance of phonics instruction, appropriate instructional resources, and sufficient intervention intensity in early reading development. Beyond decoding, accurate and increasingly fluent oral reading is important because inefficient word identification may consume cognitive resources needed for understanding text. Lane et al. (2025) demonstrated that systematic instruction in foundational reading skills can improve early literacy development among kindergarten and first-grade learners. Thus, assessing letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding, oral reading accuracy, and oral reading fluency provides a comprehensive picture of whether learners possess the fundamental competencies needed for successful reading.

Reading comprehension extends beyond accurate pronunciation and word recognition because learners must construct meaning from the text they read. Literal comprehension requires locating and recalling explicitly stated information, whereas inferential comprehension requires learners to connect textual clues with prior knowledge to derive meanings that are not directly stated. Evaluative comprehension represents a deeper level of understanding in which learners judge ideas, explain opinions, relate messages to experience, and reflect on the meaning or significance of a text. Recent research emphasizes that early literacy development involves both foundational word-reading abilities and broader language and meaning-making competencies. Cadime et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of teachers' literacy knowledge and classroom practices in supporting emergent literacy development, while Kiss and Csapó (2024) demonstrated the value of assessing component literacy abilities during the kindergarten period. Kiss et al. (2023) further showed that structured training in pre-reading skills can strengthen competencies needed for later reading development. Stuhr et al. (2024) identified distinct early-literacy profiles among kindergarten learners, indicating that children may demonstrate different strengths and needs across component skills rather than developing uniformly. In a Philippine context, Gumidam (2025) reported that interactive learning materials supported kindergarten reading literacy, while Hechanova et al. (2025) found that play-based literacy activities improved phonemic awareness among young Filipino learners. Collectively, these studies support assessing foundational skills and reading comprehension separately but in an integrated framework, since learners may successfully recognize and decode words while still requiring explicit instruction in literal understanding, inference-making, interpretation, and evaluation of written texts.

3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to assess the foundational reading skills and reading comprehension of 220 early-grade learners at Liburon Elementary School during School Year 2026–2027. The descriptive component determined the learners' profile in terms of age, gender, grade level, and language commonly used at home. It also

assessed foundational reading skills in letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding skills, oral reading accuracy, and oral reading fluency, as well as reading comprehension in the literal, inferential, and evaluative dimensions. The correlational component examined the significant relationship between foundational reading skills and reading comprehension. The participants were 220 learners from kindergarten to Grade 3, together with 12 teacher-raters representing the four grade levels. The study used an adapted teacher-rating questionnaire based on established early-grade reading assessment indicators. The instrument contained 25 indicators for foundational reading skills and 15 indicators for reading comprehension. Teachers rated learners using a five-point frequency scale: 5 – Always, 4 – Often, 3 – Sometimes, 2 – Rarely, and 1 – Never. Ratings were based on sustained classroom observations of learners' reading behaviors. Before data collection, the researcher secured permission from the Department of Education–Schools Division of Carcar City and the school head. Parents or legal guardians provided informed consent, while learner assent was obtained when appropriate. Confidentiality, voluntary participation, child protection, and data privacy were upheld throughout the study. After administration, completed questionnaires were checked, coded, tabulated, and analyzed. Frequency counts and percentages described the learners' demographic profile, while weighted means and standard deviations determined the levels of foundational reading skills and reading comprehension. Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient was used to test the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between the two major variables at the 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results

Table 1. Letter-Sound Knowledge

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can identify the sound of presented letters.	4.24	1.02	Always
2. The learner can match letters with their corresponding sounds.	4.24	1.02	Always
3. The learner can produce the correct sound when shown a letter.	4.20	1.05	Often
4. The learner can distinguish similar letter sounds.	4.05	1.10	Often
5. The learner can recognize beginning sounds in simple words.	4.20	1.08	Often
Overall mean and SD	4.19	1.01	Often

Table 1 shows that learners generally demonstrated a high level of letter-sound knowledge, with an overall mean of 4.19 interpreted as Often. Identifying letter sounds and matching letters with corresponding sounds obtained the highest means, while distinguishing similar letter sounds received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners possess generally strong foundational phonics skills, but additional practice in auditory discrimination and distinguishing closely related sounds may further strengthen their decoding ability and support more accurate word recognition and reading development.

Table 2. Word Recognition

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can read familiar grade-level words correctly.	3.96	1.07	Often
2. The learner can recognize commonly used sight words.	3.81	1.05	Often
3. The learner can read short words without teacher assistance.	3.87	1.10	Often
4. The learner can read words with correct pronunciation.	3.91	1.08	Often
5. The learner can identify words quickly and accurately.	3.90	1.13	Often
Overall mean and SD	3.89	1.01	Often

Table 2 shows that learners generally demonstrated a high level of word recognition, with an overall mean of 3.89 interpreted as Often. Reading familiar grade-level words correctly obtained the highest mean, while recognizing commonly used sight words received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners are generally able to identify and pronounce familiar words, but additional practice in sight-word recognition and automatic word identification may further improve reading speed, accuracy, and fluency, thereby supporting stronger overall reading performance.

