

Original Article

READFLEX: A Research-Based Reading Enhancement and Development Flexible Learning Experience Reading Tool for Grade 3 Pupils with Developing Reading Proficiency Level

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Abstract. Reading difficulties among Grade 3 pupils with developing reading proficiency continue to hinder literacy development, highlighting the need for research-based instructional materials that provide structured and developmentally appropriate reading support. This study aimed to develop and evaluate READFLEX (Reading Enhancement and Development: Flexible Learning Experience), a research-based reading tool grounded in Dual Coding Theory for Grade 3 pupils with developing reading proficiency level. The study employed a Design and Development Research (DDR) approach at a public elementary school in Davao Oriental, Philippines. Learners' reading proficiency was determined using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), and three purposively selected reading experts evaluated the developed reading tool using the Department of Education's Learning Resource Management and Development System (DepEd LRMS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. Results showed that most Grade 3 pupils were classified as Developing Readers (40.63%), indicating the need for targeted reading support. In response, READFLEX was developed with 25 progressively leveled reading passages integrated with picture-supported activities, guided oral reading, repeated reading, sequencing tasks, comprehension exercises, and teacher-guided scaffolding based on Dual Coding Theory. Expert evaluation demonstrated that the tool met the prescribed standards for content (28.00), format (71.67), presentation and organization (20.00), and accuracy and up-to-dateness of information (24.00). The findings indicate that READFLEX is an acceptable and developmentally appropriate reading resource that can support the literacy development of Grade 3 pupils with developing reading proficiency.

Keywords: *Developing readers; Dual Coding Theory; Grade 3 pupils; READFLEX; Reading tool.*

Reading proficiency is a fundamental determinant of learners' academic success because it enables them to acquire knowledge, construct meaning from texts, and participate effectively across learning areas (Kim et al., 2020). During the elementary years, reading serves as the foundation for subsequent learning in language, mathematics, science, and other disciplines. Learners with strong reading skills are better equipped to comprehend instructional materials, communicate ideas, and engage in higher-order thinking, whereas those with weak reading abilities often face persistent learning difficulties that extend beyond literacy itself (Colwell et al., 2021; Denton et al., 2021). Contemporary research consistently emphasizes that early mastery of decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is critical for long-term academic achievement and lifelong learning (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

Despite sustained efforts to improve literacy instruction, reading difficulties remain a widespread educational concern. International evidence indicates that many learners continue to struggle with foundational reading skills during the primary grades, limiting their ability to understand increasingly complex texts and participate meaningfully in classroom instruction (Crawford et al., 2025). Learners with inadequate reading proficiency often struggle to recognize unfamiliar words, decode connected text, read fluently, and construct meaning from written passages, resulting in reduced academic performance and diminished engagement in learning activities (Ecalte et al., 2021; Crawford et al., 2025). Because reading competence is a prerequisite for learning across disciplines, persistent reading difficulties in the elementary years may contribute to cumulative learning gaps that become increasingly difficult to remediate in later grades (Denton et al., 2022).

The challenge is similarly evident within the Philippine educational context. National and international assessments have consistently reported low levels of reading achievement among Filipino learners. Results from the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that the Philippines ranked among the lowest-performing participating countries in reading literacy, with a substantial proportion of learners failing to demonstrate minimum proficiency in reading comprehension (DepEd, 2019). Although educational recovery initiatives have been implemented in recent years, the 2022 PISA results continued to reveal substantial gaps in Filipino learners' reading performance, with achievement remaining well below the OECD average (OECD, 2023). Likewise, recent educational reports have highlighted ongoing concerns about learners' oral reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension, particularly in the primary grades, where foundational literacy skills are expected to be established (EDCOM II, 2025). These findings underscore the ongoing need for evidence-based instructional materials that support literacy development among elementary learners who continue to experience reading difficulties.

Among elementary learners, those classified at the developing reading proficiency level require instructional attention. According to the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA, 2024), these learners show emerging decoding skills and can recognize familiar words but still need instructional support to achieve automaticity, reading fluency, and meaningful comprehension. Previous studies similarly report that developing readers frequently struggle to decode unfamiliar vocabulary, recognize words automatically, maintain appropriate reading pace, and integrate textual information into coherent understanding. Because word recognition demands considerable cognitive effort, these learners often have limited cognitive resources for comprehension, making independent reading increasingly difficult (Hiebert, 2025). Consequently, they benefit from carefully scaffolded instruction, guided reading experiences, repeated reading opportunities, and instructional materials that provide explicit support throughout the reading process (Denton et al., 2022; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2021).

