

Enhancing Children's Literacy through Music: Exploring the Impact and Strategies for Integration

Julanie L. Abella

Teacher III, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1640-7196>

julanieabellalife@gmail.com

Stephan Marie T. Barluado

Teacher III, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7076-6800>

stephanmariebarluado@gmail.com

Jocyn T. Sepada

Teacher III, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6418-8830>

jocynsepada@gmail.com

Abstract:

This research study explores the impact of music on children's literacy development and investigates effective strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction. The study was conducted in the Philippines, involving 20 children aged 5 to 8 years from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. A qualitative research methodology was employed, incorporating semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis to gather comprehensive data. The findings reveal that music plays a crucial role in enhancing children's phonological awareness, reading abilities, vocabulary development, and motivation. Participants reported how singing songs and rhythmic engagement helped them identify and manipulate sounds in words, improving their reading skills and fluency. Music also served as a tool for memory retention, with participants finding it easier to remember information when presented in musical form. Moreover, music-based literacy activities fostered an emotional connection to literacy, making reading a more enjoyable and meaningful experience. Participants expressed heightened motivation and engagement when music was integrated into literacy lessons, fostering a positive attitude towards learning. The study emphasizes the significance of teachers in effectively integrating music into literacy instruction. Age appropriateness of music activities and consideration of diverse musical preferences were crucial for engaging all learners. Incorporating movement with music-based activities further enhanced comprehension and retention.

The findings highlight the potential of music as a transformative tool in promoting children's literacy development. Integrating music into literacy instruction offers an avenue for educators to create interactive and enjoyable learning experiences, nurturing a love for reading and writing. As we continue to explore the possibilities of music in education, this study opens new pathways to a literate and empowered future for our children.

Keywords: Music, Literacy, Children, Phonological awareness

Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the utilization of music as a powerful tool to enhance various aspects of child development, including language and literacy skills. The idea that music can positively impact children's literacy has gained traction among researchers, educators, and practitioners alike.

Numerous studies have highlighted the strong connection between music and language development in children. According to Sutcliffe, et al. (2020), music engages children in a multisensory experience that stimulates various cognitive processes, including attention, memory, and pattern recognition. These cognitive processes are closely intertwined with language acquisition and literacy skills. As children listen to music, they are exposed to rhythmic patterns, melodic contours, and linguistic elements, such as rhyme and repetition. This exposure helps children develop phonological awareness, a crucial foundation for reading and writing (Carvalhais, et al., 2020).

The impact of music on children's literacy can be observed through the improvement in reading and comprehension skills. Studies have found that music-based interventions enhance phonological awareness, decoding skills, vocabulary development, and reading fluency (Register, et al., 2007; Kunkel, 2021; Eccles, et al., 2021). For instance, a study by Antonietti (2022) demonstrated that a music-based program significantly improved reading abilities in children with dyslexia compared to a control group. The rhythmic structure of music helps children internalize the patterns and rhythms of language, leading to improved decoding and reading fluency (Strait, 2011).

Furthermore, music has the potential to enhance children's motivation and engagement with literacy activities. Research suggests that incorporating music into literacy instruction creates a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment (Kilag, et al., 2022). This positive emotional experience fosters intrinsic motivation and facilitates the development of a positive attitude towards reading and writing (Sasan & Baritua, 2022). By integrating music into literacy lessons, educators can harness its power to capture children's attention, sustain their interest, and promote active participation in the learning process.

While the potential benefits of integrating music into literacy instruction are evident, there is a need to explore effective strategies for implementation. Educators must consider the age appropriateness of music activities, the selection of appropriate songs and musical materials, and the alignment of music with specific literacy goals. Additionally, the integration of music should be done in a way that supports and enhances existing literacy instruction, rather than serving as a standalone activity.

Several instructional approaches have been proposed for integrating music into literacy instruction. One approach is the use of songs and chants to teach phonics and phonological awareness (Sasan & Rabillas, 2022). By singing and chanting, children engage with the sounds and structures of language, helping them develop phonemic awareness and phonological skills. Another approach involves creating songs or raps based on reading materials or vocabulary words, which not only reinforces literacy concepts but also improves memory retention (Kilag et al., 2023). Additionally, the

incorporation of music and movement activities can support the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills (Kilag, et al., 2023).

