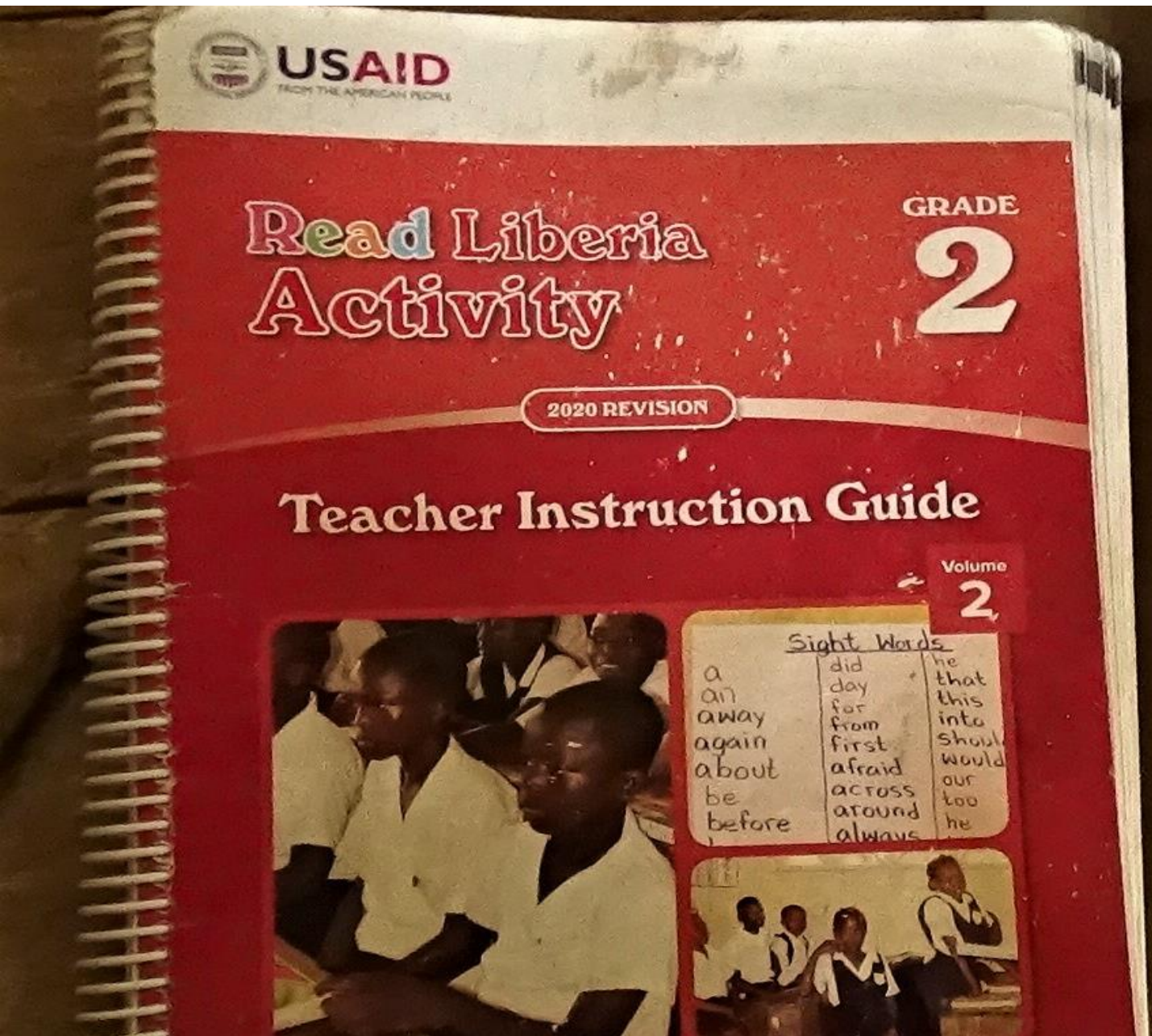




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USAID/LIBERIA READ LIBERIA IMPACT EVALUATION

CLASSROOM PRACTICES REPORT 2021-2022

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**USAID READING AND ACCESS (R&A)
EVALUATIONS**

**USAID/LIBERIA READ LIBERIA IMPACT
EVALUATION**

**CLASSROOM PRACTICES REPORT
2021-2022**

SEPTEMBER 2022

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DISCLAIMER

This report was prepared independently by Dr. Ursula Hoadley and Dr. Alicia Menendez for NORC at The University of Chicago. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Read Liberia (RL) activity is a structured reading intervention aimed at improving early grade reading (EGR) of about 57,600 students in Grades 1 and Grade 2 and emergent literacy skills of 2,700 KG students in schools in six Liberian counties: Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa, Margibi, Montserrado, and Nimba. The program started implementation in 2018 in 640 public schools and a few community primary schools. Read Liberia continues, and builds on evidence, from previous efforts to improve early grade reading made by the World Bank, USAID/Liberia, and Liberia's Ministry of Education (MOE). Previous efforts to improve EGR outcomes include the USAID-funded Early Grade Reading Assessment Plus: Liberia project, and the Liberia Teacher Training Project II (LTTP II).

There are two central components to the Read Liberia program that affect instructional practice: (1) the distribution of a set of scholastic materials to students and teachers, including daily scripted lesson plans, and (2) coaching / training support to teachers to shift instructional practice.

This report is the third in a series of classroom observation-based studies linked to the evaluation of the program that used an experimental approach to allocate schools randomly to receive Read Liberia Treatment or to serve as Control. The classroom observation research focuses on the use of the Read Liberia program materials and the nature of instructional practice in early grade reading classrooms. To discern the impact of the program, we compare instructional practices between Treatment and Control classrooms in schools across six districts.

In 2019, we visited 44 Treatment and seven Control classrooms. The study found that despite widespread availability of RL materials across Treatment classrooms, uptake of the program material, both in relation to the use of multiple materials aligned to the program week, as well as adherence to the program was very low. Students in Control classrooms had more opportunities to engage in text-based comprehension activity and discussion than students in Treatment classrooms where students mostly were exposed to some of the discrete foundational skills at the letter and word level (Hoadley and Menendez, 2019). In 2021, six Treatment and six Control classrooms were visited and suggested that this lack of exposure to text in Treatment classrooms was likely due to the design of the daily lesson plans. Teachers in 2021 taught a revised lesson plan with four to five- steps rather than the previous eight steps and students were exposed to more text and text discussion. In 2022, 19 Treatment classrooms and seven Control classrooms were visited. This report focuses on the 2021 and 2022 classroom observations to present on the findings from these 38 observations. Twenty-five of these 38 schools had been visited in 2019. Thirteen schools were visited for the first time in 2021/2022. The focus of this 2021/2022 research is framed by three questions:




- 1) What was the uptake by teachers of the Read Liberia program materials in teaching EGR?
- 2) What was the uptake by teachers of the Read Liberia structured lesson plans in classrooms, and what content was covered?
- 3) What were the differences in instructional practices between Treatment and Control classrooms?

I.1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE READ LIBERIA INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION

I.1.1. PROGRAM MATERIALS

The Read Liberia program uses four material components: a Teacher Instruction Guide (TIG), a Student Activity Book (SAB), a student reader titled Let’s Read (LR), and a series of levelled Supplementary Readers (SRs). The TIG provides teachers with weekly overviews of the reading skills to be covered and daily lesson plans which provide detail on what content needs to be covered and how the content should be taught. The TIG also includes detailed scripting, with precise directions to what the teacher should say and do. Figure 1 below shows an example of the scripting of a phonics activity that is meant to be taught using the gradual release (‘I do, we do, you do’) methodology.

Figure 1: Example of scripting from the Grade 2 TIG

PHONICS AND WORD STUDY			12 MIN.
Write the letters and words on the boards as shown at the left.			
			