Research also suggests that effective literacy instruction goes beyond repeated practice and should incorporate approaches that actively support learners' cognitive processing during reading. Learner-centered interventions, including guided oral reading, repeated reading, vocabulary-building activities, comprehension exercises, and visually supported instructional materials, have shown positive effects on decoding accuracy, reading fluency, comprehension, and learner engagement (Kim et al., 2020; Denton et al., 2022). Visually enriched reading materials help learners make meaningful connections between printed words and their corresponding concepts, facilitating deeper understanding and improving retention of newly acquired information (Fiorella, 2022). These findings suggest that instructional materials designed to integrate multiple forms of representation may better address the learning needs of developing readers than conventional text-based approaches alone.

While numerous instructional approaches have been developed to improve literacy outcomes among elementary learners, many interventions focus on specific components of reading, such as phonics instruction, repeated reading, guided reading, vocabulary development, or comprehension strategies (Denton et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2022). Although these approaches have shown positive effects on learners' reading performance, instructional materials are still needed that systematically integrate visual and verbal learning experiences into a single research-based resource designed for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Fiorella, 2022). Existing reading materials may provide scaffolded support for specific aspects of reading; however, there remains a need for instructional resources that systematically integrate decoding, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension while accommodating the learning needs of pupils who continue to require reading support (Denton et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2023). Consequently, learner-centered instructional

materials that combine evidence-based reading practices with cognitive principles are essential to strengthen learners' understanding, engagement, and retention during reading activities.

One theoretical framework that provides a strong cognitive foundation for designing such instructional materials is Dual Coding Theory, proposed by Allan Paivio. The theory posits that learning improves when information is processed through complementary verbal and nonverbal cognitive systems, enabling learners to build stronger mental representations and retrieve information more effectively (Paivio, 1991; Clark & Paivio, 1991). Recent educational research supports applying Dual Coding Theory in literacy instruction, showing that integrating written text with meaningful visual representations improves learners' comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and memory retention. For developing readers, visual supports such as illustrations, picture cues, sequencing activities, and guided oral reading experiences help build meaningful connections between printed words and their meanings, reducing the cognitive demands of word recognition while supporting deeper comprehension (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Duke & Cartwright, 2021). These findings suggest that reading materials grounded in Dual Coding Theory can provide more effective instructional support for learners whose literacy skills are still emerging.

Despite the growing body of research on reading interventions and the documented benefits of integrating visual and verbal representations in instruction, opportunities remain to develop locally contextualized, research-based reading materials specifically designed for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency (Benosa & Gaza, 2025; Heraña & Azarias, 2024). Existing studies have largely examined the effectiveness of individual instructional strategies or classroom interventions, while relatively little attention has been given to the systematic design and expert evaluation of reading tools grounded in Dual Coding Theory and developed using a structured educational design framework. Moreover, while locally developed reading materials and interventions are available, opportunities remain to develop research-based instructional resources that integrate multiple evidence-based reading practices into a single, coherent learning material tailored to the reading characteristics of Grade 3 learners identified through the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA). Addressing this gap is essential to provide teachers with developmentally appropriate reading materials that respond to the literacy needs of developing readers and support evidence-based classroom instruction.

In response, this study developed READFLEX (Reading Enhancement and Development: Flexible Learning eXperience), a research-based reading tool for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency. Guided by Dual Coding Theory and the principles of Design and Development Research, READFLEX integrates visual and verbal instructional experiences through illustrated reading passages, picture-supported vocabulary activities, guided oral reading exercises, repeated reading tasks, and comprehension activities designed to strengthen learners' decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. These instructional components provide meaningful, scaffolded literacy experiences responsive to the learning characteristics of developing readers.