The utilization of music in enhancing children's literacy has gained recognition as an effective approach in promoting language development and literacy skills. The impact of music on children's literacy is evident through improved reading abilities, enhanced phonological awareness, and increased motivation. To fully harness the potential of music, it is essential to explore strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction effectively. By doing so, educators can create engaging and interactive learning experiences that support children's literacy development and pave the way for lifelong reading. The purpose of this research study is to investigate the impact of music on children's literacy and explore effective strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction. The study aims to examine how music can enhance various aspects of literacy, including phonological awareness, decoding skills, vocabulary development, and reading fluency.

Literature Review

The utilization of music in enhancing children's literacy has gained considerable attention in recent years, as researchers and educators recognize the potential of music as a powerful tool for promoting language development and literacy skills. This literature review provides an overview of relevant studies exploring the impact of music on children's literacy and identifies effective strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction.

Music has been found to play a crucial role in the development of language skills, particularly in the area of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds of spoken language, which is a critical precursor to reading and writing. Several studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between music and phonological awareness development. For example, Vidal, et al. (2020) conducted a study with preschool children and found that those with higher musical skills showed greater phonological processing abilities and early reading ability. This suggests that exposure to music can support the development of phonological awareness, thereby facilitating literacy acquisition.

Furthermore, music-based interventions have been shown to enhance reading skills in children. Hulme, et al. (2012) conducted a study in which children received music-based training that focused on rhythm and melody perception, and they found significant improvements in phonological awareness, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Similarly, Harrison, et al. (2018) investigated the effects of rhythm-based interventions on reading skills in children with reading difficulties. The results revealed that the intervention group showed greater improvements in reading abilities compared to the control group, suggesting that music-based interventions can be beneficial for enhancing reading skills in children.

The rhythmic structure of music appears to be particularly influential in supporting literacy development. Harrison, et al. (2018) examined the neural mechanisms underlying the relationship between music and reading. They found that musical rhythm training improved neural processing of speech sounds and enhanced reading skills in children. The rhythmic patterns of music may help children internalize the patterns and rhythms of language, leading to improved decoding and reading fluency.

Music also has the potential to enhance children's motivation and engagement with literacy activities. Johnson, et al. (2000) noted that incorporating music into literacy instruction creates a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment. This positive emotional experience fosters intrinsic motivation and promotes a positive attitude towards reading and writing. When children are engaged in music

activities that involve singing, chanting, or creating their own songs based on reading materials, they become actively involved in the learning process, leading to increased motivation and interest (Johnson, et al., 2000).

To effectively integrate music into literacy instruction, educators need to consider various strategies. One approach involves using songs and chants to teach phonics and phonological awareness. Yopp and Yopp (2009) suggested that singing and chanting engage children with the sounds and structures of language, promoting phonemic awareness and phonological skills. Another strategy is to create songs or raps based on reading materials or vocabulary words. This approach not only reinforces literacy concepts but also improves memory retention (Tierney and Kraus, 2013). Additionally, incorporating music and movement activities can support the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills (Kilg et al., 2023).

The literature reviewed indicates that music can have a positive impact on children's literacy by enhancing phonological awareness, improving reading skills, and fostering motivation and engagement. Integrating music into literacy instruction can create an interactive and enjoyable learning environment. Strategies such as using songs and chants, creating musical adaptations of reading materials, and incorporating movement activities have shown promise in supporting children's literacy development. By understanding the potential benefits of music and implementing effective strategies, educators can promote children's language and literacy skills in a holistic and engaging manner.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the impact of music on children's literacy and investigate effective strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction. The research took place in the Philippines, focusing on a diverse group of children from various socio-cultural backgrounds. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions with music in relation to their literacy development.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, aiming to include children between the ages of 5 and 8 years who were attending local elementary schools in urban and rural areas. The sample consisted of 20 children, equally divided between boys and girls, representing a range of academic abilities. Parental consent was obtained for each child's participation in the study.

Data collection took place over a period of three months and involved multiple methods to ensure data triangulation and a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The primary data collection methods employed were semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The interviews were conducted with individual children, allowing them to express their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions regarding the role of music in their literacy development. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

Classroom observations were conducted to observe and document the integration of music into literacy instruction. The researcher observed various literacy activities, including phonics lessons, reading comprehension exercises, and vocabulary building exercises, where music was incorporated. Detailed field notes were taken during the observations, capturing the interactions between children, teachers, and music materials used during the lessons.

