

Adapting Marungko Sound Blending to English: A Cumulative Path from Decoding to Sentence Comprehension

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Abstract

Marungko-inspired materials are attractive for beginning reading because they introduce sounds in a purposeful sequence and quickly move learners from letters to syllables, words, phrases, and sentences. Adapting that logic to English requires care: English spelling represents sound less consistently than Filipino, and a visually simple consonant-vowel-consonant word may still contain a sound-spelling pattern not yet taught. This conceptual-design article analyzes Reading English Marungko Approach: Book 1, a 2024 beginning-reading booklet that pairs segmented letter strings with blended words, pictures, short descriptive sentences, and comprehension questions. The booklet is treated as an instructional artifact; no learner outcomes are inferred. The article proposes an orthographic-alignment framework for preserving the source's cumulative, practice-oriented strengths while accounting for English phonology, word meaning, grammar, and connected-text comprehension. Four design principles organize the framework: teach phonemes and graphemes explicitly, control cumulative decodability, connect every decoded word to oral language and meaning, and use learner errors to determine the next instructional move. Two tools are offered: an audit matrix for checking sound-spelling alignment, image support, sentence naturalness, and question quality; and a six-phase lesson cycle that moves through oral sound analysis, grapheme mapping, blending, phrase and sentence reading, meaning construction, and encoding. The framework distinguishes instructional decodability from textual authenticity and recommends planned introduction of high-frequency irregular words rather than accidental exposure. Its contribution is a transparent design proposition for English adaptation, editing, classroom use, and future empirical testing, not a claim that the booklet or framework has already produced measurable reading gains.

Keywords: beginning reading; Marungko approach; English phonics; decodable text; orthographic mapping; sentence comprehension

Introduction

Beginning readers must discover that print represents spoken language while also learning that reading is an act of meaning making. A lesson that remains at isolated letter naming can delay the experience of reading; a lesson that moves immediately to uncontrolled text can ask learners to guess from pictures or memory. Effective foundational instruction connects speech sounds with letters, teaches learners to blend and analyze words, and provides daily opportunities to read connected text (Foorman et al., 2016). The instructional challenge is to make those opportunities cumulative, accurate, and meaningful.

Marungko instruction is widely recognized in Philippine classrooms for introducing sounds in a sequence intended to support early blending rather than following the

alphabet mechanically. Reading English Marungko Approach: Book 1 adopts that practical logic for English. Its opening sound inventory is followed by compact pages that visually segment a short word, combine the parts, display the whole word, expand it into phrases and sentences, provide a picture, and ask literal questions about subject, color, quantity, or description (Sumayao, 2024). Words include bag, mat, mug, hat, pan, cat, pig, sun, wig, log, doll, pin, hen, pen, pot, pet, egg, bed, and leg.

The design offers an immediate path from print to meaning. Yet English is not Filipino with different vocabulary. English contains several spellings for the same sound, several sounds for the same letter, context-sensitive pronunciations, consonant digraphs, doubled letters, and a large set of frequent words that are not fully transparent to a novice. Castles et al. (2018) emphasize that reading instruction must be informed by the writing system being learned. An English adaptation therefore needs an explicit orthographic audit so that the order of words, sentence frames, and questions supports rather than obscures the intended learning.

Purpose and Guiding Question

This article asks: How can a Marungko-inspired English booklet retain a fast, cumulative movement from sounds to sentences while respecting the structural complexity of English spelling and comprehension? Its purposes are to analyze the booklet's instructional sequence, identify design decisions that require language-specific attention, and propose a practical audit and lesson cycle for revision and classroom use. The article does not evaluate the source author's teaching, test learners, or claim effectiveness.

Conceptual-Design Method

Artifact and Unit of Analysis

The source booklet was examined page by page as an instructional artifact. The unit of analysis was the word-to-question sequence: segmented print, blended word, phrase, sentence, image, and comprehension prompt. Each sequence was coded for the presumed target vowel or consonant pattern, whether all spellings were previously introduced, whether the image clarified meaning without replacing decoding, whether the sentence was natural and grammatically accurate, and whether questions assessed word reading, oral language, or sentence comprehension. No observations, test scores, interviews, or pupil work were available or inferred.

Standards Used for the Review

The review draws on five established relationships. Alphabetic instruction links phonemic segments in speech to graphemes in print. Orthographic mapping bonds spelling, pronunciation, and meaning in memory (Ehri, 2014). Phonological recoding allows successful decoding to contribute to self-teaching across encounters (Share, 1995). Connected-text reading develops accuracy and fluency when the text is sufficiently accessible (Foorman et al., 2016). Comprehension depends on both decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), with vocabulary, syntax, knowledge, and active regulation interacting during reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). These relationships guided the proposed design rather than serving as claims about the booklet's outcomes.