<p>🔊 Remember, we learned that sometimes two vowels come together to make a new sound. We call this a vowel team. The vowel teams <i>ee</i> and <i>ea</i> make the long <i>e</i> sound, /ē/. The vowel teams <i>ay</i> and <i>ai</i> make the long <i>a</i> sound, /ā/. And the vowel team <i>ie</i> makes the long <i>i</i> sound, /ī/.</p> <p>🔊 Watch and listen as I read a word.</p> <p>Point to see. Point under each letter.</p> <p>🔊 /s/–/ē/, see.</p> <p>Repeat with <i>stream</i>.</p>	<p>🔊 Let’s say the sounds and read the word together.</p> <p>Point to see. Point under each letter.</p> <p>🔊 /s/–/ē/, see</p> <p>Repeat with <i>stream</i>, <i>day</i>, <i>tail</i>, and <i>tried</i>.</p>	<p>🔊 Now it’s your turn. Say the sounds and read the words on your own.</p> <p>One at a time point under the remaining words.</p>	

The daily lesson plans (an example of a page shown in Figure 1 below) have similar steps (between three and six steps) to be completed in a 45-minute period every day. The TIG includes lists of materials required for each lesson and makes cross-references to the SAB, LR and SRs. The TIG also provides teachers with an assessment system, incorporating daily continuous assessment activities for the

teachers to conduct; oral reading fluency test passages and directions; formative bi-weekly tests; and periodic assessments to be conducted every six weeks.

Figure 2: Pages from the TIG - Weekly schedule and daily lesson plan

REVIEW Week 5 Lesson Planner					
	Monday (Day 1) pages 82–85	Tuesday (Day 2) pages 86–89	Wednesday (Day 3) pages 90–93	Thursday (Day 4) pages 94–97	Friday (Day 5) pages 98–100
Alphabet Recognition and Phonics	short vowel sounds, consonants, double consonants, and consonant blends	ee/ea as /ē/, ay/ai as /ī/, ie as /ī/	a + consonant + silent e, o + consonant + silent e	i + consonant + e, ar, ew	
Spelling/Sight Words	said, get, big, not, run, last, went, felt, stick, jump, want, fix, rest, glad, friend	need, green, eat, bears, stay, way, wait, tie, lied, cook, done, said, thought, pull, another		make, take, come, safe, place, home, hole, close, hope, stove, forest, crab, many, live, people	life, like, time, hide, white, farm, hard, car, few, grew, village, work, city, different, could, miss
Written Vocabulary	want, fix, rest, glad, friend	cook, done, said, thought, pull, another		forest, crab, many, live, people	village, work, city, different, could, miss
Reading Comprehension			"Spot Got Bit" and "Why Spider Has 8 Thin Legs"		"A Crab That Lives in a Tree" and "Kwenah Goes to Monrovia"
Reading Fluency	"Spot Got Bit"	"Why Spider Has 8 Thin Legs"		"A Crab That Lives in a Tree"	"Kwenah Goes to Monrovia"
Oral Vocabulary	excited, proud, stretch, suddenly, shy	hungry, wing, steal, fight, safe, hide	full, grow, build, ground, well, wind	meat, gone, afraid, decide, a little while	
Read-Aloud	"My First Day at School"	"The Mother Hen and the Hawk"	"Why Must It Rain?"	"Muhammad Goes to the Market"	

Grade 2 National Standards for Reading and Comprehension

Learning Outcomes: Read and process information • Demonstrate knowledge of sight words and other vocabulary for improved spelling and writing skills • Use letter-sound associations, word parts, and context to read new words and analyze texts • Improve spelling and writing skills for effective communication • Analyze text content and share ideas, information, and messages with others • Predict outcomes and make judgments after careful evaluation of facts and issues • Demonstrate the awareness that speech is made of a sequence of symbols and sounds that can be manipulated to recognize and read words accurately and fluently • Demonstrate a literal comprehension of readings, through identification and analysis of main ideas and supporting details • Fluently read grade-level texts • Read grade-level text with speed and accuracy • Correctly respond to questions from texts read.

Learning Objectives: Identify vowels and recognize consonants • Read words with varied word patterns • Identify beginning, middle, and end of a story • Retell a story • Identify characters, setting, events, and plot in a story • Identify the problem in a story • Construct sentences correctly • Read diverse types of writings • Identify facts from a text • Identify main idea and facts in a nonfiction text • Identify theme in a text • Recognize the elements of diverse types of writings • Name and identify some types of adjectives • Demonstrate knowledge of new words • Read words with variant word patterns • Identify the sequence of a text • Spell high-frequency and subject-related words • Demonstrate understanding of vocabulary and related subject words in context • Read diverse texts fluently • Listen to and discuss texts.

REVIEW

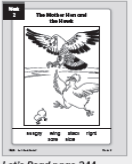
Week 5 | Day 2

OBJECTIVES

- Review the vocabulary words *hungry, wing, steal, fight, safe, hide*
- Review "The Mother Hen and the Hawk"
- Review reading words with the vowel teams *ee/ea as /ē/, ay/ai as /ī/, and ie as /ī/*
- Review spelling *need, green, eat, bears, stay, way, wait, tie, lied, cook, done, said, thought, pull, another*
- Review reading fluently "Why Spider Has 8 Thin Legs"
- Review the vocabulary words *cook, done, said, thought, pull, another*

LEARNING RESOURCES

- Let's Read
- Student Activity Book
- Student copybooks



Let's Read page 244

INTRODUCTION 1 MIN.
 ☛ Today we will review words and stories that we learned earlier in this period. This will help us prepare for the period assessment next week.

ORAL VOCABULARY / READ-ALOUD 12 MIN.
 ☛ First, I am going to read the story "The Mother Hen and the Hawk" to you again. Please turn to page 244 in *Let's Read*.

BEFORE READING

PREVIEW
 Guide the students to . . .

- review the meaning of the oral vocabulary words for this story:

1. hungry	☛ Hungry. <i>Hungry</i> is when your stomach hurts because you need to eat. For example, if I work all day and don't eat breakfast or lunch, I will be very hungry for dinner! Let's pretend to be hungry. Rub your stomach and say with me, "I am hungry!"
2. wing	☛ Wing. A <i>wing</i> is the part of an animal's body that it uses to fly. For example, a bird has two wings. Turn to page 244 in <i>Let's Read</i> and find the wings in the picture. -Let's pretend to fly with wings. (Do the motions together.)
3. steal	☛ Steal. To <i>steal</i> means to take something that is not yours. For example, sometimes one animal will steal an egg from another animal's nest. Let's pretend to steal eggs from a nest. (Do the motions together.)
4. fight	☛ Fight. To <i>fight</i> means to hit and kick and try to hurt someone, like this. (Do the motions of fighting.) For example, I feel safe when I am at home and at school. Where do you feel safe? (Help individuals respond in well-formed sentences using <i>fight</i> .)
5. safe	☛ Safe. When you are <i>safe</i> , you are far away from danger or bad things. You are comfortable. Nothing will hurt you. (Hug yourself to indicate feeling safe.) For example, I feel safe when I am at home and at school. Where do you feel safe? (Help individuals respond in well-formed sentences using <i>safe</i> .)
6. hide	☛ Hide. To <i>hide</i> means to go somewhere where no one can see you. Sometimes animals hide in trees so that other animals can't find them. Other animals hide in the ground. Let's pretend that we are hiding. (Do the motions together.)

- describe what they see in the picture, using their target vocabulary where applicable.

The SAB provides students with reading and practice activities for every week of the program. These are meant to be used in class and completed at home if necessary. The LR reader consists of a set of 34 fiction and non-fiction texts, one for each week of the instructional program, plus 16 supplementary texts. It also includes a set of 34 'read loud pictures' – pictures with a title and set of vocabulary designed for oral language and vocabulary development. The LR is supplemented with a set of SRs to support students in reading independently at their level. Finally, the program supplies teachers with a Read Liberia alphabet chart, set of letter cards, and an oral reading fluency booklet. Teachers are expected to follow three to five steps or activities specified daily in the TIG, while students engage with activities and reading in the SAB and the LR student reader. Sets of letter cards, an alphabet chart and an ORF booklet are all provided to support different aspects of early grade reading instruction.

The RL program materials used in 2021 and 2022 were the same but differed from those used in 2019. In 2020 the materials (especially the TIG) were streamlined and simplified and provided clearer lesson plans for teachers to follow with fewer steps. Crucially, the number of steps teachers were required to cover was reduced from eight or nine to five or six.

1.1.2. PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

The program incorporates a well-established conception of successful literacy instruction based on the explicit and systematic teaching of different components of reading, including phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary; and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, 2017). It also incorporates a focus on fluency, spelling, sight words, and shared writing. These different components are structured into the scripted reading program for each day of the week, for 36 weeks (an example shown in Figure 1). In the TIG, the program also recognizes writing and oral language fluency as key to the development of reading.

A further set of program-specific instructional principles also inform the program, also common to structured pedagogy programs. These are wide-ranging and include scripted content; the ‘I do, we do, you do’ methodology (or gradual release model)¹; use of familiar language; monitoring and feedback; use of appropriate pacing; inclusion; positive discipline; and homework. Details on these different methodological aspects are shown in Appendix A.