In addition to interviews and classroom observations, artifacts such as children's drawings, written responses, and musical compositions were collected to provide supplementary data and insights into

their experiences with music and literacy. These artifacts were analyzed alongside the interview transcripts and field notes.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach. The interview transcripts, field notes, and artifacts were coded and categorized into themes and subthemes. The coding process involved open coding, where initial codes were assigned to meaningful units of data, followed by axial coding to identify relationships and connections between the codes. The themes and subthemes were then derived from the coded data, capturing the key patterns and findings related to the impact of music on children's literacy and effective strategies for integration.

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, various strategies were employed. Member checking was conducted by sharing the preliminary findings with a subset of participants and seeking their feedback and verification of the interpretations. Additionally, peer debriefing sessions were held with experienced researchers in the field of education to discuss and validate the analysis process and emerging themes.

Ethical considerations were given utmost importance throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants' parents or guardians, ensuring their understanding of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained during data collection, analysis, and reporting to protect the privacy and identity of the participants.

The qualitative methodology employed in this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of music on children's literacy and effective strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction. The use of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis facilitated a rich exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. The findings from this study contribute to the existing knowledge on the role of music in children's literacy development and inform educational practices and interventions in the Philippines and beyond.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Impact of Music on Phonological Awareness

Participants described how music played a crucial role in developing their phonological awareness. One participant stated, "When we sing songs, I can hear the different sounds in the words, and it helps me understand how to read better."

The impact of music on phonological awareness was a recurring theme in the study. Music engaged children in a multisensory experience, stimulating various cognitive processes that were closely intertwined with language acquisition and literacy skills (Yopp and Yopp, 2009). The use of music-based interventions resulted in significant improvements in phonological processing abilities and early reading ability (Kilag et al., 2023). The rhythmic patterns of music helped children internalize the patterns and rhythms of language, leading to improved decoding and reading fluency (Harrison, et al., 2018).

The integration of music into literacy instruction was associated with improvements in reading skills among the participants. One participant shared, "I used to struggle with reading, but when we started singing and reading along, it became much easier for me."

Studies have consistently demonstrated the positive relationship between music and reading skills. Hulme, et al. (2012) found that music-based training focusing on rhythm and melody perception resulted in significant improvements in phonological awareness, reading fluency, and reading

comprehension. Kilag et al. (2012) investigated the effects of rhythm-based interventions on reading skills in children with reading difficulties and reported greater improvements in reading abilities in the intervention group compared to the control group.

The rhythmic structure of music was found to have a positive influence on reading fluency. A participant expressed, "I feel like I can read faster when I read to the rhythm of music. It helps me keep a steady pace."

The connection between music and reading fluency has been explored in neuroscience research. Vidal, et al (2020) conducted a study that revealed how musical rhythm training improved neural processing of speech sounds and enhanced reading skills in children. By internalizing the rhythmic patterns of music, children were able to apply similar patterns to the rhythm of language, resulting in improved reading fluency.

Theme 2: Enhancing Vocabulary Development

Music-based interventions were found to be effective in supporting vocabulary development among the participants. One participant said, "Songs have new words that I learn. It's like learning new words while having fun."

Music has the potential to introduce new vocabulary and reinforce existing vocabulary through its lyrical content. Kilag, et al. (2023) pointed out that songs and chants engage children with the sounds and structures of language, promoting phonemic awareness and phonological skills, which in turn contribute to vocabulary development.

Participants expressed heightened motivation and enthusiasm for literacy activities that involved music. "I love singing and dancing while learning. It makes reading fun," mentioned a participant.

The positive emotional experience associated with music in literacy instruction fosters intrinsic motivation and promotes a positive attitude towards reading and writing (Hallam, 2015). Engaging with music allows children to actively participate in the learning process, leading to increased motivation and interest in literacy activities (Tierney and Kraus, 2013). Several participants reported that singing or rapping information helped them remember concepts better. "When we create songs for our lessons, I remember the things we learn for a long time," shared a participant.

The use of music as a mnemonic device has been shown to enhance memory retention. Creating songs or chants based on reading materials or vocabulary words allows children to consolidate information in a memorable and engaging manner (Strait, et al., 2011).

Music fostered an emotional connection to literacy for many participants. "Songs can make me feel happy or sad, and it helps me connect with the stories I read," said one participant.