Accordingly, this study aimed to design, develop, and evaluate READFLEX as a research-based reading tool for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency. Specifically, the study identified learners' reading profiles using the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), developed the instructional material based on the principles of Dual Coding Theory, and evaluated its quality through expert assessment in terms of content, format, presentation, and organization, and the accuracy and up-to-dateness of information. By providing a theoretically grounded and systematically developed instructional resource, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen literacy instruction and support the reading development of elementary learners requiring additional instructional assistance.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed Design and Development Research (DDR) to design, develop, and evaluate READFLEX (Reading Enhancement and Development: Flexible Learning eXperience), a research-based reading tool for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency. DDR is a systematic research approach that focuses on designing, developing, and evaluating instructional products intended to address identified educational needs (Richey & Klein, 2007). This research design was appropriate because the study focused on systematically developing a reading tool grounded in Dual Coding Theory and evaluating its quality through expert assessment rather than determining its instructional effectiveness. Consistent with the Design and Development Research (DDR)

approach (Richey & Klein, 2007), the development process included a needs analysis, the design and development of the instructional material, and the evaluation of its quality using the Department of Education's Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources (Department of Education, 2019).

Participants and Sampling Technique

The researchers used purposive sampling to select participants based on their relevance to the study's objectives. The study involved two groups of participants. The first group consisted of 32 Grade 3 learners enrolled at a public elementary school in Davao Oriental, Philippines. Their Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) results were used during the needs analysis to identify learners' reading proficiency levels and determine the instructional needs READFLEX addresses. Learners were included if they were officially enrolled in Grade 3 during the study and had available CRLA reading assessment results. The second group comprised three reading experts from the same public elementary school who evaluated the developed instructional material. The experts were selected based on the following criteria: (a) currently teaching at the elementary level, (b) possessing at least ten years of teaching experience, and (c) having experience in reading instruction or serving as reading coordinators.

Research Instrument

The study utilized two research instruments. The first was the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) developed by the Department of Education, which was used to determine the reading proficiency levels of the Grade 3 learners. The assessment classifies learners into four proficiency levels: Emerging, Developing, Transitioning, and Reading at Grade Level. The CRLA results served as the basis for identifying the instructional needs of learners with developing reading proficiency and guided the design of READFLEX. The second instrument was the Department of Education's Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. The instrument was adopted to evaluate the quality of the developed reading tool across four evaluation criteria: content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and up-to-dateness of information. Reading experts evaluated each criterion using the instrument's four-point rating scale. Ratings below the highest score required evaluators to provide comments and recommendations, while evaluators rated criteria deemed not applicable according to the LRMDS evaluation guidelines. The evaluation results were interpreted using the descriptive indicators provided in the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources and were subsequently classified as either Passed or Failed based on the prescribed passing criteria for each evaluation factor.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researchers obtained ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) of Davao Oriental State University – Cateel Campus. The researchers also secured approval to conduct the study from the Campus Administrator of Davao Oriental State University and the principal of the participating public elementary school. The study began with a needs analysis using the CRLA results of Grade 3 learners to identify their reading proficiency levels and determine the specific instructional needs READFLEX would address. Guided by the needs analysis findings and the principles of Dual Coding Theory, the researchers designed and developed the instructional material, incorporating picture-supported reading passages, guided oral reading activities, repeated reading tasks, vocabulary-building exercises, sequencing activities, and comprehension exercises appropriate for learners with developing reading proficiency. Following the development phase, the reading tool was submitted to the selected reading experts for evaluation using the LRMDS Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. The experts examined READFLEX's quality in terms of content, format, presentation, and organization, as well as the accuracy and currency of the information. Their comments and recommendations served as the basis for refining the instructional material.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study utilized descriptive statistical techniques. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the reading proficiency profile of the Grade 3 pupils based on the CRLA classifications. The reading experts' evaluation results were summarized according to the prescribed scoring criteria of the LRMDS Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. The developed reading tool was considered acceptable when it met the minimum passing scores for each evaluation factor: Content (21/28), Format (54/72), Presentation and Organization (15/20), and Accuracy and Up-to-dateness of Information (24/24). The researchers interpreted the evaluation results using

the descriptive indicators provided in the instrument and classified them as either passed or failed based on the prescribed passing criteria for each evaluation factor.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers strictly observed ethical principles throughout the study. Approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) of Davao Oriental State University – Cateel Campus prior to data collection. The researchers also secured permission to conduct the study from the school principal of the participating public elementary school. Participation of the reading experts was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before the evaluation process. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Grade 3 pupils participated only in the preliminary needs analysis through their CRLA reading profile data and did not participate in the evaluation of the developed reading tool. To ensure confidentiality and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), the researchers protected participant identities through codes and stored all collected data in password-protected files accessible only to the researchers. The data were used solely for research purposes and were scheduled for proper disposal after the study's completion.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the study findings in relation to the research objectives. The results are organized by the respondents' reading proficiency profile and the development and evaluation of READFLEX (Reading Enhancement and Development: Flexible Learning eXperience). Each finding is followed immediately by its corresponding discussion, explaining its implications and relating the results to existing literature.