Table 3. Decoding Skills

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can sound out unfamiliar words.	3.79	1.01	Often
2. The learner can blend letter sounds to read a word.	3.85	1.05	Often
3. The learner can read simple nonwords or invented words.	3.71	1.06	Often
4. The learner can apply phonics skills when reading unfamiliar words.	3.63	1.04	Often
5. The learner can read syllables or word parts correctly.	3.72	1.00	Often
Overall mean and SD	3.74	0.95	Often

Table 3 shows that learners generally demonstrated a high level of decoding skills, with an overall mean of 3.74 interpreted as Often. Blending letter sounds to read a word obtained the highest mean, while applying phonics skills when reading unfamiliar words received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners can generally decode words using basic sound-blending strategies, but they may still need additional guided practice in applying phonics independently to unfamiliar words, syllables, and word parts to strengthen reading accuracy and fluency.

Table 4. Oral Reading Accuracy

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can read a short grade-level passage aloud.	3.73	1.09	Often
2. The learner reads words in the passage accurately.	3.75	1.13	Often
3. The learner avoids skipping words while reading.	3.54	1.12	Often
4. The learner avoids substituting incorrect words while reading.	3.60	1.12	Often
5. The learner reads with minimal teacher correction.	3.63	1.17	Often
Overall mean and SD	3.65	1.07	Often

Table 4 shows that learners generally demonstrated a high level of oral reading accuracy, with an overall mean of 3.65 interpreted as Often. Reading words in a passage accurately obtained the highest mean, while avoiding skipped words received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners are generally capable of reading grade-level passages with acceptable accuracy, but they may still require guided oral reading, repeated reading, and corrective feedback to reduce omissions, substitutions, and dependence on teacher assistance during reading.

Table 5. Oral Reading Fluency

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner reads a short passage within the allotted time.	3.79	1.13	Often

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
2. The learner reads smoothly without frequent pauses.	3.64	1.12	Often
3. The learner reads with appropriate pacing.	3.57	1.10	Often
4. The learner reads phrases instead of reading word by word.	3.58	1.10	Often
5. The learner reads with expression appropriate to the text.	3.63	1.15	Often
Overall mean and SD	3.64	1.05	Often

Table 5 shows that learners generally demonstrated a high level of oral reading fluency, with an overall mean of 3.64 interpreted as Often. Reading a short passage within the allotted time obtained the highest mean, while reading with appropriate pacing received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners can generally read connected text with acceptable fluency, but they may still need repeated oral reading, modeling, and guided practice to improve pacing, phrasing, smoothness, and expressive reading.

Table 6. Literal Comprehension

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can identify the main character or subject of the passage.	3.38	1.33	Sometimes
2. The learner can identify the setting of the story or text.	3.31	1.37	Sometimes
3. The learner can recall important details from the passage.	3.20	1.31	Sometimes
4. The learner can arrange events in the correct sequence.	3.16	1.32	Sometimes
5. The learner can answer who, what, when, and where questions.	3.28	1.37	Sometimes
Overall mean and SD	3.27	1.28	Sometimes

Table 6 shows that learners demonstrated a moderate level of literal comprehension, with an overall mean of 3.27 interpreted as Sometimes. Identifying the main character or subject obtained the highest mean, while arranging events in the correct sequence received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners can understand some explicitly stated information but may experience difficulty recalling details and organizing events. Thus, guided questioning, sequencing activities, and repeated reading may help strengthen their literal comprehension skills.

Table 7. Inferential Comprehension

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can infer the feelings of a character.	3.25	1.29	Sometimes
2. The learner can identify the possible reason for an event.	3.18	1.32	Sometimes
3. The learner can make a simple prediction based on the passage.	3.15	1.32	Sometimes
4. The learner can understand implied meaning from the text.	3.15	1.30	Sometimes

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
5. The learner can connect ideas that are not directly stated.	3.15	1.30	Sometimes
Overall mean and SD	3.18	1.25	Sometimes

Table 7 shows that learners demonstrated a moderate level of inferential comprehension, with an overall mean of 3.18 interpreted as Sometimes. Inferring a character's feelings obtained the highest mean, while making predictions, understanding implied meaning, and connecting unstated ideas received the lowest ratings. The findings imply that learners can make some basic inferences but still experience difficulty interpreting information beyond what is directly stated. Thus, guided questioning, prediction exercises, and discussion of implied meanings may help strengthen inferential comprehension.