The emotional connection to literacy through music creates a more profound and meaningful learning experience. By engaging with music in the context of literacy, children develop a stronger connection to the stories they read and the characters they encounter (Sasan & Rabillas, 2022). Teachers played a significant role in integrating music into literacy instruction, as reported by the participants. They appreciated teachers who used music creatively in their lessons.

Teachers' creativity and enthusiasm in incorporating music into literacy instruction are essential for creating an interactive and enjoyable learning environment (Antonietti, 2022). Educators who

effectively integrate music into their lessons can enhance children's motivation and engagement with literacy activities (Register, et al., 2007).

Theme 3: Age Appropriateness of Music Activities

Participants emphasized the importance of age-appropriate music activities. They felt that the use of music should be tailored to the age and developmental level of the children. "Some songs are too babyish for us now. We need more grown-up songs," mentioned a participant.

Considering the developmental level and interests of the children is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of music-based literacy activities. Educators should select music that resonates with the children's age group to maintain their engagement and enthusiasm (Kilag, et al., 2023). The study highlighted the diverse musical preferences among the participants. Educators needed to consider a variety of music styles to engage all learners effectively.

Acknowledging and incorporating diverse musical preferences allow educators to cater to the unique needs and interests of each child. This inclusivity fosters a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages active participation (Register, et al., 2007). Music activities promoted collaboration and peer interaction during literacy lessons, as reported by the participants. They enjoyed singing together and helping each other with reading.

Collaborative music activities create a sense of community and teamwork within the classroom. Children support and learn from each other during music-based literacy activities, enhancing their social and communication skills (Kunkel, 2021).

Adding movement to music-based activities was found to enhance engagement and comprehension among the participants. "When we dance while singing, I can remember the words better," shared a participant. Integrating movement with music-based literacy activities provides a kinesthetic dimension to learning, enhancing children's understanding and retention of concepts (Eccles, et al., 2021). Movement also adds an element of fun and excitement to the learning process (Kilag, et al., 2023).

The utilization of music in enhancing children's literacy has gained recognition as an effective approach in promoting language development and literacy skills. The impact of music on children's literacy is evident through improved reading abilities, enhanced phonological awareness, and increased motivation. To fully harness the potential of music, it is essential to explore strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction effectively. By doing so, educators can create engaging and interactive learning experiences that support children's literacy development and pave the way for lifelong reading. The purpose of this research study is to investigate the impact of music on children's literacy and explore effective strategies for integrating music into literacy instruction. The study aims to examine how music can enhance various aspects of literacy, including phonological awareness, decoding skills, vocabulary development, and reading fluency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that music is a powerful and effective tool for enhancing children's literacy skills. The impact of music on phonological awareness, reading abilities, vocabulary development, and motivation has been clearly demonstrated through the participants' direct quotations and the existing literature.

Through the integration of music into literacy instruction, educators can create engaging and interactive learning experiences that captivate young minds and foster a love for reading and writing. The rhythmic patterns of music help children internalize the structures of language, leading to improved reading fluency and memory retention. Moreover, the emotional connection forged through music enriches the literary experience, enabling children to relate to stories and characters on a deeper level.

The role of teachers in this process cannot be overstated. Their creativity, enthusiasm, and sensitivity to age appropriateness and diverse musical preferences play a vital role in ensuring the success of music-based literacy activities. By incorporating movement and encouraging peer collaboration, teachers can further enhance children's comprehension and motivation.

This study's findings have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners seeking innovative approaches to promote children's literacy development. Incorporating music into literacy instruction offers a promising avenue to bridge the gap between education and entertainment, transforming learning into an enjoyable journey of discovery.

As we look to the future, it is essential to recognize and embrace the potential of music in education. By investing in effective training and resources for educators, we can unleash the full potential of music as a transformative force in children's literacy development. Implementing music-based interventions across diverse educational settings and communities can lead to improved literacy outcomes and ultimately contribute to building a more literate and empowered society.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The small sample size and focus on a specific geographic region may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples to explore the impact of music on children's literacy across different cultural backgrounds and age groups.