Both the literacy focused principles and the pedagogical principles form the basis for the analysis presented below, looking at what is covered in the reading lessons as well as how this content is taught.

1.2. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION STUDY DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

1.2.1. SAMPLE

The sample for the observation study included 25 Grade 2 treatment classrooms (three of which combined grade 1 and 2) and 13 classrooms in control schools (one combined Grade 1 and 2), a total of 38 classrooms. For the purposes of this report, Treatment schools are labelled with a ‘T’ followed by a number, and Control schools with a ‘C’ plus a number.

The schools were selected to obtain a range in reading outcome levels, including higher and lower performers on the baseline test. The sample also included schools from six different counties and different districts within those counties, ensuring a spread of treatment and control schools within counties. In general, the sizes of the classrooms were small, shown in Table 1 below. Most classes ranged between six and 25 students, with three classes with more than 40 students and two classrooms with over 50 students.

Table 1: Number of students in treatment and control classrooms (n=38)

Number of Students	Treatment	Control	Total
0-10	11	3	14
11-20	6	4	10
21-30	6	2	8
31-40	0	1	1
41-50	1	2	3
more than 50	1	1	2

¹ Fisher and Frey, *Better Learning through Structured Teaching* (2008)

There were enough seats for all students in Treatment classrooms. In one Control classroom some students sat on cement blocks and others on the floor and in another five Control classrooms students shared desks. In many classrooms the lighting was poor.

The duration of lessons ranged between 14 minutes and 51 minutes, with the average lesson being 34 minutes long.

1.2.2. DATA COLLECTION

A dominant way of measuring classroom practices at scale is the use of closed-ended schedules that require relatively low inference judgments on a range of features of classroom practice. Often these instruments include what can be measured easily: time, presence of resources and coverage, for example. One of the problems with studying pedagogy in this way is that it produces atomistic descriptions that tell us little about the actual pedagogic processes in classrooms, and hence about quality. In other words, a set of inputs are measured, but without an understanding of when, whether and how these inputs combine to produce potential learning. In addition, more detailed and subtle processes, such as the nature of classroom discourse and feedback are missed. The importance of collecting data that captures detailed description of the lessons has thus been a focus of the classroom-based approach taken in the study.

In the 2019 classroom observation study, fieldworkers conducted live observations and were trained to collect closed-ended items and open-ended narrative descriptions of classroom activity. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, this form of data collection was not possible in 2020 at all and was restricted in 2021. For 2021 and 2022 a decision was taken to video classrooms. Video data allowed for greater in-depth analyses of classroom processes and discourse. In each of the 38 classrooms the camera was positioned at the back of the classroom to capture the classroom, blackboard, and teacher. A wide-angle setting ensured that most if not all learners could be seen on film. A fieldworker managed the camera throughout the observation period to maintain focus on the teacher, but also to capture the precise activity of students at their desks. Audio records were simultaneously collected, with the microphone positioned near to the teacher. This was to assist with accurate capture of classroom talk. Still photographs of all text that was used in the lesson were taken. This included text in books, text written on the blackboard and text written by students in their notebooks. All 38 lessons were transcribed in full. In 2022 fieldworkers also completed a brief questionnaire with the class and teacher, capturing how many students had their own copies of the RL material, whether teachers had received training on the program, and how many pages were completed in the SAB.

In this way the data provided a rich record of what was going on in classrooms teaching reading to Grade 2s. The data enabled a rigorous analysis of the quality of classroom instruction alluded to above. The fieldwork occurred in May and June 2021, and April and May 2022. In Treatment schools, teachers were asked to teach a Read Liberia reading lesson. In the Control group, teachers were asked to teach a regular designated reading period. In both Treatment and Control schools, teachers were given advance notice of the researchers' data collection visit.

2. REPORT FINDINGS

2.1 UPTAKE OF READ LIBERIA PROGRAM MATERIALS

Table 2 below shows how many of the 25 Treatment classrooms used the Read Liberia material.

Table 2: Treatment classrooms in which the Read Liberia material was used

N=25	Number	Percentage
Read Liberia Student Activity Book (SAB)	5	20%
Read Liberia Teacher Instructional Guide (TIG)	16	64%
Read Liberia Let's Read (RL) student reader	23	92%
Read Liberia supplementary readers	0	0%
Read Liberia alphabet chart	1	4%
Read Liberia set of letter cards	0	0%
Read Liberia ORF booklet	0	0%
No Read Liberia material used	2	8%

In terms of the program, the TIG and the SAB are required for every lesson, and the LR reader for most lessons. The Read Liberia material is designed so that the contents in each resource aligns with the others, and cross references are made to guide the use of one in relation to the other. In the TIG, cross references are made to the SAB and LR reader in the side frame of the TIG and in the text. The table shows that teachers used the Read Liberia TIG in 16 of the 25 classrooms, and the Read Liberia LR student reader in almost all classrooms (23 of the 25). The Read Liberia SAB was used in a fifth of the classrooms, the alphabet chart in only one classroom and the letter cards and ORF booklet were not used at all. All three materials (LR, TIG and SAB) were used together in four of the 25 Treatment lessons. In ten lessons the TIG and the LR were used together and in six lessons the LR was used on its own. Notably, some RL material is used in almost all Treatment classrooms, with only two lessons using no RL material at all.

Low usage of the SAB is consistent with the findings from 2019, as is that of the supplementary materials. The LR was the resource most consistently seen being used in lessons across the classroom observation studies and showed increased usage over time (up from 71 percent of classrooms using it in 2019 to 92 percent in 2021/2022). Use of the TIG is slightly less than 2019.

Table 3 below shows how many students in 2021/2022 had their own copy of the RL materials. Most students in most classrooms had their own copy of LR and in ten classrooms all the students had their own copy of the reader. Only one of the classes had no readers, and even where the Let's Read was not used in the lesson (in the case of T86 and T81) students still had the readers in their possession and could produce them on demand.

Table 3: Percentage of students with their own copy of Let's Read (2021/2022)

N=25	Number of Classrooms	Percentage
None	1	4%
<50%	3	12%
50%-70%	3	12%
71%-80%	3	12%
81%-90%	1	4%

N=25	Number of Classrooms	Percentage
91%-100%	14	57%

Like the LR reader, possession of the SAB was also high. However, use of the SABs was not. Fieldworkers were asked to count the number of pages that two students had completed in their SABs. The average of these two students, as well as the proportion of the 91-page book completed, was calculated to show what proportion of students were covering what percentage of the book (for 2022 data only).

Table 4: Proportion of the SAB completed by students (2022)

N=19	Number of Classrooms	Percentage
0-10%	4	21%
11-20%	11	58%
21-30%	1	5%
31-40%	3	16%
41-50%	0	0%
More than 50%	0	0%

The table shows that none of the classes had completed more than 40 percent of the book, and most had completed less than 20percent (or less than 18 pages in the book). This was borne out in the classroom observations which indicated very little evidence of SAB use. By the time of the observation, learners should have covered around 75percent of the book if they were following the program.

2.1.1 MACRO PACING – COVERAGE OF THE PROGRAM WEEKS

The Read Liberia program consists of 36 sequential weeks. The Liberian school year (excluding holidays) consists of 43 potential instructional weeks and is mandated to occur over a minimum of 200 days. Normally, the end of the school year is hastened by several factors. These include child labor², agricultural work in rural areas and the onset of the rainy season which makes accessing schools difficult. In addition, schools were closed from March to November in 2020 because of COVID-19, thus the school year started late. Given the late start, it would be expected that teachers who were following the program would be at around Week 20 (i.e., halfway through the program at the end of the year, when observations took place). In 2022 the observations started at the beginning of April and the expectation was that teaching would be between weeks 25 to 30. Table 5 below shows the week of the program material used in the observation for the four treatment classrooms where RL material was used in 2021 and the 15 lessons that followed the program in 2022. The shaded area indicates where schools were expected to be in the program schedule.

Table 5: Week of the program of the observed lesson (n=25)

Program Schedule	2021 lessons observed	2022 lessons observed	Total lessons observed
Week 1 to Week 9	1	3	4
Week 10 to Week 19		7	7
Week 20 to Week 24		4	4

² Liberia has very high rates of child labor (estimated around 17percent of the 5-14-year-old population). Seventy-eight percent of these children work in agriculture (domestic and commercial) (ILO, 2017).