Table 8. Evaluative Comprehension

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. The learner can give an opinion about the story or passage.	3.16	1.35	Sometimes
2. The learner can explain whether an action in the passage was good or bad.	3.13	1.31	Sometimes
3. The learner can identify the lesson or message of the passage.	3.08	1.21	Sometimes
4. The learner can relate the passage to personal experience.	3.28	1.33	Sometimes
5. The learner can explain why the passage is important or useful.	3.05	1.33	Sometimes
Overall mean and SD	3.14	1.25	Sometimes

Table 8 shows that learners demonstrated a moderate level of evaluative comprehension, with an overall mean of 3.14 interpreted as Sometimes. Relating the passage to personal experience obtained the highest mean, while explaining why the passage is important or useful received the lowest rating. The findings imply that learners can occasionally connect texts with their own experiences, but they still need support in making judgments, identifying messages, and explaining the significance of what they read. Structured discussion and reflective questioning may strengthen evaluative comprehension.

Table 9. Relationship between Foundational Reading Skills and Reading Comprehension

Foundational Reading Skills	rho-value	p-value	Degree	Remarks	Decision
Letter-Sound Knowledge	0.526	<.001	Moderate Positive	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis
Word Recognition	0.668	<.001	High Positive	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis
Decoding Skills	0.709	<.001	High Positive	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis
Oral Reading Accuracy	0.696	<.001	High Positive	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis
Oral Reading Fluency	0.714	<.001	High Positive	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis

Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 9 shows that all dimensions of foundational reading skills have statistically significant positive relationships with reading comprehension, with all p-values below .001. Oral reading fluency obtained the strongest relationship with comprehension ($\rho = 0.714$), followed by decoding skills ($\rho = 0.709$), oral reading accuracy ($\rho = 0.696$), word recognition ($\rho = 0.668$), and letter-sound knowledge ($\rho = 0.526$). These findings imply that learners with stronger foundational reading skills also tend to demonstrate better reading comprehension. The results further suggest that improving fluency, decoding, accuracy, and word recognition may support learners' ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate texts. Therefore, reading interventions should integrate both foundational skill development and comprehension activities rather than treating them as separate instructional areas.

Table 10. Overall Relationship between Foundational Reading Skills and Reading Comprehension

Variables	rho-value	p-value	Degree of Relationship	Remarks	Decision
Overall Foundational Reading Skills and Overall Reading Comprehension	0.702	< 0.001	High Positive	Significant	Reject the Null

Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 10 shows a statistically significant strong positive relationship between overall foundational reading skills and overall reading comprehension, with a Spearman's rho of 0.702 and a p-value of less than .001. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that learners who demonstrate stronger foundational reading skills also tend to exhibit better reading comprehension. The finding implies that competencies in letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, decoding, oral reading accuracy, and fluency are closely associated with learners' ability to understand written texts. Therefore, reading instruction should strengthen foundational skills alongside comprehension strategies to support more effective and meaningful reading development.

5. Discussion

The findings show that the learners generally demonstrated stronger foundational reading skills than reading comprehension. Among the foundational skills, letter-sound knowledge obtained the highest overall performance, followed by word recognition, decoding skills, oral reading accuracy, and oral reading fluency. This pattern suggests that the learners had already developed basic abilities in associating letters with sounds, recognizing familiar words, and applying phonics strategies when reading. However, their slightly lower performance in oral reading accuracy and fluency indicates that some learners may still experience difficulty reading connected text smoothly, accurately, and with appropriate pacing. The results imply that while basic decoding foundations are present, continuous practice in guided oral reading, repeated reading, sight-word recognition, and phonics application remains necessary to strengthen automaticity and confidence in reading. In contrast, the learners demonstrated only moderate levels of reading comprehension across literal, inferential, and evaluative dimensions. Literal comprehension was comparatively stronger, indicating that learners were more capable of identifying directly stated information such as characters, settings, and basic details. However, lower performance in inferential and evaluative comprehension suggests difficulty in interpreting implied meanings, making predictions, connecting unstated ideas, forming judgments, and explaining the significance of a passage. This indicates that recognizing and decoding words do not automatically ensure full understanding of what is read. Learners may therefore benefit from explicit comprehension instruction involving guided questioning, sequencing activities, prediction exercises, think-aloud strategies, retelling, and opportunities to relate texts to personal experiences.

The significant positive relationships found between all dimensions of foundational reading skills and reading comprehension further indicate that stronger foundational abilities are associated with better understanding of texts. Oral reading fluency showed the strongest association with comprehension, followed closely by decoding skills and oral reading accuracy, while letter-sound knowledge showed a moderate positive relationship. The overall relationship between foundational reading skills and reading comprehension was also high and statistically significant. These findings imply that reading development should be approached as an integrated process in which decoding, word recognition, accuracy, and fluency support the learner's ability to construct meaning. Thus, intervention programs should not focus exclusively on phonics or word reading but should combine foundational skill instruction with systematic comprehension activities to strengthen learners' overall reading competence.

6. Conclusion

The study concluded that early-grade learners demonstrated relatively strong foundational reading skills but required further development in reading comprehension, particularly in inferential and evaluative understanding. The findings emphasized that mastery of basic reading competencies alone did not guarantee meaningful text comprehension, highlighting the importance of integrating decoding, reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension instruction. These results underscored the need for differentiated, developmentally appropriate, and assessment-driven teaching practices that addressed learners' specific literacy difficulties.

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