Reading Proficiency Profile of Grade 3 Pupils

Table 1. Reading Proficiency Profile of Grade 3 Learners		
Reading Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage
Emerging	4	12.50%
Transitioning	12	37.50%
Developing Readers	13	40.63%
At Grade Level	3	9.38%
Total	32	100%

Table 1 shows that the largest proportion of Grade 3 learners (40.63%) were classified as Developing Readers, followed by Transitioning Readers (37.50%), Emerging Readers (12.50%), and learners Reading at Grade Level (9.38%). These findings indicate that most learners had acquired basic phonological awareness and decoding skills but still required instructional support to improve reading automaticity, fluency, and comprehension. The predominance of learners at the developing reading proficiency level underscores the need for targeted instructional support that addresses foundational literacy skills. Learners at this stage generally show emerging decoding abilities but still require scaffolded instruction to strengthen reading fluency, automaticity, and comprehension. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that guided and repeated reading activities improve reading fluency by enhancing reading accuracy, reading rate, and expressive oral reading. Similarly, evidence indicates that repeated reading and explicit instruction in foundational reading skills strengthen automatic word recognition and improve reading comprehension among primary-grade learners (Denton et al., 2022). Furthermore, integrating structured instructional support that addresses decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension enables learners to construct meaning more effectively and supports overall reading development (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). The needs analysis results provided empirical support for developing READFLEX. Grounded in Dual Coding Theory, the instructional material integrates verbal and visual representations to support decoding, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension among Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency.

Development of READFLEX

The development of READFLEX (Reading Enhancement and Development: Flexible Learning eXperience) was informed by the needs analysis findings, which identified most Grade 3 learners as Developing Readers based on the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA). These learners showed emerging decoding skills but still needed instructional support to strengthen reading fluency, automaticity, vocabulary development, and comprehension. Guided by these identified literacy needs, READFLEX was developed as a structured

supplementary reading tool grounded in Dual Coding Theory, which emphasizes that learning is enhanced when verbal and visual representations are processed through complementary cognitive systems. Consequently, the instructional material integrates text, illustrations, guided reading experiences, and scaffolded literacy activities to support the progressive development of reading skills among developing readers.

READFLEX consists of nine instructional components that were systematically arranged to provide a sequential learning experience, beginning with learner readiness and culminating in independent reading reinforcement. Each component was intentionally designed to address a specific stage of the reading process while collectively supporting the literacy needs identified during the needs analysis.

Title Page

The *Title Page* serves as the introductory component of READFLEX and establishes learner readiness before engaging in the reading activities. Positioned at the beginning of the instructional material, it was designed to capture learners' attention and create a positive initial learning experience. Previous studies show that gaining learners' attention is essential for sustaining motivation and engagement throughout instruction (Keller, 2016), while visually appealing instructional materials can promote learner interest, motivation, and active participation, particularly among young learners (Paldy et al., 2025). Guided by Dual Coding Theory, the Title Page combines text and visuals to provide an engaging introduction that prepares learners cognitively for the reading tasks that follow (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Paivio, 1991).

Let's Unlock New Words

Following the introductory component of READFLEX, the *Let's Unlock New Words* component prepares learners for the reading passage through vocabulary familiarization. Introducing unfamiliar vocabulary before reading helps learners establish familiarity with key words, reducing potential difficulties during reading and supporting meaningful comprehension. Previous studies show that pre-reading vocabulary instruction supports vocabulary learning and improves learners' understanding of texts by building familiarity with essential words before reading (Pellicer-Sánchez et al., 2022). Likewise, systematic vocabulary instruction contributes to vocabulary growth and improved reading comprehension among elementary learners (Bauer & Tang, 2022). Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding Theory, the component pairs vocabulary words with meaningful illustrations to strengthen word-meaning associations through complementary verbal and visual representations.