Program Schedule	2021 lessons observed	2022 lessons observed	Total lessons observed
Week 25 to Week 30	1		1
Week 31 to Week 36			
Multiple weeks/days	2		2
Not following	2	5	7

The table shows that only one of the lessons was taught around the expected program weeks (either Weeks 30 to 36 or Week 20 to 30 in 2021 or Week 25 to 30 in 2022). Lessons across the two years were behind program expectations, with three of the lessons drawing material from Week 1. This suggests that either the program was generally not being adhered to in the schools or schools had fallen behind considerably in the program. Seven of the lessons (almost a third of classrooms) were not following the program on the day of observation.

2.1.2 PROGRAM CONTENT COVERAGE

In considering program uptake, the analysis looked at the coverage of the eight focus literacy skills of the Read Liberia program. A number of these skills are meant to be covered on any given day, and the program is structured so that skills at the letter and word level support reading and comprehension skills using longer texts. The specific range of skills that the program targets are:

- Phonological awareness
- Alphabetic principle
- Phonics
- Spelling
- Sight words
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Shared writing

Table 6 below shows the number of Treatment and Control lessons in which these different skills were observed. The table shows instances simply of when the teacher attempted to teach the different components. It does not indicate here whether the components were covered accurately, completely or in line with the program requirements.

Table 6: Coverage of eight focus literacy components in Treatment and Control lessons

LITERACY SKILL	TREATMENT	
	TREATMENT	CONTROL
Alphabetic principle	2	
Phonological awareness	2	1
Phonics	10	
Sight words	4	1
Spelling	8	1
Vocabulary	12	2
Fluency	23	14

LITERACY SKILL	TREATMENT	
	TREATMENT	CONTROL
Comprehension	19	12
Writing	1	

The table shows that across Treatment and Control lessons, fluency and comprehension were the dominant skills covered. Phonics was only evident in Treatment classrooms and vocabulary and spelling occurred with higher frequency in the Treatment classrooms. Alphabetic principle and writing were rarely covered, and again was only seen in Treatment classrooms. Thus, Treatment lessons teach a wider range of early grade reading componential skills than the Control classrooms.

In the program, phonics and word level activities (sight words, spelling, vocabulary) provide preparation for the reading of text and comprehension activity. These activities were seen in less than half of the 25 Treatment lessons in 2021/2022.

The dominant lesson structure for half the Treatment lessons (12) and all the Control lessons (13) involved the reading of a text, in various combinations of teacher and whole class. In most cases, either during or after the reading, or both, the teacher asked questions or explained the reading. Nineteen of the 25 Treatment and 12 of the 14 Control lessons engaged students in comprehension activity. In 2019 students in Control classrooms had more opportunities to engage in text-based comprehension activity and discussion than students in Treatment classrooms. In 2021/2022 both groups engaged in text-based discussion. In many Control classrooms students did not see the text being read (see below), and echo reading took up most of the lesson time. Writing was seen in only one (Treatment) lesson.

2.1.3 ADHERENCE TO LESSON PLANS

The expectation of the Read Liberia daily lesson plans is that teachers work through different steps scripted in the TIG each day. All the daily material, time allocations, written instructions as well as scripted sentences to be read aloud by the teacher are provided. Where questions are provided, answers are also given. Table 11 in the Appendix B shows the precise steps for each of the days for each classroom that were covered or partially covered. Overall coverage of the lesson steps had improved from 2019. In 2019 the program consisted of eight to nine steps and almost none of the teachers completed all the steps. The program was revised in 2020 and in 2021 and 2022 teachers were expected to cover five to six steps. More teachers covered more steps using the revised program in 2021 and 2022. Table 7 below shows how many teachers did not follow any steps and those that either fully or partially covered all, most or a few of the steps.

Table 7: Coverage of lesson steps in program 2021/2022 (n=25)

Number of lesson steps covered	Number of lessons
No steps covered	7
All steps fully covered	2
All steps covered, but some or all partially	4
3-5 steps fully covered	5

Number of lesson steps covered	Number of lessons
3-5 steps covered, but some or all partially	2
1-2 steps fully covered	0
1-2 steps covered, but one or both partially	5

Although most teachers used RL material in their classrooms and more of the total steps in the TIG were covered than in 2019, seven lessons, or almost a third of the sample, did not follow the TIG lesson plan at all. Of the remaining 18, six lessons implemented all steps, two of them implemented the steps completely and four implemented the steps selectively. Seven lessons covered most of the steps and four lessons one or two. Overall, slightly more classrooms covered most or all the lesson steps than those that covered few or none. However, the majority entail partial rather than full coverage.

The most commonly omitted steps from the daily lesson plans were homework, spelling, phonics and writing. The focus in most classrooms was the reading of text and this took up the vast majority of the time. The nature of the reading in classrooms is elaborated below under ‘Forms of reading.’

Two-thirds of classrooms in the 2021/2022 sample followed some or all the lesson steps in the teacher guide, but as indicated above, they did so mainly selectively. In several cases the teachers appeared unfamiliar with the TIG and unsure about how to use it. Teachers made several changes to the lesson scripts, most notably in the following areas:

Pre-reading activities, such as identifying the title and author; identifying vocabulary words in the text; and predicting what the story will be about were left out.

The post-reading sections ‘Features of text’ and discussion of text was also commonly omitted.

‘Daily Checks’ are included within each lesson where teachers are given observational assessment opportunities that help them monitor student mastery of skills. Examples of these are shown in Figure 2 below. Very few of the teachers conducted these assessments.

Figure 3: Examples of ‘Daily Check’ opportunities in Week 13, Day 1

✔ *Daily Check:* Call on 2 students to read one word each.

✔ *Daily Check:* Call on 2 students to spell one word each.

- Teachers avoided parts of the plan that required individual or paired reading from students, extended answers or discussion and more complex tasks, such as writing.
- Six of the 16 teachers following the lesson plans covered the Homework step by indicating what learners needed to do at home (for example “Have students complete page 21 in the Student Activity Book” (TIG, 2020, p.132). No teachers were seen to review homework from the previous day.

The phonics section of the daily lesson plan was also often partially completed. A number of teachers abandoned it after struggling with the English sounds and how to parse words. This is probably linked to

the dissonance between Liberian English and Standard English pronunciation. An example of a teacher struggling to teach phonics is given below.

The T75 teacher reads verbatim from the TIG not always doing the accompanying actions, and at times rendering the instructions non-sensical. For example, he says “Here I see the letters e, a and r,” but he is walking away from the board and not pointing to the words as the TIG stipulates. He explains the letters e-a-r as making the sound /er/ instead of /ear/ with the long ‘e’ sound. He sounds out the words with the class, but the process makes little sense given the teacher’s explanation of ear as /er/ - /s-p-er = spear, n-er = near, etc. He mistakenly reads “beard” as “bread.” He then corrects this to “b-er-d.” The teacher then moves on to spelling. The lesson is choppy as the teacher tries with difficulty to find his way through the TIG.

Four teachers were observed to do “I do, we do, you do” following the instructions in the TIG. In two cases the teachers appeared comfortable with the methodology. In the other two it was laborious, taking long to cover the sounds and words, and delivered in a very mechanical way, so that the concept of gradual release was not transmitted but rather resulted in rote repetition on the part of the students.

Apart from T78, T80 and T84, attempts at sound and word-level work in other lessons were incomplete, confusing, or incorrect. Teachers tended to cover these sections of the TIG very mechanically, without understanding and sense of purpose. Even in cases where the teaching was more successful, the procedural nature of implementation is evident. For example, in T80 the teacher asks for words that start with ‘v’. A student offers the non-word ‘ven’ and the teacher writes the word out and asks students to repeat it.

2.1.4 SUMMARY

In summary, the uptake of the program across the Treatment lessons was uneven. Although almost all lessons used RL materials, almost a third of the sample did not follow the lesson plans in the TIG. Few of the available resources were used, apart from the TIG and the LR reader. The latter was used across 23 of the 25 Treatment classrooms. Where the TIG was in evidence teachers followed lesson plan steps mechanically, and in many cases selectively. Instruction at the sound, letter and word level was particularly weak.

2.2 INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

In this section of the report, we compare instructional practice across Treatment and Control lessons, addressing the third research question. In particular, in this section we look at the nature of reading instruction across classrooms, the availability and nature of text and patterns in classroom discourse.