The Instructional Promise of the Source Booklet

A Visible Progression

Each practice page makes a progression visible. The learner first sees letters separated across a word, then a partial blend, then the complete word. The word reappears in a short phrase and one or more sentences before comprehension questions direct attention to meaning. This layout communicates that word recognition is built rather than guessed and that decoding serves a larger purpose. The compact page also permits repeated reading without requiring the learner to navigate unrelated text.

High Repetition with Low Page Complexity

Repeated sentence patterns such as ‘This is a...’ reduce syntactic load while the target word changes. Pictures make concrete nouns accessible, and questions reuse familiar dimensions such as color, number, and description. For an early reader, this consistency can free attention for the new spelling pattern. The risk is that repetition may become predictable enough for a learner to recite from page design or image cues without processing the word. Instruction should therefore include occasional transfer words and altered sentence positions.

A Bridge Toward Sentence Meaning

The booklet does not stop after word reading. It asks learners to identify who or what a sentence is about and to retrieve details from print. This is important because phonics is necessary but not sufficient for skilled reading (Castles et al., 2018). The questions can help teachers see whether the learner attaches meaning to a decoded form. Their diagnostic value improves when wording is grammatically accurate and when some prompts require integration rather than repetition of the most visible word.

Why English Adaptation Requires an Orthographic Lens

Phoneme-Grapheme Specificity

A printed letter is not itself a speech sound. The letter *a* represents different vowels in *bag*, *made*, *father*, and *about*; *c* represents different consonants in *cat* and *city*; and doubled consonants such as *ll* in *doll* or *gg* in *egg* do not normally signal two successive consonant sounds. A lesson should state the targeted correspondence precisely, for example short *a* /æ/ in a closed syllable, and should avoid implying that a letter has one permanent pronunciation. Terminology can remain child-friendly while teacher notes retain phonological accuracy.

The booklet's early CVC nouns are useful because many exhibit common short-vowel patterns. However, the word inventory also includes features that deserve explicit handling: *doll* varies by accent, *egg* and *leg* involve vowel variation across English varieties, and high-frequency sentence words such as *is*, *the*, *are*, and *there* may not be decodable from the correspondences introduced on the same page. These are not reasons to abandon the format. They are reasons to separate the target pattern from already taught patterns and planned irregular words.

Cumulative Decodability

A text is instructionally decodable when its words can be read primarily through correspondences and word parts the learner has been taught, together with a small, identified set of irregular words. Decodability is therefore relational: the same sentence may be decodable for one learner and uncontrolled for another. Mesmer (2005) found

that text decodability matters in early reading, but decodable materials should not be treated as a permanent genre or a substitute for rich oral and read-aloud experiences.

For each page, an editor can classify words into four groups: current target, previously secured patterns, temporarily teachable irregular words, and uncontrolled patterns. If the uncontrolled group is large, the sentence can be revised, the word moved later, or additional teacher support made explicit. This audit prevents an apparent word-reading task from quietly becoming a memory or picture-identification task.

Orthographic Mapping and Repetition

Orthographic mapping occurs when readers connect phonemes in a known spoken word with graphemes in its spelling, binding pronunciation, spelling, and meaning (Ehri, 2014). Repetition supports this process only when the learner attends to the internal letters and sounds. Seeing pig several times is not enough if the learner recognizes it from the photograph or page location. Instruction should include say-and-stretch routines, phoneme segmentation, grapheme mapping, blending from print, and brief retrieval after the picture is covered.

Share's (1995) self-teaching hypothesis explains why successful phonological recoding can establish word-specific knowledge. The teacher's role is to create successful but effortful encounters. If a learner cannot blend a word, support should preserve attention to print: model one sound, mark the continuous blend, or reduce the word to onset and rime temporarily, then return to full phoneme-grapheme mapping. Supplying the word immediately may protect lesson pace but removes the learning event.