Listen and Learn

Building on learners' vocabulary preparation, the *Listen and Learn* component provides guided auditory support before they participate in oral reading. Following the vocabulary familiarization activity, learners listen to a modeled reading to become familiar with accurate pronunciation, appropriate pacing, and expressive reading before reading the passage themselves. Previous studies have shown that modeled oral reading provides learners with accurate demonstrations of pronunciation, pacing, and prosody, contributing to improvements in reading fluency and word recognition (Hall et al., 2023). Likewise, listening-supported reading activities and explicit teacher modeling strengthen learners' comprehension and oral reading performance by providing scaffolded support during the early stages of reading development (Denton et al., 2022). Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding Theory, presenting spoken language and printed text simultaneously enables learners to process information through complementary verbal and visual representations, supporting comprehension and preparing them for guided oral reading activities.

Let's Read Together

Building on the modeled reading experience, the *Let's Read Together* component provides guided shared reading opportunities that allow learners to apply the pronunciation, pacing, and expression demonstrated during the preceding activity. Through guided oral reading, learners actively participate while receiving immediate instructional support, thereby strengthening reading accuracy, fluency, and confidence. Shared reading experiences supported by teacher scaffolding have been shown to strengthen children's oral language and emergent literacy by providing meaningful opportunities for guided participation during reading (Weadman et al., 2023). Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding Theory, integrating oral reading with printed text enables learners to process information through complementary verbal and visual representations, reinforcing word recognition and supporting reading comprehension.

Read Again and Again

To reinforce the skills developed during guided shared reading, the *Read Again and Again* component provides learners with additional opportunities to reread familiar passages with gradually reduced teacher support. Revisiting familiar texts strengthens fluency, automaticity, and reading confidence while allowing learners to become increasingly independent readers. Previous research shows that repeated reading improves oral reading fluency and supports more accurate, efficient word recognition through continued exposure to connected text (Denton et al., 2022). Likewise, repeated practice with familiar passages promotes automaticity, enabling learners to devote more cognitive resources to comprehension rather than word recognition (Hiebert, 2025). Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding Theory, learners revisit the same verbal and visual representations throughout the activity, strengthening memory, supporting meaning-making, and further enhancing reading comprehension and fluency.

Put the Events Together

Once learners have become familiar with the reading passage through repeated reading, the *Put the Events Together* component develops sequencing skills by requiring them to organize the story events in their correct order. This progression helps learners move beyond accurate reading to recognize relationships among events and construct meaning from the text. Previous research has shown that explicit instruction in text structure and the organization of ideas improves learners' ability to identify relationships within texts and generate main ideas, contributing to stronger reading comprehension (Stevens et al., 2020). Likewise, reading comprehension develops as learners actively organize, connect, and interpret information presented in the text (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding Theory, the component combines written story events with visual cues to help learners organize and interpret information through complementary verbal and visual representations.

Did You Understand?

The *Did You Understand?* was developed as the seventh component of READFLEX to assess and reinforce the reading comprehension of Grade 3 pupils with developing reading proficiency through guided comprehension questions based on the reading passage. It was intentionally placed after the *Put the Events Together* activity because organizing story events gives learners a coherent understanding of the text, enabling them to engage more effectively in comprehension tasks that require recalling details, interpreting information, and constructing meaning. While sequencing helps learners recognize a story's structure and progression, guided comprehension questions encourage them to extend their understanding beyond literal recall by making connections and responding meaningfully to the text.

Previous research has shown that questioning strategies promote reading comprehension by encouraging learners to actively monitor their understanding, process textual information more deeply, and construct meaning while reading (Liu, 2021). Likewise, guided questioning and dialogic reading activities improve learners' comprehension and engagement by encouraging active interaction with the text and supporting deeper information processing (Han et al., 2025). These findings suggest that structured comprehension questioning serves as an appropriate follow-up activity that allows learners to demonstrate and strengthen their understanding after engaging in fluency and sequencing tasks.

Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding Theory, the *Did You Understand?* component encourages learners to integrate information acquired through both verbal and visual representations. As learners respond to comprehension questions after interacting with printed text and accompanying visual supports, they reinforce meaning-making, consolidate understanding, and demonstrate comprehension through multiple cognitive processes (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Paivio, 1991).