2.2.1 FORMS OF READING

In 12 of the 13 Control lessons and in 21 of the 25 Treatment lessons students had the opportunity to engage in the reading of extended text. This does not mean that in all cases they read or saw text. In several classrooms students were read to by the teacher, or chanted text read by the teacher without handling or seeing the text themselves. Table 8 below shows the form that the reading took in the lessons.

Table 8: The form of reading of extended text

	Treatment	Control
The teacher reads aloud to the class	10	2
The whole class reads aloud together with the teacher	3	
The whole class reads aloud together without the teacher	7	6
The whole class reads / chants portions of text after the teacher	11	9
Students read aloud together in groups or pairs	1	1
1-3 students read individually aloud to the class	4	3
>3 students read individually aloud to the class	1	7

The most common form of reading across Treatment and Control lessons was ‘echo reading’ in the lessons which consisted of teachers reading portions of text aloud to the class and students repeating after. The teacher reading to the class was also common in Treatment classrooms, in three of the lessons this was the only form of reading. Students reading in groups was more common in Control classrooms. The RL lessons plans include directives for ‘individuals to take turns reading aloud correctly and fluently to the whole class throughout the program. This occurred in four Treatment lessons and three Control lessons.

While there was the opportunity to read extended text it was clear in many instances that students were not actually reading but mimicking what the teacher was saying or memorizing and repeating text. An example from C62 is given below.

The teacher holds up a small story book at the front of class. Class reads in unison as the teacher points to the words. Reading is initially very loud and fluent, but it is clear the book has been memorized previously as it would be impossible for all the children in the class to see the text. As the lesson progresses through the book students struggle more with reading (consistent with the text having been memorized). The teacher resorts to echo reading after the first few pages. Divisions of the text in the chorusing defy punctuation and meaning becomes confused, as we see in the extract below:

Teacher: We cannot play with you
Students: We cannot play with you
Teacher: now. Come in the house with me
Students: now. Come in the house with me
Teacher: Saa. You can play with some color/pencils.
Students: Saa. You can play with some color/pencils.

Eventually the “reading” becomes choral recitation. Most students do not look at the book as they chant back what the teacher reads. The pace is very slow as each sentence is repeated many times.

In most classrooms students struggled to read. Students were seen pointing at the wrong text as they chanted phrases after the teacher. In the case of Control lessons, students in several cases did not have access to the text and repeated phrases or sentences read aloud by the teacher. In several classrooms it was clear that the teachers themselves struggled to read, and this was particularly acute in seven Treatment classrooms and three Control lessons. For example, in C63, the teacher’s fluency was very poor. He left out words, changed sentences, repeated sentences at random and read pages in an odd

order (page 1, 3, 2, 3 again, 4, half of 5, 2, 3, 4, 5). It was possible that the teacher had memorized the story or knew it well, but the rendering of the text was inaccurate and the meaning of the text was lost.

In T74 fluency was also very poor and the teacher showed little awareness of appropriate phrasing, punctuation, or expression. He struggled with pronunciation and frequently repeated words and phrases.

READING FOR UNDERSTANDING

The dominant practice of echo reading often atomized the text into single words or very short phrases thereby obstructing the meaning of the story. Students were more likely to hear individual words than connections between words and phrases so that they could understand what they were reading. For example, in T37 the reading of a whole story took the following form:

Teacher: The Doctor
Students: The Doctor
Teacher: Smile
Students: Smile
Teacher: And shake
Students: And shake
Teacher: His head
Students: His head
Teacher: I am sorry
Students: I am sorry
Teacher: I cannot help you
Students: I cannot help you
Teacher: I only treat
Students: I only treat
Teacher: People
Students: People
Teacher: Not trees
Students: Not trees
Teacher: Go to
Students: Go to
Teacher: Farmer
Students: Farmer
Teacher: For a help
Students: For a help

CORRECTION

In the rote recitation or echo form of reading, and where individual students read, there were no strategies deployed to assist students when they faltered. “Word attack skills” such as decoding, syllabification or using contextual clues were absent. If a student was not able to read, the teacher moved onto the next student. For example, in C24, the following exchange took place as a student stood at the board attempting to read a story:

Teacher: Alicia, you cannot read this well, you cannot continue, I will ask any student here who is able to read the story of the palm tree in your reading book, which of you can read it? None of you? you can read it?

Student: Yes

Teacher: Archie, boy, come out and read the story of the palm tree, Archie boy please come; Alicia, go sit down. You are unable to read.

2.2.2 SUMMARY

There was very little difference between Treatment and Control lessons in the forms of reading, the nature of feedback and student and teacher fluency levels. Echo reading was the dominant form across lessons, where it was often evident that students were simply mimicking words and phrases from the teacher rather than reading text themselves. Reading as rote recitation predominated in the classrooms. In many instances in the classrooms the nature of reading by both the teachers' and students' obscures understanding. One way this occurs is through the fragmenting of the text and paying little attention to punctuation and meaning in the call and response. The other obstacle to reading with meaning is lack of attention to key aspects of fluency: assisting students to accurately decode words and read smoothly and quickly enough with appropriate expression so that meaning can be derived from the text.

2.3 AVAILABILITY AND NATURE OF PRINTED TEXT IN THE CLASSROOMS

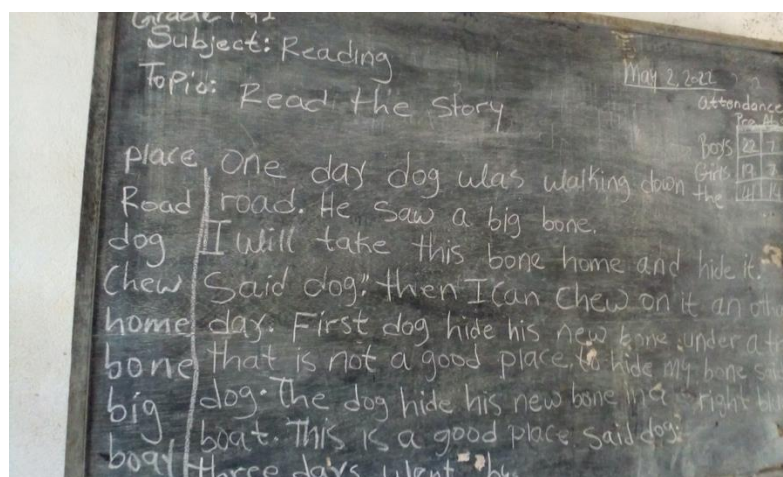
Table 9 shows the large disparity between Treatment and Control classrooms in relation to the availability of text in the classroom. In 17 of the 25 Treatment classrooms all learners had their own reading book. While at least a third of students had their own reader in all Treatment classrooms except one, in nine of the 13 Control classrooms students had no reader of their own and were reliant on the blackboard, the teacher's single reader or passages written out in their notebooks for reading.

Table 9: Availability of reading book for students 2021/2022

	Treatment	Control
All students have their own copy of a reading book	17	2
About 1/2 of students have their own copy a reading book	5	0
About 1/3 of students have their own copy of a reading book	2	2
No students have copies of a reading book	1	9

There are several clear disadvantages to students not being able to handle books, not least developing familiarity with text features and print awareness and knowledge of print. Independently handling a book also socializes students into reading as an individualized activity (as opposed to a communal one, from the blackboard). But what is clear from the two examples below, is the poor quality of the handwritten text used in the Control classrooms. In the case of C61, students echo read the text from the board after the teacher, one word at a time. The lack of basic punctuation in the text and the word-by-word chorusing obscure the meaning of the text. The text is also written in non-standard English (in particular in the omission of pronouns/articles).