Table 1

Orthographic-alignment audit for a Marungko-inspired English page

Page element	Quality question	Acceptable evidence	Revision when misaligned
Target correspondence	Is the taught phoneme-grapheme relation stated precisely?	Teacher note identifies sound, spelling, and relevant context.	Replace broad letter rule with a context-specific correspondence.
Segmented word	Do the displayed parts match phonemes or an intentionally taught chunk?	Segmentation supports blending without adding or deleting sounds.	Correct misleading spacing, doubled-letter treatment, or syllable division.
Word set	Are target and transfer words cumulatively decodable?	Patterns are taught; irregular words are few and explicitly marked.	Reorder, substitute, or preteach the uncontrolled word.
Phrase and sentence	Is the language natural, grammatical, and meaning-bearing?	Sentence sounds like usable English and preserves the decoding goal.	Revise agreement, article use, word order, or awkward repetition.
Picture	Does the image clarify meaning without revealing the word before decoding?	Image is accurate, culturally respectful, and used after an initial print attempt.	Delay, cover, replace, or reduce an overly diagnostic picture cue.
Questions	Do prompts distinguish decoding, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension?	Each question has a clear evidence purpose and grammatical wording.	Rewrite the prompt and add one explanation or inference item.
Cumulative record	Can the teacher identify what the learner has secured and what comes next?	Errors are coded by sound, blending, word recognition, language, or meaning.	Add transfer checks and a decision rule for reteaching or advancement.

Note. The audit evaluates instructional alignment; it does not determine effectiveness without learner evidence.

From Word Reading to Language Comprehension

Make Meaning Available Before Testing It

A learner cannot demonstrate reading comprehension for a word that is absent from oral vocabulary. Concrete nouns such as mug, mat, and pan are suitable because they can be shown and discussed. Less familiar items or ambiguous pictures require a brief oral-language introduction before decoding. Ouellette (2006) found that vocabulary breadth and depth relate differently to decoding and comprehension. A teacher should therefore confirm that the spoken word and concept are known, then ask the learner to map the known word to print.

Use Sentences That Are Both Controlled and Natural

Decodable sentences inevitably constrain vocabulary, but grammatical accuracy remains nonnegotiable. Prompts such as ‘How many bag is there?’ model incorrect number agreement at the moment learners are expected to build language. Editing should correct agreement, tense, article use, pronouns, and word choice while keeping the target pattern accessible. If a fully natural sentence requires an untaught word, that word can be introduced as a planned heart word or the sentence can be read collaboratively.

Sentence repetition should also accumulate meaning. ‘This is a pig,’ ‘This is a big pig,’ and ‘This is the big fat pig’ allow adjective expansion, but the teacher can ask what new information each sentence adds. The learner can manipulate adjective order orally, match sentences to pictures, or select which sentence best describes a changed image. This preserves the low decoding load while increasing language attention.

Design Questions for Diagnostic Value

The booklet's recurring questions about subject, color, number, and description can be organized as an evidence ladder. First, a decoding check asks the learner to read the target word without the image. Second, a vocabulary check asks for meaning or an example. Third, a sentence check asks who or what the sentence is about and what detail it supplies. Fourth, an integration item asks the learner to compare two sentences, explain a pronoun, or infer a simple relation. Fifth, an encoding item asks the learner to write or build the word and use it in a new sentence.

This ladder avoids treating every response as ‘comprehension.’ A learner who misreads the target may fail a detail question because of decoding; a learner who reads accurately but cannot explain the sentence may need oral-language support. Perfetti and Stafura (2014) place word knowledge within a broader comprehension system. Instruction improves when the teacher identifies the process responsible for the error rather than repeating the entire page.

A Six-Phase Instructional Cycle

Hear and Segment

The teacher introduces the spoken word without showing print, confirms meaning, and guides the learner to segment or identify the target phoneme. Counters, fingers, or sound boxes may represent phonemes. The purpose is to establish the sound sequence the spelling will encode. Phonemic awareness should be connected quickly to letters rather than becoming an extended oral-only exercise.

Map and Blend

The learner maps each phoneme to its grapheme, attends to any multiletter spelling, and blends through the word. Continuous blending minimizes memory demands: the learner begins the next sound without long pauses that break the spoken form. The teacher models only as much as necessary, then returns the complete word to the learner.

Read and Retrieve

The learner reads the word in mixed position among known words, then reads it again after a brief delay or with the picture covered. This checks whether attention has shifted from page cues to spelling. A transfer word using the same correspondence, such as moving from mat to sat when both consonants are known, tests the pattern without demanding memorization of the exact item.

Build the Sentence

The target word enters a short, natural sentence. The teacher previews any planned irregular word and asks the learner to reread for phrasing. Sentence strips can be rearranged or expanded with one modifier. The learner identifies what each added word contributes, linking grammar with comprehension.

Explain the Meaning

Questions progress from explicit detail to a small act of explanation or comparison. The image is used to confirm or extend meaning after print has been attempted. The learner should point to words that support the answer, preventing the picture from functioning as the sole source of information.

Encode and Review

The learner segments and spells the target word from speech, writes a phrase or completes a sentence, and reads the result. Encoding reveals whether sound-letter connections can be generated rather than merely recognized. A brief cumulative review records the error type and selects the next step: advance, practice blending, reteach a correspondence, strengthen oral language, or revise the sentence.