Home Reading Time

Extending reading practice beyond classroom instruction, the *Home Reading Time* component encourages learners to continue reading independently using the same reading materials introduced during class. This reinforcement activity provides additional opportunities to strengthen reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension through continued engagement with familiar texts. Previous research has shown that structured home-based reading activities improve learners' reading accuracy, fluency, and instructional reading levels by providing meaningful opportunities for repeated reading beyond the classroom (Hindin & Steiner, 2022). Likewise, regular independent reading improves reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and overall reading achievement by increasing learners' opportunities to engage with text (Mackenzie, 2025). Reflecting the principles of Dual Coding

Theory, learners continue interacting with the same verbal and visual representations introduced during classroom instruction, reinforcing memory, supporting meaning-making, and extending learning beyond the classroom.

Great Job Reader

Concluding the instructional sequence, the *Great Job, Reader!* component provides positive reinforcement by recognizing learners' participation and accomplishments throughout the reading activities. Ending the reading experience with encouragement strengthens learners' confidence, sustains motivation, and fosters positive attitudes toward reading. Previous research shows that learners with higher reading motivation engage more in reading activities and achieve stronger reading outcomes (Schiefele et al., 2012). Likewise, positive reinforcement and motivational support encourage sustained participation in literacy activities and contribute to continued reading engagement. Including verbal encouragement alongside visual motivational elements aligns with Dual Coding Theory, suggesting that combining verbal and visual representations can reinforce positive reading experiences, strengthen memory, and encourage learners to remain engaged in future reading activities.

Table 2. *List of the Reading Passages in READFLEX*

No	Title of Passage
1	The Young Crab and His Mother
2	The Lion and the Mouse
3	The Ant and the Grasshopper
4	The Monkey and the Turtle
5	The Boy Who Cried Wolf
6	The Turtle and the Rabbit
7	The Legend of the Pineapple
8	The Fox and the Grapes
9	My Brother's Peculiar Chicken
10	Midsummer
11	The Laughter of My Father
12	How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife
13	The Flowers of May
14	The Small Key
15	The Bread of Salt
16	The Mats
17	My Father Goes to Court
18	The Selfish Giant
19	The Happiest Boy in the World
20	The Ugly Duckling
21	Frog and Toad Are Friends
22	The Spotted Cow
23	Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears
24	The Giving Tree
25	Children of the Ash-Covered Loam

The passages, consisting of adapted fables, folktales, and literary narratives, were simplified to match the reading proficiency of Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency while preserving their instructional value. The study included 25 reading passages to provide sustained reading practice throughout the 10-week intervention period, with each passage delivered across two 40-minute instructional sessions. The passages were intentionally arranged from less complex to more challenging texts based on vocabulary familiarity, sentence structure, text length, and conceptual complexity (Toyama, 2021). Earlier passages contained shorter texts with familiar vocabulary and simpler narrative structures, whereas succeeding passages gradually introduced more sophisticated language and ideas requiring deeper comprehension. This progressive organization provided learners with scaffolded reading experiences that gradually increased cognitive demands while remaining developmentally appropriate (Denton et al., 2022). Consistent reading practice has been recognized as an important contributor to literacy development (Kim et al., 2020), and the systematic progression of the reading passages complements the instructional sequence established throughout READFLEX by providing repeated opportunities to apply and strengthen previously acquired reading skills.

Expert Evaluation of READFLEX

After developing READFLEX, reading experts evaluated the instructional material using the Department of Education's Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. The evaluation assessed the material's quality in terms of content, format, presentation and organization, and the accuracy and up-to-dateness of information. The findings are presented in the succeeding tables.

Content

Table 3. *Expert Evaluation of READFLEX in Terms of Content*

Indicators	Average Score
1. Content is suitable for the student's level of development.	4
2. Material contributes to the achievement of specific objectives of the subject area and grade/year level for which it is intended.	4
3. Material provides for the development of higher cognitive skills such as critical thinking, creativity, learning by doing, inquiry, problem solving, etc.	4
4. Material is free of ideological, cultural, religious, racial, and gender biases and prejudices.	4
5. Material enhances the development of desirable values and traits.	4
6. Material has the potential to arouse the interest of the target reader.	4
7. Adequate warning/cautionary notes are provided in topics and activities where safety and health are of concern.	4
Total Average Score	28
Interpretation	Passed

READFLEX obtained a total score of 28, satisfying the prescribed passing criterion of the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. All content indicators received the highest average score of 4.00, indicating unanimous agreement among the reading experts that the developed reading tool was developmentally appropriate, aligned with the intended learning objectives, promoted higher-order thinking skills, remained free from ideological, cultural, religious, racial, and gender biases, fostered desirable values, stimulated learner interest, and was suitable for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency.