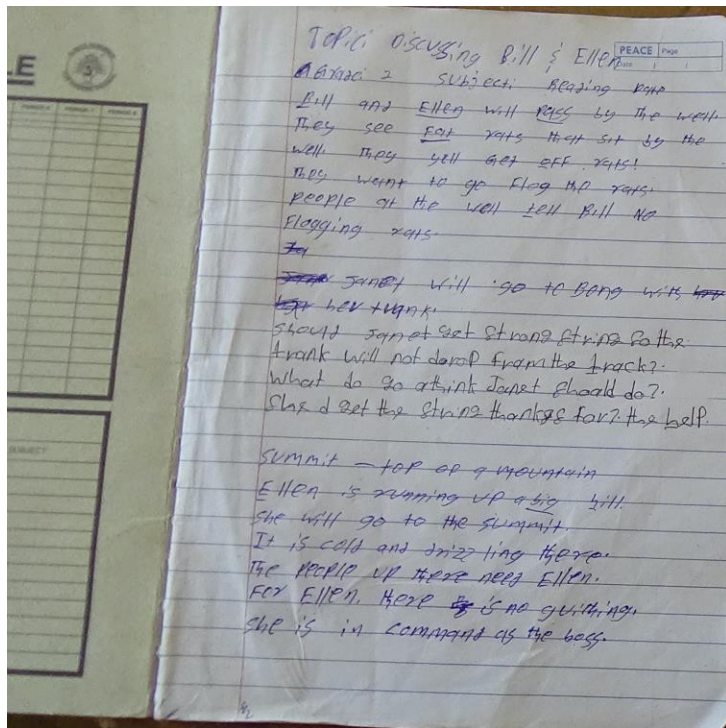
Figure 4: Text on blackboard (C61)



One day dog was walking down the road. He saw a big bone. I will take this bone home and hide it said dog". then I can chew on it an other day. First dog hide his new bone under a tree. that is not a good place to hide my new bone said dog. the dog hide his new none in a right blue boat. This is a good place said dog. three days went by

In the case of C65, the 'story' that students are asked to read is three separate paragraphs with no coherent plot and written with incorrect punctuation. Students struggle to read the text without accurate punctuation.

Figure 5: Text in notebook (C65)



Bill and Ellen will pass by the well. They see fat rats that sit by the well. They yell get off rats! They want to go and flog the rats. people at the well tell Bill No flogging rats.

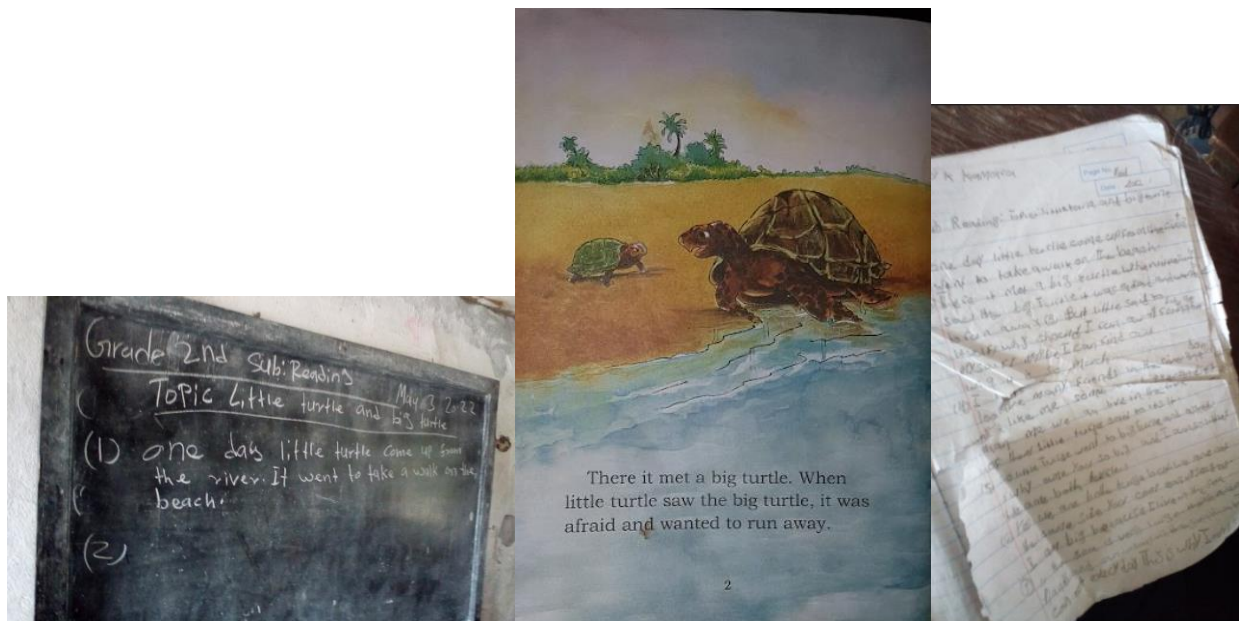
Janet will go to Bong with her trunk. Should Janet get strong string so that the trunk will not drop from the track? What do yo athink Janet should do? She d get the strong thank s for? The help.

Summit – top of a mountain

Ellen is running up a big hill. She will go to the summit. It is cold and drizzling there. The people up there need Ellen. For Ellen. Here is no [illegible]. She is in command as the boss.

In the case of C64 students obtain text from three different sources – read out by the teacher from a reading book, from a section written up on the board and from their own notebooks.

Figure 6: Text displayed in multiple formats (C64)



In contrast, the LR reader was used in 22 of the 25 Treatment classrooms, where in the majority of the classrooms almost all students had their own copy of the reader. In T86 students read from their

exercise books in similar fashion to the Control classrooms, and at T6 students shared copies of a single-story reader. At T81 students each had their own copy of an alternative reader to LR. The LR is an anthology containing 50 fiction and non-fiction texts. The program allows for each student to have their own copy and take the books home with them (there is no storage space for books in the classrooms and schools, in any case). In every single one of the Treatment classrooms at least some of the students were able to produce their LR. The contrast with the Control students' access to text is stark.

2.4 CLASSROOM DISCOURSE PATTERNS

Teale et al (2017) have recently argued that equally important to the development of the five foundational skills (phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary; fluency; and comprehension) is oral language development and the development of background knowledge, especially for comprehension. Oral language development occurs through modeling the syntactic structure of the language by the teacher; through students being given opportunities to use language; and through teachers pointing out the semantic, syntactic, and phonological aspects of students' speech. The development of early language knowledge and skills is central to the RL program. "In addition to learning to read, it is important that students develop strong early language knowledge and skills. This knowledge includes developing oral language, basic and academic vocabulary, and the tools to write (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003)" (TIG, xiv).

The question of teachers' modeling of language is dealt with under instructional quality below. In relation to students the study found minimal opportunities for oral language development in the classrooms, particularly given that students had minimal opportunities to speak. This was the case across all Treatment and Control classrooms except one Treatment and one Control classroom where students spoke significantly more than in others.

The full classroom data set was analyzed in relation to

- Who dominated talk
- The nature of student responses
- The extent of discussion

The findings are presented in the tables below.

Table 10: Classroom talk across Treatment and Control lessons (n=38)

	Treatment	Control
Teacher dominated. Students speak only when asked to in restricted sentences	12	8
Teacher dominated but some student opportunities for students to talk with more elaborated responses	9	2
Less teacher-dominated with students more engaged and talking more	1	1
No discussion and no student talk. Lesson consists only of students repeating reading after teacher.	2	2

In their responses students in Treatment classrooms spoke at more length, probably because the nature of the text elicited a more detailed response than that in Control classrooms. While the language in the example below is very much a local variety of Liberian English, it shows the longest any student spoke across all classrooms (in Control classroom C20):

Teacher: What the lesson that you learn that you will proof how well to be somebody for yourself? Who? Quickly, okay, Franklin.
Student: That' me la time where the girl not was going to school. She was sitting down outside the school fence. She was listening to the people in devotion, they was singing the national anthem she was listening to it she learn it.

'Elaborated,' then, in the table means seldom more than one or two sentences. Generally, students' responses consisted of single words or very short (and often grammatically incomplete) sentences. An example from T8 is given below.

Teacher: Okay, another question. What was some of the things that big turtle said was really making him big?
Students: plants and animals
Teacher: What he do with plants and animals?
Students: Eating it
Teacher: Eating it, right? He eat lot of plants and animals right? Is him correct?
Students: Yes
Teacher: Okay. Big turtle said, because he is the big so he can eat lot of plants and animals, right?
Students: Yes

2.4.1 Teacher questioning

The very limited opportunities for student talk stems from at least two strategies used by the teachers in the lessons: echo reading, which requires the restatement of text after the teacher, and closed questions requiring simple factual recall from students. The nature of questioning provides a clear indication of teacher expectations in the classrooms, where very low-level responses were expected and accepted. An example from T8 was provided above. In other cases, teachers 'display' the response so that students simply read an answer directly off the teacher's statement. An example from T15 is provided below:

Students [reading from book]: Hawa said, "I came with my mother too".
Teacher: who said 'I came with my mother too'?
Students: Hawa
Teacher: Clap for yourself one more

What this form of questioning negates is active meaning-making and engagement with the texts introduced. The questions do not function to check for understanding nor allow for inferential reasoning, but rather delimit student response. Open questions to encourage student discussion were not seen in the lessons.