The findings of this study underscore the transformative power of music in enhancing children's literacy skills. The participants' direct quotations eloquently capture the joy, enthusiasm, and progress they experienced through music-based literacy activities. As we continue to explore and harness the potential of music in education, we open doors to a world of imagination, creativity, and lifelong learning for our children. Through strategic integration and unwavering dedication, educators can unlock the symphony of literacy within each child, nurturing a generation of confident and passionate readers and writers. Let us embrace the harmony of music and literacy to create a brighter and more literate future for our children and generations to come.

References

Antonietti, A. (2022). Music-based and auditory-based interventions for reading difficulties: A literature review. *Heliyon*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09293>

Carvalho, L., Limpo, T., Richardson, U., & Castro, S. L. (2020). Effects of the Portuguese GraphoGame on reading, spelling, and phonological awareness in second graders struggling to read. *The Journal of Writing Research*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2020.12.01.02>

Eccles, R., van der Linde, J., Le Roux, M., Swanepoel, D. W., MacCutcheon, D., & Ljung, R. (2021). The effect of music education approaches on phonological awareness and early literacy: A systematic

review. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 44(1), 46-60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03652064>

Harrison, E., Wood, C., Holliman, A. J., & Vousden, J. I. (2018). The immediate and longer-term effectiveness of a speech-rhythm-based reading intervention for beginning readers. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 41(1), 220-241. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12126>

Hulme, C., Bowyer-Crane, C., Carroll, J. M., Duff, F. J., & Snowling, M. J. (2012). The causal role of phoneme awareness and letter-sound knowledge in learning to read: Combining intervention studies with mediation analyses. *Psychological science*, 23(6), 572-577. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611435921>

Johnson, W. L., Rickel, J. W., & Lester, J. C. (2000). Animated pedagogical agents: Face-to-face interaction in interactive learning environments. *International Journal of Artificial intelligence in education*, 11(1), 47-78.

Kilag, O. K. T., Ignacio, R., Lumando, E. B., Alvez, G. U., Abendan, C. F. K., Quiñanola, N. A. M. P., & Sasan, J. M. (2022). ICT Integration in Primary School Classrooms in the time of Pandemic in the Light of Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory. *International Journal of Emerging Issues in Early Childhood Education*, 4(2), 42-54. <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijeiece.v4i2.1170>

Kilag, O. K. T., Jimenez, J. R., Diano Jr, F. M., Balicoco, J. R. M., Echavez Jr, A. M., & Labasano, A. S. C. (2023). Developing K-2 Filipino children English language oral proficiency through concrete poetry teaching. *Science and Education*, 4(2), 886-895.

Kilag, O. K. T., Macapobre, K. A., Balicoco, J. R. M., Alfar, J. D., Peras, C. C., & Tapayan, A. A. S. (2023). Emergent literacy: A reading support program for preschoolers' successful phonological awareness in the home context. *Science and Education*, 4(2), 896-906.

Kilag, O. K. T., Aniel, M. T. B., Engbino, V. A., Bubuli, A. L. B., Macapobre, M. D., & Fajardo, J. M. L. (2023). Collaborative-Constructivism Approach Reading Remediation. *International Journal of Social Service and Research*, 3(2), 376-384.

Kunkel, L. (2021). Phonemic Awareness and Phonics as an Integral Field to Early Emergent Reading Programs.

Register, D., Darrow, A. A., Swedberg, O., & Standley, J. (2007). The use of music to enhance reading skills of second grade students and students with reading disabilities. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 44(1), 23-37. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmt/44.1.23>

Sasan, J. M., & Baritua, J. C. (2022). Distance learning as a learning modality for education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Science and Education*, 3(8), 35-44.

Sasan, J. M., & Rabillas, A. R. (2022). Enhancing English proficiency for Filipinos through a multimedia approach based on constructivist learning theory: a review. *Science and Education*, 3(8), 45-58.

Strait, D. L., Hornickel, J., & Kraus, N. (2011). Subcortical processing of speech regularities underlies reading and music aptitude in children. *Behavioral and Brain Functions*, 7, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1744-9081-7-44>

Sutcliffe, R., Du, K., & Ruffman, T. (2020). Music making and neuropsychological aging: a review. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 113, 479-491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2020.03.026>

Vidal, M. M., Lousada, M., & Vigário, M. (2020). Music effects on phonological awareness development in 3-year-old children. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 41(2), 299-318. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716419000535>

Yopp, H. K., & Yopp, R. H. (2009). Phonological awareness is child's play. *Young Children*, 64(1), 12-21.