The favorable evaluation reflects READFLEX's alignment with established principles of instructional material development. Benosa and Gaza (2026) emphasized that reading materials should match learners' developmental characteristics to keep instructional content understandable and appropriate to their reading readiness. Similarly, Anwar (2021) emphasized that instructional materials should extend learning beyond simple recall by encouraging learners to analyze, organize, and respond meaningfully to information. The integration of varied reading activities in READFLEX reflects these principles by giving learners opportunities to develop comprehension while engaging in higher-order thinking tasks.

Another factor contributing to the positive evaluation is the reading tool's learner-centered design. Benosa and Gaza (2026) noted that contextualized and learner-appropriate reading materials promote greater learner engagement by addressing learners' needs, interests, and reading proficiency. Likewise, Sampang et al. (2025) emphasized that learning materials should be inclusive and free from biases to provide equitable and meaningful learning experiences for diverse learners. These characteristics were evident in READFLEX, which was designed to address the literacy needs of Grade 3 learners while maintaining fairness, relevance, and developmental appropriateness across all learning activities.

Format

The material received an average total score of 71.67, meeting the prescribed passing score for the format criterion of the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. Most indicators received a rating of 4.00, reflecting the experts' agreement that READFLEX's print readability, illustrations, layout, and physical characteristics were appropriate for classroom use. The indicator on durable binding obtained a slightly lower mean score ($M = 3.67$), although it remained within the acceptable standard and did not affect the overall passed evaluation.

Table 4. *Expert Evaluation of READFLEX in Terms of Format*

Indicators	Score
1. Prints	
1.1 Size of letters is appropriate to the intended user.	4
1.2 Spaces between letters and words facilitate reading.	4
1.3 Font is easy to read.	4
1.4 Printing is of good quality (i.e., no broken letters, even density, correct alignment, properly placed screen registration).	4
2. Illustrations	
2.1 Simple and easily recognizable.	4
2.2 Clarify and supplement the text.	4
2.3 Properly labeled or captioned (if applicable).	4
2.4 Realistic / appropriate colors.	4
2.5 Attractive and appealing.	4
2.6 Culturally relevant.	4
3. Design and Layout	
3.1 Attractive and pleasing to look at.	4
3.2 Simple (i.e., does not distract the attention of the reader).	4
3.3 Adequate illustration in relation to text.	4
3.4 Harmonious blending of elements (e.g., illustrations and text).	4
4. Paper and Binding	
4.1 Paper used contributes to easy reading.	4
4.2 Durable binding to withstand frequent use.	3.67
5. Size and Weight Resource	
5.1 Easy to handle.	4
5.2 Relatively light.	4
Average Total Score	71.67
Interpretation	Passed

The evaluation shows that READFLEX's physical appearance was appropriate for its intended users. Clear print, adequate spacing, and well-designed illustrations make reading materials easier for young learners to use and understand. Mayer (2021) explained that illustrations and well-designed visual elements facilitate learning by directing learners' attention and supporting understanding. Similarly, Vlasenko et al. (2023) emphasized that clear visual design, organized layouts, and usability principles enhance learners' interaction with educational materials and contribute to more effective learning experiences. These features were incorporated into READFLEX to make the reading activities suitable for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency. However, one indicator received a slightly lower rating than the rest. The experts noted that the binding could be improved to better withstand frequent classroom use. While this did not affect the overall acceptability of the material, it highlights an area to strengthen in future revisions. Benosa and Gaza (2026) emphasized that instructional material quality extends beyond content by considering usability and suitability for learners' intended learning context. Improving the physical durability of READFLEX may therefore increase its usability, particularly when teachers and learners use the material repeatedly.

Presentation and Organization

Table 5. *Expert Evaluation of READFLEX in Terms of Presentation and Organization*

Indicators	Score
1. Presentation is engaging, interesting, and understandable.	4
2. There is a logical and smooth flow of ideas.	4
3. Vocabulary level is adapted to the target reader's likely experience and level of understanding.	4
4. Length of sentences is suited to the comprehension level of the target reader.	4
5. Sentences and paragraph structures are varied and interesting to the target reader.	4
Average Total Score	20
Interpretation	Passed

All five indicators received the highest average score of 4.00, resulting in an average total score of 20 and a Passed interpretation. The reading experts agreed that READFLEX presented ideas in a clear, logical sequence; used vocabulary appropriate for the target learners; maintained sentence lengths suited to their reading level; and provided an engaging, understandable presentation throughout the material.