2.4.2 Summary

In summary, classroom discourse in both the Treatment and Control was dominated by teacher talk. Teacher questioning influences student talk in a way that shuts down student thinking and speaking.

Teachers seldom asked open-ended questions that encouraged discussion. Teacher elicitation and chorused response dominated the structure of classroom discourse across Treatment and Control classrooms although student responses in Treatment classrooms were slightly more elaborated, possibly linked to greater availability and more developed texts used in these classrooms.

2.5 INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

In 2017 the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Liberia tested 12,853 Teachers. The purpose was to identify the large number of ghost teachers on the payroll, but also to plan professional development and remove functionally illiterate teachers from the system. Teachers scored lower for English than for mathematics on the test, and overall 51 percent of teachers failed the test with below 40 percent combined score for mathematics and English. Between 28 and 57 percent of teachers (depending on the county) were deemed “untrainable” by the Ministry.

Initial analysis of the classroom videos indicated that teacher competence, and especially facility with English was a problem in many classrooms. The analysis followed up on this by developing an ‘instructional quality metric. The first concern was to gain a more precise measure of teacher competence in the classroom and its implications for reading instruction. The second was to consider whether the Treatment teachers contributed to greater instructional quality in their classrooms than the Control teachers (thus possibly explaining some difference in the differential reading outcomes). Four dimensions were coded for instructional quality for each lesson:

Language use – the extent to which teachers modeled the use of English, particularly as a conduit to the standard English texts being used in the classroom

Verbal feedback – the type of feedback given by the teacher to students on their reading or answers to questions.

Knowledge – the extent to which the teacher demonstrated knowledge or understanding of components of the lesson or of the texts being read.

Reading fluency - the extent to which teachers were able to accurately identify the majority of words; read smoothly with appropriate phrasing and expression; and convey the meaning of the text read.

Discussion and examples of each of these dimensions is discussed below. A ranking then follows.

2.5.1 LANGUAGE USE

There are 31 established languages in Liberia (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020). The language of wider communication is ‘Liberian English’, which is a variety of English that is spoken in Liberia and includes several varieties (for example, Kru Pidgin English, Liberian Kreyol language, the Merico language, and Caribbean English). The official language of instruction for all public schools in Liberia is English from the first grade even though many students speak a local language as their mother tongue and are not familiar with English upon entering the education system (IBIS, 2013; Mitterhofer, 2015).

English was the official medium of instruction in all classrooms and English was used 100 percent of the time across the Treatment and Control classrooms. However, all teachers spoke non-standard Liberian

English, as we saw in the data extracts above, and in many cases ‘translated’ the text for students. However, there was a range across classrooms in the extent to which the teachers’ dialect approximated the more formal variety of Standard Liberian English. Teachers were scored on the distance between the English of the text used in the classroom and the dialect used in the classroom on a simple measure of strong dialect very different from Standard English (0) to dialect closer to the Standard English of the text (2). This measure is a crude one based on a general, global judgment of sound and grammatical similarity between the different English rather than on a formal, detailed analysis of lexical, syntactic, and phonological similarities and differences. The bounds of a given speaker’s range (from less to more standard-like) has in the past been taken as an indicator of educational level (Singer et al, 1971) although that is not clear here nor verifiable.

2.5.2 READING FLUENCY

Poor reading skills among Liberian teachers have been linked to low levels of education and qualification, as well as language competence. Davidson and Hobbs (2013) found a considerable number of primary teachers (irrespective of qualification level) struggled with reading skills. This was confirmed in the low performance of teachers on the 2017 MOE tests. In the 2021/22 classroom observation study it was clear that several of the teachers across the classrooms struggled to read themselves. Two examples are provided below.

At T79 the teacher mistakenly writes ‘carb’ on board instead of ‘crab’ and leads Ls in spelling the word out. Has trouble reading some of the definitions, for example, for crab the teacher struggles with the word ‘claws.’ While the TIG reads: ‘a crab is a small animal with 8 legs and 2 big claws. Most crabs live by water. Let’s be like crabs - show me your claws,’ the teacher says: ‘a crab is small animal with 8 leg...and 2 big (long pause) crab. Most crab live by water. Let’s be the crab show - show me your... so everybody should be a crab’.

At C63 the teacher’s fluency is very poor. He leaves out words, changes sentences, repeats sentences at random and reads pages in an odd order (pages 1, 3, 2 and 3 again, then 4, half of 5, 2, 3, 4, 5). Where the text read at one point : ‘The kernel can be cracked open. The seeds are cooked to make palm kernel oil. The palm kernel oil has a dark color. Palm oil can be made from the palm nuts. The palm oil has a red color. One can also eat the red palm nuts or the kernel,’ the teacher says : ‘The palm kernel can be break open. The seed are cooked to make palm kernel oil. The seed can be broken to make palm kernel oil (repeated twice). Palm kernel oil has, the palm kernel oil has a dark color (repeated 4x). The palm kernel oil can be made from the palm nut. The palm kernel oil has dark color (repeated twice). The palm kernel oil has a red color. One can also eat the red oil, the palm nut and the palm kernel oil can we also eat we can also eat.’

Teachers were scored on a three-point scale – from struggling to read (0), to reading smoothly but without appropriate phrasing (1), to reading fluently with expression (2)

2.5.3 KNOWLEDGE

A number of the teachers showed a lack of knowledge of different aspects of the content. Misunderstandings of texts as well as program components or comprehension questions were common across the classrooms. Teachers were scored as exhibiting misunderstanding of text or program components (0) or exhibiting understanding of text or program components (2).

For example, at T87, the teacher constantly read and re-read the TIG. In the phonics activity he was unable to sound out words or explain the sounds. During comprehension incorrect responses were accepted :

Teacher: Even though Wanibo Toe was famous, what was he like? [the answer is: Humble]
Student: He like to play football
Teacher: Okay thank you, who again yes?
Student: He was sad
Teacher: Yes, thank you. Who else?

Even those following the TIG script most closely made errors. In the following exchange, two students provide correct answers to the question of the setting of the story in T36 lesson. The teacher replies that these are wrong and provides his own answer:

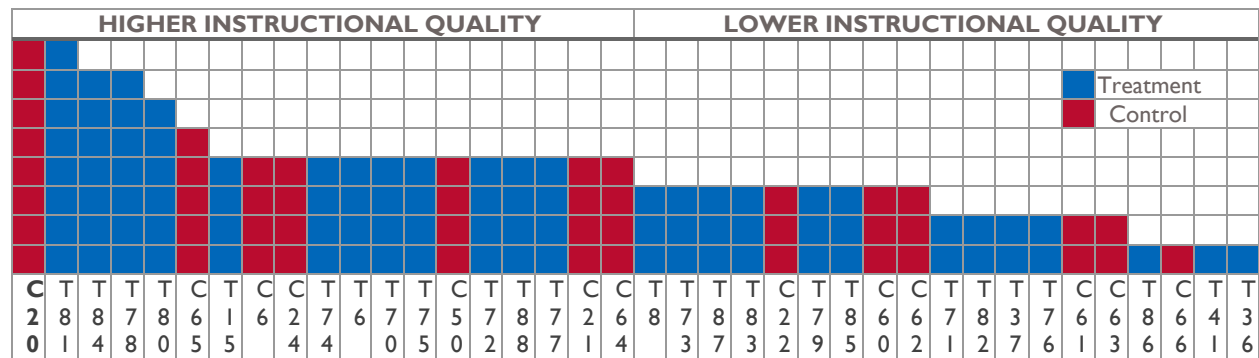
Teacher: Kwenah is the main character in the story. What is the setting?
Student: Kwenah village
Teacher: No.
Student: In Monrovia
Teacher: Err the setting is... the setting is the thing where Bainda, ehn Baina ask Kwenah to go in Monrovia with him? Because why? Because he find him that suffering, he suffering plenty. He doing all kind of hard, hard work. When Kwenah came and saw Baina doing that hard work, he try he was try to take him and carry him to he can have little rest you hear?

2.5.4 VERBAL FEEDBACK

A core principle of the RL program is feedback – “In order for students to learn to read, they need to know what they have done well, what they need to improve, and how they can improve. The teacher needs to give students constructive feedback” (TIG, page 3). Beyond the RL program, the nature of feedback has been identified as the key pedagogical variable impacting on student learning (Wisniewski et al, 2020). Data extracts above showed how teachers across the classrooms failed to provide students with feedback on their reading, other than simple correction. In teaching comprehension, the teacher’s response to incorrect answers was generally to move on to the next student. There was little evidence of attempts to understand errors that occurred nor to work with individual students in deriving the correct answer. Teachers were scored in terms of giving no feedback and/or simply moving on (0); asking students to “rub hands” or clap for a student for doing well (1); or correcting a student/students or making explicit how a response was correct or incorrect (2). The ranking occurred within a very narrow and low band of demonstrated competence, however, and high and low are scores relative to the total sampled lessons.