Table 2

Six-phase decoding-to-comprehension lesson cycle

Phase	Learner action	Evidence produced	Teacher response
Hear and segment	Says the known word and identifies its phonemes.	Accurate sound sequence independent of print.	Clarify meaning; model or scaffold only the difficult segment.
Map and blend	Links sounds to graphemes and blends through the word.	Print-based decoding without picture guessing.	Correct the earliest correspondence or blending break.
Read and retrieve	Reads mixed and delayed target/transfer words.	Increasing accuracy and word-specific recognition.	Contrast confusable spellings or add cumulative practice.
Build the sentence	Reads and manipulates a short grammatical sentence.	Accuracy, phrasing, and awareness of added information.	Preteach one irregular word or revise unnatural language.
Explain meaning	Answers with evidence from words and sentence relations.	Vocabulary knowledge and sentence-level comprehension.	Separate decoding difficulty from language or knowledge need.
Encode and review	Spells the word and uses it in a phrase or sentence.	Generative sound-spelling knowledge and transfer.	Record error category and select the smallest productive next step.

Note. The phases recur across lessons; pacing depends on learner evidence rather than page completion alone.

Using Errors as Instructional Evidence

Errors become useful when classified by process. A phoneme error occurs before print mapping; a correspondence error links the wrong sound and spelling; a blending error names sounds but does not combine them; a word-recognition error appears after successful prior decoding; a language error reflects unfamiliar vocabulary or syntax; and a comprehension error occurs despite accurate word reading and adequate language knowledge. The same wrong answer can arise from different processes.

Assessment should therefore sample isolated target words, transfer words, sentences, oral vocabulary, and brief explanations. The National Reading Panel (2000) reported evidence supporting systematic phonics while also treating fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as essential components. A single total score cannot tell a teacher which component requires attention. A compact error record aligned with the six-phase cycle can.

Editing and Material-Development Implications

Developers can apply the audit before publication. Each page should state its target correspondence in a teacher key, list all previously taught patterns, identify planned irregular words, and pass a grammar and image-accuracy review. Sentence questions should be edited for subject-verb agreement, plural forms, tense, and natural word choice. The source booklet includes strong repeated architecture; careful copyediting would protect that instructional consistency from language errors that could otherwise become part of the learner's model.

Sequence decisions should be evidence-based and revisable. A word that is concrete and visually attractive may still be unsuitable if it introduces several uncontrolled correspondences. Conversely, a common irregular word may be worth teaching explicitly because it enables meaningful sentences. The aim is not perfect decodability at all costs. It is transparent control: teachers and learners should know which parts can be sounded out, which must be learned as exceptions, and how the sentence communicates meaning.

Discussion

The source booklet's main strength is architectural. It repeatedly moves from segmented print to blended word, phrase, sentence, image, and question. That progression can reduce uncertainty for beginning readers and make the purpose of decoding visible. Its successful adaptation to English depends on language-specific quality control. English phoneme-grapheme relations, doubled letters, accent variation, irregular high-frequency words, and grammatical inflections cannot be handled safely by transferring a sound order alone.

The proposed framework preserves the source's practical economy while adding an orthographic-alignment audit, an explicit distinction among evidence types, and a six-phase instructional cycle. It also treats pictures as meaning supports after a print attempt and treats writing as a test of generative sound-spelling knowledge. Decoding and comprehension are connected without being collapsed into one score.

Research Agenda

Future research should begin with a page-level decodability analysis verified against the actual taught sequence. Small classroom pilots can then compare original

and revised pages using separate measures of phoneme awareness, word and transfer-word decoding, sentence reading, oral vocabulary, comprehension, and spelling. Think-alouds or error coding can examine whether learners rely on print, memory, or pictures. Studies should document English variety, prior literacy in Filipino or another language, dosage, teacher prompting, and fidelity. The present article provides a design and measurement agenda, not evidence that either version is superior.

Conclusion

A Marungko-inspired English booklet can offer beginning readers an appealing route from sounds to words and sentences. Its value lies in a cumulative structure that makes blending visible and gives each word an immediate communicative context. Because English orthography is comparatively complex, that structure requires an explicit audit of correspondences, decodability, irregular words, sentence grammar, image cues, and question purpose.

The orthographic-alignment matrix and six-phase cycle proposed here turn those requirements into practical design tools. They extend the booklet without fabricating pupil outcomes or replacing the need for evaluation. The resulting article is a scholarly proposition for how sound blending, word recognition, oral language, sentence comprehension, and encoding can be coordinated in English beginning-reading materials.

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