A well-organized presentation helps learners understand and follow reading texts. Duke and Cartwright (2021) explained that developing readers benefit from instructional materials that present information clearly,

coherently, and in a well-structured way to support reading comprehension. Likewise, Toyama (2021) emphasized that text characteristics, including vocabulary familiarity, sentence structure, and overall text organization, influence learners' reading comprehension and their ability to process written information. When information is presented clearly and in an organized way, learners can focus on understanding the text rather than dealing with unnecessary language or structural difficulties. Experts also found that READFLEX's presentation engaged its intended users. Rahman and Mohamad (2023) reported that reading materials that foster learners' interest and motivation promote sustained engagement in reading activities. The use of learner-appropriate language, varied sentence structures, and a logical arrangement of activities contributed to a reading material that was both understandable and engaging for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency.

Accuracy and Up-to-dateness of Information

Table 6. *Expert Evaluation of READFLEX in Terms of Accuracy and Up-to-dateness of Information*

Indicators	Score
1. Conceptual errors	4
2. Factual errors	4
3. Grammatical errors	4
4. Computational errors	4
5. Obsolete information	4
6. Typographical and other minor errors (e.g., inappropriate or unclear illustrations, missing labels, wrong captions, etc.)	4
Average Total Score	24
Passing Score	24
Interpretation	Passed

READFLEX yielded a total score of 24, meeting the prescribed passing score of the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS) Evaluation Rating Sheet for Print Resources. All six indicators received the highest average score of 4.00, indicating that the reading experts found READFLEX free from conceptual, factual, grammatical, computational, typographical, and other minor errors. The evaluation also confirmed that the information presented in the reading tool was current and appropriate for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency.

Accuracy is a fundamental characteristic of effective instructional materials, particularly for elementary learners who rely on learning resources to develop correct understanding and reading skills. Benosa and Gaza (2026) emphasized that high-quality reading materials should provide accurate, developmentally appropriate, and learner-centered content that supports meaningful learning experiences. Likewise, Mayer (2021) explained that instructional materials should present information clearly and accurately to facilitate learners' understanding and reduce unnecessary cognitive demands. These qualities help ensure that learners receive reliable instructional support throughout the learning process.

The perfect rating in this criterion reflects the careful review of the reading passages, learning activities, and instructional content during the development of READFLEX. The team ensured the material was grammatically correct, factually accurate, and free of unnecessary errors before expert evaluation. Such careful preparation strengthened the credibility of the reading tool and contributed to its suitability as a supplementary resource for Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency.

Conclusion

This study contributed to the development of READFLEX (Reading Enhancement and Development: Flexible Learning eXperience), a research-based reading tool designed to address the reading needs of Grade 3 learners with developing reading proficiency level. Guided by Dual Coding Theory and informed by learners' reading profiles identified through the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), the instructional material was systematically developed to provide scaffolded learning experiences that support vocabulary development, reading fluency, automaticity, and comprehension. The favorable evaluation of READFLEX across the criteria of content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and up-to-dateness of information indicates that the developed material satisfies the standards prescribed for instructional print resources and is appropriate for supplementary classroom use.

The findings underscore the value of designing instructional materials that respond to learners' identified needs and are grounded in established educational theory. READFLEX provides elementary teachers with an additional literacy resource that may complement classroom reading instruction, particularly for learners requiring structured support in developing foundational reading skills. The study also shows how integrating verbal and visual representations can support the development of learner-centered reading materials that promote meaningful and engaging literacy experiences.

Since the present study focused on the design, development, and expert evaluation of READFLEX, further research is recommended to examine its implementation in classroom settings and determine its effectiveness in improving learners' reading proficiency. Future studies may also explore its application across different grade levels, schools, and learner populations, while considering improvements in the material's physical durability to support long-term classroom use.

Contributions of Authors

Grace Marie Cervantes: Conceptualization, research design, methodology, proposal development, literature review, and manuscript preparation.
Nolaine Blessil O. Juanillo: Data analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation of the Results and Discussion and Conclusion sections.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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