Teachers were given a cumulative score and all 38 lessons were ranked on instructional quality from strongest to weakest. The interest was in whether this ranking related to whether the teachers were teaching in treatment or control classrooms. Figure 2 below shows that Control lessons were evenly spread across the distribution of lessons from high to low instructional quality, with seven Control lessons in the higher range and six in the lower range. The four lowest ranked lessons consisted of three Treatment lessons and one Control and the highest instructional quality was found in a Treatment and a Control lesson.

Figure 7: instructional competence ranking of treatment and control classrooms



SUMMARY

The analysis of instructional quality allows for a consideration of the relationship between instructional practices and the RL intervention. Based on the analysis presented here, instructional quality emerged as evenly distributed across Treatment and Control classrooms. In this sample of lessons, therefore, there is no clear relationship between the intervention and better instructional quality.

3. CONCLUSIONS

UPTAKE OF THE READ LIBERIA PROGRAM MATERIALS

Read Liberia materials were available in all Treatment classrooms and were used in 22 of the 25 lessons observed. Although designed to be used together, the TIG, SAB and LR reader were often used alone. In only four of the lessons were multiple, *aligned* materials used. The Read Liberia LR student reader was the most commonly used material. The TIG was in evidence in 16 classrooms.

TEXT AVAILABILITY AND NATURE

What stood out in the analysis was the fact that in 13 Treatment classrooms all students had their own copy of a reading book, and at least a third of students in 24 of the 25 Treatment classrooms had their own reading books. These were mostly the LR anthology, consisting of 50 fiction and non-fiction texts and an additional 34 picture stories. Students carried these readers to and from home and school and they looked well-used. In contrast, students in nine of the thirteen Control classrooms had no reading text of their own, and relied on the blackboard, a teacher’s single reading text or handwritten text in the notebooks for reading.

UPTAKE BY TEACHERS OF THE READ LIBERIA DAILY LESSON PLANS IN CLASSROOMS, AND CONTENT COVERAGE

Teachers were selective in using the Read Liberia daily scripted lesson plans in the TIG. Two teachers completed all the steps fully (T80 and T84). Seven teachers did not follow the lesson plans at all. Overall, slightly more lessons covered most or all the lesson steps (13 lessons) than those that covered few or none (12 lessons). However, the majority entailed partial rather than full coverage.

In considering where teachers were in the 36-week program, the analysis found a wide range, with teachers drawing on very different weeks and in two cases multiple days/weeks in a single lesson. Only one lesson was at an estimated correct point in the program. Five of the 18 lessons following the program drew material from the first five weeks of the program. In summary, uptake of the program material, both in relation to the use of multiple materials aligned to the program week, as well as adherence to the program week and following of lesson steps, was low.

DIFFERENCES IN INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES BETWEEN TREATMENT AND CONTROL CLASSROOMS

The most common form of reading across Treatment and Control lessons was ‘echo reading’ in the lessons which consisted of teachers reading portions of text aloud to the class and students repeating after. The teacher reading to the class was also common in Treatment classrooms. Students reading in groups was more common in Control classrooms. Treatment lessons consisted of a wider range of early grade reading instructional components (including phonics, spelling, etcetera) but apart from three classrooms the teaching of these components was incomplete and poor. Classroom discourse in both the Treatment and Control was dominated by teacher talk and by call and response exchanges. Teachers mostly asked closed questions that discouraged discussion. Student responses to questions were generally restricted and, in most lessons, teachers did not probe students’ answers, elaborate on them nor provide correction when they were wrong.

INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

A consideration of instructional quality revealed little patterned difference between Treatment and Control classrooms suggesting an absence or unevenness of program impact on pedagogic practice. On measures of language proficiency, reading proficiency, teacher knowledge and feedback, low levels of quality were found across Treatment and Control lessons. When ranked, levels of instructional quality were evenly distributed across Treatment than Control lessons. The analysis of data in this sample suggests that it may be individual student ownership of the RL anthology, which they take home, and exposure to more and better-quality text when it is used in class, accounts for better outcomes in the Treatment group.

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APPENDIX A: READ LIBERIA INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES

Content – This refers centrally to adherence to the scripted lesson plan and coverage of the lesson components. In particular, attention should be paid to how well the students are engaged in reading letters, words, and connected text as called for in the lesson plans.

Method – The central method of concern in the program is the ‘I do, we do, you do’ methodology (or gradual release model), where the idea is that new content is modelled for the students by the teacher (I do); then students and teachers practice the content as a class (we do); and finally, individual students practice the content on their own (you do).

Communication – Along with gestures and visual aids, an effective way to scaffold student learning is by using familiar language that students can understand. The program promotes clear and correct communication by the teacher with students.

Monitoring – Checking students’ understanding throughout the lesson helps teachers adjust instruction, provide constructive feedback to students, and differentiate instruction according to students’ needs. The idea underpinning this program principle is that teachers constantly monitor students’ understanding throughout the lesson.

Feedback – In order for students to learn to read, they need to know what they have done well, what they need to improve, and how they can improve. The teacher needs to give students constructive feedback.

Pacing – Teaching at a pace that is not too fast or slow helps the teacher cover all the lesson content and ensures that students understand what is taught.

Inclusion – It is important to engage all students during reading instruction. The program intends the teacher to ensure that all boys and girls of different backgrounds and abilities are included in the learning process.

Positive Discipline – In order to maximize learning, students need to feel safe, respected, and valued in their classroom community. The teacher needs to manage student behavior in constructive ways.

Homework – Assigning homework gives students additional practice on what was taught in class. Checking homework helps students know what was done well and what can improve.

APPENDIX B

Table 11 below shows the steps for each of the program days that the teachers were following. In the case of T36 and T37 multiple days and their steps are shown as these teachers drew on different days in their lesson. The gray shaded areas indicate full coverage of the steps and light blue shading indicates partial coverage.

Table 11: Coverage of lesson steps (n=18)

Lesson observed	Program week/day	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
T70	Week 19, day 3	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T71	Week 16, day 2 (Grade 1)	Song	Spelling	Reading fluency practise	Oral vocabulary	Read aloud	Homework
	Week 16 Day 3 (Grade 1)	Phonological awareness	Alphabet recognition and phonics	Sight words	Written vocabulary	Reading comprehension	Homework
T75	Week 16, day 1	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary / sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T87	Week 23, day 4	Spelling/sight words	Reading fluency/written vocabulary	Oral vocabulary / read aloud	Phonics and word study	N/A	N/A
T73	Week 13, day 2	Phonics and word study	Vocabulary	Read aloud	Shared writing	Homework	N/A
T74	Week 23, day 1	Oral vocab/read aloud	Phonics and word study	Spelling / sight words	fluency/written vocabulary	N/A	N/A
T82	Week 13, day 1	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary / sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T83	Week 14, day 3	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T72	Week 2, day 3	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary/sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T80	Week 14, day 1	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary/sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T79	Week 3, day 1	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary/sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T88	Week 4, day 3	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary/sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T78	Week 22, day 3	Phonics and word study	Spelling	Vocabulary/sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T37	Week32 Day 4	Phonics & word study	Reading fluency practice	Read-aloud	Shared writing	Homework	N/A
	Week 32 Day 2	Phonics & word study	Oral vocabulary	Read aloud	Shared writing	Homework	N/A

Lesson observed	Program week/day	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
	Week 33	Phonics & word study	Spelling	Vocabulary / sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T36	Week 1 Day 2	Phonics & word study	Oral vocabulary	Read aloud	Shared writing	Homework	N/A
	Week 8 Day	Weekly phonics spelling quiz	Differentiated instruction	Homework	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Week 4 Day 1	Phonics & word study	Spelling	Vocabulary / sight words	Reading comprehension	Homework	N/A
T8	Week 29 Day 3	Reading fluency & comprehension	Oral vocabulary / read aloud	Phonics & word study	N/A	N/A	N/A
T15	Week 1 Day 2	Phonics & word study	Oral vocabulary	Read aloud	Shared writing	Homework	N/A

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